

PATRIARCH MANOUKIAN TO CATHOLICOS KAREKIN II

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Nourhan Archbishop Manoukian
Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem

Your Holiness,

Be sure that I very reluctantly submit these lines to paper, particularly when a while back I was informed that you have reproached some of your bishops for their passivity in not responding to the  many criticism levelled against you on websites. It is said "Silence is a sign of agreement".

In September, at the photo-opportunity of the representatives' gathering at Holy Echmiadzin once again you raised the issue of demoting the Armenian Apostolic Patriarchate of Jerusalem to a "diocese of a sort", which you had first raised in the first years of your incumbency at a similar gathering. The adage says "the fruit does not fall far from the tree", and this year a number of ranting bishops...Hovnan, Mikayel, Haygazoun, and Hovagim ... for understandable reasons and motivations – (not so much to protect their thrones and positions--but to secure their pockets--sensing your avowed aim and only concern) have "heroically" demanded that the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem be urgently brought under the jurisdiction of Echmiadzin.

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Among those bishops--Bishop Hovnan --expressed the desire, a few years ago, to join the Brotherhood of St James, together with his brother-in-arms Bishop Pagrad who was enchanted by the prospect of a brighter future. Instead of concerning himself with the immediate threat posed by the activities of the increasing number of sectarians and Catholics in his diocese, Bishop Mikayel spends his time on questions above his intellectual abilities. While materialistic Bishop Haigazoun

who waited a very long time to be worthy for the rank of bishop, has transformed his once held anti 'Karekinian rhyme' into 'only Karekin' hymn. I do not wish to say anything about the lamentable Bishop Hovagim, who like some of the Echmiadzin Brotherhood bishops when visiting Jerusalem could not be stopped from pouring his complaints about your despotic regime. I will confine myself by using only these words regarding your attitude towards the entire Brotherhood.

All those members of the Echmiadzin Brotherhood, who have enjoyed the warm hospitality of this Holy See, seem to be hostages to their business instincts and have not wanted to see the eternal struggle that each member of the St James' Brotherhood wages to protect and preserve that national right of the Armenian people. As if our everyday problems and difficulties with the other Christian denominations, the constant conflict with the Jews and Islam, are not enough now the Brotherhood of the Holy See like yourself launches a crusade against the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, intoxicated by your uncontrollable desire for absolute authority ... *the fruit does not fall far from the tree*. Your Holiness not very long ago attempted to neutralize the Armenian Patriarchates of Jerusalem and Constantinople and failed. Do not try again. Never forget one fact...that foreigners have come to know the Armenian Church by virtue and through the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

This holy institution has survived through the ages despite all human and natural disasters, your predecessors--a whole generation of catholicoi-- have acknowledged and respected the independence and Constitution of the Patriarchal hierarchy, and what is it that gives you the authority to encourage your stooges to adopt such a negative stance towards the Brotherhood? Do you think you are wiser than your predecessors? Commercial and business acumen are not manifestations of wisdom. You can buy men and discard men but CAN NEVER USURP AND APPROPRIATE HOLINESS.

During the Second World War, Winston Churchill warned the German leadership "those who seed breeze will reap hurricane". And you over decades of incumbency have sown breeze and now you must prepare yourself to reap hurricane. Years have passed since the collapse of the Soviet Union, from the days when they would employ civilians with murky pasts and even vicious clergy to create such institutions like the 'Free Church'. In our times it is painful to see the same diseased spirit is rekindled in the Motherland, where new sects flourish and strengthen under your 'benevolent and tolerant gaze'. You who are called to be the leader of our Church hand in hand with anti-religious and faithless political leaders are trying with your auctioned mind and childish, capricious decisions to uproot the centuries-old oak tree that is our Armenian Church, because despite your age are not yet matured. During the entire course of your life you have lacked common sense, the combination of faith and consciousness that is one of the greatest virtues man has been blessed with.

Like your sophist reasoning also irresponsible is your expressions and decisions. The Armenian Apostolic Church, during its centuries-old existence, has not been afraid of external dangers, so much as by your senseless and destructive acts which your Holiness--a son born of the bosom of

the same Church--are waging war within it and against it. To deprive the Church from its characteristic features means cutting the umbilical cord that connects it with its past at a time when the strengthening of religion and its influence coalesce creating our image and the miracle of our century. Those who have given themselves the authority to guard the public interest and oversee its moral standing must surely know that a flint will not light a fire without being struck and an abscess will not burst unless it is lanced. We write these lines believing that to witness evil and remain indifferent means being an accomplice to evil. Once again in relation to our request to ordain Father Baret a bishop you have displayed the same immature disposition--relying on the rumours and grudges of certain individuals, who having cut their umbilical cords from their people, attempt with few dollars to buy favour- always disregarding the truth which in this case is the decision of the Synod of the Brotherhood of St James, Jerusalem.

Without cause you blame individuals and with no ability to separate the fact from fiction, you are one who according to the ability of his sight, or by the measure of his coloured glasses sees reality. In other words, Your Holiness, you are among those who harness the horse behind the cart. The time has come to stop pretending you are a resident of paradise attempting to cover your moral nakedness with fig leaves.

In the present time our Church finds itself confronting such dire state and serious situation which give rise to serious doubts regarding the future, when for a moment re-imagining all the virtuous traits of our nation by virtue of which our people have been worthy or could still be worthy. Be sure that the strength and greatness of a nation are not found in material achievement, because people do not perish as a consequence of physical wounds they receive, but by spiritual wounds. The wounds inflicted upon our people are more the result of our own irresponsible and self-centred actions and can be regarded as a natural death of a nation. The time has come Your Holiness for you to rediscover our spiritual values, if you have had any. If not then you yourself should declare yourself defrocked and spare our Mother Church from absolute destruction.

The Armenian Church has always been the home of our people's intellectual, spiritual and moral aspirations. It has been *par excellence* the life boat of the covenant of our faith. Our Church, this estimable religious-national institution is our nation's greatest institution, which surviving all kinds of historical and political adverse conditions has taken shape and definition has reached us and you as "Father of All" are obliged to act without vengeance, with favour and particularly graciously. Your perceived prejudices with or without foundations, mostly without foundation and in some instances it will be looked upon as a virtue if you could acknowledge your mistakes.

Your Holiness can be sure that the Holy See of Echmiadzin for us is and will always remain the source of our inspiration and hope, but you...

Nourhan Archbishop Manoukian
Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem

PS. *Bearing in mind that you lack the basic courtesy of responding to the Patriarchate's previous letter, we preferred to send this letter via the website.*

Translator's notes

- Bishop Mikayel Adjapahian is the Primate of Shirak and Gumri-Armenia
- Bishop Hovagim Manoukian is the primate of Arthik, Thalin- Armenia
- Archbishop Hovnan Derderian is the Primate of the Western diocese of America, Los Angeles
- Bishop Haygazoun Nadjarian is the Primate of Australia and the Far East
- Bishop Pagrad Galstarian was formerly Primate of Canada.
- Baret Dzayrakouyn Vartaped Yeretsian (b.1946, ordained 1966) was nominated by the Synod of the Brotherhood of St James to be elevated to the rank of Bishop. The honour of ordination is reserved to the Catholicos of All Armenians. In this instance, His Holiness has declined to carry out the unanimous decision of the Brotherhood.

November 2014

