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A Publication of the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America

Volume XVII, Number 8 — February 1995

Vartges Markarian Chairs 1995 Raffle

The 1995 raffle fundraising campaign for the Prelacy is underway under the chairmanship of Mr. Vartkes Markarian from Cranston, Rhode Island. Mr. Markarian was chairman last year also of a very successful campaign.

Now in its 20th year, the annual campaign has become a major source of funds for the Prelacy helping to finance the many educational projects the Church undertakes.

The drawing of the winning raffle tickets will take place during the National Representative Assembly, Friday evening, May 12 in Montreal, Canada. Tickets are \$100 each and will give the buyer a chance of winning one of the following prizes: First prize, \$10,000; second prize, \$5,000; third prize, \$3,000; fourth and fifth prizes, \$1,000.

Mr. Markarian and his family have been active in Church activities for many years. He served as vice chairman of the Board of Trustees of Sts. Vartanantz Church in Providence for six years. He has served as a delegate to the National Representative Assembly for 18 years. He was a world delegate in 1977 during the election of His Holiness Karekin II and he subsequently was one of the Godfathers during the consecration ceremony. Mr. Markarian, a veteran of World War II, founded Jewelart Co. in 1946 and has been the Chief Executive Officer of Vamco Industries since 1962. He is married to the former Shooshan Rafaelian and they have three children, Valerie, Annette, and Vartges, Jr., and four grandchildren.

Assisting Mr. Markarian in the 1995 raffle campaign are the following regional coordinators: Mid-Atlantic, Mrs. Grace Keshgegian; New England, Dr. Varant Hagopian; Mid-West, Mr. Richard Maloyan; Canada, Mr. Gary Pashayan.

"Once again I am asking everyone to make that extra effort to sell as many tickets as possible," said Mr. Markarian. "The funds generated by the raffle provide the funds for many worthwhile educational projects."

Tickets may be purchased from any of the above mentioned individuals as well as from our churches or from the Prelacy office, 138 E. 39th Street, New York, NY, 212-689-7810.

Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian Returns to New York

Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, Prelate of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, Eastern United States and Canada, returned to New York from Paris on Tuesday, March 7, 1995, accompanied by Dr. Raffy Hovanessian.

His Eminence experienced heart problems in Paris on January 27 and was hospitalized there in Cochin Hospital where he underwent successful angioplasty. Subsequently, three days later, he experienced unexpected complications and was transferred to the hospital's intensive care unit, where he remained for a few days and was successfully treated for pulmonary problems. On February 14, Archbishop Ashjian was transferred to a convalescent home, near Paris, where he remained for ten days where he followed a dietetic and exercise regimen. On February 22 he returned to the hospital where he underwent follow-up examination and regimen for further recuperation.

After his discharge from the hospital, Archbishop Ashjian attended Divine Liturgy services in Paris's St. John the Baptist Armenian Church, on Sunday, March 5.

Upon his arrival in New York on the evening of March 7, His Eminence immediately went to St. Sarkis Armenian Church in Douglaston where he offered prayers of thanksgiving to Almighty God for granting him full recovery so that he may continue his service for the glory of God and for the Armenian Church and its faithful people.

At this time, Archbishop Ashjian extends his deep thanks to His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, who visited him twice during his hospitalization. His Eminence also extends his thanks to the Prelate of Paris and Legate to Western Europe, His Eminence Archbishop Kuid Nakashian; to the Board of Trustees of the Armenian Church in Paris and all

of the officials of the Prelacy in Paris; Archbishops Nareg, Norvan, Housig, Karekin, Datev, Yeprem, Hovnan and Khajag, for their prayers, their visits, and get well wishes.

Archbishop Ashjian extends special thanks to the Executive and Religious Councils of the Prelacy of the Eastern U.S. and Canada; to the chairmen of the Religious and Executive Councils, Very Rev. Anoushavan Tanielian and Mr. Onnic Marashian who visited Srpazan Hayr in the hospital; to the Prelacy staff; to all of the clergymen serving the Eastern Prelacy, the Boards of Trustees of the Prelacy Churches, the Armenian Press, and to all those who through their prayers and good wishes helped him get through this difficult period.

His Eminence expresses specific and heartfelt thanks to Dr. Aram Khazarian of Lyon, Dr. Harout Nalbantian of New York, Dr. Raffy Hovanessian of Chicago, and Dr. Jean Arakelian from Montreal; and to all those physicians who from the U.S., Canada, and France monitored his recovery. Special thanks are extended also to Dr. Vigen Garabedian of Paris whose daily care provided Archbishop Ashjian the opportunity to become acquainted with an extraordinary human being.

Archbishop Ashjian also extends special thanks and gratitude to the Armenian community in Paris, to the Land and Culture Organization, *Haratch* and *Gamk* daily newspapers and to all those who made every effort so that he would never feel alone, nor far from home.

May the Lord see and reward.

Chancellery
Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic
Church of America

March 8, 1995
New York

John Vartan Donates 4.5 Million to Prelacy Endowment Fund



John O. Vartan

Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, Prelate of the Eastern Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America has announced the receipt of a donation equivalent to \$4.5 million dollars from John O. Vartan of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The donation will be used to establish a perpetual endowment fund, "The Vartan Family Fund," within the Prelacy Endowment Fund. Income earned will be used to further charitable work of the Armenian Church.

"John Vartan has been a dedicated supporter of the Prelacy for many years," said Archbishop Ashjian, "and this latest donation is indicative of his continuous and unwavering support for the Armenian Church and nation."

Mr. Vartan noted the importance of increasing the Prelacy's Endowment Fund. "A well funded Endowment Fund will place the Prelacy on a sound financial footing and enable it to meet the growing needs of the Armenian community," he said. "For 1,700 years, our Church has been the central force that has held us together, guided us and kept us proud of our heritage. We must preserve and strengthen our faith and heritage, so that our newborn nation of Armenia thrives and becomes a shining example for the rest of the world."

Mr. Vartan is a successful real estate developer and banker whose achievements from meager beginnings are now legendary.

Originally from Ainjar, the Armenian village in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, Mr. Vartan came to the United States in 1968. After receiving his Engineering Degree, he settled in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. While working during the day, he attended night courses and received his Master's

(Continued on page 2)

1915 — 1995
**Joint Commemoration of
80th Anniversary of Armenian Genocide
April 23 and 24, New York City. Watch for Details.**

John Vartan Donates 4.5 Million to Prelacy Endowment Fund

(Continued from page 1)

Degree. A short time later, he started his own business. With his extraordinary business savvy and determination, his firm became an "overnight" success.

Mr. Vartan credits the success of his Armenian roots and the magnificence of the United States, a country where a penniless immigrant is rewarded for hard work and commitment. Mr. Vartan has also given generously to his community in the United States. He serves on the Boards of many charitable organizations and has been especially generous to educational institutions and charitable causes in Pennsylvania.

Mr. Vartan and his wife, Maral (nee Karayan), have four children: Taleen, Hovig, Vahe, and Armen, all of whom are fluent in Armenian and are proud of their heritage. Mr. Vartan is the son of the late Hovhanness Keosheyan and Marie Keosheyan who now resides in New Jersey. Mr. Vartan credits his parents with teaching the importance of education, self-reliance, and helping the community. He recalls how his father, who was from Musa Dagh, repeatedly told him and his three brothers and two sisters "if one loses all of his material wealth, life can be rebuilt somewhere else putting your knowledge to work. Knowledge stored in your brain can never be taken away." His mother, also from Musa Dagh, and once a kindergarten administrator, continues to stress the principles of humility and sharing in all of her children and grandchildren.

"Mr. Vartan is a dedicated Armenian American," said Archbishop Ashjian, "and we express our heartfelt gratitude to him and his entire family. This important contribution brings us hope because it demonstrates the existence of such dedicated individuals whose financial sacrifice will enable us to continue our mission to serve the generations to come."



John Vartan, right, with Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian and Onnic Marashian, chairman of the Prelacy's Executive Council.

Correction

The name of the late Kazar Aramian, of Providence, Rhode Island, was misspelled in the January issue of OUTREACH. As noted in the story, members of Mr. Aramian's family have contributed generously in his memory to the Prelacy's program of aid to orphans and retirees in Armenia and Artsakh.

The Armenian sociologist and author of *Armenian-Americans: From Being to Feeling Armenian*, Anny Bakalian describes Vigen Guroian as the single Armenian theologian "who is honestly addressing contemporary Armenian life." And Nathan A. Scott, Jr., Kennan Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia and past President of the American Academy of Religions, has recently written that Guroian is "unarguably, of his generation, the most lucid and compelling Orthodox theologian on the American scene."

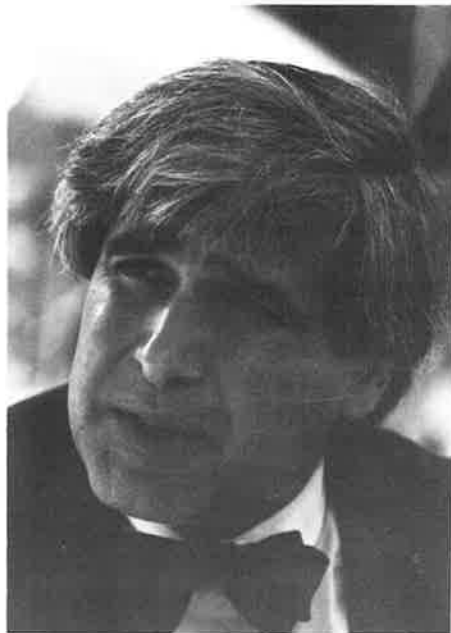
Vigen Guroian is Professor of Theology and Ethics at Loyola College in Baltimore, Maryland, and served for a time as Director of Academic Studies at St. Nersess Armenian Seminary. He is one of fewer than a handful of internationally recognized Orthodox ethicists in America and is the author of three books and over fifty articles on Christian ethics, Armenian theology, and the Armenian Genocide. His work has been translated into over a half dozen languages. Professor Guroian is the recipient of numerous fellowships and awards, including recent grants from the Earhart Foundation and the Wilbur Foundation to complete the book *Life's Living Toward Dying: A Theological and Medical Ethical Study*, which will be published later this year, and a \$25,000 grant to complete a book, *Children's Virtue: Studies of Character in Literature for Children*.

Professor Guroian's work on the Armenian Genocide has taken him to England, Israel, and Russia and his ecumenical involvements include participation in consultations of the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. In November of this past year, Guroian was one of a select group of international theologians and churchpersons who gathered in Jerusalem for the first meeting of a continuing WCC Consultation on Ecclesiology and Ethics. He also served as a principal drafter of the report that will issue from that meeting. In the years 1990, 1991, and 1992, Guroian participated in and was co-chair of several religion commissions that visited Russia and met with Europeans here in the United States under the sponsorship of the American Center for International Leadership. In February of last year he delivered the highly prestigious K. Brooke Anderson Lecture at Brown University. His topic was "Nationalism and the Memory of Genocide: The Modern Crisis in Judaism and Armenian Christianity."

Professor Guroian's professional memberships include such notable achievements as having been the first Armenian theologian to become a member of the American Theological Society—the youngest person ever elected to that society which is limited to one hundred members, the first Armenian member of

Armenian Theologian, Vigen Guroian Publishes Two New Volumes

Faith, Church, Mission Is Prelacy's Latest Publication

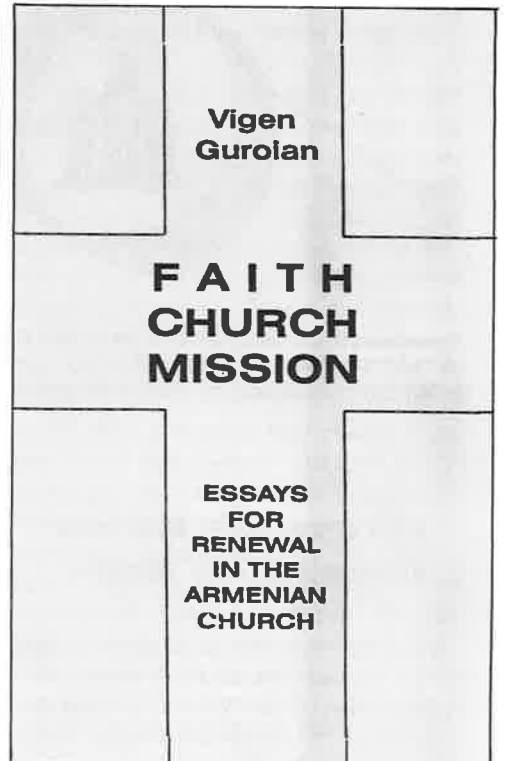


Vigen Guroian's latest work, *Faith, Church, Mission*, is published by the Prelacy and available at the Prelacy Bookstore.

the Orthodox Theological Society of America, and this past year, the first Orthodox ethicist ever to be elected to the Editorial Advisory Board of the *Journal of Religious Ethics*, the principal publication of that discipline.

The late Paul Ramsey, who taught for many years at Yale and then Princeton University and is regarded as one of the most important American Christian ethicists of the later half of this century, was moved to say the following about Guroian's first book, *Incarnate Love: Essays in Orthodox Ethics* (University of Notre Dame, 1987): "Not for many years have I read a more invigorating book.... Comes now a voice from our latest of immigrant churches—the Orthodox—often violently uprooted from their cultural habitats and dumped on these shores. Does this account for Vigen Guroian's rare discernment? He addresses to transplanted Orthodoxy a theological ethic that is vital, catholic, sacramental and liturgical. He asks of the Orthodox: Can these bones live again? The rest of us are compelled to pose a different question: Can there happen in North America an eventful intellectual, ecclesial, and moral encounter with Orthodoxy."

Just in the past several months, Professor Guroian has published two important new books that advance the encounter that Professor Ramsey encouraged and that are of vital importance to Armenian theology and the life of the Armenian Church. *Ethics After Christendom: Toward an Ecclesial Christian Ethics* was issued in November by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Professor Nathan A. Scott of the University of Virginia has said the following about Guroian's work in his comments on the book: "His sense of the absolute primacy for Christian theology of the Church's liturgy gives his work a kind of prophetic power that is calculated to make for profound renewal of both Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions." And Professor Max L. Stackhouse of Princeton Theological Seminary observes that Guroian argues correctly that "the renewal of ecclesial faith and ethics is necessary if souls and civilizations are not to be damaged by the destruction of family and ecological life." Professor Stackhouse describes *Ethics After Christendom* as "a quest for a renewed spirituality." In his ethics, Guroian draws heavily from Armenian theology and liturgy and this new book features a chapter on the issue of the



national church that examines the Church in Armenia.

The Prelacy of the Armenian Church has just issued Guroian's second new book, *Faith, Church, Mission: Essays for Renewal in the Armenian Church* (1995). It is a collection of essays on the Armenian Church that Professor Guroian has written over the past decade and is aimed at the general reader and Armenians concerned about the direction that the Armenian Church has been taking. This collection includes lectures and talks that Guroian has given in Armenian Church and community settings as well as a number of essays that were previously published in such journals as *The Christian Century*, *Ararat*, *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, and *Window*. The book is divided into four sections: "The Crisis and Challenge of Mission," "Moral Vision in the Contemporary World," "Faith After the Armenian Genocide," and "Church and National Life."

Fr. Stanley S. Harakas, Archbishop Iakovos Professor of Orthodox Theology at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology says of *Faith, Church, Mission* that "reading these essays is experiencing a faithful heart, rich in love of the Armenian people and church, that is guided by a passionate commitment to the core of the Christian message." Fr. Garabed Kochakian, Chancellor of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, comments that Vigen Guroian, "speaks to the very heart of a meaningful, evangelical Armenian Christian faith...with candor and courage. He captures the essence of what the Church's mission and life must be in the new circumstances in which it finds itself both here and in Armenia." And Elise Antreassian of the Department of Religious Education of the Diocese concludes that in *Faith, Church, Mission*, "there is no mistaking the urgency of Guroian's observations nor the path he traces from the Gospel to action. It is just such changes in paradigm that can transform the oldest Church in Christendom to a place of unprecedented renewal."

Faith, Church, Mission is dedicated in memory of the late Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan and includes an essay, "Church and Nationhood," on Archbishop Nersoyan. All three of Professor Guroian's books are available from the Armenian Prelacy Bookstore, 138 E. 39th Street, New York, NY 10016.

FAITH, CHURCH, MISSION
\$14.95 + \$3.00 shipping.

OUTREACH

A publication of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America
138 East 39th Street, New York, NY 10016
Telephone: (212) 689-7810 Fax: (212) 689-7168

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OUTREACH (USPS 426-490) is published monthly, with the exception of a combined June-July-August issue, by the Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America. Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome; please include a stamped, self-addressed return envelope. Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the policy of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America. Send all correspondence to the above address to the attention of the Editor.

Printed in the United States of America. Second class postage paid at New York, NY 10016.

Postmaster: Send address changes to OUTREACH, 138 E. 39th Street, New York, NY 10016
ISSN: 10643087

A New Publication:

Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian newest work is a book which contains valuable historical information about the electoral process of the Catholicos of Etchmiadzin through the centuries. Reprinted here is the Epilogue from that volume. The book can be purchased through the Prelacy Bookstore for \$15, including shipping and handling. The Prelacy Bookstore is located at 138 E. 39th Street, New York, NY 10016. For information: (212) 689-7810.

The main purpose of this study was to present to the general readership the history of the election of the Catholicos of All Armenians, from St. Gregory the Illuminator to Catholicos Vazgen I. We don't claim that this is a scholarly philological work; rather it is simply an attempt to relate to our people how and under what circumstances our holy pontiffs have acceded to the Holy Illuminator's throne and, as far as the past two centuries are concerned, our pontiffs and the circumstances of their elections have been presented in relatively greater detail; after a short biography, an explanation has been provided as to how they died and how and where they were buried.

We are certain that our readers too eagerly followed this story of ours and that before their eyes as well paraded our pontiffs, with their virtues and zeals, as well as their human failings. Nevertheless, generally speaking, they are a source of inspiration, with their holiness and patriotism, and today as well they show us the beauty of the deep spiritual and emotional satisfaction arising from the union of nation and religion, faith and fatherland. In the final analysis, it is with the crown of these virtues that the Armenian Church has succeeded in its mission, always remaining faithful to God and faithfully serving the people of God, the Armenian nation.

In conclusion, we present below certain points which, we are certain, shall incite our readers and, generally speaking, all those who have experienced the Armenian Church and believe in its mission and future, to thought and deliberation.

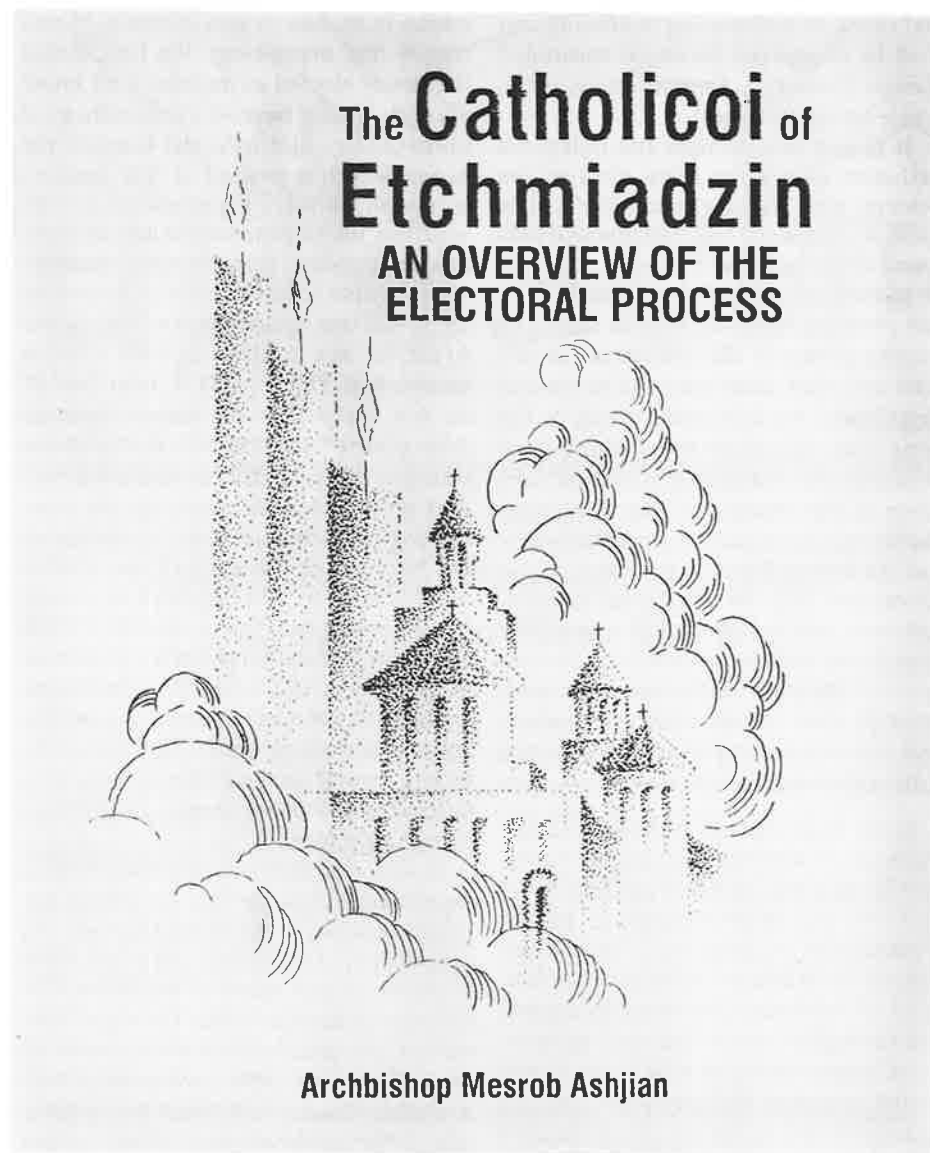
a. The Armenian Church, from the start, has not had a special bylaws and statutes, or regulations, and when the issue of the election of the head of the church has come up, generally speaking it has followed the traditions and customs of the universal Christian church.

b. However, while among the sister churches the head of a given church has generally been elected by episcopal assemblies or synods, or from among equals (the College of Cardinals of Rome, the Holy Synod electing the Ecumenical Patriarch), the will of the nation has been preponderant among us Armenians, which has been expressed through the will of the reigning king or the principal ruler, and generally with the participation of the people.

The catholicos have acceded to the throne in various ways—by the spontaneous will of the general population, the immediate will of the king, or by hereditary lineage. Some individuals have usurped the throne; others have been deposed. Some have involuntarily ascended to the throne; others have chrismed the highest office to the extreme.

Some catholicos have risen to the rank of catholicos from the state of priesthood; others from that of vardapet; while still others have gone straight from the secular and military realm to the function of catholicos, having given up the attractions of court life—one at the age of 18-20, another in a state of decrepitude. The only assembly, which was composed solely of bishops, elected as catholicos... a layperson. However, in general, it was the reigning king who would invite the most suitable person to become catholicos, of course making his decision official through securing the assent of the class of bishops and princes.

Following the loss of the Armenian kingdom, and specifically after the reestablishment of the Mother See of Etchmiadzin in 1441, unpleasant phenomena came to light in the catholicossal elections for a long time. If, on one occasion, it was Yaghup Bey who, having



Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian

received a tray of gold and silver, permitted the catholicossal election, in other cases strong personalities were the ones who succeeded in seizing the throne of Etchmiadzin with money, bribery, and force. There was a time when New Julfa imposed its will; then came the time of the heads of the principal Sees, when Artaz, Tatev and Bjni had their way. One day the decision-making center became Constantinople which imposed its will for two centuries, carrying out the election and consecration of the Armenian catholicos a few times locally. It should not be forgotten that there came a time when catholicos occupied the Illuminator's Throne who enjoyed the support of the Persian Shah or the Ottoman Sultan. However, in all of this, Catholicos Yeghiazar of Aintab remains singular for he was the only individual who succeeded in becoming patriarch of both Jerusalem and Constantinople, and then consecrated catholicos by the Catholicos of Sis before acceding to the throne of Etchmiadzin. Yeghiazar remains unique to this day...

It must be added that, in terms of catholicossal election, both in Etchmiadzin and Sis, it had never been a main issue as to whether the candidate was Eastern Armenian or Western Armenian, "from inside" or "from outside," a native of Armenia or born and raised in the diaspora. It was sufficient that he be worthy of the Throne and bring glory to the Throne. Thus, in the case of Etchmiadzin, beginning with Catholicos Yeghiazar and coming down to the present, the following catholicos have been Western Armenians: Nahapet of Edessa (Ourfa), Karapet of Ulnia (Zeytun), Abraham II of Khoshab, Abraham III of Crete, Minas of Agn, Alexander II of Constantinople, Ghukas of Garin (Erzerum), Matteos I of Constantinople, Gevorg IV of Constantinople, Makar of Teghut, Mkrtich I of Van, Matteos II of Constantinople, and Vazgen I of Bucharest (13 in number). The Eastern Armenian catholicos have been Alexander I of Julfa, Astvatzatur I of Hamadan, Ghazar I of Jahug, Hakob V of Shamakh, Simeon I of

Yerevan, Davit V of Eneget, Daniel I of Surmarou, Yeprem I of Dzoragegh, Hovhannes VIII of Karbi, Nerses V of Ashtarak, Gevorg V of Tiflis, Khoren I of Tiflis and Gevorg VI of Nakhijevan (13 in number). Although we feel that a strong tendency is being developed in Armenia, stressing the need of having a native as the future Catholicos, the motto is, "whoever is elected is of no importance; the important thing is that he should be a native of Armenia"! Other voices, on the other hand, are also heard. Those who claim that a candidate from the diaspora will be a unifying factor between Armenia and the diaspora. However, the government of Armenia has its say and, so far, there is no indication of where their priorities or preferences are. Although it seems natural that they would like to have somebody who will back them fully and who will be on hand to bless their policies. [Editor's Note: As we go to press with this issue, we have learned that President Ter Petrosyan has stated that His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia, is the most qualified candidate.]

The election of the Catholicos of All Armenians was somewhat put in order during the period of tsarist rule since, by order of the polozhenye, the nation elected two candidates and it was the tsar who designated one of those two as Catholicos of All Armenians. However, during the whole period of the polozhenye, it was the Patriarchate of Constantinople that imposed its say and its candidate on Etchmiadzin. Eastern Armenia altogether had eight dioceses, Constantinople 45, although the diocese of Georgia could easily have been the size of 8-10 Western Armenian dioceses. Indeed, it was this inequality of dioceses that gave Constantinople the paramount right but, for unity's sake, the Armenians of Eastern Armenia always closed their eyes and made Constantinople's choice their candidate, simultaneously aiding the solidarity of the two wings of the Armenian world.

Following the downfall of the Russian Empire, Armenia became Communist

and it is a known fact under what circumstances the elections of Khoren I (1932), Gevorg VI (1945) and Vazgen I (1955) took place. Although in 1932 it was trumpeted that, for the first time, the Armenian Church had succeeded in electing its catholicos free of the pressure of any secular authority, the fact of the matter is that it is on the occasion of the election of Catholicos Vazgen I's successor that the Armenian Church shall elect the Catholicos of All Armenians in a truly independent manner and in independent Armenia, to boot.

Of course, now questions abound and we are certain that, in the coming months, the press and our people in general shall raise many questions and expect that they will be focused upon and examined in public. In the final analysis, the issue pertains to the election of the Armenian catholicos and our nation in its entirety has always displayed the greatest interest in this issue because it knows that the one who accedes to the Illuminator's Throne is a symbol of national unity for all Armenians.

As such, on what basis shall the election of the Catholicos of All Armenians take place? To what extent the statutes established by the late Catholicos Gevorg V, which was utilized with a few changes in 1932, 1945, and 1955, will be utilized this coming April 3rd, which is the date announced for the catholicossal election?

It is our opinion that the newly elected Locum Tenens and the Supreme Spiritual Council have already examined or shall examine certain matters: What shall be the number and method of election of the lay and clergy delegates? For example, in the discussion of designating one delegate for each 25,000 persons, what is understood by this number of 25,000? All Armenians? Only members of the Armenian Apostolic Church? The faithful of voting age? Who shall determine the Armenian population of a given diocese? Shall women delegates be elected?...

How shall the See of the Great House of Cilicia participate in the election of the Catholicos of All Armenians? According to the regulation in effect in Etchmiadzin, "the Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia and his bishops" are invited to participate in the election.

However, has this disposition ever been requested?

According to the statute of the Catholicosate of Cilicia, Etchmiadzin participates in the election of the catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia with two delegates (as occurred in 1977 at the time of the election of Catholicos Karein II), and the See of Cilicia, based on the principle of reciprocity, participates in the election of the Catholicos of All Armenians with one clergyman and one layperson as delegates.

Since 1955, there have been major developments in Armenian life: Some dioceses have grown, other have weakened, and the Armenian people has been subjected to new geographical divisions. That notwithstanding, it is possible to group the Armenians in three regions:

a. Armenia, with approximately 3.5 million inhabitants distributed among the following dioceses: Ararat, Shirak, Gugark, and Siunik. Artsakh has one diocese.

b. Newly independent countries of the former Soviet Union (CIS), with 2.5 million Armenian inhabitants; Russia and northern Caucasus, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, etc.

c. Diaspora, with 1.5 million Armenian inhabitants distributed among the following dioceses: France, England, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, North America (Eastern and Western Dioceses),

(Continued on page 4)

Election of Catholicos of Etchmiadzin Through the Centuries

(Continued from page 3)

Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Egypt, Australia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Iraq. Spiritual pastorates: Austria, Sweden, Moldavia, Ethiopia, India, Albania.

These dioceses and spiritual pastorates can have anywhere from one delegate to...100 delegates, since nobody knows, for example, how many Armenians there are in the United States, how many Armenians there are in Albania or within the diocese of Russia...or how many individuals belong to the dioceses in America under the jurisdiction of Etchmiadzin. Here's a simple example: Last September 24, the Western Diocese already elected its twenty delegates—four clergymen and sixteen laypersons—which makes one think that the Western Diocese has a half million faithful. Who can attest and offer proof of this? Following the example of California, the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church convened an extraordinary Diocesan Assembly on January 14, 1995, and elected 24 delegates, five of whom are clergymen. This writer asked a clergyman from the Diocese on what basis they were electing 24 delegates representing 600,000 faithful. He answered with a smile, "With a simple logic: the Californians have elected 20 delegates. We thought we are a little more than they, so therefore we elected 24 delegates. Simple arithmetic."

The 24 Eastern Diocese elected representatives are: John Amboian, Julie Ashekian, Rev. Fr. Arten Ashjian, Edward Chapian, Haig Dadourian, Rev. Fr. Dajad Davidian, Suren D. Fesjian, Dr. Garo Garibian, Crosby Goshgarian, Hon. Vincent Gurahian, Rev. Fr. Carnig Hallajian, John P. Hoplamazian, Dr. Raffy Hovanessian, Kevork S. Hovnanian, Zarvin Kasparian, Rev. Fr. Mampre A. Kouzoulian, George E. Marifian, Esq., Rose Mekenian, Very Rev. Fr. Haigazoun Najarian, Dr. Dennis R. Papazian, Dean V. Shahinian, Esq., Harry Terzian, Very Rev. Fr. Baret Yeretzian, Asbed B. Zakarian. The alternate delegates are: Zaven A. Dadekian, Very Rev. Fr. Haigazoun Melkonian, Sarkis Bedevian, Edward W. Brewster, Very Rev. Fr. Shnork Kasparian, Dr. Haroutune Mekhjian, Nubar Dorian, Rev. Fr. Yeprem Kelegian, Rev. Fr. Vertanes Kalayjian, Sarkis Soutanian, Rita Balian, Very Rev. Fr. Oshagan Gulgulian. Six of the elected delegates are clergymen, and two are women—the first time that women will be participating in the election of a Catholicos!

Furthermore, on what basis shall the delegates be elected within the other dioceses—Armenia, for example? Based on the figures contained in the government's registers or by the few hundred individuals gathered around the churches? Some Armenian newspapers carried some interviews with the locum tenens, Archbishop Torkom Manoogian (*Haratch* daily, Paris, October 19, 1994) and with Patriarch Karekin of Constantinople (See *Nor Gyank* weekly, Los Angeles, January 12, 1995) which instead of elucidating the public raised more questions. One was the status of the Armenian Church in France and the controversy about the diocesan structure thereof; the other was the mode of electing the delegates from Armenia. According to the October 1, 1995 statistics, Armenia has a population of 3.6 million. But many people insist that some 800,000 people have left. Where are they? In Grasnodar? In Moscow? Who knows?

Of course, it is possible to discuss this at length and not accomplish anything. We know, however, that an intermediate direction shall be found and the catholicossal election shall take place one way or another. What's important, however, more than the mode is the candidate; as a correspondent recently wrote from Armenia, quoting a high-ranking Armenian clergyman who chose not to

reveal his name, "above statute, above the National-Ecclesiastical Assembly and everything else is the election of the best person as catholicos. If the Assembly errs and elects an undeserving individual, that shall be considered an illegal assembly." (*Lragir* [Gazette], September 24, 1994, article by Ani Yesayian).

It is our prayer that the delegates gathered before the Holy Altar of the Descent, with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and removed from all kinds of personal, ambitious and financial concerns, be guided by one principle: Who is the one pleasing to God? Who is the most worthy pastor in the church of Christ? Who is it that shall lead the Armenian Church into the 21st century and, at the same time, constitute the unifying force between the masses in Armenia and those in the Diaspora? The Armenian Church cannot remain in a petrified state, and not take part in the *renouveau* of the nation. But only an intelligent, forceful, visionary can be the chosen one whose pontificate will be a dedication to God and the Holy See of Etchmiadzin and, through that, to our country Armenia, and the children of Mother Armenia, both in Armenia and the diaspora.

In the final analysis, it is more important to know who the most eligible candidate is than the mode of election. Who shall be the next Catholicos of All Armenians? Naturally, it does not behoove us to bandy the names of candidates. Nevertheless, we wish to expand our thoughts somewhat and present those imperatives, to which the newly elected catholicos shall pay attention:

a. Armenia is an independent country, on the road to the realization of that independence, along with numerous other laws, in 1991 the Armenian Parliament passed the law of "Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations," whereby the Armenian Church shall keep its link with the state through a special governmental body. True enough, following the independence of Armenia, the authorities were disposed toward doing away with the "Religious Affairs Council" which was left over from the Soviets, but Catholicos Vazgen I himself insisted that the corresponding body continue its existence. Perhaps it was out of habit that the pontiff wished to see the preservation of such an office...but life proved that the times had changed: The council exists; the business does not exist; as it is, the chairman has been dismissed, although he continues to keep his seat; and the newly appointed director is and isn't on the job—nobody knows. As this volume was going to press, we heard that Mr. L. Khatchadrian, the chairman, has finally resigned, following the resignation of the newly appointed chairman. The new chairman is Mr. Lazar Sudjian. The government will probably execute its announced decision and abolish this council for good. In any event, the newly elected catholicos must engage in dialogue with the government in order that the relations between the nation, church, and state be clarified. Particularly in need of clarification is whether the Armenian Church is the state church, a privileged church, or whether state and church shall be separate and, in this case, the church shall function and serve as an independent church in an independent fatherland.

b. The Armenian Church shall soon greet the year 2001 which is both the dawn of the 21st century and the 1700th anniversary of the official organization of the Armenian Church. At present, the Armenian government is showing more vivacity in terms of marking the turn of the century in a manner worthy of the occasion. We must know, however, what initiatives the newly elected catholicos

shall take and, together with the See of the Great House of Cilicia and the twin patriarchates of Jerusalem and Constantinople, set the entire Armenian nation in motion to give meaning to and dignify that anniversary. We believe that the newly elected catholicos shall know enough to see beyond circumstantial undertakings and hear the voice of the people which is looking at this anniversary with different expectations. In this vein, let us say that we have already missed a golden opportunity, since we were unable to even make it known to the world that the Armenian Church and Armenia are preparing this 1700th anniversary. The Pope, H.H. John Paul II, in his encyclical "Tertio Mellenic Adveniente" dedicated to the great Jubilee of the year 2000 mentions the fact that several churches were or are celebrating their own jubilees: he mentions the baptism of Rus (1988), the 1500th anniversary of the baptism of Clovis (496), King of the Franks, and the 1400th anniversary of the arrival of St. Augustine in Canterbury (597), marking the beginning of the evangelization of the Anglo-Saxon world. Other jubilees are also mentioned, from China to Ethiopia, but nothing on the 1700th anniversary of the baptism of King Dertad!

c. On a strictly ecclesiastical realm, expectations from the new Catholicos are many: Reorganization of the Dioceses, the preparation of the clergy, the publication of religious and spiritual literature, the Christian education within the school system of the country, the elaboration of canon law, etc., etc., wherewith the Armenian Church may fulfill her historic role as the *mater magistra* of the nation and the banner holder of high moral and ethical standards.

d. And, finally, the top-priority obligation of the newly elected catholicos shall be to keep the Fatherland and Diaspora unified. From this standpoint, it is very important to see how the relations between the Catholicosate of All Armenians and the Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia shall progress. The tenure of the late Catholicos Vazgen I began with the Etchmiadzin-Antelias crisis, and years, years later, Vazgen I was able to attribute that crisis to the evil of Communism when he declared in Etchmiadzin on December 12, 1992: "The situations and *opus moderandi* created during the period of the Soviet regime, particularly on the level of Armenian ecclesiastical life and in the relations between the Mother See and the See of the Great House of Cilicia, no longer have any relevance in the Armenian diaspora at the present time, in the context of the Republic of Armenia. It is obvious to us all that those situations and *modi operandi* had come about solely as a result of the presence of the Soviet regime in Armenia. If in 1956, when we went to Beirut, Armenia had been an independent nation-state, would the well-known crisis have been created within our Church on the occasion of the election of the successor to the throne of the See of Cilicia?... We were convinced that the path we had chosen was correct, that our work was just and our dream nation-building. We personally take the responsibility for the *modus operandi* adopted by us, we take full responsibility."

On another occasion, he would say, "Finally new relations began between our twin Sees."

Indeed, the cordial relationship which developed between the two Sees and the two Catholicos was regarded by His Holiness Vazgen I as a very positive and welcome step in spite of some criticism. His Holiness answered the criticism in a press conference on December 11, 1992. His Holiness said the following:

"From the beginning of my pontificate I had the misfortune of inheriting the

divided condition of our diaspora churches, with two opposing sides. The church had become a battlefield for political struggles.... During the last 32 years the life of our church passed through various phases, and attempts were made to find solutions. Meetings and negotiations took place which did not bring about solutions.

"It was in this state that our church found itself in the beginning of 1988 with our national demonstrations and protests and especially the massive earthquake in that same year. There then followed the downfall of the Soviet Union and the declaration of the free and independent Armenian Republic. These events not only shook our peoples lives but also that of our Mother Church. Since that day we began to feel, and feel even more deeply today, that a chapter had closed in the history of our nation—the end of the Soviet era—and a new era was beginning. With this knowledge as our guide, our conscience admonished us that during these days of the rebuilding of our Motherland, especially in light of the dangerous road ahead, that it was necessary to pursue unity in our national life, working together harmoniously, especially in the life of our Church. On the road to this exemplary goal, yes, we regarded it imperative to advance brotherly relationship and cooperation between the Mother See of Etchmiadzin and the See of the Great House of Cilicia."

We wish the newly elected catholicos faith, courage, vigor, and vision so that he may elevate the reputation of the Catholicosate of All Armenians in the eyes of the population of the Republic of Armenia; so that Etchmiadzin may regain its supreme authority as the source of Christian faith; and so that he, as catholicos of the first Christian state church, brings credit to himself and his mission.

The first mission field of the newly elected catholicos is the territory of Armenia itself. It's been several years now that we are upset, we are protesting and expressing our dissatisfaction that sects are multiplying in Armenia; the Hare Krishnas are strolling through Yerevan with their tom-toms; the monumental volume, *The Bhagavad Gita*, is selling on the streets of Yerevan for a few drams; sacrifices are offered on March 21st to the god of Spring in the pagan temple of Garni by modern-day heathen priests imported from Los Angeles; the preaching of the Mahareshi Yogi has followers; the Catholics are opening hospitals; the Protestants are distributing the Gospel free of charge...protesting against all this is futile. What are you doing Church of Armenia? How faithful are you to your baptism? What are you doing, Etchmiadzin? The newly elected Armenian Catholicos must give the answers to all these questions. It is a tough challenge but one that must be met.

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