

**“WORD OF LIFE” CHURCH
OF ARMENIA**

THE BASES OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE

INTRODUCTION

Dear reader, with this writing we are drawing your attention to a very important and urgent church document - “The Bases of the Social Doctrine of “Word of Life” Church Armenia”. Considering that the creed of the church and the church’s approaches regarding general questions sometimes because of ignorance and sometimes also in a tendentious way are represented preposterously, in order to provide a reliable official information the publication of this document is considered as the motion of this time.

The "Social Doctrine" in an organized form gives necessary information on our fundamental approaches in different areas of church and society life, based on the Holy Bible, Christian theology and practice as well as church experience of former generations. This guide provides opportunities for all interested persons to get acquainted first hand with the position of “Word of Life” church about issues concerning subjects like church and state, church and nation, interdenominational relations, politics, economics, work, education, science and culture, church-family-society, war and military service, ethics, biomedicine etc.

This publication is intended for the servants and congregants of our church as well as for people in offices, mass media, religious experts and interested society. We hope that this in the best way will enlighten the attitude of "Word of Life" church concerning even the most delicate and sensitive issues while giving a credible representation about the theological and social doctrine.

With the blessings of the Lord

Senior pastor of “Word of Life” church Armenia
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BASIC THEOLOGICAL POSITIONS

BIBLE

The foundation of “Word of Life” church Armenia (hereafter: Church) for creed and the practice of Christian life is the the Bible, the Holy Scriptures containing of 66 books. The doctrine of the Church is based on the Apostolic Tradition and it takes into account the experience of previous generations. The Church gives all assessments and interpretations of the Christian life as well as of any philosophy according to the Bible and therefore puts God’s Word as its highest authority in the areas of teaching, revelations, Christian experience and practice.

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.” (2 Timothy 3:16)

The Bible is the only true criterion in matters of faith, according to which all teachings of the Church are examined. We believe that the Holy Scriptures will always remain a fundamental truth for Christians and the highest standard according to which human behavior and morality is assessed. Christians have to continually compare their faith and life with the Bible (Matth. 5:18, John 10:35).

It is the purpose of the Church to fulfill God’s will. The Bible clearly testifies that the main point of God’ will is returning mankind to God and the salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. To fulfill this plan the evangelization of all peoples is a mandate.

“This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:3-4)

“He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:15, 16)

GOD

We believe that there is one true, the living, eternal, immutable, omnipotent, just, merciful and holy God who is worthy of respect, reverence, love and trust. God is triune: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Godhead in the Trinity and the Trinity in unity.

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19)

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.” (2 Cor. 13:14).

THE CREATION OF THE WORLD

We believe that God is the Creator of the physical world, the universe and everything that is in it and also of the non-physical the spiritual world.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1)

“In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hand.” (Hebr. 1:10)

“For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.” (Col. 1:16)

God created man in His image and in His likeness (Genesis 1: 26-27). Man was created to glorify God, to have fellowship with Him, to work with God, and for Him, finding in it the highest satisfaction.

THE FALL

We believe that after the creation man was disobedient to God and that led to sin, alienation from God and death (Genesis 3:9-19). Sin is disobedience to God. Sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4).

THE WAY OF SALVATION

We believe that the salvation of man from the authority of sin and eternal punishment is only possible by the grace of God through believing in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8), Whom God sent to the world as an offering for all the sins of mankind. The Lord Jesus Christ took on Himself all the sins of mankind, nailed our old being to the cross, and took the punishment of us all through dying on the cross. He reconciled us with God through His death, was raised from the death on the third day, ascended to heaven and sat at the right hand of God in glory. Now He is interceding for all mankind. Salvation is a free gift of God, which comes through faith in the fact that Jesus died for my sins (Eph. 2:5; 1 Cor. 3:5-7; John 3:16; 1:14; Hebr. 4:14; 2 Cor. 5:19-21).

LIFE WITH GOD

We believe that man returns to God when he repents, is born again, receives righteousness and is reconciled with God. From that moment on he starts to grow in a holy life through fellowship with God (John 3:3; 2 Cor. 5:17).

We believe that conversion is the personal decision of a person to turn back from his/her sins and through faith receiving the righteousness of Jesus Christ. That decision is inspired by the Spirit of God (Acts 3:19).

We believe that justification is such a reunion with God as if we have never sinned (John 1:16; Acts 13:39; Rom. 8:1).

THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER IN CHURCH

We believe in the Universe Church as the body of Christ, which contains of all saved persons who lived or still live on earth (Eph. 1:23; 5:23; 1 Cor. 12:27; Gal. 3:28).

We believe that the water baptism is the outer sign for the inner changes in man when he dies to sin and is resurrected in Christ to a new life. The water baptism is a confession of the inner faith and salvation of man as well as a manifestation of a voluntary and conscious decision to live a God-pleasing life (Rom. 6:4; Acts 3:38; 1 Peter 3:21).

We believe that the baptism in the Holy Spirit is the promise of the Father which is given to believers of all times. The sign of the baptism in the Holy Spirit which the apostles experienced on the day of Pentecost, when they started to speak in tongues, is still happening today. Another evidence of the baptism is the infilling of the believers with power to be a witness for Christ in the whole world and to successfully evangelize (Acts 1:8, 2:1-4).

We believe that Jesus Christ send the believers to preach the Gospel that He died for their sins, was resurrected for their justification and lives as their only Savior and Lord. In order to complete this mandate successfully He anointed His followers with the power of His Spirit (Mark 16:15).

We believe the spiritual gifts are manifested in the lives of the believers as confirmation of God's Word, for spreading the Gospel, for the spiritual edification of the Church and the individual and for physical healing (Mark 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 12-13).

We believe that the Lord's Supper or the Holy Communion is a command of the Lord Jesus Christ. *"... The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."* (1 Cor. 11: 23-26) Through taking bread and wine Christians confess the reconciliation with God and their atonement through the death of Christ, the unity of the church in Christ and the faith and expectation of the Second Coming of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16-17, 11: 23-26).

We believe that it is God's will for our spirit, soul and body to be healthy. Christ's ministry which is described in the Gospels is always concentrating on the healing of people. The healing ministry is still happening in the church today (Mark 6:56; Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24):

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST AND ETERNAL LIFE

We believe in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, in the resurrection of the saints who died, in the transfiguration of the saints who are still alive and in the rapture of both groups together with Him as well as in the purpose of cleansing the earth from all wickedness and establishing His Kingdom on earth (1 Thess. 4:12-17).

FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The freedom of conscience and belief is an inalienable human right which is protected through international legal documents as well as through the national legislation. This freedom contains human rights:

- to confess any religion or to confess no religion at all, to change the personal belief, the belonging to a church or religion;
- to found a religious organization and to lead it on the grounds of personal doctrines;
- to gather at one place for worship and teaching;
- to spread the personal religious creed through public preaching, literature and mass communications;
- to not be persecuted because of personal religious beliefs.

The above mentioned cases are confirmed in many international documents especially in the following:

- UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
- The Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950)
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1976)
- Declaration on the elimination of all forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (1981).

The Church is ready to cooperate with other organization for the protection of the freedoms of conscience, belief and other human freedoms.

For the protection of social solidarity and religious tolerance we believe that the dialogue between churches and religious organizations is absolutely necessary.

Law

The law are standards and rules established by a state system which govern the relationships of people in any society. The law also includes the personal freedom of doing something or behaving in a certain way.

The law is a special area which is different from the area of ethics because it does not palpate the inner situation of man, the system of the spiritual values and does not determine their principles and rules.

However, the behavior and actions of a person really require legal regulation. Without a legal system no human society can exist.

We are convinced that legislation has to:

- not be contradictory, meaning that one part of it should in a logical way or in applying it not contradict another part;

- be clear, meaning that the interpretation of any part of it should not entail various interpretations;
- arise out of the needs and interests of the given society, aimed only at their welfare, harmony and security while not creating rightly clash of interests or transgressions of different classes in a given society.

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CHURCH AND NATION

In scientific settings there are different definitions of the word “nation”. Not to consider our task in the right or flawless definition of “nation”, nevertheless we believe it is necessary to stress one important point of view that the nation is a firm gathering of people which was formed in history on the foundations of profound generalities (concerning the territory, official language, culture, ethos, religion and others). Every nation has its special traits and characteristics through which the national identity and peculiarity of a given group of people is decided.

We accept that the Church of Christ as a universal organism does not put any borders but embraces believers of all nations. At the same time the nature of the Universal Church does in no way hinder the national identity and self-expression of Christians. On the contrary, the Church unites the universal and the national principle. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself shows that His teaching does neither bear local nor national nature.

“... a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.” (Matthew 8:20; John 4:21)

At the same time He became like His people to whom He belonged by birth. In talking to the Samaritan woman Jesus stresses His belonging to the Jewish people.

“You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.” (John 4:22)

We are convinced that for Christians the national and religious identities cannot be a problem where one has to be subordinate to the other. Therefore we do not consider it right to search for resistance between these identities. In our opinion there is not a question of subordination or preferment between national and religious belonging but a question of harmony.

Every nation has national symbols. The Church encourages its congregants to treat with honor the National symbols, such as the National anthem, flag and blazon.

CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM

Patriotism is a loyalty and love for the homeland and a readiness for sacrifices and feats for the sake of the fatherland. The Christian is called to love his country and his people. The patriotism of a Christian should be effective. It manifests in the defense of the Motherland from the enemy as well as in the activities directed to the development, welfare and moral improvement of the people.

CHURCH AND STATE

THE OBJECTIVES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE POWER

The state power is an institution ordained by God which is necessary to keep the social security, order and legality, to prevent and inhibit crime, to guarantee the inviolability of life and property, to provide protection for the citizens from outside enemies, and to realize these the appropriate means are needed (Rom. 13:1-4).

It is the task of state power to protect the rights of every citizen irrespective of their religious belief, political or other convictions. Human rights and freedoms, such as the right to life, freedom of speech, press, assembly, enterprise, the inviolability of private life and shelter, the right to property, family law, equality before the law and courts, freedom of conscience and belief, etc., should be guaranteed and protected by the state.

In order to maintain order in society, state power has the following functions:

- a) protects the rights and freedoms of the individual,
- b) takes care of the general welfare,
- c) exercises justice (Rom. 13:1),
- d) supports law-abiding citizens (Rom. 13:3),
- e) punishes criminals (Rom. 13:2-4),
- f) protects citizens from enemies inside and outside (Rom: 13:4),
- g) levies taxes and customs (Rom. 13:6). The levying of taxes and customs has to be observed as a necessity issued by law for the economic prosperity of the country, the solution of social problems and the provision of defensibility.

OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITIES

“Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities...” (Rom. 13:1)

The congregants of the Church have to be obedient to the state authorities and have to respect the laws of the country, if these laws are not directed to limit the freedom of conscience and belief and do not force believers committing acts which are against Christian ethics (Acts 4:19, 5:29).

THE AUTHORITY OF CIVIL SERVANTS

The conviction that the state is a system established by God does not at all mean that a civil servant, regardless of his/her rank, can behave at his/her discretion and misuse his/her official position. A civil servant cannot use his/her position for the harm to the interests of society or not perform his/her assumed functions.

CONTRADCTIONS BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE

In case state powers are misusing their competency and are adopting laws which are forbidding free worship services, church ordinances, the preaching of Gospel or are forcing believers to take actions which are contradicting Christian ethics, the Church reserves the right for itself and its congregants to act according to their own conscious and the beliefs of the Gospel (Acts 4:18-19, 5:28-29).

If possible disagreements are arising between the Church and the state, calls to rebellion, revolt, civic disobedience and violence are not God's means for solving problems and therefore they are not applicable for the Church. The following remedies are the means of the Church:

- a) to seek for understanding and a peaceful solution (Acts 4:18);
- b) to advert to and preach God's will (Acts 4:26-29, 5:29-32);
- c) prayer and fasting (1 Tim. 2:3; Matth. 6:16-18).

The Church also has the right to use all means and possibilities given by the Constitution and the acting state legislation in order to prevent the transgression against their rights as well as for the renewing of infringed rights.

THE CHURCH IS SEPARATED FROM THE STATE

We accept the secular state model, when the church is separated from the state which means that the state has no right to interfere in the legal activities and the inner life of the church and the church in turn does not interfere in the affairs of state control. There are some incidents described in the Bible when the Apostles were testifying to civil servants about the need for the salvation of their souls but they never dictated how to govern the state (Acts 26:8, 24:25).

AREAS OF INTERACTION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE

Although the church is separated from the state, the latter can for the sake of the welfare of society cooperate in several areas. These are possible realms for interaction between church and state:

- Maintaining the ethics in society;
- Spiritual, cultural and moral education;
- Charitable and social programs;
- Maintaining dialogue between representatives of authorities and the church about preparation for and adopting of different laws, legal acts and decisions;
- Prevention of repeat offenses and care for people in detention;
- Activities for solving problems of families, motherhood and children;
- Benevolent work.

There are realms in which the church cannot cooperate with the state systems. Those are the following:

- Political struggle, election campaigns, support for any political party or political agent;
- Participating in reconnoiter and similar activities.

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CHURCH, SOCIETY AND POLITICS

In democratic societies the main means for a citizen to express his/her will concerning the forming of the government and highly important national problems are election and referendum. The Church does not realize any voting promotions among its congregants in support of any person or party. The members of the Church as RA (Republic of Armenia) citizens take part in the elections and vote for the benefit of their chosen candidate according to their conscience, personal beliefs and views.

The Church is calling people with different political views to peace and solidarity. The Church members can have different political beliefs except for such beliefs which in a special way are leading to activities which are obviously contradicting the Church's teachings and Christian ethics. Spiritual servants with a high rank in Church cannot take part in the affairs of a political organization, pre-election activities like publicly supporting political organizations or individual candidates, promotions in favor of them and other activities. They also cannot be nominated for an election on any level. At the same time nothing should hinder the Church members to take part in the vote just as the other citizens.

The Church does not found any political parties.

The depreciation of the participation of the Church in activities of political parties and pre-election activities does not at all mean that the Church cannot openly express its position concerning issues important for society and represent its approaches to the governmental bodies. Such positions in the name of the Church are expressed by the leadership of the Church or authorized persons.

Nothing forbids believers to be involved in the legislative, executive and judicial areas of the state power as well as in political organizations.

The believers are called to fulfill their duty as citizens in taking part in elections for authorities on all levels. Believers individually or within organizations involved in state or political activities do this independently without identifying their positions with the positions of the Church and without speaking on behalf of the Church.

The Church is for all those social activities which foster national solidarity and the creating of an atmosphere of understanding in all social issues.

We accept that:

- devout, moral and virtuous people can have different opinions about political and social issues;
- we as Christians can serve the welfare of our society and state in different areas, maintaining Christian ethical standards and the principle of separation between church and state;
- the creating of tolerance, the existence of constructive discussions unite people, improve society and preserve religious freedom.

We do not accept:

- attempts to have influence on political and legislative activities which are directed to the transgression and limitation of rights and freedoms for citizens guaranteed in the Constitution;
- attempts to use state institutions for obliging to any religious views in society;
- the view, that whoever does not agree with our views has to regard himself as immoral, not devout and opponent;
- the prompting of political processes which are used with the aim to sow disunity in society, religious intolerance, enmity und hatred.

Every person in our society is precious for God regardless of their position in society. The value of a person is not decided by religious or political views, national or parental identities.

The equal opportunities for all people as well as the equality of all people before the law, regardless of their position in society, are the warranty the vital need of which have all people.

God Himself created the salvation for man and the equal opportunities to use His heavenly good things leaving the right of free choice to man.

6

CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS AND OTHER RELIGIONS

During history different Christian confessions were established: Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant. We take as a foundation the creed which was declared in 325 in Nicea at the first Ecumenical Council of the Church as well as at the second Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381. This is also known as “The Nicene Creed”.

Moreover, we keep the five foundations of the Protestant reformation:

- a) Scripture alone (Sola Scriptura);
- b) Christ alone (Sola Christa);
- c) Grace alone (Sola Gratia);
- d) Faith alone (Sola Fide);
- e) Glory to God alone (Soli Deo Gloria).

Finally we declare that the Church of Jesus Christ is universal, it has one truth and is one body with many members. We are very respectful towards the Catholic, Orthodox and all other churches which are accepting the Nicene Creed. We are convinced that according to the Bible it is needed to keep fellowship with different denominations in order to establish the Christian values.

The rising up and founding of new church communities of some evangelical confessions and denominations are aspirations to renew infringed, distorted or forgotten teachings of the Apostles and the real root is the longing of God and the need of God.

It is our belief that the revelations given to those generations and the consequently gathered rich Christian experiences and inheritance are today also forming a part of our spiritual storehouse. Therefore we are seeking to have fellowship with different churches in brotherly love and faith

unity relevant to the foundational principles of the Gospel while keeping the special features of the churches.

We are convinced that the joint efforts of Christian churches in ministries for the benefit of the nation will in a great way support the spiritual and material progress and the solidarity of the Armenian people; and it will leave such inheritance to the next generation which will keep them away from future mistakes.

The struggle of the Church against wrong and misleading teachings today cannot be successful through prompting an atmosphere of religious intolerance or hate in the community. Moreover, no kind of violence can eventually inhibit the progress of wrong teachings.

The growth of Bible literacy in our society, clarification and dialogue concerning important issues and most importantly the preaching of Gospel are the only powerful means in the battle against false teachings. The civilization of today does not tolerate violence and persecution on the grounds of religious beliefs. These methods are also unacceptable from the view point of Christian ethics.

OTHER RELIGIONS

The Holy Bible which is regarded as the foundation of our teachings as the breath of God discloses us God's will about the salvation for man. We believe that all men were created in the image and likeness of God, for His glory and for receiving salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We accept that there are different religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and others. Every religion has its view about God, man, life, death and the universe. The Christian faith maintains the human freedom of conscience and belief and his right to chose, which means that man is free to personally choose his religion or to choose to not confess any religion. We think that in order for reaching peace in society it is necessary to seek to educate people in tolerance for people with different world views. During history many people have been persecuted in the battle of religious intolerance and also for protecting the human rights of freedom of conscience and religion.

We are calling followers of different religious beliefs to peace, solidarity, tolerance and respect, to be good willing towards all people whatever world view they may have chosen.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS OCCULTISM

In recent years necromancy and many similar engagements (horoscopes, fortune telling, witchcraft, white and black magic, hypnosis, extrasensory perception, quackery, clairvoyance, divination and others) have been spread in our country. In the Bible it is clearly written:

“When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living.” (Isaiah 8:19)

The Bible strongly forbids the contact with powers of darkness. To be engaged in occultism shows the disobedience of man towards God. Occultism is one of Satan's weapons. He does everything possible so that man without understand this will find himself on the side of the forces of God's enemies. Using the lack of biblical knowledge of the people, lies, gossip and different baits Satan is sowing darkness in the souls of the people. Occultism is the most dangerous kind of worshipping idols if man does not accept the true God.

Today some kinds are appearing in a way adjusted with some elements of the Christian faith in order to drag sincere Christians into this which sometimes is successful. With united efforts the churches have to prompt a battle against occultism in its different manifestations and against its mass circulation.

7

ECONOMY, WORK AND PROPERTY

Our understanding of the economy is based on two facts:

a) The earth was created by God and legally belongs to Him. He in turn gave the right to rule over all the good things of the earth to man. (Gen. 1:27-28)

b) Because of the sin of man the relationship between the fallen creation and man, including the economy, bear the stamp of sin and cannot be perfect.

No economic system, whether it be capitalism, socialism, communism or any other system can save man and fulfill his most hidden needs. In the best case a highly developed economic system can provide material wealth for the majority of society.

No economic system can be called truly Christian but some systems have similarities with God's Word. The foundational principles of the Bible in the area of economics:

- a) right to property,
- b) freedom of enterprise,
- c) fervent work,
- d) charity.

PROPERTY

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Apostles as well as the Prophets in the Old Testament many times confirmed the right to property of a man (Is. 65:21-23; Mark 12:1-9; Matth. 25:14-30). Property is inviolable and the Church does not intervene in the property management of the believer. The person is free to use, master and direct its property in any way including donations to the Church. There are many cases known in Christian history where believers decided to give up part or all of their property. We find some testimonies in the book of Acts (2. 44-45).

The Bible does not give preference to any kind of property management. Individual, collective, state, corporate property and other kinds all have the same right of existence and the main tasks of the state is to protect all kinds of property of inroads. The arbitrary redistribution or alienation is forbidden because it is regarded as an infringement of God's fundamental commandments, particularly "Do not steal" (Ex. 20:15).

ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND COMPETITION

Entrepreneurship is the direct expression of the creative nature of human being, man who is created in God's image and likeness, therefore these human activities should not be hindered through unnecessary bureaucracy, monopoly and other means.

Free business and the right of private property are the foundations of successful economic systems. Initiative and fervent work are worthy to be recompensed accordingly. On the other hand the Christian approach for private property is not a means of fulfilling ones egoistic desires but an opportunity to do good to others.

There exists the thought that the strong competition in current economic systems makes man self-contained and self-centered. We believe that such conclusions are not objective. The experience of many countries with free market economies shows that the right competition pushes man to cooperation because a successful production demands specialization and cooperation.

It is the specialization which leads to growth in productivity at work and to a price reduction for goods and services so that they become easier available for people with low income. Competition has one more important advantage; it confirms the singularity and value of each individual person.

MONEY AND MATERIAL GOODS

The Bible does not condemn wealth in itself. Abraham, Job, Nicodemus and many other pious heroes of the Bible were wealthy people. But at the same time we are aware, that material goods by themselves do not guarantee for a happy and fulfilled life (Luke 12:15). The Bible many times warns that the love of money is the reason for many problems (1 Tim. 6:9-11) and leads man to degeneration. To continually improve the quality of life does not have to become the only goal so that a person will only become a consumer.

Today economic theories are widely spread according to which the main source of wealth is one person exploiting others. In our opinion this is not quite right although there are numerous examples of inhumane behavior of one person towards others. Freedom of business and private property do not always lead to exploitation. Wealth is more seen as a fruit of human creativity and initiative than a consequence of merely ruling over natural means or using others in unfair ways.

Social justice demands that all people, no matter what sex, race or social background they have, have to be equal before the law and as a consequence should have equal opportunities. But this does not necessarily mean material wealth on the same level for all. Just the opposite, sedulity, diligence, initiative and a creative approach are worthy to be compensated in form of higher incomes.

WORK

Since the creation of man work is a natural element of his life, an inseparable part of God's original plan (Gen. 2:15). After the fall the purpose of work changed. The creative part of work was reduced; it became a way of providing for means to secure ones existence. But nonetheless because of work man today has opportunities to create and for self-expression which is an indisputable testimony for God's likeness. Thanks to work man has the opportunity to fulfill his material needs and can care for those who are not capable of working for themselves.

The Bible does not give preference to any special kind of human work. According to God's principles any kind of work is pleasant before the Lord and blessed by Him. Providing for selfish gains, activities for spreading sin are unpleasant before God and degenerate society. Workers have the right to be rewarded (1 Cor. 9:7-10). The human exploitation of others, the unfair behavior towards others in the environment are an offence and inevitably lead to social shocks. The Bible says clearly:

“Do not defraud or rob your neighbor. Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight. (Lev. 19:13)

The workers receiving wages in turn also carry some responsibility. God calls them to work diligently (Eph. 6:5-8).

CHARITY

Charity is clear evidence that people are the administrators of God's property. The Bible calls us many times to care for those who for some reason cannot provide for their own needs (Deut. 24:19-22). Unfortunately unselfish charity work has become rarer in our days.

Although the material side of life has some importance man cannot be valued as a full individual looking to him only from the view point of his economic usefulness. Poverty, wealth or economic successes are not the perfect standards for assessing the dignity of man.

8

WORK, SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

ATTITUDE TOWARDS SCIENCE

Modern science (humanitarian and natural) is on a very high level of progress. There is an abstract belief that science can progress independently from spiritual-moral foundations. For the regeneration of normal human life it is necessary to go back to the lost link between scientific perception and spiritual values.

The German physicist and winner of the Nobel prize in 1954 Max Born writes in his book "My life and my views", "Until now nobody found means for the stability of society without the help of traditional ethical foundations; and nobody knows how to substantiate traditional ethical standards through scientific methods." He then continues, "Christ taught how man has to relate to a fellow man."

In our opinion faith in God forms an unchanging foundation for the system of moral standards. Even the atheistic moral education borrowed many foundations from the Bible. The purpose of stressing the contradiction between faith and ideology by rationalism and atheism was the removing of religion and faith out of human life and practice.

But science and culture need religion for their origin. They received life in their insides in very early time, they were existing, are existing until today and they are linked through tight links and

work together. Science and philosophy arose as attempts to give meaning to religious views to the world.

In the Middle Ages the church remained the only cultural hearth in Europe in which ancient seeds of science were kept. Monastic communities collected the ancient literature inside their walls and so gathered all treasures of science from that era.

We can be convinced of the following:

a) Science is studying the so called seen world. The theme of their study is the material universe. And religion is a spiritual desire for the supernatural world, which many times cannot be accessed through scientific methods. For science the non-material sphere remains closed. Therefore a scientist has to be very careful about philosophic beliefs in the non-material sphere and has to use the basis of revealed facts.

b) A religious mind many times uses scientific methods to reveal and give meaning to religious instinctive experience. That is mentioned in the Bible,

“Since what maybe know about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen...” (Rom. 1:19-20)

c) So science can progress in the right way under the patronage of a religious world view and revelation. Many scientific inventions, that presumably have been born and arose as a product of an instinctive thought, are seen as the consequence of divine revelation.

It is necessary to mention that a “scientific world view” which is merely built on physical facts does not exist. The highest categories of life and the meaning of good and evil relate to the sphere of faith. Religion gives knowledge to man, as to why he lives. Science cannot answer this question; it just tries to understand how the material world was created. The most part of studying science is about the sphere of concepts. But man cannot and does not have to limit himself to this sphere only. The religious world view is a complete area in which the whole life of man is found, including the thirst for science, natural scientific experience of the world.

The indifference of scientists concerning moral values can become a source of danger for society. Max Born writes in the same book, “Therefore it would be enough to take Christ’s teachings really serious and to assess evil and good not according to national but to universal standards. In history this need has never been so compulsory before and the punishment for refusing to accomplish this has never been so obvious before.”

In this way science and religion are the revelation of truth in these two ways and they have to promote the general human progress towards the way of truth. We believe that science and faith are spheres of the nature of man, different in life and activities not contradicting but complementing each other and their harmonic and free progress has a vital meaning for society.

At the same time despite positive impacts of cooperation in Christian and scientific researches, at the moment more recessions are observed towards a science of secularized ideologies. Science is coming out of the range of spiritual influence and the link with spiritual-moral values is broken, and this has severe consequences and conclusions such as for example the ecologic crisis. Such negative consequences will grow because of wrong fundamental reasons on the basis of progress in science and technology in modern society. This basis is grounded on an intentional decision that

the progress of society should not be limited by any moral, philosophic or religious demands. But in case of such “freedom” the progress of science and technology is shown in the flaws of mankind: ambition, pride, self-seeking attitude and more under a usable authority. That goes against the spiritual harmony of life and therefore all the consequences flow from that. In order to provide an orderly life for man it is necessary to return to the link between science and spiritual-moral values.

The church warns man of the bait of observing science as a sphere independent from moral foundations. The life standards of the Gospel give opportunity to educate the individual in a way that he will not use the obtained knowledge for evil. The church and science are called to cooperate for the salvation of life on earth and the provision of the necessary standards of life.

The church warns beforehand to not try to control the inner world of man through using achievements of science and technology to produce some kind of technologies for the inspiration and monopolizing of human conscience and sub conscience, because every person belongs only to the Lord God and is His priceless property. For this reason from the church’s point of view many technologies and experiences of biomedicine are not allowed. We are talking about abortion, human cloning, euthanasia, change of sex and others.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS CULTURE

Culture is an inseparable part of social life. God put a great creative potential in man. By this the great cultural achievements of the nations and their variety is explained.

The best pieces of art can guide the human mind and feelings to the highest spiritual values and promote the search for God.

The cultural inheritance of the Armenian people is quite rich and takes a worthy place in the storehouse of global culture.

Nevertheless culture by itself cannot root out the sinful nature of man and bring him to a spiritual new birth. Despite the huge human creative potential, especially among skillful and genius people in creating beauty and their pronounced manifestation, this does not keep them from weaknesses and sinfulness. For this reason some cultural phenomena (especially modern) express such values and views which are alien to Christianity and sometimes even hostile and this cannot leave us unconcerned.

Modern venal apologists of arts have brought down the creative progress to a level where the profession comes to an end and where success is not assessed by quality but by making profits.

Profitable bargains brought some cultural figures to the point that they served with their gifts homilies of human desires, cruelty and horror.

For this very reason we are trying to promote the affirmation of Christian values in arts. We welcome the activities of Christians in the cultural sphere given that they never exceed the scope of Christian ethics.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS EDUCATION

Knowing our responsibility before God and the state concerning the issue of Christian individual perfect, harmonic and intellectual progress we encourage all kinds of management of secular and spiritual education.

The content of the education has to be directed to the mutual understanding and cooperation of people, nations, and different races, ethnic, religious and social groups considering the differences of world view approaches.

The Church views the promotion of violence, enmity and hate, national, social and religious hostility in educational institutions as intolerable. It is also not acceptable in secular educational institutions that any religion will be presented as the only acceptable and true religion.

As a matter of fact in human history many considerable inventions in fundamental and applied science have been found out by spiritual ministers and Christian scientists. But following an old tradition the Church respects secular schools and is ready to build a relationship with them because of the recognition of the freedom of secular education. At the same time the Church considers the implementation to intentionally force pupils, students to accept anti-religious or anti-Christian concepts and the claim of the monopoly of the materialistic world view as unacceptable. The Church calls to reject the penetration of the danger of occult and neo-pagan impacts in school. The teachers should not only educate the children but also encourage them to seek the truth, morals and love towards their neighbor and towards their homeland.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Christian education forms an inseparable part of the Church. The Lord Jesus Christ has given a great commission to believers:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matth. 28:19-20)

Conditionally Christian education can be divided in official and non-official. The latter belongs to the different kinds of ministries in the Church, preparation for water baptism, small home groups, workshops, meetings on different levels and others.

The official Christian education includes teaching programs with the purpose to raise the level of theological literacy for spiritual leaders and church members while validating through appropriate certificates and diplomas.

The official Christian educational programs are arranged considering the general demands of the global educational systems; in some spheres (theology, pastoral care, music ministry) thanks to vocational preparation through Bachelor and Master Degrees. It is the task of the official Christian education to give every Christian such qualification that allows him to effectively work in the church.

9

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

THE BIBLE ABOUT MERCY

The Bible talks a lot about mercy and love for our neighbor, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39) “Who is my neighbor? ... The one who had mercy on him.” (Luke 10:29-37) “Give to the one who ask you...” (Matthew 5:42) True mercy for others is distributing the grace

we received from God. Christ taught that man not only needs to receive mercy from God but also has to show mercy to others.

“Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy.” (Matthew 5:7)

People are very precious in God’s eyes. Christians can and have to be persons guiding to God’s love through showing mercy for people. God calls believers to express warmth and care, compassion, support and love which people need so much.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE CHURCH IN SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

The impact of the social activities of the Church grows in different ranges in social life. The Church always eased the social strain and promoted peace and solidarity in society.

The church works in different social directions:

- Contributing to caring for children in children’s homes and boarding schools,
- Care for weak people,
- Moral support for prisoners,
- Giving spiritual and financial aid to people who are in risk groups.

The Church organizes different kinds of social institutions: rehabilitations centers, free meal distribution, Sunday schools as well as institutions for humanitarian aid.

THE UNDERTAKING OF THE SOCIAL MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

- The social ministry of the Church; the interaction between system of social workers and the Church for the progress of the country;
- The contribution of the Church in the issue of affirming solidarity among the citizens;
- Sowing seeds of religious tolerance among the citizens;
- Religious teaching and education with the goal to form positive social qualities in the individual;
- Charity work;
- Incitement of moral standards in the civil society;
- Cooperation between Christian and secular social institutions for the solution of global issues as well as for giving help to individuals.

ISSUES OF INDIVIDUAL, FAMILY AND GENERAL ETHICS

THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF MAN

God created man (man as well as woman) especially in His image and likeness. The Lord blesses marriage as a means for producing new human generations. (Gen. 1:28) Man and woman have the need for mutual fellowship and supplement (1 Thess. 5:23, Acts 4:23, 1 Cor. 3:18).

ATTITUDE TOWARDS FAMILY

According to Roman law, which is at the foundation of many modern states, marriage is an agreement between two persons who are free in their decision. While the Church accepts this definition as right at the same time it gives meaning through it in the light of the Bible.

For Christians marriage is not just a legal contract, a means for producing new generations and a fulfilling of natural desires but, in the words of St. John Chrysostom, "a sacrament of love," the eternal union of spouses to each other in Christ. Couples who want to marry are seeking the blessing of the church and take the communion together which is the oldest form of the sacrament of marriage.

For members of the body of Christ the common faith of the spouses builds an important condition for a true Christian marriage. Only a family which is united in faith can become a home church (Rom. 16:4; Phil. 1:2), in which husband and wife together with the children grow in the knowledge of God. Differences in the value systems are a serious danger for a complete unity in marriage. For this reason the Church considers it as its duty to call believers to only getting married in the Lord (1 Cor. 7:39), meaning with such a partner who has the same Christian beliefs. The Church respects those marriages, in which case only one partner is a Christian believer, according to the words of the Apostle Paul,

“For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband“ (1 Cor. 7:14).

The Church insists on the faithfulness of the spouses until death and to not divorce based on the words of the Lord Jesus Christ,

“... Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate... anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.” (Matthew 19:6-9)

The Church considers divorce as objectionable because it leads to strong suffering for the spouses and especially for the children. In modern society a considerable part of marriages ends in divorce especially at a young age. This becomes quite a tragedy for the individuals concerned and for the whole nation.

The Bible allows divorce only in two cases:

- Sexual immorality, which defiles the holiness of marriage and breaks faithfulness in marriage;
- The desire for divorce from the unbeliever (1 Cor. 7:15).

The Church sees it as its task with all its possibilities to keep the completeness of marriage and to prevent divorce. The spiritual ministers are even called to have conversations with the couples who want to marry and to explain the whole meaning and responsibility of their planned step to them.

THE ROLE OF MAN AND WOMAN IN SOCIETY

The experience in the family helps man to overcome his selfishness and to build healthy foundations for citizenship. Right relationships with dear ones are especially formed in the family which in turn reverberates in general or society as a whole. In the task of forming an individual the role of the family is exclusive, no social system can replace this role.

Orphans with living parents have become a serious problem for modern society. Children replenishing children's homes and sometimes just found neglected on the streets are a living testimony of a deep illness in society. Through giving spiritual, social and material help to such children the Church directs its efforts to the strengthening of the family, to performing their mission as parents which will allow preventing the tragedy of neglected children.

In the world before Christ a perception existed that a woman is in a lower position than man. The Church of Christ fully revealed the dignity and high calling of the woman. In church the woman actively contributes in organizing, preaching, educating, and charity works.

Valuing high the role of women and welcoming their political, cultural and social equality with man at the same time the Church does not justify the tendency of lowering of woman's role as a wife and mother.

Man and woman are equal before God and society in their value but that does not take away their natural differences and does not change their callings in the family as well as in society. The Church sees the calling of the woman not as becoming like man and to compete with man but as a progress in the God-given abilities of women.

MORAL ISSUES

The Church is calling to moral purity. Sexual licentiousness inevitably destroys human life, inflicting strong attacks on his spiritual and physical health. Commercial, sexual or with other exploitation of sexual addiction for other reasons like pornography shows the spiritual and moral fall and through that man is brought down to the level of an animal which is only led by its instinct.

The promotion of faults in society especially harms the not yet stable souls of children and youth. The Church encourages believers to cooperate with all morally healthy powers and to oppose this

demonic spreading of seduction which destroys families and overthrows the foundations of society.

“Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matthew 5:28)

“Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” (James 1:15)

“Sexual immoral... will not inherit the Kingdom of God.” (1 Cor. 6:9-10)

The Church does not call at all to find the body or having sex in itself disgusting. God blesses sexual relationships in the family where they turn into love and an expression of unity between wife and husband, a source to produce new human generations.

The Church constantly condemns immorality and the so called promotion for free love which change the pure relationships between man and woman and also the human body into an object of dirty exploitation, commerce, selfishness and satisfying filthy desires.

Knowing that the school together with the parents should give some knowledge to children and young people about the relationship between the sexes and about the body of man, programs of “sexual enlightenment” which see relationships outside marriage as normal, and even more so different homosexual relationships; are regarded as unacceptable by the Church. It is also unacceptable to insist on such a schedule for the students. The school is called to face faults, to educate a moral person who will be ready to build a strong family on the basis of faithfulness and purity.

11

PERSONAL AND NATIONAL HEALTH

THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF PERSONAL HEALTH

The Bible teaches man to take care of his health, of his spiritual, mental and physical health.

“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for God’s temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.” (1 Cor. 3:16-17)

The Lord Jesus Christ was healing people from mental as well as from physical diseases. The preaching of Gospel was always accompanied by healings as a sign of the authority of the Lord to forgive sins. The Apostles also had a healing ministry through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church anointed from the side of its divine Founder and full of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, has been and remains a healing community.

For the Church divine healing is very important which foundation is a ministry of love with the aim to ease and prevent human suffering. The healing of man from diseases is seen as a realization of God's plan for man.

“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through? May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Thess. 5:23)

At the same time witchcraft and magic and other activities as well as superstition need to be distinguished from the healing power of the Holy Spirit which only works through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ through taking part in the sacraments of the Church and through prayer.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS HEALTHCARE

The activities of the Church are directed to proclaiming God's Word and the teaching about the grace of the Holy Spirit for sick people and the persons caring for them. The Church blesses and fosters the founding of church hospitals where nursing for all phases of treatment and restoration includes medical and pastoral care.

The relationship between doctor and patient has to be build on the free decision of the person and respecting of its dignity. The doctor has to take responsibility for the patient, has to show qualitative medical help irrespective of the existence of financial compensation and its extent and should not turn his profession into a source for becoming rich. At the same time it is one of the most important concerns for society and state to provide a valuable salary for medical workers.

The Church warns against the dangers of using occult methods which are hidden under the name “alternative medicine”, this puts the human will and conscience under the influence of demonic powers. Every person needs to have the right and the real possibility to reject such medical means.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS PREVENTIVE HEALTH AND SPORTS

Preventive measures, physical education and sports are important for maintaining personal and social health. Experience shows that among the prophylactic activities for maintaining and strengthening health the success of measures of physical education and sports is very high in the battle against drug addiction, alcoholism, addiction of smoking and criminality, especially among youth.

One of the most important parts of physical education and mass sports is the strengthening of love among people. That kind of exercise and physical training which represents a danger for life or health, which is based on the performance of occult methods, so called influence of bioenergetic fields and which is an expression of worshipping violence and cruelty should not be encouraged. The Church does not accept manipulation through doping in sports which is destructive for health and reasons for disability.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS MENTAL ILLNESSES, ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ADDICTION

The Church considers mental illnesses as a general manifestation of spiritual damages in the human nature. The mental illnesses are the result of the influence of endonic factors (hereditary

inclined) and outside factors on the central nervous system (encephalic, psychological traumas) as well as on the whole organism; are the consequences of demonic influence or of the captivating desires of man. Therefore it is not right to judge all mental illnesses as demon-possession as well as trying to heal spiritual illnesses only through medical methods.

In the field of psychology the cooperation of pastoral and medical help is more successful, through some limited competences of the doctor and the spiritual minister.

Mental illness does not reduce the dignity of man. He still bears God's image and is in need of compassion and help.

The Church strictly condemns alcoholism which often becomes a reason for the breakdown of families, leading to innumerable sufferings for the sinful victim of the illness as well as for his loved ones especially for the children.

Even more destructive is drug addiction. Falling into drug addiction a person becomes very vulnerable for the influence of evil powers. Drug addiction is more prone for young people which are induced by the stereotype behavior of those for whom the use of drugs is “normal” and even a necessary token for fellowship.

The main reason for many of our contemporaries who are falling into the deceptions of alcoholism and drug addiction is spiritual emptiness, the loss of the purpose of life, distortion of moral positions. Drug addiction and alcoholism become an expression of the spiritual illness of the whole society. This is the wages of being consumers only, not being spiritual and the loss of true ideals.

The Church compassionately deals with the victims of alcoholism and drug addiction and suggests support in prophylactic and rehabilitative areas to them as well as if necessary intervenes in order to give special medical help in the work of overcoming the destructive addiction.

12

WAR AND PEACE, MILITARY SERVICE

Among our congregants we encourage the belief that everyone has to fulfill his duty for the homeland. This also means that all male adults who are suitable have to fulfill their duty in serving in the Army of the Republic of Armenia (RA).

WAR

After the fall the whole history of mankind is a history of wars (Matthew 24:6-7, Rev. 6:4). But the Church does not consider war as a normal situation of mankind.

The time of the revolution of war technique resulted in the building of weapons which have the ability to extinguish all life on earth in just one moment. But the people living in this time do not have the right to decide about the fate of the earth in the place of the One who created all of this. Of course so called local wars are a cruel reality of our lives. But Christians of different denominations have always been actively participating and are participating in peace keeping efforts.

In the area of international relationships between peoples and governments the ideal behavior of Christians is defined by the “golden rule”.

“Do to others what you have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12).

The church’s attitude towards war is encouraging or condemning, regarding each special case independently. The church does not forbid its members to take part in military activities, this also includes compliance to a constitutional order (Rom. 13:1; 1 Peter 2:13). We highly respect people protecting the homeland who sacrificed or are ready to sacrifice their lives for their fellow citizens (John 15:13).

PEACE

All life on earth is created by God (Acts 17:24). He created the earth perfectly (Gen. 2:31). As the crown of creation God created man and put him to rule over all created things (Gen. 1:26; Psalms 8:6). But man committed sin and lost God’s grace.

Because of the sin of Adam the whole mankind came under the authority of sin (1 John 5:19; Rom. 5:12). With the aim to save the perishing mankind God sent His Son Jesus into the world Who through dying on the cross for the sins of all men restored the broken relationship between God and man (Rom. 3:16). This is the biblical view of peace.

The Church considers peace also as the inner condition of man, as a gift of God's love. For all Christians peace is a blessing from God (John 14:27, Gal. 5:22). At the heart of the believer, in spite of widespread war, natural disasters, technological accidents and catastrophes, there is peace (John 16:33). The peace of Christ is freedom from sin (Rom. 15:13) and life in unity with God (Rom. 5:1). God wants His children to take the peace of Christ and the light of the Gospel to perishing mankind which suffers from ethnical, political and social shocks (Matthew 5:9):

MILITARY SERVICE

As citizens we are obliged to conscientiously fulfill our duties among which is the military service determined by the government either through call-up or on the grounds of a contract (Luke 3:14; Matth. 8:9-10).

Taking care of the spiritual image of the army, seeking to preserve the intrinsic spiritual relationship with the members of the Church, called upon for military service, we recognize the need for cooperation of the Church with the Armed Forces of Armenia.

DIRECTIONS OF COOPERATION

- Fulfilling the spiritual needs of soldiers, who were either called up or serve in the army on the grounds of a contract;
- Protection of religious rights and freedom of belief for church members who are soldiers;
- Assistance to commanders of military units in the configuration of libraries with spiritual literature.

THE PRINCIPLES OF COOPERATION

- Observance of the Constitution of RA, laws, regulations of the Armed Forces, orders and directives of the relevant ministries;
- Respecting the traditions of the Church;
- Priority of the state interests of the RA;
- Resolution of inter-denominational conflicts in military groups;
- Non-interference in the internal affairs of the Church;
- Openness in relations with the public and the media.

13

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

STATE AND CRIME

Every person has to be a citizen keeping the laws of his state.

“Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities... “ (Rom. 13:1):

Crime is a violation of the laws of the state. Crimes are the consequences of the sin of man. Sin is a deep progress in the heart and soul of man and not only a violation of moral standards determined by the state or of the articles in the criminal code.

“For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person...” (Matthew 15:19-20)

The imperfection of the legislation and the weak economic and social base also foster the growth of crime.

Organs of law enforcement and special institutions have been established for the battle against crime in the state. Their purpose is to prevent and detect crime and punishment and rehabilitation of perpetrators. To eliminate the roots of crime is not only one of the most important tasks of the state but also of the church.

CRIME PREVENTION

In the issue of crime prevention first of all the Church sees the spiritual regeneration of the nation, the grafting of spiritual values, spiritual-moral education and enlightenment. Therefore it is necessary to establish Christian mass media for cooperation with the state in the task of crime prevention. Fear, violence and punishment are not means which can uproot the evil in the heart of

man. For this reason the preaching of the Gospel, the leading of a righteous and decent life are seen of methods to prevent infractions of the law.

The evangelical-pentecostal believers pay special attention to so called risk groups, drug addicts, homeless people, children who are not cared for and others in which environment are more possible origins of crime. The activities of rehabilitation centers established by the Church for these individuals should also be aimed at overcoming the social causes of crime. Evangelical-pentecostal Christians have some experience in this and are willing to cooperate in this regard with the government.

EXECUTING PUNISHMENT FOR CRIMINALS

Committed crime is subject to deserved and just punishment. The Church insists that the rights of persons in detention awaiting trial should not be infringed, it is necessary to guarantee them protection and a scrupulous lawsuit. The Church condemns attempts of pressure towards sentenced people or in detention awaiting trial as well as humiliation and tortures of any kind.

To put the criminal in arrest does not only imply the separation from society but also his correction. In the task of reeducating people in detention the Church essentially can support the state. The convicted people have no opportunity to listen to God's Word and to feel His love but through a spiritual minister. Therefore we are always ready to cooperate with the prison department of the Ministry of Justice of RA. The Evangelical-pentecostal Christians see it also as their concern to unceasingly through Church ministries explain to the convicted the reasons for their isolation and the ways towards a healthy mindset through faith in God, distribute spiritual literature, write letters to them and similar activities with the purpose to renew the mindset of the fallen person and bring them to healthy ethics.

In order to have more successful work in detention a special preparation of spiritual ministers and their establishment in every disciplinary institution is necessary.

The Church also sees it as a task to support the state in improving the living conditions of the people in detention.

Law enforcement in a secure manner has to protect its citizens against inroads and has to put a strong barricade in front of the way of the criminal. The criminal has to know that the consequences of every crime are appropriate punishment.

Unfortunately while in detention many citizens lose their social roots, their families. The rehabilitation of such people is possible in the rehabilitation centers the Church has to establish.

INTERACTION BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE

The Church tries to pay special attention to the task of crime prevention in the state. (1 John 5:18) Respecting the work of care-takers, workers in institutions of law enforcement, experts in the Ministry of Justice the Church is ready to interact with them and to be useful to them. Such support can be realized in diverse joint projects like the establishment of rehabilitation centers, the organization of scientific-cultural events as well as taking a role in literature and arts.

The interaction with institutions of law enforcement, the prison system of the Ministry of Justice can be established on the grounds of bilateral contracts.

Only the joint efforts of churches and state will help many people to leave the way of crime and return to a full life for the welfare of Armenia.

CHURCH AND MASS MEDIA

ATTITUDE TOWARDS PROPAGANDA

The Church respects the work of the journalists who are called to provide society with well-timed information about events happening in the world.

Informing the TV-viewer, listener, reader should be based not only on a firm commitment to the truth, but also concern about the moral state of the individual and society, which includes the disclosure of positive ideals, as well as the fight against the spread of evil, sin and vice.

Mass media is not only a source of information but also a means of forming the public consciousness, the moral and philosophical convictions of individuals. Therefore the promotion of violence, enmity, hate, national, social and religious discrimination as well as the sinful exploitation of human instincts are intolerable for the Church.

EDUCATIONAL AND PEACE MAKING ACTIVITIES

The Church interacts with secular mass media in order to reach different strata with the message of the Gospel.

"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15).

Every spiritual minister is called to deal with due carefulness concerning the links with secular mass media, to perform pastoral and educational activities as well as with the aim to create interest in secular society for church life and different aspects of Christian culture.

In the relationships with mass media it is necessary to show prudence to consider the position of specific media in relation to the faith and churches, moral orientation of mass media. Christians can work for secular mass media in order to present to society also the Christian moral concepts.

The cooperation between churches and secular mass media assumes mutual responsibility. The information given to the journalist which he in turn has to pass on to the audience needs to be reliable. The view of a spiritual minister spread through mass media has to correspond to the teaching and position of the Church concerning common issues. The journalist in turn has to depict the activities of the Church in an unbiased manner without distorting the information received by the spiritual minister as well as rightly presenting the principal attitudes of the Church concerning the raised questions.

SETTLEMENT OF CONFLICTS

In the relationship between the Church and secular mass media difficulties and even serious conflicts can arise. The problems emerge because of inaccurate or incorrect information about church life, statements without due context, changing the common position with the personal attitude of the author. At the same time more serious principal conflicts can come up between the Church and secular mass media. This happens in dishonoring the name of God, other

manifestations of sacrilege, deliberate and regular distortion of the information about church life, openly talking bad about churches and spiritual ministers. In all cases difficulties and conflicts have to be solved according to the acting legislation of RA.

15

CHURCH AND ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

VIEW OF ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

The Church is aware of its responsibility for the fate of the earth and expresses a deep concern for the problems instituted by modern civilization.

Today the earth, the ground, the water, the air, the animal and plant worlds are damaged. The widespread contamination of the environment by industrial waste, bad agricultural technology, deforestation and soil lead to suppression of biological activity and the steady shrinking of genetic diversity of life. The non-renewable mineral resources come to an end, the reservoirs of clean water are diminished, numerous harmful substances are emerging which conglomerate in the atmosphere. The ecological balance is broken; mankind stands at the edge of a general environmental disaster.

MAN AND ENVIRONMENT

The harmony between man and environment was broken in ancient times. The Fall of man was the reason for this. The sin born in the spirit of man had ruinous impacts not only on him but also on the whole earth. In their behavior towards nature people started to more often rule selfishly, with consuming promptings and permissiveness.

The Church calls for a more serious punishment for the harms inflicted to nature, to join efforts on the grounds of international cooperation for the protection of the environment. One of the main principles of the Church concerning ecological problems is the principle of the unity and completeness of the earth created by God. The plant, animal and human worlds are linked together. Nature is not planned as a storehouse for selfish and irresponsible use of resources but as a home where man is not lord but administrator as well as a temple where he is the priest and not servant of the nature but of the Creator.

THE LINK BETWEEN THE ECOLOGICAL AND THE SPIRITUAL CRISIS

Ecological problems are essentially anthropological in nature, they are generated by man, not nature. Therefore the answers for many questions which arose during the environmental crises are hidden in the spirit of man and not in the economic, biological, technological or political spheres. Nature is transformed or perishing not by itself but because of human influence.

In our days the link between anthropology and ecology has been clearly revealed when the world at the same time experiences two crises, spiritual and environmental.

A spiritually mutilated person brings forth the mutilation of nature because it cannot have a positive influence on the world.

Mankind immersed in sins is not helped by enormous technical possibilities and sometimes these even lead to harm.

16

THE EVALUATION OF THE ETHICS OF BIOMEDICINE

The Church undeniably believes that man is a spiritual creature created by and for God. Therefore we consider it important to carefully analyze moral views of scientific innovations especially in such areas as methods of modern biomedicine.

ABORTION

We agree with the traditionally applicable attitude of the Christian Church towards abortion as the deliberate murder of a human being created in God's image and likeness. (Gen. 1:27) The Bible often describes the fruit in the womb as a complete human creature.

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb... Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be“ (Psalms 139:13-16).

“Did not he who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same one form us both within our mothers?“ (Job 31:15)

Based on the fact that only God gives life and that this life is holy we believe that abortion has to be rejected. We observe the wide spreading and justification of abortion in modern societies as a threat for the future of mankind.

At the same time we realize that in many cases women decide for abortion because of difficult life situations because of which often the upbringing of the child would not be complete or not sufficient. Therefore we believe that a Christian alternative for abortion is social help for mother and child.

We insist that the doctor has to pay the highest attention in the diagnosis, healing and future course concerning diseases in mother and child because any mistake by the doctor during any of the mentioned phases can prompt the woman to end her pregnancy. We are convinced that the doctor is called to heal people, to prolong their lives and make it secure, qualitative and with the utmost efforts save people in danger of death and not to become a reason for death.

At the same time we do not accept the radical methods in the struggle against abortion. God deals in love with all people including those who are supporters of the opposite view. Therefore we have to deal with them with compassion and at the same time do everything possible to protect child birth in our country.

CONTRACEPTIVES

We are convinced that issues concerning contraceptives need special attention and evaluation.

God's initial plan was already given to man in the book of Genesis.

“God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it...” (Gen. 1:28)

A big family is regarded as a blessing of God. (Psalms 127:3-5) In many countries such attitude has been preserved until today.

Some Christians think that the only purpose of sexual relations is the producing of the new generation and for this reason they do not use any contraceptives. Respecting this view we do not regard it as the only view. We believe that husband and wife are responsible before God for the complete upbringing of their children.

In our opinion families can have justified reasons to postpone for some time or to limit child birth. We also respect those who made a decision to not have children although we do not see this as the standard.

In making a decision husband and wife have to understand that some contraceptives actually have aborting influence while terminating the life of the seed in its earliest stage. We think that it is absolutely unacceptable to apply these.

In general our view is that children are a gift and blessing from God. God cares for the child, already when it is in the mother's womb. He desires children to be born and brought up in worthy circumstances by loving parents.

CLONING OF MAN

Every attempt to breed man which is outside the scope of God's initial plan to create a body for the eternal spirit and the soul we regard as impermissible. These actions infringe on the rights of God as the Creator, and are a direct challenge to Him. They deprive a man of his uniqueness, relegating it to the level of the material for experiments.

Human cloning can corrupt the natural foundations of childbirth, blood kinship, motherhood and fatherhood. No less dangerous are the psychological consequences of cloning, such as loss of self-identity as a person. A man of God's creation is transformed into mechanical copy of a living person or lived.

Even the cloning of separated cells and tissues, although this is not a depreciation of the dignity of a person and in some cases it is useful in biological and medical practice, these tests have to be performed under the consideration of moral aspects. Every human being is a special creature of God (Psalms 139:13-16).

ORGAN TRANSPLANT

There is another experience which is widely spread in our days, the transplant of organs and tissues.

Despite the fact that we believe in the bodily resurrection at the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, we understand that, in the words of the Apostle Paul:

“Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable“ (1 Cor. 15:50).

After death the body of man becomes dust, from which it was created (Gen. 3:19). It is not needed for the future life. Therefore a giving away of tissue and organs after death can become an expression of a sign of love for the neighbor, but this step cannot be accepted as a duty of man.

A special case is the transplant of organs from living donors. This can only be allowed to save the life of somebody else and as a voluntary self-sacrifice. In this case the consent to take out an organ becomes a shining example of an expression of compassion. But the potential donor has to be informed about the possible consequences for his health because of the organ transplant.

We are convinced that the only justified reason for organ transplant is love and compassion for the neighbor. To make this step commerce is radically wrong and can lead to unpredictable consequences.

EUTHANASIA

Recently, academic circles and the media are increasingly intensified debate about the justification for legalizing the intentional killing of the terminally ill (euthanasia), including at their request.

We are convinced that the human life is a holy gift from the Lord and only He has the right to rule over it. We consider euthanasia as a kind of killing or suicide which are serious sins before God. Instead of showing a respectful attitude towards human life the supporters of euthanasia immediately push as their first plan their social “advantage”, starting from the removal of “unprofitable” other citizens until the avoidance of “useless” medical costs. Believing that supernatural healing is possible at any time in our opinion it is necessary to pray for terminally ill people as well as doing everything possible to ease their physical sufferings.

HOMOSEXUALITY AND CHANGE OF SEX (TRANSGENDERING)

The Bible views homosexual relationships as a vulgar mutilation of God’s plan for human life. God calls such behavior “detestable” (Lev. 20:13) and “shameful lusts” (Rom. 1:26-27) and people doing this “will not inherit the Kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

In modern societies we more often see an approach towards homosexuality as an “exceptional sexual orientation”. Thoughts are expressed that homosexuality is conditioned by the “individual sexual precondition”.

The Bible teaches that the only normal and natural kind of sexual relationship is the relationship between man and woman within marriage. No homosexual relationships can be compared with this. We condemn attempts to present this sinful tendency as a rule, much less as a source of pride and an example to follow. We also condemn all propaganda of homosexuality.

In light of this becomes clear our position in relation to attempts to change sex (transsexualism), allegedly caused by a sense of belonging to the opposite sex. Such attempts are a sign of rebellion against God's created order and can only further aggravate the internal psychological crisis of man.