

Armenian Church Youth Organization of America

Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Primate

March 18, 1987

STATEMENT ON THE SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL CRISIS IN THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

This is a brief essay on the lack of spiritual and cultural interest in our Armenian Church., as it pertains to the youth and the youth programs.

The society in this country faces a crisis in the lack of spirituality in an individuals daily life. Because of the high pressure of the work place and the fast pace, people are looking for some spiritual fulfilment.

Formal religious institutions have not been the haven for individuals to find spiritual nurishment. Individuals feel that these institutions present more pressure and responsibilities upon the individual, rather than eliminate the stress and pains of daily life.

Instead, people are becoming attracted to new support groups that don't take on religious, ethnic or nationalistic overtones. As a matter of fact, one program of this sort is conducted right here at Kavookjian Hall.

These organizations appeal to professionals who have a spiritual void, and council them. They have a very humanistic point of view. They center on the well-being of the individual.

I suggest the following plan to combat the lack of spirituality in our Armenian Church community. We need to continue to support programs such as the ACYOA Mission program and the St. Nersess Summer Conferences. These programs orient an individual with the Armenian Church's worship. It allows the youth opportunity to contemplate their position in life. This program allows youth to feel comfortable discussing Christianity and spirituality.

Cultural Crisis

On the topic of the Armenian Cultural Crisis, we have had a tough time encouraging proper cultural and educational programs for our community, and for our youth specifically.



Central Council

Diocese of the Armenian Church of America 630 Second Avenue New York, N. Y. 10016 (212) 686-0710

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I believe that the problem with this topic, is the lack of proper perspective. We don't know how to approach this area correctly.

First, we must ask ourselves some basic questions, and discuss our answers.

What is culture?

Culture; -- the arts, beliefs, customs, institutions and all other products of human work and thought created by a people or group at a particular time.

Language; a system of terms used by a people sharing a history and culture.

The root of our cultural crisis lies in this dilemma--

We as Armenians have a culture; arts, beliefs, customs, institutions, foods, music, dance, etc. We enjoy expressing our culture. Our language is a means of expressing our culture and heritage, as we live.

We as Armenian Americans have a culture and a language to be proud of. We enjoy studying our art, customs, dances, and language, etc. This culture is a combination of being of Armenian ancestry combined with our present American culture.

The Armenian Church faces this cultural ^{dilemma} dilemma; do we live our Armenian Culture as an Armenian living in America, or do we live our culture as Armenian Americans.

We must ask and answer those questions again. Are we Armenians living in America or American Armenians? Is this the Armenian Church of Armenia or the Armenain Chruch of America, for American Armenians, and those who wish to become American Armenians?

Until, ~~Once~~ we clearly define our perspective, answer these questions, and proceed accordingly, we will continue to have a cultural crisis.

Respectfully Submitted,

Anthony J. Barsamian Jr.

Anthony J. Barsamian, Jr
Acting Executive Secretary



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