

Faith, Homeland, State
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(Part III, *see previous in Part I, II*)

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1. Faith

From a spiritual standpoint, the mission of the Armenian people – who embraced Christ's teachings through the Apostles and were the first to adopt Christianity as a state religion—is centered on the salvation of both the individual and the nation.

In the first ever documented war of the mankind and their own, the people of Hayk rejected the concept of self-deification for the human without association with God and accepted Christ as the incarnate God in 301 A.D., renouncing the man-made idols to which they had previously prayed under foreign influences, thus opening the path to divinization for humans. With the efforts of Thaddeus and Bartholomew, and the state adoption by the efforts of Gregory the Illuminator, this faith put an end to superstition and reaffirmed the covenant between the people of Hayk and God. This faith is the road to conversion, repentance, and reconciliation with God, offering the key to salvation, atonement, and divinization, which cannot be replaced by outer or false piety.

Contrary to some opinions, Christianity is a religion of the strong, as evidenced by the lives of the Fathers of the Church. Regrettably, those who claim otherwise have either never fought their own sins or weaknesses or have resigned themselves to their defeat.

Today, as it was in the past, Christianity remains actual for the Armenian people, offering encouragement and hope to those in dire moral and psychological conditions, those who have lost a part of their Homeland, and those whose trust in allies and humanity vanished. The Church's teachings reassure that both good and evil deeds will inevitably be rewarded, and that nothing and no one will be forgotten. Do we have any other source of encouragement?

Over the past millennia, Christianity has become intertwined with the national identity of the Armenian people and forms the cornerstone of their national value system. The Armenian Apostolic Church (AAC) serves as the spiritual guide of the nation, shaping and preserving public perceptions of faith, good and evil, justice and truth, piety, and virtue, and is passing these values on to the younger generation. Rejecting it means abandoning an essential layer of an average Armenian's identity and renouncing the status and spiritual protection of being a child of the Armenian Church.

Today, discussions about the actions attributed to individual clergymen are, in reality, part of a large-scale information and propaganda attack against the AAC, aimed at weakening its role and authority and reducing its contribution to the preservation of the Armenian identity. The methods vary, including attempts to revive the so-called “*old faith*”.

¹ The expert's viewpoint on the value-based foundations of national ideology is presented to the reader. The study consists of 5 parts, provided consecutively, with the included pictures taken from the internet.

The discourse on the “*ancient*”, “*national*”, and “*power-symbolizing*” divinities and the existence of a certain “*sacred knowledge*” also focuses on the “*non-Armenian*” roots and the “*Jewish*” nature of Christianity, while ignoring the Semitic, Iranian, and Greek roots and the close connections of the ancient beliefs with them. There is no mention of the fact that the doctrines and certain customs of these beliefs deeply contradict the traditional value system and customs of the Armenian people. There is no reference to the process and reasons for the rejection of similar beliefs by the Imperial Rome and, more importantly, by Iran, which had much closer civilizational ties with Armenians.

The refined “pagan” discourses introduced into the scientific, educational, and cultural fields by the systematic state propaganda of the USSR to neutralize the Christian heritage are relatively new, but there are also in demand today within the framework of the global agenda to reduce the importance of national religious institutions. The efforts to address “*religious stereotypes*” have predominantly focused on Christianity, while attention to communities practicing Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and other religions has been less prominent. At the same time, it should be noted that pagan beliefs which actively oppose Christianity in the Armenian reality are characterized by a low potential for safeguarding national identity, have a weak doctrinal basis, are not passed down through generations for centuries, and their current few adherents mainly come from Christian Armenian families. As a result, those who introduce ancient beliefs into the spiritual field, whether intentionally or unintentionally, hit upon one of the pillars of the Armenian national identity. Unfortunately, those who wish to speak from “pro-Armenian” positions overlook the fact that their openly hostile stance towards the AAC is entirely in line with the policies of those countries, which are actively erasing the traces of Armenians in their historical homeland.

Critics argue that St. Gregory of the Parthian Arshakuni dynasty aimed to acquire large tracts of land and villages to become the primary landowner in Armenia, thereby weakening national statehood during the Arshakuni reign. If we leave aside the absurdity of attributing material wealth-seeking motives to St. Gregory the Illuminator, who lived an ascetic life, and look at history, we see that, just like in other Christian countries, the feudal system in medieval Armenia led to the fragmentation of estates, competition and struggle for inheritance, and during foreign invasions, to the plundering of property and land as well. In such conditions, the Armenian Church managed to preserve its territories and settlements more or less and, thanks to the available potential, ensured the vital rights of its flock and the conditions for the existence of national institutions. Even today, the AAC tries to reclaim its property rights through the courts, even in Turkey, and sometimes achieves remarkable results.

It is common among us to emphasize that we are the first nation to adopt Christianity as the state religion, highlighting this fact as solely our decision. However, it would be appropriate to assume that the same Lord who chose the nation in which His Son would be born could not overlook the nation that would first experience spiritual rebirth in God. The unique importance of the Armenian people from the perspective of the Christian faith is also

evidenced by the activities of such pan-Christian saints as the Hripsimean Virgins² and Gregory the Parthian, who performed their spiritual feats in this land. These prominent figures of the two competing superpowers of the time, the Roman and Persian Empires, were sanctified on Armenian soil and through their mission contributed to the nationwide conversion of the Armenian people. If we try to understand the reason for this special attitude, we will inevitably return to the factor of Patriarch Hayk.

With its position, the AAC serves as a bridge between the *spiritual* and the *national*. Those who seek the truth outside the doctrine of the national church, in outwardly Christian “churches” with less than a century of history, deliberately or unintentionally sin against the Divine grace by practically claiming that God has deemed only them worthy of the “*true faith*”, while their ancestors, who belonged to the Armenian Church for generations, wandered in the “*darkness of error*”. By aiming at the formation of a “new identity” outside the national-state belonging, sects sever their followers from the ethnic-cultural environment, distort family and social ties, and hinder the fulfillment of the individuals’ obligations to the state and homeland. Unlike the servants of the AAC, who were in the trenches defending the Homeland during the past wars, the leaders of these structures stayed away from the existential struggle faced by the Armenian nation and state. We believe that the growth of sectarianism is not primarily due to individuals’ attitudes towards the national church but rather stems from their understandable desire to fulfill their spiritual needs, seek solace in times of distress and illness, and find answers to their questions. In order to adapt its spiritual mission to the demands of the times, this phenomenon should become a subject of deep and comprehensive study by the AAC.

The AAC is the spiritual leader of the Armenian people, shaping and preserving public perceptions of faith, good and evil, justice and truth, piety, and virtue, and transmitting these values on to the younger generation. It acts as a bulwark against the infiltration of detrimental phenomena characteristic of modern civilization, which is moving towards “post-truth” into the national environment. Even in the eyes of many non-believers, the Church, with its doctrine and conservatism upholding the moral imperative, prevents the rooting of foreign and unacceptable phenomena in the socio-political sphere and does not allow them to be legally cemented. The world’s experience shows that the Church is irreplaceable in this domain.

The AAC is an institution that has preserved the Armenian identity both in the Homeland and in the world for centuries. It is the body that constitutes the nation’s spiritual authority, from which behavior corresponding to its mission and functions is expected in both national and state life. It has given the nation its script and founded literature, laid the foundations of the national educational and scientific systems, and with its centralizing mission has ensured the unified spiritual life and language of Armenians – geographically

² “Hripsimean Virgins” – a group of Christian martyrs who were executed in the early 4th century. Their story is an important part of Armenian Christian history and is closely associated with Saint Hripsime (Rhpsime). St Hripsime was a Christian virgin who fled Rome with her companions to escape persecution. They eventually found refuge in Armenia but were later captured and martyred for their faith on the orders of the pagan King Tiridates III. Their martyrdom played a significant role in the eventual conversion of King Tiridates III to Christianity and the subsequent adoption of Christianity as the state religion of Armenia in 301 A.D.

and politically fragmented (between various Armenian and foreign rulers and kingdoms), scattered worldwide, speaking different dialects, and having different agendas. Even in the absence of national statehood, it provided national leadership and educated and nurtured the clergy, serving as a “social elevator”, and even raised the talented sons of ordinary people and peasants to be equal to noblemen. The Armenian Church was at the origin of the national “social security system”. This happened during the time of Catholicos Nerses I, when the First National Church Council of Armenia, among other issues, essentially founded this system. The Council of 353–354 A.D. decided to establish poorhouses, orphanages, leprosaria, hostels, and other charitable institutions in various parts of the country — a level of development that Europe reached only 15 centuries later. The Council’s decisions also included the establishment of monasteries and walled convents and the setting up schools in each monastery.

The responsibility of the AAC, as the most experienced pan-Armenian institution, extends beyond the borders of Armenia and even beyond the boundaries of its own flock. It is in charge of bringing all the sons and daughters of Hayk back to their roots. It is said that the pealing of Christian church bells symbolizes the sound of Noah’s hammer blows while building the Ark, a call for salvation from the impending disaster, which, however, was ignored by people. Anyway, the Bible has another formulation for such a situation: the parable of the lost sheep, where the shepherd, leaving his 99 sheep on a mountain, goes in search of the lost lamb. Therefore, without limiting itself to those who attend church, we believe that the AAC should recall its “youthful years” and go to the people. This is especially true for those of Armenian descent who have lost their identity and/or practice other religions due to historical circumstances, providing them with the opportunity to become acquainted with their spiritual, cultural, and historical roots, to determine their connection with the Armenian nation by free choice, and to profess the religion of their ancestors under distant, and possibly unfavorable, conditions. And if every day should be lived as if it were the last, then the good shepherd should set out as soon as possible to search for the lost children of his flock.

Therefore, the AAC, as a fundamental national-religious institution, is more than any other body subject to align its form with its content (doctrine). The AAC is an institution that preserves the Armenian identity both in the Homeland and in the world and forms the nation’s spiritual authority. It should demonstrate behavior befitting its mission and functions in the life of the nation and state. Today, in unfavorable conditions of counteraction, it needs the support of its children in order to fully conduct the function of a straggling Church, which safeguards the nation’s spiritual security, including utilizing modern technical possibilities.

Naturally, in the daily life of the AAC, the image of the clergy is of utmost importance. It is the duty of the clergy to get rid themselves of formalism and secularization, and the necessary steps should be taken by the Church itself. Tolerating negative phenomena not only intensifies propaganda against the Church but also makes its problems a subject of public discussion, whereas it is not fitting for children to criticize their parents. Regardless of everything, for a devout Armenian Christian, any failure or downfall of a clergyman in his mission is a significant blow, but it cannot overshadow the holiness and mission of the entire

Church. Due to the disregard of the gardeners, the garden may become neglected, but not ownerless. Christ himself, speaking about the unscrupulous priests, said, *“All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not”*³.

As a guardian of values and a fundamental national institution that ensures the continuity of spiritual life, the AAC has a path to follow in order to become a straggling Church once again.

Therefore, it is our desire to see the AAC as:

a) National in its form and, at the same time, adhering to the teachings of Christ. Maintaining close relations with the Armenian Catholic and Armenian Evangelical Churches, as well as with other traditional and conservative churches, being the guardian and bearer of immutable values despite the circulating discourses about the need for *“innovations”* and *“reforms”* in Christian doctrine following the examples of other churches.

b) Free from secularization, always striving for the self-improvement of its servants and faithful to its mission as a spiritual beacon, consistently ridding itself of unacceptable phenomena.

c) Impartially conducting the work of forming the nation’s spiritual authority (leadership), being an example for the education of new generations, having assumed its unique place in the life of the nation and the state, serving the former and independent of the latter.

d) Properly fulfilling its function of educating and nurturing the youth, forming a new national elite from the representatives of new generations.

And then, as a straggling Church:

e) The guardian of spiritual security, coordinating the struggle of the nation and the state against the ailments of the modern world, the *“new normality”* rooted in the national environment.

f) An institution that has revived its daily connection with the people under the existing competitive conditions, resisting proselytism among Armenians and the formation of *“new identities”* outside national-state belonging.

g) A national institute that has undertaken the mission of repatriation, developing, and implementing programs for those who wish to rediscover their roots, language, culture, and spiritual world.

h) Generating funds for charitable purposes among Armenians and overseeing their fair and transparent application with the support of public institutions.

2. Perceptions of Homeland

“Homeland” is a unique phenomenon in a person’s life, which begins in his childhood with his small homeland and, as he comes to know the world, encompasses each of our small homelands and the inexplicable personal connection formed with them.

Since ancient times, the Armenian Highlands have had a special importance for civilization, as evidenced by the records found in humanity’s oldest cultic and literary-

³ Matthew 23:3

cultural sources. In terms of sacred geography, Armenia is the threshold of paradise, and the Armenian history is a constant struggle for the right to live on this land.

Over the millennia, Armenians have repeatedly lost their statehood and even the opportunity to live in their historical territories, suffering massacres and oppression. However, no conqueror has succeeded in destroying the Armenian nation and its will to survive and create, while the conquerors have come like sea waves and disappeared like foam.

Homeland, being a territory with boundaries and bearing the consequences of geopolitical, geo-economic, and climatic processes, realities, and phenomena, at the same time has its intangible, spiritual dimensions and, in this respect, exists beyond the space-time continuum, preserving its complete image in the consciousness of the individual and the nation.

The Armenian Homeland is also connected with Hayk, as it is the land bestowed upon him and his descendants. To love it means to know it in its key manifestations and dimensions, to realize our responsibility for it, and to understand our duties and responsibilities.

2.1. Homeland as a Gift

The connection of the Armenian historical homeland with the Armenian people has never been denied by historiography, nor even by the conquerors themselves until recently.

Throughout the history of human civilization, land has been perceived as the primary and most crucial resource. Large and favorable areas have been the guarantee of prosperity for their inhabitants and the source of wealth for rulers, and, at the same time, sources of numerous dangers. In the history of nations and even individuals and families, it was a customary practice to seek their connection with a particular land and present their ownership as sacral – God-given. Thus, people describe their rights and connection to even lost or occupied territories not based on the present, changing realities, but deriving from eternal verities. The most famous and documented example of territorial rights is the Old Testament, which details, for example, the precise boundaries of the Promised Land allocated among the Jewish tribes returning from Egyptian captivity. Similarly, Armenians accept the Land of Ararat as the homeland preordained by God for Patriarch Hayk and his descendants.

Since the time of Patriarch Hayk, everything in the Armenian Highlands has been connected with the Armenian people: every place, mountain, and river has its own name. Compared to the names given later by foreigners, these often do not emphasize the manifestations of the natural environment, such as a “*large mountain*”, “*long river*”, “*deep gorge*”, “*high valley*”, “*black water*”, but rather unique names that cannot be found elsewhere. According to Movses Khorenatsi – the Father of Armenian historiography, and other historians, some of these names emerged thanks to Hayk himself or during his time.

Armenians knew their homeland well.

According to the masterpiece “[Ashkharhatsuyts](#)” created by the 5th century historian Movses Khorenatsi and updated by the 7th century geographer [Anania Shirakatsi](#), Greater Armenia consisted of 15 provinces, which were divided into 178 districts. The

“Ashkharhatsuyts” with its approximately 15 maps were taught in medieval Armenian schools alongside M. Khorenatsi’s “The History of Armenians” and A. Shirakatsi’s mathematical and cosmological works.

All these provinces, districts, and location names have been reflected in many ways and have found their place not only in historiography and the histories of individual families but also in national culture, ethnography, literature, epic tales, and heroic sagas. Thus, documented, and established perceptions of the Homeland cannot be erased from the nation’s memory, even over generations. Even our neighboring Turks do not hesitate to mention their historical connection with their homeland on the territory of another state, naming their children and enterprises “*Altai*”, “*Baikal*”, and so on.

Historically, the Armenian Homeland was given to the Armenians before they established their statehood, and today most of it remains outside the borders of the national statehood: closed and inaccessible even for visits; bearing the results of a policy of consistent destruction of traces of our nation. Nevertheless, none of this can erase the importance of these territories for individual and collective identity without distorting and fragmenting that very identity.

The situation has a whole tangle of historical-political reasons, while a spiritual perspective suggests that an Armenian cannot live without the aspiration and faith to be worthy again of a complete Homeland, and the hope that what was apportioned to Hayk and his descendants by Good will sooner or later be returned to its rightful owners. Not to believe in this would be to lose faith, to give up hope, and to surrender.

2.2. Homeland as Cradle and Sanctuary

The expression “*Armenia is a sanctuary*” is not just words.

According to the Bible, the Armenian Highlands have twice been of pivotal significance for humanity. First, the Garden of Eden, the birthplace of the first human beings, Adam and Eve, was located here. Then, Noah and his family were saved on Mount Ararat and began the new, post-flood human history in the Ararat Valley. Thus, in both cases, the Armenian homeland rightfully serves as the **cradle of humanity** (both the old and the new).

It is the land where the vile reign of Bel did not extend, the place that became a haven for the righteous. Here, at the foot of Mt. Ararat, the Armenian people was the first nation in the world to be reborn in Christ. Here, after His Ascension, the Only Begotten descended for the first time, indicating the place for the construction of the Armenian Mother Cathedral. From here, the civilized nations have drawn their roots. As a result of all this, the Armenian world is viewed as an island of salvation for humanity during the future cataclysms.

For the Armenian people, the sanctity of this land is also conditioned by the fact that it contains the relics of the ancestors and notable figures of the Armenian nation, and the remains of the generations who lived and struggled here.

2.3. Homeland as Environment and Capability

Despite its spiritual potential, the Armenian Homeland is not exclusively a museum and place of worship. Initially, it was given to Hayk as a living environment – a land to live and

create in with free will. Therefore, the homeland is also the economic, security, legal, spiritual, cultural, public, and social environment of a nation, which should be made safer and more comfortable for people to live in – with prosperity, developed infrastructure, unspoiled nature, internal and external security, and so on.

Every person living in the Homeland, whether as an individual, a citizen, a soldier, or a professional in any field, can work for the benefit of the Homeland to the best of his or her abilities. The example of an individual living in a border village and cultivating an orchard and land, is an example and manifestation of practical patriotism that is beyond politics, does not require leadership, and is devoid of pathos. Such people may not have patriotic leaders who voice their interests from podiums, but without such people, the patriots who speak from podiums are meaningless.

In addition to man-made values, the Homeland is also the potential of nature – land, water, natural resources, and landscape – which must be kept pristine and used carefully. In this sense, the Homeland is also the face of the nation. Keeping it clean and unpolluted is one of the foundations of the patriotic upbringing, accessible and understandable to individuals from childhood, though, unfortunately, irrelevant to many adults today.

A person's birthplace, besides its spiritual and emotional influence, is also connected to his or her material-biological essence by numerous threads. The sun, air, water, and food of one's birthplace is considered the most beneficial for a person, a notion reflected in the legends and fairy tales of different nations. Perhaps this combination of factors is one of the reasons why the Creator nourished humanity (in its early days) with the products from the Land of Ararat. With its natural environment and climatic conditions, it is the most favorable area for the eternal existence of the Armenians and, generally, the human race. The mission of producing on this land is destined for the Armenians, as a nation that has been connected to this land with its blood and sweat since ancient times.

An example of the Armenian attitude towards land as an important resource is the testimony of the Greek historian Strabo (63 BC–23 A.D.), who mentioned that during the reign of [Artaxias I](#), there was no uncultivated land in Armenia. And this was the case despite the fact that classical slavery never existed in our society, and the laborious task of cultivating the land was conducted by its native inhabitants.

For their economic, social, and security interests, people have always influenced nature, changed it, adapted it to their needs, and exploited its resources. They also realized that nature's exploitation could not be done thoughtlessly, causing irreversible damage to the environment. In this regard, our ancestors also had interesting experiences. For example, in the 4th century A.D., during the reign of the Armenian king Khosrov Kotak, large-scale afforestation works were carried out at the state level, where entire forests were planted and tended. One of the provisions of the First Council of the Armenian Church held in Ashtishat (373–374 A.D.) demanded the prudent treatment of trees. [Mkhitar Gosh](#) (circa 1120/1130–1213 A.D.) also addressed the protection and restoration of nature, especially forests, in his “Code of Laws” (1184 A.D.). He warned about the dangers of reckless exploitation of forests and established certain rules for their management. According to Gosh, forests must be protected for the general welfare of society.

The preservation of the homeland's nature is a complex issue that requires considerable effort and government intervention. Nonetheless, each individual can always contribute to this cause. First, by keeping the surrounding environment clean, by not polluting the land and water with household waste, and, if desired, by cleaning the environment alone or with like-minded people. High thoughts about the nation's past and future are just words against the backdrop of a homeland "decorated" with piles of garbage.

2.4. Homeland as a Refuge and Heritage

While valuing the *national* and the Armenian, we do not have the right to underestimate and disrespect others. Especially when, due to historical circumstances, the majority of Armenians have settled outside their historical homeland, in various religious, national, cultural, and civilizational environments, mostly friendly. Armenians have provided brilliant examples of individual self-realization in these foreign environments, while simultaneously succeeding to preserve their national identity and individuality. However, eventually, only the national environment has been able to ensure the continuation of national individuality even among the most successful individuals and their descendants. Without it, their new generations have drifted away from their identity and roots, even though they are well aware of their origin.

As the cradle of the collective identity of the Armenian people, Armenia cannot be considered merely as the land of those who live here and have Armenian citizenship. The goal of the nation and the state should be to create attractive conditions and encourage individuals of Armenian descent to return to their roots and homeland. Over the years, a good tradition has been established in which our compatriots living abroad strive, is possible, to return to Armenia or, at the very least, to establish another home here, primarily in the (small) homeland. This is an important undertaking not only for the present but also for future generations. In this regard, the homeland should also be perceived as a value to be passed on to the next generations, and its natural wealth and potential should be treated sparingly.

Besides its territorial, spiritual, and other dimensions and manifestations, the homeland is intricately connected with one more critical component – the state.

3. State

For an individual, alongside traditional family and spiritual authority, state authority comes to complete the role and place of authority in a person's life. Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, the Armenian nation is one of the few nations with its own independent state, one of 195 independent nations, and one of the approximately 7,000 languages spoken in the world, according to some researchers. It is a unique phenomenon in human civilization in terms of its journey, the blows it has received, and its ability to stand up and revive after them.

It is commonly said, and not only among us, that "*state is an absolute value*". If we set aside the legal and political formulations, we can say that the state is a means for people, in our case – Armenians, to live and create safely in their own homeland. As mentioned above,

the homeland, with its sanctity and spiritual importance, is also a means for nation's perpetuation – a living environment. Therefore, if both the homeland and the state are merely means, they cannot be more important than what they are meant to serve – the people, in this case, the Armenian nation. Moreover, one of the functions of the state is to ensure and strengthen the nation's connection with its homeland. Based on the above, we can say that for Armenians, it is not the state and statehood that are the “*absolute values*”, but rather the “*national state*”. Without its national content, any nation-state becomes merely a place of residence, often losing competition with many others in terms of comfort, everyday life, and other matters.

According to the Bible, the state, as a system of human authority, was meant to keep people from “evil deeds”, without separating sin from crime. The monarch was seen as the earthly representative of the heavenly Lord, deriving his rights and authority from the supreme authority, with the primary goal of preparing people for eternity. In the modern world, the function of the state is to ensure law and order. For Armenians, who have survived the Genocide and prioritize external security in an unfavorable environment, the role of statehood is to save and protect the Armenian people on their homeland from sin, crime, and the threat of annihilation.

For the Armenians who have been under the domination of various empires and found refuge in many countries of the world, the existence of their own statehood allows the nation to live and create in their homeland as possessors, to preserve and develop their spiritual and cultural heritage and collective identity, guarantee legality and justice, and ensure harmonious coexistence and security. The paramount task of the independent statehood of a nation that has gone through such a path should be to prevent the injustices, discriminations, oppressions, and illegalities known from history – both their own and those of others', in its own homeland. Indeed, Armenian statehood is called upon to fully guarantee the rights and freedoms of all its citizens, regardless of their ethnic origin, while unwaveringly preserving its national essence.

As demonstrated by at least the last 100 years of human history, theories about creating an ideal society and state on Earth are futile and destructive. Thus, even the “best” nation-state should be seen as a continuous process of institutional improvement, rather than a rigid end result.

In the era known as the “*Age of the iron ladle*”⁴, it is commonly said that the national state “*must be strong*”. This approach is understandable and acceptable. However, it is also true that a state devoid of genuine values and focused solely on external power is eventually doomed to destruction. The Third Reich – the Nazi Germany was a powerful country with strong military and efficient state system governance, but it became a scourge not only for humanity but also for the German nation itself. Similarly, Sodom and Gomorrah, known from biblical history, were powerful and wealthy city-states, which became symbols of corruption. Many times, throughout history we, Armenians, also have often witnessed the fall of powerful but internally weak and unjust empires.

⁴ See: Iron Ladle by Khrimyan Hayrig - The Armenite, <https://thearmenite.com/2014/03/iron-ladle-khrimyan-hayrig/?form=MGoAV3> (download date: 12.02.2025).

It is assumed that regardless of the views of those in power, the nation-state is obligated to help its people to preserve and develop their spiritual and cultural heritage, profess its own values, and ensure the freedom of its citizens' *soul, body, and voice* (choice). This means being free to profess its traditional and national values, excluding all types of possibilities for human enslavement, trafficking, and exploitation, and finally, fully ensuring the right of citizens to elect and be elected under free and fair conditions with a clear conscience and responsibility.

Moral and legal restrictions and the unwritten rules of political life must also be established and maintained through public consensus and agreements within social and political circles, as well as through political traditions. Armenian history has such episodes, when the national elite, led by secular and spiritual leaders, found themselves in such situations. For instance, the response of the Artashat Council in 449 A.D. to the Persian King Yazdegerd established the “red lines” and “minimum standards” of legitimacy for any authority concerning the Armenian nation. Specifically, by emphasizing the Christian faith as the supreme means of the nation's perpetuation, the Armenian rulers practically stressed that our nation's spiritual sovereignty is non-negotiable, regardless of the state within which Armenians live, whether their own or, especially, of others.

Indeed, the decision made in 449 A.D. reflected the historical and political realities of the time, and the perceptions and understandings within Armenian society may be different today. Whatever they may be, the authority of a nation-state has no right to violate the God-given and constitutional rights of its citizens; otherwise, the orders devoid of freedom and truth become humiliating even in their own country, and the state itself transforms from a means of endurance into a yoke. Such was the situation for freedom-loving people in the above-mentioned “civilized” and “developed” Nazi Germany.

It is impossible to create something national simply by superficially reproducing the **forms** that are considered national. A nation that distances itself from real values and emphasizes external traditionalism encourages formalism, breeds disappointment, and ultimately leads people away from their collective identity. A nation-state must avoid formalism by reflecting the actual functions of the state in its social, political, foreign policy, and security structures, goals, and programs, rather than replacing them with the fetishization of forms, symbols, attributes, and individuals. Of course, citizens should regard their state's symbols with due respect and pride, but in daily life, pride should not be the only thing expected from the country. Let us also acknowledge that there are moments when John F. Kennedy's words – “*Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country*”⁵ – apply to us as well. These are instances where an individual prioritizing the common good over personal interest extends a helping hand to his or her fellow citizens, thus aiding both them and the state.

We are convinced that in a nation-state, it should be unacceptable for public attention to be focused more frequently on animals' rights due to the allocation of resources, rather than, for example, on the rights of our underprivileged compatriots (fellow citizens), who feed from garbage bins. Addressing the vital issues of socially vulnerable groups (SVG) is the

⁵ One of the most iconic quotes from John F. Kennedy's inaugural address on January 20, 1961.

minimum standard by which the level of the development of Armenian statehood should be measured.

Speaking about the fetishization of individuals, we must reiterate the already mentioned formula: *“The one who serves, is not greater than the one who is served”*. Today, when the sacral foundations of authority are derived from human society and as in the past, from the representation of the divine will, a democratically elected government, despite having a broad mandate to act, has a narrow “window” for error. Thus, being “non-sacral” and temporary, theoretically, it can be changed at any time and with any frequency. This once again records that the current, *“tactical personalization,”* being transient, cannot claim to re-edit the vision and values underlying a nation-state. The still ongoing withdrawal of Lenin’s statues that once populated 1/6 of the world, is an example of proving this point.

It is also interesting to note the perception at the core of modern democratic systems, which posits that *“The people, in their entirety, are infallible”*, condensed in the Latin saying *“Vox populi, vox Dei”*⁶. In this context, the thought expressed by the renowned 8th-century Anglo-Saxon scholar, theologian, and poet Alcuin, in a letter dated 798 A.D. to the future emperor Charlemagne, is noteworthy: *“We ought not to listen to those who say, ‘The voice of the people is the voice of God’, for the tumult of the crowd is always close to madness”*. In connection with the imperfections of democracy as a system for the formation of state authority, it is customary to cite Winston Churchill’s symptomatic famous words or the fact that Adolf Hitler was elected the chancellor of Germany through fair and transparent democratic elections. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the public demand, voiced at the Roman governor’s palace regarding the fate of Jesus of Nazareth – *“Crucify Him”*, – proves that a decision made through a direct act of democracy can be, to put it mildly, wrong.

Initially, an individual’s connection with the homeland and the nation is freer and more liberal than with the state. Giving a special place and significance to the homeland in one’s life, an individual can admire it from afar – *“like the sun”*, whereas relations with the state are initially more objective, implying mutually legislated obligations and responsibilities. Of course, such relations are universal and do exist for an Armenian individual as a citizen of any state. For example, in the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian conflict, Armenian citizens are involved on both sides, as was the case during the long Iran–Iraq war. This is as tragic as the war itself, yet lawful, for in each case, people are driven by their sense of civic duty. This is a manifestation of *“civic patriotism”*. Consequently, the profound Armenian attitude towards the wars of empires arises naturally, as Armenians find themselves under threat, being in both the “winning” and the “losing” camps. This also shapes the first layer of the policy of the Armenian statehood in interaction with the world – for Armenia, countries with large Armenian communities cannot be unimportant.

The situation has slightly different *nuances* when it comes to one’s own nation-state. Being a devout citizen is necessary but not sufficient condition for patriotism. For a patriot, the duty to serve the nation and the country is not merely a legal requirement but also a moral imperative. Even the legal formalization of rights and obligations with the native state in the form of citizenship sets only the minimum threshold of an individual’s responsibility.

⁶ *“The voice of the people is the voice of God”*.

Moreover, patriotism in its manifestations is not limited to the modest bounds prescribed by law – it extends to self-sacrifice. If a taxpayer is a hero, who then is the one who repays that country with his own life at a critical moment? And if everything is regulated by legal acts, is there anyone who can compel a person to become a hero if it is beyond that person's convictions and value system?

It is impossible to educate patriotic and homeland-loving generations based on the simplistic logic that an individual's duties towards their state are limited, for example, to paying taxes and not breaking laws, while the state is responsible for hiring paid workers for everything else. Even in the most developed and wealthy countries, many issues – social, cultural, and educational – are resolved through public initiatives and the efforts of individuals and organizations.

An Armenian state with a national agenda cannot limit its interests and historical and moral responsibilities exclusively to the territory of the Republic of Armenia (RA). Of course, the country's border is not an imaginary line beyond which the issues and aspirations of the Armenian people disappear, while the people living in the homeland become indifferent and disconnected from these issues. This is an artificial agenda, and one natural result will be mirrored indifference and neglect of the RA and its people's fate by *"external Armenians"*.

Even the state's inability to defend Armenian interests in bilateral relations and on the international stage cannot justify limitation and suppression of public attention and activity in this area. The Armenian nation, despite its internal weak and strong ties, is nonetheless a unified organism; any part of it cannot be severed without causing pain or being noticed by others. Thus, regardless of the political course of the current authorities, the public cannot remain indifferent and unresponsive to the loss of Artsakh and the issue of the return of the Artsakh Armenians.

From the perspective of national statehood, the Diaspora is the entirety of Armenians who do not have RA citizenship, regardless of their place of residence, while the phenomenon of Armenian communities is the form of organization of national life in a foreign state, regardless of the citizenship of the people forming the community. Due to historical circumstances, these are Armenian enclaves operating outside the borders of the national state, formed with spiritual, social, and cultural life, characterized by the specific features and agendas of the country and place of residence. One of these features is that the Diaspora is largely the result of the Genocide, and this cannot be ignored or forgotten.

Objectively, the state's issues in intra-Armenian relations with the Diaspora include the preservation of the Armenian identity, ensuring the interests of the Armenian people, encouraging repatriation, and providing RA citizenship. The absence of RA citizenship is a legal obstacle to the Armenian people's full participation in RA public-political life. As a result, an imbalance of duties and rights is formed in their relations with the Homeland, which needs to be corrected by developing existing forms of involvement and the creating of new ones. Regardless of everything, in the absence of other obstacles, Armenians should strive to ensure the active presence of Armenia in their family's lives, including the ownership of a home in the Homeland.

The toolkit of the national state in working with the Diaspora, both in terms of human resources and agenda, should reflect the problems of the Diaspora, its real weight and

significance in national life, and the promotion of Armenia's national-state interests, including the establishment and development of relations with other nations and states. The preservation of the national content of the Armenian communities is crucial for maintaining the Diaspora as a national gene pool, encompassing human, spiritual, and material potential.

A state guided by a national agenda must be ready to mobilize the nation's potential and create tools for its efficient management. It must first declare its ambitions to take on the active role of the nation's political core and then initiate the process of forming nationwide consultative bodies and formats.

Separately, the Diaspora must take its rightful place in the life of the Armenian statehood. The state's relations with the communities should be built on the principles of equality and mutual assistance, encouraging the institutional self-organization of the communities and their cooperation with each other.

(To be continued)