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forum

Հիսիսային Ամերիկայի Հայ Աւետարանական Միութեան Պաշտօնաթերթ
The Quarterly Journal of the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America

**Why Jesus Came
to Our World**

**How to Make the
New Year a
Life-Changing Event**

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Cover: The twin peaks of Ararat are a fitting symbol of our national identity; whereas, the open Bible reveals the foundation of our Christian faith. The two columns represent the Old and the New Testaments. In Armenian miniature art, the two peacocks with their intertwined necks symbolize love, which is the supreme virtue in Christianity.



Forum

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There is an amazing piece of art by a Korean artist named **Elder Rhee**. It is not a painting, but a picture created by writing thousands of words in shaded letters with a fine-tipped pen. It is actually the entire New Testament written out by hand. There are about 185,000 words handwritten on a unique scroll with an average of a thousand words per line. The work took the artist two years to complete. The amazing scroll is only 6 feet long and 4 feet wide. The letters are drawn in such a way to create a picture of Jesus Christ surrounded by 27 angels who represent the 27 books of the New Testament. The artist wishes to convey the message that the New Testament reveals the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Our God did not simply write us a letter instructing us what to do and how to live. He did not send us a heavenly angel to act as His representative. He did not send us a prophet to declare His laws from a mountaintop. He sent us His only Son to reveal His enormous love, His character, His will and His readiness to forgive penitent sinners. The Infinite Creator became an infant!

When Jesus returned to His hometown, Nazareth, after His baptism in the Jordan River, He stood up in the synagogue and read Isaiah 61:1-2. That passage constitutes a brief summary of the Messiah's mission: to preach good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, and to proclaim freedom for the captives.

Booker T. Washington was born a slave who, after emancipation, became a famous educator. In his autobiography entitled *Up From Slavery* he tells the following experience. "The most trying ordeal I was forced to endure as a slave boy was the wearing of a new flax shirt that was made of coarse and rough fiber. Whenever I wore it, it felt like a hundred small pins were piercing through my skin. My brother John, who was several years

older than I, generously agreed to wear my prickly shirt in my stead until it was broken in." Jesus came to this world to share the human experience and to take our burdens upon Himself without participating in our sin.

Today, people still ask, "Why did Jesus come to our planet?" In addition to the answers already given, I will enumerate a few more, cognizant of the fact that the list is by no means exhaustive.

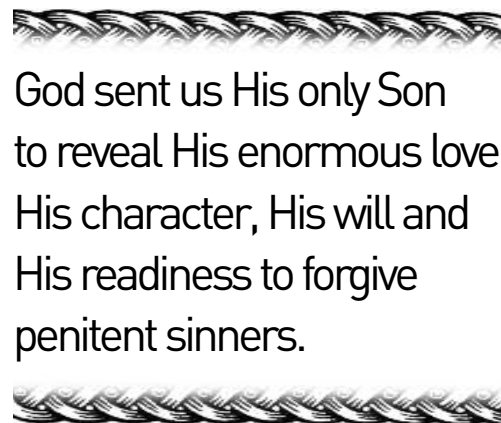
(1) In Mark 1:14, we are told that **Jesus came to proclaim the good news of the Gospel**. When we sinned, God did not forsake us, but He sent His only Son, in the likeness of human flesh, to redeem us. Our Savior willingly, without any external coercion, left the glories of heaven and came to this sin-cursed world, not only to dwell among us, but also to bear our sins. He who knew no sin, came to die in the sinners' place. The Son of God condescended to become the Son of Man in order that we, through faith in Him, might become the sons and daughters of God and share in His eternal life.

The Gospel is a message of utmost urgency and encouragement. Without the Gospel, the church would be reduced to the status of a cultural society. Preaching the Gospel is the proclamation of the good news of salvation, not only the giving of good advice. A preacher is a publisher of glad tidings. At the center of the Christian Gospel is the announcement that God has not left us alone as orphaned children. One of the peculiar names given to Jesus is "Immanuel" which literally means "God with us." Our Earth is the planet that was visited by God.

In 1994, two Americans answered an invitation from the Russian Department of Education to teach morals and ethics (based on Biblical principles) in the public

schools. They were invited to teach at prisons, business establishments, the fire and police departments, and at a large orphanage.

It was near the holiday season when, for the first time, the orphans heard the traditional Christmas story. The Americans told the orphans about Mary




God sent us His only Son to reveal His enormous love, His character, His will and His readiness to forgive penitent sinners.


and Joseph arriving in Bethlehem and finding no room at the inn, had to stay at a stable, where Jesus was born and placed in the manger. Throughout the story, the children, according to one of the Americans, "sat in amazement as they listened. Some sat on the edges of their stools, trying to grasp every word."

As a follow-up activity to the story, each child was given three small pieces of cardboard to make a crude manger. Each child was also given a small yellow napkin to be torn into strips and carefully laid in the manger for straw. Small squares of flannel from a discarded nightgown were used for the baby's blanket. A doll-like baby was made from pieces of tan-colored felt.

As they made their way around the room to observe the children, this is what one of the Americans noted: "All went well until I got to one table where little Misha sat. He looked to be about 6 years



The Gospel is a vast rescue operation for people who have lost their bearings.



old and had finished his project. As I looked at the little boy's manger, I was startled to see, not one, but two babies in the manger. Quickly, I called for the translator to ask the lad why there were two babies in the manger."

The observer goes on to note that Misha very accurately recalled the story that had been told until he came to the part where Mary put Jesus in the manger. Then, Misha started to ad-lib. He made up his own ending to the story as he said, "And when Maria laid the baby in the manger, Jesus looked at me and asked me if I had a place to stay. I told him 'I have no mama and I have no papa, so I don't have any place to stay.' Then Jesus told me I could stay with him. But I told him I couldn't because I didn't have a gift to give him like everybody else did. But I wanted to stay with Jesus so much, so I thought about what I had and hoped that it could be a useful gift for him. I thought maybe if I kept him warm, that would be a good gift. So I asked Jesus, 'If I keep you warm, will that be a good enough gift?' And Jesus told me, 'If you keep me warm, that will be the best gift anybody ever gave me.' So I got into the manger, and then Jesus looked at me and he told me I could stay with him – for always."

As little Misha finished his story, his eyes brimmed full of tears that splashed down his little cheeks. Putting his hand over his face, his head dropped to the table and his shoulders shook as he sobbed and sobbed. The little orphan had found someone who would never abandon or abuse him, someone who would stay with him ALWAYS!"

Suppose you had been one of those coal miners trapped several hundred feet below the surface of the earth in West Virginia, a couple of years ago. What

would be the greatest words you could hear under those circumstances? Would they not be "I am found"? The Gospel is a vast rescue operation for people who have lost their bearings. The Gospel rescues us from a meaningless existence.

We are living in an age of estrangement. People are estranged from God, the source of their being. Is this not the meaning of sin? After all, sin is rebellion against God's authority. Sin is trying to live as if God does not exist. Our sin separates us from God, but wonder of wonders, our sin does not separate God from us! At times we desire to flee away from God, but He does not abandon us. When we declare war against God, He does not declare war against us. His attitude towards us remains one of unconditional love. How much easier it would have been for God to either leave us to our own devices when we first sinned, or to rain fire down from heaven and destroy us for our sin! The fact that He did not resort to such actions shows that He has no hostility towards us, and that He did not remain distant. Through Jesus Christ, God is closer to us than our heart that beats within our chest.

(2) In Luke 19:10, we are told that **Jesus came to our world to seek and to save the lost sheep**. All of us, without any exception, have sinned and lost our way. Like a good shepherd, Jesus leads His lost sheep to the fold of safety.

The Bible is a very unflattering book because it dares to tell us the truth about ourselves. If it is flattery that we are seeking, we had better leave the Bible unopened and unread. In Isaiah 53:6, we find the following highly uncomplimentary fact: "We all, like sheep, have gone astray; each of us has turned to his own way." This verse contains the central truth about human nature. We have a propensity for getting ourselves thoroughly lost. Men and women feel lost in the complexities of modern life. We constantly complain about the multiplication of conveniences which cause us so much inconvenience to get them, to pay for them and to maintain them.


The Bible declares that we, human beings, not only feel lost and get lost, but that we also go astray in a particular way. We lose our way like sheep, which means

that we deviate from the right path by our own carelessness, inattention and negligence. Whenever we lose our way, we cannot place the blame on our neighbors, or on our special circumstances; we have only ourselves to blame. This is confirmed by the Bible, "Everyone has turned to his own way."


Most of us don't drive into trouble; we gradually drift and slide into it by following the impulses of our desires. We do not, for instance, say to ourselves, "Let us pollute Lake Erie by making it a wastebasket for our factories." We do not say, "Let us kill all the fish and fill the lake with toxic chemicals." The fact is that we have created a new Dead Sea by our continuous carelessness and indifference, despite warnings raised by concerned citizens and scientists over a long period of time.

Being lost should not be the last condition of the sheep. We all need to have a caring shepherd. A football team cannot function without a coach. A symphony orchestra cannot perform without a conductor. A regiment of soldiers cannot go to battle without a captain. A school cannot operate without a principal. We all need the Good Shepherd, Jesus, because He has the passion to seek out lost sinners, and He has the power to save them.

Jesus Christ was not like a roving reporter looking for sensational stories to tickle the fancy of the curious. He roamed



Jesus has the passion to seek out lost sinners, and He has the power to save them.




the highways and the byways aggressively looking for the troubled and seeking those in distress. As long as we follow Jesus, we are not in the "Lost Articles" section, but in the "Lost and Found" department.

Just as a sheep's place is with the flock,


our place is with fellow pilgrims in the church. Christ's great prayer was that, under God, there would be one flock. We all need one another. I can get along well with anyone who believes in a higher power, but I find it impossible to get along with someone who believes he, himself, is the highest power. The safety and wellbeing of the sheep are ensured only when they listen attentively to their Master's voice.

(3) In John 10:10, Jesus declares, **"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."** The Greek word used for "life" in this verse is not "bios", which refers to our physical existence, but rather the word "zoi" was selected because it signifies an energetic and uncommon life that is perpetually renewed. Undoubtedly, the abundant life is eternal life that only Jesus can impart. Millions of people around the world have all the necessities of life, but paradoxically, they find no meaning in life. They have everything to live with, but nothing to live for!

It is an incredible misfortune that the Christian faith has been misrepresented as




The safety and wellbeing of the sheep are ensured only when they listen attentively to their Master's voice.




putting the lid on life, and subtracting from the enjoyment of life by diminishing its pleasures. To be sure, Jesus denounces all forms of perverted pleasure and self-indulgence, especially if their pursuit inflicts indignity or pain upon others. Christianity does not mean the restriction, but rather the genuine enhancement of life as God meant it to be. When a person surrenders himself to Jesus, he becomes liberated from the slavery of pride, anger, hatred, lust, egotism and spiritual

blindness.

The Apostle John, in the epilogue of his Gospel, says the following about Jesus: "In Him was life and that life was the light of men"(John 1:4). Here we find another



Through our connection with Jesus, we are enlightened, acquire the ability to think clearly, perceive reality without having delusions, and weigh matters objectively.



dimension to abundant living. Through their connection with Jesus, human beings are enlightened, acquire the ability to think clearly, perceive reality without having delusions, and weigh matters objectively.

On March 15, 1994, **Deputy Sheriff Lloyd Prescott** was teaching a class for police officers at the Central Library in Salt Lake City. During a break, he stepped into the hallway and saw a gunman forcing 18 hostages into a nearby room. Prescott, who was dressed in civilian clothes, fell in line with the group and became the 19th hostage. When the gunman announced the order in which the hostages would be executed, Prescott identified himself as a police officer. A scuffle ensued and Prescott, in self defense, shot the gunman, but all the hostages were released unharmed.

Like officer Prescott, Jesus dressed Himself like one of us, and entered our world to ransom us because we were held hostage to sin and in danger of spiritual death. In Philippians 2:6-8, the Apostle Paul says that Christ, who had equal status with God, set aside His divine privileges, and condescended to come to this world in human likeness to save us.

Paul Harvey tells a story about a modern man who was not a scrooge. He was a kind, decent man, generous to his family, and upright in his dealings with others. But he had one problem: he did not believe in the doctrine of incarnation proclaimed by churches at Christmas time. It just didn't make sense to him and he was too honest to pretend otherwise. He just could not swallow the "Jesus story" about God coming to earth as man. "I'm truly sorry to distress you," he told his wife, "but I'm not going with you to church this Christmas Eve." He said he'd feel like a hypocrite if he did. So, he decided to stay home, but promised to remain awake until his wife and children returned from church. He stayed, they went.

Shortly after the family drove away in the car, snow began to fall. He went to the window to watch the flurries getting heavier and heavier, then went back to his fireside chair and began to read his newspaper. Minutes later, he was startled by a thudding sound. Then another and another. At first, he thought someone must be throwing snowballs against his living room window. When he went to the front door, he found a flock of birds huddled miserably in the snow. They had been caught in the storm and in their desperate search for a shelter, they had tried to fly through his large landscape window.

He couldn't let the poor creatures lie there and freeze. He remembered the barn where his children stabled their pony. That would provide a warm shelter, if he could direct the birds to it. He quickly put on his coat and galoshes, trampled through the deepening snow to the barn, opened the door wide, and turned on a light. But the birds did not come in. He figured food would entice them in and he hurried back to the house, fetched bread crumbs, sprinkled them on the snow making a trail to the lighted and wide open doorway of the stable, but to his dismay, the birds ignored the bread crumbs, and continued to flap around helplessly in the snow.

He tried directing them into the barn by walking around them and waving his arms, but they scattered in every direction without going into the warm and lighted barn. Then he realized they were afraid of him. To them, he reasoned, "I am a

Jesus was born in the flesh, but not of the flesh; therefore, He is able to vanquish sin and death in the same region where they had won their victories.

strange and terrifying creature; if only I could think of some way to let them know they can trust me, that I'm not trying to hurt them, but to help them!" But how? Any move he made tended to frighten and confuse them. They just would not follow his directions. They would not be led because they feared him. "If only I could be a bird myself," he thought. "If only I could be a bird and mingle with them and speak their language, and tell

them not to be afraid, and show them the way to the safe, warm barn! But I'd have to be one of them, so they could see and hear and understand."

At that moment the church bells began to ring. The sound reached his ears above the howling of the wind. He stood there listening to the church bells pealing the glad tidings of Christmas. He sank to his knees in the snow and prayed, "Lord, forgive my unbelief. Now I can understand why you had to become like one of us."

(4) In John 9:39, Jesus says, "**For judgment I came into this world.**" One evidence for the reality of judgment is our conscience. We cannot do wrong and feel right. We become inwardly torn apart when we go against what we know is the revealed will of God. Another example is that we cannot do wrong and expect to get a good result. If we do not first seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, then our whole life will go haywire and become completely unmanageable.

During World war II, a British preacher made the following observation: "We ignored the ringing of church bells, now they ring to warn us of air raids; we left the churches half-empty, now they are in

ruins; the money we wouldn't give to the churches is taken from us in taxes; the nights we wouldn't pray, we spend now in fear by huddling in air-raid shelters."

The famous historian, **Arnold Toynbee** says, "Fourteen of the twenty-one great civilizations vanished into dust, not by external defeat, but by inner decay because they became instruments that God could no longer use." Judgment means that God sets a limit to immoral practices and unjust policies. Societies that are contrary to God's will, may endure for some time, but like a Christmas tree severed from its roots, they eventually will collapse and die. No one can do wrong and expect to get a permanently good result from it. Evil has no enduring power. Judgment is God's intervention in our affairs, frustrating our purposes when we oppose His will.

Jesus was born in the flesh, but not of the flesh; therefore, He is able to vanquish sin and death in the same region where they had won their victories. The mighty Roman Empire disintegrated, and the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Religious Council that condemned Jesus to death, no longer exists, but the love of God revealed in the Manger of Bethlehem and on the Hill of Calvary endures forever. **f**

An APPEAL

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Dear Editor,

Dear Editor,

I read with great interest the two articles about "Predestination and Free Will" in your spring issue and also the letters in response that appeared in your fall issue. One of these letters carried the signatures of five of our Pastors who belong to the new generation and most of whom, if not all, are less than 30 years old. I am very proud of our young ministers and happy that young members of our church are dedicating their lives to serve God. At the same time, I am concerned that they are adopting a doctrine that is certainly foreign to the Armenian Evangelical Church.

I have been attending Armenian Evangelical Churches regularly for almost fifty years now and had never heard of "predestination" until a few years ago when my younger brethren Pastors started graduating from certain Theology Schools. In fact, these young Pastors never preach predestination from the pulpit because they know well enough that it will only create confusion and misunderstanding in the minds of the congregation.

My brethren Pastors feel confident of their position because they have found several verses in the Bible that support election or predestination and yet they ignore John 3:16, which assures salvation to ALL that believe since God loved the WHOLE world, and that certainly includes everybody. Therefore, everybody is loved by God and is chosen by God to be saved and yet only those who believe will be saved. I certainly believe that Jesus died for everybody and not just for those who are "chosen".

The Apostle Paul himself repeats this in Romans 1:16 where he says of the Gospel "...it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes..." and in Romans 2:11, "For there is no partiality with God."

If I were to believe that I was predestined to be saved while my poor neighbor did not have a chance in heaven because he was predestined to be condemned, then I become like the Pharisee who said: "God I thank you that I am not like other men..." while the tax collector said, "God be merciful to me a sinner"(Luke 18:9-14). Jesus accepted the plea of the tax collector and rejected that of the Pharisee.

Faith is a decision made by our free will; we cannot be predestined to have faith just like a computer that is preprogrammed to run in a certain manner. If salvation is by predestination, then faith becomes useless and meaningless. There is no room for faith in the doctrine of predestination. There is no room for hope in the doctrine of predestination because those who were not predestined to be saved truly have no hope. Finally, there is no room for love in the doctrine of predestination because that would mean that God only loves those whom he elects and hates the rest of mankind. How can God, the perfect Father, in his infinite love, condemn his sons to death even before they were born! It's like saying that charcoal is white; it is meaningless.

Faith, hope and love are the main pillars of Paul's Christian faith, and I am afraid that those who accept the doctrine of predestination misunderstand or misinterpret what the Apostle really had in mind.

Nazareth E. Darakjian, M.D.

Dear Rev. Terian

Dear Rev. Terian,

I want to thank you and the Forum staff for the wonderful journal that you lovingly prepare each quarter. It is a wonderful avenue of expression for our AEUNA community and I see it as a gem whose splendor we all enjoy.

The phrase “the elephant in the room” is used to focus our attention on the fact that an incredibly important issue that is highly relevant to all other topics being discussed is on everyone’s mind, but no one is speaking up about it.

Let’s take the situation one step farther. Let’s talk about what might happen next if we don’t identify the elephants and tackle them. Someone recently introduced me to the concept of “slow death” within organizations. Slow death is a situation in which people know there are problems, but fail to act; they do not want to rock the boat; they do not want to risk disruptions; they want to keep doing things as they have been and let someone else figure it out later, or better yet, maybe it will go away; they do not wish to take on the personal risks that standing up to the issues might require; they do not want to risk schism. In such a situation, the problems continue to fester beneath the surface, slowly and imperceptibly sucking the life out of the organization.

To me the concept of slow death is no different than the evils we face everyday. As Christians, we know the life of Christ was the antithesis of this. His life on earth epitomized growth and challenge and spiritual splendor. We know He fought on a daily basis against slow death. He loved to use everyday examples to teach people how to fight the slow death. He taught us that to combat it, we need a firm belief in God and all that He represents - unwavering confidence in God’s love, and a deep desire to accept the challenges before us.

We have only to answer a few simple questions to understand this. Do the gifts of individual members have an opportunity for full expression within our churches?

Dear Rev. Terian,

I would like to thank you from the depths of my heart for publishing "Life Is What's Happening Outside the Black Spot" article written by Lacreata Scott, in the December 2007 issue of the Forum. The Lord has used it to teach me a valuable lesson for which I am very grateful.

Sirvart Saboundjian
Décines, France

How do we address differences in religious understanding? Have we advanced as an organization? What have we given back to the community? Are we meeting the needs of our people spiritually, emotionally, and physically?

I would love to see the AEUNA combat this slow death with full vigor. I would love to see the AEUNA start off by identifying the elephant in the room. Ask yourself this question: What is it that causes me to feel pain when I think of our community? The answers to this question will help us see the elephant and begin our journey of transformative growth. This will be the first step to stopping and hopefully reversing that which keeps us from achieving our full spiritual potential.

Respectfully yours,
Susan Jerian, MD
Oak Park, CA

In their joint letter objecting to the articles on Calvinism in the June 08 issue, the five cosigners state that they considered expressing their opposing views, but chose not to because it would have led to “an unedifying war of words.” I’m not entirely sure how to evaluate that statement.

On the one hand, it suggests that for these young men, respectful debate of opposing theological views is simply impossible without the discussion becoming unmanageably belligerent. This is one area where pastors should offer their flocks a paradigm of courteous, irenic, yet substantial discourse. That these present and future church leaders are unable to do so is troubling, to say the least.

On the other hand, it shows a high degree of self-control coupled with a keen insight into one’s own shortcomings. These traits are not only inherently laudable, but they are especially necessary for pastors who must set an example of humility and moral behavior for their congregations.

If pride is indeed the chief sin, then it follows that humility ought to be the chief virtue. In that case, the five cosigners are ultimately to be praised for exercising a wisdom beyond their years and holding their fire in this public setting. If respectful engagement is out of the question, then silence is the next best thing.

David Bogosian
Glendale, California

The God Portrayed in Christmas

Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian

Nowhere in the world religions, other than Christianity, is there an equivalent assertion of divinity entering human time and space as He did on that first Christmas. The Transcendent, Omnipotent Deity became human. In Apostle Paul's words, "He took upon Himself the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men" (Philippians. 2:7). Here is the heart of the Christian faith: God became man in order to set free the sinful humanity from the bondage of sin; in order to be a bridge between heaven and earth. This was, and still is, God's greatest gift to mankind.

Unless we understand what Christmas means and whose birthday we celebrate, it will be no different than any other day of the year. We can embellish it, as most of us will, with family and friends, but it will be a day of new and wonderful hope only if we put Christ in Christmas.

In declaring to the world what they believed about Jesus Christ, the early Church used these words, "I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ . . . God of God, Light of Life, Very God of Very God, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven."

The God we find in Christmas is a God who revealed Himself as a loving and giving God—a God who loved mankind so much that He gave His Son for their salvation.

The Loving God

God came for us and for our salvation. He came to save us from a life separated from God. Sin had driven us away from God. A

horde of enemies descended upon us—hatred, fear, greed, lust and loneliness.

The world is alienated from God – people with their guilt, their brokenness, their separation from the source of their lives; humans without hope in the world; humans in cruel competition with their fellowmen whom they disdain. This is the world God loved so much that He sent His Son to save – a world filled with lives lost to God.

Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, came to save us for a life returned to God. He came to this world and gave His life to reopen the passageway between human beings and their Lord. Here, with our sins forgiven, we can walk with God again.

The Impact of the Loving God

At Christmas time we think of Bethlehem, that little Judean town, where Christ was born. Bethlehem was the meeting place where two thousand years ago some interesting people converged on: the angels hovered over the adjoining hills with their message; the wise men from the East, led by a star, ended their long and weary journey there; Herod's troops swept down its streets and left death and lamentation in their wake.

All had come because a child was born in Bethlehem. Jesus Christ, the Lord of lords, left His heavenly home to walk the ways of men. The heavenly hosts sang their ecstasies, the shepherds looked on in wonder, the wise men lavished their gifts, and hell lashed out through Herod's swordsmen.

We, too, may have a Bethlehem where

we can join with the humble and the great to adore the Lord, and where the Lord Himself awaits our worship. Bethlehem is in our hearts. Here in our hearts we either receive Him or reject Him. At Christmas time, let us ponder again the wonder of His coming and make room for Him in our lives.

The Giving God

More than two thousand years ago, at the first Christmas, God gave mankind His greatest Gift. In the person of Jesus Christ, He gave Himself to humankind; He became "Emmanuel" (which means "God with us").

Whether one uses the metaphor of God as a loving parent or shepherd or king, God's character, God's heart, is pictured as a giving heart. God loves to give and His motive for giving is love. God does

Jesus came to this world to reopen the passageway between human beings and their Lord.

not give to us because we have done anything to deserve His Gift. Like a parent showering birthday presents on a beloved child, or a lover giving precious gifts to his beloved, or a hero giving his

life to save the life of a stranger, God gives for the joy of giving and for His love of humankind.

The Impact of the Giving God

God's giving is a wonderful model for us to follow. His great Gift has engendered freedom and joy in people so that Christmas has become a festival of gifts. Gift giving is a beautiful custom, especially during the holy season of Christmas. Gift giving to the needy is even more blessed. But tragic it is if the myriad of lesser gifts that pass from person to person should distract human beings from the most unique gift, which is theirs through the Christ Child. For it is in Him, and in Him alone, that we have the

gift of a glorious and endless life.

Following God's example of giving, St. Luke relates in his Nativity account that when the angel told Mary she was to be the vehicle of bringing His gift to mankind, her response was "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said" (Luke 1: 38).

Mary gave herself fully, and by doing so she gave one of the best gifts a person could possibly give. Her willingness to submit to God's will and become the mother of the Incarnate Son of God was a response to God's supreme demonstration of love.

Likewise, the Wise Men from the East, when they found the newborn King, gave Him their gifts of gold, frankincense and

myrrh as well as themselves in homage. Thus, Christmas is a reminder of God's Gift to mankind, and mankind's response to that Gift. We give because God has first given to us. And the best gifts we can give are those that are expressions of love, care and concern, a part of our own selves.

In Christmas we celebrate the coming of Christ. Through His life Christ made God visible for all to see—the loving and the giving God. Now we are faced with the challenge of making Christ so real that people can see Him through us. 🙏

Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian is the Executive Director of the Armenian Evangelical World Council

The Day After Christmas

By Stephen Sheane

Around our house we start putting up decorations a month before Christmas. Our children's focus is usually on Christmas morning. They wake up and open their presents. Then we go to church and come home for a big meal. Then it's over. At the end of the day, when all the gifts have been opened and there's nothing under the tree, then Christmas is over. For many it is anticlimactic. However, what comes after Christmas is perhaps the most important part about it. I always used to look forward to the after Christmas sales. The day after Christmas was important. It is still important for many reasons.

In Luke 2:17-20, we read, "When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told."

In a few days Christmas will be over. The presents will have been opened and the decorations put away. Let me ask you a simple question, what will you do after the Christmas Celebration? This passage says

that there are three ways that we are to respond to Christmas.

1. Pondering – verse 19

After Christmas is good time to reflect on what you have just seen and heard. How many times have you heard the Christmas story? I'm sure most of you could come up here today, and tell the story. You have heard enough sermons, prayed enough prayers and rubbed up against the truth long enough that your heart is calloused so that the real truth cannot penetrate deep into your daily life. Familiarity breeds contempt. The first way to respond to the Christmas message is to make it fresh in your heart by pondering it in a new way.

A chauffeur had driven the chemistry professor to dozens of speaking engagements. He had heard the same canned speech scores of times. He said on the way to another engagement, "Professor, I believe I could give your speech myself; I've heard it so often." The professor said, "I'll bet you \$50 you can't." "You're on," said the chauffeur. He stopped the car and the two exchanged attire. They came to the banquet and the chauffeur dressed in a tuxedo, sat at the head of the table and was introduced. He stood up and gave the

speech exactly as he had heard it so many times before. There was a standing ovation when he was finished. The emcee got up and said, "You know, we are so fortunate to have such a fine resource with us tonight, and since we have a little extra time, let's have some questions and answers." The first question was asked and the chauffeur stood there dumbfounded, clearing his throat in nervousness. Finally with a flash of insight he said, "You know, that's just about the dumbest question I have ever heard. In fact it is so dumb I bet even my chauffeur could answer that question!"

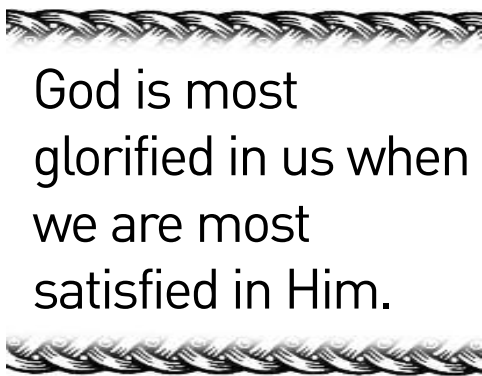
If you think about it, some Christmas traditions are very strange. The greeting on one Christmas card goes like this: "Christmas is just plain weird. What other time of year do you sit around staring at a dead tree in your living room and eat candy out of your socks." There are some things about the whole Christmas story that are amazing and unusual. A virgin teenager gets pregnant. Visits by angels. Caesar's tax. The trip to Bethlehem but no room in the Inn. God's Son born in a stable. It is all too incredible to believe. You have heard this story so many times, but have you ever stopped to really think about it?

C.S. Lewis said, "We don't need to be told

new ideas so much as we need to be reminded of old truths.”

This Christmas we remember again the true meaning of Christmas. God gave Himself for us. He was born as one of us so that each of us might be born again into the family of God. That baby born in Bethlehem is the Savior of all of us. Let's not forget the real reason for Christmas this year.

There was a wealthy European family that decided to have their newborn baby dedicated in their enormous mansion. Dozens of guests were invited to the elaborate affair, and they all arrived dressed elegantly. After depositing their wraps on a bed in an upstairs room, the guests were entertained royally. Soon the time came for the main purpose of their gathering: the infant's dedication ceremony. But where was the baby? No one seemed to know. The child's governess ran upstairs and returned with a desperate look on her face. Everyone



God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.

searched frantically for the baby. Then someone recalled having seen him asleep on one of the beds. The baby was on a bed all right—buried beneath a pile of coats, jackets, and furs. The object of that day's celebration had been forgotten, neglected, and nearly smothered. The baby whose birthday we celebrate at Christmas is easily hidden beneath the piles of traditions and cultural observances of the season. We need to enter every Advent season asking, "Where's the baby?"

2. Praising – verse. 20

The shepherds had witnessed the world's greatest birth announcement. I am sure you have heard and read those words many times, but let me just highlight one word and that is the word YOU. "But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today, in the town of David, a

Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:19-20).

The angel said to the shepherds: "I bring YOU good news of great joy. A Savior has been born to YOU. This is a sign for YOU. YOU will find the baby... The angel's message to the shepherds was that Jesus is YOUR Savior, YOUR King, YOUR Christ, YOUR gift – straight from God.

At our house, the gifts are all out and the girls have been having a great time going around and finding out which ones are theirs. They can tell which gift is which because their gifts have their names on them. The message of the angels is that Jesus is YOUR gift this Christmas.

The fact that Jesus came for you means that you need to respond to his incredible gift. What will YOU do with Jesus? How will YOU personally respond? Don't look at the person sitting beside you. Don't look at the worship teams or the pastor. God's gift is for YOU and YOU have to determine how you will respond. You respond through praising Him.

Someone once said, "We have become a generation of people who worship our work, work at our play and play at our worship." Leonard Sweet wrote: "Our pews are occupied by people who want to be moved, but who don't want to move." We crave the experience of worship, but don't work towards it; however, worship is what we were created for. God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.

In Matthew 22:37-38 Jesus says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment." What do we offer God? Giving gifts at Christmas – what do you give to the person who has EVERYTHING? We offer Him our love. How do we do that? The verse we have already read tells us how to do it. God wants us to love Him in three ways:

- a. God wants us to love Him thoughtfully – with our minds
- b. God wants us to love Him passionately – with our heart and soul
- c. God wants us to love Him practically – with all our strength

God created the entire universe and He created you, but there are three things God does not have unless you give them to Him. He doesn't have your attention (mind), or

your affection (heart), or your ability (strength), until you give them to Him.

3. Proclaiming – verses 17-18

The third way we respond to the gift of Christ this Christmas is by proclaiming Him. Treasuring Christ is something we do by not keeping Him to ourselves, but by making Him known to the whole world.

Luigi Tarisio was found dead one morning. He had lived in poverty, but in his home were found 246 exquisite violins that he had crammed into an attic. In his very devotion to the violin, he had robbed the world of all that music all the time he treasured them; others before him had done the same, so that when the greatest of his collection, a Stradivarius, was first played it had had 147 speechless years. Yet, how many of Christ's people are like old Tarisio? In our very love of the church, we fail to give the glad tidings to the world; in our zeal for the truth, we forget to publish it. When shall we all learn that the Good News needs not just to be cherished, but needs to be told? All people need to hear it. Saving knowledge is diffused over the earth, not like sunlight, but like torchlight, which is passed from hand to hand.

Just like the shepherds who went away that first Christmas to tell everyone they met, there are so many who have yet to come and see Jesus. Like the angels who interrupted the shepherds' sleep, the world today needs the light of Christ to come and wake us up from our sleep and point us to the One who can truly save.

Isaiah 9:6 states, "For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

During the American Revolution, the Battle of Blue Licks was fought at the stream that bears that name. The battle never should have been fought, for it was fought after the war was over! News traveled slowly in those days. Blue Licks is in Kentucky, and there was no quick communication over the Appalachian mountains. No one knew the war was over. In a sense, Christ won the victory over evil at Calvary. All that is left for us to do is tell the good news. 📣

Editor's Note: Rev. Stephen Sheane is the pastor of the Evangelical Church in Kuwait.

New Commitments for the New Year

By James Petticrew

Philippians 3:13-14

FORGET
YOUR
FAILURES

*Give Up
Your Grudges*

RESTORE
YOUR
RELATIONSHIPS

TURN YOUR BACK
ON YOUR
TRANSGRESSIONS



It is that time of year again when, in a fit of optimism, many of us make great promises to ourselves about what we are going to do in the New Year that we

guarantee will make a radical difference in my life and your life if you follow through on them. In fact, what I want to do is to offer to you a way of starting the New Year which could significantly change your life. Here is what I want to suggest to you: if you will make four commitments that God in His Word encourages you to make, I guarantee you that the start of 2009 could become one of the most significant events in your life. I want to challenge you to make four new commitments for this New Year.

the wrong things and the relationship ended. Some of you who are parents probably know that you failed your children in some way. Many of us are aware that we have failed our parents and, it's more than likely, that many of us know that most of all we have failed ourselves in some ways.

What God's Word is saying is that we must not allow ourselves to be bogged down by our past failures. We don't have to dwell on our past so that it stops us moving forward into the future that God has for us.

I think that the start of a New Year is a good time for you to rise to that challenge and say to yourself, "I am going to, with help of God, forget my past. I am going to stop torturing myself about what I did or didn't do." This New Year is a good time to stop being chained to your past failures. God is saying here in His Word that He doesn't want you to go through your life branding yourself as a failure.

1. COMMIT YOURSELF TO FORGET YOUR FAILURES

The Apostle Paul gives this advice: "Forgetting what is behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14). This advice from God's Word has stood the test of time. I don't know of any more relevant and practical advice for us than this one. God does not want you to live your life imprisoned by your past.

For many of us our failures are painful memories. Maybe for you it is a memory of how you failed in a relationship. You made the wrong decisions, said and did

2: COMMIT YOURSELF TO GIVE UP YOUR GRUDGES

I want you to listen to these words from the book of Colossians because in them you'll hear the second challenge I believe God wants you to rise to if you want to make 2009 a significant turning point in

God does not want you to live your life imprisoned by your past.

usually abandon about the second week in January. This year I am determined it is going to be different. I have made a New Year's resolution I know I will be able to keep for the whole of 2009. Are you ready? Here it is: I have decided to eat more and exercise less. Now, I might well be able to keep this resolution, but it wouldn't make a great deal of difference to my life, except perhaps to increase my waist size by several inches.

Today, I want to talk to you about some resolutions, some commitments, which I

your life. "Bear with each other and forgive each other whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13). Did you catch that challenge? God is challenging you directly and personally to give up your grudges. That is what He means when He says forgive each other whatever grievances you may have against one another.

What's a grudge? A grudge is a deep ongoing resentment that we cultivate in our hearts against someone else. A grudge is an unforgiving spirit that leads to unforgiving attitudes and unforgiving actions. Harboring a grudge is about nursing a dislike for someone.

What you need to know is that grudges are dangerous because they are destructive.

Grudges destroy marriages.

Grudges break up families.

Grudges ruin friendships.

Grudges split churches.

Let's be honest enough to admit that one of the scandals of the Church is the grudges that Christians hold against one another. Today, if you know you are holding a grudge against someone, then God has something to say to you. He says, "Give it up."

I want to remind you that grudges are not just destructive; they are also self-destructive. When you hold a grudge

had against his intended victim. Ultimately that man's grudge destroyed his life.

Make no mistake about it, if you keep harboring a grudge, then it will eventually destroy you, if not physically, certainly emotionally and spiritually. It will make you a bitter and twisted person. The book of Job, in chapter 21, describes people who "Have no happiness at all, they live and die with bitter hearts." Do you really want that to be your epitaph?

Do you remember that parable that Jesus told about the servant who was forgiven a huge debt by the king and then refused to forgive someone else a tiny amount? Jesus said his unforgiving spirit landed him in prison. Max Lucado makes this interesting comment in one of his books. He says, "Unforgiving servants always end up in prison. Prisons of anger, guilt and depression."

God says to you in His word "don't sentence yourself to prison." Set yourself free. Give up your grudges, "forgive each other whatever grievances you may have against one another."

According to God's Word the way to give up a grudge is to forgive a grievance. Notice what God is saying here. He isn't asking you to ignore whatever the person has done to you. He isn't asking you to pretend it did happen. He doesn't ask you to condone it, to pretend it didn't matter. What God asks you to do is to forgive the grievance.

I am absolutely certain that there are people who need to give up their grudges and forgive the grievance they have against someone else. Some of you need to forgive the grievance you have against your parents for what they did or didn't do. Some of you need to forgive your children for the same reason. Some of you need to forgive a partner for emotional or physical abuse. Some of you need to give up the grudge you have against someone at work because of the way they have treated you. Some of you need to give up the grudge that stems from an argument you had with someone. Some of you probably need to give up grudges you have against other people in your congregation. God says that that deep-seated resentment you have against people has to go. What better time to make that difficult decision to forgive than the start of a new year!

Don't tell God you can't forgive, because what you really mean when you say that is that you won't forgive. If Christ can forgive you your sin despite its involving the pain of the cross, then surely you can give up your grievance whatever the cost. The question is, will you do it?

3: COMMIT YOURSELF TO RESTORE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

Every time I turn on my computer, a little window pops up that asks if I want to run a check to see if my programs are all working properly. God in His word issues



The Lord wants you to do everything you can to restore any relationships that have gone wrong in your life.



a very similar invitation. It is the invitation not to check to see if our computer software is working properly, but to check whether our personal relationships are working properly. Here is how the Lord issues that challenge, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Romans 12:18). The important phrase here is, "as far as it depends on you." God, by using this phrase is personally challenging each one of us to do all we can to restore our relationships. The Lord wants you to do everything you can to restore any relationships that have gone wrong in your life. Some relationships might have gone wrong in your life because of what other people have done, and they might well not want that relationship restored. God recognizes that. That is why He starts by saying "If it's possible."

But let's be honest, some of our relationships have gone wrong because of what we have done, haven't they? When God's Word says here, "as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone," it is saying if you have caused a rift in a relationship, then you have a responsibility to do everything you can to restore it. That everything includes the one

A grudge is an unforgiving spirit that leads to unforgiving attitudes and unforgiving actions.

against someone, you will hurt yourself as much and perhaps more than you will hurt the person you are holding it against.

Several years ago, there was a tragic example of just how destructive grudges are. A man was killed by a parcel bomb and then a couple committed suicide a week later. It turned out that the couple who had committed suicide had sent the bomb because of a grudge that the man

thing we all probably find most difficult: asking for forgiveness. Am I the only person who finds it hardest to say, "I am sorry" to the people I am closest to? I wonder how many marriages are not all they should be or could be simply because someone won't say, "I was wrong, I am sorry, will you forgive me?" I am certain that some of us who are married need to ask forgiveness for those "harsh words and cutting remarks" that have really wounded our partners over the years.

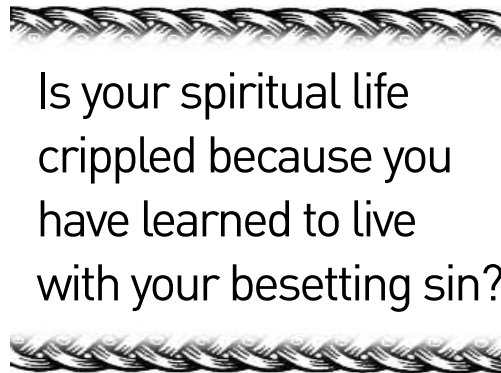
Keith Drury is a brilliant writer from the Wesleyan Church and in one of his books he touches on this whole subject of restoring relationships when talking about restitution. This is what he says: "Restitution deals with more than property. It is also going back and making things right for hurtful things I've said or done. It's far easier for me to tell you some story than to tell you of the difficult and painful times I've had to ask my wife, my boys, my boss, friends and secretary to forgive me. Restitution is asking forgiveness for harsh words, quick tongue, or cutting remarks. It is asking forgiveness from a brother you hurt, a mother you caused heartache to, or a former spouse which you maligned. Restitution is confessing and seeking forgiveness from an old business partner, neighbor, or roommate. It is admitting my past errors in relationships and humbly seeking forgiveness from the one I've hurt. And it's harder to make personal restitution than property restitution."

4. COMMIT YOURSELF TO TURN YOUR BACK ON YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS

Last year, I read a book about the American Civil War because apparently one of the leading confederate generals was called General Petticrew. I didn't find out much about my name's sake, but one of the most interesting things I did discover was that after the war was over and the slaves had been set free, many slaves decided to stay with their former master and continue to do what they were told. They were set free but they chose to live as slaves.

The New Testament says that is exactly how many Christians choose to live. Christ died to set them free, the Holy Spirit has

given them the power to be free, but just like those former slaves, they still choose to obey their old master, sin. Listen to these words, "Do not let sin control the way you live, do not give in to its lustful desires ... we are no longer slaves to sin" (Romans 6:2). This is the last challenge that I believe, if you will rise to meet, will make this New Year truly significant for you. When God says, "Do not let sin control the way you live, do not give in to its lustful desires," He is challenging you



Is your spiritual life
crippled because you
have learned to live
with your besetting sin?



to turn your back on your transgressions.

I had the photocopier engineer here the other week. He turned on the machine and the display panel flashed, "Error code". He looked at and said, "Same old fault." He then explained that each model of photocopier usually has a particular way of going wrong that happens time and time again. That is a principle that is as true in the spiritual world as it is in the electronic world. Christian writers used to talk about something called besetting sins. What they meant by besetting sins were particular sins that a particular Christian was prone to doing time and time again. For most of us, when we are saved, we give up certain sins easily, but there are other things that we know are wrong that we really struggle with. Those are our besetting sins. Many of us end up choosing to give in to our besetting sins and become conditioned to living double lives.

A man I knew had a huge growth on the neck that he ignored and refused to have it checked medically. Whenever I advised him to consult a doctor, his standard reply was: "I won't do anything about it; I have just learned to live with it." That sums up

too many Christians' attitude to their besetting sin. They won't do anything about it because they learned to live with it. I have to ask you, "Is your spiritual life crippled because you have learned to live with a besetting sin?" Do you have a quick temper that you constantly give into? Do you have a caustic tongue that loves to assassinate other peoples' characters or wound their feelings? Have you learned to live with that critical and judgmental attitude you know is wrong? Is there a sexual sin that you keep on giving in to? Have you been going too far with your boyfriend or girl friend? Have you been secretly logging on to pornography sites on the Internet time and time again? God in His word challenges you to turn your back on that sin whatever it is. Stop letting it control the way you live. He wants you to stop obeying your old master.

Let's be clear about this: Jesus' death broke the power of sin, and the Holy Spirit can give us the power to resist sin; therefore, you don't have to go into this New Year still being defeated by the same old sin. You can have the victory over it. God says you are no longer a slave to sin, so don't live like one or act like one.

It all boils down to this: Will this New Year be just a calendar changing event for you, or are you willing to rise to these challenges from God's Word, and make these commitments that will make it a life changing event?

Are you willing to make these four commitments for 2009?

Will you commit yourself to forget your failures?

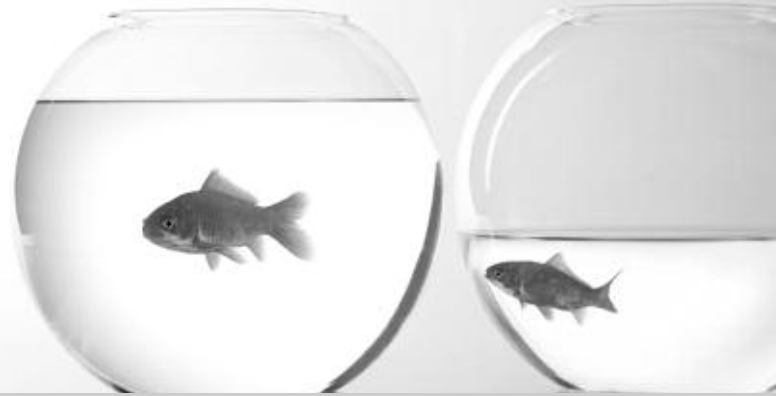
Will you commit yourself to give up your grudges?

Will you commit yourself to restore your relationships?

Will you commit yourself to turning your back on your transgressions?

This New Year will really be something to celebrate if you'll ask for God's forgiveness and refuse to remain a slave to sin. 🙏

Editor's Note: Rev. James Petticrew is the pastor of Saint Matthew's Nazarene Church in Paisley, Renfrewshire, Scotland.



Never Bless Your **Bad Impulses**

3

How human we are! We want to do the right thing, but sometimes our emotions get in the way, and we are tempted to give in to bad impulses.

Three bad impulses come to mind.

1 First is self-pity. Feeling sorry for ourselves comes very naturally! It usually starts in childhood when jealousy over who got the larger cookie kicks in. But it can easily continue into adulthood. Why? Because at times, life is clearly unfair.

Some seem to have the Midas touch with all that they do; others see their efforts fail time after time. Some suffer physical pain while others are amazingly healthy. Some lose loved ones who are very young; others are untouched by such tragedies. It is natural to go inward when we are weighed down by losses.

However, there is a huge difference between mourning a loss and falling into self-pity. Mourning is time-limited; self-pity is a way of life. Self-pity is addictive. Like all narcotics, it gives momentary pleasure. And, self-pity, as with other addictions, separates us from others.

I know a woman who has had a number of bad things happen to her in her life. How does she handle them? By complaining all the time. She can twist even a good thing in her life into something bad. Who wants to be around her? No one.

Catch yourself the first moment you begin to wallow in self-pity. Refuse the emotion. In current jargon, "Just don't go there!" If you do, you will be sorry and so will all those who have to live around you. Let the old mantra "count your blessings" run through your head to ward off self-pity.

2 Envy, closely related to self-pity, is another bad impulse. The envy-bug can bite anyone, at any time, at any stage of life. Envy sets in when we feel insecure. We compare ourselves to others. And there are endless ways to compare. Other people's children seem to be more outstanding than ours; other people are better looking than we are; other people have more prestige than we do. The list goes on and on.

Envy harms us to the core; it eats at our hearts. We hurt ourselves dreadfully when we are envious. Proverbs warns,



"He who seeks vengeance must dig two graves: one for his enemy and one for himself."



"Envy is rotteness of the bones." Envy will make you sick!

And now I have a confession to make. I began this essay several weeks ago. I was free of both self-pity and envy. Neither did I have any impulse toward **vengeance**, the third bad impulse on my list. The essay felt like it was going to be easy to write because, though I am well acquainted with struggles against all three noxious emotions, I thought I was safely

beyond battles with them. I was wrong.

In the past few weeks, someone inflicted indescribable cruelty on two people I love. What was my response? I wanted revenge; I longed to retaliate. I was obsessed with payback thoughts. If you have never responded this way, you are lucky. Either you have never been badly hurt, never had friend or family victimized, or you are just a better person than I am!

But time passed. "Vengeance is a dish best eaten cold," advises an old English proverb. When you are tempted to revenge a wrong, wait for a cooling off period.

Reflection also led me to think selfishly. If I participate in revenge, what will it do to me? I can never forget the ancient saying, "He who seeks vengeance must dig two graves: one for his enemy and one for himself." Sobering thought.

I have not changed my mind one whit about how my loved ones were treated. But I am not going to harm myself and bring more misery into the world by acting on my negative impulse. Winston Churchill once said, "Nothing is more costly, nothing is more sterile, than vengeance." Churchill was right.

An inescapable truth is that from time to time, and sometimes surprisingly, most of us are tempted to self-pity, envy, and revenge. To experience these emotions is not wrong; to cling to them is destructive.

Never ever bless your bad impulses. 🚫

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The Word


Became Flesh

By Asien Surmeian


For Christians, Christmas is known as the season of giving. Why? Is it because we celebrate Jesus Christ's birthday? If so, why don't we give the birthday Child His deserving gift? But instead, we give gifts to each other. Perhaps it's because we follow God's example. God gave first, and no one ever gave a more precious gift to us than God Himself. Two thousand years ago He gave us His Son, Jesus Christ, Whose birth we now celebrate as Christmas.

God's precious gift to the world is clearly stated in John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us..." But who is the "Word"? The Word is God, and the verse establishes His absolute deity. John 1:1 reads, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." It declares the fact of Christ's timeless existence with God the Father. "The Word became flesh," is the fact of His incarnation. His was a virgin birth. The Bible says, "When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son..." (Gallatians 4:4). God became flesh. He had to enter humankind and dwell among us,

and continue His timeless existence and deity in human form. The child born in Bethlehem was God revealed to man. Jesus is the God-Man.



It's interesting that most of us give gifts to each other, but not to the One whose birthday we celebrate!



The glorious event of God becoming man, God incarnate, for the sake of mankind, was indeed foreordained before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20). Christ came into our world to seek and to save all humanity. He came to save us from our sins. The real message of Christmas is not about a baby, or gift-giving, or good will, although these

elements are all there, but it's about the God-Man, Who came to die for us and grant us the priceless gift of eternal life when we accept Him in our hearts by faith.

Each Christmas, as we gather with family and friends, let's not neglect the true meaning of Christmas. The celebration should remind us of God's grace shown to us in His precious gift of Jesus Christ, His Son. It's interesting that most of us give gifts to each other, but not to the One whose birthday we celebrate! What gift are we planning to give Jesus Christ this Christmas? What He desires most from us is our devotion, faith and our trusting open heart. Christ died, was resurrected and ascended into heaven so one day we might live spiritually with Him forever! God loved us so much that He gave first, the most precious of all, His Son Jesus Christ, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. Let us give Him our best. After all, it is His birthday!

A Blessed Christmas to You All! 🕯️

I Corinthians 13 - A Christmas Version

If I decorate my house perfectly with plaid bows, strands of twinkling lights and shiny balls, but do not show love to my family, I'm just another decorator.

If I slave away in the kitchen, baking dozens of Christmas cookies, preparing gourmet meals and arranging a beautifully adorned table at mealtime, but do not show love to my family, I'm just another cook.

If I work at the soup kitchen, carol in the nursing home and give all that I have to charity, but do not show love to my family, it profits me nothing.

If I trim the spruce with shimmering angels and crocheted snowflakes, attend a myriad of holiday parties and sing in the choir's cantata but do not focus on Christ, I have missed the point.

Love stops the cooking to hug the child. Love sets aside the decorating to kiss the husband. Love is kind, though harried and tired. Love doesn't envy another's home that has coordinated Christmas china and table linens.

Love doesn't yell at the kids to get out of the way, but is thankful they are there to be in the way.

Love doesn't give only to those who are able to give in return, but rejoices in giving to those who can't.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

Video games will break, pearl necklaces will be lost, golf clubs will rust, but giving the gift of love will endure.



The Gospel Hidden in a Genealogical L i s t

God's Word is rich and very meaningful because it relates to all aspects of our life. Even in **the lists of genealogies** that seem so dry and boring, we can discover new insights. As an example, let's look at the list of people given us in Genesis chapter 5. I think you will be somewhat surprised.

- Adam means "man";
- Seth means "appointed";
- Enosh means "subject to death";

- Kenan/Cainan means "sorrowful";
- Mahalaleel means "from the presence of God";
- Jared means "one comes down";
- Enoch means "dedicated";
- Methuselah means "dying, he shall send" (the year that Methuselah died is the same year that God sent the Flood);
- Lamech means "to the poor and lowly";
- Noah means "comfort and rest".

Take a look at the meaning of these names in order and you will see the Gospel spelled out in the very beginning of the story of God's dealings with the human race. "Man, appointed and subject to death, is sorrowful; from the presence of God One comes down dedicated; dying, he shall send to the poor and lowly comfort and rest."

Do you see the amazing kinds of treasures God has buried in His Word for those who diligently seek Him? Here we find a brief sketch of Christ's mission to our world.

The **Foundation** of the Christian Faith

Donald Miller, in his excellent book, *Searching for God*, tells about going to a Bible college where he taught one of the classes. Speaking to this group of Bible students, he told them he was going to present the plan of salvation, but he was going to leave out one key element, and they were to listen carefully so that at the end they could tell him what it was.

He began by saying that mankind is sinful and separated from God, and he pointed out many of the sins of our culture — euthanasia, abortion, homosexuality, drug use, etc. He talked about the need to repent and backed it up with several scriptures. He used a real life example of a bridge being out, and how a man shot flares just over the top of cars to get them to stop and not drive over the bridge to their death.

He again quoted Scripture that talked about the wages of sin being death, and how we have to avoid spiritual death at any cost. He talked about the beauty of morality, and told the story of a man who avoided being unfaithful to his wife when faced with the opportunity to cheat, and how his marriage blossomed after that and became better than ever. He talked about heaven and how wonderful it would be — streets of gold and gates of pearl with a beautiful river running through it. He said all this could be theirs if they only believed, repented and honored God. Not only would heaven be theirs, but real meaning and fulfillment would be realized in their lives right here and now.

He then asked the students to tell him what was left out of the story. There was absolute silence in the room. These were students who had grown up in evangelical churches. They attended a Bible college where they had studied theology. They had read the Bible and taken classes in both the Old and New Testaments. Only two weeks before, they had taken an evangelism class and knocked on hundreds of doors in an attempt to lead people to Christ. Miller said that the students sat there for several uncomfortable minutes. Finally he wrote, "None of the forty-five students in the class realized I had presented a gospel without once mentioning the name of Jesus."

If there is anything the story of the Shepherd and the sheep tells us, it is that the Christian life is not about going through a few steps so that we can avoid hell and get to heaven; it is about a relationship that takes place between the Shepherd and His sheep. It is not about getting into the fold, for that is never mentioned; it is about following the Shepherd.

The **Most Important** Things in Life

Erma Bombeck once said,
"If I had my life to live over again..."

"I would have gone to bed when I was sick instead of pretending the earth would go into a holding pattern if I weren't there for the day.

"I would have burned the pink candle sculpted like a rose before it melted in storage.

"I would have talked less and listened more.

"I would have invited friends over to dinner even if the carpet was stained, or the sofa faded.

"I would have eaten the popcorn in the "good" living room and worried much less about the dirt when someone wanted to light a fire in the fireplace.

"I would have taken the time to listen to my grandfather ramble about his youth.

"I would never have insisted the car windows be rolled up on a summer day because my hair had just been teased and sprayed.

"I would have sat on the lawn with my children and not worried about grass stains.

"I would have cried and laughed less while watching television, and more while watching life.

"I would never have bought anything just because it was practical, wouldn't show soil, or was guaranteed to last a lifetime.

"Instead of wishing away nine months of pregnancy, I'd have cherished every moment and realized that the wonderment growing inside me was the only chance in life to assist God in a miracle.

"When my kids kissed me impetuously, I would never have said, "Later. Now go get washed up for dinner."

"There would have been more "I love you's." More "I'm sorry's."

"But mostly, given another shot at life, I would seize every minute... look at it and really see it... live it... and never give it back.

"Stop sweating the small stuff. Don't worry about who doesn't like you, who has more, or who's doing what.

"Instead, let's cherish the relationships we have with those who DO love us."

The toys, the titles, the promotions, the events, at the end of life, they don't really matter. Relationships do.

I Am the New Year

I am an unspoiled page in your book of time. I am your next chance at the art of living. I am your opportunity to practice what you have learned about life during the last twelve months. All that you sought and didn't find is hidden in me, waiting for you to search it but with more determination.

All the good that you tried for and didn't achieve is mine to grant when you have fewer conflicting desires.

All that you dreamed but didn't dare to do, all that you hoped but did not will, all the faith that you claimed but did not have -- these slumber lightly, waiting to be awakened by the touch of a strong purpose.

I am your opportunity to renew your allegiance to Him who said, "Behold, I make all things new."

West Point's "Harder Right" Prayer

This quotation is from the "Cadet's Prayer" that is repeated every Sunday in chapel services at West Point: "Make us choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong, and never to be contented with half truth when the whole truth can be learned. Endow us with courage that is born of loyalty to all that is noble and worthy, that scorns to compromise with vice and injustice, and knows no fear when right and truth are in jeopardy."

Editor's Note: This prayer is very fitting for the New Year.

4500th Anniversary of the Armenian Calendar

Posted by the "Observer"



The year 2008 marks the 4500th anniversary of the victory of the Armenian Patriarch Hayk against Bel at the battle of Hayots Dzor (south of Lake Van). Movses Khorenatsi (V century historian) depicted Bel as the head of the evil forces trying to conquer the world. Patriarch Hayk was engaged in peaceful work on the Armenian plateau, when Bel made an attempt to subjugate him.

Hayk killed Bel with his trident (the triple spear) arrow shot from his wide bow in the battle of Hayots Dzor. Hayk's victory symbolized the victory of freedom over the forces of darkness, oppression and injustice.

The struggle against foreign invaders forms the axis of the millenia-long history of Armenia. Hayk's victory, standing at the very source of that struggle, became a symbol of future victories. The day of Hayk's victory was marked as the starting point of the Armenian calendar and if our **calculations are correct**, August 11, 2008 marked the 4500th anniversary of the birth of the Armenian calendar.

While the figure of 4500 is much smaller than the 5768th year of the *Hebrew calendar*, it is certainly much greater than the 1429th year of the *Islamic calendar*, or the 2008th of the *Gregorian* or *Julian* calendars. Indeed, we are a very ancient people who have survived even though the odds have been stacked against us.

Comforters

When I Was Diagnosed With Cancer:

My first friend came and expressed his shock by saying, "I can't believe that you have cancer."

I always thought you were so active and healthy." He left and I felt alienated and somehow very different.

My second friend came and brought me information about different treatments being used for cancer. He said, "Whatever you do, don't take chemotherapy. It's a poison!" He left and I felt scared and confused.

My third friend came and tried to answer my "whys?" with the statement, "Perhaps God is disciplining you for some sin in your life?" He left and I felt guilty.

My fourth friend came and told me, "If your faith is just great enough, God will heal you." He left and I felt my faith must be inadequate.

My fifth friend came and told me to remember that, "All things work together for good." He left and I felt angry.

My sixth friend never came at all. I felt sad and alone.

My seventh friend came and held my hand and said, "I care, I'm here, I want to help you through this." He left and I felt LOVED!

Written by Linda Mae Richardson

What Matters Most in Life

When “Old Blue Eyes” died in May of 1998, at the age of 82, everyone agreed: There will never be another Sinatra. He had an amazing career; he even topped Elvis! He held the record of 40 consecutive years with a song on the billboard charts. One of those chart topping songs was “I Did It My Way” that has become a theme song for many Americans.

When Sinatra died, he left family and friends, plus a world full of fans who grieved his loss. He also left behind millions of dollars in cash and assets: cars, houses, land and stocks. He left all of his platinum and gold records, his Grammys, and his Oscar. When Francis Albert Sinatra died, he left behind exactly what you and I will leave behind when our days on Earth are over. **HE LEFT BEHIND EVERYTHING.**

Just like all of us will someday do, Frank Sinatra left this world to stand face-to-face before Jesus Christ. When God asks him, “Frank, why should I let you into my Heaven?,” he won’t have the courage to sing, or even say the words, “I did it my way.” When we stand before the Lord in heaven our self achievement and accomplishments, no matter how great, will not count for anything.

If we are going to receive the Kingdom of Heaven, then we must be “poor in spirit.” God’s eternal reward will only be given to those who die to self and live for Christ. Only one answer matters when we stand face to face before the Living God, “Jesus Christ is my Lord and my Savior. Everything I did for myself counts for nothing; I am saved by grace, through faith in Christ alone.”

Did You Know?

1. Psalms is the only book quoted by Satan.
2. At least 6 people wrote this collection of songs, prayers, and praises. Though David didn’t write all of them, he did write more than half of them. Other authors include Asaph (chief choir director for David), Sons of Korah (musicians), Ethan, Solomon and Moses.
3. The book of Psalms contains the longest and shortest chapters in the Bible.
4. It is the longest book of the Bible.
5. It contains the exact middle chapter of the Bible – Psalm 118. That’s right -- there are 594 chapters before and after Psalm 118. Now, if you add those two together (594 + 594), you get 1188. Take that number and turn it into 118:8. What does it say? “It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.”

The Disintegration of a Church

Let me share a story with you about some church people. It’s about four people in the church whose names were **Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody.**

The church had some tasks to perform and Everybody was asked to help... Everybody was sure that Somebody would have performed them... Anybody could have performed them... But did you know who performed them? Nobody... It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done...

Then the church grounds needed some work, and Somebody was asked to help... But Somebody got mad, because Anybody could have done it, and after all, it was really Everybody’s job... In the end the work was given to Nobody, and Nobody did a fine job...

On and on it went... Whenever work was to be done, Nobody could always be counted on... Nobody visited the sick, Nobody gave his time, Nobody shared his faith... In short, Nobody was a very faithful member...

Finally the day came when Somebody left the church and took Anybody and Everybody with him... Guess who was left. Nobody! Isn’t that a sad story?

Editor’s Note: Don’t let this ever happen to your church.

Twenty Ways to Transform Your Children into Rebels



1. Never eat together as a family.
2. Never have weekly, monthly, or annual family outings that children can look forward to as a family unit.
3. Talk to your children, but not with them; never listen to their concerns.
4. Punish your children in public, and never praise them or reinforce their positive behavior.
5. Always solve their problems and make their decisions for them.
6. Leave the responsibility of teaching morality and spiritual training to the schools and the church.
7. Never let your children experience adventure, risk taking, meeting new challenges, going through frustration and discouragement.
8. Threaten your children.
9. Expect your children to get A's in all subjects at school.
10. Always pick up after your children, and don't encourage them to accept responsibility.
11. Discourage your children from talking about their feelings (anger, sadness, fear, etc.).
12. Be overprotective, and don't teach your child the meaning of the word "consequence."
13. Make your children feel that their mistakes are unpardonable sins.
14. Put your children off when they ask, "Why?"
15. Lead your children to believe that you are perfect and infallible.
16. Keep your home atmosphere in a state of chaos.
17. Never tell your children how much you love them, and never discuss your feelings with them.
18. Never hug them or display affection in front of them.
19. Always expect the worse, and never give them the benefit of the doubt.
20. Don't ever trust them.

- Compiled by Rick Davis

Devoted to be Caring



"They devoted themselves" (Acts 2:42a).

By Rev. Avedis Boynerian

One of the best ways to move forward is to look backward and learn from our past failures and successes and those of others. Looking back to the lives of the first century believers, we realize how CARING they were to one another (Acts 2:42-46, 4:32-35).

Undoubtedly, the first century believers and church made an enormous impact on many individuals in their community. If we want to make an impact, then, we need to be "devoted" (Acts 2:42) as were the first century believers.

To what were they devoted? They were devoted to the apostles' teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, praying, sharing everything, selling their possessions and goods, giving to the needy, meeting together in the temple courts, eating together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God, and enjoying the favor of all the people (Acts 2:42-46).

In Acts 2:42 we read, "They devoted themselves to the FELLOWSHIP." Fellowship in Greek means "to share something in common." Indeed, the rest of the passage underscores this concept, for we learn that the first century believers were all TOGETHER (44), met TOGETHER in the temple courts (46), and ate TOGETHER (46).

Acts 4:32-35 give us an INSIDE LOOK at how the first century believers and church CARED for one another. Their care for one another was the result of their UNITY. Their unity was one of HEART and MIND, PURPOSE, LOVE, and CONCERN for one another.

Let's consider each of these characteristics.

First, a **unity of HEART and MIND**: "All the believers were one in HEART and MIND. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had" (4:32). When the Holy Spirit took charge of the lives of these believers on the day of Pentecost, He produced a unity of HEART and MIND among them. They experienced ONENESS, a UNITY which they could never have produced on their own.

The diverse multitude, which gathered from all nations and tongues, was melted together into a union which was a UNITY in HEART and MIND among the believers. They were TOGETHER, and they were ONE. They could express their LOVE, CARE, and CONCERN for one another freely and openly. "No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had" (32). They acknowledged to one another that they were ONE. They said, "What's mine is yours; what's yours is mine." That is, indeed, a powerful acknowledgement of their UNITY and ONENESS! Only God could do this, for it is something born of Him and His Spirit!

We can experience this kind of UNITY when we yield to the Holy Spirit. To experience what the first century believers and church did, we must value COMMUNITY over ISOLATION. We are not here on our own. God created us to be in COMMUNITY with one another. He made us to HAVE personal relationships, to SHARE what we have, and to BUILD into the lives of the people around us. Deep within us we all long to be close to others, to be part of a COMMUNITY, to be in tune and in touch with each other.

The first century believers and church valued COMMUNITY over ISOLATION. They wanted to be TOGETHER. They wanted to be CONNECTED to one another.

Consequently, to be a CARING church, we are encouraged to value COMMUNITY, DEVOTION to one another, TOGETHERNESS, and CONNECTEDNESS to one another.

Second, a **UNITY in PURPOSE**: "With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all" (33). The first century believers were not only one in HEART and MIND but also ONE in their PURPOSE. Their purpose was to TESTIFY to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. They were experiencing great power and grace, and that kept them to continually TESTIFY to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

There is nothing quite like a church that is united in PURPOSE. Unity in PURPOSE produces an even greater sense of COMMUNITY among us. That is why it is so important to move from a unity in HEART and MIND into a practical unity of PURPOSE. The whole purpose of our being ONE is not to relax in our oneness, but to join TOGETHER in a common PURPOSE, and TESTIFY to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus in word and deed.

The first century believers and church experienced UNITY in PURPOSE because they valued MINISTRY over SELFISHNESS. To have what the first century believers and church had, we must value MINISTRY over SELFISHNESS.

To have a UNITY of PURPOSE, we need to have everyone on board, pulling together, sharing the load, and getting involved. It really goes back to the word "devoted" (2:42). We need to be completely "devoted" - committed and sold-out to the fellowship - to the life, ministry, and witness of the church. It is up to us to decide to be supportive, involved, and active participants in the task



God has called us for and entrusted to us. One way we can do that is by becoming ACTIVE and SUPPORTIVE members of our individual churches because God is looking for ACTIVE and SUPPORTIVE members - members who are fully "devoted" to MINISTRY and not SELFISHNESS, members who are willing to TESTIFY to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Third, a **UNITY in LOVE and CONCERN**: "There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need" (34-35). As a result, NO ONE LACKED ANYTHING! This was a spontaneous expression of what God through His Spirit had done in their MINDS and HEARTS. God's Spirit led them to voluntarily and joyfully SHARE their possessions with one another. THEY DID NOT HOLD ANYTHING BACK in their lives that they thought could be used to help someone in need. That is what we want people to say about us: "These are Christians who really CARE about one another! They go out of their way to HELP one another."

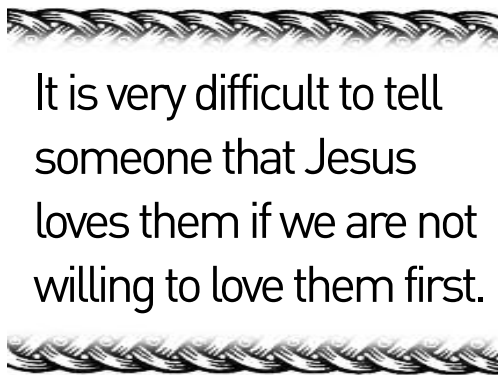
The first century believers valued PEOPLE over POSSESSIONS. That was something which was born from within, not something which was imposed from without. They CARED, and so they gave. They CARED enough to give and give sacrificially. It is very difficult to tell someone that Jesus loves them if we are not willing to love them first. And one way of loving them is by SHARING what we have with others who are in need.

A man named Lucian lived between 120 and 200 AD. He was a Greek satirist and opponent of everything religious, which he grouped together as superstitions. Yet, when he saw the generosity of the Christian church he wrote: "It is incredible to see the fervor with which the people of that religion help each other in their wants. They spare NOTHING. Their first legislator [Jesus] has put it in their heads that they are brothers (and sisters)."

In these two passages (Acts 2:42-46; 4:32-35) God is telling us, quite clearly, that our possessions are only a MEANS by which His work can be accomplished. They are NOT ours, they are His, and we ought to hold them in such a way that when He desires to use them, we are able to GIVE them gladly. Sometimes we forget that EVERYTHING that we have in life belongs to God: our money, our house, our cars, and even our very lives. And

the reality is that God is letting us use whatever is His! The Psalmist rightly declares, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it" (24:1). We can say a lot about a person's Christian faith and maturity by their GIVING. People who have truly surrendered to Christ reflect their commitment in their GIVING.

There are many things we desire to do for God and His people, some of which we may not be able to do. But ONE thing all of us can do is to GIVE and SHARE what we have. However, first, we need to be willing to GIVE.



It is very difficult to tell someone that Jesus loves them if we are not willing to love them first.

We need to be willing on a regular basis to give to the ministry of our churches and those in need. We need to be willing to GIVE generously and sometimes even sacrificially.

What happened in the life of the first century believers and church can happen to us, too. We, too, can be filled with the power of the Spirit, be united in our HEARTS, MINDS, PURPOSE, LOVE, and CONCERN for one another.

We can become people who make a difference in the lives of the individuals who are around us. But, we need to value first, COMMUNITY over ISOLATION, -which is based upon our unity in HEART and MIND; second, MINISTRY over SELFISHNESS, which comes from our unity in PURPOSE; and third, PEOPLE over POSSESSIONS, which flows from our unity in LOVE and CONCERN for one another.

Many years ago, a pastor had a small farm with some chickens. He and his wife would sell the eggs but never give them away for free. Even close relatives were told, "You have to pay for the eggs." As a result, a lot of people complained, "The pastor and his wife do not practice what they preach. They make all that money, pastoring a 700-member church, yet they do not even have an ounce of decency to give some of it away to those who are in need. They are hypocrites!"

For years, the pastor and his wife never defended themselves. But after the pastor's wife passed away, the truth came out. The profit from the sale of the eggs was used to support two elderly widows in the church. The pastor and his wife had seen a need in their church and had made the decision to meet that need in Jesus' name.

That is what CARING Christians and churches do! They look for NEEDS that they can meet, and then they meet them! They do not care about publicity. They do not care about being acknowledged. All they CARE about is communicating the LOVE of GOD to those who need it most.

That is one of the things we admire about the church in Acts. Those first century believers were eager to SHARE their blessings with each other. And it got to the point where non-Christians were saying, "Wow! This is a CARING group of people. I have NEVER met such nice people in my whole life. Romans believe in helping people only if they can pay them back. But, these people will help you even if you cannot give back! THEY CARE ABOUT EVERYBODY! If believing in Jesus Christ will make me more like that, then count me in! That's what I want for my life!"

A pastor had a farmer friend in his congregation, and as they were talking over the fence one day, the pastor asked him, "Tell me, if you had a hundred horses, would you give me ten?"

The farmer said, "Certainly."

The pastor asked, "If you had a hundred cows, would you give me five?"

The farmer said, "Yes."

Then the pastor asked, "If you had two pigs, would you give me one?"

The farmer said, "Now come on, pastor. You know I have only two pigs!"

God is GRACIOUS and CARING! When we DEVOTE ourselves to Him and His Spirit, He works among us; He makes us GRACIOUS and CARING, and gives us unity in HEART, MIND, PURPOSE, LOVE, and CONCERN for one another.

Charles Spurgeon, the great English preacher, was once invited by a wealthy church member to preach in his church to help the members raise funds to pay off a debt. The man told Spurgeon that he could stay either in his country, town, or beach house.

Spurgeon wrote back and said, "Sell one of your houses and pay the debt yourself."

How true! "Charity begins at home!" 🙏

Rev. Dr. Soghomon Nuyujukian



Rev. Dr. Soghomon Nuyujukian was born in Aleppo, Syria, on March 1, 1923, to Deuvlet and Lucia Nuyujukian, who were refugees from Aintab, Turkey, where Soghomon's four older siblings were born. Although his father was a master weaver and designer, times were hard, and Soghomon left school after the eighth grade to work in the family business eighteen hours a day. Two years later, with scholarship aid, he completed high school and one year of college before enrolling in a five-year combined program at the Near East School of Theology and the American University in Beirut, Lebanon.

Returning to Aleppo after graduation in 1948, Soghomon served as assistant to the minister of his home church, Emmanuel Armenian Evangelical Church, where he soon became the senior pastor. He then married Matilde Cholakian. However, Matilde was soon diagnosed with lymphoma. After nine years of marriage, Matilde died, leaving behind eight-year-old Jessy and six-year-old Hratch.

In 1959, he married Hilda Cholakian. That year, Rev. Nuyujukian left the Aleppo church in the hands of his associate pastor and went, with his family, to Alexandria, Egypt, to fill the desperately needed position of a pastor. During their time in Egypt, Hilda gave birth to Ara.

In 1962, Rev. Nuyujukian was invited to Beirut, Lebanon, to serve as secretary of the Armenian Evangelical Union of the Near East. Two years later, Christine was born. In 1968, he became the pastor of the First Armenian Evangelical Church of Beirut where he served until 1974, when he moved to America to pastor the Ararat Armenian Evangelical Church in Salem, New Hampshire.

While at the Salem Church, Rev. Nuyujukian enrolled at Andover-Newton Theological Seminary to pursue further studies. He received his Doctorate of Ministry, *cum laude*, in 1979.

In 1980, he was called to the Armenian Martyrs' Congregational church in Havertown, PA, where he served until 1988.

In 1989, his wife of thirty years was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. She died on May 25, 1989. Hilda's funeral was one week before Christine's wedding. Badveli lived with Christine and Bruce from then on.



Though officially retired, Badveli took on many pastoral assignments. These included interim pastorates in Glenside, PA; Paramus, NJ; Chicago, IL; and Belmont and Watertown in MA.

He served as moderator of the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America from 1994-1996. He traveled to each Armenian Evangelical church in the U.S. as a representative of the Armenian Missionary Association of America. In that capacity, he also traveled abroad to Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina, France, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Armenia. On these trips he was also able to renew his extensive friendships with the families of former parishioners.

In December 2007, Badveli was named Pastor Emeritus of the Armenian Martyrs' Congregational Church during the 100th Anniversary Celebration of the founding of the church. In the spring of 2008, at the age of 85, Badveli celebrated his 60th year of Christian ministry.

On September 14, 2008, Badveli Nuyujukian passed from this life to life eternal. He is survived by his daughters Jessy and Christine, and son Hratch. His son Ara died last year in an auto accident. Badveli derived no greater pleasure than being with his extended family, including his twelve grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. His older brother, Kevork, lives in Massachusetts. Burial was private.

On Saturday, September 20, 2008, a memorial service was held at the Armenian Martyrs' Congregational Church, with nearly 200 people filling the sanctuary. Among these were representatives from the AEUNA, the AMAA, the UCC, local Armenian churches, and fellow ministers. As a testament to Rev. Nuyujukian's dedicated service, both here and abroad, messages were also received from other Armenian Evangelical unions and churches around the world.

Participants in this service of remembrance included the church pastor Badveli Nishan Bakalian, Bruce and Christine Momjian, and Badveli Nuyujukian's grandchildren. The church choir sang *I Surrender All*, the hymn that launched his journey of Christian Service, and *The Glory of the Lord* (from Handel's Messiah), which Badveli knew was being revealed to him during his last few days. The Rev. Dr. Peter Doghramji, fulfilling a promise made to his brother in Christ, preached a message of joy and sadness, hope and promise fulfilled, drawn from years of collegial friendship.

In lieu of flowers, gifts and charitable donations may be made to the Armenian Missionary Association of America, Rev. Dr. & Mrs. S. Nuyujukian Endowment Fund, at 31 W. Century Road, Paramus, NJ 07652. 📍



Mrs. John (Sirpuhe) Conte

Mrs. John (Sirpuhe) Conte died peacefully and entered her eternal home on October 23, 2008. She was three months away from celebrating her 100th birthday. Sirpuhe was born in the village of Hadjin, Turkey, and immigrated to the United States as a young lady. She resided in Los Angeles, California, with her devoted parents, Yeghia and Hnazant, brothers John and Barkev, and sisters Azad and Mary, all of whom preceded her in death.

In 1931 she married Stephen Philibosian, a successful Oriental rug merchant and philanthropist. They had two daughters, Joyce and Louise, both of whom survive her in California. She and her husband later moved to Philadelphia, enjoying their beautiful Hilltop Farm, which later became the Armenian Sisters' Academy of Philadelphia after the death of Mr. Philibosian in 1974.

Sirpuhe became a dedicated volunteer for a number of organizations, and carried on the philanthropy of her husband. Of special interest was support for Armenians in the Middle East, building and renovating elementary schools in

Lebanon, student scholarships, supporting orphanages and providing housing for the aged and the blind. Mrs. Conte often traveled to the Middle East, and was honored by the Lebanese government with a Certificate of Merit for her many charitable and cultural contributions. In 1955, the Philibosian Foundation founded Haigazian University, the only Armenian institute of higher learning outside of Armenia.

In 1953, she moved to California with her daughter Louise, and was one of the first to launch the financing of the Los Angeles Music Center. She married John Conte in 1962 and they soon moved to Palm Springs where they owned and operated the El Mirador Hotel. During this time, they founded and operated KMIR-TV on the grounds of the hotel, later locating the station in Palm Desert. The station was later sold to Journal Broadcasting. The Contes built a home at Eldorado Country Club, and were later joined there by Joyce and Joe Stein, Stephanie and Michael Landes and their children and Louise Danelian. Four generations at Eldorado! Mr. Conte died in 2006.

Sirphue's philanthropic activities in California included the Eisenhower Medical Center, the Virginia Waring International Piano Competition, the Center for East-West Medicine at UCLA, Pet Rescue of the Desert and ARCS (Achievement Rewards for College Scientists) of which she was a Charter Member. She served as a trustee of the McCallum Theatre, and also was honored with Northwood Institute's Distinguished Women's Award in 1978.

Mrs. Conte is survived by her daughters, Joyce (son-in-law Joe Stein) and Louise; grandchildren Stephanie (husband Michael) Landes; Christina (husband David) Segel; Leslie (husband Rick) Berge and Stephen (wife Lulu) Danelian. Great-grandchildren Matthew, Christina and Stephen Landes; Stephanie Logan; Catherine Harnish and Henry Richard Segel, and Andrew and Emily Smith; Christopher (wife Susan) Conte and their children Ashley and John Richard.

During the last four years, Sirpuhe received attentive, faithful and loving care from Gabriella DaCosta and Vickie Hayworth. The family has been truly blessed by their services.

A celebration of Mrs. Conte's life was held on Sunday, October 26, at 2:00 p.m., at the Forest Lawn Mortuary, on Ramon Road at DaVall, in Cathedral City. Rev. Doug Garrard, Pastor of the Palm Desert Community Presbyterian Church, presided. Sirpuhe was laid to rest with her husband.

Gifts of remembrance may be made to the Armenian Missionary Association of America, 31 West Century Road, Paramus, NJ 07652; Pet Rescue of the Desert; Christian Schools of the Desert, 40700 Yucca Lane, Bermuda Dunes, CA 92203; and the UCLA Center for East-West Medicine, 2428 Santa Monica Boulevard, Suite 208, Santa Monica, CA 90404, ATTN: Dr. Hui. 📞

**WE GRIEVE NOT AS THOSE
WHO HAVE NO HOPE**

The Armenian Evangelical World Council Holds Meeting in Paramus, New Jersey



The Board of Directors of the Armenian Evangelical World Council (AEWC) held its meeting on Friday, October 17, 2008, at the AMAA headquarters, 31 West Century Road, Paramus, New Jersey. Representatives from five Armenian Evangelical Unions, the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) and the Stephen Philibosian Foundation (SPF) were in attendance.

I. Reports.

The Board received the written reports of the AEWC Executive Director, Rev. Vahan H. Tootikian and Treasurer Albert Momjian, Esq. for the year 2007-2008, and the oral report of the President, Rev. Ron Tovmassian.

It also received oral reports from the representatives of the member organizations of AEWC: Rev. Ron Tovmassian and Rev. Joseph Matossian presented the report of the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America; Rev. Rene Leonian reported on the Armenian Evangelical Church of Armenia; Rev. Samvel Kirakossian reported on the Union of Eurasia; Rev. Megerdich Karagoezian and Rev. Haroutune Selimian presented the report of the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East; Rev. Joel Mikaelian and Rev. Gilbert Leonian gave a report on the Armenian Evangelical Union of France; Dr. H. Steven Aharonian and Mr. Andrew Torigian reported on the activities of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA); and Mrs. Joyce Philibosian Stein reported on behalf of Stephen Philibosian Foundation.

II. Old Business.

a. An update on the evangelistic work in Europe. The representatives of the Armenian Evangelical Fellowship of Europe as well as the AMAA representatives reported that the search for a church property in Belgium is continuing, but as of now a property which meets the proper criteria has not been found. Also with the AMAA assistance a few new fellowships have been organized in Germany.

b. Protocol regarding ministers moving from one church union to another. Whereas moving from one country to another is a personal or family decision, leaving one union and joining another is definitely an ecclesiastical matter that concerns all the church unions involved.

It was reported that a committee, composed of Reverends Ron Tovmassian, Megerdich Karagoezian, Nishan Bakalian and Nerses Balabanian are in the process of preparing a protocol agreement on this matter and will submit their report to AEWC Executive Committee for their consideration.

c. **Evangelism through the internet.** Following a report from Rev. Joel Mikaelian, the Council members felt that each union should decide to consider this matter on its own. *It was resolved that the five ecclesiastical Unions of AEW, in consultation with one another, should decide when and how each can start its own program of evangelism through the internet.*

III. New Business. Under New Business the following items were discussed and acted upon:

1. Enhancement of the Armenian Evangelical Archives.

The Council went on record to thank the AMAA leadership for moving the AEW archives and the library from the former to the present headquarters (31 West Century Road, Paramus, New Jersey); It extended special thanks to the AMAA Field Director, Dikran Youmshakian for his role of putting the archival material and the library together.

The Board also expressed its special appreciation and gratitude to its Executive director, Rev. Vahan H. Tootikian for his donation of 22 leather-bound archival material which include the following:-

- (a) Four volumes of "Armenian Memorial Church Bulletin" (1965-1975)
- (b) Nine volumes of "Armenian Congregational Church Bulletin" (1975-2005)
- (c) Nine volumes of an anthology of articles covering highlights of church activities in the U.S and abroad (1959-2005).

The Council, once again, reiterated the importance of preserving Armenian Evangelical historical materials and the enhancement of the archives.

2. The establishment of a new archival branch in Yerevan, Armenia. The Board welcomed the establishment of a new AEW archival branch in Yerevan, under the supervision of the President of the Evangelical Academy of Armenia, Dr. John Khanjian, and pledged to support it morally and financially.

It was resolved to make an allocation of \$2,000.00 for the clerical expenses of the archives for the year 2009.

3. Recognition of Rakel Dink. The 90th anniversary banquet of the AMAA on October 19, 2008 was an opportune time to honor Mrs. Rakel Dink, the widow of the human rights hero and martyr Hrant Dink. Hrant was assassinated on January 19, 2007 in Istanbul, Turkey. Since his death Rakel Dink has become a courageous advocate of human rights in her own right.

In token of their appreciation, admiration and love, the AEW and the AMAA recognize and honor Rakel Dink with a plaque of commendation and a painting specially prepared for this occasion by artist Lucy Janjigian. Tributes will be paid to Mrs. Dink in Armenian and English languages by Rev. Vahan Tootikian and Andy Torigian respectively.

4. Inquiry regarding the World Council of Churches (WCC). The World Council of Churches, a worldwide ecclesiastical organization of more than two hundred Protestant and Orthodox denominations and church bodies, was founded in

1948, in Amsterdam, Holland. The Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East was one of its charter members and has been active since.

The Board discussed the issue whether AEW would join the WCC or leave each union to make that decision on their own.

It was resolved that each union on its own make the decision to join or not to join the World Council of Churches.

5. A new Armenian Chair in the University of Aleppo.

Through a mutual agreement between the University of Yerevan and the University of Aleppo, a new Chair of Armenian studies was established. AEW secretary, Rev. Haroutune Selimian, was instrumental in facilitating that agreement.

The Board welcomed the establishment of the Armenian Chair in the University of Aleppo and commended Rev. Harout Selimian's assistance in this agreement. The Board pledged its moral support to this newly established Chair.

6. Annual Dues. Both the Treasurer and the Executive Director emphasized the importance of paying the annual dues in a timely fashion and paying them in American currency lest there may be any unnecessary delays and transactional problems.

It was suggested that payments of the annual dues by overseas Unions be made through AMAA with a cover letter notifying the AEW Treasurer.

7. 100th Anniversary of the Armenian massacres of Adana and holocaust of the Armenian Evangelical leadership in Osmanieh, Turkey. April 13, 2009 is the 100th Anniversary of the massacres of the Armenians in Adana. On April 14, 1909, 26 Armenian Evangelical clergymen and lay leaders were burned alive in the Armenian Evangelical Church of Osmanieh on their way to attend the Armenian Evangelical Annual Convention in Adana.

It was resolved to instruct all Armenian Evangelical churches and organizations to observe on Sunday April 12, 2009 (or any day closer to that date), the 100th anniversary of the Armenian massacres of Adana, and pay tribute to the memory of those who were martyred in the Armenian Evangelical Church of Osmanieh.

8. The status of the Armenian Evangelical Church of Baghdad. Armenian Evangelical Church of Baghdad was organized in 2004 and currently has over 250 members. On September 28, 2008, fire destroyed part of the rented facilities of the Church. Responding to this tragedy, AMAA made a financial appeal to the public to rebuild.

It was reported that this church, which had formally applied for membership into the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East, has been accepted in principle and their petition is in its final phase. It is anticipated that the formal admission of the church by UAECNE will be in the near future.

The Council expressed its joy that the Armenian Evangelical Church of Baghdad will soon unite with the family of the UAECNE.

9. Williams Saroyan's 100th Anniversary. The 100th Anniversary of the renowned Armenian American writer William Saroyan is being celebrated in the United States, Armenia and in the Diaspora. Centenary celebrations are held in Saroyan's childhood hometown, Fresno, CA and in many places by many Armenian and non-Armenian organizations. Saroyan, the son of an Armenian Evangelical lay preacher Armenag Saroyan of Bitlis, Turkey (former Western Armenia), grew up in Fresno and received his Christian education in the First Armenian Presbyterian Church of Fresno, CA. during the ministry of Rev. Megerditch Knadjian (1912-1920).

It was resolved to mark with joy and thank God for the 100th anniversary of William Saroyan, an American Armenian Evangelical by birth, who received his early Christian education at the first Armenian Presbyterian Church of Fresno, CA, and later achieved prominence in the literary world.

10. Augmenting AEW's missionary outreach in Russia. In the Diaspora, Russia is one country which has the largest number of Armenians, many of whom unfortunately are unchurched. The delegates from the Armenian Evangelical Unions of Eurasia and Armenia underlined the importance of augmenting our missionary outreach in that part of the world.

It was resolved to study the matter of missionary outreach in Russia and ask the Unions of Eurasia and Armenia to provide the Council with further information and ways and means of reaching out to the unchurched Armenians.

11. The Diaspora Ministry of the Republic of Armenia. The Republic of Armenia has recently established a new ministry, named "The Diaspora Ministry" which, in some ways, is similar to that of "Committee for Cultural Relations," of Soviet Armenia during the Soviet period. The head of the new ministry is Hranoush Hagopian, who recently visited Aleppo,

Syria, and had a meeting with Rev. Harout Selimian.

AEWC welcomes the creation of the Diaspora Ministry and hopes that it will accomplish its mission through effective programs and will culturally energize Armenians in the Diaspora. It extends its full support to the newly established Ministry.

12. Elections. According to AEW's Bylaws Article 5, the officers of the Board of Directors consists of a President, Vice-President, Secretary and a Treasurer. The terms of office are two years commencing on January 1 and ending on January 31 at the expiration of two years.

Elections took place and the following new officers were elected for the ensuing two years, effecting January 1, 2009: **President - Rev. Haroutune Selimian; Vice-President - Rev. Avedis Boynerian; Secretary - Rev. Joel Mikaelian; Treasurer - Mr. Albert Momjian.**

13. Appreciation

It was resolved to extend grateful thanks to the Executive Director, Rev. Vahan Tootikian for continuing his voluntary and faithful service to the Armenian Evangelical World Council.

14. Venue and date of the next meeting

It was resolved to hold the 2009 meeting on Friday, October 16, at the Armenian Euphrates Evangelical Church, in Providence, Road Island.

15. It was resolved to express the Council's appreciation to the Armenian Missionary Association of America for playing host for the meeting of AEW.

Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian

Executive Director, Armenian Evangelical World Council

“He who confers a favor should at once forget it. To remind a man of a kindness conferred on him, and to talk of it, is little different from reproach.”
– Demosthenes, Greek statesman, orator (384-322 BC)



Ministerial Ordination

The ordination of **Pastor Hrag Karagoezian** took place on November 2, 2008, at the Glendale Armenian Church of the Nazarene.

Hrag was born and raised in Beirut, Lebanon, where he was an active member of the Armenian Evangelical Emmanuel Church. He graduated from Haigazian University with a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degree, and later he attended the Near East School of Theology where he earned the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree. Following his graduation in 2003, he served the Armenian Evangelical Church of Ainjar for two years as an associate pastor. In 2005, he



Rev. Ron Tovmassian



Rev. Mgrdich Karagoezian



duties a minister performs.

After singing another hymn, two charges were given: the first to the candidate for ordination by Rev. Mgrdich Karagoezian, and the second to the congregation by Rev. Habib Alajaji. The ordination service was led by Rev. Joseph Matossian, the Minister to the Union, and Rev. Ron Tovmassian, who represented the Moderator of the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America.

The scene was very moving and highly charged with emotion when Rev. Megrdoch Karagoezian, the father of the ordinand, exhorted his son to be a loyal witness for Jesus and rightly interpret the Word of God. The



Rev. Habib Alajaji



Rev. Mgrdich Melkonian

was called to serve at the Armenian Church of the Nazarene in Glendale and he immigrated to the United States. He and his fiancé, Fabia Panjarian, were married in 2007, and they continue their ministry at the same church.

The ordination service began with songs of praise and Rev. Habib Alajaji's invocation. The reading of the Apostles' Creed and two sermons from God's Word followed.

The Armenian message was delivered by Rev. Mgrdich Melkonian (Hrag's uncle), who focused on the Prophet Jeremiah's calling, and the English sermon was delivered by Rev. Ron Tovmassian who emphasized the role and



Rev. Joseph Matossian



Rev. Hrag Karagoezian giving the Benediction

prayer of ordination was offered by Rev. Rene Levonian, who is the superintendent of the Armenian Evangelical churches in Armenia. More than a dozen local Armenian clergymen participated in the laying on of hands ceremony. The officers of the Glendale Armenian Nazarene Church presented a



ministerial robe to their newly-ordained pastor. Rev. Joseph Matossian gave him the ecclesiastical stoles that symbolize the pastoral authority bestowed through ordination. After singing the Lord's Prayer, Rev. Hrag gave his first Apostolic Benediction.

It was an evening of praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God who calls people to be ministers and workers in His field. At the conclusion of the ordination service, a lavish reception was held. The congregation and invited guests mingled in the Fellowship Hall, congratulating Rev. Hrag Karagoezian and offering him words of encouragement. To God be the glory.

Lincy Foundation's Generous Contribution to Merdinian School

SHERMAN OAKS, CA - The Lincy Foundation has once again generously contributed \$150,000 to the C. & E. Merdinian Armenian Evangelical School. The Foundation's President, Mr. Jay Rakow, notified the school of this grant in a letter dated August 25, 2008. Such a gesture underscores the genuine interest that the Lincy Foundation shows year after year, in the perpetuation of Armenian Education in the United States.

In his letter, Mr. Jay Rakow stated that this amount is allocated based on the needs and circumstances of the school for 2008-2009 academic year.

The entire Merdinian School Family, including the Board of Directors, the administration, faculty, staff, and the student body, is extremely grateful and proud for having the significant support of the Lincy Foundation in their march forward. We look forward to even a brighter future.

Fire Destroys Major Part of the Armenian Evangelical Church Building in Baghdad

A recent communication received from the Armenian Evangelical Church in Baghdad, Iraq, sadly informs that a major part of the church building was destroyed due to military operations in the area.

On Sunday, September 28, 2008, when the Iraqi police confronted a group of terrorists near the Armenian Evangelical Church in Baghdad, heavy weapons fire struck the church building and, the entire second floor was engulfed in flames. The church guard and neighbors tried to extinguish the fire, but were not able as the fire spread rapidly. The firemen were delayed because the streets leading to the church were closed. When the firemen arrived, the fire had already consumed three Sunday school classrooms, the management office, and most of the furniture and office equipment, including computers. This was a severe blow to the young and fledgling church.

The Armenian Evangelical Church in Baghdad, Iraq, was established during the war and it provided spiritual relief and hope for a striving Armenian community. Over 250 parishioners come to church to worship God every Sunday. The church also has an active Sunday school and youth group.

The Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) supports this young church by subsidizing their rent. Any assistance to this church and community is transmitted through the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East.

We do share the sorrow of our Armenian Christian brothers and sisters in Iraq and pray to God for peace in an area which has been



devastated by war and terror acts. We also appeal to our churches and concerned individuals to support this church with their prayers and gifts. The building needs to be renovated and refurbished so that our suffering people can continue to receive spiritual nourishment.

You may send your gifts to the AMAA earmarked for Iraq Church Reconstruction and mail it to 31 West Century Road, Paramus, NJ. For credit card donations, please visit our website (amaa.org) or call (201) 265-2607.

AMAA Distributes \$140,000 in College Scholarships

The Scholarship Committee of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) spent almost two days reviewing the 70 applications submitted by Armenian students requesting scholarship aid. The applications were thoroughly examined and evaluated according to academic achievement and financial need. Fifty-nine students attending colleges and universities in North America were granted scholarships. The total scholarship amount distributed in North America this year was \$125,000.

"We were very satisfied with the academic standard of our students," Mr. Robert Hekemian commented, while signing the scholarship grant letters. Only very few of the applicants had performed near average, with the rest having very high grades. "It is an honor for us to be able to help," added Mr. Hekemian. "Hopefully one day these students will return the favor and will step up to help other needy students." Mr. Hekemian is the competent and experienced

chairman of the AMAA Scholarship Committee which comprises eight volunteer members. Most of the members have served this program for over ten years.

The Scholarship Program of the AMAA was established with one goal in mind- to help Armenian students receive higher education, achieve their educational goals and thus become assets to our communities. Hundreds of students over the years have benefited from this program and many today are well recognized educators, ministers, professionals and service men or women. Many graduates of the program have returned the favor and have supported this program with their financial aid. Some have established scholarship endowment funds with the AMAA.

In addition to the aid provided to students studying in North America, AMAA also distributed \$15,000 in scholarships to students in Armenia and over a quarter of a million to Haigazian University in Beirut, Lebanon.

Education is one of the major service programs of the AMAA. Through its support to kindergartens, elementary schools and high schools in Armenia, the Middle East, and the United States, AMAA has played a vital role in educating and training the next generation. Through its Child Education Sponsorship Program, the AMAA has helped thousands of needy students in Lebanon and Syria.

The AMAA thanks God for the privilege of serving the needs of our students and acknowledges the thoughtfulness and the generosity of great benefactors like the Stephen Philibosian Foundation, the Hekemian Family Fund, the Levonian Educational Fund and many others, which continuously support this program.

Those who are interested in supporting the Scholarship Program can contact the AMAA headquarters in Paramus, New Jersey or visit AMAA's website: amaa.org.

AMAA Announces Winners of James Jameson Essay Contest



Alex Tavlian



Jonathan Garabedian

"Alex Tavlian of Fresno, CA, is the winner of the James Jameson Essay Contest this year," announced Mr. Doug Kurjian, Chairman of the Publications Committee of the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA). Tavlian's essay in the high school category was titled, "*Adam Schiff: Friend of the Armenian Community.*"

The panel of the judges included three other members, namely, Vartan Sahagian, Arthur Artinian and Judith Kurjian. Alex Tavlian, who is a member of the First Armenian Presbyterian Church of Fresno, received an award in the amount of \$300. "Various factors come into play in judging the essays," said Mr. Kurjian. "This includes appropriateness of material, style, clarity, content, emotion, logic, credibility, organization, development, maturity, diction, usage and connection with the reader."

In addition to Alex, three college-bound students received awards for their essays that were submitted along with their scholarship applications. The winners were Jenna Gavroian, first place, for her essay "The Hurdle of Life"; Jonathan Garabedian, second place, for his essay "Major Influences that Continue to Shape my Life"; and Lisa Der Ohanessian, third place, for her essay "Road to Success." The panel of judges for this category, along with Doug Kurjian, were Nurhan Helvacian, Arouss Darpinian and Berjouhi Gulesserian. The winners received awards of \$300, \$250 and \$200, respectively.

The Board of Directors of the AMAA congratulates the winners and encourages our young students to participate in this contest. The deadline for next year's contest is May 1, 2009. Those who are interested in participating can contact the AMAA at 201-265-2607.



Jenna Gavroian



Lisa Der Ohanessian

AMAA's "Children Helping Children" Thirteenth Annual Event A Success

BELMONT, MA. The AMAA Orphan/Child Care Committee's 13th annual luncheon, held October 16 at the Belmont Country Club, was once again a sparkling success, gathering area supporters in a generous show of support to needy children in Armenia. This year's event featured an exciting live auction hosted by WCVB-TV Channel 5 Meteorologist Mike Wankum together with WBZ Newsradio Host Jordan Rich.

Contributors and attendees represented all Boston area churches, and continues to grow each year. Supporters arrived early to browse the gift items available for auction and sale, including sports, theater, and concert tickets, as well as an abundant variety of exciting gift packages. Guests were entertained by a fashion show lit up by adorable child models in fashions by Elite Bebe of Belmont. This year's book event featured the sale



Artwork by children of Armenia displayed for silent auction



Children participating in the Fashion Show

of novels by Armenian author Nancy Kricorian.

In her opening remarks, Mrs. Michele Simourian, the co-founder of the AMAA Orphan/Child Care Committee, thanked the committee members for their dedicated hard work, and welcomed all the guests including AMAA's Field Director, Dikran Youmshakian, and the Rev. Samvel Kirakossian, the pastor of the Evangelical Church in Vanatzor, Armenia.

Founded in 1918, the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) is a nonprofit charitable organization that

provides services to underprivileged youth through educational, relief, and mission ministries. AMAA is a nonsectarian Christian organization which renders its services to those in need without discrimination. AMAA operates in twenty-two countries and often partners with other relief agencies to aid disaster stricken areas throughout the world.

This luncheon was one of many similar functions organized by the AMAA Orphan/Child Care Committee to raise funds and provide aid to needy children in Armenia. Thanks to the efforts of the committee, children today have a better chance to survive the hardships in our homeland. They are provided with food, clothing, medical care, education

and most of all reason to know that God loves them all. Each year thousands of children attend summer camps, receive gifts on Christmas and experience the joy of Easter. For additional information, please visit AMAA.org.

Event sponsors are all volunteers who welcome new members of all ages and all backgrounds. Anyone wishing to join the committee or make a donation is encouraged to contact Michele Simourian at 508-785-0569. All contributions are tax deductible.

The Bridge to Hankavan Camp Is Repaired

PARAMUS, NJ: The Armenian Missionary Association of America is delighted to announce that the construction of a new bridge leading to AMAA Sheen Shoghik Camp in Hankavan was completed in October of 2008.

In May of 2007 the bridge leading to Hankavan Camp in Armenia was destroyed due to the heavy rain and the overflowing of the river near the entrance. An urgent appeal was made to the public asking for help to reconstruct the bridge. Thanks to the generosity of AMAA members and friends, and support received from Armenian Evangelical Churches worldwide, a total of \$40,000 was raised for this purpose.

A temporary bridge was installed to the camp providing limited access before the camp season



started in June of 2008. In August, construction of a new and permanent bridge began, and within three months a new bridge was installed. The total cost of the construction was \$45,000.

The AMAA Board of Directors and the AMAA Summer Camp Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who supported this vital project. Thanks to their generosity, the bridge to Hankavan Camp is open.

The summer camp program in Armenia is vital for children who come to camp to enjoy the beauty of nature, to receive nurture, associate with friends, play, and learn that they are loved by Christ.

**“You cannot do a kindness too soon,
for you never know how soon
it will be too late.”**

– Ralph Waldo Emerson, poet, philosopher (1803-1882)



Սուրբ Ծնունդ

Մարդեղութիւն՝ Աստուածայայտնութեան ճամբով



Աստուծոյ մարդեղութիւնը Յիսուս Քրիստոսով սուրբ անեղծուած (paradox) մըն է, այսինքն տրուած բացատրութիւնները այդ մասին՝ անհասկնալի կամ անտրամաբանական ըլլալ կը թուին մեզի: Արդարեւ դժուար է հաւատալ թէ Աստուած մարդկային մարմինով յայտնուած է մարդկութեան, ապրած է մարդու պէս, ու մարդերու հետ: Ու տակաւին, ան պարպուելով իր աստուածային ստորոգելիներէն (attributes), արտօնած է որ երկրային իշխանութիւններ վարուին իրեն հետ իբրեւ ասագակ, ու չարաչար մեղսներն զինք խաչին վրայ...: Ծատերու համար մեծ եղած է փորձութիւնը Աստուծոյ մարդեղութեան այս հրաշալի դէպքը պարզ առասպել մը համարել՝ նման Յիսուսի ժամանակակից եւ ուրիշ կրօններու ասանդած առասպելներուն:

Փութա՛նք յայտնել թէ Աստուծոյ Մարդեղութիւնը կարելի չէ անջատել Աստուածայայտնութենէն, այսինքն, Աստուծոյ մարդեղութիւնը-մարդ ըլլալը-կարելի չէ ըմբռնել մեզի համար՝ եթէ Աստուած չյայտնուի մեզի մեր փորձառութեան մէջ: Օրին մէկը Յիսուս կը հարցնէ աշակերտներուն.

- *«Մարդիկ ի՞նչ կ'ընեն իմ մասին...Ո՞վ եմ ես:*
- *Ոմանք քեզ Յովհաննէս Մկրտիչը կը կարծեն, ոմանք՝ Շոյիս մարգարէն, իսկ ուրիշներ՝ Երեմիան կամ մարգարէներէն մէկը, կը պատասխանեն աշակերտները:*
- *Իսկ դո՞ւք ով կը կարծէք որ եմ:*
Պետրոս՝ իր սովորութեան համաձայն՝ առաջ կը նետուի ու կ'ըսէ.
- *Դուն Քրիստոսն ես, կենդանի Աստուծոյ Որդին:*
- *Երանի՛ք քեզի Սիմոն՝ Յովնանի որդի, կը պատասխանէ Յիսուս, որովհետեւ աստիկա քեզ յայտնողը մարդ մը չէր, այլ իմ Հայրս, որ երկինքն է»:* (Մատթ. 16. 15-17):

* * * * *

Տարիներ շարունակ տօնած ենք Սուրբ Ծնունդը, ու Աստուծոյ կամքով՝ այս տարի ալ կը տօնենք Աստուածորդիին մարդեղութեան այս տօնը: Սակայն եկէք անկեղծ ըլլանք մենք մեր անձին, ու իրարու հետ: Իրա՞ւ է որ Աստուածորդիին

ծնունդն է որ կը տօնենք: Բայց ի՞նչ կը հաւաստեն մեզի մեր տուններէն ներս կանգնող տօնածառերը, մեր ստացած նուէրները «Նոր Տարիի եւ Սուրբ Ծնունդի առիթով»: Բաւարար հաւաստիք չէ՞ն մեր եկեղեցիներէն արձագանգող սրտագրաւ երգեցողութիւնները՝ քառաձայն կամ՝ այլապէս: Հապա՞ պերճախօս քարոզներն ու տպաւորիչ արարողութիւնները...: Թերեւս մեզմէ ոմանք կը մտաբերեն մանկութեան շրջանին իրենց ունեցած «միամիտ հաւատք»ը՝ մինչ ժողովուրդին հետ կ'երգեն այդ քաղցրահունչ երգերը:

Բայց հիմա՞...: Ո՛չ: Մենք 21-րդ դարուն մէջ կ'ապրինք այժմ: Գիտութիւնը եւ բանականութիւնը խախտած են ու յաղթահարած՝ մեր մանկական հաւատքն ու հաւատալիքները: Մեր այս Քրիստոնէայ ճանչցուած երկրին մէջ հակաստուածեան նոր եւ ուժգին հոսանք մը ծայր տուած է որուն հեղինակները ամէն ճիգ կը գործադրեն խախտելու մեր հաւատքն ու սրբութիւնները: Աշխարհայանութիւնը (secularism) կը դիմէ անելի խորամանկ ու զարտուղի միջոցներու, որպէսզի հաշտեցնէ մեր քրիստոնէական թաքուն կամ յայտնի հաւատքը իր սին պերճանքներուն եւ անբարոյ կենցաղավարութեան հետ: Այս պայմաններուն ներքեւ ինչպէ՞ս կրնանք խոր համոզումով երգել մեր Մայր Եկեղեցիին մէկ քաղցրահունչ ու խորիմաստ շարականը որ մեր եկեղեցիներուն մէջ ալ կ'երգուի Յիսուսի ծննդեան տօնին առիթով -

*Սուրբ Աստուած, սուրբ եւ հօգօր, սուրբ եւ անմահի՛
Որ ծնար եւ յայտնեցար վասն մեր: Ողորմեա՛ մեզ:*

Այո՛, կրնանք երգել ու ողջունել Աստուծոյ Մարդեղութիւնը Յիսուս Քրիստոսի մէջ՝ եթէ ունենանք նախ Աստուածայայտնութեան փորձառութիւնը՝ խոնարհելով Սուրբ Ծնունդի մտորին առջեւ, ինչպէս ըրին Մանուկ Յիսուսը տեսնելու եկող հովիւներն ու մոզերը: Արդարեւ անոնք իրենց վերադարձին՝ ուրիշներու պատմեցին ինչ որ տեսած ու լսած էին՝ «փառաբանելով եւ օրհնաբանելով զԱստուած»:
Նախապէս, երկնային հրեշտակները լոկ իմացուցած էին անոնց Փրկիչի մը ծնունդը՝ ինչպէս մենք կ'ընենք իրարու՝ մեր մարթանքներով, երգերով եւ տօնախմբութիւններով...: Կը հաղորդենք իրարու, սակայն, չե՛նք երթար «մինչեւ Բելթլեհեմ»,

չե՛նք ողջունք Նորածին Մանուկը, չե՛նք ընծայք անոր մեր նուէրները – անձերը, ու հետեւաբար, չենք ունենար անձնական փորձառութիւնը՝ մեր Փրկիչին յայտնութեան: Արդարեւ Աստուած պիտի յայտնուի մեզի Մանուկ Յիսուսի մէջ իբրեւ Մարդեղացեալ Աստուած՝ եթէ խնդրենք իրմէ, ու հաւատքով մտաբերենք Աստուածաշունչի վկայութիւնները այդ մասին: Միայն ա՛յն առեւն է որ մենք եւս իսկապէս պիտի փառաբանենք զԱստուած, ու երախտագիտութեամբ պիտի տօնենք Յիսուս Փրկիչին սուրբ Ծնունդը:

Կրկնե՛նք: Աստուածայայտնութիւնը մախ մեր անձնական փորձառութիւնը ըլլալու է, որպէսզի մենք կարենանք վկայել Աստուծոյ Մարդեղութիւնը՝ Յիսուս Քրիստոսի մէջ, ու ողջունել զիրար երախտագէտ եւ ուրախ սրտով, ու համաձայն մեր հայկական աւանդութեան –

- **ՔՐԻՍՏՈՍ ԾՆԱԻ ԵՒ ՅԱՅՏՆԵՑԱԻ,**
- **ՅԱՅՏՆԵՑԱԻ ԵՒ ՄԿՐՏՈՒԵՑԱԻ:**

Եթէ չունենանք Աստուածայայտնութեան փորձառութիւնը, իրաւունք չենք ունենար մատնելու Յիսուս Քրիստոսի սուրբ ծնունդը: Ու տակաւին՝ անիմաստ կը դառնայ իրարու կատարած մեր մաղթանքը –

Ձեզի, Մեզի՝ Մեժ ԱԻԵՏԻՍ

Աղօթենք որ այս «Աւետիս»ը, այսինքն՝ բարի եւ ուրախ լուրը՝ իրապէ՛ս երջանկացնէ մեզ՝ երբ Քրիստոս Յիսուս կը ծնի ու կը յայտնուի մաւտ մեր սրտին մէջ, ու անվրէպ վերստին ծնունդ կը շնորհէ իւրաքանչիւրիս: Ամէն: 🙏

Վեր. Պարգեւ Ն. Տարագճեան

| Վարդանանց Տօնին Առիթով |

«Վասն Կրօնի, Վասն Հայրենեաց»

Հայոց պատմութեան մէջ Վարդանանց պատերազմը կը նկատուի մեր ազգային պատմութեան ամենանկատարական անկիւնադարձերէն մէկը, ըլլալով մաւտ ամենէն ժողովրդական, ու կրօնա-ազգային բնոյթ կրող տօներէն մէկը՝ որ կը յիշատակուի ամէն տարի, ու համայն հայութեան կողմէ:

Ոմանց կարծիքով Ե. դարու կիսուն մղուած այդ պատերազմը պարսիկներու դէմ՝ լոկ քաղաքական բնոյթ ունէր, ցուցաբերելով մաւտ կրօնական մտահոգութիւններ: Հետեւաբար, կը խորհին անոնք, Վարդանանց պատերազմի յիշատակութիւնը՝ ոգեկոչումն է ազգային արժանապատուութեան ի խնդիր մղուած նուիրական գոյամարտի մը՝ որ կը ցուցաբերէ հայ ժողովուրդին աննկուն կամքը՝ զոր իբրեւ սրբազան աւանդ ժառանգած ենք մենք մեր դարասոր անցեալէն:

Ուրիշներ կը խորհին թէ Վարդանանց պատերազմի միակ դրոշմապատճառը կրօնական էր՝ նպատակ ունենալով հաւատքի ու խղճի ազատութիւնը, այս պարագային՝ քրիստոնէական հաւատքի ու պաշտամունքի ազատութիւնը: Մեր կարծիքով՝ անխախտ պահելով հանդերձ անոր հաւատամարտ ըլլալու հանգամանքը, Վարդանանց պատերազմը պէտք է նկատուի մաւտ հայրենամարտ, ու ասոր իբրեւ փաստ՝ յիշելու ենք այն օրերէն մեզի հասած սուրբ վկայաբանութիւնը, որ մարտիկներու կողմէ ընդունուած լուզումը մըն էր, այսինքն՝ «վասն կրօնի, ու վասն հայրենեաց»:

Հինգերորդ դարու մեր սրբազան պատմիչները, Եղիշէն եւ Փարպեցի, կը շեշտեն Վարդանանց պատերազմին կրօնական հանգամանքը՝ իր բոլոր տուեալներով՝ որոնք կը դրսեւորուին պատերազմի նախօրեակին եւ վաղորդայնին: Սակայն տարակուս չկայ որ Վարդանանց պատերազմը մղուեցաւ մաւտ ի խնդիր մարդկային անբռնաբարելի իրաւունքներու, ինչպէս մաւտ ազգային ինքնուրոյն մշակոյթի, եւ ազգային դիմագիծի պահպանումին:

Պարսից Թագաւորը, Յագկերտ Բ., ուզեց Զրադաշտական կրօնը պարտադրել Քրիստոնէայ Հայաստանի վրայ, ու այդ նպատակին հասնելու համար ծանր տուրքերու ենթարկեց ոչ միայն հայ հոգեւորականներն ու վանքերը, հապա մաւտ հայ նախարարութիւնները՝ բռնաբարելով անոնց մարդկային ու ազգային իրաւունքները: Արդարեւ անոնք զոհուեցան այս գոյգ նպատակներուն համար:

Սովորաբար մենք Վարդանանց պատերազմը կը սահմանափակենք Աւարայրի ճակատամարտով զոր մղեցին Վարդան եւ իր վաթսուհի վեց հազար զինուորները: Ու տակաւին, կը միախառնենք մենք զմեզ յայտարարելով որ անոնք թէեւ կորսնցուցին պատերազմը, սակայն բարոյապէս յաղթեցին թշնամիին: Պատմութիւնը ցոյց կուտայ մեզի թէ Աւարայրի ճակատամարտը՝ որ տեղի ունեցած էր 26 Մայիսի, 451-ին, հանդիսացաւ մէկ նախերգանքը յաջորդող 33 տարիներու ընթացքին մղուող ճակատամարտներուն: Վերջապէս, 484 թ.ին, մեզի ծանօթ Նուարասիկի դաշնագիրով, հայ ժողովուրդը յաջողեցաւ տիրանալ կրօնական ու քաղաքական որոշ ազատութիւններու: Ուրիշ խօսքով, Աւարայրն ու Նուարասիկը անյետխօրէն կապուած են իրարու:

Անշուշտ կարելի չէ ուրանալ Վարդանանց կրած պարտութիւնը պարսիկներէն, սակայն, այս վերջինները չյաջողեցան հասնիլ իրենց նպատակին: Աւարայրի ճակատամարտը թէեւ զինուորական պարտութիւնով վերջացաւ ի վնաս հայերու, սակայն, իրականութեան մէջ՝ այդ մէկը յաղթանակի սկիզբը հանդիսացաւ ազգային անկիւնէն դիտած: Հայեր թէեւ կորսնցուցին ճակատամարտը, սակայն այս մէկը պատճառ եղաւ որ վերատեսութեան ենթարկեն իրենց ռազմավարութիւնը, ու ի վերջոյ շահին «պատերազմ»ը: Վերջին հաշուով, անոնք հասան իրենց նպատակին: Ծիտակ է որ Աւարայրի ճակատամարտէն անմիջապէս ետք պարսիկներ մեծ զուլումներ

գործադրեցին Հայաստանի մէջ: Ղեւնդ Երեց, Յովսէփ Կաթողիկոս, ու բազմաթիւ հոգեւորականներ չարչարալից մահուան ենթարկուեցան, եւ հալ նախարարներ Պարսկաստան գերի տարուելով 13 երկար տարիներ հոն արգելափակ մնալու դատապարտուեցան: Սակայն այդ ժամանակամիջոցին Հայաստանի մէջ երեսան եկան վարդաններու տեսիլքով օծուած նոր սերունդներ որոնք շարունակեցին սրբազան պայքարը: Յատկապէս Վարդանին եղբորորդին՝ Վահան Մամիկոնեան, գլովսը անցած թարմ ոյժերու՝ շարունակեց առնակատումը Պարսիկ բանակին դէմ՝ հաղթական կոչուեց: Ծառ չանցած, Վահան՝ իր թոռով եօթը հազարի հասնող մարտիկներով՝ պաշարեց Արարատի լանջերուն վրայ գտնուող Ակոռի գիւղը, եւ շախչախեց հոն դիրք բռնած պարսիկ բանակին մէկ զօրագունդը: Այնուհետեւ, առ երեք այլ վայրերու մէջ ալ յաղթանակ տարա թշնամի զինուորներու դէմ, ինչ որ բարոյաբեց Վաղարշին բանակը: Այս վերջինը եզրակացուց թէ բռնի ոյժով պիտի չկարենար լուծել Հայկական Հարցը: Հետեւաբար, 484 թ.ին, իմաստութիւնը ունեցաւ դաշինք կնքելու հայոց հետ՝ Հեր ու Զարեանդ գաւառի Նուարսակ կոչուած գիւղին մէջ: Դաշնագրիին զլիստոր պայմաններն էին, ա) կրօնական ազատութիւն տալ հայ ժողովուրդին. բ) դադարեցնել ու արգիլել զրադաշտական մեհեաններու կառուցումը Հայաստանի հողին վրայ. գ) պետական վարչամեքենան լեղաշրջել՝ հիմ ունենալով արդարութեան եւ մարդկային իրաւունքներու պահպանման սկզբունքը:

Այսպէս, Աւարայրի ճակատամարտով սկսած Վարդանանց արկածախնդրութիւնը արդիւնատուրուեցաւ Նուարսակի պատմական դաշնագիրով: Անշուշտ այս մէկը չէր նշանակել որ պարսիկները պարտութիւն կրած էին պատերազմի դաշտին վրայ, սակայն, կը նշանակէր թէ հայեր բարոյական մեծ յաղթանակ տարած էին իրենց հետապնդած նպատակին ճամբով: Այս կերպով, Վարդանանց նահատակներուն անաւարտ առաքելութիւնը յաջողութեամբ պսակուեցաւ շնորհիւ Վահան Մամիկոնեանի, ու իր մարտունակ զինակիցներուն հերոսական ջանքերուն եւ զոհողութիւններուն:

Հոս կ'արժէ հարցնել թէ որո՞նք էին այն ազգայնները որոնք միջոցին հայերը մեծ զոհողութիւններ ընելու, ու մինչեւ մահ կոռուելու: Թուե՞նք զանոնք մէկ առ մէկ-

- Հայաստանի մէջ Քրիստոնէութեան պետական կրօնք հռչակուիլը 301 թ.ին Ս. Գրիգոր Լուսաւորիչին եւ Տրդատ Թագաւորին նախաձեռնութեամբ:

- Ս. Մեսրոպ Մաշտոց, Ս. Սահակ Պարթեա եւ Վրամշապուր Թագաւոր երրորդութեան ջանքերով իրագործուած հալ գիրերու գիւտը, Հայ Ոսկեդարու գրականութեան ծաղկումը, եւ անտարանչութեան միջոցաւ նոր հաւատքին տարածումը Հայաստանի մէջ՝ 406-451 տարիներուն:

Ասոնք հանդիսացան ուժեղ ազգայններ հալ ազգային ինքնագիտակցութեան, միութեան, եւ հալ ստեղծագործ տաղանդին դրսեւորման: Արդարեւ, ո՛չ Վարդանանց Պատերազմ տեղի պիտի ունենար, ոչ ալ Վահանեանք Նուարսակի Դաշնագիր պիտի ունենային եթէ չունենայինք վերոյիշեալ ազգային, կրօնական, ու մշակույթի հերոսները՝ իրենց տեսիլքով, գործունէութիւնով, եւ զոհողութիւններով: Այս բոլորը ստեղծեցին սքանչելի ենթահող մը հալ ժողովուրդին հալադրոշմ, կրօնաշունչ, եւ ազգաշունչ գոյութեան եւ ինքնութեան:

Հակառակ անոր որ Հայաստան քաղաքականապէս ենթակայ դարձաւ բիզանդական եւ պարսկական կայսրութիւններուն՝ ան յաջողեցաւ հասցնել նոր սերունդ մը, պատրաստ՝ զոհողութիւններ ընելու «վասն կրօնի, եւ վասն հայրենեաց»: Վարդանանց այս սերունդն էր որ ներշնչման աղբիւր դարձաւ գալիք բոլոր սերունդներուն: Արդարեւ, Վարդանանց հերոսամարտէն ետք հալ ազգը միջոց անհաւասար բազմաթիւ զուպարներ՝ սակայն ան փորձառաքար համոզուած էր որ ամենէն մտք գիշերներու կը յաջորդեն նոր արշալոյսներ:

Վարդաններն ու Վահանները կը ներկայանան մեզի իբրեւ անձնատուրմը հալ ցեղին ազնուագոյն առաքինութիւններուն: Արդարեւ, անոնք եղան մարմնացումը քրիստոնէական անդրադարձի, ու անշահախնդիր հայրենասիրութեան: Մենք կը հրաւիրուինք իրացնելու անոնց «վասն կրօնի ու վասն հայրենեաց» լոզունգը՝ մինչ կը դիմակալենք նոր եւ խիստ վտանգաւոր մարտահրաւերներ եւ գոյութեանական սպառնալիքներ՝ «հալ Քրիստոնէաց» մնալու եւ արժեքներու մեզի թողուած հալ քրիստոնէական անփոխարինելի ասանդը: Թ

Վեր. Գոկոս. Վահան Յ. Թութիկեան
Գործադիր Տնօրէն
 Հայ Աւետ. Համաշխարհային Խորհուրդի

Հայ Աւետարանական Գոլէճի Հիմնադրութեան 85-ամեակի Հանդիսութիւնը

Պ էրոյթի Հայ Աւետարանական Գոլէճը (ՀԱԳ-) 19 Հոկտեմբերի 2008-ին յիշատակեց իր հիմնադրութեան 85-ամեակը Իւնւարտի ջրէլ հանդիսաւարահին մէջ: Այս հանդիսութիւնը կազմակերպուած էր Գոլէճին հոգաբարձութեան կողմէ, ու կը վայելէր հովանաւորութիւնը Մերձատր Արեւելի Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցիներու Միութեան: Հանդիսութեան ներկայ եղան, ու փայլ տոնին անոր առաջի քան 650 հոգիներ որոնց մէջ կային հալ երեք կրօնական համայնքներու պատկանող հոգեւորականներ, ու Լիբանանի Հանրապետութեան բարձրաստիճան պաշտօնատարներ:

Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցիներու Միութեան նախագահը՝ Վեր. Մկրտիչ Գարակէօզեան պաշտօնով քաղաքէն դուրս ըլլալուն՝ զայն ներկայացուց Միութեան Կեդրոնական Մարմինին ատենապետը Վեր. Դոկոս. Փօլ Հայտութեան որ Նախագահն է Պէրոյթի Հայկազեան Համալսարանին: Ն. Ս. Օծոյթին Արամ Կաթողիկոսը ներկայացուց

Նորայր Եպիսկոպոս Աշըրքեանը: Ներկայ էին նաեւ Լիբանանի Թեմին Առաջնորդ Գեղամ Եպիսկոպոս Խաչերեան, Լիբանանի Հայ Կաթողիկէ Համայնքի Պատրիարքարանի փոխանորդ Վարդան Եպիսկոպոս Աշքարեան, եւ Տէր Մեսրոպ Քրիստ. Քէրքիզեանը: Իսկ մեծանուն աշխարհականներէն ներկայ էին բարերար Տիար Ռաֆֆի Մանուկեան, Լիբանանի Պետական Նախարար՝ Ժան Օղասապեան, երեսփոխան Յակոբ Գասարեան, Պորն Համոտի քաղաքապետ Տիար Անդրանիկ Մարրեան, ու քաղաքապետարանի անդամ Տիար Վարուժան Գանթարեան: Ներկայ եղան նաեւ Լիբանանի մէջ մեր եկեղեցիներուն ծառայող բոլոր Հոգեւոր Հովիւները:

Յայտագիրը սկսաւ Լիբանանի եւ Հայաստանի ազգային քայլերգներու ունկնդրութիւնով, որմէ ետք բացման խօսքը կատարեց հոգաբարձութեան ատենապետուհի Դոկոս. Արտա Լըմբընի՝ արարելէն

ու հայերեն լեզուներով: Ան հակիրճ պատմականը ըրաւ Գոլէճին՝ թէ ան հիմնուած էր 1923 թ.ին, ու հանդիսացած յետ-եղեռնի առաջին երկրորդական վարժարանը: Հակառակ Լիբանանի մէջ տիրող քաղաքական անկայուն վիճակին, Գոլէճը անընդհատ շարունակած էր իր կրթական առաքելութիւնը: Գոլէճը իր հիմնադրութենէն իվեր տուած էր անէի քան 1500 շրջանաւարտներ: Անդրադառնալով օրուան հանդիսութեան, Դոկտ. Էքմէքճին նկատել տուաւ անոր խիստ յատկանշական մէկ երեւոյթը՝ թէ յայտագրին մէջ բաժին բերող բոլոր անհատներն ալ կը պատկանէին Հ.Ա.Գ.-ի մեծ ընտանիքին:

Օրուան բանախօսն էր Տիկին Ժանէթ Քասունին որ յատկապէս հրաւիրուած էր Ամերիկայի Միացեալ Նահանգներէն: Ան վկայեց թէ ինք նախ աշակերտած էր, ու ապա իբրև ուսուցիչ՝ երկար տարիներ ծառայած էր այս հաստատութեան մէջ, ու ականատես եղած էր անոր հետապնդած Հայ Աւետարանական առաքելութեան, այսինքն, աշակերտներուն ջանքել հոգեւոր, բարոյական, ու հայեցի դաստիարակութիւն՝ գիտական ու պահանջուած ուրիշ առարկաներու շարքին: Բանախօսը անդրադարձաւ ԺԹ դարու կիսուն Կ. Պոլիսի մէջ ծնունդ առած Հայ Աւետարանական Ծարժումին, եւ անոր գոյապատճառին, այսինքն, լուսատրել հայ ժողովուրդը հոգեւորապէս եւ բարոյապէս, ու իր կրթական հաստատութիւններով բարձրացնել անոր հոգեւոր եւ իմացական մակարդակը՝ բարեկարգուած եկեղեցիի եւ դպրոցի ճամբով: Բարեխախտաբար, Մեծ Եղեռնը չկարողացաւ կանցնել բարեկարգչական այս շարժումին դաստիարակչական սրբազան առաքելութիւնը, ու հետեւաբար, նոր ստեղծուած հայ սփիւռքին տարածքին, ու յատկապէս Սուրիոյ եւ Լիբանանի մէջ՝ գոյութեան եկան նոր եկեղեցիներ եւ դպրոցներ: Պէտք է երախտագիտութեամբ յիշենք Արաբներուն ցուցաբերած հիւրընկալ հոգին, որուն շնորհիւ կրցանք ազատօրէն շարունակել մեր ընդհատուած հոգեւոր ու կրթական առաքելութիւնը՝ մեր նորահաստատ եկեղեցիներուն եւ դպրոցներուն միջոցաւ:

Ակնարկելով Հայ Աւետարանական Գոլէճին ընդգրկած Հայ Աւետարանական դիմագիծին եւ ուղղութեան, Տիկին Քասունին յայտնեց՝ թէ ան իր հիմնադրութեան առաջին օրէն իսկ հարազատ մէկ զաւակը դարձաւ անոր հիմնադիրը հողը Հայ Աւետարանական Ծարժումին, ու անոր դաստիարակչական տեսիլքին: Հաստատիմ Հայ Աւետարանականութեան բարեկարգչական ոգիին, Գոլէճը՝ հետեւելով հանդերձ ժամանակներու պահանջքին, ամէն ջանք ըրաւ որպէսզի միշտ նորոգէ ինքզինք՝ անհրաժեշտ բարեփոխութիւններ կատարելով, ինչ որ հասցուց զայն իր առաքելութեան բարձունքին: Վկայ են անցեալ 85 տարիներու ընթացքին անոր հասցուած շրջանաւարտները՝ որոնք գերազանց դիրքերու հասած են այսօր՝ իրենց ընդգրկած ասպարէզներուն մէջ: Անոնք երախտագէտ հոգիով կը յիշեն Հ.Ա.Գ.-ը, իրենց վաղեմի տնօրէններն ու ուսուցիչները, եւ անոնց միջոցաւ իրենց ստացած բարձրորակ ուսումը՝ բարոյական, հոգեւոր ու ազգային մարզերուն մէջ:

Խօսք առաւ նաեւ Գոլէճի արաբական գրականութեան եւ պատմութեան երկարամտայ ու վաստակատր դասախօս Դոկտ. Քասուն Ապպար: Ան շեշտեց Հ.Ա.Գ.ին կրթական բարձր մակարդակը,

ինչպէս նաեւ անոր ընդգրկած դաստիարակչական մշտնօր, «Բան մը՝ որ ո՛չ մէկ տեղ կարելի է գտնել» մեր այս բազմամշակութային ընկերութեան, ու յատկապէս Լիբանանի քաղաքականօրէն պղծ կացութեան մէջ»:

Հանդիսութեան գեղարուեստական յայտագիրին մասնակցեցան յատուկ այս նպատակին համար Զոյիցերիայէն հրաւիրուած Լեւո Քիւրքճեանը-մեցօ սօփրանօ, որ երգեց Կարօ Աւետանի դաշնակի ընկերակցութեամբ: Օրիորդներ՝ Շուշան Արթիմեան եւ Անի Պալապանեան ներկայացուցին զուգանուագ մը, առաջինը թաւ ջութակի, ու երկրորդը՝ դաշնամուրի վրայ: Իսկ աշակերտական երգչախումբը ներկայացուց երգերու փունջ մը՝ ղեկավարութեամբ Տիկ. Նեկտար Փալապանի, եւ դաշնամուրի ընկերակցութեամբ՝ Օր. Մարիա Փալապանի: Ապա պատահի վրայ ներկայացուցան Օր. Արթիմեանի պատրաստութիւնը եղող լուսանկարներու շարք մը՝ 1927-2008 տարիներուն - ինչպէս՝ շրջանաւարտներու խմբանկարներ, 14 տնօրէններու նկարներ, ու տեսարաններ՝ աշակերտական գործունէութիւններէն:

Ապա հոգաբարձութեան անունով բեմ հրաւիրուեցաւ Դոկտ. Զաւէն Մարրլեան՝ Գոլէճի եկար տարիներու անխնայ, վաստակատր, ու մեծապէս յարգուած տնօրէնը, ու Վեր. Դոկտ. Փօլ Հայտութեան եւ Դոկտ. Արտաւ Էքմէքճին վարժարանին հոգաբարձութեան անունով գնահատանքի յատուկ յուշանուէրով մը պատուեցին զայն՝ իբրև տնօրէն ու դաստիարակ իր մատուցած 41 երկար տարիներու արդիւնաբեր ու պատուաբեր ծառայութեան համար: Խօսք առնելով՝ Դոկտ. Մարրլեան շնորհակալութիւն յայտնեց իրեն ընծայուած պատիւին համար, անեղեղով որ Գոլէճը հաստատուելով իրագործած էր անցեալի ու ներկայի բոլոր նուաճումները, եւ թէ՛ ան կը նայի ապագային նոյն անշեղ հաստատուելով, եւ վճուակամութիւնով:

Վեր. Դոկտ. Փօլ Հայտութեան՝ Հայ Աւետ. Միութեան Կեդրոնական Մարմինի Ատենապետի իր հանգամանքով խօսք առաւ եւ յայտարարեց՝ թէ Գոլէճին 85-ամեակի յրեկնական այս հանդիսութիւնը մէկ խօսուն ու բարձրորակ սպասուցը կը հանդիսանար Մ.Ա.Հ.Ա.Ե.Մ.ի հետապնդած կրթական առաքելութեան, եւ անոր տուած կարեւորութեան՝ ի խնդիր հայ ժողովուրդին լուսատր վերածնունդին:

Հանդիսութիւնը փակուեցաւ Առաքելական Օրհնութեան Աղօթքով՝ զոր մատուց Էշրէֆիէ-ի Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցիին Հոգեւոր Հովիւր՝ Վեր. Սողոմոն Քիլապեան:

Հանդիսութեան առիթով հրատարակուած էր գրքուկ մը որ կը բովանդակէր բացի հանդիսութեան Յայտագիրէն՝ Գոլէճին մէկ ամփոփ պատմութիւնը, ինչպէս նաեւ 1927-2008 տարիներու շրջանաւարտներուն անունները: Հանդիսութեան յաջորդեց ճոխ ընդունելութիւն-հիւրասիրութիւն՝ Ֆենիսիա Պանդոկիին շքեղ սրահներէն մէկուն մէջ՝ բարեխախտութեամբ Տիար Ռաֆֆի Մանուկեանի, որուն ընթացքին պարգեատրուեցան յայտագիրին մէջ բաժին ունեցող անձնատրութիւնները:

*Թղթակից՝
Ժանէթ Քասունի*

ԼԻՆՍԻ ՀԻՄՆԱՐԿԻՆ ԻՇԽԱՆԱԿԱՆ ՆՈՒԻՐԱՏՈՒՈՒԹԻՒՆԸ ՄԵՐՏԻՆԵԱՆ ՎԱՐԺԱՐԱՆԻՆ

Ծ. եւ Է. Մերտինեան Հայ Աւետարանական Վարժարանը 150,000 տոլարի իշխանական նուիրատուութիւն մը ստացաւ Լիւնսի Հիմնարկէն:

Պրն. Շէլ Բաքով, Հիմնարկին նախագահը, իր նամակին մէջ կը ճշէ որ այս նուիրատուութիւնը եղած է վարժարանին, հիմնուած անոր 2008-2009 տարեշրջանի կարիքներուն վրայ:

Մերտինեան Վարժարանի մեծ ընտանիքը դրախտապարտ է Լիւնսի Հիմնարկին, որ նիւթական իր աջակցութեամբ զօրակոչ կը հանդիսանայ մեր Վարժարանին, որպէսզի հայ մանուկներ կարենան բարձր կրթութիւն ստանալ հայկական ու քրիստոնէական միջավայրի մէջ եւ պատիւ բերող քաղաքակիցներ դառնան այս երկրին ու հայութեան:

«Հայ Մշակույթը» Մերտիեան Վարժարանէն Ներս

ՇԵՐՄԸՆ ՕՔՍ - Կրկին հայ դպրոցը թեատարած կը դիմաորէր Հայ Մշակույթի ամիսը՝ Հոկտեմբերն ու Թարգմանչաց տօնը, կը փառաբանէր մեծաբանչ Մերոպ Մաշտոցն ու անոր բերած նպաստը հայութեան:

Արդարեւ Մերտիեան Հայ Աւետարանական Վարժարանին մէջ, Հոկտեմբեր ամսուան ընթացքին, ամբողջ դպրոցը պարուրած էր Թարգմանչաց շունչով: Դասարանները ու սրահը զարդարուած էին Թարգմանչիներու եւ հայ մշակույթին նուիրուած գրութիւններով ու նկարներով: Հայոց պատմութեան ու հայ լեզուի պահերուն աշակերտները կը սորվէին տօնին յատուկ ոտանաւորներ ու երգեր:

Հոկտեմբեր 27, 28 եւ 29-ին, Հայկական Բաժանմունքն ու դպրոցին գրադարանը ձեռնարկած էին հայ գիրքի ու հայկական յուշանուէրներու ցուցահանդէս: Աշակերտներ ու ծնողներ խանդավառութեամբ կը շրջէին ցուցարահին մէջ ու մեծ հայարտանքով իրենց հետ կը տանէին գիրքեր ու մշակույթի նմուշներ:

Չորեքշաբթի, Հոկտեմբեր 29-ին, առաւօտեան ժամը 8-ին, վարժարանի հանդիսարահին մէջ տեղի ունեցաւ հայ մշակույթին նուիրուած յատուկ գեղարուեստական յայտագիր մը, պատրաստութեամբ Հայկական Բաժանմունքին:

Հանդիսութեան բացումը կատարեց տնօրէն՝ Պրն. Յովսէփ Ինճէճիբեան եւ աղօթքը առաջնորդեց: Հայկական Ուխտէն ու քայլերգէն ետք, 7-րդ կարգէն Ժագլին Մակտեսեան բացման խօսքը կատարեց եւ բարի գալուստ մաղթեց ներկայներուն: Իսկ Ռոզ Ասագեան, հանդիսավարը, հերթով բեմ հրապիրեց յայտագրին մէջ բաժին վերցնողները:

Տիկ. Աշխէն Իսթենճեան օրուան բանախօսն էր: Ան շեշտեց մեր կապը հայ մշակույթին հետ: «Ինչ որ ունինք կամ նուր կը ստանանք, գորգուրանքով ու յարգանքով կը պահենք: Այդպէս է նաեւ պարագան մեր մշակույթին՝ որ մեզի հասած է դարերու ընթացքին»: Ան, ապա, թելադրեց «Պիտի գիտնաք որ հայ էք, եւ ձեր սրտին մէջ տեղ պէտք է գտնէ մեր մշակույթը, իմ մշակույթս է» ըսելով ու զայն սիրելու եւ պահպանելու համար ամէն զոհողութիւն ընելու պատրաստ պէտք է ըլլաք»:

Այնուհետեւ, ելոյթ ունեցան Ա. կարգը «Հայոց Լեզու»ն արտասանելով եւ Բ. կարգը՝ «Ռ՛վ Ունի» ոտանաւորով ու խմբական երգով:

Է. կարգէն Ծուշան Գալստեան պատմեց հայ ժողովրդական ասանդութիւններէն «Ղափամաս»ն եւ Գ. կարգը զայն ներկայացուց պարով, խանդավառելով աշակերտները:

Ապա, դարձեալ Գ. կարգը ներկայացուց Յովհաննէս Թումանեանի «Անխելք Մարդը», արդիական յաւելումներով:

Յայտագրի ասարտին, Պրն. Ինճէճիբեան շնորհակալութիւն յայտնեց յայտագիրը պատրաստող ուսուցիչներուն՝ Տիկ. Աշխէն Իսթենճեանին՝ իր խօսքին համար, Տիկ. Մարգարիտ Մեղրոյեանին, Տիկ. Զեփիտ Թալաթիեանին, Տիկ. Վիկտորեայ Աբրահամեան-Էլիասին՝ աշակերտական ելոյթներուն համար եւ Տիկ. Շողեր Թիլբեանին՝ բեմի յարդարումի համար:

Բոլոր ներկայները հայ մշակույթի սիրով ներշնչող յայտագիրը վերջ գտաւ «Հայր Մեր»-ով:

Նկատի ունենալով, որ Մշակույթին մաս կը կազմէ նաեւ տուեալ ժողովուրդի մը խոհանոցը, առաւօտեան զբօսանքին Մերտիեանի աշակերտները կերան հայկական նշանատր «Հատիկ»ը, պատրաստութիւն՝ վարժարանի աշակերտական խորհուրդին:

Նոյն օրը, լետ միջօրէին, յայտնի հիքթաթասաց Տիկ. Ալիծ Աղպապեան, փորձերուն եւ մեծերուն զատ-զատ յայտագիրներ ներկայացուց: Թատերական ոճով ան պատմեց ասանդութիւններ հայոց բնաշխարհէն ու հայ մարդու կեանքէն, իրեն ընկերացող թմբկահար Մհեր-ին հետ: Աշակերտները լարուած ու մեծ հետաքրքրութեամբ հետեւեցան Տիկ. Ալիծին պատմածներուն, կրկնեցին անոր խօսքերը ու ծափահարութիւններով իրենց սէրն ու գնահատանքը յայտնեցին թէ՛ հիքթաթասացին եւ թէ՛ մեր ասանդութիւններուն:

Մերտիեան Վարժարանէն ներս, Հայ Մշակույթի ամիսը երկարաձգուեցաւ մինչեւ Նոյեմբեր 4, երբ Տիկ. Ալին Պզովկեան-Շիրաճեան, հեղինակ մանկական գրքերու, այցելեց վարժարան, ներկայացնելու համար իր վերջին գիրքը՝ «Վարդեհին եւ Եղեհին»: Դ. - Ը. կարգի աշակերտներուն խօսեցաւ հայկական ասանդութիւններու մասին, ապա կատարուեցաւ նոր գրքին զինեծօնը՝ նուրի ջուրով: Աւելի ուշ, նախամակապարտէզէն մինչեւ Գ. կարգերու աշակերտներուն, պատատի վրայ ներկայացուց ու պատմեց նոյն գիրքը:

Մերտիեան Հայ Աւետարանական Վարժարանը հիմնուած է 1982-ին ու 26

տարիներէ ի վեր կը ծառայէ հայ համայնքին՝ կրթական ու քրիստոնէական ընտիր դաստիարակութեամբ: Վարժարանը վարկաւորուած է Դպրոցներու եւ Համալսարաններու Արեւմտեան Ընկերակցութեան կողմէ - Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC): Վարժարանի մասին յաւելեալ տեղեկութիւններու համար հեռաձայնել (818) 907-8149:



ԻՆՆՍՈՒՆ ՏԱՐԵԿԱՆ

Ահա կազմակերպություն մը իննսուն տարեկան հասած, Խոնարհ ու համեստ, կարօտեալի պայմաններով սկսած, Աստուծոյ հաւատարմութեամբ, ծաղկած ու բարգաւաճած, Աւետարանչականն հիմի իննսուն տարիներ է նուաճած. Տարիները շուտ թաալեցան եւ առաջնորդներ փոխուեցան Իսկ աստուածատուր տեսիլքը օգնելու, ձեռք երկարելու օգնութեան, Անշուշտ կը շարունակուի, պիտ շարունակուի անվախճան:

Անշուք պայմաններով, եկեղեցիին մէջ Աւետարանական Ծնունդ առաւ այս սուրբ մարմինը Աւետարանչական Տարուէ տարի, վերին օգնութեամբ Արարչային Աղօթեց, ծրագրեց ու հաւատարիմ գործեց կաթօգին. Աստուած ալ վերէն նայելով, յորդառած Ան օրհնեց Տուա միջոցներ, անհամար կարելիութիւններով օժտեց Արժանատուր առաջնորդներ, միութեական աղբիւրներ հայթայթեց:

Ամէն կողմ աջակցութեան, օգնութեան ձեռք երկարեց Զարդէն ճողոպարած բեկորներուն ան շատ օգնեց Ապաստան, ապաւէն ու յստակ յոյս ներշնչեց Տուա կրթութիւն ու սնունդ, զուլալ հաւատք ներգործեց: Բաժնելով սէր աստուածային, նայող, սեւեռող դէպ երկինքի Սփիռքի ստուար գաղթօճախներէն եւ մէջն մեր մայր հայրենիքի Հարազատ հայէն սկսած, նոյնիսկ հասաւ հեռաւոր օտարի:

Տարբեր ազգերու, գոյներու եւ ցեղերու առանց խտրութեան կատարեց շքեղ աստուածատուր գործն բարեգործական կրթեց ապագայ առաջնորդներ, շինեց ամբողջներ ուսման Հասնելով քսան եւ երկու երկիրներ ամբողջական: Ծառայելով բոլորական, անխոնջ անանձնական Ամէն հնարքով աստարեց ազգին ու մարդուն անխտրական Վստահելով ամէն բան Արարչին պատուական:

Միշտ Փառք Աստուծոյ եւ շնորհակալութիւն բոլորին Անոնց, որոնք անսակարկ տուին, մոխրացան, ծառայեցին Զգացում երախտագիտական, շնորհական մաքուր սիրտ Թող պարգեւէ Բարձրեալն երկնային բոլորիս ընդմիշտ. Աղօթք, աստար, օժանդակուիւն, նուիրական սպասատրութիւն Որպէսզի երկարի աննկուն տարիները Աւետարանչականին Անդով գործածուի պարգեւելով աւիշ, հիւթ, ու ցող աստուածային:

Վեր. Տ. Ծանլեան

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