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Armenian Apostolic Church of America
138 East 39th Street, New York, New York 10016

Volume XIX, Number 1 — May 1996

National Representative Assembly Convenes in New Jersey, May 15-17

Full Coverage in Special Summer Issue

Holy Week Services Attract Many Faithful

"Year after year we witness the growth of the celebration of Holy Week within our parishes," said the Prelate, Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian. "We are gratified and encouraged by the growing attendance during Holy Week starting with Palm Sunday and through to the joyous celebration of the Resurrection on Easter."

All of the parishes within the Prelacy have reported a tremendous growth in attendance not only on Palm Sunday and Easter but for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Good Saturday services. Larger parishes such as Montreal, Toronto, Boston, New Jersey reported from 1,000 to 2,000 parishioners on Easter Sunday alone.

"We sincerely hope this trend will continue throughout the year and more and more of our faithful will become actively involved in spiritual life," the Prelate said.

As he has done since becoming Prelate in 1989, Archbishop Ashjian spent Holy Week—the high point of the Christian calendar—in different communities in an effort to be with as many of his people as possible.

"The Great Week," Archbishop Ashjian said, "not only commemorates the death and resurrection of our Lord, but it renews the efficacy of the redemptive work of Christ. It actualizes the Paschal mystery in the most authentic way. It is the time when we are full with Christ's presence amongst us, and it is the central focus into which merge and from which emanate the liturgical life of the Church."

Palm Sunday

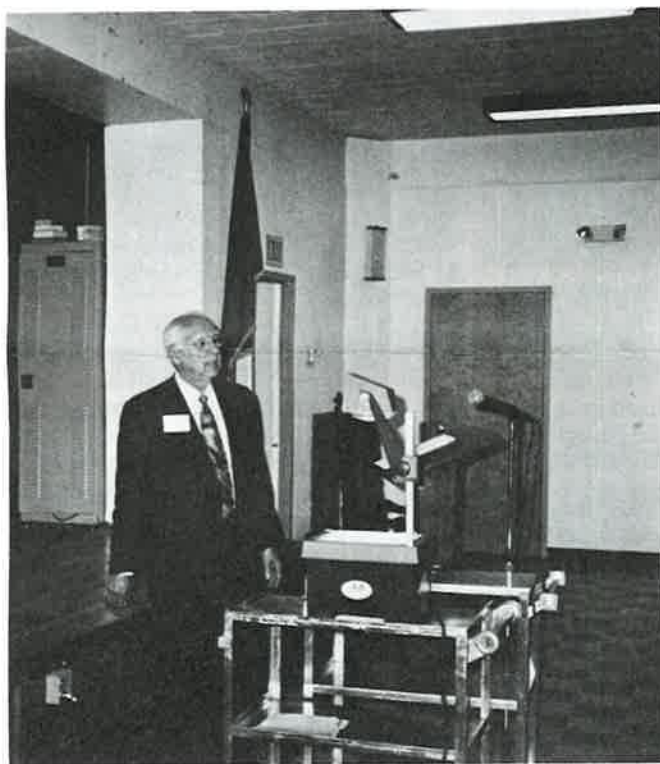
Archbishop Ashjian attended Palm Sunday and the Opening of the Gates (Terpatzek) ceremonies at St. Illuminator's Cathedral in New York City, where following the religious services a special program took place in celebration of the Cathedral's 80th anniversary, with Professor Vigen Guroian as the main speaker. In his Palm Sunday meditation on the mission of the Armenian Church, Professor Guroian set forth major challenges for the Church into the next millennium. [Professor Guroian's Palm Sunday message will be printed in the Summer issue.—Editor.]

"On Palm Sunday the Liturgy, the hymns, and everything in the Church reminds us not only of the triumphant entry of Christ into the city, but also His second coming which is dramatized in the Vespers (Ternpatzek) service which in the United States is performed following the Divine Liturgy," the Prelate said.

Great Wednesday and Maundy Thursday

On Great Wednesday, the day the Church commemorates Mary Magdalene

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John Manougian speaks about "Parish Organization and Development," at the Board of Trustees Regional Seminar which took place in Watertown.

Board of Trustees Seminar in Watertown

A very informative and successful seminar for members of Boards of Trustees took place on March 23, hosted by St. Stephen's Armenian Church, Watertown, Massachusetts. Representatives from New England and Mid-Atlantic parishes attended the one-day seminar which was dedicated to the "Growth of the Local Church."

Organized by the Executive Council and under the auspices of the Prelate, more than 100 individuals, including Executive Council members and representatives from the following parishes: St. Stephen's (Watertown); Sts. Vartanantz (Providence); St. Gregory (Indian Orchard); Holy Trinity (Worcester); St. Stephen's (New Britain); St. Asdvadzadzin (Whitinsville); St. Gregory (North Andover); Sts. Vartanantz (Ridgefield); St. Illuminator's Cathedral (New York); St. Sarkis (New York).

The seminar was opened with a prayer by Very Rev. Khajag Hagopian, rector of St. Illuminator's Cathedral. Words of welcome were offered by the pastor of the host church, Rev. Antranig Baljian, and Aram Minasian, chairman of the Board of Trustees. A meditation based on St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians was offered by Very Rev. Anoushavan Tanielian, vicar-general of the Prelacy.

Jack Mardoian, Esq., a member of the Executive Council, served as moderator and prior to the five lectures presented an explanation of the concept and purpose of the seminar.

The first topic, "National and International Issues Facing the Armenian Church," was addressed by Very Rev. Khajag Hagopian. He spoke about the various challenges currently facing the Church and some possible solutions.

The second lecturer, Shant Haroutunian, Esq., spoke about "What It Means to be a Church Trustee: Roles and Responsibilities." Mr. Haroutunian, a member of the Executive Council, presented in detail the obligations of trustees using the guidelines provided in the bylaws.

The third lecturer, Jack Mardoian, Esq., spoke about "Financial Issues Facing the Church in North America." Mr. Mardoian, a member of the Executive Council, provided details about the financial situation of the Prelacy and the Parishes. He offered suggestions which could be adopted for financial stability.

The fourth lecturer, John Manougian, spoke about "Parish Organization and Development." Using his experience at St. Sarkis Church in Michigan, Mr. Manougian expanded on many ideas to aid parishes in their outreach to the community leading to growth of parish membership.

The fifth lecturer, Professor Hrach

(Continued on page 8)

Emergency Appeal for Lebanon

The recent tragic events in Lebanon have created great suffering for many innocent Lebanese civilians. Besides the senseless loss of life, hundreds of people, including women and children, have been displaced from their homes. Furthermore, the destruction of power plants in various parts of the country and the blockade of the Lebanese seaports have created tremendous hardship throughout the country.

We have already expressed our solidarity with the people of Lebanon through cables sent to the President, the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Parliament of Lebanon, and His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia.

The Lebanese Ambassadors in Washington, D.C., New York, and Ottawa, Canada, have informed us of the establishment of a "Lebanon Emergency Fund." All donations will be transferred to the Supreme Relief Council of Lebanon which is the governmental agency in charge of coordinating this relief work. His Holiness Aram I, who is currently on a pontifical visit to Syria, has also issued an appeal to the dioceses under the jurisdiction of the Catholicate of Cilicia.

Checks payable to "Lebanon Emergency Fund" can be sent to: Embassy of Lebanon, 2560 28th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20008; or checks payable to the "Armenian Apostolic Church of America" can be mailed to, Armenian Prelacy, 138 E. 39th Street, New York, NY 10016 (indicate "For Lebanon" on your check).

We appeal to all parties to end hostilities and begin negotiating a just and lasting situation. We urge our faithful to keep the Lebanese people in their prayers and to contribute generously in order to facilitate vital humanitarian aid.

Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, Prelate
Armenian Apostolic Church of America, Eastern U.S. and Canada
April 22, 1996

From the Editor...

With this issue OUTREACH begins its 19th year of continuous publication.

Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian arrived in New York in January 1978 to begin his tenure as Prelate and from the moment of his arrival he realized the necessity of a regular, free Prelacy publication.

The moment of my naming I remember very vividly. The concept of a publication had already been agreed upon, but its name had yet to be decided. All of the suggestions just did not seem to describe its true mission. With the first issue on the drawing boards, the search for a name was becoming urgent. One evening at a gathering at the home of the late Bob Derian and his wife Lucy, a few of us were talking and I happened to use the word "outreach" in a totally unrelated way. Surpazan closed his eyes slightly and then opened them wide and exclaimed, "That's it! Of course—Outreach!"

Since our first issue we have tried to live up to our name and our mission—reaching out to you, keeping you informed of news of the Prelacy and Parishes, while also offering articles of interest, sometimes controversial, but always relevant to church and nation.

Looking back at earlier issues of OUTREACH, I realize that we have had both high and low points in meeting our mission. But, one thing is certain: OUTREACH has developed and matured through the years.

If I have one personal regret it is the lack of "official" feedback from you, the readers. I say "official" because certainly verbal comments are abundant, however the amount of written comments is very disappointing. A recent case in point: The March issue included an article by Professor Vigen Guroian. His article, "Becoming Real: Living the Life in Christ," brought an extraordinary amount of verbal comments (both pro and con), but not one written communication.

In this issue, on this page and the facing page, we have three articles dealing with the language of the liturgy—a debate that has been around for many years, but seems to have intensified recently. The question of language is an important one, but the answer is not as simple as some imagine. The Roman Catholic Church is finding this out, some thirty years after Vatican II, which supposedly answered the question of language once and for all.

The National Representative Assembly is meeting in New Jersey this month with Sts. Vartanantz Church as the host parish. Our next issue, the expanded summer issue, will give coverage of this annual gathering of clergy and lay leaders who chart the course of our diocese.

I look forward to a growing dialogue with you during the coming months. You can send your comments to my attention to the Prelacy, 138 E. 39th St., New York, NY 10016. If you prefer cyberspace, I can be found at: iapapazian@aol.com ✚

OUTREACH

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The Ongoing Debate About We Need Divine Liturgy in...

English...

by Haig E. Tashjian

This article originally appeared in the California-based The Armenian Observer, February 14, 1996.

I AM a regular subscriber to your fine, well edited English language newspaper. I am submitting the following in behalf of the vast majority of your subscribers who happen to be American born Armenians. The issue must be addressed and presented to the Vehapar at this opportune time. I feel that this can be done in comprehensive manner by you as an editor of a respected newspaper which provides an important news source for the Armenian families who cannot read Armenian.

It is imperative that our Church should finally acknowledge the spiritual needs of American born Armenian families. It is apparent that the Church fathers of our Dioceses and Prelacies do not recognize that this group does and will always comprise the vast majority of Armenians in North America. These families, if properly served, represent the most important resource which can ensure the long-term survival of our church and ethnic heritage in the ultimate melting pot of America. The Church should beckon them to determine and serve their spiritual needs. It should make a concerted effort to attract those of mixed marriages.

The American born have a dire need to be served by our beautiful Badarak translated into English, the accessible/comprehensive language of the adults and their children. This was recognized by a representative group of Armenian Americans in the parish of St. Mary Church of Costa Mesa. With the participation of the parish priest and the Western Diocese, an acceptable English Worship Liturgy was formulated, and it was presented for the first time, on a monthly basis, approximately two years ago. It comprised altar prayers in English with some response from the congregation in English, the choir hymns in their beautiful, original (Armenian) form and a 12-15 minute comprehensive English sermon. It was conducted each

month by a visiting clergy, and it was structured to be no more than one hour in length. The English Liturgy, conducted on the first Sunday of each month, was immediately followed by the traditional Badarak. In this manner and on this one Sunday each month, the total Armenian community was presented with the words of Christ within the walls of our beloved church in a language they could comprehend.

I believe you were aware of the St. Mary English services, since they were noted in the Calendar of your newspaper each week for about one year. The English Worship Liturgy was a singular success. Each English service attracted from 75 to 150 parishioners and it had the great potential for further development and growth. Unfortunately, before these promises could be fulfilled, it was unexpectedly terminated in April 1995. Repeated efforts by the spokespersons to reinstall the English Worship Liturgy have been unsuccessful even though we have since learned that the Eastern Diocese has formulated an English Divine Liturgy which is currently being used on a monthly basis with great success by a few of their churches.

The time has come for our Church fathers to realize that these matters must be favorably and courageously addressed. We cannot overstate that our church belongs to all Armenians who wish to worship and participate in religious services at our churches. With both our beautiful traditional Armenian Badarak and the English Divine Liturgy, our churches will deliver the inspirational words of our Lord, Jesus Christ, to the hearts of all Armenians in a language they understand.

All Armenians, regardless of church affiliation will appreciate any effort you can make to present this case to our beloved Vehapar during his visit. ✚

Modern Armenian...

by David Gijiriguan

On behalf of a group of Armenians in Queens, NY

WE are a group of Armenians writing about an issue which in our opinion, concerns the entire Armenian community here in America and around the world.

The problem that concerns us is the language used in our church. As we all know, the Armenian used is Krapar, which was written and spoken by our ancestors centuries ago. Whatever the merits of Krapar, Armenians today do not understand it; it must be learned by us as any other foreign language.

We go to church and attend the service understanding almost nothing of its meaning, because the Church uses a language that passed out of circulation a long time ago. With the exception of the priest's sermon, the majority of Armenians do not understand the language of the entire service. We believe that it is inadmissible in this day and age to sit in church Sunday morning and leave after 90-120 minutes without understanding the service. And the same situation applies for baptisms, weddings, funerals, etc.

The Old and New Testament exist translated into modern Armenian. Why is it not possible to use these versions in every service, so that the people may understand at least part of the service?

Every religious servant stresses the need for the Armenian language in the education of our young. This is a difficult task in itself given the richness of our language; but even supposing the younger generation has learned Armenian, how can we explain to them that, although they speak Armenian, they may not understand any of the Sunday services? Isn't the service supposed to be understood by *all* the parishioners?

A look at the attendance of Sunday services shows that the majority of people are elders; they come to church as a form of inertia, as a matter of habit, simply because their fathers and grandfathers did so before them. And when they are asked, what was the service about, they cannot answer, because they did not understand it. This is not right.

We believe it is high time to adopt in our church a language that is understood by one and all. The Armenian Church has always been a leader of its people. We think the time has come for the Church to show its leadership and take the forefront on this matter. The time to change is now, especially in the diaspora where people hear and speak Armenian only at home; the workplace, the street, popular entertainment, all take place where a language other than Armenian is used.

In conclusion, we would like to suggest to our religious leaders to sit down and work at the change we are proposing. It is late already, but we believe that in these last years of this century, and especially as we prepare to celebrate the 1700th anniversary of the official acceptance of Christianity in Armenia, the church servants should make the change from Krapar to modern Armenian. What other gift can the Armenian Church give to its flock that would be more appropriate on this anniversary than to provide religious services in a language understood by each and every Armenian? They would be giving the gift of understanding: religious services understood by every man, woman and child in church.

Whatever our past, be it brilliant or sad, we have to look at our future, and we believe that changing the language is a small but very necessary step in maintaining us as Armenians. We are certain that our religious leaders will listen to us. After all, all that we ask is that they speak to us in a language we can understand. ✚



Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian with Mr. & Mrs. Antranig and Varsene Sarkissian at a luncheon given by the Near East Foundation in honor of Queen Noor of Jordan. Archbishop Ashjian and Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Eastern Diocese, were both guests of the Sarkissian's at the luncheon which took place at the Union League Club.

The Theology of Computers...

Italian writer Umberto Eco, author of, among other works *The Name of the Rose*, recently weighed in on the denominational implications of choosing your personal computer. As reported in the *Ecumenical News International*, Eco stressed, "I am firmly convinced that the Macintosh is Catholic and the DOS is Protestant." The Mac, Eco explained, is "cheerful, friendly and conciliatory"—a true product of the counterreformation—and tells the faithful "how they must proceed step by step to reach—if not the kingdom of heaven—at least that moment when their document is printed." Further, Eco noted, it is a "catechistic" system, where revelation is dealt with by simple icons, and everyone has a right to salvation. DOS, however, is "Protestant, or even Calvinistic," skeptical that all can achieve salvation. With DOS, "the user is closed within the loneliness of his own inner torment." Windows (the graphic program that runs on DOS computers) is, in turn, Anglican, with "big ceremonies in the cathedral but always the possibility of a return to DOS." Some thoughts to ponder before investing in an upgrade.

the Language of the Liturgy

The Language Debate In Perspective...

by Michael B. Papazian

FROM its beginnings, the Church has been multilingual. In the *Acts of the Apostles*, we read that on the day of Pentecost, the apostles had gathered in one place, and that suddenly something that sounded like a strong wind filled the house in which they were assembled:

And there appeared to them flames like tongues of fire distributed among them and coming to rest on each one. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them power of utterance. (Acts 2:2-4)

Many of the people in Jerusalem on that day were from foreign lands. They marvelled at the fact that each one of them could hear and understand the Apostles' words about the great things that God had done in his own language.

It is appropriate that the first gift of the Holy Spirit given to the Apostles was the ability to speak and be understood by people who came from many different nations. Jesus had commanded the apostles to, "Go therefore to all nations and make them my disciples." (Matthew 28:19) To make disciples of a nation, of course, requires that one speak the language of that nation.

This was no less true of the Armenian nation. It was with the translation of the Bible into Armenian in the 5th century and the subsequent translations of many of the riches of early Christian literature that Armenian culture first became Christian. The language of the 5th century was classical Armenian or *krapar*. Given the enormous significance of the 5th century in Armenian history and for the Armenian Church, it is understandable that classical Armenian would become the standard of good Armenian, and that it would become the liturgical language of the Church.

Today, however, classical Armenian is an ancient language that is little studied and which is not well understood by most Armenians. Recently, there has been increasing discussion of using the vernacular, either modern Armenian (*ashkhara-par*) or English, in the Divine Liturgy or *Badarak*. I do not wish to make any definite proposals here. Instead, I would like to make a few points in order to place the discussion of the issue of the language of the liturgy in perspective.

First, any serious discussion of this

issue should take into consideration the experiences of the Armenian Church's sister churches. Most notable among them, the Roman Catholic Church since the reforms made following the Second Vatican Council during the early 1960s has replaced Latin with the vernacular as the liturgical language. The change in language, which is just one of the many reforms made by the Catholic Church, has met with mixed results. While many Catholics prefer to hear the Mass in a language they can understand, some feel that the spirituality, dignity, and mystery of the Latin Mass has been lost. Especially interesting is the fact that many young Catholics, even those who were born after the reforms, find themselves drawn to the Latin Mass. The attraction of the Latin Mass, therefore, cannot be attributed simply to nostalgia. Clearly, there is something special, perhaps timeless, about it, something that can be felt even by people who have not experienced it in their childhood.

One of the lessons of the Catholic experience is that in any liturgical reforms the Church should offer to parishioners as many options as feasible. Initially, Latin Masses were replaced almost completely by Masses in the vernacular. This left many Catholics who preferred the Latin Mass alienated. Since 1984, however, Pope John Paul II has allowed churches to offer Masses in Latin if parishioners request them. This has resulted in a minor renaissance for the Latin Mass and satisfied the desires of those parishioners who prefer the traditional to the vernacular. If the Armenian Church is to make similar reforms, it must be careful not to offer the Divine Liturgy only in the vernacular, lest it likewise alienate parishioners who find the same mystery and dignity in classical Armenian that many Roman Catholics find in Latin. Perhaps the best course would be to authorize liturgies in all of the languages and allow each parish, according to its own needs and desires, to determine how often their church should use the alternative Liturgies.

My second point concerns the issue of understanding the Divine Liturgy. One of the reasons advanced for using the vernacular in the Liturgy is that it will then be understood by all of the parishioners. I agree that use of the vernacular will reduce the obstacles to understanding the readings, prayers, and hymns. But there is

also a danger in assuming that if the Liturgy is in our everyday language that therefore it will be transparent and fully understandable. The Divine Liturgy is a celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist, a mystery that transcends human understanding. There will always be something about the Liturgy that stands beyond our reason whether or not we know the language that is used. Furthermore, a true understanding of the words of the liturgy requires considerable effort and work regardless of the language used. The Church has no less of a responsibility to teach to the faithful the nature and the significance of the Liturgy when the language is the vernacular.

My final point concerns certain issues with which the question of liturgical language is often tied. Some have argued that the language of the liturgy must remain Armenian because otherwise the Armenian Church would lose its distinct identity or would fail to preserve the Armenian language and culture. The issue of liturgical language must be kept separate from any nationalistic goals. The basic mission of the Church is not to advance the cause of the nation or to promote the use of the Armenian language. But even if the Church is able to contribute to these goals without neglecting or compromising its primary spiritual responsibility, the use of Armenian in the liturgy does not make any such significant contribution. If it did contribute to an interest and a desire to learn classical Armenian, then we should expect much greater enrollment in classes in classical Armenian than there currently is. Furthermore, the identity of the Church is much greater than the language. The language of the Divine Liturgy may change, but what is specific to the Armenian rite, for example, the unique hymns or the unmixed chalice, remains.

Just as at the Pentecost, the Church today is also called to speak to and to embrace people of diverse origins. The present circumstances of the Armenian Church in the United States is that it increasingly ministers to faithful speaking different languages and of different national backgrounds. A wise and careful decision on the question of liturgical language must be made in the light of the fact that at its birth, the Church did not demand that people speak its language, but, filled with the Holy Spirit, the twelve Galileans spoke to all in their own native tongue. ✚

Holy Week

(Continued from page 1)

and the Betrayal of the Lord by Judas, the Prelate went to Montreal. Included in Archbishop Ashjian's itinerary was a meeting with the Pastor, Board of Trustees, and delegates of the newly established St. Kevork Church in Lavalle, Quebec. His Eminence was accompanied by Dr. Jean Arakelian, a member of the Prelacy Executive Council, at this meeting as well as subsequent meetings and religious services in Canada.

On Maundy Thursday His Eminence was with the Sourp Hagop community of Montreal, a parish which has retained many of the centuries-old traditions of the Armenian Church. The Pastor, Rev. Archbishop Ashjian, celebrated one of the most important Liturgies in the Christian calendar which has special significance because it is a remembrance of the Last Supper. "This ceremony is central in the Christian world. As the last liturgical day before the Paschal Vigil, it has the benediction of the oil. As the last day of the antique Lent, it has the office of the penitents; as the day of the institution of the Eucharist and the beginning of the Passion, it has the solemn Eucharist and the Washing of the Feet. All these culminate in the service of Tenebrae commemorating the betrayal of Judas, Jesus' arrest and judgment," Archbishop Ashjian explained.

The faithful of St. Hagop Cathedral in Montreal follow many traditions which have been lost in other parishes including one tradition which Archbishop Ashjian says as far as he knows survives in only two parishes: St. Hagop in Montreal and St. Gregory in Aleppo, Syria. During the Divine Liturgy at noon, the faithful come to church bearing breads, cookies, raisins, dried fruits, which are placed on a table set up at the nave of the church. After the Liturgy the bounty is shared. "This is a remnant from a tradition whose roots are in the Book of Acts, where St. Luke describes how the first Christians came together and brought with them food that they shared on the Communion table," Archbishop Ashjian said. Following this service the faithful attended lunch in Aharonian Hall where, in another tradition, the parishioners shared a Lenten meal of *vospov kufte*.

During the Washing of the Feet ceremony at St. Hagop Cathedral Archbishop Ashjian washed the feet of sixty young men and boys. "I always enjoy going to Montreal for Holy Week," Surpazan said, "because so many of our traditions are intact. The talented choir participates in the moving ceremonies including the Thursday night vigil, Tenebrae, which lasts a full three and one-half hours."

During the Tenebrae service, in yet another tradition, the faithful take a string and make a knot as each one of the seven gospels is completed, forming a bracelet of seven knots which is worn for the next forty days. Archbishop Ashjian noted that although this tradition survives in many Armenian churches in the Middle East, at St. Hagop it has become an "industry" as parishioners hurriedly prepare scores of bracelets to give to relatives.

Good Friday

St. Hagop Cathedral and its surroundings were packed with a multitude of people who came to take part in the entombment service. St. Hagop is one of the few churches within the Prelacy which marks this service in a traditional way with great pomp. The tomb, lavishly decorated with flowers, is taken around the church in a procession and the faithful rush up to it as it passes by. The flowers this year were donated by Jirair Shadakhtzian in memory of his father.

Holy Saturday

Leaving Montreal Archbishop Ashjian next went to Boston where he presided over the Great Saturday and Easter Sunday services at St. Stephen's Church.

"The Church has taken off the clothes of mourning and has put on the raiments of glory. We are filled with spiritual courage and hope of eternal life," said His Eminence. The Pastor, Rev. Antranig Baljian, read the Prelate's Easter message and Archbishop Ashjian read the Easter message of His Holiness Aram I, Catholics of the Great House of Cilicia.

Following the Easter services, Archbishop Ashjian described the church hall as a "war zone" as hundreds of the

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In Step Together or Fall Together...



CROSSROADS

A PICTORIAL REVIEW OF PRELACY AND PARISH ACTIVITIES



A total of \$405,000 was raised for St. Illuminator's School and the Armenian Center in Woodside, New York, in December. The School and Center have embarked upon a expansion and renovation project. Mrs. Isabella Avedissian, seen above with Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, led the donors with \$250,000. The Washington Heights chapter of the Armenian Relief Society donated \$100,000.



After an absence of several years, the Paregentan Weekend again took place in Worcester with good attendance in spite of a severe snowstorm. Archbishop Ashjian, who managed to get to Worcester with great difficulty, is seen with some of the clergy in attendance: (left to right), Rev. Gomidas Baghsarian, Rev. Antranig Baljian, His Eminence, Rev. Vazken Bekiarian, Rev. Khatchadour Boghossian, and Rev. Daron Stepanian.



Parishioners attended regular vigils during Lent at All Saints Church in Glenview, Illinois. Students of the higher grades of the Daniel Varoujan Saturday School participated in the services.



Archbishop Ashjian with Robert Kocharian, President of the Republic of Mountainous Karabagh, during the President's visit to the U.S. in February. Also in the photo is Alexander Arzoumanian, Armenia's representative to the United Nations. Archbishop Ashjian gave President Kocharian another installment of funds for the renovation of the village of Talish which the Prelacy undertook last year. The President said that thanks to this aid, families are returning home.



Four young men were ordained at St. Gregory's Church, Indian Orchard, on March 24. Called to serve as acolytes were Daron and Stepan Stepanian and as deacons, Bedros Setian and Nishan Baljian.



Ordination services for acolyte and deacons took place in Providence's Sts. Vartanantz Church on February 18. Ordained were Vigen Rushouni, Levon Attarian, and Aris Khatchadourian.



The National Association of Ladies Guilds sponsored a very successful mid-atlantic seminar on Saturday, April 13 at the Prelacy. The morning session featured noted cardiologist, Dr. George Dermksian whose lecture was titled, "Madam, How is Your Heart?" His presentation resulted in a lively question and answer period. The afternoon session featured an informative and interesting lecture and slide presentation by Dr. Vazken Ghougassian, about "The Armenian Churches in New Julfa (Iran). Lunch was hosted by the Prelacy Ladies Guild.

ՊԷՏՔ Է ՎԵՐԱՆՈՐՈԳՈՒԻ ՍՈՒՐԲ ԹԱԴԷՆՆ 1700-ԱՄԵԱԿԷՆ ԱՌԱՋ

Պարսկաստանի հիւսիս արեւմտեան շրջանը գտնուող Ատրպատականի Հայոց պատմական թեմը հարուստ է եկեղեցիներով: Արդարեւ, Թաւրիզի, Նոյի, Սալմաստի, Ուրմիոյ, Մակուի եւ Արտազի շրջաններուն մէջ կը գտնուին աւելի քան հարիւր սրբատեղիներ, վանքեր, մատուռներ եւ եկեղեցիներ, որոնք պերճախօս վկայութիւնն են հայ ժողովուրդի հարազատ ոգիին, ստեղծագործ հանճարին ու խորունկ հաւատքին: Անոնք նաեւ եզակի գոհարներ են հայ ճարտարապետութեան:

Անցնող դարերու ընթացքին ի՞նչ զոհողութեամբ կանգնեցան անոնք, եւ ի՞նչ զոհողութեամբ մնացին կանգուն պատմութեան փոթորիկներուն, բնութեան աներկներուն ու թշնամիներու քանդումներուն դիմաց: Անոնցմէ իրաքանչիւրը կենդանի պատմութիւն մըն է, տեսակ մը մանրամասն հայոց պատմութեան: Անոնցմէ իրաքանչիւրը քարէ պատարագ մըն է՝ դարերու աղօթքն ու հաւատքը իր մէջ խտացուցած: Անոնցմէ իրաքանչիւրը անլուրդ կանգնած պատմութիւն մըն է՝ քսան դարերու մէջ արմատացած ու քսան դարերու սրբութեամբ ու նահատակութեամբ պայծառակերպուած հայ քրիստոնէութեան:

Եկեղեցին մեր ժողովուրդին համար քար ու սիւն, կամար ու գմբէթ չէ: Եկեղեցին մեր ժողովուրդին համայնական կեանքն է՝ դարերէն եկող ու դարերուն գացող: Ա՛յս հաւատքով շինւեցան մեր եկեղեցիները: Ա՛յս հաւատքով վերաշինուեցան ու պահուեցան մեր եկեղեցիները: Իր քանդուած տունէն առաջ մեր ժողովուրդը Աստուծո՛յ տունը շինեց, այլ խօսքով՝ իր ճշմարիտ ու յաւիտենական տունը, անոր խառնելով իր սէրն ու հաւատքը, իր աղօթքն ու խունկը:

Ատրպատականի պատմական եկեղեցիներու մէջ տակախն կան վերաշինութեան կարօտ եկեղեցիներ: Այդ եկեղեցիներուն վերաշինութիւնը Մենք կը նկատենք հրամայական պահանջ ու համագոյն պարտաւորութիւն, որովհետեւ անոնք մեր հոգեւոր ու մշակութային ժառանգութեան անկորնչելի հարստութիւնը կը կազմեն եւ իբր այդպիսին կը պատկանին ամբողջ հայութեան: Հետեւաբար, չէ՛ կարելի անտարբեր մնալ համագոյն այս պարտաւորութեան դիմաց: 2Է՝ կարելի լքել այդ վանքերն ու եկեղեցիները կիսաւեր վիճակին մէջ: 2Է՛ կարելի ընդունիլ որ օտարներ գբաղին անոնց վերաշինութեամբ: Ընդհ չէ, այսօր մեր ժողովուրդը շատ աւելի կարեւոր ու անյետաձգելի կարիքներ ու առաջնահերթութիւններ ունի: Եւ հետեւաբար, հսկայ ծախսեր ենթադրող վերոյիշեալ նախաձեռնութիւնը այս հանգրուանին ստիպողական անհրաժեշտութիւն մը կրնայ չնկատուիլ: Սակայն կը խորհինք, որ յատկապէս Սուրբ Թադէի վանքին ու եկեղեցւոյ շինութիւնը կենսական է ու անմիջական, հետեւեալ պատճառներով:—

1. Երբ մեր ժողովուրդը կը պատրաստուի տօնելու Հայաստանի մէջ քրիստոնէութեան պետականացման 1700-ամեակը, այս շրջագծէն ներս Ս. Թադէն պէտք է արժեւորուի որպէս սրբավայր ու կենդանի վկայարան հայ եկեղեցւոյ առաքելականութեան:

2. Ս. Թադէն բազմիցս ենթակայ ըլլալով անբուժելի, այսօր կը գրտնդի լուրջ վտանգներու դիմաց: Հետեւաբար, պէտք է վերաշինութեան աշխատանքներուն անմիջապէս սկսիլ:

3. Ս. Թադէն Սփիւռքին մէջ ուխտագնացութեան ամենէն կարեւոր սրբավայրն է: Հարկ է վերստին լուսարձակի տակ բերել Ս. Թադէն հայ կեանքէն ներս:

4. Ս. Թադէն հայ ճարտարապետութեան սքանչելի գոհարներէն մէկն է: Պէտք է փրկել զայն ամէն գնով:

Այս ուղղութեամբ մեր ժողովուրդի զաւակներուն ազնի ուշադրութեան կ'ուզենք յանձնել հետեւեալը:—

ա. Ատրպատականի պատմական



A southwest view of St. Thaddeus Monastery in Iran.

եկեղեցիներու ու վանքերու վերաշինութեան համար յատուկ յանձնախումբ մը նշանակուած է, որուն մաս կը կազմեն Պարսկաստանի երեք թեմերուն՝ Թեհրանի, Ատրպատականի ու Նոր Զուղայի Առաջնորդները իրենց թեմական իշխանութեանց ներկայացուցիչներով: Յիշեալ Յանձնախումբը կը գործէ Մեծի Տանն Կիլիկիոյ Կաթողիկոսութեան անմիջական հովանաւորութեան ներքեւ:

բ. Վանքերու Նորոգութեանց Միջ-Թեմական Յանձնախումբը իր կարգին յառաջացուցած է մասնագիտական յանձնախումբ մը, որպէսզի վերաշինութեան գործը յառաջ տարուի մասնագիտական մօտեցումով ու գործակցելով հնագիտական վայրերու նորոգութեանց պետական յանձնախումբին հետ:

գ. Մասնագէտներու գնահատանքով եկեղեցիներու ու վանքերու նորոգութիւնը կը կարօտի շուրջ 400,000 Ամերիկեան տոլարի: Այս գումարին մօտաւորապէս կէսը պէտք է տրամադրուի Ս. Թադէի վանքին վերանորոգութեան:

դ. Հոս կ'ուզենք յատուկ գնահատանքով յիշել «Երկիր եւ Մշակոյթ» կազմակերպութիւնը, որ իր հիմնադրութեան առաջին իսկ օրէն մօտէն հետաքրքրուեցաւ Ատրպատականի շրջանի մեր պատմական եկեղեցիներու ու կոթողներու ու յատկապէս Ս. Թադէի եւ Ս. Ստեփանոսի ապահով պահպանման ու վերանորոգութեան աշխատանքով: Վստահ ենք, որ յիշեալ կազմակերպութիւնը վերանորոգ խանդով իր գործօն մասնակցութիւնը պիտի բերէ այս յոյժ կարեւոր նախաձեռնութեան:

ե. Վերոյիշեալ նպատակին համար կատարուելիք նուիրատուութիւնները պիտի հաւաքուին Անթիլիասի Կաթողիկոսարանին մէջ, եւ ապա պիտի փոխանցուին Վանքերու Նորոգութեանց Միջ-Թեմական Յանձնախումբին: Հետեւաբար, նուիրատուութիւնները կարելի է դրկել հետեւեալ հասցէին:—

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Beirut-Hammond Branch
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Սիրելի՛ հայորդիներ, նկատուի ունենալով մեր կեանքի ներկայ պայմանները ու տակաւ աճող այլազան ու բազմազան կարիքները մեր ժողովուրդին թէ՛ հայրենիքէն ներս եւ թէ՛ Սփիւռքին մէջ, չենք ուզեր պաշտօնական հանգանակութեան ձեռնարկել: Սակայն, սրտագին կոչ կ'ուղղենք ձեր բոլորին, որպէս շօշափելի արտայայտութիւն մեր հոգեւոր ու մշակութային արժեքներուն նկատմամբ ձեր ունեցած նախանձախնդրութեան, կարելիութեան սահմաններուն մէջ մասնակից

դառնալու յոյժ նուիրական ու անչտաձգելի գործին:

ԱՐԱՄ Ա. ԿԱԹՈՂԻԿՈՍ
ՄԵՍԻ ՏԱՆՆ ԿԻԼԻԿԻՈՅ

Անթիլիաս, Լիբանան

His Holiness Aram I recently announced that the Catholicate of Cilicia will embark on a project to restore several Armenian religious landmarks located in Iran's Aderbadagan Prelacy, especially the monastery of St. Thaddeus. His Holiness expressed the hope that the St. Thaddeus renovation would be completed in time for the 1700th anniversary of Armenia's adoption of Christianity as its national religion.

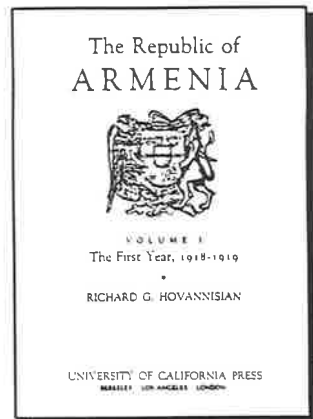
The Catholicate hopes to raise \$400,000 for the overall project, with half of this amount going toward the renovation of St. Thaddeus. His Holiness commended the efforts of the Land and Culture Organization which many years ago began the renovation of St. Thaddeus and St. Stepanos Monasteries, and he expressed the hope that the LCO would again participate in preserving and maintaining these historic sites.

Donations can be sent to the address and account designated in the article at the left. (See bottom half of second column.)

—Editor



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This article by His Holiness Aram I appeared in a recent issue of the Ecumenical Review. Catholicos Aram is Moderator of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches. It was written in preparation for the Eighth Assembly in 1998.

Gospel &

by Aram I

THE question of Gospel and Culture is an old ecumenical concern. Practically all the major ecumenical gatherings have, in different contexts and from different perspectives, touched the issue. This complex question has re-emerged in a new context and framework, and has acquired a focal attention in the life and witness of our churches and the ecumenical movement. With this concern in mind, the Central Committee in Johannesburg called the Council and its member churches "To explore afresh the relations between the Gospel and culture," and its implications for the pluralistic societies of today. As you know, this study process will lead us to the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in November/December 1996. The theme of this Conference is "Called to Hope: The Gospel in Diverse Cultures." Gospel and culture will then become one of the major foci of the Eighth Assembly in 1998.

Since the Council has already embarked on a dynamic process of intense theological reflection, discussion and exploration on local, regional and global levels, it is appropriate at this point that we, as the Central Committee, make our own contribution to the process.

Three features of modern society deserve our attention: First, what we call pluralism has become an existential and global reality. It has penetrated all spheres of life, introducing new fears, hopes and challenges. Second, due to close interaction between culture, religion and ethnicity, cultures have become sources of social, political, economic, religious and ethnic divisions and tensions. Third, Western society has considerably changed its identity, having become a technological society which breeds secularism and spreads a mono-culture.

The churches' close identification with cultures raises critical missiological questions for the ecumenical movement. The encounter between the Gospel and cultures in pluralist societies poses a major challenge to the churches to *develop a new vision of missio Dei*. For many years, the question was how to relate the Gospel to cultures. Now the question is how to liberate, transform, and re-orient the cultures. Let me try to point out some significant aspects of this challenge and identify, in the perspective of Gospel-culture interaction, a few vital dimensions of the emerging new vision of mission.

Culture in Crisis

Contemporary cultures are in deep crisis. They have become the arena for new powers of evil, destruction, dehumanization and death. What then are the symptoms of the growing cultural crisis?

Culture is the self-expression of a group of people in time and space. It is an expression of life, a mode of becoming oneself, a way of relating to one another and to nature. Culture thus embraces the wholeness of language, tradition, beliefs, institutions and customs that hold a community together. Culture is a complex reality that includes spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features. The ethos, the self-identity of people, is manifested through culture. Culture, then, is a dynamic reality, and as such is subject to change. Culture and religion are intimately interrelated, and in many societies they express themselves through each other, conditioning each other. While for religions such as Judaism, Islam and Hinduism, the founding culture is the sacred model for encountering the ultimate reality, for Christianity culture has instrumental and transitory value.

The world is moving towards one dominant culture. The emergence of this new global mono-culture seriously threatens humanity and all of creation. Produced by modern advanced technology and the market economy, the new global culture is based on profit, quantitative growth and exploitation. It denies participation, sharing and equal rights. It dehumanizes and disintegrates local cultures and alienates people from their cultural

roots. This new and dominant culture is a product of Western culture which is overwhelmed by norms and patterns of relationships that call into question its own quality, integrity and credibility. In fact, Western culture is dominated by an economic materialism that reduces value-judgment to the calculation of costs and benefits. It is sustained by a growth-oriented value that disregards the dignity of the human person and the integrity of creation. It is guided by an uncritical secularization that affirms the humane at the expense of the Divine.

Canberra spoke of "hidden ideologies" that are deeply rooted in our culture; ideologies that introduce new cultural norms; paradigms, and value systems. These "hidden ideologies" embodied in Pizza-Huts, MacDonalds, Coca-Cola, etc., now infuse the entire globe. By transmitting these "hidden ideologies," electronic global communication has transformed the whole ethos of cultures. The growth of secularism and consumerism has marginalized Christian values. Cultures are dominated by ethics which are more and more counter to the Gospel. Cultures are in moral and spiritual decay. The dominant cultures worship the idols of secularism. Their counter-Gospel values are easily spreading across cultures. People in affluent societies are searching for meaning through such counter-culture paradigms as neo-fascism, religious fundamentalism, the esoteric, the occult. Western cultures are characterized by ethical relativism. Some people believe that this ethical relativism ensures tolerance and mutual respect between people; others, however, believe that it destroys the ethical foundations of societies and is leading them to total disintegration.

"Culture and religion are intimately interrelated, and in many societies they express themselves through each other, conditioning each other."

Humanity and the whole of creation are moving from theo-centrism to antro-po-centrism. Humanity has created new power centers, called economy, communication, technology. In its pride, humanity has forgotten its finite nature. The growing perception of self-sufficiency of the people has made cultures lose the sense of dependence on, and accountability to, an ultimate reality, sacred and mystical dimensions of cultures have become secularized. The horizontal has established its predominance. In other words, secularism, materialism and technology have made cultures exclusively human-oriented, yet less humane.

Cultures are concerned with sheer human survival and growth-oriented development. All values are based on it. Life is not taken as the fulfilment of God's purpose. "Having" has become the criterion and *raison d'être* of cultures. The cultures of today are not only destroying the meaning and vocation of human life, they are capable of destroying life itself. Instead of becoming a means of human self-realization, cultures have become a means of human self-destruction. The question is not one of the *relationship* between Gospel and culture, but one of the very *presence* of the Gospel itself, particularly in those cultures that used to be referred to as "Christian cultures." In the midst of cultures of fear, hopelessness, violence and death, how do we proclaim the Gospel? How could the Gospel by its life-generating action become a source of liberation, renewal and transformation? The Gospel is Jesus Christ, not written book. It is the living encounter between God and humanity. Hence, the Gospel is the beginning of a new humanity and a new world. It is with such an understanding of the nature of the Gospel that I would like now to outline some of the significant aspects pertaining to the role of the Gospel in contemporary cultures.

From Indigenization To Contextualization

The Gospel becomes relevant and reliable when it is communicated to people through their own culture. The Word was incarnate in a given cultural context. He must be re-incarnated in a specific culture and find appropriate human response through it. Therefore, the Gospel is received, experienced, affirmed and proclaimed through a culture. Culture plays a crucial role in the God/humanity dialogue. In this regard, one should keep in mind the following points:

1. The Gospel is experienced and expressed in different ways at different times. While God's self-revelation took place in Judaic culture, Pentecost was the manifestation of God's impartial action in all cultures. Since Pentecost, the Gospel has taken root in several cultures. Church history reveals that any authentic response to the Gospel has always been contextual. In fact, the Gospel is contextual by its very nature. The Christ-event is the saving event of God and, as such, pertains to all of humanity and creation. The uniqueness and universality of the Gospel is experienced and continuously affirmed in the diversity of cultures. This is its strength. The Gospel makes the church a confessing community of one faith in many cultures.

But how can the various cultural expressions of Christian faith enter into dialogue with each other? The church suffered enormously for not having been able to develop a creative dialogue among the various expressions of the one Gospel. Diversities of expression and interpretation led the church to polarization and division. I believe that it is the task of the ecumenical movement to develop an ecumenical hermeneutic which will establish

mutual understanding among the churches as they confess and proclaim one Gospel in diverse cultural contexts.

2. The Gospel should not simply be transmitted from one culture to the other; it must be re-incarnated. Being God's saving act in the life of human beings, the Gospel must be fully re-owned by people in and through their own cultural forms, patterns, norms and values. The Gospel deals with God/humanity relations, therefore it cannot be isolated from the concrete world. It has to be incarnated in the life of human beings and the community.

The Orthodox Churches have the rich experience of rooting the Gospel in their cultures. There, the Gospel has permeated all aspects and dimensions of community life. In an Orthodox context one cannot speak in terms of Gospel/culture relations—only of Gospel/culture identification. This is particularly true in my own Church. The penetration of the Gospel into Armenian life was described by our historians as the process of Armenianization of the Christian faith. The Gospel loses its authenticity and relevance without a dynamic process of genuine inculturation which is not merely an adoption or an adaptation, but a conscious response and a faithful commitment to Christ in a concrete place and through a specific culture. In our missionary involvement we may use all the technological facilities of communication we have; we may develop new missionary strategies and methodologies. But the issue is not efficient communication, it is not strategies or methodologies. The issue is how to incarnate the Gospel in a cultural context and make it a transforming reality; the issue is how to bring different cultures in dialogue to express the universality of Christian faith.

3. The Gospel should cross all human frontiers and be taken to all people, cultures and lands. The Gospel is not only a

reality to be lived out (in-reach), but a reality to be taken out (out-reach). It is a missionary event which calls for missionary engagement. However, crossing frontiers must be accompanied by respect and sensitivity to the cultural values and norms of the other. Mission must proclaim the Gospel through the receiving culture; missionaries must not seek to impose their own culture. When the Gospel imposes a new culture, it destroys the existing one. In many places, Western missions have introduced cultural norms and values that alienated local Christians from their own cultures. Missionary outreach meant cultural outreach. Thus to become Christian meant being "Westernized." There were also cases—very few, indeed—where the Gospel was taken to people through a process of contextualization. I can give you here the example of Danish missionaries in the Armenian Church. They did not bring with them the Danish culture; they did not bring the Lutheran confession. They learned Armenian and accommodated to the Armenian way of life, solely in order to serve the spiritual needs of the Armenian people. The ecumenical movement challenged the assumption that the Western culture is the Christian culture, and that any Christian culture must follow its example. It is time now to go back to the authentic roots of cultures.

Some of our churches which were formed by colonial rule still carry much of its symbolism. However, they are now rediscovering their cultural identity. They realize that, in order for the church to survive in Africa, it has to become African; the church in Latin America must become Latin American; the church in the Middle East must become Middle Eastern. In other words, the "new" churches are seeking to become self-nourishing, self-governing, self-ministering in their own cultures in openness and dialogical interaction with other churches and cultures. Alienating from culture is alienating from the Gospel. The Gospel distorts its own nature and vocation when it aims to change the identity of indigenous culture and subjugate the people to a supra-culture. This old model of mission that marked a certain period of history is now reappearing in the countries of the former USSR. Western sects are not only bringing with them a distorted Gospel but also the Western culture. The ecumenical movement must remain constantly alert to this threat.

4. The Gospel cannot exist without some form of inculturation, but it is never exhausted by any particular culture. It transcends every culture; it is trans-cultural. God assumed humanity in a particular culture to restore it to its authenticity. The blind identification of the Gospel with a particular culture is the negation of the very nature of the Gospel. Christ meets us in our own cultural contexts. He is confessed through specific cultural patterns and forms. The Gospel is affirmed *through* cultures, not *in* cultures. Culture is only an instrument, framework and context to embody and articulate the Gospel. During the colonial era, mission emphasized the text and ignored the context, while during the post-colonial era, mission focused on context to the extent of losing sight of the text. How can we go beyond the Jesus of history who is so deeply rooted in our cultures, and identify ourselves with the Christ of faith? In fact, the identification of Gospel and culture is so close in many churches that it may result in endangering the universality of the Gospel by substituting the one for the other. Incarnating the Gospel in a culture is one thing, but making a culture a source and criterion of revealed truth is something else. The Gospel helps us to be genuinely indigenous yet critically open to other cultures.

The fear that churches were substituting culture for the Gospel was expressed sharply in Canberra. Should we limit ourselves to our specific context? Can we transcend our specific understanding and

Culture

Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia

expressions of the Gospel? How can the universal Gospel become particular, and how can we express the universality of the Gospel in the midst of particularities? Is there a transcultural identity that must be given due consideration by the churches and the ecumenical movement? Answers to these questions provide the alternative vision being sought by the ecumenical movement in the Gospel and Culture reflection process. This vision affirms that the Gospel creates a dynamic dialogue of cultures and finally leads people to one Christ through cultural diversities. Therefore, we have to take care that the growing global ecumenical culture does not dominate the cultures of particular churches. We must have a contextual approach to mission which avoids both total indigenization and globalization, and which conceives mission as the re-incarnation of the Gospel in a context that is open to interaction between cultures.

Pluralism: A Fear or a Hope?

As the world becomes more and more pluralistic, the question of how to proclaim the Gospel in a multi-cultural context acquires critical urgency and priority. Growing cultural interaction often resulting from uncritical use of non-Christian cultural elements and categories in the Christian church raises some controversial questions. For some this is a threat to mission. For others it provides a greater possibility to Christian mission for an efficient outreach. Canberra challenged churches to move beyond formal encounters to a "culture of dialogue." On this it is important to make the following observations:

1. Cultures are no longer self-contained; they constantly engage in dialogue and interact. Population movements have virtually made every part of the globe multi-cultural. The old boundaries between Christian West and Muslim East, White North and Black South, have disappeared. I wonder whether Hendrik Kraemer would have given the same title to his well-known book, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, had he written it today? In fact there is no Christian world or non-Christian world today. The world has become one place, one community, where cultures cannot maintain themselves apart from each other. They interrelate and interpenetrate. Is multi-culturalism a threat or a challenge, a weakness or a strength? The inter-relatedness of all cultures is affirmed by the Gospel. A dialogue of cultures is integral to the nature of the Gospel. The ethos of the Gospel encourages cultural pluralism. It affirms inclusiveness in culture. Cultures are mutually inspired, corrected, challenged and enriched through creative dialogical relations.

On this point, two realities merit our attention: first, this dialogical interaction is between a technologically advanced Western culture and a subordinate non-Western culture. Therefore, it may result in domination, assimilation or conflict. Second, we find a cultural rigidity among minorities. They maintain their specificity through their culture. Culture is a safe refuge for survival. Hence, any threat to culture is a serious threat against the very existence of these ethnic groups. But this growing search for ethnic roots in today's societies, manifested most concretely through cultures, may become a destructive force by generating exclusiveness; it may also become a source of reaffirming one's authenticity. In fact, the survival of the Armenian people in a Diaspora situation after the Genocide is due to the Armenian culture.

2. The whole Gospel for the whole world! This is the missionary calling of the church. Dialogue is not an alternative to mission; dialogue should not compromise our faith. We have again and again reminded ourselves of this basic missionological stand. We have made a clear distinction between witness and dialogue, at the same time affirming their inter-related-

ness. We are now much more open to people of other cultures and faiths, willing to learn more from them and to share with them our concerns and perspectives. We are coming to a better understanding of the ways in which Gospel and cultures interact. Therefore, we have to be bold in our proclamation of the Gospel and, at the same time, humble in our interfaith dialogue. In other words, I believe that responsible dialogue with other faiths and firm attachment to the uniqueness of the Gospel are not contradictory. The inclusiveness of the Gospel helps it to establish dialogue and remove the barriers of a given culture.

But what does it mean to have a missionary calling in a world of many faiths? What are the missionary challenges of living in close inter-dependence with other faiths? The fear of syncretism will always be with us as we try to relate the Gospel to other cultures. But such a legitimate concern should lead the church in its missionary calling to take with renewed awareness and vision the uniqueness and universality of the Gospel and the enduring validity and urgency of its call to make disciples of all nations. This is not an aggressive evangelism; it simply means that the church in pluralistic societies must take more seriously and responsibly the message of the Gospel.

San Antonio referred to the need for a holistic understanding of mission. What does this mean? We cannot accept the so-called "larger ecumenism" that advocates the kind of dialogical interaction with religions that may relativize the basic foundations of Christian faith. For Christian mission, Jesus Christ is the center of all inclusiveness and absoluteness. In Him all particularities merge. Mission is a faithful wit-

"The ecumenical movement challenged the assumption that the Western culture is the Christian culture, and that any Christian culture must follow its example."

ness to Christ; it rejects unfaithful compromise. Yet, as stated in San Antonio, "Christian theology cannot give adequate expression to the missiological thrust of the Christian vision unless it is thoroughly dialogical in its stance and style. Witness does not preclude dialogue but invites it, and that dialogue does not preclude witness but extends and deepens it." Since our existence is a missionary one, our very existence as God's people must be dialogical."

A Criterion for Judging Culture

It is a basic missiological conviction that the Gospel has a prophetic role vis-à-vis cultures. In fact, Christ shared a specific culture; He affirmed and at the same time judged it. God's assuming humanity through a particular culture was intended to be a sign that every human culture is under the same promise and judgment of God. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ put an end to all cultural claims. The Gospel is related to every culture—critically, creatively and redemptively. A culture is under judgment from beyond culture. But what is the criterion for judging a culture? The ecumenical movement has not been able to spell out clearly such a "Gospel criterion." Is it not the time for us to work together for an ecumenical ethics that clearly outlines the demands and imperatives of the Gospel? Is it not the time to re-emphasize the inter-connectedness that exists between mission and ethics? At this point, let me offer the following remarks:

1. The Gospel is the self-revelation of God. Cultures are devoid of meaning without God's revealing presence which transcends all cultural patterns, norms and values. Only the Gospel can give a real value to cultures by introducing transcendental, spiritual and eschatological dimensions. Therefore, the Gospel should challenge secularist, consumerist and mil-

itarist "values" that have become norms in many cultures.

2. The Gospel should reject cultural superiority and any hierarchy of cultures. All cultures are equal and full of inherent ambiguities that make them susceptible to both false and true prophecy. Technological progress, economic growth and political power are creating cultures of evil and death that, in turn, are polarizing societies. Hence, the Gospel should re-orient cultures so that they may overcome this power of evil and death.

3. Technological progress has given cultures the impression that their power is indestructible. The Gospel must challenge this arrogance of cultures. God's powerlessness challenges human power. The encounter of Gospel and culture is the encounter of God's humility and human pride, God's faithfulness and human unfaithfulness, God's love and human rejection. The Gospel is a reminder of cultural limitations and human finiteness. The power struggle is not between the Gospel and cultures, but between the Gospel and the "powers" within any culture which dehumanize and enslave people.

4. Cultures have broken the human community. They have bred injustice and oppression manifested through sexism, racism, classism and poverty. Many cultures are still patriarchal, discriminatory and exclusive. This is a root cause of many conflicts. How can the Gospel help to eliminate the mutual exclusiveness of cultures? How can the Gospel challenge injustice and exploitation and struggle against oppressive and life-destructive structures and values? The prophetic judgment "must begin at the house of God" (1 Peter 4:17).

5. The Gospel in its turn is challenged

by the cultures in which it finds itself. The Gospel itself is marked by peculiarities of specific cultures. In Gospel/culture interrelations, culture may question particular understandings of the Gospel which are alien to its norms and perceptions. A culture cannot become a criterion to judge Gospel. Yet a culture cannot accept any cultural patterns and norms pertaining to Gospel that are not compatible with its own.

The Gospel: God's Liberating Presence

We have already stated that cultures are in crisis. They are in need of transformation. In Gospel/culture relations, the Gospel not only challenges and judges cultures, but also shapes, purifies and transforms them, giving them a new identity. This process of transformation implies liberation and renewal.

Today more than ever, humanity is exposed to a great variety of evil and destructive forces that are manifested through cultures. Cultures today offer fear, confusion and disorientation. Violence is the most characteristic feature of contemporary cultures. Militarism, consumerism and socio-economic injustice have produced the kind of violence that threatens human life and the whole creation. Humanity is directly and constantly exposed to the "culture of death." How can we transform this "culture of death" to a "culture of life"? How can we enhance life-promoting cultures? The Gospel is a Gospel of life. Whatever is opposed to life is the rejection of the Gospel. The Gospel of life is a reality made manifest in Jesus Christ. In Him the Gospel of life was fully and concretely given to humanity born as a gift and as a task. Through the life-affirming message of the Gospel, the churches should challenge the cultures of violence and death, and proclaim and celebrate the Gospel of life over against the

"culture of death."

The World Convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation in Seoul, Korea (1990) called for a culture of active non-violence. In Johannesburg we established, within the WCC structure, a new "Programme to Overcome Violence." Violence is caused by a lack of justice and meaning. To combat violence we must eradicate these root causes; reaffirm the sacredness of life; promote justice and respect for human rights, and restore human dignity. To overcome violence through "active non-violent action" is now a clear ecumenical strategy. This strategy should undergird all ecumenical actions. Its aim ought to be to develop "a just peace culture" where conflicts are resolved through non-violent action.

Cultures are deeply affected by human sin. Exploitation, domination and inhumanity generate violence, poverty and unemployment. According to estimates in the United States, a crime is committed every minute. You cannot stop crime by collecting weapons from the streets or putting murderers in jail; you stop crime by transforming cultures, by liberating them from their inherent evil forces and providing them with the power to struggle against social injustice, moral degeneration and economic exploitation.

The Gospel should become incarnate in a given culture so that it liberates those whom it holds and does not make them captives of culture. The Gospel is a liberating event—it liberates cultures from their self-imprisonment. Any culture that generates alienation and exclusiveness negates the Gospel. In some situations the Gospel itself has become a captive of culture, while in others, the Gospel has alienated people from their own cultures. In some of our churches the indigenization of the Gospel has produced parochialism. The ecumenical movement should help the churches to assert both their identity in culture and their identity in Christ which is beyond every culture. The first without the second is a source of imprisonment.

The Gospel renews cultures; it promises a new life: "Behold, I make everything new" (Rev. 21:5). Christ did not bring a new culture; He did not destroy the Jewish culture; He renewed and transformed it. In his missionary activities, St. Paul did not seek to replace cultures with a "Christian culture." Rather, he called for the liberation of what is authentically human within the culture (Acts 17). In the Gospel/culture encounter, the vertical and the horizontal engage in existential dialogue. The Gospel is the breaking in of the vertical and transformation of the horizontal from within. Many of our churches have gone through similar enriching and transforming experiences. I refer again to the experience of the Armenian Church. With the coming of the Gospel to heathen Armenia, the Armenian culture underwent a dynamic process of inner transformation. Many of the heathen cultural patterns and elements, customs and traditions remained the same, but they were "Christianized" by changing their meaning and identity.

The Gospel restores wholeness and integrity to cultures. God's saving act in Christ is to restore wholeness to His creation (2 Cor. 5:19). Salvation includes the cultures; it also embraces the totality of the life of societies, i.e., humanity/God/creation relationships. In drawing persons around Him, Jesus recreated humanity by making it a community of shared life, and by giving it a common identity. In the Gospel, cultures are healed and their integrity is recovered and affirmed.

The Gospel: A Reconciling or A Dividing Factor?

The Gospel is a unifying factor in the midst of cultural diversities. It may also become a divisive factor. In other words, a culture provides a basis for bringing people together as well as a basis for excluding others. Let me elaborate on this point.

(Continued on page 4)

Gospel & Culture (Continued from page 7)

In cultures, particularities have become walls of division. They have also become forces of defense, self-protection and survival. In the Gospel, the local and the global interact. The Gospel makes people affirm their cultural identity, and at the same time it enables them to transcend their cultures, to become part of a global community. But can the Gospel really play a unitive role in those cultures which are producing so many polarizations and confrontations? We should not forget the religious and confessional dimensions of some of the prevailing conflicts. I believe that the Gospel as a unitive factor must acquire a crucial importance in the societies torn apart by so many tensions and contradictions.

In the Gospel there is a creative interdependence and complementarity between the one and the many. The Gospel is a concrete manifestation of what we call in ecumenism "unity in diversity" and "diversity in unity." The one Gospel is received, experienced and proclaimed within the diversity of cultures. And cultures are reconciled and come together through the Gospel. Belonging to one Gospel does not preclude belonging to different cultures. Missions alienated people from their own cultures; the Gospel became a divisive force. Such a missionary methodology and practice belong now, I hope, to the past. Any missionary initiative that brings division and tension is simply proselytism and must be rejected. Western missionaries who are currently carrying on activities in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and in Africa must constantly be reminded of this basic concern.

The Gospel is also a healing reality. The Gospel is not taken to others only through teaching and preaching, but also through healing. The English words "healed" in Acts 4:9 and "salvation" in Acts 4:12 both come from the same Greek root *sothenai* meaning "to be made whole." This dimension of wholeness is almost forgotten in our missiology. Healing as being made whole is, in fact, reconciliation. It brings together those who were separated. The Gospel is God's healing presence. In the midst of cultures that create tensions and separation, the Gospel is called to promote reconciliation. The Gospel is a call for *metanoia*, a renewed relation with God and creation. It is a message of divine reconciliation in Jesus Christ addressed to the whole world. In the world where there are so many wounds, we badly need the healing presence of the Gospel.

Christian Mission Facing New Challenges

What new perspectives and tasks are opening up for Christian mission in a world where geographical and cultural boundaries are removed, distances are shortened, and humanity is moving towards one inter-dependent community?

Recently in one of my readings I came across the following question: "Does the church have a mission in the contemporary world?" In our missionary thinking and engagement, we have reached the irreversible convictions that, first, mission is not the church's "mandate" but God's "initiative"—it belongs to God, it is *missio Dei*. And, second, mission is not one of the functions of the church—it is the *esse*, the *raison d'être*, and the action of the church by which the church becomes fully and authentically itself.

Hence, mission pertains to the whole people of God. The concepts of "missions" and "missionary agencies" which still prevail in some of our churches must be revised. We have to think and act in terms of one mission of the one and the whole church. Mission has become multi-dimensional; it is no longer merely a matter of sharing the "Good News" among people. The church's mission is to promote *Koinonia* in a world where cultures have brought divisions; it is to judge, heal, liberate and transform the cultures which generate injustice and violence. And mission has become multi-directional. It is no longer from West to East and from North to South—it takes place in each and in all places, from and to all directions. Mission has also become multi-cultural. It is no longer a Western or a Northern enterprise; it is essentially a cross-cultural venture. Therefore we need the kind of mission that is not dominated by the peculiarities of one locality and one culture. The



Catholicos Aram I with Patriarch Alexei, leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, during the Catholicos' recent visit to Moscow.

mission of the church is not just to proclaim the Gospel but to live it, articulate its demands, and be a sign of the kingdom. A reincarnation of the Gospel in the cultures of today remains a basic missionary concern. We must develop an incarnational missiology.

The church has been a major factor in preserving cultural identity and cultural values. It has also been an efficient instrument for imposing culture on an unwitting group. Many of our churches are closely identified with their cultures. In a world where small nations and ethnic minorities are struggling to reaffirm their ethnic and cultural identities, how can the ecumenical movement help the churches to break out of their cultural captivity and transcend their cultural boundaries while at the same time remaining faithful to their cultural heritage and identity? The Gospel affirms cultural identity and promotes a dialogue of cultures. A holistic approach to mission which has become a new ecumenical strategy must take this dimension seriously.

The ecumenical movement must develop an ecumenical hermeneutic to enable churches to understand each other across cultural boundaries. This has become, in fact, a growing concern in the past few years. The *koinonia* that the Gospel proclaims is inclusive community, open community, a community for others. Canberra appealed for a "wholeness" of the mission of the church. The aim of the Gospel is not to convert people to a specific culture but to proclaim Jesus Christ. Mission is by its very nature and aim a cross-cultural and multi-ethnic outreach that embraces all cultures, the whole of humanity and of creation. The church is called to become an inclusive community, it should not aim at an "inclusive culture." The churches and the ecumenical movement must give due consideration to this challenge.

The church is a reality "in each place" and "in all places," as is mission. Taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth is the unequivocal mission of the church. But mission is primarily the *in-reach* of the church, not simply an "overseas" or "foreign" enterprise. In the past we have perceived mission as being exclusively the outgoing of the church. We organized mission to six continents. The growing globalisation has considerably marginalized our missionary concern for "all in each place." Without losing this global dimension and vision, the churches should now engage in serious missionary work at home. The global missionary outreach of the church becomes more credible and efficient if it is authenticated by a local missionary engagement. In other words, the supra-national, supra-cultural and ecumenical character of mission acquires validity when it emerges from a concrete missionary situation. Therefore, a renewed dynamism ought to be given to the contextual dimension of mission.

Mission should enhance and orient the

dialogue of cultures. But the question is, How to "speak the truth" (Eph. 4:15) in cultures which have different criteria for truth? The tension between the Gospel and culture will never be resolved. The Gospel will always challenge those aspects of culture that are not compatible with the Gospel. God took the path of humility and dialogue in order to make Himself known. Should this not also be the way of Christian mission? Let us not forget the call and challenge of San Antonio to carry on our mission "in Christ's way." The dialogue between Gospel and culture is the encounter between divine love and human pride. Human pride destroys; divine love builds, liberates, transforms, reconciles.

The role of the ecumenical movement, which is called to speak and act in the name of the Gospel, is to re-orient cultures towards the kind of humanity/creation/God relationship that is portrayed in the Gospel and given as a gift and call of God. "One world—one culture" is a dangerous illusion. The ecumenical movement itself—being a concrete manifestation of the creative dialogue of cultures—will never accept such an agenda offered by the world. The ecumenical vision remains more than ever towards one Gospel in many cultures, towards one humanity in a reconciled diversity.

Therefore, in obedience to the Gospel message, the role of the ecumenical movement is, first, to call the cultures to quality of life that is manifested in its fullness and authenticity through the Gospel; second, to give wholeness, integrity and authenticity to cultures and converge them towards the crucified and risen Christ; and, third, to help the churches speak and act together in the common language of the Gospel by affirming *life* in the midst of cultures of death, *peace* in the midst of cultures of violence, *justice* in the midst of cultures of injustice, and *Koinonia* in the midst of cultures of conflict and division.

The coming millennium brings with it a new way of being a missionary church in a new world. ✚

*He has a very hard heart
who does not love May.*
—French Proverb—

Holy Week (Continued from page 3)

faithful joyfully engaged in battles with colored eggs.

"The Great Week is truly filled with inspiration," the Prelate concluded. "Each day has its own special meaning and message which becomes spiritually uplifting. And perhaps most important of all, each year the traditions and lessons of Holy Week are transmitted to yet another generation of Armenians." ✚

World Council of Churches Issues Statement on 1915 Genocide

Konrad Raiser, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches issued the following statement:

Having just returned from an official visit to the Armenian Apostolic Church, Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin, I want to associate myself with the Armenian people as they are commemorating today the beginning of the Armenian Genocide on April 24, 1915. During my stay in Armenia, I was able to visit the deeply impressive national monument and to place there a wreath on behalf of the World Council of Churches honoring the memory of the victims of the genocide.

No one can stand in front of the eternal flame or see the evidence of the genocide in the museum without being deeply moved and stirred in heart and soul. Yet, commemorating the Armenian genocide today in a free Armenia points beyond the tragic legacy of this century. On the eve of the Second European Ecumenical Assembly at Graz, 1997, our remembrance must lead to the pledge that such horrors shall never happen again. People of faith are called to be agents of peace and reconciliation! May God bless the efforts at rebuilding the lives of the church and the people of Armenia and grant her to live in security among her neighbors.

Konrad Raiser
General Secretary
World Council of Churches
April 24, 1996
Geneva, Switzerland



Warning Bell

Gen. 19:18

Church Bell of Love

John 3:16

Dinner Bell of Grace

Matt. 22:24

School Bell of Light

Matt. 11:29

Work Bell of Life

Matt. 21:28

Tolling Bell of Death

Heb. 9:27

Board of Trustees Seminar (Continued from page 1)

Zadoian, spoke about "Administrative Unity of the Church in North America." Mr. Zadoian, who is vice chairman of the Prelacy's Executive Council, gave a concise history of the administrative split in North America and presented a report of efforts being made to unite the Church.

Each session was followed by a question and answer period which gave participants the opportunity to ask specific questions pertinent to their parish.

Closing remarks were offered by Very Rev. Anoushavan Tanielian, who on behalf of the Prelate, offered words of thanks to all of the participants and to St. Stephen's Pastor, Board of Trustees, and Ladies Guild for their exceptional efforts and generous hospitality which insured the overall success of the seminar. Similar regional seminars are planned. ✚