

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH IN THE HOLY LAND



Dr Harry Hagopian, KOG

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To the Armenian Christian Community
in the Holy Land
&
All those who call it Home

*First Keep Peace with yourself,
then you can also bring peace to others*

Thomas à Kempis, The Imitation of Christ (1420)

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Foreword

On meeting Harry Hagopian, it is not long before he reminds you that he is Armenian and proud to be so.

Although much of Harry's work is focused on the Middle East North Africa region, not least because of his responsibilities as MENA Advisor to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales, this work on the Armenian Church in the Holy Land tells its own story. It is the story of an ancient Christian Community that still retains a strong identity and contributes greatly to wider society by means of ecclesial, ecumenical, cultural, scientific, legal and medical gifts.

Like many communities in the Holy Land, the Armenian Christians have lived through both joyful and challenging times, not least the experience and memory of the 1915 genocide which brought many Armenians to the Holy Land as a place of refuge - to be welcomed by Christians and Muslims alike.

Today they are having to face the challenges and tensions arising from the fraught Palestinian-Israeli relationship. They are making their contributions to a peaceful and just resolution, though like other communities in the Holy Land, the Armenian community is also leaving the Holy Land for a safer and more prosperous life elsewhere. However, there is still hope that a miracle can transform the situation so that Jerusalem is indeed a City of Peace.

Dr Hagopian provides us with an informative and analytical work which can help to deepen our awareness of this ancient Christian community which is thankful for its past, passionate for its present, and hopeful for its future.

+Declan Lang

Bishop of Clifton, Chairman, Department of International Affairs of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

Introduction

*Unity applies for essentials,
Liberty for doubtful matters
and Charity for all things*

I am often invited to write about the legal, ecumenical or political dynamics associated with Israel and the Palestinian Territories (now also recognised *de jure* as a UN non-member observer state following UNGA Resolution 67/19 of 29 November 2012). So at such times I invariably recall a statement I heard some years ago for the first time from His Beatitude Michel Sabbah, Latin-rite Catholic Emeritus Patriarch of Jerusalem. Talking about the communities of this biblical land, he referred to them as the “two peoples and three religions of the Holy Land”. In other words, and with one succinct phrase, this faithful leader was simply acknowledging that the Holy Land comprises of Israelis and Palestinians, Jews, Christians and Muslims alike sharing one narrow and contested space.

Having learnt over many years the significance of this inclusive statement, I have repeated it almost mantra-like in order to affirm the existential rights as much as interconnected realities of two peoples and three religions living side-by-side on this hallowed but conflict-ridden parcel of land. However, within this large formula lies also a narrower Christian ecumenical component whereby thirteen Eastern and Oriental Orthodox, Catholic and mainline Protestant Churches have been witnessing - sometimes together, sometimes separately, sometimes harmoniously and at others times noisily - for long centuries and perhaps as far back as the Church of the First Pentecost.

One of the long-established and ancient churches within this Christian mosaic remains the Armenian Orthodox Church. As an Armenian Christian myself whose own genes hail from Jerusalem, I am proud of the significant role ‘my’ Church has played in the lives of so many men, women and children. Besides, my ecumenical and political experiences in the Holy Land over a stretch of long years have made me realise that no study of the Holy Land would be whole without a closer look at the life, presence and witness of the Armenians within it. In the words of Avedis Sanjian, ‘Any definitive history of Bilad al-Sham, including Palestine, must also include an in-depth study of the minority groups that have inhabited the region since ancient times, for they too have played an important role in its historical development’.¹

Today, despite the trials and tribulations that have challenged the Armenian Orthodox Church - let alone the other traditional Churches of the Holy Land - over many centuries, this statement still stands the test of time. It is an acknowledged fact that the Armenian Church has held in the past, as it still does today, a prominent and undisputed position in the Holy Land. First of all, it enjoys a unique standing in Jerusalem by virtue of its historical role as joint custodian or guardian of the holy sites alongside the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches. Secondly, it still influences the lives of many Armenian communities in the Middle East.² Thirdly, it holds substantial properties, including churches and monasteries, both in Israel and in the Palestinian Territories.

In the next few sparse pages, I shall endeavour to provide the reader with a bird's eye view of the Armenian dimension of the Holy Land. My family have lived in Jerusalem since the marking years of the Armenian genocide of 1915, and I have been deeply involved with the ecumenical and political initiatives undertaken by the late Patriarch Torkom II and the Armenian community of Jerusalem during the critical and now also unfriendly Oslo chapters from 1995 to 2001.

The following pages will hopefully tease out some of the history of the Armenian Christian presence in the Holy Land. They will also acknowledge the ebb and flow of Armenians in this land, and underline the hands-on relevance let alone contribution of the Armenian Church, institutions and community to the Land of the Resurrection. Finally, they will conclude with an overview of current political realities that have a practical and blunt impact on the daily lives of Armenians. But in writing these pages, I remain mindful of the fact that I am an international lawyer with a modicum of political nous and some ecumenical experience. I am neither a theologian nor a historian. Therefore, I hold myself entirely accountable for possible inaccuracies, inconsistencies and lacunæ in this publication.

First, though, I would like to highlight one sentence *par excellence* that still stands out in my mind regarding the Armenian Orthodox Church. The late Catholicos Karekin I (1991-1995), a cherished advisor let alone a veritable beacon of Christian love and literary erudition, told me once in his inimitable manner, 'Harry, the Armenian Church is indeed an ancient church. However, remember, it is not an archaic church'. His words of wisdom remain prophetic today.

1. Avedis K. Sanjian 'The Armenians and the Holy Places in Jerusalem', The Third International Conference on Bilad al-Sham: Palestine 19-24 April 1980, Vol. 1, University of Jordan, Yarmouk University, Jerusalem 1983

2 .Ibid

I Historical Perspective of Armenians in the Holy Land

◆ Armenians and the Early Days of Christianity

Christianity started spreading throughout Armenia as early as the first century. According to tradition, Saints Thaddeus and Bartholomew, two of Christ's twelve disciples, were the first evangelists to reach the mountains and valleys of Armenia.

St Thaddeus was a bold missionary. He brought the Good News to the royal palace of Armenia's King Sanatruk and baptised the king's daughter Sandoukht. The established government and religious leaders bitterly opposed the threatening new sect called Christianity, going so far as to imprison the king's daughter. However, Sandoukht refused to renounce her faith and converted instead many of her fellow prisoners. When her father forced her to choose between the church and the crown, she chose the former, was duly executed and became the first Armenian Christian saint. Also according to tradition, St Thaddeus brought to Armenia the spear with which the centurion Lucian had pierced Christ's side on the cross. It was kept at Ayri Vank (present-day Geghard Monastery) and used once every 7 years in the consecration of Holy Chrism for baptisms and ordinations by Armenian churches around the world. St Thaddeus continued preaching in Armenia and was martyred at Artaz in 43 AD.

St Bartholomew, also known as Nathaniel, followed Thaddeus' mission to Armenia at the time of Sandoukht's imprisonment and subsequent martyrdom. He converted King Sanatruk's sister Valouhi. The king in anger ordered the execution of both his sister and Bartholomew at Albac in Armenia in 66 AD. It is claimed that Bartholomew was at first sceptical about Jesus being the long-awaited Messiah, but soon became an ardent believer and follower. It is also claimed that Jesus' saying 'Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile' (Jn 1:47) referred to this disciple.

However, and following those seminal experiences with the new faith, Christianity was proclaimed fully as the state religion of Armenia in 301 AD through the evangelising and organisational efforts of St Krikor Lousavoritch (St Gregory the Illuminator or Enlightener) who converted King Trdat III the Great. Agathangelos,

author of the history of the Armenian conversion, describes how the royal family were baptised in the Euphrates River alongside the entire population. To mark this turning point in the destiny of the church, the foundations of the Cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin were laid in 301-303 AD in the city of Vagharshabad. The Cathedral of Etchmiadzin, signifying 'The Descent of the Only Begotten', became the Holy See of the Armenian Orthodox Church and a most sacred spiritual centre for Armenians worldwide. The first Armenian religious shepherd was Catholicos Nerses I (353-373).

The Armenian Church inspired the flourishing of a new Armenian culture. It promoted the creation of the Armenian alphabet in 404-406 AD by the monk St Mesrob Mashtots. Later, under the guidance of Catholicos St Sahak, it also helped with the translation of the Holy Scriptures as well as the liturgical and patristic literature from Greek and Syriac into Armenian. Following the loss by Armenia through war of its territorial sovereignty, the church led the nation throughout the centuries and helped it survive numerous setbacks and disasters. As early as May 451 AD, Armenians were forced to defend their Christian faith at the Battle of Avarayr, the first battle in history fought for the freedom of religion and conscience.

The Armenian Orthodox Church preserves the doctrines and rites of the ancient Christian Church both in their purity and simplicity. It acknowledges the Ecumenical Councils of Nicaea (325 AD), Constantinople (381 AD) and Ephesus (431 AD) where the fundamental dogmas of Christianity were adopted by all the churches. However, it does not embrace the Fourth Council of Chalcedon (451 AD), since Armenia at the time was engaged in a war with Persia and did not participate in the Council. As such, it shares the ecclesiology and traditions of the family of Oriental Orthodox Churches, namely Coptic, Syriac, Ethiopian and Indian (Malabar). In the words of St Cyril of Alexandria, the Armenian Church believes that 'one is the nature of the Incarnate Word'.

The Armenian Church also administers the seven sacraments of baptism, chrismation (confirmation), Eucharist, penance, matrimony, ordination and extreme unction (order of the sick). Baptism is administered by three-fold immersion, with chrismation and communion following immediately thereafter. The liturgy is always sung, and Holy Communion is given in both elements of the unleavened bread and unmixed red wine. At the conclusion of the Eucharist, fragments of the unleavened bread are blessed by the priest and distributed to the non-communicant faithful.

◆ Coming to the Holy City

The Armenian presence in the Holy Land, however, was established long before Armenian King Trdat III turned to Christianity and adopted it as state religion in 301 AD. There is historical evidence that bishops of the Armenian Church together with Greek Orthodox Churches in Jerusalem, Alexandria and Egypt were engaged as early as

254 AD in the discovery and preservation of the Holy Places related to Christ's life. They also had a prominent role in constructing edifices for preserving these early Christian treasures.³

The history and development of the Armenian community in this land is also intimately intertwined with pilgrimage. Indeed, the adoption of Christianity by Armenia as a state religion was a turning point in the attachment of Armenians to the Holy Land. This resulted in pilgrimages of sizes hitherto unknown and gave impetus to the formation and development of the Armenian Church from the 4th to the 7th centuries.

Over the years, thousands of monks flocked to the Judaeen wilderness, staying in caves and newly established lavras (monasteries). Hundreds of Armenian ascetics were part of this movement. Euthymius, an Armenian bishop from Melitene (modern-day Malatya in Turkey), for example, is considered to be the organiser of Palestinian desert monasticism. He came to Palestine to live in a cell in 405 AD. Later, he established his *lavra* on the way to Jericho.

In the 5th century, the Greek hagiographer Cyril of Scythopolis wrote about four hundred Armenian pilgrims *en route* to the River Jordan. Burckhardt, the famous 19th century peregrinator who 'discovered' Petra in Jordan, also referred to eight hundred Armenians who had been to St Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai desert.

The Armenian Church of Jerusalem was therefore mobilised to provide for the physical and spiritual needs of a constant flow of pilgrims. At first, the hospices were in the form of single rooms or halls. Later, as their numbers steadily increased, they were organised around courtyards with separate entrances. Today, within the monastery, there are twenty such courtyards - each bearing the name of a town such as Tokat, Adana, Smyrna, Crimea – or simply that of the builder. The Armenian monastery of St James was considered the largest hospice in the city.

Most pilgrims would come during the Lenten period and spend the forty days before Easter as well as Holy Week in the city, leaving only after the feast of the Ascension. As such, the pilgrimage season usually lasted three months and was a major source of income for the monastery. However, there were also special monk emissaries called *nviraks* who were sent to the Diaspora to encourage pilgrimages to Jerusalem and raise funds for the church.

The improvement in land transport, paralleled with cheaper shipping fares from Odessa as well as the development of the railroad, led to a wave of popular pilgrimages with numbers reaching record heights of eight to ten thousand men and women a year.

For its part, the Armenian Patriarchate felt morally obligated to provide facilities for the pilgrims, some of whom would spend as long as six months in Jerusalem. The annual growth in the number of pilgrims led to the expansion of the Armenian Quarter within the city. With the additional income, the Patriarchate invested heavily

in property - a move that proved judicious and whose income helps sustain the Armenian Church during the lean times.

Jerusalem's Armenian Convent, as it can be seen today, owes its existence (with some minor additions) to Krikor Shiravantzee (Gregory the Chainbearer, 1715-1749), probably the most prominent Patriarch of the Armenian Church in Jerusalem. In 1718, he hung a heavy chain with a large cross round his neck and promised not to take it off until his mission of raising funds for the Armenian Church was completed.⁴

Krikor Shiravantzee undertook his duties of Armenian Patriarch with devotion. He managed to rescue the Armenian Church from collapse due to its mounting debts. He reaffirmed its rights to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, secured the pilgrim routes to Jerusalem, made St James self-contained and self-supporting and finally restored the Armenian churches to an excellence that they had not enjoyed for centuries. Furthermore, he created the economic basis for the future existence of the Armenian Convent by acquiring properties that helped the latter to prosper and later on to accommodate the refugees that flooded the Holy City during World War II (WWII) as a result of the Armenian genocide of 1915.

However, the pilgrimage to the Holy Land dampened considerably after 1915 and the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. During the late 1920's, pilgrimage by land persisted mainly from neighbouring Arab lands. Even that small number of pilgrims only lasted until the Six-Day Arab-Israeli War of June 1967 when the political conditions prevented further pilgrimages in any considerable numbers from coming to Jerusalem.

3. <http://www.armenian-patriarchate.org>

4. Roberta Ervine 'Grigor the Chainbearer (1715-1749): Rebirth of the Armenian Patriarchate' Chapter 7 in *'The Christian Heritage in the Holy Land'*, Edited by Anthony O'Mahony with Goran Gunner and Kevork Hintlian, Scorpion Cavendish, 1995, pp. 106-111.

II Religious Presence in Jerusalem and the Middle East

◆ Armenians in the region

Armenian communities have had a long history in the Middle East and have remained intertwined to a large extent with the other indigenous peoples of the region. This held both advantages as well as difficulties for an Armenian community trying to preserve their own ethno-religious characteristics against the dominant cultures of their respective countries. At times, this preservation was achieved by simple isolation of the community in terms of both language and culture. Interestingly enough, isolation was not the stance adopted by Armenians in terms of economic integration in the host countries.

Armenians had an uninterrupted presence in the whole Middle Eastern region since the 5th century, although their numbers increased drastically at the beginning of the 20th century due to the refugees and deportees who survived the Armenian genocide of 1915 and fled to the Middle East. Many of them were rescued and sheltered by the Arabs from the Syrian Desert.

Armenians shared almost the same experience in the region even though they lived under different mandatory powers and political systems. It was not an easy life, and the survivors of the Armenian genocide had to subsist under humiliating conditions in crowded camps or shantytowns on the fringes of large cities.

It was during this period that Armenians revealed a sharp sense of nationalism, particularly when they felt that their physical existence was in danger. It also impacted their choice of isolated and self-sufficient communitarian lifestyles. Armenian national life was largely based on the principles of the *millet* system.⁵ As a distinct group, Armenians were mostly concerned with their own rights and duties as defined either explicitly or tacitly by the system. They considered themselves members of a distinct ethno-cultural minority as opposed to the rest of the Arab population, whether Sunni, Shi'i, Druze, Maronite, Catholic or Orthodox.⁶

However, economically, they became much more integrated in their host countries. Craftsmen and merchants pressed into the hearts of bazaars and markets, while the

youth were studying at schools of higher education to enter into professions that could be practised elsewhere in the world in case the political situation deteriorated in the Middle East and they had to flee once more. However, there was always a contradiction in the psyche of many Armenians with regard to their host countries. On the one hand, their businesses and commercial activities required them to be largely associated with all other peoples. On the other, the fear of assimilation and loss of their own national identity slowed down this integration at the threshold of the Armenian household.

◆ In Jaffa

Jaffa, Bethlehem and Jerusalem are the key cities where the Armenian religious and cultural life evolved and flourished over the centuries.

Indeed, and for the last five hundred years, the Armenian Convent of Jaffa has been an epicentre of organised monastic life. Being a port city, Jaffa was the window to the outside world and considered second only to Jerusalem in the whole of Palestine. The Armenian Convent of St Nicholas, situated on the sea front, was the first shore haven for many pilgrims travelling to the Holy Land by sea. In his efforts to restore the integrity of the Armenian Church, Krikor Shiravantzee expanded its facilities in order to receive and host the increasing number of pilgrims. The archives contain much of the correspondence between the convent and the Patriarchate in Jerusalem, highlighting the role that the former assumed as the pilgrims' nexus between the Holy Land and the outside world. Its importance can also be underlined in symbolic terms by the fact that Patriarch Teodoros Bedros Vanetzi (1800-1818) was interred there.

At its zenith and until 1948, the Armenian community of Jaffa numbered six thousand - with schools and cultural centres. Today, the shifting political sands and an emigrant trend toward North America and Australia have reduced the numbers to a mere four hundred.

◆ In Bethlehem

Outside the Holy City of Jerusalem, there are three monasteries. The oldest one is in Bethlehem, in proximity to the Church of Nativity. It has many Justinian remains (from the 6th century) and an old chapel known as the University of St Jerome. Dating from pre-Crusader times, it underwent extensive renovations during the reign of Patriarch Krikor Kantzagehtzee (Gregory of Baronter, 1613-1645) who converted it into a hermitage. An ascetic figure who would usually retire to pray in a cell located in an orchard in Bethlehem, the Patriarch attracted other ascetic groups to Jerusalem and started an anchoritic settlement either in the Judaeian desert or in Sceta.

◆ In Jerusalem

The Armenian community of Jerusalem is perhaps the oldest one outside the spiritual homeland of Armenia itself. As early as the 5th century, when caravans of Armenian pilgrims began to arrive in the Holy Land, some of those pilgrims decided to stay on rather than return home. Thus, Armenian communities started in Palestine and Jordan - as far south as Karak - and many families still carry names indicating their origin from different towns in Palestine.

According to Armenian sources, the history of the establishment of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem goes as far back 637 AD during the reign of the Second Caliph 'Umar (634-644 AD). In the Byzantine and Crusader periods, Armenians were present within the Holy Places and this time-tested attachment and defence of Holy Places were to shape their vocation and orientation for centuries to come. The sense of Christian responsibility for maintaining the fabric and living liturgical presence on the Holy Sites was to become the spiritual and historic objectives for which they had to go through enormous hardships and sacrifice.⁷

The Patriarchate had jurisdiction over the Armenian shrines in Transjordan and Palestine. St James, being the patriarchal monastery in the Armenian quarter, always had a domineering position and was generously looked after by the Armenian royal-princely families and commercial magnates. The Patriarchate is also relatively economically self-sufficient due to lucrative investments in secular properties, particularly in the New City.⁸ It enjoys a special status as one of the three major guardians of the Christian Holy Places in the Holy Land (the other two being Greek Orthodox and Latin-rite Roman Catholics).⁹

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem was one of the spiritual centres for Armenians during the 19th century. The others were the Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin in Armenia and often described as the Mother See, the Catholicosate of Aghtamar in the province of Van in the southern region of Turkish Armenia and the Patriarchate of Constantinople. In fact, Jerusalem had been only second to Etchmiadzin in terms of the main focus of Armenian Christian attention. It was then administratively subordinated to the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the latter sometimes would impose hurdles on the activities of the Jerusalem-based Armenian Church. Only after World War I (WWI) did the Patriarchate in Jerusalem become independent and based on its constitution, giving its Religious Brotherhood the right to govern its own affairs.¹⁰

Throughout four hundred years of Ottoman rule (1514-1914), the rights of the Armenian Patriarchate, along with those of the Latin and Greek Patriarchates, were confirmed in the Paris Peace Conference in 1856, and then also the Congress of Berlin in 1878.¹¹

Of particular and vital significance is the *firman* of 25 July 1888 that was issued by Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid to the Armenian Patriarch Harootiun Vehabedian (1885-

1910). This document re-affirmed the supreme authority of the Armenian Patriarch once again, and his seat in Jerusalem was declared once more as ‘the seat of the Armenian Patriarchate of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem, Gaza, Tripoli, Nablus, of the Abyssinians, the Copts and the other nationals’. This *firman* meant that the Patriarch was no longer relating directly to the local authorities but rather to the Sublime Porte. As such, the Patriarchate acquired its legal independence of any assembly in Constantinople or Jerusalem. (See *Appendix I*)

Ironically enough, Sultan Abdulhamid who was dubbed ‘red’ by Armenians since history records that he undertook the early massacre of more than 300,000 Armenians, was the last sultan to grant a *firman* to an Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem. The rights of the Armenian Patriarchate were later guaranteed again in the Treaty of Versailles of 1919.

The Armenian genocide of 1915, which left a bitterly sad legacy of well over one million Armenian victims, resulted in momentous changes in the life and witness of the Patriarchate. Communities in countries as diverse as Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Cyprus, which until then had come under the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem Patriarchate, were transferred to that of the Catholicosate of Cilicia (whose See was in Sis until 1930, and now at Antelias in Lebanon under the current and ecumenically-minded leadership of HH Aram 1).

Following the difficulties associated with the earlier years of the 20th century, the Armenian community received a further injection of ‘new blood’ when another wave of refugees arrived after World War II. These Armenians progressed quickly toward higher educational and professional levels. Many became well-off franchise holders and representatives of foreign firms. Jerusalem soon became the most flourishing centre for the Armenian Church.

During this period of renaissance, two great intellectual figures occupied the Patriarchal See of Jerusalem. The first was Archbishop Yeghishe Tourian (1921-29) and the other Torkom Koushagian (1930-39)¹². It was during their reign that the Patriarchate regained its financial stability. The theological seminary expanded. The number of renowned intellectuals within the community grew, and some students were sent to England where they attended theological courses at the various colleges run by the Church of England. Upon their return, they became prominent leaders in Jerusalem and other Armenian churches. The Printing Press of the Armenian Patriarchate was also improved, and 1927 saw the re-appearance of the monthly review *Sion*. This publication achieved a significant place in the Diaspora and presented itself as a point of encounter where Armenian scholars and intellectuals from all over the world would meet in its pages. Patriarch Esayee of Talas (1864-1885) first published *Sion* as the official organ of the Patriarchate in 1866. Ever since, all patriarchs who succeeded him have supported this publication.

Sadly, this renewed period of prosperity did not last very long. There are many reasons for this decline in the fortunes of the Armenian Patriarchate and community.

For one, and after 1940, discord within the Religious Brotherhood significantly undermined the Patriarchate. Some of its members even gave up their vows and left the Patriarchate. Unfortunately, these internecine rivalries replicated themselves later on and contributed to further weaken the strength and prestige of the Patriarchate.

Secondly, the Armenian community was seriously impacted when the British government withdrew its mandate from Palestine in 1947 and the State of Israel was created in 1948. During the first Arab-Israeli war, nearly all Armenians in the coastal towns and the New City fled to the walled monastery in the Old City for safety'.¹³ Overnight, the Armenian communities of Jaffa and Haifa, numbering ten thousand, were reduced to a mere 1,000 people. In West Jerusalem, several hundred Armenian families also lost their homes and businesses as part of the forced exodus of Palestinian refugees.¹⁴

Just like the Palestinian Arabs of 1948, many Armenian families also lost their homes to the advancing Israeli army in Jerusalem only to find themselves refugees once more. Many of them crowded into the courtyards and cells of Saint James, or moved to Beirut as stateless persons where many were admitted to the United States in the 1950s'.¹⁵ The Church devoted much of its resources to accommodate over 4,000 new refugees. As a result, the financial and moral strengths of the Patriarchate were sapped considerably.

In 1967, with the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem as well as the West Bank, the Armenians of Jerusalem were reunited with the smaller communities still remaining in Haifa and Jaffa. However, the Israeli occupying authorities started exercising strict controls over the daily lives of Armenians in a manner that had largely been unknown to them under Jordanian rule. Yet, the Patriarchate also strove to sustain a respectful working relationship with the Israeli government. As such, Israel allowed the building of a new seminary complex within the Old City walls. It also allowed the Patriarchate to restore All Saviours' Church situated beyond the wall in the Armenian portion of the former no-man armistice land that divided at the time the Old City and the New City and marked the frontier between Israel and Jordan.¹⁶

◆ Saint James' Monastery

St James is the patron saint of Armenians in Jerusalem, with both the monastery and the Brotherhood named after him. St James is also considered one of the five main holy places in Jerusalem and has been built on the site of the tombs of St James, the Lord's brother, and St James the Lesser. St James monastery, along with St Catherine's and Mar Saba, is one of the oldest functioning monasteries in the Holy Land. For the last 1500 years, not a single day has passed without two or three daily services being held there.

The first lectionary of Palestine (St Thoros' Collection, codex 121) was translated from Greek into Armenian in Jerusalem and was used both in Jerusalem as well as in Armenia. This 5th century document, covering the period from 5 January to 29 December, charts

all the feasts of the Armenian Church. It is the liturgical calendar of the Jerusalem church and is the oldest known document in the world to include the corpus of feasts, sites and dates in the Holy Land since the Greek original has been lost and the calendar survives only in the Armenian translation.

In the forecourt of St James, one can also detect many funerary inscriptions. One example is that of Patriarch Abraham of Jerusalem (1180-1191), who died during the reign of Salaheddin and another tombstone of Bishop Vartan of Kars, 1238. To the left, a flight of stairs leads to the Patriarch's residence, built in a palace-like fashion by the Baliani who were the architects of the Ottoman Court. Hung on the walls are portraits of monarchs who have visited the Armenian Patriarchate, including Franz Josef and Eliza of Austria, Kaiser Wilhelm and his wife Augusta Victoria, as well as King George and Queen Mary of England. Although Queen Victoria did not visit Jerusalem, she sent her autographed picture in 1869 in recognition of the assistance rendered by the Armenian Patriarch Esayee in releasing a British ambassador who had been taken hostage in Ethiopia.

The Armenian Church owns much property beyond the Armenian Quarter, both inside and outside the Old City of Jerusalem. This property is rented out to businesses and government agencies, and most of the tenants are non-Armenians. The Armenian Church is also prominent in its control over Christian Holy Places in the Jerusalem area. It has sole jurisdiction over St James Cathedral and the houses of Annas and Caiaphas (Acts 4 in the New Testament) and shares with other Christian churches control over the Holy Sepulchre, St Mary's Tomb in Gethsemane, and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.¹⁷ In terms of overall control of Christian Holy Places, the Armenian Church is ranked third after the Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches or the various Protestant churches'.¹⁸

The Armenian element is often sadly ignored in the literature covering the history and modern affairs of the Middle East. But one cannot deny its presence and impact when visiting the region. Peaceful coexistence with the Arabs, alongside the preservation of cultural-linguistic identity, was a model of success for the Christian Armenians. Unfortunately, during past decades, those tissues of peaceful dwelling that have been woven throughout long centuries have no longer been able to withstand the pressures of Israeli Palestinian strife. Many Armenians, who have lived in the region for centuries, have left for calmer harbours - though not always greener pastures - abroad.

However, and unlike other Armenian communities across the world, Armenians in the Middle East have largely upheld a special duty of preserving the Western Armenian language and culture. They have served as guardians of those Holy Places that are essential for the Armenian Church. And being geographically closest to the homeland, the Armenians in the Middle East have been foremost leaders in promoting the Armenian ethos and identity as they relate to the Armenian genocide of 1915.

5. In classical Islamic tradition, non-Muslim religious communities that possessed an accepted written holy book were granted a covenant of protection, the *dhimma*, and were considered to be protected people, the *dhimmis*. In return for this status, they paid a special poll tax, the *cizye*. The Ottomans continued this tradition during the reign of Muhammad the Conqueror (1451-1481). The three leading non-Muslim religious communities- the Jews, the Greek Orthodox Church and the Armenian Church - were established as recognised *dhimmi* communities known as millets. Each millet was headed by its own religious dignitary: a chief rabbi in the case of Jews and patriarchs in the case of the Greek Orthodox and Armenian communities. In the millet system., each community was responsible for the allocation and collection of its taxes, its educational arrangements and internal legal matters pertaining especially to personal status issues such as marriage, divorce and inheritance. In the pre-modern Middle East, identity was largely based on religion. This system functioned well until the European concepts of nationalism and ethnicity filtered into the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the 19th century. See Norman Itzkowitz 'Ottoman Empires', <http://www26.brinkster.com/efedai/ott/index2.html>
6. Richard G. Hovannisian 'The Ebb and Flow of the Armenian Minority In The Arab Middle East', *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 1974, p. 20.
7. Kevork Hintlian 'Chapter 10: Travellers and Pilgrims in the Holy Land: The Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem in the 17th and 18th Century' in *The Christian Heritage in the Holy land*, edited by Anthony O'Mahony with Goran Gunner and Kevork Hintlian, Scorpion Cavendish, 1995, p. 150.
8. For further information on the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and the history of secular communities in Palestine, see Maghazia Ormanian, *Haikakan Erusaghem* [Armenian Jerusalem] (Jerusalem, 1931); Avedis K. Sanjian, *The Armenian Communities in Syria under Ottoman Dominion* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), pp. 1-30, 95-147, 168 - 302 passim. Sited in Richard G. Hovannisian 'The Ebb and Flow of the Armenian Minority in The Arab Middle East', *The Middle East Journal*, Vol 28, No. 1, 1974, p. 24.
9. <http://www.armenian-patriarchate.org>
10. Right Reverend K. V. Sarkissian, 'Armenian Church', Chapter 10 in 'Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions In Concord and Conflict', General Editor A J. Arberry, Vol. I, Judaism and Christianity, Cambridge, University Press, 1969, p. 493.
11. Kevork Hintlian, in an interview to *Armenian International Magazine*, vol.11, No. 10 October 2000, pp.40-44
12. Right Reverend K. V. Sarkissian, 'Armenian Church', Chapter 10 in '*Religion in the Middle East: Three Religions In Concord and Conflict*', General Editor A J. Arberry, Vol. I, Judaism and Christianity, Cambridge, University Press, 1969, p. 512.
13. Richard G. Hovannisian 'The Ebb and Flow of the Armenian Minority in The Arab Middle East', *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (1974), p. 25.
14. George Hintlian, Fact file: Armenians of Jerusalem, *Jerusalem Quarterly File*, Issue 2, 1998 <http://www.jqf-jerusalem.org/journal/1998/jqf2/armenians.html>
15. Richard G. Hovannisian, p. 25.
16. Ibid.
17. '*Hintlian, Armenians in the Holy Land*', pp. 57- 60; Bishop Shahe Ajamian, "Brief Notes on the Armenian People and the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem," *Christian News From Israel*, 18 December 1967, pp. 39-40'. Footnote no. 7 in *The Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem: Urban life Behind Monastery Walls*, Victor Azaya, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1984, p. 3.
18. V. Azarya, p.3

III Statistical Flows of Armenians to the Holy City

Armenians enjoy a very cohesive community that has preserved its language and cultural heritage with remarkable tenacity despite its shrinking numbers.¹⁹ In fact, the Armenian presence in the Old City is still felt strongly today despite the dwindling numbers. As mentioned earlier, one could trace the continuous existence of an Armenian presence in Jerusalem back to the 4th or 5th centuries AD, and for most of that history in its present location at the southwest quarter of the Old City. The Armenian quarter covers roughly 30 acres, about one-sixth the area inside the Old City walls.²⁰ The prominence of Armenians is manifested by the fact that their quarter is one of the four principal sections into which the Old City is now divided (the others are the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish quarters). It is centrally located and found on the itinerary of many visitors (*See Map*). Not all of what is customarily called the Armenian quarter is inhabited or controlled by the Armenians,²¹ but their institutions and living quarters nonetheless occupy a disproportionately large area compared to the size of their community in the Old City, in Israel, in the West Bank or in Christendom as a whole.²²

Precise statistics about the numbers of Armenians across the latter centuries are not available. However, a census in 1902 put their number at twelve hundred. In the 19th century, many Armenians were craftsmen, mainly watchmakers, photographers, goldsmiths and carpenters. This period is remembered as a time of war, epidemics and starvation. Many Armenians, including seminarians, went to the army never to return.²³

As a result of the Armenian genocide perpetrated by the government of the ‘Young Turks’, the Armenian refugees and deportees who survived marches through the Syrian Desert flooded Palestine. Most of them were sheltered within the church walls. According to the archives, approximately 10,000 survivors of the massacres came to Palestine.²⁴ They and their generations comprise the majority of the contemporary Armenian Jerusalemite community.

Overall, 200,000 exiled Armenians arrived in Arab lands by 1925. 100,000 arrived in Syria, (augmented in 1938-39 when France ceded the sanjaq of Alexandretta to Turkey as modern-day Iskenderun), 50,000 in the enlarged province of the Lebanon, 25,000 in Mesopotamian towns and refugee camps, 10,000 in Palestine and Transjordan, and 40,000 in Egypt.²⁵ (See *Table I*).

But the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 changed the demographic dynamics of the Armenian communities in the Middle East in general and Palestine in particular. First of all, only one-tenth of Armenians remained in Jaffa, Haifa as well as in West Jerusalem. Before 1948, the Armenian Community in Palestine numbered 15,000. This land was attracting many Armenians from Syria and Lebanon. However, the emigrant patterns were reversed after the war. Around 4,000 (less than a half of all the Armenian refugees) found asylum within the walls of St James. The majority left the country. Some of them ended up in Beirut and Amman, waiting for the turmoil to end and hoping to go back to their relatives in Jerusalem. However, due to continuing unrest in the 1960's, the emigration shifted to Canada, the USA and Australia. After 1967, many Armenians once again immigrated to North America. The Israeli occupation thwarted the natural increase of the community by hindering migration from Arab countries. The number of Armenians in Jerusalem was 5,000 in 1949 and 3,500 prior to 1967.²⁶

The demography of the community did not change much throughout the 1980's. However, the first Palestinian Intifada in December 1987 against the Israeli occupation accelerated emigration during the years 1987 to 1989. In 1990, relative political stability led even to a small demographic growth.²⁷

As of 1998, the estimates indicate that there are 2,500 Armenians in Jerusalem. 500 in the West Bank (mainly in Bethlehem and Ramallah), 400 in Jaffa, 350 in Haifa, 100 in Nazareth and the surrounding area, and 200 in the rest of the country.²⁸ Today, the Jerusalem Patriarchate has jurisdiction over less than 5,000 Armenians in Israel, the West Bank and Jordan.²⁹

19. 'We have conflicting data on the number of Armenians living in the Old City. A figure of 2,000 people is given by the Armenians themselves and is accepted by some other sources. In contrast, the census carried out by the Israeli government in 1967 showed fewer than 1,000 Armenians living in the Armenian quarter. That census, however, was held immediately after the capture of the Old City, when the local population was deeply suspicious of Israeli intentions and hence its figures might not be very reliable though there is no special reason why they should be low. My own estimate, derived from personal acquaintance with a large number of residents in the Armenian quarter, is that about 1,500 Armenians currently live in the Old City, almost all of them in the Armenian quarter. On the total population of the Old City of Jerusalem in the 1960's and the number of its Armenian inhabitants, see Ori Stendel, 'The Arab in Jerusalem,' in *Jerusalem*, ed. J. M. Oesterreicher and A. Sinai (New York; John Day, 1974), p. 159; Evan M. Wilson, *Jerusalem- Key to Peace* (Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1970), p. 16; Assadour Antreassian, *Jerusalem and the Armenians* (Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1969), p. 52; Shlomo Gafni, *The Glory of Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: the

- Jerusalem Publishing House, 1978), p. 78; Zeev Vilnay, *Jerusalem, Capital of Israel: The Old City*, 2 Vols. (Jerusalem Achiever, 1972, in Hebrew), 2,6; Arie Shanon, *Planning Jerusalem* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1973), p. 84; *Census of Population and Housing 1967- East Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1968), pp. 2,6; Uziel O. Schmelz, 'The Demography of Muslims and Christians in United Jerusalem' (Paper presented at the Seminar on Jerusalem and Occupied Territories. 1967-1977, The Van Leer Institution, Jerusalem, 1917). According to Schmelz's data 89.2 percent of the Armenian inhabitants of Jerusalem live in the Old City. The Armenians form 16.2 percent of the Christian population of the Old City and 10.1 percent of the total Christian population of Jerusalem ("Demography of Christians", p.11)'. Footnote #3 cited in *The Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem; Urban life Behind Monastery Walls*, Victor Azarya, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London '84, p. 2.
20. 'Twenty-six acres according to Sharon, more than thirty acres according to Armenian sources. See Sharon, *Planning Jerusalem*, p. 84; Antreassian, Jerusalem and the Armenians, p. 53; Kevork: Hintlian, *History of the Armenians in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: St James Press, 1976), p. 46; *Album of the Armenian Monastery of Jerusalem* (New York: The Delphic Press, 1950), p. 20'. Footnote no. 4 in *The Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem: Urban Life Behind Monastery Walls*, Victor Azarya, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1984, p. 2.
 21. 'Personal observations. See also Yehoshua Ben Arie, *A City Reflected in its Times* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak: Ben Zvi, 1977, in Hebrew), p. 279. After 1967, some areas of the Armenian quarter inhabited by Arabs were expropriated and added to the renovated Jewish quarter. Although Armenians were not directly hurt by that move, some fears linger among them that the adjoining Jewish quarter might, in the future, expand at their expense. Interviews with informants (1975-1978); see also Benvenisti, *The Torn City*, p. 239'. Footnote no. 5 in *The Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem: Urban Life Behind Monastery Walls*, Victor Azarya, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1984, p. 2.
 22. "There are about 6 to 7 million Armenians in the world. Less than 1,000 Armenians lie in various towns of Israel and the West Bank outside Jerusalem. David M. Lang and Christopher J. Walker, *The Armenians* (London: Minority Rights Group, Report no. 32, 1977), p. 14; 'The Tragic Armenians,' *Jerusalem Post*, March 18, 1977; S. P. Colbi, *A Short History of Christianity in the Holy land* (Jerusalem: Am Hasefer, 1965), p. 68; interviews with informants (1975 - 1978)'. Footnote no. 6 in *The Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem: Urban Life Behind Monastery Walls*, Victor Azarya, London, 1984, p. 2.
 23. Harry Hagopian, 'The Armenians of Jerusalem and the Armenian Quarter' in *Christians in the Holy land*, Edited by Michael Prior and William Taylor, The World of Islam Festival Trust, p. 125.
 24. Daphne Tsimhoni 'Communities in Diaspora: The Armenians, Syrians, and Chaldeans', *Christian Communities in Jerusalem and the West Bank Since 1948: An Historical, Social, and Political Study*, PRAEGER, Westport, Connecticut, London, 1993, p. 64.
 25. Richard G. Hovannissian 'the Ebb and Flow of the Armenian Minority in The Arab Middle East', *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (1974), p. 20.
 26. George Hintlian, Fact file: Armenians of Jerusalem, *Jerusalem Quarterly File*, Issue 2, 1998 <http://www.jgf-jersalem.org/journal/1998/jqf2/armenians.html>
 27. Daphne Tsimhoni, 'Communities in Diaspora: The Armenians, Syrians, and Chaldeans', *Christian Communities in Jerusalem and the West Bank Since 1948: An Historical Social and Political Study*, PRAEGER, Westport, Connecticut, London, 1993, p. 65.
 28. George Hintlian, Fact file: Armenians of Jerusalem, *Jerusalem Quarterly File*, Issue 2, 1998 <http://www.jgf-jersalem.org/journal/1998/jqf2/armenians.html>
 29. Harry Hagopian 'The Armenians of Jerusalem and the Armenian Quarter' in *Christians in the Holy Land*, Edited by Michael Prior and William Taylor, The World of Islam Festival Trust, p.122.

IV Clergy and Laity

◆ Clergy Community

The Armenian Patriarchate has a structure not unlike that of the other Oriental Orthodox Churches. It is divided into a secular lay community and a monastic order that comprises the Brotherhood of St James. The current regulations that guide the Brotherhood were laid down in 1860 (*See Appendix II*). The Patriarch heads the Brotherhood. He is also the spiritual leader of the church, president of all its assemblies and governor of church properties. He also represents his community before the state. The Holy Synod, composed of the bishops and archimandrites, which derives its authority from the general assembly of all members of the Brotherhood, assists the Patriarch in discharging his spiritual and administrative duties.³⁰

The Jerusalem Patriarchate is different from the rest of the Armenian Patriarchates, in that it does not allow secular communities to participate in the management of its properties or the elections to its See. This exceptional provision dates back from the time when the Armenian Patriarchate had rejected all attempts by the Ottoman authorities to include secular community participation and had always regarded itself as an independent and unique guardian of the Armenian rights in the Holy Places.³¹ The Armenian Orthodox Church is also quite different from some of the other Middle Eastern Christian communities in that it does not engage in proselytising. Nor does the Armenian Church readily encourage non-Armenians to become adherents. One explanation is that the other churches have their ethno-cultural nucleus within the Arab land and this makes it much easier for them to accept proselytism. However, this argument does not hold much water since European denominations are also known to proselytise.³²

Perhaps the true answer is hidden in the pages of the tragedies that befell Armenians throughout their history - and especially during the events of the Armenian genocide of 1915. This single event one century ago has shaped the Armenian collective psyche by importing into it the fear of extinction and loss of ethnic identity. The Armenian

Church is one of the pillars on which the Armenian people anchor their identity. Therefore, its preservation is one of the concerns of Armenians, leading to a separation between the Armenian Church and other ethnic and national groups.

Political realities have also affected the Armenian Patriarchate in relation to the election of Patriarchs. Every newly-elected Armenian Patriarch must now obtain the formal and written approval of the Jordanian, Israeli and Palestinian authorities respectively. On 24 January 2013, Archbishop Nourhan Manougian (born In Aleppo, Syria, on 24 June 1948) was elected as 97th Patriarch of Jerusalem and received the imprimatur of Jordan, the Palestinian Authority and later Israel.

◆ The Institutions of the Armenian Patriarchate

The foundations of the Armenian Patriarchate consist of a network of institutions that were laid down throughout the centuries. First of all, it consists of the Brotherhood of St James, the monastic body of the Patriarchate, which includes fifty members, fifteen monks, four bishops, and one archimandrite. There also exists a nunnery called Dayr al-Zaytuna with two nuns.

In 1843, the St James' Theological Seminary was established. The curriculum includes studies in theology and Armenology, and its graduates serve not only in Jerusalem but also travel quite often to the Armenian churches in the US, Canada or elsewhere.³³

The Armenian philanthropist Calouste Gulbenkian has been one of the financial pillars for the Armenian Church in Jerusalem. He founded the Gulbenkian Library in 1929 in memory of his parents. The library houses around 120,000 volumes in many languages, as well as an important Armenological collection with almost eight thousand titles on Armenian themes in foreign languages. There also is a separate section of about four thousand titles of old Armenian printed books. The library also features many periodicals and magazines, including the first newspaper *Aztarar* that was started in Madras (now Chennai in India) in 1795. It is worth noting that the first Armenian book was printed in Venice in 1512, and the first Armenian Bible in Amsterdam in 1666.³⁴ The library recently underwent extensive renovations and computerisation.

The Armenian monastery printing press, established in 1833, was the first one in Jerusalem.³⁵ It prints in Armenian, English and Arabic and provides Armenian liturgical, religious and educational books for the local community and the Armenian Diaspora. *Sion*, the monthly review of the Patriarchate, was also established in 1866 and still appears today.³⁶

St Tarkmanchatz School was established for the education of the local community. It is the first and only co-educational school in the Old City of Jerusalem, and is attended by most of the Armenian children (there are approximately 200 pupils in primary and secondary classes today). The languages of instruction are Armenian, English, Hebrew

(since 1967) and French (since 1990). The school is funded by Armenian philanthropists abroad as well as by local community contributions.³⁷

◆ Armenian Catholics

The Armenian Catholic Church officially separated from the Armenian Orthodox one in the 18th century as part of the Great Schism of all Catholic Churches. Subsequently, Pope Benedict XIV recognised it officially as one of the Oriental Catholic (also known as Uniate) churches in 1742.

Before the Armenian Catholic Church was recognised by the Sublime Porte, though, its followers had to escape persecution and established their centre in Bzemmar in Lebanon.³⁸ It was following the intervention of Marquis de Moustier, the French Ambassador in Constantinople in 1835, that the Ottoman government issued an edict recognising Armenian Catholics as a separate community with their own Patriarch. (The present Armenian Catholic Patriarch, Krikor Bedros XX Gabroyan, was elected on 9 August 2015 and resides at the Patriarchal See in Achrafieh, Beirut). However, this did not mean that Armenian Catholics gained a separate status as a distinct community in the sense of a millet (*see footnote 5*) that was officially recognised by the Sublime Porte. During the same century, a new conflict broke out between the Armenian Catholic and other Oriental Catholic Churches, with the

Armenian Catholic Church arguing for a larger degree of autonomy and national tradition and the latter churches promoting closer relations with Rome.

The Armenian Catholic community has always remained very small, not exceeding 300, and suffered continuous decline during the 1950's and 1960's (*See Table II*). Like the Armenian Orthodox, their rites and liturgy stress the Armenian language and culture. They do not engage in proselytism, and have retained Armenian as their spoken language.³⁹

◆ Laity

Armenians form the most compact community in Jerusalem. A large majority of the community lives in the Old City and many of those - well over two-thirds - in the monastery itself. The lay people live in the areas where the first abodes for pilgrims were built although some of those modest abodes on the outer fringes have faced appropriation or takeover by Israeli settlers. Nonetheless, symbolic rentals for these apartments are paid to the Patriarchate. One of the reasons why the lay people prefer to stay within the monastery walls is that secular life is well organised - with many cultural and social services provided in the compound of the Patriarchate itself.

However, 20% of the Jerusalemite Armenians live outside the walls of the monastery but still within the Armenian quarter. The latter are called '*kaghakatsi*', or town-dwellers,

whose ancestry goes back many long centuries. On the other hand, those who live within the compound itself are called '*vanketsi*', or those from within the convent.

Interestingly enough, Victor Azarya is a sociologist who argues that Armenians do not constitute a local group in the strict definition of the term despite their long-standing roots and involved presence in the Old City. Given that their origins, as well as religious and cultural foci, are centred round Mount Ararat.⁴⁰ (which is found in the Eastern Anatolian region of modern-day Turkey and is the national symbol of Armenians), Azarya argues that they cannot be part of the fabric of the local societies.

However, I believe that this blanket characterisation does not reflect the full reality of the Armenian communities in the Middle East. It is true that many Armenians consider Armenia as a spiritual homeland, but they have their physical homeland firmly anchored in the countries where they live today. It is also true that they have preserved the Armenian language, and maintain close connections with other Armenians in the Diaspora. However, their political and economic contribution within their own societies is unassailable.

◆ Lay Community Organisations

Due to the firm policy of the Armenian Patriarchate to have a clear-cut separation between the religious and secular, the Armenian communities have developed their own lay organisations. In the Holy Land, these include The Armenian Benevolent Union, Hoyetchmen (the Armenian Young Men's Society, established · 1933) and Homentmen (the Armenian Physical Education Society, established 1935 as a branch of world-wide Homentmen clubs). Traditional Armenian political parties from the right and left of the political spectrum such as Dashnatsutyun or Ramgavarutyun are also closely involved with these organisations and strive to bring up new generations of Armenians who are aware of their national heritage.

The Armenian Catholics also have their own club, Arax, which was established in 1935. It is at the centre of the life of Armenian Catholics and includes some Armenian Orthodox members too. This is the case with the Orthodox Armenian organisations as well - being Armenian is the only criterion, while confessional affiliations are meant to assume a subsidiary relevance.

Given the conservative nature of the Middle East where those Armenian organisations operate, one needs to mention that they have nonetheless exhibited quite a progressive nature. Unlike many other communities, Armenian women participate fully in those clubs, are present in many of the activities and are elected to all positions in most of those organisations.

◆ Armenian Quarter: Unity of the Opposites?

Having briefly covered the broad Armenian history and presence in the Holy Land, it becomes perhaps clearer to readers that the Armenian Quarter houses an interesting blend of two communities. On the one hand is the religious community, and on the other is the secular or lay community. And at first glance, they might appear to have conflicting natures or contradictory statuses.

According to Victor Azarya, and in its strictest sociological definition, a religious community usually assumes a structure that is endowed with a centralised authority. The clergy have a more universalistic framework that strives to attain a higher belief in God let alone a stronger devotion to the values of Christianity. As such, the clergy require a certain degree of isolation and minimisation of contact with the profane (in the sense of mundane) world in order to fulfil their true monastic mission. The secular lay community, on the other hand, has little resemblance to the clergy. By its nature, and contrary to the clergy, the laity is not focused exclusively on the unique goal of attaining closeness to God. Rather, it is a random collection of men, women and children that are the product of close interaction.

Conventional theories of sociology assume that the clash between a well organised community (such as that of the clergy) and a less-organised community (such as the laity) is inevitable. In such a model, and given their different natures, structures and roles, the clergy could well be tempted to use their better structures to take control over the laity and turn them into a homogeneous body.

However, the Armenian Quarter is a unique case against the background of the other religious or ethnic communities in the Holy City. This is largely due to the fact that those two opposite communities that are traditionally thought to be at different poles of localised collectivities⁴¹ converge quite comfortably in Jerusalem. They are quite compatible, and can co-exist let alone support one another at times. The striking uniqueness of this accommodation between the religious and lay poles of the same community is the fact that a large number of lay Armenian families still live within the monastery walls. They do so even though the monks officially lock the gates every night at ten o'clock in accordance with the rules of a monastery.

So how did the two communities learn to co-exist peaceably? According to Azarya again, the roots of this phenomenon lie in the 'role-modification' that the clergy had to go through when refugees started arriving at the compound. As a result of this influx, the division between sacred and profane activities became blurred. Moreover, the refugees settled permanently within the monastery walls without offering any specialised services to the Brotherhood. As such, the clergy found a delicate balance of distancing itself from the headship of the community whilst at the same time keeping things under control within the monastery walls. There is also co-operation from the laity in that it recognises that the space belongs to the Brotherhood, and is happy to have clergy invited to their events, which should be sanctified by a priest.⁴²

In a nutshell, Azarya concludes that the Armenian Quarter is a contemporary challenge to a number of sociological theories on collectivities and associations, and is an example of success and harmony.

30. Shahe Ajamian, "Brief Notes on the Armenian People and the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem," *Christian News from Israel*, vol. 18 (1967), p. 40; cf. *Christian Communities in Jerusalem and the West Bank Since 1948: An Historical, Social, and Political Study*, Daphne Tsimhoni, PRAEGER, Westport, Connecticut, London, 1993, p. 67.
31. Shahe Ajamian, "Sultan 'Abdul Hamid and the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem" in M. Ma'oz (ed.), *Studies on Palestine During the Ottoman Period* (Jerusalem, 1975), pp. 341-350. These reforms formed the basis for the secular participation in the management of the Patriarchal Sees of Etchmiadzin and Cilicia through mixed councils of clergy and laity, Sarkissian, pp. 510, 515. *Christian Communities in Jerusalem and the West Bank Since 1948: An Historical, Social, and Political Study*, Daphne Tsimhoni, PRAEGER, Westport, Connecticut, London, 1993, p. 67.
32. V. Azarya, p. 4.
33. *Ibid.* p.71.
34. Harry Hagopian 'The Armenians of Jerusalem and the Armenian Quarter' in *Christians in the Holy land*, Edited by Michael Prior and William Taylor, The World of Islam Festival Trust, p. 120.
35. It is not surprising that the Armenians were the pioneers in printing since they were famous for their advanced literary skills for centuries. Thus it is now assumed that there was an active scriptorium in the monastery by the year 450 AD. The value of these manuscripts lies in their textual contents. Armenian monks, who were very much part of the desert community from the 5th century, translated the Greek and Syrian texts into Armenian. These translations travelled from Jerusalem to Armenia where they were copied. Some are the only surviving copies of important works of the Church Fathers, as many of the originals have been destroyed.
36. Daphne Tsimhoni, London, 1993, p. 72.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-3.
38. For details on the establishment of the church see R. P. J. Mecerian, 'Un Tableau de la Diaspora Armenienne', in P.O.C. vol. 12 (1962), pp. 37-38; cf. G. C. Anawati, "The Roman Catholic Church and Churches in Communion with Rome," in Arberry, vol. I, pp. 373 -374 in 'Christian Communities in Jerusalem and the West Bank Since 1948: An Historical, Social, and Political Study', Daphne Tsimhoni, PRAEGER, Westport, Connecticut, London, 1993, p. 76.
39. Daphne Tsimhoni, London, 1993, p. 77.
40. V. Azarya, p. 4
41. V. Azarya, p. 7.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-55.

V Contextural Issues: Realities on the Ground

◆ Ecumenism and The Armenian Church

Across the centuries, the Armenian Church has upheld the spirit of renewal, conviviality and co-operation in its relations with other churches. It has done so by adhering to the motto that ‘unity applies for essentials, liberty for doubtful matters and charity for all things’.

With this powerful motto in mind, the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem contributed throughout the centuries to the safeguarding of the Holy Places. During the Persian invasion of 614 AD, for instance, Armenians relied upon their historic and friendly ties with Persia to help restore the Holy Sepulchre. The archives record the great appreciation that Patriarch Modestus of the Greek Orthodox Church expressed to Catholicos Komitas for the assistance provided by the Armenian Church. The Armenians equally helped protect the interests of other churches from the same Oriental Orthodox family during the Ottoman and Crusader times. This occurred when some of those communities were expelled from Jerusalem for short periods due to their political affiliations as much as the frictions caused by ancient theological discrepancies between the Latin Church (as the religion of the ruling class) and the Greek and other churches.

In their relationships with the Christian communities aboard, Armenians have also received favourable verdicts from foreign travellers. Louise de Rochechouart, for instance, noted in 1463 that, ‘... Armenians are, of all, the most friendly to the Latins’. Father Eugene Roget also described Armenians - rather condescendingly might I also add - in 1632 as ‘most zealous, civilised and affable’.⁴³ But for a small community, such words of encouragement are welcome in their struggle to remain loyal to an Armenian witness in Jerusalem that has continued uninterrupted for well over fifteen centuries.

In the last four years, and under the leadership of Patriarch Nourhan Manougian, the Armenian Patriarchate has begun to reassess its objectives and priorities in order to strengthen the ever-diminishing Armenian community of the Holy Land. It is also

involved alongside the Greek Orthodox & Roman Catholic Churches in the restoration of the Aedicule or Tomb of Christ at the Church of the Resurrection. In addition, ecumenical relations in the patriarchate have been given a further impetus by the appointment of Fr Gorioune Baghdassarian as the new Ecumenical Officer at the patriarchate. For many years now, and despite olden issues, the spirit of collaboration, which fosters unity in diversity, has focused on all issues affecting Christians in the Holy Land - inevitably including current political ones, not least the status of Jerusalem itself.

So where does the Armenian Church stand today in its ecumenical and political endeavours?

On the ecumenical level, the Armenian Church participates with the other churches in a host of activities. Perhaps the most prominent of those remains the Jerusalem Inter-Church Committee (JICC). The Churches of Jerusalem set up this ecumenical body in the mid 1990's as an instrument that would help them with their Jubilee celebrations for the new Millennium. It comprised of representatives from all four families of Churches. Chaired by [the now deceased] Anba Dr Abraham, Coptic Orthodox Archbishop of Jerusalem, it included representatives from the Armenian Orthodox, Latin-rite Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Anglican and Franciscan Churches. The author of this book was Executive Secretary from 1995 to 2001.

The first set of major achievements for this JICC committee was the organisation of a host of millennial activities in the Holy Land. Those celebrations culminated in an historic gathering of all the Heads of Churches of Jerusalem at Manger Square in Bethlehem in December 1999. This gathering was the first Jubilee celebration in the Holy Land and constituted a breakthrough in that it was the first truly ecumenical assembly of all Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Churches in the Holy Land for decades. It included biblical readings, sermons, prayers, messages as well as folkloric participation from young Palestinian girls and boys. The success of this celebration led to expand its remit and soon became one of the executive arms of the Churches of Jerusalem.

As mentioned earlier, the Armenian Church is also a member of the Status Quo Commission which regulates the running of the major Christian shrines in the Holy Land that are under the joint custodianship or guardianship of the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic Custody and Armenian Orthodox Churches.

On a regional scale, the Armenian Church maintains contacts with the Middle East Council of Churches (the author of this book was also its Executive Secretary from 1995 to 2001), the World Council of Churches in Geneva and many of the individual Churches or Conferences as well as ecumenical bodies across the world. Even at the most critical political moments in the Holy Land, there have been representatives, pilgrims and visitors from these bodies coming to Jerusalem and spending time with the Armenian Church at its various sanctuaries across the land in order to learn from the Armenian experience in a land riven with endless conflicts.

Perhaps two marking moments in the memory of Armenians were the visits of Catholicos Karekin II in January 2000 and of Pope John-Paul II (now canonised) in March 2000. The Armenian Church was involved at leadership and lay levels in the activities of pilgrimages undertaken by both pontiffs.

Pope John-Paul II visited St James' Church on 26 March 2000 where both he and the late Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem Torkom II prayed together at the altar that houses the remains of St James, the Brother of the Lord. This gesture by the Bishop of Rome symbolised the ever-growing conviviality between the two Churches as evidenced by the visit of HH Pope Francis to Armenia in 2016. It was also reminiscent of an earlier visit by Pope Paul VI to the Armenian Patriarchate in 1964. It was also a return visit to the one made by the Armenian Patriarch to the Vatican in December 1996. During this prayerful visit, the Pope delivered his message to the Armenian Patriarch:

It gives me great pleasure to visit you in your own residence, after having had the joy of meeting you in Rome on the occasion of the memorable visit of His Holiness Karekin I in December 1996.

I cordially repeat the words I spoke at that time to the Catholicos Patriarch of All Armenians: "May the grace and cordiality of our meeting become like 'a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts'" (2 P 1:19).

Our meeting today is yet another step forward which the Lord has granted us for the strengthening of ties between the Catholic Church and the Armenian Apostolic Church. In this Jubilee Year when we pray more intensely that the Lord will grant us the gift of unity, may our friendship be like a prayer rising up to the Father like incense, like the fragrance of the evening sacrifice offered on the Cross by his beloved Son.

Your Beatitude, in visiting your home I feel like a brother in the midst of brothers who together are striving to build up the Church of Christ. I thank you for your gracious welcome, and I ask the Risen Lord to grant to you and to all the clergy and faithful of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the Holy Land His gifts of prosperity, joy and peace.

Catholicos Karekin II, the current spiritual leader of all Armenians at Holy Etchmiadzin, celebrated Christmas at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem on 18 January 2000. This event was comparable for Armenians in spiritual importance to the visit by Pope John-Paul II to the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem two months later. Attended by all the Heads of Churches from Jerusalem, it re-affirmed the fraternal bonds between the Armenian Church with the other Churches of the Holy Land.

In 2001, one year after the Jubilee Year, the Armenian Apostolic Church also marked the 1700th anniversary (301-2001) of the proclamation of Christianity as the national religion of Armenia. In Jerusalem, those joyous celebrations included liturgical, ecumenical, musical, literary and theatrical events. All these activities within the ecumenical movement have consolidated the universal standing of the Armenian Church despite its dwindling numbers and harsh political realities.

◆ Arab-Israeli Conflict and Armenian Communities

As a major historical presence in the Holy Land, there is no doubt that the Israeli-Arab conflict has impacted the Armenian Church let alone its communities. The threat is serious, and the alarming statistics of emigration are a symptom of deeper problems.

◆ The Armenian Quarter

Although most Armenian communities have experienced some hardship as a result of the ongoing political conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbours, Jerusalem has had by far the most serious imprint on their daily living. This is because the Holy City is the locus of conflicting interests and Armenians are far from indifferent towards the future of this city.

In fact, Jerusalem does not merely represent the spiritual interests of Armenians. It also represents their physical interests since it houses a community with assets and properties all over the city. After all, one-sixth of the Old City comprises the Armenian section that is about 28 acres (150 dunams).⁴⁴ Despite its small congregation, the Armenian Church is the second largest landowner in the Old City with substantial holdings in the Israeli coastal city of Jaffa and in West Jerusalem where it owns much of the central shopping district.⁴⁵ Hence the on-going Israeli-Palestinian negotiations over the status of the city, and particularly over the one-square-kilometre plot of land, have become of vital importance for Armenians.

The Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem entered the agenda of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in a major way during the Camp David summit in July 2000. One of the main aims of this summit that had brought together US President Bill Clinton, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Chairman Yasser Arafat was a definition of the status of Jerusalem - and particularly that of the Old City. Throughout the negotiations, Israel had insisted that it had the right to exercise full juridical sovereignty over the whole area of the Old City. It was willing to grant administrative control to the Palestinians over the Muslim and Christian Quarters only, meaning that the Armenian Quarter would have been annexed to the Jewish Quarter under complete Israeli sovereignty and administration.

The Palestinians, on the other hand, insisted that they were entitled to acquire sovereignty over the whole of the Old City. Referring to the Armenian Quarter, Yasser Arafat as President of the Palestinian Authority affirmed that “ [it] belongs to us and we and the Armenians are one people.” His statement scotched the rumours that he had ‘agreed’ to Israeli annexation of the Armenian section.⁴⁶

But how would the Camp David scenario have translated for Armenians in Jerusalem? During the Camp David Summit, and once the Church leaders found out that the Old City was being ‘bartered’ and divided up by the negotiating sides, they issued a strong letter of repudiation of any such set-up that would weaken the Christian presence in the city and asked to be involved in the future discussions impacting the Old City.

The idea of splitting up the Quarters of the Old City and placing the four quarters under two different administrative controls would have been unworkable for the Armenians living in Jerusalem. For one, a number of Armenians work in one quarter and live in another. The split would have inevitably meant a physical separation (checkpoints or other means of control) between the different quarters and resulted in the inability of Armenians to go to work or to return home. Given the long nature of the conflict, there is a high possibility that the ‘border’ will have turned into a permanent separation and resulted in job losses and economic migration.

This separation will have also affected the education of Armenian students. Many of the young schoolchildren live outside the Armenian Quarter or the Old City and they will have been unable to reach school every day without hassles and obstacles. The number of the students at St Tarkmanchatz School is already modest, and such scenarios will have made it even worse for those students and their parents.

However, over and above such concrete and practical concerns, there were also deeper concerns that led the Heads of Churches to reject any notion of splitting up the Old City.

One major criterion for the Christian life, presence and witness in Jerusalem is that all the shrines and sanctuaries belonging to the different denominations should remain accessible to all Christians. It will have been inconceivable for the Christian communities to tolerate a situation whereby the churches will have been cleaved from each other. A practical example can illustrate the point. The Armenian Patriarchate enjoys uninterrupted access to the Holy Places and particularly to the Church of Holy Sepulchre where daily religious services are conducted on the basis of the Status Quo Agreement. This document refers to the 1852 Ottoman decree settling the contested rights of the churches and guarantees the role of the Christian Churches in the Holy Places. According to this decree, the Armenian priests have a duty to perform daily services at different churches - including the Holy Sepulchre. However, given that the Holy Sepulchre is in the Christian Quarter, it will have been under Palestinian administrative control. How

would the Armenian priests and lay members of the Church have reached it? “We would not be able to punctually perform our obligations at the holy places if the city is divided,” said Hintlian, an Armenian historian from Jerusalem.⁴⁷

As a result of these considerations, blending the religious with the political and practical, the Churches objected to this proposed scenario. The rest is history anyway, since the Camp David talks failed due to a reluctance from both sides in dealing with the five core issues of the conflict.

◆ The Christian Dimension of the Conflict

Despite fluctuations hither and thither, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains in its essence a political one that pits two nationalisms against one another. However, within this larger context, there are also religious issues that go to the heart of the conflict. One such issue that preoccupies the Armenian Church is the future survival of the Christian community as a whole. The Christian dimension of Jerusalem is not only in its hallowed churches and historical shrines. It is as much about the *Living Stones* of those lands who have marked with their daily lives the Christian presence for almost two millennia. As such, one cannot separate Armenians as a community from the conflict itself since the deleterious social and economic consequences (such as emigration) of this conflict have been visited upon them as a direct result of the political situation and the Israeli occupation of the past forty-nine years that has also manifested itself with an increased religious radicalism in some quarters.

This overall indigenous Christian population today counts well under 2% of an overall three million Palestinians living in a biblical land that is of religious value for Jews, Christians and Muslims. The majority of the Christians living in the Holy Land are Palestinians, and the Armenians share a huge cultural and political baggage with them. It is safe to assume that their fate is linked quite closely with that of other Palestinians. Christians own some 35% of the Old City, and their voice needs to be taken very much into account.

The position of all the Churches of Jerusalem is perhaps still best laid out in the letter signed on 17 July 2000 by the then three Patriarchs of Jerusalem, namely Their Beatitudes Diodoros I (Greek Orthodox), Michael Sabbah (Latin) and Torkom II (Armenian Orthodox). This letter was addressed to US President Bill Clinton, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and President of the Palestinian National Authority Yasser Arafat. (*See Appendix III*). It expressed the position of the Churches when it said, *inter alia*, “... we appeal to you as foremost political leaders and negotiators to ensure that the Christian communities within the walls of the Old City are not separated from each other”. As a possible solution, the Church leaders suggested the creation of “... a system of international guarantees that will ensure to the three religious communities

a quality of right of access to their respective holy places of profession of faith and of development”.

This is not a new position for the Churches of Jerusalem. On 14 November 1994, they issued a Memorandum in which they noted their legitimate concerns. This document, which has become a primary reference for the Churches of the Holy Land, demanded international guarantees for their rights, protection of their lands, permission to build on their properties and tax exemption as non-profit organisations, as has been the practice for centuries. These demands apply to Armenians as well.⁴⁸ (*See Appendix IV*).

In fact, and like the other churches, the Armenian Patriarchate has been facing many difficulties in its daily dealings with the Israeli government. Such difficulties include obtaining building and working permits for its shrines or its workers. For example, work on the Armenian Church on Mt Zion was delayed for twenty years due to a refusal by the Municipality of Jerusalem to grant a building permit. A majority of Armenians fear that the Israeli territorial expansion in the Old City will be in the direction of the Armenian Quarter and its residences.

The political flux has also impacted Armenian property and trusts in different parts of the West Bank. As far back as July 2002, for instance, the Israeli army had seized lands in Bethlehem belonging to the Armenian Patriarchate. The land under the dispute consisted of 35 acres in an area referred to by Armenians as *Baron Der*. The Israeli plan proposed a 40-metre barrier that would splinter this Armenian property let alone result in the occupation of land on both the Jerusalem and West Bank sides of the dividing line. The barrier was meant to be part of a 350- km security wall being currently completed by Israel around the West Bank and parts of Jerusalem in order to separate to Palestinian territories from Israeli-held areas.⁴⁹ The Armenian Patriarchate petitioned the High Court of Justice in Israel for a Judicial Review of this seizure.

In summary, and despite the dissimilar ethnic identity of Armenians in the Holy Land, it is fair to assume that the Armenian Patriarchate and community are considered an integral and legitimate part of the mosaic of the larger Palestinian society. Their political perspective could best be summed up as one that advocates an equitable resolution of the conflict that is based on peace, justice and security for all.

◆ Jerusalem: In Search of an Adjective

Despite numerous attempts, not least those at Camp David and later at Taba as well as all subsequent negotiations to date that I have been familiar with, no tangible progress was achieved in settling the question of the status of Jerusalem let alone other core issues. The conflict keeps draining the hopes and aspirations of both peoples. The Armenians are as much affected by the problems impacting the Holy Land as are all its

other communities - Jews, Muslims and Christians alike. Only a win-win solution (in the sense that it is just and equitable for both Palestinians and Israelis) would bring peace to al-Quds or Yerushalaim or Yerousaghem - the City of Peace.

If a purist approach were adapted to the political problem of Jerusalem, relying exclusively on the precepts of International law, United Nations Security Council Resolutions and international legality, the answer becomes quite unequivocal. The whole of 'East Jerusalem' is territory occupied by Israel in June 1967. No significant country, or federation of countries, has ever acknowledged any other interpretation on the status of this city. UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338 as well as the Fourth Geneva Conventions apply fully. Foreign embassies are situated outside Jerusalem, and the foreign consuls in Jerusalem do not even get the *exequatur* from Israel. As such, any irenic initiative would entail a withdrawal by Israel from occupied territories, so that a future Palestinian state can be perched on this whole landmass with the eastern sector of Jerusalem as its capital.

As far back as 16 long years ago, on 22 September 2000, and in an interview with Jerusalem Post, MK Yossi Beilin, the then Israeli Minister of Justice and Acting Minister of Religious Affairs, said that 'nobody is suggesting dividing Jerusalem or anything like that'. He added that 'the question is how we are going to call the arrangement [on Jerusalem]. Is it sovereignty or non-sovereignty- suspended, joint, custodian, extra-territorial? This is a search for an adjective'.⁵⁰

However, under the circumstances, it is difficult to make straightforward decisions or find mutually acceptable adjectives. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has produced a smorgasbord of demographic realities on the ground that can neither be circumvented nor ignored easily. Jerusalem is one such illustration, and more particularly the old city intra-mures. This small parcel of land - prime real estate - that is barely bigger than 900 dunams is a real home to the four (out of an original five) Muslim, Christian, Jewish and Armenian quarters.

Within this context, the Christians have often expressed their views over their future. They have referred to three optional 'adjectives' that could describe the future. The first option is that of international status for Jerusalem under the control of such bodies as the UN or a combination of multinational entities. This preference is not new. It goes back to the UN 1948 decision on the partition of Palestine. The Vatican, and particularly the late St Pope John Paul II, had also called for a 'special status' for Jerusalem. The second option consists of joint Palestinian-Israeli sovereignty with international guarantees. For example, the presence of an international court or arbitrary system to which churches could appeal in case of disagreements with the rulers.⁵¹ The third option is somewhat a hybrid of previous two choices. Described abstrusely in some texts as the 'vacuum theory', it combines both the 'special status' and the 'joint sovereignty' models.

What does this mean in concrete terms for the old city of Jerusalem? It means that Jerusalem would remain an open city. The Palestinians would control the Muslim, Christian and Armenian quarters that are demographically and ethnically appurtenant to them, whereas Israel would retain control over the Jewish quarter. The practical consequences of such a set-up is that the city will no longer be divided or partitioned, but that the Christian [including Armenian] and Muslim shrines would fall collectively under Palestinian control, whereas the Western Wall would fall under Israeli control. Since there exist established and recognised procedures of governance in all those places - not least the Status Quo agreement regulating the Christian shrines - both parties could end up exercising *de facto* sovereignty but will not insist upon any absolutist *de jure* enforcement of all their rights.

Such a 'vacuum theory' becomes even more relevant when one considers that the Jerusalem of two square kilometres would then acquire for itself a special status that would be enforced through a panel of international guarantors drawn both from the three local faith communities as well as from international institutions - notably the United Nations. Jerusalem would become *stricto sensu* a spiritual capital, no longer a political capital. It would belong to all the residents of the old city, and they can relate to each other, as much as to its other neighbourhoods, in harmony.

Can the parties achieve such a breakthrough? With great difficulty, since many readers and analysts would indict me of a careless negligence of hard facts! But it is possible! However, it can only happen if both Palestinians and Israeli disinvest themselves of absolutist solutions and turgid ideologies and become willing partners in a more pragmatic and visionary future that is based on goodwill and mutual respect - on peace clothed with justice. Here is where I admit that this scenario is far from being an easy one. After all, sovereignty still remains today a reassuring concept that provides certainty and gives the Palestinians - by far the dispossessed party - a sense of recuperative dignity.⁵² But such hopes also defy the reality on the ground that is gradually turning more entrenched and uncompromising and whereby Israel - the party with far more power - seems to prefer managing an occupation rather than resolving a conflict. As my tutor in Alternative Dispute Resolution often reminded me during a postgraduate phase of my law studies, one can either resolve a conflict with a serious and sober approach that is painful but that yields a win-win formula or else stick a Band-Aid on it until it erupts again ... and again!

43. Harry Hagopian, 'The Armenians of Jerusalem and the Armenian Quarter' in *Christians in the Holy Land*, Edited by Michael Prior and William Taylor, The World of Islam Festival Trust, p. 123.

44. Hratch Tchilingirian, *Armenian International Magazine*, vol.11., No. 10 October 2000, pp.40-44

45. Harvey Morris, 'Armenian Church Snared in Conflict's Faultlines', *Financial Times*, 23 July 2002.

46. Hratch Tchilingirian, *Armenian International Magazine*, vol.11., No. 10 October 2000, pp.40-44

47. Ibid.
48. Hratch Tchilingirian, *Armenian International Magazine*, vol.11, No. 10 October 2000, pp.40-44
49. Baron Der, with its 165 agricultural acres and many olive trees that date back hundreds of years, was purchased legally in 1641 as the site of a summer residence for the Armenian Patriarchs and as a rural retreat for the Armenian monks in the Holy Land. The olive trees supply the traditional oil that lights the lamps or 'ganteghs' over the birthplace of Jesus Christ in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem as well as over the tomb of Christ in the Church of Resurrection (Holy Sepulchre) in Jerusalem. Harry Hagopian, Israeli Army Seizes Lands in Bethlehem Belonging to the Armenian Orthodox Patriarchate, *The Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation*, 25 July 2002, <http://www.hcef.org/news/news/index.cfm/dsp/newsview/itemid070.htm>
50. Harry Hagopian, The Sovereign Battle over a Sovereign Jerusalem ... Continues! October 2000, p.1, <http://go.to/nonviolence>
51. Hratch Tchilingirian, *Armenian International Magazine*, vol.11, No. 10 October 2000, pp.40-44
52. Harry Hagopian, The Sovereign Battle over a Sovereign Jerusalem! September 2000, pp. 3-4, <http://go.to/nonviolence>

Conclusion

This short book on the Armenian Church in the Holy Land vivifies for me both hope and pride. Despite many lean years and arduous periods throughout the centuries, it is a fact that the Holy Land is now richer as a result of the many Armenian contributions. As reconcilers and peacemakers, or as a people of faith who struggle to live the way they preach, they have been a steadfast source of continuity and stability in an uncertain land that has far too often been fractured by conflicts and raddled by wars. Whether in providing a sanctuary to those vulnerable parties who flocked into Jerusalem from other climes, or whether in their solidarity with the oppressed and needy, their contribution in many fields has indeed been disproportionate to their numbers. Besides, a mere glance at the list of ninety-seven patriarchs (*See Appendix V*) who have led the community in the Holy Land in the last 1500 years speaks of history let alone of faith, perseverance, continuity and hard work.

It is true that there have been many ebbs and flows in the numbers of Armenians in the Holy Land. I remember as a toddler growing up in Jerusalem in the 1960's when my parents would occasionally take me to St James on Sunday to attend *Sourp Badarak* or Divine Liturgy, or else to visit friends in the Armenian Quarter. The place was bustling with men, women and children. Now, a combination of political and economic factors - let alone a dangerous rise in radicalism and fanaticism amongst a minority of Jews and Muslims - has depleted the Holy Land of many of its native Armenians.⁵³ However, this has happened before, and there is nothing that would prevent Armenians living today in North America or Australia from returning 'home' once 'peace' has been secured between Israel and the Palestinians. After all, many of the institutions of the Patriarchate, let alone the lay community organisations and networks, still function tirelessly despite the hard times.

Many writers and thinkers have stated that Armenians have out-measured the indigenous populations in economic achievement, and have invested significant intellectual and financial resources in the establishment and perpetuation of their

cultural-linguistic traditions. Yet, they have been subjected in recent years to a measure of vindictive nationalism and overbearing administrative centralism.⁵⁴ The choices are somewhat stark, those writers and thinkers have surmised, and the future involves either wholesale assimilation with the mainstream culture or emigrating from the region for safer places.

But as a native son of Jerusalem, whose forbears fled the Armenian genocide of 1915 and were welcomed by the Arab populations and who has also experienced its many peccadilloes, paradoxes and frustrations over many years, I disagree somewhat with this broad assessment since it includes doom and gloom scenarios that lack a real appreciation of the local communities in the Holy Land. As I see it, Armenians have to date played an unquestionably significant role in the ecclesial, ecumenical, social, cultural and economic lives of the region. They have become pioneers and artisans in industry and crafts. They have made significant contributions in the medical, legal and scientific fields. They have also been musicians and teachers in universities or institutions of higher education. They have equally made substantial input to the political discourse between Israelis and Palestinians, given the number of Armenians who have been political advisers or consultants to the Madrid and Oslo peace processes (including this author and other more prominent Armenians).

And throughout those difficult moments, they have managed to survive - and at times even thrive - despite the painful and challenging odds. True, their numbers have dwindled painfully over the years, but this is due largely to the political situation that is creating untenable economic conditions for all Christians - including Armenians. But the continuing presence of this small community is living proof of an inveterate attachment to their faith and culture, and of an unyielding sense of destiny and preservation as living testimonies of their own identity and wider ethos. In short, living in Jerusalem today is not so much a romantic privilege as it is a calling that is taken seriously and humbly by those still residing in the Holy Land. After all, Jesus Himself did not quibble as He carried His cross, met His supporters as well as detractors, and fell along the way before His glorious Resurrection.

As I look at the broader picture today, with an Armenian history spanning almost two millennia, I feel proud that so many achievements have been realised by the Armenian Church, community and affiliated institutions. It is quite true that those achievements are not enough in themselves, and Armenians should not sit on their laurels, look at the grandiloquent church-related edifices, and conclude that they have made a success of 'their' opportunity. Far, very far, from it! After all, and despite its achievements, it is undeniable that the Armenian community in the Holy Land often feels that it is barely struggling to be in sync with the pulse in this land. Like many others, it is constantly buffeted by the harsh realities of life in the Holy Land and tries to keep its head above the parapet.

Such harsh realities have been exacerbated over the past six years by the turbulence of the popular uprisings across much of the Middle East North Africa (MENA) region. Not only have the winds of change impacted Palestinians - Christians and Muslims alike - they have also augmented at times the levels of intolerance amongst communities. Equally critically, they have diverted world attention from the Holy Land in its narrower sense as a hub for the region with countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Libya and Yemen competing for media attention, humanitarian assistance and political stamina.

But I maintain my conviction that Israel-Palestine remains a hub for the two peoples and three faiths of this land. And Armenians are no exception. In fact, a long conversation I had over dinner a few years ago with a well established Armenian family of six from Jerusalem still stands out for me today. The father had decided to leave for Canada, and had already obtained an emigrant status for all his family. Every time it came to leaving, though, he managed to postpone the departure by another couple of months. Somewhat intrigued, I asked him the reason for all this procrastination. He looked at me, smiled wryly, and said that he was 'hoping against hope' that some miracle would transform the dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict so that they could then all stay on in the Holy Land rather than go to Canada! Enjoying the cobbled stones of the Old City, walking through its souks, fashioning its pottery, or attending vespers at St James' Cathedral with the postcard shaft of light streaming from the windows, carried their own definition and significance let alone charm in the life of this man and his family.

For me, this vibrant statement speaks volumes about the attachment that Armenians have for their 'home' in the Holy Land. These are not passing human caravanserai, but faithful communities that have been anchored in the Holy Land for well over fifteen centuries and have forged their lives, annealed their faith and sealed their identity with their next-door neighbours. They have empowered the Armenian ethos at its most rudimentary level, and have managed to stamp their impression on the land. Many of them would wish to stay on ... yet that depends realistically on the political situation.

But sadly enough, that political future is still an open-ended riddle despite so many long decades. Mind you, hope springs eternal for local Armenians - aided no doubt by the optimism that is blended into their faith-based and cultural genes as weary survivors in a tough and unyielding world. In the meantime, I remain confident that the Armenian Church - not the cobwebby stones per se but that assembly of living men, women and children who inspire the stones and give meaning to the definition of 'Holy' in this parcel of 'Land' - will maintain their resilience by adhering to the abiding motto that *'unity applies for essentials, liberty for doubtful matters and charity for all things'*.

53. Such religious radicalism has been on the rise over the past two decades, not least in the Southern Triangle, following the "Arab Spring" of 2011.
54. Richard G. Hovannisian 'the Ebb and Row of the Armenian Minority in the Arab Middle East', *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (1974), p. 32

Appendices

◆ Appendix I

FIRMAN DATED 19 DHU AL-QA'DA 1305, SENT BY THE SULTAN TO THE PATRIARCH HAROOTIUN, ON THE OCCASION OF HIS ELECTION TO THE SEAT OF PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

The Seat of the Armenian Patriarchate of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem, Gaza, Tripoli, Nablus, of the Abyssinians, the Copts and the other Nationals: having fallen vacant and the nomination of a titular head having become necessary;

The beneficiary of this Imperial *berat*, Artin Efendi member of the Congregation of Mar Yacoub and the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople having been elected according to legal dispositions, and his election having been brought to our cognizance by the two mazbatas drawn up and presented by the Religious and Lay Councils; this election has been examined and approved by our Council of Ministers who, having drawn Our Imperial Attention to this matter, has obtained permission to publish our *irade* so that it may be carried out.

The Personality in question, having become, as he is described above, according to the ancient religious customs and laws, Patriarch of the Armenian population of Jerusalem and the places connected thereto, these nationals, great or small, must not, in all those places coming under the jurisdiction of his Patriarchate, swerve from these just orders relating to their religious laws.

No one is allowed to remove from his hands the churches and monasteries which, since antiquity, have been in his possession in the places belonging to his Patriarchate.

No one is allowed to intervene in or oppose the reparation of these holdings, executed by a *fetva sherif* and Imperial *irade*.

And if the Patriarch brings legal action before the shari'a court, the trial must be brought before the *Sheykhulislam*.

And contrary to ancient custom, he will not be interfered with when, in all places belonging to the Patriarchate, he dismisses and expels from their churches and

monasteries such priests as merit punishment in accordance with the prescriptions of their religious laws, and whose beards will be shaven off and who will be replaced by other priests.

And the priests of the towns and villages will not be allowed to perform marriages between persons who cannot, according to their religious laws, make such contract, without there being an authorization for it and an act by the aforementioned Patriarch.

And if, in all the places subordinate to the Patriarchate, a woman deserts the conjugal hearth, or if a husband abandons his wife or wishes to take another, no one else may interfere or meddle in this sort of matter except the Patriarch or his representatives. And in all the places under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch, the *beytulmal*, the *qassam*, the *mutevellis* and others, no interference is allowed when a prelate or monastic (known as a *marabet*) dies and his belongings are taken by the Patriarch.

And everything which deceased prelates, priests, *marabets* and others of the Armenian population have bequeathed to the poor of their churches or to the Patriarch will be legal and the evidence in this case by Armenian witnesses will be valid before the *shari'a* court.

And the Patriarch, in order to go about in dangerous areas in safety, will have the right to change his dress and carry arms; and no intervention will be made in this matter by the police authorities.

And the *qadis* and the *na'ibs* will not be allowed to interfere and impose a fine if, in the questions of marriage or divorce or other litigious religious questions which may arise between two people, the Patriarch reconciles the parties by mutual agreement, or, if necessary, compels them to give an oath according to their religious customs or punishes them by pronouncing the sentence of excommunication against them.

And no one may interfere if the Patriarch punishes and interdicts certain prelates who, not belonging to any monastery or church, wander from place to place and cause scandals, and, if those in charge of the monasteries and churches appropriate for themselves the dues which belong to the Patriarchate, the Patriarch alone will examine their accounts.

And, in contrast to the past, there will be no interference or opposition on the part of the *qadis*, *na'ibs* and others, to the representatives of the Patriarch or those close to him, in any place where they come and go, to collect alms from all those who give out of their own free will.

And when it becomes necessary, by decision of the *shari'a*, to imprison a prelate, priest or marabet, this imprisonment will be carried out through the mediation of the Patriarch.

And according to the ancient custom, police officers may not touch his sceptre (*asa*), the horse he rides or his servants.

And wherever he goes, no one will be allowed to inconvenience him by imposing his services on him by force.

And, in accordance with the Imperial rescripts, delivered and promulgated by the previous Sultans to those who have become Patriarch of Jerusalem in the past:

The Holy Sepulchre, Bethlehem, the Grotto of the Nativity and the North Gate of the Grotto, and the Monastery of St. Jacques, and Dayr Zaytun, the Prison of Christ, and Nablus belong to him and his followers of long standing, namely:

Abyssinians, Copts, Syrian Jacobites and his co-religionists and the Armenian Prelates of the Monastery of St. Jacques, will recognise the Patriarch as their superior and will always address him in everything concerning his role as Patriarch.

And the functionaries will not be allowed to set themselves against the exercising of his functions and prerogatives in the churches and monasteries and other places of pilgrimage where, from olden times until today, they say their devotions, and on the tomb in the middle of the Holy Sepulchre, and the lamps near the door, and the censers which they light there and which are in their possession.

And no bishop or priest possessing a *berat* will be recognized by the officials and will be opposed, if he does not have the permission of the Patriarch.

And no one will be imposed as interpreter to the Patriarch without the consent and decision of said Patriarch.

And, contrary to ancient custom, neither the Patriarch alone nor the prelates who are with him will be hindered, wherever they may go to collect alms, by customs officials, for any object which is not liable to taxation.

And no one will be allowed to convert forcibly to Islam anyone of the Armenian population without the consent of the Patriarch.

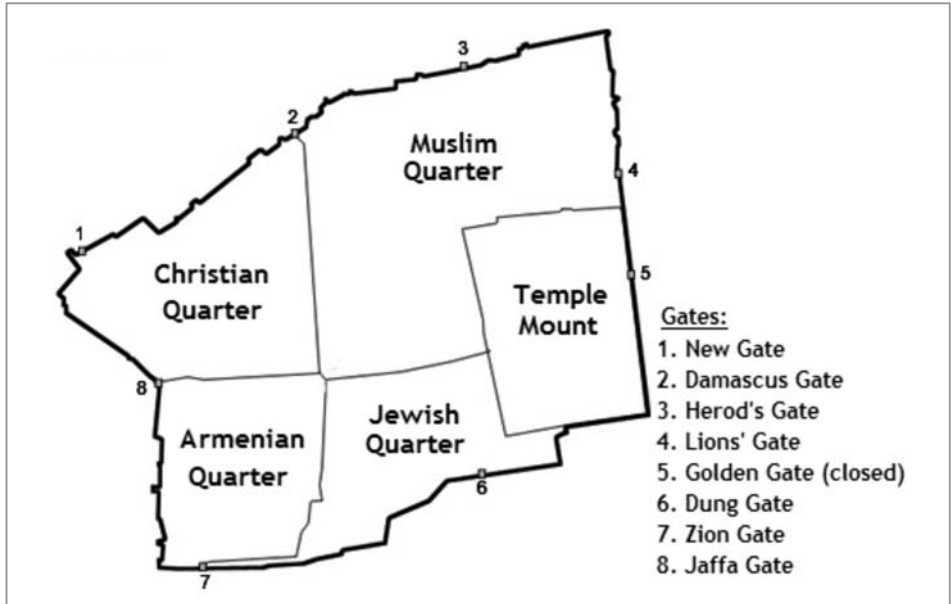
And the vineyards, gardens, mills, cultivated lands, houses, shops, fruit and forest trees, sacred springs (*ayazmas*) which have belonged to their churches since ancient times, and objects and animals which were likewise given in *waqfs* to their monasteries and their fellow Abyssinian, Syrian Jacobite and Coptic nationals; and the churches in Jaffa, Ramla, in Jerusalem and environs, of which former Patriarchs became the masters, in whatever manner it may have been, are also, and shall remain as long as he lives, the property of the Patriarch, who is confirmed in his rights without anyone being allowed to interfere or oppose him.

And no one shall be allowed to interfere with or oppose this Imperial *firman*.

Done 19 Dhu al-Qa'da 1305

25 July 1888.

◆ The Old City of Jerusalem



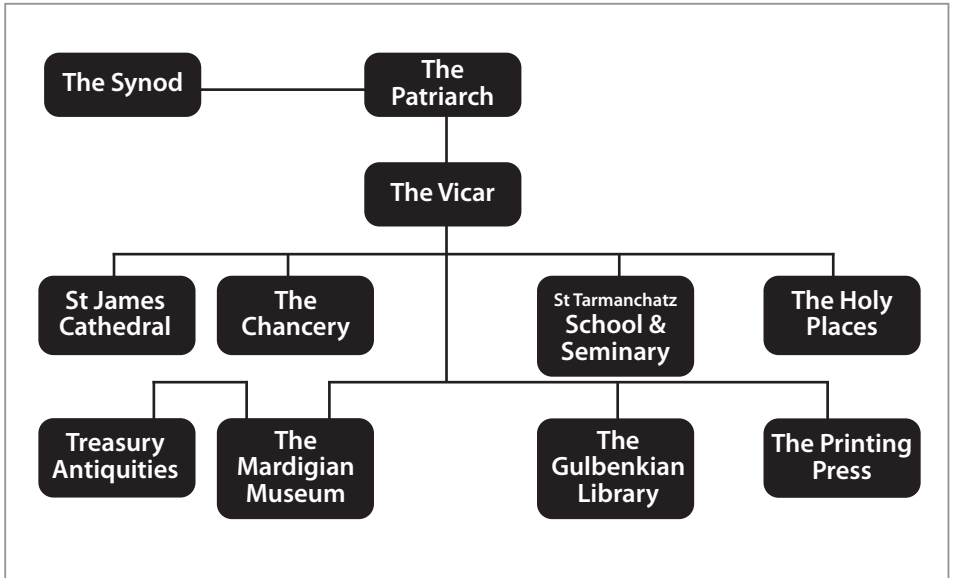
◆ Table 1.1: THE DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARMENIAN ORTHODOX COMMUNITY 1806-1990

Year	Jerusalem	Bethlehem
1806 ¹	500	---
1912 ²	1000	186 ⁶
1922 ³	2367	150
1931 ⁴	2049	200
1945 ⁵⁻⁶	5000-7000	200
1961 ⁶	3000	150
1967 ⁶	2000	100
1978 ⁶	1200	109
1990 ⁶	1500	200

Source: 'Christian Communities in Jerusalem and the West Bank Since 1948: An Historical, Social, and Political Study', Daphne Tsimhoni, PRAEGER, Westport, Connecticut, London, 1993, p. 65

Notes: 1. Y. Ben-Arieh, *Jerusalem in the Nineteenth Century: The Old City* (Jerusalem, 1984), pp. 188-190; 2. Ben-Arieh, op. cit., pp. 194-96 and sources therein; 3. J. B. Barron, *Palestine, Report and General Abstract of the Census of Palestine, 1922* (Jerusalem, 1923); 4. E. Mills, *The Census of Palestine, 1931*, vol. II (Alexandria 1933); 5. Palestine Government, *A survey of Palestine (prepared in December 1945 and January 1946 for the information of the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry)*, Vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1946), p. 693, estimated the number of non-Arab Christians in Jerusalem at 13,000. A considerable number were Armenians; 6. Estimate based on data from the community and the official statistical returns.

◆ **Appendix II**
THE STRUCTURE OF THE ARMENIAN PATRIARCHATE



Source: <http://www.armenian-patriarchate.org>

◆ **Table 1.2: THE DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARMENIAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY 1910-1990**

Year	Jerusalem	Bethlehem
1910 ¹	50	---
1922 ²	103	12
1931 ³	258	15
1945 ⁴	500	20
1961 ⁴	400	---
1967 ⁴	100	---
1978 ⁴	210	---
1990 ⁴	150	---

Source: 'Christian Communities in Jerusalem and the West Bank Since 1948: An Historical, Social, and Political Study', Daphne Tsimhoni, PRAEGER, Westport, Connecticut, London, 1993, p. 76

Notes: 1. K. Baedeker, *Palestine and Syria: A Handbook for Travellers*. Leipzig and London, 1912, pp. 24; 2. Census of Palestine, 1922; 3. Census of Palestine, 193; 4. Estimates based on the church register.

◆ **Appendix III**

**FIRMAN DATED 19 DHU AL-QA'DA 1305, SENT BY THE SULTAN TO THE
PATRIARCH HAROOTIUN, ON THE OCCASION OF HIS ELECTION TO THE
SEAT OF PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM**

*HE Mr Bill Jefferson Clinton
President of the United States*

*HE Mr Ehud Barak
Prime Minister of Israel*

*HE Mr Yasser Arafat
President of the Palestinian National Authority*

Jerusalem, 17 July 2000

Your Excellencies:

Greetings to you from Jerusalem as you strive to bring peace to our beloved Holy Land. We continue to pray that you will succeed in your prophetic mission of ending the long and painful conflict in our region. Yours is a difficult and challenging task, and we remain confident that you will conclude it in a manner that lifts up the hopes of the two peoples and three religions of this land - Palestinians and Israelis, Jews, Christians and Muslims alike.

Your Excellencies, it is an established fact that our Patriarchates and Churches enjoy a long history and a rich heritage in this biblical land. Local Christians have been represented by their ecclesial institutions here for centuries, and have enjoyed special privileges that were codified by the Status Quo provisions as much as by custom and tradition over many centuries. As you deliberate over those issues that impact the Holy City of Jerusalem, we trust you will not forget or overlook our age-long presence here. The rich tapestry of this land is made even richer and more precious with this continuous Christian life, witness and presence alongside the two other Abrahamic traditions of Judaism and Islam.

Conscious of this qualitative and quantitative reality as represented by all our Christian communities, we appeal to you as foremost political leaders and negotiators to ensure that the Christian communities within the walls of the Old City are not separated from each other. We regard the Christian and Armenian Quarters of the Old City as inseparable and contiguous entities that are firmly united by the same faith. Furthermore, we trust that your negotiations will also secure that any arrangement for Jerusalem will ensure that the fundamental freedoms of worship and access by all

Christians to their holy sanctuaries and to their headquarters within the Old City are not impeded in any way whatsoever. Such freedoms underline the special nature of this city and enhance its right to development.

We suggest that one possible way of ensuring this peaceful unity and cohesive prosperity of the Christian presence in the Holy City of Jerusalem - with its varied mosaic of worshippers, churches and sanctuaries - is through a system of international guarantees that will ensure to the three religious communities a quality of right of access to their respective holy places, of profession of faith and of development.

Your Excellencies, as Heads of our Churches and being fully conscious of the heavy duty we carry with us, we also suggest that it might well be advisable to have representatives from our three Patriarchates and the Custody of the Holy Land at the Camp David summit meeting as much as at any future for a in order to provide continuity and consultation on our future and on our rights so that our one collective presence here - with its history of rights and expectations- is maintained unequivocally and safeguarded fully.

In conclusion, and as we re-iterate our prayers for the success of your summit meeting, we also recall that Jerusalem- al-Quds the Sacred and Yerushalaim the Peaceful- will remain vital to Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. And in so being, it will also reflect a sense of full equality for all the three religions witnessing in this land.

+DIODOROS I

Greek Orthodox Patriarch

+MICHEL SABBAH

Latin Patriarch

+ TORKOM II

Armenian Orthodox Patriarch

◆ **Appendix IV**
MEMORANDUM OF THEIR BEATITUDES THE PATRIARCHS AND OF THE
HEADS OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES IN JERUSALEM ON THE
SIGNIFICANCE OF JERUSALEM FOR CHRISTIANS

November 14, 1994

◆ **Preamble 1.**

1. On Monday, the 14th of November 1994, the heads of the Christian Communities in Jerusalem met in solemn conclave to discuss the status of the holy city and the situation of Christians there, at the conclusion of which, they issued the following declaration:

◆ **Jerusalem, Holy City**

2. Jerusalem is a holy city for the people of the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Its unique nature of sanctity endows it with a special vocation: calling for reconciliation and harmony among people, whether citizens, pilgrims or visitors. And because of its symbolic and emotive value, Jerusalem has been a rallying cry for different revived nationalistic and fundamentalist stirrings in the region and elsewhere. And, unfortunately, the city has become a source of conflict and disharmony. It is at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab disputes. While the mystical call of the city attracts believers, its present unenviable situation scandalises many.

◆ **The Peace Process**

3. The current Arab-Israeli peace process is on its way toward resolution of the Middle East conflict. Some new facts have already been established, some concrete signs posted. But in the process Jerusalem has again been sidestepped, because of its status, and especially sovereignty over the city, are the most difficult questions to resolve in future negotiations. Nevertheless, one must already begin to reflect on the questions and do whatever is necessary to be able to approach them in the most favourable conditions when the moment arrives.

◆ **Present Positions**

4. When the different sides involved now speak of Jerusalem, they often assume exclusivist positions. Their claims are very divergent, indeed conflicting. The Israeli position is that Jerusalem should remain the unified and eternal capital of the State of Israel, under the absolute sovereignty of Israel alone. The Palestinians, on the other hand, insist that Jerusalem should become the capital of a future State of

Palestine, although they do not lay claim to the entire modern city but envisage only the eastern, Arab part.

◆ Lesson of History

5. Jerusalem has had a long, eventful history. It has known numerous wars and conquests, has been destroyed time and again, only to be reborn anew and rise from its ashes, like the mythical Phoenix. Religious motivation has always gone hand in hand with political and cultural aspirations, and has often played a preponderant role. This motivation has often led to exclusivism or at least to the supremacy of one people over the others. But every exclusivity or every human supremacy is against the prophetic character of Jerusalem. Its universal vocation and appeal is to be a city of peace and harmony among all who dwell therein. Jerusalem, like the entire Holy Land, has witnessed throughout its history the successive advent of numerous peoples: they came from the desert, from the sea, from the north, from the east. Most often the newcomers were gradually integrated into the local population. This was a rather constant characteristic. But when the newcomers tried to claim exclusive possession of the city and the land, or refused to integrate themselves, then the others rejected them. Indeed, the experience of history teaches us that in order for Jerusalem to be a city of peace, no longer lusted after from the outside and thus a bone of contention between warring sides, it cannot belong exclusively to one people or to only one religion. Jerusalem should be open to all, shared by all. Those who govern the city should make it “the capital of humankind.” This universal vision of Jerusalem would help those who exercise power there to open it to others who also are fondly attached to it and to accept sharing it with them.

◆ The Christian Vision of Jerusalem

6. Through a prayerful reading of the Bible, Christians recognize in faith that the long history of the people of God, with Jerusalem at its center; is the history of salvation which fulfils God’s design in and through Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. The one God has chosen Jerusalem to be the place where His name alone will dwell in the midst of His people so that they may offer to Him acceptable worship. The prophets look up to Jerusalem, especially after the purification of the exile: Jerusalem will be called “the city of justice, faithful city (Is 1 ,26,27) where the Lord dwells in holiness as in Sinai (cf PS 68,18). The Lord will place the city in the middle of the nations (Ez 5,5), where the Second Temple will become a house of prayer for all peoples (Is 2,2, 56,6-7). Jerusalem, aglow with the presence of God (Is 60,1), ought to be a city whose gates are always open (Is, 11), with Peace as magistrate and Justice as government. (Is, 17).
In the vision of their faith, Christians believe the Jerusalem of the Prophets to be

the foreseen place of the salvation in and through Jesus Christ. In the Gospels, Jerusalem rejects the Sent-One, the Saviour; and He weeps over it because this city of the prophets that is also the city of the essential salvific events - the death and resurrection of Jesus - has completely lost sight of the path to peace (cf Lk 19,42). In the Acts of the Apostles, Jerusalem is the place of the gift of the Spirit, of the birth of the Church (2), the community of the disciples of Jesus who are to be His witnesses not only in Jerusalem but even the ends of the earth (1,8). In Jerusalem, the first Christian community incarnated the ecclesiastical ideal, and thus it remains a continuing reference point. The Book of Revelations proclaims the anticipation of the new heavenly Jerusalem (3.12, 21,2 cf Gal 4,26: Heb 12,22). This holy city is the image of the new creation and the aspirations of all peoples, where God will wipe away all tears, and “them shall be no more death or mourning, crying out or pain, for the former world has passed away” (21,4).

7. The earthly Jerusalem, in the Christian tradition, prefigures the heavenly Jerusalem as “the vision of peace.” In the Liturgy, the Church itself receives the name of Jerusalem and relives all of that city’s anguish, joys and hopes. Furthermore, during the first centuries the liturgy of Jerusalem became the foundation of all liturgies everywhere, and later deeply influence the development of diverse liturgical traditions, because of the many pilgrimages to Jerusalem and of the symbolic meaning of the Holy City.
8. The pilgrimages slowly developed an understanding of the need to unify the sanctification of space through celebrations at the Holy Place with the sanctification in time through the calendared celebrations of the holy events of salvation (Egeria. Cyril of Jerusalem). Jerusalem soon occupied a unique place in the heart of Christianity everywhere. A theology and spirituality of pilgrimage developed. It was an ascetic time of biblical refreshment at the sources, a time of testing during which Christians recalled that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth (cf Heb. 11,13), and that their personal and community vocation always and everywhere, is to take up the cross and follow Jesus.

◆ The Continuing Presence of a Christian Community

9. For Christianity, Jerusalem is the place of roots, ever living and nourishing. In Jerusalem is born every Christian. To be in Jerusalem is for every Christian to be at home. For almost two thousand years, through so many hardships and the succession of so many powers, the local Church with its faithful has always been actively present in Jerusalem. Across the centuries, the local Church has been witnessing to the life and preaching, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ upon the same Holy places, and its faithful have been receiving other brothers and sisters in the faith, as pilgrims, resident or in transit, inviting them to be re-

immersed into the refreshing, ever living ecclesiastical sources. That continuing presence of a living Christian community is inseparable from the historical sites. Through the “living stones” the holy archaeological sites take on “life.”

10. The significance of Jerusalem for Christians thus has two inseparable fundamental dimensions:
- 1) a Holy City with holy places most precious to Christians because of their link with the history of salvation fulfilled in and through Jesus Christ;
 - 2) a city with a community of Christians which has been living continually there since its origins. Thus for the local Christians, as well as for local Jews and Moslems, Jerusalem is not only a Holy City; but also their native city where they live, whence their right to continue to live there freely, with all the rights which obtain from that.

◆ Legitimate Demands of Christians for Jerusalem

11. In so far as Jerusalem is the quintessential Holy City it above all ought to enjoy full freedom of access to its holy places, and freedom of worship. Those rights of property ownership, custody and worship which the different Churches have acquired throughout history should continue to be retained by the same communities. These rights which are already protected in the Status Quo of the Holy Places according to historical “firman’s” and other documents, should continue to be recognized and respected. The Christians of the entire world, Western or Eastern, should have the right to come in pilgrimage to Jerusalem. They ought to be able to find there all that is necessary to carry out their pilgrimage in the spirit of their authentic tradition: freedom to visit and to move around, to pray at holy sites, to embark into spiritual attendance and respectful practice of their faith, to enjoy the possibility of a prolonged stay and the benefits of hospitality and dignified lodgings.
12. The local Christian communities should enjoy all those rights to enable them to continue their active presence in freedom and to fulfil their responsibilities towards both their own local members and towards the Christian pilgrims throughout the world. Local Christians, not only in their capacity as Christians per Se, but like all other citizens, religious or not, should enjoy the same fundamental rights for all: social, cultural, political and national. Among these rights are:
- a) the human right of freedom of worship and of conscience both as individuals and as religious communities,
 - b) civil and historical rights which allow them to carry out their religious, educational, medical and other duties of charity,
 - c) the right to have their own institutions, such as hospices for pilgrims, institutes for the study of the Bible and the Traditions, centers for encounters with

believers of other religions, monasteries, churches, cemeteries, and so forth, and the right to have their own personnel man and run these institutions.

13. In claiming these rights for themselves, Christians recognise and respect similar and parallel rights of Jewish and Muslim believers and their communities. Christians declare themselves disposed to search with Jews and Muslims for a mutually respectful application of these rights and for a harmonious coexistence, in the perspective of the universal spiritual vocation of Jerusalem.

◆ **Special Stature for Jerusalem**

14. All this presupposes a special judicial and political stature for Jerusalem which reflects the universal importance and significance of the city.

(1) In order to satisfy the national aspirations of all its inhabitants, and in order that Jews, Christians and Muslims can be “at home” in Jerusalem and at peace with one another, representatives from the three monotheistic religions, in addition to local political powers, ought to be associated in the elaboration and application of such a special statute.

(2) Because of the universal significance of Jerusalem, the international community ought to be engaged in the stability and permanence of this statute. Jerusalem is too precious to be dependent solely on municipal or national political authorities, whoever they may be. Experience shows that an international guarantee is necessary.

Experience shows that such local authorities, for political reasons or the claims of security, sometimes are required to violate the rights of free access to the Holy Places. Therefore it is necessary to accord Jerusalem a special statute which will allow Jerusalem not to be victimised by laws imposed as a result of hostilities or wars but to be an open city which transcends local, regional or world political troubles. This statute, established in common by local political and religious authorities, should also be guaranteed by the international community

◆ **Conclusion**

Jerusalem is a symbol and a promise of the presence of God, of fraternity and peace for humankind, in particular for the children of Abraham: Jews, Christians and Muslims. We call upon all parties concerned to comprehend and accept the nature and deep significance of Jerusalem, the City of God.

None can appropriate it in exclusivist ways. We invite each party to go beyond all exclusivist visions or actions, and without discrimination, to consider the religious and national aspirations of others, in order to give back to Jerusalem its true universal character and to make of the city a holy place of reconciliation for humankind.

Signed by Greek Orthodox Patriarch, Latin Patriarch, Armenian Patriarch, Custos
of the Holy Land, Coptic Archbishop, Syriac Archbishop, Ethiopian Archbishop,
Anglican Bishop, Greek-Catholic Patriarchal Vicar, Lutheran Bishop, Maronite
Patriarchal Vicar, Catholic Syriac Patriarchal Vicar.

Jerusalem, November 14, 1994

◆ **Appendix V**
ARMENIAN PATRIARCHS OF JERUSALEM

Number	Patriarch	Period of Office
1.	Abraham	638-669
2.	Krikor Yetesatzi	669-696
3.	Kevork	696-708
4.	Mgrdich	708-730
5.	Hovhannes	730-758
6.	Stepanos	758-774
7.	Yeghia	774-797
	Unknown Incumbents	797-885
8.	Abraham	885-909
	Unknown Incumbents	909-981
9.	Krikor	981-1006
10.	Arsen	1006- 1038
11.	Mesrob (usd hrovardagatz)	1008
	Unknown Incumbents	1038-1090
12.	Simeon	1090- 1109
13.	Movses	1109-1133
14.	Esayee	1133-1152
15.	Sahag	1152-1180
16.	Abraham of Jerusalem	1180- 1191
17.	Minas	1191- 1205
18.	Abraham	1215- 1218
19.	Arakel	1218- 1230
20.	Hovhannes Garnetzi	1230- 1238
21.	Garabed of Jerusalem	1238-1254
22.	Hagopos	1254- 1281
23.	Sarkis	1281 – 1313
24.	Theodore (Asdzvadzadoor)	1313- 1316

Number	Patriarch	Period of Office
25.	David	1316- 1321
26.	Boghos (usd odaratz Bedros)	1321- 1323
27.	Vartan Areve1tzi	1323- 1332
	No Patriarch Period of office	
28.	Hovhannes Josleen	1332-1341
29.	Parsegh	1341- 1356
30.	Garabed	1349
31.	Krikor	1356- 1363
32.	Giragos with Krikor remembered as a co-adjutor	
33.	Mrgdich first co-adjutor with Krikor the Patriarch	1363- 1378
34.	Hovhannes Lehatzee	1378- 1386
35.	Krikor of Egypt	1386-1391
36.	Esayee	1391- 1394
37.	Sarkis first co-adjutor then Patriarch	1394- 1415
38.	Mardiros probably co-adjutor	1399
39.	Mesrob probably co-adjutor	1402
40.	Boghos Karnetzi	1415- 1419
41.	Mardiros of Egypt	1419- 1430
42.	Minas probably co-adjutor with Mardiros	1426
43.	Esayee initially co-adjutor with Mardiros then Patriarch	1430- 1431
44.	Hovhannes	1431 – 1441
45.	Muron	1436- 1437
46.	Abraham Missirtzee	1441 – 1454
47.	Mesrob first co-adjutor then Patriarch	1454- 1461
48.	Bedros first co-adjutor then Patriarch	1461 -1476
49.	Mrgdich Elovtze	1476- 1479
50.	Abraham Pereahtzee initially co-adjutor then Patriarch	1497- 1485
51.	Hovhannes Missirtzee	1485- 1491
52.	Mardiros Broosatze	1491- 1501
53.	Bedros	1501- 1507
54.	Sarkis	1507- 1517
55.	Hovhannes	1517- 1522
56.	Theodore (Asdvadzador Merdeentze) came to Jerusalem 1523	1532-1542

Number	Patriarch	Period of Office
57.	Pilibos	1542- 1550
58.	Theodore (Asdvadzadoor Merdeentzee) again	1550- 1551
59.	Antreas Merdeentzee initially co-adjutor with Theodor then Patriarch	1551- 1583
60.	David Merdeentzee initially co-adjutor then Patriarch resigns	1583- 1613
61.	Krikor Kantzagehtzee	1613- 1645
62.	Theodore (Asdvadzadoor Daronetzee)	1645-1664
63.	Yeghiazar Hromglayetzee co-adjutor	1664- 1665
64.	Theodore (Asdvadzadoor Daronetzee) again	1665-1666
65.	Yeghiazar	1666- 1668
66.	Theodore (Asdvadzadoor)	1668-1670
67.	Yeghiazar again	1670-1677
68.	Mardiros Khrimtzi	1677-1680
69.	Hovhannes Amasyatzee	1680
70.	Mardiros Khrimtzi again	1681- 1683
	LAY LOCUM TENENS	1683- 1684
71.	Hovhannes Bolsetzi 1684-1697	1684-1697
72.	Simeon	1688- 1691
73.	Minas Hamtetzzi initially co-adjutor of Hovhannes later Patriarch	1697- 1704
74.	Kaloosd Hetoontzi co-adjutor	
75.	Krikor co-adjutor at historical period when Jerusalem Patriarchate was unified with Istanbul Patriarchate	1704-1715
76.	Krikor Shiravantzee (Chainbearer)	1715-1749
77.	Hagop Nalian	1749 - resigned 1752
78.	Teotoros	1752-1761
79.	Garabed Tantchagetzee	1761- 1768
80.	Boghos Vanetzee	1768-1775
81.	Hovhannes Kanapertzee	1775-1793
82.	Bedros Yevtogeeyatzee	1793- 1800
83.	Teodoros Vanetzi	1800- 1818
84.	Kapriel Neegomeetatzee	1818- 1840
85.	Bogbos Atreeunoobolsetzi	1824-1847
86.	Zakaria Gooetzi	1840- 1846
87.	Giragos of Jerusalem	1846-1850

Number	Patriarch	Period of Office
88.	Hovhannes of Smyrna	1850-1860
	Vertanes LOCUM TENENS	1860-1864
89.	Esayee of Talas	1864-1885
	Yeremya Der Sahagian LOCUM TENENS	1885- 1889
90.	Harootiun Vehabedian elected 1885 stays in Istanbul until	1889- 1910
91.	Yeghishe Tourian	1921- 1929
92.	Torkom Koushagian	1929-1939
93.	Mesrob Nishanian	1939-1944
94.	Guregb Israellian	1944-1949
	Tiran Nersoyan (Patriarch - elect)	1957- 1958
95.	Yeghishe Derderian	1960-1990
96.	Torkom Manoogian	1990-2013
97.	Nourhan Manougian	2013-

Source: <http://www.armenian-patriarchate.org>

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About the Author

Dr Harry Hagopian is an Armenian Christian who hails from Jerusalem. He is an international lawyer, with degrees in Public International Law and in Alternative Dispute Resolution.

He worked for five years as Legal Counsel at Saba & Co (Touche Ross International) in Cyprus where he headed their Intellectual Property department for the Middle Eastern and Gulf regions. He was later appointed Assistant General Secretary of the Middle East Council of Churches in Beirut / Cyprus, and also co-managed the humanitarian relief programmes of the Council with regard to the refugees of the earthquake in the Gillan region of Iran and later of the first Gulf war in Iraq.

Dr Hagopian also contributed to the debate on the future of the Holy Land and participated in many of the political and religious meetings in Jerusalem and abroad relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Until 2002, he worked as Executive Director of the Inter-Church Committee in Jerusalem and was deeply and proactively involved with the Oslo-led political process between Israelis and Palestinians.

He has authored a short book, 'Let us Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem', and written monographs on 'Blasphemy under Islam and Common Law Principles', 'The Role of Women in Islam', 'The Armenian Genocide', 'Legal Sovereignty and Jerusalem' and 'Principles of Conflict Resolution in Nagorny-Karabagh'. His web-site remains *www.epektasis.net*.

Dr Hagopian is presently also the MENA Advisor for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales. The Chair of International Affairs at the Bishops' Conference is HG Bishop Declan Lang, Bishop of Clifton, who is also Chair of the Holy Land Coordination (Palestine, Israel & Jordan).

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