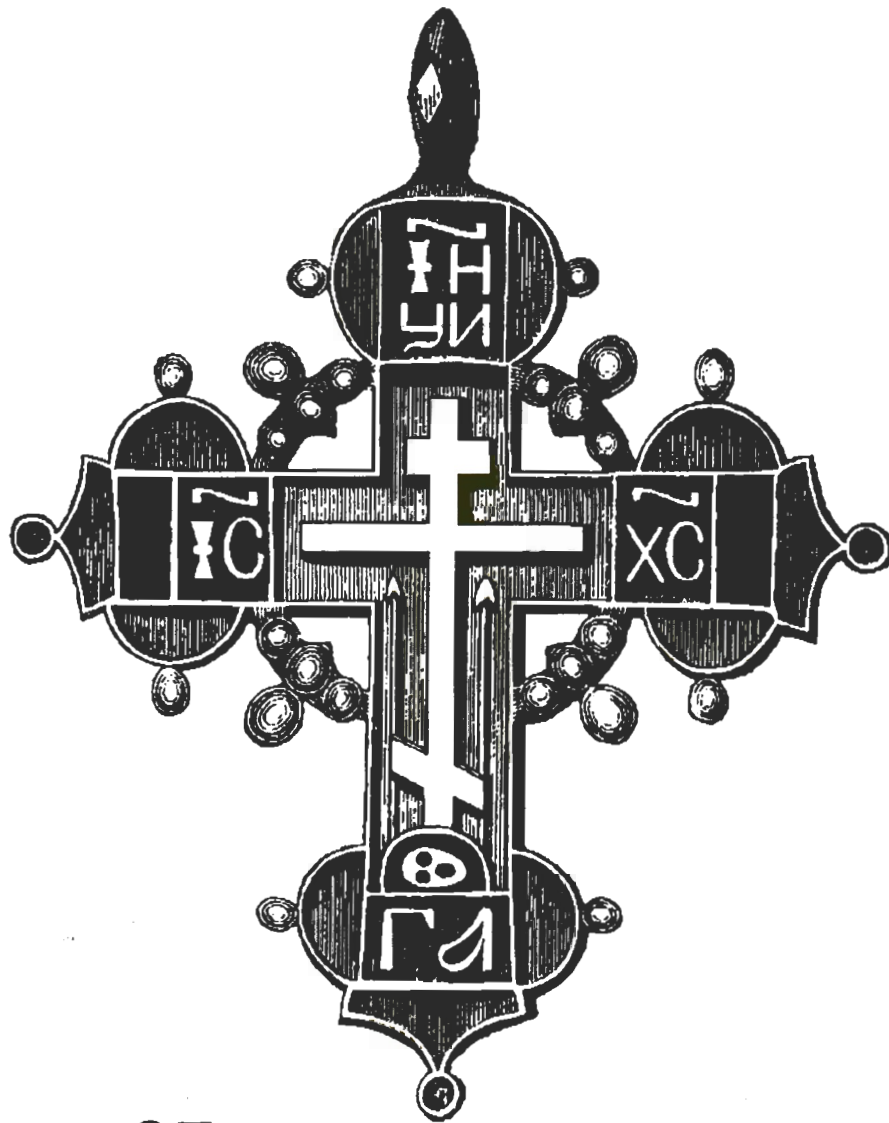


# window™



WINDOW VIEW OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH



## oikoumene

IN THE SPIRIT OF THE TIMES



## Window view of the Armenian Church

Volume IV Number 4 — 1994

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#### Photo Credit

Our apologies to **Armen Garabedian**, whose photograph of the late Catholicos Vazken I appeared on the cover of *Window* Vol. IV, No. 2. Credit for the photograph was inadvertently omitted from the issue.



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# οἰκουμένη

## Contemporary Trends in the Ecumenical Movement

While speaking of ecumenism and the Armenian Church might be an oxymoron – given the ethnocentric ecclesiology of the church – in this issue of *Window* we present the thoughts, views and ecumenical vision of Archbishop Aram Keshishian, Prelate of the Armenian Church in Lebanon. Archbishop Aram has become, par excellence, synonymous with *Ecumenism and the Armenian Church*. As the Moderator of the Central and Executive Committees of the World Council of Churches, he holds the highest position within the structure of WCC. As an Armenian theologian, he has been active in the ecumenical movement for over two decades – not only by participating in dialogues, but by the dozen books and articles that he has authored over the years.

The Third Conference of the Joint Commission of the Theological Dialogue between the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches – hosted by the Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Chambesy, Switzerland – was held September 23-28, 1990. The meeting was aimed at repairing the rift which has existed since the Council of Chalcedon in 451. The Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church participated in the Dialogue, represented by Bishop Mesrob Krikorian (See of Holy Etchmiadzin); Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian and Archbishop Aram Keshishian (See of Cilicia)

Thirty-four theologians from 16 countries unanimously adopted an “Agreed Statement and Recommendations to the Churches” to transcend the theological differences over the nature and person of Jesus Christ. They agreed that “both families have always loyally maintained the same authentic Orthodox Christological faith, and the unbroken continuity of apostolic tradition, though they may have used Christological terms in different ways.” The theologians recommended that “anathemas and condemnations of councils” be lifted as they seek deeper unity. (For the text of the entire document, see *Window* Vol. II, No. 3, 1991, pp. 21-24).

Four years after this historic Dialogue, the Commission is still waiting for *official* responses from the Hierarchy of the participating churches. While some have responded, the majority are yet to respond.

In an exclusive *Window* interview, Archbishop Aram Keshishian reflects on the process and prospects of this Dialogue. The answers to many questions that enthusiastic people – from both families of churches – have been asking with regards to the outcome of the Dialogue, are self evident in the interview.

We also present excerpts from Archbishop Keshishian's report on current ecological issues and the role of the churches. We hope that his insightful essay will spark discussion – as well as awareness—of contemporary eco-theological issues among Armenian Church clergy, church workers and laity.

- **Ecumene**

– (Greek - οἰκουμένη) - the whole world, the entire inhabited world. <οικειν, to dwell, inhabit <(ge), the inhabited world.

- **Ecumenical**

– general or universal, esp., of or concerning the Christian Church as a whole, or furthering or intending to further the unity or unification of the Christian Churches.

- **World Council of Churches (WCC)**

– includes most of the Protestant and Orthodox churches of the world, in over 100 countries. Its headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland. The original WCC, drafted its constitution in 1938 and was formally inaugurated in 1948 at the Amsterdam Conference.

The initial aims of the WCC were: the search for Christian unity and a concerted effort to relate the Christian faith to social and world problems. The range of the council's membership and activity has expanded greatly since its inception. The activities of the council touch almost every aspect of Christian service.

The doctrinal basis of the WCC was nothing more than, “faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior.” The desire was for the WCC to be a fellowship of those churches who accept that truth and not to be concerned with the manner in which the churches interpreted it. The policies of the WCC are set by assemblies—composed of representatives of all member churches.

Source: *Spiritual Life, Diocese of San Francisco; Grollier's Electronic Encyclopedia.*

# **JOINT COMMUNIQUE**

## **Catholicos of All Armenians and Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia**

**W**ith brotherly embraces in Moscow, We, the religious leaders of the two ancient Christian Churches — the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church — address to the fold of our faithful, here and abroad.

The history of Armenia and Russia is familiar, with periods of time when our peoples lived either in different nations or in a single nation. But, we testify that throughout the centuries, our two churches and their followers have been banded together with brotherly ties in Jesus Christ.

Our historical universality whose usefulness has been confirmed by the test of life — is above any division introduced through new realities. Apart from the new borders, national governing methods and arrangements of different external conditions, spiritual, cultural and other ties and mutual cooperation between the members of the two churches are maintained and multiplied.

We are fully in favor of the spiritual solidarity of all Christians and of strengthening relations among all people believing in one God. In this connection, we are specially striving to establish the spirit of mutual respect in the relation between Christians and Muslims.

We deeply regret the continuing fratricide war in Mountainous Karabagh. We call upon all who are involved in the conflicts, to cease immediately all military operations, so that the complex problems be resolved in a just and peaceful way with the intention of reaching an agreement through negotiations. We earnestly request the international public to assist in the peaceful solution to the question of Karabagh and do everything in its power to allieviate the suffering of the victims.

We convey to all the members of our churches and to all the peoples of the world our heartfelt wishes for peace, well-being and success in all their good endeavors  
“May the Lord of Peace Himself give you peace at all times in all ways.” (2 Thess. 3:16)

**VAZKEN I**  
Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos  
of All Armenians

**ALEKSI II**  
Patriarch of Moscow and  
All Russia

Moscow, January 21, 1993

# UNITY EFFORTS BETWEEN EASTERN & ORIENTAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES

A Conversation with  
**Archbishop Aram Keshishian**  
Moderator of World Council of Churches and  
Prelate of the Armenian Church in Lebanon

by Hratch Tchilingirian

• *Archbishop Aram Keshishian, a prolific writer, has also contributed to the ecumenical movement with his books, especially, Conciliar Fellowship: A Common Goal (WCC, 1992); Orthodox Perspectives on Mission (Oxford, 1992); The Christian Witness at the Crossroads in the Middle East, (Beirut, 1980); The Witness of the Armenian Church in a Diaspora Situation (New York, 1978).*

**Q. What is the position of the Armenian Apostolic Church with regards to the unity efforts between the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches, and particularly with regards to the joint communique that was signed in Switzerland in 1991?**

**ARCHBISHOP ARAM:** Before I touch the question of the position of the Armenian Church, pertaining to the ongoing dialogue between the Oriental Orthodox family and Eastern Orthodox family of churches, I think it is important that I say a few words about *this* dialogue.

In fact, this is not the first time that these two families have engaged in theological dialogue. As you remember, the Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches had already organized four unofficial dialogues among the theologians of these two families of churches. These dialogues took

place, as far as I remember, late in the 60s and early 70s. In these meetings, the theologians have raised the basic questions concerning the respective christological and doctrinal positions of these two families. The issues – as they have been developed in the course of history of each respective church – were treated in substantial and serious way. Therefore, we should not underestimate the theological literature that was produced by these four consultations and dialogues. As I said, these were informal dialogues, the theologians who took part in these discussions were not official representatives of their churches, but they were individuals discussing mutual concerns. And they treated the subject as such. In other words, four documents or statements that were produced by these four dialogues – theologically, christologically speaking – were very much in line with the positions of the churches in the two families. From a new perspective, in a new context, and with an ecumenical spirit, these efforts were serious attempts in terms of reevaluating the christological question that divided the churches. Obviously, these documents were never sent to the heads of the churches, and as such, the churches never reacted to their conclusions.

Unlike the previous efforts, the latest dialogue that started between these two families is a formal dialogue.



First, those who take part in this process formally represent their churches. Secondly, the intention of this dialogue is not just theological discussion – for the sake of clarifying some of the misunderstandings or misinterpretations that marked the history of these churches – but the restoration of communion between these two families. Therefore, it was with this intention and aim that this dialogue was initiated.

We had four meetings. During these meetings, we produced three christological statements and one pastoral statement. Of course, the process is continuing. We face some difficulties. Nevertheless, at the same time we realize that the substance of our faith is the same – we are not different in terms of the very essence of our doctrine of faith – but we are different in formulation and expression of our faith.

**Q. When you say “formal meetings,” does that mean that the process was set up by the respective churches?**

**ARCHBISHOP ARAM:** Yes, “formal meetings” denotes the fact that the dialogue was initiated by the churches of the two families. To be more precise, the initial step was taken by the Ecumenical Patriarchate [in Constantinople]. The Ecumenical Patriarchate sent a representative to the heads of the Oriental Orthodox Churches to discuss with them the possibilities of starting this formal dialogue. In this sense, the dialogue is formal, that is, the churches are talking with each other and not individual theologians sharing mutual concerns, which was the case with the previous dialogues.

**Q. What are some of the issues and aspects in the formal documents that were produced during these four meetings?**

**ARCHBISHOP ARAM:** There are three spheres to these documents.

First sphere:

a) *Christology*. We came to say, always in a formal way, that Nestorianism and Eutycianism have been rejected and anathematized by our churches and we adhere to that. In other words, we both anathematized, once again, Eutycian and Nestorian heresies. This is the first step.

b) *Formula*. We said that the well known Cyrilian formula of “One nature of the Incarnate Word” has constituted the basis, the crux of our christologies.

c) *The issue of Natures [of Christ]*. In terms of definition, when one family says “One nature,” it means “Two natures united.” We do not speak about numerical one, but always united one. When the other family says “Two natures,” it does not mean two separate natures, but united natures. In other words – when we use these two formulas or terminologies – we mean exactly the same thing: *united two natures*, without confusion, without

alteration, without change, without division, without separation. (In fact, this was said by our own St. Nersess the Gracious in the twelfth century). Hence collectively, we came to this conclusion. On the other hand, we realized that there are some nuances, some differences of emphasis – as they have been developed in the course of our histories. For instance, for us the Oriental Orthodox, it was very important to put the emphasis on the fact that it was the Logos who assumed humanity. We always put the emphasis on the divinity of Christ and this is in line with the Alexandrian christology. We also say “two natures” in *theoria* – because in our understanding we cannot speak about “two natures” after the “unity,” after the incarnation. So, even though there are some differences of emphasis, essentially we are saying the same thing. And this is very important. We realized this issue and reiterated it together, this time in a formal way. This is more or less the christological aspect of our dialogue.

Second sphere:

We discussed the whole question of anathemas. We have to realize that things are very much interrelated – you cannot divorce christology, anathema, councils and other aspects of the debate from each other. Christology, necessarily leads us to the old question of anathemas. In this respect, we agreed that we are ready to lift the anathemas pronounced against persons and synods, provided that lifting of anathemas should not necessarily imply the acceptance of that person or synod as holy or ecumenical. Therefore, lifting the anathemas should not imply anything specific. It is just automatic lifting of anathemas. We said that lifting of anathemas should not be done in a solemn way, but rather each church should do it in its own appropriate ways, according to their own traditions.

Third sphere:

We discussed the old question of conciliarity – the ecumenical councils. Of course, during our discussions we reiterated our acceptance of the first three ecumenical councils and that we hold fast to that. The [Eastern Orthodox] family accepts seven ecumenical councils. And they attach a particular importance to the seven councils. As far as they are concerns, you cannot divide these councils, they all go together. However, what we said, is the following: historically, theologically, doctrinally or in whatever perspective you want to look at them, you cannot put all these councils in one basket; you cannot deal with each of these council on the same level. They are theologically and qualitatively quite different from each other. Even the ecumenicity of the first three councils has much more weight than the other councils. Therefore, we tried to make a clear distinction between the first three and the ones that followed them. For

*(continued on page 14)*

# ECO-THEOLOGY

## *Towards An Ecumenical Ethic for a Responsible Society in a Sustainable Creation*

by **Archbishop Aram Keshishian**

*\*Excerpts from the report of Archbishop A. Keshishian to the meeting of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches in Johannesburg, South Africa, January 20-30, 1994. For the full report see The Ecumenical Review, February, 1994.*

Humanity seems to have entered a crucial period of its history. Emerging hopes and prospects for a qualitatively new tomorrow brought about by significant changes in many spheres of society's life, are being overshadowed by new tensions and growing fears of a total destruction of life. Unprecedented economic and industrial progress with unlimited use of earth's limited resources has greatly increased poverty, created food scarcity and thus jeopardized the eco-life support system. According to scientists, the world is on the edge of apocalyptic self-destruction. In fact, "as the Cold War fades away, we face not a 'new world order' but a troubled and fractured planet."<sup>1</sup> In a letter addressed to the churches, the World Council of Churches (WCC) conference on "Searching for the New Heavens and the New Earth, an Ecumenical Response to UNCED" (June 1992, Baixada Fluminense; Brazil) stated with a sense of urgency: "The earth is in peril. Our only home is in plain jeopardy. We are at the precipice of self-destruction."<sup>2</sup> Analyzing objectively the major ecological and economic issues facing humanity in the 21st century, and stating that "something is wrong - terribly wrong - on earth," the Institute for 21st Century Studies posed the critical question: "What shall we do?"<sup>3</sup> The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), otherwise referred to as the Earth Summit (June 1992, Rio de Janeiro) called the nations to search for a "sustainable future."

Such a goal can be attained only through a responsible society in a sustainable creation because the central issue here is the self-understanding of humanity

and its vocation vis-a-vis God and His creation. The role of the churches is no more only to resist, to combat, to react; but also to discern visions and to identify values that will ensure economic justice, political participation and a sustainable creation. These concerns have, in one way or another, always been on the agenda of the ecumenical movement. What the ecumenical movement should do now more specifically is: first, to treat the ecological and economic issues in their inseparable inter-relatedness and as issues pertaining to Christian faith; and, second, to work for ecumenical ethical paradigms that will help the churches to provide clear orientation to societies searching for new meaning and identity.

### **I. TOWARDS NEW ECO-THEOLOGICAL PARADIGMS**

The ecological crisis is not just environmental, pollution. Nor is it a socio-technical problem. It is a crisis of the whole life system. The destruction of natural resources, ozone shields and forests, the pollution of water and environment are only symptoms and consequences of the problem, but not the problem itself, which is essentially a theological-ethical one related to humanity's role in the creation. It is important to distinguish between the micro-ecological phenomenon and its macro-ecological essence. Any political, ecological, economic and social analysis and prescription falls short if it is not undergirded by theological-ethical perspectives and vision. Therefore, we must deal with the macro-ecological aspect of ecological crises. We must develop a

new theology of creation that challenges the prevailing paradigms of humanity-creation relations, namely, anthropocentrism, domination and exploitation, and promote a renewed relationship and a new covenant with the creation. We need a new eco-theology and eco-ethic that heal and protect the creation in its original goodness and integrity, and restore the right place and true vocation of humanity within it. Such a theology necessarily implies a clear shift from anthropocentrism to theocentrism, from domination to accountability, from self-centeredness to a holistic spirituality.

### 1) From Anthropocentric to Theocentric Theo-Ecology

Vis-a-vis the prevailing anthropocentric concepts of creation, it is important to spell out some of the significant aspects and important dimensions of creation which are basic for any Christian-biblical understanding of creation:

a) Creation is God's gift of life. It is an accomplished yet a continuous event (*creatio continua*) in the sense that God constantly recreates His creation by protecting, sustaining, redeeming and perfecting it through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. The Father is the "original cause," the Son the "creative cause," and the Holy Spirit the "perfecting cause."<sup>4</sup> In this Trinitarian creative act, the specific function of the Holy Spirit is one of "completing," "perfecting," "fulfilling," "guiding," "governing," "freeing," "renewing," "sanctifying," and "deifying."<sup>5</sup>

b) The Bible affirms the goodness of creation and the intrinsic value of all beings. Creation is good by its origin, nature and purpose (Gen. 1:32). Evil is not part of creation. It is the negation of creation. Christian faith rejects any dualistic interpretation of creation. Evil is the absence of good; it is a non-being. Evil is due to the rebellion of humanity against the Creator and, as such, it is a threat to creation.

c) God's creation is characterized by relationship, order and unity. Each creature has a specific task within the creation and a special relationship with the Creator. The relationship of non-rational creatures with God is one of sheer dependence

and contingency, and that of rational beings is one of obedient response. All creatures are in a permanent relationship with each other within a diversified yet inter-dependent whole. The wholeness and integrity of creation are to be safe-guarded by human stewardship.

d) Creation is not an aimless self-sufficient reality. It has to be seen in the perspective of the Kingdom of God since it is the beginning of God's economy and covenant with humanity. Therefore, creation has no existence or meaning apart from God who is both immanent and transcendent in the creation. The latter neither stands apart from God (deistic view) nor is it confused with God (pantheistic view).

e) In Jesus Christ, God has reconciled the creation to Himself (Col. 1:17-20). The Christ-event is God's recreation of the whole humanity and creation. In Christ, the eschatological future, "the new heaven and the new earth," (Rev. 21) is anticipated; we are in a new creation (Gal. 5:22). Yet through Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, creation moves towards its full redemption. The church is a sign of the "new creation" in Christ.

For long, we have developed

We must develop a new theology of creation that challenges the prevailing paradigms of humanity-creation relations...

a Christological doctrine of creation. It is time now to re-emphasize the Trinitarian understanding, eschatological perspective and holistic nature of creation. For a long time, our theology of creation has been dominated by the kind of anthropocentrism that made God's transcendence "wholly other" (Barth). It is time now to regain the theocentric concept of creation and immanence of God within it.

### 2) Domination to Accountability

Anthropocentric and hierarchical understandings of creation led

humanity to dominate over the creation and to exploit it. The ecological crisis started when the first human being considered himself to be the master of the creation, thereby misusing his free will. The divine command to "subdue the earth" (Gen. 1:28) was misunderstood by the human being who trespassed his God-given mandate and caused destruction and death. The ecological crisis is "in a sense, the contemporary repetition of the original sin."<sup>6</sup> Humanity has a special relationship with the creation and special responsibility towards it. It is important to highlight some of its significant features:

a) Humanity cannot have a self-centered existence. It is neither separate from the creation nor above it. It is an integral part of it. An anthropocentric, dualistic and hierarchical view of creation, which alienates human beings from each other, from the creation and God, is alien to biblical theology. Such an interpretation, one that has dominated Christian thought at certain periods, must be totally rejected. Humanity must come to recognize its inseparable connection with all God's creation and see its survival closely bound up with the future of all life – human and non-human – in the creation. A hierarchical understanding

of *imago Dei*, putting the human beings above all creatures, must be replaced by a more rational view. The human relationship to the creation is neither absolute dominion over it nor total subservience to it. This means that, first, we must reaffirm God's absolute sovereignty over the creation. It belongs to Him (Ps. 24:1), He is "the King" and "the Lord" of the whole creation. Therefore, acting

without God is acting against God. Human freedom should not be opposed to God's law and truth. Second, humanity and creation must be considered as inter-dependent realities. They need each other; they are conditioned by each other. Creation (*oikos*) is the household of humanity.

b) Humanity should rediscover its specific vocation within the creation which is one of stewardship. This is a basic biblical teaching which should not be altered. The human being is given the right and responsibility by God to be *oikonomos* (manager, steward, administrator, governor), but not the Lord of creation



(Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7, 15). It is in this context that God's command must be understood (Gen. 1:28). God gave human beings the right to use the natural resources for their survival (Gen. 1:29; 2:16) and not to exploit them for their own pleasure and glory. Christian ethic makes a clear distinction between need and greed, use and exploitation. Our theology of creation often encouraged an exploitative approach to creation. We have often used the Bible to justify our unqualified manipulation of the creation. We must, therefore, redefine humanity's role within the creation which is managing, enriching and preserving it in love and reverence, as well as being preserved and enriched by the creation.

c) Human responsibility is not a passive stewardship. The human being is called to become a co-worker (I. Cor. 3:9) with God. This concept, which is so dominant in Pauline letters and in the theology of the early church, has been nearly forgotten in contemporary theology. In fact, being a co-worker with God does not mean just to preserve the creation, but to renew and transform it, bringing it to its fulfillment. It also means to be always accountable to God. Human freedom is subject to God's absolute sovereignty; it is also conditioned by full accountability to God.

d) Humanity has to see the creation as a sacrament of God's presence and as a means of communion with Him, considering itself as both the *deacon* and the *priest* of God's creation. Therefore, humanity has to protect the integrity, purity and wholeness of creation and has to offer it as a sacrament to God, its Creator and Lord: "Thine own from Thine own we offer to Thee, in all and for all" (the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom).

In sum, first, Christian theology must rediscover the specific role of the human being in relationship with the creation, as deacon of the creation, as mediator between the creation and God, and as co-worker with God. Second, the church must call humanity to conversion from dominion to responsible relationship, and from self-sufficiency and self-glorification to total accountability to God.

### 3) From Self-Centered to a Holistic Spirituality

Christian spirituality by its very nature is Trinitarian, holistic,

and eco-centered. Western Christianity has virtually lost these vital dimensions of spirituality and has confined it to the person-God relationship. This is, in fact, one of the causes of the present ecological crisis. We must go back to biblical and ancient spirituality which looks at the humanity-creation-God relationship as an integrated, coherent and comprehensive whole. The following points deserve our particular attention:

a) Christian theology has always emphasized both the immanent and transcendental presence of the Triune God in the creation through His uncreated energies. The created life share in the uncreated life of God through the creative and dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, life permeates all creation. In and through Him, the community of all created things is realized – a community where all creatures communicate with each other and with God, each in its own way. The role of the Spirit is not only one of renewing and perfecting the creation, but also reconciling and binding us inseparably with all created life. This is not syncretism, but a significant feature of Christian theology and a basic dimension of Christian spirituality.

b) The biblical understanding of creation goes beyond the natural environment. It embraces the "heaven and earth", "all that lives", "human and non-human beings" (Rm. 18:25); simply, the whole cosmos in all its aspects, dimensions and manifestations. Christian spirituality is deeply rooted in and expressed through the creation which has a profound spiritual significance. Creation is a sacramental reality; but it is not sacred, and is not identified with God. God uses the elements of creation as signs and sacraments of His revelation and presence. It is significant that many of the elements of creation are still used, particularly, in Eastern Christian spirituality.

c) The human being is the image of the whole creation, *imago mundi*. Being an integral part of the whole creation (Gen. 2:15), all created things, spiritual and material, meet in Him. Any dualistic attempt to see humanity apart from or above or over against the creation is theological heresy. The church fathers have described the human being as a "microcosm". His God-given task is to reconcile the spiritual and material realms, and become a mediator between the creation and the Creator.

Hence, the relationship between humanity and creation should be one of dynamic interdependence and a close partnership. Any power relation which attempts to separate humanity from the creation is a sin against God since it is the denial to the God-given vocation of humanity.

d) Sin is the pervasion and alienation of humanity's relationship with God and also with the whole creation. It is not only a personal but also an ecological reality. The goodness, wholeness and integrity of creation is constantly threatened by human selfish exploitation and sin: "The whole creation groaneth" (Rm. 8:20-22) because of human sin. Creation shares in the fallen condition of humanity. It needs liberation and sanctification. As the "priest" of creation, the role of humanity is to liberate creation from the bondage of death and draw it into the fullness of life of the Kingdom of God.

e) Eucharist is the place where God's immanence and transcendence are revealed sacramentally and creation, and humanity, are united within one economy of God. Through the Eucharist, the connectedness of humanity to all created life, human stewardship towards creation as well as human accountability to God, are being manifested in a living way. The Eucharist is, in a sense, the offering of the creation back to its Creator on behalf of the whole humanity. It is the foretaste of the eschatological consummation of creation.

We must, therefore, rediscover the sacramental character and spiritual dimension of creation that challenges the "utilitarian" view of it. We must re-emphasize the healing, liberating and transforming role of Christian spirituality which aims at establishing a right relationship with creation. The pneumatological perspective on creation that so forcefully emerged in Canberra should constantly remind us of the crucial importance of a holistic and a deeper eco-spirituality.

## II. SOCIETIES IN SEARCH OF RE-ORIENTATION

Creation can be healed, renewed and become sustainable only through responsible societies whose relation with God, creation and with each other are guided by binding ethical values and principles. Humanity, as well, is in the process of disintegration. The present structures, norms and policies that govern societies are simply exploiting

the people by enriching the rich, impoverishing the poor and destroying the creation. Hence, the emergence of new models of society is a must. Communism has failed. Capitalism, with its exploitative nature, simply cannot become the norm. It is beyond the immediate responsibility of the churches to propose new alternative. But it is a major task for the churches to help societies to set just and accountable structures, to ensure more participation in political and economic life, and to establish sustainable moral values. The churches should develop an ecumenical social that clearly outlines the Christian vision of society, and engages them in common struggle for restructuring and re-orienting the societies.

Amsterdam (1948) proposed as an ethical model the concept of "responsible society". This was not an alternative to political and economic systems, but only an ethical criterion. The churches of the third world raised then the question of "social justice" as a key for any system. Later on "development" was considered a vital instrument to promote justice. Nairobi (1975) brought all these concerns and perspectives together under "Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society" (JPSS). Vancouver (1983) felt the urgent need for an "ethical guideline" which should be "both ecologically responsible and economically just, and could effectively struggle with the powers which threaten life and endanger our future".<sup>7</sup> The "Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation" (JPIC) process that emerged from Vancouver was, in a sense, the continuation of JPSS. Canberra, in its turn, reaffirmed the crucial importance of JPIC calling for "new value systems" for the re-orientation of societies.

In the ecumenical movement, therefore, we have developed the concepts of "responsible", "just", "participatory" and "sustainable" society. But living in different situations and being contextually conditioned, we have not been able to reach common and comprehensive ethical guidelines. Should we not try, then, to reach an ecumenical ethical understanding to address together more efficiently the major burning ecological, social and economic issues of our time? Let me propose some perspectives:

### **1) From Quantitative Growth to Qualitative Development**

It is now generally accepted

that one of the root causes of present ecological and economic problems is the commitment to unlimited material growth. The economic production which reached an unprecedented scale in the last few decades aimed, under the name of development, to promote progress, peace, justice and security. But it not only failed to eliminate poverty and social injustice; rather it deepened further the gap between developed and developing countries and between haves and have-nots within the same society. Economic growth was also politicized, becoming for the West a tool to fight against communism, and for the East a means to gain political influence. Thus, the Third World was further exploited and the creation was further destroyed.

Uncontrolled economic growth remains a serious threat to ecological and human survival. Progress is no longer an expression of hope and justice, but of fear and injustice. Realizing this growing threat, UNCED placed a special emphasis on the concept of "sustainable" development as an alternative approach. This aims at developing the kind of economic policy that is based on earth's environmental carrying capacity, and enhances a just relationship between people, the earth and economy. In my view, "sustainable" development will remain a sheer slogan if it is not sustained and guided by clear ethical values. I would like to make a few observations:

a) Development has become synonymous to growth. It is important to make a clear distinction between mere economic growth and "sustainable" development. We must redefine the whole concept of development opposed to the Western growth models. "Sustainable" development should have ethical meaning and implications; otherwise, it will become simply another expression of economic growth. It must strongly challenge any model of development that encourages indefinite growth, which simply and eventually tends to the destruction of life in the finite system of the planet. It should aim at enhancing the quality of life which cannot be measured by quantitative growth. In other words, there has to be a shift from growth-oriented development to "qualitative" development that fully respects ecological laws and concerns as well as ethical values.

b) "Sustainable" development must necessarily ensure the eradication of poverty, which is, indeed, one of the concrete repercus-

sions of unlimited economic growth and increasing ecological deterioration.<sup>8</sup> The environment is primarily destroyed by major industries and transnational corporations which deprive people of their own land and resources, thus making them poorer. As a survival mechanism, the poor destroy their own environment. This, in turn, aggravates poverty. According to estimates, some 15 million people are said to die every year as a consequence of starvation or malnutrition. The churches cannot endorse the kind of development which results in the enormous development of the few at the expense of many. The churches cannot support those so-called "developmental" projects that are politically conditioned. They cause more damage, rather than healing the wound. What is needed is not charity or aid, but structural change, transformation of systems and re-evaluation of policies that are unjust and sinful.

c) Development should serve justice otherwise it becomes another vehicle for oppression. Just and equitable distribution of wealth is a key factor for putting a limit to material growth and stopping the growing poverty. In order to develop poor countries, one has to "de-develop" the rich countries. In other words, the rich countries should change their structures of production and patterns of consumption and respond to the needs of the poor. In fact, the gap between the rich and the poor is wide and threatening. Sharing resources and mutual accountability ought to become the criteria and guiding principles of any developmental model that claims to be "sustainable." An important element in sustainable development is the poor. They should not be used for the development of the rich. They must become the agents of their own development. They ought to be empowered to become self-reliant and full participants in the development process. This is a major political challenge which has not yet been met because of the implications of power.

Therefore, limiting economic growth and enhancing "sustainable" development are both moral and ecological necessities. "Sustainable" development itself must be ethically sustainable and should generate dignity, freedom, participation and justice, otherwise it destroys the creation and endangers human survival. The rich countries have the primary responsibility of re-evaluating and re-orienting their policy of development.

## 2) From Elite-Controlled Economy to Participatory Economy

The idolatry of the present global economic system is a fact. Controlled by a few countries, it continues to cause ecological destruction, social injustice and high-level consumerism, alienating people from each other and from creation. The present economy must be re-structured so that it ensures participation and justice, and functions in harmony with ecological reality. Such an attempt should, in my judgment, necessarily involve the following perspectives:

a) With the collapse of communism, the world is now steadily moving from the state-controlled economy towards the free-market economy. In the absence of any possible choice, the free-market economy has become for many a new source of liberation. For others, however, it continues to generate, with ever-increasing pace, poverty, inequality, domination and ecological destruction. The question is: is free-market capitalism a solution? Should we not look for qualitatively different and realistic alternatives that meet the needs and concerns of societies and the creation? The WCC in its first assembly, criticizing false promises and assumptions of both communism and capitalism, stated that "It is the responsibility of Christians to seek new, creative solutions which never allow either justice or freedom to destroy the other".<sup>9</sup> Canberra spoke of "the immorality of our world economic order", and clearly stated that the market economy is in need of "reform".<sup>10</sup> We should not idealize any system. Nor should we attempt to initiate an alternative system. This is not the task of the church. As the "prophetic sign" of the coming Kingdom, the church must constantly recall the "provisional character" of all structures, systems and ideologies; they will all be judged by the demands of the Gospel and the values of the Kingdom.<sup>11</sup> This criterion and perspective must constitute the only basis of the churches' involvement in the reconstruction and transformation of economic systems.

b) The free-market became an expression of neo-racism in various situations by oppressing people and violating human rights in the

name of freedom and democracy. It brought about a dominant and privileged elite and a marginalized majority. Any economic structure that is not participatory produces economic and ecological injustice and thus is sinful theologically and ethically speaking. The people have the right to full participation. A Christian vision of society condemns any kind of

Any political, ecological,  
economic and social analysis  
and prescription falls short if not  
undergirded by theological-  
ethical perspectives and vision

ideology or system that reduces people to by-products of social and economic forces. Seoul affirmed that any form of human power and authority ought to be subject to God and accountable to people.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, economic structures and policies should be based on people's participation and empowerment and not on their exploitation as consumers and factors of production. A Christian ethic stands firm for a participatory democracy that protects human dignity, value and the people's right to full justice, freedom and life. What might be called "dictatorial" democracies that are emerging in some parts of the world are new forms of totalitarianism. They must be strongly challenged. When the people are neglected and not given full right in decision-making processes, there is no true democracy. Any structures or ideology that has an "elitist" character and does not have a popular basis in the long run becomes oppressive. The outburst of young people in the streets of Berlin, Bucharest and Beijing in recent years reflect the relentless drive of people for participation, dignity and life.

c) One of the major problems with free market capitalism is the unequal distribution of its fruit. Exploitation and domination are inherent to the uncontrolled free market economy since it is founded on power and profit. It looks as if we are moving from political colonialism to an economic colonialism since the wealth in the North has its origins largely in

the exploitation of the South. Therefore, poverty cannot be addressed by aid programs, but by eliminating its root-causes, i.e., redistribution of economic access, power and wealth. We endorse ownership provided that is not perceived in terms of exclusive individualism and practiced as domination and to the detriment of the common good. Democracy and inequality simply cannot

co-exist. Inequality is the negation of democracy since it creates a privileged and oppressive minority. In fact, "the mark of an economic system is measured not by its power, wealth or size, but by how it cares for the poorest and weakest members".<sup>13</sup> The world economy has moved from authoritarian collectivism to exclusive individualism. However, injustice continues to

remain. It can only be healed when the world economy moves from elite-controlled capitalism to a democratic, participatory and equalitarian economy.

I want to conclude this section with the following remarks. We are against centrally planned and controlled economic systems. We are also against the uncontrolled neoliberal, capitalistic market-economy system. Both dehumanize the human being, considering him the center of creation striving for self-sufficiency and self-glorification. Besides measuring all economic structures and policies against its ethical values, the prophetic role of the church also implies a creative participation in political, economic and social renewal and reconstruction. The churches should, therefore, commit themselves to re-shaping and re-orienting the present free-market system in a way that transcends the deficiencies and failure of both Marxist collectivism and liberal capitalism, and practices fully the economic democracy based on participation, shared responsibility, equality and mutual accountability.

## 3) Life-Destructive Consumerism to a Pattern of Responsible Living

The present level of consumerism is such that the resources of the earth can no longer meet human needs. The life-styles of affluent societies are greatly challenging the sustainability of human life and eco-

life. UNCED recognized the far-reaching consequences of consumer practices in developed countries, and proposed a pattern of "sustainable living". It is important to spell out two basic points:

a) The restoration of the quality of human life is vitally important. This is not only an ecological, social or economic necessity, but essentially an ethical requirement. Life given to humanity and to the whole creation is a gift of God. Humanity is called to preserve and enrich it for the glory of God. Life is sacred, not only because its giver is holy, but also because it is given for the building of the Kingdom of God. Sacredness, integrity and wholeness of life should be safe-guarded. This is a basic demand of Christian faith.

b) For a Christian, the question is not one of "sustainable" living, but rather one of responsible living. Life is not only a divine gift to be preserved sacredly, it is also a vocation to be carried on with the sense of responsibility and accountability. Life is a theo-centered and theo-oriented reality. A self-centered and self-sufficient understanding of life is alien to Christian faith. Consumerism is not only a way of life, it is also a way of understanding the meaning and purpose of human life.

Therefore, consumerism is not only at the root of economic injustice, ecological disorder and human survival, it is fundamentally the denial of the sacredness and wholeness of life. It is a moral sin because it generates poverty and threatens life. The church has to deal with consumerism as an ethical issue.

First, by condemning the accumulation of wealth, which was a legitimate expression of human rights for self-determination and security, but has become a source of injustice and insecurity for many.

Second, by encouraging the reduction of consumption and waste, and sharing the resources of the earth in ways that enhance the lives of all people and preserve the integrity of creation.

Third, by promoting a culture that can build up the quality of life and live in harmony with creation's integrity.

Fourth, by aiming at breaking down the prejudice of race, class and gender to re-build an all-inclusive community of sharing and participation.

Economic justice and ecological sustainability require fundamental changes in consumption and lifestyles. Christians should be examples of a new way of asceticism by consum-

ing less and living responsibly.

### III. ECUMENICAL IMPLICATIONS: A FEW CONSIDERATIONS

The churches and the ecumenical movement should deal with ecological and economic issues on the basis of an ethic that moves the church from its prophetic role of merely denouncing or alerting to the dynamic role of educating and participating. Simply, a responsible society in a sustainable creation can be built up when, first, the churches' theology, liturgy, spirituality, diakonia, mission and evangelism are re-shaped and re-oriented in a way that provide the people with the basic ethical values of the Gospel and make these values relevant and responsive to the present realities and concerns. Second, when the churches become agents of change and conversion by fully participating in reconstructing and transforming the societies based on justice, peace, human rights and respect for creation.

Christian faith must be lived out in the midst of the ambiguities of a complex world and be enacted in concrete ethical decisions and commitments. This is not, of course, an easy task in a world full of evil "powers and principalities". But, this is the calling of God which is more urgent today than ever before. The churches should take this missionary challenge with courage and faithful obedience to the imperatives of the Gospel. The following priorities should, in my view, acquire in the coming years more focal attention on the ecumenical agenda in general, and within the programmatic priorities of the WCC, in particular.

#### **1) Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation: More Urgency and Focusing**

The JPIC process must continue to remain at the heart of the work and witness of the WCC. The recommendation of Canberra to launch a global decade for JPIC to be observed through an annual ten-day celebration deserves serious consideration.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, it is important that the debate on "Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society" (1976-79) be revived in new perspectives within JPIC. I consider this inter-linkage crucial since it sharpens the ethical and socio-economic dimensions of JPIC. I believe that due consideration should be given to the following concerns: first, the JPIC

process needs to be more clearly focused and contextualized and brought into a clear relationship with action-oriented concrete programs. Second, it should not be confined only to a few regions and groups rather it should become a place where the participation of all people of God is secured, the voice of the voiceless heard and broader networks of solidarity established. Third, one of the weaknesses of the JPIC is its omission from the agenda of many churches. Therefore, more educational work is needed with the churches to make JPIC an integral part of their Christian witness.

#### **2) Towards a New Ecumenical Social Thinking**

One of the factors contributing to the present ecological and economic crises is that the western Christian ethics is predominantly anthropocentric and dualistic. As we enter a new period of ecumenical history, issues related to church and society must be given serious attention. Canberra said that the WCC should "focus on the central ethical concerns of our time".<sup>15</sup> The role of the ecumenical movement is not only one of reminding, serving and challenging the churches, but also developing ecumenical social thinking which will help the churches in their efforts to seek the most appropriate ethical responses to the burning questions facing humanity. While this concern should permeate all the programs of the WCC, it should also find a clear point of expression, particularly in the work of Unit III.

#### **3) A Life-Centered Theology of Creation**

The subject of creation has always remained on the periphery of ecumenical discussion. Being immediately concerned with unity, the ecumenical movement turned its attention mainly to Christology. The development of a life-centered and eco-oriented theology of creation has to be a major thematic priority for the WCC for the coming period. In such an initiative, pneumatological perspectives provided by Canberra and growing emphasis on Trinitarian theology in the ecumenical movement should be taken seriously. Particular consideration should also be given to the inseparable inter-connection that exists between humanity and the creation, and to the whole meaning of life. Faith and Order and JPIC could become appropriate contexts to treat



the issue in a comprehensive manner.

#### 4) Population Explosion: Study and Action

I have already referred to the urgency of this problem. Our churches are not well prepared to deal with this global issue. The WCC should immediately embark on a study process, tackling the issue in all its dimensions and manifestations. Two factors must be taken into consideration. First, demographic explosion and ecological and economic issues are inter-dependent. Second, the problem of population growth is not primarily about numbers of people, other factors are also involved, such as human rights, women's rights, consumption patterns, sustainable development, etc. Besides the study, the role of the WCC must be to build public awareness, collaborate with international organizations and establish guidelines for action. The WCC should also bring a specific contribution to the forthcoming International Conference on Population and Development (1994 Cairo).

#### 5) Christian Understanding of the Human Being

The UNCED, the WCC conference in Baixade Fuleminence and the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order asked for a renewed Christian anthropology. I consider this crucial for the future of the ecumenical movement. The Humanum Studies, concluded in 1975, helped the churches and the ecumenical movement to refocus on anthropology as a major theological, ethical and ecumenical issue. A separate program within the programmatic framework of the WCC may not be appropriate at this time. What is vitally needed, in my opinion, is a renewed understanding of the place and vocation of the human being in the creation. Anthropology must become a permanent concern of the ecumenical movement, as it attempts to grapple with issues emerging from the church, humanity and creation relationship. An inter-unit approach, including Faith and Order, must be established to provide a focus for this concern.

#### 6) Towards a Culture of Non-Violence

Societies are in search of the kind of culture that transforms unjust structures and promotes non-violence, sacredness of life and human rights; a culture that can live in

immediate nearness and harmony with the whole creation; a culture that enhances the equal dignity of all people and races, and partnership between men and women. In fact, commitment to a culture of non-violence, dialogue and solidarity has become a major concern for the pluralistic societies of today. The WCC could treat this concern through many of its major programmatic priorities, including particularly, the program of Gospel and Culture and Education for all God's people.

#### 7) An Ecclesiological Basis for the "Civic Society" Debate

The concept of "civil society" has become a challenging one in this transitional historical moment. There are, of course, different understandings of civil society. For some, it is to enable the society to preserve its autonomy. For others, the role of civil society is the critique of the state and the search for "post-statist policies". In spite of its different meaning in different socio-political contexts, society is a new terrain of democratization and protection of human rights. The debate on civil society that just emerged in the WCC is a helpful one particularly for the JPIC process. It needs, however, more clarity and focusing. It needs, particularly, a clear ecclesiological basis since churches are part of civil society.

The parliament of World Religions (August 28-September 5, 1993, Chicago) emphatically stated: "No global order without a new global ethic."<sup>16</sup> It attempted to develop a consensus on binding values and basic moral attitudes for a global ethic.

Can the ecumenical movement by its prophetic and renewing power promote "sustainable value systems" (Canberra) that will undergird the ecological and economic decisions of nations and build a responsible society in a sustainable creation? Can the churches become a sign of hope and an instrument of a socially just, politically participatory and economically equitable society? Can the churches act as the avant-garde of one earth community built on binding global ethical values and principle? The ecumenical movement is called to give to Christendom and the whole world "a vision in which the promise of life is stronger than the accusation of death...critical hope that does not bow to the powers of destruction but is turned towards the future of life"<sup>17</sup> This is a challenge with which the ecumenical movement

must seriously grapple with.

#### • NOTES

<sup>1</sup>F. Kennedy, *Preparing for the Twenty-first Century*, (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1993), p. 349.

<sup>2</sup>W. Granberg-Michaelson, *Redeeming the Creation*, (Geneva: WCC, 1992), p. 70.

<sup>3</sup>G.O. Barney with J. Blawett and K.R. Barney, *Global 2000 Revisited; What shall we do?*, (mimeographed), 1993, p. XV

<sup>4</sup>St. Basil, "On the Spirit" in P. Schaff and H. Wace, eds., *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. VIII, p. 23.

<sup>5</sup>St. Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Holy Spirit" and "On the Faith," *op cit.*, *A Select Library*, vol. V, pp. 320, 338.

<sup>6</sup>E. B. Ecpomou, "An Orthodox view of the ecological crisis", reprinted from *Theologica*, Athens, 1990, p. 618.

<sup>7</sup>D. Gill ed., *Gathered for Life, official Report IV Assembly World Council of Churches Vancouver, Canada 24 July - 10 August 1983*, (Geneva: WCC and Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991), p. 242.

<sup>8</sup>*Christian Faith and the World Economy Today. A study document from the WCC*, (Geneva: WCC, 1992), p. 23.

<sup>9</sup>W.A. Visser't Hooft, ed., *The First Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, (New York, 1949), p. 80.

<sup>10</sup>M. Kinnamon, ed., *Signs of the Spirit - Official Report, Seventh Assembly*, (Geneva: WCC and Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1991), p. 242.

<sup>11</sup>*Towards Koinonia in Faith, Life and Witness*, (Geneva: WCC, 1993), p. 36; C. Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 232.

<sup>12</sup>*Now is the Time, World Convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation*, Seoul, 1990, (Geneva: WCC, 1990), p. 12.

<sup>13</sup>*Christian Faith*, p. 44.

<sup>14</sup>*op. cit.*, *Signs of the Spirit*, p. 68.

<sup>15</sup>*ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>16</sup>*A Global Ethic; 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions, August 28 - September 5, 1993, Chicago, Ill.*, (mimeographed), 1993, p. 3

<sup>17</sup>W. Hubler, "Perspectives for Ecumenism in the Nineties" in M. Reuver, F. Solms and G. Hutzler, eds., *The Ecumenical Movement Tomorrow, Suggestions for Approaches and Alternatives*, (Geneva: WCC and Kok Publ. House, 1993), p. 37.

Opinion? Comment?

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**CONVERSATION***(continued from page 6)*

us, the crux, the substance of Christian faith is in the first three ecumenical councils. The four councils that followed them just reinterpreted and re-elucidated the theological teachings of the first three. In fact when you look at these councils closely, you realize that they did not have anything substantial over the earlier teachings of the councils. In view of this, our position was firm on accepting the first three as the most fundamental and conclusive of all councils.

**Q. How pragmatic were these discussions?**

**ARCHBISHOP ARAM:** The most recent meeting that we had was very crucial in this respect – we tried to establish a process to implement our decisions. At this stage we wanted to raise some questions which are important to Christian unity – after all Christian unity is not just theological unity. We raised four main questions and tried to treat them in a very critical and objective manner:

a) What is the competent ecclesiastical authority from each side for the lifting of the anathemas? What are the presuppositions for the restoration of ecclesiastical communion?

b) Which anathemas of which synods and persons could be lifted in accordance with the proposal of paragraph 10 of the second common statement?

c) What is the canonical procedure for each side for the lifting of the anathemas and the restoration of ecclesiastical communion?

d) How could we understand and implement the restoration of ecclesiastical communion in the life of our churches? What are the canonical and liturgical consequences of full communion?

Having raised these questions, at this stage, we faced some difficulties. For instance: the Eastern Orthodox said to us that they cannot draw a line demarcation between the first three ecumenical councils and the four that followed them. They go together. So whatever we do, we have to do it as a “package deal.” Of course, our position was very clear on that. Then the status of the church families was raised – in other words, what will happen to the two families after the restoration of full communion? Whether the families should stay as they are or dissolve into one entity. This is another question that needs serious discussion. Another question was the *dyptichs* – commemorations during the liturgy, the mention of the name of patriarchs and heads of churches. For instance, in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, they mention all the patriarchs – starting with the Ecumenical Patriarch. Another question was the issue of protocol, which I remember I raised at the meeting. For some it may sound funny, but it is an issue that needs to be addressed. There is a well established protocol among the patriarchs of the Eastern Orthodox churches, how-

ever, what will happen after the unity? We do not have such protocol in the tradition of the Oriental Orthodox churches. So, what will happen when we come together? What would be the arrangement? Of course, this is a question of protocol, but its implications are more than that. There were other similar issues that we tried to deal with in a very practical and realistic way.

In light of our discussions, we prepared a statement which is a summary of our conclusions and sent it to the churches.

**Q: What is the next step?**

**ARCHBISHOP ARAM:** As I said earlier, we have produced a christological statement. These were sent to the heads and synods of the churches for their formal response. Some churches responded with some observations and remarks and some churches did not.

On the other hand, parallel to this process, we have started a new process, as I said, raising some critical questions. First, it is important that we have the formal response of the churches concerning the christological questions.

**Q: Was the non-response of some churches a part of your discussions?**

**ARCHBISHOP ARAM:** No, this is not related to this process. This new process is taking place while we are waiting for the responses and comments from the churches. We thought that – at this juncture – it is appropriate that we raise some critical questions concerning the procedure that will follow the restoration of communion. We wanted to start that now. And I think that these two processes complement each other. On the one hand, we have to push our churches to sent their formal responses and on the other hand, we need to discuss the canonical and practical questions – in order to clarify the ambiguities of these complex issues. So, this is where we are. Up to this point, none of the churches have taken any formal steps toward full communion.

The discussion is among the formal representatives of the churches, we have come together, we have discussed certain things, wrote down the conclusion of our discussion and sent it to the churches for their formal reaction. This is where we are.

**Q: Has the Armenian Church responded?**

**ARCHBISHOP ARAM:** Concerning the position of the Armenian Church, during the last meeting, I read a short paper about how I understand the restoration of communion among the churches. First, let me say that the Armenian Church is represented with two delegations: representing the Etchmiadzin Catholicosate and the Cilician Catholicosate. Nevertheless, it has been our understanding that on

the issues that pertain to Armenian theology and christology, the Armenian Church as a whole, we would have (and we have had in the past) one position – the Armenian Orthodox position.

The documents were also sent to the heads of the Armenian Church: Catholicos of All Armenians and the Cilician Catholicos. However, we have not yet responded formally. Recently, when Catholicos Karekin was in Armenia, he raised this question in the presence of Catholicos Vasken and the two Patriarchs [Archbishop Torkom of Jerusalem and Archbishop Karekin of Istanbul], reminding them that as a church we need to formally respond to this document. So far we have not. We need to respond. I know that some of the Oriental Orthodox churches have already responded. We need to do it also.

**Q: What should be the position of the Armenian Church?**

**ARCHBISHOP ARAM:** I have to give you my personal understanding and evaluation, my personal conception of the whole process. First, after fifteen hundred years of separation, we cannot restore communion with two or five or ten meetings. We need to take our time. There are numerous questions that need to be discussed. I don't think that we should leave anything ambiguous. We need to clarify everything that is related to the relationship of these two families of churches – because we have had some bitter experience in our relationship with the churches of Byzantine tradition. We had a long history of controversies, of animosities, of tensions, so we need to be very careful. We cannot erase or change history. History is a continuous reality. Therefore, I think we should not hurry. We should take our time to deal with all the pending questions and problems related to the dialogue.

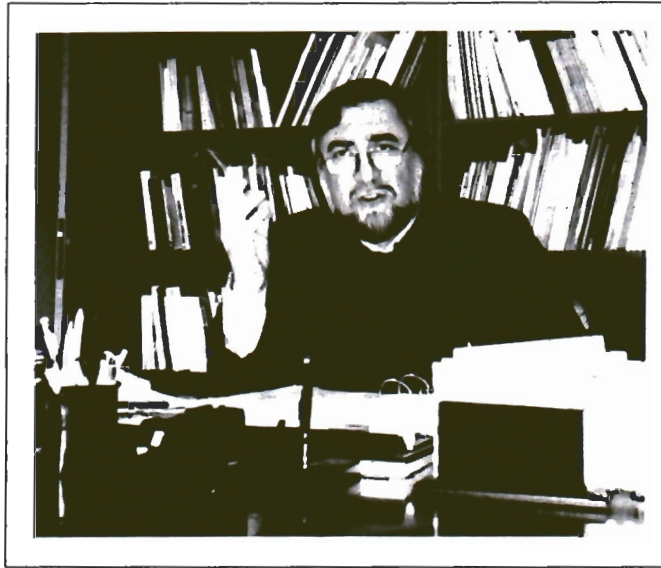
Secondly, we have to be very faithful to our own tradition, to our own christological tradition. The christological position of the Armenian Church has been developed in the course of history. When you take the christology of St. Nersess the Gracious and the christology of the fifth, sixth, seventh centuries, you immediately realize a tremendous difference of approach that exist between these theologies of the centuries. So, we need to realize that our christology has evolved over the centuries. We have been very flexible during the Cilician period of our history, yet our position has been very tough and firm during the fifth, sixth, seventh

centuries. Therefore, what we are saying in our dialogue is that through the centuries we have been open and understanding toward various positions. Just as with the example of St. Nersess the Gracious, we have been very ecumenical and dialectic. St. Nersess has beautifully described the position of the Armenian Church, that is, he has reconciled the two positions saying that when the "formulas" are explained they fundamentally mean the same things. I believe that in our present dialogue we should take the statement of St. Nersess seriously and that should provide us the framework and the context within which we can very easily express our christological position. We stick to our formulation,

but at the same time, if the crux of your formulation corresponds to that of ours, no problem. The problem is not one of formulation but one of content of our faith.

**Q: Up to this point, does the Armenian Church have a christological agreement with the Byzantine churches?**

**ARCHBISHOP ARAM:** No, because we are working as part of a group and not as Armenian Church. Within our Oriental Orthodox



group, we are expressing our views as "one family." Of course, the Armenian Church is well represented in that group with three theologians. For instance at our last conference, I presented a paper stating the position of the Oriental Orthodox churches. So our views and position is very much there, we are very actively participating in these dialogues, but we are working as a group. However, now that the statements have been prepared and sent to the churches, we need to respond as the Armenian Church. Therefore, the synods of the Armenian Church should come together and discuss just one issue and we need to have one response. This is what we proposed to His Holiness Catholicos Vazken I.

I do not think that we would have any difficulty with the formulation of the content of the christological debate – because they are saying the same thing as we are, but in different formulations. However, after the restoration of communion, it is important that the specificities, the particular characteristics of each family and each church be maintained. This is very important for us. We cannot become part of the Byzantine tradition. We cannot go against the course of history, because these churches have been developed in different

ways. We cannot change the historical, cultural, linguistic, liturgical, theological, patristic identities of these churches. So, we have to be faithful to our own traditions, to our own identities and particularities.

**Q: Is this a problem of "ecclesiological assimilation"?**

**ARCHBISHOP ARAM:** Yes. There should not be a kind of a merger of the families. This is an important question for us. However, this is not acceptable idea for the Byzantine churches. They are unable to understand our concerns in this matter. In fact, I raised this question in a very strong way at our last meeting and one of the Metropolitans said, "Wait a minute, I disagree with you, because in Orthodox theology we do not believe in *intercommunion*, but *communion*." He said, my description of communion is intercommunion, as if two families are coming together and restoring their communion, that is to say, they are entering into intercommunion. And that is not acceptable. Theologically and canonically speaking, he is right. I said, I agree with you theologically, but you cannot forget the historical level, the "life" level. The question is how do we reconcile these positions: the historical development, the practical aspect and the theological dimension. We need to do it.

**Q: For instance, the Armenian Church is in communion with the other Oriental Orthodox churches and yet there is no dissolving of identities or characteristics.**

**ARCHBISHOP ARAM:** Yes, we are in communion with them, but not intercommunion. The intention of the present dialogue with the Byzantine churches is to become one family of Orthodox Church: theologically, canonically, liturgically, etc. and not two families as it is currently the situation. This is a problem for us, because there are other questions that are related to this. For example, as I raised the question earlier, the issue of *dypitcs*. If we become one family, the *dypitcs* should be organized accordingly. A protocol should be organized accordingly.

Their perception is quite clear: we were one family and we were divided into two families and we have to restore our communion of becoming one again. This is a serious question that we need to tackle.

Personally, I do not think we are going to face other major problems. For us as Armenian Church, the Armenian identity, the Armenian tradition, the peculiarities that mark the specificity of the Armenian Church is very important. We need to

maintain our specific identity. Otherwise, I do not see any major problem. This is where we are for the time being. We need to proceed in this process very slowly and seriously. We are not there just for dialogue, but we are there to restore communion. Whatever happens, the autocephaly, the identity of the Armenian Church, in all its manifestations, in all its dimensions and aspects, need to be maintained intact. This is very important for us.

**Q: Do you see any possibility that a member church or some of the churches in the Oriental Orthodox family would unilaterally declare communion with the Eastern Orthodox family?**

**ARCHBISHOP ARAM:** No, because we have raised this question amongst ourselves and have agreed that no member of the Oriental Orthodox family would – under any circumstance – unilaterally establish communion with the other churches. This is our understanding and it is very clear. In fact, the Coptic Orthodox Church in her response has raised that question. The Copts said that they agree with these christological statements, provided that the other members of the Oriental Orthodox family agree with it as well. So, their agreement was very much conditioned by the agreement of the other churches. This is an important term. We sit, we talk, we act as one family.

**Q: Can you give a time frame when these dialogues and meetings would lead to a final agreement and communion? How long is it going to take?**

**ARCHBISHOP ARAM:** I remember in one of my statements, I said, in an enthusiastic way, that before the end of the century we need to do our utmost to establish communion among our churches. But, we see some difficulties with our partners – the Eastern Orthodox side.

During our last meeting, I expressed my thoughts to our partners. I see two trends in this process: the first is a very open ecumenical approach in favor of unity, as soon as possible, and this trend is headed by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Patriarch has had – and continues to have – a very constructive and decisive role in this whole process. I have seen a clear flexibility and realism exercised by the Ecumenical Patriarch. The second trend is the approach of the Greek speaking churches – such as the churches of Greece, Cyprus, Alexandria Patriarchate. These churches are very conservative and hold fast to their tradition, especially christological issues. They say how can we restore communion with the other family when



they are not ready to accept the Seven Ecumenical Councils – at least they are not ready to accept the Council of Chalcedon. Their approach is very conservative and it reminds us the debates and fights of the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth centuries, when Byzantine emperors and patriarchs put some conditions and demands for the restoration of unity.

These are the two tendencies on the Eastern Orthodox side. I should say that despite all our difficulties, the general climate is very positive. For instance, a few months ago, the representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Metropolitan Damascinos, informed me that once again the Patriarchate is willing to continue and speed up the process of unity.

In sum, I could say that we have not prepared any kind of a time table for this dialogue. But we need to remind the heads of our churches that, first of all, they need to respond formally to the christological statements, so that in light of these responses we may revise or edit or rewrite the whole statement and send it back to the churches for their formal approval. This will take some time.

**Q. How about the Syrian Orthodox Church (or the Jacobites) who have gone a step further beyond this document – due to political conditions or other factors in the region – and have made some agreements with the Patriarchate of Antioch (in Syria)?**

**ARCHBISHOP ARAM:** I read their statements of agreement and I have spoken with their representatives and as well as the Syrian Patriarch – there is no formal theological agreement or unity between these churches. They have just established terms for practical collaboration concerning some practical areas of pastoral, educational and other issues in their communities. What they've done is to strengthen their closer, practical collaboration and not theological statements. This is due to the situation in this part of the world, which pushes or necessitates the churches to give much more importance to the pastoral, practical aspects of their collaboration than to theological dialogue.

**Q. What is your understanding of church unity?**

**ARCHBISHOP ARAM:** For me unity is not a theological statement. We cannot just declare unity. Unity needs to be translated into action in the real life of the church and community. That is real unity.

*\*This interview was conducted in Antelias, Lebanon, on June 22, 1994.*

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- Committee on Public Issues
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## DOCUMENTS

# Catholikos of All Armenians and Archbishop of Canterbury

LAMBETH PALACE – Between the first and fourth May, 1993, His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primate and Metropolitan of All England, Dr. George Carey was the guest at Holy Etchmiadzin of His Holiness Vazken I, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians.

The Rt. Rev. Bishop of Oxford, Dr. Richard Harris was member of the entourage of the Lord Archbishop. His Grace the Archbishop and His party were received by the Catholicos of All Armenians.

On this occasion the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, His Beatitude Archbishop Karekin Kazandjian and Primates of Armenian dioceses in Armenia and from abroad were invited to the Holy See.

During the visit His Holiness Vazken I, His Grace Dr. George Carey and their delegations had meetings on various theological issues. They reflected on the Mission of the Churches, distinctive traditions, histories and magnificent issues which concerned both Churches at this time.

One of the most poignant moment of the visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury was the laying of a wreath with due solemnity and prayer at the Monument in Yerevan dedicated to the memory of one and a half a million Armenians martyred during the 1915 Genocide. Dr. Carey and His party visited Gumri, in order to console the afflicted souls of the earthquake victims and to see the British built Byron School, where they were greeted with great joy by the students and teachers alike. The Archbishop was profoundly moved by the devastation he saw, but also by the reception he received at the Lord Byron School, from both children and parents.

The Archbishop also visited the Theological Seminary at Holy Etchmiadzin where he was welcomed by the dean, teachers and the seminarians. It was recalled that a number of Armenian clergy in the past had furthered their theological education in Anglican academic institutions. It was hoped that similar interrelationships would continue to flourish and strengthen in future years.

In this area, the Archbishop mentioned, in his talks with His Holiness, the establishment of the St. Andrew's Trust, which aims to bring Armenian clergy and religious to study in Britain.

During the consultation between the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Anglican Church, His Holiness expressed gratitude to the Church of England and the British Government and people for the moral and material help provided immediately following the devastating earthquake of 1988. The tangible evidence of this help was the foundation in Gumri of the Lord Byron School, and the St. Nareg pediatric hospital in Kirovakan.

The relationship between the Churches flourishes through periodic encounters at various levels, be they theological, pastoral work or other related matters.

### OTHER ECUMENICAL DOCUMENTS PUBLISHED IN WINDOW

**"Evangelization and Ecumenism in the former Soviet Union"** • *Window*, Vol. IV, No. 2, 1994, pp. 15-18.

Issued by the Vatican – the Pontifical Commission for Russian. It gives general principles and practical norms for coordinating the evangelizing activity and ecumenical commitment of the Catholic Church in Russia and in the other countries of the C.I.S.

**"Fatherly Advice"** • *Window*, Vol. III, No. 1, 1992, pp. 32-35.

Joint Statement of Catholicos [Vazken I & Karekin III] Regarding Religion in Armenia.

**"Joint-Commission of the Theological Dialogue Between The Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches"** • *Window*, Vol. II, No. 3, 1991, pp. 21-24

Issued by the Orthodox Centre of Ecumenical Patriarchate, Switzerland, September 1990.

**"Unity at What Cost?"** • *Window*, Vol. II, No. 3, 1991, pp. 25-26.

Reflections by the Orthodox Participants at the 7th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Canberra, Australia, 1991.



# PENTECOST



## Fling Open the Windows Fling Open the Doors

By P.L. Shaw

*If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?*

—St. Peter, Acts 11:17

Pentecost is the day of the birth of the Church. Jesus Christ had promised his beloved followers and the household of the faithful that a comforter would be sent to them; they would be given the strength and power to become Christ's witnesses to all the world. And on that day when the Holy Spirit was given to the household of believers, Peter for the first time, preached the Good News of Christ Crucified and Christ Risen from the Dead. *For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him (Acts 2:39).*

This was the Church's first day of its mission of Evangelization. Christ had told the disciples that, by means of the gift of Pentecost, they would be bringing people from all the ends of the earth into the new household (oikoumenes) of faith. Peter's first sermon by the power of the Holy Spirit was preached to Jews of the Diaspora gathered in Jerusalem, but the boldly declared ... as the Holy Spirit led him ... that this evangelic, the Good News, was for All whom God might call to him. Poor Peter... he little knew where such a rash claim would lead him. And that was just the morning of the First Day.

The Church was barely the Church yet; we would not even be called Christians until a successful mission was firmly established in Antioch. The blood of the sainted Stephen, the Proto-martyr, was barely dry upon the earth. The young church did not dare to imagine that it controlled this Holy Spirit. It was a great unpredictable force, sent from God.. and its great unpredictable power would, like a storm, whirl all the first Witnesses around, shattering all their pre-conceptions and assumptions, — forcing them into directions they never expected to be going.

So, as St. Luke writes in the Book of Acts, here was the dedicated band of those first Witnesses in Judea—the Disciples, the kinsmen of Jesus, the other followers, the first converts— all of them devout and observant Jews, and known to one another. But then what happened? Samaritans, even Samaritans, a people long despised by the Judean and Galilean Jews (who returned the compliment), had heard the Gospel preached — and they believed. And when Peter and John hurried up to Samaria to lay their hands upon the new converts, these Samaritans — of all people — received the Holy Spirit — just like the Apostles had.

Then the Lord God Himself — without consulting the Apostles first — reached into the hearts of three very unlikely men — impossible converts — from totally suspect and unacceptable backgrounds.

The Lord told Philip to get out on the southern road towards Garza. Heading South, he was led by the Spirit to join a man that he, Philip of Galilee, would never have met on his own: an official of the Royal Court of Ethiopia. This man was one of those pious people who believed in the Lord God and studied the Scriptures — but he was denied full conversion into the faith of Israel. He was a eunuch — not uncommon in the royal courts of the ancient world, but barred from the faith by the Law of Moses. This man was unacceptable as a Jew, and Philip knew this. Could men and women be brought into the fellowship of the believers without first being good Jews, or at least ethnic Jews? Philip did not ask; he simply baptized this African eunuch as soon as he asked for entry into this new life in Jesus Christ.

This Holy Spirit would go even further — much further. A man widely known and greatly feared by the believers, suddenly — blinded and seeking help — showed up in Damascus, at the of believer called Judas. Now this Soul had hated the Believers; he had dragged many of them to prison, and sought their execution. But Jesus Christ wanted Saul. He wanted him for his highest service.

Now, here were two utterly improbable, unlooked-for men; one a eunuch barred unconditionally by the strict Jewish law for what he was, and, secondly, a man ruled out, as far as the Church was concerned, by

the personal and shocking matter of who he was. Yet, when the faithful Ananias of Damascus was sent to a street called Straight to meet with Saul, God Himself said, "take this Saul. I have chosen him." So, confused, and against his personal inclinations, but in obedience to God, Ananias accepted Saul as a brother and believer in Jesus Christ.

The Church was shocked and bewildered to hear Saul of Tarsus proclaiming the Gospel. In fact the group in Jerusalem would not even accept or trust their old enemy Saul until the well-known Barnabas — and one of Stephen's fellow-deacons — vouched for him. We also know that it took the pillars of the Church (Paul's own term), and the group of first witnesses in Jerusalem, a long, long time to accept Saul/Paul and his methods.

The Holy Spirit forced the question: Is the Church and its pillars to choose or to veto who is to come into God's household? Are they to choose who proclaims the Gospel, even if Jesus Himself raises a witness up and the Holy Spirit empowers him? The leading circle of believers in Judea and Galilee — who were, after all, the first friends, the family, and fellow countrymen of Jesus — were finding things spinning well out of their control (And can't we too, like almost every church everywhere, always find some reason why someone or some group might not be quite suited for our pure, homogenous little church, filled with like-minded people who share our own little ways of doing things?). But God's plans are not our plans; His agenda isn't our agenda. God's people are not always going to be exactly who we think they are going to be. God has his own reasons for choosing the servants He does.

Philip's unlooked-for convert was a eunuch; this Saul, born a Jew, scrupulous in the Law, had been an accomplice in the beloved Stephen's murder and a proven enemy of the church. Yet God had wanted them in His new household of faith. Things were about to get even more upsetting: poor Peter was about to be told something that could shake the foundations of everything he'd been brought up to believe. His religious belief, his Jewish upbringing, and his daily customs took for granted certain intractable boundaries and barriers — "All these differences and

distinctions are not mine," Said God to Peter. "These distinctions and walls are of man. Ignore them. Nothing I give you is unacceptable."

The echoes of God's voice had barely died away when the stunned Peter was called to the home of a Gentile, a very high-ranking Roman Officer posted in Caesarea, the seat of the Roman Governor. Now could a pious Jew like Peter go to the home of a Gentile, and a Roman officer at that? An observant Jew would be defiled. But — Peter went. And there he preached the Good news of Jesus Christ under the very roof of the Centurion Cornelius, a devout Roman who feared God — a Roman chosen by God — to a house-full of Gentiles in this cosmopolitan, Gentile, Roman city. And the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word (Acts 10:44), and Peter baptized them all into the household of the faithful.

And Peter, brave rash Peter, stood up before the brethren in Jerusalem — who were doubtful about these outsiders — and told them of God's unexpected and new commandment. And they were silenced. And they praised God.

St. Luke begins his inspired story of the birth and spread of the Church with these accounts of how the Holy Spirit, sent by God, blew where it listeth, and brought unexpected and hitherto unacceptable and persons into the intimate household (oikoumene) of the True Church, the fold of the Apostles themselves. In fact, this is the "plot-line" of the first eleven chapters of the Book of Acts. And let us reflect that it was the Holy Spirit that led St. Luke to write in just this way, so that the Orthodox Church would for all time, be reminded of its universal mission and of God's charge that all who come are to be welcomed and accepted as full sisters and brothers. Obviously Peter — or Ananias of Damascus, or James — raised in an ancient tradition of a closely knit people — had never before thought of these people God was bringing in as i their kind," — certainly not as a fellow-workers for Jesus Christ! But the Holy Spirit points out again and again that no one is unsuited for God's church. No gifts offered to His service are unfit for God's work.

How can anyone be acceptable to God and not to the Church?

Peace is at the center of the mes-

sage of Christ (Acts 10:36). How can there be peace unless brothers and sisters live in accord with one another? Peace in this earth-bound part of eternity is dependent on people, Christians, opening up to and accepting one another. We cannot find our peace in Jesus Christ until we erase man-made barriers and love the image of God in all brothers and sisters. There is no one group of people better for or more suited to God's work; the Holy Spirit will use anybody. The Holy Spirit operates solely in the service of God's agenda, not ours.

Father Sergius Bulgakov writes in *The Orthodox Church*, "...The way of the sacraments is not in the only one which gives the Holy Spirit. The Spirit bloweth where it listeth, and the gift of the Holy Spirit is not confined to the sacraments, or in the church. The gift of the Holy Spirit does not depend on human cognizance.." — As the pillars in Jerusalem soon found out! The fearless Martin Luther, the Protestant Reformer, had a gift for putting important teaching into pithy, short sayings: "The Holy Spirit is a thunderclap to the proud."

Father Bulgakov pointedly reminded us, "Orthodoxy is the Church of Christ on earth. The church of Christ is not an institution, it is a new life with Christ and in Christ, guided by the Holy Spirit (*The Orthodox Church*). It is a Way, and St. Luke calls the new life "the Way." In a sense, it is a verb, and not a noun. It is power and movement, giving life, opening doors and windows, opening eyes and hearts, and binding unlikely people together as full brothers and sisters.

I am a convert to Orthodoxy. My reasons for making such a decision were because I believe that the Orthodox Church is truly the Church of the Apostles. The Holy Spirit's reasons or God's plan for me here, I may never know — but I believe that God called me here to join Christian sisters and brothers, as surely as He called an African royal official or an important Italian army officer to come and be joined to the small oikoumene of Jewish Believers and Apostles.

A justifiable Orthodox criticism of Protestantism points to its division and its divisiveness. It is centrifugal in nature, not centripetal; it flies apart instead of coming together. We

Orthodox claim to be one— as Christ's Body is one; neither can Orthodoxy, which hold the whole-ness of the Faith, be divided. Yet, Orthodox Christians, every day erect barriers, draw boundaries, and create distinctions. "You go there, I go here. You are this and not that; I am that and not this!" St. Paul (who was to say and do a lot to fret the protective and cautious inner core of brethren in Jerusalem) said bluntly and without condition: There is no distinction between Jew or Greek. Or in easy math terms — the church is the set; there is no sub-set.

The Orthodox Church is not allowed to be ethno-centric. An ethno-centric group is, by definition, not the Church. The Holy Spirit which poured forth upon the Apostles on Pentecost, and brought the Church to life, made sure the first believers understood that, in no uncertain terms. As long as you give people other reasons to belong to the Church — social reasons, cultural reasons, nationalistic reasons, exclusionary reasons — then those reasons and motivations (those spirits) will direct the church, and not the Holy Spirit. And people's reasons for staying in the church and supporting the church will be those reasons — not their love of God or the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And those reasons will obscure and finally drown out the preaching and the living out of the Good News of Jesus Christ's Promises and His New Life.

For the sake of a single and unified household of faith, St. Paul, led by the Holy Spirit, pushed and pulled, tugged, and nagged and preached: he insisted that there could be only One body of believers. Out of different ethnic, cultural, and social backgrounds the new Christians had come together to be ONE — no distinctions, no divisions. No one was less, no one was more. Neither birth nor history made any difference.

Are some Orthodox less suited? Are some *second-best*? Are some workers in the vineyard *hard to place*? Are some Christians *going to be happier elsewhere*?—perhaps *with their own kind*?

I grew up in the Deep South; I knew those vague phrases like, "Being happier with one's own kind

*As long as you  
give people  
other reasons to  
belong to the  
Church — so-  
cial reasons,  
cultural reasons,  
nationalistic  
reasons, exclu-  
sionary reasons  
— then those  
reasons and  
motivations  
(those spirits) will  
direct the  
church, and not  
the Holy Spirit*

(i.e., not here)" and "Different from us ...," and, oh yes, "All our old people are set in their old ways ...," and that ancient chestnut: "These Things Take A Long Time ...:" and I know what they were euphemisms for. These were polite ways to talk about racism and segregation.

Coming in as a convert, my way

was smoothed because my literary Greek allowed me to fully participate in the Greek liturgy; I do not, however, speak modern Greek, or Armenian or Arabic. Jesus Christ does not seem to care that I function in English. He still called me to Orthodoxy. Christ has yet to tell me that I belong somewhere else, that I am second-best. And that is all I need to know.

Are some Orthodox Christians content to spend the rest of their Christian lives here on earth in a dim room with the doors and windows bolted shut — from the inside? What are they afraid of? They will never hear — not even from afar — other Orthodox Christians worshipping and singing and praising God in a church with doors and windows flung open — while the nations and those who are far away and those from every kindred and kind pour through those doors.

And the Holy Spirit is blowing up and down the streets and highways and souls of North America calling people just like me who are not Greek or Armenian or Lebanese or Russian to become part of the living Orthodox household of faith. It was, of course, Greek Christians and Russian Christians and Armenian Christians who brought Orthodoxy to America; but they did not bring it here for Armenian, Russians, and Greeks: they brought it here for Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit. They brought it so that Orthodoxy might be here as a witness, firmly rooted in North America, ready to embrace all those whom God called into its arms.

On that long ago Pentecost of 33 AD a great, awe-full force was let loose upon the world; and seized in its power, Peter proclaimed, "Repent. Be Baptized. Receive the Holy Spirit. This promise is for everyone whom the Lord God calls to him."

It was never Peter's church, or James' church, or Paul's church. It is not your church, or the church of the Armenian, or the Greek, or the Russian people. It is not my church. It is Jesus Christ's church. And he is going to fill it full with every soul the Holy Spirit can call and bring in through those doors.

So, my dearest Orthodox sisters and brothers: Be the salt of the earth. Be the city set on a hill. After all, you are the light of the world.



## LETTERS

### Non-Armenians in the Armenian Church? We many never know...

*Rousing cheers were heard from readers following the interview with Tim Robinson ("Knocking at the Door", Window, Vol. IV, No. 3), a non-Armenian preparing for ministry in the Armenian Church. Fascinated by Robinson's conversion experience and sincere desire to envelop Orthodoxy, readers were further intrigued by his desire to serve the Church through the priesthood.*

*Apparently, the church hierarchy, more interested in ethnic makeup than in religious conviction, has allowed Robinson to leave the Armenian Church. Recently Robinson was confirmed in the Greek Orthodox Church and is currently awaiting admission to the Holy Trinity Orthodox Seminary, to become a priest in the Greek Orthodox Church.*

—Editor

Congratulations on another fine issue! Again, you treat timely and significant issues. Of particular importance are Dn. Hratch's observations that the Armenian Church has failed to preach the Gospel to its own people; and the number of dues paying members and church attendance indicate that the Church hierarchy has done a bad job (e.g., The Eastern Diocese has 8,500 dues paying members). It is amazing that so many support building programs while inside the churches are crumbling. At some point, enough people will say, "The emperor has no clothes!"

Meanwhile, as William Penn observed, "If men art not ruled by God, they will be ruled by tyrants."

—Dean Shahinian  
Alexandria Virginia

Your last issue dedicated to "Non Armenians in the Armenian Church" reminded me of my experience some 20 years ago.

A Roman Catholic priest in his thirties came to me expressing his interest in the Armenian Church. He had tried few better known Orthodox Churches, but was not satisfied. We became friends, he started learning the Armenian language, he called himself "Child of Ararat," and for a few years served at the Altar as a deacon, singing the chants. He expressed interest in becoming an Armenian priest. After an interview with the Primate in New York, he became discouraged and eventually returned to the Roman Catholic Church and accepted a pastorate.

—Rev. Fr. Arnak Kasparian  
New Milford, New Jersey

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## PAST WINDOWS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED...

### Window Vol. I, No. 1 • **PREMIER ISSUE**

The first issue of *Window* is an eight-page introduction that sets the tone and scope of this "new" publication. It consists of three articles written by the editors and a translation of Patriarch Torkom Kushagian's "Revival in the Armenian Church."

### Window Vol. I, No. 2 • **ARMENIAN THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION**

This issue provides a series of articles in search of an Armenian theology of Liberation, stimulating discussion and dialogue between Armenian church members and theologians.

### Window Vol. I, No. 3 • **1915—THE YEAR THE CHURCH DIED**

This entire issue is dedicated to the martyred clergy of the Armenian Church during the Genocide of 1915. With this issue, *Window* turns the views of its readers back 75 years and provides a glimpse of the pre-Genocide Armenian Church. For the first time in the English language, the monumental work of Teotig—a scribe who tediously recorded the lives of the martyrdom of the Armenian clergy—is presented with statistical and analytical charts.

### Window Vol. I, No. 4 • **IS THE COLLAR CHOKING THE PRIEST?**

This issue discusses the role for the Armenian priest from the perspective of both the Armenian community and the Church. In doing so, it dispels some of the stereotypes and myths associated with the Armenian clergy.

### Window Vol. II, No. 1 • **CULTS IN ARMENIA**

In an attempt to educate the Armenian community on the dangers of cults, this issue provides an extensive coverage of cults presently operating in Armenia. The deep psychological wounds caused by the 1988 earthquake have facilitated the infiltration of various cults into Armenia under false pretenses. This issue of *Window* poses a challenge to the Armenian community and the Church, by the fact that "the cults will do what we neglect!"

### Window Vol. II, No. 2 • **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ARMENIAN CLERGY**

The first ever International Conference of Armenian Clergy held in New York, June 17-21, 1991 is covered with exclusive interviews and analysis by the *Window* editors. An inside view of the conference is provided. Detailed information about the current situation in Armenia by the directors and leaders of the Center for the Propagation of Faith. Candid and alarming revelations regarding the religious awakening in Armenia and the Church's ability (or inability) to provide for the needs of the people.

### Window Vol. II, No. 3 • **ARE ALL BRANDS THE SAME?**

This issue of *Window* explores the Armenian Protestant and Roman Catholics churches, providing a history of their development and place within the Armenian Community. A candid discussion of possible means of reapprochement is provided. Also, the place of the Armenian Church within the world Church community is explored with statements by the Orthodox Churches and reflections concerning the cost of unity. This issue is filled with facts and information. A map of religions is provided as a centerpiece to this important volume.

### Window Vol. II, No. 4 • **TESTING THE MYTH AND BEYOND**

The understanding of myths and their place in religious perception is the theme of this issue, especially as it is applied in the Armenian Church and community. The main article gives an excellent definition and explanation of what Myth is. Articles discuss services in the liturgical tradition of the Armenian Church, namely Blessing of Madagh and Chrismation.

### Window Vol. III, No. 1 • **THE CHURCH IN ARMENIA**

This issue presents a series of interviews conducted in Armenia, which give a general view of the state of the church and religion in the post-soviet Republic of Armenia. There are conversations with the Catholicos, representatives of Armenian political parties; Armenian "skinheads," and others who are closely involved with the church.

### Window Vol. III, No. 2 • **HYPOCRISY**

Hypocrisy is among those topics that are normally avoided in church life. However, in this issue, ordained and lay workers in the church candidly write about their experiences in the Armenian Church and share their thoughts about hypocrisy in the community.

### Window Vol. III, No. 3 & 4 • **DEATH: THE KEVORKIAN FACTOR**

Death and Dying, Euthanasia and assisted suicide are among the main topics of this issue. The articles discuss the issues in the context of the controversy of assisted suicide that became a matter of public debate, especially through the actions of Dr. Jack Kevorkian, or "Doctor Death" as he became known by the American media.

### Window Vol. IV, No. 1 • **THEOLOGY OF WAR: KARABAKH**

The main focus of this issue is the religious revival in Nagorno-Karabakh, despite the war in the region. Two significant interviews – with the Primate of the Diocese of Karabakh and the Editor of Kantzasar Theological Journal – are the highlights of this issue.

### Window Vol. IV, No. 2 • **Pontifical Election Process**

In Memoriam issue dedicated to the blessed memory of His Holiness Vazken I (1908-1994). Historical process of election of a catholicos are presented with statistics and charts, as well as brief profiles of the 45 candidates for the 1995 election. Also, in an exclusive interview, H.H. Karekin II, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, reflects on the mission of the Armenian Church today.

### Window Vol. IV, No. 3 • **Journey to a Promised Land**

The issue of non-Armenians in the Armenian Church is discussed in a candid and critical look at the Armenian Church. The issue includes an interview with a non-Armenian candidate for the priesthood and an indept analysis of the spiritual life within the diasporan Armenian community.



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