INGRATE VARTABED DENIES PATRIARCHATE'S DEBT TO NATION

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By Hagop Hagopian, Toronto

The abusive and irascible Vartabed Baret Yeretsian, who acts as Jerusalem Patriarch's enforcer, denies the financial assistance the Armenian Nation has provided to the patriarchate. The intemperate Yeretsian, who is the captain of the treacherous Goveroun Bardez project, has said he did not need the approval of the Armenian Nation when making "for my eyes only" real estate deals. The cigar-chewing vartabed *failed to mention that in recent decades the patriarchate has received millions of dollars from Alex and Edward Manougian, the Gulbenkian Foundation, Samuel Garabedian, and Garo Gharibian, plus $1.2 Euros from the Republic of Armenia in addition to $650,000 from a single donor in Los Angeles. Without the donations from the Armenian Nation—pilgrims to princes, penniless beggars to benefactors--the patriarchate would have become a footnote centuries ago.*

Below are edited excerpts from "The Travel Account of Simeon of Poland" which provide details of a dark page of the patriarchate's history when the drowning-in-debt patriarchate was rescued from certain demise by donations from Armenians.

Simeon of Poland was descended from Armenians who had immigrated from Ani to Eastern Europe after the fall of Armenia's capital. He visited Jerusalem in 1615 when the Celali Rebellion raged across Asia Minor as Armenians wore the brunt of the rebels' plunder. As a result, Armenians stopped making pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Without their donations the debt of the patriarchate grew to an unsustainable 40,000 kurus*.*



Rev. Baret Yeretsian enjoying the good life in Istanbul

"The church's gold and silver vessels, be they crosses, chalices, censers, books, chasubles, or everything else was seized by the unbelievers, who benefited greatly from this—taking ten, fourteen, or fifteen percent interest a month…

"Long before this, the Armenian Patriarchate in holy Jerusalem was seized and looted. All the holy places were emptied and God's churches were mortgaged. All this had occurred because of the carelessness and weakness of former Patriarchs. If one wanted to serve Mass, there was no cross, no chalice, nor a Gospel. They went and gave bribes, brought chasubles and other necessities,

conducted Mass, and hurriedly returned them. The debts increased so much that even the holy places were taken away from the Armenians, so that nothing remained…

"On July 18 of the year 1059 , God the Lord Awakened a certain *Khoja* Engi of Amid so that he, with great spiritual care and worry, traveled to Aleppo for the sake of the debts of holy Jerusalem. Finding noted *khojas* and merchants there, he wrote to of other capitals, asking them to hurry to Aleppo and to confer as to how to free Jerusalem from its debts.

"Then the pious, who had come from various lands and *kavars*, joined the *vartabeds* and *kahanas* in one mind and aim, came to Aleppo, stayed there for three months and became acquainted with the dubious affair—that is the debt of the 40,000 *kurus*. They found no other solution but to pay the debt. All the men began to give according to their ability, some one thousand, others two thousand, yet others five thousand and more *kurus*. There were also some who gave 10,000. The less fortunate ones gave one hundred, fifty, and so forth. They collected a treasure more than the debt, for even the poor, beggars, the blind, and women gave.

"They selected twenty wise and reasonable men and together with *Khoja* Engi, they rushed to holy Jerusalem. Entering the castle, they informed the governor of their purpose, saying, "We want to pay all the debts." The governor ordered criers to inform all the inhabitants in the city that all the lenders were to appear before him and bring everything that was pledged and woe to him who didn't come in three days' time and did not appear to bring the pledge, for he would not receive payment and the money they had lent would be lost…

"When they had paid all the debts, they entrusted the excess funds to a monk named Krikor. Soon after, Krikor was elected patriarch. With the money entrusted to him, he renovated the twelve Armenian churches in the city and its environs…he built rooms for guests and the sick, stone cells for the brothers, nice gates, proportioned refractories, orchards, vineyards, flower gardens, and other buildings. He renovated the 365 cells in Surb Hagob and its church. During his time, the Armenian Patriarchate thrived; in fact, it became rich and magnificent."

It wasn't the last time the Armenian Nation would rescue the patriarchate.

Vartabed Yeretsian denies the financial support patriotic Armenians have provided to the patriarchate in recent decades. The bullish *vartabed* and the other once poor boy (now patriarch) behave as if the patriarchate is their family heirloom.

It's worth mentioning that Yeretsian was born and raised in the Armenian Convent. He attended the Armenian school. Like other impoverished families, the Yeretsians lived rent-free. Yeretsian and his two sisters attended the tuition-free Armenian school. The Armenian Convent, which sheltered the ingrate *vartabed's* family, exists because for a millennium Armenians have filled its treasury with donations. Yeretsians' parents did not pay his tuition fees because the Gulbenkian Foundation and *hokapartous* in the Americas and Europe covered its expenses. Yet the ingrate *vartabed* denies the nation's financial support to the sacred institution he and the patriarch have misruled, betrayed, and

besmirched.

Save the Lands

Comments

Vrezh S. – 2022-03-02 00:56:02
Goverooon Bardez should never be leased to these Israeli extremists, because time and again, since they illegally occupied Jerusalem in 1967, they have demonstrated a deep-seated but inexplicable hostility towards Armenians. Perhaps it's not so inexplicable since their dream is to grab every inch of the Old City of Jerusalem and the Armenian Quarter sits on top of Mt. Zion... No Armenian Jerusalemite can forget the harassment, the spitting, verbal and physical attacks on Armenian clergy and Christian symbols, the lack of police interest in arresting the racist criminals, the tearing of Genocide posters, the recent assault to the Armenian Convent and the attempt to place Israeli flag on top of the gate at the entrance - the situation would be worse if the deal is completed. About ten years ago, They "asked" the Patriarchate to accede to converting a parcel of Armenian land at the southeast corner of the Armenian Quarter into a parking lot. Now it's a Jewish parking lot. No Armenian is allowed to park on Armenian land. Also, they were the main reason for the defeat of Artsakh when they gave drones and military aid to the azeris... Vrezh S.

Vahakn – 2022-02-25 18:44:28
Domsyan, you have a point. But the problem is deeper than that. Far too often, Armenian young men join the clergy because they have no other career option. The Church has thus become a sanctuary for men who can't make it in the world. Spirituality? Patriotism? Those are the last things on the minds of many who decide to become priests. To become a clergyman is to be on the fast track to obtain a visa to go abroad. Rev. Baret Yeretsian is a perfect example of this trend. Without education, without a trade, or any prospect in an economically depressed city, he decided to become a priest. He had no problem making the jump because candidates to priesthood are very few. To underline the above point--the lack of qualified clergy candidates--Yeretsian was not defrocked despite his many questionable acts (let's be polite) while serving (let's be polite) in North American parishes. There can be also a psychological aspect to the cigar-chomping Yeretsian's destructive behavior: Once a penniless boy at the bottom of the community, the dangerously overweight vartabed is now regaling in his power as the man at the top. A psychologist might say he is avenging his childhood: "Look, Ma, it's all mine now."



Domsyan – 2022-02-25 14:57:06
Jerusalem deserves what it gets. If they had elected Ghevont Samoorian, we Armenians would have led the world. He loved Jerusalem and fought for it. Yet, he and Guregh were both rejected. They elected Torkom, and now we get the flood - incompetents only interested in making their lives more comortable. Torkom paid off Khajag, Kisag, Vicken and others. They all became bishops quickly after Torkom's election and this is what we are left with. Now look at 630 Second Avenue. They can barely keep the doors open. What did Khajag do for 30 years but spend everything we had? The only quesiton is why anyone is shocked by this.



Arshalouys – 2022-02-25 10:16:56
I remember him very well, I remember his childhood at the Vank and School. Looks like he is doing everything to destroy our Vank. He needs to go home as soon as possible! Where is the Catholicos to stop all these things?!?



Hovsep Gureghian – 2022-02-25 03:45:14
[...] Խաչիկը մարդ եղաւ ազգին հաշուոյն: Անամօթ Պարէտ, ո՛վ ես դուն որ Երուսաղէմի Հայոց Պատրիարքութիւնը վերածես քո անձնական շահի աղբիւր: Դուն եւ քո Մանուկեան ըսուած Մանուկը (անունը ճիշտ վրան է) պէտք է օր առաջ հրաժարական տաք: Երուսաղէմի Պատրիարքութիւնը Հայ ազգին կը պատկանի եւ ոչ ձեզի պէս անդամօթներու: Կը բաւէ այլեւս...



Armenag Derderian – 2022-02-25 02:54:34
The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem survived during all these years because of the generous donations of the Armenian Nation. Baret and Nourhan are treating with this place as their private institution. They should be forced to resign immediately. I don't understand how our nation is not forcing them to resign, they should leave Jerusalem before they sign other scandalous deals. He isn't only an ingrate "Vartabed" but also the drunk and [...] Vartabed. Վերջ այս խայտառակութեան անամօթներ: