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The Quarterly Journal of the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America

Predestination

&

Free Will

In This Issue...

- 3 From the Editor's Desk**
Argues that predestination & free will are both taught in the Bible
- 7 An Overview of John Calvin's Doctrine of Election & Predestination**
Discusses the T.U.L.I.P.-the Five Points of Calvinism
- 13 Joseph and Predestination**
Validates free choice through Joseph's life experience
- 15 The Testimony of the Early Church Fathers about Free Will**
A selection of quotations that show the earliest church fathers affirmed free will
- 16 Pentecost – Some Observations and Lessons**
Explains the meaning and importance of the feast of Pentecost
- 18 The Foundations of Christian Ethics**
Lists 14 points that cover the whole range of Christian ethics
- 20 A Brief History of the Armenian Evangelical World Council**
Traces the formation of the AEWC & lists its accomplishments
- 22 Life Lessons**
Shows the perils of procrastination
- 23 Life's Exams**
Unveils the right attitude that we must develop regarding life's tests
- 24 Dr. Tootikian's 30th Book Released**
"As I See It/Eem Déssangyunén"
- 25 Freedom through Forgiveness**
Reveals the importance of forgiving others
- 27 In Memoriam**
Salpi Messerlian-Cholakian
- 28 Newsbriefs**
 - 26th Anniversary Banquet of Merdinian School
 - AMAA Sunday at Armenian Martyrs' Congregational Church
 - Genocide Gathering at the Fresno Armenian Presbyterian Church
 - APC'S Elder Emeritus: Robert Hekemian Sr.
 - The First AEUNA Fundraising Banquet in Toronto
 - New England Churches Support the AEUNA
 - West Coast Youth Leadership Summit
 - Camp AREV Expansion
- 35 Ժամանակ Ունի՞ս Մտածելու Վեր. Տիգրան Ծանկեան**
- 36 Հայ Աւետարանական Համաշխարհային Խորհրդրդի (ՀԱՀԽ) Ծնունդն Ու Զարգացումը (30-ամեայ Տարեդարձին Առթիւ) Վեր. Դոկտ. Վահան Յ. Թութիկեան**
- 37 Հայաստանի Հանրապետութիւն 90-ամեակի Առթիւ Վեր. Դոկտ. Վահան Յ. Թութիկեան**
- 38 Շքեղ Եաշկերոյթ Ի Նպաստ Հ.Ա.Հ.Ա. Միութեան Ժանկթ Ծանկեան**
- 38 ԿԱՐԴԱԼՈՎ Արթնցո՛ւր Ներսիդիդ Գտնուող Առաջնորդը Վեր. Տիգրան Ծանկեան**

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 interesting story about a group of theologians who were having a contentious debate on predestination and free will. The group soon broke into two opposing camps because they could not find a middle ground. There was one man who could not make up his mind regarding which camp to join. Finally, he decided to go with the predestination camp. "Who sent you here?" asked the predestination theologians. "No one sent me," he replied. "I came of my own free will." "Free will?" they exclaimed. "You can't join us! You belong with the other camp!" So he went over to the free will camp. There the free will theologians asked him, "Why did you decide to join us?" The man replied, "Well, I didn't really decide, I was sent here." "Sent here!" they shouted. "You can't join us unless you have decided by your own free will. You belong to the other camp."

In the history of Christian theology, the teachings on predestination can be classified under two broad types. The first type holds that God creates two kinds of people: those whom He has predestined to be saved (the elect), and those whom He has predestined to be damned (the reprobate). According to this understanding, those who are destined for salvation will be saved, and those who are destined for damnation will be damned, no matter what they do or do not do. This version of predestination is generally known as deterministic predestination.

The second type of predestination is based on God's omniscience and foreknowledge. Although God knows all that will take place, He does not determine all the actions of each individual. What God knows, He does not necessarily cause to happen; therefore, He is not responsible for the acts of sinful men.

The problem with deterministic predestination is that it portrays God as capricious and arbitrary in the dispensation of saving grace. It contradicts what we read in Acts 10:34-35, "God has no favorites; anyone of any nationality who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him." Moreover, it denies the validity of human accountability. If God has already decided our eternal destiny and there is nothing we can do about it, why then "We should all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account for what we have done while living in the flesh?" (See 2 Corinthians 5:10).

During the last five centuries, Christians have been divided into two main groups: some emphasize the sovereignty of God and His control over human affairs, while others stress the fact that humans are created as free moral agents who are endowed with the freedom of choice. I contend that both of these positions are correct. While it is true that the whims and intelligent maneuverings of human beings cannot thwart God's plan, it is equally true that the Bible contains numerous exhortations that encourage us to believe, to repent, to turn away from evil and lead godly lives. These divine admonitions would be superfluous and meaningless if human beings do not have the freedom to choose what to do and how to live. Furthermore, if we are not free to make moral decisions, how could God hold us accountable and justly punish us for them?

After conducting extensive research about predestination and human freedom, I have come to the conclusion that there is convincing biblical evidence that these two theological terms are neither contradictory nor mutually exclusive. Human freedom places no limitations on God's sovereignty because

God maintains control over the circumstances, conditions and events that precede and follow our decision making. We are not programmed zombies who are unconsciously forced to act in a predetermined way. If we were created to

A denial of human free choice would make God responsible for the existence of evil in our world.


act like mindless machines, then God could never hold us responsible for our actions. Therefore, it is absurd to deny that humans possess a free will. Having said that, I hasten to add that prior to making our free choice, God, as the sovereign ruler of this vast universe, can set up conditions that can affect its final outcome. Viewed from this perspective, God's sovereignty and human freedom are logically compatible.

Often, as a direct consequence of exercising our free will, we choose wrongly and make bad decisions that may ruin our lives or affect them adversely. At that point in time, our sovereign God can intervene directly and transform the disastrous result into an advantageous condition for us. A denial of human free choice would make God responsible for the existence of evil in our world.


On rare occasions, our sovereign God decides to override human freedom. This happened in the case of the prophet Jonah who was commissioned by God to go to Nineveh, the capital of the feared

Assyrian Empire, and urge the residents of that metropolis to repent. Jonah, however, exercised his free will, and chose not to comply with God's command. He boarded a ship that sailed in the opposite direction of Nineveh; he chose to evade the task that God had assigned to him. At this juncture, God intervened and, through physical means, revealed to the wayward prophet the rightness of His merciful purpose.

The book of Jonah makes it crystal clear that the people of Nineveh had a choice: to continue living in defiance to God's will and perish, or to relinquish their sinful lifestyle and be saved. When the people of Nineveh responded to Jonah's preaching in a positive way and repented, God canceled the decree that He previously had issued concerning their doom. Thus, the people of Nineveh, by their own free choice, averted a major disaster (see Jonah 3:10).



If God foreordains all our acts, we cannot be held accountable for them.



Normally, God does not impose His will upon us because He respects the free choices that we make. When the prodigal son exercised his free will and chose to leave home, his loving father did not compel him to stay; on the contrary, the anguished father let the prodigal go to the far country that he had chosen for himself. God does not coerce us. The prodigal was held responsible for what he did because his decision was made of his own free volition. If God foreordains all our acts, we cannot be morally responsible for them. The biblical principle of personal accountability validates the reality of our free will.

When the ancient Israelites decided to have a mortal king to rule over them so


that they would be like the nations around them, God was deeply grieved and disappointed by their decision, for He desired to remain their only king. Although God expressed His displeasure, He relented and allowed the people to have what they wanted (see 1 Samuel 8). God foreknew the disastrous result of the Israelites' free choice; nonetheless, He did not override their free will.

Most of our actions, choices and decisions are influenced, to some degree, by internal and external causes that may sway our will prior to our choosing. God, who is omniscient, knows the general laws that govern every condition, He knows our character and our motivation; therefore, He can accurately predict what will happen as a consequence of our free acts. It is important that we bear in mind the fact that before we make our free choices, there is no inherent necessity that dictates what must be chosen. For example, it was not absolutely necessary that Adam sin. No one is free who could not have done otherwise. An action is considered free even if it is influenced by certain causes so long as the causes are not constraining. If someone brings poverty on himself through laziness or carelessness with money management, he was not constrained to do so, and it is wrong for us to assume that his poverty was decreed by a loving and merciful God. The Apostle Paul says, "A man reaps what he sows" (Galatians 6:8).


Those who adhere to the doctrine of strict predestination claim that God's will is done in every case. This assertion goes against the general tenor of the teachings of the Bible. Jesus made it plain that the Pharisees "rejected the purpose of God for themselves" (Luke 7:30). They could not defeat God's plan for the whole world, but they were able to reject it effectively in their own case. Jesus desired to gather the Jews as a mother hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but they were reluctant to submit to His will and authority. God sincerely desires that all be saved, but we know that all are not saved. God is not willing that any should perish, yet many do. God's will is not always done on this earth because humans have been given the freedom to either yield to their Creator's will, or to reject the acceptance

of His plan for them.

Throughout the Bible God invites and urges people to make a choice. Joshua told the Israelites, "Choose for yourselves this



Since the essence of God's nature is love, He does not coerce us.



day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15). The prophet Elijah asked the people, "How long will you waver between two opinions?" (1 Kings 18:21). The Apostle Peter says that even the state of human ignorance is willful. "They **deliberately forget** what God said" (2 Peter 3:5). The Apostle Paul declares that even the pagans, who knew the truth about God through His general revelation in the natural world, were **without excuse** because they had **suppressed the truth** (Romans 1:18-20). "Without Excuse" implies choice and consequence. In 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, we read that spiritual blindness came to those who chose to be unbelievers. Even the passages that allude to God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart make it clear that Pharaoh first hardened his own heart (Exodus 7:13, 14, 22; 8:15, 19, 32). The last verse emphatically states, "**This time also Pharaoh hardened his heart.**"

Augustine, a 4th century Catholic theologian, whose writings about predestination influenced John Calvin, believed that heretics could be coerced to believe against their free choice, and he saw no problem in God's doing the same for the elect (Norman Geisler, *What Augustine Says*, Chapter 7). Augustine implies that the unwilling could be dragged screaming and kicking into God's Kingdom. Holding such a belief ruins God's reputation and is a frontal assault on the essence of His nature which is love. Genuine love is always persuasive and never coercive. In *The Screwtape Letters*, page 38, C. S. Lewis says, "The

irresistible and the indisputable are two weapons which the nature of God forbids Him to use."

In *The Great Divorce*, page 69, C. S. Lewis shows how God will ultimately respect



Although God knows beforehand what we will do, His foreknowledge does not interfere with the free exercise of our will.



the free choice of His creatures. "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, 'Thy will be done.' All who are in Hell, choose it. Without that unfettered choice, there could be no Hell."

The observation that C. S. Lewis makes is correct. The Bible is replete with examples that show how people resisted God's plan and His purpose for them. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, boldly stated to his persecutors, "You stiff necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! Like your fathers, **you resist the Holy Spirit**" (Acts 7:51). The first century Jews stubbornly resisted God's will, intentionally rebelled against His plan, and rejected what their prophets had said about the mission of the Messiah. Peter refers to those who "**denied the sovereign Lord who bought them**" (2 Peter 2:1).

God's predetermination is in accordance with His foreknowledge. Peter states that we are "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God" (1 Peter 1:2). To have foreknowledge is to know what will occur prior to its occurrence. Although God knows beforehand what we will do, His foreknowledge does not interfere with the free exercise of our will, and does not determine the actions we perform. God foreknew that Judas would betray Christ, but God's foreknowledge did not force Judas to betray his Master. God did not compel Judas to be a traitor. The nature of

Judas' character, dominated by greed and self-seeking, predisposed him to act treacherously, and we all know that a person's character is shaped by the free choices he makes. Furthermore, foreknowledge does not eliminate free will; the only thing that is contrary to free will is coercive force which God never uses.

In Ephesians 1:4, we are told that in Christ we were chosen by God before the foundation of the world. However, I was not born saved. It is an undeniable truth of the Bible that people are not actually saved until the moment when they place their faith and trust in Jesus' substitutionary death and accept His atoning sacrifice. Since there are no contradictions in the Bible, we have to conclude that God's election is based on His foreknowledge of certain events. God simply looks into the future to see who will believe, and He chooses those whom He sees choosing Him. That's why Romans 8:29 says, "Whom He foreknew, He also predestined to conform to the image of His Son."

Election is one of the applications of God's redemptive plan; therefore, logic demands that it be subsequent to



God does not elect to save anyone without faith and repentance.



redemption. God does not elect to save anyone without faith and repentance. Jesus told the people of Jerusalem, "Unless you repent, you shall all perish (Luke 13:3). Election is the pre-designed destiny of everyone who believes in Christ; it describes the "status" of the believer, and is the present possession of everyone who has accepted Christ as Savior and Lord. Paul admonished the Thessalonian Christians to give thanks because of their election (2 Thessalonians 2:13), while Peter says that we should



Election is the pre-designed destiny of everyone who believes in Christ; it describes the status of the believer.



"make our calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10).

Romans chapter 9 deals exclusively with the Jewish nation. After expressing his love and concern for the Jews, the Apostle Paul proceeds to refute their main objection to the Christian Gospel: that the divine rejection of the unbelieving Jews and the acceptance of the Gentiles were contrary to the word of God. The Jews could not accept the fact that God had rejected the unbelieving nation of Israel; they had presumed that God's choice of Israel was irreversible, and that their highly privileged status could never be lost. Paul's main objective here is to prove

that God's rejection of the unbelieving Jews and the incorporation of the Gentile believers into His new covenant were actions that are entirely consistent with His word and sovereignty. Through unbelief, the Jews had sadly cut themselves off God's economy of grace. The selection described here is primarily for service. God could no longer work through those who had rejected His plan of salvation. The once "honorable vessels" had become unfit for God's use. No one can find fault with God for rejecting those who had rejected Him.

How does God choose and still allow the operation of free will? The answer can be found in Judges 7:4-6. God in effect said to Gideon, "I am going to choose the men who will constitute your army, but the way I will do it is to let them make the choice. Bring the men down to the waterfront, and command them to drink. Those who lap water with their tongue like a dog are the ones I have chosen. You can dismiss the men who get down on all fours and take their time to drink. They are unfit for the task." God ordained the

test and selected Gideon's fighters on the basis of their free choice. Without the application of any pressure, the soldiers chose their preferred method of drinking water.

Anger is an emotion that proves God created human beings with free will. In the Old Testament, we discover many instances when God was angry with


preordained everything, then why would He be angry if people and nations did exactly what they were programmed to do? Since God is sovereign and almighty, people could not oppose Him or disobey Him unless they were given free will.

How can salvation be all of grace if it is dependent on our free choice? There are no conditions for God's offering of salvation; it is entirely of grace. But there is one condition for receiving the gift of salvation: genuine faith. We do not initiate salvation and we cannot earn it. Our faith is not a condition for God's giving salvation, but it is for receiving it. The act of faith (free choice) by which we receive salvation is not meritorious. It is the giver who gets credit for the gift, not the recipient.


A proper balance must be maintained between God's sovereignty and human responsibility. If God's sovereignty is overemphasized, Christianity degenerates into **FATALISM** and leads people to lose sight of the need to have their lives transformed. On the other hand, if human responsibility is overemphasized, Christianity turns into **LEGALISM** and becomes a demanding moral code without appreciation for God's active power in our lives.

Predestination and free will are like two

parallel tracks that intersected at Calvary. Jesus' crucifixion was foreordained by God and prophesied by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah Chapter 53); however, Jesus chose




Since election is the application of God's redemptive plan, logic demands that it be subsequent to redemption.




to submit to God's will. In John 10:18, Jesus says, "No one can take my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord." Although Jesus' death was predetermined, He still had the free will to sacrifice Himself on the cross.

Predestination is the hand we are dealt; free will is what we do with that hand. We did not choose the gifts, abilities and talents that we were born with; however, we are responsible for how we develop and use them. 🍎



Our faith is not a condition for God's offer of salvation, but it is for receiving it.



many people, even with His own chosen people. When the Israelites crafted and worshiped the golden calf, God said to Moses, "They are stiff-necked people. Leave them alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them" (Exodus 32:9-10). If God

Rubber Bands

A rubber band is made for only one purpose: to be stretched so it can hold something together. Now, if it is not stretched, it is not fulfilling its purpose at all, is it?

Christians are much like rubber bands. We were put on this earth to be doers of God's Word. To accomplish this, we must stretch ourselves beyond our comfort zones so that we can be effective. This is one of the hardest things for us to do, but to be effective for God, we must do it.



John Calvin's Doctrine of Election & Predestination An Overview

Rev. Barkev N. Darakjian



In this article, we deal with Calvin's Doctrine of Election and Predestination, in view of its recent come-back into some theological schools and churches in the U.S.A. We first present, very briefly, the two most ardent theologians of the doctrine of election and predestination; namely, St. Augustine of Hippo and John Calvin. Both Augustine and Calvin have left behind a very rich and lasting spiritual and theological heritage which is still studied in theological schools.

A. St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430)

St. Augustine was born of a pagan father and Christian mother in Tagaste, Algeria. He was raised as a Christian by his mother, Monica, who prayed for Augustine day and night. She was a woman of great faith and devotion and lived to see her wayward son's dramatic conversion. Augustine's concept of sin, salvation, election, and predestination was formulated while he was countering a heresy, called Pelagianism, named after a British monk called Pelagius. During a visit to Rome, Pelagius was alarmed by the teachings of Augustine. Rightly or wrongly, one historian tells us that Pelagius was greatly offended by the religious in Rome, who were indolent and careless about practicing their Christian faith and were living an immoral life. When asked about it, Pelagius was told that God had elected them already, and predestinated them for salvation and eternal life. He learned also that Augustine was the promoter of this doctrine of Election and Predestination.

Most probably this doctrine was in the making at the time Pelagius arrived in Rome. Pelagius taught that there is no Original Sin, and that Adam's sin is not hereditary. By sinning, Adam only harmed

himself. However, he did not die as a result of his sin; he would have died naturally. The other great heresy which was propagated by Pelagius was that man does not need God's grace for salvation. Man can achieve his own salvation through education, and by following the example of Jesus' life and His teachings and, most importantly, by using his God-endowed free will. New-born babies are not affected by Adams' sin, nor by the sins of their parents or forefathers; therefore, they do not need to be baptized by the Church. The verbal battle was fierce between St. Augustine and Pelagius and both were relentless in their struggle to win the battle. Finally, St. Augustine had Pelagius anathematized by the Church.

What are we to make of this great and historic controversy? On the one hand, we cannot agree with Pelagius' humanistic views. We are emphatic in our belief that man cannot save himself by depending on his moral and intellectual capacities and his will. Pelagius admitted that man is in need of God's help, and he should make every effort to stop sinning. "God helps those who help themselves" he declared. Augustine, on the other hand, put the emphasis on God's sovereignty and grace. Responding to Pelagius' statement, Augustine said, "Not

so! God helps those who *cannot* help themselves." For Augustine, divine grace is not conditioned on human worthiness, thus maintaining the doctrine of absolute predestination. He believed that through the disobedience of Adam all mankind sank into corruption and sin. However, God, through His sovereign decision elected some for salvation and the rest for eternal damnation.

Many theologians explain Augustine's teachings on Election and Predestination by referring to his wayward life before his conversion. He was a highly skilled rhetorician and philosopher, but also a sex-obsessed and immoral person. One should read his *Confessions*, an all time classic, to see how deeply he had sunk into sin and debauchery, and how God's amazing grace lifted him up, and His sovereign will overcame his willful iniquities. Augustine could find no explanation except that God should have elected and predestinated him to

Divine grace is not
conditioned on
human worthiness.


become a new being. It was God's saving grace that had done what he, Augustine, could not have done with all his intellectual and moral capacities. This is why St. Augustine was called the theologian of Grace.

B. John Calvin (1509-1564)


Augustine's teachings on election and predestination must be kept in mind as we consider his theological heir, John Calvin, who walked onto the scene over one thousand years later. There were a number of other theologians in between, but it was Calvin who showed the relevance of this doctrine to the theology of the Protestant Reformation. Following Calvin's death, his followers built up on this doctrine and gave it a central place in the theology of the Reformed Church.

John Calvin was born in 1509, in Noyon, France. His father, Gerard, wanted his son to become a priest, but later he changed his mind and sent him to law-school. Calvin was a bright student, and attained some distinction in his studies for which he did not have much love. He had the opportunity to read the old Greek and Latin classics, and became familiar with the ideals of the Italian Renaissance, as well as with the emerging Protestant reform movement. It is not known exactly when Calvin was converted to the Protestant faith, but eventually he became one of the strongest and most influential pillars of the Protestant Reformation, with Luther, Zwingli, Melancthon, and others.

Calvin became a very controversial leader,



In Calvin's theology, we find the sovereign God eclipsing the most loving and merciful heavenly Father.



pastor, and theologian, during his leadership of the Church in Geneva where he made many friends as well as enemies. Theologians and historians have very contradictory views about Calvin; some praise him highly, while others are very critical of him and his theology. Calvin was accused of breaking one of the central teachings of the Bible, namely, the command, "Do not kill," found in both the Old and New Testaments. Some church historians record the atrocities carried

directly and indirectly by Calvin during his despotic rule in Geneva. According to the most renowned church historian, Philip Schaff, "From 1542-1546, fifty-eight judgments of death and seventy-six decrees of banishments were passed." According to this same author, "A girl was beheaded for striking her parents, to vindicate the fifth commandment...", and during the "ravages of the pestilence in 1545, more than twenty men and women were burnt alive for witchcraft, and wicked conspiracy to spread the horrible disease...". Schaff also cites the case of Servetus, a medical doctor and inventor, who was burnt alive by the consent of Calvin because of his different interpretations of the Doctrine of Trinity. However, this historian justifies Calvin by suggesting that a person has to consider the times in which Calvin lived.

Calvin's theology and ecclesiology was instrumental in the formation of some Protestant denominations such as Reformed, Presbyterian, early Baptist, and Congregational. He authored almost 60 books, booklets, catechisms, commentaries and apologetics. His most acclaimed and monumental work is *Institutes of the Christian Religion* which was first published in 1536 in Latin, consisting of only six chapters. In 1539 appeared an enlarged edition with seventeen chapters. The final edition, comprised of 80 chapters, was published in Latin in 1559, and in French in 1560. This last edition consisted of four parts: *God the Creator, God the Redeemer, The Holy Spirit, and The Means of Grace and the Church.*


As mentioned above, Calvin was greatly influenced by the teachings of St. Augustine, specially in his doctrine of election and predestination. Martin Luther, the Founder of the 16th century Reformation was also influenced by St. Augustine; however, there are some minor differences between Luther and Calvin in their concepts of election and predestination. But first we must answer the following two related questions: Was the doctrine of Election and Predestination the core issue in Calvin's theology? Second, does this doctrine have a biblical basis?

C. The Doctrine of Election and Predestination in Calvin's theology.


Let us first state this doctrine as it is found in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*:

"We call predestination the eternal decree of

God by which He has determined in Himself what He would have every individual of mankind to become, for they are not all created with a similar destiny; but eternal life is foreordained for some and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say is predestined either to life or to death." Election, for Calvin, like reprobation, is an entirely



Many atrocities were committed during Calvin's despotic rule in Geneva.



free act of the divine will. In his sermon on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, Calvin has this to add: "If we ask why God takes pity on some, and why lets go of the others and leaves them, there is no other answer but that it pleased him to do so."

Until the late 19th century, theologians assumed that this doctrine of election and predestination constituted the core of Calvin's theology and preoccupation. Of course they knew that Calvin had mostly borrowed it from St. Augustine, and that there were quite a number of theologians in between, such as Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), who had written about this doctrine.


Calvin hardly touched on this doctrine in the first edition of his colossal work, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. In the succeeding editions, however, we find Calvin's thoughts being more and more dominated by the Sovereignty of God on the one hand, and man's total depravity on the other. So in Calvin's theology we find the Absolute Sovereign God replacing the most loving and merciful God. Scholars tell us also that the reason for this shift was the fierce criticism raised by some of the prominent members of his church in Geneva. The more he was attacked, the more his doctrine became radicalized.

Some historians of the Protestant Reformation state that Calvin did not derive this doctrine directly from the Bible, but that he read this doctrine into some biblical


passages. We will address this issue later in this article.

D. "Five-Point Calvinism".

Calvin's Doctrine of Election and Predestination has been interpreted differently by even the so-called Calvinist theologians and churches. We shall briefly present the historic "Five-Point Calvinism"



In opposition to Calvin's theology, Professor James Arminius taught that Christ died for everyone, not only for the elect.



which was formulated and adopted by the great Reformed Synod of Dort in 1618-1619, half a century after Calvin's death, and as a refutation of a doctrinal statement set forth by the Remonstrants or Arminians in 1610, rejecting the deterministic logic of Calvinism. But let us first present here the doctrinal statement of the Synod, and then we shall return to the doctrine of the Arminians. Here is this post-Calvinist statement on the doctrine of election and predestination which is called *Five Point Calvinism*, and is presently known as Extreme Calvinism.

1. **T – Total Depravity** (Total inability). This is the consequence of man's fall in Adam because of the latter's disobedience to God. According to this view, people are not by nature inclined to love God, but rather all are inclined to reject the rule of God. Every person born in the world is enslaved by sin and is morally unable to choose to follow God. Their nature is totally corrupt, that is, sin has affected every part of a person.
2. **U – Unconditional Election**. God chose from eternity those whom He will save. This is not based on foreseen virtue, merit, or faith in those whom he elected. It is totally and unconditionally grounded in God's mercy.
3. **L – Limited Atonement**. This means that Christ died only for those who are elected by God. The death of Christ actually takes away the penalty of sins

only of those on whom God has chosen to have mercy, that is, takes away the sins only of the elect, not all humanity.

4. **I – Irresistible Grace**. Following St. Augustine, Calvin says, "Grace is by no means offered by God only to be rejected or accepted as it may seem good to one." The elect soul is incapable of resisting God. He has no other choice but to accept the saving faith in Christ.
5. **P – Perseverance of the Saints**. This means that any person who has once been truly saved from sin and damnation necessarily perseveres and later cannot be condemned. (Here the word *saint* refers to all who are set apart by God for a specific purpose. It is in this biblical sense that this word must be taken, and not for someone who is exceptionally holy, or canonized). Calvin, in his *Institutes* makes this affirmation: "It cannot be that the true members of the elect people of God should in the end perish or be lost. Their salvation has such sure and firm support that even if the whole machine of the world broke down, this could not fall. It rests upon the election of God..."

Some Calvinist scholars propose that Calvin would not have agreed to all five points, especially on the *Limited atonement*, since he believed and taught that Christ died for all humanity. However, the present Calvinists take their lead from the Five Points promulgated by the Synod of Dort.

And now the *Arminians*. They were followers of the teachings of James Arminius (1560-1609), a professor of divinity at the University of Leiden, (Holland), and a very dedicated Pastor. It was after his death in 1609 that his sympathizers called themselves Arminians, and demanded a revision of the Calvinist catechism and the Belgic Confession. As mentioned above, it was against this declaration of the Arminians that the international Synod of Dort formulated the Five Point Calvinism, i.e. T-U-L-I-P.

But what were the points that the Arminians had raised earlier against Calvin's doctrine of election and predestination?

1. God in Christ decreed to elect from fallen humanity those who believed in Jesus Christ and persevered in the faith; however, He rejected the unbelievers. (*This is against "Unconditional Election"*).


2. Christ died for everyone, and not only for the elect. (*Against "Limited Atonement"*).

3. Only God's grace can move someone to believe in Him.


4. God's grace is not irresistible; all works of faith must be ascribed to God's grace. (*Against "Irresistible Grace"*).

5. True believers might fall away from faith. (*Against "Perseverance of the Saints"*).

Even though the Arminians were severely criticized by the Calvinists in general, and even were persecuted at the time, there are today many Arminian churches all around the world. It is enough to say that the Methodist Church, whose founder was the great 18th century evangelist, John Wesley, is Arminian by faith. To this day there is an ongoing, though silent, animosity between the Calvinists and Arminians. Rather than getting involved in the polemics between



Calvin taught that the elect are incapable of resisting God; however, the Gospels clearly state that Jesus was rejected by the people of Israel who were God's chosen people at that time.



these two camps, the aim of this article is to present a general and balanced evaluation of Calvin's Doctrine of Election and Predestination, including of course, Double-Predestination.

E. Our objections to Calvinism, specifically, to the *Five Point Calvinism*.

- a. The nature of the statement.

In order to refresh the minds of our readers, let us repeat here how Calvin presents his doctrine in his *Institutes*: God eternally decreed, - "*determined in Himself what He would have every individual of mankind to become, for they are not all created with similar destiny; but eternal life is foreordained for some and eternal damnation for others ... predestined either to life or to death.*"

The first thing that comes to mind is that this is an *a posteriori* statement, e.g. an

inductive and empirical statement. Everyone can see that people are not created equal; everyone can see that the majority of people are not, and will not be believers showing concern for their future destiny. The other thing is that it is *fatalistic*; those of us who have moved to this country from eastern, or Moslem countries, will easily notice the similarities between Calvin's doctrine and the fatalistic concepts and beliefs of the non-Christian religions of the East. The other source of Calvin's doctrine is the ancient Greek philosophers, and oriental pagan cults, from whom he must have borrowed through St. Augustine, who was very familiar with those religions, cults, and philosophies.

b. Is this doctrine biblical?

It is not our intention to engage in textual proof reading to show what the Scriptures say about this issue, since any attempt to do this will demand exhaustive and somewhat futile study, and there will be no end in listing passages and verses to prove or disprove this doctrine. We agree with all



We find it impossible to believe that our loving and merciful God creates some people only to hate them and consign them to Hell just because it pleases Him to do so.




those biblical scholars who confirm that Calvin's doctrine of election, predestination, and double-predestination is not found in the Bible. In fact, there are only two passages in the letters of Paul, where we come across these terms; they are found in Romans chapters. 9 – 11, and Ephesians chapter 1. Some scholars propose that this doctrine has been read into those passages. We must be very careful not to take those passages out of their historical and theological context.

In Romans, Paul is defending himself against those Jews who accused him of undermining their special status as God's chosen people entitled to His special privileges, among which was the belief that they were predestined for salvation and eternal life, simply because they could trace their physical descent to Abraham. On the


other hand, the Jewish Christians blamed the apostle for considering the Gentile converts as equal sharers of the promises made by God to specifically Jewish people. As for the latter, they thought that the people of Israel had forfeited their status as the chosen people of God by not believing in His Son, Jesus Christ, and consequently God had chosen them instead, to carry on His redemptive plan for the world.

It is at this point that Paul comes up with God's new covenant which would include in His salvation plan all those – without discrimination – who believed in His Son, Jesus Christ. It is at this point that Paul states his conviction of the ultimate Sovereignty of God in deciding who His elect were to be. Paul separates the true Israelites from the Jewish nation because the latter, in general, had failed in its calling as God's elect. God, in His Son Jesus Christ, had called the Gentiles to join in the New Israel, the Church. Jews, as well as Gentiles, who believed in Him and thus were justified, were redeemed and saved. Thus, for Paul, those who had accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior were the Called, Elected, and Predestined to become God's special People and His ambassadors to the world. In Galatians 3:29, Paul affirms the truth that only those who believe in Jesus are the true children of Abraham and the rightful heirs of God's promise. Thus, we too will be among the elect and the predestined if we believe in Jesus Christ; *"For God so loved the WORLD that He gave His one and only Son, that WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM should not perish, but have eternal life."* (John 3:16) (Emphasis is mine).

The second reference to God's election and predestination, in Ephesians chapter 1: 1-6, can be characterized as an outburst of praise and gratitude to God who chose the members of the Church in Ephesus **in Christ, in order that they may be "holy and blameless before Him"**. This plan of God's work of salvation was set by God *"before the foundation of the world."* The election of the Church, or a person, represents on the one hand, God's unmerited gift or grace, and on the other hand, a challenge to the elect for responsibility and for *holiness*. All this means that this process of election and predestination does not refer to the eternal salvation and life of individuals or groups, but it is a call for a holy life, and responsibility to carry on Christ's ministry.



The Apostle Paul separates the true Israelites from the Jewish nation because the latter failed in its calling as God's elect by not believing in Jesus Christ.



F. The Absolute Sovereignty of God vs. Human Integrity.

God's Absolute Sovereignty forms the core of Calvin's Doctrine of Election and Predestination. Our contention is that while Calvin strongly emphasizes God's absolute Sovereignty, he shows absolutely no concern for man's integrity. God's Sovereignty and Human Freedom could be a topic for a theological or philosophical dissertation which is not, of course, the intent of this article. However, we shall make an attempt to bring this dichotomy down from its metaphysical and philosophical heights, and treat it existentially, that is, by relating it to our everyday experience as humans and believers.

It will not be too far from the truth when we state that Calvin's doctrine of election and predestination hinges upon God's Absolute Sovereignty and Glory. The problem is how we can reconcile the divine sovereignty with human integrity and freedom without doing injustice to God. In our hearts and experience we cannot rule out God's Sovereignty without sinning against Him; on the other hand, we feel and act by making the most of our God-endowed freedom and integrity. This sense of freedom as part of human integrity has been declared by the Psalmist not to just glorify man, but to praise the divine wisdom in giving man such a lofty status:

"You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings/ and crowned him with glory and honor.

You made him ruler over the works of your hands/ you put everything under his feet..." (Psalm 8: 5,6)

We must also keep in mind that God created Adam in His own image endowing him with divine characteristics of which *freedom* was his highest virtue and glory. Such a freedom enabled Adam to be even

disobedient to his Creator, to say “NO” to Him! One can argue that that was before Adam’s fall, and that man’s total depravity was the result of Adam’s fall. However, the entire Bible and human experience throughout history, stand as witnesses to human freedom to say “Yes” or “No” to God. The Scriptures are full of challenges in which humans have felt free to obey or


never fall away but persevere in faith to the end.

We believe that God is above any human doctrine, be it formulated by St. Augustine, Luther, or Calvin. Despite His being the Sovereign God, the Creator and the Ruler of the world, God limited Himself by His self-revelation to humanity, and by living among them through His Incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. Moreover, He gave His life for the expiation of the sin of mankind. Despite all the glories with which God is surrounded, we now know Him better and feel ourselves closer to Him as our Father and Friend through, Jesus the Christ. This is the reason why we cannot believe in Calvinism, which according to Chris Wilhoit – a theologian – “...is a theological system that teaches that God directly causes people to be saved without them having a choice in the matter, and puts people in eternal hellfire without them ever having an opportunity to repent and believe.” This is true specifically for Augustine’s and Calvin’s concept of Double-Predestination. Unfortunately, St. Augustine, Calvin, and the rest of the predestinarians and *Five-Point Calvinists* have replaced the essentially loving and merciful Father with a capricious Judge who discriminates against His own children by condemning the majority to eternal damnation. Moreover, this god of double-predestination has passed his judgment on those unfortunate creatures even before they were born, and without their knowledge. As we mentioned above, “*If we ask why God takes pity on some, and why lets go of the others and leaves them, there is no other answer but that it pleased him (God) to do so*” affirms Calvin.


This is not what we have learned about our most gracious heavenly Father in the teachings of our Lord Jesus, who is God’s very Revelation. Yes, we have come to know this God through Jesus’ parables, e.g. in the Father of the lost son, and in the Shepherd of the lost sheep; in both parables we discover the true nature of God in the person of the Waiting Father for His prodigal son, and a most anxious Shepherd, who endangers his life by going after his lost sheep. God rejoices over the return of His lost son, and over the recovery of His lost sheep. We feel safer and happier by believing in the most loving and merciful Father of Jesus Christ than believing in the God characterized by Augustine and Calvin; a god who,

according to their predestinarian theology is a most capricious, and undependable god. Our trust is in our most loving and merciful God who listens to us when we call on Him, and is ever-ready to save us from our sins, fears and predicaments. God in Jesus Christ does not discriminate against His children and “wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (1Timothy 2:4). And again, “He (God) is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 2:9).

After saying all this, we cannot altogether put aside God’s acts of election and predestination. The difference, however, is that whereas for Augustine and Calvin this is an *eternal decree for unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints*, for us, **these are, or should be, a personal experience, and testimony, that it was God who elected us, saved us, and called us to give our testimony to His saving grace. Moreover, it is this God who has entrusted to us a most sacred responsibility to go out and tell the world what He has done for us, and what we owe Him in return.** This is how we understand divine election and predestination: **Salvation, Personal**




The election taught in the Bible is for a special mission to become God’s prophet, apostle, or a martyr, but not for the individual’s salvation or eternal damnation.




disobey God. A Calvinist will respond to this by alluding that it was God who decreed that some people would respond positively and others negatively to God’s call for repentance and service. This is an afterthought, an empirical statement. Human salvation would have lost its meaning if humans had received it without their participation, and at times without struggling and paying a high cost for it. After saying this, we must admit, however, that there is a Divine Election, but this Election is for a task, a mission, to become God’s emissary, prophet, apostle, missionary, or a martyr, but not for the individual’s salvation and eternal life, let alone eternal damnation.

By and large, Calvin’s doctrine of election and predestination turns the human being, who is God’s masterpiece, into a puppet, a very passive commodity having nothing to say about his ultimate destiny. It is enough to have a closer look at each of the Five Points stated by the Calvinist Synod of Dort. Through all these Five Points you see only **God** as sole Actor and Decisive Factor in Man’s present and future, or ultimate destiny. **God** “elects a minority” from His entire human creation for eternal salvation and life, leaving the majority to their lot of “eternal damnation” - hell and fire. It is **God’s Irresistible Grace** that keeps the elect from resisting Him. Since **God** elected the person for salvation, it is natural that he should



We cannot accept Calvinism because it teaches that God assigns people to hellfire without giving them an opportunity to believe and repent.



Testimony, Challenge, and Responsibility. Thus, the idea of Divine Election and Predestination ceases to be a Doctrine, and instead, becomes a humbling and grateful confession of the saved-sinner, in the presence of God. In all these we see our God limiting His Sovereignty by coming down into the world in order to save His wayward children through His Son, Jesus Christ. Yes, it is God who saves the sinner, and in the process of His saving activity, He challenges the saved-sinner, to become His collaborator in His world-wide salvation plan. God does not revoke the sinner’s freedom because of

his Sin, unless the person himself becomes a slave to his Sin. However, God takes the initiative in restoring the person's original freedom if he repents and accepts Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

In order not to be misunderstood, I should state that St Augustine and John Calvin have become a great inspiration to me, not

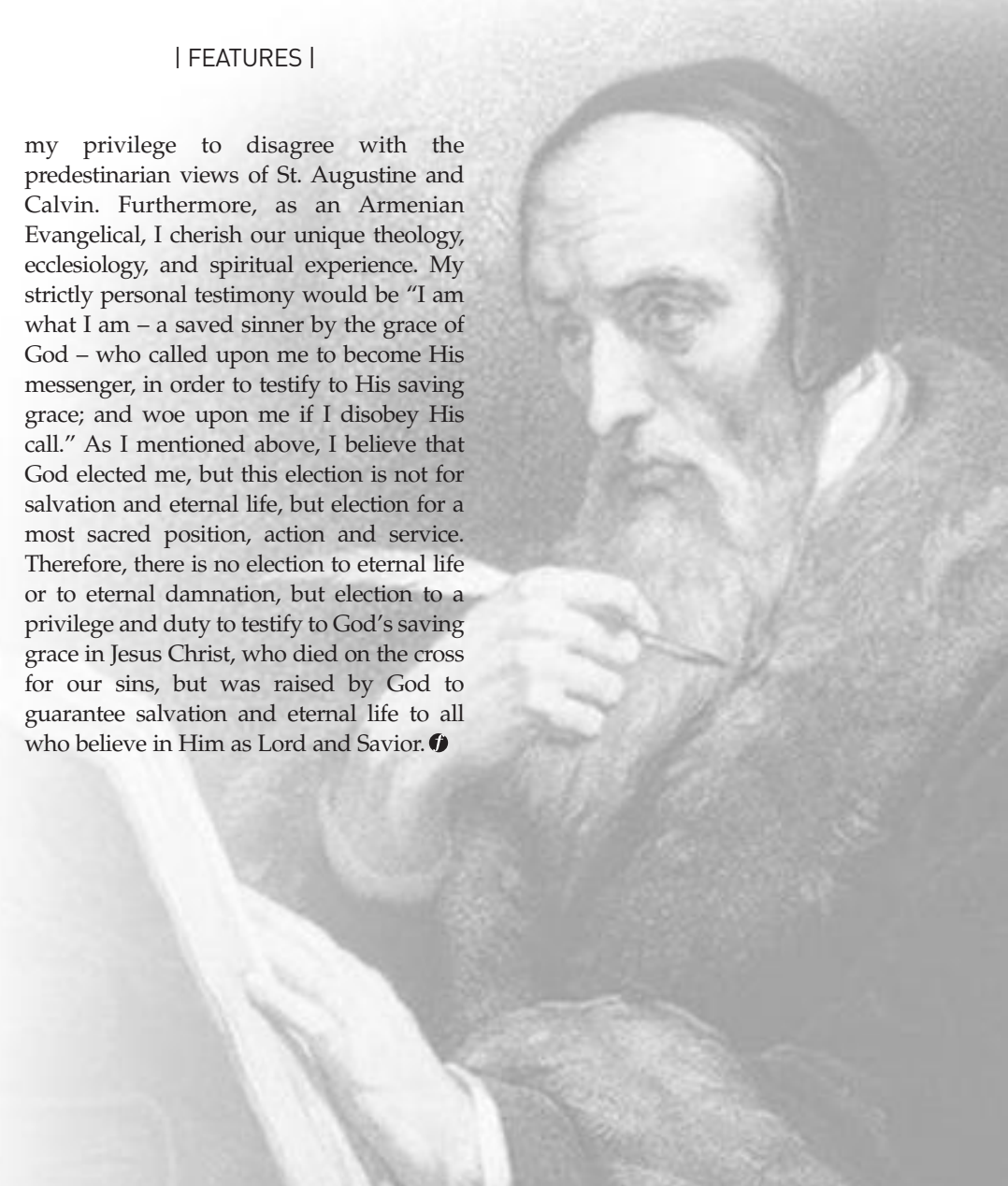


It is absurd to believe that God has passed His judgment of damnation on some unfortunate creatures even before they were born and without their knowledge.



only as theologians who left their mark on the history of Christianity, but also as courageous believers and Christian apologetic writers. As a permanent student of Historical Theology, I am greatly indebted to these giants of Christianity and theologians of Divine Grace. However, being a modest historian of the theology of the Armenian Evangelical movement, I use

my privilege to disagree with the predestinarian views of St. Augustine and Calvin. Furthermore, as an Armenian Evangelical, I cherish our unique theology, ecclesiology, and spiritual experience. My strictly personal testimony would be "I am what I am – a saved sinner by the grace of God – who called upon me to become His messenger, in order to testify to His saving grace; and woe upon me if I disobey His call." As I mentioned above, I believe that God elected me, but this election is not for salvation and eternal life, but election for a most sacred position, action and service. Therefore, there is no election to eternal life or to eternal damnation, but election to a privilege and duty to testify to God's saving grace in Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for our sins, but was raised by God to guarantee salvation and eternal life to all who believe in Him as Lord and Savior. 🙏



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Joseph **AND** Predestination

By Tony Grant

The book of Genesis tells us that Jacob had several wives, twelve sons and assorted daughters, but he loved his wife Rachel most of all, and consequently her firstborn, Joseph, was his favorite son. The other sons were soon put to tending flocks, but Joseph stayed home with his father.

Joseph was something of a tattletale. His father frequently sent him on errands to his brothers, and he sometimes found them doing things that they were not supposed to be doing, and he told all to his father—which did not sit well with his brothers. Jacob continued favoring Joseph over his brothers by giving him “the coat of many colors.” The point of giving this distinctive “coat” was that Jacob recognized Joseph as his eldest son. In that culture, 4000 years ago, the eldest son got double the inheritance of any other son. So, Jacob’s decision had direct economic consequences, and it aroused jealousies that nearly destroyed his family.

Joseph was not the eldest son; he was the eleventh son. Reuben was the eldest. We can imagine that the other sons would have reluctantly allowed Reuben a double portion because, after all, he was the firstborn, but they were unhappy with their father changing the natural order of succession and promoting Joseph to the position of the eldest son.

The final straw was the dreams. Joseph was always a visionary and he had prophetic dreams. His dreams were symbolic, but they obviously represented Joseph’s superiority over his brothers. He foolishly told the brothers about the dreams, and we imagine he told them with smug satisfaction. This drove the brothers over the edge. They decided to kill him, but later on they thought it would be better if they sold him to a passing company of Ishmaelite slave traders.

The Ishmaelites took Joseph to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar. Poor Joseph, he

had been a Bedouin prince; now he was just property. He belonged to Potiphar just as Potiphar’s dog, and had about the same rights. Being sold into slavery was certainly a traumatic experience, but Joseph was apparently transformed by the experience. He was humiliated and shaken by what had happened, but he determined to make the best of his situation. He rose quickly through the ranks of the slave hierarchy, and became Potiphar’s steward, or head overseer, supervising all his possessions.

Things were going well for Joseph, but disaster struck again. Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce him. When he refused her advances, she, in her fury, accused him of rape. Joseph was still a slave. His word against the word of his master’s wife was worthless. Potiphar threw Joseph in prison. Commentators point out that Potiphar could have killed Joseph. The fact that he did not suggests that he had some doubts about his wife’s story. In any case, Joseph was still in prison. This must have seemed like an immense calamity to him. He was a slave in prison with no prospect of ever getting out.

After some time, Genesis tells us that Pharaoh got angry with his cupbearer and his baker and threw them into prison, the same prison were Joseph was. These two high-ranking prisoners had dreams that Joseph interpreted. His interpretation was that the cupbearer would be restored to his office in three days, but that the baker would have his head chopped off in three days. Sure enough, in three days, Pharaoh restored the cupbearer and decapitated the baker.

Unfortunately, the cupbearer forgot about Joseph, and didn’t remember him until two years later when Pharaoh complained of having persistent dreams of seven fat and seven lean cows coming out of the Nile River. Pharaoh also dreamed of seven plump ears of grain and seven blighted ears of grain. Then the

cupbearer belatedly remembered Joseph who interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams to mean seven years of bountiful harvests to be followed by seven years of famine. Pharaoh was so impressed that he appointed Joseph as his second in command and used the seven good years to store up food for the bad years to come.



By giving a distinctive coat to Joseph, Jacob conferred on him the privilege that was reserved for the eldest son.



Soon, the good years were gone and the anticipated famine came. The famine included not just Egypt, but the land of Canaan as well. Jacob’s family faced a predicament. The sons of Jacob went down to Egypt to buy grain. There they met Joseph, but he had become so Egyptian in speech and manners that they could not recognize him, but he knew their identity.

Several chapters in Genesis describe how Joseph played with his brothers, which is as near as he ever came to seeking revenge. He accused them of being spies; he accused them of stealing; and since he had absolute power over them, any hint of accusation must have struck fear into their hearts. As they had seen his anguish when they sold him into slavery, so now he witnessed their distress. But Joseph was not a vengeful person and eventually he revealed himself to them. To the brothers, it must have seemed as if the ghost of one whom they had murdered suddenly stood before them. They shrank from him, but he

forgave them freely. He had them return home and bring their families to Egypt, including their father Jacob. They moved to Egypt where Joseph had become so rich and powerful that he could take care of them all.

Then Jacob died of old age, and the brothers began to be anxious again. Their



God will not predestine us to do evil, and then turn around and condemn us for doing that over which we had no control. We need to stop blaming God for human folly.



thought was that Joseph only forgave them for the sake of his beloved father. Now that Jacob was dead, Joseph might feel that it was payback time. So the brothers concocted another lie. They had lied to their father for years about what happened to Joseph. Now they were desperate to extract themselves from the guilt of what they did to Joseph, so they lied again, saying that their father had told them to tell Joseph to forgive them. We suspect that Joseph knew they were lying, but simply did not care. He says, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good" (Genesis 50:19-20).

That is the Joseph story as it is found in Genesis chapters 37-50. The question today is: What does Joseph tell us about the doctrine of predestination? We see that the Joseph story has a lot to say about human sin. Jacob sinned. He was an awful parent, preferring one son above the others. Joseph sinned. He was a tattletale. He was arrogant. But whatever Joseph did, he did not deserve to be sold into slavery. Joseph's brothers committed a terrible evil against him. So, there is plenty of sin in this story. But this is also a story of the triumph of human will and ability over bad circumstances. Joseph may have been a spoiled teenager, but he had talent and strength of character that only became apparent when his world collapsed around him. Sold as a slave, he

worked his way up to be the chief slave in Potiphar's household. Tossed into the dungeon, he came out as Pharaoh's number one man. This is an inspiring story of triumph over all obstacles. But the story of Joseph is not only about human sin and human triumph. It is also about how God works in human affairs.

First of all note that we are responsible for our sins. That means we have free will. If we did not have free will, God could not hold us responsible. The Persian poet Omar Khayyam says,

"Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin

Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil round

Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!"

What Omar Khayyam is saying is that God will not predestine us to do evil and then turn around to blame us for doing evil. That makes no sense at all. We are responsible for what we do because we have free will.

In our story from Genesis, the brothers had several choices. They could have forgiven Joseph and Jacob and got on with their lives. They could have given Joseph a good beating, torn his coat up, and sent him home crying to daddy. But, they chose a much greater evil and sold their brother into slavery.

Joseph had choices also. In slavery, he could have just given up, but he did not. He made a choice to work with all his power and ability. So the Joseph story teaches free will and responsibility, but that is not all. What happened to Joseph shows us that God works in human affairs to bring about His will, but in dealing with people, God deals with very imperfect instruments, so He has to operate in conditions that are often not so good.

We can imagine a world where God's will is always perfectly done, where everything that happens is in accord with what God wants. Everything that happens is good and true and wonderful. We can imagine such a world, but we know that is not our world, and never has been.

In Genesis, we read about a young man sold into slavery. God did not sell him into slavery. His brothers sold him, and they did it out of envy and malice, and they

had to deal with the guilt of that sin for years thereafter. But God was working in that situation to turn human sin into something good. That is what Joseph said. "You intended to do me harm." Do not try to cover anything up. Don't talk about daddy wanting me to forgive you. I know, Joseph says, what your intentions were, but God took your evil intentions and made them turn out good. The situation was sinful, but God influenced it and made good come out of it.

This leads us then to a basic principle about how God works in human affairs. God constantly, in every moment and every place, acts to bring about good for those who believe in Him and trust Him implicitly. We need to stop blaming God for human folly.

Some commentaries on the Joseph story say that God predestined the brothers to sell Joseph into slavery so that he would eventually become prime minister of Egypt, and be instrumental in saving thousands of people from starving to death. But that makes God a slave dealer and absolves the brothers of their sin. If God made them do it, it was no sin. But if you read Genesis, the brothers did not feel that way at all. They knew they had sinned, and Joseph knew they had sinned, but God came into all this sinfulness and transformed it to good, so that the outcome was that multitudes were saved from famine, but that did not justify the brothers at all. They were still responsible for their own sins.

Again we hear the same thing about Judas. Some say that Judas was predestined to betray Jesus from the beginning of time, and he had no choice in the matter. But Judas did not feel that way. When he realized what he had done, when he realized that Jesus would be crucified, Judas committed suicide in despair over his betrayal. Make no mistake, Judas betrayed Jesus of his own free will. He made that choice, and he was responsible for that choice, and he knew it. But God took Judas' sin and the sin of the Jewish establishment and the Roman Government, God took all that sin and changed it to something good in that Jesus died on the cross so that all our sins might be forgiven and so that we might be reconciled to God.

Let us now apply all this to us. We, like Joseph's brothers, like Judas, are

responsible for our own sins. We have free will. We make our choices. We cannot blame our sins on God, or the devil, or circumstances, or society. We need to have the courage to stand up and say what everyone knows: “I am responsible for what I do.” That is really the first step in forgiveness—realizing that I need forgiveness because I am responsible for my sins.

The Joseph story is about forgiveness. Joseph forgave his brothers. The gospel story is about a larger forgiveness. When I

am in despair over my sins, when I realize that I am the one who needs forgiveness, Jesus forgives. Jesus forgives totally and completely and forever.

In conclusion, Joseph’s story ends on an optimistic note. God changed human sinfulness to good and saved people from famine. This shows us that God is here with us and He is working. Sometimes evil seems strong; sometimes sin seems all powerful; but that’s the point. God can change the most evil situation into something good. God can bring us out of

our slavery; God can bring us out of our dungeons. That does not mean that we should sit down and wait on God to do it all. God does not work that way. God works with us as we use our God-given talents and abilities to do His work. God is actively working in us, with us, and through us. 🌱

Editor’s Note: Rev. Tony Grant is the pastor of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in York, South Carolina.

The Testimony of the Early Church Fathers about **Free Will**

Ignatius of Antioch - Ignatius was a disciple of both Apostles Peter and John and was martyred in Rome in 110 A.D. Seven of his letters have survived to this day.

- “If any one is truly religious, he is a man of God; but if he is irreligious, he is a man of the devil, made such, not by nature, but by his own choice” (*earlychristianwritings.com*).

Irenaeus - (130-202 A.D.) - About 180 A.D., Irenaeus wrote a book titled *Against Heresies, Book IV*. We present two quotations from pages 37 and 39.

- “Men are Possessed of Free Will, and endowed with the faculty of making a choice. It is not true, therefore, that some are by nature good, and others bad” (*Against Heresies Book IV, Chapter 37, page 37*).
- “Man is Endowed with the faculty of distinguishing good and evil; so that, without compulsion, he has the power, by his own will and choice, to obey God’s Commandments, and by doing so he avoids the evils prepared for the rebellious” (*Ibid. page 39*).

Justin Martyr - He was beheaded 168 A.D. for his strong defense of the Christian faith. His works represent the earliest surviving Christian apologies of notable size.

- “Man acts by his own free will and not by fate” (*Second Apology*).
- “We have learned from the prophets, and we hold it to be true, that punishments, chastisements, and rewards are rendered according to each man’s actions. Otherwise, if all things happen by fate, then nothing is in our own power. For if it be predestined that one man be good and another man evil, then the first is not deserving of praise, or the other to be blamed. Unless humans have the power of avoiding evil and choosing good by free choice, they are not accountable for their actions—whatever they may be... For neither would a man be worthy of reward or praise if he did not of himself choose the good, but was merely created for that end. Likewise, if a man were evil, he would not deserve punishment, since he was not evil of himself, being unable to do anything else than what he was made for” (*First Apology*).

- “But if the word of God foretells that some angels and men shall be certainly punished, it did so because it foreknew that they would be unchangeably wicked, but not because God had created them so” (Justin Martyr, Chapter CXXI, page 141).

Clement of Alexandria - (Died in 190 A.D.)

- “A man by himself working and toiling at freedom from sinful desires achieves nothing. But if he plainly shows himself to be very eager and earnest about this, he attains it by the addition of the power of God. God works together with willing souls. But if the person abandons his eagerness, the spirit from God is also restrained. To save the unwilling is the act of one using compulsion; but to save the willing, that of one showing grace” (*Salvation of the Rich Man, Chapter 21*).
- Neither praise nor condemnation, neither rewards nor punishments, are right if the soul does not have the power of choice and avoidance, if evil is involuntary (*Miscellanies, Book1, chapter 17*).

Archelaus - (250-300 AD)

“All the creatures that God made, He made very good. And He gave to every individual the sense of free will, by which standard He also instituted the law of judgment.... And certainly whoever will, may keep the commandments. Whoever despises them and turns aside to what is contrary to them, shall yet without doubt have to face this law of judgment.... There can be no doubt that every individual, in using his own proper power of will, may shape his course in whatever direction he pleases” (*Disputation With Manes, pages 32-33*).

Methodius - (260-315 AD)

- “Those pagans who decide that man does not have free will, but say that he is governed by the unavoidable necessities of fate, are guilty of impiety toward God Himself, making Him out to be the cause and author of human evils” (*The Banquet of the Ten Virgins, Discourse 8, Chapter 16*).

Pentecost

Some Observations and Lessons

Scripture: Acts 2: 1-5, 22-24, 36-39

Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian*



The Christian Church was born on the Day of Pentecost, around 30 A. D., in the city of Jerusalem. On that day something unusual, but not unheard of, took place; remote from us, yet very closely related to us; something we all know about but do not always fully understand.

First, WHAT happened? It is not easy to say exactly what happened. Other than the biblical account, there are no other records of the event. But from this one record we have in the Book of Acts, we can say that it went something like this: A small group of people made themselves conspicuous by getting noisy. They attracted the attention of the people and crowds gathered around them. They were shouting, but they were shouting for joy, not hate. They were ecstatically happy, and they shared their joy with the whole world.

These people were followers of Jesus of Nazareth. When He was crucified (less than two months before this event took place) they were crushed. They saw nothing but defeat and degradation in the cross. And their lives were dragged right down to the bottom.

When He was raised from the dead, their spirits started to rise. They glimpsed the light once again, and they understood things from a different perspective. They were no longer “scattered” individuals. They were “gathered” in small groups to pray and to break bread together. But on this particular day something else happened to them. They were galvanized into a community. Their purpose from this day forward was to spread their joy, to share it with the rest of the world. God

had come to them in a new way; they received a new insight that they were not alone. They were convinced that God was there, that His power was available to them. No longer did they need to be fearful and apprehensive. Their courage revived. They knew that they could do God’s work. Why stay hidden in an upper room when the people of Jerusalem could be assured that the God of love was with them also? They started in Jerusalem, and they fanned out in all directions. They never stopped.

On the day of Pentecost, the curse of the Tower of Babel was reversed. People who had been confused and alienated from one another were brought together by the activity of the Holy Spirit.

Second, WHEN did it happen? We know what happened to them. The next question is: What day did it happen? The Bible says that it was on the *Day of Pentecost*.

Pentecost was one of the three major Jewish feasts also called the Feast of Weeks. “Pentecost” is derived from the Greek word meaning “fifty.” Pentecost occurs in the month of Sivan (May/June), 50 days after Passover, and celebrates the end of the grain harvest. This feast, which the Jews named “*Shavuot*” (Weeks), was celebrated in commemoration of the

giving of the Torah at Sinai — the “birth” of the people of Israel as a covenant people. So this gathering, this little group, this galvanizing of a scattered group of individual followers of Jesus, happened on the Feast of Pentecost.

HOW did people see it? Usually people see different things in the same situation. There were at least three different explanations given as to how people viewed the event recorded in the second chapter of Acts.

a. The first observation was made by the author of Acts, Dr. Luke. He described a series of extraordinary happenings: the blowing of a violent wind coming from heaven; tongues of fire resting upon those gathered; and “glossalolia” (the gift of speaking with tongues).

The author probably associated these phenomena with some events in the Hebrew Bible. The wind was a symbol of the Spirit of God; the fire denoted the judgment of God. But the speaking of tongues was a contrast to the story of the Tower of Babel. In the Tower of Babel narrative, men decided to build a tower to make a name for themselves, and God confused their tongues and thwarted their plans. The Tower of Babel represented humanity’s alienation from one another. On the Day of Pentecost, these Galileans began speaking, and people from different nationalities could understand them in their own language. For Luke, Pentecost represented humanity’s coming together in Christ. That which had been torn asunder came back together under the Lordship of Christ, through the activity of the Holy Spirit.

b. The second explanation came from

some of the bystanders. They thought that the state of ecstasy experienced by the disciples of Jesus was due to intoxication. They thought his followers were drunk. The truth of the matter was that the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and spontaneously were in a state of rapture or ecstasy. From outward appearance, however, the bystanders thought that the disciples were drunk and

It is almost impossible to create a fire with one log, even if it is a good one. On the other hand, several poor logs may make an excellent fire if they stay together as they burn.

disorderly.

c. The third explanation was given by Peter when he stood up to speak. First, he said the disciples were not drunk; it was only nine o'clock in the morning. At least in those days people did not begin to drink that early. He said it was the fulfillment of a prophecy made by Joel, an Old Testament prophet, signifying that the time would come when God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28). This was the time, and that is what God was doing.

The core of Peter's message was that what happened on the Day of Pentecost cannot be explained apart from Jesus of Nazareth. He was the cause of it all. God had raised Jesus from the dead. He was the explanation for what was happening. He was the cause of it all because He was a risen and a victorious Lord! It was the reversal of the whole downward drag of life plunging into darkness to an upward movement toward light and life. That is why those people were so ecstatically happy. To those people the resurrection meant that Christ is the Triumphant Lord. He had won the decisive battle against evil powers and death.

What these first Christians were saying was that we can win because Christ won. His Spirit is everywhere, like the air. We can take a long, deep breath of it, and it

will give us new life. Christ's Spirit is the Holy Spirit. And it was the Holy Spirit that descended upon the disciples on the Day of the Pentecost and completely transformed their lives. God, being the same yesterday, today and tomorrow, can do the same to us if He finds receptive hearts.

The Unique Fellowship. Through the experience of the Resurrection, the disciples felt themselves bound together in a unique fellowship. They were members of a new community. It was, in effect, the rebirth of the people of God. In spite of the fact that they faced the constant threat of being apprehended, and perhaps punished, because of their association with Jesus, they stayed together in Jerusalem. One may ask: Why didn't they go home? Because the Risen Lord had told them to stay in Jerusalem where they would receive power and would bear witness for Him in Jerusalem, and all over Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

So they waited for God. While they waited, they supported one another in their fellowship. They spent time in prayer. They ate together, sang together and worshiped together. They drew their strength from their powerful sense of unity.

Followers of Christ, no matter how powerless they feel, become amazingly powerful when they are inseparably united. It is almost impossible to create a fire with *one* log, even if it is a sound one. On the other hand, several poor logs may make an excellent fire if they stay together as they burn.

From a Fellowship to a Dynamic Church. What happened on the Day of Pentecost was that the fellowship of Christ's followers was ignited by the fire of the Holy Spirit and sent them out to do God's work. The followers of Christ became the Church; the Body of Christ. Now the church must always have two facets: a *base* and a *field*. The early Church, first of all, had a base. It didn't fully become a Church until it had a field. The disciples met together for fellowship, mutual understanding and acceptance, and grew in their understanding of the Christian life and faith. They kept in touch with God. When they realized that the Holy Spirit was with them, that God's

power was theirs to use for His work, they went out into the field. They went out to others as an enabling, supporting, redeeming group. As they bore witness to Christ's work, they "turned the world upside down." They helped people live the new life, God's way of life. They shared their understanding of God, His love, forgiveness, power and His way with people. They truly went out into the entire world.

What about us? Unfortunately, people identify the church with a building. When people speak about the work of the church, they usually refer to what goes on in the building. This was not so in New Testament times. In those days the people of the church did the work of the church out in the world, the community in which they lived. Today, many are easily

A church must have a base and a mission field. We cannot truly work in the field if we don't have a base, nor can we have a base if it is not related to being at work in the field.

tempted to say that both the *base* and the *field* are found in the building.

A church true to its calling recognizes its peculiar relationship to the world. It exists for the world, yet it is different from the world. It is in the world, yet at the same time apart from the world. We cannot truly work in the field if we do not have a base, nor can we have a base if it is in no way related to being at work in the field.

Today, we will be helped by examining the events in the life of the church, which took place on the Day of Pentecost. We may very well ask ourselves whether we have been open enough to God that the Holy Spirit may dwell within us. Has the fire of the Holy Spirit ignited us? Are we hot fire or merely a damp wick? ❗

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The Foundations *of* Christian Ethics

By Dr. Gevorg Kherlopian

(1) Christian ethics is based on God's love. God is the source of true love that is spread to the entire world. Being absorbed and interiorized by man, it is reflected as man's love for God, as man's love for his fellowmen, and as man's love for nature. Creation is not only the act of creating the physical or material reality, for while creating the immense universe, God also created the esthetical and ethical values

Christian ethics is based on the principle of reciprocity and mutuality; it demands that you do to others what you want them do to you.

therein. God created the good. All creation was pronounced to be good. There was no evil there. His love for man is expressed in the creation story. He created man in His own image and then blew His breath into his nostrils. Being created in God's image, man is endowed with intelligence, a free will, a sense of morality, and the capacity to commune with and worship his creator.

(2) Christian ethics is based on the reality that God loved man, even when he fell into sin. To save man from sin and to put him on the right track, God did not

spare His own Son, but delivered Him up to die and bear the sinner's penalty. This mission necessitated that the Son of God become a man and take upon Himself our human nature without giving up His divine attributes. As a perfect God and a perfect man, He showed us how to relate to Him and to our fellowmen. His vicarious death on the cross was prompted by His love for the lost sinner. By His triumphant resurrection He not only proved His divinity, but also made it possible for man to live eternally. This too is an expression of God's love for man.

(3) The first demand of Christian ethics is to love God and to love man as God has loved man. Christian ethics works in a system where the relation of man to man is directly dependent on the relation of man to God. There can be no ethical and moral relations in human life if people reject God and fail to establish a personal relationship with Him.

(4) In Christian ethics, love presupposes and demands forgiveness. To love means to be able to forgive because God forgives man. Love rejects all kinds of tensions between men. Peace, harmony and mutual understanding must reign supreme in all human relations. Christian ethics is the ethics of peace.

(5) Christian ethics is based on an optimistic understanding of reality. Since the Christian believes that evil was not created by God, he believes in

the gradual and continuous perfection of man. Through Jesus' enabling grace, the Christian can overcome sin and defeat death. Through Christ, the sinner will be able to regain the lofty position he held prior to his fall into sin. As an optimist, man is capable of constructive thinking, creative work, genuine friendship and cooperation, and of making the world a better place to live in.


(6) Christian ethics is based on the principle of reciprocity and mutuality; it demands to do to others what you want others to do to you. It foresees that man will be judged by the same standard that he applies to judging others.

(7) Christian ethics is based on the demand to take a critical approach to man; man must be critical both of his own self and of the acts of others. However, he must first start from the critical approach to his own self. This means that man must first know himself, and get acquainted with his strengths and weaknesses. The process of self-criticism is not a goal in itself. If it is limited in itself, it may lead to pessimism and to underestimation of one's God-given aptitudes. The goal of criticism must be the attainment of perfection; the desire to be saved of one's shortcomings by the help of God. Criticism must be based on self respect and the love of others. The goal of the criticism directed to others must not be to show the superiority of your self, but to help a fellow man overcome his hidden defects.


(8) Christian individualism is another principle of Christian ethics. It is founded on the idea of personal salvation. Each man is responsible for his own acts and thoughts. Every human has the personal responsibility to know himself, to get rid of his sins, to repent and ask for the mercy of God. Others can help him in his efforts, but they cannot save him. Salvation and accountability are personal matters.

existing possibilities by the free exercise of his will. Man is considered responsible for his thoughts and deeds. God willed that human beings be given a free will. The material world functions according to the perfect physical, chemical and mathematical laws that were ordained by God at the time of creation. The biological world acts according to its God-given instincts without being able to comprehend the meaning and purpose of life, and without the desire to know its Creator. Man, created in the image of God, does not act without reasoning, intellectual approach, and responsibility. God does not force His will upon us, even though He can do that as an Almighty Creator. Although God has revealed to us His plan for a fruitful life, He allows us to act according to our free will and personal choice. In the absence of a free will, personal responsibility and accountability cannot exist.

(12) Christian ethics requires that man be obedient to God and to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Christian obedience must be based on the conviction that God is right, that His Word is true, and that He works for the good of man. Obedience is also based on love. Man obeys God when he realizes that God loves him, and he responds by expressing his love through obedience. We ought to bear in mind the fact that obedience must not be based on fear because the latter is contrary to love.




In the absence of free will, personal responsibility and accountability cannot exist.




(13) Christian ethics requires servitude; the inner desire and motivation to serve God and man. Christ emphasizes the fact that He came to this world, not to be served, but to serve. Whoever aspires to be a great leader must first learn to be a humble servant. Through the avenue of unselfish service man makes himself and others happy.

(9) Christian individualism does not presuppose egoism; the overestimation of the self and the underestimation of others. The superiority of the individual over society is a concept that is foreign to Christianity. The individual Christian is motivated to dedicate himself to great causes, sublime ideals, human emancipation, human equality, human freedom, peace and brotherhood. This process of dedication requires self-forgetfulness and self-sacrifice. The individual can employ all his God-given gifts and abilities within a body of untied people, in an organization headed by God. That organization is the Church.

(11) Christian ethics is based on the concept that the inner spiritual world of man is the decisive factor in the defining of morality. God has put in man a light that becomes more luminous when man continues to cultivate his relationship with his Creator and Savior. If, on the other hand, he gradually drifts away from God, then the inner guiding light becomes dim and loses its intensity. Thus, when man gets information, he arranges, evaluates and cultivates it according to the condition of his inner world. He rejects the kind of information that conflicts with his chosen values. So, more important than the type of information man receives is the way he filters that information and the conclusions he draws from it.



There can be no ethical and moral relations in human life if people reject God and disobey His revealed will.



(10) Christian ethics, according to the understanding of the Armenian Church, is based on man's God-given right to choose between the

(14) Christian ethics underlines the truth that man is responsible for the welfare of his neighbor. Through the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus has taught us that every human being that needs help is our brother, regardless of his race, nationality, or religious affiliation. ❶

Why Not?

You see things as they are, and ask "why?"
But I dream things that never were, and ask "why not?"
Henry Blackaby

A Brief History of the Armenian Evangelical World Council (AEWC)

(On the 30th Anniversary of AEWC)

Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian*

The Armenian Evangelical World Council (AEWC) is the child of the First World Conference of Armenian Evangelicals, jointly sponsored by the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) and the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America (AEUNA). It was convened at Haverford College in Pennsylvania for three days in June of 1978. The conference was planned and administered by a Joint Task Force of the AMAA and the AEUNA, the members of which were Archie Cherkezian, Nazar Daghlian, Hrant Kazanjian, and Rev. Giragos Chopourian (representing the AMAA); and George Philibosian, Reverends Doghramji, Harry Missirlian, and Vahan Tootikian (representing the AEUNA).

Although the First World Conference (FWC) was the beginning of AEWC, it should be stated that neither the FWC nor the AEWC were born in a vacuum. In a sense, they were the continuation, or the offshoots, of another important organization called the Inter-Union Council (IUC) of the Armenian Evangelical Churches, which was born in the early 1950s. The IUC was composed of representatives from the Armenian Evangelical unions of the Near East, France, the Eastern U.S., and California, plus the AMAA. It was set up to be a deliberative body to review the state of the unions; to strengthen Armenian Evangelical churches around the world; to recruit, train, and place ministers; to start a publication which was to become the official organ of Armenian Evangelicals; to deliberate on ways and means of preserving and perpetuating the educational institutions; and to cultivate and transmit the Armenian Evangelical heritage. The Council had three formative

conferences: the first, in 1952 in Beirut, Lebanon; the second, in 1955, in Marseille, France; and the third, in 1965, in Paris, France.

The Paris conference of the IUC elected an executive committee and proposed a revised constitution, which had been drawn up at the previous conference. However, the executive committee failed to fulfill its mandate to call another meeting. Two factors, which contributed to this failure, were the preoccupation of the two Unions in America with their merger and the deterioration of the political situation in the Middle East.

The Armenian Evangelical World Council (AEWC) was not born in a vacuum. In a sense, it was the offshoot of the Inter-Union Council (IUC) which was set up in the early 1950s to review the state of the unions and strengthen our churches around the world.

In 1977, the AEUNA decided to table the proposed constitution of the IUC and, together with the AMAA, recommended the calling of an all-Armenian Evangelical conference. Through the initiative of the AMAA and the AEUNA, this conference, the FWC, was held in June of 1978 at Haverford College in Pennsylvania, with 126 representatives (44 clergymen and 82 laymen) in attendance. The theme of the Conference was "Evangelical Vision For Our Time." Its purposes were as follows:

- To bring clergy and lay leaders together for consultation on the status of the Armenian Evangelical movement.

- To study and pray together to recapture the inspiration which led us to our commitment to the kingdom of God.
- To evaluate, plan and act upon ways and means of making our Christian testimony more biblical, dynamic, and evangelistic.
- To strengthen the base of our missionary outreach by making the AMAA the missionary arm of all Armenian Evangelical churches in the diaspora.
- To seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the "revitalization and growth of our Armenian Evangelical movement."

The FWC tried to evaluate Armenian Evangelicalism in its various fields of endeavor. Its findings were turned over to a Master Plan Committee. The recommendations of this 13-member committee led to the founding of the AEWC. However, in spite of its sublime purposes, the FWC created controversy in some circles: some of the participants and leaders of the IUC charged that it was a subtle means of destroying the IUC.

Nevertheless, the Council continued its work and held its meeting from April 29 to May 5, 1981, at Issy-Les-Moulineaux, France. In attendance were representatives from each of the Armenian Evangelical unions, the AMAA, and the Stephen Philibosian Foundation. After the meeting, the Council released a communiqué which stated that it was proposing to its constituting bodies "a structure for its corporate activity" and that "it set up task forces to deal with areas of common concern." The communiqué concluded with these words: "Subject to the ratification of the proposed constitution and by-laws by the constituting bodies, authorizing the Council to be the corporate expression of the ongoing life of the

Armenian Evangelical movement in the world.”

Unfortunately, the civil war in Lebanon delayed the first meeting by a few years. Finally, AEWWC met in full capacity in Havertown, Pennsylvania, from October 12-14, 1987.

Since its inception, the AEWWC has accomplished the following:

1. Playing an important role in providing massive aid to Armenia in the aftermath of the 1988 earthquake and organizing new Armenian Evangelical churches in Armenia, in cooperation with the AMAA. (late 1980s and 1990s);
2. Gaining the status of incorporation (1991);
3. Coordination of Armenian Evangelical relief aid for Armenia and Lebanon (in the late 1980s and early 1990s);
4. Establishment of an endowment fund (1991);
5. Visitation to and provision for moral guidance to small struggling Armenian Evangelical churches;
6. Creation of a united voice and stance on behalf of the Armenian Cause regarding the genocide issue, Armenia and liberation of Artzakh (Nagorno Karabagh);
7. Formulation of guidelines concerning the preparation of ministers and religious leaders;
8. Creation of an Armenian Evangelical archive at the AMAA headquarters (1994);
9. World-wide celebrations of the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Armenian Evangelical Church of ecumenical and national magnitude in Issy-Les-Moulineaux, Yerevan and Istanbul in 1996;
10. Participation in the Armenia/Diaspora Conference in Yerevan, Armenia, in 1999;
11. World-wide celebrations of the 1700th anniversary of Armenia’s adoption of Christianity as its state religion, culminating with a grand celebration in Yerevan, Armenia, in August 2001;
12. Being co-founders and supporters of the Evangelical Seminary of Armenia and regularly providing lecturers from the diaspora to the seminary, as well as furnishing books and publications to the seminary’s library;
13. Participation in the Second



The Armenian Evangelical World Council (AEWWC) has its limitations due to our decentralized church structure; however, it has helped in planning ways to make the Armenian Evangelical testimony be heard more effectively.



Armenia/Diaspora Conference in Yerevan, Armenia, in 2002;

14. Adoption of a common “Statement of Faith,” (2003);
15. Sponsoring and supporting the publication of the following books:
 - a. *The Armenian Evangelical Church: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (1991);
 - b. *Hye Avedaranagan Yégéghétzin; (1846-1996)*, (1996);
 - c. *The Pastor’s Manual / Hovagan Tzérakirk* (2003);
 - d. *Highlights of Armenian Christendom* (2002);
 - e. *160th Anniversary of the Armenian Evangelical Church/ Haruyr Vatsounamiag Hye Avédaranagan Yégéghétzyee* (2006);
 - f. *Pioneer Armenian Evangelical Clergymen in America from 1880-1950* (2005).
16. The First Worldwide Armenian Evangelical Ministers’ Conference from April 28 to May 2, 2003, in Thollon-Evian, France;
17. Supporting Armenian Evangelical Missions work in Europe (2004);
18. Worldwide celebrations of the 160th Anniversary of the Armenian Evangelical Church (2006);
19. All-Armenian Evangelical Conference with lay and clergy participation (2006);
20. All-Armenian Evangelical pilgrimage for two weeks (2006);
21. Participation in the Third Armenia/Diaspora Conference (2006);
22. Participation and regular attendance in the All-Armenia Fund Meetings since its inception in the early 1990s;
23. Mailing official communiques to all Armenian papers concerning the activities, plans and accomplishments

of AEWWC since 1987;

24. Sending messages on Christmas, Easter, Vartanantz, Armenian Martyrs’ Day and other major milestones and anniversaries, since 1987.

Besides these and other tangible accomplishments, Council members have benefited through fellowship and prayer, and by working together have learned from one another. These are obviously not visible and measurable, yet they are exceedingly important for mutual cooperation and spiritual growth.

Undoubtedly, the AEWWC is not a perfect institution. It has its limitations, some of which are due to our *congregational* decentralized church policy. Surely, the AEWWC is not a “super church.” It is only a representative body of five Armenian Evangelical unions (North America, France, Near East, Eurasia and Armenia) and of two organizations (AMAA and Stephen Philibosian Foundation). It brings Armenian Evangelicals together in order to deepen and strengthen their commitment to the Kingdom of God; to evaluate, plan and act upon ways of making the Armenian Evangelical testimony more effective; to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the revitalization and growth of the Armenian Evangelical Church; to strengthen missionary outreach; and to create a united front in essential matters of national interests and tragic emergencies. In the absence of a centralized church structure, AEWWC endeavors to cement all Armenian Evangelical unions and organizations for the common purpose of sharing in the needs and the deeds of each other’s lives.

The AEWWC, which was a promise in the post-World War II era, is a reality today. Sometimes we tend to forget just how far we have come in a few short years. The assurance that it will remain a strong institution for Armenian Evangelicals worldwide depends on our faith and dedication.

The AEWWC recommends that all Armenian Evangelical churches set aside one Sunday in June (2008) to mark its 30th Anniversary. 📍


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Life Lessons


By Laqueta Scott

Never put off till tomorrow, what you can do the day after tomorrow" (Mark Twain).

How many of us relate to Twain's way of thinking? The operative word here is procrastination. From the Latin word "procrastinatus," the roots are pro- (forward) and crastinus (of tomorrow). Sam Levenson speaks for many of us when he says, "I'm going to stop putting



The five most dangerous words in the English language are: "Maybe it will go away." We kid ourselves that tasks and problems will disappear if we simply disregard them.



things off, starting tomorrow!" The eminently practical Benjamin Franklin tells us plainly, "Never leave till tomorrow that which you can do today."

Ah! Procrastination. Some fortunate people seem not to fight this battle, but many of us do. However, if you procrastinate because you set priorities, that can be good. For example, if you put off cleaning the garage because you are deeply involved in charitable works, power to you! You are not a procrastinator; rather you are a person who knows that the urgent must never take the place of the important. You can die with the garage still untidy, and no one will be the worse off. Someone else will clean it efficiently and without dilly-dallying over every little item. But your life is wasted if you put off doing good for others in order to have a clean garage. If you are a prioritizer, but not a procrastinator, ignore the criticism you may receive because you are not the neatest person on the block.

But most drag our feet for less than noble reasons. We delay getting started on important tasks. We kid ourselves that tasks will disappear if we simply disregard them. And some do. For example, we can fail to answer letters or write thank you notes. Eventually these jobs fall off our "things-to-do" list and fade away. The only problem is that the ignored friends also tend to fade away. Procrastination in these cases is costly.

Avoidance saps our energy. Very little drains our psyches and our bodies as much as frittering our days away. We toss and turn at night, mulling over what we should have done with our time during the day. Not sleeping well, we set ourselves up for another failed day when we awaken the next morning. Beyond the general feeling of self-disgust and self-blame, we also face specific problems when we shirk tasks that must be done. For example, when we put off paying credit card bills, the interest goes up. Soon what we purchased has cost us far more than we intended.

Household repairs rank right up there with car repairs. We may limp along for a while with things barely functioning, but the day will come when the breakdown is complete. As the oil filter ad warns, "Pay us now or pay us later." Procrastination can be extremely expensive.


One common problem many of us seem to have is procrastination about our health. I saw a poster in a doctor's office that said, "The five most dangerous words in the English language are 'maybe it will go away.'"

Maybe that nagging pain in the chest is just indigestion. Maybe that lumpy thing I feel in my breast is just fatty tissue. Maybe my gasping for breath when I climb a flight of stairs is just bad air. Maybe these headaches don't mean anything but that I am stressed. Well, maybe. You may be right. You may be very well despite these irksome problems.


But what if you are wrong? What if you are experiencing the first signs of a serious medical problem that can be taken care of in early stages but is fatal in final stages? Procrastination in matters of health is foolish indeed.

Another foolish procrastination is failure to repair relationships. Do you have friendships that are waning? Are you estranged from any of your family? I cannot stress too urgently how important it is to delay no longer in fixing up whatever is broken or is breaking down. Putting off confronting the problems you have with others leads only to deeper estrangements. I quote from St. Paul here who advises "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men (Romans 12:18)." Life is unpredictable. One never knows whose death is next. You don't want to die with personal rifts; you don't want to stand at the grave of someone with whom you refused to reconcile.

Procrastination can seem like a minor flaw. But it can be a major barrier to a life well lived. Here are some ideas that may help you get over the hump of putting



I cannot stress too urgently how important it is to delay no longer in fixing up whatever is broken or is breaking down.



things off.

First, admit that you have a problem.

Second, list the areas you are dragging your feet on.

Finally, try to discover what you are afraid of or anxious about that keeps you

stymied. Just write them down where no one else can read them.

Sounds simple to solve the problem, right? It is not simple. Procrastination is a habit. Like any habit, it is hard to break. One sure way to fail is to be unrealistic. You will not instantly become one who does not procrastinate. Perfectionism is the twin of procrastination. So if you attempt to be perfect in overcoming the problem, you will fail.

If you continually beat up on yourself, you will fail. Always remember that just because you have a habit of putting things off, you are not inherently lazy and beyond redemption. You simply have a human flaw you are working on.

Give yourself credit for small successes. Reward yourself. But don't fool yourself. Pearl Buck has good advice, "I don't wait for moods. You accomplish nothing if you do that. Your mind must know it has got to get down to work."

Accomplish something. Ignore your mood and simply get going with what needs to be done. One task at a time. 🍌

Published on March 1, 2008, in the following newspapers:

- Pasadena Star-News
- Whittier Daily News
- San Gabriel Valley Tribune
- San Bernardino Sun
- Maybe It Will Go Away

Life's Exams

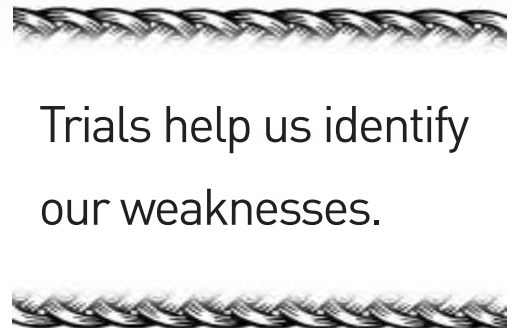
By Asien Surmeian

The hardest English course I ever took was at a community college! No other English course after that seemed so hard. Our first day's assignment was to describe something in 20 minutes in one and a half pages. I was a new bride at the time, and since we were looking to buy a house, I described a floor plan. When our papers were returned, the professor had made a few corrections in red pencil. I wasn't thrilled, but I was there to learn. However, Jane, a classmate, was furious. During the break she told me that she was dropping the class. Then she showed me her paper. Every sentence was corrected—the pages looked red! Then she went on to tell me that she had copied her entire assignment from an Ernest Hemingway book. How she managed to do that in class, I don't know. Then she added, "If she doesn't like his work, how can I ever please this woman—this professor!"

"Well," I responded, "I'm foreign born, and I need to learn English. Besides, we learn more from a tough teacher!" She said goodbye, and I never saw her again.

Weeks later I remarked to our professor that we often read books by well-known authors whose sentences are not always grammatically quite correct. I asked how she felt about that. "Ah," she said, "one has to first prove to be a good writer. Then when you become famous, you can get away with it. We consider that the author's style!" That answered the question I had about Jane's paper. Professors are there to teach students what they came to college or university for. Besides, if we didn't have papers to write or tests to pass, how hard would we study?

St. James talks about attitudes toward tests; he calls them trials. He says: "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him" (James 1:12). The "crown of life" was the usual term for the wreath placed on the head of a victorious athlete or military leader in ancient Greece. God's crown of life is not glory and honor here on earth, but reward of eternal life in heaven. The



Trials help us identify our weaknesses.

way to be in God's winning circle is by loving Him and staying faithful and obedient, even under pressure.

God tests us so that we'll grow in knowledge, wisdom and faith. Through trials we identify our weaknesses and work to become strong. Often when students of tough-testing instructors return years later, they thank them for preparing them for life's challenges! Spiritual testing is never easy. But looking back we can say, "It was a valuable lesson that we endured, and praise God we have been blessed!" 🍌

Dr. Tootikian's 30th Book Released



“As I See It/Eem Déssangyunén”

by Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian,
Armenian Heritage Committee
3922 Yorba Lind Blvd.
Royal Oak, MI 48073-6455

208 pages. Hard cover
\$25.00, plus 2.50 for shipping.

Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian is to be commended and congratulated on completing his thirtieth book, six of which are currently being used as college textbooks in North America and overseas.

Rev. Tootikian’s writing ministry goes back to the early 1960s, when as a newly-ordained minister, he wrote many articles to a number of Armenian papers and magazines. But his first book entitled “Reflections of an Armenian” was published in 1980. Since then he has been writing and publishing.

His latest publication, titled “*As I See It/Eem Déssangyunén*” (a bilingual book of 50 articles, 34 of which are in English and 16 in Armenian) is a tapestry of historical and present day facts that are skillfully woven together to present his views on a number of social and political issues and concerns relative to Armenia, Christianity, and man’s ethical and moral responsibilities to one another.

The English section of this volume consists of three parts: Holy Days and Holidays, Special Anniversaries and Views on Issues. The Armenian section deals with religious, social and patriotic themes. The style in both Armenian and English sections

of the book is characterized by its vividness, the explorations are impressive and the reflections are lively and positive.

Each chapter in this book, causes the reader to pause, reflect and re-evaluate personal beliefs and values. To put it succinctly, this book helps focus the reader’s attention on what’s really important in life! “Faith should not be divorced and separated from our daily lives,” says Rev. Dr. Vahan Tootikian. It should serve as a beacon and as a corner stone to help guide us in our daily lives and our interactions with other human beings. “We need to take our Christian faith seriously...and put God back into our lives.”

Whether the essays deal with temporal or religious issues, Dr. Tootikian has that unique ability to communicate some complex spiritual, moral and ethical principles in comprehensible everyday language. He motivates and inspires his readers, enlarges their vision and helps create a better future for them and for those around them.

— Reviewed by William & Araxi Terian



Freedom THROUGH Forgiveness

Matthew 18:21-35

Rev. Norayr Hajian
Whitehorse Church of the Nazarene
www.whitehorsenazarene.org



Bumper Stickers can be a lot of fun, but they can also convey a great deal of truth. One that I had seen read, “The more people I meet, the more I like my dog”. This had obviously been a person who had bad experiences with other people. The truth is, it doesn’t take long to find people who have been burned or disappointed by others.

When Jesus was asked the greatest commandment, He replied, “Love the lord your God...” and then he added the second, which is to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-38). Loving God is one thing; loving a neighbor can sometimes be a real challenge, especially when you’ve been hurt. But loving one another is so important that in Matthew 18 Jesus gave His disciples some instruction on what to do when you’ve been hurt. He said, “If a brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you” (Matthew 18:15). That’s the first step. Notice that Jesus didn’t say, “You go and call all your friends and start talking about the person who wronged you.” He said, “Go and show him his fault, just between the two of you.”

It’s easy to get upset when you’ve been wronged. At a convention with their wives, two businessmen who had been roommates in college crossed paths. They sat in the lobby all night talking. They knew they would be in trouble with their wives. The next day they happened to see each other. “What did your wife think?” “I walked in the door and my wife got historical.” “Don’t you mean hysterical?” “No, historical, she

told me everything I ever did wrong.”

Well Peter comes along. Good old Peter; always wanting to stick his nose into something; always having something to say. He always needs to be just one step ahead of everyone else. Peter wants to show just how generous he is so he asks a question in verse 21 and suggests the answer: “Lord, how



The Apostle Peter didn’t consider the possibility that he might sin against someone else; his only thought was what would happen if someone sinned against him.



many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me, up to seven times?”

Notice that Peter didn’t even consider the possibility that he might sin against someone else. His only thought was what would happen if someone sinned against him! Isn’t that just the way it is? We always figure that we’re the ones who have been wronged.

Peter, wanting to impress Jesus, suggested forgiving seven times. That really is impressive, considering that the law only required that you forgive three times. I’m sure Peter was expecting a pat on the back

for suggesting 7 times. Jesus had a better idea – and to make his point, Jesus told a parable.



Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.” Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. “The servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred Denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and told their master everything that had happened. “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. “This is how my heavenly Father will

treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." Matthew 18:22-35 (NIV).

Here was a man who owed 10,000 talents. Now I'm not sure how we can translate that into current dollars. There are various calculations, but one thing is certain: this was more money than someone could ever hope to make in their lifetime. I mean, there was no way this guy was going to be able to pay it back. It was beyond imagination. Think millions.

Well, it didn't require a genius to recognize that this man was in a heap of trouble. It's an awful feeling to be in debt – and this guy was way in over his head – and for whatever reason, the king, to whom the man owed the money, wanted to settle the account. The man with this debt was brought in and since he couldn't pay the debt, the king was going to liquidate whatever he had, and sell his wife and children into slavery.

The servant recognized the depth of the trouble. He didn't deny his debt, he didn't try to explain it away, he didn't blame it on the bad stock market, he didn't make any excuses, which was a good thing, because


If a person receives pardon from God, he has the obligation to extend pardon to others.


there was nothing he could say that would get him out of the jam he was in. He did the only thing he could; he fell on his knees and begged for more time.

Incredibly, the king took pity on him and granted him a full pardon. Can you imagine that? The whole debt was cancelled and the man was free to go home! Unbelievable!

The servant has just been freed, the greatest load in the entire world has just been released off his back, and what does he do? He goes and finds someone that owes him a small amount, a few dollars, and demands payment. He literally held him by

the neck, and threatened him. When this second guy didn't have any money at all, the first rushes him off to prison.

It must have been a small community because word of what happened got around to the king and the king was not impressed. He calls the servant back in and has a few words for him. "You wicked servant" he said, "I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" And with that, the unmerciful servant was sentenced to prison where he wouldn't see the light of day again.

Then Jesus makes the point of the parable painfully clear in verse 35, "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." In other words, Once you've been forgiven, you better make sure you forgive those around you. If a man receives pardon from God, he has the obligation to extend pardon to his brother.

This idea is not something new. "Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy" (Matthew 5:7).

"Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). Both these verses show how we need to forgive others if we hope to have God forgive us. If God were to forgive you in the same way you forgive others, where would that put you? The truth is that God will forgive us the same way we forgive others.



Forgiveness is a decision we need to make. It is not a feeling. It is not necessarily rational or logical. It has little to do with whether a person deserves it or not, or even if they've asked for it or not. Forgiveness has to do with my decision to extend grace and mercy – even when, or especially when, it is not deserved. Why? Because we have been the recipients of forgiveness ourselves.

There's something else here I don't want us to miss: This parable not only teaches us how important it is for us to forgive others; it also teaches us the magnitude of God's grace towards us.

Think about it. The king in the parable is God. The servants are you and I. And we have a debt that we can never repay. It's called sin. And we've all sinned. And the wages of sin is death. But God, in His great mercy, in His great love for us, sent Jesus to die for our sins, and to release us from our debt.

The really sad thing is that so many don't



even recognize their debt. So many people deny the reality of sin. They go around whistling in the dark trying to convince themselves that everything is OK, when in their heart they know they are walking away


The truth is that God will forgive us the same way we forgive others.


from God. Yet, if the servant had denied his debt, he would never have been given grace. He did the only thing he could – he admitted his need.

Likewise, the Bible says, in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God wants to release us from our debt. God's grace is unlimited. There is no sin that God cannot forgive. It doesn't matter who you are, where you've been, what you've done. God's love is greater still. He wants to forgive you. He will forgive you. But you must ask Him to.

Forgiveness is not just something we talk


Forgiveness has nothing to do with whether or not a person deserves it.


about – it must become a reality. I heard about a man who really loved dogs. He devoted his life to them – he read about them, studied them, and even gave talks about them to other dog lovers. One day he decided to pour a new sidewalk in front of

Salpi Messerlian-Cholakian



A Brief Biography of Salpi Messerlian-Cholakian

Salpi Messerlian-Cholakian was born on March 8, 1967, in Beirut. She was the first child of Barkev & Angel Messerlian, who also have a son, Anto.

Salpi received her high school education at the Armenian Evangelical Shamlian Tatikian School. After her graduation, she was admitted to Haigazian University in Beirut where she majored in Education in

order to become a kindergarten teacher.

As dedicated and active members of their church, Barkev & Angel Messerlian encouraged their children at an early age to take an active role in the life of the church - a path which Salpi naturally followed even as a young person. She participated in the Sunday School, the youth choir, the Christian Endeavor's Junior and young adults' groups, athletic activities and dance groups. Her contribution to Church committees was characterized by full dedication. Salpi's persevering spirit, her keen sense of commitment and responsibility and her great sense of initiative enriched the life of the church.

Salpi first held the position of treasurer-secretary of the Central Committee of the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East office in Beirut, and then served as the secretary of the Armenian Evangelical Church of Ashrafieh for a year.

On June 10, 1989 Salpi married the Rev. Vicken Cholakian at the Armenian Evangelical Church of Ashrafieh, Beirut. They were blessed with two lovely children - Narineh born in 1993 and Norayr in 1996.

In 1994 the Cholakian family was called to pastoral service at the Armenian Evangelical Church of Athens, Greece where the Rev. Cholakian was and continues to be the pastor of both churches in Palea Kokkinia and in Neos Kosmos, while Salpi served as the Church kindergarten principal and teacher for almost 14 years.

Upon their arrival, the Rev. Cholakian and Salpi were warmly received by the Greek-Armenian community and welcomed everywhere with great respect and love.

As a pastor's wife, Salpi joined the Reverend in his pastoral visits and in various church responsibilities. Salpi was a selfless and capable companion, always bearing a cheerful smile and viewing her



responsibilities with optimism, helping people in all circumstances in life. Through her warm and communicative personality, Salpi brought out positive qualities in people and encouraged them.

Through discretion and enthusiasm, so characteristic of Salpi, she was most supportive of her husband, and together they organized church retreats, conferences and Kermeses which brought together various groups of the Greek-Armenian community. She also took part in organizing and teaching the children in the Sunday School.

One couldn't help but love this family. It was their fine character and personality that created this strong bond of love and gravitated people towards them. The tears shed and the deep sorrow and pain felt after her illness and death attest to the profound love contained in everyone's heart for Salpi.

Salpi was a unique and irreplaceable kindergarten teacher who left an indelible mark on the lives of the children under her care. Salpi's tenderness, enthusiasm and affection were visible in the children's innocent eyes, in their smiles and tears.

Salpi's main concern was to inspire the children with the importance of upholding our national and spiritual identity, our values and culture. To this end, she worked hard to provide suitable literature and other materials for all ages - children and young adults, thus establishing the Arevig ("little sun") bookshop.

The kindergarten of the Armenian Evangelical Church is greatly indebted to Salpi for her hard work and vision.

Dear Salpi, your sweet memory will never fade away from our hearts, while you rest in God's peace. 🕊

| FROM THE PULPIT |

his house. His neighbor watched from his window as he smoothed out the last square foot of cement. Just then, a large dog appeared and walked through the fresh cement, leaving paw prints behind. The man muttered something under his breath and smoothed out the damage. He then went inside to get some twine so he could put up a fence around the sidewalk. But, when he got back outside, he discovered some more dog tracks in his fresh cement. He smoothed out the cement and put up the fence. He then went into the house. Five minutes later he looked outside and saw some more paw

prints. He was really mad now. He got out his trowel and smoothed the cement one more time. As he got back to his porch, the dog reappeared and sat right in the middle of the sidewalk. He went inside, grabbed his gun and shot the dog dead. The neighbor rushed over and said, "Why did you do that? I thought you loved dogs." The man thought for a minute and said, "I do, I do like dogs. But that's in the abstract. I hate dogs in the concrete." That's how many of us feel about today's scripture. We love to hear about forgiveness in the abstract, but when it hits close to home, we hate it in the concrete.

Just as God has forgiven you, He wants you to forgive those who have hurt you. Is there someone who has hurt you in the past, and you have not forgiven them? Is there someone who you need to ask forgiveness from?

I encourage you today; seek the forgiveness that God has offered you. Seek forgiveness from those whom you have wronged. Forgive those who have sinned against you. Only then will you be truly free to be the man or woman God wants you to be. 🕊



Board members having served 15 years or more: l-r: Samir Ekmekji, Dr. Nazareth Darakjian, Herair Mouradian, Hratch Sarkis, Koko Balian, Zaven Khanjian, Dr. Hrair Atikian, and partially shown, Dr. Vahe Pierre Haig.



Merdinian Principal Hovsep Injejikian.

Meridian School 26th Anniversary Banquet Celebration

AMAA Vice President Peter Kougasian, Esq. Keynote Speaker
New High School Project
Highlighted

UNIVERSAL CITY, CA—The Universal Sheraton Hotel Roof Garden was, on March 2, 2008, the celebration site of the 26th anniversary of the Charlotte and Elise Merdianian Armenian Evangelical School. Peter Kougasian, an Assistant District Attorney of New York City was the Keynote speaker. He spoke about the importance of an Armenian Evangelical education such as the one offered at Merdianian. He shared how his ancestors' Armenian Evangelical faith and education continues to influence him.

Mr. Kougasian works in the office of Robert Morgenthau— grandson of Henry Morgenthau, the US Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during World War I. He relayed a warm message from Mr. Morgenthau. He shared how the Morgenthau family are fierce partisans of the Armenian people in the world today stating *"Armenian blood flows through their veins and whenever there is an Armenian cause, they can always be counted on to try to bring a sense of justice."*

The evening began with the honoring of Armenian history and language teacher Ashkhen Ispendjian. Board of Directors Chairman, Dr. Hrair Atikian honored Mrs. Ispendjian for her 25 years of devoted service to the students and school. She came to Merdianian after serving in Lebanon as a teacher and principal for 20 years. Here, she not only taught Armenian language and history, but prepared textbooks for these courses when no such books existed. Mrs. Ispendjian expressed her appreciation for the honor and confessed she "lied" to her students claiming no knowledge of English in order to encourage their use and understanding of Armenian.

Former students honored her. Duduk player Armen Kvrlyan, performed a musical piece and Greg Martayan, stated, *"Merdianian is not just a school feeding into college prep schools. Merdianian is the prep*

school for life."

Also honored were individuals who have served 15 years or more on the Board of Directors. The late Mrs. Alice Haig was highlighted as the *"First chairperson and moving force behind the school from its inception 27 years ago."* Accepting her award posthumously was her husband, Dr. Vahe Pierre Haig. The other honorees were: Zaven Khanjian, Koko Balian, Samir Ekmekji, Hratch Sarkis, and Dr. Nazareth Darakjian,

Dr. Steve Aharonian, AMAA President, encouraged the gathering to continue their financial support for the growth of the school—pledging AMAA's support by raising 10% of the cost. A conditional-use permit for the new expansion has been granted as of this printing, adding 13,100 square feet on the same school site for a high school. The projected cost is about \$7 million. The student population will have the capacity to increase from 260 to 650.

Principal Hovsep Injejikian stressed the importance of a high school by stating; *"When the students leave us at the end of middle school, they are still teenagers. They are not fully committed to their Armenian Christian heritage."*

Master of ceremonies Dr. Nazareth Darakjian stated how the school started with, *"a few visionaries and with a lot of faith and hope."* Miss Elise Merdianian made the school possible by donating her entire estate to the AMAA.

An architectural drawing of the proposed new high school was proudly exhibited by the building committee consisting of Samir Ekmekji, Dr. Hrair Atikian, Hratch Sarkis, and Herair Mouradian. Evening co-chairpersons Helga Sarkis and Seta Nalbandian, along with their committee, were encouraged by the enthusiasm shared by the evenings large crowd and some impromptu donations. The Lark Musical Societies Women's



Mrs. Ashkhen Ispendjian honored for 25 years teaching Armenian language and history.



Dr. Hrair Aharonian, President of the AMAA, encouraging the guests to continue their financial support.



Co-chairs Helga Sarkis (Seta Nalbandian not shown) welcoming the guests.

Acappella Chorus provided the musical portion of the evening under the direction of Maestro Vatsche Barsoumian.

From the humble beginning in 1982 with only 13 students and no campus of their own, Merdianian has developed into this unique Armenian Evangelical School shaping the lives of hundreds of students as they envelop their Armenian Christian heritage coupled with a first class education. Elise Merdianian's dream was realized beyond her expectations.

— By Joyce Abdulian



Proposed Classroom / Administration Building



AMAA Sunday at the Armenian Martyrs' Congregational Church (AMCC) IN Havertown, PA

By Ruth Melian



Executive Director with the Missions Committee of the Armenian Martyrs' Congregational Church, Havertown, Pennsylvania. Left to right - Daniel Babaian, Andy Torigian, Maria and Rev. Nishan Bakalian, Lucille Tashjian, Pauline Karjian, Cynthia Hamill, Diane DeMirjian (Chair) and Vicken Keshishian.

HAVERTOWN, PA - Sunday, March 9, which was designated as Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA) Sunday, found our church without power and very cold due to a harsh storm. Vicken Keshishian saved the day by rounding up some propane heaters to warm the fellowship hall where we held our worship service.

Andrew Torigian, Executive Director of AMAA, delivered an inspiring English sermon. He said that a man who has put his focus on the Lord is like a tree which bears much fruit. We can draw upon the power of our spiritual life and the blood of Jesus Christ who cleanses us. Andy also remarked that being without electricity helps us to identify with many in the Near East and Armenia who are regularly in the same situation.

After our worship service and a light lunch, Mr. Torigian spoke about many vital services the AMAA performs throughout the world. This year, AMAA celebrates 90 years of

service with 140 projects. Unfortunately, without power in the church, we could not see the film, which showed many of these services.

Andy spoke about the beginnings of AMAA in 1918, when Armenian Evangelicals got together to form a missionary organization that would preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and heal the wounds of their compatriots suffering in the homeland. This offered the churches an opportunity to go out of their circle and touch the lives of many disadvantaged people in this country and abroad and demonstrate the reality of God's love.

AMAA has built schools, helped heal the sick, feed the hungry, helped support orphans and widows, and has given scholarships for pastoral education. They have sent annually 1,200 children to Christian schools in Lebanon. The AMAA now serves Armenians in twenty-two countries.

Mr. Torigian thanked Badveli and his wife, Maria, for the mission work they have done for the past seven years at Haigazian University in Beirut. The AMAA supports Haigazian and the Lebanese Armenian Evangelical churches' social and welfare center.

The AMAA is very active in Armenia and now sends over 11,000 children to 55 summer camp sessions. For many, a summer camp program is the first time a child hears about the Lord. AMAA also have 2,800 children and their families on their yearly child care support program.

AMCC has always been an active supporter of the mission of AMAA. As we warmed our bodies, many hearts were warmed to the needs of the AMAA and the great work they are doing to the glory of God.

APRIL Genocide Month Gathering

An Armenian pastor whose ministry is based in the Republic of Turkey was the keynote speaker at the oldest Armenian Church in the State of California.



Reverend Krikor Aghabaloghlu spoke at the Spring 2008 Dinner of the Men's Fellowship of the First Armenian Presbyterian Church. The dinner event, honoring the faith and sacrifices of the Armenian Martyrs of 1915, took place on Tuesday evening, April 29, 2008, at the church campus, 430 South First Street at Huntington Boulevard in Fresno.

The evening began with ethnic appetizers at 6:30 p.m. and continued with a barbecue steak and chicken dinner at 7 p.m. The event was open to the public and reservations, at \$10 per person, were made by calling George Karkazian at (559) 434-9009.

The keynote speaker was born in 1957 in

Arapkir, Turkey, near the confluence of the Eastern and Western branches of the Euphrates Rivers. After receiving his early education in his native city in the Malatya Province, Aghabaloghlu matriculated at the University of Istanbul, a state institution dating to A.D. 1453. He majored in the history of Turkey as an undergraduate and received a Bachelors of Education Degree in 1979.

Some years later, Aghabaloghlu completed graduate work at the Bitinia Bible School of Istanbul. In September 1999, the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East granted him a license to preach and perform the Sacraments at the Armenian Evangelical Church of Gedik Pasha, Kumkapu, Istanbul. Three years later, he was ordained a Minister of the Word and Sacraments and continues to serve as pastor of the Gedik Pasha congregation. He is married to the former Maria Semerji and they have two children.

Founded in 1850, the Gedik Pasha church is one of the oldest Armenian Evangelical houses of worship in the Republic of Turkey, and was the home church of the late Hrant Dink, founding editor of the influential *Agos Weekly* newspaper.

In 2005, the Turkish national television channel, Flash TV, invited Aghabaloghlu to participate in a five-hour live talk show on the topic of the Armenian Genocide. The young pastor had once been jailed for challenging the confiscation of church property by the authorities. Shocking his broadcast hosts, he told viewers there was no doubt genocide had

occurred and that citizens of Anatolia knew the truth about



the subject. He insisted that a member of the clergy has the obligation to tell the truth and he refused to allow himself to be silenced.

The host congregation in Fresno has its roots in the Ottoman Empire of 19th Century Turkey. On July 25, 1897, 40 immigrants from Marsovan, a town in the Central Black Sea region, chartered the First Armenian Presbyterian Church of Fresno. The boyhood church of authors William Saroyan and A.I. Bezzerides, FAPC today has a multigenerational congregation drawn from the Old and New Worlds.

Reverend Mgrdich Melkonian is the Senior Pastor, Reverend Aren Balabanian is the Associate Pastor, and Edward N. Esajian is Chair of the FAPC Men's Fellowship Executive Committee.

The Fresno congregation is marking its 110th Anniversary Year with the theme, "Becoming the Church." FAPC is a member congregation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America.

— George Karkazian

APC'S Elder Emeritus: Robert Hekemian Sr.

Every year on Palm Sunday, the session of the church chooses to honor one of its members. This year, the session chose to honor Robert Hekemian Sr. for his many years of sacrificial and dedicated work both in church and community, and bestowed upon him the title of Elder Emeritus.

With over two hundred and seventy people in attendance, pastor Berj started the program by welcoming everyone and invited David Hekemian to say a few words about his father. David did a wonderful job telling the people about his father through a son's perspective. One thing was extremely

evident in his speech that God's Church meant a great deal to his father and how it played a major role in the life of his family.

After David, Pastor Berj shared with the attendees how we are truly blessed to have a person of the caliber of Mr. Hekemian in the community. He said: "You have touched so many lives that only eternity will give us the full picture. You are a man of expertise, integrity and vision and I pray that God will raise more people like you." After his speech, he invited Robert to the stage and on behalf of the session and congregation, he presented him with a plaque and bestowed



Pastor Berj and Robert Hekemian

upon him the honorary title of Elder Emeritus. The program ended by the grandchildren handing roses to their grandfather.

The Speech of the Honoree Delivered on Palm Sunday

In a few months, we will be celebrating our church's 110th anniversary; a

monumental event, for which we should truly be thankful to God. I cannot claim that I have been around for the past 110 years, but I certainly have witnessed many significant changes that have taken place during the past 60 years. Fortunately, many of those changes have been good; however, in speaking with you today, I do not want to dwell on the past; instead I would like to say a few words about our future.

Our church has grown and has made tremendous progress under the most capable leadership of Pastor Berj. We have witnessed good changes as he has motivated us to do the work that God has called us to do. Pastor Berj has made it very clear that the church is not about us; it is about God, and the work that He wants us to do, starting here in our community, in our nation and to the ends of the world. **He has boldly challenged us through Christ's teachings that Armenian culture and heritage are not the means of salvation, but Christ is.** So many of his sermons have encouraged us to leave our comfort zones and take risks, by doing things we have never done or thought of before.

Now risk taking can be a risky business to many of us. It makes some feel uncomfortable. Many say: "Why rock the boat?" "Why do things differently?" "We have always done it this way." "Why change now?" Churches and organizations that had such narrow vision inevitably waiver and ultimately fail.

Pastor Berj constantly states that we need to be more concerned about being biblically correct, rather than politically correct. Pastor Berj mentioned in his sermon this morning that the church is not about democracy, but about theocracy. Taking risks for God is necessary in order to bring about meaningful change, which will result in spiritual growth. By any sense of the definition, change fosters risk. Alex Haley, the author of *Roots*, said this about taking risks, "Nothing is more important. Too often

we are taught how not to take risks. When we are children in school—we are told to respect our heroes. What we are not told is that these leaders were, in fact, rule-breakers. They were risk-takers in the best sense of the word; they dared to be different." Just think a moment about the formation of this Republic. Great men such as John Adams, George Washington, Ben Franklin and Thomas Jefferson vehemently fought for change through independence. They were branded as revolutionaries; they risked all they had and a bounty was placed on their heads. Had they not taken the risk and made huge personal sacrifices, this great republic most probably never would have persevered. Friends, a calm sea has never produced a skilled sailor. An anonymous person once said: "We cannot discover new oceans unless we have the courage to lose sight of the shore." A church trapped within its comfort zones will never see the future.

If taking risks for God and his Kingdom is a biblically accurate statement, then I call upon all of you to do your part, thereby ensuring that our church continues to evolve in the correct spiritual course and become the beacon of light in our community and the world.

Pastor Berj, I want to thank you and the members of the session for selecting me to receive this prestigious title of ELDER EMERITUS. I am honored and proud and will use the authority wisely.

I also want to thank each of you present today for making this Palm Sunday dinner a great success, and my thanks to the Trustees and their many helpers for arranging such a wonderful banquet.

In closing, my vision and hope for this church is to make it a God-centered house of



Robert's youngest son David with his father



Robert Hekemian Sr. speaking to the people



Robert Hekemian's grandchildren giving him roses

worship for all people, for a better and different tomorrow.

Robert Hekemian Sr.
Elder Emeritus

**"It is your attitude,
not your aptitude,
that determines your**

altitude."

- Zig Ziglar

author and religious speaker

The First Ever A.E.U.N.A. Fundraising Banquet in Toronto!

By Sylvie Yeghiaian



“The Armenian Evangelical Union of North America (A.E.U.N.A.) is a fellowship of churches in the United States, Canada, and Brazil, united by a common history and tradition dating back to the founding of the first Armenian Evangelical church in 1846 in Constantinople, Turkey. Our purpose is to unite our member congregations, pastors, and organizations within an ecclesiastical fellowship for ministry, mission, and service in the name of Jesus Christ. We strive primarily to serve people of Armenian descent living in the Americas” (www.aeuna.org).

The first church to ever have an A.E.U.N.A. fundraising banquet was the Armenian Evangelical Church of Toronto (AECOT). The banquet was held on Saturday, March 29, 2008, and all the proceeds were dedicated for the support of the various projects that are run by the union.

The banquet program consisted of a plethora of well-organized and beautifully arranged components, including speakers, musicians and an appetizing menu. More than one hundred fifty people had come to attend the banquet, and Mihran Jizmejian served as the master of ceremonies. He shared with us Psalm 100:1-5 which says, “Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us, and we are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.”

Emil Yeghiaian, the intern pastor, offered the opening prayer. The delicious meal, prepared by Lara’s Catering, consisted of a medley of Mediterranean appetizers, grilled chicken breast,



Parisian roasted potatoes, broccoli and sautéed carrots. For dessert, we had fruit-shaped ice cream, coffee and tea.

A unique and insightful slide presentation was prepared and presented by David Torounian. It

showcased the current students and pastors-in-training whom the union is helping support as they receive their ministerial training at accredited seminaries.

For entertainment, we had a group of six women (Tamar Albarian, Sevan Bederian, Tamar Bederian, Meerna Khatcherian, Niary Toodakian and Sylvie Yeghiaian) singing contemporary Armenian songs. Mrs. Tamar Albarian was their conductor.

Antibas Lousararian, the organizer of the event, spoke about the important services that the union renders to its constituent churches. He



talked about the history of the forming of the union, and stressed that the union continues to help subsidize the youth summer camps (Camp Arev and Camp Arevelk) on both the east and west coasts.



The beautiful opera singer, Sona Mardoyan, who was accompanied at the piano by Vazken Kaljian, sang two Armenian patriotic songs, and two Christian songs.



It was a privilege for us to have the minister of the union, Rev. Joseph Matossian, who concluded his remarks by saying, “I’m inspired and I’m encouraged.”

Rev. Samuel Albarian, the church pastor, shared with us Psalm 34:1-2 which says, “I will extol the Lord at all times; His praise will always be on my lips. My soul will boast in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice.” We closed the banquet by singing the Lords Prayer (Hyer Mer) in Armenian.

We would like to thank all of those who financially contributed for this banquet, especially the 27 local companies, patrons, sponsors, and friends for their generosity. We also want to thank the committee that organized this event investing both time and effort, and the youth volunteers for their active participation during this magnificent event.

It was a wonderful, joyous and amazing event to be a part of, and we hope that this event would encourage other churches to follow in helping support the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America. We pray that God will be with the leaders of the union when making decisions, including financial decisions, that would bring glory to God, and extend the boundaries of His Kingdom.

New England Churches Support the AEUNA

On Saturday, April 5, the Armenian Evangelical Churches of New England gathered together at the First Armenian Church in Belmont to celebrate the AEUNA. During a sumptuous roast beef dinner served to the people by our ministers, friends at the tables shared their own testimonies with each other on how the work of the Union has benefited their own lives. Once everyone had dessert in front of them, Tsolen Sarian began the brief program of testimonials with thanks to the AEYF for underwriting the cost of the dinner we shared this evening. The AEYF invited all youth to attend this special evening as a way to show the Union their gratitude for the difference it has made in their lives.

Carlos Tarakjian from Providence led the way by eloquently recounting the journey the Armenian Euphrates Church of Providence had taken from the retirement of Rev. Zarifian to the ordination of Rev. Mike Mekredjian this past fall. Just as God is with us always, Carlos assured the audience that the AEUNA was with the church every step of the way, even during their darkest days.

Silvia Jizmejian, Director of Camp Arevlek, gave a loving report on the work of the AEYF and Camp Arevlek on the East Coast. The AEUNA plays such an important role in the lives of our young people, impacting them as they are growing in their own faith. The camp provides an even more intense opportunity for study and prayer amongst our youth. We, in turn, are fortunate to have someone as talented as Silvia working with our youth, loving them even as we do.

Doris Markarian spoke of how the Armenian Evangelical Women's Fellowship has grown on the East Coast in the past five years. In addition to very successful biennial conventions on the East Coast and a large contingent attending the Biennial Conventions, the AEWf in Boston decided they needed to take this mission further. They have formed a fellowship with all

Armenian women in Greater Boston — Evangelical, Apostolic or Catholic. Bringing their experiences from the AEWf, these Armenian women gather on a monthly basis to pray and study the Bible together, followed by refreshments, of course. While the Union provided the initial funding and support for a Women's Ministry on the East Coast, there is no mistake that it is the inspiration from God which has taken hold in these women, inspiring them to growing the ministry outside our own boundaries.

As Mrs. Markarian shared her excitement to be part of the AEWf, Serge Khoshafian shared the excitement he has for beginning a new ministry on the East Coast. A new Couples Ministry is being established with a two-day conference to be held in September. This will be a time for couples to grow in their relationship with God as a couple and as parents. The AEUNA has provided seed money and support to the volunteers leading this new ministry.

Phyllis Dohanian provided insights into the challenges the AEUNA faces and endeavors to meet from her vantage point as a member of the Board. She reminded the audience that one of the first tasks for the Union's Minister to the Union is to pastor our badvelis, as even they need encouragement and support. Even though many of the challenges presented to the Board are of our own making as congregations, the Union is working to face these challenges. However, in doing so, the Union may not only try to fix the immediate problem but also find a solution that will help everyone in the future. Such a challenge is how the Union is endeavoring to assist Rev. Manjelian while still trying to find a solution to offering disability insurance to all our AEUNA ministers at a reasonable cost. Often the solutions take far longer than any of us would prefer but a key component to finding the best solution is for the AEUNA to have the funds available to implement that solution. Ms. Dohanian

reminded everyone present that the Union not only needs our financial support now and in the future, it needs our talents to help them attain all of their goals in serving our churches. She asked everyone to give the AEUNA their full support so it can grow in stature and accomplishment for the Glory of God.

Rev. Ara Heghinian from Salem, NH recounted his experiences as a member of the AEYF, being led to a life serving Christ during his years in the Youth Fellowship, to becoming an In-Care Seminarian, then an ordained minister, with the AEUNA encouraging him and supporting him every step of his journey. His remarks were followed by a video presentation showing everyone present photographs of all of the young ministers who are in various stages of their journey to full-time ministry. Seeing Jeremy Tovmassian's picture was a special treat for everyone who remembered him as a child.

Who could possibly steal the show from Rev. Joe Matossian? His presence lights up the room as did his greetings to us from the AEUNA. He spreads God's love to everyone he encounters. We listened carefully and learned even more about the Union's work today.

Sevan Sarian (does she use her maiden name professionally?) of AMC and Levon

Hovsepian of FAC entertained the crowd with musical presentations on the cello and piano respectively.

Anyone who has still not made a contribution to the AEUNA may still do so by either sending a check directly to the Union's Glendale, CA office or by making a check payable to your own church with AEUNA listed on the memo line.

The evening of fellowship ended with everyone wanting more, but it was time to return home to reflect on our great fortune in having the AEUNA to support our churches, our youth and ourselves.

— By Phyllis Dohanian

West Coast Youth Leadership Summit

The Armenian Evangelical Youth Fellowship of the West Coast held its Leadership Summit on March 29, 2008, at the Glendale Armenian Church of the Nazarene.

Thirty seven youth leaders and those who work with youth in various capacities gathered together for the day to worship, learn and reflect on what it means to be a leader. The following AEUNA churches were represented: Glendale Armenian Church of the Nazarene, United Armenian Congregational Church, First Armenian Presbyterian Church, Armenian Christian Fellowship of Orange County, Immanuel Armenian Congregational Church of Downey, Armenian Cilicia Evangelical Church, and the Armenian Evangelical Brethren Church.

The speaker was Pastor Razmig Minassian who discussed the qualities of a leader as found in 1 Timothy 3. He stressed the importance of having a servant-like attitude and being above reproach as a leader. Later the leaders were treated to some fabulous Elena's kebab for lunch. Overall, it was a great opportunity to bring together all those who are involved in youth ministry within our union, and revisit our main purpose as leaders and to meet and fellowship with all those who are co-laborers in our union churches.

Camp AREV Expansion **GROUNDBREAKING** *"Building on the Foundation of Our Lord"*



FRAZER PARK, CALIFORNIA – Over 150 friends from Los Angeles and Fresno gathered on a crisp spring day for the April 12, 2008 groundbreaking ceremony of the expansion project at Camp Arev. The new facilities will include an Infirmary, a Chapel, and a Dining Hall.

As the bulldozer moved the earth signifying the beginning of the project, everyone rejoiced in God's goodness and mercies for the prospect of a facility that will accommodate more campers. Also, there will now be separate quarters for a fulltime nurse to attend to medical situations that may arise. This expansion will also be utilized by many organizations wishing to use the facilities. The Camp committee hosted a delicious kebab lunch that was enjoyed by all.

— Reported by Joyce Abdulian



Ժամանակ Ունի՞ս Մտածելու

«Հիմա գորսց Տէրը այսպէս կըսէ.
Ձեր ճամբաներուն վրայով մտածեցէք»:

Անգեալ 1:5



Ո՞րքան ժամանակ կը յատկացնենք մեր անհատական, ընտանեկան եւ ազգային վիճակներուն ու գործերուն մասին մտածելու եւ խորհելու: Յաճախ լնան կեանքեր փուն տեղը կը մարին ու կը կորստին լոկ մարդուն մարմնատր պէտքերուն համար: Տխուր երեւոյթ է բացառապէս որ հաստատեցա՞յնք որ մաս ու բաժին ունին այս տխրահոշակ վիճակէն:

Ահաասակ Մարգարէին միջոցով կատարած կոչ մը: Աստուծոյ խօսքը ուղղուած է Իր ժողովուրդին, որուն կեանքը կը յատկանշուի անհոգ, համր, անխորհուրդ եւ ձգձգող երեւոյթներով:

Արդեօ՞ք այսօր ալ մեր մէջ չկան թոյլ եւ անփոյթ կերպերով Տիրոջը գործին հարցերը դիմակայողներ:

Ի՞նչ ըրին անոնք, իրենց ժամանակին մէջ: Իսկ այսօր մենք ի՞նչ ընելու ենք:

1. Աստուծոյ Գործը -

Ժողովուրդը ըսաւ. «Ժամանակը չէ հասած»: Տիրոջը տունը շինելու ժամանակը չէ հասած:

Ամէն հաստատեցա՞յ, առաջնորդ կամ հետեւող, բաժին մը ունի կատարելիք Աստուծոյ գործին մէջ: Որքան յաճախ պատրաստ ենք յետաձգելու մեր բաժինը, նոյնիսկ ուրիշի մը վերագրելով, անկէ ակնկալելով որ բան մը ընէ:

Գիտակից ըլլալով որ մեր անձերը Աստուծոյ պէտք է նուիրուին, բաժին մը, մասնակցութիւն մը ունենալու ենք մեր պատկանած միջավայրին մէջ, սակայն «հիմա ժամանակը չէ» ըսելով, կանտեսենք ու ձեռնածպոյթեամբ, շուքի մը մէջ կանհետանանք, փոխանակ խրամատի մէջ գտնուելու ու պատնէշի վրայ մնալու:

Աստուծոյ գործին ծառայելու, օգնելու եւ սատարելու առիթը հիմա է:

Քիչ ենք ուշ կըլ լայ... ուշ կըլ լայ հոգիներ շահելու, ուշ կըլ լայ անելու եւ ուշ կըլ լայ ծառայելու: Հիմա է ժամանակը մեր մրափէն արթննալու:

Վերջին ժամանակաշրջանին քա՞հի Աւետարանական եկեղեցիներու մէջ հոգիներ վերստին ծնունդ ունենալով փրկուեցան: Ժամանակն է որ հոգեւոր կեանքն ու Աստուծոյ գործը լորջի առնենք ու ընենք ինչ որ Աստուած կը պահանջէ, կակնկալ է մեզմէ:

Այս օրերուն Աստուծոյ գործը, եկեղեցին, փրկութիւնն ու յախտնականութիւնը, մարդու գործի վերածած ենք ու միայն հետամուտ ենք մեր պաշտօններուն, անասկաններուն, հանգիստին ու մարդահաճոյութեան: Ուշքի գալու ժամանակն է:

Հաստատեցա՞յնք այսօրեան ձեռնուագարդ տուններու մէջ եւ Տիրոջը տանը աներակ էր: Այսօր Աստուծոյ թագաւորութիւնը պէտքեր ունի, ո՞վ պիտի լեցնէ այդ պէտքերը:

Շատ քրիստոնէականներ կան որոնք զինովցած են նիւթակալով եւ գովասանքով. մինչ Աստուծոյ գործը կը կաղպ հաստքի տկարութեան եւ անձնական նուիրումի պակասին պատճառով, Աստուածաշունչը բոլորիս կը սորվեցնէ՝ «Առաջ խնդրեցէք Աստուծոյ թագաւորութիւնը»:

2. Աշխատանքի արդիւնքը

«Շատ ցանցեցիք, բայց քիչ բերիք»: Ատողը արդիւնքը շատ բերելն է:

Նաեւ, «կերսք բայց չկշտացար»: Այս է հոգեւոր վիճակը քրիստոնէականներու ջախջախիչ մեծամասնութեան, պարծակ ունին այս աշխարհի վայելքներուն, հարստութեան, դիրքին, պատիւին ու մարդոցմէ փառատրուելուն: Այսպիսիներ շարունակ կուտեն, սակայն գոհ չեն:

Անօթի հոգիներ են, բայց իրենց անօթութիւնը կենաց Հացին հանդէպ չէ: Աշխատանքի արդիւնքը, բերք ունենալ է, կշտանալ ու տաքնալ:

Հաստատեցա՞յնք ինքնադարացումի եւ ուրացումի շողշողուն



զգեստներով կը ծածկուին, բայց չեն տաքնար:

Աստուծոյ արդարութիւնը փոխարինող ոչ մէկ բան կայ այս աշխարհի մէջ: Անոր արդարութիւնը անոնց վրայ է, որոնք կը հաստատեն ու Անոր արիւնով փրկուած են իրենց մեղքերէն: Միայն այդ ձեռով պիտոյ տաքուն կը պահուի ցուրտ եղանակներու եւ հակապատկան պարսպաններու մէջ:

Պատուէրը «Յիսուս Քրիստոսը ձեր վրայ տաքն», Անոր արդարութեան ծածկոցը եւ ներկայութեան փայլքը կը ջերմացնեն մեր կեանքերը:

Վերջապէս աշխատանքի արդիւնք եղող վարձքը, «կը դնէք ծակ տուրակի մէջ»: Այն վարձքը որ կը շահինք մեր հպարտութեան եւ անձնակերպուն ջանքերուն միջոցով. մեր հոգիներուն համար գործնական արժէքներ չեն ներկայացնէք: Աստուածաշունչը կանաչ անգէ «Մեղքին վարձքը մահ է»: Մահը պարկ մըն է շատ ծակերով, ամէն բան որ Աստուծոյ ծրագրիին, կամքին եւ փառքին համաձայն չէ, պիտի իյնայ այդ ծակերէն:

3. Ի՞նչ պիտի ընենք

Գործը որ պէտք է կատարուի: «Տուն շինեցէք ու Անոր պիտի հաճին ու պիտի փառատրուին»: Տուն շինել Իր ծրագրիին համեմատ, Իր յանձնարարութիւններով եւ ոչ թէ մարդահաճոյ եւ ինքնահաճոյ կերպերով: Տիրոջը տունը Երուսաղէմի տաճարն էր, որ կը կենար պաշտամունքի եւ վկայութեան համար: Աստուծոյ եկեղեցին, որ Քրիստոսի մարմինն է, կը ծառայէ վերին նպատակներուն: Եկեղեցին հոգեւոր տաճար մըն է, շինուած հոգեւոր կենդանի քարերով: Այս տաճարը հիմա կը շինուի եւ Տէրը հրապարած է մեզ, որպէսզի Իր գործակիցները ըլլանք: Մեր աստարելովը այս սուրբ տաճարի շինութեան, Ինք կը հաճի ու կը փառատրուի: Եթէ անտարբեր ենք, անհոգ ու ձգձգող եւ միայն «մեր ճամբաներուն վրայով կը մտածենք», վիճակը որդեգրական է, գուցէ կը գոյատեւենք, գուցէ կը շարունակենք, սակայն Իր կամքը չի կատարուիր ու Իր փառքը չենք փնտրէ:

Ի՞նչ պիտի ընենք, պիտի շինենք: Սակայն ի՞նչով:

«Լեղը ելէք, փայտ բերէք»:

Երուսաղէմի տաճարը չէր կրնար շինուիլ ոչ ազնուական գաղափարներով եւ ոչ ալ պարսպ անարդիւնք խօսակցութիւններով: Տաճարը շինուելու համար փայտ պէտք էր:

Հոգեւոր տաճարը, որուն հիմը Քրիստոս է, սովորական աղօթքներով, միապաղաղ կեանքներով ու անկենդան պատգամներով, ընկերային պահերով ու մարդկային հաշիւներով չի շինուիր: Հոգեւոր կառուցումը պէտք ունի հոգեւոր քարերու, որոնք կենդանի են, որոնք Սուրբ Հոգիին հնազանդելով կանգնուին սուրբ տաճար մը ըլ լալու:

Ո՞րով պիտի գան այս ասպող քարերը, «լեռնէն»:

Այդ օրերուն Աստուծոյ ժողովուրդը Լիբանանի լեռները երթալով, փայտ բերելու էր: Իսկ մենք այս օրերուն Գողգոթա լեռը պէտք է երթանք, միայն պղտեր կը գտնուին կենդանի քարեր, հոն է որ կը ծնին ու կը թրծուին անմահ հոգիներ:

Մենք հոգիներ շահելու համար, անձնական մաքրութեան, հոգիներու համար ցաւ քաշելու եւ արթութեան կեանքին կը կարօտինք:

Քու ճամբաներու վրայով մտածելու ժամանակ, կանգ առ ու Աստուծոյ ճամբաներուն վրայով մտածէ, ու երբ կը մտածես, Հոգին պիտի առաջնորդէ ընելու յաւագուղ Տիրոջը թագաւորութեան համար: ❶

Վեր. Տ. Շանկեան



Հայ Աւետարանական Համաշխարհային Խորհուրդի (ՀԱՀԽ) Ծնունդն Ու Զարգացումը (30-ամեայ Տարեդարձին Առթիւ)

2008-ի Յունիսին Հայ
Աւետարանական

Համաշխարհային Խորհուրդը

կ'ամբողջացնէ իր 30-րդ տարին: ՀԱՀԽ-ի գաղափարը ծնունդ առաւ «Հայ Աւետարանականներու Առաջին Համաշխարհային Համագումար»-ի (ՀԱԱՀՀ-ի) ընթացքին, որ կայացաւ Յունիս 25-28, 1978-ին Փենսիլվեյնիա նահանգի Հալլըրֆորտ քաղաքին մէջ: Սոյն համագումարը կազմակերպուած էր Ամերիկայի Հայ Աւետարանական Ընկերակցութեան եւ Հիւսիսային Ամերիկայի Հայ Աւետարանական Միութեան կողմէ: Սոյն երկու մարմիններուն կողմէ նշանակուած ութը անդամնոց կազմակերպիչ յանձնախումբ մը հրապիրած էր Հայց. Աւետարանական Եկեղեցոյ բոլոր եկեղեցական Միութեանց եկեղեցական եւ աշխարհական ղեկավարները մասնաւոր համագումարի մը՝ խորհրդակցելու համար Հայց. Աւետարանական Եկեղեցոյ գոյալիմակին եւ ապագային մասին:

Համագումարին մասնակցեցան 126 ներկայացուցիչներ, որոնցմէ 44-ը եկեղեցականներ էին եւ 82-ը՝ աշխարհական առաջնորդներ: Չորս օրեր տեւող Համագումարին նիստն էր «Աւետարանական Տեսիլք Մեր Ժամանակներուն Համար»:

Հայ Աւետարանականներու Առաջին Համաշխարհային Համագումարը փորձեց արժեւորել Հայց. Աւետարանական Եկեղեցոյ ծառայութեան բոլոր մարզերը: Սոյն Համագումարին մէջ էր որ ծնունդ առաւ Հայ Աւետարանական Համաշխարհային Խորհուրդ մը կազմելու գաղափարը: Համագումարին եզրակացութիւնները յղուեցան 13 անդամներէ բաղկացած յանձնախումբի մը, որուն յանձնարարութիւնները ճամբայ հարթեցին Հայ Աւետարանական Համաշխարհային Խորհուրդի կազմաւորման:

ՀԱԱՀՀ-ի կողմէ նշանակուած միջ-միութենական յանձնախումբը յաջորդական ժողովներ գումարելէ ետք՝ իր աշխատանքներու ասարտին, 1982-ին, կը յայտարարէր թէ՛ առաջադրեալ սահմանադրութիւնը եւ կանոնագրութիւնը վաւերացուելէ ետք, հիմնադիր մարմինները կրնան գումարել Հայ Աւետարանական Համաշխարհային Խորհուրդի (ՀԱՀԽ-ի) պաշտօնական առաջին ժողովը: Դժբախտաբար, սակայն, Լիբանանի մէջ ծագած քաղաքացիական պատերազմը պատճառ եղաւ որ ՀԱՀԽ-ի առաջին լիանիստ ժողովը

գումարուի Հալլըրթաունի մէջ, Փենսիլվեյնիա, Հոկտեմբեր 12-14, 1987-ին:

Իր կազմութենէն ի վեր, ՀԱՀԽ-ը գումարած է 18 ժողովներ, որոնց 8 հատը լիանիստ հանգամանք ունեցած են, իսկ մնացեալները եղած են տարեկան համագումարներ:

Անցնող երեսուն տարիներու ժամանակամիջոցին մէջ, անոր իրագործումները բազմազան եղած են, որոնք մանրամասնութեամբ ներայացուած են անգլերէն բաժնին մէջ:

Անոնցմէ զատ, Խորհուրդի անդամները մեծապէս օգտուած են փոխադարձ հաղորդակցութեան, աղօթքի եւ համագործակցութեան մթնոլորտէն, ստրկած են իրարմէ, եւ օգնած իրարու: Այս բոլորը տեսանելի չեն եւ կարելի չէ գնահատումի ենթարկել անոնց բարերար ազդեցութիւնը, թէեւ անոնք կը հանդիսանան կենսական երեսօյներ փոխադարձ գործակցութեան եւ հոգեւոր աճումի մարզերուն մէջ:

Հայ Աւետարանական Համաշխարհային Խորհուրդը ինքնին գերագոյն (Super) եկեղեցի մը չէ: Խորհուրդը կը հանդիսանայ որպէս ներկայացուցչական մարմին՝ ի մի բերելու հայ աւետարանականները՝ խորացնելու եւ զօրացնելու անոնց յանձնառութիւնը Աստուծոյ թագաւորութեան գործին հանդէպ. արժեւորելու, ծրագրելու եւ իրարկելու միջոցներ որոնցմով կարելի պիտի ըլլայ անելի ազդեցիկ դարձնել հայ աւետարանական վկայութիւնը. փնտռելու Սուրբ Հոգիին առաջնորդութիւնը Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցիին վերակենդանացումին եւ աճումին համար: Զօրացնելու աւետարանական նախաձեռնութիւնները, եւ ստեղծելու միացեալ խօսք եւ կեցուածք ազգին շահերուն առնչակիչ հարցերուն եւ դժբախտ պարագաներուն դիմաց:

Եկեղեցական կեդրոնացեալ դրութեան մը բացակայութեան, Համաշխարհային Խորհուրդը կը ջանայ իրարու զօղել Հայ Աւետարանական Միութիւնները եւ կազմակերպութիւնները, բաժնեկից դարձնելու բոլոր աւետարանականները իրարու կարիքներուն եւ գործունէութիւններուն: Խորհուրդը կը ձգտի հանդիսանալ միջոցը փոխադարձ իրեօգուութեան, ծառայելու Միութիւններուն, հայ ժողովուրդին եւ ուրիշներու, փոխանակ թողելու որ Միութիւններ գործեն անկախաբար եւ մեկուսացած: ❶

Վեր. Դոկտ. Վահան Յ. Թութիկեան



Հայաստանի Հանրապետություն 90-ամեակի Առթիվ

Ընթացիկ տարուան, 2008ի Մայիսի 28-ին, Հայաստան կը նշէ իր անկախութեան 90-ամեակը: Արդարեա, Մայր Հայրենիքի Բագրատունեաց Թագաորութենէն 873 տարիներ ետք եւ Կիլիկիոյ Ռուբինեանց Հարստութենէն 543 տարիներ ետք, անդատական հայութեան համար Հայաստանի անկախութիւնը բացատրիկ հանգրուան մը հանդիսացաւ հաշ ժողովուրդի պատմութեան մէջ: Յատկապէս, հայոց ցեղասպանութեան «գողգոթայ»-էն երեք տարիներ ետք՝ Հայաստանի անկախութիւնը հրաշքի համագոր իրականութիւն մըն էր:

Հայաստանի Առաջին Հանրապետութիւնը

Համաշխարհային Ա. Պատերազմին Արեւմտահայութեան Ֆիզիքական կոտորումէն ետք՝ բացապաշտ էին Թուրքիոյ նպատակները Արեւելահայութեան ճակատագրի մասին: Արդարեա, 1918-ի Փետրուարին, Կովկասեան Դաշնակցային Հանրապետութեան (Մէլմ) անկումէն ետք, Օսմանեան պետութեան համար ստեղծուած էր պատեմ վայրկեանը՝ Հայկական Հարցի վերջնական «հաշումեղարարին»:

Օրհասական այս ճգնաժամին մէջ հայութիւնը բոլորովին ձգուած էր իր անկաստագրին: Հայերը ստանձին կոռուցան թուրքերուն դէմ **Սարտարապատի, Ղարաքիլիսի** եւ **Բաշ Ապարանի** ճակատներուն վրայ: Թշնամին նահանջեց եւ **Հայոց Ազգային Խորհուրդը** հոշակեց Հայաստանի անկախութիւնը՝ Մայիս 28, 1918-ին:

Նորանկախ երկրի վարչէները կը գտնուէին ծանրակշիռ կացութեան առջեւ: Պէտք էր ոչինչէն պետութիւն կառուցանել եւ պահպանել: Բարդ հարցերը լուծելու միջոցները սահմանափակ էին: Արտաքին ճակատի վրայ, լուրջ վտանգ մը կը ներկայացներ դրացի երկիրներու աննպաստ դիրքորոշումը: Իսկ ներքին ճակատի վրայ կար հաշ գաղթականներու կնճռոտ հարցը-սով, վարակիչ եւ մահացու հիւանդութիւններ եւ յուսահատութիւն: Արդարեա, անկախութեան առաջին օրերուն, սովն ու վարակիչ հիւանդութիւնները մեծ անբերք գործեցին: Տարաբախտ այդ օրերուն՝ շուրջ 180 հազար մարդիկ մեռան:

Ի հեճուկա այս ամեան, սակայն, մեր «մանուկ հանրապետութիւնը» իր անկախացումէն մէկ տարի ետք իսկ, արդէն կազմակերպուած պետութիւն էր: Երկիրը բաժնաձ էր տասը գաւառներու իրենց համապատասխան վարչութիւններով եւ դատական իշխանութիւններով:

Նոյեմբեր 11, 1918-ի զինադաշարէն ետք, թուրքերը, որոնք Երեւանէն 7 քիլոմէթր հեռու սահմանին վրայ դիրք բռնած էին, սկսան նահանջել: Նոյեմբեր 18-ին հայ բանակը մտաւ Վանաձոր (նախկին Ղարաքիլիսէ), Դեկտեմբերին Կիւմրի (Ալիքսանդրոպոլ), իսկ 1919 գարնան, հայկական բանակը գրաւեց Կարս, Օլթի, Նախիջեան քաղաքները, եւ ազատագրեց Արեւելեան Հայաստանը: 1919 Մայիս 28-ին, Հայաստանի կառավարութիւնը յայտարարեց Հայաստանի հողերուն վերամիացումը: Այսպէս, դարեր ամբողջ օտարի լուծին տակ ապրող հայեր ունեցան իրենց, ազատ, անկախ եւ միացեալ Հայաստանը:

Թուրքիոյ պարտութենէն երկու տարի ետք, Օգոստոս 10, 1920, Դաշնակիցները Սեպի մէջ (Ֆրանսա) դաշինք կնքեցին: Թուրքեր եւ Երոսպական տերութիւններ ընդունեցին Միացեալ Հայաստանի անկախութիւնը: Ամերիկայի նախագահ Վուորոյ Ուիլսոն գծեց Հայաստանի սահմանները - շուրջ 87,500 քառակուսի միլոն տարածութեամբ երկիր մը: Իժմբատաբար, այդ որոշումը մնաց թուրքի վրայ:

Սեպի դաշնագիրէն ետք, դաշնագիրը ստորագրող պետութիւններ անհամաձայնութիւններ ունեցան իրարու միջեւ: Մինչ այդ, Թուրքիա ռազմապէս քիչ մը զօրացած՝ դաշնակցեցաւ համայնակար Ռուսիոյ հետ եւ ասպարէզ կարողաց անմիաբան Դաշնակիցներուն: Այնուհետեւ թուրքեր եւ ռուսեր ճնշում բանեցուցին Հայաստանի վրայ որ հրաժարի Սեպի Դաշնագիրէն: Թուրքերը աշխատեցան տէր դառնալ Ղարաբաղ-Ջանգեղոյր Նախիջեան գիծին եւ միանալ Ատրպէյճանին: Հայաստան մնաց թրքական սայի եւ համայնակար Ռուսիոյ մորճին միջեւ: Թուրքերը յարձակեցան Հայաստանի վրայ ստանց որեւէ պատճառի: Ռուսերը կամակցութիւնով, թուրքեր գրաւեցին Կարսը ու հասան մինչեւ

Կիւմրի (Ալեքսանդրոպոլ): Մինչ այդ, հաշ Համայնակար Կոմիտէն 70 հազար ռուս զինուորներու հետ մտան Դիլիջան:

Հայաստանի կառավարութիւնը ուզեց համաձայնի ռուսերուն հետ թրքական արշաւանքը կեցնելու համար, սակայն ռուսերը շատ անելի կարեւոր նկատեցին թուրքին բարեկամութիւնը քան փոքրիկ Հայաստանի ապահովութիւնը: Անոնք թելադրեցին հաշերուն, որ ընդունին թուրքերու դրած պայմանները: Նոյեմբեր 29, 1920-ին, Հայաստանի հանրապետութիւնը եմթարկուեցաւ համայնակարներու իշխանութեան: Միանգամայն, Հայաստան ստիպուեցաւ նաեւ ստորագրել Ալեքսանդրոպոլի դաշնագիրը հողային մեծ զիջումներ ընելով թուրքերուն:

Խորհրդային Հայաստան - Երկրորդ Հանրապետութիւն Դեկտեմբեր 2, 1920 հաշ եւ ռուս համաձայնութեամբ, Հայաստան ընդունեց Խորհրդային (սովետ) վարչակարգը:

1921 թուականի վերջին օրերուն կովկասեան ժողովուրդները միանալով կազմեցին Ռուսիոյ եմթակալ Անդրկովկասեան Դաշնակցային Հանրապետութիւնը:

1936-ին սովետական նոր Սահմանադրութեամբ, կովկասեան իրաքանչիւր ազգ, իբրեւ ստանձին հանրապետութիւն մաս կազմեց Խորհրդային Միութեան:

Սովետ Միութեան հովանիին ներքեւ, ու հակասակ տիրող բռնապետական վարչակարգին, Հայաստանի ժողովուրդը զարգացուց իր տնտեսութիւնն ու մշակոյթը: Սովետներու օժանդակութեամբ մեծ զարկ տրուեցաւ նարտարարութեան: Տնտեսութեան եւ նարտարարութեան հետ, մեծ զարկ տրուեցաւ նաեւ կրթական, գիտական եւ գեղարտեստի մարզերուն: Անգրագիտութիւնը գրեթէ անհետացաւ, հիմնուեցան պետական բարձր կրթական հաստատութիւններ, գրադարաններ, թատրոններ, եւ ակումբներ: Հայաստան արձանագրեց աննախընթաց նուաճում գրեթէ ամէն մարզերու մէջ: Ան դարձաւ Սովետ Միութեան 15 հանրապետութեանց մէջ ամէնէն բարգաւաճ երկիրը բաղաառած իր թիւին եւ տարածութեան:

Առաջին Հանրապետութիւնը ի՛նչ-ի՛նչ զոհողութիւններու գնով՝ հաշ ժողովուրդին տուաւ ներկա Հայաստանը իր շուրջ 29,000 քառակուսի քիլոմէթր տարածութեամբ: Երկրորդ Հանրապետութիւնը, հակասակ իր համայնակար վախի ու սարսափի վարչակարգին, ստնուազն պահեց ու մեզի փոխանցեց ներկա Հայաստանը, ուր գիտութիւնն մշակոյթը կրցան արձանագրել միջազգային նուաճումներ:

Երրորդ Հանրապետութիւնը - Արդի Հայաստանը Սօսադարապէս եօթնամասուն տարի Սովետական լուծի տակ գտնուող Հայաստանը իր անկախութիւնը հոշակեց 21 Սեպտեմբեր 1991-ին՝ Սովետական Միութեան անկումէն քանի մը ամիսներ առաջ, դառնալով առաջիններէն մէկը Սովետ Կաշարութեան 15 հանրապետութեանց՝ իր անկախութիւնը հոշակելու եւ ազատ ու անկախ պետութիւն դառնալու:

1988-ի աներիչ երկրաշարժէն շուրջ երկուքուկէ տարի ետք ճնունդ առնող Երրորդ (Գ) Հանրապետութեան ծագումն ու օրէ օր աճումն ու զարգացումը հրաշալի երեւոյթ մըն է հաշ ժողովուրդի կեանքին մէջ: Մանաւանդ եթէ նկատի առնենք Հայաստանի դրացի թուրք-ազերի տնտեսական շրջափակումն ու քաղաքական սեղմումները՝ Հայաստանի գոյատեւումը հրաշքի համագոր իրողութիւն մըն է:

Ներկա Հայաստանը, իր բոլոր թերութիւններով հանդերձ, մեզի կու տայ ազգային ինքնութեան հպարտութիւնը, թէ մենք ազգ ենք. ունինք հայրենիք եւ ունինք ազգային դրօշ: Այս հպարտութիւնը, անտարակոյս, կ'ամիսպնէլ աշխարհացիք հայորդիներու հայրենասիրութեան եւ ազգայնականութեան զգացումը:

Արդ, Հայաստանի Հանրապետութեան 90-ամեակին առթիւ, Հայ Աւետարանական Համաշխարհային Խորհուրդը եւ Հայ Աւետ. Համալնքը, համայն հայութեան հետ միասնաբար, սրտովին կ'ողջունեն այս բարեբախտիկ տարեդարձը, անոր մաղթելով նոր նուաճումներով, յաջողութիւններով եւ հայրենասիրական յաղթանակներով յի ցնճուն տարի մը ու շատ տարիներ...:

Աստուած օրհնէ Հայաստանի Հանրապետութիւնը եւ հաշ ազգը: 🌟

Վեր. Դոկտ. Վահան Յ. Թութիկեան

Շքեղ Շաշկերոյթ Ի Նպաստ Հ.Ա.Հ.Ա. Միութեան

Նախաձեռնութեամբ Թորոնթոյի Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցիի Վարչութեան եւ աուջնորդութեամբ Պրն. Անթիպաս Լուսարարեանի, 29 Մարտ 2008, երեկոյեան եկեղեցիի սրահին մէջ տեղի ունեցաւ, եզակի շքեղ ճաշկերոյթ մը ի նպաստ Հիւսիսային Ամերիկայի Հայ Աւետարանական Միութեան:

Յայտագիրը վարեց Պրն. Միհրան Շիզմէճեան եւ իր բացման խօսքէն ետք հրահրեց Պատ. Էմիլ Եղիաեանը որ աղօթքով օրհնէ սեղանը:

Ուրախ մթնոլորտի մէջ եկեղեցիի երիտասարդներու անթերի ապաստարկութեամբ, հրամցուեցան համադամ ճաշեր:

Ապա սկսաւ յայտագրի գործադրութիւնը: Պատաստի վրայ ցուցադրուեցան 8 երիտասարդներ որոնք կոչուող ստացած են աստուածաբանական դպրոց ուսանելու կրթանպաստ ստանալով Միութենէն:

Տիկ. Թամար Ալլարեան իր երիտասարդաց ոյժերով ներկայացուց երկու խմբային հոգեւոր երգեր: Ապա, Ամերիկայի Հայ Աւետարանական Միութեան հոգաբարձութեան անդամ Պրն. Ա. Լուսարարեան, իր աշխոյժ ձայնով բացատրեց Միութեան աստեղծութիւնը եւ կոչ ուղղեց ներկաներուն որ իրենց միութեան

օժանդակութիւնը ընծայեն, ապագայ հովիւներ

պատրաստելու ծրագրին: Օրինակ բերաւ Պատ. Էմիլ Եղիաեանը որ մեծ նուիրումով կ'աշխատի եկեղեցիի մէջ:

Տիկ. Սօնա Յովսէփեան, Երեանի Բօմանո Մելիքեանի Երաժշտական Գոլէճէն եւ Կոմիտասի անուան Երաժշտանոցէն վկայեալ, մեզի ներկայացուց 4 երգեր եւ իր առինքնող ու դիւթիչ ձայնով հրապուրեց ներկաները:

Օրում գլխաւոր խօսողն էր Միութեան հովիւ Վեր. Շօ Մաթոսեան: Ան իր զուարճախօսութեամբ հետաքրքրեց ներկաները եւ շեշտեց կարեւորութիւնը եկեղեցիներու բերած նպաստին Միութեան:

Հուսկ հրահրուեցաւ եկեղեցիի հովիւ Վեր. Սամուէլ Ալլարեանը որ իր շնորհակալական ու շնորհատրական խօսքերէն ետք օրհնութեան աղօթքով փակեց օրումն հանդիսութիւնը: **🕊**

Ժամէր Շանլեան



ԿԱՐԴԱԼՈՎ Արթնցո՛ւր Ներսիդիդ Գտնուող Առաջնորդը

Նմանօրինակ հատորի մը չէի հանդիպած: Ինչպէս միշտ վերջին տասնամեակներուն աւելի կը նկատուի պէտքը առաջնորդներու, որոնք «պատրաստուած» են:

Հայրենիքի եւ ափիւքի տարածքին ունեցած ենք պիտանի եւ օգտակար առաջնորդներ, սակայն միշտ ալ պակասն ու պէտքը տեսնուած է «պատրաստուած» առաջնորդներու:

Այս խոնարհ հատորը, աշխատանքը Միհրան Շիզմէճեանի, կու գայ բաց մը գոցելու, պէտք մը լրացնելու եւ համապարփակ էջերու մէջ ներկայացնելու առաջնորդի կերպարը:

Այս հատորին մտադրացումը արդիւնքն է Միհրան Շիզմէճեանի ունեցած երկարամեայ վաստակին ուսումնական դաշտէն ներս: Հայաստանի Աւետարանական Աստուածաբանական Ակադեմիայէն ստացած հրաւերին «Քրիստոնէական Դաստիարակութիւն» դասաւանդելու: Հեղինակին պրպտումներն ու ուսումնասիրութիւններուն, երկու հեղինակներու լոյս ընծայած հատորներուն, իր լաւագոյն կէսին (տիկնոջ) բարեացակամութեան եւ դասընկերոջ՝ Դոկտ. Երուանդ Քասունիի պատրաստակամութեան խմբագրելու եւ հրատարակելու: Այս բոլոր մոյիչ ոյժերը կարեւոր ազդակներ ըլլալով հանդերձ, եթէ չըլլար Առաջնորդին եւ Ուսուցիչին անփոխարինելի շնորհքը, աշխատանքը իր լրումին չէր կրնար հասնիլ:

128-ը էջերէ բաղկացած գրքուկը, մեզի կը ներկայացնէ երկու բաժիններ՝ «Արթնցուր ներսիդիդ գտնուող առաջնորդը», 13 գլուխներու բաժնուած, իսկ երկրորդը՝ «Ուսուցիչը՝ առաջնորդ» երկու բաժիններով:

Առաջին բաժինով հեղինակը, աշխատասիրողը իր հայեցակէտը սեւեռած է Առաջնորդին, Յիսուս Քրիստոսի վրայ: Անոր անձին,

նկարագրին եւ գործելակերպին ընդմէջէն կը տեսնէ ու կ'ուզէ տեսնել առաջնորդի մը էութիւնը որ սիրող է, ներող, ընդգրկող, վստահող, թափանցիկ, աղօթքի տէր ու հաւատքով լեցուն, պատուախնդիր ու խիզովս, ծառայող եւ լայնախոհ, գթասիրտ ու կարեկցող, գործնական եւ ազդեցիկ: Այս բաժինին մէջ տարբեր գլուխներու վերջաւորութեան դրումն է «Յիսուսի իմաստութիւնը», Յիսուսի կեանքէն ու գործելակերպէն ամփոփումներ: Բոլորիս յիշեցնելով որ Ան է մեր օրինակը ու մենք Ձիւնք ընդօրինակող առաջնորդներ ըլլալու ենք:

Երկրորդ բաժինը՝ Ուսուցիչը՝ առաջնորդ: Սկիզբը ամփոփուած ու մէկտեղուած են եօթը սորվեցնելու օրէնքներ, միջին քաջատեղեակ ըլլալ, աշակերտի հոգեբանութեամբ, հասկնալի լեզու, պարզ գիտելիքներու վրայ հիմնուած, միտքը արթնցնել (աշակերտին), նոր միտք մը տալ ու վերաքաղել: Ապա կը հրամցնէ տիպար դաստիարակի պարտականութիւնները ու վերջապէս ուսուցիչը միջոց քրիստոնէական դաստիարակութեան: Հատորը վերջաբանով մը կ'ամբողջանայ:

Թէեւ օգտագործած է երկու օտար աղբիւրներ, սակայն աշխատանքը լոյս թարգմանական գործ չէ, որովհետեւ ինչպէս յիշեցնեմք, անձնական փորձառութիւններ, պրպտումներ, դասաւանդութիւն, այս բոլորին արդիւնքը եղած է այս հատորը:

Լեզուն պարզ է ու հասկնալի: Ամփոփ հատոր մը բոլորին լամնարարելի, որոնք առաջնորդներ են կամ կը պատրաստուին ըլլալու, յատկապէս ուսուցիչներ:

Ահաւաստի լուրջ եւ անհրաժեշտ աշխատանք մը: **🕊**

Վեր. Տ. Շանլեան

ARMENIAN EVANGELICAL WORLD COUNCIL ՀԱՅԱՒԵՏԱՐԱՆԱԿԱՆ ՀԱՄԱԾԵՍԱՐՀԱՅԻՆ ԽՈՐՀՈՒՐԳ CONSEIL MONDIAL EVANGELIQUE ARMENIEN

... that they may be one (John 17:11) ... որպեսզի անկեց մեկ բլրակ (Յովհ. 17:11) ... afin qu'ils soient un (Jean 17:11)

Գործադիր Տնօրէն/Executive Director
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30 Մարտ 2008

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Յարգելի Տիար Նախագահ,

Հայ Աւետարանական Համաշխարհային Խորհուրդի անունով կը
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Ուրախ ենք որ Երեւանի մէջ վերջին քանի մը շաբաթներուն տիրող
տխուր իրադարձութիւններն ու անհանդարտ կացութիւնը արդէն սկսած են
վերջ գտնել եւ լիայոյս ենք որ Ձեր ողջմտութիւնը, հեռատեսութիւնը,
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նպաստեն մեր հայրենիքի ներքին անդորրութեան եւ քաղաքական-
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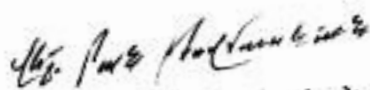
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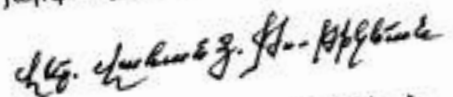
Սրտանց կը շնորհակարտեմք Ձեզ եւ անգամ մը եւս մեր
պատրաստակամութիւնը կը յայտնենք՝ գորավիզ կանգնելու մեր
հայրենիքին, անոր ներկայ ղեկավարութեան եւ հայրենաքնակ մեր
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քաջաողջութիւն շնորհէ Ձեզի, որպէս զի նորանոր նուաճումներով եւ
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Նախագահ


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Գործադիր Տնօրէն

As I See It
Rev. Dr. Vahan H. Tootikian

Իմ Տեսանկյունն
Վեր. Դոկտ. Վահան Զ. Թուօթիկեան

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