

The Armenian Church A Brief Introduction

Dr Hratch Tchilingirian

The Church was founded by Jesus Christ (1). According to tradition, two of His Apostles — St. Thaddeus and St. Bartholomew — preached His Gospel in Armenia as early as the second half of the first century. Then in the early fourth century St. Gregory the Illuminator formally established the Church in Armenia, when King Tiridates III was baptized and declared Christianity as the state religion (2). Indeed, the Christianization of Armenia “determined the entire future course of Armenian history” (6).

St. Gregory (c. 240-325 AD) was a descendant of a noble house in Parthia, who was brought up as a Christian in Cappadocia. He was consecrated a bishop by Leontius, the metropolitan of Caesarea, as the first Bishop of Armenia (3). He began his missionary work in Armenia during the first decade of the fourth century, while a layman — and upon his consecration as Bishop — he established the Armenian nation’s Holy See in Vagharshapat (Etchmiadzin) (4). He is called Illuminator for “enlightening the nation with the light of the gospel” through baptism (5). *Etchmiadzin*, literally, means “the only begotten descended.” According to tradition, St. Gregory saw Christ in a vision, who indicated to him where to build His Church, the first Armenian Church.

As the new Faith took roots in the life of the nation, the invention of an Armenian alphabet was necessitated. Realizing the needs of the Armenian faithful, in 406, St. Mesrob Mashdotz (7) created the Armenian alphabet, under the auspices of Catholicos Sahag (8), in order to make the Christian faith accessible to the people in a written form. Greek and Syriac were the languages used in the church services.

Soon after the invention of the alphabet, St. Mesrob together with St. Sahag and a group of associates — known as Holy Translators — translated the Holy Scriptures into Armenian, followed by the biblical, theological and liturgical writings of eminent church fathers. This most important era is known as the Golden Age of Armenian history. “The missionary and literary labors [of this period] shaped the destiny of the Armenian people and Church for succeeding generations. [St. Mesrob and St. Sahag, their disciples and co-workers] spearheaded the creation of the Armenian Christian culture under the patronage of the King Vramshapuh. This period was one of intense activity and rapid development for the Church and was decisive in its consolidation and nationalization” (9).

One of the most significant events in Armenian Christianity is the battle of Avarair. Toward the middle of the fifth century, Armenia faced growing pressures from the Persian King Yazdegerd II, who had issued an edict bidding the Armenians to renounce Christ and embrace Zoroastrianism (10). In 451, headed by the commander-in-chief Vartan Mamikonian, Armenians fought against the Persians to

preserve their faith. Yeghishe, the historian who wrote *The History of Vartan and the Armenian War*, in a dialogue between the Persian Tenshabuh (ambassador) and the Priest Ghevont, expresses the profundity of this faith: “Christ, the living and life-giving true God, by His beneficent will became the healer of souls and bodies and Himself first suffered tortures and pains to cure the entire human race. He granted us second birth in health without pains and afflictions” (11). St. Vartan fell in the battlefield of Avarair and Armenians were physically defeated. For the next thirty years, Persian oppression followed and Armenian resistance under the leadership of Vahan Mamikonian (Vartan’s nephew) continued until 484, when the Persian King Peroz reversed course and declared full toleration of Christian faith and the formal recognition of the Church in the treaty of Nuarsak,

The following centuries were difficult periods in Armenian history, starting with Persian rule (430-634) and later Arab domination (c. 654-851). In the 9th century (c. 885) there was an independent kingdom of the Bagratids in Armenia, however it ended in 1079. In the medieval Kingdom of Cilicia, or Lesser Armenia, there was an independent entity from the end of the 12th century to 1375. Persecution and martyrdom had become common occurrences. A larger proportion of Armenians were massacred in the Ottoman Empire starting in the late 19th century to the Genocide in the early 20th century. Armenians also suffered under the Russians starting in 1893 and later in the Soviet Union until the 1980s.

In assessing history and the role of the Armenian Church in the life of the Armenian nation, Archbishop Aram Keshishian (since 1995 Catholicos of Cilicia) writes: “Confessing Christ has become the quintessence of our history. The history of the Armenian Church in all its manifestations and achievements, conflicts and struggles, is in the fullest sense of the term the history of confessing Christ in action. All the spheres of our life were touched by the transforming power of Christ. The Armenian culture in particular with its spiritual depth and transcendent dynamism has provided the Church with creative insights and new perspectives and horizons in terms of integrating Christ into the ethos of the Nation” (12).

The Faith of the Armenian Church

The Faith of the Armenian Church is transmitted through the church’s Holy Tradition, that is, the ongoing life of the church from the time of Christ to our times. The Bible, liturgy and worship, writings of the church fathers, church councils, saints, canons, religious art and rituals — organically linked together — formulate the Holy Tradition of the Church. This Faith is articulated in the Creed of the Armenian Church, the formal declaration of beliefs, which in turn defines the church’s *raison d’être* and sets the parameters of its mission and functioning (13).

The Armenian Church professes her faith in the context of her worship. Theologically, whatever the church believes, the church prays (14). As such, the Armenian Church’s worship and liturgy constitute a prime source for teaching and

living her faith. Tradition, on the other hand, defines and formulates the “articles of faith” and transmits them from generation to generation.

As articulated in the Creed, the Armenian Church believes in One God, the Father Almighty who is the Creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. Humanity (male and female) (15) is created in the image and likeness of God (16), and as such is a special creature. However, because of the Fall of man, sin entered the world (17).

The Church believes in Jesus Christ, “the only begotten Son of God, who came down from heaven, was incarnate, was born of the Virgin Mary, by the Holy Spirit.” He became man, suffered and was crucified, and was buried. He rose again from the dead on the third day and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead.

The Armenian Church believes in the Holy Spirit, uncreated and perfect, who proceeds from the Father, and together with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified. The Holy Spirit spoke to the prophets and apostles and descended into the Jordan river, witnessing Christ’s Baptism.

The Armenian Church is One, Holy, Apostolic, Catholic Church (18). She believes in one Baptism (19) with repentance for the remission and forgiveness of sins. On judgment day, Christ will call all men and women who have repented to eternal life in His Heavenly Kingdom, which has no end. Christ overcame the power of death with His own death and gave salvation to all mankind.

The dogmas of the Armenian Church are based on these “articles of faith.”

Family of Churches

The Armenian Church belongs to the Orthodox family of churches, known as the Oriental Orthodox, or Non-Chalcedonian, Churches: the Armenian, Coptic, Syrian, Indian Malabar, Ethiopian and Eritrean churches.

Generally, Christianity is divided mainly between Eastern and Western churches. The relationship between Byzantium (East) and Rome (West) deteriorated gradually. In the ninth century a schism between the Byzantine Church and the Church of Rome started to shape during the time of Patriarch Photius. In 1054, anathemas were declared by both sides (Patriarch Michael and Cardinal Humbert), which lasted for centuries. By 1204, when the Crusaders captured Constantinople, the schism had become final. In 1965, following the Vatican II Council, the anathemas were lifted by both sides in a spirit of ecumenism and understanding among the churches.

The main theological differences and disagreements between the Eastern (including the Armenians) and the Church of Rome (Catholics) are in the following issues:

Papal Supremacy: the Roman Catholics consider the Pope the “Vicar of Christ”, while the Orthodox churches consider him only as “first in honor” and in pastoral diakonia.

Papal Infallibility: The Catholics follow a “monarchical” model of ecclesial polity, whereby pronouncements of the Pope made on behalf of the Church (*ex cathedra*) are considered infallible. The Orthodox follow a “conciliar” model, where church councils determine church dogma, canons and policies.

There are also other minor differences between these two branches of churches, for example, regarding the rules of fasting; unleavened bread at Eucharist (West); manner of conferring confirmation; celibacy of clergy; divorce (not sanctioned in Roman Catholicism); purgatory (East doesn’t teach it); West has “scholastic” approach, East has “mystical” approach to theological issues.

On the other hand, the main difference between the Byzantine tradition (Eastern Orthodox) — also known as Chalcedonian churches — and the Armenian Church (along with the Oriental Orthodox Churches) has been on the issue of Christology, namely, regarding the dogma on Christ’s Divine and Human natures. The controversy originated at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, which defined Christ as “Perfect God and Perfect Man in One Person” and “confessed to be in *two natures*, without mixture and without change, without separation and without division...” (21).

Unlike the formulation at Chalcedon, the Armenian Church’s Christology is based on what is known as the Alexandrian school of theology. St. Cyril of Alexandria’s formula of ‘One Nature of the Incarnate Word’ is the basis of this Christology. It teaches that at the moment of Christ’s Incarnation, divine nature and human nature are united inseparably in a *single* nature, that is, ‘in a single person’. Catholicos Karekin I explains: “The two natures haven’t lost their own characteristics or their integrity, but they do not act separately; otherwise, we would have a dualism, and the Incarnation would not have taken place” (20). Furthermore, “‘One Nature’ is never interpreted in the Armenian Christology as a numerical one, but always a united one,” adds Abp. Keshishian. “Second, the term ‘nature’ (Greek *ousia*, Armenian *bnut’iun*) is used in Armenian theological literature in three different senses: (a) as essence, an abstract notion, (b) as substance, a concrete reality, (c) as person. In the context of anti-Chalcedonian Christology ‘one nature’ is used in a sense of ‘one person’ composed of two natures” (22).

The followers of Cyril of Alexandria and those who adopted his formulation became known as *monophysites* (those advocating ‘*one nature*’) because they rejected the formulation of Chalcedon on the basis that the Council spoke of *two natures* (*Diophysites*). This is why the Armenian and the other Oriental Churches are also known as Non-Chalcedonian Churches and are sometimes erroneously referred to as Monophysite Churches.

These Christological terminology and debates might seem trivial to the laymen, but the theological controversy continued for centuries, often becoming a matter of political influence and expediency. But, in 1990, the theologians and official representatives of both Eastern (Byzantine) and Oriental Orthodox Churches — after years of dialogue and consultations — agreed in a formal statement that their theological understanding, especially their Christology, is “orthodox.” The statement

called for unity and communion between the two branches of Orthodox Churches. The document was sent to the respective leaders of the participating churches for review and formal approval (23).

The Functional Structure of the Armenian Church

The functional structure of the Armenian Church is primarily based on the canons and established traditions of the Armenian Church, which were formulated over the centuries. One of the most important aspects of the Armenian Church administration is its *conciliar system*. In other words, the administrative, as well as doctrinal, liturgical, and canonical norms are set and approved by a council — collective and participatory decision-making process. Indeed, conciliarity in decision-making is a significant aspect in the Book of Acts 15. The Council of Bishops (or Synod) is the highest religious authority in the Church (24).

The norms of the administrative structure of the church go back to the Apostolic times. A point could be made by the fact that there was a quasi-organizational structure in Christ's group of twelve apostles. Perhaps not as clearly defined, but nevertheless, it was an organizational sub-system that was endowed with a specific task and purpose. While the Scriptures do not record the organizational aspect of the "apostolic college," their activities and interaction underline the existence of certain "norms." For example, the group of the twelve disciples of Christ had a treasurer (Judas Iscariot) and a "natural" division of labor based on the talents or traits of each apostle. Matthew was a tax collector (a "government employee") and had certain familiarity with management practices of the time. In fact, Matthew was "sitting in his office," when Christ met him and asked him to "follow" him (Matthew 9: 9). Then, it is said: "Jesus called his twelve disciples together and gave them authority" to carry out their mission (Matthew 10:1). There are also certain "rules" for carrying out Jesus's instructions recorded in the Gospel: "The twelve men were sent out... with instructions" (Matthew 10:5ff). One could even see traces of "bureaucracy" (as defined by Max Weber) as early as Christ's time: a) recruitment and hierarchy, b) division of labor, c) set of rules.

The apostles continued the mission entrusted to them by Christ. The first thing they did was to elect a replacement for Judas. "There was a meeting of the believers... so they proposed two men... then they drew lots to choose between the two men, and the one chosen was Matthias, who was added to the group of eleven apostles" (Acts 1:15ff). Interestingly, this "democratic" election and the process of proposing a candidate is indicative of yet another organisational norm, namely "promotion based on merit and qualification." Eventually, as the church progressed from being a persecuted entity of believers to an institutionalized organization, the rules and admonitions of "the apostles and the elders" (Acts 15:6) were integrated in the canon books of Christian churches, including the Armenian Church.

The Hierarchical Structure of the Armenian Church

Clerical Hierarchy

- Catholicos

- Bishop
- Priest

Lay Representation

- National Ecclesiastical Assembly
- Diocesan Assembly
- Parish Assembly

The Catholicos

First on the hierarchical ladder is the Catholicos, as the Chief Bishop and Supreme head of the Armenian Church. The Catholicos is elected for life by a National Ecclesiastical Assembly (NEA), consisting of lay and clergy representatives of the Armenian Churches from around the world. The Catholicos is the chief administrator of religious, spiritual, ecclesiastical and administrative matters and oversees the decision-making processes over dogmatic, liturgical and canonical issues. He has exclusive authority to bless the Holy Muron (chrism), to consecrate bishops, approve the election of diocesan prelates, discipline clergymen, and other related matters. In the Middle Ages, the Catholicos also anointed the kings of Cilician Armenia. Working closely with the Catholicos is the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council, (the administrative arm of NEA) which carries out the overall administration of the Armenian Church throughout the world.

The Bishop

Second on the hierarchical ladder is the bishop, who is “elected” by the people and consecrated by the Catholicos with the aid of two other bishops (according to current practice, the Catholicos has exclusive right to consecrate bishops). A bishop in a given diocese is the “chief executive officer” of a given country or region, who works in cooperation with a Diocesan Council (consisting of clergy and lay members), who in turn are elected by the Diocesan Assembly of the region. The Bishop is the ex-officio president of every Diocesan organization.

The Priest

Third on the hierarchical ladder is the priest, who is appointed by the Bishop and accepted by the Parish Assembly of a given parish. The parish priest is the ex-officio president of every Parish organization. “Monastic priests” or celibate priests (*vardapets*) would normally be members of a Brotherhood of the Hierarchical Sees in Etchmiadzin, Antelias, Jerusalem or Constantinople and are under the jurisdiction of the Catholicos or the Patriarch of a given See.

The National Ecclesiastical Assembly

The National Ecclesiastical Assembly (NEA) — the highest legislative body of the Armenian Church — is made of two-thirds lay representatives of the Armenian nation and one-third clergymen. Delegates to the NEA are elected by the Diocesan Assemblies of the dioceses of the Armenian Church or communities around the world. Every bishop in the Armenian Church is automatically a member of the Assembly. The Catholicos — or in his absence the Locum Tenens — is ex-officio president of the NEA. The primary function of the NEA is to elect a successor to a deceased Catholicos. The last three NEAs were convened in 1955, 1995 and 1999 to elect the Catholicos of All Armenians in Etchmiadzin.

The Diocesan Assembly

The Diocesan Assembly consists of lay delegates elected by the Parish Assemblies. Every diocesan clergy is automatically a member of the Assembly. The Diocesan Primate is ex-officio president of the Diocesan Assembly.

The Parish Assembly

The Parish Assembly consists of all baptized and/or dues paying members of a given parish in a given diocese. The Pastor is the ex-officio president of the Parish Assembly.

On each level on the hierarchical structure of the Armenian Church, clergy and lay cooperation is central to the overall administration and ministry of the church. While the Church is governed according to the standards set forth in the Canons, there are complementary By-Laws in most dioceses that further define the role and relationship of each functionary in the church within a given region.

The Hierarchical Sees of the Armenian Church

- The Catholicosate of All Armenians in Etchmiadzin (established by St. Gregory the Illuminator in the fourth century).
- The Catholicosate of the Great House of Cilicia (established in Antelias, Lebanon in 1930, but its roots go back to the 13th century).
- The Patriarchate of Jerusalem (the St. James Brotherhood established the Patriarchate at the beginning of the 14th century).
- The Patriarchate of Constantinople (established in 1461 by Sultan Mehmet II).

The Catholicosate of All Armenians, also known as the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, is the supreme ecclesiastical centre of the Armenian Church. It is recognized as the 'pre-eminent' See (*Naxamecar Atoř, primus inter pares*) among the four Hierarchical Sees of the Church.

The Catholicos of Cilicia is equal in rank, but recognizes the primacy of honor of the Catholicos of All Armenians in Etchmiadzin. The heads of both Sees are consecrated by the same rite of the Church and enjoy the same privileges of a catholicos, namely, the consecration of bishops and blessing of Holy Muron.

The Patriarchs of Jerusalem and Constantinople have the rank of Archbishop. They are autonomous in the internal affairs of their Patriarchates and pledge canonical allegiance to the Catholicosate of All Armenians.

Each See has its own brotherhood, ecclesiastical jurisdiction and internal administrative by-laws. They are not separate churches, but are part of the One, Holy, Apostolic Church — the Armenian Church — and are one in dogma, theology, liturgy and rendered services.

While the overwhelming majority of Armenians are members of the Armenian Apostolic Church (at least nominally), there are also Armenians belonging to Armenian Catholic and Protestant (Evangelical) churches.

The Armenian Catholic Church

Beginning in the 12th century, Armenians came into contact with the Roman Church through their ties with the Crusaders in Cilicia. Later in the 14th century, through the missionary activities of the Franciscan and Dominican orders, a "latinizing movement" gained ground among "liberal elements in the Armenian Church." However, it was only in the 19th century that the Armenian Catholic Church was formally organized as a separate church. In 1831, when a new constitution for Christians living in the Ottoman Empire was instituted, the Catholics were legally recognized as a separate *millet* — an autonomous Church affiliated with Roman Catholicism — in the Ottoman Empire, with their own hierarchy and their own Catholicos-Patriarch.

In the early 18th century, two Mekhitarist monastic congregations were established in Venice and Vienna. These monastic orders are autonomous and do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Armenian Catholic Patriarchate, although they are affiliated with the Vatican. In 2000, on the 250th anniversary of the order's establishment, the two branches in Venice and Vienna merged into organization.

According to Vatican sources, some 250,000 Armenians are members of the "Armenian Rite" of the Catholic Church (others put the number closer to 150,000) with communities in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey, Jerusalem and the US. The Armenian Catholic Church is in "full communion with Rome" and pledges allegiance to the Pope as the supreme head of the church. For centuries, controversies, theological debates and mud slinging have gone on between the Armenian Apostolic

and Armenian Catholic churches. Even as recently as a few years ago, when the Armenian Catholic church announced a “return” to Armenia after its independence, clergymen in both churches exchanged bitter words over who was to “re-evangelize” Armenians after 70 years of Communism. The Armenian Apostolic Church has not fully accepted the “validity” of the Armenian Catholic Patriarchate and has seen it as a “separated” community. In turn, Armenian Catholic clergy have consistently questioned the Armenian Apostolic Church’s theology and history and some have branded it as “heretical.”

Evangelical Armenians

The Armenian Evangelical community was formally recognized in 1846 by the Ottoman government, after “painful clashes” between church authorities and the “reformers” — those within the Mother Church who wished to “reestablished” the church’s true evangelical mission. The beginning of Armenian Protestantism is traced back to the 19th century missionary activities of the American Board of Missions, which expanded an aggressive mission throughout Asia Minor. As a result of the continued affiliation of the Armenian Evangelicals with American missionary organizations, many schools and colleges were established during the second half of the 19th century, which benefited thousands of Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire (25).

Numbering only 50 to 70,000 around the world, Armenian Evangelicals are among the most organized and active of the world’s eight million or so Armenians. Despite their small numbers and their periodic conflicts with the Armenian Apostolic Church, the legitimacy and mission of the Armenian Evangelical Church is recognized by the Apostolic Church. In 1996, the late Catholicos Karekin I of All Armenians participated in a ceremony in Yerevan celebrating the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the Armenian Evangelical Church. He praised the ministry of the Evangelical Church in the life of the Armenian nation in the last century and a half.

NOTES

1. Matthew 16:18; 28:19-20. Church, *yegheghetzi* in Armenian (from Greek *ekklesia*) literally means assembly, gathering, coming together for a common purpose, i.e., to worship God and hear His words. Cf. *Nor Baragirk Haygazian Lezvi*, Vol. 1, Yerevan 1979; Abp. Khoren Narbey, *A Catechism of Christian Instruction According to the Doctrine of the Armenian Church* (New York: Diocese of the Armenian Church, 1964), p. 75.

2. Although 301 has been traditionally accepted to be the date of conversion, critical studies by notable scholars (H. Manandian, G. Garitte and B. Ananian) have shown that 314 is the actual date; cf. Tiran Abp. Nersoyan, *Summary Topics of Armenian Church History* (New Rochelle: St. Nersess Armenian Seminary, 1986), p. 3.

3. See Agathangelos, *History of Armenians* [in Armenian] (Tiflis, 1914), p. 782.
4. According to archaeological findings, the present Cathedral of Etchmiadzin is where St. Gregory built an edifice over a pagan sanctuary. Prior to that he had founded a Christian sanctuary at Ashtishat in Taron.
5. Malachia Ormanian, *The Church of Armenia* (London, 1910) p. 10.
6. David Marshal Lang, *The Armenians* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1988), p. 47.
7. St. Mesrob Mashdotz (c. 355-439) was born in the village of Hatsegyats in Taron, Armenia. After formal education in Armenia, he studied in Antioch, where he learned Greek, Syriac and Persian. Upon his return, he worked as a secretary in the Royal Court. In 394, he left the palace and became a monk and was eventually ordained a priest.
8. St. Sahag (ca 348-438) was born in Caesarea. He was the only son of Catholicos Nersess the Great, whom he succeeded in 386. He was educated in Caesarea and Byzantium. Besides his important role in the invention of the Armenian alphabet, St. Sahag is also famous for organizing the Church and establishing learning centers.
9. Nersoyan, *op. cit.* p. 8.
10. Zoroastrianism was the dominant religion of Persia, especially during the Sassanid dynasty (211-640 A.D). It is a system of religious doctrine ascribed to Zoroaster. He taught that the world was made by one "Wise Lord" with the help of his Spirit and six other divine spirits or attributes of god. These spirits work against the Evil spirit, who is also helped by six other spirits and tempts man to wrong.
11. Yeghisheh, *History of Vartan and the Armenian War*, Trans. Dikran Boyajian (New York: The Delphic Press, 1952), p. 110.
12. Aram Keshishian, *The Witness of the Armenian Church in a Diaspora Situation* (New York: Prelacy of the Armenian Apostolic Church, 1978), p. 53
13. The Creed (*havadamk*) as expressed in the "Constantinopolitan formulary". The dogmas and teachings of the Armenian Church are based on the declarations of the first three Ecumenical Councils of the Church. The Council of Nicea, in 325 A.D., defined the divinity of the Son of God; Constantinople, in 381, defined the divinity of the Holy Spirit; Ephesus, in 431, defined Christ as the Incarnate Word of God and Mary was declared Theotokos (*Asdvadzadzin*). Subsequent "Ecumenical" Councils, which are accepted by the Byzantine and Roman churches, defined other theological issues: Chalcedon in 451, Constantinople II in 555, Constantinople III in 680, Nicea II in 787; however, they are not formally recognized by the Armenian Church. Nevertheless, the decision of Council of Nicea II (787) to uphold the veneration of the holy icons is in conformity with the Armenian tradition already articulated by Catholicos Vrtanes Kertogh in the seventh century.
14. *Lex orandi est Lex credendi et agendi* (Latin) "the rule of prayer is the rule of belief and of action." This simple rule is the essence of liturgical theology. According

to patristic understanding, “the man of prayer is the true theologian; the true theologian is the man of prayer.”

15. The word *Ish* and *Ishah* in Hebrew are the masculine and feminine of the same word *human*. An exhaustive discussion of this topic is found in Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), pp. 201-208. Verhovskoy writes, “The profound thought of Genesis lies in the indissolubility of man and woman in the very moment of creation. God created not one man but two, in combination and mutual dependence.” For a theological discussion of this topic, see Serge Verhovskoy, “Creation of man and the Establishment of the Family in the Light of the Book of Genesis,” *St. Valdimir’s Theological Quarterly* 8:1/64, pp. 5-30.

16. Theologically, in the “image” of God means sharing the spiritual attributes of divinity. “Likeness” is the potential of humans to become Godlike, through His grace. From a theological point of view, human development and growth is a continuous process in life.

17. *Sin* in the original Greek (*hamarthaia*) means “missing the mark,” failure to be what one should be and to do what one should do.

18. ONE: the Church is one because Christ founded one church. There can only be one Church and not many, as such the Church is indivisible. HOLY: the holiness of the Church comes from God. “The members of the Church are holy to the extent that they live in communion with God. Within the earthly Church, people participate in God’s holiness. Sin and error separate them from this divine holiness as it does from the divine unity. Thus the earthly members and institutions of the Church cannot be identified as such with the Church as holy.” CATHOLIC: the catholicity of the Church is understood in terms of the Church’s universality throughout time and space. Also, the term *catholic*, which means universal, should not be confused with the Roman Catholic Church. APOSTOLIC: the term *apostolic*, traditionally, affirms the establishment of the Armenian Church by Sts. Thaddeus and Bartholomew. However, the fact that the word *apostolic* describes that which has a mission, that which has “been sent” to accomplish a task should not be overlooked. “As Christ was sent from God, so Christ Himself chose and sent His apostles.” He said, “as the Father has sent me, even so I send you- receive ye the Holy Spirit.” Just as the apostles were sent by Christ to preach the word of God, the Church, i.e., its earthly members, is also *sent* by God to bear witness to His Kingdom, to keep His word and to do His will and His works in this world. Cf. Thomas Hopko, *Doctrine* (New York: OCA, 1981), pp. 123-128.

19. The major sacraments of the Armenian Church are: Baptism, Confirmation, Penance, Holy Communion, Matrimony, Holy Orders, Unction with Oil. Sacrament (*Khorhourt*) means mystery, i.e., something that cannot be explained in “human terms.” St. Paul uses the word mystery to explain God’s desire to save, renew and unite all things in Christ. Jesus is mystically present in all the sacraments of the church and is Himself the officiant through the person of the priest. The sacraments are outward signs that give grace and blessings to the person receiving the sacrament. For a more detailed discussion of the sacraments in the Armenian Church, see Fr. Garabed Kochakian, *The Sacraments: The Symbols of our Faith*

(New York: Diocese of the Armenian Church, DRE, 1983); Bp. S. Kaloustian, *Saints and Sacraments* (New York: Diocese of the Armenian Church, ACYOA, 1964), pp. 37-58. Also op. cit. Ormanian, *The Church of Armenia*, pp. 114-117. For a more philological survey and study of the Armenian Church's sacraments, see F. C. Conybeare, *Rituale Armenorum* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905).

20. Guaïta, Giovanni, *Between Heaven and Earth. A conversation with His Holiness Karekin I* (New York: St. Vartan Press, 2000), p. 97.

21. The Council of Chalcedon (today Kadikoy, a suburb of Istanbul), also known as the Fourth Ecumenical Council, was convened with the purpose of, among other things, asserting the Church's orthodox teaching against the heresy of Eutyches. He asserted that after the Incarnation Christ had *one nature*.

22. Keshishian op. cit. pp. 58-59n.

23. For the text of the Joint Statement see *Window view of the Armenian Church*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1992, pp. 21-24.

24. See, for example, Nersoyan op. cit. p. 25-26.

25. For an extensive discussion of Evangelical Armenians, see Leon Arpee, *A Century of Armenian Protestantism* (New York: The Armenian Missionary Association, 1946); Hratch Tchilingirian, "When Small is Big. Armenian Evangelicals Render a Century and a Half of Service," *AIM*, Vol. 11, No. 1, January 2000.