

THE FAITH AND PRACTICE OF THE ARMENIAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH

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FAITH AND THEOLOGY

The formal recognition of the Armenian Evangelical Church was granted by the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Medjid on November 27, 1850. The first Armenian Evangelical Church, however, was established at Pera, Istanbul (then Constantinople) four years earlier, on July 1, 1846.

Armenian Evangelicalism is basically a religious movement representing both the tradition of Protestant Reformation (and the later spiritual renewal movements of Pietism and Puritanism) and the Armenian Apostolic Church. The early Armenian Evangelicals claimed that they followed "the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ" and obeyed the Gospel, and consequently were "members of this one, Catholic and Apostolic Church." They insisted that, like their Mother Church, they received the Nicene Creed of the Church...and could be considered as regular members of the National Church by simply receiving the ancient (Nicene) Creed.¹ They objected that the "New Creed" Patriarch Matteos Chouhadjian, the Patriarch who excommunicated them from the church, had "invented" in 1846 was contrary to Holy Scriptures, and consequently, they could not subscribe to it. They stated that the "true foundation and perfect rule of Christian faith is the Holy Scriptures alone."²

THE "CONFESSION OF FAITH" VERSUS THE "NEW CREED"

In the course of time, the Armenian Evangelical Church adopted a great deal of Protestant teachings, principles, and theology. These imported influences did not touch the Nicene Creed, adherence to which was emphatically reaffirmed; but they included a declaration of freedom of conscience and a number of affirmations to express the Church's views of the truth on points not explicitly covered by the "Ancient Creed." These affirmations at first were formulated by the Armenian Evangelicals in response to Patriarch Chouhadjian's "New Creed." They were hammered out by men who were on the firing line. In facing accusations and excommunications, Evangelicals were forced to think out and declare the implications of their convictions. After issuing a bill of excommunication against priest Vertanes on January 12, 1846,³ the

Patriarch demanded that the Evangelicals sign the "Paper of Recantation" declaring that they were "deceived by the wicked enticements of Satan"⁴ and renouncing all further communication with the missionaries. Moreover, the Patriarch had warned all the Armenian Apostolic churches in Turkey to "beware of the seducing and impious followers of false doctrines of the modern sectaries" (i.e. the Evangelicals).⁵

Thus, the first authoritative statement of faith by the Armenian Evangelicals, the "Confession of Faith," was prepared in response to the so-called "New Creed" formulated by Patriarch Matteos Chouhadjian. The "New Creed" composed of nine articles, spelling out the position of the Armenian Apostolic Church, was presented to the Evangelicals as a sign of orthodoxy.⁶ It dealt with such important issues as salvation, the church, the sacraments, Apostolic Succession, the saving ordinance of the church, the Virgin Birth, the intercession of saints, the creeds, the rites and rituals, and the hierarchy of the church.⁷

The "Confession of Faith," composed of twelve articles, was both a response to the Patriarch's "New Creed" and a statement of the theological position of the newly organized Armenian Evangelical Church. It reaffirmed some important beliefs common to all Christian Churches, as set forth in the Scriptures, and the doctrinal decisions of the early General Councils. It reaffirmed, for instance, the Apostolic and Catholic belief in the existence of "one only living and true God, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the Universe";⁸ the mystery of the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost as One God;⁹ the work of the Holy Spirit; the reality of sin; atonement; forgiveness and redemption; the existence of eternal life;¹⁰ Christ's role as Head of the Church; the resurrection of the dead and the promise of eternal life.¹¹

The "Confession of Faith" rejected some important concepts, beliefs, and practices as presented in the Patriarch's "New Creed." It rejected justification by faith and good works¹² and it affirmed that justification and salvation are by faith alone; that salvation is God's free gift; that it cannot be earned or purchased by any kind of meritorious works, such as "fasting, alms, penances, or other deeds of our own."¹³

The "Confession of Faith" rejected the concept that there are Seven Sacraments -- Baptism, Confirmation, Penance, Communion, Ordination, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction -- and that they have saving power. It claimed that there are two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Communion), "the former being the seal of the covenant, and the sign of the purifying operation of the Holy Spirit, and the token of admission into the visible church"; and the latter, "a perpetual memento of Christ's atoning love, and

a pledge of union and communion with Him and with all true believers."¹⁴ It rejected the Apostolic Church's belief that baptism, auricular confession, and penance are saving ordinances to be supplemented after death by the Mass, alms, and prayers.¹⁵ It maintained that salvation is through the grace of God by faith. Faith represents man's willingness to be saved on God's terms. It rejected veneration of images and the relics of saints, as well as devotion to the Virgin Mary.¹⁶ It affirmed the biblical view that besides God, no other being is to be worshiped and adored, and that "each person in the sacred Trinity is worthy of our worship, which to be acceptable, must be offered through no other mediation than that of Jesus Christ alone; and that the use of relics, pictures, images of any sort, in any act of worship, and of the intercession of saints, is directly contrary to the Scriptures."¹⁷

"GUIDE FOR MEMBERS OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH"

With the passage of time, the Armenian Evangelical Church was greatly influenced by Protestant theology. Within a decade of her inception, she had already entered the mold of American Protestantism. Thus, the very same Armenian Evangelicals who had told the American missionaries, "we do not need to adopt any foreign denominational polity...but wish to restore our Mother Church to her former Apostolic orthodoxy,"¹⁹ became obliged in 1855 to adopt a constitution and catechism entitled, *Guide for Members of the Evangelical Church*, prepared by the American Protestant missionaries.²⁰

The *Guide for Members of the Evangelical Church*, besides representing by-laws of the early Armenian Evangelical Church, was indeed a guidebook to Evangelical theology. It is one of the earliest documents which sets forth the important tenets that distinguish Evangelicals from Apostolics. One of its purposes was to state in simple terms the basic convictions and affirmations of Evangelicalism. It also stated some of the beliefs and practices that are alien to Evangelicalism.

The *Guide for Members of the Evangelical Church* presents the following distinctive affirmations of Evangelicalism which, then as now, are the basic principles of Protestantism; namely, that a man is justified by faith alone, without works; a man's salvation depends entirely on divine grace; the Bible is the only Christian norm and practice; all believers are priests, not only on behalf of themselves, but also on behalf of each other.

The book explains the nature and the meaning of the Sacraments of Baptism and Communion. Furthermore, it deals with the other five "lesser sacraments" which the ancient churches accept, but Protestantism does not. It criticized the Armenian Apostolic Church for not separating Scripture and Tradition.²¹

In this early Evangelical document, one can clearly see the strong the-

ological influence of the American missionaries. Most of these missionaries were graduates of Andover Theological Seminary who, in turn, were greatly influenced by the new theology of Hopkins and Jonathan Edwards -- a theology which made much of a personal religious experience, of a new birth through trust in Christ, commitment to Him; it sought to win nominal Christians to an acceptance of the Gospel; it advocated a revivalistic kind of preaching. This was theology of anti-celibacy, anti-ceremonialism, anti-monasticism, and anti-episcopacy." *The Guide for Members of the Evangelical Church* is a reflection of the American missionaries' thinking. The life principles of Evangelicalism are described here to be the doctrine of justification by grace alone, through the merits of Jesus Christ, by means of living faith. One of the major thrusts of the book is to define Evangelicalism and to insist that the Armenian Evangelical Church is a Scriptural Church, and that the sufficiency and unerring certainty of the Bible is the only norm of all-saving knowledge. Here there is an emphasis on evangelism; an urgency to proclaim the Kingdom of God. The Evangelical person is urged to take seriously the "great commission," namely, to preach the Gospel to everyone.²³

COMMON AFFIRMATIONS AND CHERISHED VALUES

In spite of the diversity among various Armenian Evangelical churches and groups, there are some common convictions and some cherished values shared by all Armenian Evangelicals. In fact, beneath the observable diversities and differences, there is a solid body of agreement which the Armenian Evangelical Church shares with the rest of Protestantism. These principles and values originated with the Reformation Movement and were crystallized in the course of time.

The distinctive affirmations and cherished values of Armenian Evangelicalism are as follows:

1. *Justification by Faith Alone.* This was a central principle of the Protestant Reformation. Justification means an accommodation with God -- the establishment of a joyful relationship with Him. It means that people cannot justify themselves. They cannot make themselves right with God. God alone justifies them by virtue of the sacrifice and death of Jesus Christ. It is with the undeserved grace of God, through Jesus Christ, that the repentant sinner is brought into fellowship with Him.

God, through the atoning work of Jesus Christ, restores the broken relationship between rebellious and sinful man with Himself. It is by faith that a man receives this free gift of God. Faith is belief that God has actually provided in Jesus Christ a mediator between Himself and man. Faith is also trust in Christ to do this work of reconciliation. Furthermore, faith is fidelity or faithfulness "in maintaining that belief and trust and living in accordance with that <newness of life,> which comes through union with Him."²⁴

"Justification by faith" means that people cannot earn God's favor by performing meritorious acts, or by the merits of saints. It is a rejection of the performance of set tasks of devotion to earn merit for oneself or a share of those that the church had at its disposal in its "bank of merits."²⁵ Salvation is a gift from God to man, given on the sole condition of faith alone -- *sola fide*.

2. *Priesthood of all Believers*. This is an affirmation and an assertion that every believer has the right of direct access to God on his own behalf. This is both his privilege and responsibility. This is the assertion that the Christian can come into the presence of God, without a priestly intermediary. He can confess his sins to God and can make his own commitment to the way of Christ.

The "priesthood of believers" is closely connected with the doctrine of the Church. The Church is the body of Christ and the fellowship of those who are committed to Him. This Protestant principle rejects the priestly monopoly on the means of grace and the priestly power of absolution. Absolution is the authoritative declaration by a priest of God's pardon of the penitent. In the Roman Catholic Church, the priest announces absolution to the individual who confessed his sin. In the Armenian Apostolic Church, a general absolution is given to a group. The form used is declaratory, meaning, simply, that God forgives the repentant.

Protestantism also rejects the assumption that the priestly class is a separate class, representing the church. Furthermore, it rejects the so-called Apostolic Succession, the historic continuity of the ministry, which supposedly has been passed on, from age to age, by the laying on of hands of the bishops.

According to the ancient churches, the authority of Christianity is seated in the church, and the church is built on the episcopate. There is a hierarchy of order, consisting of three grades of divine institution: bishops, priests, and deacons. The historic and "valid" churches are those founded by the Apostles, wherein the apostolic succession has been maintained by the succession of the bishops. The entire structure of these churches is that of "hierarchy," the root of meaning of which is "rule by priests." The priests, themselves, are arranged in grades with the lower being ruled by the higher.

The idea that an episcopate, in lineal and tactual succession from the Apostles, represents this essence of the Church, and that ordination by the bishops standing in this succession is a prerequisite to the valid performance of Christian ministry, is alien to Evangelical mind and spirit.²⁶

The principle of the "priesthood of all believers" is not a denial of the function and role of clergy. The Armenian Evangelical Church recognizes the importance of recognized and qualified ministry. It recognized the need for specially trained people, who can devote all their time to pastoral duties. For that reason, she ordains those who have received a call, undergone pastoral training, and have dedicated their lives to full time Christian ministry.

In the Armenian Evangelical Church, ministers are not a special class by themselves. They are on equal standing with the rest of believers, except that they are authorized by the Church to be her spokesmen, to conduct the corporate acts of worship, and to be teachers and administrators. Aside from this formal authorization, they are like the rest of church members. All have the privilege and the duty to minister to each other, to be each other's "priest," especially to those in need. As part of the Body of Christ, they are all a "royal priesthood." They are all ministers under Christ, "the High Priest" and the Head of the Church.

In short, Christian ministry belongs to the whole church. All Christians, both lay and ordained, are ministers and in their own way, they are to be as faithful and as committed to their life in Christ as possible.

3. *The Liberty of the Christian Man.* Another principle of Armenian Evangelicalism affirms the conviction that a Christian has the right to think his own thoughts, to make his own decisions, to be his own person, and to live his own life. He is free from legalistic life; his faith in Christ frees him from bondage to the law. This concept of Christian liberty does not mean freedom to do "anything under the sun," but freedom to follow the injunction, "through love be servants of one another." This kind of freedom does not mean to be wrapped up in oneself, but to live a life of outgoing concern for others.²⁷

This kind of freedom, also, is concerned with the minority rights, rather than the majority rule. It recognizes the importance of each individual, regardless of his status. It respects the right of private judgment, and cherishes freedom of conscience.²⁸

Armenian Evangelicals, at times, may have misused or abused their freedom; they may not have displayed absolute allegiance toward their Church. But they have always believed in the right of dissent. They have always cherished the concept that the Church, being fallible, is not the final authority; that deep in the heart of every believer there is a higher court of appeal, his conscience, as molded by biblical values. Hence, the religious institutions and church organizations have meaning and value only as they serve to meet the needs and enrich the lives of people.

4. *The Concept of Vocation.* The Christian is called by God to that useful work for which he is best suited and which the fortunes of life bring within his reach, whether it be a specifically religious work or secular occupation.²⁹ The Armenian Evangelicals, like all Protestants, believe that no one calling is intrinsically more sacred than any other. The smallest work, performed at the right place, in the consciousness that it fulfills a divine commission, stands ethically on the same level as the highest work, measured by its results. God calls people to carry out their Christian concern in various occupations.

Armenian Evangelicals do not believe that in the Christian life there are some "sacred" professions that may be distinguished from less "sacred"

ones. They consider this distinction between the so-called "sacred" and "secular," "holy" and "profane," artificial and against the spirit of the Gospels. The vocation of a Christian layman is as sacred as that of the minister, priest, monk, or nun. Thus, laymen are not second-class Christians. Every Christian's occupation is a service to God and his/her fellows.

5. *The Sufficiency of the Bible.* Armenian Evangelicals, like all Protestants, affirm the sufficiency of the Bible as the rule of faith and practice for Christians and for the Church.³⁰ They believe that the Bible reveals God in a way which will never be superseded. They also believe in the "open Bible" and encourage individuals to read it for themselves, leaving them free to make their own interpretation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.³¹

Thus, the principle of the sufficiency of the Bible is accompanied by the assertion that all Christians have the right and privilege to have direct access to the Bible and read and interpret it for themselves.

The Evangelical assertion of the sufficiency of the Scriptures is a denial of the claim that the tradition of the Church is also an indispensable channel of revelation, through which "other truths not contained in the Bible, but just as authoritative are transmitted."³² The Armenian Evangelical and the Armenian Apostolic Churches differ on the question as to who should interpret the Bible. For the Armenian Apostolic Church, the answer has always been that the same continuing Christian community, which accepted the Hebrew Scriptures as its Old Testament and which determined the list of books of the New Testament, retains the final authority to interpret the Bible. While individual Armenian Apostolics can read and study the Bible, it is the responsibility of the Church to interpret the Scriptures with authority. In the Armenian Evangelical Church, as in all Protestant Churches, the responsibility of interpreting the Bible falls on the individual believer, who, assisted by the Holy Spirit, prayerfully searches the Scriptures and arrives at a true interpretation. Tradition is not irrelevant, but it should not be equated with or made comparable to Holy Scripture.

WORSHIP

Christian worship is directed toward God. The very phrase "worship service" denotes that. Worship literally means, "that which has worth," or "is worthy of honor." The word "service" implies an attitude or servanthood. The faithful servant is not so much interested in his own desires and pleasures as in those of his master. In the worship service, the worshiper is engaged in the worship of God; his focus is upon God, not upon himself.

The Armenian Evangelical Church is not bound by ecclesiastical authority to a fixed Order of Worship. She belongs to a tradition in which great flexibility and experimentation are germane. Hers may be characterized as free

worship where a variety of forms may be used, borrowed, or created. She is free to utilize materials from whatever source, ancient or modern.

Free worship does not necessarily imply disorderly worship. In fact, there are a number of fundamental principles and common ingredients in the Armenian Evangelical Worship Services.

One of the most basic principles of the Armenian Evangelical worship is its biblical origin. It is rooted in the rich soil of biblical heritage. From the beginning, the Bible has occupied a primary place in the Armenian Evangelical tradition. It has been and continues to be the textbook for religious instruction, the source book for private devotions and meditations, as well as sermons.

Armenian Evangelical worship is also "people-oriented." It is active and not passive. Worshipers are not passive spectators, but are called to be active, committed, and energetic participants in what happens. Moreover, services are in the language of the worshipers. There is a desire to make the service understood. The Armenian Evangelical Church has always regarded it as her duty to offer the ministrations of the Church in the language of the people and to increase the participation and involvement of her people in the service.

The common elements in the Armenian Evangelical worship services are *Praise and Adoration*, *Confession of Sins* (penitence, contrition and repentance), *Absolution and Pardon* (assurance of pardon and forgiveness), the *Hearing of God's Word* (instruction and insight), *Dedication and Call* (inspiration, offering and stimulation to action).

ORDER OF WORSHIP

The Order of Worship in the Armenian Evangelical Church may differ from place to place, but ordinarily it consists of the following:

Musical Prelude,³³ which is a period of preparation on the part of the worshiper for his involvement in corporate worship. For each person, the beginning of private worship starts when he enters the Sanctuary; and the music is designed to help one enter the mood in which worship becomes vital and real.

Call to Worship is usually a passage of Scripture which signals that the quiet meditation is over and that corporate worship begins. With that signal, worshipers move from their private worship to join with their fellow-worshipers in their common praise.

Hymns are meaningful words blended with music. They can become a most effective medium to express a person's most tender emotions and loftiest sentiments. They are expressive activities in which every worshiper can join. The Armenian Evangelical hymns, with few exceptions, are translations of old and new Protestant hymns. Most of them are translated from English. The tunes, of course, have come from many traditions, countries and cultures.

In recent years, in many Armenian Evangelical hymnals, *Sharakans*, hymns of the Armenian Apostolic Church, are incorporated, and occasionally

one or two are sung, adding sublimity and beauty to the worship services.³⁴

Prayers have been the main method by which men have approached God. The constituent parts of prayer are adoration, thanksgiving, confession, petition, and intercession. There are various types of prayers:

(a) *The Invocation*, which appears near the opening of the service, is an expression of adoration to God and a petition for His blessing upon the worshipping congregation.

(b) *The Pastoral Prayer* is the gathering of the hopes, the fears, the aspirations, failures, the confession, the praise, the deep needs and the concerns of the whole congregation. It represents the corporate voice of worshipers, expressed through the medium of the minister.

(c) *The Offertory Prayer* is not simply a collection taken from the congregation, but a physical symbol of dedication to God.

(d) *The Benediction* is a scriptural prayer or an act of blessing used at the conclusion of the service. The benediction most frequently used by the Armenian Evangelical ministers is that normally identified as the Apostolic Benediction found at the conclusion of Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians (13:14). An alternative is the blessing known as the blessing of the Old Testament (Numbers 6: 24-26).³⁵

The Scripture Readings, from different parts of the Bible, occupy a regular place in the Order of Worship. They are for the instruction, edification, insight, and guidance of worshipers. Unlike other traditions, the Armenian Evangelical Church has no lectionary which follows the course of the Christian year. Hence, the responsibility for the selection of the passages to be read rests upon the minister.

Responsive or Unison Readings are Scriptural verses read by the minister and congregation, either responsively or in unison. All Armenian Evangelical hymnals contain a special section devoted to these readings. In earlier days, the responsive readings were exclusively from the Psalms.³⁶ But in recent years, other portions of the Bible, as well as non-biblical sources, have been used for this purpose. Although the section of the Armenian Evangelical hymnal devoted to these readings is labeled "Responsive Readings," they also contain unison readings, litanies, versicles and responses.³⁷

The Sermon is the spoken word, by the preacher, designed for the religious instruction of worshipers. It is not an essay, a lecture, or an address expressing the preacher's views, but a religious discourse explaining the written word of God. Types of sermons delivered by the Armenian Evangelical ministers are *textual* (using a Bible verse as a motto), *expository* (explaining a biblical text, giving its background meaning and application), *analogical* (setting forth an idea suggested by or resembling a biblical or other event), *doctrinal* (explaining a doctrine or a dogma), and *life-situational* (dealing with every-

day situations). There is a common misconception among many Armenian Evangelicals which prompts them to refer to the worship service as "the sermon," as though the latter were the most important item in worship. It must be noted that the sermon is only one item of the worship service through which God speaks to the minds, hearts and consciences of the worshipers.

Other materials for worship include the *Apostle's Creed*, the *Gloria Patri*, the *Doxology*, instrumental or vocal music, reading matter of a devotional nature, offering, moments of concern and sharing, as well as brief periods of silence. All of these modes of religious expression represent spiritual resources from which Armenian Evangelical ministers draw to enhance and enrich the spiritual experience of worshipers.

Armenian Evangelical Church worship may be characterized as flexible, as opposed to fixed. It is a simple and direct worship, in contrast to formal worship. It is a worship in the vernacular Armenian *Ashkharhabar*, in contrast to the ancient Armenian *Grabar*.

THE LEADERSHIP AND LAITY OF THE ARMENIAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH

All members of the Armenian Evangelical Church, clergy and laity, have the privilege and responsibility to witness to the Gospel. They are in the ministry and are called to exercise such gifts of teaching, evangelizing, healing, preaching, and administration as God has bestowed upon them.

The Armenian Evangelical Church also recognizes the fact that some of her members are called to full-time service for various forms of ministry in the Church. This calling is recognized by ordination, commissioning, or other appropriate services of dedication.

The officers of the Armenian Evangelical Churches include clergy as well as laity. These officers are: the minister or the pastor, the associate or assistant minister, the Christian education director, the board of deacons, the board of trustees, the Council or the Session of various committees.

PASTORAL MINISTRY

A pastor or a minister of the Armenian Evangelical Church is a communicant member, who has been called by God and ordained to preach and teach the Gospel, to administer sacraments and rites of the Church, and to exercise pastoral care and leadership. Membership in the Union to which the candidate's own church belongs is a requirement, as well as the acceptance of the constitution of that Union.³⁸

Speaking of ministry, it must be pointed out that there are varieties of Christian ministry: parish, pastoral, clinical, educational, social, youth. There are many common characteristics among these ministries. Here we shall dwell primarily on parish ministry.

MINISTERS AND THEIR TASKS

Ministry has many facets. Armenian Evangelical ministers, like other parish ministers, are expected to perform the following tasks, duties, and responsibilities:³⁹

1. **Preaching.** Planning and conducting worship services and delivering the Word of God and the Good News is one of the greatest tasks of a minister. Preaching brings people in touch with the grace of God. It creates opportunities for people to come to terms with their Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. It brings the Word of God into meaningful contact with the living needs and concerns of a congregation. Through preaching, a minister has a unique privilege to impart the Good News of Jesus Christ as it relates to people's daily lives.

2. **Teaching.** A minister is also a teacher. Sermons are vehicles of instruction, and should be used as such regularly and skillfully. There are also other vehicles of instruction. These include:

- Teaching children, youth, and adults in the church school or other study programs of the congregation;
- Training and guiding teachers; helping them with biblical and theological understanding; aiding their planning and evaluation;
- Training and guiding other leaders of the congregation, helping them prepare for their work and growth on the job.

3. **Administration.** A minister serves as "executive director" of the congregation, working with committees, helping to plan the financial program of the church, working with committees on planning and implementing programs, etc. Administrative work includes:

- Organizing committees on education (or the like) to plan and administer those programs and actively support them;
- Working directly with planning for the congregation's whole mission and its ministries;
- Encouraging and guiding the development of promising innovations in church education;
- Participating directly in the enlistment of teachers;
- Getting involved in the hiring and firing of staff;
- Managing the office work of the church.

4. **Pastoral Work.** A minister is also a "pastor," as such, the shepherd of the flock, the bringer of God's consolation. The pastor is the uplifter of the wounded and broken hearted, the encourager of the weary and fallen. Among other things, this task includes:

- Calling on the homes of members or at their place of work in a systematic program to meet each member on his or her own turf,
- Serving as the leader in the congregation - the person to whom members turn for advice and guidance on all aspects of the life and work of the congregation.

5. Community Leader. A minister is a community leader, serving as a volunteer to help make this a better world for all of God's children. The Church must be an inseparable part of community life, bearing its witness corporately as well as individually. The Church must manifest its concern for community problems. The minister must get involved in worthy community projects educational, social, and political - as well as in the work of the denomination's various departments.

6. Evangelism. Evangelism is the sublime calling, the vocation of the Church and its ministers. It is an activity directed toward change in the light of biblical witness, personal resolutions (self-perception, world view, and behavior), organizations (internal activity and goals), and social structures (justice, participation, and consciousness). A minister is called to bring people into a vital relationship with Jesus Christ - a relationship that must relate to life in the daily sweat and tears, to business, and to all personal relationships with others. This is one of the greatest challenges of a minister who is the "enabler" of the people.

Evangelism may be conducted by calling on the unchurched people in the community, bearing witness to the Good News, calling on prospective new members, and training lay persons to be evangelists.

It must also be pointed out that a minister's evangelistic outreach must never be limited. While maintaining the role as pastor of the local church, the minister reaches out to the world, feeling a sense of responsibility for all humankind. No opportunity for reaching others should be overlooked, using whatever means and media are at hand, including pulpit, press, radio, television.

7. Ecumenical Responsibilities. A minister should move beyond the boundaries of the parish, having fellowship with other ministers and churches, and participating in ecumenical groups and other cooperative bodies. The word "ecumenical," of course, is much broader than its organized manifestations in councils of churches at the local and national levels; it is really worldwide. It is an exciting phenomenon to be part of the banding together of the separated fragments of the Body of Christ in a cooperative fellowship.

In addition to all the tasks that the average parish minister performs, Armenian Evangelical ministers are expected to assume some additional responsibilities in order to fulfill their ministerial duties adequately and effectively in the Armenian Evangelical churches.

Like all ethnic churches, the Armenian Evangelical Church has a specialized ministry. It has its problems and challenges in addition to those experienced in an average Protestant church.

First of all, there is the problem of duality: *dual allegiances and loyalties*. Outside the homeland of Armenia, all Armenians have dual national allegiances. They are hyphenated Armenians, such as American-Armenians,

Canadian-Armenians, French-Armenians, Lebanese-Armenians. Most Armenian Evangelical churches have *dual religious loyalties*. They have denominational ties, such as United Church of Christ, Presbyterian, or Baptist (in Armenia). Most of the time, the diasporan Armenian Evangelical ministers find themselves in a peculiar specialized ministry which requires, as it were, constant changing of gears.

Armenian Evangelical ministers must dedicate themselves to the preservation and perpetuation of the Armenian heritage. They must preserve their heritage, because from their heritage they gain a real sense of *roots* and *belonging*, without which they are rootless and hopeless. That heritage provides them a *body of experience* through which they gain knowledge and wisdom, and without which they would be unrelated to the present.

LAY MINISTRY

Ministry is the work of the entire church. God's call is to all people. The mission of the church belongs to the *whole* people (*laos*) of God. Many churches are trying to suggest this emphasis on the front page of their Sunday bulletin, under the heading, "Ministers: all the members of the church."

Moreover, the task of witness is that of the *whole* community of God's people. In the Church, there are many different gifts, many different stages of maturity, but the work to which the Church is called requires the witness of every member, in the place where he/she lives and works.⁴⁰

A viable church will find its membership serving as co-pastors to each other and to the larger community where they live and work. The whole church, including the clergy and lay people, should move together as one team, as the people of God, to enhance the mission of the church in the world. In reality, lay people are the general practitioners of the parish; the clergy are called to be theological specialists -- the grass-roots theologians within the community. In other words, ministry belongs to the church. Ministers live in the midst of people, providing the climate in which lay leadership can be nurtured and expressed. The usual expectation is for pastors to lead from the front, developing into a "one-man show" to the detriment of the congregation's growth.⁴¹ The church cannot be effective if it is not convinced that, primarily, the work of the church is the ministry by the laity.

In the Armenian Evangelical Church, the lay people play an important role. Lay persons have the opportunity to take an active role in the life of the church, not simply in its organizations, but also in ecclesiastical matters. The Board of Deacons of any local church, for instance, is called to look after the spiritual welfare of the church. The deaconate is called to assist the minister in the conduct of the worship services, as shall best promote the welfare of the church, and in the preparation and administration of the sacraments. It is the privilege and duty of the Board of Deacons to minister to the needs of the poor,

the sick, the sorrowing, the aged, the indifferent and the stranger; act with the minister in considering applications for membership in the church, and make recommendations pertaining thereto; find ways and means to enhance the church membership; seek to awaken an intelligent interest in evangelistic and missionary causes; provide preachers in the absence of the minister, or in case of a vacancy, in the pastoral Ministry.⁴²

The laity of the Armenian Evangelical Church is also charged with the temporal and physical needs of the church. The Board of Trustees, for example, assumes the care and custody of the property of the church. It raises and disburses budgeted funds for the expenses of the church.⁴³ Lay persons also serve the church through other committees such as Christian education, benevolence, missionary, music, social action, and stewardship committees, as well as through auxiliary organizations.

The Armenian Evangelical Church is governed, her service ordered, and her work organized on a constitutional and democratic base in which lay persons play a decisive role. Her power and effectiveness, from the human point of view, lies in the dedication, the leadership, and the involvement of her people.

THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE ARMENIAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH

The Armenian Evangelical Church took root as a movement within the Armenian Apostolic Church. It was never the intent of the early Evangelicals to end their affiliation with the Armenian Church, which they called their "Mother Church." Even when opposition became so strong that they were forbidden to work inside the Armenian Apostolic Church, they refused, at first, to react to rejection. It was only later that, as a last resort and with heavy heart, they founded an independent Church.

Existing as a small minority church in an overwhelmingly large Armenian Apostolic community, and a relatively strong Armenian Catholic minority, the Armenian Evangelical Church exhibited both the merits and defects of minorities.

The strength of the Armenian Evangelical Church more than outweighed its defects. It fulfilled aspirations already nurtured in the bosom of the Armenian people. It was the product of demands imposed by the times. The Armenian Evangelical Movement served the Armenian people in many ways for many decades, administering to their needs, healing their wounds, and lightening their sorrows. The Movement put no limit to service, nor did it discriminate against other creeds, but served equally all those who bore the name Armenian.

The Armenian Evangelical Movement also brought a strengthening

influence to the life of the Armenian Nation. From the middle of the nineteenth century until World War I, the Movement reached intellectual and spiritual prominence; partly because of its readiness to examine and accept what seemed relevant from the world of scholarship; partly because of the noble way of life it inculcated in its adherents; and chiefly because of its spiritual impact. In the early years of its growth and development, it made rapid progress among Armenians because it met the social, intellectual, and spiritual needs of the Armenian people in the Ottoman Empire. The Armenian Evangelical Church gave the Armenian Nation a potent medium for disclosing its latent intellectual and spiritual force.

1. Revival of Spiritual Values

The Armenian Evangelical Movement was primarily spiritual in character. It was responsible for the revival of religious values at a time when religion in the Armenian Church seemed to reflect a preoccupation with outward formality. Measured by its effects, it is safe to say that the Movement became a potent force in the life of the Armenian people. It restated the answers to some fundamental questions which belong to the very nature of Christianity. It affirmed that a new life offered through Christ comes through a personal encounter with Him and through disciplined spiritual life and piety. The necessity for personal religious experience, which had been replaced almost entirely by visible institutions and traditions, became a topic of central significance and emphasis in Evangelical teaching. It also affirmed that nominal membership in the church does not make a person truly Christian; rather, being a Christian means a radical commitment of one's whole life to Jesus Christ.

2. The Role of the Laity in the Mission of the Church

The Armenian Evangelical Church laid the foundation for the proper understanding of the role of lay people in the mission of the Church. She stressed the truth that the Church is the people, the community of committed Christians engaged in their mission in the world in the name of Christ. Thus, the Armenian Evangelical Church cherished the concept of "the priesthood of all believers." She maintained the view that there is no distinction in status between clergy and laity. She insisted on the active participation of the whole church in ecclesiastical affairs and religious life. In consequence, neither in the Worship Service nor in Christian service in the community is the individual believer reduced to the status of an observer. Rather, the individual assumes a central, leading role in the religious life of the church, achieving personal fulfillment as an active participant.

3. An Enviably Educational System

One of the most important contributions of the Armenian Evangelical Church was the development of a sound educational program. Here the missionaries played a key role. The Armenian Evangelicals became their co-labor-

ers and partners.

The educational level of the Armenian community in Turkey, prior to the Armenian literary Renaissance in the mid-nineteenth century, was deplorably low. With the help of the American missionaries, the Armenian Evangelicals created an unprecedented era of enlightenment, marked by unparalleled achievement in the field of Armenian scholarship. By establishing schools, they provided the Armenian people with the means and the motive for attaining a high degree of education. The Armenian Evangelical Movement created an educated Armenian elite to exploit and extend the intellectual and social renaissance of the nineteenth century. Scores of schools for boys and girls, from kindergarten to college, became sources of hope and blessing to the Armenian people. The Evangelical Movement was instrumental in educating thousands of Armenians who later enjoyed a quality of life that otherwise would have been unavailable to them. World War I heralded, among other unimaginable disasters, the destruction of this highly organized school system; but nothing could eradicate the lasting benefits of the education the system bestowed on future generations of the Nation.

4. The Popularization of the Bible

The spread of literacy brought the Bible within the reach of a population that knew it only by rote, in classic, archaic Armenian, and only as a rare and esoteric volume, copies of which were generally restricted to churches. The American missionaries, with the help of the Armenian Evangelical scholars, changed all that. They translated the *Grabar* Bible into vernacular Armenian (*Ashkharhabar*) and made it available to anyone who could read. This Bible became, in turn, an agent in the wider dissemination of literacy, in the spread of the Movement among the Armenian people, and in the enrichment of the spiritual life of the people.

5. The Development of the Modern Armenian Language

The translation of the Bible and the production of other religious publications in the Armenian vernacular contributed to the purification of the Armenian language spoken in the middle of the nineteenth century. The emphasis on the Armenian vernacular helped it develop into an accepted literary language.⁴⁴ The Armenian vernacular, which differed greatly from the classical language (*Grabar*), had developed gradually and had become the official language of the Cilician Kingdom in the twelfth century.⁴⁵ After the fall of the Cilician Kingdom, the vernacular lost its popularity to classical Armenian, *Grabar*. It became the literary language until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when once again, the Armenian vernacular, *Ashkharhabar*, reasserted itself to replace the ancient literary language.

Both the missionaries and the Armenian Evangelical leaders advanced the development of the modern Armenian language through the translation of

the Bible and through the medium of publications, textbooks, newsletters and tracts.

6. Enrichment of Armenian Literature

Armenian Evangelicals, with the help of American missionaries, rendered a most valuable contribution to Armenian culture in a number of ways. For instance, in the realm of literature, they provided numerous resources for Armenian scholars and students. Through periodicals such as "*Eshtemaran Pitani Giteliats*" (1839), "*Arshalouys Araratian*" (1840), "*Yeprat*" (1867), "*Avetaber*" (1855), "*Ditak*" (1870), "*Burakn*" (1882), they helped to educate the Armenian people and to promote Armenian literature.⁴⁷

They also published a great number of books on religious, ethical, social, scientific, and philosophical subjects. They translated many books from English, thus introducing and exposing the Armenian people to Western literature. Cognizant of the fact that the emerging Armenian *Ashkharhabar* needed grammar books, they prepared some excellent works on the grammar of the Armenian vernacular. They also compiled scholarly Armenian dictionaries following the scientific standards of their time.

But one of their most noteworthy achievements was the publication of numerous textbooks in Armenian for high school and college students on the subjects of astronomy, physiology, anthropology, biology, sociology, psychology, geography, mathematics, and theology.⁴⁸

7. Emphasis on Christian Nurture

From the beginning, the Armenian Evangelical Church placed great emphasis on Christian education in the life of the family and church. Laying a strong biblical foundation for the faith of all its members and for its application in the life of all age groups became her main concern. She regarded the Christian nurture of children as one of her most important tasks. Thus, the Sunday School became a very important institution for the Armenian Evangelical Church. In fact, a decade after her inception, the Evangelical Church had approximately forty Sunday schools with nine thousand pupils; an enrollment which, immediately before World War I, had risen to twenty-two thousand seven hundred.⁴⁹

But Christian education work was not confined to Church school and the training of children in Christian ways; it also included adolescents and adults. Regular Sunday school classes before Sunday Morning Services, Sunday Evening Vesper Services, Mid-Week Bible Study and Prayer Meetings, discussion groups sponsored by Church organizations and groups, and church membership and confirmation classes became part and parcel of the Christian Education program of the Evangelical Church and a source of blessing, not only to her members, but to thousands from the Apostolic Church, who also benefited from these educational opportunities.

8. *Emphasis on Individual Responsibility and the Inviolability of Freedom of Conscience*

The Armenian Evangelical Church asserted vigorously the principle of the moral responsibility of each individual. One of her most important contributions was the emphasis upon religion as a relationship, not only between God and the community of believers, but also between God and the individual. The Evangelical spirit is paramount to a life of individual responsibility.

The Armenian Evangelical Church also cherished the principle of freedom of conscience. This principle encouraged tolerance of diverse viewpoints, an open mind and a quest for fuller freedom. Armenian Evangelicals have insisted that every person must find his guide in his own conscience; he must exercise his freedom, and the quest for personal liberty should lead him to freedom from preconceived beliefs and religious and ideological dogmatism. The Church has upheld the view that all relations between fellow Armenians and other people ought to rest on mutual free consent, and not on coercion. The Armenian Evangelical Church, from the very beginning, became an advocate of freedom of thought and expression and exercised that freedom through her pulpit, press and educational media.

The democratic form of the Armenian Evangelical Church calls for obedience to the Church, but it also leaves room for dissent on the part of her membership. Behind the right of dissent is an awareness that the Church is not the final authority. Deep in the heart of every member, there is a higher court of appeal: a person's *conscience* as molded by biblical values. The Armenian Evangelicals accept the fact that their Church is not infallible and recognize the reality of a higher authority.

9. *An Example To Emulate*

The Armenian Evangelical Church stung conventional wisdom where it sat and galvanized it to action. It fulfilled the role of gadfly by promoting an examination of traditional mores and manners and by provoking the development of machinery to meet needs that had never been successfully addressed in the past. Like most gadflies, its effect far surpassed its size and influence.

Even the Armenian Apostolic Church could not remain entirely indifferent. She was, to a degree, prompted to justify and reaffirm herself in a counter-reformation that represented a response to the stimulus introduced by the gadfly of the Evangelical Reformation. The Armenian Evangelical Church, despite its small representation of the total population, proved a good enabler and an excellent model to emulate.

The Armenian Evangelical Movement, along with other important contributing factors, created a reform-oriented atmosphere in the nineteenth century Armenian community in Turkey, with many beneficial results.

The Armenian Evangelical Reformation also created a healthy competition in the Apostolic Church. For instance, in the realm of education, this

healthy competition led to the establishment of a large number of parochial schools by the Apostolic Church. Another area was the introduction and popularization of the Sunday School system. The Sunday School movement in the Apostolic Church, which started in Aleppo, Syria in 1929, was the brainchild of a team of devoted clergy and laymen, which included Archbishop Artavazd Surmelian, Rev. Nerses Tavookjian and Archdeacon Levon Zenian. The dynamic organizer of the movement was the highly educated and dedicated deacon Zenian, who had just returned from America with many new ideas and great enthusiasm.⁵⁰ Shortly after this initial experiment and success, His Holiness Sahak II Khabayan, Catholicos of the See of Cilicia, gave his blessings in an official encyclical and urged all the churches in his jurisdiction to open Sunday Schools and encourage and promote the Christian Education movement in the Apostolic Church.⁵¹

Other areas in which Evangelicalism influenced the Armenian Church were Christian education for adults through mid-week Bible study classes, which are currently very popular in the Apostolic Church in America, the adoption of a weekly stewardship pledge system for the support of the church, and the formation of youth organizations similar to the Protestant Christian Endeavor Societies.

10. *Christian Mission and Outreach*

The Armenian Evangelical Church became an evangelistic, mission-minded church. She considered evangelism the sublime calling and the vocation of the church. That she did not succeed always to be the "mission church" is a fact, but it is also an unquestionable fact that she tried to impress upon her members that the divine calling of every believer is to serve God through daily work, be it secular or ecclesiastical. The Armenian Evangelical Church held that as the community of believers, they had an obligation to work in their respective communities for the creation of a caring and a loving human society.

Along with her educational, religious, ecclesiastical, theological, liturgical, and social contributions, the Armenian Evangelical Church rendered a great humanitarian and Christian service to the Armenian people, through her charitable and philanthropic institutions. Armenian Evangelicals felt not only duty-bound, but privileged to lend a helping hand to those in need. They helped their fellow Armenians in the trying days of the oppressive Ottoman rule; they founded and supported the Armenian Sanatorium in Azounieh, Lebanon; they supported the Armenian Old Age Home in Aleppo, Syria; they rescued Armenian orphans from the interior provinces of Turkey.

In the missionary outreach, they made their greatest contribution to the Nation through the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA). In the early years, the AMAA responded generously to recurring

calls for help from stricken compatriots in their homeland, and later, helped those same compatriots to regain their dignity and trust in rebuilding their lives in their adopted countries. It contributed generously to a myriad of Armenian causes. In churches, clinics, or in the Haigazian University of Beirut, Lebanon, in more than a score of schools which catered to over 3,000 students, and in youth centers, thousands of people, generation after generation, have found the way to a better life through the facilities and the assistance extended by the Armenian Missionary Association. Countless Armenians, regardless of their denominational affiliation, have benefited from its services and have enjoyed a quality of life that would have otherwise been unavailable to them.

11. Leadership

The Armenian Evangelical Church gave the Armenian nation many great individuals, clergy and lay, who not only distinguished themselves in their own fields of endeavor, but also provided good leadership. Armenian Evangelical leaders have distinguished themselves in the realms of education, arts and sciences, literature, community leadership, philanthropic and humanitarian enterprises.

Armenian Evangelical leaders also played an important role in the lives of Armenian organizations, among which are the Armenian General Benevolent Union, the Knights of Vartan, and the Armenian Athletic Union, to name a few. Some of them left not only their distinctive mark on the organizational life of the Armenian community, but also inspired others by their own example; albeit, their fame outside the Armenian Evangelical constituency has sometimes been far less than it deserved to be.

12. Christian Life-Style

Last, but not least, one of the greatest contributions and lasting services of the Armenian Evangelical Church was the distinctive Christian life-style. The early Evangelicals had a *ministry of presence*. There was no gap between their utterance and their performance. Their Bible-and-Christ centered life-style was their most convincing witness and testimony. They were distinguishable, not only in their conduct, but in their faith and service to the Armenian people.

This life-style, which was the by-product of their religious commitment to, and personal experience with, Jesus Christ, impressed upon their Armenian Apostolic compatriots the all-important truth that faith is not lip-service but a way of life, and "the essence of an inner relationship to God in Christ, and as such, the all-sufficient ground of salvation before God."⁵²

The Evangelical Christians' piety and conduct, their rejection of secular modes of life, their strict observance of the Christian Sabbath, their abstinence from alcoholic beverages, their principle of absolute integrity and honesty in business dealings and the marketplace, in short, their example, provid-

ed a living testimony to character and values to which society as a whole might aspire. It is common knowledge now that, generally speaking, Armenian Evangelicals in the Ottoman Empire had a reputation as a people of complete integrity, with a character beyond reproach. So much so that in the Turkish courts, Evangelicals were exempted from taking an oath on the Bible; their word was accepted as their bond. Not even a Muslim judge would question that.

The early Armenian Evangelicals attracted great attention and drew admiration by virtue of their strong spiritual life, their stern ethical standards, and their fervent spirit. They were inquisitive and searching, never content to accept the obvious or the traditional at face value. They spoke with such passion and such depth of spiritual understanding that contact with them was contagious and attracted a considerable following. In speaking out as they did, they risked retaliation from the outraged ecclesiastical and lay leadership, but that did not deter them in the slightest. On the contrary, their loyalty to their faith and Christian values was heightened by persecution.

Succeeding generations of Armenian Evangelicals lost a good deal of the original vision, dedication, and enthusiasm of the "faith of their fathers." Following generations have not shown the same flexibility as the first and second generations displayed in the early years of the Armenian Evangelical Movement in adapting themselves to the religious, educational, social and cultural needs of the Armenian people, while retaining their individual character. But when every criticism has been made, and every allowance recorded for the imperfection of the Armenian Evangelical Church, the fact remains that she worked her way into many corners of the life of the Armenian Nation. Obvious faults and weaknesses must not hide the deeper significance of the Evangelical Church because, measured by its effects, she proved herself a potent force among the Armenian people. Its record speaks for itself.

NOTES

1. *The Missionary Herald*, vol. XLII, Boston, 1846, p. 194. Also, Stepan Utudjian, *Tzagoumn Yev Entatsk Avetaranakanoutian Ee Hays*, Kostandnoupolis [Constantinople], 1914, pp. 169-173.
2. *The Missionary Herald*, *Ibid.*, p. 195.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 196-197. Also, Avetis Perperian, *Patmoutioun Hayots*, Kostandnoupolis [Constantinople], 1871, p. 112.
4. O. G. H. Dwight, *Christianity Revived in the Near East*, New York, 1850, pp. 327-328.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 329-331.
6. G. H. Chopourian, *The Armenian Evangelical Reformation: Causes and Effects*, New York, 1972, pp. 32.

7. Dwight, pp. 329-331; also Utudjian, pp. 154-156.
8. "Confession of Faith," *The Missionary Herald*.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 239.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 240.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 241.
12. Dwight, p. 329.
13. *Ibid.*,
14. *Ibid.*
15. Dwight, p. 330.
16. *Ibid.*,
17. *Ibid.*, p. 241.
18. Melikset Vardapet Mouratian, *Patmoutioun Hayastanyayts Sourb Yekeghetsvo*, Yerousaghem [Jerusalem], 1872, p. 616.
19. Utudjian, p. 167.
20. *Aradjnord Avetaranakan Yekeghetsvo Andammeroun*, Kostandnoupolis [Constantinople], 1855. Hereafter cited as *Aradjnord*.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 120-132.
22. Chopourian, pp. 21-22.
23. *Aradjnord*, pp. 30-105.
24. Winfred E. Garrison, *A Protestant Manifesto*, New York, 1963, pp. 29-30.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
27. Robert Mc Affee Brown, *The Bible Speaks to You*, Philadelphia, 1952, p. 253.
28. Puzant S. Levonian, *Boghokakanoutian Yev Katolikoutian Tarberoutiounnere*, Beirut, 1958, pp. 174-176.
29. Garrison, p. 31.
30. Hovhannes N. Karjian, "Avetaranakan Eskezbounkner," *Djanasser*, Vol. 44, No. 7, July, 1981, p. 134. Cf. Tigran Andreasian, *Kristoneakan*, Beirut, 1954, p. 44.
31. Pargev Taragjian, "Hay Avetaranakan Yekeghetsiyin Vardapetakan Arandznahatkoutiounnere", *Haigazian Armenological Review*, Beirut, 1971, pp. 185-186; see also, Levonian, pp. 103-105.
32. Garrison, p. 117; Karjian, p. 134.
33. Almost all Armenian Evangelical churches use either an organ or a piano. Hence, the musical prelude is either an organ or a piano prelude.
34. In the English editions of some Armenian Evangelical hymnals, the *sharakans*, hymns taken from the Armenian Apostolic Church liturgy, are transliterated in order to assist English-speaking worshipers to enjoy them as part of their Armenian spiritual heritage. See, *Armenian Evangelical Hymnal/Hay Avetaranakan Yergaran* (Bilingual). Published by the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America, Inc., 1976.
35. Other benedictions occasionally used are Prayer of Paul in Ephesians 3:20-21, and the prayer with which the Letter of Jude concludes (vss. 24-25).
36. *Pashtamounki Hogeavor Yerger* (in Armenian, English and Turkish, E. E. Elmajian, comp. and ed.), Pasadena, 1937, pp. 582ff.
37. *Hogeavor Yerger*, published by the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East, Beirut, 1954; also, *Hogeavor Yerger*, published by the Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East, Beirut, 1971, pp. 445-492; see also,

- Armenian Evangelical Hymnal*, op. cit., pp.306-399.
38. Vahan H. Tootikian, "The raison d'être of the Armenian Evangelical World Council," *AMAA News*, Vol. 23, No. 6, Paramus, N.J., 1978, p. 1.
 39. Vahan H. Tootikian, *From Pulpit to Platform*, Southfield, Michigan, 1995, pp. 136-151.
 40. Robert S. Paul, *Ministry*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1965, p. 103.
 41. Carnegio Samuel Calian, *Today's Pastor in Tomorrow's World*, New York, 1977, pp. 82-83.
 42. *Sahmanadroutioun Merdzavor Arevelki Hay Avetaranakan Yekeghetsinerou*, Beirut, 1938, pp. 34-35. Hereafter to be cited as *Sahmanadroutioun*; see also, *Constitution and By-laws of the Armenian Congregational Church of Greater Detroit*, Detroit, 1973, p. 5; and *Constitution and By-laws of the Armenian Martyrs' Congregational Church of Philadelphia*, adopted on May 21, 1972, and amended on May 18, 1973, p. 6.
 43. *United Armenian Congregational Church By-laws*, Los Angeles, CA., January, 1971, p. 9; also, *Constitution and By-laws of the Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church, October, 1968*, Fresno, CA., p. 9; *Constitutions and By-laws: Armenian Memorial Church*, Watertown, MA, January 24, 1965, p. 3; and *Sahmanadroutioun, Merdzavor Arevelki Hay Avetaranakan Yekeghetsinerou*, Beirut, 1954, p. 39.
 44. Munsell Edwin Bliss, *The Missionary Enterprises: A Concise History of its Objects, Methods and Extension*, New York, 1918, p. 169.
 45. Ohan Gaidzakian, *Illustrated Armenia and Armenians*, Boston, 1898, p. 169.
 46. Gorun Shrikian, *Armenians Under the Ottoman Empire and the American Missions' Influence* [Doctoral Dissertation presented to Concordia Seminary in Exile, in Cooperation with Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1977], p. 124.
 47. Yeghia S. Kassouny, *Boghokakanoutian Meshakoutayin Tzarayoutiounnere Hay Azgin*, Beirut, 1946, pp. 9-11.
 48. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.
 49. Tigran G. Kherlobian, *Kesanhingamy Hoontzke*, Halep [Aleppo], 1948, p. 28.
 50. Kevork Nersoyan, *Kiraknorya Deprotsi Sharjoome Hayastanyayts Yekeghetsvo Medj* [an unpublished manuscript in Armenian], [Aleppo, n.d.]
 51. Archdeacon Levon Zenian, one of the founders and chief architects of the Sunday School Movement in the Armenian Apostolic Church, relates that he and some of his colleagues were accused of being "Protestants" when they opened the first Sunday Schools in Aleppo and Beirut, in the early 1930's, because only the Armenian Protestants had Sunday Schools then.
 52. Leon Arpee, *A Century of Armenian Protestantism: 1846-1946*, New York, 1946, p. 36.

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ՀԱՅ ԱՒԵՏԱՐԱՆԱԿԱՆ ԵԿԵՂԵՑԻՒՆ ՀԱՒԱՏԱՄՔՆ ՈՒ ԳՈՐԾՈՒՆԵՈՒԹԻՒՆԸ

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ՎԵՐ. ԴՈԿՏ. ՎԱՀԱՆ Յ. ԹՈՒԹԻԿԵԱՆ

Հայ Աւետարանական Շարժումը որ հիմնականին մէջ սկսաւ որպէս կրօնական շարժում կը ներկայացնէր թէ Քաղաքական Բարեկարգումի եւ յետագայ կրօնական շարժումներու եւ թէ ալ Հայ Առաքելական Եկեղեցիի աւանդութիւնները, սակայն ժամանակի ընթացքին էր որ անիկա իրացուց մէկ մեծ մասը Քաղաքական Շարժումի ուսուցումներուն, սկզբունքներուն եւ աստուածաբանութեան: Այսպէ՛ս էր որ Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցիի Հաւատամքի Յայտարարութիւնը որ կը բաղկանար 12 կէտերէ եւ ձեռով մը պատասխանն էր Չուխանեան Պատրիարքին հաւատքի Նոր Հանգանակին՝ հաստատեց շատ մը կէտերը Հայ Եկեղեցիի սկզբունքներուն, այսուհանդերձ՝ մերժեց նաեւ կարգ մը ուրիշներ, որոնց հիմնականները մնացին Եօթը Խորհուրդները: Անոր համար անփոխարինելի մնաց հաւատքով փրկութիւնը:

Ժամանակի անցքին հետ, սակայն, Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցին մեծապէս ազդուեցաւ բողոքական աստուածաբանութենէն, եւ հակառակ որ անիկա յայտարարեր էր որ չէր միտեր նոր եկեղեցի մը հաստատել՝ 1855ին ընդունեցաւ Ամերիկեան Բողոքական Միսիոնարութեան կողմէ պատրաստուած սահմանադրութիւն մը՝ *Առաջնորդ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցոյ Անդամներունը*, որ շեշտը կը դնէր հաւատքով փրկութեան վրայ:

Հակառակ հայ աւետարանական եկեղեցիներու արտաքինապէս բաժանուածութեան՝ անոնց բոլորն ալ ունին հիմնական որոշ արժէքներ եւ սկզբունքներ, որոնց կը հաւատան անոնք եւ որոնք զանոնք կը զօդեն իրարու: Այժմ անոնցմէ կարելի է նշել «լոկ հաւատքով փրկութիւնը», «բոլոր հաւատացեալներու քահանայութիւնը», «քրիստոնեաներուն ազատութիւնը», «կոչումի գաղափարը», եւ «Աստուածաշունչի բաւարարութիւնը»:

Այս բոլորէն ետք՝ Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցին հիմնուած կը մնայ պաշտամունքի գաղափարին վրայ, այս մէկը մատչում մըն է Աստուծոյ: Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցին չ'ընդունիր պաշտամունքի դասաւորուած դրութիւն մը, սակայն ժամանակի ընթացքին յառաջացուցեր է որոշ ընթացք մը պաշտամունքի, որ կը սկսի երաժշտական նախերգանքով մը, այս մէկը նախապատրաստութիւն մըն է անհատական պաշտամունքի եւ կեդրոնացումի, անկէ ետք իրարու կը յաջորդեն պաշտամունքի կոչը, հոգեւոր երգեցողութիւնը, զանազան բովանդակութեամբ աղօթքները, Սուրբ Գրային ընթերցումները, Աստուածաշունչէն կատարուող փոխասացութիւնները եւ փոխընթերցումները, միասնական ընթերցումը Առաքելական Հանգանակին, եւ փառաբանանքին, երգեցողութիւնները եւ այլազան ընթերցումներ: Այս բոլորը ցոյց կու տան, որ Հայ Աւետարանական

Եկեղեցիին պաշտամունքը ճկուն է, պարզ եւ ուղղակի ի հակադրութիւն կազմակերպուած եւ պաշտօնական արարողութեան, եւ կ'օգտագործէ աշխարհաբարը՝ փոխան գրաբարի:

Հայ Աւետարանական որեւէ եկեղեցիի ղեկավարը որ հովիւ մըն է՝ ունի որոշ պարտաւորութիւններ եւ պարտականութիւններ. անիկա կը քարոզէ, կ'ուսուցանէ, կը ղեկավարէ եւ կ'առաջնորդէ, հովուական այցելութիւններ եւ գործեր կը կատարէ, եւ կը նուիրուի միջեկեղեցական եւ միջկրօնական յարաբերութիւններու եւ պարտականութիւններու: Այս բոլորէն անկախ, սակայն, պէտք չէ մտահան ընել, որ Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցին կը պատկանի ազգային հաւաքականութեան մը, եւ պայմաններու իսկ բերումով՝ ունի բազմաճիւղ եւ բազմաձաւալ հաւատարմութիւն՝ ինչպէս հայութիւնն ինք, եւ առ այդ անիկա կը պատկանի ո՛չ միայն համայնքային որոշ դրութեան մը՝ այլ նաեւ ազգային: Այս իրականութիւնն իսկ կը պարտաւորեցնէ Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցին եւ համայնքը որ նուիրուին հայկական ժառանգին պահպանումին եւ յանձնարարութեան: Անհրաժեշտ է որ անիկա չհեռանայ իր արմատներէն եւ պատկանելիութեան գիտակցութենէն, եւ չտկարանայ:

Հովուութիւնը, սակայն, պարտքն է ամբողջ եկեղեցիին, եւ առ այդ՝ եկեղեցիին առաքելութիւնը պարտականութիւնն է անոր բաղկացուցիչ բոլոր տարրերուն, ահա թէ ինչո՞ւ համար հայ աւետարանական դրութեան մէջ հովիւ մըն է պարզագոյն անհատն իսկ, այս իսկ պատճառով եկեղեցիի պաշտօնական հովիւին քովն ի վեր որպէս անոր օժանդակ կը կենան ոչ-կրօնական ծառայողներ եւ եկեղեցիին սպասարկողներ:

Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցին հաստատուած է ռաւակապետական դրութեան մը վրայ, կազմակերպուած է այդ ձեւով եւ այդպէս ալ կը կառավարուի «մարդկային տեսանկիւնէ դիտուած» անոր ուժն ու ազդեցութիւնը կը կայանան անոր ժողովուրդին նուիրումին, ղեկավարումին եւ գործօնութեան մէջ»:

Այսօր անուրանալի է Հայ Աւետարանական Շարժումին ձգած աւանդը հայութեան: Անիկա վերակենդանացուց հոգեկան եւ քարոյական արժէքները, հաստատեց եկեղեցական ու կրօնական առաքելութիւնը ժողովուրդին, հիմը դրաւ ուսումնական եւ դաստիարակչական նախաձեռնելի դրութեան մը, աշխարհաբարի թարգմանելով՝ ժողովրդականացուց Աստուածաշունչը, պատճառ հանդիսացաւ աշխարհաբարի զարգացումին, հարստացուց արդի հայ գրականութիւնը իր հրատարակած մամուլով եւ գիրքերով, շեշտը դրաւ քրիստոնէական կրթութեան եւ դաստիարակութեան վրայ, ինչպէս նաեւ անձնական պատասխանատւութեան եւ խիղճի անկապտելի ազատութեան, Մայր Եկեղեցիին համար օրինակ ծառայեց կիրակնօրեայ դպրոցներու հաստատումին, հիմը դրաւ հայ քրիստոնէական միսիոնական շարժումի մը, հայութեան տուաւ խել մը ընկերային, քաղաքական, գիտական, գրական, բարեսիրական եւ մարդկայնական արտայայտութեան առաջնորդներ, ղեկավարներ եւ կազմակերպիչներ, եւ ի վերայ այս ամենայնի՝ քրիստոնէավարի կեանքի մը ոճը: Արդարեւ՝ Հայ Աւետարանական Եկեղեցիին ուժը անելի քան գերակշռեց իր տկարութիւնները: Անիկա իրագործեց հայ ժողովուրդի ծոցէն ներս արդէն իսկ սնուցուող ակնկալութիւնները: Ժամանակի պահանջներու պարտադրանքին հետեւանքն էր անիկա: Բազմաթիւ տասնամեակներ բազում ձեւերով Հայ Աւետարանական Շարժումը ծառայեց՝ հայ ժողովուրդին, հոգաց անոր կարիքները, բուժեց անոր վէրքերը, եւ ամոքեց անոր վիշտերը: Շարժումը ծառայութեան սահմանագիծ մը չդրաւ, ոչ ալ խտրութիւն՝ դաւանանքներու միջեւ, ընդհակառակը՝ հաւասարապէս ծառայեց բոլոր անոնց որոնք կը կրէին հայ անունը:

