

LITERARY REVIEW



A NEW AND VERY NEEDED PUBLICATION

“During the Patriarchate of Catholicos of all Armenians Garegin II” in 2023, WCC Armenia Round Table Foundation published a new and very needed volume about diaconic work¹. In the annotation on page 2, we read: “The manual was prepared for the purpose of the program “Prevention of discriminatory selection due to the sex of the foetus and/or related harmful practices in the South Caucasus within the project “To support regional, national, and south-south initiatives”. The program is implemented by the United Nations Population Fund in cooperation with the WCC Armenian Round Table Foundation. The project is financed by the European Union and the United Nations Population Fund. The book was prepared with the support of the European Union and the United Nations Population Fund. Its content is the responsibility of the Armenian Round Table Foundation of the Council of Europe, and it does not necessarily express the views of the European Union and the UNFPA.”

The book consists of two parts: part A. “The Biblical aspects of diaconia” (pp. 16–58) and part B. “The modern understanding of diaconia” (pp. 65–113). In a Supplementary part is added the work of one of the graduates of Gevorgyan Theological Seminary Deacon Garegin Hovsepean (1867–1985) (later Catholicos of Great House of Cilicia): “The Church and the Care of the Poor” (pp. 121–189). This part of the book ends with a list of used literary sources (190) which will also be helpful for readers. On page 114 is the “Summary” of the book that is telling the following: “The preparation of the manual “Introduction to Diaconic Work” is based on the need to inform and train students with diaconic knowledge within the programs implemented in Armenia by the WCC Armenian Round Table Charity Foundation.

¹ DR. KAREN NAZARYAN, ARCHIMANDRITE ANDREAS YEZEKYAN, Introduction to Diaconic Work (in Armenian) (ԴՐ. ԿԱՐԷՆ ՆԱԶԱՐԵԱՆ, Տ. ԱՆԴՐԷԱՍ ՎՐԴ. ԵԶԵԿԵԱՆ, *Դիակոնիկ աշխատանքի ներածություն*), Etchmiadzin, 2023, 292 pages; “Two words” by Rev. Fr. Shahe Ananyan Director of the Inter-Church Department of Holy Etchmiadzin, Supervisor of Gevorgyan Theological Seminary. Editor of the book Dr. Lusine Vardanyan.

Diakonia is a theological principle that is closely connected with the mission of the Church. It is a call to action, a response to human deprivation, the fight against modern challenges, injustice, and inequality, and a message to care for creatures, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups, such as women, elders, children, and people with disabilities. Christian diakonia, according to the modern ideas of the WCC, is understood as a manifestation of mercy towards everyone, a service to all humanity... The manual, composed by Rev. Fr. Archimandrite Andreas Yezekyan and Dr. Karen Nazaryan, consists of two main parts as it was mentioned. The first part reflects foster care areas that are viewed in Biblical Light, some social mechanisms to help those in need, the greatest commandment that is the basis of diakonia, the diaconal significance of the parable of the Good Samaritan, the image of the last judgment as a basis for diakonia, some episodes of Jesus' diaconal activity, early Church diakonia and family diakonia. The second part refers to the Diakonia of Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant churches and ecumenical Diakonia. After that, the types of diaconic work, the basics of program work, and the way of developing programs are presented in detail." (p. 115) The authors emphasize: "We believe that this manual will be useful both for the students of Gevorgyan Theological Seminary and for other students studying in the humanitarian direction, as well as for social workers who are engaged in both diaconic and social work." (ibid.) The authors, who are well-known and recognized in the scientific, and spiritual spheres and especially in the Etchmiadzin Congregation from the beginning are mentioning the purpose and problems discussed in the book. They note that the mission of the Church is threefold: the proclamation of the Gospel, worship, pastoral care, and Diakonia. It can also be formulated in this way: the main functions of the Church are preaching, ritual, and service.

On this trinity is constructed the true and real Church. And if any of these constituents is absent or imperfect the life and the scope of function of the Church will be incomplete. The service or diakonia, which is an integral part of the nature and mission of the Church, is the main object of study of the authors. And we can see that both authors: doctor of biological sciences Karen Nazaryan the director of WCC Armenia Round Table Foundation and Father Andreas Vartabed Yezekyan head of the chair of the Historical Theology of Gevorgian Seminary (Theological University) had done their best to research all the circumstances in connection with Diakonia. First of all, are pointed out the problems and perspectives of Diakonia in present-day Armenia. Also are shown the basics and the origins of Diakonia and

some mechanisms for helping those in need. It's mentioned that the commandment to love God and neighbor is a general idea for Diakonia. This commandment and the parable of the Good Samaritan were discussed in connection with the origins of the Diakonic work. Turning to modern reality the authors are writing: "We would like to note that the social diaconal service is especially developed in those dioceses and parishes where hardworking and devout ministers serve. As a rule, they combine active social-philanthropic initiatives and preaching service, which also contributes to the formation of a strong, conjoint, consolidated community."

In addition to clergymen and students, the book will undoubtedly be useful for social workers who take care of the needy, as well as for others who are interested in the humanitarian activities of the Armenian Church.

So let's welcome greatly this initiative of Fr. Andreas Yezekyan and Dr. Karen Nazaryan and wish that the book will reach its worthy reader and will spread abundantly the good and humane ideas in wide circles paving the way for new similar volumes that are very needed today.

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