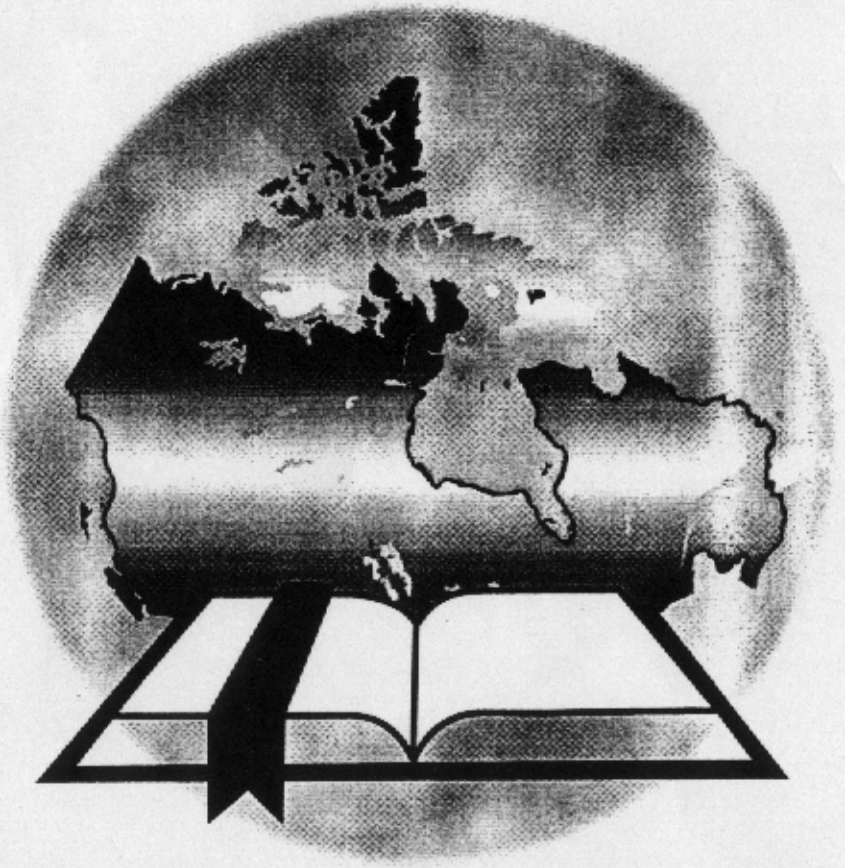
THE HOLY BIBLE
AND
DIVINE REVELATION



ALBERT J. NORADUNKIAN

HAI-CHRISDONIA
2000



FORWARD

When Albert handed me this manuscript and asked me to write the forward, I was immediately drawn by a curious interest which was generated by the title, "The Holy Bible and Divine Revelation".

Albert's treatment of this topic elevates the Scriptures to its rightful place as the divinely-inspired Word of God, emphasizing how it has withstood the test of time and how it crosses cultural boundaries. One gets the true sense that the Bible is the primary way in which God speaks to humankind and that the Holy Spirit enables the necessary understanding for it's reader.

This book is filled with many wonderful insights into the influence the Bible has had on Armenian literature and history. Albert has written with an exuberant passion and love for the Holy Bible and manages to share an insightful vignette.

Albert J. Noradunkian has a contagious faith which he freely shares.

Rev. Blain MacLeod
District Director – Central Ontario
Canadian Bible Society
February 23, 2000

SOWING THE SEED SINCE 1904 MEMBER OF THE WORLDWIDE FELLOWSHIP OF THE UNITED BIBLE SOCIETIES

P R E F A C E

Krikor Odian has been known by Armenians as both an intellectual and a political person. He was the architect behind the Armenian Constitution of 1863 which is still in use. He was born in 1834 in Constantinople, and he died in Paris, where he received his literary education.

Krikor Odian is dead as far as the present generation is concerned, but his faith in God and his remarkable life still speaks to many. Let us hear what he has to say to us today. In his spiritual search for truth he claimed that he never missed a day without reading the Bible and praying. This is his testimony:

"What is it that can raise a man after he has fallen, except the power of prayer? If this is so, let us practice praying. Our fathers have bequeathed to us a legacy of faith and prayer which will never tarnish or disappear. Whatever heritage left to us, other than prayer, would have been spent and wasted by now. We also spend and waste our inheritance of prayer, but it can be replenished. Pray to your Creator, my son and make your confession and your penitence. He who prays will enjoy the peace of conscience which no other thing can give."

We are thankful to all church fathers who translated the Holy Bible and were the pivotal force behind our untarnishable history.

Faith does not belong only to the clergy. It should also be active and motivating for Christian laypersons whose souls are holy altars of God and whose hearts are open holy scriptures.

I wish to say a special thank you to my good neighbours, Stan and Kathleen Jolly, for their help in editing this English translation.

Albert J. Noradunkian
November 11, 1999
Toronto, Canada

THE HOLY BIBLE

AND

DIVINE REVELATION

If you were to give a match box to an "uncivilised" person who had no idea of western culture and technology, he would take it, look at it, find it funny but not understand its function or value. He may hang the box on the wall, put it under his pillow or look at the picture which is on the surface.

An unlit match is a *material* thing which you can touch and hold. When you ignite the match, it is converted into fire and power. It is the same thing also with the Holy Bible. Once you read the Bible prayerfully, the printed and visible words cease to be mere letters of the alphabet and they are transformed into spiritual awareness and understanding which empowers your life and drives your will into action.

When you take the cable of a television set to a lab for analysis, you cannot see colourful pictures or hear heavenly music in that metallic copper cable. But when that copper cable is "electrified", it becomes "spirited" and you are then able to see the unseen and hear the unheard.

It was not through the brain's audiovisual power that Beethoven's sweet melodies and the Ninth Symphony came into being. The enraptured musician switched his hearing to the heavenly choir and then reproduced the unheard melodies for men and women. So it is with the message of the Holy Bible. We do not need to quarrel about the words of the Bible. It is the meaning or "the message" shining through the words which is important. The written words will guide us to the Divine Source, where our soul and heart will become ready to understand the spiritual meaning. The Holy Bible is the key to the divine revelation, not the revelation itself. If the divine revelation could be captured in a written book, God would not have sent His Son as a Living Revelation. One of the important reasons why Jesus did not write the Gospels himself, was because He was a *living revelation* instead. The written Gospels are like a water pipe through which man receives the water of life.

The Armenian alphabet became the engine of religious culture

through which the Armenian race continued as a Christian nation and also as a state. St. Mesrob Mashtots' disciple, Goriun once said, "God administered His graces to the Jews and to the Armenians. To the Jews He gave the 10 commandments and to the Armenians He gave the 36 letters of the Armenian alphabet."

St. Mesrob's long years of prayer, search and meditation was not primarily for the development of an Armenian alphabet. The Armenian alphabet was only a **means** for translating the Holy Bible and thus inspiring his fellow Armenians by giving them knowledge of God the Father and of Jesus Christ the Messiah.

Why did St. Mesrob and St. Sahag the Catholicos translate the Holy Bible and not the Indian Vedas or the Mazdean holy scriptures?

The Holy Bible (consisting of both the Old and New Testaments) is not just a Hebrew literature along the line of the Indian or Iranian religious writings. The Bible contains the plan of God for His creation. It is a blue print for all human beings. In the Bible we feel the warm communal breath of God. In it we can see the invigorating good news of Jesus Christ for the salvation of our souls. The Holy Bible is the inexhaustible spiritual food for all humanity.

Human origin and development were not accidental happenings. The emanation of men and women on this planet was a purposeful event of the Divine Mind according to a grand plan whose underlying motive was love. Faith in God who created and preserves humanity is more dependable and eloquent than the theory of accidental evolution.

Accidents produce or cause **negative results.** For example, a car's tire can accidentally blow out. But has a tire ever accidently blown out and spontaneously repaired itself after being driven ten or fifty miles? I humbly will say that I have not heard of it.

How can intellectual persons in the 20th century believe that through an evolutionary process, independent of a Supermind and architect, this cosmos became a supremely organised universe with ingeniously interrelated vegetation, animal and human life?

What made evolution give an eye to a creature or an ear to an animal? Who decided that a vegetable would have neither eye nor ear, but humans and animals would have both? Who made these decisions? What authority gave the verdict?

Mankind today lives in an age of fast changing ideas, complexity and confusion. Without God, man does not and cannot know who he is, where he came from or where he is going. What is the meaning of life and the interpretation of human history? Today humanity is yoked to the rocket of technology and travelling at breathtaking speed without knowing its ultimate destination. People have lost the

message and the knowledge of the Bible. Churchgoers have become nominal Christians and armchair believers. They do not attend church to pray, but only to show their presence.

In this enigmatic confusion, the Holy Bible presents a sincere seeker with four meaningful topics or subjects:

1. God is the Absolute. He is the Creator of heaven and earth. He not only governs nature but also universal history.
2. Humans are the apex of His divine creation. They are created in His Image, but not yet perfected.
3. Jesus Christ is the supreme Revelation of God. He came to save us from our ignorance and prejudices and to lead us to God.
4. God has not perfected His creation, but He created us with the potenial ***to become*** perfect. Perfection requires human cooperation with the Creator.

Humans for example, give birth to children, but their offspring is not born with university degrees or Olympic muscles. Parents cannot study and attend classes to make their children university graduates, nor can they exercise so their children will be healthy! If a child wants to be educated, he or she has to study, not the parents. If a person wants to be an athlete, he or she has to exercise and train the body. Jesus never said, "Come unto Me and I will make you perfect." His recommendation was, "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect".

You make yourself "perfect" by hard work, patience and self-denial. It is better to try to reach perfection and miss it, rather than try for evil and reach it.

Although the Holy Bible was not originally Armenian literature, it became the source of Armenian enlightenment and learning. The Holy Bible was the motherly milk to the newly born Armenian literature, the "powerhouse" of the Armenian Golden Age, the inspiration for the Armenian alphabet and it became the soul of the Armenian struggle for existence. If the Armenian nation had not translated the Holy Bible, it would have been easily and rapidly swept away and incorporated into the melting pot of Iranian and Assyrian civilizations. Armenia would have vanished from the horizon of history. Two developments acted as a catalysts to immortalize the Armenian nation against all the odds. The creation of the Armenian alphabet and the subsequent translation of the Holy Bible were the twin developments which proved to be an invincible shield for Armenian culture and identity.

There are innumerable literary creations which become only a number in a library or thoughts which vanish in the vortex of time.

There are also many examples of creative literature which rise above their immediate context and reveal their presence or splendour to future generations. The Holy Bible, however, is that unique Divine Revelation which not only ascends above its surrounding literature and time, but through its dominant and super presence casts a lasting influence and lifegiving force on time and universal human history.

What makes an Armenian proud today? Is he or she proud of the past colonial empire? Or is it the oilfields of today which erect titanic banks on the foundation of black gold? No, none of those worldly riches produces a sense of pride. Armenian men and women are proud of the thousands of Armenian churches and the Armenian translation of the Holy Scriptures. It is impossible to describe the Armenian culture or picture its soulaltering music, prayers and sharagans (holy hymns) without contemplating the Armenian church.

The shining and radiating light which emanated 17 centuries ago from the Khor Virab (the donjon where Krikor the Enlightener was prisoned for 13 years) guided the Armenian people, lived with the beat of its people's heart and became the Naregatsi, the Shnorhali and the Datevatsi. Above all, that light continued to be the source of strength to the poor remnants of the Armenian genocide of 1915 and enabled them to revive and prosper.

In 1604 Shah Abbas of Persia uprooted three to four hundred thousand Armenians from their native land and drove them like cattle to Iran. When they reached the Arax River there was no bridge, but the people were forced to continue. About 50,000 to 100,000 people drowned.

The survivors walked on the dead bodies of their countrymen in order to land on the opposite shore of the Arax River and reach Tabriz.

Those poor refugees who were driven like cattle in 1604, built the first printing press in all of the Middle East in the 17th century. In their All Saints Saviour Convent the monks built the press with their own hands. They made and cast the letters of the alphabet and in 1638 they printed the first book of Psalms. In the 17th century the Armenians of Iran inaugurated their Golden Age. Today in Nor Chougha there are 13 open and active churches including All Saints Saviour monastery with its printing press, museum, manuscripts and library.

In 1979 the Communist government of Armenia reprinted one hundred thousand copies of the prayer book of St. Krikor Naregatsi in both Armenian and Russian. There was no higher literature than the prayers of Naregatsi.

Barouyr Sevag, the much loved poet of communist Armenia, has said,

"He who has not read the Holy Bible can not, in reality, be considered an intellectual or an academic. International literature is founded and built upon it. All classical Western art and music was inspired by the Holy Bible. The "Divine Comedy", "The Naregatsi" and the "Raphael" are three examples. Now science is seriously studying the historical aspect of the Bible and finding that they are not myths. Details which were considered unreliable in the past, are being proven today. Modern scientific research will confirm the veracity of the Holy Bible".

Who do you think translated the Holy Bible into Chinese? The first translation of the Holy Scriptures into the Chinese language was done by an Armenian teacher Ohannes Ghazarian who was born in Nor Chougha, Iran. He lived in Canton, China and translated the Bible from English into Chinese between1700-1800 A.D. From the second century on, Armenians maintained a colony in China with schools and churches. When the Japanese invaded China during the Second World War, the Armenians were faithful to the Chinese people and joined them to defend China. Therefore the Japanese killed the Armenians too. The centuries-old Armenian colony no longer exists in China, but you can still see evidence of its presence in ancient ruins.

What is the Holy Bible?

The Bible is the tangible representation of the Divine Revelation. It imparts wisdom and conveys the meaning of human existence. The Gospels make the invisible God meaningful, visible and understood by men and women through the incarnate Jesus Christ.

The Holy Bible was written down over a period of 1400 years by more than forty individuals whose hearts and minds were inspired by the Spirit of God. Some of these authors were kings, others were shepherds, farmers, priests, poets, philosophers, fishermen, tax collectors, tent makers and physicians.

The Holy Bible consists of two main parts: the Old Testament with the first covenant and the New Testament where God is made manifest by Jesus Christ, the tangible Word of God.

The Holy Bible is the greatest and the most monumental literary treasure that mankind posseses. The Holy Bible has put its remarkable stamp on the international educational system. Arshag Chobanian has said, "National literature in both its beginning and development owes a lot to the Hebrew thinkers, prophets and poets. Their wisdom influenced international thinkers such as Dante, Milton, Lamartine and Hugo."

The Bible may seem like a collection of unrelated thoughts to a casual observer. However, a true searcher will find that it embodies

in spite of many facets, one main and fundamental message. It is **the high-way** to true knowledge and life. It is not a scientific, geographical or historical textbook. The Holy Bible is neither the answer to our every question nor the resolution to our research however, it is the true **stimulus** to our questions. The Bible is the foundation stone of our law and moral understanding. It is the odometer of our education and the flower bed of our arts. The Bible has inspired music, poetry, sculpture, philosophy, painting, literature and fine arts.

The Holy Bible is the extended depository of the ocean-deep revelation of God. It is the gushing source of truths and the treasury of moral richness. The unspoiled human mind is but a minute flash of genius from the Eternal Mind and a faint and insignificant reflection of the Oceanic Light. The Bible does not present argumentative theories, but gives, instead, divine and intuitive revelations. It is not professional knowledge of the Bible which makes a person a better Christian, but it is spiritual openness and obedience which makes a believer realize his faith and carry it to performance and fruition.

The Old Testament has four divisions:

1. The Law, 2. The History, 3. The Prophets, 4. Philosophical morality.

All of the books of the Old Testament are written in the Hebrew language except parts of the books of Ezra, Daniel and Jeremiah which are written in Aramaic (ancient Babylonian Semitic).

The Hebrew Old Testament consists of 24 books. The Armenian Old Testament has the same content but it is divided into 48 books. The English translation of the King James Bible has 39 books.

1. The Law:

The Old Testament's **first division** is called the **Pentateuch** or the Law. The Pentateuch contains 5 books: the book of **Genesis** which accounts for the the creation of the world and the explanation of the meaning of all life; the book of **Exodus** which represents the Hebrew people's coming out of Egypt and wandering in the desert for 40 years; the book of **Leviticus** which is the book of feast days and precepts to the priests; the book of **Numbers** which gives the second census of the children of Israel after 40 years; and the book of **Deuteronomy** which reiterates the law and the commandments.

2. The History:

There are 13 historic books beginning from Joshua and ending with Job. In these books we read about the occupation of the land of Canaan by the Hebrews, the lives of the judges and the times of the kings. This section deals with important issues such as the

righteousness of God, the affliction and pain of the just and the success of the evil ones.

3. The Prophets:

The books of the prophets represent both major and minor prophets. The three major prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. There are 13 minor prophets begining with Daniel, Hosea and Joel and continuing to Malakai.

4. Philosophic Morality:

The moral books consist mainly of philosophical reflections. These are found in the books of Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs.

The historical stage of the Old Testament includes not only the land of Palestine with its many races and languages, but also Egypt with its monumental architectural pyramids, Sumeria and Babylonia with their astronomy and civilization, the Hittites, Midianites and the people of Ararat (the Armenians), Assyria with its triumphant armies, empire and wall inscriptions, Syria with its Aramaic language, Phoenicia (modern Lebanon) with its commerce, written alphabet and arts and Persia with its successive empires and world domination.

The Old Testament tells about the prophecy of the birth of Jesus Christ and His crucifixion. The Old Testament is only a mere shadow of the New Testament:

1. In the Old Testament God was revealed as a breath, a voice and an apparition. Whereas in Jesus Christ **the Word became flesh**--John 1: 14.
2. The Old Testament has to do with sin and punishment - a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye - precept. The New Testament deals with the sin of the spirit and it cleanses it with love and the divine self-sacrifice on the cross.

The secret of the human dilemma is revealed in the Holy Bible. The Old Testament is more than the history of a nation. It is the progressive self-revelation of God in human history and the act of His redeeming love within the lives of individuals.

1. Its unprecedented messages concern all mankind, all the time.
2. God has operated in different individuals in different ways and He has used them to accomplish His grand project of saving the whole world.
3. The goal is to bring man to *maturity* ie. **perfection.**

In the Old Testament, God reveals Himself to Moses in the

"burning bush", but the prophets understand Him as the God of War**!**--Josh. 5: 46, 13-14, 6: 18-19, 21-23, 7:24.

In the New Testament, God is revealed through His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as the True Incarnation to show the depth of God's love for humanity.

Why the New Testament?

The Holy Bible is the progressive self-revelation of God the Father. All prophetic predictions about Jesus Christ were ended after the books of the Old Testament were written. Sin's mighty period of domination was terminated and the age of grace and mercy began to dawn.

In the past the Divine Revelation began with the Law of Moses. It progressed in the melodic Psalms. It further advanced and rose to greater heights in the Prophecies. It reached the supreme height in the Incar- nation and daily living of Jesus Christ. Paul, the apostle, speaks of this when he wrote:

"This mystery has been hidden for many ages. But now it has been made known to God's people. God has chosen to make known to them the glorious riches of that mystery. He has made it known among the gentiles. And here is what it is. Christ is in you. He is your hope of glory."--Col. 1:26-27.

The glorious transfiguration of Jesus was only a glimmer of His triumphant and victorious Resurrection. His countenance dazzled with a glory which only the Divine Light could accomplish. His Body became luminous and celestial. His Spirit began to radiate. Moses and Elijah came to witness to the New Light who spread His radiance from the top of Mount Tabor saying, "I am the Light of the World". Then Moses and Elijah disappeared. The world no longer needed their law. God's melodious voice was heard saying,

"This is My beloved Son, Listen To Him."

Jesus alone has the eternal words.

It is not possible to rise and reach God or feel His fatherly and sacred Presence by hope alone. Intimacy with God takes time and spiritual exercise like the dawning sunrise. A teenager slowly leaves the company of his or her childhood friends, and becomes a dreamy, imaginative and creative thinker. Eventualy the teenager wakes up with grown-up feelings and he or she becomes an adult.

Jesus unerringly said to His fellow Jews,

"What I am about to tell you is true. No one more important than John the Baptist has ever been born. But the least important person in the kingdom of heaven is more important than he is"--Matt. 11:11.

"The law and the prophets were preached until John; since that time the Kingdom of God is preached."--Luke 16:16.

In the Bible the word "Gospel" does not mean a *book .* The word "gospel" was used for two situations. One meant "good news" and the second declared that the "Kingdom of God was at hand"--Matt. 4:23, 9:35, 24:14, Mark 1:14-15.

The Gospels describe the totality of the work, life and teachings of Jesus Christ--Acts 20:24, Romans 2:16, 1st Corin. 4:15, Gal. 1: 11-12.

Some theologians regard three chapters of Matthew chapters 5 to-7 as "The Tiny Gospel".

The New Testament consists of 27 books. It is divided into the fol-lowing five sections:

1. the four Gospels, 2. the Acts of the Apostles, 3. the fourteen letters of Paul the apostle, 4. Various letter written by other apostles and, 5. the Revelation of the apostle, John.

The New Testament was originally written in the Greek language. of the 1st century. Some linguists think that there are passages in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark which originally were written in Aramaic. The apostle Matthew wrote his Gospel primarily for his Jewish compatriots. He tried to prove that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah (The Ordained Lord) by quoting verses from the Old Testament. In his Gospel, he mentioned the *"Kingdom of Heaven"* 33 times, and*"the Kingdom of God"* 4 times. Matthew, the evangelist, represented Jesus as the Great Teacher and Messiah who had the authority to interpret the Law of God and to preach the Kingdom of God. The Sermon on the Mount is also found in the Gospel of Matthew.

Saint Mark addressed his Gospel to the gentile world. His purpose was to show the gentiles that Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world, and that men and women can find forgiveness through the mercy of God.

Luke was "the dear physician" who narrated the miracles and healings performed by Jesus. He related in detail the parable of "The Prodigal Son", "The Good Samaritan", "The Lost Sheep" and "The Unlawful Servant." Luke was not a Jew. According to Bishop Iraneus of Lyon, he was a Syrian who became a Christian and followed St. Paul in his missionary tour. While accompanying St. Paul in his travels, he got to know the rest of the disciples and consequently became familiar with the teaching and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth.

The apostle John was a theologian. He introduced Jesus as the true Revelation of God (or *Epiphany*)--the incarnation of the Son of

God. In this Gospel Saint John emphasized that there was more to **faith** than *"faith"* itself. "Faith" alone can become mere knowledge, but ***"to believe"*** is an operational accomplishment. The Gospel of John is not only a historical testimony of an apostle, but it goes ***further*** to witness and prove that Jesus Christ is the historical apostle sent from God.

The First three Gospels are called the "Synoptic Gospels" because they more or less resemble one another. Matthew, Mark and Luke were evangelists. St. Mark is known as the first Gospel writer and he wrote his Gospel about 70 AD. Mark is the shortest and simplest narrative of our Lord Jesus Christ. St. Mark was not one of the apostles, but he accom-panied Peter to serve him in his journeys. St. Matthew and St. Luke subsequently wrote their Gospels incorporating much from the gospel of Mark.

The second part of the New Testament is called **The Acts of the Apostles.** This book acts like a bridge between the four Gospels and the apostolic letters. Its author is St. Luke the writer of the third Gospel. The book of the Acts of the Apostles begins with the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ to heaven. It describes the out-pouring of the Holy Ghost, the Conversion of Saul to become Paul, the apostle, and the missionary journeys of the apostles up to, and including, Paul's journey to Rome.

The book of Acts is followed by the 14 letters of St. Paul to the new churches. These are followed by the remaining 7 letters.

The last book of the New Testament is called "The Book of Revelation". This book describes revelations to St. John which con-tained prophetic insight into apocalyptic scenes of the future and the "End times" of Jesus' Second Coming.

The 21 apostolic letters show us how the teachings and instructions of Jesus Christ were applied to the everyday life of His true and faithful followers. The fundamental and central subjects of some of the apostolic letters are listed below:

Justification--in Romans and Galations.
Holiness--in Corinthians 1 and 2 and 1st Peter
The Church--in Ephesians and Colossians
Happiness--in Philippians
Christian Socialism and forgiveness--in Philemon
The personality and character of Jesus--in Hebrews
The Second Coming of Jesus--in Thessalonians
Church Organization--in Timothy and Titus
The Working Faith--in James

Courage for the Faithful--Peter's Letters
Assurance and love--in the Letters of St. John
Caution about wrong doctrine--in the letter of Jude
The Book of Revelation--the Song of Victory of the believers.

The words "faith" and "to believe" are mentioned ten times more frequently in the New Testament than in the Old. Jesus taught his disciples that the Law of Moses was human legislation. *"For while the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ"*--John 1:17. The Supreme arbitrator or the "referee" of faith should not be the New Testament, but **the Holy Spirit**. The Gospels are not autobiographies of Jesus Christ, but testimonies and declarations of faith.

Some informative statistics about Armenian manuscripts:

1. The oldest Armenian Gospel manuscript is No. 887 found in the Lazian University in Moscow.
2. There are 25,000 complete New Testaments in the entire world and 4,000 partial manuscripts.
3. There are 10,780 complete Gospels and 4,000 partial manuscripts in St. Mesrob Mashdots National Library in Yerevan, Armenia. In addition, there are 4,500 manuscripts in the Armeian Patriarchy in Jerusalem, 4,000 manuscripts with the Mkhitarists, in Venice, 1,200 Manuscripts with the Mkhitarists, in Vienna, and 100 manuscripts in the All Saviour Monastery in Nor Chougah, Iran.
4. According to the testimony of Sdepannos Orpellian, in the year 117O the Seljuk Turks plundered the Paghapert Castle in Siunik, Armenia, and sacked more than 10,000 manuscripts. Some were burned and the rest were carried away to the far East.
5. The Mesrob Mashdots Library of Yerevan is currently the temple of arts, literature and ancient manuscripts.
6. Armenians can be proud of both their faith and of their translation of the Holy Bible into their mother tongue.

The Holy Scriptures are not a system of philosophy, but, rather, the **"Way"** towards God. The Gospels are a unique, intricately woven ceremon-ial robe which cannot be, and should not be divided, but accepted as a whole.

The translation of the Holy Bible:

The Old Testament was first translated into Greek between 285

and 247 B.C. This monumental undertaking was done in Alexandria, Egypt, by 72 Hebrew rabbis by the order of Ptolemy Phladelfus, the second king of Alexandria. (This view is based on a work by a certain Aristeas written to a friend named Philocrates.) Their translation of the book of Hebrew Law into Greek was completed in Egypt. It became known as the **"Septuagint"--LXX.**

The second translation of the Holy Bible was the Syriac done in the 2nd century. It is called the **"Peshitta"** which means "simple" in Syrian.

The third translation was done by St. Jerome into Latin by the order of Pope Damaseus. It is called the **"Vulgate"** This wonderful work was accomplished in Bethlehem in 392 A.D.

The fourth translation of the Holy Scriptures is the pride of the Coptic church in Egypt. This translation into Egyptian was accomplished in the third and fourth centuries A. D.

The fifth translation of the Holy Bible is the masterpiece of the Abyssinian (Ethiopian) Christians in the fourth century.

Armenians became the sixth group to translate the Holy Bible into their mother tongue. St. Sahag, the Catholicos of the Armenian Church, and St. Mesrob Mashtots, together with the assistance of their studious disciples, completed the translation of the Holy Bible into the Armenian language from the Greek Pentateuch and the Syriac Peshitta. Within 30 years. This Armenian translation was called "the queen of the transla-tions" by M. V. de La Croze, the French scientist, because of its perfection and its poetic style and charm. This qualification is not an overstatement. It has been accepted among many modern translators.

After the Holy Bible was translated into the Armenian language, (the first in 414 A. D. and the corrected version in 431 A.D.) the Armenian nation took wings. Instead of being dependent upon her neighbours, she began to have her own written culture and literature. Culture is the mirror of a nation's soul.

The Georgians became the seventh nation to translate the Holy Scriptures into their own language by the assistance of St. Mesrob. Slavs and Russians translated the Holy Bible in the ninth century with the assistance of the Greek Orthodox Church.

Some scientists disregard and reject the Holy Scriptures because of a personal and collective selfishness and not because of ignorance. Even at the time of Jesus, those who refused to believe in Him were not the ignorant or uneducated. It was the lettered and educated class which rejected Him and demanded His death sentence, not because they were stupid and ignorant, but because they were

jealous and selfish racially, culturally and morally.

In the 19th Century, Friederich Nietzsche tried to destroy many religious and cultural ideas. He began an atheistic and immoral assault against the church. He believed that life has only a materialistic meaning and that humans were the master's of their individual destinies. The "supernatural" did not exist in his psyche. He declared that "God is Dead." Nietzsche contended that the Christian virtues of compassion, humbleness, meekness and gentleness were "sheep-minded" moralities which should be eliminated. He glorified power and violence as the only means for success. Hitler became one of his disciples and used Nietzsche's philosophy to burn down much of the civilized world and destroy more then 53 million people on this beautiful earth.

Jean Paul Sartre preached a theory proclaiming the emptiness and meaninglessness of life itself. His question was, "Is it really worth living?" The ungodly and confused sophists of the 19th and 20th centuries wanted and pretended to become gods themselves. They sang and danced to show the world that the only reality and truth was chaos and disorder and that the only dominating power was **indifference...!**

Anti-religious revolutionaries, in quarrels with the Christian religion, did have temporary successes, but they were unable to uproot the faith and the constant stirring of religion from the hearts of men. Through unfounded theories and colourful assumptions, materialistic scholars tried to muddy the idealistic and sublime truths of the Christian faith. Even today, the Western mass media is filled with exaggerated news, untruths and brain-washing propaganda.

How much do scientists really know and how much can be proven about their lofty declarations? For example, how much of the Theory of Evolution is scientifically honest and can actually be proven? Why do scientists banish God from their boundaries? What is their fear? There are many who claim to be atheists without persuasion and without support by reasoning or proof. When man loses the perception of the Absolute (God), he loses the ability to discriminate between reality and imitation, between the false and the true. If the concept of reality is **relative,** then what is the truth? What is right and what is wrong? People try to imitate Mr. Albert Einstein who published the Theory of Relativity. That wise scientist spoke about the relativity of **physics,** not about **morality** and faith...!

The materialistic philosophy with its focus on earthly materialism is the greatest deception and fraud of the 20th century. The pictures taken by an ordinary camera first appear in a **negative**

perspective until they are properly developed to become a **positive** reflection**.** The first active product of a camera is negative and deceitful. Similarly, unbelieving scientists also see everything in a negative aspect. Some eventualy come to a true understanding, but the majority see only the negative films, which reflect only the material aspects of life.

The most important issue which can never be analysed is the faith of an individual. To have faith is to believe in God and also in His Fatherhood. You cannot analyse human consciousness, human intelligence, human creativity, or spiritual power.

In the 19th century Fyodor Dostoyevsky was arrested for his novels and condemned to die along with many political revolutionaries. He was stunned when he heard about his death verdict because he was not a revolutionary. He became a living eye-witness to those who were being executed, one after the other. Then his turn arrived. He was tied to a stake and the officer ordered the soldiers to get ready to fire. Fortunately, before the officer pronounced the word "Fire", they heard the hoof beats of a horse which was galloping towards them. When the horseman arrived, he presented a document which commuted the conviction of Dostoyevsky from death to life imprisonment.

This condemned novelist saw death approaching, felt its horror and miraculously returned to the world of the living. After his frightening experience, our novelist represented modern man in stinging words in the novel "The Brothers Karamazov" saying, if God does not exist, then everything is permissible.

In "The Possessed", Dostoyevsky reasons that if there is no absolute balance and measurement (God), then the only reasonable act should be suicide.

Dostoyevsky has said, "Man is a mystery. We should endeavour to understand that mystery and dedicate our whole life in search of it. Never say that you have no time for such research. I have dedicated my life to its study, because I want to **"BECOME MAN"**.

Reinhold Niebur put his trust in God whom he believed to be away from the world but always present in history. God's love and forgiveness enobles and elevates human life, and God's hopeful promise saves men and women from disillusionment and disenchantment. This type of hope comes to humanity only because the last victory belongs to those who believe in God. The world and its inhabitants were created by the purposeful reflections of the **Divine Mind.**

From all the classical documents written by Aristotle, there

remains only small fragments. Whatever we call Aristotelian today, was edited in the 2nd century (ie. 6 centuries later) by Antronicus of Rhodes. Their authenticity is still debatable. By contrast, the Gospels of Jesus and the New Testament were written by eye-witnesses--or their disciples (Mark & Luke) only 60 years after the ascension of Jesus Christ.

Both Jesus Christ and Socrates died for the sake of the Truth. However, not a single temple was built for Socrates. Socrates preached in order that man should attain wisdom. In the preaching of Christ there is the dimension of the "supernatural" from the past to the future. There is ultimate meaning and hope for mankind.

The "golden tongue" of the Armenians, Karekin the 1st, has said, "Christ did not only *speak* about the Truth, but He *became* Truth itself. Jesus said, ***"I am the Truth",*** not, *"I know the truth"* or "*I speak about the truth".*

Until the incarnation of Jesus, the Son of God, the word "Truth" was a philosophical thought or apparition. In Jesus Christ it became *touchable and seeable*--**"It became flesh".**

Theologians tend to be interested in biblical literature, not in its divine message. The mission and life of Jesus should not be an academic question. It is a question of faith and conviction. Some theologians are enthused only by **abstract** values and vain slogans. Mr. Adlai Stevenson, who was a candidate for the American presidency, once said "Journalists and editors are men who separate the wheat from its chaff but publish only the chaff..."!

Jesus called Himself "The Word of God". His life should not be understood as a "writing" but as a **Living and Explanatory Word of God.** The question should not be "who has written the Holy Scriptures?" The real question is "Who has revealed God to man?" Jesus Christ lived as the Divine Revelation and as the Reflection of the LOVING GOD.

The Four Gospels are great literary monuments which show the close relationship and communion between man and God. There we see the uncircumscribable God who contained Himself in finite flesh. In the gospels, the body of Jesus was transformed into consecrated Bread, His tomb into a Shrine, His memory into a victorious Celebration and His life and mission into Good News--the Gospel.

The gospel message shows the justice and mercy of God and the coming of the Kingdom of God into this world and into the hearts of mankind. The Gospels were not written to satisfy the curiosity and the inquisitiveness of historians. They were written to show the Church and its clergy that faith should become the active educational

preaching force to evangelize the world. The Gospels reveal that God is the Active Power behind whatever happens on earth. They reflect the depth of God's love for humanity. They are the sacred scrolls--the eternal source of knowledge and wisdom.

The Apostle, John, represented Jesus from a very different pers-pective than Matthew, Mark and Luke. John knew his Master much more deeply and with a warmer attachment and love. Jesus in turn perceived a unique soul in this disciple and, for that reason, He entrusted His mother to John before He died. The study of the Holy Bible demands a special dedication and self-denial. Each student of the Bible should be open to the innerworkings of the Spirit and be willing to convert the words of the Bible into his or her daily practice.

The heroic battle of Vartanants (The Battle of Avarair) brings forth the memory of one of those truths. On that occasion this Armenian believer read what the Spirit had written in the Holy Bible and totally understood its message. This comprehension provided him with the courage to say "No" to the Persian lord and resulted in the unequal, but heroic, battle to protect his faith, his homeland and his family.

The four Gospels testify about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

All four agree about the miracles and the resurrection that Jesus accomplished during His mission. All of them testify that Jesus spoke in parables. They are all unanimous about His apocalyptic declarations and about "The Last Judgment" which He described before His crucifixion--Mat. 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, and John 15-16. Faith is not an obsolete historic experience. Faith is an everyday living occurrence even in the 20th century. However, faith needs study and practice for renewal. In order for faith to remain vital and vibrant, there must be regeneration and understanding, not with prejudice, but with an open mind.

I have spoken about the Old Testament and the Four Gospels, but there is also a very important *Fifth Gospel.*

The fifth gospel is proclaimed in the everyday lives of Christians. Those who profess Jesus by word of mouth are the ones which need the shining and regenerating light of the Gospels. The lives of the first century Christians demonstrated a force and conviction which attracted others to their faith. What is the point of attending church or praying without feeling God's Presence and

receiving spiritual uplift? What is the use of a student going to school if he or she is not going to receive an education? What is the use of a person going to work and getting tired if he or she is not going to get his or her right wage?

Art-loving Armenians speak about the uniqueness of Armenian Church architecture. The politically-minded make heros of martyrs who died in Turkey demanding lost lands. Intellectual scholars take pride in the church and literary books of poetry and sharagans (chants). Other political parties argue that the presence of thousands of Armenian Khachkars (huge stone stelae with lacelike carved cross designs) all over Turkey prove that there was ancient Armenian habitation and this supports their claim to lost lands.

How many of these representatives of the Armenian nation actually **believe** in the reality and sacredness of the Church of Jesus Christ? There was no place ***"in the inn"*** on the day of Jesus' birth--Luke 2:7. Similarly, there is neither vacancy nor welcome for the morality and love of Jesus Christ in this world's hostelry. Even today, there is a lack of space within the human heart to demonstrate the love of a neighbour, to serve the needy and to be devotional in the way that Jesus taught.

Beautiful flowers occupy the earth, absorb the sun's energy and disperse their perfume and scent to the world. Delicious fruits derive nourishment from the sun's essence and offer it to the human and the animal world. Humanity is the representative of the supreme order of life. It is the individual person's mission to appropriate goodness from God's abundant gifts and blessings and to transfer this goodness to the needy and destitute.

Armenia is a land of martyrs whose air is perfumed by the prayers of its saints and whose soil is soaked by the blood of its martyrs. Human life should pursue an object or a goal. Life should become a heroic quest for spiritual perfection. The meaning of living will not be found in extending our days on earth but in the unselfish **giving of creative life** from within our days. Human life is sacred. It must be converted into the arena of **faith, love and service** for the needy**.**

The comforting voice of Christ is still an open invitation,

"Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden and over burdened, and I will cause you rest".

Matt. 11: 28.

Jesus alone has the power to calm and relieve and refresh our

souls. His Calling is gentle and gracious. His Voice has a universal and thrilling force which has the ability to restore and renew the painful and shattered lives of sinners.

I would like to end these reflections with one simple sentence.

He who cannot see God, the Creator, in this vast cosmic beauty, lacks the power of reasoning and judgment, rather than **faith.**

Written:
November 13, 1996
Toronto

THE HOLY BIBLE
AND
DIVINE REVELATION

ALBERT J. NORADUNKIAN
HAI-CHRISDONIA
1999

--Հայագիտական ու արեւելագիտական ուսումնարան հիմնուած 1815-ին Մոսկուա
--1841-ին ծեմարանին կից կը բացուի նաեւ հոգեւոր բաժին:
--Նոր Ջուղայեցի Լազարեան ընտանիքի միջոցաւ հիմնուեցաւ Մոսկուայի Լազարեան ծեմարանը:
--Լազարեաններ յայտնի զօրավարներ տուին Ռուսական բանակին՝ հռչակաւոր զօրավար Լազարովները
--Լազարեան ծեմարանի տպարան 1828-ին
--Մասնաւոր յիշատակութեան արժանի է Լազարեան ծեմարանի տպարանը, որ Մոսկուայի մէջ հաստատուեցաւ 1820-ին
1.-Այս տպարանը ունէր ճուլարան մը որ ԺԹ. դարու ընթացքին հայկական տպարաններու մեծ մասին հայթայթեց տպագրական տառեր: