

Armenian National Ideological Standpoint.

The Path of Hayk and the Path to Hayk

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(Part II, see previous in Part I)

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“And our country is named Hayk after our ancestor Hayk”.

Movses Khorenatsi, “The History of Armenians”

1. The Path of Hayk

National identity is the collective consciousness and appreciation of common origins, language, homeland, faith, education, and culture. It is one of the types of collective identity formed on the basis of numerous factors and can represent both a long-term evolutionary process and, sometimes, the result of a historical event over a brief period of time.

For Armenians, modern national identity also includes “visible” historical-political realities such as the Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh issue (*massacre, loss of homeland, migration, hardship*). Being new – these realities were absent 120 years ago – they came to complete the Armenian collective identity.

Alongside historical and political realities, the national “myth” – whether it is an epic, a legend, or a heroic tale – holds unique significance in shaping national identities. It provides a (pre)history of the formation of a nation, detailing the actions and exploits of its founding figures and outlining the traditions and value systems characteristic of the nation.

We, Armenians, trace our origins to the myth of Hayk the Patriarch, which for millennia has reflected the collective value system and vision of the Armenian nation regarding its identity, circumstances, and environment. As such, it has never required historical-documentary validation¹.

However, the origin of the Armenian nation is unique in human history, having a clearly recorded² “zero point” – known by the year and day – thanks to Armenian historiography³. This point is not only chronologically placed on the historical timeline of humanity but is

¹ The name *Hayk* is reflected in Hittite sources from the 16th to 13th centuries BC, in the name of the *Hayas(s)a-Azzi* state formation mentioned in the Armenian Highlands. The suffix *sa* in *Hayasa* is a pluralizing suffix, while *azzi* or *azi* in Armenian dialects still means *nation, people*. Therefore, *Hayasa-Azzi* means *the nation (people) of Hay (Armenians)*, *the nation of Hayk*. *H-A* is mentioned for the last time at the end of the 13th century BC, coinciding with the period of decline of the Hittite state. The rising Assyria in the same period calls the territory of *H-A Urartu* (Ararat) or *Nairi*.

² According to Ghevond Alishan's calculations, it is about August 11, 2492, BC.

³ The war between Hayk and Bel has been mentioned by Sebeos in his “History”, by Tomas Artsruni in the “History of the House of Artsruni”, by Hovhannes Draskhanakerttsi in his “History of Armenia”, by Ukhtanes in the “History of Armenia”, by Samvel Anetsi in his “Chronicle”, by Vardan Aygektsi in his “Aghvesagirq”, by Vardan Areveltsi in his “Universal History”, by Mkhitar Ayrivanetsi in his “History of Armenia”, by Isaac the Priest in his “Chronicle”, by Nerses Palients in “History of the Armenian Princes and Kings”, by David Baghishetsi in his “Chronicle”, by Anonymous Livornatsi in his “Chronicle”, and others. The war is also mentioned by Georgian medieval historians, who note that Hayk – *Gaios*, the eldest of Torgom's seven sons, was the strongest and most prominent among them. The ancestor of the Georgians, Kartlos, was Torgom's second son. See: “Kartlis Tsovreba” by Leonti Mroveli (Leon Melikset-Bek, the “History of the Georgian Kings, Forefathers, and Dynasties”); “History of Georgia” by David Bagrationi.

also organically intertwined with biblical, universal events. This “zero point” relates to Hayk the Patriarch and his story.

It seems that the story “About Hayk and Bel” is well known in modern Armenian society. However, in a deeper sense, it remains unknown and underrated by our society and is more often accepted in a manner typical to similar narratives: the giant Hayk pins down another armored giant, the evil Bel, to the ground with an arrow shot from his broad bow. Emphasizing the battle scene, which is the climax of the conflict between the two giants, perhaps flatters our national pride, calculating the origin of the nation from that very moment and noting that the Armenian nation was born on the battlefield.

However, Hayk is perhaps the least deciphered among the epic heroes of humanity, so by focusing exclusively on this point, we overshadow no less and, perhaps, more important issues directly related to the entire subsequent history of the Hayk’s nation.

Let us begin with the general context and prehistory of the events preceding the incident of Bel's downfall, which, according to the historians M. Khorenatsi and Sebeos, is intricately connected with the well-known biblical episode.

Thus, the division of humanity into nations (languages) took place by the will of the Lord, in order to thwart another evil plan of the misguided humanity. After the confusion of languages, Bel accidentally becomes the ruler of mankind – a king, through violence and murders. And, as the historian attests, *“Hayk, unwilling to submit to him, after having his son Aramanyak in Babylon fled and went to the Land of Ararat, which was located in the northern regions, with his sons, daughters, sons of the sons, the powerful men – about 300 people in total – and other relatives, and those who joined him, and all their households and belongings”*.



The ruins of the Borsippa temple, considered to be the ruins of the Tower of Babel, are located in the Babylon Governorate of Iraq, 17 km southwest of the historical city of Babylon's ruins, on the banks of the Euphrates River. You can find more information here:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borsippa>

This very pivotal episode – rejecting the established illegal authority and the striving for free live, which was also reaffirmed by the Armenian historiography during the Christian era – was set as the primary axiological value for the origin of the Armenian nation. It is also noteworthy that the decision to wait until the birth of his son Aramanyak before leaving Babylon, even today, is a reasonable decision that makes the character of Hayk even warmer and more human – something not common among the idealized heroes of the epic stories.

While the Patriarch settled with his family in the north, “*finding a [common] language*” with the few people living there, and becoming the region's landowner and leader of the region, Bel in the south – in Babylon and its surroundings – performed “*various wonders*” and subjected everyone to his will by force, proclaiming himself also as a god and demanding that “*his image be placed in homes*” and worshiped as a deity. Meanwhile, Hayk's country continued to live freely under the Hayk's *patriarchal* rules known and understandable by Armenians even today. Thus, contrary to modern fashionable discourses, *patriarchal* does not mean *unfree* but *free*.

Years passed before Bel decided to march with his army into Hayk's country, to subject it to his will, and to impose the worship of himself as a god. The long decades that have passed are evidenced by the fact that the one who informs the Patriarch of the attack was the son of his Babylon-born son Aramanyak – Cadmus, who had inherited from his grandfather the southern areas of the region bordering Mesopotamia.

Hayk with Cadmus and his son Aramanyak, and the “*mighty sons*” of his 7 daughters moved ahead to meet Bel. However, due to the small number of his armed men, he was initially forced to retreat. Here, according to Sebeos, we encounter several interesting episodes: first, the historian specifically highlights the fact that the Patriarch's grandchildren – the sons of his daughters – were “*mighty*”, thus affirming that the daughters' sons can also inherit their maternal grandfather's qualities, something genetic research has proven in our times. Secondly, the episode of Hayk's tactical retreat is also uncommon for the pathos of the epic tales about heroes.

According to the Armenian historians, the purpose of Bel's campaign was to kill Hayk, although from the course of events it becomes clear that the ruler of Babylon offered the Patriarch to obey to his will, in return for which he was ready to accept Hayk with his people in any place of his domain. He even offered Hayk to become his close companion, to train the royal young archer hunters. However, in the face of the imminent danger, Hayk did not abandon his decision and rejected the proposal to accept the unlawful authority and worship the false god, choosing the struggle and earning victory. This part of Hayk's story also played a vital role in the Armenian national value system: the Patriarch did not yield to the “honoring” and attractive offers of Bel – then the most powerful figure of the world – and, most importantly, refused to recognize the tyrant as a god, as he knew the true God.

Thus, the Armenian nation was born in the struggle for freedom and the truth when Hayk rejected the Babylonian despotism and false faith. Despite being tempted by the offered glory and benefits, he, along with his family, relatives, and like-minded followers, returned to his (and the mankind's) roots – the Land of Ararat, the cradle of the mankind's salvation.

The confusion of languages led to the inability of people to understand each other and to continue the joint construction of the Tower of Babel. By not being part of Bel's vile plan, Hayk manifested his human nature inherited from Noah, possessing the ability not to subjugate others by force but to understand them and earn their love and respect. It is from Hayk the Patriarch that the Armenian nation inherited the unique ability to deeply understand the civilizational-cultural code of the distant and close nations, to reproduce, enrich, and perfect it in various fields for those nations and the entire world. Some contemporary Armenian intellectuals refer to this as the Armenian “*Translational mission*”.

Thus, Hayk was the “key” through which Bel sought to gain the opportunity to govern all humanity and bring to life his plans for building the tower – to reach the heavens and become “equal” to the true God, which he was unable to realize over several decades.



Haykaberda (also known as Sardurihinili, Sardurihurda, in Turkish as Chavushtepe, and in Kurdish as Aspesin) is a fortress settlement located on the western promontory of a hill in the northeastern edge of the village of Astvatsashen in the Hayots Dzor district of the Historical Armenia. It is now situated in the village of Chavushtepe in the Gurpinar district of the Van province, Turkey.

This was the profound purpose that brought the ruler of Babylon to the land of Ararat. Here, in the cradle of the mankind, Hayk, preferring death to the slavery of his soul and body, fought with his people on August 11, 2492, BC, on the eastern shore of the Lake Van, in the district of Hayots Dzor in the province of Vaspurakan, in the valley of the Khoshab River, against Bel and his huge invading army and destroyed him.

By overthrowing the first tyrant king, who had proclaimed himself a god, and his plans, Hayk completed his mission and outlined the path of life for his future generations:

- Love of freedom and refusal to obey the vile tyranny,

- Rejection of Babylon, its benefits, and favors,
- Loyalty to the truth – he faith in the true God,
- Return to the native roots (the ancestral homeland),
- Readiness to engage in a life-and-death struggle for the true values.

This, apparently, was the secret of the mission of the Armenian nation for centuries to come. It was the “zero point”, the “sourdough starter” of the Armenian nation at a time when the community that would later be called Armenian, had no history, culture, or any other ethnic-national institution. Thus, the cornerstone of the Armenian identity was the Patriarch's free will decision to distance himself from the evil both physically and spiritually.

Through the character of Hayk, the formula of heroism was given to all the forthcoming individuals of Armenian descent, and if we decipher their path, we will see that each of them became a hero in his own way, fighting for at least one of the mentioned values.

Hayk became the first Armenian not by birth – from his father Torgom⁴ – but by the path he chose, which laid the foundation for the Armenian identity. Therefore, millennia after the Patriarch, the individual identity for his descendants cannot be derived solely from their parents' (ethnic) origin, as the Path has been the foundation of the Armenian nation-building from the very beginning. Those who follow Hayk are Armenians in both body and spirit because they have accepted the call of the mission. Those who do not accept it, though remain close to the material root, but are far from the spiritual fruits, like a wheat grain that did not sprout or a servant who buried his talent in the ground.

The call of the mission has also entitled those who were not born as Armenians, such as the Arsacid royal dynasty, the lineage of Gregory the Illuminator, the Ripsimean virgins, and many others who were not of the Armenian descent, but intertwined with the Armenian people through their mission, becoming the guardians and an inseparable part of our identity. The spiritual door of the Armenian identity is still open today for all those who have chosen Hayk's path, rejecting the defilements, idols, and the unfreedom of the present day Babylons.

Thus, if we follow the example of the Patriarch, being Armenian is first and foremost a choice of path and a victory of the spirit. Interestingly, the figure of Hayk makes the Armenian history complete, which nowadays is divided into two periods – the *pre-Christian* and *Christian* – often contrasting with each other. The Armenian Apostolic Holy Church also recognized Hayk as the beginning of the Armenian nation and transmitted it to the future generations, deriving the subsequent historical path and the geographical environment of the Armenians from Hayk and his children – name by name.

In ancient times, the Patriarch and his comrades rejected the false path of the tyrant king's self-deification, and it was only through the incarnate Christ that his descendants recognized the possibility and path of human divinization. The Christian Armenia became the first country to embody the coexistence and mutual complementarity of spiritual and secular authorities. Perhaps it was due to Hayk's spiritual heroism that his descendants were granted the opportunity to receive what would fulfill Hayk's path and the only way to God⁵ – Christ.

⁴ Who, according to Armenian and Georgian historians, was also the father of the leaders of the Georgian and Caucasian peoples.

⁵ “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”.(John 14:6-7).

2. The Path to Hayk

If we were to briefly answer the question of what the Armenian's path in this life is, we would immediately say that it is what has kept them Armenian for the past 1700 years in a region, which is a crossroads of civilizations, nations, and religions – being Christian-Armenians. Without this component of identity, the remaining fragments of Armenians were lost as they were assimilated into other nations.

Perhaps this assertion would have been accepted without reservation a century and a half ago, but our times do not tolerate dogmatic statements and formulas that demand scientific or, at least, logical justifications, often placing the “*zero point*” of history in a visible past and ignoring the empirical experience of the history.

Nevertheless, our national ideological conceptions are based on the belief that man created by God, was initially endowed with a complete and perfect human nature. However, by yielding to temptation, by his own will, he violated the Lord's one and only commandment and sinned. As a result of the sin, the man's integrity was fragmented – his inner content (inner world) was separated from its outer manifestations (form(s)).

As a consequence, our fragmented human minds, speech, and actions began and still continue to contradict each other. We have allowed falsehood and deception to infiltrate our daily lives and become our companions. This is characteristic of the “new” human nature, common to all people and nations, including us Armenians. In this respect, we do not differ from any other nation in either “*good*” or “*bad*” aspects – we bear within us both the invitation to reach the heights of holiness and the constant inclination to fall.

Human spiritual degradation continues to this day. In an aggressive informational and ideological environment, the individual's inner world (values, emotions, perceptions, principles, internal code) is further distorted, changing the forms of self-expression (behavior, deeds, interpersonal and family relations, status, position, etc.), deepening the disharmony and contradictions between the inner and outer worlds. The individual's bonds with people and nature are also distorted, reaching extreme manifestations in several cases, such as the refusal to accept one's own nature and form (gender) and fighting against it. One distances oneself from one's statuses and replaces them with roles, striving for empty forms and masks, and ignoring the substantial.

The distortion and disharmony between the external and the internal, the form and the content, is evident in all areas of the modern human life – in the family, in interpersonal relationship, in the workplace, in public and state institutions, and even in cultural works and merchandise produced by humans.

Movses Khorenatsi, the father of Armenian historiography, painfully addresses the tragic consequences of this discrepancy for the Armenian nation and statehood in the “Lamentation”⁶ chapter that concludes his “The History of Armenians”.

The contemporary ethical and philosophical doctrine of “transhumanism”⁷, which is considered progressive, also acknowledges the reality of human imperfection. However, it

⁶ <https://www.aniarc.am/2018/03/08/movses-khorenaci-voghby/>

⁷ See: Nick Bostrom, A History of Transhumanist Thought, Faculty of Philosophy, Oxford University, Journal of Evolution and Technology, Vol. 14, April 2005, <http://jetpress.org/volume14/freitas.html> (download date: 21.09.2024).

views the enhancement of individual physical abilities and capacities through technological advances as a solution to problems.

In contrast, we believe that solutions should be sought where the problems originate – in the inner world of human beings.

2.1. An Individual

According to the Church, just as Adam voluntarily distanced himself from the Creator, each individual must repent of his or her free will and, with the help of Christ, rediscover his or her divine image and likeness, for which humans were ultimately created.

In the “secular” realm, the path from a “*Hay*” (“*an Armenian*”) to “*Hayk*” begins with one's own “self” and requires willpower. It is a path of self-improvement, a process of harmonizing one's form and content on an individual level. In everyday life, this means that each of us must strive to reassess and rediscover our place and role in this life, truly fulfilling the functions and responsibilities arising from our statuses as human beings, children, parents, friends, relatives, citizens, soldiers, servants, employees, and other roles. This process, which begins at the individual level, is not merely a matter of just self-improvement for an individual, because a law enforcement officer who acts against the law, a soldier who undermines the security of the country, a doctor who endangers patients' lives, and a person who acts outside his position are also threats to national security.

Thus, the aforementioned path includes but is not limited to the following cornerstones:

2.1.1. Aspiration for Freedom

Freedom is the greatest gift given to us; it is the precondition of our existence. Without freedom, there is no free will, therefore no choice, and, most importantly, no love. Only a free person can love, create, and struggle. According to the tradition, it was for this freedom that Hayk the Patriarch fought. This freedom is not permissiveness, while the perfect freedom is the freedom from sin.

Depriving a person of physical freedom has long been considered a form of punishment. Throughout history, this has often been legal, but not always just. Therefore, those who take away the freedom of a person, created free by God, must have good reasons. However, even when physically deprived of freedom, individuals can retain their spiritual freedom and loyalty to their values. In this sense, the absence of physical freedom does not constitute “perfect” unfreedom. There is also an important *nuance* that clearly distinguishes the term “*freedom*” in its legal sense from other conceptions. From a legal perspective, a person is free and has the right to do anything not prohibited by law. However, the norms of the state can change and sometimes cross the boundaries of moral and spiritual guidelines. Human history is full of such examples. Furthermore, unfreedom can also refer to a state in which a person, although not physically imprisoned, voluntarily deprives himself of the right to make decisions and choose a path by joining a sect or group.

Those who value their freedom cannot fail to respect others' freedom, recognizing that an individual's freedom ends where anyone else's begins. Beyond human, mutable, and selectively enforced laws, an individual's life is also regulated by a system of values and moral commandments, which are much more enduring and conservative. In this respect, a

devout individual's freedom cannot cross the implicit rules and objective realities, which are also the “*red lines*” of the freedom. In the modern world, violations against freedom, while preserving the classical methods, are also combined with new ones.

Today, anything that dulls the mind, makes people captive of their own weak human nature (alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling, etc.), shackles their will, forces them to make choices (aggressive commercial, cultural, and political advertising, “the Overton windows”, etc.), alienates them from their values, makes individuals unfree even in freedom. The modern forms of unfreedom also include dependence on cell phones and similar devices, as well as various life-easing applications, artificial intelligence, which occupy a significant place in people’s lives, depriving them of the ability to make independent decisions, overcome difficulties, and readiness to struggle. Today, we are already witnessing situations where restrictions on the use of these applications have become punitive measures – from separating families to entire states.

Meanwhile, everything is permissible for those who have been granted freedom, but not everything is beneficial for them⁸. According to the Bible, the Lord endowed man with free will. The very first lines of the Scripture speak of man's freedom, for example, the right to name animals and plants with his free will. Even in the episode of the forbidden fruit, it says that it was forbidden for humans to eat it, but not impossible. Renouncing sins of one’s own free will brings man closer to the Lord again.

2.1.2. Guiding by Love

Nowadays, it is often said that the “*love has diminished*”. It is also said that “*love cannot be forced*”. Whatever they say, we must learn to build our lives on the formula of love – seeking in each other what unites and strengthens us, rather than what divides and pits us against each other. If we accept that human is created in the likeness of the Lord, then only by seeing the image of God (and/or Hayk the Patriarch) in each other can we begin to love and respect one another and escape the hyper-competitive spiral that envelops our society.

We must learn to love our neighbor as ourselves – sincerely and forgivingly. Those who do not love themselves are incapable of loving others. A person must also respect and love his or her own body as the temple of the soul given by the Lord, a means of perpetuating humanity that requires attention and care. After all, Christ himself was born in a human body, transformed, and ascended with it. This implies attention to health, moderation in everything, and renunciation of harmful habits that damage the soul and body. On the other hand, people who limit love exclusively to themselves make idols of their “selves” and demand that others accept their individuality and uniqueness. Many pleasures, comforts, and meaningless excesses are offered on the “altar” of this “self” idol.

Loving one's neighbor as oneself brings one closer to perfection, and it is this love that the Lord commands⁹. This love begins with the recognition of oneself and then of others, with the basic attention, the attempt to understand, empathy, the respect, and the adherence

⁸ “For what is a man advantaged, if he gains the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?” (Luke 9:25).

⁹ “You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these (Mark 12:31).

to the rules of coexistence. And, naturally, this is not about casting pearls before swine¹⁰.

The perfect (Christian) love, in turn, is to love others more than yourself and to be ready to sacrifice oneself for them¹¹. Patriotism is a manifestation of this perfect love. This is the source of our attitude toward those who have been martyred for the Homeland, whose heroism is also a martyrdom for the Homeland.

2.1.3. Aligning Mind, Word, and Deed

One of the reasons for the prevailing disappointment and mutual distrust in our times is that we often see the difference between what is said and what is done. Do we always say to others' faces what we say behind their backs, and are we as kind and positive in our minds as we are eloquent in our words?

This duality and the inconsistency between the form and content, which permeates every aspect of human and societal life, poisons human relationships and public life, creates “wrinkles” in the relationships between individuals, society, and the state, and makes falsehood and hypocrisy an integral part of the culture of communication. It also affects the culture of governance and the socio-political atmosphere. Nevertheless, here as well the process of improvement should start on the individual level. And since each individual recreates around them what dominates in his or her inner world – in the hearts and minds – we must keep clear not only the environment that surrounds us but also our minds (thoughts), words, and deeds to avoid this “sloppiness” in our lives.

a) “**Mind**” (*Thoughts*) is the domain of perfect freedom for a free person, the engine of his or her conscious life, and therefore the primary target of evil. Education is the positive factor that broadens an individual’s mental horizons, while upbringing and faith close off negative loopholes. In our era of information and artificial intelligence technologies, it is more necessary than ever to keep the individual's mind free from impure and harmful influences, especially the inner world of the younger generation.

b) “**Word**” (*Speech*) has been regarded as valued and kept pure as the foundation of creation in traditional worldviews. In everyday life, it is an underestimated double-edged sword that, like any weapon, harms those who misuse it¹². As a means of communication, it can help and encourage but it can also hurt and offend. Verbal elements are present in almost all incidents of daily life that lead to unfortunate consequences. Although the common *tabu* words are not of Armenian origin, let us note, that it is already a widespread phenomenon when a person, who would not anyhow keep the pure and the impure in the same vessel, both prays and curses with the same lips. Cursing, seen as an adjunct to the “freedom of speech”¹³, has entered television and radio broadcasts, has become an

¹⁰ “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you” (Matthew 7:6).

¹¹ “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13).

¹² “For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matthew 12:37).

¹³ To understand the depth of negative changes that have occurred in recent times among us, one can compare the vocabulary of the foreign and the domestic Armenian segments of the internet on the social platforms, media pages, and elsewhere. The picture will become more complete if we remember that we are a nation with at least one and a half millennia of written speech culture.

inseparable part of humor shows, and has infiltrated into social networks, becoming an acceptable way to “express opinions”, degrading the culture of speech and increasing hatred and hostility in our society.

c) “**Action**” (*Deeds*) is a unique ability to create, to bring forth new things, to materialize an invisible idea (content) in the physical world, thereby giving it form. By valuing and keeping action pure, a person resembles the Creator of the universe. The scale of the work, its public importance, and the resonance of the deed are not the primary factors here, but rather how the individual brings the task assigned to him or her to life. Obviously, human beings with their innate ability can and should differentiate between *good* and *evil*, the *just* and *unjust* actions. However, it is also important to consider how consistent we are in our actions and how much our actions (deeds) align with the standards we have set with our words and, for example, how the quality of the products we produce matches what was declared.

The term “**hayavari**”, meaning sloppy, careless, of inferior quality, and other negative connotations, is familiar to many of us. Unfortunately, it can serve as a general descriptor for everything from badly packaged products to improperly implemented state programs. Another issue in this realm is actual inaction, the refusal to act, the desire to get everything at once without making efforts. All this, unfortunately, circulates among the nation whose canals, bridges, and places of worship have been in use for millennia, whose spiritual and philosophical works have not lost their relevance, who have been collecting their own and others’ great parchments for centuries, and whose carpets and paintings have not faded over the centuries. Let us add that the literal opposite of “**hayavari**” is “**hayetsi**”, another “intra-Armenian” term that, although it may not have an accepted explanation, but is still understandable to both the Armenian individual and society.

Thus, the inconsistency of our minds, words, and deeds distorts our identity and form, dividing it into three independent worlds, in two of which we usually consider ourselves “*incomparable*”, while in the third, “*no one hangs the bell*”. Here again, the key to transforming the whole lies in the individual's will and initiative. Therefore, when we are personally good and pure in our thoughts, honest in our words, and just in our actions, we will approach the virtue, demonstrating the others the way by our own example.

2.1.4. Manifestation of Will (Willpower)

The path to rediscovering our “self” is complex and demands significant effort. At the very beginning of this route, a person often has only one “ally” – his will. It manifests itself in struggle and difficulty and remains alien to unnecessary pathos typical of ephemeral outbursts, it is invisible and consistent.

Willpower is like a coiled spring; when compressed, it symbolizes the ability to withstand external difficulties, and when uncoiled, it expresses the ability to impose one's own “game rules”. In its intermediate position, the “*spring of will*” symbolizes the readiness to both resist and retaliate.

We can consider three dimensions of will (willpower):

a) Will as **God-given freedom**: The freedom to choose, love, and create; the ability to make the right choice between the necessary and the desirable; a restraint for one's sins and weaknesses.

b) Will as **the ability to withstand inner and external difficulties**: Strength nourished by spirituality and collectivity (national), and in their weakening – a guarantee not to retreat, a prerequisite for striving and struggling.

c) **In its superior level, the will becomes law**: For both the individual and society, based on the unity of those who strive for victory for the sake of true values.

2.1.5. Setting the benchmarks

One of the greatest obstacles to our chosen path is disappointment. It usually arises from underestimating problems and overestimating one's own strength, from excessive and unfounded expectations. Outbursts of enthusiasm can lead a person who is trying to align thought, word, and deed to take drastic steps without accurately calculating one's own strengths and abilities, thereby paving the way for an apparent “mismatch” between the efforts invested and the results obtained. To avoid such situations, when starting or joining any endeavor, we should soberly assess our potential and capabilities, as well as clearly define the boundaries of our goals and interests. Patriotism and any public-spirited endeavor are done on a voluntary basis, so an individual must be able to find the right (acceptable) balance between personal and public interests and, at least, maintain it. Otherwise, one may lose the former without succeeding in the latter, thus endangering others.

2.2. Family

The family has a unique and irreplaceable significance in a person's life. This idea is not just a reiteration of the common discourse about the importance of the cell of society but a recognition of the practical and indispensable necessity of this institution in the life of each individual and of the nation as a whole. Despite the circulation of various “new” and “progressive” theories in the modern world, it cannot be formed in any other way than as the union of a man and a woman¹⁴ based on mutual love, respect, and responsibility, formed by free will.

Such, according to the father of the Armenian history M. Khorenatsi, was Patriarch Hayk's family, for whom he waited in the hostile Babylon for the birth of his son, so as not to subject his pregnant wife to the challenges of a long and difficult journey. The Armenians, who celebrate the so-called “St. Valentine's Day”, had the figure of Ara the Beautiful¹⁵ in their written history, which could become a symbol of love and family loyalty for the Armenians.

Talking about the public importance of the family, it should be noted that no one and nothing can fully replace the family. Any policy concerning the family – be it state, informational, cultural, social, or any other – should be built on the logic of helping the existing family, rather than trying to replace it in any way. A society that overlooks the

¹⁴ “So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27).

¹⁵ See: The Legend of Ara the Beautiful, <https://araratour.com/the-legend-of-ara-the-beautiful>.

importance of the initial formative years of an individual's upbringing and education within the family will be forced to deal with the consequences of this oversight for decades, losing talented generations and increasing the number of hospitals, prisons, and law enforcement officers.

The image of the family as an environment of love and respect must be reinforced in the information field and in cultural life, communicated through the media, films, educational programs, textbooks, social advertising, and other means. In the absence of adverse social and health circumstances, a large and decent family should be recognized by the public as a sign of success and piety, a testament to public respect.

However, a family that fulfills its mission in form and content to its mission is the cornerstone of a healthy society and a strong state, and in foreign lands, a preserving environment of the national identity.

So, what is the mission of the family in the life of the individual and the nation?

2.2.1. Ensuring the continuity of humanity that sanctifies the institution of the family.

Through the family, individuals become participants in creation, giving birth to new human beings, ensuring the continuity of their genes, giving life to the Lord's commandment¹⁶ to humanity, thereby ensuring the perpetuation of their kind (nations). In this regard, the discourse on the importance of the family from childhood forms in the individual a constant consciousness of responsibility and readiness to act for the sake of the family. Let us add that only a complete, traditional family with a father and a mother can ensure demographic growth. The possibility of having many children increases if the family includes representatives of senior generation – the grandparents. Partial families, with only a mother or a father, for understandable reasons, including socio-economic ones, are almost incapable of ensuring demographic growth and a formative childhood for children. So-called “*childfree*” and “*same-sex families*”, naturally, have no children of their own, while the children raised by the latter are also likely to follow the path of their “*adoptive*” families.

2.2.2. The family is the primary unit in the traditional environment for the formation of personality, which is most effective in extended families that include the older generation and in large families with many children.

The family is where an individual learns to love, respect elders, adapt to harmonious coexistence (including generations), and be caring and responsible. In this regard, the family, as an environment for raising the young generation, differs from other formats of human public-social coexistence and cooperation by the absence of competition, and therefore the need for self-assertion, finding one's place, etc. Hierarchical relationships formed in the family and enforced by tradition do not imply internal “struggle” for authority and influence other than the natural increase in the degree of love and responsibility.

2.2.3. The family plays an irreplaceable role as a *social integrator* for individuals. It is in the family that individuals develop communication and relationship skills, become familiar with values, and form the value-based foundations of their personality; take on their

¹⁶ “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it...” (Genesis 1:28).

first social role, become acquainted with the idea of authority through the father's (grandfather's) role in the family, develop learning skills, and begin their track of self-education. The family's uniqueness in this regard is that an individual's learning process here is built on **unquestionable** love, which facilitates learning and shapes a correct understanding of criticism and personal mistakes. It is here that the individuals form their concept of their inherent and unquestionable status as a child, sibling, grandchild, etc., and their associated rights and responsibilities.

In society, the family serves as a unique bridge that forms **kinship ties** even between individuals, families, and clans that previously had no blood relations or common interests and outlines common benefits and plans. In the past, relationships between elites and even states were regulated through marriages, the “*marital diplomacy*”.

In the Armenian environment, from the outset, images (patterns) of relations and status of people outside the family are copied from the family and family relations – “*brother*” in the case of a friend, “*brotherhood*” in the context of unions and friendly environments, “*father/mother*” for elderly people, “*aunt/uncle*” for friends' parents, “*family*” for a well-established collective, etc.

What is unacceptable and condemnable in the family is also unacceptable in society, nation, and state. The values and customs exported from the family shape the overall atmosphere in society.

2.3. Society, Nation

We consider “society” as the next link in the “individual – family” chain, an environment of people, their groups, and relationships outside the family and family environment, where the formation of the individual continues, and the process of self-expression begins. Unlike the family, society is an environment in which the individual must apply the coexistence and self-discovery skills acquired in the family.

The perception of society as a hyper-competitive environment shapes our attitude towards the “*collective we*” and the “*common value*”. By emphasizing individualism and focusing on person-centered visions in the upbringing of the younger generation, we often push to the background the communication skills and the abilities necessary for coexistence and transition to cooperation in larger communities. The reasons for this are essentially due to the lack of a culture of coexistence, conditioned by the historical experience of living in small settlements, and dense communities.

This is why, as we grow up, we try to recreate around us the “patterns” that come from the family, – a comprehensible and comfortable (comfort) environment – a “*wall-around-me*” from which we live according to the “survival” logic typical for the social Darwinist theory. The part of the society “available” to the individual – the “surrounding-society” – is spatial and hardly extends beyond the geographical boundaries of his daily life and activities. Having the individual's family at its core, it expands layer by layer, including, according to life stages, their friends, the yard and neighborhood, the school, university, and the work environment, ending with the outer wall of his or her small world. This system formed based on the basis of positive elements – the blood ties, paths taken, human contacts and sympathies, acquaintances, “valuable” and “practical” contacts – contrasts with the “*alien*”

world beyond it, which may be inhabited by both Armenians and foreigners. The entry of people and ideas from the “*outside world*” can occur through the “mediation” of trusted individuals, and the opinion of these trusted individuals about a “foreigner” – whether a carpenter or a candidate for parliament – is guiding and sometimes – even decisive.

This closed (or semi-closed) system is essentially a “community format” of life, in which we continue to live not only in the Diaspora but also in the Republic of Armenia – within the setup of rural communities, small townships, and, in large cities and neighborhoods. Its modest size and conservatism serve as an obstacle to various modern influences penetrating the individual's life. Meanwhile, the nation is, of course, a more inclusive concept, encompassing each individual's “society” just as only a small part of it, lying beyond and above the scope of the individual's empirical cognition. And it is not at all about the political dimensions of the nation. Its foundation is the collective consciousness and appreciation of common origins, history, language, homeland, faith and traditions, education, and culture. Adding to our roots stemming from Hayk the Patriarch, we should also include his mission – the Path of Hayk.

In our times, individuals' relations with their nation cannot be based on a “consumer mentality” (the nation itself essentially needs to help itself at this moment), nor can it be imposed, remaining within the realm of each individual's free will. This is also how national identity differs from citizenship, which is regulated by laws and various mechanisms. Demanding that someone be a “*good Armenian*” is like forcing someone to be a “*good Christian*” – a decision to which the Lord Himself does not compel. Therefore, it is up to each individual to define the form and content of their relationship with a community that has gone through difficult routes, faces numerous dangers now, and has even more challenging days ahead. Yet, all this is part of our identity, from which it is impossible to detach, and as it is said, “*But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved*”¹⁷. And he or she, who does not share the difficulties, will probably not ask for a part in tomorrow's victories either.

The nation (national environment) is more than just society; it is also an *identity perpetuation format*. In terms of blood ties it is an entity woven together by different threads of relatives – families and clans¹⁸ – it is called to ensure the continuation and continuous creativity of its children in a native environment, under the sacred truths, and with a sense of mission, be it within the borders of its own state or beyond, with or without a national state.

The native (national) has a deep layer intertwined with emotional cognition and individual identity. It starts with childhood memories, language, and family, from the images of loved ones imprinted in memory, the bright sun of the small homeland, the blue sky and the emerald nature, the smell of *lavash*¹⁹ from the *tonir*²⁰, and the scent of incense at a liturgy, the friends, school and the first love. It continues with the searches of the maturity years, the path of personal formation, achievements and losses, seasoned with national humor, reinforced with the discovery of the ethnic roots and the started own family,

¹⁷ Matthew 24:13.

¹⁸ In the Scottish sense of the term (translator).

¹⁹ Traditional Armenian bread (translator).

²⁰ Or *tondir* - a ground-embedded Armenian traditional oven (translator).

discovering the small Homeland within the great Homeland, knowing the world and the people. Over the years, it has been strengthened by the realization that the Homeland is not just a gift but an achievement, the results of the struggle and overcoming of hardships of entire generations, and a “great circle” composed of the personal responsibility of each individual. It manifests itself both in the material and spiritual, in time and space, in the visible and invisible layers of life. One day you realize that the native is not only the past or the present but also of the future. You understand that the Native, in all its greatness, is merely a sapling that still needs to be grown. It must grow on its soil, with all its potential, safely and freely.

National identity is a part of an individual's identity, originating from the subconscious layers of his or her “self”, and it is very important to ensure that it does not dry up in the conscious realm of your identity.

Valuing the nation and the native (national) in an individual's life is not a tribute to formalism or modern idolatry. It cannot be introduced into the lives of individuals and society through superficial reproduction of the forms that are considered national, as the copying of the forms does not create the corresponding content.

Our path is to harmonize the refined form and profound content of national life. A society that moves away from genuine, profound values, rather than developing them, yields to external traditionalism, encourages formalism, breeds disappointment, and eventually becomes a haven for false and alien ideals of coexistence, where love and respect turn into permissiveness and perverted tolerance. As a result, the nation, as an entirety of individuals united around values, moves away from its collective identity.

This is especially dangerous in the modern world, where processes are underway aimed at revising collective identity from the national to globalist. The authors of these processes assume that nations must “overcome” their differences and peculiarities by abandoning “*dividing boundaries*” and transitioning to the next stage of identity, leaving the national as a relic of the past. According to this viewpoint, valuing the national “ignores” the universal, “limits” people's mental horizons, thereby advancing the false conclusion that preserving of the native (national) is a “*neglect*” of the universal. According to those who share this perspective, in the modern world, people's collective identity can be formed around common preferences, such as vegetarianism, environmentalism, sports, etc.

These, as well as the manifestations of the loss of national identity are understandably stronger outside the Homeland, where the Armenian Diaspora and communities only form the national environment. From a national perspective, the Diaspora is the entirety of people without the citizenship of the national state, regardless of their place of residence, while the Armenian community is a form of national life²¹ outside the native state, regardless of the citizenship of its members.

The Armenian Diaspora, with its Armenian content, is a guarantee of the preservation of the national gene pool, identity, language (including the dialects), uniqueness, and historical memory outside the Republic of Armenia. In the long term, it has an intermediate status:

²¹ Naturally, the best geographical environment for the perpetuation of any nation is its homeland, and the best format for self-organization is its own national state.

with the weakening of the national axis in daily life, it is now facing the danger of assimilation, losing many of its representatives. Therefore, the tactics of the interaction with the Armenian communities should be fostering a broad awareness of national roots and ensuring the preservation of national heritage and life, while the long-term strategy should target the popularization of the dual citizenship and repatriation.

In this challenging period for the Armenian people, we must also demonstrate healthy courage in reconnecting those who have been distanced from their national identity due to life and circumstances. While allowing each individual the freedom to determine his or her personal relationship with the nation, the Armenian people, through its national and state institutions, must create opportunities for them to become acquainted with their roots and history and to embrace their national identity. This is especially important when the majority of the nation's representatives, according to some estimates, around one-third, live outside the national, religious, and cultural environment. The significance of this issue demands special attention from the Armenian nation, the Church, and the State.

Before aspiring to great and important projects, we must also try to be guided in our daily lives by the awareness that we are all representatives of a nation that has survived massacres and genocide ransomed its children from captivity and slavery with gold, and that was built by the hands of tens of thousands of children raised in orphanages. We are the embodiment of the dreams of generations who have endured suffering and longed for the perpetuation of their children. The same philosophy underlies our attitude towards those who seek our destruction: misogynists and Armenophobes, obviously, cannot deserve respectful treatment, as they have already voluntarily renounced the image of God within them.

Guided by an understandable warmth towards our native people, we cannot fail to respect others. Initially, the Christian love and respect is the formula for treating every person bearing the image of God. Such an attitude is also fitting for us as a nation that has experienced the support and care of various nations and individuals in tough times, whose children have been hosted in different countries and have had the opportunity to find themselves in various fields of their lives. This also shapes our attitude towards the national minorities that are part of our society and have gone through all kinds of difficulties with the Armenian people. While creating proper conditions for their existence, self-realization, and preservation of their national identity, Armenia, as in the past, must take on a special mission towards those without their own statehood, particularly the Yazidi and Assyrian peoples, and become an island of preservation and development of their culture and identity in the region.

Only by holding on to its values and uniting, the Armenian people will be able to undertake their crucial mission in the upcoming trials. Just as humanity was saved from the clutches of the first Babylon by being divided into nations, so it will be saved from the last one²² by preserving its national values and staying true to its faith, rejecting the ultimate tyrant of humanity, who will come to proclaim himself as God.

(Continued)

²² John 7:9-14.