

The Armenian Church

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[This pamphlet is dated as regards politics, being written in 1965 before the fall of the Iron Curtain. In 1970 Pope Paul VI and Vaskan I, Catholicos and Supreme Patriarch of the Armenian Apostolic Church issued a joint Declaration on Unity. May the reproduction of this pamphlet help to advance the cause of union under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.]

Cover Picture and illustrations (not shown) 1) PRIEST READING the Scriptures during a Divine Liturgy or Mass - Note Altar and Sanctuary hidden and covered by black curtain during Lent. 2) Note: Dome on Bishop's Throne on our left, same style as actually is on Church. 3) Note also Bishop's distinctive Head-dress, the 'veghar'.

THE CHURCH OF ARMENIA

GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION

Armenia is divided, unlike Gaul, into two, not three parts, Greater Armenia and, Lesser Armenia. The position of Greater Armenia is easily found on the map [and is now an independent nation]. It lies between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea It is bordered on the north by the Soviet Republic of Georgia and on the east by the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan [both are now independent nations]. The western frontier is partly the Black Sea and partly Turkey, while to the south-west and south it adjoins Iran. Since 1920 it has been part of the U.S.S.R. and today it is one of the sixteen Republics which form this unity. [In 1980 the U.S.S.R. dissolved and Armenia became independent.] It is a mountainous country and much of its arable land consists of valleys situated at various altitudes among the mountains, in consequence, it enjoys a wide variety of climates. Being so mountainous, only one quarter of the territory is arable but what can be cultivated. produces cereals, cotton, grapes and tobacco as well as other crops. It ranks second among the cotton-producing regions of the U.S.S.R., the first place going to its neighbour, Azerbaijan. It is said to produce thirty-seven different kinds of grapes from which wine and brandy are made. Since its absorption into the U.S.S.R., agriculture has been mechanized and the Republic has shown increased productivity. Industry, too, has developed and factories for the production of rubber, chemicals, armaments and other goods have been set up. It lacks oil and coal but the fast flowing rivers have been harnessed and the resulting electric power is employed to serve the needs of industry. Lesser Armenia is in South-eastern Turkey astride the Cilician Mountains.

POPULATION

The population of Greater Armenia does not exceed 1,400,000 but Armenians scattered about Georgia, Azerbaijan and other districts in Russia. number about a further 800,000, thus giving a total of about 2,200,000 in the U.S.S.R. Many Armenians have figured prominently in different spheres of life in Russia. Probably the best known of all Soviet Armenians is Anastas Mikoyan, one of the vice-presidents of the U.S.S.R. who has travelled a great deal in western countries on behalf of Russia. The inventor of the Mig, the Russian fighter plane, was a brother of Anastas Mikoyan.

During the second world war there were thirty generals of Armenian origin in the Russian army, the best known of whom was General Bagramian, Commander of the First Baltic Army.

NOAH'S ARK

Tradition has associated the resting place of Noah's Ark after the Flood with Mount Ararat, a mountain rising to almost 20,000 feet which was formerly in Armenia but which now lies just outside its frontier in Turkey. The Armenians, even claim to possess a portion of the Ark at Etchmiadzin, the ecclesiastical capital, situated near the Turkish frontier not far from Yerevan, the civil capital. There seems to be little support in history for the claim but this does not deter enthusiasts whom one reads about in the newspapers, from going off to Mount Ararat to search for what may be left of Noah's Ark. Another association of the Armenians with Noah is the name which they give to their race, Haik, after the grandson of Japheth, the son of Noah. Haik is a very common baptismal name among the Armenians.

Lesser Armenia

Lesser Armenia came into being in the twelfth century when persecution by the Moslems (especially the Seljuk Turks after the Seljuk victory in the Battle of Manzikert) forced many Armenians to flee to Cilicia in Asia Minor, near the border with present day Syria. The persecution was additionally caused by the willing aid which the Armenians gave to the Crusaders in their struggle to occupy and hold Jerusalem and Palestine with their holy places so sacred to Christians. It was the support and protection afforded to the Armenians by the Crusaders which enabled them to establish the Kingdom of Cilicia which endured until 1375, when the Moslem victories against the Franks caused it to collapse. Cilicia remained a strong centre of Armenian influence with a large Armenian population until recent times when the massacres of large numbers forced most of the others to flee during a period lasting from 1895 till the end of the first world war.

ORIGIN OF RACE

The Armenians are a people of Indo-European extraction who settled in Greater Armenia several centuries before the Christian era. Throughout their history they have shown a tradition of sympathy towards the west and look upon themselves as a bridge between Europe and the east and the vanguard of the European way of life among Orientals.

Language

Their lot has been one of incessant struggle and misfortune which has revealed a tremendous spirit of tenacity and endurance and a resolute determination to remain distinct as a nation with its own characteristics, culture and language. It must be confessed with embarrassment that the dissident Armenians who form the great majority have shown greater attachment to their language and culture than the Catholic minority who tend much more easily to frequent schools where English and French are the main medium of instruction. Almost without exception the dissident Armenians will insist on securing at least a solid grounding in their own language in a school where it is the medium of instruction, though all must become proficient in a European language since Armenian is an unknown tongue in the countries where so many Armenians have settled outside Russia. A notable exception to this apathy among Armenian Catholics is the religious Order of the Mekhitarist Fathers who follow a Benedictine rule and whose contribution to Armenian literature is gratefully acknowledged by all.

INTELLECTUALS

The Armenians are a highly intelligent people with special gifts in the fields of music and the arts. They have many representatives who are of world renown in painting and music, such as Khatchadourian and Spendiarian, the famous composers and Sarian the painter. They show a strong interest in photography and it is no accident that Karsh, the American photographer, one of the most outstanding in the world, is of Armenian origin. He has co-operated with Mgr. Fulton Sheen in the production of books, such as one on the Holy Land, which require illustration with first class photos. The Armenians also excel in commerce and in this connection the name of Gulbenkian comes to mind at once. Mr 'Five Per Cent', as he was known, built up an enormous fortune and with it set up the Gulbenkian Foundation which helps worthy causes even among non-Armenians and from which even Ireland has benefited.

FOUNDED BY ST PETER

Christianity came to Armenia from Cappadocia in Asia Minor which itself had been evangelized from the great Patriarchate of Antioch, the first See of St. Peter which the apostle left to come to Rome. Antioch was a city of Greek language and culture and it was here that the followers of Christ were first called Christians. (See Acts 11: 26). It was from here that St. Paul set off on the first three of his missionary journeys and where he returned at the end of the first and second and where he caused great joy to the first Christians by announcing the conversion of so many of the first Gentiles and the breaking down of the wall of separation which had been keeping them outside the Church. From this great centre the Church spread throughout Syria and the Lebanon and Asia Minor, where the region of Cappadocia lies. As Armenia was not far away, it was natural that the faith should have come to it from Cappadocia. The Armenians themselves attribute their conversion to the work of the Apostles St. Bartholomew and St Jude Thaddeus, but this has no support in history and generally the tradition is believed to be spurious. The work of St Gregory the Illuminator, is more certain and he is said to have been responsible for the conversion of the King of Armenia and a great part of the population at the end of the third century A.D.

St Gregory had been consecrated bishop at Caesarea in Cappadocia and it was inevitable that the liturgy and religious customs of that city should have been followed by the Armenians. As Cappadocia had taken these from Antioch, the liturgy of Armenia can be said to have originated in Antioch. The liturgy at Caesarea was carried out in Greek and when it was transplanted to Armenia, it was celebrated in Greek there, too, at the beginning.

At the end of the fourth century A.D. the Armenian language replaced Greek, as the invention of an alphabet for this tongue by Mesrop enabled the Armenians to translate the scriptures and the liturgy into their own language and to secure greater religious independence. They have the distinction of being the first Christian nation in history.

The Armenian dissidents of today call their Church the 'Orthodox Church of Armenia.' The title 'Orthodox' is claimed by all dissident Churches. In its strict meaning it designates a Church which claims to teach the true doctrine of Christ, but custom attributes it to the Churches of the Byzantine Rite and it should not be used in speaking of other Churches such as those which hold the doctrines of Nestorianism and Monophysitism. As the Armenian Church is monophysite, one should not refer to it as 'orthodox.' The tendency in Catholic circles today is not to employ the term at all in speaking of the separated Churches of the East lest this may imply the correctness of their claim to be the true Church of Christ. There is an even stronger tendency among Catholics to avoid the use of epithets

such as 'heretical' or 'schismatical' which are liable to hurt the feelings of the members of these Churches, most of whom are acknowledged to be in good faith.

MONOPHYSITES

The Armenians, then, are Monophysites in faith and as such are cut off from both the Catholic Church and the separated Churches of the Byzantine Rite. Monophysitism teaches that in Jesus Christ there is only one nature, the divine nature, and that his human nature was swallowed up by his divinity. This teaching is opposed to that of the Catholic Church with which the Churches of the Byzantine Rite agree, and which holds that in Our Lord there are two natures, complete and unmixed, joined in perfect unity in the single person of the Son of God. The doctrine was defined by the Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon held in 451 A.D. There are three Monophysite communities, the dissident Copts of Egypt, the Jacobites in Syria and the separated Armenians. The Armenians were not present at Chalcedon, being detained at home by the very great necessity of defending themselves from aggressors. They were defeated in battle in that year in which Chalcedon was held. The year 451 A.D. is still commemorated annually among the Armenians but it is Vartan and his glorious defeat which is celebrated and not the Council of Chalcedon. They seem not to have learned of the nature of the decrees of the Council until later, when conditions were more settled in their own country and Armenia was again 'open to tourists.' When they did learn of the decrees, they refused to accept them, largely out of a spirit of opposition to the East Roman or Byzantine Empire with its centre at Constantinople, for the Greeks and West Romans with their centre at Rome had approved of the decisions of the Council.

It is becoming clearer that most of the early schisms were for the most part political rather than religious in origin and that the separatists used doctrinal differences as a means of expressing their disagreement with colonialist powers or disagreeable neighbours. The results have been none the less calamitous for Christian unity because of the reasons behind the schisms and the magnitude of the problem of reunion today should serve as timely warnings for the future. In 491 A.D., forty years after the Council of Chalcedon, the Armenian Church held a council at Vagarshapat, at which the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon were condemned and from which the state of separation from both Rome and Constantinople is reckoned. Relations were re-established on more than one occasion later, but the Armenians returned to their isolation as the political conditions favouring rapprochement with Constantinople deteriorated and the advantages of reunion diminished. As Constantinople had not yet broken with Rome, Armenian reconciliation with the Byzantines meant a return to Catholic unity.

CRUSADES

When the Crusades began, the Armenians came into contact with the Latins, whom they aided in maintaining their precarious hold on the holy places in Palestine and the overland supply routes through Asia Minor. With the help of the Franks the Armenian Kingdom of Lesser Armenia was established and reunion with Rome declared in 1198. The Armenian Rite bears the marks of that period of reconciliation when it took over elements from the Latin Rite some of which it has retained to the present day as it will be shown later. The defeat of the Crusaders by the Moslems necessarily involved the disappearance of the independent Kingdom of Lesser Armenia which came about in 1375 A.D. Nothing exhibits more clearly than the fate of the reunion with Rome the political nature of both reconciliation and schism in past centuries, for with the elimination of the Kingdom of Lesser Armenia went the state of reunion with Rome. Contact with the West seems to

have stimulated the Armenians, for the period during which they were reunited with Rome marks the golden age of Armenian religious literature. In Lesser Armenia a religious order, called the Brothers of Unity came into being as a result of the labours of the Dominican Fathers, recently established as a religious order by St Dominic, whose rule the Brothers of Unity followed. Like the reunion, it came to an end after the defeat of the Crusaders.

The Armenians were represented at the Council of Florence held in 1429 A.D. and signed the decree of reunion which was never put into effect. One relic remains of this abortive effort to secure reunion, in the form of a document drawn up by Rome for the guidance of the Armenians on the question of the sacraments, and is taken almost word for word from the works of St Thomas Aquinas. However, groups of Armenians remained loyal here and there to the Catholic Church but without leadership until 1742 when they received a hierarchy which set up its headquarters in Krim in the Lebanon.

GREGORIAN CHURCH

The Armenians refer to their Church also as the Gregorian Church of Armenia after the missionary who introduced the Christian faith to their country, St Gregory the Illuminator. In theory the Gregorian Church, or the 'Armenian Apostolic Church,' is a unity but in practice there are four autonomous Sees with the Patriarch of Greater Armenia holding a primacy of honour.

PATRIARCHS

1) The Catholicate of Etchmiadzin in Greater Armenia. The Patriarch is referred to as the Catholicos which has the meaning of 'universal ruler.' Out of the 2,200,000 Armenians in the U.S.S.R. it is difficult to say how many have remained faithful to their Church. The Catholicos of Etchmiadzin claims authority also over the dissident Armenians in Egypt, Iraq, Europe and the U.S.A. but not all acknowledge him.

2) The Catholicate of Sis in Cilicia. This is the See of the Catholicos of Lesser Armenia. Most of those who escaped with their lives after the massacres of 1895 and subsequent years fled from Turkey so that the importance of this Catholicate is now greatly diminished. The Catholicos moved his seat to Antilyas in near-by Lebanon, though he retains his original title. He also claims jurisdiction over dissident Armenians living in the Lebanon, Syria and the island of Cyprus.

3) The Patriarchate of Jerusalem. This Church became independent of the Catholicate of Sis in the fourteenth century when the monks of the Monastery of St James refused to accept the decisions of the Council of Sis held in 1307. Owing to its ancient connections with the Holy City, the Armenian Patriarchate shares the right to celebrate religious services in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre with the Latins, Byzantine dissidents, the Copts and the Ethiopians. The division of Palestine into Israel and Jordan in 1948 led to financial difficulties for the Armenian Patriarchate, as much of its property was situated in the region occupied by the Israelis. The great distress suffered by Armenians in Jordan as a result of the Arab-Israeli war [of 1948] could not be sufficiently relieved by the alms of the Patriarchate which were then insufficient to come to the aid of all the needy.

4) The Patriarchate of Constantinople. The exodus of Armenians from Turkey after the massacres by the Turks resulted in a great decrease in the importance of this See. Out of an Armenian population of one and a half millions only about seventy thousand remain.

A fifth See, the Catholicate of Aghtamar in Persia, has become extinct in recent times. Through the massacres of Armenians during the first world war and the exodus which followed, none of the 95,000 of the faithful remained a few years after the termination of hostilities.

Communities of Armenians of varying sizes can be found scattered throughout Europe but those in Lyons and Marseilles are among the largest. The links with France have their origin during the Crusades. They were strengthened in the nineteenth century when the French gave their support to the Armenians in their difficulties with the Turks.

Catholics of the Armenian Rite (Uniates) are much fewer in number than the Gregorian Armenians and they do not exceed 100,000 in all. Until recently they were ruled by their Patriarch, Cardinal Agagianian, who was born in a village not far from Batum, a port on the Black Sea in the territory of the U.S.S.R. As he is a member of the Roman Curia, and Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda Fidei, his many duties forced him to renounce his position as Patriarch and a successor was appointed. The full title of the holder of the office is 'Patriarch of the Catholic Armenians and Catholicos of Cilicia,' though he now resides in Beirut in the Lebanon which is also the See of an Archdiocese ruled directly by the Patriarch. There are also dioceses of Armenian Catholics in Constantinople, Aleppo, Baghdad, Alexandria and Isphahan in Persia.

MEKHITARISTS

The development of literature in the Armenian language owes much to a Catholic Religious Order, called the Mekhitarists, which was established in the Morea (Greece) in the eighteenth century by Mekhitar, the founder, under the protection of the Venetians who were in control of the area. When the Venetians withdrew from the area, Mekhitar was obliged to transfer his Congregation to Venice where he was allowed to set up his religious foundation on the island of San Lazaro. The Congregation, which follows the rule of St Benedict and is devoted to the advancement of learning, set up a printing press for the publication of works in the Armenian language or relating to Armenia. Later, the Order split into two parts, one retaining its headquarters on the island of San Lazaro and the other setting up its mother-house in Vienna. These Congregations have established schools throughout the world for the education of Armenians wherever they are to be found in large numbers. These schools are notable for their zeal for the Armenian language, chant and customs, and work for both Armenian Catholics and Gregorian Armenians. In this the Mekhitarists differ from the secular priests of the Armenian Catholic Rite who are said to show less enthusiasm for the Armenian language and are therefore less acceptable to the dissidents who regard them and their faithful as being a little less than complete Armenians.

Apart from the two branches of the Mekhitarist Order, there is also a religious Order of women, called the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, which was founded in Rome in 1852 and which has established schools in many places for the education of girls.

ARMENIAN PROTESTANT CHURCH

Apart from the Gregorian Armenians and the Catholic Armenians there is also a body of Armenian Protestants whose numbers are estimated to be at least as high as those of the faithful of the Armenian Uniates (i.e. Catholic Armenians). In 1831 missionaries of the Presbyterian Church of America arrived in Constantinople and began work among the Armenians resident in that city, and finally succeeded in establishing themselves throughout Asia Minor. Their activities included the administration of schools and clinics. At first the Presbyterians proclaimed that they had no intention of making converts from among the Gregorians but this promise was forgotten and an

Armenian Protestant Church was set up. In 1866 an American Presbyterian College was opened which has developed the flourishing American University, which together with the Jesuit University St Joseph, was responsible for the revival of Arabic literature at first in the Lebanon and finally throughout the Arab world. The Lebanese leaders in the revival were mostly Christians, but the first place has since passed to the Moslems of Egypt. The American University has received generous grants from both the Rockefeller Foundation and the Gulbenkian Foundation, as much as two and a half million dollars from the first-named philanthropic institute. The Protestant Armenians were very badly hit in the massacres they suffered at the hands of the Turks in Cilicia, especially during the most serious of all, those endured during the first world war. As a result, almost nothing is left there of the schools and clinics provided by the American Presbyterians. Many of the refugees fled to the Lebanon, especially Beirut which has now an Armenian quarter and a Protestant Armenian Community of about 12,000. After the second world war, a college was established in Beirut for the education of future preachers for which the necessary funds came from America, where there are many Armenian Protestants. Armenian Protestants can also be found in Cairo where they have a church.

Art

Armenian church buildings are easily recognized from the outside. Like all church buildings influenced by the style of Constantinople they have a dome. In the Armenian Rite the dome is not round, as in the churches of the Byzantine Rite, but conical and is said to be built in the shape of the head-dress, called the *veggar*, worn by the clergy of the Gregorian Church. The interior of the church is characterized by simplicity of ornament. This severity of decoration in the interior of the church is the result of the iconoclast movement of the seventh and eighth centuries. Statues are entirely forbidden but paintings are allowed, though these are few in number. Icons and religious paintings in private homes are not encouraged. The church building is usually rectangular in shape and the altar normally faces east. The Armenian altar is the only one among those of the dissident Churches to have gradines (steps or ledges) in the Latin style and is not flat as among the other separated Orientals. The sanctuary in which the altar stands is one of four parts of the church. Next to the sanctuary comes the choir which is always a step lower in height. The nave or main part of the building which holds the faithful during religious services is also a step lower than the choir. The vestibule near the main door is separated from the nave by a grill which has replaced the earlier custom of a dividing wall. In early times penitents and catechumens were obliged to remain in the vestibule and were not allowed to proceed into the nave.

LITURGY

There are usually three altars in an Armenian Church but two of these are simply for ornamentation and Mass is said only at the high altar. Daily celebration of the Mass has long been given up and the present custom is to celebrate Mass only on Saturdays and Sundays, as well as on feast days. There is no strict obligation on the faithful to assist at Mass on Sundays and feasts. In the matter of devotion the Armenian dissidents are not bound by any prescribed rules and failure to attend Mass on Sundays and Holidays (Holy Days) does not entail sin, whether mortal or venial. The obligation of keeping the Sabbath holy is fulfilled, according to the Patriarch of Constantinople, Mgr Ormanian, even by assisting at part of the Office said on Saturday evening. 'The Church contents herself with enjoining what is expedient.' (Ormanian. *The Church of Armenia* p. 153). Not many feasts are celebrated and some of these such as the Assumption of Our Lady, the Transfiguration and the Exaltation of the Holy Cross are transferred to the nearest Sunday. Christmas is celebrated,

not on 25th December, but on 6th January (the Epiphany). The Sunday begins with the evening of Saturday and it is for this reason that assistance at an Office celebrated on Saturday evening is counted as a fulfilment of the divine precept of sanctifying the Sunday. [A similarity here to the post-Vatican II Catholic practice.]

It is clear that the obligation of religious worship has been reduced to a minimum.

The Armenian Gregorian Church is the only dissident Eastern Church to undergo latinisation in its liturgy. To this day she bears marks of her close association with the Crusaders in the Middle Ages when zeal for the faith was identified with enthusiasm for the spread of the Latin Rite and customs. The gradines on the Armenian altar bear witness to this process. Unleavened bread is used for the Sacrifice of the Mass and there are four minor orders, Porter, Lector, Exorcist and Acolyte as in the Latin Rite [until the reforms of the minor orders by Pope Paul VI in 1972].

Since the Armenian Catholics have been in contact with the Latins for a much longer period than the Gregorians were, they are, as might be expected, much more latinised than the Gregorians, for whom the process of latinisation ceased with the Crusades. The Armenian Catholics have evolved a low Mass which is unknown among the dissidents. It is read, not sung, and takes about the same length of time as the Latin Mass. Thus they have several Masses on Sundays and Feasts. It is especially in the taking over of Roman devotions that the latinisation of the Armenian Catholics is shown. Devotion to the Sacred Heart, the Rosary, St. Therese of the Child Jesus, the Way of the Cross, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament are all in favour among them. There is no suggestion that these devotions are not good, in themselves but it is doubtful whether wholesale conformity to the devotions and practices of the West is healthy for the Uniate Churches. They set up a barrier between Catholics and dissidents and make the latter fearful of their fate in the case of reunion with Rome. The Armenians have been particularly attached to their customs and culture and are not at all disposed to accept and submit to universal conformity in these matters. Their fears of Roman pressure to spread Latin customs have a foundation in history and they have need of being reassured of the complete change of attitude on these matters in the west. Recent Popes have already given assurances to the dissident East that in the case of their reunion with Rome the integrity of their customs will be preserved and the discussions on the liturgy in the Second Council of the Vatican have shown how wide-spread among the bishops the new and more healthy ideas are.

As has been remarked earlier the Armenian liturgy derives from that of Antioch in Syria through Caesarea in Cappadocia. There is a preparatory rite of corresponding to the 'Prothesis' of the Byzantine Church during which the bread and wine of the sacrifice are prepared but this takes place in the sacristy and not at a special altar. The Armenian side altars are merely for decoration and there is no altar of the 'Prothesis' as in the Byzantine Rite. The Armenian Mass properly so called begins at the foot of the altar and in this it is different to the other Oriental Rites. This singularity suggests Latin influence and the suspicion is made stronger and even certain by the recitation of the 'Introibo ad altare' psalm [the 'I will go to the altar of God' psalm which was part of the Latin liturgy until the 'Novus Ordo' Mass of Pope Paul VI] and the 'Confiteor.' ['I confess.'] The Creed recited after the Gospel is neither the Apostles Creed nor the Nicene Creed but one peculiar to the Armenian Rite. The Armenians are also exceptional in that they are the only Oriental Christians who do not add a little water to the wine for consecration. The reason for not using water seems to have been a gesture which had as its purpose to avoid their being confused with other early Christians of Gnostic leanings who condemned wine as evil and used only water for "consecration" in the Mass. The Gregorians always chant the Mass and the ceremony is therefore a lengthy one,

lasting about two hours. They have taken over the Latin Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament with the hymns in Armenian and set to Armenian music, which, though oriental in character, is pleasant to western ears.

The Armenian Church is not one of those which celebrate the liturgy in a living language. The language employed is ancient or classical Armenian which is not fully understood by those conversant with only the modern version. Ancient Armenian is related to modern Armenian in the way that classical Greek is related to modern Greek. The vocabulary is largely the same but the declensions of nouns and verb endings have been simplified through the centuries, in accordance with the tendency of spoken languages to become less complex in the course of time. Armenian is a language of the Indo-European group for which a special script was invented by Mesrop in the fourth century.

VESTMENTS

The liturgical vestments in use are eastern in character, too. The celebrant wears an alb with a cincture in the form of a narrow band of material of the same colour as the vestment. The amice, however, is distinct and takes the form of a square piece of linen or cotton to one edge of which is attached a rather stiff cardboard covered with material of the same kind and colour as the cope which takes the place of the Latin chasuble. The amice is so worn as to form a collar round the neck of the celebrant and helps to give an appearance of neatness to the liturgical dress. The cope referred to differs from that used by the Latins in so far as it has no cape and is curved and not rectangular, in front. During part of the Mass the celebrant wears an ornate crown which is said to be Persian in origin. In common with other Oriental Churches, the celebrant in the Armenian Rite carries a small hand cross with which he gives the numerous blessings required by the ceremonies.

Armenian bishops, both Gregorian and Catholic, use the mitre and crozier of the Latin bishops. This is explained by the close contact of the Armenians with the Latin Crusaders over a period of more than two hundred years. The traditional oriental crozier which ends in twin serpents' heads is reserved for those enjoying the office of 'Vardapet.' The Maronites, Catholics, who have no dissident counterparts, from Lebanon also use the Latin mitre and crozier. Thus the two peoples who co-operated most closely with the Franks are, as might be expected, the two which show most clearly the effects in their liturgical customs.

BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION

The Gregorian Armenians are very vague on the subject of the sacraments, though in practice they use most of them. Baptism is conferred by a triple immersion, one in the name of each Person of the Holy Trinity. The form of baptism is couched as a prayer and thus differs slightly from the straightforward affirmative of the Latin form. 'Let N... be baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.' Even in case of necessity only a priest is allowed by them to confer this most necessary of sacraments. Baptism is always immediately followed by the conferring of the sacrament of Confirmation as is the custom among all the Orientals, except the Uniate Maronites, who were induced by the Latins during the Crusades to follow the custom of the West and defer it to a more mature age. The Armenians are so strict about the conferring Confirmation immediately after Baptism that many of their scholars hold that the ceremony of Baptism without Confirmation is invalid. The Eucharist is also given on the occasion of Baptism and after Confirmation. If the recipient is an infant, the priest dips his finger into the Precious Blood and makes the sign of the cross on the infant's lips saying, 'The plenitude of the Holy Spirit.' In general the other Eastern

Churches agree with the Armenians in considering the sacrament of Confirmation to be, with the Eucharist, the complement of Baptism. (So does Latin theology, but the Latin custom prefers to wait for the more mature years when an infant is baptized.)

EUCCHARIST

The doctrine of the Eucharist is that of the Catholic Church and includes an acceptance of Transubstantiation, though some authors, such as Ormanian, deny this explanation of the manner of Christ's Real Presence in the Sacrament. The leavened bread used for the confection of the Eucharist is much thicker than the Latin host. This greatest of sacraments is received infrequently and most of the faithful, even the fervent, are satisfied with receiving the Eucharist three times a year on the major feasts.

The Catholic Church teaches that the words of consecration in the Mass are sufficient of themselves to effect the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The Armenians take the view of other dissident Oriental Churches that the invocation of the Holy Ghost which follows the words of consecration in the Eastern liturgies are also required for the validity of the Sacrifice of the Mass and that Christ does not become present in the bread and wine until the Epiclesis or invocation of the Holy Ghost has been said. There is an invocation of the Holy Ghost in the Latin Mass of Pope Pius V, but it comes immediately after the offering of the wine and water and before the 'Lavabo.' ('I will wash my hands' - the washing of fingers.) [The Novus Ordo Mass of Pope Paul VI does not have the invocation of the Holy Spirit at the Offertory, but it is explicit in the Alternative Eucharistic prayers and it is held to be implicit in the words of the Prayer 'Bless and approve our offering... ' just before the Consecration in the Roman Canon of Eucharistic Prayer One.]

CONFESSION

Penance is also in use among the Gregorian Armenians but its reception is restricted to the major feasts and in preparation for Holy Communion on these occasions. Detailed confession of sin is not required, except among the Armenian Catholics, and the usual practice is for the priest to read aloud a list of the more common sins to the penitents, for they may be many at the same time, express even inwardly their guilt and the priest gives a general absolution. This method would be considered invalid in the Catholic Church, (except in an emergency and when accompanied by a determination to confess mortal sins to a priest at the earliest opportunity.)

EXTREME UNCTION

The Sacrament of the Sick is no longer in use in the Gregorian Armenian Church and to explain why this is so, Ormanian invokes a distinction between a dogma and a doctrine. 'The dogma is a proposition drawn from the sacred books and expressed in a formula which is both clear and distinct. It should be accepted by the follower; of a given Church, on pain of estrangement from the bosom of that Church. The doctrine is a statement or explanation, equally drawn from the sacred books and collaborated by tradition. Consequently, it may be accepted as an assertion which is sound and positive, or it may be quasi-positive; but it imposes no obligation on the faithful to comply with it.' (The Church of Armenia p. 90.) Later (p. 102) he states that the doctrine of the Sacrament of the Sick 'cannot be accepted by the Armenians.' It is difficult to follow the reasoning of the above author and the illogical argument must be considered to be an attempt to explain, post factum, the present custom of neglecting this sacrament.

ORDERS

The dissident Armenians are the only Church separated from Rome in holding four Minor and three Major Orders. Like the Latins, they have the Minor Orders of Porter, Lector, Exorcist and Acolyte and the three Major Orders of Sub-diaconate, Diaconate and Priesthood, whereas other dissident Churches have fewer Minor Orders and some of them count Sub-diaconate among the Minor Orders. [In 1972 Pope Paul VI issued reforms in the Minor Orders for the Latin Rite. Now, there are only two Minor Orders, Lector and Acolyte, now termed 'ministries'. The Sub-diaconate was abolished.] Diaconate and the priesthood impose the obligation of celibacy on those who are not married; that is to say, priests may be married provided that the marriage is contracted before the reception of the Diaconate. Among the Armenian Catholic clergy celibacy is universal. Preaching the word of God is confined to a special class of priests, called Vardapets, who are specially trained for the function. The Vardapets carry the oriental crozier with the heads of two serpents facing each other as the emblem of their office. The ordinary priest is unfitted to preach because of the poor facilities for their religious education, there being no seminaries strictly so called. As the Vardapets are few in number, the result is that the faithful are ill-instructed in the faith. The office of Vardapet is to be found only among the Armenians. It is a very ancient institution and goes back to the fifth century. The jurisdiction of the office of Vardapet, symbolized by the crozier, varies with the degree of the office conferred.

MARRIAGE

The Armenians see in the consent of the contracting parties the essence of the marriage contract. The ceremonies surrounding the sacrament of marriage resemble those of other Eastern Churches, particularly those of the Byzantine Rite. The verbal expression of consent is followed by readings from appropriate passages of the Sacred Scriptures. Crowns are placed on the heads of the bride and bridegroom and these are interchanged, that of the bridegroom being transferred to the head of the bride and vice versa, to symbolize the unity between man and wife. As elsewhere, besides the priest, there are two witnesses. As among all the dissident Orientals divorce is allowed in the case of adultery. The Armenians, however, admit several other reasons for divorce such as abandonment of the family for seven years, sodomy or other unnatural vice, attempts on the life of the other partner, madness incurred subsequent to marriage and contagious diseases such as leprosy. The strict Catholic attitude (in conformity with Sacred Scripture) of never allowing divorce is likely to cause considerable difficulties in the event of discussions concerning reunion between Rome and the Gregorians.

MONOPHYSITISM

It has been pointed out that the doctrine of Monophysitism is held by the Armenians in common with the Jacobites of Syria and the dissident Copts of Egypt, but the Armenians seem to have gone further in their aberrations concerning the union of the divine and human natures in Christ. The basis of Monophysitism was a distrust of matter and an overemphasis on the spiritual, a form of angelism induced by various sects which owed much to Gnostic ideas. An extreme form of this excessive spirituality was Docetism which taught that the body of Christ was only imaginary and that Our Lord only seemed to have a body. The Armenians are accused, even by their fellow Monophysists, the Jacobites and Copts, of having taught this doctrine in the centuries following their break with the universal Church. It would follow that God suffered in His Divine Nature during the Passion and Crucifixion. In recent times Armenian writers have little to say on the subject. They still, however, maintain their belief in Monophysitism and their rejection of the Council of Chalcedon. Modern Catholic writers believe that part of the trouble at the time of

Chalcedon was the difficulty of finding exact translations in other languages of the Greek terms for nature and person. This gives hope that in the case of reunion between Rome and the dissident East, the question of Monophysitism will not present insuperable difficulties.

OUR BLESSED LADY

Their errors in Christology have not prevented the Armenians from exalting the Blessed Virgin and attributing to her the qualities and privileges so readily accorded to her in the Catholic Church. They believe in her perpetual virginity, her divine maternity, her assumption into heaven and her universal mediatorship. However, the definition of the Immaculate Conception by the Pope in 1854 led some Armenian authors to deny this doctrine. They show Our Lady the tenderest devotion and one of the few paintings exhibited in Armenian churches features Christ and His mother.

Apart from Monophysitism, the chief obstacle in the way of reunion with the Catholic Church is the divergent teaching of the Gregorian Armenians on the question of the primacy of the Pope and his infallibility. Their view of the Church is that it has unity but that this does not necessitate one visible head on earth. They hold the only head of the Church is Jesus Christ who has no visible representative on earth. The Patriarchs are all equal and enjoy full authority within the limits of the territory and peoples subject to them. The primacy of the Pope, which they admit, is only a, primacy of honour and gives him no rights in jurisdiction over the other Patriarchs though in the event of an Ecumenical Council representing all the Oriental dissidents as well as the Catholics, the Holy Father's right to preside is admitted, but only as first among equals.

ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

The Gregorian Armenians recognize only three Ecumenical Councils, the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D. and that held at Ephesus in 431 A.D. Ormanian says that for a Council to be truly Ecumenical and to possess the authority to make dogmatic definitions, all Churches both of the East and the West must be represented and that in view of the divided state of Christians since the fifth century this condition cannot be fulfilled nor is it likely to be fulfilled in the future. He died in 1918 and his pessimism concerning the possibility of reunion of Christians must be viewed in the light of developments in the ecumenical movement since then and of the almost universal desire for unity throughout the world. He could not have foreseen that official representatives of his own Gregorian Church would one day assist as official observers at the Second Council of the Vatican. Strange to say, Ormanian himself had assisted at the First Council of the Vatican in 1870 in the capacity of theologian for he was then a Catholic priest of the Armenian Rite. Some time after 1870 he left the Catholic Church and joined the Gregorian Armenians where his superior education soon brought him promotion. He eventually became Patriarch of Constantinople in 1890 and retained the post till 1908. He died in 1918. His book on the Armenian Church is, as might be expected, anti-Catholic in tone.

PURGATORY

Most of the Eastern dissident Churches, including the Armenians, are shy about using the word 'Purgatory' and they go so far as to deny the existence of this intermediate state of purification. In practice this theoretical denial does not seem to matter much as they pray for the dead. The Armenians believe in heaven but not in the Beatific Vision for they hold that no one can ever see God face to face, not even the blessed endowed with the light of glory. Instead they teach that the saints see the brightness of God, which is distinct from His Essence.

They do not mention in their writings nowadays the question of the procession of the Holy Ghost. They seem to have agreed with the Latins until the thirteenth century for they recited the 'Filioque' in their Creed, ('He proceeds from the Father and the Son'.) The suppression of this phrase after the thirteenth century implies that the Armenians shifted over to the Greek view that the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father alone. This vagueness of teaching is typical of all the separated Eastern Churches. On most subjects writers can be quoted in a heretical sense but this can be balanced by quotations from other writers of the same Church in an orthodox sense and he who expects to find the Catholic precision of doctrine among the dissidents will be disappointed.

RE-UNION

In the case of the Gregorian Armenians, reunion among themselves is desirable before they can make much progress on the subject of reunion with others, for they themselves are hopelessly divided. The cause of all the trouble is the geographical position of present-day Armenia and its present status [1965] as one of the Republics of the U.S.S.R. All Armenians seem to have taken a stand on the attitude to be adopted towards Russia and are either pro- or anti-Russian. To be pro-Russian in the case of the Armenians does not necessarily mean the same thing as pro-Communist. Armenians are extremely nationalistic, even though separated from the homeland and exiled in foreign countries, as so many of them are. To be pro-Russian means for most of them to be pro-Armenian, since Armenia is at present situated within the borders of the U.S.S.R. and co-operation with the Russians is thought to be useful for the welfare of Armenia. The group which advocates this policy is called the 'Ramgavar' which, strange to say, was created outside Russia in the early years of the present 20th century, while the violent anti-Russian party, the 'Dashnak' was created in Greater Armenia at the end of the nineteenth century in self-defence against persecution at the hands of the Russians. The 'Ramgavar' are pro-Russian because of their memories of the massacres of Armenians at the hands of the Turks.

Thus Armenians have become divided throughout the world for they have brought their divisions with them wherever they have settled, though Armenian Catholics seem to belong to neither party, while being strongly anti-Communist. The Russian authorities have encouraged the Ramgavar abroad and crushed the Dashnak at home. They support the Patriarch of Etchmiadzin and work for the acceptance of his authority abroad so that more and more Armenians may declare their support for the Soviet Union. In 1933, a schism resulted in which the Dashnak supporters withdrew their allegiance from bishops peddling Soviet influence in the U.S.A. In the same year, a pro-Russian Archbishop was murdered in Boston and the blame was laid at the door of the Dashnak who already had a reputation for violence. The pro-Russian group seems to have had more success than their opponents in taking over Church buildings for their exclusive use and therefore stands the greater chance of being considered the official Armenian Church in the U.S.A. The struggle has been extended to other parts of the world particularly the Middle East, where a struggle between the two camps can be seen for the possession of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

The tragic history of the Armenian people throughout the centuries makes them worthy of the attention, sympathy and prayers of all Catholics. Their incessant struggles have been necessitated by their determination to remain distinct as a nation, to preserve their Christian faith and to avoid being absorbed by nations waging war against them in order to force them to submit to their own non-Christian religions, such as the Mazdaism of the Persians and the Islamic religion of the Arabs. If their Christianity seems at times to have become suspect of being a support for nationalism, we must take into consideration what they have endured and not judge them too harshly. Perhaps the

most frightening period of all Armenian history lies in recent times, between 1890 and 1920 when massacre after massacre in Turkey earned for them the doubtful honour of being the world's most persecuted people. The last massacre was the worst of all, when during the 1914-1918 war a million Armenians lost their lives and many thousands of others suffered unlimited injustices and indecencies for having remained faithful to Christ through it all, they have surely won the special affection of all other Christians.

SOME BOOKS AND REVIEWS CONSULTED

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