

BIBLE - I

HOW MOSES LED EXODUS: A NEW THEORY IS OFFERED

by Chris Eliou Athens

A world authority on earthquakes believes he has evidence of an ancient upheaval that could explain how Moses and his people crossed the Red Sea. After years of poring through musty records, Prof. Angelos Galanopoulos claims he has proof that nearly 31,500 years ago the Mediterranean area was struck by the mightiest volcanic blast the world has ever known. Galanopoulos said the upheaval with air waves some 300 times more powerful than those of a hydrogen bomb, occurred shortly before 1491 B.C. when Bible scholars say the Israelites fled Egypt. The professor, who heads the seismological institute of Athens observatory, told an interviewer the blast devastated the island of Thera 500 miles off the coast of Egypt and scattered searing volcanic ash for hundreds of miles. The fiery deluge, he said, could explain the Old Testament's description of the plagues that visited Egypt before the exodus, with their "rivers turning red and fire running along the ground." Geological and climate changes brought about would account for the plagues of locusts, lice, and flies, the plagues of hail, and the plagues of darkness," he said. Some time later, he went on, came the flight from Egypt which coincided with another catastrophe on devastated Thera, now known as Santorini. Roof that had been formed over the volcanic crater by falling pumice--it would have been about 600 to 900 feet thick - collapsed," Galanopoulos said. "The central part of the island, an area of 50 square miles, thus became a gigantic cavern. This caused a colossal inrush of water drawing the sea in tidal waves away from the Egyptian coast. • Galanopoulos noted that Moses and his people were said to have gathered on a coastal strip flanked by a lake nearly 30 miles east of Egypt's Port Said. "Between them and the next strip of dry land was a sea-filled gap about 450 feet long," he said. The tidal rush towards Santorini left that gap dry for Moses and his people to cross. But the lake water remained, and as the Bible says there was a wall of water to their right and left. "The time that elapsed between the dividing of the waters and the backwash that overwhelmed the Egyptian army would have been about 15 minutes. Moses and his people, who modern research estimates as numbering 1,500, would have needed only six minutes to cross."

COUNT ZERO

“Multiply and replenish the Earth” says the Lord God and govern it.” (Genesis1:22)

A holy pact was established between God and man whereby man was drawn into a partnership with God in His creative act. Man (man-woman, the male and female human species) is the crown jewel of God’s creative act. All was made for man. All was made to serve man's needs.

It is paradoxical though, for although man has multiplied and is replenishing the Earth, he is being governed rather than the one who governs. There are vast areas of poverty; hunger and starvation is widespread; and with the ever increasing world population poverty, hunger and starvation multiplies and serves as the breeding ground for its own perpetuity.

How did man lose control? Did he ever have control? Can he gain or regain control?

It seems man misinterpreted God's command. Each individual or nation of people looked upon himself/herself or themselves as a group chosen by God - to multiply, replenish and govern Earth. Instead of collectively striving for the common good, man pitted his strength and energy against each other. Every nation seeks to gain control; enlarge its sphere of influence; and finds fault in others for the ills of mankind. This is the vicious cycle of international diplomacy.

In the past man was able to rebuild and nature was able to blossom once more even on the wastelands of the battlefields. We have reached a stage where recovery from the devastations wrought from a nuclear holocaust could conceivably be impossible. There are strong indications that such a catastrophe would take hundreds and thousands of years for the deadly radioactive radiation to dissipate. It could even take over a million years. It's ironic that it took millions of years for us to reach this stage of civilization and that we could reset the clock of history back to the Stone Ages by one senseless act. There are no winners in a nuclear war, only losers.

If a being from another world came to our planet he would recognize man as being the greatest and mightiest of all creatures but yet he would consider him the most wicked and beastly because of his cruel nature.

What went wrong?

Man misconstrued God's intention of his role. The world was made for man and man made from the soil of the earth. But man was not made for the world but for God. He was called to be partners with God in His holy creative act.

When man forgets his Creator and His divine commandments, he ceases to aspire for the high and noble. The partnership is dissolved with man now directing his energy against one another instead of for one another. Consequently, sin multiplies and replenishes the Earth and man becomes the conquered and not the conqueror; the governed and not the one who governs.

In order to upright him once again, God sends His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ to show and to teach him the way. Through the redemptive power of the Holy Cross man discovers the remission of his sins thus abating the spreading of the disease of sin and finds the means of correcting his wrongs; and through Jesus' holy resurrection receives life and thus permitting him constantly to rise to a higher form of life from here to the hereafter.

Freedom of the Spirit of God to work internally within each individual;
Equality amongst all Men

ISSUES ≥ concerning birth control-Genesis 1:27-2

"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it"

"Have dominion over the fish of the sea; birds of the air; and every living thing that moves upon the Earth."

Most people know the Roman Catholic Churches position of no restriction placed upon the person to prevent fertilization: one of the main points being that the Bible says to be fruitful, multiply and fill the Earth. Many leading scholars, scientists and churchmen see a great need to be resourceful about the growth of the population. Although in our marriage canons the Roman view can be seen the Church is not ever come out and openly stated that position. My personal opinion is that the Church has felt this to be the personal prerogative of each individual as they see fit and if God grants their wish. Years ago there was a shortage of laborers and large families were encouraged so more would work in the fields and through this their personal land would become even more enlarged. Today the pendulum has swung to the other end. There is an overabundance of laborers and also all problem of unemployment. The Church does not take an open position or dictates about this issue because this is not a dogma or theological matter. It dictates in those matters and makes a definite pronouncement such as seen in the Nicene Creed and also in the matter of the presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine; baptism, etc.

Another important point is the continuation of the reading from the book of Genesis where

It says not only "to subdue the Earth but to have dominion over it." Because of the rapid growth of the population more things are being needed. In order to meet these needs factories are built. But this economic explosion is contaminating the water, air and land; also the smog conditions that prevail especially in the cities of Los Angeles, New York, St. Louis and other densely populated cities all of whom have water pollution problems which eventually will affect the ground also. It is ironic that we are not subduing and dominating, but contaminating and destroy God's creation. Will there be any fresh air and water for the birds and fish and other animals?

It seems that each family decides and is living accordingly by God's desire. If they want, they should go to agencies to help them live within the means of their decision.

Should the Jews Be Held Guilty of Jesus' crucifixion?
LUKE 13:1-9; JOHN 1:10-11

In the case of the massacre of the 2 million Armenians in 1915, who should be blamed? We cannot blame the people, because they didn't make the decision to execute this heinous act. The decision was given by the leaders of that time in the Ottoman Turkish government who planned and executed this horrendous crime. Not the leaders before or after them, but the leaders of the time. This, of course, is a blank page in their history books, a claim though that is disclaimed by historical fact that cannot be erased. People are tied with the country's history and decisions and because of this definite time they rejoice over successes, proud of their achievements as suffer the consequences of the wrong doings.

The decision to crucify Jesus was made by the Jewish leaders, not by the people, but the Jews as a whole are held in contempt by the Christians because of the decision which they felt belong to them since they belong to that nation even though many personally did not agree with this act. This method of reasoning can be seen substantiated in the reading from the Gospel of St. Luke 13:1-9. The line "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" of verses 3-5 is directed not only to the people dwelling in Galilee and Jerusalem, but to all of mankind. This is seen in the reading from the Gospel of St. John 1:10-11 where we read "He was in the world but the world knew him not." In other words, the world did not accept him, but rejected him. "He came to his own and his own received him not." This is, I believe, in reference to his own people who had him crucified. It all boils down to one point and that is "let him who is without sin among you, be the first to throw stone." If we want to find the Jews at fault for Jesus' crucifixion and blame the people also we must acknowledge that we are just as bad sinners as they are or else, we would be misinterpreting Jesus' word "and the spirit of the Gospel that all are equal in the eyes of God." (Mt. 20:1-16)

The Old Testament's awaiting for the Messiah has its fulfillment in the person of Jesus of Nazareth known as Jesus Christ-(Ararat-Gen. 8:4)

Christ's mission was carried on by the apostles with the preaching of Christianity by word of mouth and establishment of churches. It began as an oral tradition and later put into writing first on parchments and later in printed form with the invention of the printing press which was the early stages of the formation of the New Testament.

Preaching of the apostles-accepted by the traditional churches

Thaddeus-Bartholomew (Mt.10: 3) Armenia

Peter and Paul in Rome

John, Beloved disciple of Christ (Jn. 13:23; 19:26) Greece
Thomas-India-Malabar Church of South India
Philip-Ethiopia-Acts 8:26 – 40

Early Christian Centers: Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Constantinople and Rome

Ecumenical Councils of the early church

325 A.D. – Nicaea – Nicaea Creed (Havadamk)
350 A.D. – Constantinople – Mary Mother of God (Asdavadzadzin)
425 A.D. – Ephesus – The oneness of Christ
451 A.D. – Chalcedon

The Armenian Church did not attend because of the war of Varanantz that year. The Armenian church did not and does not accept the decision of that Council because it felt that the natures of Christ, human and divine, were resolved at the Third Council held in Ephesus following the statement given by Cyril of Alexandria as being an ‘unconfused’ union of the Godhead and manhood within the person of Jesus Christ.

The Alexandria school of thought, centered in the city of Alexandria, Egypt, emphasized the divine aspect of Christ as being the son of God.

The Antiochian School in the city of Antioch, emphasized the human aspect of Christ's human nature over the divine.

The Roman Church, that is the Catholic Church, did not participate in these theological debates but often was asked to mediate in the theological disputes.

Again our church, the Armenian Church – follows the Alexandrian school of thought. The claim that all issues concerning the divinity and humanity of Christ were decided in the first three Ecumenical Councils and that the fourth council's decision concerning the natures of Christ was in contradiction to the Third Ecumenical Council's decision. In the year 451 A.D. when the fourth Council of Chalcedon was taking place the war of Vartanantz between Armenia and Persia was going on. A war fought for the religious freedom of the Armenian people to retain their Christian identity. The Persians were insisting that the Armenians should forsake their Christian belief and embrace Zoroastrianism. Although the Armenians were defeated on the field of battle they won the war because they were able to retain their Christian belief.

It should be noted that we were not excommunicated as others have been, whose thoughts and beliefs were considered to be unorthodox. That is those who did uphold the decision of the Council of Chalcedon did not remove the Armenian Church and those of the Minor Eastern Orthodox churches from what was considered to be the true church. Our position was different because we were defending a decision on a clarified at the previous council gathering.

Those who sided with the Alexandrian School were the Armenian, Abyssinian, Assyrian and Coptic Churches who are in intercommunion with each other that is they may receive Holy Communion from priests of the respective churches.

Arab Conquests began to take place in the sixth century. Egypt and Assyria fell under the Muslim rule of Rome and Constantinople. The debate henceforth was no longer about theological issues but became more political in nature as to who would be the head or considered to be number one.

Division of the Roman Empire: The Byzantines and Rome

The new center of the Roman Empire in the East became Constantinople named after the Emperor Constantine. He is the one that called the First Ecumenical Council held in Nicaea in 325 A.D. Under him the

Roman Empire accepted Christianity as a state religion in the year 311A.D. Armenia under King Tiridates III and in the lifetime of St. Gregory the Enlightener accepted Christianity as a state religion 10 years prior to that date in the year 301 A.D.

8-10th Centuries Period of Seljuk Turks controlling lands in Anatolia Turkey and pressing on the doors of Constantinople which they eventually conquered and controlled in 1453A.D.

The Byzantine plea for help was not answered by the leaders of the western regions of the Roman Empire under the influence of the Pope. Christians failed to rally aid to their Christian brothers. The spiritual leader of the church in Constantinople went to Rome and accepted the Pope's demand of submission for military aid but on his return his own people refused to recognize his decision and preferred to live under Moslem rule rather than have to submit to Rome.

Russian and Balkan Orthodox churches; through the efforts of Greek missionaries beginning with a man named Sergius, they eventually all accepted Christianity about the 10 century.

10th Century- split between the Eastern and Western churches – Roman and Greek churches

15th Century-Rise of Protestantism-Martin Luther; also division in the Roman Church

All the major doctrinal problems were resolved in the first five centuries

Prayer

“...for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people” (Isaiah 57:7)

During the season of penitence, a desire should awaken in us to want to return to the blessed state which the first human being enjoyed in being near their Creator. Peace reigned in man and in the world. We yearn for that peace and primarily it is for that purpose that we turn to prayer beseeching the Lord, “to receive, save and have mercy.”

Prayer is a natural act as breathing, that is, an automatic happening requiring no urging. But in order to reach that stage. One must learn how to form this as a habit. This actually is the goal Sunday school: to teach our young how to pray. We learn about the saints, sacraments, bible, history, Armenian culture, religions in the world so that we can learn properly. Once the habit is formed, we either do it automatically or we coax ourselves to do it so not to break the habit. It's too great an experience for us to want to lose. It is like a trip into outer space; exciting, challenging and mysterious, being beautiful and helpful to our mind, bodies and souls.

We do not have that high experience every time. There are many times and often long periods of time, when we think that nothing is happening. When we think and believe that nothing is happening and quit is the time that Satan begins to take over because he was able to make us to stop praying. Jesus says that we “ought always to pray and not to lose heart” (Luke 18:1)

The formula for prayer is seen in a parable which Jesus told the people about a tax-collector, a despised person because of his work, who went to the Temple to pray and would not even lift up his eyes but beat his chest, saying, “God, be merciful to me a sinner.” (Luke 18:13)

In remembering others, we reach out to all peoples of the world through prayer. We all are members of God's Holy family on earth as well as in heaven. Since all is possible by God by the power of prayer we reach even those souls of our love ones whom God has called and physically take from us.

Prayer, then, is a respond to a call by God beseeching us so that we may be one with ourselves, one with those in the world, one with those in heaven by being one with god through Jesus Christ His Only-begotten Son.

“...for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people,” (Isaiah 57:7)

God's Plan-Man's Vision

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, said God, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy and your young shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams.” (Joel 2:28)

God conveys to the universe and particularly to mankind a plan whereby all of mankind and creation are to be re-incorporated in God's vital energy called grace. This plan is a picture before mankind composed of varying shades of tonal colors and dimensions. Each facet of this this painting is in itself a work of art and can detract one's attention from total effect of the picture. The picture is not a portrayal emphasizing the ravishing beauty of its segments but rather has the mission of conveying to its viewers one all-inclusive message, similar to joining segments of a puzzle together to see what the whole picture is all about.

The major segment of this plan of God is seen in the Major Feast Days of the church calendar year. All of these days have its own particular theme and pronouncement but we often fail to combine all of these together so that we may be able to see the entire scope of this plan. This is important for man because he needs a clear picture and not pictures of the whole operation so that he can understand where he is within this activity or scheme.

The following are the feast days and the sequence is the order that they follow in the church calendar year. They are... (1) Christmas (2) Easter (3) Transfiguration (4) Assumption (5) Holy Cross

To form the whole picture doesn't necessarily mean that the sequence has to follow in this order. In fact, this will distort the original plan and cause confusion. It will be like looking at a modern abstract painting with an untrained eye. The parts are to be studied not in the order that they are celebrated but in the sequence of their happenings. That is, what took place first the studied and then we proceed to what happened second. Before continuing, we must add to more portions of one part that will fill an obvious gap and void. These two parts are of the Easter message. They are Ascension and Pentecost and are considered to be part of the Easter cycle.

The first event of course is Christmas. The "Good News" proclamation of this day is the manhood of God. The word of God takes on flesh. He becomes one of us except for sin. The second event is 'Transfiguration' which tells the world why God became man. The reason is so that man can become like God in his image. This is seen in the glorious Transfiguration of the human body of Jesus. Man is called to change his old ways and to vest himself with the new.

The way that this is accomplished is through the lesson of the Holy Cross which teaches us love, brotherhood and humility. The evil cravings of the body were subdued, even unto death.

God uplifts the broken body and grants to it new apparel. This is the glorified body which cannot rot, nor wear out or be corrupted. This is the Easter message. As a continuation of this, causes the Ascension of this body to its eternal habitation of this day is the manhood of God. The Word of God takes on flesh. He becomes one of us except for sin. The second event is Transfiguration which tells the world why God became man. The reason is so that man can become like God in his image. This is seen in the glorious transfiguration of the human body of Jesus. Man is called to change his old ways and to vest himself with the new. The way that this is accomplished is through the lesson of Holy Cross which teaches us love, brotherhood and humility. The evil cravings of the body were subdued, even unto death. God uplifts the broken body and grants it new apparel.

This is the glorified body which cannot rot, nor wear out, nor be corrupted. This is the Easter message. As a continuation of this, God causes the Ascension of this body to its eternal habitation. He returns and revisits the world the second time, you might say, but this time it is not to take on his body but to bring forth the Holy Spirit. It is this Spirit that will cause the birth, transfiguration, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of each individual man that is the body of Jesus.

The first fruit of this process and its noblest example is seen in the person of the mother of Jesus, St. Mary, through whom God took on flesh. For her exceptional piety, her body was granted assumption into heaven. She is the first to enter and she is the most prominent citizen in that kingdom from the ranks of sinners of mankind.

This then is God's plan which is man's vision. God became man so that man could be near Him. Man's physical body undergoes a change but his service is the same. It is similar to water evaporating from an open pot. The water particles ceased to be water but untransformed into vapor. There is a change of form and shape but it is still useful because it is serving in another capacity as vapor.

Through Jesus the life of man takes on a new form and shape but whether it is in the life of this world or in the world to come, it continues its service in the always present vision of God.

We celebrate the visitation of God but this time in the person of the Holy Spirit of God. In the gospel of St. John 14:18 we read, "I will not leave you desolate. I will come to you." The word in the Armenian text for 'desolate' is 'vorp' which means 'orphan'. One of the most difficult hardships in life is loneliness, more so for a child who is left all alone. God knew this from the very beginning and that is why He created Eve for Adam. Jesus promises his followers that he will not leave them as orphans but will be with them always.

The fulfillment of this promise is the feast day called Pentecost. It is the day when the Holy Spirit, in the form of fiery cloven tongues, entered the apostles, the disciple and the faithful gathered in the upper room. It completes the Easter resurrection message.

Is celebrated for 50 days and the last day is Pentecost. Ascension and Pentecost well-being two distinct and very important holy days, they are not regarded or classified as separate major feast days because they are an integral part of the Easter season.

The Bible

The Bible is a book of law. They are God's law for his children. There are some which can be considered statutory, such as, the 10 Commandments, the sermon on the Mount or the institution of the holy sacrament in the pronouncement by Jesus of the bread and wine to be his body and blood that are the ordinances of the 'Does' and Don'ts; there are the religious codes governing the rituals, foods to be or to be refrained from, pessimists to be worn at the building of temples - types of wood, their measurements and design; relationships of husband and wife, parents and children and in regard to inheritance, there are ethical quotes concerning behavior - love your neighbor as yourself, love your enemy. All of the church's Canon laws pertaining to rituals, traditions and religious belief find a source in the Bible.

In the beginning there was no written law. God's commandments were given verbally. This is what is called the oral tradition. The creature and his created human species enjoyed each other's presence and voice. The line of communication was direct, person to person, and it was immediate. There was no need for mediator or forms of creeds, churches or alters. When the line up to communication was broken, human beings no longer enjoyed the direct and immediate presence and voice of God. It came through other objects and bodies, such as a burning bush, a pillar of cloud reaching heavenward, a cloud coverage or and altar on which to offer a sacrifice. Oral tradition began to be written and thus the beginning of the written tradition of the Bible.

The purpose of the law is to maintain order-law and order go hand-in-hand. The law services as a protective shield. There is the desert shield, that military might in Saudi Arabia. It does not take too long before this shield begins to break down and the morale of soldiers in the Arabian deserts becomes 'testy' and repairs of equipment and machinery are needed to constantly. God's law, being oral or written, serving as a protective shield, is very delicate like the ozone layer, that protective shield in the atmosphere protecting the Earth's habitation from the sun's harmful rays. But that protective shield is being in danger by human consumptive and wasteful practices so too was the protective shield shattered protecting the first human beings in Paradise known as the Garden of Eden, when everything began to fall apart because of man's disobedience to God's commandments. It was like a beautiful vase shattered into a million and one pieces.

God began to repair the vase, known as the human soul as told in the Old Testament. The pieces were put together in a deliberate manner but it was a slow and tedious process. The pieces were fitted together but it wasn't nearly the same as the original form being still full of cracks and crevices. With the arrival of Jesus Christ and the story of the reconciliation of God with his children of the human race as told in the New Testament, not only was the vase restored to its original form but was even better than what it was.

In all this the underlying spirit of the law in the Bible whether oral or written, is seen in the compassion of God demonstrated through Jesus on the cross which is the total unselfish giving of one's self which we call law, a love that is full of mercy and a foolproof and foolproof protective shield that cannot be penetrated.

Give us the wisdom and courage, O Lord, to seek out the truths found in your divine commandments whereby we receive the light of your knowledge protect us from the deceptions of the evil one, so that we too can with the heavenly hosts give thanks to you ever singing praises and glory to your holy name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit now and forever more. Amen

Bible/Asdvadzashounch (Breath of God)
Where there is breathing, there is life

In the beginning of creation and the creation of man, God breathed His holy breath into the nostrils of the first created human being, Adam. In the Old Testament book of Genesis (2:7) we read that the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. There is a saying that wild horses become tame when a human breathes a strong breath into the nostril of the horse. Could it be that humans become tame in having God's breath breathed into them?

When mortal sin was committed humans were deprived of this breath of God. The story of the Bible (The Breath of God) is how this breath of God is restored into the human body granting peace that it had in the beginning...the taming of the human soul by Jesus Christ. This process begun by God through Jesus Christ during his earthly life culminated in His holy resurrection and ascension into heaven by which it became eternalized, that is to say it is as real today as when it happened during Jesus's earthly life. This is what happens when we celebrate the Divine Liturgy, during which God's holy breath is restored to us. The inhaling or taking away the sins of the world by Jesus' crucifixion takes place which is during the Offertory of the worship service when the chalice is brought ceremoniously before the holy altar where it is placed signifying Jesus' crucifixion on Holy Friday.

The rest of the service is restoring the "Breath of God" and the peace of mind, soul and heart that comes with it culminated in the receiving of the blessed sacrament of Holy Communion. The body is thus energized which will protect it and allow the individual to endeavor to do God's will that is His good work for another week.

So a breathing process is taking place during the worship service with God inhaling all the sins and impurities of mankind and breathing a new life and exhaling of a new "breath of life" while the human exhales all that is preventing an individual from enjoying the blessings granted by this process in the receiving/or inhaling a new energizing breath. * All of this is possible for the praise and glory of God's holy name, the Holy Trinity Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*This can be likened also to that which is done in an emergency when a person's breathing stops such as in a drowning.

The Life of the Church is an Embodiment of the Bible

The Bible is called the "Breath of God" in Armenian. In the first book of the Bible called Genesis, we read of God breathing into the nostrils of the first human called man, his Holy Breath by which it says, that man became a "living being." This may be considered the last act of God's creative act followed by the seventh and final day, called "a day of rest." This can be found in the book of Genesis chapter 2 verse seven. By breathing into the nostrils God granted life, a procedure that may seem strange but in the case of an emergency, a mouth-to-mouth procedure is done (CPR/ coronary pulmonary resuscitation) to reinstate life in the person such as in the case of one experiencing a heart attack. There is a saying that in Argentina wild horses are tamed by the breathing of a human breath into their nostrils. Could it be that in breathing into the nostrils of man God elevated the human specie above the rest of the animal world, to one of a special status of being a 'Child of God'? The Bible or 'Breath of God' is the story of how this holy breath was given, lost and then restored. Restoration of God's holy breath in man began in the events during Holy Week culminating in the Crucifixion, Resurrection from the dead and Ascension into heaven by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that is celebrated on Holy Friday.

One day as I was walking through some of the Sunday school classrooms I saw a picture of a young boy about seven or eight years old who had a very mean look on his face with his arms crossed over each other and a writing below the picture that said, "I am not a piece of junk."

Science defines man as a product of the universe in which it claims that all of the universe is found in the body of man and as such say that we of the human race are an embodiment of all that is in the universe and are 'Stardust'. I think that this is what this young man was referring to when he said, 'I am not a piece of junk' but inferring rather that he is a child of God because of God's creative act.

The creation of Eve is explained in the book of Genesis of the Bible chapter 1 verse 27 also in chapter 2 verses 18 to 25 as being formed from the rib bone of Adam. Blood originates in the marrow of the bone. In the book "Home Medical Encyclopedia of the American Medical Association", volume 1 page 182 under the heading of "Blood Cells", we read that all types of blood cells are formed within the bone marrow by a series of divisions from a single type of cell called 'stem' cell. Adam's creation as related in Genesis 2: 7 was "from the dust of the ground" to which he returned because of sin. In languages that use the masculine and feminine genders, earth, soil and ground are in the feminine gender. Both men and women have male and female hormones. Where the male hormones dominate the human is a male and when the female hormones dominate the human becomes a woman. This may be the reason why God saw no need to start from the dirt of the earth again to form Eve as he did for Adam. A part of Eve was already in Adam that only needed to be brought out. The 15th century Armenian Church father, St. Gregory of Dathev states in his formulated "Creed" that God took the blood from St. Mary and adjoined it to His Godhead.

Classroom, work place and place of pleasure such as having coffee. In so doing, the warmth of God sunshine through Jesus Christ is brought into the worldly prayer. It is an organic process of breeding new life into a system by inserting a spiritual vitality while removing the waste harmful to a healthy growth. As such, the church is more than a physical structure but a means whereby life is brought into our temporal world similar to the function of the organ of our bodies. More than a physical structure of bricks and mortar the church is an organic body, the body of our Lord Jesus Christ who is its head and governing source similar to the function of the head and brain of our bodies.

Bless, Praise and Exalt God

This is a praise said by the three boys (young men) Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego* while in the burning fire where they were ordered by the Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar to be burned to death because of their refusal to comply with his order for all too worship a 'golden statue'. The story is told in third chapter in the book of the Prophet Daniel of the Bible. It should be understood that the three although called 'boys' they are really young men in the early stages of the adulthood.

At the beginning of the Divine Liturgy worship service following the preliminary preparatory stage that takes place in the chancel of the church, the celebrant priest together with the deacons and candleholders ascent to the Main altar where after a brief continuation, they approach the main Altar where much of the remainder of the service will take place. He Altar curtains are drawn close where upon the next phase if the Divine Liturgy called the Prothesis (presentation of the bread and wine) takes place. The prayers and service during this part represents, or as I prefer saying, re-presents, the incarnation when the Blessed Virgin Mother of Jesus, St. Mary became conceived with the Christ child. During the Prothesis preparation of the Chalice is taking place with the blessing of the bread and wine offering; the offering which will become the body and blood of our Lord as told during the Last Supper to the Apostles, together with the blessed Mother of Jesus, the faithful gathered at the worship service offer themselves to God through her son, Jesus through His suffering, crucifixion and resurrection from the dead. It begins with the celebrant priest blessing the bread and then the wine while holding them in his hands and as such sets them in the chalice, he says a prayer ending with the words 'bless, praise and exalt.' This final ending grammatically in the Armenian language is said in the second person plural indicating that what is taking place is on behalf of all those present and as such we shall see for all and everything in God's creative act. It should be noted that chapter 3 of the Book of Daniel is read in its entirety in the Armenian Church on Christmas and Easter eve services before the celebration of the Divine Liturgy begins. It is read from the altar stage in front of closed curtains with the 3 boys representing the three boys in the Book of Daniel while a fourth boy reads the narrative. In the Armenian Bible the 3rd Chapter of Daniel has 100 verses while the English version has only 39. They are the same for the first 23 verses after which the Armenian text continues until verse 9 which relates of the encounter between the king and three boys which does not appear in the English version, but is recorded in the Septuagint and subsequently in St. Jerome's Vulgate bible that followed the Septuagint writing. Verses 90 of Chapter 3 in the Armenian text and 24 of the English basically agree and continue as the same for the remainder of the chapter. It is interesting to note that during the latter part of the intoned recitation of the boys on the Altar the choir intermittently sings at three intervals the very same words of the blessing of 'bless, praise and exalt'. After the reading of Chapter 3 has been completed the Altar curtains is opened and the celebration of the Divine Liturgy for the Major Feast day takes place.

*Who are named Anania, Azaria and Misayek in the Armenian Bible following the names as written in the Septuagint and Vulgate Bibles.

Also it should be noted that in the Morning service headed as 'Hartz' meaning directed to the 'fathers' of old who precede us in this process of god's holy work of redemption, that is found in the "Book of the Hours"

Service Book, a service directed to the Son of God Who appeared to the ‘Oil-bearing’ women who came to Jesus’ grave to anoint His body after His burial according to Old Testament tradition, a Psalmic chant headed ‘Song of the Three Boys’ inferring the three in Chapter 3 of the Book of Daniel, is said at the beginning of the service. The Psalmic chant corresponds to not only to the part of the 3 boys but also the last three chapters in the Book of Psalms 148, 149 and 150. The Psalmic chant in the Book of the Hours ends naming the boys as being Anania, Azaria and Misayel but in the Armenian Bible, Chapter 3:23 they are given the names of Setrak, Misak and Abednego but gives the name of Azaria as the one who rose giving the praiseful blessing.

The Armenian and English texts continue with King Nebuchadnezzar in observing the fire observing the fire sees a fourth person that the English text version (Dan.3:25) calls ‘an angel’ while the Armenian text mentions the person as being ‘the son of God’ (Dn. 3:92) while an Aramaic text describes the person as being ‘Godlike’. He is seen to be protecting the three boys from the harmful effects of the fire. The Armenian Church regards Him to be Jesus Christ (the Son of God). Upon witnessing the unbelievable phenomenon, the King orders the boys to be taken out of the fire and that instead of worshipping the ‘golden statue’ to praise the god of the three boys.

Returning to the Prothesis of the Divine Liturgy, the bread and wine representing the congregation present at the service as an offering of themselves to God in the spirit of the ‘three boys’ and more so of the spirit of Jesus in offering Himself on the Cross, a process by which Jesus became their protectorate during their journey through the fires of life. This is only perhaps, that the words of the celebrant Priest over the bread and wine is said in the second person plural, which should be understood to include all mankind and everything in creation both in heaven and in the world as indicated in Psalms 148, 149 and 150. In addition, it brings the faithful into the immediate presence with the Apostles at the Last Supper, the Agape Meal of the Passover, when Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Therefore, in the blessing taking place behind the closed curtain with the blessing of the bread and wine at the beginning of the Divine Liturgy worship service, when the celebrant Priest utters the words of the ‘three boys’ of ...’bless, praise and exalt’ Him, the faithful find themselves in the process that began in the beginning of God’s creative act and continuous through the ages of time during which in our journey through the fires of life, Christ is at our side protecting us now and forever.

Maccabees I & II

The books, Maccabees I & II, which are part of the Bible known as the apocryphal books, brings us to the end of the Old Testament history and the threshold of a new era in God's plan of salvation. It is about the rededication of the second Temple in the year 164 BC after the successful revolt leading to Jewish independence under Judas Maccabeus. This event is recalled in the celebration by those of the Judaic faith on the feast of Hanukah which takes place about the time of our Christmas. St. Vartan mentions them in his speech on the Holy Scriptures, a speech given on the Eve of the battle of Vartanantz to instill courage in his soldiers in the face of martyrdom. The Maccabeans are considered to be saints in the Armenian Church. Their feast day is celebrated in the season of Transfiguration generally during the month of July but it can also take place before the Great Lenten period depending on when Easter is celebrated that particular year.

The Apocryphal Books

There are 14 books considered to be sacred writings but not on the level of the other canonical books of the Bible and they are called "apocryphal." The word ‘apocryphal’ means unknown. These writings are accepted as part of the Bible used in the Armenian, Orthodox and Catholic churches. In Western terms is called the Catholic or Vulgate Bible and also the Jerusalem Bible. The Bible used by the Protestant churches do not

include them. At times this may cause confusion among the Armenian faithful in seeking readings of the day in their personal Bibles because the vast majority of our faithful are more familiar and common use the Protestant Bible.

Two of these apocryphal books, Maccabeus I&II, tell of the heroic events surrounding the rededication of temple in Jerusalem in the year 164 BC and the restoration of Israel as an independent state. The event is recalled in a commemorative celebration by the faithful of Judaism each year in the feast of Hanukah which coincides with the Christian celebration of the Nativity and Epiphany of Jesus Christ called Christmas. The Maccabeus story said about a Jewish family, Hasmonean, whose elderly father, Mattathias, a priest, led an armed rebellion against the Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes in order to stem the flow of foreign influence upon their religion. One of his sons, Judas, surnamed Maccabeus (hammer) led a successful revolt. It is from him that books derived the name Maccabees. The death of the father and his sons for this holy cause served as an inspiration for the Christians of the early church who were persecuted because of their faith. In his speech before his troops on the eve of the battle of Vartanantz, St. Vartan made extensive references to Holy Scripture, among which were that heroic acts of the Maccabeus (Hasmoneans). These events prior to the surrounding and aftermath of this critical battle for the Armenian people and faith are recorded in a book, "Yeghishe" which is named after its author, Yeghishe was a fifth century Armenian church father, a saint, who was a member of the team of translators. They translated the Bible in the Armenian language following the Greek and Syriac texts and became known as "The Translators". Their feast day is celebrated each year on the second Saturday in October. The Maccabean episode is commemorated annually in the Armenian Church which considers them to be saints. Their feast day normally takes place during the season of Transfiguration in the month of July but can't take place earlier in the year before the Great Lenten period depending on when Easter is celebrated at that particular year.

Among the scriptural readings of the day in the Armenian Church, one is from II Maccabees 6:18-7:42. It tells of the martyrdom of an elderly scribe, Eleazar, who refused the King order to eat meat which is prohibited by his faith; and also about the martyrdom of a mother and her seven sons for the same reason. In the Armenian church calendar her name is given as Shamoun'.

The similarities are striking surrounding Maccabean and Vartanantz episodes and the challenges confronting the present-day Republic of Armenia. All were faced with external pressure by their neighbors who were the leading powers of the day, to submit to their will and to conform to religious practices foreign to their own traditions as well as internal tensions arising from persuasions of different parties such as the ultra-conservatives, a non-compromising group; those willing to forsake past ideals.

Holy Scriptures

The Holy Scriptures speaking in a tongue that people can readily understand, often portrays God as a strict and reprimanding being and uses a language which the more highly literate or sophisticated writers would consider to be rather crude and sometimes even vulgar. But it must be remembered that the divine message by God was not relayed to mankind from scholars, historians or the literary class onto mankind, but through the priestly and prophetic groups of the Old Testament, speaking to the simple rather poor peasant people or poor farmers and in the New Testament it is revealed to shepherds and carpenters, fishermen, tax collectors and again to the simple class. As such, the message relayed by them is in need tone which would be understood by all. The message in the Old Testament primarily is about obedience for the sake of righteousness and justice or pay the consequences of God's vengeance. Very seldom does one hear or read of a sympathetic or kind word format and understanding him in his pathetic situation, although the New Testament shows consideration towards man's basic weaknesses. Only when the person's ego is completely broken and he approaches God with a

repentant heart, is there any sign of mercy. It is difficult to find sweet and caressing words of understanding towards man's human friend for frailties.

There is one place that does what you might say, an "about-face" and shows God through Jesus as a tender and a thoughtful person in a way that we generally understand someone to be. Let us search the Scriptures and find where this is.

First, since it is about Jesus, we know that it is in the New Testament and the main portion of the New Testament is comprised of the four Gospels and letters by the apostles. One of these Gospels was written by Matthew. Now Matthew was from the old guard conservative Judaic group and he knew the Old Testament writings quite well and believed Jesus to be the prophesied promised Messiah. His writings are seen in the light of showing how Christ fulfills this prophecy. We don't expect, nor do we find a different tone than the other writings, so this isn't the Gospel with the gentler message.

Next is the Gospel written by St. Mark. Now Mark was a young and energetic man and as such is impetuous and full of life. His is believed to be the first one written in as a young man taken onto a new experience of a new ideal, exciting and spiritual life, he writes as a young man in haste running over open pastures of life, anxious to have the message relayed without giving thought to grammar or to the niceties of good writing. Again, we fail to find evidence of an understanding, gentle voice seeking a man with a humanistic feeling, but rather as a youth hurrying to get something done.

There is the Gospel by John. Now John was the youngest of the Apostles, but he didn't write this gospel until he was quite along in age. In fact, his is considered to be the last Gospel to be written. When John saw the other Gospels all were more about the manhood of Christ, but he emphasized Christ's Godhead. Not only was Jesus Christ a man like us, but even more, he is God. This is a message of doctrine, dogma and church canons to occupy theologians but not that particular type that we are seeking.

This leaves us with Luke. Now Luke was a personal physician of St. Peter and traveled with him. This Gospel is considered to be that of Peter because it was from Peter that Luke learn what he knew about Christ. He knew from other sources such as Marx writing, but he received most of his knowledge of faith from Peter. Being a doctor he could portray the new message in a humanistic manner, more so than anyone else because as a physician he was constantly in contact with the witnesses of man; his diseases as well as his frailties. St. Luke writes with warmth, understanding and a compassionate tone. He cares and is more attracted by a newborn baby probably because as a doctor, he probably brought many such babies into the world. Jesus wasn't just for from Mary, but born in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes. Before its birth, Luke writes that Mary was with child nine months. Who else but a humanitarian would write like this except someone familiar and sympathetic with an average person living a simple life? Elizabeth was with child six months when Mary conceived Christ. You can sense how close and familiar he is with this situation. It is a child to whom kings and wise men pay homage; angels who proclaim his birth singing in heaven to the shepherds who were tending their flocks. You are brought back to the actual event as it happened. You could practically feel and touch the soft and gentle baby's skin. A baby like all other babies that needs care, attention and caressing. This is the word of God to man in this newborn infant, a message of peace on earth and goodwill towards all men. This is the word of God descending from its heights in heaven into man's soul giving him a new birth; a new lease on life; a new happiness and joy, sweet voice which comforts, soothes and heals and a prescription for this healing medicine for the soul of man written by doctor in writing of the Gospel of the Great Healer. Man's inner wounds could now be cared for by a new therapy. This is the sweet message portraying God is a loving, gentle and understanding being. But just as a growing baby that can also be annoying with this constant demands, so too the newborn baby, the Word of God can be annoying if it is not given the proper care and attention. But through time, just as the child grows and "waxes strong" (Luke 1:80) so will the word

in man's inner system. Luke does a magnificent job and pursuing this message in this particular manner. Is by far the best of the Gospels in literary refinedness, but this is the way he writes and relays his message.

So, in this festive season of Santa Claus and reindeer's; Christmas trees and holly; snowmen, decorations and ornaments; chestnuts and Christmas goodies, remember the child, the Christ child. The babe, the Word of God that became flesh and dwelt amongst us, being kind, gentle and helpful to all giving proper care and attention to those called to be 'a child of God'.

The Book of Job

Exorcists is a person 'struck by evil' and as such possessed by the evil spirits, not necessarily of one's own choosing such as the man struck by the demons of Gadarene (Matthew 8:28-34) whom Jesus healed.

In the Old Testament there is story of a man who was struck by a series of misfortunes and diseases but unlike the demons remained in full control of his faculties, his mind and body but whose spirit became deeply disturbed. His name is Job.

Job was an extraordinarily pious man, especially blessed by God. He had cattle and many children and lived a comfortable and happy life; a wealthy man who was god-fearing and faithful to his religious teachings. If there is such a thing as a human being enjoying a perfect state of happiness both worldly and divine at the same time, one of the leading candidates for the position would be Job.

Suddenly and inexplicably he is suddenly struck with great affliction without knowing why this is happening to him though it is with God's permission (Job Chapters 1&2). Job bears up heroically under the trial and does not sin. He complains, protests and argues his case of innocence but never quits calling upon God. He retained his relationship with his Creator through 'thick and thin'

Three of Job's friends tried to comfort him by bringing a solution to the enigmatic problem. It must be understood that they lived in a period before the Prophets and especially post exilic period when a more personal relationship was developed with god and held fast to the traditional teaching of their day and believing that all suffering was a punishment for one's and reward granted for good deeds because they knew nothing of retribution after death. Each in his own way urged Job to confess that he guilty of sin.

Job rejects their explanations and defended his innocence. They find no solution to the dilemma and Job ends by boldly calling on god to appear and visibly judge him. God does not do it immediately.

A young man named Eliu suddenly appears on the scene. He seems to have been as interested bystander listening silently to their conversation but now comes into the act by boldly trying to shed new light on the subject and boldly tries to add a new dimension onto the subject but adds nothing new. Job, his friends and even an interested bystander have gained nothing by their rationalization.

God finally appears on the scene and speaks out of a whirlwind or storm proclaiming His divine wisdom and omnipotence as manifested in nature. Upon hearing the words of god, Job becomes deeply humble and repents for his audacity in having the presumption to argue with God.

Job asked and obtained God's pardon for his three friends whom God also found at fault that were regarded greater than those of Job's wrongdoings. Job then receives from God greater earthly riches more than he had before. Job that sets forth before God is actual innocence. God does not give the answer why, though innocent, man nevertheless suffers. With Job, the reader also is left hanging between hope and fear. If he looks for a clear answer here on the reasons for Job's suffering, he will put the book away in disappointment, for after such a strong and sharp discussion the rather stock answer of the "submission of faith" is hardly satisfying. We see that if and when the will of God decides to manifest itself and if man is truly contrite, man will be richly rewarded. Calling on his own experience, Job testifies that God's justice is shown in a mysterious way.

In the end Job does not ask God to take away his suffering or even to offer him an explanation, but only to give him public vindication of himself. The moral of the story seems to be, is to show that God being omnipotent is entirely free and the source of his righteousness and the normal all judgment, whether or condition be good or bad, we should keep ourselves close to him ever trusting in his righteous judgment.

The Heartbeat of America

"To Thee, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in Thee I trust" (Psalm 25:1,2)

All the monetary currency of the United States Government, be it bills or coins, bear the phrase "in God we trust". It makes no difference to its value be it a penny or highest denomination of paper money. Governments who place their "Trust in God" are also invoking God's divine protection from evil from within or without her borders and redemption from her own sins committed knowingly or unknowingly. Money is associated with power and where there is power there is also corruption outside of the realm of God. The imprinting of "In God we trust", is not only a profession of faith but it is also a prayer invoking God's aid to curb the evils that arise from this power so that it may serve the good purposes of God's will which among other things implies that the people not be brought to sever to of its service, that is their lives be not controlled by money although it's necessity for one's either one is well understood. As Scripture says, "For the love of money is a source of all kinds of evil." (I Timothy 6:10)

America has come a long way in a relatively short period of time-a little over 200 years. The Constitution in establishing a government of the people, by the people and for the people together with the Bill of Rights, guarantees basic rights and freedoms of which one is the freedom of religion along with the division of power among the three main branches of government being the executive, legislative and judicial. It is a land of plenty... bountiful crops, scientific achievements, advanced technology, great educational institutions big and small. She is the envy of the nations throughout the world.

America also has great problems confronting her such as drugs, crime, corruption in high and low places, poverty, Street people, unaffordable housing, pollution and ecology, substandard education and exorbitant cost for higher education, abortions issues, AIDS, lung, heart and liver diseases, a national debt in astronomical figures and many more problems seen and unseen, that eat away at the general morale of the land. We were children are seeking a Savior to save us from ourselves.

There is a need for a new spirit to breathe new life into the nation, a spirit we should be coming from her religious institutions. A moral decline may be attributed in part to the failure of the churches collectively in keeping spiritual values on life. On Sunday morning the streets of America, Europe and civilized nations are empty. There are no traffic jams except for those holiday travelers especially those going to and from airports. Generally, though, the streets are empty Sunday mornings for "Sunday drivers" who have forever to get where they want to go.

The throbbing of the "Heartbeat of America" comes from the churches but the place of God's house of worship is weak in our society. Other places are given higher priority in this regard such as Wall Street, Washington D.C. or the motor capital of the country, Detroit, where a car is advertised as being "The Heartbeat of America."

What America needs is some "Holy Days". It has holidays some of which are holy in character... The Fourth of July being the day of independence celebrating the founding of the democratic form of government of this Republic; Thanksgiving day when the nation recalls the sufferings and hardships endured during its formative stage; Memorial Day, when all are called to remember those who gave their lives in the past and present for

the preservation of these blessings. The state should be considered as being 'Days of Obligation' for all Americans to attend their particular house of worship to give thanks to God in accordance to their particular faith for those who suffered and died for these noble ideals; men and women who made the supreme sacrifice and others who returned home with broken bodies, minds and spirits and their respective families who pay a high price every day coping with the problem of adjusting to a new life all for the sake for..."God and country". The "Heartbeat of America" will remain vibrant and strong for people and others throughout the world because of the spirit emanating from her houses of worship within our land.

That is pray that the spirit of the psalmist be within the hearts and souls of all...To Thee, O Lord, I lift up my soul, all my God, in the trust." And also the phrase, "In God we trust" be a living reality amongst us all. Amen.

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty."(Psalm 29: 3, 4)

The voice of a person or a group of people affects us in different ways – jabbering of some make us uncomfortable, while others there speaking in a foreign unfamiliar tongue make us feel left out. A cajoling voice flatters while those teasing and confrontational intone challenge us. The voice of a crowd chanting in unison instills a sense of power, at times as though it is a self-appointed authority. There is the voice working within us, the working mind, which can exhaust us making it so that we don't have time to think. There are times when one must be alone the rest. Voices work on us in different ways with it and from without.

Voices of the past at times encourage and inspire and then there are others that haunt. The voices of the action of the Turkish government towards the Armenians haunt them. They spend millions of dollars in an attempt to change world opinion about them and at times they are successful. The past injustices follow them like a shadow. There is no exception from the truth. Our voice has to be strong, one a decisive..." You may deceive others but not us."

The voice of the present generation is about its concerns relating to immediate needs and pleasures...there is no time to wait, now or ever. The voice of the future beckons restraint, one of caution and prudence... don't deprive future generations from the right of enjoying clean-air and water, don't saddle them with huge debts; they also want to be able to own a home and have a family.

A voice came from above, the voice of the Lord; and those that came from below attempt to drag us down.

We say if only I can build a wall, a Berlin wall, secluding myself and not allow the thoughts and expressions of others to affect me. It's good to be objective and let everyone to their own opinions; respect yet requires respect. But walls come down suddenly and unexpectedly as the Berlin wall did. We find ourselves flooded with thoughts and opinions it a subjective manner. They bother us, get to us and some youths would say..." Get off my back."

The voice of parents affects in this way. They highly affect their children to whom they wish to convey years of acquired experiences. But the tenor of advice comes to them as commands – does and don'ts. It aggravates touching a tender, very sensitive part the child's being. As such it easily bruises to the point where reason seems to fly out of the window. At during times of sicknesses, all comforting it is to have a loving parent at one's side. The voice and presence of parents are essential to a growing child. It is a great comfort to know that one's parents has always been at one's side for better or for worse, through" thick and thin."

In the church the parent ceases their authoritative role and like a child is called to listen and obey-be childlike at times to hear the voice and feel the presence of our heavenly parent Who we are called to obey. His presence is of great comfort in times of distress.

Jesus enjoyed the presence and voice of his parents, Mary and Joseph. He lived in a home environment where there was a deep and genuine love and fear of God. Mary, Joseph, their relatives and friends reflected this in their lifestyle living a childlike behavior in their relationship concerning the requirements of their faith. This brought security and stability to them and their children while living in an unstable and insecure world. Much has changed since those days but yet there are certain things that do not change. He still seeks stability and security in a very unstable and insecure world and this can only come about by the hands of God. That is our prayerful wish now and always.

The Fountain of Life
**(Psalm 36:9“For with Thee is the Fountain of Life;
In Thy light do we see light.)**

One characteristic of scenic Armenia is the many bubbling springs that dot the land, be it pouring from mountain sides or gushing forth from the ground. At times they may run dry due to seasonal dry spells but are revived when the waters of the wellsprings are replenished.

The bloodstream of the nation is kept pulsating with vitality by their running waters which their sources remain unseen and hidden from human probing.

In their simplicity there is a charm, an enchanting beauty and mystery that surrounds them serving as points of inspiration around which were woven countless wonderful stories, fables, songs and paintings. Thus they have become an integral part of Armenian culture, a culture which like them continuously brings forth new revelations making anew to old in keeping it young.

In order to truly benefit from it, that is the Armenian culture, and appreciate its contribution to mankind, a concept of its history must be had to gain a perspective as to where it is headed from where it had come. Its beginning is enshrouded in a mystery which must be recognized as emanating from God, it's eternal and inexhaustible fountainhead. Another important trait is the boldness for its contemporaries to strike out, adding their own personal mark on it, which is another reason why the waters of Armenian culture never becomes stagnate nor stale.

Together with the ancients appear on its horizon such as from the pen of composer Aram Khachaturian and even the presentation of Armenian pop orchestras. It is this combination of profound depth, fidelity to its past, plus present audacity to move forward that keeps the flowing waters of Armenian culture clear and free-flowing.

“Trust in the Lord and do good; so you will well in the land and enjoy security.”
(Psalm 37:3)

The keyword this phrase is ‘trust’ and this requires two or more persons. Either directly or indirectly a service or commodity is there binding them together. Trust is more than a business transaction, be it credit, a contract or a covenant. It is hard to earn but pays rich dividends.

Our trust in God is based on two types of services or commodities that we receive from Him which we call “blessings.”

The first kind is spiritual in nature therefore it is for our souls. It is a continuous and spontaneous out-pouring from God which we receive instantaneously. For example, in prayer we are in direct contact with God. There is no middleman or third-party involved through whom it passes before it reaches us. In the instance of baptism and marriage where it is administered by a clergy the blessing flows uninhibited. The celebrant is no control over it.

The second blessing which we base our trust in God is in the form of material goods, believing that all in the world owes its existence to God who is the provider and sustainer of life. The distribution of this blessing is entrusted to the hands of humans. The trust based on the human level however is quite different from that which we experience in our association with God.

The administration of the second blessing because it is a material good passing through the hands of human beings, is controlled and entails bargaining. Favoritism exists making it a sophisticated problem with complications. We don't do what needs to be done until it has to be done, that is until a crisis arises and often then it is too late.

Today we are caught up in a spiraling inflation that seems to have no end and seems to be out of control. We knew 20 years ago that we were to be confronted with such a crisis. Today's crises owe itself to the gross negligence of those (which is all of us) who failed to face tomorrow's needs today. Let them (whoever they may be!) take care of it.

Without trust the world could hardly function; marriages wither, friendships fade, nations would be unable to deal with one another and governments would collapse.

We are interested to meet the needs of our church. Do we do what needs to be done or only when it becomes a crisis? There is no condition when we seek God's blessing here instantaneously at times of baptisms, marriages or times of duress such as death, but we think nothing of placing conditions as a prerequisite to our involvement.

"Trust in the Lord and do good; so you will dwell in the land and enjoy security."

For God to act, though, all of us have to live up to our collective commitments. Are our dealings with our church and with one another, the free, spontaneous and instantaneous or is it conditionalized?

"Trust the Lord and do good; so you will dwell in the land and enjoy security. Take delight in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart."

(Psalm 37:3,4)

Governments who place their "Trust in God", which is printed on all of our monetary currency with dollar or coins, we seem to be invoking for God's protection from sins committed knowingly or unknowingly. Recognition that there is a power and money-where there is power there is corruption. The imprinting of "In God we trust" seems to be a prayer invoking God's 18th to cover the evils coming from this power so that it may serve a good purpose and not bring the people to servitude to its service. America has come a long way in a relatively short period of time, in a little over 200 years

Constitution stating that it is a government of, by and for the people together with its Bill of Rights (the first 10 amendments) guaranteeing basic freedoms one of which is the freedom of religion. There is the division of power between the executive, legislative and judicial departments of government in a country where there is a land of plenty of bounty, remarkable scientific achievements and advanced technology, noted educational institutions of higher learning as such has become the envy of many nations and people throughout the world.

It is confronted, though, with the problems of enormous proportions-dope, crime, corruption, poverty, pollution and many more highly pressing issues. It is presently seeking a Savior to save us from ourselves.

There is a need for the spirit to breathe new life into the country, a spirit that should be coming from the religious institutions of the land. There is a moral decline mainly attributed to the failure of the churches collectively in addressing themselves to the spiritual values of the people. On Sundays, which is the day of worship for most of the religions in America and Europe, the so-called civilized nations of the world, the streets are empty or the people are going to other places other than a place of worship. The heartbeat of

America should be its throbbing coming from the religious institutions of its land but sadly the place of God's also worship is so weak that there is difficulty in finding a heartbeat. It seems to be a heart without a pulse beat because other matters and things are given higher priority.

What America needs is some Holy Days. The 4th of July, a day associated with the founding, or to a certain extent, the beginning of a governmental body of a sort could be considered, along with Thanksgiving Day. Memorial Day is also a strong candidate when all are called to remember all those men and women who made the supreme sacrifice for the noble principles this country was founded upon and the suffering of returning veterans and their families had to go for the simple fact of sacrificing in order to achieve and making these noble ideals a living reality in our lives. Everyone without exception should feel it his/her obligation to go to their place of worship and thank the God that they worship for the sacrifice these individuals and their respective families made and those who fought for these noble principles and returned home to their love ones with broken minds, bodies and souls and the years of healing they all had to endure. Every one without exception should make it as part of a national practice to go to their place of worship and in their own way thank their God for all who served and suffered so that we may enjoy the daily that we presently experience and as important, everyone without exception should renew a vow to do their utmost to live up to standard and principle that this country was founded upon. If this is not put into practice, all we will be doing is diluting the nobleness of these principles by which a 'water-down' principle takes its place.

The heartbeat of America will remain strong for her people and others throughout the world because of the spirit emanating its houses of worship. The Armenian Church should be in the forefront leading the movement but sadly it is too weak internally because of divisions and financial problems.

**"For you do not desire a sacrifice or else I would give it. You do not delight in burnt offerings. The offerings of God are a broken heart spirit: a broken and a contrite heart God will not despise."
(Psalm 51:16–17)**

The sacrifices of Abel, Abraham, Noah and the patriarchs of the Old Testament all done with a contrite heart and because of this, they were considered to be pleasing to God. Abel's brother, Cain also made an offering by his sacrifice was not found pleasing because it was not done with a repentant spirit. From this we understand that the sin at Thanksgiving offerings of the Old Testament which were in the form of animal or grain sacrifices were done in the act of contrition otherwise they were not considered to be God-pleasing offerings. Christ set the pattern for the law of the New Testament by offering himself up on the cross; an act of self-denial and dedication out of a pure merciful love to serve God and man. Throughout the Bible we often see God portrayed as a strict person and a hard bargainer.

Cain complained that the sentence imposed upon him was more than he could bear; Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son to prove he feared God; only now and his family were the sole survivors of the great flood; Sodom and Gomorrah were completely demolished because of this sins.

Did God have a change of heart in the New Testament? Was He more lenient?

Let us read about the story of Ananias and his wife Sapphira in the fifth chapter of the book, Acts of the Apostles..."A certain man Ananias with his wife, Sapphira sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to the act, and brought a certain part and laid it at the Apostle's feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own power? Why did you conceive this thing in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God. And Ananias upon hearing these words fell down, and gave up the spirit: and the great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the

young men arose, wound him up and carried him out and buried him. It was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered her saying, " Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" And she said,

"Yes, for so much." Then Peter said unto her, "How is it that you agreed together to tempt the spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which have buried your husband are at the door, and shall carry you out. Then she fell down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the spirit: and the young man came and, and found her dead, and carried her out, buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon all the Church and upon as many as heard these things." No matter how hard we try it is quite difficult to convince ourselves that it is a ruthless and merciless God. We keep thinking and believing that no harm can come to us. The thought of what happened to the God Who cares, Who is forgiving, Who keeps running through our minds to persuade others that all is alright and that we have nothing to fear. These characteristics truly tone down the anxieties caused by fear of God's almightiness and stern judgment, but whether we like it or not, the teaching of judgment onto eternal damnation or eternal life is both explicit and implicit in the writings of the Holy Scriptures. The spirit of the Church however is not to teach fear in order to gain love, that is scaring one into loving, but by showing God's almightiness and all dominating spirit in his creative act to us. And we being convinced of this truth willingly submit ourselves to his divine will. Thus the acknowledgment of God leads us to submitting ourselves to his divine will in the end result being not only a freedom in a new life in His spirit but the promise of life everlasting as the Apostle Paul wrote in his epistle to the Galatians (6:8–9)," for he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." The basic principle being as the Psalmist says," the offerings of God are broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart God will not despise."

The Beginning of Wisdom is the Fear of God –Proverbs 1:2

Wisdom-One who knows a lot and the possessor of much accumulated knowledge; but not only having the knowledge but applying it in a very special way. A person may a lot of facts stored up in one's brain and know much about many things and varying subjects; and impress people and even large audiences with his/her exceptional amount of knowledge; or make astounding discoveries through research analytical geniuses of the mind and could be classified among the genius of the world and even of all time, but that and even more does not make that individual a wise-man .Other traits are needed in order to qualify an intelligent person to be qualified as being a wise person. Wisdom is beyond intelligence

A person may not know too much, that is to say, he/she might not have a lot of data on the tip of their tongue, but he/she may know much about what is pleasing to the ears of people. That individual may know human behavior and may know how to act and do to satisfy a person's likes and dislikes. He /she use their talents in such a manner discreetly for their own personal gain and the glory and also the esteem that will follow. They are admired for their wittiness and sense of humor and cleverness but again this does not qualify that person as being a wise person.

A wise person is not necessarily an intelligent person in the intellectual sense of the word nor is that person necessarily a socially graceful individual, but one respected and honored for possessing in their character traits that are nobler and more virtuous than these. That person is considered wise for being prudent; not seeking personal gain and usually persons of very modest means who are constantly giving of themselves for the needs and benefit of others. His personal identification in society might be about because of his thoughts and position on issues. Others may become jealous of him because that he possesses something greater than themselves. This person is not seeking nor is interested in personal recognition or glory from others. He is only thinking more of the general well-being of others on a whole. Wisdom encompasses many fields and disciplines and is very broad in its outlook. It is neither narrow nor individualistic in its outlook.

The wise person also realizes and recognizes his/her limitations. He knows that whatever he knows or how much knowledge he possesses is very limited in scope and that the span of one's own lifetime is too short to be of any significance. He is older and approaching the twilight of his/her own life. He feels weak, feeble and ignorant before the mighty and eternal presence of God. Realizing these limitations, he seeks assistance and direction from God so that what he/she does can be done in the proper light and have a meaningful significance. This fear of God grants him a wholesome and healthy outlook in life and above all the wisdom for which he /she is respected and honored.

“The Hope of the Righteous ends in Gladness” Proverbs 10:28

Upon receiving his citizenship papers a person was asked why he would want to become a citizen of the United States after hearing all of the evils of this country. “The place I came from was so perfect that there was no hope for improvement.” he replied jestingly. America is the land of the hope.

It took hundreds, even thousands of years to raise the level of individual human dignity to its present stage and the development of the basic rights of man.

That which stands out most prominent in our minds as to the beginning of this process probably is the period of the great Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato and Aristotle when the immortality of the soul and reference to God as a pure form was even spoken of.

The period of early Christian philosophers, of whom many were great saints, can be summed up in the thoughts of Thomas Aquinas who considered faith in addition to reason essential in the belief of God. The signing of an important document took place in June, 1215 called the Magna Carta or Great Charter marking a decisive step forward in the development of a signing of constitutional form of government in England, which others benefited centuries later. The signing of it by King John forced him to grant rights to English aristocracy. This came about because of his abuse of regal power. The ordinary Englishman neither gained little from it nor guaranteed any individual liberty but it did become a model for those who clamored for democratic government and individual rights. Articles pertaining to taxation later were used to support the argument that no law should be made or tax levied without the consent of England's Parliament (the law-making body that represents all people). Other articles became foundations for modern justice such as the idea of due process of law to make the King keep his promise. In its own time the greatest value of the Magna Carta was that it placed the king under the thus decisively checking royal power.*

It was largely forgotten during the 1500 but members of Parliament brought it back the 1600's. In the 1700's Sir William Blackstone, a famous lawyer set down these ideals as legal

Rights of the people in his famous “Commentaries on the Laws of England.” These ideals eventually became part of the framework of the Constitution of the United States and the Declaration of Independence thus the beginning of the process to insure the rights for the colonists in America.

Now a new age seems to be emerging addressing itself to the degree of responsibilities individual, the business world and governments have vis-à-vis not only concerning individual liberties and rights but also their responsibility before nature.

This new age took on greater impetus with the splitting of the atom and the subsequent bombing of Hiroshima and invention of nuclear devices. A questioning process has begun with debates and arguments defining man's responsibility towards man in a world caught up within scientific technological advancements with its myriad complexities such as highly intricate and sophisticated spying mechanisms ranging from spy-in-the-sky orbiting the Earth to eaves-dropping devices concocted to invade the privacy of an individual's life.

These questions may not be resolved and their answers remain unclear but life will continue and considered relatively tolerable as long as there shines a ray of hope, “hope of the righteous whose end is gladness in God.”

*Another king had come at another time and voluntarily placed himself under the law even to his own death. His name was Jesus Christ.

In a vision of the Prophet Isaiah, the Lord spoke to him saying that the Lord nourished and raised the children (Israel) and they rebelled against him. The ox knows its owner and the donkey its master's crib, but Israel does not know. My people do not consider. The Israelites were led by God to the Promised Land but were ungrateful and began to disobey Him provoking the Holy One of Israel in to anger. They have gone backward and because of this, God let them to be overrun by their enemies. Of this, only a small remnant remained to remember what God had done and these were the few faithful. The Israelites tried to win back God's favor by offering sacrifice but God would not listen to their prayers.

This Old Testament writing is dominated by the spirit of the Law of Moses where one sees that no righteousness comes from the law with it offering of sacrifices.

Romans 6:12-23

St. Paul the Romans, “Do not live in sin but give the members of your body to be instruments of righteousness unto God as one alive from the dead. Sin will no longer over you because you are no longer under the law but under grace. St. Paul tells them that “We do not say that we cannot sin because we are not under the law but grace. You know that to whoever you are willing to put your services to, it is to him that you are a servant; whether it is sin to death or obedience unto righteousness. St. Paul reminds them that they were the servants of sin but now they have obeyed in their hearts the doctrine given to them. They are made free from sin and have become servants of righteousness and servants of God and that their reward will be sanctification and eternal life through Jesus Christ.*

*This reading teaches that grace is a gift from God through Christ unto eternal life for those who yield themselves to be servants of righteousness.

Matthew 12:1

Begins with Jesus and Disciples walking through a field and the Pharisees notice that His disciples are eating wheat, upon which they question Jesus whether it was lawful to do this on the Sabbath or not. Jesus tells them of how David ate of the bread in the Temple which was unlawful act and also unlawful things that the priests did in the Temple of the Sabbath. He continued, that there is one greater than the Temple in this place (referring to Himself) and if they understood this, He said, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice and you would have not condemned the guiltless because the Son of Man is even Lord on the Sabbath.”

Isaiah 14:3-17

The Old Testament reading is from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. It tells us of a powerful world leader, a man who thought highly of himself. He said in heart, I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God and there I will set my throne on high and make myself like the Most High. This was his aspiration and hopefully fulfillment of an ambitious and ambitious dream. The grandeur of his throne and court were most impressive and reflected the glory of his power.

One would sense that he was before a man with much authority, who could, if he so desired, to control a person's mortal destiny. He was a real tyrant, though, and cruel person. He wouldn't let his prisoners to return

home and oppressed his people. He took what he could from them, leaving them barely enough to exist on and deprived them from their legitimate rights and benefits. He turned the world into a desert, overthrowing cities and leaving them to waste away in his wake. People would tremble at the utterance of his name. His decisions were ruled by his emotions often persecuting and prosecuting those who provoked his anger.

Needless to say, his death was welcomed by everyone with all breathing a sigh of relief remarking as to "How the oppressor and his insolent fury has ceased." Even nature rejoiced exclaiming, "Since you were laid low, no one has come against us." Nature no longer was usurped for one person's personal gains and left to breathe once more on its own.

In grave, hell even was stirred, and they stared at him pondering, "Is this man who made the earth tremble?" Those who were leaders came to greet him saying, "You have become like us -weak."

It is a lesson of what we want to be and what we become. All of us possess authority to varying degrees. What this story is telling us, to not abuse that authority and thus our nature but use it prudently and constructively for a good purpose.

What, we ask, determines, what is a good purpose? By using this power with the intent of gaining a crown not made by human hands but by the grace of God. All things will come to an end except those which have eternal value.

Isaiah Chapters 36 & 37

The principles that take up the dialogue in this reading are Hezekiah, King of Judah, Sennacherib, King of Assyria and the Prophet Isaiah who speaks on behalf of the Lord God. There are others who play minor roles such as a spokesman for one of the kings, but the main stream of the conversion is flowing between these three.

Sennacherib feels himself strong at this time after many victories and conquests and feels ready to take Judah. So with this in mind, he sends some messengers to talk with some representatives sent by King Hezekiah informing them in so many words so many words to give in to the Assyrians. They warn the Judeans not to put their trust and confidence in the Pharaoh of Egypt. Sennacherib makes a simile of the Pharaoh to a broken reed of a staff that will pierce the hand of any man who leans upon it. That is, if you lean were depending upon Egypt to help and protect you, you might get hurt, and if you (Judeans) answer saying that we don't depend upon him but have our confidence in our Lord God, I shall answer, 'isn't He was hiding places and altars Hezekiah had removed saying to Judah and to Jerusalem," You shall worship this altar?" Sennacherib's spokesman makes an offer of 2000 horses if the Judeans can find the men to ride them. He warns the Judeans, "how do you think you will be able to repulse a single captain among the least of any masters servants, when you rely on Egypt for chariots and horsemen?"

King Hezekiah's representatives returned without giving an answer because that was their instructions. The came and relayed to their king the message with rented clothes which was a sign of mourning or sad news. When Hezekiah hears this, he rents his clothes and covers himself with sack cloth and goes to the House of the Lord. He sends messengers to Isaiah informing him of the situation and asks him to pray to God for the remnant. Isaiah assures Hezekiah through his spokesman that God will protect them, and that he shouldn't be afraid.

The representatives of the Assyrian King upon hearing of disturbances, return to their king. Sennacherib sends them back warning Hezekiah not to be deceived by these disturbances or by the threat of the Ethiopians to war against him. He warns Hezekiah again that if other cities and countries were not spared neither shall yours.

When Hezekiah receives the written message, he takes it to the House of the Lord and lays it before the Lord praying that God will hear his prayers. Isaiah then sends a message to Hezekiah saying that since you have prayed, this then is the word that the Lord has spoken concerning the King of Assyria; and he gives a long account of how God made King Sennacherib great and powerful and now he in turn is unrightfully using this position. God says that since He knows everything about Sennacherib, that there is to know, and that his arrogance against God's will has come to His ears; I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth and shall return you on the way by which you came. Not a sword or a shield will come against the City of David for I will defend it for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David. Then the angel of the Lord went forth and killed 185,000 in the Assyrian Camp. After this, Sennacherib returns to his capitol, Nineveh where he was killed by his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer while he was worshipping in the Temple of his god, Nisroch. His two sons then fled 'to the land of Ararat' as written in the Hebrew text. The Greek text says "to the land of Armenia" and the Armenian text reads "ee hyes" which means to the land of the Hyes. (*The name 'Hyes' is what the Armenians call themselves*) This is the second time that Armenia is mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. The first is when Noah's Ark came to rest on Mount Ararat or the mountains of Ararat (Genesis 8:4) and here the Hebrew, Greek, and Armenian texts are in agreement using the same word "Ararat". The Hebrews probably would like to use the names of mountains because for them mountains had a special significance. They believed that is where God lived; on the lofty heights. He dwelt in the Temple where His presence was, but this happened because He condescended from His higher position. So there are have various mountains having an important meaning in their history; Mount Sinai where God spoke to Moses; Mount Zion or Sion where the tabernacle had its final resting place; Mounts Carmel, Tabor, Moriah, Herman, and Lebanon. Even though Jesus would preach and teach in synagogues He would go to the top of the mountains to spend the night in prayer.

The Greek translation of the original Hebrew text didn't take place until the beginning of the 3rd century B.C. at the time of Ptolemy II called Philadelphus (285-247 B.C). The Greeks also had a tradition from her Herodotus and Eutyches in the 5th and 4th centuries BC whereby the Armenians were said to have been a group migrating eastward from northern Greece or Thrace and finally settling in Armenia. It would be easy to suppose that the Greeks wanting to strengthen this tradition would probably prefer using the word Armenia than Ararat, but it must be remembered that the Greek translation was done by Hebrew priests and scholars and not Greeks and they are "we said means "to the land of the Hyes" is the Armenians identifying the word from their own language which was familiar to them. Armenians call each other 'Hyes' giving it a more personal flavor or identity which again in keeping with the spirit of the Scriptures.

ISAIAH 61:1

For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. Sion is the Greek pronunciation of the Hebrew word Zion which means a dry, sunny place or a defense but usually is referred to as mound. It is referred to as a sacred or holy place because it was on a particular mound or hill in Jerusalem where the Ark of the Covenant was placed in which the commandments were kept. Zion, City of David, and Jerusalem are often used interchangeably denoting the same thing. In order to have a better understanding, we have to go back to an earlier part of Hebrew history to where Moses received the Divine Commandments on Mt. Sinai. The Hebrews considered these to be sacred and put them in a specially built Ark and whenever they traveled they would raise the Ark and had it carried before them just as kings or queens were taken in royal processions. To them it signified God's presence with them. When they crossed the River Jordan and entered the Promised Land, the Ark again was carried before them.

After David became king and had captured Jerusalem and established it as his capitol, he had the Ark brought and put in a temporary tabernacle. It was at that particular place in Jerusalem, on one of its hills, where David

lived and the Ark was placed, that became known as Zion. It is on that very same ground on which we have our Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem. When Solomon succeeded David to the throne he had a glorious temple built on the same hill where the sacred ark was placed, not too far from where David's court was. This is the hill which is known as Mt. Zion.

Isaiah 62:1

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

Sons of Zion(Sion) arise, give the good news to the bride of light, that your resurrected bridegroom defeated death with authority. He comes and crowns you with glory, so arise and go to be adorned. Sing a new song to the resurrected, the fruit of life for those who are at rest. Sion is the Greek pronunciation of the Hebrew word Zion which means a dry, sunny place or a defense but usually is referred to as mound. It is referred to as a sacred or holy place because it was on a particular mound or hill in Jerusalem where the Ark of the Covenant was placed in which the commandments were kept. Zion, City of David, and Jerusalem are often used interchangeably denoting the same thing. In order to have a better understanding, we have to go back to an earlier part of Hebrew history to where Moses received the divine commandments on Mt. Sinai. The Hebrews considered these to be sacred and put them in a specially built ark and whenever, they traveled they would raise the ark and had it carried before them just as kings or queens were taken in royal processions. To them it signified God's presence with them. When they crossed the River Jordan and entered the Promised Land, the ark again was carried before them. After David became king and had captured Jerusalem and established it as his capitol, he had the ark brought and put in a temporary tabernacle. It was at that particular place in Jerusalem on one of its hills where David lived and the ark was placed that became known as Zion. It is on that same very ground on which we have our Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem. When Solomon succeeded David to the throne he had a glorious temple built on the same hill which the sacred Ark was placed, not too far from where David's court was. This is the hill which is known as Mt. Zion. As the years passed by and the population increased, the metropolitan area became known as Jerusalem-City of David and the Temple and the hill on which it was built, Mt. Zion.

When the Assyrian King Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple, the people were taken captive to Babylon and the Ark and tablets were lost never to be found again. Later the Jews were permitted to return and rebuild the Temple. Today it is in the hands of the Arabs and is used as a mosque.

The Christian meaning of New Zion is in reference to the risen Christ and the Heavenly Jerusalem. It is there that our Lord, risen from the dead, established the New Covenant of the New Testament. We have many references of this in our hymns such as the last verse of hymn 'Norasdeghial' is 'Sioni Vortik'(Sons of Zion); the song after the baptismal service when the newly baptized child is taken to the parent's home the song Nor Sion-New Zion; and the song sung at funerals and requiem services- Ee Vereen Yerusaghem(Jerusalem on High.)

Isaiah 62:6 "Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchman, all the day and all the night, they shall never be silent".

This passage is a lesson on vigilance. The Feast of the Transfiguration of Our Lord on Mount Tabor revealed to us the necessity of change to approach God that required the Knowledge of God. In the Feast of the Virgin Santought, we learned that the Knowledge of God keeps us awake so that the change which is inevitable in life takes its proper course.

Today immorality has a strong grip on life telling us of the absence of God. As a result people are not awake so man's moral standards change from bad to worse and progressively worse. The Supreme Court made a

verdict concerning the sales and distribution of immoral literature, respecting man's freedom of choice. This decision does not deny man life's freedom but the consequences expose the weakness of man. Education is not a top priority in the land because the people do not demand it. The mind is curious and inquisitive. School years are the period when the intellectual capacity of an individual is developed. Left undisciplined it will corrupt, because the forces of evil will set in and corrupt it.

The Supreme Court also passed a decision banning prayer in public schools. Many decried this decision, but we fail to remember that this is the land of the free, not only for Christians and Jews but for men of all faiths and also atheists. If not, then the article on the freedom of religion is a hoax. This decision does not deprive anyone of us from the right to worship but again what it has done is to expose the weakness of man. Religion is not a high priority in the collected families of America and consequently there is the absence of God's Knowledge to guide us. Spiritually sloven, again the forces of evil take advantage of our ill-prepared state and rule.

There are those who see to it that their children receive a good education but do not pay attention to their religious training. They are like a man who used his talents wisely and became very successful but did not take precautionary safeguards to protect himself. His enemy came feigning friendship and gradually usurped his wealth until he had none left. So too it is with those who see to it that their children receive a good education but leave their religious training to chance. Change is inevitable but it necessitates knowledge which keeps us alert and awake.

Reading from the Book of Daniel

After the fall of Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar the Hebrews (Israelites) to Babylonia which became known as the Babylonian captivity. Although they were prisoners they treated kindly and some were even admitted in the king's palace to play with the other children there. There were four boys, Daniel, Hananieh, Mishal and Azariah who were Hebrews but were treated kindly with some even being allowed Azariah with the other Chaldean children. One day the king ordered a group of these boys be instructed with the teachings of the Chaldeans so that when they grew up they could help him rule his kingdom. Daniel and his friends were among those selected. They all ate food from the king's table and there were things that according to the Hebrew tradition they were forbidden for their people to eat. Daniel and his friends were strong believers and refused to eat that which according to their custom was forbidden. The chief officer who was in charge of them became concerned and told them that they didn't appear healthy. Daniel persuaded him to let them eat according to their own custom and assured him that they be healthy also appear healthy. After three years the king examined the three and found Daniel and his friends and found them far more advanced than the rest of the group and gave them better positions.

One night King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream and felt that his dream had an important meaning but forgot what the dream was about. He called his wise men to find out what he had dreamt. They told him it possible to interpret a dream but to find out what he had dreamt was asking too much of them. The king became disappointed with them and angry and ordered them to be killed. When the executioner went out to fulfill the king's command, he stopped at the home of Daniel and told him what had happened. Daniel persuaded him not to do any thing until Daniel an opportunity to see the king. When Nebuchadnezzar explained to Daniel about his dream and how the wise men could not find out at it was, Daniel told him that this is impossible for man to do and asked the king to delay his command for four days so that he would have enough time to pray and have God reveal the dream to him. The king consented and after four days Daniel came and told him the dream and what it meant. For this Daniel and his friends were promoted to higher positions and the boys' names were changed to Shadrach, Mishach and Abednego.

Nebuchadnezzar by conquests began to enlarge his kingdom and became very powerful so that all the people feared him. One day he had a great statue built and ordered that everyone had to come and worship it when the musicians began to play. And he further ordered that if anyone refused to do so and disobeyed his orders they would be thrown in to a huge fire that he had ordered to be made for that purpose. Now there were some Chaldeans who were jealous of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and went told the king that they weren't obeying his command. When he heard that they wouldn't worship his statue he had the fire made seven times hotter and had them thrown in, but instead of burning he could see them walking to and fro in the flames and not only were there the three boys but also a fourth person. He approached the fire and called the boys out. He was amazed to see that nothing had happened to them and that they were as they were before. He commanded all not to talk disrespectful of their God and granted them even higher positions.

Sts Sahag and Mesrob and the Prophet Saint Daniel and the three children Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were giants, great men of the past. Artists, writers especially poets in attempting to enliven their spirit show them as youthful, wise, strong and capable; and attractive -handsome- in appearance curly wavy hair, appealing eyes, well-proportioned body. Pictures and stories attempt to leave a good and lasting impression, of an important happening or person. At times we idolize pictures and melodies of the music rather than the idea which inspired them. We don't know the height, weight, skin complexion and other physical characteristics of these great historic personalities. For all we know, they could have been short, fat or skinny and bald. What concerns us is what they did. It excites and inspires. It inflames the imagination, the crucible of our youthfulness, like Sassountzi Taviti (David of Sasoun), always full of vigor and vitality; an imagination which springs from a good sound faith and belief in the Almighty. These men were of sound faith and belief.

The Prophet/Saint was a keen interpreter of dreams and the three young boys were brave, deifiers of King's orders who was requiring demands beyond his jurisdiction. Sts. Sahag and Mesrob and those associate with them called the Holy Translators, men who endeavored to tame the beastly superstitions of pagan practices amongst our people. The letters and literature were developed of religion (basically the Holy Scriptures), philosophy and history. It was developed to such an extent that their period and those of their immediate successors were called the Golden Era of Armenian History, never to be equaled again. There was the Silver Age of St. Nersess Shnorhali of the Cilician Period (11th–15th Centuries); and perhaps the Bronze or Copper Age of Armenian Literature could be the 18th-19th Century Literary Renaissance beginning with Khachadour Abovian; but none attained the glorious heights of the 5th Century Church Fathers, Sts. Sahag and Mesrob and their associates, all who were named the Holy Translators. The ink that flowed from their pens was gold. Literature and grammar existed in a foreign language until this period, going back to ancient times of cuneiform writing. Amazingly with the discovery and formation of the letters and first words of translation demonstrated a quality so pure and unique that it has never been equaled and can be numbered among the great achievements of ancient and even modern times. Where did it come from? Was it the spoken language of the people whom St. Mesrob saw in the village of Goghtn who were clinging to their pagan practices and superstitions? Like life itself, it is great and wonderful mystery. Archbp. Yeghishe Tourian wrote of his pilgrimage to Oshagan, the burial place of St. Mesrob where as he knelt and kissed the tombstone containing the remains of the great saint he uttered to himself, "How can the cold stones contain the fire burning within this tomb and the light shining from it of St. Mesrob." And as he prayed he called on the great saint to come and give a lesson teaching him the A,B,C's of the Armenian alphabet. Archbp. Yeghishe Tourian is one of the great churchmen of these past few centuries. His prayer is our

Prayer that these great men of our faith come and teach us the ABC's of our faith freeing us from the superstitions and paganistic outlook of life of the present age.

Joel 2:28 - And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions.

When people gather together at social gatherings the conversation usually is about something that happened in the past. Most of the time it is about their youthful days or about good times when they were young. Ponce de Leon sought the fountain of youth in Florida. This is natural and normal. There is an innate desire in humans to regain the spirit of their youth and to find the zest and vitality they once possessed. Something everybody wants, only to be young again and the men of the world or worldly minded take advantage of this; some with good intentions, others with evil, promising and assuring their followers that sensation of being young again. People accept it so that they can experience that sensation again even if it is for only a moment. And they may be satisfied because they were rewarded with some comfort; but to keep pace with this method is nerve-racking and exhausting and its adverse effect is seen in its endless results for the need of more money, time and human resource to be given for repair job work to be done. There are needs more hospitals, doctors & nurses now than at any other time. And what about the numerous organizations that are maintained to help those in need, those whose lives have been damaged? Who pays the cost? Everyone shares the burden equally.

Life and all the things life has to offer should be enjoyed but enjoyed reasonably. Youth and feeling young are important but how is this attained and in a sound manner. To find this we have to look at the youth and see what makes them function. From the time a child is born it learns by means of its sensory organs; the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and hands. In the process of growing up and by the experience accumulated by these senses an imprint, a picture is left on the heart, mind, and soul, the central receiving points of our being. This is going to determine the make-up of the child. There is a Turkish saying, what you are at seven is what you will be at seventy. One phase of modern psychology teaches that the first five years determines what the child is going to be. Children have an enormous capacity to learn quickly. Everything about them is fresh and new and growing. Therefore it is what they receive and digest into their systems which are going to affect that which I will call the sixth sense which is belief. You might be called and regarded as the consummation of the whole operation. This is the "fountain of youth" that the child will cherish and take until the grave. The type of belief determines what kind of fountain it will be and whether it is fruitful or not. *The source of the fruitful fountain is the church where youth, vigor, vitality, life is granted. Just before the sermon the last part of the services was presenting the wine and host representing Jesus' body and blood and at that time holding and making the sign of the cross over the congregation, the following is said..."This is the life, hope, resurrection, propitiation expiration and remission of sins." This is the source. This from where the spirit is poured out so that our sons and daughters may prophecy, our elders may dream dreams and our young even see visions. This is the operation of the church. So let us drink from her cup, eat from her table and so that we may be happy, be merry, be full of the spirit of youth with the hope and belief it will serve for the good of man individually and corporately by benefiting all human beings of the family of God every` where and at all times.

JUSTICE AND RIGHTEOUSNESS Amos 5:21-24 - The Lord says, "I hate your religious festivals; I cannot stand them! When you bring me burnt offerings, I will not accept them; I will not accept the animals you fattened to bring me as offerings. Stop your noisy songs; I do not want to listen to your harps. Instead, let justice flow like a stream, and righteousness like a river that never goes dry."

God is not against all that which is mentioned in the above. The strong language is indicative more to His dismay in what they have become. They were to serve as a means to justice and righteousness, but have instead become an end to themselves, similar to holy days that have become holidays without any religious and spiritual significance. After hundreds of years, not much has changed!

God's ultimate goal and purpose of His involvement with the human race, is the establishment of justice and righteousness. The Armenian word for justice and righteousness, especially in the case of justice, better describes their meaning. The word in the Armenian Bible for justice is 'iravounk'. The root word 'Ir' means an article, object or thing. In the grammatical declination of the noun 'ir', 'ir' becomes 'irav' in the instrumental case (with the 'ir' or thing), denoting belonging to the 'ir'. The abstract meaning in the English has taken on a substantive form in the Armenian. The word 'ir' as in 'irav' or 'irakan' is used to establish a truth of matter or the reality of it, such as the question, irav'? ... "is that a fact?", or "is that the truth?"; and 'irakan eh?'...did it really happen?" The word 'ir' is also used as a pronoun in the 3rd person singular indicating ownership such as, 'ir kirkuh' meaning his/her book. Among the inalienable rights innumerable in the Constitution and in the Bill of Rights, is the phrase "in the pursuit of happiness". Here 'happiness' has a substantive significance such as the right to ownership of property; or a home. There is a striking similarity between the words 'happiness' in English and 'iravounk' in the Armenian. If a question arises as to the legitimacy of ownership, a case is brought to court before a judge to be heard. The defendant's cause is defended by a lawyer, which in the Armenian is called an 'iravapan', that is, a person versed in speaking about justice in defending the right of his client. All rights are respected especially those categorized under the class 'human rights' and deemed as being 'God-given'. The pursuit of one's rights, or happiness, does not bring about righteousness, because justice or human rights are flagrantly misused. The underlying girder, or so-called 'bottom-line' of a matter, one to which an individual, or corporation or even a nation of people returns to legitimize its action is a phrase often heard, and that is, what is considered to be "in their best interest". Broadly interpreted, it means to do that which is necessary, be it right or wrong, even if it be at the expense of the rights of others. This policy is enacted upon on all levels of society from corporate management, in government, to individuals on a personal relationship. This does not mean that all adhere to these iniquitous procedures, but rather that it is a dominant force prevailing from generation to generation under whose influence over society one lives under. All the rights, considered in human terms, cannot bring forth righteousness. In fact, it has the opposite effect causing a hellish phenomenon where individuals are pitted against one another for the sake of survival. For it to be an effective tool for peace, recognition and acknowledgement is necessary that justice and righteousness are a gift of God to which a life-style reflective of that confessional belief is demonstrated. The Book of Proverbs (1:7) states that "...that to have knowledge, you must first have reverence for the Lord." The word for reverence in the Armenian text can be translated as being fear. Within reverence one senses a fear and awe in the holy presence of God. It is somewhat similar to the experience in a courtroom where a person becomes apprehensive as to the outcome and decision of the judge. One wonders too what God's final judgement will be from the one Who is the source of all justice and righteousness.

"But for you who hear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing on its wings"

(Malachi 4:2)

Jesus is referred to as the Sun of Righteousness in Armenian Church hymns and Christmas carols of western Christendom. The Sun is a star but it is so powerful that when it makes its appearance it overshadows and literally overpowers all others taking sole possession of the heavens. It was part of God's first creative act which evolutionists claim began with a "big bang." According to this theory, which is highly plausible, there was a mass congregate of matter in space that became so dense that any small spark or electrical charge could cause a huge explosion which is what purportedly happened. When the "dust," so to speak, settled was the birth of the present universe called the solar system because of the complete dominance of the sun in the emergence and sustainer of plant and animal life. The crown of the creative process was the emergence of the human race, men and women, on the stage and the on-going drama of human life.

The second great explosion took place "in the fullness of time" (Ephesians 1:10), which in Christian terms, is called an act of Reconciliation. Due to the corrupt nature of the human soul, which came about because of sin

or turning away from God, iniquities and injustice became so pervasive, similar to the congregate of matter at the beginning of the first creative act that any small spark could ignite a massive explosion. The spark was the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, whom Christians regard as the Son of God; God in the flesh who became a human thereby becoming a member of the human race. When the "dust" settled after the explosion by His birth, a sun rose, the sun of righteousness, in the spiritual universe of mankind which is the Cross of Jesus; the sun that overshadows and literally overpowers all others that had happened prior and thereafter. Other stars shine in the heaven of spiritual universe. They are saints, righteous persons who were made and are sustained by the Sun of Righteousness. Stars in the solar system cannot sustain life on Earth. They only beautify the heaven when the great star, the Sun, sets at eventide. So too, the company of saints enriches the religious faith of humans, but are deprived of those essential ingredients for its maintenance. It is only through the Sun of Righteousness, the glorified Cross of Jesus because of His Holy Resurrection from the dead that allows all the Righteous to live eternally. The saints exist by virtue of their attachment and thereby rotate around the Sun of Righteousness, continuously conforming to his will. They also remain in orbit as members of His Family by willingly sharing and agreeing with God's way amongst themselves in a sincere fellowship of brotherhood. Those who do not wish to conform to this practice and do not respect others of the same family ultimately will find themselves outside of God's fold.

A good example of the spirit of great saints is seen in the persons of Saints Peter and Paul, whose personalities seemed diametrically opposed to one another. Peter was regarded as a nobody in the social circle of his time because of his being a Galilean a people who were looked upon as uneducated, whereas Paul was a highly educated Pharisee and therefore a highly, regarded personage, whose knowledge of the law caused him to have a great zeal toward its enforcement. This led to his unrelenting severe persecutions of Christians until he was demobilized by the Lord in a special apparition in which he became blinded leading to his conversion to the Christian faith. Thereafter, his energies were directed to bringing all, be they of Jewish decent or not, to the new faith while Peter concentrated his efforts on the Jewish Community. Peter was among the first apostle through a call by Christ and Paul, the last, the thirteenth apostle, by a special revelation.

Despite their deep seeded differences these two truly great men never allowed their differences to separate themselves from each other. They always had respect toward one another although they didn't see things "eye to eye" retaining their fellowship from the commonality of mission commissioned by the same Lord, one toward the Jewish people and the other to those in the outside world. Their stars remain shining because of their receiving light from the Sun of Righteousness which dominates and rules their spiritual universe. They were truly first class leader-s who provided true leadership for a world starved for spiritual sustenance.

HANUKKAH BY ANTHONY CARDINALE

Hanukkah is a lighthearted festival, but its origins are nearly as heavy as the Holocaust. It wasn't Nazi Germany, but Syria under the Greek kings, that tried to trample Judaism into the ground a century and a half before the Common Era. Although the festive holiday comes during the Christmas season, Hanukkah celebrates not the birth of a messiah but the rebirth of the Jewish state long after the fading of the golden years under King David and King Solomon. It commemorates the Jews' independence as a people and the failure of Syrian kings to destroy Judaism. The First and Second books of Maccabees, written toward the end of biblical times, tell the true story of King Antiochus Epiphanes, who came to power in Syria in 175 B.C.E. A Greek, he used Syria as a stepping-stone to extend Greek culture throughout the Middle East. Antiochus determined to make himself king of Egypt. With chariots and elephants and a great fleet, he invaded and plundered Egypt. Then he advanced on Jerusalem, where he broke into the holy sanctuary of the Temple and removed the

precious altar vessels. Two years later, believing that King Antiochus had been killed while campaigning again in Egypt, Jewish dissidents executed the Hellenistic party leaders in Jerusalem. Infuriated, King Antiochus, very much alive, sent forces to pillage and torch Jerusalem. The Temple ran red with blood. Antiochus began a campaign to eradicate the Jewish religion and force Jews to adopt Greek customs, dress, language, and values. The king ordered the Jews to build altars and shrines to strange idols, to sacrifice pigs and other unclean meat, to profane the Sabbath, and to stop circumcising their sons. Refusal meant execution. Then, on December 8, 167 B.C.E., Antiochus erected in the Temple a statue of the Greek god Zeus, which the Jews would come to call "the abomination of desolation." Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar had done four centuries earlier. Psalm 74 recounts the earlier tragedy and foreshadows the later: "Pick your steps over these endless ruins: the enemy have sacked everything in the sanctuary Determined to destroy us once and for all, they burned down every shrine of God in the country Rise, God, say something on your own behalf, do not forget the madman's day-long blaspheming" (*Jerusalem Bible*, verses 2-23).

*Rather than endure the unendurable, many Jews renounced their faith. Beautiful Greek style cities with their colonnades, statues, and athletic gymnasiums enticed them. "So far had the apostasy gone," writes historian Laura Knott, "that it seems more than likely that Judaism would have been absorbed and have quietly disappeared from the face of the earth." Much troubled was a priest named Mattathias who had left Jerusalem and settled in Modein. He had five sons, including Judas Maccabaeus, or "the Hammerer." "Alas," cried Mattathias, "that I should have been born to witness the overthrow of my people, and of the Holy City, and to sit by." When the king's inspector came to Modein to force sacrifice to Zeus, the inspector singled out Mattathias. "You are a respected leader," he said. "You have sons and brothers to support you. Be the first to step forward and conform to the king's decree. You and your sons will be declared friends of the king." "Even if every nation living in the king's dominions obeys him," Mattathias retorted, "I and my sons and brothers will still follow the covenant given to our ancestors by the God of Israel." As he finished speaking, a Jew came forward to offer sacrifice on the king's altar. Stirred by The Scriptures were burned, the desecration, Mattathias and those possessing holy books put to death. Women who had circumcised their sons were killed and their babies hung around their necks. King Antiochus' acts in the Temple reenacted what the *Anthony Cardinale*, slaughtered the man on the altar. He then killed the king's inspector and destroyed the altar itself. Striding through Modein, he shouted: "Let everyone who has a fervor for God's Law come out and 30 LIBERTY NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1993 a reporter with the Buffalo News in New York, has covered international assignments in Jordan, Israel, and Great Britain.