

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_sbct-01.php

The Armenian Church Under the Soviet and Independent Regimes, Part 3: The Leadership of Vazgen

FELIX CORLEY

This is the third part of an article tracing the history of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Soviet Union. The first part covered the period from 1938 to 1954, when the Church was led by Kevork Chorekchyan, first as *locus tenens* when the catholicossal see at Echmiadzin was vacant, later as catholicos. The second part covered the period from 1955 (the year Vazgen Paljyan was elected catholicos) until 1986, when greater openness began to transform the religious picture in the Soviet Union. The third and final part takes the story through to the death of Vazgen in August 1994. This period saw Armenia transformed from a prosperous Soviet republic into an uncertain outpost of the Soviet Empire, troubled by growing conflict with its neighbour Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave and by a devastating earthquake in December 1988, and finally into a fragile independent state plagued by instability and poverty. Archive material for this period is still mostly classified, so this section of the article relies on published sources and reminiscences and on personal interviews and impressions gained on visits in the 1980s and 1990s.¹

The Coming of *Glasnost*'

The Armenian Church had, by the mid-1980s, reached a plateau of recognised public existence within Soviet Armenia without the freedom to carry out widespread religious services amongst the population. Elsewhere in the Soviet Union it was able to maintain only isolated outposts. In the international sphere the Armenian Church was able to act relatively freely, although only by strictly adhering to the goals the Soviet authorities had set it. The picture by the mid-1980s was stable and there were few complaints within the Church about the constraints under which it had to live. All this was to change dramatically over the next few years in a way few people inside or outside the Church could have predicted.

In the wake of the devastating explosion on 26 April 1986 at the Chernobyl' nuclear power plant in Ukraine, religious groups in the Soviet Union were permitted to make contributions to the appeal fund set up to provide relief to the victims. One of the first Churches to step forward with offers of help was the Armenian Church. Within a month Vazgen sent a telegram to state president Andrei Gromyko informing him that the Church would make a contribution of 150,000 roubles to the fund. Charitable work by religious groups was illegal under Soviet legislation and Vazgen cautiously stressed to Gromyko that he knew 'that our state had taken all measures to provide flats, foodstuffs and medicines to the evacuated population'. However, he

felt that his Church had a moral duty to contribute. The Church's contribution was also reported on Yerevan radio. Vazgen's action was followed by other church leaders in the Soviet Union.²

As *glasnost*' and *perestroika* took hold, gradually loosening state controls on religious groups, there was initially little impact within Armenia. The number of religious prisoners from the republic was small, and almost all were from the then illegal Hare Krishna community. A Hare Krishna devotee, Martik Zhamkochyan, arrested in November 1986, had died within days of being forcibly treated with drugs in the Sovetashen psychiatric hospital in Yerevan. A programme on Armenian television on 28 June 1987 declared he had died after going on hunger strike. The same programme also featured a doctored interview with another detained devotee, Armen Sahakyan. Sergei Avakyan, a believer of unknown denomination who had been arrested in 1986, was freed from the Sovetashen psychiatric hospital in August 1987. Two Hare Krishna prisoners, Karen Sahakyan and Suren Karapetyan, were freed from the same psychiatric hospital around New Year 1988, although another Armenian Krishna devotee, Sarkis Ohadjanyan, died in a labour camp near Orenburg in Russia just days before.³ An attack on the Armenian Hare Krishna community appeared in the Yerevan paper *Kommunist* in August 1987. However, it was not long before all the remaining imprisoned Armenian Hare Krishna devotees were released from the compulsory labour camps in Russia to which they had been transferred.

Restrictions on religious publishing in Armenia had not been quite as strict as elsewhere in the Soviet Union and the Church had been able to maintain more of a public profile. Initially, even *glasnost*' did not have an impact on the number of functioning places of worship the Church was able to maintain in Armenia itself. However, as 1987 progressed and the winds of change began to reach Armenia, Catholicos Vazgen professed himself optimistic about the scope for change. In an interview given in New York in late 1987 he noted that important Soviet newspapers had published articles stressing the positive contribution the Churches could make to the moral education of society. However, he admitted that not all problems had been removed and expressed the hope that the Church would soon be able to give religious instruction to children. He declared that two new churches had recently been opened and that by the end of 1987 two more churches and two monasteries would be opened. He claimed that some 70 per cent of Armenian babies were baptised.⁴

In a *Moscow News* interview, published early in 1988, Vazgen began a cautious public reassessment of the past, focusing on the Stalin period (before he became catholicos), although he did not go nearly as far as many secular journalists in openly criticising the repression of the past, and he retained a curious admiration for Lenin. 'The period of Stalin's cult of personality was unhappy for all. Crooked ways were taken away from the teaching of Lenin – the real teaching of socialism. It is a pity that Lenin left this life so early. If only he had lived longer. ...' However, Vazgen stressed that the unhappy Stalin period was a long time ago. Turning to the present, he offered a bland, reassuring assessment of church–state relations, which he characterised as relations of 'mutual trust and mutual understanding'. But he obliquely criticised the current status of religious groups, no doubt aware that public discussion of changes to the restrictive 1929 legislation on religion was just beginning: 'Under the Constitution of the USSR citizens are guaranteed freedom of conscience. But a simple proclamation of this principle does not solve all problems. Additional legal guarantees are needed to ensure its accurate fulfilment.' Vazgen did not go into specifics at that point.⁵ However, he returned to the question of reforming Soviet legislation on religion the following year in response to a question from the once-

atheist journal *Nauka i religiya*, which was by now responding to the new mood and publishing more balanced features on religion. The catholicos declared that he and the Church would welcome a new law on religion which would accord with the Soviet Constitution and which would 'secure the legal recognition of the activity of churches and religious organisations, and strictly determine the limits of their activity, rights and obligations, and their mutual relations with the state and local organs of power'. He argued that it was important that any new law should respect the special characteristics of each faith, apparently a reference to the international identity of the Armenian Church and the involvement – at least on paper – of Armenians throughout the world in governing the Church and electing a catholicos. Vazgen's remarks were relatively cautious compared with the responses of other religious leaders published by the journal.⁶

Armenia had not been involved in the celebrations of the Millennium of Christianity, marked with great pomp in June 1988: this anniversary had involved only the Churches of Ukraine, Russia and Belorussia. But the enormous impact of the celebration in changing the climate for religion across the Soviet Union cannot be overemphasised. The massive media publicity helped spur greater freedom for all religious groups. As a major ecumenical event the celebration in Moscow had been joined by the four senior Armenian hierarchs: the two catholicoses, Vazgen and Karekin II of Antilias, as well as Patriarch Yeghishe Terteryan of Jerusalem and Patriarch Shnork Kalustyan of Istanbul. Among the other 1500 official guests were senior church figures from across the ecumenical spectrum.

The Church gradually entered the mainstream of Armenian public life. Suren Harutyunyan, who took over as first secretary of the Communist Party in May 1988 after the dismissal of Karen Demirchyan, spoke favourably of the role of the Church and of Echmiadzin. Newspapers which because of state censorship had rarely covered religious affairs or given space to anything more than brief factual items about Vazgen's meetings or travels now began to cover religious themes. Echmiadzin's communiqués and sermons by Vazgen were regularly reported.

The Karabakh Movement

The question of Nagorno-Karabakh – a region of Azerbaijan where the majority Armenian population was seeking to leave Azerbaijani for Armenian jurisdiction – was becoming urgent.⁷ Tensions rose in February 1988, with demonstrations on the streets of Stepanakert, the capital of the enclave, and in Yerevan. However, as huge crowds massed in Yerevan's Opera Square, church representatives were hardly to be seen. Only one priest attended – 100-year-old celibate priest Boghos. No one attended from Echmiadzin, at least officially. On 25 February Vazgen appeared on Armenian television (transmitted also to the crowds on Opera Square) to defend himself against charges that he had been inactive in support of Armenian demands for the transfer of the territory to Armenian control. He declared he had already sent a telegram to Mikhail Gorbachev supporting the calls. 'I believe that this demand is natural, legal and constitutional', he added. Vazgen also used the broadcast to appeal for the Armenian people to remain calm and to await the decision of the Soviet authorities on the territory's status. Vazgen's appearance on television followed shortly after the nationalist Paruir Hairikyan had sent the catholicos a telegram in which he accused him of betraying the interests of his people.⁸

Following the outbreak of unrest in February 1988 the Soviet leadership immediately called on Vazgen to exert influence on the Armenian community to moderate

their demands. On 28 February a Central Committee secretary, Vladimir Dolgikh, had spoken with Vazgen who, as Mikhail Gorbachev told the Politburo the following day,

promised to use all his authority not to allow any antisovietism. He had received many telephone calls from abroad. According to his word, he had given all of them this response: don't interfere in these matters, there must be no antisovietism; only here, within the bounds of the Soviet Union, the Armenian nation is reviving. At the same time he said that real problems do exist, that these events have not arisen from nowhere. In this he referred to one example from his experience. So, he said, I was in Baku at a reception with [Azerbaijani communist party leader Heidar] Aliyev. In Baku there is an Armenian church. Two hundred thousand Armenians or more live in the city. Vazgen asked to hold a service [*moleben*] in this church, but for 12 years he's been waiting for an invitation, which he hasn't received. He's an unwelcome figure, they don't want him to turn up there.⁹

This meeting was publicised in Moscow by Sergei Grigoryants, editor of the new magazine *Glasnost'*, which, partly because of Grigoryants' Armenian origins, adopted a sympathetic attitude to the Armenians. At a press conference on 11 March after returning from a visit to Yerevan he was asked about the involvement of the clergy in the mass street demonstrations there.

I do not have definite information about participation by the clergy. I do know that Catholicos Vazgen was visited by secretaries Dolgikh and Lukyanov of the Central Committee and that they urged him to influence the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh. Reportedly, he answered, 'I have no such influence. There has not been a single church there for a long time. You closed them yourselves.'¹⁰

In Moscow itself the rise of the Karabakh movement and the influx of frightened refugees from Azerbaijan galvanised the Armenian community. The natural place for meetings was the Armenian church. Some 400 or 500 people gathered in early March after massacres of Armenians in Sumgait, Kirovabad and Agdam and Bishop Tiran Kuregyan led a memorial service. The service was followed by a meeting to discuss the events and plan what action to take.¹¹

The role of the Church and of Vazgen in particular in 1987–88, when the Karabakh question began to reach the top of the political agenda in Armenia, was ambiguous. As an institution totally controlled by the Soviet state the Church would do little publicly to oppose Moscow's policies. It is characteristic that on a visit to California in 1987 Vazgen's response to a question from a local Armenian about the burgeoning movement to reunite Karabakh with Armenia was to dismiss the subject, saying that there was 'no such movement. There are groupings, and intellectuals who have issued such requests before. This is not the first.'¹² While it was true that many Armenians had campaigned for decades to have Karabakh's status changed, Vazgen's dismissive words must have disappointed his listeners. His later repeated statements that the Armenians must solve their problems 'within the great family of Soviet nations' did little to raise his esteem among more militant Armenian nationalists. During street demonstrations in Yerevan in February 1988 – as the question came to a head – some demonstrators carried placards declaring 'The catholicos has crucified our faith'.¹³

Later that summer Vazgen appeared to be changing his mind gradually. Speaking to an Austrian journalist from *Die Wochenpresse*, Lucian Meysels, who visited at the time of the Reagan–Gorbachev summit in Moscow in June 1988 when enormous street demonstrations took over central Yerevan, Vazgen was careful to declare that he would offer a ‘non-political’ interview. ‘The Armenian Church cannot officially comment on its position in the present dispute, but we can assure you that our heart is bleeding for our brothers.’ But his implicit support was clear. Vazgen also stressed that ‘we are not alone. Our brothers in the diaspora have no restrictions imposed on them. They can lobby their governments on behalf of our just cause. And this support would certainly not be without its effect.’¹⁴

In an interview with the Soviet press agency Novosti in May Vazgen specifically turned to the religious aspects of the Karabakh problem. After calling for Armenians and Azerbaijanis to live together in harmony, he mentioned the fact that there were no churches or monasteries open for worship in the enclave. He declared that the Armenian Church had recently renewed its application to the Council for Religious Affairs for churches to be allowed to open in Nagorno-Karabakh.¹⁵ ‘In the past 15 years the Azerbaijani leadership has refused our repeated appeals to allow us to open at least one church in Nagorno-Karabakh,’ he repeated in an interview in June. ‘Some 150,000 Armenians live there, while there is not a single working Armenian church, while there are more than 100 churches standing empty and forgotten.’ Amid the heightened national mood, Vazgen believed his Church was set for a revival. ‘We are witnessing the revival of interest, especially among young people, towards their ancestors’ history, their religion. I believe that with *perestroika* a new epoch would begin for the Church.’¹⁶

During the summer of 1988 the tension in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh rose. In early July riots and demonstrations in Armenia culminated in the wounding of a number of soldiers and the death of one Armenian. Archbishop Mesrop Ashjian, prelate of the Eastern United States and Canada, who was on a visit to Armenia, reported that as Soviet troops arrived in Yerevan in early July thousands gathered at Echmiadzin to speak to Vazgen. He eventually met them and agreed to ask the Armenian government to remove the soldiers from Yerevan. Vazgen called on the crowds to be restrained. Ashjian reports that Vazgen was ‘very disturbed’ about the rapid course of events.¹⁷ In an address shown shortly afterwards on Armenian television and republished in the local press Vazgen again declared that he supported the popular demand for the transfer of the region to Armenian jurisdiction as ‘constitutional and legal’, but suggested that the recent forcible seizure of Yerevan airport had served to lose the Armenians much of what they had gained. He praised the Soviet armed forces for protecting the half million-strong Armenian community that lived in Azerbaijan, reminding his listeners of the need to restore ‘peaceful coexistence’ with the Azerbaijani people if only for their sake. ‘Whoever fails to appreciate this fact’, he warned, ‘is a victim of the self-deluders.’ He said it was time to regain the respect of other peoples of the Soviet Union, to reject those who made ‘antisoviet statements’ and to return to constructive work. Clearly rejecting the demands of those who wished for an independent Armenian state, Vazgen called for the strengthening of the Armenian nation ‘within the great and mighty family of Soviet nationalities’. The catholicos revealed that he had received telephone calls over the previous few days from religious and national leaders in the diaspora appealing for him to speak up for ‘good sense, far-sightedness and discipline’. In conclusion, he warned starkly: ‘If you do not heed my call, if you do not heed my call, I – your patriarch – will curse my fate and keep silent forever.’¹⁸ A Russian correspondent who visited Yerevan

soon after the broadcast reported that although many national figures were making appeals for calm 'the strongest impact' was made by Vazgen.¹⁹

Even though he appeared to be coming round gradually to an acceptance of greater self-determination, both in Armenia and in Nagorno-Karabakh, Vazgen always retained a strong conviction that the Armenians' salvation lay in close ties with Russia as a historical protector of the Armenian nation – not least during the critical years of the Ottoman genocide. 'It is the historical truth', Vazgen declared in the June 1988 interview, 'that the only support the Armenians received at a critical time in history [i.e. during the 1915 genocide] was from the Russian peoples.' He viewed the Soviet Union as essentially a continuation of the Russian Empire. 'In 1920, when the Soviet power finally triumphed in the republic, our people finally got rid of genocide, which was salvation for us.'²⁰

Despite Vazgen's reluctance to push Armenian claims to jurisdiction over Karabakh, many Azerbaijanis believed he was the prime mover behind the renewed demands for the transfer of the enclave to Armenian control. Ziya Bunyatov, a member of the Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences, wrote in May 1989 in an article outlining what he saw as the causes of the Karabakh conflict and the massacres in Sumgait:

Armenian ambitions reached their climax when the Armenian international mafia succeeded in claiming a key post for Levon Karapet Paljyan, a personal friend of [the Romanian wartime leader] Marshal Ion Antonescu. By means of international Armenian tycoons and the sermons of Paljyan [since 1955 Catholicos Vazgen], bellicose Dashnak propaganda increased from year to year.²¹

Other Azerbaijani writers too saw in the Armenian Church the instigator of the campaign to transfer jurisdiction over Nagorno-Karabakh from Azerbaijan to Armenia, often working in partnership with groups from the Armenian diaspora. A. Zargarov, writing in the Baku paper *Kommunist* in November 1988, was highly critical of what he viewed as the leading role of the Church.

Even though the clerical leadership states that the Armenian Church is not involved in worldly affairs, in fact it is a concealed source of inspiration of ideas for the 'desires of the ill-starred Armenian people' and their active supporter. The Church has worked hard for 'the jinn to come out of the bottle'. Long before mass demonstrations began in Karabakh, the Armenian Church was doing all it could, on the pretext of restoration of national feelings, to achieve the separation of the NKAR from the Azerbaijan SSR. ... The Armenian Church is successfully giving direction to and coordinating the measures of its religious workers abroad and especially in the USA.

Zargarov quoted the *New York Times* as saying that most meetings in the United States called to demand the transfer of jurisdiction of Nagorno-Karabakh were organised by the Church. 'The financial situation of the Armenian Church is good, thanks to the financial assistance of the Armenians living abroad, and it has broad international relations with religious organisations.' Zargarov claimed that the Church was making 'efforts to dress up the dispute which has occurred with religious garments', presenting an erroneous picture of an ever-contracting territory of Armenia surrounded by 'the world of Islam'. He quoted the *Wocheupresse* interview with Vazgen nearly six months before as proof of the western conspiracy organised

by the Church.²²

The 1988 Earthquake

In addition to the increasingly violent dispute with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia had to cope with a devastating earthquake that hit Spitak on the morning of 7 December 1988. The earthquake, which measured 7 on the Richter scale, killed tens of thousands, many of them in the nearby towns of Kirovakan and Leninakan, and caused extensive devastation. The two functioning churches in Leninakan, All-Saviour and St Nishan, were heavily damaged. The diaspora pastor Manuel Jinbachian was in Yerevan for consultations on the new Eastern Armenian bible translation when the earthquake struck.

The seminary students from the Armenian Apostolic Church and the young pastors formed two groups and straightaway left for the north. They took bread, water, sausages and some emergency medical supplies with them. When Father Yeznik [Petrossian] came back from the disaster area he was so distressed by what he had seen, that he could not talk about it. ... I too wanted to go there to help. I asked his Holiness, the Catholicos, head of the Armenian church. He replied that he would be going to Leninakan himself on Sunday, after the daily service, to pray for the souls of the victims, and he would be pleased to take me with him. So on Sunday, four days after the tragedy, I found myself in Leninakan. ...

Vazgen celebrated the liturgy in the damaged church on the main square in Leninakan, which had not long before been restored. However, it was difficult to cope with people's questioning, as Jinbachian recounted.

The people were in a state of shock. And when they learned that we were there, they started to bombard us with questions: Why did God want to punish them in this way? Were they so guilty that their town had to be razed to the ground like Sodom and Gomorrah? One of them went further and asked his Holiness if he had come to bring her children, who were buried under the ruins, back to life again!

The earthquake brought a crisis of faith in many believers. No one could understand the huge loss of life, the devastation of a number of towns and many villages and, to cap it all, the crash of two planes bringing relief supplies and personnel to the stricken region. Jinbachian, like many others, had no response to the questioning.

A young pastor asked me in tears: Is our country so accursed that even the rescuers who come to help us must perish? Why is God persecuting us in this way? I replied only: I have no reply to your questions. But I know that now, the people have even more need of you in this tragic situation. Go into the hospitals to console the survivors and comfort the wounded. I gave him a Bible and a New Testament that I had with me. And while one group started off for the north again, two other groups went to the hospital in Echmiadzin to help care for and comfort the wounded.²³

Vazgen issued a statement about the earthquake, which was eventually published in *Pravda*. The catholicos likened the tragedy to the 1915 genocide of the Armenians at the hands of the Ottoman Turks. 'Beloved brothers and sisters,' Vazgen wrote, 'although – for obvious reasons – we all find ourselves in a wounded and desperate

state, let us not forget that we are Christians and that countless times throughout its entire history our believing nation has endured martyrdom to a lesser or greater extent.' He prayed to God (spelled in *Pravda* with a capital letter) for the Armenian nation and offered his blessing to all who were helping in the relief effort. He thanked other Soviet and foreign churches for their telegrams of sympathy, as well as financial contributions. Patriarch Pimen of the Russian Orthodox Church had given one million roubles and Pope John Paul II had given 100,000 dollars, Vazgen recounted, while the Archbishop of Canterbury had been instrumental in getting the British government to pledge 'a large sum' to help the victims. 'Primate holy Echmiadzin, out of its modest possibilities, has put at the disposal of those in a desperate state 500,000 roubles which, together with the others, amounted to 1,700,000 roubles.' Vazgen pledged to continue his efforts to gather further contributions and outlined his plans to appeal to the Armenians of North and South America for funds to build five or ten thousand homes and factories in Spitak in a programme he would soon draw up.²⁴

The earthquake also brought an immediate response from other Churches in the Soviet Union and abroad. Among those making donations were the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian-Baptists and the still-banned Ukrainian Catholic Church. From abroad, many other groups sent donations and Mother Teresa of Calcutta soon arrived in Armenia to discuss the despatch of her sisters to help in the earthquake area.²⁵ One of the main focuses of Vazgen's visit to the United States – and especially his meeting with President George Bush at the White House on 9 February 1989 – was to offer his thanks on behalf of the Armenian people for the assistance received from America.

Some members of the clergy and students from Echmiadzin immediately travelled to the Spitak area to try to minister to the earthquake's victims. However, there was a widespread perception that the Church failed the people at this crucial juncture. 'During the tragic earthquake of December 1988 and the politically turbulent and difficult years that followed,' Vigen Guroian later wrote, 'the public absence of clergy among the people was noted and severely criticised by many observers. From burials to relief efforts the clergy were frequently not present.'²⁶

More positively, the earthquake brought reconciliation between Echmiadzin and Antilias. Catholicos Karekin arrived in Echmiadzin from Antilias within a week of the quake. During the liturgy on Sunday morning in Echmiadzin cathedral Karekin removed the gold eagle from his neck and presented it to Vazgen, declaring 'Your Holiness, take this gold, and may this be turned into a piece of bread, a drop of water for the Armenian people.'²⁷

Pressure for Independence

Despite Vazgen's reserve about the question of Armenian independence he was obliged to participate in the growing national movement. On 9 November 1989 delegates to an Armenian National Movement conference came to visit the catholicos at Echmiadzin. In his address Vazgen presented the Church as the institution at the heart of the nation throughout its long history. He was well aware that few of the delegates were religious and went out of his way to make them feel included. 'Perhaps for some of you it is the first time you are in Holy Echmiadzin', he said.

I do not know how familiar you are with the history of our Church ... [or] with the achievements of our Church through the centuries, from the

perspective of strengthening and realising the national idea.

Unlike other churches, we are not preoccupied with inquisitions. All Armenians, whether believers or not, we consider true children of the Armenian Church without discrimination. ... Let it not be assumed that in the formation of the national ideology the Armenian Church was a follower or a conformist. No. The Armenian Church for the past seventeen centuries has been the author and the leader [in these matters]. ... Through Christianity the moral and spiritual identity of the Armenian nation was formed.

Vazgen offered an interpretation of the life of the Church under Soviet rule and his role in preserving the spirit of national realisation.

... even in the bad times [of the Stalin years] ... though under isolated conditions, the Armenian Church has always kept the light of this spirit in Holy Echmiadzin and in the diaspora. And after the [Second World] War, when the situation considerably improved from the perspective of the Church, especially the last 30–35 years, during my tenure, we were able to accomplish worthy tasks by rebuilding our church life in Armenia. Numerous monasteries and churches were renovated and opened, of which you all know.

He stressed that in his sermons and encyclical letters he had furthered this spirit and noted, ‘perhaps a little immodestly’, that the first monument in Armenia to the victims of the Turkish genocide had been unveiled in Echmiadzin, even before the national monument in Yerevan which was dedicated in 1965. Likewise it was the Church which had declared the anniversary of the 1918 battle of Sardarabad (in which the Armenians repulsed the Turks) a national holiday. ‘With this I would like to show once again that not only myself individually, but our Church in its entirety has remained the bearer of the flag of the national spirit, also during the last decades, both here and in the diaspora.’

Vazgen outlined what he saw as the future role of the Church.

I believe that now, as new circumstances are created in the Soviet Union, those truths should more forcefully be forged and underlined, so that our people not only understands the essence of the Armenian Church, not only understands correctly our national ideology, but also understands himself correctly as an Armenian person, that who he is as an Armenian in this world and what kind of a calling he has under the new circumstances in our days, and what kind of longings he has towards our future.

On the question of the national movement – which even then was beginning to show signs of becoming a prospective government – Vazgen was cautious.

You have come forward in the name of a new movement and started to be organised and you will continue to prosper, just as here, perhaps also in the diaspora, especially in the interior Diaspora [in the other Soviet republics].

Naturally, amongst our people, not every Armenian individual thinks in the same way about different issues, concerning national issues, political issues, social issues or economic issues, neither here nor in the diaspora. That is a natural phenomenon. Yesterday, a well-intentioned fellow asked me that now there are different waves and streams among our people, here

and in the diaspora, which side is the Church with? I said the Church is not with any side, the Church is with all the sides. In other words, the Church stands on the idea of unity and it should remain so, because the calling of the Church has been to be a reconciling and peacemaking bridge among different sides.

Vazgen allowed himself to spell out what he felt were the three imperatives of the national movement. Firstly, guaranteeing and strengthening the political security of Armenia. 'I consider this of essential matter in view of the geopolitical position of our country. We should be very careful and realistic.' Secondly, rebuilding and developing the economy of the country. Thirdly, advancing 'the prosperity of our national culture'. It was this final point that Vazgen spoke the most about, stressing that while Armenians should not oppose the Russian language, they should promote the use of Armenian, both within Armenia and among Armenians in the rest of the Soviet Union.²⁸

Vazgen's address seemed designed to underline the fact that he supported the national and cultural aims of the movement without necessarily backing the political aims which might lead the movement into conflict with the Soviet authorities. His emphasis on Armenia's delicate geopolitical situation was a prescient cautionary note amid the national euphoria then gripping the country in the wake of the launch of the Karabakh movement.

Within Karabakh the question of the lack of places of worship, still regarded more as a cultural than a religious problem, returned to the agenda. Again the hostile attitude of Boris Kevorkov, communist party secretary in the region in the 1970s and 1980s, to all expression of Armenian cultural identity, including national monuments, was recalled (among many other perceived faults).

The former Amaras monastery. Here, it is maintained, at the beginning of the fifth century the creator of the Armenian written language Mesrop Mashtots organised the first school. This remarkable monument is in a state of complete devastation. In a similar poor state is the Gandsasar monastery from the thirteenth century on the summit of a hill near the village of Vank. Any attempt to express concern for monuments laid one open immediately to being dubbed a 'nationalist'.²⁹

According to Igor Muradyan, an economist by training who had long campaigned for Karabakh to be returned to Armenian jurisdiction and who had written dozens of letters to official bodies, the Azerbaijani Council for Religious Affairs was involved in the process of deliberate misclassification of Armenian monuments. In a letter written in 1987 Muradyan declared:

A directive has been received by district soviets of the NKAR [Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region] from the commissioner for religious affairs attached to the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR, Abdullayev, dated 8 September [1987], no. 158. In it there is an already drawn up list of monuments of culture and architecture, described as [Caucasian] Albanian or Azerbaijani, which are by origin Armenian. The district soviets must confirm that they belong to these invented cultures in Nagorno-Karabakh. The aim of this openly nationalistic measure is the creation of a documentary basis for the falsification, including in documents presented to Moscow.³⁰

Muradyan claimed that neighbouring districts of Azerbaijan were not sent such a directive.

The renewed interest in the fate of Armenian monuments in Karabakh, combined with the greater liberalisation that allowed such interest to be expressed more directly, encouraged a spate of publications about this architectural heritage. Books, pamphlets and articles appeared, mostly in Yerevan, describing these monuments, bewailing their neglect under Azerbaijani administration and using these monuments to legitimise Armenian claims to the territory. While academic works of archeology had appeared during the later postwar period, especially from the 1970s, these new works were designed as much for a popular as for an academic market. Among the historians producing such works was Shagen Mkrtychyan, the director of the state regional museum of Nagorno-Karabakh from 1965 to 1972, who later moved to Yerevan. He produced his first survey of historical and architectural monuments of Nagorno-Karabakh in Armenian in 1980, with a second, expanded edition in 1985. By 1989, when a revised, Russian edition was published, Mkrtychyan was able to be far more hard-hitting in his attacks on Azerbaijani historiography and custody of the monuments. He criticised Azerbaijani books on Karabakh for ignoring Armenian monuments and attacked the Azerbaijanis who, he claimed, had 'systematically falsified the history of Artsakh-Karabakh' since the 1930s. 'The Nagorno-Karabakh autonomous region is rich in unique monuments from the past, the majority of which have a history dating back centuries and which represent an integral part of Armenian culture', he wrote.

The information included in this book unfortunately testifies to the absence of the necessary attitude towards the preservation of the region's monuments. If this happened, for understandable reasons, in the past, it is completely unacceptable today, all the more so since the adoption of the law on the protection and use of monuments of history and culture, which has still not come into full force in this region.

Of the more than 1700 monuments in the region recorded by 1987, Mkrtychyan noted that some 60 of these were monasteries and more than 500 were churches. Mkrtychyan was lyrical in recalling the role of the Church in Karabakh's history:

The monastery complexes and churches which have come down to us from the depths of the centuries have even during periods of calamity and devastation for the entire nation nourished the unquenchable flame of national unity and originality. These monuments were above all the first centres of enlightenment for the region and under their vaults the art of manuscripts, miniatures and epigraphy flourished. Tracing their beginning to the sources of antiquity and enduring the tribulations of time, these stone witnesses and books not only embody the material and spiritual culture of the nation, but they also sum up the ancient history of the region and the struggle of the mass of the people for its freedom and independence.³¹

The fears over the future of Armenian culture in Nagorno-Karabakh were exacerbated by the fate of the Armenians in the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhichevan, where the Armenian population had fallen significantly during the latter Soviet period. With the momentum of the Karabakh movement a renewed interest was shown in the fate of Armenian monuments there. The unofficial Russian monthly *Glasnost* published a list of 28 Armenian monuments destroyed in the exclave over the previous 40–50

years, the vast majority of them churches. The journal claimed that most of the destruction took place at the initiative of local residents, although three of the churches were destroyed in Nakhichevan itself between 1970 and 1982 on the orders of local soviets.³² Because by the time of the 1989 census there were just 1858 Armenians left in the exclave there were no recorded calls for any of the surviving churches to be reopened.

If Armenians were concerned for the fate of their monuments, the hostility against the Azerbaijani community of Armenia in the wake of the growing conflict and massacres was vented not only on Azerbaijanis, but on their monuments too. An American journalist, Robert Cullen, reported on the fate of one mosque:

In Yerevan one night [in late 1990], a friend took me to see a pile of rubble behind an apartment building at 22 Ulitsa Knunyantsaya. It had been, he whispered, a small, simple Azerbaijani mosque back in the days when Azerbaijanis still lived in Armenia. Then, during the cycle of pogroms and expulsions, the Armenians of the neighbourhood had descended on the mosque and torn it apart with picks and crowbars, and a bulldozer had come to level the pile. Once in a while, after listening to an Armenian passionately list the uncivilised and genocidal acts of the Azerbaijanis against his people, I would mention the destruction of this mosque. Almost invariably, the response was an indignant denial that such a thing could have occurred. Even Rafael Papayan, the chairman of the new Supreme Soviet's commission on human rights – a man who served several years as a political prisoner in the pre-*glasnost* days – insisted that such a tale could not be true. 'Absolute disinformation,' he told me. 'The only mosque that was in the city is still preserved, and I can show you where it is.' He was not lying; he simply did not know what had happened. It was not the sort of thing the Armenian press would report.³³

Churches Reopened

In other areas of the Soviet Union attempts were renewed to reopen long-closed churches. The growing religious freedom under Gorbachev saw one new Armenian community registered by the CRA in 1987, the first for many years, then five new communities in 1988 and seven in the first nine months of 1989, a rising curve echoed by almost all other religious groups in the Soviet Union.³⁴ Although the number of new communities was small it must be remembered that the Armenian Church was starting from a low base. One of the new communities was in Leningrad, where the last Armenian church had been closed in 1937. A petition was launched in early 1987 by 77-year-old Argina Nikiforova, which soon gained over a hundred signatures. The following year the city soviet handed over the Holy Resurrection church in the Armenian section of the Smolensk cemetery to the newly-registered community, although the eighteenth-century church did not open until 1991. Appointed as priest was Fr Yezras Nersissyan, who had studied at Echmiadzin and at the Russian Orthodox academy in the city. He had to organise the 16 months of repairs needed to bring the church back to a presentable state. The city authorities also promised to return the much larger and more prominent St Catherine's Church on Nevsky Prospekt, completed in 1780 but confiscated during the Soviet era.³⁵

In Armenia itself the Church did pay attention to the serious lack of places of worship, especially in the capital Yerevan, a city of more than a million people. In

autumn 1990 Vazgen laid the foundation stone for a major new church in the city.³⁶ Churches began to be reconstructed in the earthquake zone around Spitak – an aluminium church was rapidly constructed in Spitak itself – and Leninakan (Gyumri). In Leninakan itself, though, the two churches remained in ruins. As late as ten years after the quake a reporter visiting the city would note that

a large church in the central square still lies in ruins, its worshippers gone. The cupolas and parts of the walls are still piles of bricks and shards of concrete. The main entrance remains precariously propped up by a giant brace. A sign pleads for donations to rebuild the complex but an idle construction crane abandoned nearby testifies to the fact that the country of nearly four million is all but broke.³⁷

In one village, Gogaran, a French Armenian charity *Terre et Culture* had been helping with reconstruction since 1989. Two years later, after many of the homes had been reconstructed, the villagers asked the group to help with rebuilding the church, which had been totally destroyed by the earthquake.³⁸ The church had been closed in the 1920s and turned into a granary in the 1930s.

Between 1985 and 1990, according to figures from church headquarters, four monasteries and 15 churches were returned in Armenia. A further 17 communities were in the process of being formed and 10 more were beginning the process of formation.³⁹ A number of the returned monasteries and churches had been restored during the later Soviet period, although not for use as churches. Much of this work had been carried out by the Administration for the Preservation of Historical Monuments, headed by Lavrenti Barsegyan. The administration held an exhibition in 1990 entitled 'Armenia's Renovated Churches', looking back on its 25 years' work.⁴⁰

Other religious groups in Armenia also found it easier to gain registration. Orthodox Assyrians had finally been able to register their first community on 30 September 1988 in the village of Dimitrov, 25 km from Yerevan. They had campaigned fruitlessly for decades to register the community, which had a church dating back to 1831, and suffered harassment from the local authorities, who 'suggested that the Orthodox Assyrians go to the Armenian Gregorian church, as if there were no differences between the denominations'. Eventually, after appeals to Moscow, they were successful.⁴¹

With the increasing openness throughout the Soviet Union from 1987 and the rise in the influence of religious groups the fundamental weakness of the Armenian Church became apparent. The Russian ethnographer Valeri Tishkov visited Armenia in October 1987. After witnessing major feasts at Echmiadzin, including services, weddings and animal sacrifices, and visiting a cemetery, he tried to establish the extent of faith of those he had met. He reported that 'none of the Armenians I spoke with had any religious texts at home nor knew any of the basic prayers by heart'.⁴² Even the twin tragedies of 1988, the start of the dispute with Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave and the December earthquake in Spitak, failed to bring people back to an active participation in the Church. Russian photojournalist Yuri Rost spent a lot of time in Armenia that year, especially in the wake of the earthquake. He observed how people coped with its aftermath:

... faith helped. Faith, not in the traditional sense, habitual for peoples whose religious tendencies, although not in tune with the Soviet political system, nevertheless are the norm. Armenians are the oldest Christians on the territory of the Soviet Union. The roots of their culture and traditions,

imbued with their national characteristics, are close to the culture of other Christians. But faith in a world beyond the grave, in spiritual salvation, as taught by the church, is to a great extent lost. The old churches lie empty, converted from places of worship into architectural testaments to their ancient historical culture. To a significant extent, also, the religious traditions observed by Christians in other countries have been lost.

But Rost noted a paradox. While ‘only a few knew their prayers and held services’ in the wake of the earthquake, respect for the institution of the Church and in particular for Vazgen as catholicos remained strong.

In essence, he fulfils the role of father to this nation scattered throughout the world, uniting people through his unlimited authority – not only defender of the faith, but also of the soul of the nation. Armenians trust him alone to intercede with God, to pray for them, to take upon himself their woes and rekindle their hopes.⁴³

This respect ensured that when the semi-free elections to the Congress of People’s Deputies in Moscow took place in March–April 1989 Vazgen was elected as people’s deputy from Echmiadzin territorial constituency no. 745, one of four clergymen – two Christian, two Muslim – elected to the body from the whole Soviet Union (though a further three were nominated to it by public bodies). However, not all were happy with his candidacy. Some felt it was inappropriate for the catholicos to put himself on an equal footing with simple deputies, pointing out that the Russian Orthodox Church had chosen two senior hierarchs to be nominated but not the patriarch. Vazgen was elected but 4435 voters left his name off the ballot as an expression of displeasure.⁴⁴

As conflict with Azerbaijan escalated Gorbachev continued to turn to the catholicos as a national figure and as a moderating influence. In early August 1990, for example, Gorbachev appealed to Vazgen ‘to use the influence, authority, rich life experience and the higher feelings of your humanitarianism and your responsibility for the fate of the Armenian people to work for the immediate ending of ethnic violence and fighting in the Transcaucasian region’.⁴⁵ Vazgen responded positively to Gorbachev’s letter on 7 September. At a press conference just a few weeks later Vazgen declared that words were not enough to overcome the bitter conflict between the Armenians and Azerbaijanis. ‘Actions and decisiveness from Moscow are needed to open a way to mutual understanding’, he said.

By this time the stakes had been raised by a high-profile hunger strike in Moscow. Karabakh people’s deputy Zori Balayan had declared an indefinite hunger strike in a room in the Moskva hotel in central Moscow on 9 September, and was soon joined by three other people’s deputies as well as several Karabakh party officials. The group soon came under pressure from various Armenian bodies to end the hunger strike. Among those issuing such appeals was the bishop of Moscow, Tiran Kuregyan (who signed the appeal in his capacity as ‘chairman of the board of the Moscow city Society of Armenian Culture’). ‘The hunger strike you have declared’, the bishop wrote on 16 September, ‘is an act of civic courage, aimed at drawing the attention of the Centre [i.e. the Soviet leadership in Moscow] and international public opinion to the fate of the Armenian Christian nation of the Caucasus.’ While ‘fully sharing your feelings’, Kuregyan declared it was unreasonable for them to put their lives at risk. On the same day Catholicos Vazgen sent the hunger strikers a similar telegram from Echmiadzin which, while recognising that their protest was directed at

the 'injustices' against the Armenians of Karabakh, expressed his 'deep agitation' about the action they had taken.

We are raising a fatherly voice of sorrow and protest together with all our nation, we grieve over the centuries-old fate of our faithful Karabakh flock and we bow before your heroic deed which expresses the holy voice of the Armenian nation. We consider it our fatherly duty to raise our voice and to send an appeal to the president of the USSR, appealing to his love of humanity and sense of justice. In the days of your suffering, hear the words of Jesus: 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for the truth, for they shall be satisfied'. Accept our sympathy, support and blessing.⁴⁶

Vazgen's initial response was thus supportive and fell short of calling for a halt to the protest, but later he moved to bring the hunger strike to an end.

On 2 October the catholicos met the Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev (and presidential council member Yevgeni Primakov) in Moscow. A correspondent from the television news programme *Vremya* described the meeting as 'more a conversation between two wise and benevolent men who are seeking equally hard to ensure peace and well-being for the peoples of their common homeland', rather than an official meeting. Vazgen told the correspondent that he was happy he had been able to persuade the people's deputies from Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia to end their hunger strike. On the dispute itself, he declared that it was

not a different faith that divides the peoples, but spite and hatred. It is precisely through respect for one's own sacred things and those of others that man establishes himself as man. That's why our destiny and the future of our region lie only in friendship and in understanding one another.

Vazgen reported that he felt Gorbachev was trying his hardest to resolve the conflict.⁴⁷

During the hunger strike Balayan had given several interviews addressing Karabakh's grievances. Inevitably questions turned to whether the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict was religious. Balayan was at pains to stress that in his view the Azerbaijanis were motivated not by Islam but by Panturkism, which he regarded as by far the greater evil. 'Panturkism is a clearly political concept, one can say a fascist concept, with its own ambitions and demands, claiming certain territories.' He denied that Islam was a factor in the dispute and agreed that, like Christianity, Islam called for peace.

This is so, although there are suras in the Quran that call for violence. However, this is more the business of the strategists of Islam and they must undertake their reforms just as Christianity has done. In short, it is not our business. You are right that there is a difference between Islam and Panturkism and Islam as a religion, just as there is between true Christianity and Christianity. As you know, it is impossible to say that Hitler, a Christian, was acting from the position of Christ and the position of the Bible, although at least on the surface he appeared to be a Christian. Here we are talking of fascism. And this is the most important point. Panturkism is the same fascism and religion is its operational weapon to influence people's minds, to inflame interethnic hatred, to create sources of tension and so on. So we will never allow people to accuse us of opposing one religion to another or one nation to another. It is not true and

never can be.⁴⁸

Spurred by the revival of national feeling as a result of the Karabakh conflict and the growing signs that the Soviet Union was nearing its demise, the prospect of independence for Armenia became increasingly realistic. One commentator, Rafael' Ishkhanyan, writing in 1989, felt that only Armenians themselves could guarantee their own independence and must break free of the idea that some outside force would help them achieve their goal. He stressed the role the Church should play:

... our path to becoming a sovereign and independent nation will become barren if we forget our Christian faith, which is being denied [by] the majority of our nation today. If we try to do everything without relying on our Maker, we will fail. Our nation has been kept and will be kept by God, if we rely on Him. He has never turned away from us; it is [we] who have done so and fallen onto bad days. We need a return to Christianity like we need the air. Let us rely not so much on a third force but on God and on the strength we can develop.⁴⁹

As independence grew more likely the Karabakh Committee turned to domestic issues concerning Armenia itself. It pledged itself to campaigning for a democratic, independent Armenia which was mindful of its historical heritage. As part of that aim it pledged itself to meeting the religious demands of the population. In the section of the *Programme* – adopted in Yerevan on 19 August 1989 – on ‘Short-term objectives of the Armenian National Movement’, point 12 (out of 13) declared:

To guarantee the free operation of Armenian churches, to open new churches upon request of the faithful, and to reestablish national religious holidays and traditions.⁵⁰

New Initiatives in the Church

As the restrictions on the Church eased new parishes, monasteries and seminaries gradually began to function in Armenia. Seminaries were founded, or refounded, in a number of places including Gyumri and by Lake Sevan, and a seminary was planned at Haghbat. In most cases, acquiring the necessary money and materials to restore the regained buildings proved to be very difficult in a country descending into chaos and poverty. In 1991 the British writer Philip Marsden witnessed a moment of joy for the priest in charge of the newly-regained Sevan seminary, struggling to cope in providing an education for the seven seminarians.

As I walked across the isthmus to the old seminary building, a car pulled up and a young priest offered me a lift. He was grinning from ear to ear. ‘I must tell you the good news. In Armenia we say when you share good news with a stranger, it is twice as good!’ He pointed to a semi-derelict building, once part of the seminary but commandeered by the state [in the 1930s]. If the Church wanted it back, the order was, they would have to pay – three hundred and seventy-five thousand roubles. But the Committee had just told the priest he could have it for nothing. For nothing! Not only that, but he had been to see that day some factory directors. These men, once the bastion of communism, had switched their loyalties. One had pledged to provide lights for the seminary and his finest chandeliers for the main hall and church, and would replace all the pipes

that irrigated the gardens. Another had agreed to give a million roubles for the restoration of a seventh-century church in one of the villages.

Marsden recounts that 'eating soup in their new kitchen, [the seminarians] explained how when they had arrived six months before there was no electricity or water. After their Bible classes they would go outside into the snow and cook on an open fire.' However, work in the seminary did not always go on undisturbed.

A coach stood near the seminary when I returned and I found the priest nervously fingering his ring of keys outside the chapel of Arakelots. The Russian girls, he said, they make trouble; always they come and see the seminary boys and they want to make trouble, asking the boys to pick them flowers, asking for special tour, saying why do you want to be a priest, making trouble with their deep-blue Russian eyes. ...⁵¹

Despite these temptations, by 1992 there were 25 students enrolled on a five-year study programme at the Sevan seminary (compared with 125 at Echmiadzin seminary).⁵²

Within the Armenian Church there were movements to take greater advantage of the opportunities now being offered, especially in the realm of preaching and charitable work. The Gtutyun (Compassion) movement, no doubt inspired by the Miloserdiye movement (founded in Russia in spring 1988) which shared the same name, was established later the same year, receiving official recognition on 8 October 1988, two months before the devastating earthquake. Gtutyun was involved in giving aid to the many Armenian refugees driven out of Azerbaijan, as well as visiting the sick and needy in their homes. When the earthquake struck it immediately began channelling aid to the survivors. The leading figure in establishing Gtutyun was Khachik Stamboltsyan, a 48-year-old biophysicist and a lay activist in the Church. Although not on the official ballot, he received the majority of votes in an October 1988 by-election to the Armenian Supreme Soviet. His nomination was then officially accepted and the following month he was formally elected when the by-election was rerun. Stamboltsyan was close to the leaders of the Karabakh Movement and was to be arrested with them in December 1988 and transferred to prison in Moscow. He was not freed until 23 May 1989.⁵³

In a 1991 interview he gave his account of how he came to faith. It was 1980 and he and a group of friends who looked more Russian than Armenian decided to go to the ancient monastery at Tativank in Karabakh to film this part of Armenian cultural heritage, travelling through Azerbaijan on foot to reach it. They entered the church.

It was 7 November and, by tradition, on the anniversary of the revolution, the Armenians gathered in cemeteries. In the church, which had lain silent for seventy years, their voices echoed, 'Holy, Holy is Your name.' Khachik wasn't a believer, but he loved religious hymns, and the church inspired singing. One by one the villagers came in and knelt down.

Khachik stopped singing. 'Carry on,' whispered one of his companions. On the altar was a large cross. Khachik seized it and raised it in front of the silent faces. Old canticles rose up in his memory. In the nave the singing echoed richly. Their voices reached as far the village of Vank. Armenians started to arrive in carts and on horses. Gathered in the church, each came up to the cross and kissed it.

According to Stamboltsyan it was later reported to the Azerbaijani communist party

leader Heidar Aliyev that a group of bearded priests had entered the church. Guards were reportedly stepped up on the borders of Karabakh to prevent a recurrence. This incident was a turning point for Stamboltsyan and apparently continued to inspire him many years later.⁵⁴

Elsewhere he spoke of his path to faith and how this was leading him in his current activity. Shortly before his arrest in 1988 Stamboltsyan was interviewed by a Moscow-based unofficial publication, *Byulleten' Khristianskoi obshchestvennosti* (*Christian Community Bulletin*). He recounted that he had become a Christian at the age of 40 after becoming convinced of God's existence through his work as a biophysicist. He stressed that the new charity he was founding had a Christian basis; he saw a need to give people spiritual as well as material aid. He said he had seen the power of spiritual counselling to bring together families on the brink of divorce. He viewed his support for the Karabakh Movement not just as a consequence of the requirement to campaign for truth and justice, but also as having a spiritual dimension. 'Although the Armenian nation considers itself to be a Christian nation, in fact, true believers in Christ make up no more than five to seven per cent,' Stamboltsyan declared. He believed that the suffering of the Armenian people in the Karabakh conflict was a result of their turning away from God and hoped that through the suffering the Armenians would come to a personal and national renewal of faith. 'If our nation repents, Karabakh will be ours; if it does not it will not be,' he concluded. 'This is the last chance for my nation. To be or not to be.'⁵⁵

Working closely with Gtutyun was an organisation called Yegpairagsutyun (Brotherhood), an evangelical group within the Church aimed at rekindling the religious fervour of the people. The Brotherhood reemerged in the late 1980s, organising prayer groups in homes and, later, larger gatherings in meeting halls and stadiums. At first outside the auspices of the Church, it reached agreement with it in 1990 and was reintegrated with it, giving instruction to church members within parishes.⁵⁶ In some ways the Brotherhood mirrors the work of the Lord's Army evangelical movement within the Romanian Orthodox Church.

Armenia was able to found its own Bible Society, something prohibited during the Soviet era, although the United Bible Societies had been able to give some help to Echmiadzin in producing editions of the Bible. The Society was inaugurated on 20 October 1990 by representatives of the Armenian Church and the UBS in the presence of Catholicos Vazgen, although at the time of its inauguration no agreement had been reached on participation by the Baptist Church in Armenia.⁵⁷ The Society's agreement with Echmiadzin provided for UBS help in the provision of advanced equipment for the printing press at Echmiadzin.

The Church was keen to reintroduce religious education into schools and colleges, an idea backed by the Education Ministry. Levon Chavakhyan, a ministry official, wrote in the literary paper *Grakan tert* of the place of the Gospel in promoting human morality. The Bible was a 'powerful tool of education', he declared. Not only did he want to bring religious education into school, he also wanted to remove the effects and techniques of atheist education from the next generation of teachers.

Instruction can be realised by the holy fathers and vardapets [celibate priests] of the church as well as secondary school history teachers who have taken special courses in religion. The moral education of the Armenian people and the goal of the recreation of a national school demands the radical reconstruction of the activity of the chairs of scientific atheism in the institutions of higher learning so that it too will serve that same end.⁵⁸

Vazgen himself was the first cleric to address students of the prestigious Bryusov Institute of Russian and Foreign Languages in Yerevan in February 1990. Hundreds of students attended his lecture.

The Education Ministry, at the request of the student body and with the cooperation of the catholicos, was able to announce the establishment of a Department of Theology at Yerevan University in 1990. Vazgen appointed Fr Abel Oghlookian to teach and develop the programme. Born in Beirut in 1957, Oghlookian had studied at the Echmiadzin seminary before ordination to the priesthood in 1980 and had later continued his studies at Vienna University. Oghlookian was also the leader of the Centre for the Propagation of the Faith (CPF), founded with the support of Echmiadzin in August 1990 and dedicated to the training of religious and Sunday school teachers, publishing and producing radio and television programmes. 'Its fundamental purpose is to evangelise', Oghlookian declared bluntly. While the Education Ministry looked favourably on the idea of restoring religious education to state schools, the absence of textbooks was creating problems, Oghlookian explained.

... we are working closely with the Ministry of Education, which is providing us with the necessary and relevant information, for instance about the laws regarding this project. We are now preparing religious textbooks for grades 1 to 11. However, we cannot prepare these books overnight or prepare and secure enough teachers. For instance, in Armenia, in order to teach religion in all the public schools, we need 5000 teachers. This is an impossibility. At the very least, it will take 10 to 15 years to prepare this many teachers.

As a stop-gap measure, Oghlookian explained, religion would be taught as part of Armenian history classes and, to a lesser extent, Armenian literature.

... a few years ago, in Armenian history courses, they would not acknowledge the entry of Christianity into Armenia, or mention the corresponding facts of history of that process. Mesrop Mashtots was responsible for the invention of the Armenian alphabet only. They would not explain and/or emphasise the reasons. He invented the alphabet so that the Gospel, the Holy Bible, could be preached in Armenian.

He reported that while there had long been 'indifference toward religion, the supernatural and the mystical' in Armenia, there was now a 'great awakening' sparked by the national revival. However, he noted at the same time that while some were drawn to Christianity, others were drawn to pre-Christian paganism because of its even more ancient association with the Armenian people. Oghlookian also expressed concern about the work of other Christian and non-Christian groups, something that was causing 'serious problems and distress'. To gain a first-hand impression, Oghlookian even attended an evangelistic rally organised by Protestants at a stadium, attended by 5000 people. 'I myself felt a wave of uneasiness', he recalled. 'Unfortunately, because our Church, or more precisely our clergy, at this historic juncture are not well prepared, they stand before an unexpected reality.' He believed the Church should do more to train capable people, warning that 'if our clergy, our hierarchy do not organise in a corresponding fashion and a concerted display of energy is not shown, then we will not be able to lead our people'. He expressed regret that Vazgen put greater emphasis on restoring parishes and dioceses than on

building up evangelisation skills through the CPF.⁵⁹

The CPF gained support from members of the diaspora Church. Bishop Hovnan Derderian, Primate of the Diocese of Canada and himself a member of the Echmiadzin Brotherhood, linked the necessity to develop the CPF's work with the necessity to change the organisation of the Church in Armenia and to recreate a parish structure, if the CPF's work was not to fail. 'The primary fault is that pastors do not live within their parishes', he declared.

Today, unfortunately, Echmiadzin has turned into a 'nest of clergy', where the parish clergy reside. The diocesan primates in Armenia administer their dioceses by sitting in their rooms in Echmiadzin and the priests go once a week to their parishes. The few priests who are involved with the CPF cannot evangelise all of Armenia, that's just impossible. Their work will be productive only when His Holiness the Catholicos [Vazgen] insists on the most essential changes to take place in the life of our Church. ... When I presented this observation to His Holiness, he responded very naively that he wasn't aware that pastors do not live within their parishes or that primates do not live within their dioceses. A few times a week they are found within their dioceses. In Goris, or Siunik or Shirak, the primate is in his diocese only a few days a week. ... I am sorry to say, but the CPF and its efforts do not receive the necessary encouragement from certain diocesan bishops in Armenia.

Derderian reported that on visits to Yerevan people had complained that priests had not once visited them in their homes. He contrasted this 'indifference' with the activism of other groups:

Take for instance St Sarkis Church in Yerevan, which is surrounded by many residential buildings and homes. If the Jehovah's Witnesses are going without invitations and knocking on the doors, and advancing their ministry, why shouldn't our clergy do the same? I believe our clergy have even more reason and would be more welcomed in these homes to propagate Christianity. No one will stop them, and I guarantee you that our people will open their doors with love.⁶⁰

Bishop Derderian noted the difficulty of engendering parish life with so few churches. Yerevan, with a population of more than a million and a half, had just four functioning churches 'which are not equipped to handle the people's needs', merely serving the 'needs of incidental visitors'. The more than 20 priests who served in these churches were 'largely occupied with the performance of sacraments and rituals', Derderian complained. Elsewhere it was worse. The dioceses of Shirak, Gugark and Syunik – which each had a population of some 150,000 – had just one working church in each area, a situation that made it impossible to generate any feeling of community.⁶¹

The Ararat diocese (which included Yerevan and which was headed by the young and dynamic Bishop Karekin Nersesyan) did take some steps to reactivate its work. A visiting priest from the United States, Fr Krikor Hairabedian, initially intended helping in Armenia for a few weeks, but was soon persuaded to dedicate himself to two years' service in Yerevan as director of education for the Ararat diocese, responsible for training teachers of religion for the state education system and training for Bible classes for church youth groups.⁶²

While the CPF came under the direct authority of Echmiadzin, a unique venture

started by Bishop Parkev Martirosyan of Karabakh was the Gandsasar Theological Centre, established in 1991 while the fighting in Karabakh was at its height and named after the monastery which is the bishop's seat. Because of the war the Centre was established in Yerevan. Fr Mesrop Aramyan, a priest who had volunteered to join Bishop Martirosyan's work in Karabakh, was appointed to head the Centre. Among its first projects – and what would remain the Centre's flagship project – was the publication of a regular theological journal *Gandsasar* of some 350–400 pages, the first issue of which appeared in 1992. The founders traced their inspiration back to the mid-1980s, when a group of young people, among them Aramyan and Martirosyan, had come together in Yerevan. 'Gandsasar was conceived when we came to faith – when we made a conscious choice to follow Christ. When someone comes to faith and tries to deepen that faith, by necessity he becomes in need of spiritual literature,' Fr Aramyan explained, adding that

at the time we came to faith there was a tremendous deficit of spiritual literature. The books that were available to us were in Russian or English or some foreign language. They were not available in Armenian. Also at that time, our knowledge of Classical Armenian was very limited.

However, once Martirosyan had been ordained priest and, in November 1988, appointed bishop of Karabakh, the realisation of this project became possible, despite the chronic economic difficulties and problems with lack of electricity and paper. Fr Aramyan describes the bishop's role as 'decisive'.

Aramyan was born in Yerevan in 1966 and became associated with Martirosyan in the mid-1980s.

We were a close circle of friends, about ten people, and we used to have discussions on religious and spiritual matters; we used to talk about the ways and teachings of Christianity; together we used to read the lives of saints; we used to pray together and spend a lot of time together.

After Martirosyan's ordination in 1985 'we used to visit him frequently in Echmiadzin and have ... deep and intimate discussions with him. Also, we had many close friends at the Seminary, so Echmiadzin was like a second home for us.'

After completing his schooling in Armenia, Aramyan studied at the Institute of Physics and Technology in Moscow and it was there that he was first able to have access to patristic writings, through books borrowed by friends from the library of the Russian Orthodox seminary at Zagorsk. In his last year of study he decided to become a priest and, after graduating from the Institute, joined the newly-created special class at Echmiadzin for those with higher education and a good knowledge of the Bible and theology. He was allowed to complete the three-year programme in one year and was ordained priest in May 1991. As Martirosyan had been his sponsoring bishop, Aramyan immediately joined him in his work. Together with another member of their circle from the 1980s, Dikran Khatchadryan, they began work on the journal and Centre.

Fr Aramyan and his colleagues were encouraged by the favourable response to *Gandsasar* not only in Armenia but abroad. Speaking in late 1993 he declared:

You will notice that from one issue to another, our work is improving and slowly but surely, we are trying to have a publication based on the norms and standards of international theological journals. In this respect, we are receiving very positive response from professional and scholarly circles

from around the world.

A series of Armenian classical spiritual texts was also planned, making available hitherto inaccessible works. 'Just the first series of the Armenian Theological Library already has 30 volumes of patristic literature,' Fr Aramyan was able to claim by 1995, 'from the third through the 11th century ready for publication. These are in the original Classical Armenian. Those works which had been published in the past are translated into modern Armenian, according to the traditional rules of orthography, and presented together with analyses and introductions.' The Centre maintained close relations with scholars of the Matenadaran manuscript repository in Yerevan, the seminary at Echmiadzin and various departments of Yerevan University, which facilitated access to original texts. The Centre also published a range of more popular literature, including pocket-size prayer books, textbooks, pamphlets on basic religious themes and children's colouring books. Fr Aramyan explained the dual aims of the Centre's work: 'Not only was our population deprived of the contents of our rich theological literature for decades, but the western world, too, remains ignorant of the research and scholarship which has for centuries earned us a unique place in Christendom.' There were plans to produce translations of Armenian spiritual classics into English and German to remedy this.

In addition to its publishing work, the Gandsasar Centre also began charitable activity. In 1993 it founded the Zatik orphanage with financial support from the Austrian Caritas organisation and others. The Centre also promoted the study of Christian art and ancient Armenian religious music. With foreign support, the Centre was gradually able to build up its resources and install the latest desk-top publishing technology. It even established its own website on the Internet.⁶³

Other church-related groups also became active in Armenia. At the Khor Virab monastery a group of young people from Artashat and Ararat regions grew up under the leadership of local priest Fr Mkhitar Saribekyan. They began publishing a religious weekly *Kavit* (*Church Courtyard*), as well as pamphlets, and developed close links with the CPF after it was created. In the late 1980s the Momik Youth Association of Armenian Christian Culture was founded to bring together Christian artists, writers, literary specialists and translators. The group worked on making available texts of medieval Armenian religious literature, producing a children's Bible with illustrations in the style of medieval Armenian miniatures and exhibiting paintings at its exhibition hall near Opera Square in central Yerevan. The Association was registered as an official organisation on 15 April 1991 with Fr Abraham Mgrdtchyan as president.⁶⁴

Another religious newspaper that gained the approval of Catholicos Vazgen was *Lusavorich* (*Illuminator*), published by a group of laypeople. When it was first set up it had some 'political tendencies', being close to the Armenian National Movement, but Vazgen was able to encourage the paper to steer clear of politics. 'Through our suggestions, they have distanced themselves from the political currents and today they enjoy our auspices, including financially', Vazgen reported in March 1992.⁶⁵

Despite all these initiatives, the spontaneous religious revival of the late 1980s largely bypassed the official Church. Many of those whose Christian faith was renewed or who found a Christian faith for the first time felt the Church had little to offer them or was an organisation alien to the essence of true Christianity. Some were appalled by the elaborate, ancient liturgy which they felt did more to keep people from God than to bring them close and which preserved too many pagan rituals. However, there is no doubt that many felt that in the wake of the national

tragedies and upheavals they should seek to come closer to their national faith. There were plans enthusiastically endorsed by Bishop Karekin Nersesyan of Yerevan for a mass baptism of up to 200,000 refugees from Azerbaijan in Lake Sevan, but these plans never materialised. In late 1990 Robert Cullen spoke in Armenia to a young refugee from Sumgait about the gold crucifix around her neck and whether she had worn it while she was still living in Azerbaijan. 'I didn't wear this then,' she told him. 'I started wearing it after what happened. Now I go to church regularly.'⁶⁶ There were often more mercenary reasons for such displays of religiosity. Refugees from Baku seeking to emigrate to the United States sought baptism in the Church while in Moscow, hoping this would ease their passage to the promised land. Bishop Tiran Kuregyan was quite aware of the motivation for baptism in these cases. 'It's a sin to baptise them; most of them are unbelievers, I know. They are lost both for God and for the nation. Nobody could blame them, but I am sorry that they are running to Russia, America, everywhere instead of returning to Armenia.' Others seeking baptism, such as two sisters aged 18 and 17 from Moscow, felt that baptism would make them 'real Armenians'.⁶⁷

Some felt that the Church's initiatives were doomed to failure unless they addressed the current state of Armenian society. In a clear criticism of the type of publications offered by the Church Archbishop Ashjian of New York told the Yerevan newspaper *Azatomart* in May 1992:

New publications, new sermons are needed. ... Every church is a natural site for lectures, sermons, education. New publications are extremely important. What, however, do I see around me? Literature from the 1890s is being reprinted. Today the people of Armenia is not what it was at the end of the 19th century. Today's intelligentsia is completely different. A century ago Yerevan was a town of fifteen thousand; how many intellectuals did it have then? Today there are hundreds of scientific and educational institutions in Yerevan, the scientific mind has advanced. You can't satisfy people with those works. A new theological way of thinking must be created in such a way that our fathers may be conversant with us. Contemporary literature is required. ... Publications must be high-quality and accessible to the people. ...⁶⁸

The political liberalisation in the later 1980s brought increased contact between Echmiadzin and Antilias. Catholicos Karekin II visited Vazgen in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake and again in April 1989 (Karekin was to visit Armenia three times while it was under Soviet rule). The two catholicoses proposed that as 1990 would mark the 75th anniversary of the Turkish genocide, preparations be instituted for the canonisation of the victims. The rapprochement allowed further progress to heal the rift that had developed between Echmiadzin and Antilias after 1956. The 1979 synod in Echmiadzin that had brought together representatives from the two jurisdictions had taken decisions that were never implemented. In March 1987 Vazgen wrote to Karekin asking that a delegation come to Echmiadzin 'to normalise and legalise relations between the Mother See and the See of Cilicia'. Karekin formed a delegation that visited in June–July 1988 for joint meetings. Cochaired by Archbishop Torkom Manoogian and Archbishop Mesrop Ashjian, six sessions were held after which the proposals for restructuring the church jurisdictions and practical cooperation between the two sides were sent for consideration to the two catholicoses. The sessions took place in a 'truly fraternal atmosphere', according to Ashjian.⁶⁹

Law on Religion

Links between the Church and the Armenian government became more respectful. In November 1990 the chairman of the Supreme Soviet (and later president) Levon Ter-Petrosyan, who had taught early church history and manuscript studies at the Echmiadzin seminary on a part-time basis in the early 1980s, hosted a reception in the Armenian parliament in honour of the catholicos. At the conclusion of the reception Vazgen submitted to the president a bill on Freedom of Conscience, drawn up by the Supreme Spiritual Council at Echmiadzin.

The liberalisation inaugurated by Gorbachev in the religious sphere culminated in a Soviet law on freedom of conscience, eventually passed by the Congress of People's Deputies in Moscow in October 1990. Individual republics, including Russia and the Baltic States, adopted their own legislation at about the same time. Armenia enshrined a guarantee of freedom of conscience in its 23 August 1990 Declaration of Independence⁷⁰ and enacted its own Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations in June 1991.⁷¹

The law guaranteed freedom of conscience (to believe or not to believe) and profession of faith (to conduct religious rites individually or with others) and the equality of all citizens before the law, regardless of religious belief or affiliation. Proselytism was banned, as was compelling citizens to adopt any religious belief or participate in any religious activity. The only restrictions on religious freedom were those affecting public order, the 'health and morality of citizens' and the defence of the rights and freedoms of other citizens.

While acknowledging freedom of conscience and expressly adhering to Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the law declared in its preamble that it recognised 'the Armenian Apostolic Church as the national Church of the Armenian people and as an important bulwark for the edification of its spiritual life and national preservation'. One section specifically mentioned the existence of the Armenian Church, separate from 'other religious organisations', while another accorded it special privileges.

The contradiction here inherent continued in sections relating to official recognition of religious groups. Only groups 'based on historically-recognised holy scriptures' and whose 'doctrines form part of the international contemporary religious-ecclesiastical communities' could be recognised. In addition, groups needed to be dedicated to religious, not material, ends and to have at least 50 members. Religious organisations for 'ethnic minorities with their national doctrine' did not need to conform to the limitations mentioned above.

In order to gain official recognition, groups fulfilling the criteria were required to present their statutes to the Council for Religious Affairs attached to the Council of Ministers, providing very detailed information about all aspects of the religious group's structure, membership and activities. The Council was to make a decision within one month, and a decision not to register a group could be challenged in the courts; the courts could close down a religious organisation if it violated the law. In addition to registering religious organisations and maintaining their statutes, the Council for Religious Affairs was to respond to requests by religious organisations for help in resolving disputes with government entities and, at the government's request, mediate between religious groups.

The law declared that there was absolute separation of church and state, and that the state must not interfere in the internal affairs of any religious group and must finance neither religious nor antireligious activity. The state did however take

responsibility for preserving historical monuments of whatever affiliation.

The law permitted recognised religious groups to own property in accordance with the Law on Private Ownership. They could hold services on their own premises or on the premises of members, as well as in state institutions (such as hospitals, prisons and military camps) at the request of members in those institutions. It also permitted them to organise religious education for their members (and children with the consent of their parents), to train clergy, to use the mass media, to engage in charitable work and to maintain contact with their religious centres abroad. It allowed religious groups to raise money (tax free) from their members. However, it banned religious organisations ‘whose spiritual centres are outside Armenia’ from receiving money from those centres or political organisations abroad.

Elsewhere, the law specifically reserved to the Armenian Church the right to ‘preach and disseminate its faith freely’, to ‘recreate its historical traditions, structure, organisations, dioceses and communities’, to build new churches, to conduct religious education in state educational institutions and to expand charitable work. The Republic would also protect the Armenian Church’s activities abroad.

There was no specific mention of religious objection to performing military service but, in an apparent reference to it, the law declared that in cases of ‘conflict between civic duties and religious convictions’ government entities and religious organisations might come to a mutually agreeable alternative form of service. This section did not appear to guarantee citizens the right to avoid military service (or other civic duties). (There was no separate legislation guaranteeing the right to conscientious objection to military service either.)

The 1991 law seemed to be an uneasy alliance of three competing and contradictory elements: the traditional Armenian belief that the Armenian Church should be the protected national Church; the Soviet tradition that every organisation, including religious organisations, must be registered and have official approval before undertaking any activity; and international norms regarding religious freedom and human rights. While the Armenian Church was accorded a privileged position, it is notable that unrecognised groups were not accorded protection under this law. It appeared that such unrecognised groups could not own property, rent premises for meetings, publish newspapers, sponsor broadcasts, collect money, conduct charitable work or sponsor visas for visitors to Armenia.

The Church and Independence

The failed Moscow coup of August 1991 made independence for the Soviet republics inevitable. Armenia held its own referendum on 21 September. In a pre-referendum appeal, Vazgen backed independence:

The cry for freedom and independence is the imperative of our centuries-old history, the dictate of our nation’s consciousness and the guarantee of our future existence. ... The Armenian Apostolic Church looks forward anxiously and unhesitatingly to hearing our people’s historical affirmation, and to following that voice. ... On the horizon of the Armenian land there rises that star of independence. Blessings and glory to that radiating star, and to the forever free Armenian nation.⁷²

As expected the result was a resounding vote in favour of state independence. The inauguration of Levon Ter-Petrosyan as Armenia’s first democratically-elected president in October 1991 saw Vazgen playing a key role. The new president took

his oath of office in Vazgen's presence on an ancient copy of the Gospels, after which he kissed his ring and sought his blessing. This was a pattern Armenia would follow in the independence era.

The blessing of holy chrism, which took place on 29 September, allowed Vazgen the opportunity to present the Church's case for being at the heart of the nation. He asked for special privileges for the Church in the new society, for it to be the established Church. He spoke of its 'heroic battle against the expansionist desires of foreign Churches', a sentiment that echoed those of other Churches of the Soviet Union, which were appalled at the growing onslaught from rival religious groups. He declared that the Armenian people 'will never tolerate' proselytising by other religious groups.

... after the proclamation of our independent republic, it is crucial to secure the spiritual independence of the Armenian Church, as the sole authentic church of the Armenian people, free from foreign religious centres. One of the foundations of our new independent government is the freedom and self-determination of the Armenian Church.

In identifying the Church's faith with the political aspirations of the nation he went so far as to declare: 'We profess the Creed: one free nation, one free government, one free national Church. With this Creed, with this understanding, we proclaim this holy chrism, which has been blessed by the power of the Holy Spirit, as the "Chrism of Independence".'⁷³

Towards the end of the Soviet era the Armenian government, unlike those of some other former Soviet republics, believed it would be useful to continue the work of the Council for the Affairs of the Armenian Church, headed since the mid-1980s by Stepan Vartanyan. A former minister of agriculture and also a poet, Vartanyan had initially taken a firm line against the Church, but had gradually softened his approach, reportedly under Vazgen's influence.⁷⁴ On 1 February 1990 the Armenian Council of Ministers confirmed the continued existence of the Council, although its affiliation was changed to that of a subcommittee of the Armenian parliament. A newcomer, Lyudvig Khachatryan, a mathematician in his early forties and a parliamentary deputy, was placed in charge, although at least some of the other staff appeared to be unchanged. Lazar Sujyan, a veteran employee, continued as vice-chairman.

Sujyan in particular justified the Council's continuing existence. Asked in autumn 1991 whether religious bodies in Armenia were not able to look after their own affairs, he replied:

Our role has never been to control the Church, and indeed, Moscow used to criticise the Armenians for allowing the Church too much liberty. It's true that some republics have closed down their religious affairs departments for the reason you give, and perhaps Armenia should do the same. But our parliament expressed the view that this department should be used to enforce freedom of conscience. Our role is to promote and defend all religious rights. Even the leaders of the Church are defending our department.⁷⁵

In an interview with the diaspora church magazine *Window View of the Armenian Church* in late 1991, Khachatryan echoed Sujyan's remarks. 'Basically, we are the liaison between the government and the churches and/or religious groups or organisations and our primary role is to establish contacts and cooperation between these

groups.' He acknowledged the KGB links of the Soviet-era Council, but added: 'We have asked the KGB in Armenia to pull out all personnel who were assigned to the [Council]. Which they did.'

Khachatryan spoke of the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations which had been passed earlier that year, but advanced an interpretation of the privileged status of the Armenian Church which went beyond what appeared to be present in the text of the law itself:

First, let me say that the Armenian Apostolic Church is the only recognised Church in Armenia, the other Christian churches are recognised as communities. Legally speaking, the Armenian Church is the only religious entity that is registered as a church, the other churches, like the Catholics or Protestants, are registered or are recognised as religious communities, e.g. these would be registered as the Community of the Catholic Church in such and such place or village.

Second, the various denominations are permitted to preach among their community members and in their house of worship only. The Armenian Apostolic Church is permitted to preach all over Armenia.

Third, proselytising (hunt for souls) is forbidden by law.

Fourth, permission has been granted only to the Armenian Apostolic Church to teach in the public schools, of course if the parents and the school authorities consider it important to offer religious education.

Fifth, all organisations (whether religious or political) whose headquarters are outside the boundaries of the Republic of Armenia are not permitted to receive financial support from their organisations. For example, the headquarters of the Russian Orthodox Church in Armenia is outside the boundaries of our Republic, therefore they cannot receive financial support from Moscow and build churches in Armenia. They may only receive contributions from outside for charitable work.

Although he admitted that 'this does not please other religious groups or denominations', Khachatryan strongly defended this special status. '... Considering the persecution of the Armenian Church by the Communists during the past 70 years', he declared, 'we have created special opportunities for the Armenian Apostolic Church and have given certain privileges, so that the Church may recover what she lost.' In a graphic image, he likened the Church to a father who was imprisoned and whose children were taken away from him. 'Now that the father is free, others have come to adopt his orphaned children. What we need to do is to give the father a chance to regain his children. ... I have explained this to various denominations and religious groups who have come to Armenia.' But he saw no contradiction in also claiming that 'there is no difference between the Armenian Church and other churches or religious groups, because the legal system that we have adopted assumes that everybody is free to choose his religion or faith and is free to practise his religion'.

Although Khachatryan personally believed that 'at times' many of the new religious movements were 'purposely organised to cause ruptures in Armenian society', he felt that their influence was 'somewhat inflated or exaggerated' and that by late 1991 the religious awakening sparked by the 1988 earthquake was already in decline. Nevertheless, he claimed that the Council had detected fraudulent applications to register such groups. 'In several cases we discovered false signatures in their formal application. They were trying to register their relatives without their consent or knowledge.' He pledged that the Council would 'put an end to these illegal

practices’.

One subject that was of concern to the government, he said, was the division within the Armenian Church between Echmiadzin and Antilias. ‘I have personally been involved with these issues in the past few months. I have had conversations with both catholicoses, Vazgen I and Karekin II, in search of a process by which the problems may be remedied. Our efforts are progressing very slowly and with great difficulty.’ Stressing the political origin of the split, he affirmed the government’s point of view: ‘The Church should be depoliticised as much as possible. And if the Church is going to get involved in politics, that should only be in national issues and not party politics or state politics.’

Khachatryan reported that the Council was giving ‘practically all the old churches’ back to Echmiadzin. ‘There are requests to build new churches in various regions of Armenia and we are positively responding to these requests, by giving them the land, building material, etc.’ He added: ‘I must mention that we have also returned the churches that belonged to the Catholics, for instance in the village of Panik, and the [Russian] Orthodox church in Yerevan. The law is the law.’⁷⁶

The government began to recognise church feasts: in 1992, 6 January (Theophany) was celebrated as a state holiday for the first time.

Most major Armenian political parties supported granting a leading role in the country’s public life to the Armenian Apostolic Church. The Armenian National Movement, which grew out of the Karabakh Committee and was initially headed by Levon Ter-Petrosyan, was favourably inclined towards the Church. Elected in February 1992 as chairman of the executive council of the Armenian National Movement was a priest, Fr Ter-Husik Lazaryan, who had been elected to parliament as an ANM member in 1990. Born in Yerevan in 1955, Lazaryan had entered the Echmiadzin seminary in 1979 after studying philology at Yerevan State University (during which time he had also been active in the Komsomol). When the Karabakh movement started in 1988 he was working as priest of the St Marine church in Ashtarak, but felt he had to become involved. In 1992 Lazaryan declared that he believed that priests should not get involved in party politics, but stressed that the ANM was a broad movement, not a political party.

Everything I do in the Movement is dictated by the fact that I’m a priest. The Armenian Church has always been close to the people in the liberation struggle. It is normal for priests to be involved in this. In a normal state priests shouldn’t be in politics. When we have built a normal society I can breathe easily and return to my job in the Church.

He said that while some priests were members of the ANM, he was the only priest in the movement’s leadership. He claimed his parish supported his political involvement.⁷⁷

The party with probably the most explicitly Christian agenda was the Christian Democratic Union, which had been founded in May 1989 and was officially registered on 19 August 1991 under the leadership of Azat Arshakyan. ‘Its objective was to focus attention on the spiritual dimension of politics, to work towards channelling politics along a more proper, nobler, more Christianlike course and, most importantly, to be a party of the people,’ explained two of the Union’s executive committee members, Vardan Khachatryan and Aram Mkrtychyan. The party recognised the primacy of the Armenian Church in Armenia, but considered itself open to all Christian believers and others who accepted Christian values. The party approached Catholicos Vazgen and the Ararat diocese in Yerevan proposing co-

operation, but the Church declined, not wishing to forge links with any political organisations. The party had three deputies in the 1990–95 parliament. During the discussion on the new Armenian Constitution in summer 1994 one of its leaders, the parliamentary deputy Makhak Gabrielyan, spelled out some of the party's policies. The party supported the teaching of religion (i.e. Christianity) in schools, although Gabrielyan declared that his party did not support the establishment of a religious state.⁷⁸

Religious Competition

Although the initial religious resurgence that followed the 1988 earthquake later died down, incoming religious groups did find willing listeners to their messages. The Hare Krishna movement, so persecuted in the mid-1980s, came out into the open again. Transcendental Meditation gained hundreds of adherents. Protestant Christian groups sprang up, mainly outside the framework of the Evangelical-Baptist Church which had existed legally in Armenia during the Soviet era. The Mormons and the Unification Church gained some followers. Some even took to celebrating the pre-Christian Novruz spring festival in front of the pagan temple at Garni, while others revived worship of the god Vahagn, apparently taking their cue from some Californian Armenians.⁷⁹

The small Jewish community – estimated at between 600 and 800 people – was also able to revive its activities, led by I. Ulanovsky. Representatives reported to visiting Helsinki Commission staff in September 1991 that although the community had no synagogue in Yerevan Jews' religious rights were not restricted. Members of the community gathered in private homes to pray and religious classes for children were begun in a central Yerevan apartment. There were attempts to regain the synagogue in Yerevan and the Council for the Affairs of the Armenian Church was helping the community regain confiscated buildings, the vice chairman Lazar Sujyan told Stephen Brook in autumn 1991.⁸⁰ However, when the Israeli ambassador, Aryeh Levin, travelled down to Yerevan in April 1992 to establish diplomatic relations with the Armenian government, he found a community on the brink of leaving, mainly on economic grounds. 'They said they were very great patriots of Armenia, but the circumstances of their life were such that they wanted to hasten their emigration.' Levin said he believed that most of the community departed soon after.⁸¹

The Russian Orthodox were among the Christian Churches rebuilding their life. Armenia had been the only republic of the former Soviet Union without any Orthodox churches during the immediate postwar era, although one registered community opened in 1965 in the wake of the ending of Khrushchev's antireligious campaign. Among the Russian Orthodox churches reopening in Armenia was the Church of the Protecting Veil of the Holy Virgin in the Kanaker district of the capital, founded during tsarist rule for the Ter Cossacks who had their barracks right opposite. After Soviet rule was imposed in Armenia the church was first turned into a warehouse, then used as a club. Appointed as parish priest when the church was regained in September 1991 was Fr Makari Oganesyian, an Armenian who had been born and brought up in Yerevan, but who went to study at the Russian Orthodox seminary in Zagorsk. Fr Makari also served the Assyrian community in the village of Dimitrov in the Ararat valley. He had to supervise the restoration work on the Yerevan church in difficult economic circumstances, but was assisted by the CIS military, who flew in a *font*, among other things, on a military flight. He established the 'warmest of relations' with Catholicos Vazgen, who donated an antique carpet, a

throne and 15,000 roubles as a gift on the reopening of the church in December 1991. He also maintained good relations with the bishop of Karabakh, Parkev Martirosyan, who had passed on to him a request from Russian speakers in Stepanakert that he travel to the enclave to hold services. However, Fr Makari did have problems with the Council for Religious Affairs, which waged a campaign in late 1991 and early 1992 to oust the chairman of the community, an actor from Yerevan's Russian theatre, Vyacheslav Dyachenko.⁸²

Fr Makari soon established a Sunday school and had plans for a monastery, plans for which he had presented to the Church's Synod by 1993. A monastic community and a community of sisters of mercy already existed in the parish. Fr Makari described himself in 1993 as 'parish priest, missionary, monk and night-watchman, all in one'. He described his parish as mostly single Russians who had remained in Armenia after independence as they had no relatives to go back to in Russia itself. He saw his role in providing not just 'a little island of the Orthodox faith' but also 'a part of the motherland'. Although he appeared to view his role as catering to the religious needs of local Russians, both Russians and Armenians came to the church. In a 1993 interview Fr Makari was brutally frank about the parlous state of the Armenian Church, based on his observations. He recounted that in 1985 in the Azerbaijani town of Kirovabad there had been two churches (Russian and Armenian) and no mosque. 'In the Armenian church of Saint Gregory the Illuminator the priest served the liturgy on his own, and there was no one there to say to him "Lord Have Mercy!"' His experiences in Yerevan in 1993 seemed little different when, on Good Friday, he visited the church of St Sarkis. 'The church was empty. Bishop Karekin [Nersesyan] was in the semi-darkness, serving the liturgy in the light of the candles. The choir sang beautifully. But when the American preacher Billy Graham came to town a whole stadium gathered to hear him.' Fr Makari declared that he regretted that the Armenians had abandoned their own Church to join other religious groups. However, he felt it his duty to step in when the Armenian Church had failed. He recounted that on a visit to the southern Megri region he had been shocked by the physical conditions: there had been little food and terrible conditions in hospitals.

But this is what troubled my soul even more. There is an Armenian church in Megri but it doesn't function. The priests have abandoned it. In the village of Shvanidzor I baptised 58 people. At the request of the director of the school, Samvel Arakelyan, I baptised 10 teachers and 62 students. I baptised them right in the school. I baptised 15 children in the kindergarten, where there were no toys. I am now collecting toys for them. I believe deeply that there is no one in Armenia in such need of support and comfort as the people of Megri. And my soul aches for the honour of the priest, for his unfulfilled duty to be a comfort in grief, to bring solace to people, not to abandon them in their suffering.⁸³

The Armenian Catholic Church, which retained the traditional Armenian liturgical rites but recognised the authority of the pope, was never banned in Soviet Armenia but, in practice, had ceased to exist legally. Some 26 of the Church's priests were killed by the Soviet authorities between 1930 and 1937. By the end of the 1980s it was being revived in its traditional stronghold in the north of Armenia around Panik. 'Despite the absence of any Catholic priest for the last fifty years', wrote the American Jesuit Fr Robert Drinan, who visited the community in September 1991, 'the people still know the Hail Mary, baptise their children and understand that they are Uniate Roman Catholics [sic] and not Orthodox or Apostolic Christians, as most

Armenians are.’ Fr Drinan visited a 70-year-old priest, Fr Gomidas Manougyan, who was ministering to some 20 communities in northern Armenia and trying to rebuild them as parishes. Fr Manougyan was in the process of rebuilding one church, built in 1850 and confiscated during the communist period; he had established a Sunday school and was planning a parish centre. Overseas Armenian Catholic priests, many of them from the Mekhitarist order, were sent to minister to many of these newly-revived communities. Pope John Paul appointed Nerses Der-Nersessian of the Venice monastery to head the community in 1991, upgrading him in November 1992 to the rank of archbishop. Sister Aroushig Sajonyan was sent from Philadelphia to investigate what contribution her order could make in Armenia. In early October 1991 the dedication ceremony took place in the presence of President Ter-Petrosyan and Vatican officials of the 110-bed Redemptoris Mater hospital in the village of Gukasyan (Ashotsk), financed as a gift to the country by the Holy See.⁸⁴

The Armenian government was keen to foster ties with the Vatican. Levon Ter-Petrosyan, the chairman of the Armenian Supreme Soviet who had himself been baptised in the Armenian Catholic Church as a baby, met Pope John Paul II on 21 January 1991, during a visit to Italy which also included a trip to the Mekhitarist monastery in Venice. During the papal audience John Paul asked Ter-Petrosyan to convey his greetings to Vazgen. Like all but a handful of former Soviet republics, Armenia established full diplomatic relations with the Vatican soon after independence. This happened on 23 May 1992, the same day the Vatican established relations with Georgia and Azerbaijan. By April 1994 relations between the Vatican and the Armenian Church had developed so well that the pope was able to make a gift of relics of Ss Thaddeus and Bartholomew to Echmiadzin. Cardinal Achille Silvestrini, prefect of the Vatican Congregation for the Eastern Churches, visited Armenia, where he met Ter-Petrosyan, Vazgen and other key leaders. There were plans for a seminary to train priests for the Armenian-rite Catholic Church.⁸⁵

Faced with this religious competition, Armenian church leaders constantly reiterated that they were opposed to proselytism. In August 1992 the two catholicoses, Vazgen and Karekin, spoke out against moves by rival religious groups: ‘To consider Armenia an open and uncultivated field for Christian evangelism means first and foremost to transgress against truth and reality.’⁸⁶

If the Armenian Church was unhappy at what it viewed as unfair competition from these rival groups, the support that overseas dioceses of the Armenian Church gave to the mother Church was significant. Collections were taken up in diaspora churches to support the revival of the Church in Armenia and priests and young people were sent to aid missionary work. Although much of this work seemed to be focused on preventing Armenians falling under the influence of ‘sects’, the increased contact and sharing of experience helped the two parts of the Armenian Church come together and learn from each other. ‘The Mother Church is asking for help’, a California-based priest, Mesrop Sarafian, declared after a mission to Armenia. ‘It is burdened, it is swamped by too many needs. If the Church doesn’t get to the people first, the cults or other religious organisations will.’ And he continued, ‘People hunger for hope and a reason to live. They are curious about their ancestral faith. Thousands turned out to touch, see and listen to us share our faith in Jesus Christ and the message of salvation.’ The impact of the mission clearly had an effect on Sarafian. ‘I have never been so moved in my life. ... To witness this awakening, to see people make their first sign of the cross, to feel that the seed of faith has a chance to flourish – it was an immeasurable reward. There is still much work to be done.’⁸⁷ Members and pastors of Armenian evangelical congregations abroad also visited Armenia to help evangel-

istic work within the framework of the Armenian Church. One Congregational pastor from California, Berdj Djambazian, taught at the newly-reopened seminary on Lake Sevan. This foreign input was instrumental in bringing into the Church expertise on Sunday school teaching, publishing and other skills which the Church had been forbidden to develop during the communist era.

With the continued influence of Protestant groups, many of them sponsored by American missionary organisations, the Armenian Church again made representations to the government to tighten up the law to protect the established Church. On 30 November 1993 a delegation, led by Vazgen, went to see the vicepresident, Gagik Harutyunyan, to express the Church's 'serious concern' about the religious situation. The delegation alleged that various sects were causing dissension that threatened national unity. Vazgen called for amendments to the law on freedom of conscience. Harutyunyan responded that within the confines of the law the state would fight against every 'extremist and illegal phenomenon' in the religious sphere. He stressed that he viewed the Church as the mainstay and unifying factor among Armenians in Armenia and in the diaspora.⁸⁸ The Armenian government responded to the pressure. On 22 December President Ter-Petrosyan issued the Decree on Measures Legalising Religious Activities in the Republic of Armenia, which placed limitations on the freedom allowed to denominations other than the Armenian Church.⁸⁹

The 1993 decree specifically justified itself by claiming that foreign and un-registered religious groups had begun operating in the republic and that even some registered religious organisations had violated the 1991 legislation. 'They affect the moral and psychological atmosphere in the republic, sometimes fostering a lack of respect toward military service, and hinder the smooth work of religious organisations, thus arousing their justified complaints.' The decree accorded the Armenian Church the right to 'build and strengthen the religious consciousness of the Armenian people'. It enjoined the Council for Religious Affairs to investigate registered religious groups to see whether any representatives had been conducting missionary activity in violation of the law. In such cases it was to 'dissolve' these religious organisations. The Council was also to 'terminate the activities of representatives of foreign religious organisations who, visiting Armenia at invitation, carry out activities not sanctioned by their status' and to 'establish proper oversight' over religious publications. The decree specified that only registered religious groups could 'conduct religious propaganda' or rent premises for religious meetings from enterprises or institutions, in both cases keeping the Council informed. All foreigners invited for religious purposes had to be invited via the Council. Only teaching based on that of the Armenian Church was permitted at state educational institutions. The Council was also to be informed of an invitation to go abroad to any Armenian citizen by a foreign religious organisation, whatever the purpose of the visit.

The decree called on the Armenian government to provide within two months proposals for amending the penalties for violating legislation on religion and to conduct an examination of the Council's work with a view to increasing its efficiency.

Some religious groups were required to reregister in the wake of the new decree and to include new clauses in their statutes banning their members from proselytising. Some groups, such as the Mormons, were quietly discouraged from applying for registration and kept a low profile thereafter. But the decree did not succeed in halting the activity of such religious groups and church leaders continued to speak out against them at every opportunity. However, the catholicos of Cilicia, Karekin II, argued that the best way to counter such groups was for the Church itself to become

more active.

The church has to go beyond opposing or condemning the new sects and cults. It must till the field. ... No more waiting for the people to come to the church. The church, the churchmen, have to go to the people. This is the outreach, outgoing type of mission that we have to undertake. Seventy years of Soviet rule have surely left a mark on the attitudes of both the clergy and the people, we have to emancipate ourselves from that inherited apathy.⁹⁰

However, the instincts of both Church and state – and often of the population at large – remained profoundly hostile to religious minorities. The Hare Krishna community bore the brunt of the attacks. It had been officially registered in Armenia in 1990 and had been actively involved in aiding the victims of the 1988 earthquake through its Food for Life programme. In July 1992 its temple in Yerevan had been attacked by arsonists. An appeal to the Commission for Human Rights and to the local police was ignored. In September 1993 a devotee, Mikael Unjugulyan, was beaten up by the local Armenian Apostolic priest, Father Kevork, in his home village of Oshakan. In April 1994 a large consignment of Hare Krishna books sent from Moscow was seized by customs. Despite appeals to the Council for Religious Affairs, the books were not released. The same month another devotee, Artur Khachatryan, was beaten up by army officers in the Yerevan Officers' Club and he required hospital treatment. The police refused to investigate. In July 1994 two female devotees travelled to Sisyan near Yerevan to distribute literature, but were intercepted by two Armenian Apostolic priests, Father Narek from Sisyan and the visiting Father Zenob from the United States. Supported by soldiers, the priests seized 150 books, tore the women's garments and neckbeads from them and burnt everything in a large bonfire. In the same month another devotee was beaten and threatened by Dashnak party members. At the end of August there were two attacks on the Yerevan temple by armed men. After the second raid police detained 17 devotees, while at least two had to seek hospital treatment.

Attacks on the Hare Krishna community also featured on television and in the press, some of them with the participation of members of the Armenian Church. In July 1994 the administrator of the Syunik Diocese based in Goris, Abraham Mkrtchyan, condemned the activity of the Hare Krishna community as the work of Satan. Speaking in a live phone-in on local cable television, Mkrtchyan declared that their literature represented a real social danger, diverting young people from the path of God. He reported that he had formed a committee in the local Young People's House of Culture with the aim of collecting in as much as possible of the Hare Krishna literature already in the hands of the local population in exchange for free Bibles. The literature collected would be burnt. The committee's formation was also announced on local radio.⁹¹

Also encountering official hostility was the Jehovah's Witness community, which had been seeking in vain to register since 1991. Part of this hostility stemmed from the group's absolute refusal to countenance military service, a position that left them vulnerable to suspicions of disloyalty at a time when the government expected and insisted that all male citizens play their part in the military defence of Armenia and Karabakh. Although no law specifically allowing for conscientious objection had been passed, Jehovah's Witnesses had reached some kind of tacit agreement with the authorities to allow their members to serve in non-combat roles outside the framework of full army membership and, crucially, without wearing uniforms or swearing

the military oath. According to the Yerevan journalist Vahan Ishkhanyan this accommodation broke down in 1994 and a number of Jehovah's Witnesses were imprisoned after that date for refusing military service.⁹²

In Karabakh too, minority religious communities came under attack. In June 1993 several Hare Krishna devotees from Armenia went to Karabakh to open a free food distribution centre. They reached agreement with the head of the department for refugees and humanitarian aid, Lentson Gulyan, to open such centres in Stepanakert and other towns in Karabakh and he promised that premises would be made available. The community was given a former restaurant in Stepanakert to use as a feeding centre. However, within a month a group of armed men had broken in and demanded in the name of the Karabakh government that the devotees leave the enclave within 24 hours. The Hare Krishna community appealed to state minister Zhirair Pogosyan, who not only refused to help, but actively supported the demand that they leave.⁹³ This attack heralded the beginning of a campaign to suppress other minority religious communities in Karabakh, with the active support of the Armenian Church in Karabakh. During the aerial bombardment of Stepanakert by Azerbaijani forces in September 1993 a Jehovah's Witness serviceman in the air defence artillery refused to fire a missile at an attacking plane. As a result 51 people were killed or injured. The case sparked mass arrests as the Karabakh security service joined the campaign to persecute religious minorities, especially those espousing pacifism. In June 1994 a group of more than 60 Jehovah's Witnesses, among them old men and women, were arrested in Stepanakert and accused of being agents recruited by western missionaries. They were imprisoned in Shushi for nearly a week and pressured to recant. Other communities affected included Pentecostal Christians and Seventh-Day Adventists.⁹⁴ The Nagorno-Karabakh Supreme Council increased its penalties for 'unlawful religious activities'. Gayane Arustamyan, press spokeswoman of the Supreme Council, accused unregistered communities of 'contributing to a split in society and also exerting a negative influence' on the people of Karabakh. She said that these groups had recently stepped up their activity and, echoing the phraseology of the old Soviet-era criminal code, that they were 'encroaching on personal and civil rights' under the guise of performing religious rituals.⁹⁵ Robert Kocharyan, the leader of the Karabakh government, denied that the actions against religious minorities amounted to religious persecution. He claimed that these missionaries had been carefully monitored for several weeks before their arrests, and had been held purely for breaking the law. He claimed they had been spreading pacifism among the soldiers and leading some to desert or to become suicidal.⁹⁶

Symptomatic of the close association of the Church with the state was the way preparations for the 1700th anniversary of the adoption of Christianity as the state religion in 2001 were coordinated. Echmiadzin set up its own committee to oversee preparations and plans were drawn up to build a large church in central Yerevan to be named after St Gregory the Illuminator and to be complete by the time of the celebrations. An exhibition of more than 40 designs was held in the House of Artists in Yerevan in February 1992 and the choice of design was finally approved by Vazgen in 1993. The following year the Armenian-American millionaire Alex Manoogian announced that he would finance the building of the church.⁹⁷ After three meetings of the Echmiadzin committee had been held Archbishop Nerses Bozabalyan announced that in addition to the Yerevan church and the publication of books, documentary films would be produced and scientific conferences held not only in Echmiadzin but in Armenian church centres around the world. A jubilee session would be held in Yerevan with government figures attending. For the major

celebration in Echmiadzin leading members of other Christian Churches would be invited. Sessions would be organised at UNESCO and the CSCE in Geneva, at the National Council of Churches in the United States and elsewhere to mark the event.⁹⁸

On 5 May 1994 President Ter-Petrosyan ordered the establishment of a state committee to prepare for the anniversary, which would liaise closely with the Echmiadzin committee as well as with international organisations (including UNESCO and the World Council of Churches), foreign governments and the Armenian diaspora. A programme to upgrade facilities for tourists visiting for the celebrations was to begin in 1996. Six days later the first meeting of the state committee took place, chaired by the vice-president Gagik Harutyunyan. He declared that the celebrations would begin in 2000 in Echmiadzin. He mentioned the new church to be built in Yerevan, as well as the publication of scientific, cultural and religious books marking the anniversary. Working groups were set up under the committee to oversee different projects.⁹⁹ In July Shushinik Khachichikyan, the scientific secretary of the Matenadaran manuscript institute, announced that with support from the Manoogian family it would be producing a number of publications to mark the anniversary, including a reprint of the Old Testament translation produced in Echmiadzin in 989.¹⁰⁰

Despite the expulsion of the Muslim Azerbaijani and Kurdish communities in 1988–90, a representative of the Iranian president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani visited Yerevan in 1990 and during a meeting with the Armenian prime minister plans were drawn up for the restoration of the city's mosque, which had been closed as a place of worship in the 1920s and which later became a museum.

One foreign church community that wished to retain friendly ties with Echmiadzin was the Anglican Communion, which has traditionally opposed the poaching of believers from other Christian denominations. Following the long tradition of mutual visits between Lambeth Palace (the seat of the Archbishop of Canterbury in London) and Echmiadzin, Archbishop George Carey visited the Armenian Church in May 1993 as Vazgen's guest. The archbishop also visited the Russian and Georgian Orthodox Churches on the same trip. In Armenia he not only visited Echmiadzin, but also went to Gyumri where he met survivors of the 1988 earthquake and visited the Lord Byron school, built with British relief money. A key feature of Dr Carey's visit to Armenia was the setting up of the St Andrew's Trust, which would pay for Armenian priests to study in Britain. Although Dr Carey was diplomatic during his visits to the three churches, he was more forthcoming on the return journey home about how he believed these churches should respond to the challenges facing them.

I think there are two great challenges that the Orthodox Churches face. First, at the theological level, of facing up to questions concerning evangelisation. The question focuses on do churches such as the Russian Orthodox Church, the Armenian Church and the Georgian Church have a sole right to evangelise in their own land. I think they have to face up to the reality of a marketplace of religions. It's something we're used to in our country and maybe we can make a contribution to their life theologically.

Secondly, at the level of worship. Their worship is grand, quite spiritual and I enjoyed it enormously. But worship that goes on for nearly four hours may not be conducive to modern people. And therefore finding worship or forms of worship that are appropriate to life today in the post-communist world, in the modern world where materialism matters, where

there's a hustle and bustle or where people are more and more educated and facing up to the reality ... I think the Orthodox Churches have an enormous challenge facing them.¹⁰¹

Azerbaijan and Karabakh

Elsewhere in the former Soviet Union the fate of the Church took diverging paths. The community in the Azerbaijani capital Baku gradually left after the outbreak of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh in 1988. The bishop of Baku, Anania Arapadjan, left Azerbaijan in late 1988 with many of the community and went to Echmiadzin. He reported that the Soviet authorities had told him that they could no longer guarantee his safety in Azerbaijan. The priest of Kirovabad had likewise fled by late 1988. 'Both recounted such atrocities that I am still deeply disturbed', wrote the visiting pastor Manuel Jinbachian.¹⁰²

An American writer, Jim Forest, visited the Azerbaijani capital Baku in May 1989. He was told by Rafiq Abdullayev, chairman of the CRA in Azerbaijan, that in the republic there were 34 mosques, three synagogues, four Russian Orthodox churches, one Old Believer church, 12 Molokan churches, six Baptist churches, four Adventist churches and two Armenian churches. In a follow-up letter to Forest, dated 27 October 1989, Abdullayev noted, among other newly-registered religious communities, a further two Armenian churches (presumably in Nagorno-Karabakh).¹⁰³

Despite the existence of two churches in the republic, Forest found only one remaining Armenian priest, Fr Vartan Diluyan, at the St Gregory the Illuminator cathedral in central Baku. Diluyan (who had lived in Baku for 15 years) told Forest:

Until the tension in Nagorno-Karabakh, the climate was very favourable. If you had come here last year, you would have found a crowded church with a good choir. On holy days the church was completely filled. Now most of the young people have left. Mainly it is the old people still in the city. ... In my sermons I try to persuade people to stay.

Forest asked about attacks on Armenians in Baku in December 1988 following an upsurge in tension. Diluyan responded:

In December our church wasn't attacked, but many flats where Armenians lived were attacked by gangs of young people. The windows of my flat were smashed. Thanks to a neighbour, I was able to escape. Then soldiers came and drove the gang away.

None [of the other clergy] were injured but they have now left the city. It is almost a miracle that none of them were killed. They are married and have families. I am a monk and so I have stayed. In Kirovabad the church is now closed. The priest escaped, and no other priest is prepared to take his place. I know his feeling. I am living in my apartment again but I feel frightened.¹⁰⁴

The cathedral in Baku was attacked and set alight in December 1989, two weeks before coordinated pogroms against the Armenians were launched in the Azerbaijani capital.¹⁰⁵ The January 1990 pogroms precipitated the flight or expulsion of the entire Armenian community from Azerbaijan (with the exception of Nagorno-Karabakh) and the two Armenian churches in the country were closed. The bishop, Anania Arapadjan, had already departed from Baku and the Azerbaijan diocese was abandoned. Any and every Armenian monument was destroyed in the mutual hatred

stirred up by the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. By spring 1991, a visitor to Baku reported, the 'burned-out Armenian cathedral grimly demonstrated the violent nature of these animosities once released'.¹⁰⁶ Another visitor to Baku, Thomas Goltz, reported that in summer 1991 'the several Armenian churches in the downtown area were boarded up and partially desecrated'.¹⁰⁷ The head of the Azeri Muslim community, Sheikh-ul-Islam Pasha-Zade, later explained that he had criticised the destruction of the cathedral: 'I was in Moscow at the time, and I tried to explain to the people that a stone structure carried no responsibility for what was happening. I tried to stop the destruction, but I was not successful.'¹⁰⁸

In Nagorno-Karabakh itself the Church was able to rebuild its life in areas under Armenian control. The appointment in November 1988 of the young priest Parkev Martirosyan as the first bishop of Artsakh (Karabakh) since the arrest of his predecessor in 1931 was crucial. Martirosyan, whose parents were from Karabakh, was born in Sumgait in Azerbaijan in 1954, but grew up in his family's home village of Chardakhlu. From 1960 he again lived in Sumgait before going to Yerevan in 1966. After Russian literature studies in Yerevan (where he wrote a thesis on Mikhail Bulgakov's novel *The Master and Margarita*) and work as a teacher, he became a monk in 1980 and began at the seminary in Echmiadzin, graduating in 1984 and being ordained priest the same year. He then undertook further studies at the Russian Orthodox academy in Leningrad on the knowledge of God in Christianity and in the Eastern religions. Following his consecration as bishop he recruited a number of volunteer priests and deacons from within Armenia who were willing to travel to work in the war-torn enclave. Martirosyan took up residence in his new diocese in March 1989, first in Stepanakert and, after 1992, in newly-captured Shushi (where the diocesan headquarters had been located until the 1920s).¹⁰⁹

A key role in reviving the Church in Karabakh was played by lay preachers from the Brotherhood Movement, who went to Karabakh in 1987 as the movement for independence from Azerbaijan was growing. There they attracted a group of young people who became committed Christians and soon began secretly collecting signatures on petitions to allow churches to reopen, despite threats from the KGB. They formed a delegation which travelled to Echmiadzin to visit Catholicos Vazgen, to whom they handed copies of the petitions. When the delegation returned home it was accompanied by Father Vertanes Aprahamyan, a native of Karabakh assigned by Vazgen to continue the work of revival that had already begun. Father Aprahamyan was the first clergyman to visit Karabakh for decades. He secretly baptised some 70 people who would provide a core of church workers for the future. He was soon joined by the newly-appointed Bishop Martirosyan and four priests who had been assigned to assist him.¹¹⁰

In addition to bringing the sacraments to those who had been without them for many decades, the clergy and laypeople were involved in rebuilding churches. At first, in the final years of the Soviet era, Martirosyan complained that there was harassment which prevented the registration of Armenian churches in the enclave. In 1989 he opened a few churches with permission from Moscow (although the Azerbaijani authorities in Baku refused permission). Perhaps symbolically, the first to be reopened was the historic monastery church at Gandsasar, reconsecrated on 1 October 1989 after six months of renovations. According to Zori Balayan several KGB agents could be spotted among the crowd attending.¹¹¹

It seems that the impetus for their registration came during the period when Gorbachev's special envoy, Arkadi Vol'sky, was in charge of the territory, first as special representative of the Soviet Central Committee then, from January 1989, as

head of the special administration. Balayan reported that in April 1989 Vol'sky had brought permission from Moscow for the registration of the monasteries of Gandsasar and Amaras and the churches of St Karapet in Mardakert and St Harutyun in Hadrut, as well as for churches in Khnatsakh and Nekrin Oratag. Vol'sky later told Robert Cullen of the progress he had made during that time in meeting Armenian cultural demands in the enclave, including the provision of Yerevan television, the opening of Armenian-language schools and the supply of Armenian textbooks. 'We opened an Armenian theatre', he recalled, 'and gave two churches back to the Armenian community. We even opened three religious communities, for the first time in 70 years of Soviet power.'¹¹² However, progress was reversed with the withdrawal of Vol'sky and the transfer of the territory back to Azerbaijani control in November 1989. This brought renewed pressure to bear on Bishop Martirosyan. In January 1990 the second secretary of the Azerbaijani communist party, Viktor Polyanichko, visited the bishop in Stepanakert, accompanied by Voiko, the Karabakh KGB chief. Polyanichko failed to make any headway with the bishop and placed him under surveillance. He also ordered searches to be carried out in churches and priests' homes.¹¹³

According to Bishop Martirosyan the authorities in Baku took the decision on 21 November 1990 to close all the churches in Karabakh, claiming that Moscow was not authorised to grant permission.¹¹⁴ Ruben Arutyunyan reported that it was the CRA in Moscow in November 1990 which

accepted the protest of the Council of Ministers [CM] of the AzSSR against the transfer by the local soviets of the Gandsasar (thirteenth-century) and Amaras (fourth-century) monasteries to the Christian communities of the village of Vank (Mardakert district of NKAR) and the village of Sos (Martuni district of NKAR) in 1989. The *kollegiya* [of the CRA] declared that the transfer had been deprived of juridical force, having agreed with the reasoning of the CM of the AzSSR that the churches of Gandsasar and Amaras were 'works of [Caucasian] Albanian architecture' and 'the cultural property of the Azerbaijani nation', and that it thus broke Article 17 of the USSR Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations of 1 October 1990.¹¹⁵

Despite appeals in 1990 from thousands of Stepanakert residents, permission was initially denied to build a church in the town to replace the one demolished in the 1930s (and on whose foundations the theatre was built in the 1950s). It was only after the Armenians gained control of the administration there that services could begin in an upper room of the theatre.

Martirosyan set up Sunday schools, addressed the Stepanakert Institute (later to become the University of Nagorno-Karabakh) and spoke in schools. During the 1989–90 academic year the bishop began a fledgling seminary, for which he managed to obtain exemption from military service for the young men, but this soon had to close because of the military situation.¹¹⁶ In addition, Martirosyan began small-scale publishing of religious works in Karabakh. At the end of 1991 he published his Leningrad research as a small book in Russian in Stepanakert.¹¹⁷ The following year he began publication (in Armenian) of a journal *Gandsasar*, named after the thirteenth-century monastery which is the bishop's seat. This journal has gained respect not only within Armenia but also abroad for its high scholarly level, maintained despite the difficult economic conditions within Karabakh and in Yerevan (where the editorial work was mostly done). At the time there were many

complaints that the Church's official journals (especially *Echmiadzin*) had little serious content; *Gandsasar* was widely welcomed as an alternative.

Ever since his appointment Martirosyan had been an influential figure in Karabakh. For the successive regimes in Stepanakert he provided the stamp of legitimacy, fulfilling a similar role to that of Catholicos Vazgen in Armenia. When the first Karabakh parliament opened in Stepanakert in January 1992 he launched the proceedings with a prayer. He attended military parades and was closely involved in all aspects of the campaign (he reportedly carried a pistol under his cassock). He was also prominent in representing Karabakh's interests to the international community, visiting various embassies in Moscow and addressing meetings during his foreign travels. 'It is impossible to imagine the Karabakh movement without bishop Parkev,' Balayan commented, adding that he had given an 'unmistakable boost to the religious life of the Armenians'.¹⁸

But the years of bitter war with the Azeris took their toll on the Church and its workers. The Armenian church of Christ the Saviour (the biggest in Karabakh) in the hilltop town of Shushi, which had a majority Azeri population, was 'desecrated' in 1990. In July of that year a group of five USSR people's deputies from Nagorno-Karabakh, led by Zori Balayan, appealed to a range of religious figures, including Vazgen, Catholicos Karekin II of Antilias, Russian Patriarch Aleksii, Pope John Paul II and the general secretary of the World Council of Churches Emilio Castro, as well as to the UNESCO director general Federico Mayor and to Soviet political leaders like Mikhail Gorbachev and Nikolai Ryzhkov, to save this 'monument of church architecture of world importance' from destruction.

The dome of the main nave ... has been taken down and architectural features and details have been destroyed. The structure of the cross on the chapel of the cathedral with its foundation has been blown up. The building as a whole has more than once been deliberately set on fire. At close proximity around the church, multi-storey buildings are being constructed, while the historic Armenian cemetery, with its irreplaceable khachkars and ancient inscriptions, is being built over with blocks of flats. ... Under the eyes of the civilised world there is being conducted a real act of vandalism, a profanation of the sacred feelings not only of the Armenian people, but of millions of Christian believers and of mankind as a whole.¹⁹

The church – which the Armenians had begun to restore in the 1980s – was later used by the Azerbaijanis to store ammunition, apparently in the belief that the Armenians would never attack it. The smaller of Shushi's two Armenian churches, that of St John the Baptist, was also desecrated by the Azerbaijanis. In September 1990 Bishop Martirosyan had been able to reopen the fourth-century St Grigori monastery at Amaraz (near the village of Sos in Martuni district of Karabakh). But during the night of 9–10 September, two days after the opening, the monastery was attacked in a joint Soviet Interior Ministry/OMON raid. The secretary of the Martuni district committee of the Communist Party, Esayan, and the chairman of the district executive committee, S. Seyranyan, protested about the raid in an appeal to the Supreme Soviet in Moscow on 10 September.

The cynicism of certain representatives of the Interior [Ministry] forces has reached such a point that on 9 September, the day when a religious rite was being conducted, they burst into the Amaraz church in Martuni

district, without any grounds whatsoever, under the pretext of searching for weapons and carried out there an unsanctioned search, insulting the national, religious and human feelings of the people.

According to Esayan and Seyranyan the troops then attacked the village of Sos, taking 24 hostages.¹²⁰ On 14 September Vazgen wrote to Mikhail Gorbachev to complain about the attack.

Today we are obliged to write to you again to report with deep sadness and indignation that the situation of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh has become tragic in church life as well. The spiritual head of the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, Bishop Parkev, has reported to us that on Sunday 9 September after the completion of the ceremonial liturgy the Armenian monastery of Amaraz, founded in the fourth century, suffered attacks twice in the night on the part of groups of people dressed in military uniforms, who opened fire on the walls of the monastery and terrorised the clergy and unarmed watchmen. Our newly-reopened monasteries and churches are again in danger, as well as the lives of our clergy.

Vazgen called on Gorbachev to end this 'tragedy' by placing Karabakh under direct presidential rule. 'The cup of the Armenians who have been deprived of their rights has long been overflowing and they are prepared to die as free people,' Vazgen told Gorbachev.¹²¹

Despite Vazgen's intervention a number of local Armenians were to suffer reprisals for trying to defend the monastery. Some, who had heard of the impending raid, had gathered with primitive weapons. Twenty-six locals were arrested; one was shot on the spot and the remainder were transferred to prison in Fizuli in Azerbaijan. Nine were eventually tried in 1991 and sentenced to periods of imprisonment. Following the attack on Amaraz (not the first), the monastery – which was situated in an area of heavy fighting – became unusable and was abandoned in May 1991. (It would not be reopened until Karabakh fighters regained control of the area a few years later.) In July 1991 there was a Soviet Army/OMON raid on the thirteenth-century Gandsasar monastery, allegedly in a search for guns. Papers were checked and a thorough search, including the raiding of graves, took place.¹²² In December 1991 a deacon and a driver were killed in separate incidents and in February 1992 a bookkeeper for the diocese was seriously injured. The bishop himself was nearly killed when two shells landed on his house (which also served as diocesan offices) in Stepanakert on 28 December 1991 just after seven o'clock in the morning. The bishop had got up to pray just a few moments before.¹²³ He claimed: 'It was a miracle that I remained alive. It was none other than God who saved me.'¹²⁴ In January 1993 a priest at the Gandsasar monastery was wounded during an attack from the air which killed several people nearby. The attack reaffirmed his belief that God was protecting the monastery. 'Gandsasar is our protector', he told the soldiers, 'they cannot touch her.'¹²⁵ Bishop Martirosyan reported that when the Azerbaijani forces took the town of Gulistan they desecrated the church and placed on the altar the bodies of seven local Armenians they had killed.¹²⁶

For the Armenians of Karabakh, whether religious or not, the Christ the Saviour church in Shushi and the Gandsasar monastery remained powerful symbols of their history and identity. 'The Cathedral of Christ the Saviour in the Kazanchetsots district of Shushi was often called to mind while the Karabakh movement was developing', recalled Zori Balayan. When the Armenians took the town on 9 May 1992 victorious troops raised an Armenian tricolour on top of the shattered dome and

the church was visited by the bishop and numerous fighters. Volunteers – including the veteran Karabakh campaigner Igor Muradyan – immediately set to work to clear the artillery and rocket shells the Azerbaijanis had stored in the church.¹²⁷ Long green munitions boxes were piled high outside the nineteenth-century church. Stephen Brook described the scene at the church two weeks after the capture:

A small Armenian tricolour flew from the top of the dome. All the windows were missing but the interior was in reasonable condition. Flowers and candles had been placed on the altar, and men and women were kneeling in prayer. Two women rose to their feet, hugged each other, then wept. Then they stepped outside to take family photographs on the steps.¹²⁸

On a Sunday morning that May the liturgy was celebrated in the church for the first time since 1920; a memorial service for the fighters who had died was held.

On 16 August 1992 Azeri bombers and helicopters made two attempts to bomb the hilltop monastery at Gandsasar in the Mardakert district, despite the fact that the monastery was not near the front. The imposing church was not hit, but Azeri bombs destroyed some of the outlying buildings in the complex. A week later, on 23 August, Azeri bombers targeted the Christ the Saviour cathedral in Shushi, just three months after the town had been seized by the Armenians. Although the Sunday liturgy was being conducted at the time there were no serious casualties.¹²⁹ Neither target was of military importance and the raids appeared to be a deliberate attempt to attack the Armenian heritage in Karabakh. The Armenians maintained that during and after the seizure of Azeri towns care was taken not to desecrate mosques, citing the examples of those in Shushi (taken by the Armenians in 1992) and Agdam (taken in 1993).¹³⁰ As the front line moved back and forth, both sides claimed the presence of ancient monuments as proof of the right to own the territory. Thus when the Armenian forces seized the Kelbajar region in March 1993 they immediately made great play of the presence there of ancient Armenian churches and monasteries. Speaking two months later, for example, the field commander Monte Melkonyan used this argument to justify the annexation.¹³¹ On the Azerbaijani side, the minister of culture, Polad Byul-Byul-ogly, complained in April 1992 to the culture ministers of neighbouring countries about the destruction of historical monuments by the Armenians in Karabakh: 'In a barbaric way, without regard for religious or national differences, monuments of the Muslim and Christian faiths – more than 5000 of which have been taken under state protection – are being destroyed. The graves of ancestors are being desecrated and wiped from the face of the earth.' His letter received a swift response from Artsvin Grigoryan, the head of the Armenian Architects' Union, who questioned the minister's claims of concern for the local cultural heritage.

Allow me to ask a few humble questions: whose culture? Haven't thousands of Armenian Christian monasteries and churches, famous throughout the civilised world and which have survived intact thanks to a miracle, come to your attention as they try today to drag them into the 'pre-Muslim culture of the Azerbaijani nation'? And five, ten, fifteen years ago, weren't they destroying Armenian monuments in Karabakh? And didn't they pave the streets of Nakhichevan with the debris from Christian khachkars [stone crosses] from the graves in Djuga?¹³²

A 1994 report from both Armenia and Karabakh summarised the damage to ancient monuments in the course of the war. Gagik Sargissyan, chairman of the Administra-

tion on Protection of Historical Monuments, reported damage to the Vahramyan centre in Noyembryan region in northern Armenia and destruction to monuments in Kapan region in the south. The parallel Administration in Karabakh reported damage not only to the Gandsasar monastery, but to the church complexes of Tsamdzor Surb Astvatsatsin, Banazur, Arakyul and Edillu in Hadrut region and Khramort church in Askeran region.¹³³

Members of the clergy played a direct role in the military campaign to hold onto Karabakh. Volunteer fighters, known as *fedayin*, were recruited not only in Karabakh but in Armenia too. 'Before going to the battle front', a visiting American Armenian priest reported in 1992, 'all the fedayin take an oath in church before the priest.'¹³⁴ Some took a break from the fighting to be baptised.

The soldiers used to come to the priests or the Bishop in large numbers, 30, 40, 70, 100 of them, get baptised and go back to the front. They wanted to have some holiness with them, they wanted to receive strength from God, they wanted to receive God's blessings. They wanted to fight with a Christian vocation.

The priest believed that the common experience in the war proved to be a 'unifying bond' between the clergy and the people.¹³⁵ Other clergy were reported to have joined military units operating in Karabakh. French journalist Myriam Gaume met a Fr Raffik on the front line in Shaumyan region in September 1991. 'I am a priest', he told her, 'I pray always, it's essential. But I fight too. My rifle has shot many times. I'm afraid of blood, I'm afraid of bullets, but they don't hit me.' The priest was fatally wounded in Mardakert that December. The dying priest is quoted as saying:

I came from Gandsasar to Mardakert. Vartan the Brave said to God: 'Just as You gave Your son, we give our lives for our brothers.' We are the successors of Gregory the Illuminator, of Vartan. This is how a people is formed. May Your kingdom come.¹³⁶

Some priests were not sure how to cope with their role in the fighting. The British writer Philip Marsden encountered a priest, Fr Vasken, in the town of Kapan in southern Armenia in 1991. He had just been ordained and was apparently the first priest in the region since 1921. He told Marsden:

Last week, some fedayi saw me in the hotel. 'Come, Kahana!' they said. I could not say no to the fedayi. They took me to their room. On the bed were six guns in a row. The leader points at the guns. 'You must say mass, Kahana! You must bless our guns!' ... I did not know [what to do]. They did not teach me in the seminary. So I said prayers and put some water on the guns as if for baptism.¹³⁷

In both Karabakh and Armenia there was a widespread perception that the conflict was between Christian Armenians and Muslim Azerbaijanis. Fighters often sported Christian symbols as a badge of identity. Marsden observed:

All the fedayi wore crosses round their necks and had them tattooed on their forearms. They kept saying to me, 'We are Christian, they are Mussulman'. But the whole casual liturgy was enacted with a clumsy bravado. In these warring villages religion had become more a waving of colours than a statement of faith.¹³⁸

The war heightened a sense of religious hysteria in some. A demonstration was held

in central Yerevan by the nationalist politician Paruir Hairikyan in February 1993. 'After the demonstration', Thomas Goltz reported,

I ran into some disgruntled religious fundamentalists, Armenian Apostolic style, who were parading around with a white cloth banner emblazoned with a red cross. The banner, they said, was made from the vestments Jesus wore and had descended to them 'from heaven' so that they might raise it over the 'Christian tanks' in Karabakh.

The demonstrators tried to present the banner to Hairikyan, but he declined to accept it.¹³⁹

At an official level on both sides, political and religious leaders stressed that the Karabakh conflict was not a religious war. Levon Ter-Petrosyan, chairman of the Armenian Supreme Soviet and, from October 1991, president of Armenia, repeatedly denied that this was a religious war. 'People say that the origin of our conflict with Azerbaijan is panislamism. No, religion is not a factor here. Likewise with ethnicity or nationalism. This conflict centres around a nation's international right to self-determination', he told an interviewer in 1990.¹⁴⁰ He repeated this in October 1991: 'The Karabakh conflict is often portrayed in the West as a religious conflict. We reject this. It is purely a question of self-determination for the Karabakh people.' Speaking the previous day, Bishop Parkev Martirosyan echoed this position almost exactly: 'The problems here in Karabakh did not have religion as their basis. It's a very simple question: a people's right to its own development, a people's right to exist.' Azerbaijani president Ayaz Mutalibov likewise believed religion played no part: 'The conflict is neither ethnic, nor religious, nor nationalistic', he said. 'The war was provoked by Armenian nationalists claiming Azerbaijani territory.'

Both Ter-Petrosyan and Martirosyan made the point that Armenians had not had a problem coexisting with Muslims. 'History shows that Christians and Muslims can live together', declared Bishop Parkev. 'There are Armenian communities throughout the Middle East, in Lebanon, Iraq, Persia. This shows they can live together. Sadly, there are places where Christians can't even live together.' Ter-Petrosyan echoed his words: 'Armenia has never suffered from religious fanaticism and has always lived well with other nations regardless of their religion. There are large communities of Armenians in many Muslim countries who have lived for centuries in perfectly good relations with the people of these nations.'¹⁴¹

By 1992 Bishop Martirosyan was sceptical about the possibility of a peaceful resolution of the conflict. In an interview he pointed out that it was not the people of Karabakh who had started the war. Asked about how a clergyman could get involved in a war, he responded: 'I'll tell you simply: when a house is burning there's no time to sort out who's a priest and who's a fireman. You have to put out the fire as quickly as possible – everyone together.' In one prediction, he was wildly optimistic, declaring that he believed the war would end that same year, 1992. 'I will not go into details, but independently of one another I have been told this by many people who have the gift of looking into the future. The gift of prophecy, if you like.' He believed that God was with the Karabakh Armenians.¹⁴²

The bishop further developed his view of the role of religion in the conflict and the 'righteous nature' of the Armenians' position, expounding his views in a pamphlet *Yergnayin ognutyun grisdonya zinvorin (Divine Help for the Christian Soldier)*, which he published in Yerevan in 1995 and distributed widely among the troops. His interpretations were designed to encourage the ordinary soldier on the front line:

You are well aware of the 1992 historic liberation of Shushi. The Artsakh

command and the entire army – three hours before the battle – received the blessings of the holy father [Bishop Martirosyan] and, filled with faith in God, climbed the difficult fortresses and mountains. All the Armenian soldiers were carrying the sign of the Holy Cross on their uniforms. The same cross was on all the armoured vehicles. The strength of God was visibly with us. The small army, with minimal casualties, achieved a great victory. The unimaginable victory of Shushi became one of the greatest pages of Armenian military history. It showed the bravery and faith of the sons of Armenia, by witnessing the glory and power of Christ to the whole world.

The bishop had already spoken of this in a 1994 interview: ‘To lose 25, 30 soldiers and seize Shushi, to liberate the entire Shushi region, in addition to Lachin – that, you’ll forgive me, is only a miracle of God. All the soldiers can tell you that.’¹⁴³

In his booklet Martirosyan linked such battles with other famous victories in Armenian history, notably the victory of St Vartan and of Emperor Constantine over Maxentius in 312, drawing out what he believed was the crucial religious element in such battles:

When the enemy was under the walls of the monastery of Gandsasar and had turned our holy place into a target, on that critical day when there was constant shelling, the prayers, the Divine Liturgy, the services and the bells of our churches did not remain silent. It was on that day that the entire population of Artsakh, young and old, were sitting in shelters because of the shelling and – by candle light – were unceasingly praying to God, beseeching His Almighty power to help our young and brave fighters. And in Gandsasar, battalion by battalion, the Armenian fighters were being baptised, receiving the blessings of the clergy and then entering the battlefield, having the holy Chrism on their foreheads, and carrying in their hearts the unshakeable faith of certain victory. It was such strong faith that brought the liberation of a number of villages in the Mardakert region, by cutting through the enemy’s deadly ring which had been spread over the land of Artsakh. It was this faith that led the Armenian freedom fighters to many new and admirable victories.¹⁴⁴

From the late 1980s in Azerbaijan itself there was anger at the coverage of the growing conflict, especially in the Moscow-based media. Many believed the media were pandering to the myth of Islamic fanaticism in Azerbaijan, deliberately focusing on evidence that supported this. One Moscow paper that came in for criticism was the weekly *Ogonek*, especially in the wake of an article about Karabakh by Anatoli Golovkov in spring 1989. ‘A. Golovkov was not in Baku last winter’, a group of hundreds of people in Baku wrote in an open letter to *Ogonek*’s editor, ‘or he would have seen that by no means did a “throng of several thousand go wild under the green flags of Islam”. More than 500,000 people of various nationalities and, incidentally, religions gathered every day on the square during that period.’ The writers stressed that there were many Soviet flags, flags of the Azerbaijan SSR and portraits of Lenin. ‘Yes, there were some religious flags. After all, religious believers had something to say about all these problems too. But to infer from this fact that the real, underlying cause of the conflict was religious is laughable and absurd.’ *Ogonek* received the letter in June 1989, but did not publish it.¹⁴⁵ Another Azerbaijani writer, Farkhad Agamaliyev, concurred. Writing in the April 1990 issue of *Umid*, a moderate

monthly published in Baku, he complained:

Over the past two years the Soviet mass media have laboured mightily to shape public opinion on the subject of 'Islamic fundamentalism' in Azerbaijan. Television reporters and their crews have covered hundreds of rallies in Baku since the beginning of the so-called 'Karabakh problem'. Among the thousands of signs carried in these demonstrations, television cameramen have unerringly focused their sights on the rare banners with Islamic import. Close-up pictures have been published by the million. (*Moscow News* has been particularly assiduous in this regard.) The goal is to portray the all-ethnic Azerbaijani national movement as a product of Islamic fanaticism rather than as a vehicle to achieve democracy and authentic sovereignty.

Agamaliyev too criticised Golovkov's 1989 article in *Ogonek* and especially ridiculed Golovkov's claim that while in power in Azerbaijan, Heidar Aliyev had tacitly given the green light to Islamic activists. Agamaliyev rejected the perception he claimed many intellectuals held that 'cruelty is inseparable from Islam'. He pointed to the cruelty the Christian Armenians had inflicted when they 'mercilessly drove some 220,000 Azeris from their ancestral homes in Armenia'. He claimed the Soviet and foreign press had kept silent about this mass expulsion. But Agamaliyev was keen to separate religion from the conflict. 'The territory between the crescent and the cross need not be a no man's land on a vast battlefield. These symbols are, after all, representations of faith, hope and charity.' He too vigorously rejected Mikhail Gorbachev's assertion that the January 1990 demonstrations in Baku led by the Popular Front had been an expression of Islamic militancy. 'The notion, then, that there is an overpowering "Islamic factor" in the Azerbaijani national movement is arrant nonsense.'¹⁴⁶

Azerbaijani Popular Front leaders themselves stressed that while they would welcome the reopening of mosques closed during the Soviet repression of religion they were not working to install an Islamic regime in Baku. Despite religious ties with the Shia Muslim community of neighbouring Iran most Popular Front leaders looked to Turkey's secular constitution as a model. Ekhtibar Mamedov, a Baku historian and a Front leader, told the visiting journalist Bill Keller in August 1989 that the Soviet authorities were deliberately raising the spectre of Islamic fundamentalism to isolate the southern republics from the sympathy of the Soviet Union's Christian majority and of the West. 'They're not afraid of Islam', said Mamedov. 'They're afraid of losing control of their colonies.'¹⁴⁷ Other leaders later insisted that the Azerbaijani communist party second secretary Viktor Polyanchko had deliberately tried to incite the Popular Front to portray itself as an Islamic light. Tofik Gasimov, a Front organiser, recalled an encounter with Polyanchko in March 1989: 'He had a Koran in his office, and he went over to it and said, "The Koran is a good book. ... In Baku, this European thinking may be fine, but out in the countryside, the Muslim faith is very strong. So you should take the Islamic factor into account".' Gasimov told Polyanchko that after decades of Soviet atheism there were few observant Muslims left and that any trace of Islamic fundamentalism would give Moscow an opportunity to intervene. On later reflection, Gasimov believed this was what Polyanchko had in mind. Zardusht Ali-Zadeh, another Front activist, had a similar impression of the meeting.¹⁴⁸

While few declared explicitly that the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict was a religious war, there were many on both sides who expected fellow-believers abroad

to line up in their support and who expected their own country's foreign policy orientation to be dictated by the religious composition of other states. Thus Armenians expected support from states such as Russia, Georgia, the United States and Western Europe, just because they were 'Christian', while the Azerbaijanis expected support from Turkey, Iran and the countries of the Middle East, just because they were 'Islamic'. There was to be disappointment on both sides. When the fighting in Karabakh was at its height in the early 1990s Armenians frequently expressed to western visitors a sense that they had been betrayed by the rest of the Christian world. Russians who fought on the Azerbaijani side were equated with and derided as 'Muslims'.¹⁴⁹ In 1993 Armen Khanbabayan declared that the widespread feeling among Armenians that Russia was an 'eternal and real ally' was a myth, created in the nineteenth century. He believed that after a democratic regime had come to power in Russia with independence Armenians had seen it do little to promote their cause. 'People in Armenia have begun to realise that times have changed and to remain as the "sword and shield" of Christianity in the region has become simply dangerous.' Khanbabayan declared that being able to count on the Christian Georgians was likewise a myth, citing as evidence the fact that they had joined the energy blockage on Armenia and had sold military aircraft to Baku.¹⁵⁰ The Azerbaijanis also expressed their frustration at their fellow believers. The prime minister, Hasan Hasanov, complained in 1992 that no Islamic state with the exception of Turkey had given his country any assistance.¹⁵¹

As the Karabakh conflict was getting under way the religious leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Vazgen and Sheikh-ul-Islam Allahshukur Pasha-Zade, took part in an interreligious meeting in the southern Russian city of Rostov-on-Don. The May 1988 meeting adopted an appeal to the believers of the Transcaucasus and the North Caucasus, but according to Pasha-Zade the appeal had little impact on ordinary believers. However, interviewed separately by the Moscow weekly magazine *Ogonek* in December 1988 for publication in January 1989, both leaders expressed their desire to meet again and the need for such a meeting. Pasha-Zade spoke of his 'personal sympathies and great respect' for the catholicos, while Vazgen declared that the two were friends who had met frequently. Both leaders condemned religious and national extremism. 'Ethnic and religious fanaticism is the path of darkness, the path of sin', Vazgen declared. He maintained that the two sides had 'no religious disagreements, nor can there be any'. Pasha-Zade expressed the conviction that Azerbaijan would remain a country where Muslims and Christians of different nationalities could remain in peace. He called for a face-to-face encounter with Vazgen on national Soviet television.¹⁵²

Concerned at the increasing hostility between the Christian Armenians and the Muslim Azeris and the danger that the conflict might become religious, the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches (of both of which the Armenian Church was a member) launched a mediation mission. A WCC mission had visited Armenia in June 1991, and recommended a follow-up visit to both Armenia and Azerbaijan, which took place in November–December 1992. In Armenia they met Vazgen and President Levon Ter-Petrosyan, as well as other church and state officials and refugees. In Azerbaijan they met the leading Muslim cleric, Sheikh-ul-Islam Pasha-Zade, as well as other officials and refugees. 'The military situation prevented their entering Nagorno-Karabakh itself from either the Azerbaijani or Armenian side', the WCC declared.¹⁵³ The delegation reported:

The understanding with which we embarked on this mission, namely that

the conflict ... is not essentially a religious one, was repeatedly confirmed on both sides and at all levels. Politicians, government leaders, academics, ordinary citizens, refugees and wounded veterans virtually all agreed that this war was about land, human rights, defence of culture, language, sovereignty, and a particular view of history. Very few saw themselves engaged in a religious war of any sort, be [it] a new Crusade or Jihad.¹⁵⁴

The delegation noted that a previous attempt to bring the two religious communities together had failed.

Shortly before we arrived an inter-religious conference on 'Our Common Caucasian Home' had been held in Baku. Religious representatives from several countries, with the exception of Armenia, participated. They included Jews, Christians and Muslims who responded to Sheikh-ul-Islam's invitation. Armenians did not come because they felt the invitation was not genuine. Indeed the event had heavy political overtones given the involvement of Azerbaijani government authorities and the presence of diplomats from Turkey and Iran.¹⁵⁵

At the 'Caucasian Home' conference in November 1992, as the WCC noted, specific attacks on the Armenian Church were mounted, especially by the sheikh-ul-Islam:

He called on the forum participants to speak out against [religious] figures promoting interethnic conflicts. Speaking on the role of the Armenian Gregorian Church in the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, Sheikh Allahshukur Pasha-Zade noted: 'Having betrayed the ideals of peacemaking and preaching frenzied nationalism, the Armenian Church made the conflict even sharper'. In the view of Allahshukur Pasha-Zade it would have been possible to avoid many casualties if the Catholicos of all Armenians Vazgen I had been true to the moral obligations he took on himself back in 1988. Haji Allahshukur Pasha-Zade expressed his concern over the refusal of the Armenian religious delegation to attend the forum. He declared that the Azerbaijani clergy were making the utmost efforts to persuade the Armenian Gregorian Church of the necessity of beginning talks. He also underlined that Vazgen I had more than once declined his proposals to meet: 'I am ready to conduct a television debate about current problems of the region with the leader of the Armenian Church'.¹⁵⁶

The Armenian Church and the Muslim administration in Baku did, however, respond positively to the WCC/CEC invitation to a joint meeting, which was held at Montreux in Switzerland from 6 to 8 February 1993. The Armenian church delegation was led by Vazgen, while that of the Azerbaijani Muslims by Pasha-Zade. The International Islamic Council for Dawa and Relief also attended as an observer. The two leaders issued a joint appeal for peace during the meeting and affirmed that 'this is not a religious conflict. Armenian Christians and Azerbaijani Muslims have lived and will live in peace'. They appealed for hostages to be freed unconditionally and prisoners of war to be treated humanely and called on the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan to cooperate in the peace negotiations being conducted by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and other international bodies. They also announced the formation of a fund to assist the victims of the conflict without regard for their religion or nationality.¹⁵⁷

The primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church in the United States, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, was reportedly impressed by Pasha-Zade's attitude of respect towards Vazgen (who was 40 years his senior). He quoted Pasha-Zade as telling the catholicos: 'even though we are both religious leaders, I am like your son. Please forgive me if I make mistakes.'¹⁵⁸ However, these meetings failed to secure any significant improvement in the situation. Fighting continued. Asked five months later about what impact the Montreux meeting had had on the conflict, Bishop Martirosyan sighed, 'Well, you see the war is still going on. ...'¹⁵⁹

Interestingly, in its publication of the Montreux documents, Echmiadzin included for comparison the joint appeal of Catholicos Khrimyan and the sheikh-ul-Islam of Baku after ethnic conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the city in February 1905. Other commentators had already referred back to these earlier events, most notably Fr Mark Smirnov, writing in the Russian monthly *Nauka i religiya*. He quoted contemporary newspapers, describing the reconciliation meetings undertaken apparently at the instigation of the Russian governor: 'Under the gaze of all, the Armenian and Muslim clergy kissed; the people shouted "Hurrah" and loudly expressed the desire to be reconciled.' Smirnov believed it was unfamiliarity with the others' faith that often caused such interethnic conflicts, both then and now. 'People brought up in the Christian tradition', he wrote, 'know little of Islam. Some think that hostility to Christians is prescribed by the Muslim religion.' He also believed many Muslims were unfamiliar with Christian teachings, or even with the Quran. 'But if both Muslims and Christians believe in one God, then one must after all make clear that the pursuit of religious ideals does not allow one to bow down before the idols of national isolation and exclusivity.'¹⁶⁰

Just as the Russian state was taking over from the international community in proposing political settlement in Karabakh, so the Russian Orthodox Church sought to increase its influence in the region in 1994. In April Russian Patriarch Aleksii II brought together Archbishop Tiran Kuregyan of Moscow, Bishop Martirosyan of Karabakh and Sheikh-ul-Islam Pasha-Zade at Moscow's Danilov monastery. The religious leaders' appeal, issued on 15 April, was delivered to Russian President Boris Yel'tsin three days later. Two months later, in June 1994, Armenian representatives also took part (together with all the major Christian denominations) in a conference on 'Christian Faith and Human Enmity' organised at the Danilov monastery by the Russian Orthodox Church. The Russian Orthodox Church – as the unofficial leading religious group in the Soviet Union – had played a role from the start of the Karabakh conflict as a kind of religious referee. In May 1988, as the conflict was developing, it had been the focus for an exchange of messages, involving Patriarch Pimen, Vazgen, Catholicos Karekin II of Cilicia and Gabriel Habib, general secretary of the Middle East Council of Churches. In January 1990 Pimen had appealed to Vazgen and Pasha-Zade, expressing concern about the continuing conflict. The same month the Russian Orthodox Church had organised a Christian unity service in Moscow's All Saints church during which prayers for an end to the conflict were offered.¹⁶¹

In 1994 Pasha-Zade was reported as pledging to help two Armenian prisoners of war in their bid to be repatriated to Armenia. Visiting the navy's military hospital in Baku, where he encountered the two wounded POWs, Pasha-Zade said he would put their case on the agenda of the state committee on POW exchanges. As the sheikh-ul-Islam later recalled somewhat bitterly, the prisoners of war

appealed to me and said they placed all their hopes on me. I didn't believe

them at first. After I went to the hospital to ascertain the validity of their claims they were released under my authority. I was criticised for this in Azerbaijan. On the other hand, there was not even an expression of appreciation from the Armenian side.¹⁶²

These contacts did not succeed in removing the religious dimension from the conflict. Echoing the allegations made by Academician Buniyatov in 1989, a propaganda booklet issued in English in Baku in 1994 accused the Armenian Church of being the driving force behind plans for a 'Greater Armenia'. A Baku-born Armenian, Robert Arakelov, who professed himself 'ashamed' of the 'fascist' actions of the Armenians in Karabakh, was asked who was most active in promoting the idea:

It's a simple question. The Church. [The] Armenian apostolic church is a unique and extraordinary phenomenon. And not only because it differs from other confessions, it serves just one nation, but also has a direct participation in these events. The church became the bearer of the aggressive Nazi ideology able to unite all the Armenians in the world. And everybody knows I was the witness of such a fact in the Mountainous Karabakh when the local bishop Portev [i.e. Parkev Martirosyan] convinced that to be an Armenian was a great honour and called to support 'the Armenian Artsakh' till a victorious end.

The interviewer and interviewee agreed that the political parties, including the Dashnaks, served only as a 'screen for the real inspirer of the Armenian expansionism', the Church.¹⁶³

If the Armenians likewise viewed Islam as one of the primary motivations of anti-Armenian sentiment on the Azerbaijani side, other commentators were sceptical. Aleksei Malashenko, a Russian academic, writing in 1992 in *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, argued that Azerbaijan was the traditionally Islamic ex-Soviet republic in which Islam enjoyed the lowest influence on political life.

At the end of the 1980s it seemed that it was Azerbaijan, the majority of whose population are Shias, that would be the most fertile field for the spread of fundamentalism. At that time, portraits of imam Khomeini started to appear on the streets of Azerbaijani towns, the activity of the Iranian consulate sharply increased and Islamic literature was distributed in Baku and other cities. ... However, the religious explosion never took place. ... Islam was not even connected to the Karabakh conflict, even though some Armenian radicals attempted to present the Azerbaijani-Armenian confrontation precisely as a religious war.

Islam's weakness in Azerbaijan can be explained by a high degree of urbanisation of society, its obvious gravitation towards the secular Turkish model and the proximity of Iran, whose former super-radical fundamentalist course has 'scared' the cautious Azerbaijanis. Furthermore, political Islam has failed to win support among the intellectuals. In short, the Islamic movement in Azerbaijan has failed. ...¹⁶⁴

Looking back on the conflict later, after Vazgen's death in 1994, Pasha-Zade expressed some satisfaction that religion had been kept out of the dispute:

The start of the Karabakh conflict was the greatest sin. Thank God, efforts

to give that conflict a religious colouring were unsuccessful. When the Soviet army entered Baku [in January 1990], Gorbachev referred to our people as 'Muslim extremists'. A people's revolt in the name of independence was interpreted as Muslim fanaticism. There were rumours that I would look to the Koran and pray to Allah that there would be an earthquake in Armenia. But, how could I, a man of God, ask God to deprive women and children of the life that He, Himself, gave them?

The sheikh-ul-Islam implied that with the breakup of the monolithic Soviet state, local control over religion had replaced control from the centre. 'The KGB was very busy in matters of religion. You either did what they said, or you were removed.' Pasha-Zade was retrospectively critical of Vazgen and of himself for allowing themselves to be swayed by extremist politicians.

We bear great responsibility, Vazgen I and I, because we allowed ourselves to be pressured by the politicians. This was obvious in the televised speech and interviews that Vazgen I gave. Knowing him, I understood that he was saying [not what should] have been said, but what he could not not say. I was in the same position.¹⁶⁵

If the Karabakh conflict had led to the Armenians leaving Azerbaijan and the Azeris leaving Armenia, the instability in the Transcaucasus caused by this and other conflicts was also affecting the Russian Christian minorities which had lived in the region since tsarist days, among them the Dukhobors and Molokans. Both Azerbaijan and Georgia, and to a lesser extent Armenia, had such communities, but the trickle of emigration to Russia which had started in the 1970s became, by the end of the 1980s, a flood.¹⁶⁶ Many of the Dukhobor communities in Georgia were located in the southern region of Akhalkalaki, where there is also a large Armenian population. A Russian researcher, Svetlana Inikova, who made field trips to the region in 1988–90, reported that local Armenians (as well as Azerbaijanis) also considered Dukhobor religious places to be holy. In the village of Gorelovka, for example, the Dukhobors climbed the Sacred Hill every summer to pray at two unknown graves, presumably of saints. 'Armenians from the surrounding villages also visited the graves, and sacrificed doves there.' At caves the Dukhobors consider holy Armenians would 'set burning candles on the rocky ledges and appeal to God for favours'.¹⁶⁷

Some of the Molokan communities in Armenia survived until the 1990s, preserving their original regional Russian dialects, their way of life, their customs and, according to commentators, their faith. In August 1992 one of their representatives from Krasnosel'sk on the border with Azerbaijan told the Armenian foreign minister in Yerevan that the community had no intention of leaving, but in 1993 almost all the 3000 Molokans in Krasnosel'sk district departed for Russia, no longer able to endure the cross-border shelling. A Russian scholar of Armenian origin, Aleksandr Iskanderyan, writing in *Rossiiskiy vestnik*, reported: 'It is not by chance that it is precisely from the Krasnosel'sk district, where their life is subject to constant danger, that the Molokans have now come to Russia. Many Molokans live in the Kalinino district of northern Armenia, where military action is not taking place.' However, even from there a representative had travelled to Russia in 1991 at the behest of his village to scout around for a suitable place to relocate. Iskanderyan pleaded for the Russian government to finance the 'repatriation' of the impoverished Molokans (whom he called 'a special group within the Russian nation'), just as the Israeli government had financed the repatriation of Jews from Yemen and Ethiopia.

‘Although the Molokans had always been considered prosperous peasants, most of them do not have the money to buy a place to live in Russia’, Iskanderyan wrote.¹⁶⁸

The Church in the Other Former Soviet Republics

In Georgia, the Armenian community of 450,000 is mainly found in the capital Tbilisi and in the south. During the later Soviet period – and paralleling the academic arguments between Armenian and Azerbaijani historians over ownership of monuments in Karabakh – Georgian and Armenian scholars had quarrelled over whether churches were ‘Georgian’ or ‘Armenian’.¹⁶⁹

Since the late 1980s the Church has had greater opportunities to rebuild its work.¹⁷⁰ Although many of the Tbilisi Armenians have become russified those in the Akhaltsikhe region in the south have retained their Armenian identity. Church attendance in Tbilisi – whose 29 precommunist churches were reduced to just two – increased at the end of the Soviet period and the two churches became inadequate. The Church immediately applied to regain 12 of the confiscated churches, but received no response from the government. Church representatives complained that all former Armenian churches had been handed over to the Georgian Orthodox Church, which was using some of them for services. The Orthodox Church apparently refused to discuss the question with Armenian representatives.

Interviewed in 1992, Bishop Kevork Seraidaryan of Tbilisi expressed his gratitude that the Orthodox Church had served the Armenian community during the communist era when there had not been enough Armenian churches, but complained that the attitude of the Orthodox Church had become one of national chauvinism. He believed that the Georgian government, mostly made up of former communists, was basically neutral in religious matters, but favoured relations with the Orthodox Church. The bishop refuted the argument put forward by some Orthodox that, because the Armenian churches in Tbilisi were located in the city centre while most Armenians lived in the suburbs, any reopened churches would be empty.

If the Shevardnadze government seemed neutral, the same could not be said for its predecessor, led by Zviad Gamsakhurdia. The Norashen church in central Tbilisi, which had been shut down in 1933 and turned into a library, was one of those whose return to the Armenians had been refused. It is claimed that it was on the orders of the Gamsakhurdia government that the plaque on the church which identified it as Armenian was removed in 1991.¹⁷¹

In Akhaltsikhe, a dispute between the Armenian and Georgian communities arose over the Subnechak Vartanank church. The Armenians took possession of it in 1988, but their ownership was contested by the Georgians, who claimed that the church had been built in 1861 on the site of an earlier Georgian church. The two sides backed away from a conflict and neither used the church for services. At that early stage of *glasnost* the Georgian authorities were wary of assertions of Armenian identity. Deacon Garnik Tsarukyan, who had been released from enforced confinement in a psychiatric hospital in Yerevan in 1987, travelled to the Georgian village of Shulaveri, where he held Easter services in the abandoned Armenian church on 2 April 1988. He was immediately detained.¹⁷²

The regime of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia (who was ousted from office by a military revolt in January 1992) had tried to foment divisions in the Armenian community by claiming that the Armenian Catholics of southern Georgia were in fact Georgians who had been armenianised. This policy was unsuccessful, and both communities have lived harmoniously.

In the breakaway Georgian region of Abkhazia, full-scale war between the local Abkhaz-dominated authorities and the central Georgian authorities broke out in 1992 after earlier tensions. The Armenians of the region – some 77,000 people, about 15 per cent of the population, before the conflict began – were caught between the Abkhaz and the Georgians. One of those who threw in his lot with the Abkhaz leadership was Albert Topolyan, who became deputy chairman of the local Supreme Soviet. He had been instrumental in setting up an Armenian Cultural Society, *Krunk*, of which he became president. *Krunk*'s founding congress took place on 27 January 1990, when the society's governing statute was adopted. This listed one of the objectives of *Krunk* as 'To widen the possibilities for the realisation of the spiritual needs of the Armenian population in the sphere of education, culture ... and for the satisfaction of religious requirements.' The Sunday schools envisaged by the statute were apparently solely for the teaching of the Armenian language and not for religious instruction.¹⁷³

Speaking in 1992, Topolyan highlighted one of *Krunk*'s main aims: 'Above all, the restoration of the Armenian church [in Sukhumi], which was destroyed by the Stalinists in the 1930s.' He described how the local Armenians had regained a church in the Abkhaz capital:

In order to receive permission to build it, we had to register the Armenian Apostolic Church. We were able to gather more than 12,000 signatures and after that the Armenian Apostolic Church in Abkhazia was registered at the Council for Religious Affairs attached to the USSR Council of Ministers. In addition, we even received permission to build a church in Sukhumi. We also opened Sunday schools where Armenian children studying in Russian-language educational institutions had the opportunity to study the Armenian language.¹⁷⁴

One might have expected the Christian Armenians and the Christian Georgians – both of whom had a strong perception of themselves as embattled defenders of Christianity – to have had great mutual sympathy. But rivalry was more the order of the day, a point highlighted by one Armenian priest, Archimandrite Yeznik Petrossyan, who noted in 1994 that 'the Armenian Church has been enjoying more freedom in the Muslim Abkhazian [breakaway republic] than in Orthodox Georgia, where many Armenian churches are forced to become Georgian'.¹⁷⁵

Churches began to reopen in Russia from the end of the communist era. The status of the Armenian Church as an ethnic minority Church helped keep it out of the conflicts between the Russian Orthodox Church and non-Orthodox Churches (especially the Catholics and Protestants) over accusations of proselytism. By July 1993 there were 22 registered Armenian communities in the Russian Federation, according to Aleksandr Kudryavtsev, head of the department in the Ministry of Justice which registered religious communities.¹⁷⁶ However, not everywhere did the Armenians avoid conflict. In Akademgorodok, the scientific city attached to the Siberian city of Krasnoyarsk, there was uproar over the building of an Armenian church. Some complained that it represented a 'threat of religious expansionism',¹⁷⁷ despite the fact that the Armenians are well known for avoiding proselytism among non-Armenians. It seems that the protest was, rather, linked to widespread resentment of the influx of migrants from the impoverished Caucasus. Similar ethnic tensions were aroused by the large influx of Armenians into Russia's Krasnodar and Stavropol' territories, fleeing impoverishment at home. Attacks on Armenians were led by local Cossack groups. Among those contributing to reducing tensions between

the two communities were Armenian priests.¹⁷⁸ In late 1993, during the election campaign in Krasnodar region, local politicians close to the Cossacks led public campaigns against recent Armenian immigrants. G. Len', a local Cossack judge, published several long and inflammatory articles in the local press alleging that the Armenian migrants were settling in the area as part of a plan to attach the region to a Greater Armenia. After an Armenian reader had written in to complain of an initial article, he published a further rant accusing the immigrants of all kinds of crimes, alleging that they 'used their excess sexual energies against local girls and boys'. But, he went on,

When a guest overturns his host's table and spits in his face, tries to rape his wife and daughter, it is the duty of any man with an ounce of masculine self-respect to drive that type of scoundrel out of his house. ... Why should we be crowded in our own home by those who are hardly superior to us intellectually, are no more industrious, and do not shine as fighters?

He then produced documents purportedly from Catholicos Vazgen advocating a policy of Armenian resettlement in southern Russia. Although Len' could not vouch for their validity, he said they were of interest nevertheless. The documents were subsequently declared to be forgeries. Echmiadzin registered a strong protest and both the regional administration and soviet criticised the paper for irresponsibility in publishing such material; but only after the election.¹⁷⁹

Archimandrite Yeznik Petrossyan, who worked as a priest in the North Caucasus from 1991, was involved in several initiatives aimed at defusing Muslim-Christian tensions. He took part in a 1992 joint meeting in Stavropol', organised by Metropolitan Gedeon of the Russian Orthodox diocese of Stavropol' and Baku, and another in November 1993 in the North Ossetian capital Vladikavkaz, held on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the Armenian church of St Fotios the Illuminator there.¹⁸⁰ In the traditionally Armenian town of Nor-Nakhichevan, incorporated during the Soviet era into the city limits of Rostov-on-Don, there were numerous churches, most of which were confiscated by the communist authorities and turned into barns and warehouses. Some were destroyed out of antireligious motives or during the Second World War. Local Armenians were able to restore their surviving churches in the early 1990s. Among those restored and inaugurated for use once more was the Holy Saviour Church in the Red Crimea district of the city.¹⁸¹

During the later Soviet era there were no registered Armenian places of worship in Ukraine. By 1 January 1994, however, there were nine registered churches, served by seven clerics.¹⁸² At Epiphany and Easter 1991 Vardapet Natan Hovhanessyan had visited the city of L'viv in western Ukraine to hold services, finally settling there in November of that year and taking over episcopal functions in the absence of a properly-constituted diocese, which he began to set up. In L'viv the parish, which was finally registered as a religious community in 1991 after two years as a cultural society, held services in a chapel in the old bell-tower as a dispute raged over ownership of the former Armenian Catholic cathedral. Confiscated along with two other Armenian Catholic churches in 1946 following the Soviet takeover of western Ukraine, the cathedral had been sought by the cultural community in the late 1980s. The leader of the community, Aleksandr Adramyan, claimed in 1991 that the cathedral should be handed to the Apostolic Church. Shortly afterwards the Armenian Catholic community in L'viv, served for the past year by an Armenian priest from Poland, Józef Kowalczyk, demanded that the cathedral (which still

housed an art museum) be handed over to them. The longstanding Armenian Catholic community in the area had largely been polonised during the centuries of Polish rule, while the Armenian Apostolic community were mainly more recent incomers, including a number of refugees from Azerbaijan. The Catholic community, which had also gained registration in 1991, received a visit from the papal nuncio in Moscow, Archbishop Francesco Colasuonno, in May 1991, but later seemed to fizzle out. The Apostolic Church was eventually able to take over the bell-tower and use it for services, while the museum warehouse remained in the main church building, which the authorities refused to hand over.¹⁸³ In Odessa, the foundation stone was laid in November 1993 for a new church – to be named after St Gregory the Enlightener – that would replace the old church destroyed when the community was liquidated in the 1950s. Communities in Kiev, Khar’kiv and the Crimea (where seven of the 28 church buildings survived) acquired land to build or set about the renovation of long-disused churches. Again, the lack of clergy slowed revival of parish life. In the Crimea there was just one priest.

In June 1993 the ceremonial consecration of the Holy Mother of God church in the Moldovan capital Chişinău took place in the presence of the president of Moldova, Mircea Snegur. In May 1992 the founding conference of an association of Armenians in Moldova had taken place in the church on the old Armenian street in Chişinău.

The church leadership in Echmiadzin was keen to support local efforts to revive parish life. Vazgen presented several gold awards of Gregory the Enlightener to Armenians in the ‘internal diaspora’ who had contributed to local churches, including Suren Sahakyan and Vanush Karapetyan, who had founded the first Armenian church in the Estonian capital Tallinn.

Following the lifting on restrictions on the Church with the ending of the Soviet Union, the Armenian Church was hoping to restructure the dioceses in what was known as the ‘internal diaspora’. At the fall of the Soviet Union the Church had four dioceses in Armenia (Ararat, Shirak, Gugark and Syunik) and one for Nagorno-Karabakh. The diocese of Baku was now defunct. The only other dioceses within the boundaries of the Soviet Union were the Georgian diocese, based in Tbilisi, and the diocese of Nor-Nakhichevan and Moscow, based in the Russian capital.¹⁸⁴ A fledgling diocese was set up in Ukraine (based in L’viv), and there was some talk of establishing new dioceses in the Sochi area and in Moldova (based in the capital, Chişinău). However, the process of setting up new dioceses would be slow.

The Death of Vazgen

With the establishment of the independent Armenian Republic the government sought ways of building the new state. A new award was introduced, National Hero of Armenia, and the first recipient was the ailing Vazgen on 29 July 1994 for services towards the preservation and development of the spiritual values of the nation.¹⁸⁵ But the elderly catholicos did not survive long. His death on 18 August 1994, a month before his 86th birthday, marked the end of an era. Having ruled the Church since 1955 he was the longest-serving leader of any religious community in the former Soviet Union. He was the ninth-longest-serving catholicos in the history of the Armenian Church, after Grigor III (Pahlavuni), who was Catholicos for 53 years.¹⁸⁶ In the wake of his funeral, the Supreme Ecclesiastical Council elected the 75-year-old patriarch of Jerusalem, Torkom Manoogian, as *locum tenens* to govern the Church until the election of Vazgen’s successor the following year.

Vazgen had dominated the Church for so long that it was difficult for historians to

tackle such potentially tricky subjects as his leadership and his relationship with the Soviet Armenian authorities. The reassessment of the Church's history over the Soviet period had begun cautiously at the end of that period, spurred by the lifting of restrictions on research and the opening of large sections of the archives (with the exception of high-level documents and material in the possession of the KGB). Researchers initially seemed to have focused on the period before the Second World War, admittedly the most dramatic part of Soviet history. The articles by Parkev Kevorkyan, the former bishop in Moscow, the articles and book by Stepan Stepanyan and the collection of documents by Sandro Behbudyan were among the first steps to restoring this lost history. All of them concentrated on the earlier years and had little or nothing to say of the Vazgen era.¹⁸⁷

Vazgen's death allowed the Church at last to reassess its place in the new Armenian state and focused attention on it in a way that had not occurred up till then, preoccupied as the population was with the war in Karabakh and the sheer difficulty of earning a living in a new state reduced to poverty. It also allowed the Church to take stock of its situation not just in independent Armenia, but throughout the world.

Conclusions

The Armenian Church was a unique religious body in the Soviet Union. It was the only one which, with a headquarters within the Soviet Union, had more believers outside the country than within. At the same time, believers and church structures outside the country had a life and autonomy of their own which precluded any drastic steps to curtail such autonomy. Thus the Soviet authorities created after 1945 a unique policy towards the Church, allowing it much latitude while at the same time expecting it to confine itself to strictly religious affairs or the pursuit of national goals amenable to the Soviet Armenian government. Their acceptance of a leader who had grown up outside the Soviet system would have been unthinkable for any other Soviet religious body.

However, it took some decades for such a *modus vivendi* to be worked out. In the early Soviet years the Church suffered the same repression as other religious groups, being excluded and marginalised in public life, having its property and land holdings confiscated and suffering state-sponsored attempts to divide the Church into a 'progressive' and a 'reactionary' wing. However, the Church managed to claw back its position from the low point of 1938, largely saved by the Second World War which produced the impetus for a new Soviet religious policy. Kevork's response to the war, the needs of the 'repatriation campaign' and Vazgen's skilful handling of the Soviet Armenian leadership helped formulate the unique *modus vivendi*. From the Church's point of view, the negative aspect was the state's tacit acceptance of a Church dominated by its catholicos in a way that was at variance with the Church's traditions of democratic, synodal government. In many ways this was an amenable arrangement for the Soviet authorities as it meant that they could exercise leverage over Vazgen to put a stop to activities they did not like.

Vazgen lived long enough to see the Church into the era of independence, a development he viewed with some caution and concern. As nationalist fever swept Armenia in the wake of the Karabakh movement, the catholicos showed a marked lack of enthusiasm, mindful of Armenia's vulnerability in the face of its neighbours. However, reluctance to pursue a policy at variance with the popular mood caused Vazgen to hold back, and he went along with the pursuit of independence. The Church's seal of approval was important to the process of state-building in the wake

of independence. President Levon Ter-Petrosyan and the catholicos knew the importance of symbolism and both Church and state worked towards a new relationship where the Church refrained from direct interference in government affairs, except in the realm of religious policy, while guaranteeing and endorsing statehood and providing almost sacramental endorsement of the new government and president.

The preferential treatment accorded the Apostolic Church in independent Armenia (and in Karabakh) received wide popular endorsement, even from those who had no active attachment to the Church. Religious minorities, by contrast, especially the new religious movements, experienced widespread hostility, even from those who had no active faith. However, this does little to help us understand the popular indifference to the persecution of the Armenian Church during the Soviet period. It is difficult to understand why the Soviet assault on the Armenian Church during the 1920s and 1930s did not provoke greater popular discontent and attempts to defend what was, after all, a central Armenian institution and repository of the nation's culture and faith. This was in marked contrast to the position in the late tsarist period.

It was the idea of protection of the Armenian Church that gave the greatest impetus to the rise of Armenian national self-awareness. ... An important factor in this process was the persecution of the Armenian Church by the Russian authorities at the end of the 19th century. This threatened the last institutional embodiment of Armenian unity, and, in terms of Armenian ancestral consciousness, was a threat which called for an effective counter. ... Attempts to close churches even led to serious peasant rebellions.¹⁸⁸

The occupation of Echmiadzin by Russian forces in 1903 was the final straw. A contemporary writer describes the public solidarity in defence of the Church at that time.

Confiscated church property (except money) immediately became dead stock. Land and houses were not rented. Those Armenians who wanted to use them were effectively warned against doing so. The clergy led by the catholicos refused to draw interest from financial capital – they preferred starvation to subsidies from Russian officials. They declared a boycott of all state institutions.¹⁸⁹

In the 1920s too there were protests – some of them violent – at encroachments on the Church's rights, but by the late 1920s, responses to Soviet moves against the Church were almost invisible. This was partly the result of the climate of fear created by the Stalin regime, though this did not prevent Orthodox villagers in Russia from defending their village churches from closure, but partly also because Armenia's statehood, though circumscribed by membership of the Soviet Union, had at least been assured. Another decisive factor lay in the accelerated secularisation imposed by the Soviet regime which drew on the earlier secularisation of the late nineteenth century.

Perhaps one of the most significant areas of impact on the Church caused by the Soviet period was that survival ranked higher than defending doctrine and developing Christian responses to change in society. Soviet restrictions largely prevented the Church from pronouncing on public issues, such as contraception, abortion or social injustices. Nor was the Church equipped to tackle modern trends in theology sweeping through the rest of the Christian Church. The American scholar Vigen Guroian has written that because of 'past forces of ottomanization and sovietization the Armenian Church has also been gutted of much of its doctrinal

conviction'.¹⁹⁰

One of the main problems for the Church was that the Soviet state viewed it almost exclusively as a tool to be used, an attitude shown as early as the 1920s. In the words of the defector Georgi Agabekov,

The Soviet government and the GPU reserved a special hatred for the Armenian archbishop Nerses of Tabriz, who had actively helped the Dashnaks. The archbishop was also dangerous because, enjoying great respect among the Armenian population and clergy, he could be elected to succeed the catholicos of all the Armenians after his death. In this event, the residence of the catholicos would be moved out of Soviet Armenia to another country and the Soviet government would be deprived of the opportunity to exert influence on the Armenian Church and, through it, on the Armenian nation.¹⁹¹

Preventing just such an eventuality was a key goal of Soviet policy towards the Armenian Church. The Church was given enough leeway in Soviet Armenia to head off any such sentiment without being given space to conduct its mission to the people.

The neutralisation of the sharp political divisions of the Armenian diaspora in the 1980s lessened the need for the Church to promote a controversially pro-Soviet policy. The view of Soviet Armenia as the national homeland began to be widely accepted throughout the Armenian community worldwide. However, the Church never managed to overcome its division into the Echmiadzin and Antilias jurisdictions that had itself been a result of these political divisions.

The Armenian Church's desire to reinstate itself as the established Church of Independent Armenia was exactly similar to the aims of the Orthodox Church in Russia and Romania and the Roman Catholic Church in Poland and encountered criticism from some commentators and international human rights groups. 'National churches are struggling for identity and purpose where the reality of post-Christendom no longer is camouflaged by the Soviet system', declared Guroian.

The behaviour of the Armenian Church illustrates the powerful temptation of many of these national churches to take cover within the nation from outside forces. Just when the future of the new Armenian nation depends so heavily upon full participation in the community of nations, the Armenian Church is yearning to return to its former comfortable institutional and ideological identification with the nation. Yet a genuinely ecumenical church would be of far greater service to the nation. This ecumenical church would have the perspective from which to be a witness to the nation of the larger universal vision of the Christian faith.¹⁹²

Guroian, himself a practising member of the Church in the United States, argues that the Armenian Church, drawing its inspiration from the German Lutheran Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan, should seek to become a 'confessing church' within the nation. He quotes with approval Nersoyan's 1928 essay *Nationalism or Gospel*,¹⁹³ in which the author argues that preserving Armenian identity and promoting nationalism is not the Church's *raison d'être*. Nersoyan believed that such a view 'obviously harms both the cause of Armenian nationhood and nationalism, and does even more harm to the true calling of the Armenian Church, which, alas truthfully, she is still far from understanding and accomplishing.' Guroian regrets that Nersoyan's death in 1989 deprived the Church of someone who could have

contributed much to what he feels is the need to 'envision a new role for the national church'.¹⁹⁴

Perspectives

The Armenian Church survived the communist onslaught, and indeed revived itself from the low point of the 1930s when it all but ceased to exist in Soviet Armenia. The constantly changing role of the Church in this century – indeed, in its history as a whole – has given the current Church a sense that it is strong enough to withstand any onslaught, thanks to its close identity with the nation. However, it is difficult to exaggerate the fundamentally weak state the Church now finds itself in. As an institution, the Church in Armenia enjoys some residual respect, but is so far removed from the identity of most Armenian citizens that it is largely an irrelevance that impinges little on their daily lives. The greatest impact it might have is as a reminder of the Armenian past and as an adornment to national independence. If its survival in the homeland in this century was in part due to input from the diaspora Church, so its revival has depended and will continue to depend on such input from a more outgoing and less introverted overseas Church, especially in the United States.

The religious 'free market' which developed after the 1988 earthquake was greatly resented by the Church, which thus failed to see the opportunity this offered the Church to rejuvenate itself and to present itself as a forward-looking institution with something to offer the nation. The resentment spilled over into the ecumenical arena, with distrust displayed towards other Christian Churches, especially the Protestants and Catholics (in the latter case, partly justified).

Armenia's fragile independence, the debilitating war with Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave and the resulting dire poverty have hardly presented auspicious circumstances for the Church or society. The growing estrangement between the diaspora and Armenia in the mid-1990s depressed hopes of a national unity transcending boundaries. One thing is certain, though: the Church cannot return to the old certainties.

Notes and References

- ¹ The first part of this article appeared in *Religion, State and Society*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1996, pp. 9–53, and the second part in vol. 24, no. 4, 1996, pp. 289–343. Please refer to the first part for a detailed list of sources. I am grateful to the many people who helped me on this study, whose names are noted in parts one and two. In addition, I have made extensive use of the quarterly journal *Window View of the Armenian Church*, published in Reseda, CA, and later San Jose, CA, from 1990 under the editorship of Fr Vazken Movsesian and Deacon Hratch Tchilingirian (referred to as *Window ...*). I am also grateful for material supplied by the Armenian Assembly of America and by Liz Fuller at the Open Media Research Institute (OMRI).
- ² TASS, 30 May 1986; BBC *Summary of World Broadcasts (SWB)*, 9 June 1986; *Keston News Service (KNS)*, no. 252, 12 June 1986, pp. 7–9. For a survey of how other religious groups in the Soviet Union became involved in charitable activity see the chapter 'The quality of mercy' in Michael Bourdeaux, *Gorbachev, Glasnost & the Gospel* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1990), pp. 188–208.
- ³ *KNS*, no. 284, 24 September 1987, p. 18, no. 292, 21 January 1988, pp. 4–5 and no. 294, 18 February 1988, p. 10.
- ⁴ *KNS*, no. 290, 17 December 1987, p. 17.
- ⁵ Interview with Natal'ya Kraminova, *Moskovskiye novosti*, no. 4, 24 January 1988, p. 16. In her description of Echmiadzin Kraminova notes the cathedral's museum (containing a

reputed piece of Noah's Ark), 'something which is in itself unusual for a working church'.

- ⁶ *Nauka i religiya* (Moscow), no. 2, 1989.
- ⁷ For an account of the beginnings of the movement see Ronald Grigor Suny, 'Nationalism and democracy in Gorbachev's Soviet Union: the case of Karabagh', in Rachel Denber (ed.), *Soviet Nationality Reader* (Westview Press, Denver, CO, 1992), pp. 485–507. See also Caroline Cox and John Eibner, *Ethnic Cleansing in Progress: War in Nagorno Karabakh* (Christian Solidarity International, Zurich, 1993), which includes a bibliography of some of the numerous writings on the Karabakh conflict.
- ⁸ *KNS*, no. 295, 3 March 1988, p. 17.
- ⁹ Politburo minutes, 29 February 1988, TsKhSD, f. 89, op. 42, d. 19, p. 6. Vazgen had in fact visited Baku and held services in September 1979: see *Echmiadzin*, no. 11, 1979, pp. 23 ff. According to Parkev Martirosyan, Vazgen had been allowed to visit Karabakh only once – in 1958. Interview with the author in Yerevan, July 1991.
- ¹⁰ *Glasnost* (US edition), nos. 16–18, January 1989, p. 24.
- ¹¹ *Glasnost* (Moscow), no. 17, May 1988. The same issue contained an 'Obrashcheniye k khristianskim narodam i pravitel'stvam' ('Appeal to Christian Peoples and Governments') signed by the 'Community of the Armenian Apostolic Church' calling for their support. Kuregyan later declared that he believed the Church had been too passive at the start of the Karabakh movement. Interview in *Armenian International Magazine*, August/September 1991, p. 17.
- ¹² At press conference in Los Angeles, 10 November 1987; Gerard Libaridian (ed.), *The Karabagh File* (Zoryan Institute, Boston, MA, 1988), pp. 69–70.
- ¹³ Libaridian (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 93.
- ¹⁴ *Die Wochenpresse* (Vienna), no. 22, 3 June 1988, pp. 43–45.
- ¹⁵ *Novosti*, 31 May 1988.
- ¹⁶ Alexander Andryuschenko, 'Where knives gave way to stones – and a new life', *The Guardian* (London), 24 June 1988.
- ¹⁷ Archbishop Mesrop Ashjian, *Remembrance and Hope: Essays of Faith and Life* (Armenian Prelacy, New York, 1997), p. 331.
- ¹⁸ Rebroadcast on Armenian radio for Europe, 11 July 1988; *SWB SU/0202 B/1–2*, 13 July 1988. See also *Trud*, 8 July 1988.
- ¹⁹ *Argumenty i fakty* (Moscow), no. 29, 16–22 July 1988.
- ²⁰ Andryuschenko, *op. cit.*
- ²¹ *Elm*, the weekly publication of the Academy of Sciences of the Azerbaijan SSR, Baku, no. 19, p. 175. Translated in Levon Chorbajian, Patrick Donabedian and Claude Mutafian, *The Caucasian Knot: the History and Geo-Politics of Nagorno-Karabakh* (Zed Books, London, 1994), pp. 188–89.
- ²² *Kommunist* (Baku), 25 November 1988, translated in *SWB SU/0386 B/5–7*, 16 February 1989.
- ²³ Jinbachian in *Le Messager Évangélique*, 22 January 1989; English translation in *Lutheran World Information*, no. 6, 9 February 1989, pp. 13–14.
- ²⁴ *Pravda*, 16 December 1988.
- ²⁵ Bourdeaux, *op. cit.*, pp. 192–95. For an account of Mother Teresa's visit to Armenia see 'Milost' serdtsa', *Ogonek*, no. 1, January 1989, pp. 4–5.
- ²⁶ Vigen Guroian, 'The election of Karekin I: Armenian Church, nation, and the gospel witness', *Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol. XVI, no. 1, February 1996, p. 3.
- ²⁷ Ashjian, *op. cit.*, p. 165.
- ²⁸ English translation of Vazgen's address in *Window ...*, vol. 1, no 2, Spring 1990, pp. 6–9.
- ²⁹ *Izvestiya*, 13 July 1988.
- ³⁰ *Zayavleniye* to KGB chairman Viktor Chebrikov and Armenian KGB chairman Marius Yuzbashyan from Igor' Muradyan, dated 7 October 1987. Muradyan gives the date of Abdullayev's directive as 1967, but I presume this must be a misprint. Presumably this is the same Rafiq Abdullayev encountered below.
- ³¹ Shagen Mkrtchyan, *Istoriko-arkhitekturnyye pamyatniki Nagornogo Karabakha*, 2nd edn

- (Parberakan, Yerevan, 1989), pp. 5, 197.
- ³² *Glasnost*, no. 17, May 1988.
- ³³ Robert Cullen, 'A reporter at large: roots', *The New Yorker*, 15 April 1991, pp. 75–76.
- ³⁴ *Nauka i religiya*, no. 1, 1990.
- ³⁵ *KNS*, no. 272, 2 April 1987, p. 17, and no. 307, 25 August 1988, p. 14; *AGBU News* (Armenian General Benevolent Union), vol. 2, no. 3, September 1992, p. 9.
- ³⁶ *KNS*, no. 358, 13 September 1990, p. 13.
- ³⁷ Reuters, 26 March 1998.
- ³⁸ *Les Nouvelles d'Arménie* (Paris), no. 10, April 1994, pp. 50–51. The church's eventual consecration by the catholicos in 1996 was reported by *Armenian International Magazine* (*AIM*) (Glendale, CA), September–October 1996, p. 55.
- ³⁹ For the names, see Ashjian, *op. cit.*, pp. 250–51.
- ⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 251.
- ⁴¹ See the account in *Byulleten' khristianskoi obshchestvennosti* (Moscow), no. 10, 1988, pp. 72–73.
- ⁴² Valery Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union: The Mind Aflame* (Sage, London, 1997), p. 107.
- ⁴³ Yuri Rost, *Armenian Tragedy* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1990), p. 156.
- ⁴⁴ Ashjian, *op. cit.*, p. 254.
- ⁴⁵ *The Armenian Reporter* (New York), 30 August 1990, p. 18.
- ⁴⁶ Information on the hunger strike, as well as the messages from Kuregyan and Vazgen, are from *Bor'ba za svobodu: Dokumenty i materialy o prichinakh golodovki narodnykh deputatov SSSR* (Feniks, Moscow, 1990).
- ⁴⁷ *Vremya*, 2 October 1990; *SWB* SU/0886 B/5–6, 4 October 1990.
- ⁴⁸ Text of interview with unnamed correspondent, 20 September 1990, in *Bor'ba za svobodu ...*, pp. 47–49.
- ⁴⁹ 'The law of excluding the third force', *Haratch* (Paris), 18–22 October 1989, English translation in Gerard J. Libaridian (ed.), *Armenia at the Crossroads: Democracy and Nationhood in the Post-Soviet Era* (Blue Crane Books, Watertown, MA, 1991), p. 36.
- ⁵⁰ English translation in Pierre Verluise, *Armenia in Crisis: the 1988 Earthquake* (Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1995), pp. 133–40.
- ⁵¹ Philip Marsden, *The Crossing Place: A Journey Among the Armenians* (HarperCollins, London, 1993), pp. 207–8, 210–11.
- ⁵² *AGBU News*, vol. 2, no. 2, May 1992, p. 12.
- ⁵³ *KNS*, no. 320, 2 March 1989, p. 2 and no. 327, 8 June 1989, p. 16.
- ⁵⁴ Myriam Gaume, *Les Invités de la terre: Arménie, Karabagh 1988–1992* (Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1993), pp. 60–61.
- ⁵⁵ Interview with Nataliya Babasyan, *Byulleten' khristianskoi obshchestvennosti*, no. 10, 1988, p. 154–57. The journal, edited by Aleksandr Ogorodnikov, a Christian Democrat, was sympathetic to the Armenian cause. The editors declared that 'the tragic events of the past year in Nagorno-Karabakh, Sumgait and Yerevan are of primary importance not only for the Armenian people and the cause of democratisation in the USSR, but also for the whole Christian oikumene', *ibid.*, p. 153.
- ⁵⁶ For further details on these two movements see Guroian, *op. cit.*, p. 193 and David Lewis, 'Working partners', *Frontier* (Keston Institute, Oxford), July–August 1993, p. 17.
- ⁵⁷ *KNS*, no. 367, 24 January 1991, p. 7.
- ⁵⁸ *Grakan tert*, quoted in Ashjian, *op. cit.*, p. 255.
- ⁵⁹ On the Department of Theology and the CPF, see *Window ...*, vol. 1, no. 4, Fall 1990, p. 31 and vol. 2, no. 1, Winter 1991, p. 26. Quotations are from an interview with Oghlookian in vol. 2, no. 2, 1991, pp. 12–13, 22–24.
- ⁶⁰ Interview in *Window ...*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1991, pp. 16–17.
- ⁶¹ Bishop Hovnan Derderian, 'Painful concerns: the slow revival of the Church in Armenia', *Window ...*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1992, pp. 3–4.
- ⁶² *AGBU News*, vol. 2, no. 2, May 1992.

- ⁶³ Information from: Gandsasar World Wide Web site; November 1993 interview with Hratch Tchilingirian in *Window ...*, vol. IV, no. 1, 1994, pp. 9–12, 16–17; *Armenian International Magazine*, December 1995, p. 36.
- ⁶⁴ Address by Mgrditchyan given in New York on 18 June 1991 in *Window ...*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1991, pp. 9–11.
- ⁶⁵ Interview in *Window ...*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1992, p. 8.
- ⁶⁶ Cullen, *op. cit.*, p. 66.
- ⁶⁷ Interview with Tigran Xmalian in *Armenian International Magazine*, August/September 1991, p. 17.
- ⁶⁸ Ashjian, *op. cit.*, pp. 337–38.
- ⁶⁹ Ashjian, *op. cit.*, pp. 325–27.
- ⁷⁰ Text in *Armenia & Karabagh Factbook* (Armenian Assembly of America, Washington, DC), 1996, pp. 88–89.
- ⁷¹ Law no. 245, 17 June 1991. English translation in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service USR-91-016*, 'Armenia', 23 July 1991, pp. 14–16. For a detailed analysis of this law, and of the 1993 presidential decree on religion, see Felix Corley, 'Armenia', in Kevin Boyle and Juliet Sheen (eds), *Freedom of Religion and Belief: a World Report* (Routledge, London, 1997), pp. 265–71.
- ⁷² *The Armenian Reporter*, 19 September 1991, p. 1.
- ⁷³ English text of Vazgen's address in *Window ...*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1991, pp. 30–31.
- ⁷⁴ Ashjian, *op. cit.*, p. 351. Archbishop Ashjian believes it was Vartanyan who summoned Archbishop Husik Santuryan to the Council's offices to accuse him of treason for allowing Ashjian (who was of the Antilias jurisdiction) to join him in officiating at a wedding in the St Gayane church in Echmiadzin in January 1985. The minister for diaspora affairs agreed with Vartanyan that Santuryan should be criticised. *ibid.*
- ⁷⁵ Stephen Brook, *Claws of the Crab: Georgia and Armenia in Crisis* (Sinclair-Stevenson, London, 1992), p. 236. Brook also met the former CAAGC chairman Karlen Dallakyan on his travels, pp. 160–62.
- ⁷⁶ Interview in *Window ...*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1991, pp. 4–6.
- ⁷⁷ Interview in Yerevan, March 1992.
- ⁷⁸ Interview with Vardan Khachatryan and Aram Mkrtychyan in *Window ...*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1992, pp. 19–20, 30; *Monthly Digest of News from Armenia* (Armenian Assembly of America), June/July 1994, p. 12, quoting *Lragir* (Yerevan), 15 June 1994. See also *Armenia Factbook* (Armenian Assembly of America, Washington DC, 1994), pp. 25–26.
- ⁷⁹ Ashjian, *op. cit.*, p. 253.
- ⁸⁰ *Human Rights and Democratization in the Newly Independent States of the former Soviet Union* (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington, DC, January 1993), p. 106; Brook, *op. cit.*, p. 234.
- ⁸¹ Aryeh Levin, *Envoy to Moscow: Memoirs of an Israeli Ambassador 1988–92* (Frank Cass, London, 1996), pp. 366–72. During his visit Levin visited Vazgen at Echmiadzin, where the two spent much of the time discussing the Armenian community in Jerusalem. Levin also recalls that he and his wife were pleasantly surprised to find that President Ter-Petrosyan's mother-in-law, Bracha, spoke 'beautifully accented' Hebrew, which she had learnt at school in Vilnius in the 1930s.
- ⁸² Interviews with Fr Makari and Vyacheslav Dyachenko, Yerevan, March 1992.
- ⁸³ *Urartu* (Yerevan, in Russian), no. 18, 23–30 June 1993, p. 13. The journalist who conducted the interview, Marina Mkrtychyan, was full of admiration for Fr Makari's work with wounded soldiers from the Karabakh war, patients in the local hospital and others in need. Fr Makari must have been mistaken about the identity of the crusade leader – Billy Graham never visited Armenia on a crusade.
- ⁸⁴ Robert F. Drinan, 'Armenians' catacomb Catholicism is giving way to a new, open era', *National Catholic Reporter* (Kansas City), 1 November 1991.
- ⁸⁵ *The Tablet* (London), 7 May 1994, p. 574.

- ⁸⁶ *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, 17 October 1992.
- ⁸⁷ *Armenian International Magazine*, March 1993, p. 36.
- ⁸⁸ Yerevan radio, 30 November 1993, reported in *SWB SU/1879, F/4*, 23 December 1993.
- ⁸⁹ The Armenian Assembly of America in Washington DC has made available a translation of this decree.
- ⁹⁰ *AIM*, March 1994, p. 22.
- ⁹¹ *Persecution of Hare Krishna Members in Armenia*, 4-page report distributed by Hare Krishna movement, late 1994. For information on attacks on minority religious communities in 1995, see Felix Corley, 'Might, not right', *Frontier*, September–October 1995, pp. 6–8.
- ⁹² *Ayjm* (Yerevan), 27 March–2 April 1996.
- ⁹³ *ibid.*
- ⁹⁴ Karen Ohanjanian, 'The remaining minorities: oppression of non-traditional religions continues', *War Report* (London), November 1997, p. 33.
- ⁹⁵ *The Tablet*, 20 August 1994, p. 1055.
- ⁹⁶ Christian Solidarity International mission to Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, 29 August–7 September 1994, trip report.
- ⁹⁷ *Monthly Digest ...*, June/July 1994, p. 32, quoting *Azg* (Yerevan), 15 June 1994.
- ⁹⁸ *Monthly Digest ...*, August 1994, p. 22, quoting *Respublika Armeniya*, 30 June 1994.
- ⁹⁹ *Monthly Digest ...*, June/July 1994, p. 11, quoting *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun*, 6 May and 12 May 1994.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Monthly Digest ...*, June/July 1994, p. 24, quoting *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun* and 'Past' news agency (Yerevan), 20 July 1994.
- ¹⁰¹ Interview with BBC correspondent Mike Wooldridge, 7 May 1993. For Lambeth Palace's press statement on the visit, see *Window ...*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1994, p. 18.
- ¹⁰² Jinbachian, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
- ¹⁰³ Jim Forest, *Free at Last? The Impact of Perestroika on Religious Life in the Soviet Union* (Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1990), pp. 195–97.
- ¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 83–85.
- ¹⁰⁵ *New York Times*, 19 February 1990, p. A8.
- ¹⁰⁶ Peter Hopkirk, 'Epilogue', in Reginald Teague-Jones, *The Spy Who Disappeared* (Gollancz Paperbacks, London, 1991), p. 216.
- ¹⁰⁷ Thomas Goltz, *Requiem for a Would-be Republic: The Rise and Demise of the Former Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan* (Isis Press, Istanbul, 1994), p. 22.
- ¹⁰⁸ Interview by Lusik Ghukasian in *Armenian International Magazine*, January 1996, pp. 30–31.
- ¹⁰⁹ See Martirossyan's interview with Hratch Tchiingirian in *Window ...*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1994, p. 18.
- ¹¹⁰ Hratch Tchilingirian, 'Religious discourse and the Church in Mountainous Karabagh 1988–1995', *Revue du Monde Arménien Moderne et Contemporain*, no. 3, 1997, pp. 67–83. The article is based on Tchilingirian's extensive field interviews in Karabakh.
- ¹¹¹ Zori Balayan, *Between Heaven and Hell: The Struggle for Karabakh* (Amaras, Yerevan, 1997), p. 401.
- ¹¹² Cullen, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
- ¹¹³ Balayan, *op. cit.*, p. 401.
- ¹¹⁴ 'Interviews conducted and information gathered by Felix Corley' in *Report of a 2nd International Delegation from the First International Andrei Sakharov Memorial Congress to Armenia and Azerbaijan, 13–16 July 1991*. Martirossyan claimed the decision was published in the Azerbaijani press. I could find no mention of it in the Baku Russian-language paper *Bakinsky rabochi* for this period.
- ¹¹⁵ Ruben Arutyunyan, 'Sud'ba pamyatnikov zodchestva Nagornogo Karabakha: varvarstvo, vozvedennoye v zakon', *Pro Armenia* (Moscow), no. 1, 1991, pp. 34–42.
- ¹¹⁶ Tchilingirian, 'Religious discourse ...', p. 74.
- ¹¹⁷ Yepiskop Pargev, *Bogopoznaniye* (Armyanskaya tserkov' Artsakha, Stepanakert, 1991).

- The bishop described it as a ‘modest work’, p. 4.
- 118 Balayan, *op. cit.*, pp. 400–1.
- 119 *Kommunist*, 10 July 1990.
- 120 Text in *Bor’ba za svobodu*, pp. 27–28.
- 121 For the text of the letter see *Golos Armenii*, 15 September 1990. See also *Izvestiya*, 16 September 1990.
- 122 For details of the Amaras and Gandsasar raids see *Report of a 2nd International Delegation ...*
- 123 Interview with Bishop Martirosyan in Stepanakert, January 1992. See also Parkev Martirosyan, appeal, 5 January 1992 (in Russian; copy in author’s possession).
- 124 Interview in *Pro Armenia*, no. 2, 1992, p. 11.
- 125 Tchilingirian, ‘Religious discourse ...’, p. 77.
- 126 Quoted by Baroness Caroline Cox in *Christian Solidarity International Humanitarian Aid Mission to Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, 30 November–8 December 1994*.
- 127 Balayan, *op. cit.*, pp. 116–24.
- 128 Brook, *op. cit.*, p. 338.
- 129 These two incidents were reported in *COVCAS Bulletin* (Geneva), 20 August 1992, p. 5, and 27 August 1992, p. 3.
- 130 When I visited Armenian-occupied Agdam in February 1994 I noted that unlike the rest of the town, which had been systematically ruined, the mosque appeared not to have been touched. However, inside it had been gutted.
- 131 Quoted by Baroness Caroline Cox in *Christian Solidarity International Visit to Nagorno-Karabakh, 13–20 May 1993*.
- 132 *Kul’tura* (Moscow), no. 11, 4 April 1992, p. 2, and no. 13, 25 April 1992, p. 2.
- 133 *Monthly Digest ...*, March 1994, p. 25, quoting *Yerkir*, 26 January 1994.
- 134 Diary of visit to Armenia in February/March 1992 by Fr Yeprem Kelegian, ‘Diary of an American priest in Armenia’, *Window ...*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1992, pp. 23–25, 30–31.
- 135 Tchilingirian, ‘Religious discourse ...’, p. 76.
- 136 Gaume, *op. cit.*, pp. 159, 189–90.
- 137 Marsden, *op. cit.*, pp. 234–35.
- 138 *ibid.*, p. 239. For symbols of crosses on fighters’ uniforms, see for example the photo in *War Report* (London), no. 34, June 1995, p. 44. Even tanks and the straps of Kalashnikovs were at times decorated with crosses.
- 139 Goltz, *op. cit.*, p. 351.
- 140 *Moskovskiy novosti*, no. 33, 19 August 1990, p. 4. Compare the interview with Ter-Petrosyan in *Soyuz*, no. 37, September 1990.
- 141 Interview with Bishop Martirosyan in Stepanakert, October 1991. Interview with President Ter-Petrosyan in Yerevan, October 1991. Mutalibov’s remarks are from an interview broadcast by Worldwide Television News on 9 December 1991. Mutalibov had made similar remarks at a press conference cited by TASS, 27 November 1991.
- 142 Interview in *Pro Armenia*, *op. cit.*
- 143 Interview in *Armenian International Magazine*, June–July 1994, p. 20.
- 144 Translated by Hratch Tchilingirian.
- 145 Translated in Christopher Cerf and Marina Albee (eds), *Voices of Glasnost* (Kyle Cathie, London, 1990), pp. 227–28.
- 146 Translated in *Glasnost* (US edition), July–September 1990, pp. 34–36.
- 147 Bill Keller, ‘Turkic republics press Soviets to loosen reins’, *New York Times*, 3 September 1989, p. 18.
- 148 Bill Keller, ‘Did Moscow incite Azerbaijanis? Some see a plot’, *New York Times*, 19 February 1990, p. A8.
- 149 Numerous interviews in Armenia and Karabakh, 1990–94.
- 150 *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 3 February 1993.
- 151 *Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS)*, SOV-92-053, 18 March 1992, p. 77.
- 152 *Ogonek*, no. 3, January 1989, pp. 2–3.

- ¹⁵³ WCC press release, 10 December 1992. See also the WCC/CEC report *Inshallah, Allah isterze, Astvacz ouze ... God Willing: Report of an Ecumenical Delegation to Azerbaijan and Armenia, 27 November and 9 December 1992* (Geneva, 5 February 1993).
- ¹⁵⁴ *Inshallah ...*, p. 6.
- ¹⁵⁵ *Inshallah ...*, p. 7.
- ¹⁵⁶ *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 26 November 1992. The conference was also very critical of Russia's actions in the North Caucasus, especially in relation to the Ingush–Ossetian clashes in the Prigorodny district just weeks before.
- ¹⁵⁷ For the text of the appeal see *Ecumenical Press Service (EPS)* (Geneva), 93.02.24. For further WCC and CEC actions see *EPS* 93.05.01, 93.05.27 and 93.08.30. In September 1993 Dwain Epps, head of the WCC's Commission of the Churches on International Affairs, wrote to Archbishop Bozabalyan at Echmiadzin to condemn the Armenian seizure of land in Azerbaijan. 'We urge you to appeal for an immediate ceasefire, a withdrawal of all troops to their own territories and an avoidance of all acts of retaliation', Epps wrote. *The Tablet*, 11 September 1993, p. 1174.
- ¹⁵⁸ *Armenian International Magazine*, March 1993, p. 19.
- ¹⁵⁹ Interview in Yerevan, July 1993.
- ¹⁶⁰ *Echmiadzin*, January/February/March 1993, pp. 35–41; *AIM*, March 1993; *Nauka i religiya*, no. 9, 1990, p. 23.
- ¹⁶¹ *Informatsionny byulleten'* of the Department of External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, no. 4, 1988, pp. 11–12 and no. 1, 1990, pp. 2–3. See also Oxana Antic, 'The Russian Orthodox Church and Islam', *Report on the USSR*, 4 May 1990, pp. 10–11.
- ¹⁶² *Monthly Digest*, May 1994, p. 38; *AIM* interview, January 1996.
- ¹⁶³ Interview by Zaur Gadimbeyov in *Armenian Nazism: Two Interpretations* (Azerbaijan Publishers, Baku, 1994), p. 7. Arakelov had been sent to Baku during Vol'sky's tenure as Moscow's envoy to the region, but had soon returned to Baku. He was well known for his statements condemning the Karabakh movement.
- ¹⁶⁴ *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (Moscow), 18 September 1992.
- ¹⁶⁵ *AIM* interview, January 1996.
- ¹⁶⁶ See: V. I. Kozlov and A. P. Pavlenko (eds), *Dukhobortsy i molokane v Zakavkaz'ye* (Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 1992), especially the article by O. D. Komarova; and V. I. Kozlov (ed.), *Russkiye starozhily Zakavkaz'ya: molokane i dukhobortsy* (Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 1995), especially ch. 12. See also *Soyuz*, no. 44, 1990, p. 6. An interesting survey is also given in Svetlana Inikova, 'Doukhobors of the USSR at the end of the 1980s', *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, vol. 27, no. 3, 1995, pp. 181–95.
- ¹⁶⁷ Inikova, *op. cit.*, p. 193.
- ¹⁶⁸ *Rossiiskaya gazeta*, 13 August 1992; *Rossiiskiy vesti*, 6 January and 18 March 1993.
- ¹⁶⁹ Jonathan Aves, *Georgia: From Chaos to Stability?* (The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1996), p. 44. See also the unpublished conference paper by Aleksandr Kukhianidze, *Rol' Gruzii v Armyano-Azerbaidzhanskom konflikte*, given in Tbilisi in September 1995.
- ¹⁷⁰ Information on the Church in Georgia is from Egbert Wesselink, *Minorities in the Republic of Georgia* (Pax Christi, Brussels, 1992), pp. 43–44.
- ¹⁷¹ *AGBU News*, vol. 2, no. 3, September 1992, p. 7.
- ¹⁷² *Glasnost'* (Moscow), no. 17, May 1988.
- ¹⁷³ For the text of the statute see M. Yu. Chumalov (ed.), *Abkhazsky uzal: dokumenty i materialy* (TsIMO, Moscow, 1995), pp. 308–12. The Georgian general procurator declared the statute – and thus the society – unlawful in August 1991.
- ¹⁷⁴ Interview with Yelena Sergeyeva, *Pro Armenia*, no. 8, 1992, pp. 45–47.
- ¹⁷⁵ Pestrossyan, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
- ¹⁷⁶ *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 30 July 1993.
- ¹⁷⁷ *Izvestiya*, 2 November 1993.
- ¹⁷⁸ As for example in Armavir on 13 February 1992; A. E. Ter-Sarkisyants and V. Ts.

- Khudaveryan, *Armyanskaya diaspora yuga Rossii: polozeniye i perspektivy* (Engel, Moscow, 1993), p. 50.
- ¹⁷⁹ *Kubansky kur'yer*, 23 October 1993 and 20 November 1993; *Kubanskiye novosti*, 15 December 1993. See also Mary McAuley, *Russia's Politics of Uncertainty* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997), pp. 136–37.
- ¹⁸⁰ Petrossyan, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
- ¹⁸¹ *AGBU News*, September 1995, pp. 11–13.
- ¹⁸² 'Relihiyni orhanizatsii Ukrainy', *Liudyna i svit* (Kiev), no. 10, 1994, pp. 10–11.
- ¹⁸³ *Informationsdienst Osteuropäisches Christentum* (Munich), 30 April 1991, p. 10 and 30 June 1991, pp. 23–24. Christian Weise, 'Armenische Kirche in der Ukraine', *Glaube in der Zweiten Welt*, vol. 24, no. 9, 1996, pp. 27–29.
- ¹⁸⁴ For a list of dioceses and bishops, see Nikolaus Wyrwoll (ed.), *Orthodoxia* (Ostkirchliches Institut, Regensburg, various editions 1982 to date).
- ¹⁸⁵ *Izvestiya*, 30 July 1994.
- ¹⁸⁶ See the obituaries, for example in *The Independent* (London), 20 August 1994, and *The Times* (London), 24 August 1994. For his reminiscences of Vazgen written just a month after the catholicos' death, see Ashjian, *op. cit.*, pp. 347–56.
- ¹⁸⁷ See footnote 2 in Felix Corley, 'The Armenian Church under the Soviet Regime, Part 1: the leadership of Kevork', *RSS*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1996, pp. 9–53. On Soviet and post-Soviet Armenian historiography as it affected the Church, see Philippe Sukiasyan, 'À propos d'un rapport secret de Béria sur l'Église Arménienne', *Revue du Monde Arménien*, vol. 2, 1995–96, pp. 122–24. On Behbudyán's work see *AIM*, January 1996, p. 41.
- ¹⁸⁸ Svetlana V. Lourie, 'Yerevan's phenomenon: the formation of a traditional social community in a modern capital city', in V. Naumkin (ed.), *Religion, State and Society in Central Asia* (Ithaca Press, 1993), p. 187. See also Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 67–71.
- ¹⁸⁹ A. K. Dzhivelegov, *Armyane v Rossii* (Tipografiya A. P. Pavlovskogo, Moscow, 1906), p. 25.
- ¹⁹⁰ Vigen Guroian, 'Church and nationhood: a reflection on the "national church"', *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, vol. 46, nos 1–4, 1992, p. 192.
- ¹⁹¹ Georgi Agabekov, *G.P.U.: zapiski chekista*, p. 187.
- ¹⁹² Guroian, *op. cit.*, pp. 189–90.
- ¹⁹³ *Sion* (Jerusalem), September 1928, republished in *The Armenian Reporter* (New York), 5 October 1989.
- ¹⁹⁴ Guroian, *op. cit.*, p. 189.