The Anatolian Genocide:

Understanding Narratives Of Tragedy From An Orthodox Perspective

by

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Abstract

This project looks at the Anatolian genocide, an umbrella term for the systematic destruction of Orthodox Christians of Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek ethnicities in the Ottoman Empire and the emerging Republic of Turkey in the first two decades of the 20th century and how Orthodox Christians process the genocide, as well as other narratives of tragedy, through the lens of their faith. Survey work of a diverse group of Orthodox Christians of various ethnic backgrounds showed a major lack of knowledge of the Anatolian genocide as well as much uncertainty in understanding the events through their Orthodox faith. The returned surveys also showed an eagerness to learn more about both the genocide and an Orthodox Christian approach to the matter. This work includes a brief, approachable history of the genocide as well as an examination of how the Orthodox Church looks at tragic events through patristic commentary on the Bible, liturgical texts, canons, and more as part of a new model of ministry.

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Chapter One: Introduction

On January 13, 2015, the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople canonized the elder Paisios (Eznepidis), now known as St. Paisios of the Holy Mountain. Paisios, who reposed in 1994, was well known for his piety and, despite being a monk and an ascetic, for dispensing spiritual advice to his many visitors. After his passing, his status as a figure of popular devotion among Orthodox faithful increased and ultimately lead to the aforementioned canonization. Paisios's popularity with Orthodox Christians naturally resulted in an increased interest in another saint who is intimately connected with Paisios - St. Arsenios of Cappadocia. Arsenios was the spiritual father of the Eznepedis[1] family, and he baptized Paisios as Arsenios - the name Paisios was given to the saint later when he was tonsured as a monk. Paisios maintained a lifelong devotion to Arsenios and wrote a biography of the saint.

Arsenios lived in Cappadocia[2] in what is now southeastern Turkey and was a noted spiritual father. He is well-known in the Orthodox world

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[1] Eznepedis is a Hellenized version of the Turkish Zeynep, from the Arabic Zaynab. The name means "fragrant flower" and is well known in Islam because the name was prominent in the prophet Muhammad's family.

[2] Kapadokya in modern Turkish. Many of the place names of former Greek areas in modern Turkey are merely Turkish versions of the original Greek.

for using the Psalter[3] as a reference point for blessings where no prayers for a specific circumstance existed. Most of these Psalm references conform to the advice that one would expect from a spiritual elder. Arsenios recommended Psalm 19 as a prayer for successful childbirth, while he listed Psalm 28 as a prayer for one suffering from mental illness. His prescription of Psalm 142, though, gives us something unexpected; he assigns the Psalm "[s]o that God makes peaceful the rebel who is doing bad; then even if he is a Kurd he becomes a lamb." The reference to a Kurd in the midst of a list of Psalms and spiritual needs is jarring and unexpected - why is the spiritual elder talking about Kurds? The answer lies in the story of the Asia Minor genocide - the tragic events that befell the Orthodox Christian population of Anatolia in the first two decades of the twentieth century during the waning days of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the modern Republic of Turkey.

The Asia Minor or Anatolian genocide was an epochal event that resulted in millions of Orthodox Christians, mostly of Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek ethnicity, killed, forced out of their homes and ancestral homelands, forcibly converted to Islam, and subjected to many other atrocities. While the Asia Minor genocide was by no means the first genocide in human history, it spurred the development of the concept of

[3] The Book of Psalms.

genocide by Raphael Lemkin, a Polish Jew who coined the term after studying the Anatolian genocide and using its history as a reference point to the Holocaust.[4] In fact, Adolf Hitler, in his Obersalzberg[5] speech,[6] used the comparative obscurity to the West of the events that happened in Asia Minor to justify the actions of the Holocaust when he said "Who today, after all, remembers the Armenians?"[7]

While the tragic events that occurred in Asia Minor during the end of the Ottoman era and the beginning of republican Turkey—generally the years between 1914 and 1922—are clearly important from a historical perspective and can be seen as the opening volley of the great human fratricides of the twentieth century, from World War I to the Holocaust through the killing fields of Cambodia and the horrors of Rwanda, what further interest, beyond of course the natural Christian compassion for their fellow man, do they hold to Orthodox Christians? There are a number of reasons for Orthodox Christians to know the story of the genocide as well as try to understand it in a Christian context. Part of being a Christian is knowing one's story. Orthodox Christians hear the

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[4] Yair Auron, The Banality Of Denial: Israel And The Armenian Genocide (Piscataway, NY: Transaction Publishers, 2004) 9.

[5] A mountain side resort town in Bavaria.

[6] Louis P. Lochner, *What About Germany?* (New York, NY: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1942), 4.

[7] "Wer redet heute noch von der Vernichtung der Armenier?".

Gospel and recite the Symbol of Faith, also referred to as the Creed, every Sunday, and understanding this belief statement includes knowing the events that lead to its creation. The genocide is part of the story of Orthodox Christians, and especially as Orthodox Christians of the 21st century - the events happened within the past 100 years, which in Orthodox history is a very short time ago indeed.

The genocide is not just part of the story but part of the identity of Orthodox Christians. Some parts of the identity are chosen, while others are inflicted upon the faithful. The distinctive liturgical traditions of the Orthodox Church developed organically from within as well as from external pressures, while the difficult experiences of the Church under Communism in Russia and Eastern Europe was not something chosen by the faithful. The experience of the Church during the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine cannot help but be viewed through the lens of the tragedies which she endured during the bulk of the 20th century. The beauty and form of the Orthodox liturgy, with its characteristic music and prayers, are parts of Orthodox identity; the events of the genocide, as well as the Holodomor in the Ukraine and many other catastrophes that befell Orthodox people belong, I would argue, also to the identity of Orthodox Christians. While most Orthodox likely don't tend to think in these terms, and certainly don't conflate their various narratives of tragedy, Orthodox

Christian believers are a people that have been singled out and persecuted at various times, and especially during the Anatolian genocide, not for ethnicity but for common religious beliefs, which in itself makes the Orthodox their own *ethnos* or nation. The Ottoman Turks themselves recognized this last part. For organizational and administrative purposes the Ottomans categorized conquered subjects in the millet system based on the subjects' religion rather than ethnicity.

Another aspect of Orthodox Christian interest in the genocide is the fact that current events in the Near and Middle East, so greatly influenced by the genocide and other legacies of the Ottoman Empire, point to the ultimate destruction of the area's (mostly Orthodox) Christian communities. The familiar refrain of the post-Holocaust world of "Never Again" rings true but it in fact has happened again and, sadly, has happened often. In such a world of religiously-motivated violence how do believers maintain their faith in Christ? On the other hand, in a world driven by social media, with 280-word tweets and online click bait informing young people of the day's news, it is easy, if one is even interested at all, to get a very one-sided view of the genocide, with a non-stop slide show of tragic photos from the catastrophe, as we are seeing with the recent Azeri attacks on Armenia. Finally, there is the well-funded campaign of the Republic of Turkey to deny that the tragic events of one

hundred years ago were really a genocide. How do Orthodox Christians respond to such denial?

This project has several goals. One is to provide a non-academic, digestible history of the Anatolian genocide for Orthodox Christians who wish to know the story of what happened, and what really every Orthodox Christian should know regardless of their ethnic background. Another goal is to provide a resource for someone who wishes to preach a sermon or teach a workshop at the parish level on the genocide. A final goal, and probably the most important aim of this work, is to provide a framework on how Orthodox believers process the events of the Asia Minor genocide through the lens of their faith and how they react to current events in the Orthodox Christian world which in many ways mirror the tragic events of over one hundred years ago.

Chapter Two: Genocide And Genocide Denial

Before proceeding, we need to define what is meant by the word "genocide", which as noted above was coined by Raphael Lemkin in the context of the history of the tragic events in Asia Minor and the Holocaust. The term genocide is a combination of Greek and Latin. The Greek *genos* has multiple meanings in Classical Greek—nation, kindred, family, homeland, among others—but the primary meaning is "race". The second root "cide" comes from *caedere*, which means "kill" in Latin. The standard definition has come to be the one defined by the United Nations in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which was adopted by the U.N.'s December 9,1948 General Assembly Resolution 260. This of course is not without controversy - there are other definitions of genocide[8], and the Holocaust, for which the U.N. definition was adopted, has come to overshadow other genocides, for various reasons. Nevertheless, the United Nations's formulation of what genocide is contains enough of the common elements of other genocide definitions

[8] One of many examples of alternate definitions is from sociologist Helen Fein: "Genocide is a series of purposeful actions by a perpetrator(s) to destroy a collectivity through mass or selective murders of group members and suppressing the biological and social reproduction of the collectivity. This can be accomplished through the imposed proscription or restriction of reproduction of group members, increasing infant mortality, and breaking the linkage between reproduction and socialization of children in the family or group of origin. The perpetrator may represent the state of the victim, another state, or another collectivity." Adam Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, Taylor, & Francis, 2006) 15.

to make it more than satisfactory for our purposes. The U.N. resolution defines genocide as:

> any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: Killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part, imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.[9]

The tragic events of the Asia Minor genocide of Orthodox Christians meet every single criterion of the United Nations's definition of genocide. While this definition is purely secular, it also contains conditions that fall squarely within the realm of Orthodox Christian morality, which is opposed to murder, torture, abortion, kidnapping, and other abominations. The Anatolian genocide, it is important to note, was not just the namesake of the term "genocide" but also not the only genocide of Orthodox Christians. The Holodomor—the forced starvation of Ukrainians by the Soviet state—and the genocide of Orthodox Serbs by Roman Catholic Croatians—are two recent examples. There are, sadly, also examples of Orthodox Christians conducting massacres, whether in an organized fashion such as in the dissolution of Yugoslavia or the retaliatory actions of the

[9] W.D. Rubinstein, *Genocide: A History* (London, UK: Pearson Education, 2004) 308.

retreating Greek army during the Asia Minor catastrophe.

Genocide denial, which can be practiced by individuals, groups, or governments, is something that not only denies history but also continues to harm the victims and enable the perpetrators. Gregory Stanton, writing on behalf of the organization Genocide Watch, suggests[10] that genocide denial harms the victims by essentially "killing" them a second time, in this case culturally and psychologically. Denial interferes with healing and can encourage further tension and hatred by stigmatizing survivors and marginalizing victims. In a case such as the Anatolian genocide where the original victims are all deceased, the descendants, both biologically and culturally or religiously, can also experience genocide denial as victims. Perpetrators are enabled by genocide denial in the most basic sense as when they are found innocent or, as happened in the 1918-1920 Ottoman Courts-Martial,[11] when the guilty are allowed to go free due to no existing structure to enforce the court ruling.[12] Denial can encourage future genocide, and generations of children can be misinformed in school and

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[10] Dylan Fotiadis, "Undeniably Difficult: Extradition and Genocide Denial Laws", *Wash. U. Global Stud. L. Rev*. 3, no. 17 (2018) 677, accessed July 23, 2023, https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/law_globalstudies/vol17/iss3/10.

[11] Sean McMeekin, *The Ottoman Endgame: War, Revolution, And The Making Of The Modern Middle East* 1908-1923 (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2015) 426.

[12] Vahakn Dadrian, *The History Of The Armenian Genocide* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2003) 342.

through popular culture and continue to perpetuate the falsehoods they have learned. A related phenomenon to genocide denial is what Dr. Elizabeth Prodromou calls memorycide. In addressing the destruction of churches she tells us that “Destruction of sacred sites is a form of memorycide. It kills the memory of people on a site.”[13] The history of Christianity, to be fair, includes its own from of memorycide, with pagan temples such as the Parthenon[14] being converted to churches, traditions such as the use of koliva[15] being Christianized, etc.

Denial of the genocide has been a phenomena since the time of the destructive acts themselves, with first the Ottoman and then the Republic of Turkey having various rationales for what did (or in their views) didn’t happen. From the perspective of deniers, the victims were resettled rather than massacred. There may have been some rogue officials that crossed the line but there was no organized campaign. Bad weather and disease contributed to the (in their view much lower) death count, as did outlaw

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[13] “A Strong Message From The Archon’s Conference On Religious Freedom To Stop The Persecution Of Christians In The Middle East”, Thema News, accessed August 2, 2019, http://en.protothema.gr/a-strong-message-from-the-archons-conference-on-religious-freedom-to-stop-the-persecution-of-christians-in-the-middle-east/.

[14] Paul Stephenson, *New Rome: Empire In The East* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2022) 177.

[15] Jane Ellen Harrison, *Prolegomena to the study of Greek religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1903) 35.

bands of Kurds and others.[16] Deniers will also point to a relative lack of documentation of the purported events.[17]

The natural resulting question here is how does an Orthodox Christian, regardless of ethnic background, respond to what happened in Anatolia, even over one hundred years after the fact? There is a broad spectrum of potential reactions. For many Orthodox Christians, the genocide is only vaguely known. In my survey work for this project the vast majority of responders professed to know little to nothing about the story of the genocide but also mostly did not hold much animosity towards Turks or Muslims in general. While the question about the importance of history itself is addressed further on in this project, what follows is a brief history of the genocide. The purpose of this short history is for us to know and understand the historical background and context of what became unthinkable acts committed on people specifically because they were Orthodox Christians. Being familiar with the historical background of the Anatolian genocide also helps everyone to be watchful for genocide and genocidal activity which is, sadly, an ongoing phenomenon, as we see in the recent Azeri actions against Armenia. This watchfulness is a way to

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[16] Ronald Grigor Suny, "*They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else": A History of the Armenian Genocide* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015) 12.

[17] Thomas de Waal, *Great Catastrophe: Armenians and Turks in the Shadow of Genocide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) 54.

fulfill Christ's command to love the neighbor and Paul's directive in Galatians: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."[18]

It is tempting to look at the genocide as an ethnic, rather than religious, event. My preferred term of Anatolian or Asia Minor genocide is not widely used; rather, one ethnicity followed by the word genocide, such as Assyrian or Pontic Greek genocide, is normally used. Events, books, media, and activities dealing with the genocide are usually focused on one ethnic element to the exclusion of others. The celebration of the culture of different ethnicities can be seen as a wonderful gift from God, but to an Orthodox Christian faith should always trump any ethnic consideration. The notion that an Orthodox Christian is living in diaspora is, as Peter L'Huillier says, "inaccurate and often tendentious,"[19] if we look at it from the perspective of faith (excepting the notion that believers are all together as diaspora in this world waiting for the next). The idea of ethnophyletism, which says that the ethnicity of churchgoers should match their administrators was condemned as a heresy[20] in 1872 by a

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[18] Galatians 6:2.

[19] Peter L'Huillier, "Are We Living in Diaspora?", Jacob's Well (Fall 2003), accessed July 23, 2023, https://www.jacwell.org/Fall_2003/are_we_living_in_diaspora.htm.

[20] Andrew Damick, *Orthodoxy And Heterodoxy* (Chesterton, Indiana: Ancient Faith Publishing, 2011), 25.

council in Constantinople.[21] Orthodox immigrants to the United States, for example, are not bound to attend a church connected to the Mother Church back home, although for language and cultural reasons this has quite often happened. This phenomenon is a problem with which Orthodox faithful have not fully dealt with in America, where some cities have bishops from multiple Orthodox jurisdictions and the youth camp system is de facto segregated along jurisdictional lines, robbing Orthodox children of an opportunity to develop strong bonds across ethnic lines with other Orthodox youth. While the Ottoman Empire had no problem committing violence against their Muslim subjects—such as the 1826 massacre of the Janissaries known euphemistically as the Auspicious Incident,[22] or the execution of Arab Muslims responsible for a massacre of Christians in Damascus in 1858—the Empire singled out their Armenians, Assyrians, and Greek subjects because they were Orthodox Christians.[23] Their ethnicity was basically interchangeable to the rulers.[24]

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[21] Matthew Namee, The "Bulgarian Question" and the 1872 Council of Constantinople, Part 4, accessed March 30, 2023, https://orthodoxhistory.org/2012/12/04/the-bulgarian-question-and-the-1872-council-of-constantinople-part-4/. This post contains a translation of decree of the council.

[22] Patrick Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries: The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Empire* (London: Perennial, 1977) 456.

[23]Benny Morris and Dror Ze'evi, *The Thirty Year Genocide: Turkey's Destruction of Its Christian Minoritiees 1894-1924* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2019), 168.

[24] This is not to say that specific ethnicity did not come into play at certain times. A good deal of the persecution of the Armenian population came about because of the threat that the presence of Armenians in their historic homeland in eastern Anatolia presented to the Ottomans; Armenian independence would result in a major territorial loss of the Asia Minor heartland.

Chapter Three: History

The roots of the Asia Minor catastrophe lie in the story of the Ottoman Empire, which began in 1299[25] and ended with the establishment of the modern Republic of Turkey in 1923.[26] The empire spanned the far reaches of North Africa, Arabia and the Levant, the Balkans and part of Central Europe, as well as its heartland in Asia Minor and the Fertile Crescent to the constantly-shifting border with the Persian Empire.[27] The empire was multi-ethnic and multi-religious, with a Christian majority in the Balkans and a Muslim majority in Anatolia, with large minorities of the other faith in both areas[28] The Ottomans ruled by the millet[29] system, where each religious community ruled its own affairs - its social institutions, religious affairs, internal judicial affairs, schooling, and, most importantly, collection of taxes to send to the Ottoman

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[25] Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story Of The Ottoman Empire 1300-1923* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2005) 31.

[26]McMeekin, 487.

[27] Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300-1650: The Structure Of Power* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) 50.

[28] Harry Psomiades, *Fridtjof Nansen And The Greek Refugee Crisis 1922-1924* (New York, NY: Athens Printing Company, 2011) 5.

[29]Like many Ottoman religious terms, the word comes from Arabic. *Millah* in Arabic means "nation" - like the Greek "*ethnos*". The Ottomans grouped people by religion rather than ethnicity.

government.[30] Millet[31] communities were largely left alone to the extent that they obeyed their second class status and the local Ottoman authorities. Tolerance and protection from local rulers and others was not always uniform and served as a reminder of the inferior status of Christian communities, and resentment on the part of the Christian subjects of the empire grew over time. Due to the diversity within the empire, the authoritarian nature of the government, and the lack of consistency in enforcing the law, problems with millet communities were often dealt with in extremes of violence; the genocide would become the ultimate legacy of this situation.[32]

The nineteenth century was the era of national awakening in Europe, and the Ottoman Empire felt the fury of its Christian subjects. The Orthodox Christian Serbs began the first uprising in the Balkans in 1804,[33] and the war for independence for Balkan Greeks began in 1821.[34] During this same period the Ottoman Christian minority communities appealed to

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[30] Patrick Balfour Kinross, *Ataturk: The Rebirth Of A Nation* (New York, NY: William Morrow & Co., 1965) 357.

[31] Kenan Cetinkaya, "The Importance Of Dialogue In Turkey," *Journal Of Ecumenical Studies* 50, No. 1 (Winter 2015): 169.

[32] Sargon Donabed, *Reforging A Forgotten History: Iraq And The Assyrians In The Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, United Kingdom: Edinburgh University Press, 2015) 65.

[33] Barbara Jelavich, *History Of The Balkans: Eighteenth And Nineteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 193.

[34] David Brewer, *The Greek War Of Independence*: *The Struggle For Freedom From Ottoman Oppression* (New York, NY: Abrams Books, 2001) 235.

European powers, especially Russia,[35] seen as the natural protector for Orthodox Christians, for help. This naturally angered the Ottoman authorities, who saw this as treasonous and threatening. Christian religious authorities outside the area of the revolutions understood this and often vocally opposed their co-religionists' revolts. The Ecumenical Patriarch Gregory V, for example, spoke out against the Greek revolution because he knew that the Greeks in Constantinople would suffer punishment for the actions of the rebel Greeks in the Balkans.[36] Gregory would nevertheless be blamed by the Ottoman authorities and was hanged from the gate[37] leading into the Patriarchate.[38]The success of some of these revolts lead to a problem for the empire: Muslim refugees, usually Turks but also Pomaks and Bosniaks[39] forced out of the newly liberated areas, needed to be resettled in Ottoman territory. This would happen, but with dire consequences for the Christians in Asia Minor.

Other geopolitical factors in the nineteenth century helped set the stage for the genocide. The European powers mentioned above sought,

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[35] Orlando Figes, *The Crimean War: A History* (New York, NY: Metropolitan Books, 2010) 165.

[36] Matthew Namee, "The Death Of Patriarch Gregory V Of Constantinople, 1821," *Orthodox History*, March 25, 2010, https://orthodoxhistory.org/2010/03/25/the-death-of-patriarch-gregory-v-of-constantinople-1821/.

[37] The gate remains closed and out of use to this day.

[38] Adrian Fortescue, *The Orthodox Eastern Church* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2001) 341.

[39] Bulgarian Muslims and Serbo-Croatian Muslims, respectively.

and received, trade agreements with the Empire that were usually quite lopsidedly in favor of the foreign power.[40] Several wars and the worldwide financial crises of the 1870s and 1890s strained the Ottoman treasuries,[41] while the rise of a prosperous Christian middle class earned the resentment of the much less successful Muslim peasantry. The resentful peasantry found a natural solidarity with the Muslim Ottoman elite over their faith and their Turkishness.

The nineteenth century, while a time of diplomatic humiliation and territorial and population loss for the empire, was also an era of reforms, or attempted reforms. The Tanzimat[42]—reform—period went from 1839-1876. Reform came largely from a desire from the Empire to modernize as well as to confront the demands of the minorities.[43] The court systems, conscription system, education, minority constitutions, and many other issues were addressed. The culmination of the Tanzimat era was the institution of a new constitution in 1876[44] proclaiming all

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[40] V. Necla Geyikdağı, *Foreign Investment In The Ottoman Empire: International Trade And Relations 1854-1914* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2011) 25.

[41] Murat Birdal, *The Political Economy of Ottoman Public Debt: Insolvency and European Financial Control in the Late Nineteenth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010) 256.

[42] Jakub Mazanec, "The Ottoman Empire At The Beginning Of The Tanzimat Period," Prague Papers On The History Of Ottoman Relations 3, no. 2 (Fall 2016): 21.

[43] Christopher de Bellaigue, *The Islamic Enlightenment* (New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017) 72.

[44] William Cleveland, *A History Of The Modern Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2012) 79.

citizens, or rather subjects, to be Ottomans, regardless of ethnic or religious background, and for all religions to be equal before the law, with Islam remaining the official faith of the empire. The Sultan remained the supreme power but in conjunction with an elected parliament. He soon dissolved the parliament - an action typical of the vagaries of Ottoman government and indicative of why most reforms fell through. One important result of the reform era was the creation of the Committee of Union and Progress (the CUP),[45] a movement which later became a political party. While the CUP would eventually splinter into many different, smaller groups, and ultimately become the Young Turks who founded modern Turkey, the group first set forth the notion of pan-Turanism - the superiority of Turkish Muslims and the unification of all Turkic people.[46]

The Tanzimat era did result in some legal secularization, but it also further separated the religious communities of the Empire. Foreign pressure had been the impetus for many reforms, but the resulting changes did not stop Christian millets from their relationships with their foreign protectors. Also, the perception among the Muslim peasantry was that the Christians only cared about themselves—a natural thing for those

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[45] M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Preparation For A Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001) 153.

[46]Halidé Edib, *Memoirs of Halidé Edib* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2005), 312.

considered inferior and constantly threatened—and were traitors to the Empire and loyal to other countries. The Russo-Turkish war[47] that followed in the two years—1877-1878—following the proclamation of the new constitution continued to move events forward. The Russians armed Ottoman Armenians to attack civilian Turks, thus making claims of treason a reality. The settlement of the war resulted in significant population, territorial, and financial loss for the Ottomans. The Treaty of San Stefano[48] made Russia the official protector of Ottoman Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks, furthering Turkish resentment against the Christian millets. The resentment soon became violent at the hands of the authorities. The government conducted a major massacre of Armenians in 1894.[49] The following year conflict broke out on Crete between Greeks and Muslims, with several massacres of Greek rebels.[50]

The turn of the century found events intensifying. Continued agitations from the European Powers convinced Turkish nationalists that the ultimate goal of the powers was to carve up the remains of the Empire

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[47] Francis Vinton Greene, *The Russian Army and its Campaigns in Turkey* (New York, NY: D. Appleton and Co., 1879) 10.

[48] L.S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2000) 408.

[49] Lord Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries: The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Empire* (New York, NY: Morrow, 1977) 559.

[50] Leonidas Kallivretakis, *A Century of Revolutions: The Cretan Question between European and Near Eastern Politics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008) 27.

and distribute them amongst themselves. In 1908 the CUP revolted against the government with goals of restoring the 1876 constitution and decreasing the power of the Sultan.[51] Massacres by government forces began on minority populations, who were seen as natural allies of those seeking to reform the Empire.[52] Outright warfare soon followed in the Balkans. The two Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, between the Empire on one side and Bulgaria, Greece, and Montenegro on the other resulted in more territorial loss for the Ottoman Empire and eventually established the current European border of what is now Turkey. The humiliating defeat resulted in a coup with the CUP back in power.[53]

Anti-Christian activity continued with the specific aim of pressuring the Christians to leave the remaining territory of the Empire. Guilds were formed to replace the Christian middle class with a Muslim Turkish one. Boycotting and confiscation of Christian business became the norm and Christian men of military age were conscripted into the army and placed into labor battalions.[54] In these battalions the men were worked until they died, and the soldiers helped the process by ensuring that if the

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[51] Alan Palmer, *The Decline And Fall Of The Ottoman Empire* (New York, NY: Campbell Thompson & McLaughlin Ltd, 1992) 211.

[52] Alan Moorehead, *Gallipoli* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1956) 89.

[53] Palmer, 258.

[54] Eric Bogosian, *Operation Nemesis: The Assassination Plot That Avenged The Armenian Genocide* (New York, NY: Little, Brown And Company, 2017) 7.

non-stop work and malnutrition did not kill them, exposure to the elements would. Even at this late hour the Armenian leadership was still asking for reforms, which was seen by the Ottoman authorities as a threat to the Empire.This, along with a desire to return the Ottoman Empire to its former glory, was the final straw in pushing the Empire to enter World War I on the side of the Central Powers and therefore against Russia.[55]

Early defeats in the war gave the Ottomans another excuse to scapegoat the Armenians, and on April 24, 1915, Armenian intellectuals, clergy, and political leaders were rounded up and in most cases executed. This event and date traditionally mark the beginning of the Armenian element of the genocide.[56] Men were sent off to work battalions while women and children were given an hour, if that, to gather what they could carry and be marched off into the Syrian desert. Most of the elderly died during the trip, and many women and children were forced into sexual slavery or forced to live as Muslims.[57] The Assyrian component of the genocide dates to 1915, and is called in Assyrian “Seyfo."[58] meaning sword, a reference to the massacres to which they

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[55] Christopher Walker, Armenia: *The Survival Of A Nation* (London: Croom Helm, 1980) 200.

[56] Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Talaat Pasha: Father Of Modern Turkey, Architect Of Genocide* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018) 10.

[57] David Gaunt, *The Assyrian Genocide: Seyfo* (Santa Clarita, CA: Seyfo Center, 2011) 43.

[58] Hannibal Travis, *Genocide in the Middle East: The Ottoman Empire, Iraq, and Sudan* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2010) 237.

were subjected and the favored means of their execution. The Assyrians were largely killed in their ancestral homeland of Assyria in eastern Anatolia. Some of the massacres occurred outside the empire by Ottoman Turks and Kurds in Persia.[59] An account from German missionaries gives a description of what happened:

> There was absolutely no human power to protect these unhappy people from the savage onslaught of the invading hostile forces. It was an awful situation. At midnight the terrible exodus began; a concourse of 25,000 men, women, and children, Assyrians and Armenians, leaving cattle in the stables, all their household hoods and all the supply of food for winter, hurried, panic-stricken, on a long and painful journey to the Russian border, enduring the intense privations of a foot journey in the snow and mud, without any kind of preparation. ... It was a dreadful sight, ... many of the old people and children died along the way.
> The latest news is that four thousand Assyrians and one hundred Armenians have died of disease alone, at the mission, within the last five months. All villages in the surrounding district with two or three exceptions have been plundered and burnt; twenty thousand Christians have been slaughtered in Armenia and its environs. In Haftewan, a village of Salmas, 750 corpses without heads have been recovered from the wells and cisterns alone. Why? Because the commanding officer had put a price on every Christian head... In Dilman crowds of Christians were thrown into prison and driven to accept Islam.[60]

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[59] Philip O. Hopkins, "Iran's Ethnic Christians: The Assyrians And The Armenians," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 61, No. 1 (Spring 2018): 150.

[60] Abraham Yohannan, *The Death Of A Nation* (New York, NY: G.P. Putnam And Sons, 1916), 119-120.

Pontic Greeks - those Greeks in the Black Sea region of northern Anatolia, were liquidated in a similar fashion. The tragedy of the Pontic Greeks is particularly telling of the overall motivations of the Ottoman and Turkish leaders; the Greeks of the Pontos were very far from any wartime actions, proving the genocidal motivation of the authorities:

> Many children and elderly died during the voyage to Greece. When the crew realized they were dead, they were thrown overboard. Soon the mothers of dead children started pretending that they were still alive. After witnessing what was done to the deceased, they would hold on to them and comfort them as if they were still alive. They did this to give them a proper burial in Greece[61].

The Greek element of the Asia Minor genocide started later but continued for a longer period. Greek prime minister Eleutherios Venizelos kept Greece out of the Great War until 1917, and when Greece entered the war Venizelos threatened the Ottomans to leave their Greek subjects alone or else there would be reprisals on Muslims in Greece. The Greek army pursued the *Megali Idea*[62]—the “Great Idea”, an irredentist concept of a greater Greece incorporating all areas of Greek populations—and occupied Smyrna, a cosmopolitan Ottoman coastal city with a largely

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[61] Neal Ascherson, *Black Sea* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1996) 184.

[62] McMeekin, 429.

Christian population.[63] The army threatened Ankara, the headquarters of Kemal Pasha, the hero of the battle of Gallipoli[64] and the founder of what would soon be the Republic of Turkey. However, the Greek army overextended itself and became cut off from supply lines. The Imperial army soon drove them back to Smyrna, routed them, and burned the city.[65] This event was considered one of the most dreadful humanitarian crises ever seen unto that point, and it created a massive wave of refugees. American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire Henry Morgenthau, Sr., who wrote eloquently and sympathetically on the genocide, described the situation the refugees faced when leaving Anatolia:

> The condition of these people upon their arrival in Greece was pitiable beyond description. They had been herded upon every kind of craft that could float, crowded so densely on board that in many cases they had only room to stand on deck. There they were exposed alternately to the blistering sun and cold rain of variable September and October. In one case, which I myself beheld, seven thousand people were packed into a vessel that would have been crowded with a load of two thousand. In this and many other cases there was neither food to eat nor water to drink, and in numerous instances the ships were buffeted about for several days at sea before their wretched human cargoes could be brought to land. Typhoid and smallpox swept through

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[63] Lou Ureneck, *The Great Fire* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2015) 169.

[64] Moorehead, 129.

[65] Christos Papoutsy, *Ships Of Mercy* (Portsmouth, NH: Peter E. Randall Publisher, 2008) 15.

> the ships. Lice infested everyone. Babes were born on board. Men and women went insane. Some leaped overboard to end their miseries in the sea. Those who survived were landed without shelter upon the open beach, loaded with filth, racked by fever, without blankets or even warm clothing, without food and without money.[66]

It was at this time that Greek prime minister Venizelos and the Ottomans agreed on an exchange of populations,[67] with all Turks from Greece save the area of Western Thrace being sent to what would soon be Turkey, and the remaining Greeks in the Empire with the exception of those in Constantinople being sent to Greece. Ecumenical Patriarch Meletios IV strongly opposed this,[68] fearing that it would signal the end of the Greek population of the former Byzantine capital through attrition.

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[66] Henry Morgenthau, *I Was Sent To Athens* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, And Co., 1929) ch. 5.

[67] Dimitri Pentzopoulos, *The Balkan Exchange Of Minorities* (London, United Kingdom: C. Hurst And Co., 2002) 1076-1077.

[68] N. Michael Vaporis, *Witnesses For ChristL Orthodox Christian Neomartyrs of the Ottoman Period 1437-1860* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000) 336.

Chapter Four: Aftermath

The genocide has had an aftermath that has run in two streams. It was the first genocide of the 20th century and in many ways set the tone for the Holocaust, the Killing Fields of Cambodia, and many others. The Holocaust was inspired and shaped by the Anatolian genocide. As mentioned earlier, Hitler, in arguing that the Nazis would not receive opprobrium and obloquy from other civilized nations, said "Who today, after all, remembers the Armenians?". The Nazis also admired the Ottoman and Young Turk military history, which in the latter days of the Ottoman Empire was largely influenced by Germany—the Ottoman officers received German training and modeled their military after that of Germany.[69] In their own strange way, the Nazis thought their method of extermination of unwanted minorities such as Jews, homosexuals, Romani[70], and others by using gas chambers was humane, as opposed to the Turkish practice of burning and clubbing people to death. The Nazis also had a “humanitarian” aspect to the concentration camps with the infamous medical experiments - something in which the Ottomans had no interest. The second stream of aftermath was that of the refugees

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[69]Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2016) 55.

[70] The historical and preferred term for “Gypsies”.

themselves in new lands and their coreligionists left behind in what became modern Turkey. The Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek refugees brought new customs and accents to where they were relocated. The indigenous Greeks in Greece found it strange that the Greeks who came from the Ottoman Empire ate yoghurt with everything and spoke with strange accents or, in some cases, didn't speak Greek at all.[71] At one point the Greeks native to what we now know as modern Greece in the southern Balkans, out of resentment, thought that the government was favoring the refugees at the expense of those already living in Greece and labeled the government the *yoghurtokrateia*—"rule of the yoghurt eaters". For those Christians left behind in Turkey, the situation was far worse than food or accents. The remaining Christians in Turkey continued to be scapegoated. When in 1955 Greek Cypriots rebelled against British rule and wanted union with Greece, the Turkish government sponsored riots against Christian—not just Greek—store owners for three days in Istanbul. The rioters desecrated cemeteries, vandalized churches, and destroyed schools in the city. The remaining Greeks on the few Turkish Aegean Islands[72] were forced out in the 1960s. In the recent era of advanced genocide studies and continued Turkish denial of what actually

[71] One common indicator of a Greek in the Ottoman Empire was by what language he used - someone using the Greek alphabet; regardless of language, was Greek.

[72] Both Archbishop Iakovos and Patriarch Bartholomew grew up in Imvros, one of these islands.

happened, native Armenian journalists such as Hrant Dink have faced intimidation and assassination in an increasingly Islamized Turkey.[73] In the eastern part of Asia Minor, where Turkish rule is inconsistent and dependent of the vicissitudes of struggles with Kurdish rebels, the remaining Assyrian population continues to be discriminated against. In the traditional Assyrian city of Diyarbakir, one Assyrian family remains[74] as of 2018.

The previous reference to Adolf Hitler using the popular reception of the Asia Minor genocide to justify being able to get away with what would become the Holocaust still has meaning today. Despite the flourishing of new interest in the genocide during the late 1990s and throughout the new millennium, the story of the Anatolian catastrophe remains in relative obscurity. A random Google internet search[75] comes up with the following number of hits: “Holocaust” (which admittedly could refer to other things besides the events of the 1930s and ‘40s) 84.7 million. A search for the term “Armenian genocide” yields 8.2 million results while one for “Assyrian genocide” brings up 401, 000, and “Greek genocide” yields 11.5 million results. Similarly, a random search on e-commerce website

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[73] Taner Akçam, *The Young Turks’ Crime Against Humanity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012) 15.

[74] Sargon Donabed, email message to the author, July 25, 2018.

[75] This search, as well as the following Amazon and Twitter searches, was conducted on August 1, 2019.

Amazon.com under books gives the following results: “Holocaust” has over 20,000 hits while the search term “Armenian genocide” has 902 hits. The subject “Assyrian genocide” brings up 33 hits, and finally “Greek genocide” yields 96 hits. Twitter subject searches give the number of related tweets in the past hour; Holocaust and Armenian genocide tweets, in a random search, numbered 130 mentions in the past hour, while Assyrian genocide and Greek genocide tweets were statistically insignificant. While not scientific surveys, these numbers do point to the fact that the genocide is nowhere near as well-known or discussed as the Holocaust and more recent genocidal events such as the tragedy of Rwanda and the Killing Fields of Cambodia. Survey work for this project, as documented in an appendix to this paper, demonstrated a lack of awareness on the subject among Orthodox Christians across the Orthodox jurisdictional spectrum.

While there has been an explosion in recent years of interest in and work done on the history of the genocide, there was still a secular reaction from the beginning and the story has been in popular consciousness, although for many years at a very low level, since the events themselves. Below are several prominent examples. The writings of Henry Morgenthau, Sr., the American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, as well as the work of Fridtjof Nansen, a Norwegian polar

explorer and polymath who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize[76] for his work with genocide refugees, brought the story of the Anatolian genocide to the masses. In 2011, the Tompkins Square record company released a 3 CD set called To What Strange Place - The Music of the Ottoman-American Diaspora 1916-1929 consisting of recording made in America by refugees - mostly Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek - from the genocide. The recordings, by both famous and sometimes unknown artists, reflect both confusion from the displacement of the singers and also a yearning for a homeland that for them no longer exists:

> Bandurma's[77] winter sea
> Ships in rows
> Cruel! Don't you have justice?
> Why did you aggrieve us?

William Saroyan, an American-born Armenian-American writer and Pulitzer Prize winner whose parents emigrated from the Ottoman Empire to California in 1908 to escape persecution,[78] wrote a well-received short story called Seventy Thousand Assyrians about the tragedy of the genocide and the difficulties in dealing with displacement. Joseph Heller's

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[76] Harry Psomiades, *Fridtjof Nansen And The Greek Refugee Crisis 1922-1924* (New York, NY: Athens Printing Company, 2011) 116.

[77] A city on the Sea of Marmara. The original Greek name was Panormos.

[78] Saroyan's father died when Saroyan was a child and he spent some time in an orphanage, which influenced his writings on the displacement of the genocide victims.

1961 novel Catch-22 introduced the world not only to the new phrase based on the title but also to Captain John Yossarian, whose very being is shrouded in mystery and confusion just as the survivors of the genocide experienced, and in the end it is even revealed that he is not actually Assyrian, as he has maintained, but Armenian, which is meant as a reflection of the confusion Orthodox Christians often felt in their place in the Ottoman Empire. Kurt Vonnegut's 1987 novel Bluebeard features the protagonist Rabo Karabekian, whose parents survived the genocide. Their experiences in escaping the Ottoman Empire are a told in sobering contrast to the wry humor of the rest of the book. In a non-fiction vein, Thea Halo, who is of Assyrian and Greek background, in 2000 wrote and published Not Even My Name,[79] which is an account of her mother's experience being forcibly removed from an Anatolian Greek village to make room for Kurdish settlers. Halo became a popular speaker at Orthodox churches across the U.S. in the early 2000s, at a time when there was a flourishing of interest in the story of the genocide. System Of A Down, a hard rock/nu-metal American musical band which originally flourished in the 1990s made up entirely of Armenian-Americans, not only sang about the history of the genocide on many of their releases but also conceived of, produced, and participated in a well-received documentary

[79] Thea Halo, *Not Even My Name* (London, UK: Picador, 2000).

called Screamers,[80] which looked at the genocide in the context of modern-era genocides and genocide denial. While all of these efforts helped bring the genocide into public knowledge, they mostly approached the history from a secular viewpoint rather than a religious or spiritual one.

[80] Ben Myers, *System Of A Down - Right Here In Hollywood* (New York, NY: Disinformation Company Ltd., 2007) 2.

Chapter Five: Importance

The genocide, then, is a part of recent Orthodox history whichever way we consider it, and there is for believers a natural self-identity with the victims as fellow Orthodox Christians. With this, we must keep in mind that the tendency to self-identify with victims runs the risk of putting Orthodox Christians on the road to pride (in the sense of vainglory), self-love, and justification of injustice (see the account of Operation Nemesis later in this work). The genocide created a whole new category of martyrs and martyr-saints and also dispersed survivors who brought their faith and identity to new lands. It is important for the faithful to know their history, of course, since history is a component of identity, but Christians also believe that history is only important insofar as it reveals Christ. On the one hand, history qua history does have meaning. Peter Bouteneff, while addressing the historicity of Old Testament accounts and acknowledging that they are there to further a story rather than to be read literally, argues for the importance of history:

> As for the events themselves that underlie, for example the Russian Communist era, these are gone; they are outside of our reach. We only have the accounts - whether of eye-witnesses, social or political historians, commentators - each of which has a perspective. The events matter a great deal: they shaped and continue to shape people's lives. But all that remains are the

> narratives: people's stories. How these stories are told is everything: the stories can be true, and they can be false.[81]

The history of the genocide, being one primarily of the suffering and often of the death of Orthodox Christians, reveals Christ. In suffering and how we deal with death - our own and others - we imitate Christ in his suffering. It would be very easy to look at the sufferings and indeed martyrdom of the genocide victims and view them the same way we view, say, the 3628 Martyrs in Nicomedia, the 40 Holy Virgin Martyrs celebrated on September 1, or other martyrs where we don't know much or anything about their life - we only know the story of their martyrdom.[82] For a saint like, say, the Great Martyr Irene,[83] we have stories and legends dating from the fourth century and beyond, but due to their remoteness in time it can be difficult to relate in any manner beyond a broad and genuine way. The case of the genocide is very different, though. We have photographic evidence[84]—usually very graphic—as well as witness and survivor accounts, plus correspondence from the oppressors that is often

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[81] Peter Bouteneff, *Sweeter Than Honey (*Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006), 83.

[82] Michael Walsh, *A New Dictionary of Saints: East and West* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007) 401.

[83] George Poulos, *Orthodox Saints, Vol. 2* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Press, 2005) 136.

[84] Hayk Demoyan, *100 Photo Stories About Armenian Genocide* (Yerevan, Armenia: Armenian Genocide Museum, 2014).

downright bloodcurdling. While this may be more of a result of modernity —survivors who knew how to write, writing materials that last, photography, etc.—it forces Orthodox Christians to confront what happened in a way that knowing the brief history of a saint from centuries ago does not. The proximity in time - especially in an Orthodox sense - means that there are several degrees of separation from knowing victims. I myself met several survivors, in their nineties at that point, when I was in college in the Virginia/DC area in the mid-1990s. While almost all survivors have since passed away,[85] there are connections such as those of people who may have had stories passed down in their families.[86] Finally, the continued denial of the Turkish government and the ongoing cultural and academic examination[87] and promotion of the story of what happened again make confrontation with the subject unavoidable.

Genocide is a 20th century term, but the phenomena has been around through much of if not all of human history. There is no tradition of the Bible and the Church Fathers speaking about genocide by that name, since it is a 20th century neologism, but there are genocidal events in the

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[85] On February 21, 2019, Lucin Khatcherian, one of the last living survivors of the genocide, passed away at age 106.

[86] Kostas Faltaits, *The Genocide of the Greeks in Turkey: Survivor Testimonies From The Nicomedia (Izmit) Massacres of 1920-1921* (Brooklyn, NY: Cosmos Publishing, 2016).

[87] Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Bible and in Church history as well as Patristic commentary on the persecutions that can help us set up a framework for looking at genocide, whether that of Asia Minor or modern events like the rise of ISIS and its persecution of Near Eastern Christians, from an Orthodox Christian perspective. Along with knowing Orthodox history, believers also of course need to understand it and, as Christian witnesses, be able to talk about it. Knowing the history and understanding it is crucial to not only their own belief but also in other ways that faith is lived such as mission and apologetics. It is very easy to ask where Christ is in all the suffering; using the tools of the faith can help Christians take steps toward going beyond that question towards a fuller engagement with genocide in all of its components.

The 4th century bishop Eusebius of Caesaria[88] wrote the first comprehensive history of the Church from a Christian perspective, and in his introduction he immediately brings up the issue of suffering for the faith.[89] Eusebius's work is important for many reasons, including record-keeping, with its lists of Apostolic succession,[90] as well as its preservation of quotes from many lost works. For our purposes, the fact that

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[88] Caesarea Maritima or Palestinae, on the coast of Israel.

[89] Eusebius.1890. *Church History.* Edited and translated by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 1. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co.

[90] This is the concept of ordinations of bishops being traced back to the original apostles of Christ.

Eusebius's Church History was continued by later writers such as the fifth century Theodoret, Bishop of Cyrrhus shows us the importance the Church attached and attaches to remembering history. Below is an excerpt from Eusebius's introduction about the importance of writing down the history of suffering for the faith:

> It is my intention, moreover, to recount the misfortunes that immediately came upon the whole Jewish nation in consequence of their plots against our Savior, and to record the ways and the times in which the divine word has been attacked by the Gentiles, and to describe the character of those who at various periods have contended for it in the face of blood and of tortures, as well as the confessions which have been made in our own days, and finally the gracious and kindly succor which our Savior has afforded them all.[91]

Another famous Church historian that we can look to for the importance of knowing history as Orthodox Christians is the Venerable Bede. Bede's most famous work is his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, or Ecclesiastical History of the English People. Bede's most celebrated work, written in Latin as we see in the title, is a history of England in both political but also religious terms. In his introduction written to King Ceolwulf, Bede states his case for the importance of knowing history. Scripture is the most important work with which to be familiar, but the history of good men

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[91] Eusebius, *Church History*, 1.1.

inspires and the knowledge of what wicked persons have done inspires all the more to avoid evil and even more so to do good things:

> And I cannot but recommend the sincerity and zeal, with which you not only diligently give ear to hear the words of the Holy Scripture, but also industriously take care to become acquainted with the actions and sayings of former men of renown, especially of our own nation. For if history relates good things of good men, the attentive hearer is excited to imitate that which is good; or if it mentions evil things of wicked persons, nevertheless the religious and pious hearer or reader, shunning that which is hurtful and perverse, is the more earnestly excited to perform those things which he knows to be good, and worthy of God.[92]

Scripture is the bedrock and foundation of the Orthodox Christian faith and the obvious place to begin to try to understand genocide through that lens. The Bible contains more than a few of what Rabbi Jonathan Sacks calls "hard texts", which are stories that could potentially cause harm if misinterpreted and may seem impossible to reconcile with the idea of a loving God. However, as Sacks points out, all religions with sacred texts have a tradition of commentary, usually nearly immediate writings,[93] that explains the hard texts, and of course Christianity is no exception. The difficult texts in the Bible that contain genocidal material,

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[92] Bede. 1910. *Ecclesiastical History Of The English Nation.* Edited and translated by Ernest Rhys and John Stevens. Everyman's Library. London: J. M. Dent. 1.

[93] Jonathan Sacks, *Not In God's Name: Confronting Religious Violence* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 2015), 199.

such as the massacres of the Canaanites, Midianites, and Amelekites, have from the beginning been interpreted by commentators such as Origen and Chrysostom. This interpretation, though, assumes a certain belief in reading of scripture.

While discussing the Orthodox view of reading scripture, it is important take a moment to discuss the heresy of Marcionism,[94] a distortion of Orthodox Christianity that flourished in the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. (and continued to exist in diminished fashion in far-off parts of the Roman Empire for several centuries afterwards). Marcion of Sinope[95] in the middle of the 2nd century rejected the Christian connection to Judaism and went so far as to declare the God of the Old Testament a separate and lesser God than the one of the New Testament. He even created his own Bible[96] which completely rejected the Old Testament as well as much of the New Testament. His version of the Bible included selected parts of Luke's Gospel and parts of Paul's letters with added Marcionite texts.[97] Marcion was excommunicated by the Church as

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[94] David Salter Williams, "Reconsidering Marcion's Gospel", *Journal Of Biblical Literature* 108, no. 3 (1989): 477.

[95] Coincidentally a city on the Black Sea in the Pontus region, where a significant part of the Greek aspect of the genocide occurred. The Turkish word for the town is the slightly simplified Sinop.

[96] Jason BeDuhn, *The First New Testament: Marcion's Scriptural Canon* (Salem, Oregon: Polebridge Press, 2013) 30.

[97] Thomas Jefferson also created his own Bible by literally cutting and pasting the parts he agreed with. Unlike Marcion's book, Jefferson's Bible was created for his own private reading and not general consumption.

a heretic and Marcionism was denounced as a heresy. The relevance of this story from the Church's distant past is that many Orthodox Christians, and especially the many faithful who are unfamiliar with scripture in general and the Old Testament in particular, today in some way hold a Marcionite view of scripture and consider the God of the Old Testament to be a harsh, judgmental God, while the God of the New Testament is loving and merciful. Such a dualistic vision of scripture and God is of course a severe misunderstanding of the Bible and the relationship of Christ to Old Testament events.

The Orthodox Church believes in a holistic approach to reading scripture - it is to be received and read in a salvific, Christ-centered manner, inspired by God and written by human hands rather than a literal transcript of God's word. For this reason Orthodox Christians do not read such passages literally but rather look for meaning beyond the literal. As Maximos the Confessor writes:

> When our intellect has shaken off its many opinions about created things, then the inner principle of truth appears clearly to it, providing it with a foundation of real knowledge and removing its former preconceptions as though removing scale from the eyes, as happened in the case of St. Paul (cf. Acts 9:18). For an understanding of Scripture that does not go beyond the literal meaning, and a view of the sensible world that relies exclusively on sense-perception, are indeed

> scales, blinding the soul's visionary faculty and preventing access to the pure Logos of truth.[98]

Irenaeus of Lyons reads the creation account in Genesis in an allegorical sense as pointing towards Christ:

> Now in this same day that they did eat, in that also did they die. But according to the cycle and progress of the days, after which one is termed first, another second, and another third, if anybody seeks diligently to learn upon what day out of the seven it was that Adam died, he will find it by examining the dispensation of the Lord. For by summing up in Himself the whole human race from the beginning to the end, He has also summed up its death. From this it is clear that the Lord suffered death, in obedience to His Father, upon that day on which Adam died while he disobeyed God. Now he died on the same day in which he did eat. For God said, 'In that day on which ye shall eat of it, ye shall die by death.' The Lord, therefore, recapitulating in Himself this day, underwent His sufferings upon the day preceding the Sabbath, that is, the sixth day of the creation, on which day man was created; thus granting him a second creation by means of His passion, which is that [creation] out of death.[99]

The Church Fathers, in reading scripture as allegory, were not being innovative. Paul himself in many places reads and interprets scripture allegorically. In Galatians 4:23-24a, while speaking of Ishmael and Isaac, the apostle tells us "But he who was born of the bondwoman was born

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[98] Various authors. 1982. *Philokalia Volume II.* Edited and translated by G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 156.

[99] Irenaeus. 1885. *Against Heresies.* Edited and translated by Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co. 552.

according to the flesh, and he of the free woman through promise, which things are symbolic."[100] In the Gospel accounts Christ uses parables - the New Testament equivalent of the Hebrew *masha*l - to promote eternal truths in ways for his disciples to understand: "And with many such parables he spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. But without a parable he did not speak to them. And when they were alone he explained all things to his disciples."[101]

Modern Orthodox biblical criticism naturally takes the same approach. Timothy Ware - Metropolitan Kallistos of blessed memory - one of the more well-known Orthodox figures outside of to the world outside of Orthodoxy,[102] writes in the "How To Read The Bible" chapter in the Orthodox Study Bible that "(f)irst, our reading of Scripture is obedient, Second, it is ecclesial, in union with the Church. Third, it is Christ-centered. Fourth, it is personal."[103] Fr. Stephen Freeman puts it thus:

> If we look back to the Fathers, and the tradition, for inspiration as to the nature of theology, there is one thing we meet which must be paused over and discussed in some detail: and that is their use of allegory in interpreting the Scriptures. We can see already that for them it was not a superfluous, stylistic habit,

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[100] Galatians 4:23-24a.

[101] Mark 4:33-34. See also Matthew 13:34-35.

[102] In most chain bookstores in the United States the only Orthodox books in the religion section are likely to be Ware's The Orthodox Church and sometimes the Philokalia or The Way of the Pilgrim.

[103] Orthodox Study Bible, 1757.

something we can fairly easily lop off from the trunk of Patristic theology. Rather it is bound up with their whole understanding of tradition as the tacit dimension of the Christian life: allegory is a way of entering the 'margin of silence' that surrounds the articulate message of the Scriptures, it is a way of glimpsing the living depths of tradition from the perspective of the letter of the Scriptures. Of course the question of allegory in the Fathers is complex (and often rendered unduly complicated by our own embarrassment about allegory): but whatever language the Fathers use to describe their exegetical practice (and there is no great consistency here), they all interpret Scripture in a way we would call allegorical, and allegoria is the usual word the Latin Fathers use from the fourth century onwards to characterize the deeper meaning they are seeking in the Scriptures.[104]

[104]Stephen Freeman, "The Allegory of All Things," *Glory to God for All Things* (blog), *Ancient Faith Ministries*, January 11, 2010, https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/glory2godforallthings/2010/01/11/the-allegory-of-all-things/.

Chapter Six: Scripture, Patristics, Liturgics, and Canons

The stories of massacre and genocide in the Bible are not accounts and justification of historical atrocities but rather part of God's story. The Bible is a compendium all kinds of literature - narratives, poems, songs, fables, parables, genealogies, letters, and even census data - presented in a way that serves the greater story. Understanding this approach to scripture, we can look at how the Church views these stories as well as actual historical events that have affected the Church. The conquest of Canaan by the Israelites in Joshua reads like a blueprint on genocide but is interpreted by the Fathers as being a lesson on obedience and the wrath that comes with disobedience (while not denying a literal meaning):

> So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor. And the Lord said to Joshua, “Do not fear them, for I have delivered them into your hand; not a man of them shall stand before you.” Joshua therefore came upon them suddenly, having marched all night from Gilgal. So the Lord routed them before Israel, killed them with a great slaughter at Gibeon, chased them along the road that goes to Beth Horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah. And it happened, as they fled before Israel and were on the descent of Beth Horon, that the Lord cast down large hailstones from heaven on

> them as far as Azekah, and they died. There were more who died from the hailstones than the children of Israel killed with the sword.[105]

While it is the story of a military rout, we see the additional genocidal elements in the idea of chasing (displacement) and the fact that the hailstones killed more people than did the sword—using nature, such as exposure to temperatures and bad weather—to enhance the death of a targeted people is a hallmark of genocide. Origen, in his Homily 12 on Joshua, interprets the story allegorically:

> If those things that were dimly sketched through Moses concerning the tabernacle or the sacrifices and the entire worship are said to be a "type and shadow of heavenly things," doubtless the wars that are waged through Jesus , and the slaughter of kings and enemies must also be said to be "a shadow and type of heavenly things," namely, of those wars that our Lord Jesus with his army and officers—that is, the throngs of believers and their leaders—fights against the Devil and his angels. For it is he himself who strives with Paul and with the Ephesians "against sovereigns and authorities and the rulers of darkness, against spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places.[106]

John Chrysostom, in his Homilies on Hebrews, goes even further than Origen and presents Joshua himself as an allegorical figure: "Why was

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[105] Joshua 10:7-11.

[106] Origen. 2002. *Homily* 12. Edited and translated by Cynthia White and Barbara Bruce. The Fathers of the Church : A New Translation. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press. 37.

this? The name of Joshua [Jesus], was a type. For this reason then, and because of the very name, the creation reverenced him. What then! Was no other person called Jesus? [Yes]; but this man was on this account so called in type; for he used to be called Hoshea. Therefore the name was changed: for it was a prediction and a prophecy. He brought in the people into the promised land, as Jesus [does] into heaven."[107]

For Cyprian of Carthage, the story of the slaughter of the Amelekites in Exodus exists to present a type of Christ when Moses assumes a cruciform stance:

> Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." And Moses built an altar

[107] Chrysostom. 1889. *Homilies on Hebrews.* Edited and translated by Philip Schaff and Frederic Gardiner. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 14. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co. 27.6.

> and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner; for he said,
> “Because the Lord has sworn: the Lord will have war
> with Amalek from generation to generation.”[108]

Cyprian interprets the difficult passage thus: "In Exodus, when Moses, for the overthrow of Amalek, who bore the type of the devil, raised upright open hands in the sign of the cross, and could not conquer his adversary unless when he had steadfastly persevered in the sign with his hands continually lifted up."[109] In the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, the saint uses the story as a reflection on the soul: “As Joshua subdued Amalek and the lying Gibbeonites, arise, O my soul, and subdue the weakness of your flesh, subduing everything which leads your mind astray.”[110] Even patristic accounts of these events that do use a literal approach, such as the Syriac Book of Steps, read the story as ultimately taking place to show God’s will: “For he sent [the prophets] during that era when there was enmity between God and human beings in order to go kill his enemies because they had defied the Lord...For if the Lord had killed [the rebellious] without the prophets, they would have said “Our idols killed us,

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[108] Exodus 17:8-16.

[109] Cyprian of Carthage. 1886. *Treatise 11*. Edited and translated by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 5. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co. 5.505.

[110] Andrew of Crete. 2017. *Canon.* Edited and translated by Kallistos Ware and Mother Mary. Jordanville, NY: The Printshop of St Job of Pochaev. Ode 6.

not the Lord".[111] Michael the Syrian, whose biography was written by Bar Hebraeus and whose greatest surviving writing is the medieval Chronicle. took this point further by suggesting that destruction of Christian civilizations are God's punishment for the sinfulness of these Christian civilizations.[112]

The Maccabean literature, present in Orthodox and Roman Catholic Bibles but not in Protestant ones, contains major genocidal material. The three Maccabees books tell the story of Jewish revolts agains the various Hellenistic successors to Alexander the Great in the Near East. First Maccabees 4:36-61 tells the story of the rededication of the Jerusalem temple, which is the origin of the modern Jewish holiday of Hanukkah.[113] It is in the background to the revolt that we find bold elements of genocide. Antiochus, the Greek general who conquered both Judea and Egypt, desecrated religious buildings, in this particular case the temple, slaughtered men and took women and children as captives, and also seized property. In addition, he also decreed that everyone in his empire was to be one people and so the Jews were forced to forsake their customs and religious beliefs. This forced apostasy included no-doubt

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[111] Anonymous. 2004. *Book of Steps.* Edited and translated by R. A. Kitchen and M. F. G. Parmentier. Cistercian Studies Series 196. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press. Memra 9.

[112] Philip Jenkins, *The Lost History Of Christianity* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2008) 223.

[113] Celebrated on the Orthodox calendar on August 1.

painful procedures[114] for the surviving Jewish men to mask their circumcisions. The writer of 1 Maccabees condemns the survivors as collaborators, telling us “they fell away from the holy covenant, yoked themselves to the Gentiles, and sold themselves to do evil.”[115] While the Maccabean books present themselves as historical material, and do have a literal component, the history is also recounted as a story to show that God ultimately delivers and takes care of his people.

The Psalms are not normally what springs to mind when we think of violent material in the Bible. While the dedicated souls who attend vespers and orthros will hear at least some of the Psalter on a weekly basis, many of our faithful will likely only be familiar with a psalm with mainstream, almost secular popularity, like Psalm 26 ("The Lord is my shepherd/I shall not want"). They will also likely know phrases from the Psalms used in the normal Sunday liturgy, although they perhaps don't know the Biblical origin of these lines. It can be a surprise, then, to find out that the Psalms contain a startling amount of material most would consider too brutal for modern sensitivities. This seems to fly in the face of wisdom literature, the category of the Old Testament in which the Psalms are usually grouped. Wisdom literature is something that generally transcends traditional religious

[114] 1 Maccabees 15.

[115] 1 Maccabees 1:14-15.

boundaries; interfaith services will often incorporate selections from the Psalms into choral or worship programs.

Psalm 137:9 reads "Blessed is he who shall get the upper hand/And dash your infants against the rocks." The verse is horrifying and appalling by any measure. The Church's interpretation of it follows the theme of exile laid out in the first verse: "By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat and wept/When we remembered Zion." The Church reads[116] the vivid description of physical exile, which includes the above mentioned couplet where the exiled psalmist ponders revenge on those who removed him from his home, as a metaphor for spiritual exile. For this reason this Psalm is used in the orthros service on the Sunday of the Prodigal Son and then during Lent in the Orthodox Church. The younger son in the story returned home from exile, while Christians live in exile in this world until it is time to go home to the next. Another Psalm verse with violent implications is Psalm 55:16: "Let death come upon them/And let them go alive into Hades; Because evils are in their dwellings, in the very midst of them." The Church reads[117] this Psalm as a prophecy of Christ's betrayal, and for this reason incorporates it in the hymnology of Holy Thursday and Holy Saturday.

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[116] Augustine. 1888. *Expositions On The Psalms.* Edited and translated by Philip Schaff and J.E. Tweed. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 8. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co.137.

[117] *Expositions On The Psalms,* 55.

When we think of genocide in the Bible we naturally look to the above Old Testament stories. There is, however, a major incident of violence with the genocidal overtones of infanticide in the New Testament —the slaughter of the Holy Innocents at the command of King Herod. The story is told in the Gospel of Matthew, and serves several purposes, such as fulfilling Old Testament prophecy and illuminating Christ as a king. Regardless of the historicity of the event, the Church has celebrated the event and the martyrdom of the children since its earliest times. The troparion of the feast of the Holy Innocents—celebrated on December 29 on the Church calendar—asks the Lord to "to accept in supplications the suffering which Your saints endured for Your sake, O Lord, and heal all our infirmities". The kontakion for the feast connects the end of Herod's kingdom to the sacrifice of the Innocents: "But in exceeding wrath, Herod harvested the infants as sorrowing wheat; the rule of his kingdom has come to an end." The slaughter of the children is of course "sorrowing" but the slaughtered children are called wheat, which is a powerful symbol in Orthodoxy, with everything from Koliva and the celebration of a Slava using wheat as a symbol of resurrection to the reality of the Eucharist itself.

One of the hallmarks of Greek Independence Day commemorations (a reference to the beginning of the revolt of the Balkan Greeks in 1821)

is the notion that Greeks - Orthodox all at the time - were ‘slaves’ under Ottoman rule, and certainly we can easily argue the notion that 80-100 years later the genocide victims were truly slaves. Slavery has varied throughout history; in the Roman Empire slaves lived not too much differently than Roman citizens, while the western hemisphere slave model varied from the dehumanizing experience of American slavery to the Brazilian model where slaves were completely worked to death and quickly replaced. The victims of the genocide experienced all the things slaves have throughout history. Men were taken from their families, forced into labor battalions, and literally worked to death. Women and children were sold and forcibly given new identities. For women, the new identity included being the wife or concubine of a Turk, a new, Turkish, first name, and forced conversion to Islam as well the new language of Turkish. Outside of the population exchanges and those who managed to escape the killing, women and children who survived the genocide did so only by literally becoming slaves.

Gregory of Nyssa, writing about the relatively mild slavery of the Roman Empire, puts it in this manner:

> 'I acquired male and female servants...' For what price, tell me? What did you find in existence worth as much as this human nature? What price did you put on rationality? How many obols did you reckon the equivalent of the likeness of God? How many staters did

> you get for selling that being shaped by God? God said, Let us make man in our own image and likeness. If he is in the likeness of God, and rules the whole earth, and has been granted authority over everything on earth from God, who is his buyer, tell me? Who is his seller? To God alone belongs this power; or, rather, not even to God himself. For his gracious gifts, it says, are irrevocable. God would not therefore reduce the human race to slavery, since he himself, when we had been enslaved to sin, spontaneously recalled us to freedom. But if God does not enslave what is free, who is he that sets his own power above God's?[118]

Gregory is framing an opposition to slavery in a way that was not typical of the writers of his time—he is strongly opposed to the practice and lays out the theological argument against slavery. Writers in antiquity would either write in support of the practice or condemn it while acknowledging that slavery was crucial to society and inevitable. Slavery is mentioned often in the Bible; in fact, the Greek word *doulos* used so often by Paul in the phrase *doulos tou theou* - servant of God - is more properly translated as “slave.” Our interpretation of the word slave is naturally framed by our familiarity with the history of slavery in America, but the Pauline connotation of slavery in a Roman environment is akin to the notion of an indentured servant. Paul in Romans 6 uses the term extensively in comparing sin and grace, while in Ephesians 6 he urges slaves to be

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[118] Gregory of Nyssa. 1993. *In Ecclesiasten Homiliae.* Edited and translated by Stuart George Hall. Berlin: W. de Gruyter. Homily IV.

obedient to their masters and masters to treat their slaves well. In the earlier Wisdom of Sirach there is a similar charge to masters and slaves, although the passage leaves room for slaves to be treated harshly. Slavery apologists in the antebellum American south took advantage of such seemingly ambiguous scriptural passages to justify and even promote slavery.

Other patristic writers and figures dealt with slavery, though none with the severity of Gregory of Nyssa. The Council of Chalcedon held in A.D. 451 upheld an earlier synodal decision promoting the manumission of slaves. In the City of God Augustine condemns slavery in a larger discussion about freedom and sin. John Chrysostom, in his Homilies On Ephesians, calls slavery the “fruit of covetousness, of degradation, of savagery ... and rebellion against ... our true Father”. Others, including St. Ambrose and St. Patrick, were personally involved in attaining the freeing of slaves. St. Eligius, according to legend, personally purchased many slaves in order to manumit them. Before moving out of the area of scripture, it is important to note that the allegorical interpretation of the texts is not a replacement for the literal sense of interpretation. Rather, the Crucifixion creates an entirely new framework for exegesis and faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As John Behr says in reference to the apostles and early Christians:

> The scriptures were not used merely as a narrative of the past, but rather as a thesaurus, a treasury of imagery, for entering into the mystery of Christ, the starting point for which is the historical event of the Passion. In this it is not so much scripture that is being exegeted, but rather Christ who is being interpreted by recourse to the scriptures.[119]

The biblical accounts of genocidal violence, and violence in general, then, are read by the Church as allegory but also with an understanding and respect of the literal sense of the stories.

Outside of the foundational and authoritative role of the scriptural canon, we also have the commemoration and veneration of the saints of the Church. The stories of the saints range from cases where we only know the name of a saint to stories of holy men and women filled with legendary lore to modern saints like the aforementioned Arsenios of whom we have full biographies of their lives. We must not discount the legendary material associated with the saints; whether the added stories are true or not is not the point. Rather, the stories reveal the true qualities of the saints. These stories show how the faithful have felt about the saints. A pious believer would not attach a story to a saint to make something up but rather to illustrate already-known qualities.

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[119] John Behr, *The Mystery Of Christ* (Yonkers, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2006) 5.

The story of the 40 Martyrs of Sebaste, whose feast is celebrated on March 9 on the Orthodox calendar, dates to the early 4th century and unlike many older saint stories in this case we actually have rather reliable contemporary accounts of the event, which in many ways foreshadows the hideous experience of Orthodox Christian men forced into the Ottoman military and worked to death in labor battalions. Here is the brief account from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America's synaxarion:[120]

> These holy Martyrs, who came from various lands, were all soldiers under the same general. Taken into custody for their faith in Christ, and at first interrogated by cruel means, they were then stripped of their clothing and cast onto the frozen lake which is at Sebastia of Pontus, at a time when the harsh and freezing weather was at its worst. They endured the whole night naked in such circumstances, encouraging one another to be patient until the end. He that guarded them, named Aglaius, who was commanded to receive any of them that might deny Christ, had a vision in which he saw heavenly powers distributing crowns to all of the Martyrs, except one, who soon after abandoned the contest. Seeing this, Aglaius professed himself a Christian and joined the Martyrs on the lake, and the number of forty remained complete. In the morning, when they were almost dead from the cold, they were cast into fire, after which their remains were thrown into the river. Thus they finished the good course of martyrdom in 320, during the reign of Licinius.

Gregory of Nyssa was a child when the martyrdom occurred and he later

[120] "Saints and Feasts", Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, accessed July 23, 2023, https://www.goarch.org/chapel/saints?contentid=454.

wrote two sermons on the topic. Ephraim the Syrian was also a young boy during the same period and wrote a poem on the subject. Gregory's Second Sermon Of The Forty Martyrs nicely expresses the natural concern of an Orthodox Christian with everyday life which is superseded by the focus on life with Christ: "...we treasure as the heavens, sun, earth, people, as well as our country, mother, brothers, friends, relatives, and colleagues. What can be more enjoyable than cherishing them? Nevertheless, all these are insignificant if because one good alone exists, and that is Christ himself. The martyrs rejected them in order to gain him. The saints reckoned the time spent in chains as nothing; they spurned it since their desire matured into perfect love."[121]

There are many miracle stories[122] associated with the 40 Martyrs, and one bears an almost direct relation to the genocide. In the early 20th century, in the village of Gomati in Chalkidiki in what is now Greece but at the time had not yet been incorporated into the Kingdom of Greece, there was a practice where Ottoman soldiers would come and take men from the village to work in mines. In 1905 the villagers had had enough of the

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[121] "Second Sermon of the Forty Martyrs,' Gregory of Nyssa, accessed July 23, 2023, https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/second-homily-concerning-the-forty-martyrs-part-two-12529.

[122] Basil The Great. 2003. *A Homily On The Holy Forty Martyrs Of Sebaste*. Edited and translated by Pauline Allen, Boudewijn Dehandschutter, Johan Leemans, and Wendy Mayer. 'Let us die that we may live' Greek homilies on Christian Martyrs from Asia Minor, Palestine and Syria c.350-c.450 AD. Abingdon-on-Thames, UK: Routledge.

practice and murdered the soldiers who came to conscript men for the mines. The Sultan was enraged at this and ordered the destruction of the village. The Turkish officer in charge of the Ottoman contingency sent to destroy the village saw the church there and realized it was dedicated to the 40 Martyrs. He was astounded; his own name was the Greek Sarantos, which means forty and is a reference to the aforementioned saints. He was a Turk from Sebaste whose mother kept losing children in childbirth. A pious Christian woman advised his pious Muslim mother to pray to the 40 Martyrs for a child, and she named the ensuing child Sarantos in honor of this perceived miracle. When the Ottoman officer made the connection he joyously spared the village its prescribed fate.[123]

The story of the 40 Martyrs of Sebaste contains elements of genocide and is remarkably attested despite its age. From the era of the Anatolian genocide itself we have several stories of saints who were directly involved in the events. St. Gregory of Kydonies the Ethno-Hieromartyr lived from 1864 until his martyrdom in 1922. Gregory was born in Manisa in Asia Minor with the name Anastasios Saatsoglou (he later Hellenized his last name to Orologas) and received the name Gregory upon ordination as a celibate. He was made Metropolitan of

[123] "How The Holy Forty Martyrs Of Sebaste Saved A Greek Village in 1905", Chrysostomos Maidonis, accessed July 30, 2023, https://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2016/03/how-holy-forty-martyrs-of-sebaste-saved.html.

Kydonies (modern Ayvalik in northwestern Asia Minor) in 1908 and served there until his martyrdom at the end of the Graeco-Turkish War. As Metropolitan, Gregory was not just a religious leader but also the political leader or ethnarch of his community, as was often the norm in the Ottoman Empire. When, during WWI, the Ottomans put many men from his metropolis in prison for political reasons, Gregory intervened with the authorities and was often successful in freeing these prisoners. He himself became a political prisoner from 1917 to 1918. In 1922, seeing the writing on the wall for his Orthodox flock, Gregory called his local council of elders and argued for the evacuation of the town. He was voted down, and the town suffered accordingly. Able-bodied men were forced into military labor battalions to be executed or worked to death. Gregory, with the permission of the Ottoman authorities, petitioned the American Red Cross to rescue the remaining women, children, and elderly, and by doing so he was able to save them. Gregory then dismissed his priests and stayed behind until everyone was evacuated. He then joined them at the waterfront, was arrested, and earned the crown of martyrdom when he died of a heart attack in the process of being buried alive. Gregory's story is of immense value to us, since he was right in the middle of the events of the genocide. As a shepherd he did all he could to protect his flock and thus showed his concern with

them being able to live peaceful lives. He worked with and often clashed with authorities, both the ruling Ottomans and the occupying Greek forces. Gregory made a reasonable and understandable attempt to preserve his life when he dismissed his priests, made sure everyone left was evacuated, and then left his village. When the crown of martyrdom became inevitable he embraced it.[124]

St. Paisios, mentioned in the introduction, composed a “Prayer For The Whole World” as a prayer rule for a women’s monastery. It includes petitions for a whole variety of earthly concerns, including a number of lines that deal with persecution and violence:

> Lord have mercy on Thy servants who are suffering from cancer.
> Lord have mercy on Thy servants who suffer either from small or serious ailments.
> Lord have mercy on our leaders and inspire them to govern with Christian love.
> Lord have mercy on children who come from troubled homes.
> Lord have mercy on troubled families and those who have been divorced.
> Lord have mercy on all the orphans of the world, on all those who are suffering pain and injustices since losing their spouses.Lord have mercy on all those in jail, on all anarchists, on all drug abusers, on all murderers, on all abusers of people, and on all thieves. Enlighten these people and help them to straighten out their lives.
> Lord have mercy on all those who have been forced to emigrate.

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[124] Bruce Clark, *Twice a stranger : the mass expulsions that forged modern Greece and Turkey* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006) 25.

Lord have mercy on Thy servants who find themselves in the midst of war.

Lord have mercy on Thy servants who are being pursued in the mountains and on the plains.

Lord have mercy on Thy servants who are being hunted like birds of prey.

Lord have mercy on Thy servants who were forced to abandon their homes and their jobs and feel afflicted.

Lord have mercy on the poor, the homeless and the exiled.

Lord have mercy on those who have been abandoned and have suffered injustice. Have mercy on families that are going through trying times.[125]

St. Herman of Alaska is another saint whose life bears light on the genocide. His time of ministry was previous to the genocide although he still retains a tangential connection, for the Russian Empire within which he lived was always at odds with the Ottoman Empire. Herman is best known as a missionary and ascetic, and it was in his calling as a missionary in the 18th century to the natives of Kodiak Island in Alaska—Russian America at the time—that his sainthood helps us understand the catastrophe. Herman came to Alaska as a missionary sent by Catherine the Great as the Russian American Company engaged in the fur trade and, in typical 18th century fashion, exploited the natives. The monk Herman, though not a priest or a bishop, was a true shepherd to the Kodiak natives, who were

[125] "Prayer for the Whole World", Paisios of Mount Athos, accessed on July 23, 2023, https://www.orthodoxpath.org/spiritual-life/prayer-by-saint-paisios-for-the-entire-world/.

abused by the Russians. In another eerie precursor to the Anatolian genocide - similar to the above-mentioned 40 Martyrs of Sebaste, the native men were forced to hunt out of season - in the extreme cold of winter - at great danger to their own lives. The women and children were abused, and many Russian men took native women as mistresses and de facto concubines. Herman spoke out and defended the indigenous people of Alaska. He founded schools and taught the natives the faith as well as agriculture and traditional school subjects. Herman's time on Kodiak Island was brief, as he soon settled in his hermitage on Spruce Island, but his saintly work showed concern for the oppressed[126] and a desire for them to live tranquil everyday lives.

The writings of the Church Fathers, a massive and diverse body of work, regardless of era, language, location, or school of thought, does not deal very much with the self-worth and self-esteem of believers. The Fathers were not writing with a 21st century American mindset; even patristic writings that can be read as self-help guides such as The Ladder of Divine Ascent are geared towards salvation rather than the happenings of every day life - whatever we do on this earth and our struggles must be toward the goal of salvation. But does this mean that the cares of

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[126] Sergei Korsun, *Herman: A Wilderness Saint: From Sarov, Russia to Kodiak, Alaska* (Jordanville, NY: Holy Trinity Publications, 2012) 50.

everyday life aren't important? All religions look to their deity for such things, and Christianity is unique in minimizing the importance of material needs, but the concern exists nonetheless. Part of our natural recoiling at what happened in the genocide is at the tragic uprooting of people from their ancestral homeland and the shock of leaving (no doubt meager) possessions behind. Is this something that should concern Orthodox Christians? Clement of Alexandria argues that it is good and even necessary to have possessions, because if nothing is owned, there is nothing to give: “And how much more beneficial the opposite case, for a man, through possessing a competency, both not himself to be in straits about money, and also to give assistance to those to whom it is requisite so to do! For if no one had anything, what room would be left among men for giving?”[127] In his 36th Sermon, Gregory the Theologian makes a case for the right to private property: “You, who are aiming at wealth, give ear to what the prophet says: 'If riches abound, set not your heart on them.' Bear in mind that you are leaning on a frail support. Lighten the boat somewhat that it may sail the more easily.”[128] Finally, the Lord himself

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[127] Clement of Alexandria. 1885. *Who Is The Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?* Edited and translated by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, A. Cleveland Coxe, and William Wilson. Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 2. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co. 13.

[128] Gregory the Theologian. 1894. *Oration 36*. Edited and translated by Philip Schaff, Henry Wace, Charles Gordon Browne, and James Edward Swallow. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 7. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co.

shows the ultimate example of caring for everyday life in the story of the death and raising of his friend Lazarus. In the story, Christ shows his divine nature by resuscitating the clearly-dead (four days in the tomb) Lazarus after showing his own human nature by weeping: “(i)n the course of the dramatic events Jesus displayed deep human emotions. The Gospel records His deep feelings of love, tenderness, sympathy and compassion, as well as distress and sadness. The narrative reports that He sighed from the heart and wept.”[129]

Going beyond the writings of the Fathers, we have the Orthodox Church's liturgical tradition which makes the strongest arguments for tranquility in life and the need to prosper in our every day life. The Liturgy of St. Mark, with its historical origins in Egypt, contains a prayer for the rising of the Nile, without which there would be no agricultural production there. The Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom as well as the other main liturgies currently in use in the Orthodox Church contain numerous prayers for peace in the world, stability of churches, our leaders both ecclesiastical and secular, good weather, safe traveling, deliverance from strife, and ultimately a Christian and peaceful end to our lives. The word peace or variations thereof alone is used around 21 times, depending on

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[129] Alkiviadis Calivas, *Great Week And Pascha In The Greek Orthodox* Church (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1992),21-22.

the translation, in the Divine Liturgy[130]. The ending of the prayer during the anaphora, right before the faithful arise from kneeling, reads: “For civil authorities and our armed forces, grant that they may govern in peace, Lord, so that in their tranquility we, too, may live calm and serene lives, in all piety and virtue.” We see again a concern for tranquility and everyday life.

The compendium of Patristic literature is to us perhaps a bit sparing on the importance of tranquility in everyday life. The Fathers were not writing for an audience of comfortable middle class 21st century Americans but rather for the intense spiritual needs of their own time. It is important to note that, as popular as the Fathers have been and are with the faithful, it is the liturgy that is popular in the true sense of the word. Orthodox Christians experience the Divine Liturgy every Sunday in church just as those who suffered in the genocide did and those before them. The liturgy is in many ways the ultimate vehicle for the Church's teaching, because the faithful, even when illiterate as was the case for many through the centuries, could hear, participate, and receive the prayers and teachings of the church daily or weekly. The teachings of the Fathers, as

[130] Excluding the fervent litany, litany for the catechumens, and others sections omitted in some Orthodox jurisdictions in America.

important as they are, are generally not heard or read frequently by most believers.

Beyond the various Divine Liturgy services, the sacramental life of the Church bears out a concern with everyday life tempered, as always, with the notion that tranquility and prosperity are for the greater goal of helping others and for their salvation. The services of betrothal and marriage (once separate but now together[131]) are pointedly, as we are reminded in the petitions, for the continuation of the human race, and acknowledge the importance of a stable marriage in promoting a peaceful society. As we read in the first lengthy prayer of the crowning service:

> Bless this marriage and grant unto these Your servants (Name) and (Name) a peaceful life, length of days, chastity, love for one another in a bond of peace, offspring long−lived, fair fame by reason of their children, and a crown of glory that does not fade away.
>
> Account them worthy to see their children's children. Keep their wedlock safe against every hostile scheme; give them of the dew from the Heavens above, and of the fatness of the earth. Fill their houses with bountiful food, and with every good thing, that they may have to give to them that are in need, bestowing also on them that are here assembled with us all their supplications that are unto salvation.

[131] Until fairly recently in Cyprus the two services were conducted separately. The Church of Cyprus stopped this practice because too many couples were having the betrothal service and not following through with the wedding service.

The final blessing of the crowning service, immediately before the dismissal, again stresses earthly blessings:

> The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; the All−Holy, Consubstantial and Life−creating Trinity; One Godhead and Kingdom; bless (+) you; grant to you long life, well-favored children, progress in life and in Faith; replenish you with all the good things of the earth, and count you worthy of the promised blessings, through the intercessions of the holy Theotokos, and of all the Saints.

The sacrament of baptism, the hoped-for and prayed-for natural next step in Church life after a wedding, also prays for and assumes a long tranquil life, as in this prayer from the end of the service:

> ...as You did bless the head of Your servant David the King through the Prophet Samuel, so also bless the head of this servant (Name), through the hand of me, the unworthy Priest, visiting him (her) with Your Holy Spirit, that as he (she) goes forward to the prime of his (her) years, and the gray hairs of old age, he (she) may send up Glory to You, beholding the good things of Jerusalem all the days of his (her) life.

The funeral service, of all of the sacraments, shows the least concern with daily life qua daily life, but even here we see references to earthly living, persecution, and even to genocide itself. The third stasis of the service, from Psalm 119, prays thus:

> Look upon me, and have mercy on me. According to the judgment of them that love Your Name. Alleluia. I am young and accounted as nothing. Your statutes have I not forgotten. Hear my voice, O Lord, according to Your mercy; According to Your judgments quicken me. Alleluia. Princes have persecuted me without a cause, and because of Your words my heart has been afraid.

The Akathist In Praise Of God's Creation[132] by Metropolitan Tryphon is even more explicit in its concern with earthly life and presents an idyllic picture of how life on earth should be. From the second kontakion:

> O Lord, how lovely it is to be your guest:
> Breeze full of scent; mountains reaching to the skies;
> Waters like a boundless mirror,
> Reflecting the sun's golden rays and the scudding clouds.
> All nature murmurs mysteriously, breathing depths of tenderness, Birds and beasts bear the imprint of your love,
> Blessed are you, mother earth, in your fleeting loveliness, Which wakens our yearning for happiness that will last for ever In the land where, amid beauty that grows not old,
> Rings out the cry: Alleluia!

Even here, of course, we have as a primary concern spiritual life and the heavenly kingdom; note the reference to the "fleeting loveliness" of nature and the affirmation that we are guests sojourning on earth.

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[132] This service, whose composer reposed in 1934, nicely prefigures the current Ecumenical Patriarch's emphasis on ecological responsibility.

The existence of the Paraclesis, or intercessory service, is a testament to the Church's concerns with our earthly well-being. During my first week of seminary the September 11 attacks occurred, and the school's immediate response was to cancel classes and hold the Paraclesis to the Theotokos in the chapel. During the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 Orthodox churches throughout the United States and elsewhere celebrated the service frequently. While the service dedicated to the Virgin Mary is by far the most popular paraclesis service, there exist others devoted to saints. Such services are often celebrated at the saint's eponymous monastery. Here is an excerpt of a paraclesis to St. Stylianos of Paphlagonia:

> O Saint of God, intercede on our behalf.
> Dissolve, O Stylianos, the shackles of barrenness from those storm-tossed, through your fervent visitation, and entreat for the remission of their offenses.
> O Saint of God, intercede on our behalf.
> Extend, O Father, as one compassionate, your providence as far-shining rays, and invisibly enwrap and protect nursing babes, O Righteous one.
> Cease all infections and passions, and all distress and every affliction, and keep our children unharmed, O Stylianos, as a loving Father.[133]

[133] "Paraklesis to St. Stylianos of Paphlagonia," *Truth And Light* , November 26, 2012, http://full-of-grace-and-truth.blogspot.com/2012/11/paraklesis-to-st-stylianos-of.html.

The Church's concern for tranquility in everyday life extends beyond the services celebrated within the church building itself. The Book of Needs, a book containing services and prayers used outside of the regular services of the church and so-called because they exist as need arises, is filled with material aimed at the vicissitudes of everyday life. These prayers address topics such as childbirth, sleep, vehicles, wine, drought, weather, captivity, wells, bars, flocks, bees, fishnets, and many more subjects that deal with quotidian matters. The prayers themselves further flesh out the Church's concerns. Here is an excerpt from the prayer for the blessing of bees:[134] "...be pleased to bless these bees and increase them for the profit of mankind, preserving them and making them fat. Let everyone hoping in your majesty and your boundless compassion and laboring in the care of these living things, be counted worthy to receive the abundant fruit of their labors...". With this concern for daily life is of course the primacy of spiritual life; a previous prayer in the same service asks for God to bless the bees so that "they may abundantly bear fruit for the beauty and adornment of your temple and your holy altars...", a reference to church candles. The many other prayers in the Book of Needs combine the same balance of spiritual and material concerns. The

[134] The Brotherhood of St. Tikhon of Zadonsk, *A Small Book of Needs* (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2012) 207.

tradition of blessing homes after Epiphany is part of the same concern with everyday needs.

The tradition of the holy canons of the Church also show a concern for possessions and material life. Canonist Lewis Patsavos explains that "(T)he holy canons help fallen humanity remain united and in a harmonious relationship with one another in the Church. They do not deprive a person of one's freedom but rather help one to live that freedom."[135] There exist canons dealing with all kinds of offenses against property and people, including theft, violation of graves, lending money for interest, lack of respect of the disabled, abandonment of children, and even consumption of spoiled food.[136]

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[135] Lewis Patsavos, *Spiritual Dimensions Of The Holy Canons* (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2007) 27.

[136] Patsavos, 27.

Chapter Seven: Responses From Church Leaders

The Orthodox Church is collegial[137] rather than hierarchical, but the faithful naturally look to hierarchs and Church leaders for guidance on all subjects, which includes how they process the genocide and other narratives of tragedy. The renewal of interest in the genocide in the modern era combined with advances in ecumenism in the Church in America as well as the explosion of social media has resulted in the ability of Orthodox Church leaders to speak out about the genocide in a way that hierarchs and others were not able to in the immediate aftermath of the events. Predating this era, Archbishop Iakovos of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America famously marched with Rev. Martin Luther King and other civil rights leaders in Selma, Alabama on March 15, 1965, to protest the genocidal-like segregationist and voting rights repression in the American South. Iakovos, who had been born on the Ottoman-ruled but Greek-inhabited island of Imvros, explained one of his motivations for participating in the American civil rights movement as being related to his own upbringing:

> Unlike you and most of you I was not born in the United States, to live in and enjoy democracy. I came to the United

[137] Patsavos, 36.

> States from Turkey where I was a third category citizen. So, when Martin Luther King, Jr. had his walk to the courthouse of Selma, Alabama, I decided to join him and say this is my time to take revenge against all those who oppress people . . . I know that civil rights and human rights continue to be the most thorny social issues of our nation, but I will stand for both rights, civil and human, as long as I live. I feel it a Christian duty and a duty of a man who was born as a slave.[138]

In April 2017, in an ecumenical commemoration of the Armenian genocide - the first of its kind in New England - His Eminence Metropolitan Methodios of Boston ended his remarks with a nice summation of the importance of history and empathy with those who suffered as well as the revelation of Christ in the catastrophe:

> Every day we learn about people's suffering. It is easy to become desensitized to the oppression and violence against our fellow human beings, irrespective of racial origin, ethnic background, or religious conviction.
> What happened in 1915 is being repeated today throughout the Middle East and Africa. We are appalled by the brutality inflicted upon people of every religion. Many turn a blind eye, but we must not remain silent before such ongoing, horrific acts of brutality. To do so would be disrespectful to the memory of our Armenian brethren. We must raise our voices in solidarity and prayer. As St. Paul reminds us, "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together." (1 Cor 12:26)
> My brothers and sisters in the household of God,

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[138] Athanasios Grammenos, "The African American Civil Rights Movement and Archbishop Iakovos of North and South America," *Journal of Religion & Society* 18 (2016): 18-19.

> We believe that God's appearance as man, as Christ in history, offers all of us the possibility for repentance, reconciliation, and redemption. The Holy Resurrection is proof of the triumph of good over evil, of hope over despair. The memorial service this evening manifests our belief in the power of truth to change the future. As we respectfully remember our Armenian brethren, let us pray that Almighty God may embrace their souls in His loving bosom, granting them eternal rest. And, to quote St. Paul, "may the Lord of peace Himself give you (us) peace at all times and in every way." (2 Thess 3:16).[139]

On the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the Armenian genocide, His Holiness Catholicos Aram I gave a Sunday sermon in Deir Zor, Syria - a place where thousands were massacred - and outlined the importance of remembering what happened as well as what it means for their descendants - in faith, not just through blood - of the martyrs:

> It is a plain fact that the Armenian Genocide, the first genocide of the 20th century was carefully planned and systematically executed by Ottoman Turkey. The relics that are displayed in this church and in the chapel not far away from this place, as well as hundreds thousands of relics that were found in the sands of this desert are indeed eloquent and tangible evidence of the massacres that were committed in this very place by the Ottoman army under the pretext of exodus and deportation.
>
> Dear martyrs, you fell in this desert but you did not remain here. We took you with us and you remained with us wherever we went; your faith, your hope and your vision sustained our life. We always remembered you: we remembered you in our churches, in our

[139] "Armenian Genocide Centennial Commemoration", Metropolitan Methodios, accessed on July 29, 2023, https://boston.goarch.org/news/metropolis_news/1303/1424.html.

> schools, in our personal and community life. We remained faithful to your cause, becoming the ardent defender of your just rights.
>
> As a pilgrim, in the name of our people, I renew my oath to remain faithful to our faith that you have defended with your blood, to our national heritage that you have preserved by your struggle and to your vision that you have shaped and conveyed to the generations to come. We will undergird our life with the strength of your faith and hope and will continue the struggle for the promotion of those values and aspirations which gave meaning and purpose to your life: freedom, justice and dignity.[140]

Hermiz Shahen, the Deputy Secretary General of the Assyrian Universal Alliance, spoke on the dedication of a monument in Australia to the victims of the Anatolian genocide which emphasizes the Christian character of the victims:

> Today's unveiling of this extraordinary monument which honours the victims of the Greeks, Assyrian and Armenian genocide, is a significant event in the life of the three nations and our communities in Australia and abroad; communities that have been established as a direct result of the continuous assaults on their nation.

Shahen, in addition to using the phrase "their nation" as opposed to the plural, continued to speak of the Christian nature of the genocide. His All-

[140] "Recognition and Compensation: The Way to Reconciliation", Aram I, accessed on July 29, 2023, https://www.armenianorthodoxchurch.org/en/archives/3900.

Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew I,[141] during a sermon at the first divine liturgy celebrated at Sumela monastery since 1922, in the part of Turkey where the Pontic Greek genocide occurred, poignantly said that “After 88 years, the tears of the Virgin Mary have stopped flowing.”[142]

[141] Like Archbishop Iakovos, Patriarch Bartholomew was also born on the Turkish island of Imbros.

[142] “Pontian Greek Monastery in Turkey Celebrates First Mass Since Genocide”, accessed July 29, 2023 https://armenianweekly.com/2010/08/15/pontian-greek-monastery-in-turkey-celebrates-first-mass-since-genocide/.

Chapter Eight: New Model Of Ministry

How do Orthodox Christians in a 21st century America who hopefully are moving towards a time where they are no longer hyphenated Orthodox Christians, process the disturbing events of the genocide and use their knowledge of it to deal with the continuing, similar events of the contemporary era as well as the recent past? This is not a topic at which Orthodox Christians necessarily look dispassionately. I was raised in a household where you could not use the word “hate” to mean dislike but I was also told that we the Greeks hate the Turks. A mentor of mine, Col. James Cristopulos, USAF, of blessed memory, grew up in the 1930s, when the genocide was of very recent memory, in Cheyenne, Wyoming, playing Greeks versus Turks rather than cowboys and Indians with his childhood friends.[143] In many American cities and towns where there are Armenian communities there are two Armenian Apostolic churches due to a split in the community between congregants who came from Armenia and their co-ethnics who came from Turkey. As noted above, the social media age lends itself to quick and often superficial responses to current events as well as shallow historical

[143] One of the colonel’s childhood friends was Curt Gowdy, longtime radio announcer for the Boston Red Sox baseball team. Gowdy would occasionally insert anecdotes of these childhood games into his broadcasts.

reflection.[144] We also live in an increasingly multi-cultural society, where encounters among and between Orthodox Christians and Muslims will become commonplace, although in a very different setting than such encounters in the Old World. Dr. Chrysostomos Stamoulis, addressing the refugee situation in Greece, which is the landing point[145] for many refugees of the political and religious turmoil in the current Near East, says:

> In a place such as America, a place of such powerful migration, in a place which has experienced the turbulence of fierce racial disturbances and clashes, and coming, as I do from Greece, which today is Europe's largest camp for migrants from the East as a whole, it would make sense to talk about the mystery of alterity. About the Other; about the migrant and migration, about the mystery of the stranger.
> That is because, if we are to be honest to God and other people, we have to say that the whole history of divine Dispensation, from the creation of the world until its eschatological destination, is a history of the migration of a people of pilgrims and strangers. This is why the great Gregory the Theologian states emphatically that the Church is made up, essentially, of a nation of migrants, who are waiting expectantly for the miracle.[146]

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[144] It can also lend itself to ethnic violence. During the September 2018 ructions in Libya, some Facebook users posted coordinates so that missiles could be aimed.

[145] The current crisis has highlighted divisions with Orthodox between nationalistic impulses and helping those in need. Metropolitan Ambrosios, for example, has spoken out against the hosting of Muslim refugees from Syria in Greece because he sees them as a threat to Orthodoxy.

[146] Chrysostomos Stamoulis, "Give To The Stranger - Give Me This Stranger", Pemptousia, Mt. Athos, April 30, 2016, https://pemptousia.com/2016/04/give-to-the-stranger-give-me-this-stranger/.

While research for this project revealed little knowledge of the genocide among the faithful and also a refreshing lack of dislike towards Turks and Muslims, it also contained a section of what our faith teaches about how to react to genocide and its perpetrators. Most respondents believed the Orthodox faith has much to teach, but in most cases either did not know what this was or gave responses that showed a superficial, almost New Age understanding of Orthodox doctrine. This information is explained further in Appendix A. These responses, in many ways, represent an opportunity for education not just about the genocide but about the faith itself, since learning about the event incorporates history and the realities of Orthodox beliefs.

On a very basic level, the way to process the story of the genocide as well as modern narratives of tragedy such as the current situation of the remaining Near and Middle Eastern Christians is to live the life of an Orthodox Christian. The way believers live the faith, along with prudent use of the many implements in the Orthodox toolbox (fasting, scriptures, the Fathers, liturgical life, etc.), helps Orthodox Christians to understand the natural repugnance they may have toward what happened to their predecessors who suffered the horrors of genocide and also provides a strong corrective to the primal and awful sinful urge to seek vengeance, which is a destructive passion. It also should instill in all a desire to pray

for those who are currently persecuted and work for justice for them as well as to pray for the persecutors.

Earlier in this work I mentioned that the genocide is part of the identity of Orthodox Christians whether they know it or not. Some Orthodox faithful understand that horrors were perpetrated upon Eastern Christians in Anatolia during the end of the Ottoman Empire because they were Christian, and indeed Orthodox Christian as opposed to Muslim subjects of the empire or even foreign western Christians working in or visiting in the empire, and that the Ottomans saw Eastern Christians as not able to be assimilated into their vision for a Muslim empire or, later, a republic founded on (Muslim) Turkishness. There are other Church faithful who are unaware of the history of the catastrophe. This may be because they are of a different ethnicity than those who were killed or displaced and the story is not part of their upbringing, or it may be merely through a lack of information or teaching on the subject from the Church. On the other side of the story, there are non-Orthodox Christians who may know of the genocide through popular culture and social media and think of Orthodox Christians in terms of a persecuted group, much like modern Jews live with the legacy of the Holocaust as part of their identity. In the modern Turkish republic students who are descendants of Turkish and other Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire learn that the genocide

wasn't really a genocide and grow up with this perspective as part of their own identity as Turks. There are also people in Turkey who have studied the subject and realize that it was indeed a genocide against the Orthodox Christian subjects and have bravely spoken up on the subject at great risk to their lives. Some journalists and academic figures have even paid the ultimate price for speaking the truth and lost their lives.

With this project I am proposing "The Anatolian Genocide: Understanding Narratives Of Tragedy From An Orthodox Perspective" as a new model of ministry. This is not the kind of subject normally dealt with at Orthodox churches, yet it is very important, not just because of it being a history including events of 100 years or so ago that in the sense of "Orthodox time" are very recent, but also because genocide is a historical reality and one that continues to this day in different parts of the world. In our modern era the news cycle never ends, and we have instant access to news on seemingly any event at the click of a screen on our phones. While believers may be ignorant of our their history of genocide perpetrated on Orthodox Christians, they cannot ignore current day genocides and other persecution stories due to the information overflow to which we are subjected at all times.

Learning the history of the genocide is the first step in the new model of ministry mentioned above. A first step in this process is to learn

the history of what happened in the genocide. This is a foundational idea because it helps believers understand the context in which many of their faith traditions developed. The Church's struggles under Islam after the glory years of Byzantium forged its modern identity in many ways, from the fortifying role of monasteries and the demographic settings of Orthodox populations to more minor things like clerical street garb. Learning about the genocide honors the immediate (in the sense of Orthodox time) spiritual ancestors—the victims—of Orthodox faithful, for knowing someone's story is a way to show care for them. Knowing the history is important because believers should know their own history, and the story of the genocide is one that reveals Christ in the suffering of the victims.

On the surface, educating ourselves about the genocide should be an easy thing, such read a book or an online article on the subject. The reality, though, is a bit different. For one thing, there is not exactly a lack of resources but certainly a much smaller amount of work has been done on the genocide than on the Holocaust. What material there is usually on the academic side of the spectrum and therefore probably not suited to the needs of an average American Orthodox Christian parishioner. The genocide is also a highly politicized subject and one is as likely to find material from a nationalist perspective decrying what happened as one is

to find Turkish works denying the events. Popular culture platforms are one place where people can get information about the genocide, but by its very nature pop culture is superficial and biased. Social media again usually deals with the superficial—we cannot grasp the whole meaning of the catastrophe in a 280-character tweet—or with agenda-driven politics, yet it is an omnipresent and an easy source for people to use to form opinions. The chapter on history presented in this project is designed to be a non-academic and concise history of the genocide meant for an average Orthodox Christian parishioner. It assumes no prior knowledge of what happened in Anatolia a century ago, and it also assumes no knowledge based on ethnic background; a Romanian immigrant or an American convert should take away the same thing from the story as a fifth-generation Assyrian-American or a Greek-American person rediscovering his heritage. The history is by design very general. To get a broad idea of what happened we do not need to learn every single detail, and it would be very easy for such a project to get bogged down in historical minutiae. Knowing a general history as opposed to a detailed one makes it easier to remember and also to recall in conversation. Part of the idea of this project, as with any kind of ministry, is to get people talking about the subject with each other and exploring things further.

Once we know the history of the genocide we need to face the hard, brutal truth. Terrible crimes against humanity were committed against Orthodox Christians, and really understanding the genocide involves confronting this fact. As much as we don't want to look at pictures of massacred people or read accounts of women and children being taken away to become Muslim concubines and slaves, these things are part of the reality of what happened and drive home that historical narrative. Reading survivor accounts enlightens all to the human aspect of what people suffered and makes the history much less dry and less of a reporting of facts. Knowing the story of the genocide also makes us confront the fact that Orthodox Christians - the ostensible "good guys" in this story - also committed atrocities. The retreating Greek army which in 1922 got to within an hour of Ankara, the Young Turk stronghold, wreaked havoc on Turkish villages as a means of surviving but also for revenge as they were driven back to the sea. A group of Armenian survivors launched Operation Nemesis[147] after the creation of the Republic of Turkey and took to assassinating Turkish perpetrators of the genocide. There are other examples of Orthodox Christian people and indeed countries acting in such an explicitly non-Christian manner. While it is easy to say that the

[147] Giuseppe Motta, *Less than Nations: Central-Eastern European Minorities after WWI, Volume 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013) 18.

numbers of victims “favor” the genocide enacted upon Orthodox Christians and that Orthodox atrocities pale in comparison to those committed by the Ottomans and the Turks, this is disingenuous at best and demonic at worst - believers cannot deal with the facts of the genocide without considering and processing the actions of Orthodox Christians in response to what was happening. Along the same lines, to truly understand the full scope of the genocide it is important to understand Turkish denial or, more objectively, the Turkish perspective on what happened. While I believe the facts of what happened dispute and disprove the modern Turkish historical line on the events, and that objective scholarship supports this, I cannot discount the beliefs of a Turkish person raised learning that history. Orthodox Christians will not be able to relate to and have a good conversation on the subject with a Turkish person who believes what they have been taught about their history without understanding what they have learned on the subject and that this is reality for them. This is almost a missionary endeavor; if one go es into a conversation pushing his own view of the genocide on someone with a different view they quite likely will not hear the person. The model for this is Christ’s model for mission - when he initiates an encounter he often comes in need, such as approaching the woman at the well without

having a water bucket or when he asks Peter to use his boat because he needs a place to preach.

Knowing the history of the Asia Minor genocide and facing the hard brutal truth are very important parts of this new ministry, and they are two parts that lead to a third - processing everything. Learning the history is a mental exercise, while facing the truth brings in the physical—a visceral reaction to what happened is natural—and the spiritual—relating to someone who learned an alternative, and to a Christian, consternating, history, or merely trying to connect with someone who has no concept of the catastrophe. Processing the emotions of all this is the centerpiece of genocide ministry, and the end result is to love our neighbors even more that we do now.

Merely knowing the history, though, is not enough—an Orthodox Christian need to process the manifold emotions that come from injustice it in order to understand it. The Orthodox faith, in its totality rather than a boxed-in Sunday morning only version, gives the faithful the tools to do this. Scripture is foundational to the faith and is also basic to this process. A common criticism from certain evangelical Christians is that Orthodox faithful are ignorant of scripture. While this is a sweeping condemnation—in fact, the Orthodox Church compiled scripture—there admittedly is some truth in it; Orthodox history and tradition is so vast that there is much to

delve into, and it is easy for scripture to not always be the first priority. There is a reason that the Church wall calendars that are ubiquitous in the American Orthodox world, as well as the various Orthodox apps, contain the daily scripture readings for the whole year. All of scripture is helpful but the fact that there are many accounts of violence, slavery, war, and actual de facto genocides, as well as patristic commentary on these accounts, enables believers to develop a fuller understanding of narratives of tragedy. As a secondary benefit, knowing and understanding these scriptural stories allows one to answer secular critics who incorrectly cite violent scripture accounts to falsely denounce Christianity. The stories of the saints—only a few who experienced genocide or similar forms of violence have been mentioned in this paper—act in a way similar to the scriptural accounts but with the added benefit that the saints are specifically set aside by the Church as role models; she makes them known to us so that the faithful can live by their examples and emulate them.

Full participation in the liturgical life of the Church, which is a requirement and expectation for all believers, is yet another tool that Orthodox Christians have. The petitions and prayers of the Sunday liturgy request from God and remind all of the need for peace, healing, forgiveness, unity, and many other virtues and positive actions. The many

extra-liturgical prayers of the Church such as various blessings for livestock or vehicles illustrate the need for tranquility in everyday life, something that was take away from the victims of the genocide. This focus on everyday life not only helps for empathy with the victims but also helps to dispel heretical notions of dualism or fanatical obsession with only the spiritual. It is also a blessing to have statements from Church leaders on the genocide. These statements, often made in the context of commemorations of the events and therefore are in short, digestible forms, generally include a theological synthesis of what happened. In many ways Orthodox hierarchs are doing the homework for their flocks.

It is impossible to have an encounter with the story of genocide without also facing the idea of love of neighbor. Christ's teaching of love of neighbor was groundbreaking and transformational of the original command to love your neighbor in Leviticus 19:18b: "…but you shall love your neighbor as yourself;." The original Hebrew of Leviticus uses the word *r'a*, which has the connotation of companion or close friend. The Septuagint uses a Greek equivalent - *plusio*, which connotes someone close by. The English word neighbor translates well both of these words. In Christ's encounter with the Pharisees in Matthew he puts the commandment of love your neighbor second only to the loving of God. In Luke 10 Jesus fully fleshes this idea out with the parable of the Good

Samaritan.[148] He turns the table on the young man who was questioning him. The young man was really asking to whom he had the obligation to treat well. Jesus points out, via the story, that everyone is our neighbor and we have to treat everyone well.

The instructions in Leviticus and Christ himself use the same word — neighbor—but with very different meanings. A neighbor in Leviticus, which is a work written specifically for the Israelites in exile in the desert, meant a tribesman or countryman. Jesus destroys tribal boundaries—everyone is our tribesman or countryman. In his masterful way, Christ proves this point in Matthew 26:50, when Judas betrays him. The NKJV translation of the sentence is "But Jesus said to him, 'Friend, why have you come?'" Most all English translations use "friend" to translate the Greek "*etaire.*" This word means companion but with the connotation of "countryman." So Christ is using supreme irony here, since Judas was the only disciple who was from Christ's town, and was therefore his "countryman."

[148] This story is the Gospel reading on the 25th Sunday after Pentecost.

Chapter Nine: Going forward

Once Orthodox Christians know the history of the genocide as well as its theological implications, have processed the facts and emotions, and have committed themselves to love their neighbor even more, what other positive actions can be done with this knowledge? For clergy and laymen who have the blessing to preach, one idea is to preach a sermon on the topic or to use the story as a jumping off point in a homily. In many ways, the unfortunate events of the genocide are ripe with scriptural tropes that can be expanded upon, such as violence, exile, xenophobia, and more. There are also dedicated days of the year for the different aspects of the genocide (often ethnically centered); a resourceful preacher could pair a sermon with one of these Sundays as an opportunity to educate and inspire the faithful. As we will see in the analysis of survey data from this project, Orthodox parishioners strongly believe their faith has resources for processing genocide but many have very little grasp of what exactly they are.

Another positive action related to knowing the genocide story is for a religious educator at a church to offer a seminar or even a class on the events. While the genocide was inflicted upon the victims because of their Orthodox Christianity, the reality is that the current understanding of

events among the faithful is that the catastrophe was largely an ethnic matter; Armenians were killed because they were Armenians, etc., and the use of Greek Genocide or Assyrian Genocide as de facto names for what happened as opposed to my term Anatolian or Asia Minor Genocide, a geographical term, or something like Orthodox Genocide, which strikes me as being too vague, especially in terms of when and to what we are referencing, illustrate the ethnic focus on the events. Educating believers in a classroom setting will not only dispel these notions but also work the faith into something in which people had not put a faith connection (and also bring people who do not often attend church and emphasize the ethnic identity more than their religious identity back into church).

> In one such moment we learn of an Armenian nurse who was captured by the Turks along with her brother. Her brother was executed by a Turkish soldier before her eyes. She, however, somehow managed to escape and later became a nurse in a military hospital.
> One day she was stunned to find that the same man who had killed her brother had himself been captured and brought wounded to the hospital where she worked. Something within her cried out, "Avenge your brother." But an even stronger voice called for her to love. She listened to that voice and nursed the man back to health.
> When the recuperating soldier finally realized who she was, he asked her, "Why didn't you let me die, or better yet, why did you not kill me?" Her answer was, "I am a follower of Him who said, 'Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you.' (Luke 6:27)." The young soldier

replied, "I never heard such words before. Tell me more, because I want this religion for myself."[149]

[149] Andrew Demotses, "Love Your Enemies," accessed August 2, 2019, 14:12, https://www.goarch.org/-/love-your-enemi-1?inheritRedirect=true.

Appendix A

The genesis of the idea for a project giving a digestible history of the Anatolian genocide and examining how Orthodox Christians process such an event as well as how they look at other historical genocides and especially current genocidal events in the Near East, which largely target the dwindling remaining Orthodox Christian population in that troubled area, came from my own anecdotal observations that most Orthodox Christians I have encountered in an American setting knew almost nothing about what happened in Asia Minor in the first several decades of the 20th century. Besides my conventional research—reading accepted and finding new primary and secondary sources, etc.—I conducted a survey of a diverse group of Orthodox Christians to find out what exactly people knew about the genocide as well as what they thought Orthodox teachings on injustices such as the genocide were. The questions are below:

Survey Questions

1) How familiar are you with the history of the Anatolian or Asia Minor genocide?
On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being not at all and 5 being very familiar.
2) If you are familiar with the genocide, briefly note the most important details. If you are unfamiliar, please leave this space blank.
3) Do you hold an overall opinion about people of Turkish Muslim ancestry?
Yes/No. If yes, please state what that opinion is.
4) If you answered yes to the above question, please indicate your opinion on the following scale.
On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being very negative and 5 being very positive.
5) Does our Orthodox faith have a meaningful teaching for people who suffer injustice?
On a scale of 1-5, no - nothing to offer to yes - a great deal to offer.
6) Please summarize the teaching of the Orthodox Church on how we are to respond when we or others suffer unjustly. If you do not know, please leave this blank.

The people that took the (anonymous) survey represented what I consider to be a fairly representative slice of the American Orthodox demographic pie in 2017-2018. People who were surveyed were from across Orthodox jurisdictions but the majority group was from the Greek

Orthodox Archdiocese (although not always ethnically Greek) and largely based in New England. The hard data from the surveys is given below. I found it interesting that, while the surveys were anonymous, people were eager to orally share with me their thoughts on the subject. Amazingly, people who traced their ancestry to Anatolia and whose families had actually experienced killing and displacement from the catastrophe in many cases knew very little of what had happened. Interestingly, a number of these people were involved with musical or social groups that promoted the songs and culture of their ancestral populations, and this involvement constituted the bulk of what they knew. Their eagerness both for more information and for others to learn more about their ancestors' story was readily apparent. Hearteningly, only half of the respondents had no opinion or no negative opinion about Turks and Muslims, but also expressed a desire to learn more about how, through our faith, we look at the genocide and genocides in general. My initial thoughts were that most survey takers would hold negative thoughts towards Muslims or Turks, whether through ancestral ethnic memory of the events of the genocide, fallout from the events of 9/11, or the changing demographics of America.

The questions of the above survey are divided between four

that ask for a number or yes/no and two that ask for a brief explanation of a previous answer.

Question 3 reads: “Do you hold an overall opinion about people of Turkish Muslim ancestry? If yes, please state what that opinion is.” Fifty percent of responders answered no, 48% said yes, and 2% responded neither. A large sampling from the comments is below:

1) There’s some nice people in all faiths.
2) I feel that the negative actions of some get reflected on the entire community - disproportionately.
3) People thirsty for power, using the others to do bad things.
4) Not too happy with them.
5) They are not all the same.
6) I feel that as a generalization Muslims wish to impose their beliefs on others. However, as individual people this is not always the case.
7) Even though they killed some of my ancestors I believe that they are also people of God and my opinion is favorable.
8) Many Turkish Muslims were Anatolian in origin (Greek, Armenian, Assyrian, etc.).
9) I believe they should acknowledge this horrible genocide and apologize.

10) Natural enemies.

11) I don't hold any animosity towards current Turkish citizens but Ataturk was akin to Hitler.

12) I would not treat people differently but being honest the history comes to mind.

13) Non-tolerant people.

14) Brutal to Armenians and Albanians.

15) Somewhat negative.

16) More nomadic.

17) You can't blame people for what the government does.

Question six reads: "Please summarize the teaching of the Orthodox Church on how we are to respond when we or others suffer unjustly. If you do not know, please leave this blank." A large number of responders did indeed leave this space blank, while some others wrote variants of "I don't know". Below is a sample of responses which show a heavy emphasis on broad platitudes and very little specifics.

1) We are, by direction of the teaching of the Orthodox Church, to respond with forgiveness and prayer for mercy upon those who have suffered as well as those who have caused the suffering.

2) It depends on our own level of closeness to God. If we are holy, we can suffer injustice. But when others suffer, we must try to protect them.
3) As Christians it is our faith to help everyone in need.
4) Just pray for hope, peace and love for everyone.
5) Try to see the big picture and forgive those who have been forced to do bad things.
6) With love, repaying good for evil.
7) We need to understand people's stories better and not make immediate judgment...compassion is key.
8) To support the people who suffer.
9) Treat everyone the same.
10) I feel that the beliefs are beneficial to support injustices, however it is sometimes not well received since many people "tune out" during liturgy.
11) Although we have the power of choice I firmly believe that good conquers all.
12) Important to help those in need.
13) Suffering has been within the Christian religion (Orthodoxy) from the beginning. It gives hope of redemption and salvation to the most hopeless of circumstances.

14) Offer kindness to people in need. Reach out.

15) The Church preaches forgiveness but fails to accept the modern era of change.

16) To put faith in God's hands. "Turn the other cheek" no matter how difficult it is.

17) Have compassion and provide help to those in need.

18) Forgiveness, prayer, belief in faith.

19) We cannot allow extermination because of an embrace of pacifism.

20) Help, forgive, but not deny.

21) Pray for those that suffer to find peace and for better life.

22) Kindness. Offer help when you can.

23) We offer prayers for the suffering but very little education for our parishioners.

24) For the persecutors, we have Jesus Christ as our example of forgiving those that unfairly persecute us and praying for them.

25) Prayer

26) Don't seek revenge.

27) Ease the suffering of others.

28)

Appendix B

This section includes sermon ideas about the genocide, a youth activity idea, and an outline for a half day retreat. The many themes of the genocide - violence, exile, forgiveness, the place of God in everything, etc., make for rich preaching material. For young people, in this case junior high and high school students, the story of the genocide and the reality of how difficult forgiveness can be present an opportunity for discussion. A half day retreat offers a good occasion to connect more fully with the history of the genocide and explore and engage with its many themes.

There are opportunities to preach on the genocide both from scripture and the lives of the saints. The below verses offer opportunities to speak about the genocide and how to process narratives of tragedy with insights from the Bible. I recommend that if you preach about the genocide on or near one of the designated ethnic commemoration dates (such as Pontic Greek Genocide Remembrance Day on May 19) you make an extra effort to stress the religious rather than ethnic elements of the catastrophe. In Joshua 6:21 a story of seemingly God-commanded violence has as its main points obedience and the offering of sacrifice.

Saul, in 1 Kingdoms 15:3 (1 Samuel in a Bible translated from the Hebrew text), disobeys the prophet Samuel, who speaks on God's behalf, and spares King Agag from death. This act of disobediences results in a crisis for God's people and leads to Saul vainly building a monument to himself. Psalm 137, with the striking notion of dashing infants against the rock, emphasizes that God's judgment spares no one, even those we think of as our enemies. Hosea 13:14-15 and 14:1 speaks of hope coming from God in the middle of annihilation.

The New Testament also has material which we can use for preaching about the genocide. The story of the Holy Innocents in Matthew 2:16 offers themes of exile and restoration. Paul emphasizes to us in Romans 1:24 that God handed over the control of our own wants to us and we suffer the consequences. In Revelation 1:9 John tells us that he was exiled on the island of Patmos for preaching God's word and remaining true to the faith in the midst of persecution. John's account is also one of many lives of the saints stories that make for excellent preaching material, such as the story of the 40 Martyrs of Sebaste and that of the 3628 Martyrs in Nicomedia mentioned earlier.

A youth activity for junior high and high school students (due to the material it would not be appropriate for younger children) is a discussion based on Simon Wiesenthal's book The Sunflower. The book is about the

limits and possibilities of forgiveness and is the true story of a dying Nazi soldier asking Wiesenthal, who is imprisoned in a concentration camp, to forgive him.[150] Wiesenthal, who was not an Orthodox Christian, is, after much agonizing and reflection, ultimately unable to grant the request for forgiveness. The book has over 40 short essays from people such as the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu on how they would have handled the situation if it had happened to them. None of the contributors are practicing Orthodox Christians. While reading the book and discussing the topic would make an excellent book club activity, it is not necessary for the youth group members to read it. The priest or youth worker would introduce the story of Simon Wiesenthal's encounter and have the young people envision a beloved aunt or uncle in the military on duty in the Middle East who is killed for being an Orthodox Christian. The discussion that will follow this exercise will naturally center on themes of forgiveness and mercy, and ultimately how the response of Orthodox Christians would differ from Wiesenthal's. This activity would also work for an Orthodox Christian Fellowship college group.

A short retreat using the material from this project is an opportunity for a parish to learn about and process the genocide and, by extension, to equip the faithful to better deal with narratives of tragedy. Ideally the

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[150] Simon Wiesenthal, *The Sunflower* (Paris: Opera Mundi, 1970) 28.

retreat would take place somewhere other than at the church facilities to help place people outside of their comfort zone. This helps underscore the seriousness of the topic as well as subtly hints at the theme of exile. The person presenting at the retreat can give a talk on the history of the genocide using the history chapter from this project. The talk can be enhanced with photos and videos, easily available online, ranging from contemporary photos to readings of poems about the genocide. Attendees can give their thoughts on what they have learned and then be broken into small discussion groups, with each group charged with a different topic, and at the end coming together to share their discussion with the group as a whole. The moderator would use material from this project to facilitate the conversation. There are many possible points of discussion for this format such as persecution because of one's faith, forgiveness in the midst of horrific violence, stereotyping of ethnicities and religions, and more. The retreat would end with a memorial service or trisagion prayers for the victims of the genocide or, in times of strife, a paraclesis service.

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