

THE RELIGIOUS FACTOR IN ARMENIA-TURKEY RELATIONS AND  
IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW MECHANISMS OF ADAPTATION

H. HOVHANNISYAN, M. YAVRUMYAN, H. KOCHARYAN

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*“All the sons of Adam make mistakes,  
but the best of them are those who repent”*

*Al-Tirmidhi*

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# 1. General description of the research

The aim of this research is to study the ongoing processes in the Armenia-Turkey bordering regions, particularly the revelation of the tendencies which have the potential to facilitate or be an obstacle towards the strengthening of mutual trust between the neighboring peoples, the opening of the Armenia-Turkey border and the establishment of normal relations. Armenia-Turkey relations found themselves at a qualitatively new level in Zurich, Switzerland, in 2009, after the signing of the Armenia-Turkey protocols, which, after some time, were condemned to being frozen<sup>1</sup>.

Although it is not possible to separate any aspect of Armenia-Turkey relations from the ongoing diplomatic and political processes between both countries, within this study, an attempt will be made nevertheless to analyze the possible tendencies shown by cultural and religious issues, the mutual religious influence and developments as well as the growth of cultural ties.

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<sup>1</sup> On 23 February 2011, the signed Armenia-Turkey protocols were removed from the agenda of the Turkish Parliament. Nevertheless, we think that this step had certain political and propagandistic objectives for Erdoğan's government, in order to show Turkey's attitude towards future Armenia-Turkey relations. Let us also add that, some time later, the protocols returned to the Parliament's agenda, but Turkish media almost completely failed to report this. The principles outlined in the declaration of independence cited by the decision of the Republic of Armenia Constitutional Court were used by the Turkish government as an excuse to not sign the protocols and to crush Armenia-Turkey relations in that embryonic state.

In this sense, one must note that the cultural and religious stereotypes that have existed for years cannot but have an influence on the mutual perception of each other by the two peoples. Memories that have been shaped historically as well as an absence on both sides of direct interaction have formed a whole group of myths and stereotypes, which cannot but have an influence on relations between both sides. In this sense, one can insist that the claim that “there exists not a rational basis for Armenia-Turkey relations, but rather there exists a metaphysics of those relations” is correct. This research must be seen as an attempt to bring this issue, which is important for the Armenian people and for independent Armenian statehood, out of the sphere of metaphysics and to see it as part of a logical chain of rational relations.

A clear testimonial of this is the fact that any investigation of Armenia-Turkey relations sees the scene dominated by aspects of relationships that are on a familial/matrimonial, moral, emotional, psychological or simply an individual level, all of which ignore the cultural and religious aspects, to some extent<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, all of the aspects mentioned above are formed on the basis of cultural and religious, especially a day-to-day, perception and are expressed through certain limited language models.

Besides this, one can also place on the intersection of this rationality and irrationality the danger of today’s democratic changes, which on one hand is the result of “historical fear” formed during the years of the

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<sup>2</sup> See *Խառատյան-Առաքելյան Հ., Նեյզի Լ., Խոստերով միմյանց հետ, Երևան-Ստամբուլ*, 2010 [Kharatyan-Arakelyan H, Neyzi L., Talking to Each Other, Yerevan-Istanbul, 2010].

existence of a monoethnic state, and on the other hand the global changes and migration flows, the manifestations of which in the Republic of Armenia over recent years are a cause for serious concern<sup>3</sup>.

As mentioned, there is a lack of systemized and multi-layer studies of the positive and negative sides of Armenia-Turkey relations. Even debates by politicians demonstrate a lack of factual arguments and positions based on research. The declarations made are rhetorical and stay within the boundaries of false nationalism.

In this sense, it is possible to divide the process of Armenia-Turkey reconciliation or the establishment of Armenia-Turkey relations into two parts – a) in the first stage, there are mainly emotional points related, largely, to the appropriateness of the signing and the ratification of the Zurich protocols, b) in the second stage we deal with the current reality, when a specialized evaluation is necessary of the existing issues and the tendencies of developing processes and possible predictions. In case the border between the two states opens, the Republic of Armenia must be able to offer quick and effective solutions both on a state and on a societal level to neutralize issues that can arise in a number of spheres (such as ideology, cultural heritage, attempts to reevaluate or attach new significance to the historical past, even emotional issues).

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<sup>3</sup> See Hovannisian R. G., *The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times: Foreign dominion to statehood: the fifteenth century to the twentieth century; Volume 2 of The Armenian People from Ancient to Modern Times*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. See also "Armenians in Turkey". Economist. 2006-11-16. Retrieved 2008-08-24; *Մելքոնյան Ռ., Իսլամացված հայերի խնդիրների շուրջ, Երևան, 2009, էջ 86-90* [Melkonyan R., *On the issues of Islamized Armenians*, Yerevan, 2009, pp. 86-90].  
[http://noravank.am/arm/issues/detail.php?ELEMENT\\_ID=5325](http://noravank.am/arm/issues/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=5325).



**In the context of the above-mentioned, this study is attempting to introduce the idea of adaptation mechanisms and to see them as a preventive measure against those consequences, which arise on an emotional and futuristic level from public discourse about Armenia-Turkey relations.**

## **2.Specifying the scope of the research**

When speaking of Armenia and Turkey and their societies, it is important to note that, being in the same plane of civilization<sup>4</sup>, mutual interaction will begin between two differing cultures, in which an essential role has been played by religion, faith, religious tradition, ceremonies and so on. Once the characteristics of the potential for (religious and) cultural adaptation mechanisms are clarified, a new possibility for collaboration is created which, in turn, weakens possible ideas of clashes, violence or conflict. A modern information civilization provides the opportunity to develop, consolidate and, thanks to its principles and laws, to find solutions to issues that seem impossible to solve.

It is possible to find three main systems that facilitate the mutual relations of societies and that provide for the possibility to establish these relations –

a) the first of them has a macro-systemic nature, and is formed on a set of fundamental principles and provides the value scale on which processes and phenomena which occur are evaluated,

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<sup>4</sup> The approach used by the research team allows one to refer to this stage in the development of modern societies as one plane of civilization – that of an information civilization.

b) a system consisting of cultural norms, arising from the basic values of society and forming as a result of history and territory,

c) structures of civilization, which produce their results based on cultural norms and value systems<sup>5</sup>.

The whole complexity of the issue is that when state structures are not protected enough to effectively react, or have mechanisms for the development of filters of the necessary quantity and quality, external political inflows can introduce different values, myths and rites, which can threaten national structures and traditional value systems.

One way to effectively prevent this process is to study the points of contact of the two systems entering into mutual interaction, developing mechanisms to facilitate dialogue between them and the filtering of elements that are incompatible with the host system and the prohibition of its entry within a specific boundary.

After the Armenia-Turkey border is opened, an increased intensity of Armenian-Turkish and Armenian-Kurdish<sup>6</sup> contact is expected. If we try to generalize this on a cultural plane, it is possible to insist that in reality what would happen first and foremost is a process of mutual exchange between Islamic and Christian value systems (no matter how superficially each value system is presented – wrapped in everyday packaging). These

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<sup>5</sup> For further details see Оганесян Д., Государство и система ценностей в среде глобальных миграционных потоков, Арцив: философский журнал, № 1, Ереван, 2008, стр. 118-133. [Hovhannisyan D., The State and the System of Values among Global Waves of Migrations, Artziv: Philosophical Journal, N 1, Yerevan, 2008, pp. 118-133].

<sup>6</sup> Current discourse about the reestablishment of the identity of kurdified, Islamized and turkified Armenians is beyond the research scope of this study.

processes are unstoppable on an everyday, social and cultural level, in conditions of constant contact.

In order to insist on the possibility of developing effective adaptation mechanisms for Armenia-Turkey relations, it is not just the cultural and societal similarities – shaped over a number of centuries – that are being considered, but also the overall secular nature of both societies. In other words, besides the areas of religion and everyday life, there are also other spheres where the discovery and application of new adaptation mechanisms is possible for these two systems.

For adaptation processes, religious differences can be a real obstacle, because historically, the two peoples have used religious identity in particular for the purpose of mutual identification, especially from a linguistic point of view. Thus, the Turks identified the Armenians, and other nations as well, particularly through religious belonging, uniting these ethnic groups under the concept of “*giavur*” (based on the Arabic *kāfir*, the Islamic concept of the non-believer) and for the Armenians, the profile of the Muslim believer was long identified with the ethnic Turks and a somewhat intolerant position was taken towards Islam<sup>7</sup>.

As part of this research, an attempt will be made to reveal the possible “safety cushions” on the point of contact between these two different cultural and religious systems, which can mitigate all kinds of possible conflicts and, through this, act as functioning and stable adaptation mechanisms.

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<sup>7</sup> See *Խառատյան-Առաքելյան Հ., Նելզի Լ., Խոսելով միմյանց հետ, Երևան-Ստամբուլ*, 2010, էջ 112-115: [Kharatyan-Arakelyan H, Neyzi L., Talking to Each Other, Yerevan-Istanbul, 2010, pp. 112-115].

In this sense, without excluding the religious and cultural agenda, we think that each of the following two statements can become serious adaptation factors – either separately or together –

- a) the presence of masses sharing the same religion in areas near the border,
- b) the presence of converted and hidden Armenians in those zones.

The combination of these two factors would allow the development of more effective mechanisms.

When studying the issue, turkologist R. Melkonyan noted that converted hidden Armenians are characterized by the closed and private nature of their everyday lives and that in the years between 1916 and 2004, around 1340 Armenians rejected Islam and reconverted to Christianity<sup>8</sup>. Taking this into consideration, it is possible to say that the number of people who have reconverted, albeit not officially, is even higher and that ethnically they are mainly Armenians, Assyrians and Greeks, who have either converted from their own religion themselves or this has been done by their ancestors, for one reason or another, and in the current relatively suitable conditions, they are returning to their religious roots, where they see a return to their ethnic, national and tribal identity.

Different manifestations of Christianity are spreading through the Kurdish-populated regions of Eastern Turkey. Information received from the regions of Easter Turkey bordering with Armenia has further

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<sup>8</sup> See Մելքոնյան Ռ., *Իսլամացված հայերի խնդիրների շուրջ, Երևան*, 2009, էջ 29: [Melkonyan R., *On the Issues of Islamized Armenians*, Yerevan, 2009, p. 29].

consolidated the bits and pieces of information on this issue. The representatives of certain private religious communities in the western regions of Armenia are in active contact with the Kurdish population of the neighboring country through the Kurds living in Armenia, as a result of which the number of converts in the eastern regions of Turkey has increased quite a lot, on the side of Christianity.

Based on this point of view, we think that the Armenian Apostolic Church must also have its place in the processes which have been initiated, and it should use its pan-national network and reputation. Although the Armenian Apostolic Church has traditionally not worked on mass adoption of Christianity or proselytization (missionary work), one must nevertheless remember that in this case the focus of attention is not on people who practice other religions but rather those children of Armenia who have been forcibly converted, but whose identity has been partially maintained<sup>9</sup>.

In this sense the research is important not only for the development of adaptation mechanisms at the levels of the state and society, but also as a practical proposal to the Armenian Apostolic Church. One must remember that there are still Armenian churches (which are consistently being Georgianized or demolished, however<sup>10</sup>) standing in the Kurdish-

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<sup>9</sup> Reference – the spontaneous revelation of the Armenian ancestry of a relative of Deputy Leader of the Constantinople Armenian Patriarchate Aram Ateshian during the opening ceremony of the Soorb Khach (Holy Cross) church on the Akhtamar Island at Van and, later, his baptism during the reopening of the Soorb Kirakos (St. Kirakos) church at Diarbekir.

<sup>10</sup> In reference to this, the resolution adopted on 20 July 2011 by the Foreign Relations Committee of the American Congress, which demands that Turkey returns all the Christian churches on its territory to the “legal owners”: With 43 votes for and 1 against, the Congress committee adopted a comprehensive

population and Turkish-populated areas of Turkey, the presence of which is facilitating this process despite the presence of the attempts to revisit this cultural heritage and all the debates on these issues.

It is understandable that the issues mentioned above are laden with serious challenges, because we are dealing with a situation that is quite varied and volatile. That is why one needs to give particular importance to the study of the mechanisms of equilibrium. In cases where the traditional religious and cultural value system dominates, the societies could find themselves in crisis, while a wise combination of the traditional and the new can not only create a state of balance, but it can also facilitate the solution of problems and the maintenance of cohabitation. The discovery of effective mechanisms for the combination of the traditional and the new is also within the scope of this study, which cannot rule out the revision or modification of some traditional hardened and non-functional values.

It should be mentioned that we will avoid the direct discussion of political and economic issues within this study. This is outside the scope of

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appendix in the US State Department Authorization Act, calling for “the Secretary of State to note in all official meetings with the Turkish leadership and other Turkish officials, that Turkey must –

1. end all kinds of religious discrimination,
2. allow the legal owners of the assets of Christian churches to conduct religious ceremonies and provide social services,
3. return to the legal owners all Christian churches and other places of worship, monasteries, schools, hospitals, monuments, relics, holy places and other religious assets, including works of art, manuscripts, costumes, vessels and other objects and allow the legal spiritual and secular owners of Christian church assets to renovate all Christian churches, places of worship, monasteries, schools, hospitals, monuments, relics, holy places and other religious assets located on Turkish territory.

More on this is available here -

[http://noravank.am/arm/issues/detail.php?ELEMENT\\_ID=5947](http://noravank.am/arm/issues/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=5947)

this research, with the exception of those cases when these issues are closely related to the religious and cultural sphere of Armenia-Turkey relations. Moreover, it is important to note that the stereotypes based on religion and culture form, as a core concept, the axis around which all the interactions between the two sides unfold. This is often the result of a lack of knowledge about each other's culture as well as a dearth of information about each other which is filled with all kinds of myths and stereotypes. Stereotypical approaches are not just distant from a rational approach, but they also very often result in inadequate attitudes and actions as well as the development of different kinds of fears. For example, the residents of Bagaran village narrated an incident to the research team about when a woman from their village, in Soviet times, married a "Turk" (an Azeri, in today's terms). After the declaration of Armenia's independence, the children born of that marriage found themselves unable to integrate and were forced to emigrate from the village<sup>11</sup>.

Thus, this multi-disciplinary study can serve as practical material to give state policy papers (for foreign relations issues, from a religious and cultural point of view) a holistic approach and to facilitate the fortification of Armenian-Christian positions, the strengthening of State-Church ties and to support future similar studies.

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<sup>11</sup> The interview was conducted on June 12 in the village of Bagaran.

### **3. The general condition of religious minorities in Turkey**

For a long time, various religious, political, military and today even economic and pan-national as well as other numerous western organizations have tried to assert their influence and have representative structures in the East. Among the countries there, one of the most important has been and continues to remain the Republic of Turkey. The difference in the epochs is that in the case of religious structures, the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries have seen the Pope replaced by various Evangelical and Pentecostal denominations, which have created religious structures in different parts of Turkey, including also the eastern villages. The information and gossip about how those organizations are financed and sponsored varies and are, as a rule, often no more than mere assumptions.

It is also not possible to make one generalized conclusion about all religious network organizations, because they are often not managed from one united center, they do not belong to the same religious structure, are quite heterogeneous and they do not have the same denominational or ceremonial system. Each of the religious communities has its own separate center, from where the activities of each religious unit are coordinated.

In 1987, Turkey presented an application for membership in the European Union. In 1993, a decision was made in Copenhagen that an EU candidate country must guarantee the supremacy of the law, democracy and human rights, including the protection of the rights of ethnic and religious



minorities<sup>12</sup>. Later, in 1999, during the EU summit held in Helsinki and the discussion of EU member states held in Luxemburg in 2005, a clear response was not given regarding Turkey's membership, with the explanation that the country has still not approximated its legislative sphere to European standards.

In particular, according to the obligations taken upon itself by signing international agreements, Turkey was required to respect the religious freedom of its citizens, including their right to publish and provide such education individually or in groups. These rights can be curbed only in cases when they violate the rights of others or when they pose a danger to the security of society<sup>13</sup>. According to paragraph 4 of article 16 of the OSCE Vienna document of 1989, member states are obliged to secure the right to freedom of expression, to build places of worship and gathering, to live according to their traditions and to develop, of all religious minorities living within their boundaries<sup>14</sup>.

From 1998 to 2005, the EU produced eight reports on Turkey where it has noted that Turkey has made significant changes in its legislative processes to approximate them to EU standards, but there still remained issues which did not satisfy the EU. It was particularly emphasized that Turkey still had to take certain steps to improve the state of religious minorities in the country. The International Council of Human Rights

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<sup>12</sup> See Кудряшова Ю. С., Копенгагенские критерии ЕС и Турция, Востокведный сборник, в. 6, М., 2004, стр. 119. [Kudryashova Y. S., The EU Copenhagen Criteria and Turkey, Orientology Collection, v. 6, M., p. 119]

<sup>13</sup> See 2008 Human Rights Report, Declaration of Rights, [www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108547.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108547.htm)

<sup>14</sup> See Bilgin U., Azınlık hakları ve Türkiye, İstanbul, 2007, s. 134. [Bilgin U. Minority Rights and Turkey, İstanbul 2007, p. 134].

considers article 3 of the Turkish Constitution – which outlines Turkey’s state and national integrity - unacceptable by European standards. This article is interpreted as ruling out the right to equal co-existence of ethnic and religious minorities with Turks and Muslims.

In almost all the reports of the EU there is an emphasis that religious minorities are harassed more often due to issues around places of worship, meeting and gathering<sup>15</sup>. On 26 October 2009, the report of the Human Rights and Democracy Bureau, presented in Istanbul, stated that there had been a rise in the anti-Semitic and anti-Christian sentiments since 2006. The reports note that, in recent years, no change had been noted by the attitude in society towards Muslims who had converted. They continued to be persecuted by state structures and society. Minorities can create foundations and associations, however these must be run by a citizen of Turkey. Besides the Armenian, Greek and Jewish communities, there are simply no other legally registered minorities in Turkey.

The 2009 report also presented the issue of the patriarchates of the religious minorities, because it was considered illogical that the Patriarch would be a citizen of Turkey. This criterion is not considered to be logical for religious leaders, because it would make the selection of a potential candidate significantly more difficult<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> See State Department Reports. U.S. releases 2004 International Religious Freedom Report, [http://dublin.usembassy.gov/ireland/reifree\\_2004.html](http://dublin.usembassy.gov/ireland/reifree_2004.html)

<sup>16</sup> See International Religious Freedom Report 2009 October 26, Bureau of Democracy, human rights and labor, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108476.htm>

In Turkey, the website Forum 18 (<http://www.forum18.org>) periodically covers the issues of religious organizations; the website contains information about Christian and other religious minority organizations. This information, as a rule, is derogatory in nature.

In particular, it is considered unacceptable that until now no verdict has been presented in the case of the murder of Protestant missionaries in Malatia in 2007. It is notable that on the day following that incident, the Justice Minister of Turkey N. Günel announced at Turkey's Grand National Assembly that missionary work is more dangerous than terrorism but is, unfortunately, not liable to criminal punishment in the country. Later, further developing this train of thought, the Minister noted in an interview to the *Millet* newspaper that there are links between missionary work and terrorism<sup>17</sup>.

In this sense, the state is not only unsupportive of the protection of the rights of minorities, but it is also facilitating the persecution of minorities through such official statements.

As another example of state sponsorship, one can note the verdict handed down on 29 December 2008 by a court in Izmir in the case of the stabbing of Catholic monk Adriano Frencini by Ramzan Bay, who was sentenced to 5 years imprisonment, which was later reduced to 5 months and a 250 dollar fine<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> See UN Human Rights Council, May 2010, Universal Periodic Review of Turkey, Forum 18 News Service.

<sup>18</sup> See International Religious Freedom Report 2009 October 26, Bureau of Democracy, human rights and labour, <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108476.htm>

The report presented on 1 October 2009 by Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights T. Hammerberg is also a testament to discrimination against religious minorities; the report repeated the evidence about negative events and violations of human rights presented in previous international reports.

Another interesting document is the Vatican's message, regarding religious freedom in Turkey and non-Muslim minorities, to the Ambassadors of EU-member countries, where it is noted that Turkey must give legal status to the Catholic community in Turkey. The reply to this letter is a clear example of the perceptions of this issue by the Turkish side – “The Armenians, Greeks and Jews living on the territory of the Ottoman Empire have been recognized as early as the Treaty of Lausanne; however, recognition of the Catholic community as such is not possible without changes to the Constitution, which is against the principle of secularism. Related to this Treaty, we do not have an obligation to legally recognize the Catholic community or any other. In a country which is 99% Muslim, asking for the Catholic Church to receive rights which are not even given to Islamic structures is neither legal, nor appropriate.<sup>19</sup>”

Let us also note that despite its political ambition of working towards EU integration, Turkey has still not signed a document which is very important in this regard – the Framework Convention for the Protection of

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<sup>19</sup> Wehr P., *Almanya ve Türkiyede din özgürlüğünün bir parçası olarak din dersi Türkiyedeki katolik kilisesi örneğinde*, s. 169-170, 172.  
<http://www.konrad.org.tr/Migration%20tr/169-172.pdf> [Wehr P., *Germany and Turkey as part of the freedom of religion Roman Catholic religious instruction in the case of Turkey*]

National Minorities, which has been adopted by the Council of Europe Ministers' Committee<sup>20</sup>.

#### **4. The state policy towards ethnic and religious minorities and the public perception of the issue**

The issue of religious minorities has been and remains one of the issues on Turkey's agenda. The policies of the different governments that have come to power since the founding of the Republic of Turkey have not significantly differed from each other<sup>21</sup>. Religious minorities continue to be seen as a tool for foreign intervention in the country, which continuously give large states the opportunity to meddle in Turkey's internal affairs. Although Turkey is trying to approximate its legislative field to European standards, the implementation of these laws is not at this level or is simply imitative in nature.

The Turkish pro-government press and some analytical centers present religious minorities as enemies of the Turkish people and their operations

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<sup>20</sup> See

[http://www.coe.int/t/e/human\\_rights/minorities/2.\\_framework\\_convention\\_\(monitoring\)](http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/minorities/2._framework_convention_(monitoring)).

<sup>21</sup> There are reservations about the current policy towards religious minorities of the ruling Justice and Development Party. See Քարտաշյան Ա., Սարտիրոսյան Ա. «Թուրքիայում իշխող Արդարություն և զարգացում կուսակցության և նաքժբանդիա-սուֆիական տարիկաթի փոխհարաբերությունների շուրջ», Վերլուծական տեղեկագիր, ԵՊՀ, Քաղաքակրթական և մշակութային հետազոտությունների կենտրոն, 2010, հ. 5, էջ 63-75: [Kardashyan A., Martirosyan A. "The Mutual Relations in Turkey between the Ruling Justice and Development Party and the Nakshbandia-Sufi Religious Order", Analytical Report, YSU, Center for Civilization and Cultural Research 2010, v. 5, pp. 63-75.

are seen as providing a ready field for foreign missionaries<sup>22</sup>. In the same spirit, analyst Ali Rıza Bayzan criticizes the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Turkey for the wide range of right and opportunities given to religious minorities. At the same time, the legal counsel of the Union of Protestant Churches of Turkey regularly produces reports<sup>23</sup>, where it raises the alarm on the lack of legal status of religious minorities as well as about the gradually increasing dangers and threats.

One of the issues of concern to the religious minorities in recent times is the issue of churches, and places of gathering and worship. The Turkish state is trying, through various means, to raise obstacles to their construction and operations. On 17 August 2001, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Turkey sent a document to the local self-governing bodies, which was focused on the issues of places of gathering and worship for minorities, aimed at putting up specific limitations. While Article 24 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey secures the right to freedom of conscience, thought and faith for all citizens, if that freedom does not contradict the second paragraph of the very same article and the limitations set by Article 14. Article 24 of the Constitution lists all those places which cannot be used for the purposes mentioned above, noting at the same time that the monasteries meant for religious rites and ceremonies must be in closed spaces. Creating places of religious gathering outside of the noted places is considered a crime that is subject to punishment. It should also be

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<sup>22</sup> See the article by Barış Tına - Barış T., İsmanlı, Devletinden Türkiye Cumhuriyetine, <http://www.politikadegisi.com/node/179>. [Barış T., From the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic]

<sup>23</sup> For more on this, see the website of the Association of Protestant Churches <http://www.protestankiliseler.org/>

noted that 81 percent of the monasteries in Turkey are constructed without the necessary permits, but so far there has not been a single registered case of a mosque being shut down<sup>24</sup>.

One should note that despite all the constitutional amendments made by Turkey in recent times, there continue to remain certain articles in the Turkish Constitution which contradict Ankara's international obligations. The state is continuing to encourage the violation of the rights of religious minorities by continuing the pan-Turkist programs adopted a long time ago. The core of the state ideology continues to remain Kemal Atatürk's famous phrase – "Happy is he who can call himself a Turk".

The summation of all that was said above was manifested in the killings at the Zirve publishing house in Malatya on 18 April 2007, which found great resonance in the local and international press. The murder of the missionaries became an occasion for a large public debate on that dangerous profession with the main emphasis that in Turkey, such activities are dangerous to the very existence of a person.

The activities of missionaries in Turkey have always been at the center of the public's attention. The Turkish state bodies, with the secular principles that they have adopted, constantly keep their attention focused on this issue and a whole range of politicians and state officials have spoken about this at various times, as a result of which the attention of nationalist, Islamist and marginal elements has also been concentrated on this issue.

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<sup>24</sup> See Cengiz O. K., Protestanların Türkiye'de karşılaştıkları hak ihlallerinin insan hakları hukuku bakımından değerlendirilmesi, <http://www.alevileriz.biz/showthread.php?t=31139> [Evaluation of the Protestants of Human Rights Abuses Faced in Turkey]

The incident in Malatia is also the result of this anti-propaganda implemented on a state level.

In November 2005, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced in Şırnak that the authorities have three red threads and one of those is the issue of national belonging which they are going to eradicate through the concept of the supremacy of the identity of the Turkish citizen<sup>25</sup>.

The next declaration of this kind came from Defense Minister Vecdi Gönul, who announced on 10 November 2005 at an event in memory of Atatürk at the Turkish Embassy in Brussels, that present-day Turkey owes its “national” character to a number of events at the beginning of the previous century, including the population exchange which took place between Turkey and Greece in 1923<sup>26</sup>.

In 2008, after a series of Kurdish demonstrations, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made a declaration about “One nation, one state, one flag” which was not considered completely acceptable by the various representatives of the EU, where Turkey was seeking membership.

These declarations give quite a comprehensive picture of the attitude of the Turkish state towards religious and ethnic minorities. There is also the opinion that the issues of religious minorities have been purposefully

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<sup>25</sup> See Մելքոնյան Ռ., «Ներքին ինքնության» խնդիրը Թուրքիայում և համաշխարհային, <http://www.noravank.am/am/?page=analitics&nid=1407> [Melkonyan R., The Issue of “Internal Identity” in Turkey and the Hamshens]

<sup>26</sup> See Մելքոնյան Ռ., Թուրքական «ազգային պետություն» նախահիմքերը, <http://www.noravank.am/am/?page=analitics&nid=1497> [Melkonyan R., The Foundation for Turkey as a “Nation State”]



exaggerated, which in turn is the reason for the extremist behavior that has been manifested against missionaries and the representatives of religious minorities<sup>27</sup>.

Starting from 2001, there has been a mention of missionaries and religious minorities in various reports published by Turkish state bodies.

On 24 April 2001, the National Research Organization presented a report to the National Security Council on missionaries and the activities which they carried out. The report mentions the threat faced by Turkey – “Starting from 1998, more than 8 million Bibles have been distributed in our country. Some radio stations in Istanbul are broadcasting programs that preach Christianity. In just the last year, 19 churches have opened in Istanbul. They are coming to our country, building churches, schools, hospitals, creating different foundations and unions, setting a trap for our compatriots, distributing Bibles, and we are not taking any steps against all this. The state is in great danger and it is necessary to prevent all this from going on, in order to avoid irreversible consequences in the future<sup>28</sup>”. It was noted that the work of missionaries had particularly gathered pace after the Iraq war which is connected to a number of circumstances, specifically the increase in Turkey’s role in the region.

In June 2004, in a report prepared by the Chamber of Trade and Industry, the number of (newly converted) Christians in Ankara alone was estimated at 55 thousand. The report noted that the objective of the

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<sup>27</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this, see [http://www.yuruyus.com/www/you2/news.php?h\\_newsaid=3883&dergi\\_sayi\\_no=2&](http://www.yuruyus.com/www/you2/news.php?h_newsaid=3883&dergi_sayi_no=2&)

<sup>28</sup> See <http://www.mit.gov.tr/>

missionaries' activities is to break up the foundations of the state by seeding religious discord<sup>29</sup>.

On 20 September 2006, the leadership of the Turkish Armed Forces presented a similar report to the ruling "Justice and Development Party" and National Security Council. Almost the same concerns and anxieties were expressed there. The report stated that, until 2005, around 50,000 Muslims had converted to other religions in Turkey. According to the same report, until 2020, 10% of the population would have adopted Christianity. The report recommended paying greater attention to the so-called underground churches in apartments or other rented spaces, which had grown in number at a rapid pace over recent years<sup>30</sup>. The report also noted a link between the Kurdish Workers' Party and the American missionaries. According to data collected by the leadership of the Turkish Armed Forces, American missionaries had been aiding that organization since 1980<sup>31</sup>.

It is a fact that Evangelical missionaries preach actively in the regions with Kurdish populations and, because of the existence of modern Kurdish political structures, it is not possible to conduct these activities without a mutual agreement with these decision makers. Naturally, that agreement had to be of mutual benefit and based on an internal understanding.

Representatives of religious minorities are constantly under threat of terrorism in Turkey, and the state of Evangelical missionaries is even

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<sup>29</sup> See [http://www.evrensel.net/haber.php?haber\\_id=8605](http://www.evrensel.net/haber.php?haber_id=8605)

<sup>30</sup> See Polat F., Misyonerlik Faaliyetleri, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2005/01/03/siyaset/siy07.html>. [Polat F., Missionary Activities]

<sup>31</sup> See Vatan, 05.10.2004, Bala T., Diyalog turu ve TSK'nin misyonerlik raporu [Bala T. Dialogue Between PKK and Missionaries]

worse, because they are seen as a structure which is destabilizing the nationalist foundation of the Turkish state. This attitude towards other religions is encouraged not just by the Turkish state, but by society as a whole, which turns anyone who has conducted an act of terror on these grounds into a hero<sup>32</sup>. Such encouragement from society makes the work of religious minorities – and especially Evangelical missionaries – even more difficult. One of the fundamental values of the EU is providing for diversity in society where, unfortunately, Turkey is very far from meeting European standards.

After the killings in Malatia, one could find all kinds of words of praise and encouragement for the murderers on various websites. Moreover, the mother of one those arrested after the *Zirve* publishing house incident said that her son would serve Allah<sup>33</sup>.

Public opinion has a very big and important role in all this and mass media has a significant role to play in its formation.

Ahmed Kaan, a teacher in a Turkish school said that missionaries were being perceived as spies in Turkey and the press had a major role to play in the formation of this opinion. “Priests and monks beware, for we know about your dirty games. You will do everything to destroy Turkey,” – such declarations can be heard during protests or can be read in well known

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32 For example, the story of how Hrant Dink’s murderer, Ozün Samast, was made into a hero

33 Aksiyon, 25.04.2007, <http://www.malatyaaktuel.com/inx/haber.asp?id=264>

Turkish newspapers and magazine. “Even famous professors and historians speak of the dangers of Christianity,” said Ahmed Kaan<sup>34</sup>.

From time to time, the addresses of religious minority churches and places of gathering as well as spiritual leaders and missionaries appear on websites, in newspapers and magazines, which serve as a guide for potential criminals. Articles appear in newspapers regularly where Turkish readers are told stories of how missionaries dupe their compatriots, promise them money in return for their conversion to Christianity and there are calls to fight them and save the country.

In the face of this anti-propaganda by the media and state bodies, the attitude shown by society towards Christians has become more and more intolerant. This is also the reason why most of the people who have committed crimes against Christians are perceived as heroes saving Turkey by the majority of the public. Even after the murder of Catholic priest Andrea Santoro in Trabzon the local mullah mentioned the 16-year old murderer during the Friday prayer (*khutba*). In such conditions, it is almost impossible to maintain not just the work, but also the physical existence, of Christian (and not just Christian) believers and missionaries.

Mustafa Akyol, a reporter at the *Turkish Daily News* noted that in the eastern regions of Turkey, where these issues are more controversial, there have been cases when people have thrown sticks and stones at missionaries, “Taking into consideration the fact that many of the missionaries had come to Turkey with their families, they felt a sense of responsibility not just for

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<sup>34</sup> See Лагунуна И., Судьба христианских миссионеров в Турции, <http://www.svobodanews.ru/content/transcript/426983.html> [Lagununa I., The Fate of Christian Missionaries in Turkey]

themselves but also for their families. That is the reason why the majority of the missionaries has left Turkey after the incident in Malatia.<sup>35</sup>”

By putting together the facts mentioned above, it is possible to say that just being a Christian in Turkey and speaking out on this contains a certain element of physical risk. The state policy and structures, which consider Christians to be foreigners and enemies, is indirectly inciting nationalists and Islamists to take provocative action and, in practice, gives out mild punishment for crimes against Christians. It is tragic to see that a significant part of these crimes is committed by minors, who are easily manipulated by different kinds of propaganda schemes.

## **5. Research on the Armenian-Turkish border and in Turkey: Methodology**

During the research, a range interviews were conducted with other researchers interested in the topic of the study, with analysts, students, individuals, journalists who write about Armenia-Turkey relations, newly-converted Turkish Christians as well as representatives of religious organizations preaching Christianity in Turkey, Armenia and along the Armenia-Turkey border.

In autumn 2010 and July 2011, the research team conducted interviews in the Kültür and Bilgi Universities of Istanbul. Reporters from the *Zumhuriyet* and *Zaman* newspapers, as well as CNN Türk, completed the

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<sup>35</sup> See Лагунуна И., Судьба христианских миссионеров в Турции, <http://www.svobodanews.ru/content/transcript/426983.html> [Lagununa I., The Fate of Christian Missionaries in Turkey]

questionnaire drawn up by the team, which allowed us to gather data on the relevance of the religious and cultural aspects in Armenia-Turkey relations as well as to form an idea about the level of awareness among journalists.

During 2011, the team visited a number of cities and villages located along the Armenia-Turkey border (Gyumri, Artik, Bagaran, Yervandashat, Amassia and Ashotsk) where they conducted group and individual surveys with the local population and representatives of local administrative bodies. Besides this, surveys and interviews were conducted among representatives of religious organizations and preachers, many of whom are preaching or have preached in Turkey. In Europe, the team has conducted interviews with Turks who have converted to Christianity and who have emigrated from the country due to persecution<sup>36</sup>. A majority of the interviewees requested to remain anonymous.

This study also used in-depth interviews, mainly emphasizing the clarification of the questions around the objectives and issues of the research. Before presenting the results, analysis and summary, it is necessary to briefly note that the surveys on both the Turkish side and the Armenia-Turkey border revealed that on a (non-professional) personal level, the main interest shown was in questions on social, economic and (globally speaking) political issues. The concerns and perception about the religious and cultural spheres were “hidden” and from time to time contradictory, they were expressed mainly through impressions from everyday public memory, sometimes even in the sub-conscious plane. The

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<sup>36</sup> One of the members of the research team, conducted interviews among Turkish families in Belgium in November 2011, and has revealed the issues of identity and religion among Muslims living in Europe.

interviewees, as a rule, felt it necessary to mention that they had never consciously thought about religious issues. Nevertheless, during the conversation about identity issues, it quickly became clear that the questions were making them uncomfortable in one way or another. On the other hand, a lack of awareness or a limit to the knowledge about everyday religious and cultural issues is an obstacle to developments around religious or cultural issues after the opening of the Armenia-Turkey border, whether that takes the form of conflict situations, their resolution, avoidance or the possibilities of dialogue.

It should be mentioned that the existence of a closed border in itself creates limitation – not just physical, but also psychological and cognitive ones. Cultural isolation also has a big influence on cognitive limitation and this in turn further widens the gap caused by the border into an abyss, which does not just separate, but also disconnects the sides. In this sense, as C. Jung said, the best way to overcome the abyss between the two sides is to fill it with all kinds of myths and legends, which is necessary in order to be able to cross over to the other side<sup>37</sup>. However, if Jung's postulation is acceptable for the abyss between this world and the hereafter, in the case of the abyss formed by the Armenia-Turkey border these myths and legends not just make it more difficult to cross, but even end up making it an obstacle of a different kind by transforming it into a wall.

The multi-lateral aspect of the study has been secured by scientific diversity, both from a methodological point of view as well as the various academic titles in the research team from an operational research aspect,

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<sup>37</sup> See Jung C. G., *Dreams*, Routledge, 2002, pp. 23-69.

which provided for various prisms of perception for the realization of the field work as well as drawing conclusions from the study.

The possibility of subjecting this text (discourse) to semantic analysis has also been included in the preliminary objectives of the research. Preference was given to Polish scientist A. Wierzbicka's proposed "Natural semantic metalanguage" theory. The universal human concepts which can be found in every language in the form of specific, readily identifiable lexical units (words and wordlike elements), constitute the core of a language's lexicon – a core on the basis of which all other, more complex, meanings can be built, and through which all other, more complex, meanings can be understood. Within the NSM theory, the sixty or so empirically identified universal human concepts are regarded as each language's set of "semantic primes" – unanalyzable elements of meaning which underlie a given language's entire semantic system and which are the cornerstone of its entire lexicon.<sup>38</sup> In the early stages of the development of this theory by A. Wierzbicka, a metalanguage of this kind was called a "language of thoughts" – *lingua mentalis*.

The list of semantic primes, which is considered the lexicon (in parallel to the morphology and syntax) of the metalanguage as part of the "natural semantic metalanguage" concept, has a varying quantity of elements in A. Wierzbicka's study, from 9 to 55. A. Wierzbicka has noted on a number of occasions that with an increase in the number of semantic

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<sup>38</sup> For a summary of this, see Вежбицкая, А., Семантические универсалии и описание языков, под ред. Т.В. Булыгиной, 1999, Москва: Языки русской культуры. [Wierzbicka A., Semantic Universals and the Description of Languages, editor T.V. Bulygina, 1999, Moscow: Languages of Russian Culture]



primes the Natural Semantic Metalanguage turns more expressive and flexible.

A. Wierzbicka considers the following nine semantic primes to be the most probable candidates: the “substantives” - I, YOU, SOMEONE, SOMETHING; “mental predicates” - THINK, WANT, FEEL, SAY; “determiner” – THIS.

As part of this study, the following version of that list, with an average number of 37 primes will be used<sup>39</sup> -

Substantives - I, YOU, SOMEONE, SOMETHING, PEOPLE

Determiners - THIS, THE SAME, OTHER

Quantifiers - ONE, TWO, MUCH/MANY, ALL

Mental Predicates - THINK, KNOW, WANT, FEEL

Speech – SAY

Actions and Events - DO, HAPPEN

Evaluators - GOOD, BAD

Descriptors - BIG, SMALL

Time - WHEN, BEFORE, AFTER

Space - WHERE/PLACE, BELOW, ABOVE

Taxonomy – KIND OF, PART

Metapredicates – NOT, CAN, VERY

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<sup>39</sup> See Goddard, C., Wierzbicka, A. (eds.). *Semantics and Lexical Universals: Theory and Empirical Findings*. 1994, Amsterdam:John Benamins.

Logical Concepts– IF, BECAUSE

Similarity - LIKE

Besides these, A. Wierzbicka paid particular attention to the following words, which were included in the list of semantic primes in one way or another -

Quantifiers– SOME

Intensifier – MORE

Mental predicates - THINK, SEE, HEAR

Non-mental predicates – MOVE, THERE IS , LIVE

Space - FAR, NEAR, ON (WHAT) SIDE , INSIDE, HERE

Time - A LONG TIME, FOR SOME TIME, A SHORT TIME, NOW

Imagination and possibility – MAYBE, IF ONLY

Word – WORD

The application of A. Wierzbicka's concept of describing meaning through a semantic metalanguage provides quite a comprehensive range of tools not just for linguistic research but also for research in ethnography and cultural studies. The semantic analysis of vocabularies, phraseologies and text extracts allows for the development of certain conclusions which will be called *cultural scripts*. The primary approach for cultural scripts can be considered the coding (in one or other language) of the socio-cultural norms (with the expanded interpretation of the content of the latter), which

can be presented as a simply and (for the given public) based on a sequence of universal (accepted) rules, which lead the native speakers from this or that culture.

In this study, the revelation of such rules or norms is seen from the point of view of proposed 'safety cushions' and the 'institute of adaptation mediators'. Besides this, the explanation for the various mechanism for coding the norms of this or that culture using the same tools - in this case the same list of semantic primes – is secured through the possibility of 'dialogue' regarding these norms on a common foundation, because the norms are seen from a more profound point of view, the semantic one.

The methodological approach expands the value of the explanation of the research results, which, in turn, provides for a wide range of applications for the results.

## **6. The ethno-psychological context of Armenia-Turkey relations**

In order to reveal the essence of the public perception of Armenia-Turkey border relations, as well as the religious and cultural basis for these perceptions, it is necessary to consider a series of ethno-psychological factors.

The most important point in Armenia-Turkey relations is that these relations have mainly led to a dead end. To be more precise, during the years of the existence of the Second Republic of Armenia, they were almost completely absent or they were indirect, created a base in the public

perception which was then passed on to the Third Republic and on which today these relations are trying to be built.

In general, mutual relations must be built on a perception of each other and determination of the characteristics that make up each other's identity. In this sense, the perceptions (today) of the "Armenians" about the "Turks" were mainly established in the context of their co-existence under the authority of the Ottoman Empire and of the memory in the collective consciousness of the 1915 genocide, symbolizing the end of all that. On the (official) Turkish side, that memory is of a mythical nature mainly, based on stories handed down by old men, the information given with the government's directive and the myths of the "aggressive" Armenians conducting massacres of the Turks<sup>40</sup>.

Nevertheless, perceptions on the Turkish side are not homogeneous, which is due not only to the ethnic and religious diversity of society, but also because of the political and social leanings dictated by these differences. On one hand, this refers to the "privileged" Turk ethnoses in the country and on the other it is the Kurdish tribes, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the religious and ethnic groups of the Alevis and the Zazas, the hidden Armenians and other.

From this point of view, the starting point for the formation of perceptions on the opposite sides of the border is not similar, and the

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<sup>40</sup> Turkish anti-propaganda says that the Turks killed by Armenians between 1910 and 1922 numbered up to 523 thousand. However, this anti-propaganda is quite weak, because it is not supported by evidence. See <http://www.jihadwatch.org/2005/04/turkey-says-523000-were-killed-by-armenians-between-1910-and-1922.html>

mutual perception of “we” and “them” sharply differ from each other. Moreover, the “We Turks” project does not present itself as a whole and it faces a number of internal problems, such as the absence of unifying myths, ceremonies and common symbols. All this leads to conflicts within the group, which we are constantly seeing during recent years on the Turkish side.

The lack of basic information on the Armenians side about the “We Turks” and the developments going on in that “We” has led to a generalization of the population on the other side of the border and a grouping of them under a united “They”, which makes it more difficult to have a mutual perception based on reality.

If, on the Armenian side, we are dealing with the Armenian ethnos and with the representatives of different religious minorities, then on the Turkish side the issue is completely different. The eastern regions of Turkey are populated by ethnic Kurds, Turkic peoples, Armenians, Assyrians as well as the representatives of religious minorities (Alevi, Catholics, Protestants and others). **When speaking of Armenia-Turkey relations one must take into account this whole religious and ethnic diversity and, in case the border is opened, there should be an agenda for having relations with all these groups.**

In case the symbols of one’s own group are interpreted, the representatives of this group perceive their ethnos from an “interpreted” point of view, which is a rule in cases when the other groups’ representatives perceive this particular ethnos/group under a different “sign”. This is the reason why mutual relations can lead to conflicts and an

unwavering conviction of one's own sense of being right, which further strengthens the ethnic self-consciousness and generalization within one's own ethnic group.

After the intensification of interactions with the Turks and representatives of other ethnic/religious groups, a revelation of the heterogeneity of cultures and the diversity in religions on the other side could – it cannot be ruled out – create a reaction among the Armenian ethnos of incompatibility, an increase in the negative attitude towards cultural differences which, in turn, could lead to the consolidation and en masse nature of ethnocentric tendencies.

In case of open borders, the creation of a qualitatively new environment will force the piebald religious and ethnic groups on both sides of the border to revise some of the perceptions in their own religious and cultural systems and to revitalize the discourse of starting a dialogue with “them”, which will also include a thesis about integration and the necessity for adaptation mechanisms. After the opening of the Armenian-Turkey border, both sides will unavoidably see some changes in the spheres of consciousness and recognition and after that in the areas of behavioral rules, norms, tolerance and the acceptance of “them”<sup>41</sup>.

Novelties and innovations in one's own culture will not undermine the cultural peculiarities of the given ethnos but will also further strengthen the tendencies and activities towards ethno-protection. Nevertheless, adaptation as a phenomenon in “itself” cannot be productive if there are no clearly

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<sup>41</sup> See Görgülü A., Gündogar S., Iskandaryan A., Minasyan S., Turkey-Armenian Dialogue Series: Breaking the Vicious Circle, Tesev Caucasus Institute Joint Report, April, 2009.

defined filters from state and society, whose effective functioning determines the level of cultural interpenetration and clarifies the significance of the ethno-protective process, leading to a reevaluation of the place and role in a specific space and time of one's own ethnic group.

It is a widely held opinion that, after the opening of the Armenia-Turkey border, an important filtration function will be carried out by Christianity, especially in the case of mixed marriages, where dangers of assimilation are always great. From the position of Christian values, mixed marriages with Muslims are not possible, which is also reflected upon in the context of possible Armenian-Turkish mixed marriages. But this concept can diminish to some extent, if the public consciousness registers that there are serious Christian tendencies on the other side of the Turkish border and that, through the efforts of Protestant preachers, a large number of Turks and Kurds have accepted Christianity. In contrast to this point of view, the Islamic value system does not see a problem, because Muslim law clearly covers these kinds of relations<sup>42</sup>. It should be noted that during our field research we came across a number of cases of Armenian-Turkish marriages from Soviet times, when the children born of the marriage were then forced to emigrate from Armenia, because they were not accepted by their compatriots.

**In this sense, the results of this research are particularly important to the extent that the Armenian Christian ethno-protective function can be considered vital and to the extent that it can remain**

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<sup>42</sup> Muslim men are allowed to marry non-Muslim women. The opposite is not permitted.

**effective in the conditions of an open Armenia-Turkey border and intensive trade and economic relations.**

Ethno-protective mechanisms and strategies, as well as the ethno-protective functions of traditions, are activated and manifested when a consciousness is formed in the ethnos that its existence and identity are under threat. This is the perception of the danger of assimilation, pressure from stronger neighbors from military, political or economic points of view as well as the threat of forced assimilation. In this sense, the peculiarities of Armenian culture can act as a bulwark which, as a filtration mechanism, can express its ethno-protective functions and prevent serious threats to the national security of the Republic of Armenia from a religious and cultural point of view.

The opinions of Armenian analysts about Armenia-Turkey relations usually end in different kinds of ethno-conscious fears and the presentation of the dangers of assimilation, without a serious specialized basis for this. Usually, the primitive approach is taken that if one familiarizes oneself with Turkish culture then it will be put into comparison with the Armenian one, which will lead to a more clear differentiation of “us” and “them”. However, specialized research is needed in order to support this conclusion. Historically, having lived on the same territory and having mutual influence from a linguistic, cultural, traditional and everyday point of view, it is sometimes not possible to insist on the justification of such conclusions<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> For example, the field work done by Hranush Kharatyan-Arakelyan and Lela Neyzi in recent years has shown that having lived in the same territory, the Armenians and Turks have developed numerous similarities in their cultural,



The presence of the Azeri ethnic element will make dialogue on both sides of the border more difficult. In particular, the Turkish region bordering the Armavir marz of the Republic of Armenia contains a predominantly Azeri population, which does not just form unnecessary ballast for Armenia-Turkey dialogue due to obvious reasons, but also plants the seed of intolerance. For example, in Bagaran, the photo journalist Ali and his companion (from Turkey), after spending a week in the neighboring village, noted that the level of tolerance on the Armenian side is significantly higher than in Turkey. They explained this intolerance through individual, ethnic and religious factors<sup>44</sup>.

Thus, the Azeri influence on the border regions must be seen as the primary obstacle from the Armenian point of view to Armenian-Turkish dialogue. Let us note that the Azeri population comes mainly from Nakhijevan. The people of Nakhijevan explain the high level of unemployment and their poor social conditions primarily through the conflict around Nagorno-Karabakh, as a result of which they plant hatred towards the population that lives on the other side of the border. In this sense, the testimony of one of the interviewees was significant, where it was noted that from time to time, the residents of the neighboring Azeri village put up posters in areas visible to the Armenians which contain phrases insulting the Armenians and Armenia. This, in turn, confirms the

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traditional and everyday lives. See Kharatyan-Arakleyan H, Neyzi L., *Talking to Each Other*, Yerevan-Istanbul, 2010).

<sup>44</sup> Interview 12.07.2011

fact that the Azeri factor has an essential role to play on a societal level on the road to improving Armenian-Turkish relations<sup>45</sup>.

The Azeri factor is also emphasized on an expert level. For example, in the opinion of Turkologist R. Melkonyan, the presence of the Azeri element in border areas, especially Kars and Iğdir, will create serious problems in the mutual interaction between the two countries<sup>46</sup>. This Azeri population has, as it was noted, emigrated to Turkey from Nakhijevan. The tough social situation in this enclave has for years been explained by the Azeri propaganda machine as a consequence of the “occupation” of Azeri land by the Armenians, which makes it clear what the attitude of Turkey’s Azeris will be towards the Armenians.

## **7. Christian values on the path to defeating the identity crisis and the appreciation and reevaluation of the historical past**

It is also necessary to mention that one of the reasons for the pro-Islamic policies of the government led by R. T. Erdoğan and the rebirth of Islam<sup>47</sup> in the nationalist circles of the Turkish population is the directive to react to and in some way counter the territorial demands by the Armenians. This further reinforces the anti-Armenian and, along with this, nationalistic and radical religious attitude in the eastern regions of Turkey. This emphasis on religious factors will eventually lead to a rejection of religious

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<sup>45</sup> Interview 12.07.2011

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Turkologist R. Melkonyan 10.08.2011

<sup>47</sup> Read the thoughts of renowned Turkish public figure Mustafa Akyol - [http://www.rferl.org/content/turkey\\_akyol\\_apostle\\_of\\_third\\_way/24313757.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/turkey_akyol_apostle_of_third_way/24313757.html)

tolerance, which can be further reinforced in Armenian-Turkish relations by the sum of the nationalistic and ethnic factors.

**The objective of the research is significant to the extent to which the dissemination of Christian values – whether it is through Evangelical, Jesuit or other means – in Turkish, Kurdish and groups with other ethnic belonging on the Turkish side can be seen as models for the “adaptation mediators institute” during interaction between the sides.**

The essence of this process must be seen in the context of the issues of identity in the public discourse being carried out in Turkey. As one of the respondents who had a charismatic nature said, the Armenian side has also taken active part in the dissemination of Christian values and beliefs. One of the Evangelical centers is in Van, from where the local preachers are preaching in the border villages, although the preaching activities of foreigners here can be a direct threat to their physical existence<sup>48</sup>.

From this point of view, the number of cases where newly converted Christians or preachers are literally subjected to persecution are not few, as a result of which they either lose their lives, or emigrate<sup>49</sup>. Such cases are significant to the extent that a certain part of the Turkish population sees converting to Christianity and creating the imitation of persecution as a way to emigrate to the United States of America, insists Turkologist Artak

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<sup>48</sup> Interview 16.08.2011

<sup>49</sup> The murder committed at the publishing house in Malatia is considered the pinnacle of terrorism against Christian missionaries. In various cases, the respondents also mentioned incidents of the persecution of other preachers.

Shakaryan<sup>50</sup>. We do not exclude this intention of the Turkish converts, but interviews with Evangelicals conducted during the research nevertheless show that proselytism in Turkey has wide prevalence and it cannot completely be imitational in nature; that is only true for certain specific cases.

On the other hand, representatives of the Evangelical denominations insist that, on the same level as Iran, Turkey is quite a dangerous country for preachers, both at the state level and also due to the presence of strong nationalist and Islamist attitudes in society. From this point of view, preachers see a big difference between the southern and western regions of Turkey on one side and the eastern regions on the other. One of the respondents mentioned in a conversation with us, that “in the southern regions or in big cities, which are more touristic zones, they are a lot more tolerant. We have been in Ankara, Istanbul, at different gatherings, among businessmen, among intellectuals and the Turks have been the ones who have said ‘The Armenians have the habit of saying Grace before a meal, please say Grace so that we can begin to eat.’ They are the ones who say this. The Kurds, being closed, conservative and living in a village environment do not tolerate such actions. But on the other hand, Kurdish soil is more fertile for the dissemination of Christianity, because for the Kurds this is an act of rebellion against Turkey’s policy”<sup>51</sup>.

In this sense, one has to note that many of the people interviewed during the study proposed two hypotheses regarding the Christianization of the Kurds – first, the Kurds are quite closed and react negatively towards

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with Turkologist A. Shakaryan 14.08.2011

<sup>51</sup> Interview in Gyumri, 18.09.2011

any attempts at the penetration of Christianity and second, the simulated or real acceptance of Christian values is seen as an act of rebellion against Ankara's policies.

In Turkey, the Armenian factor is of vital significance in the spreading of Christianity; this is true for attempts at revealing or refreshing memories related to the Armenian Genocide, attempts at revealing the identities of hidden Armenians, the presence of Armenian monuments (cultural heritage) and the range of myths weaved around the name of the Armenian people. The vast majority of the missionaries (Iranians, Americans) are forced to deal with the Armenian factor in their everyday work. Nevertheless, the Armenian factor is interpreted ambiguously by ethnic Armenian missionaries. For example, as one of the Armenian respondents said, which was generally accepted by all the other Armenian respondents, in order for Christianity to spread in Turkey it is necessary to break the shackles created after the Genocide. According to him, "We must change our policy, no matter how much pressure we apply, they are not going to confess their sins. It is a fact that if someone has a wound then you will cause more pain by pressing down on that wound and that will not make the person confess his sins. He will only allow a doctor to touch his wound."<sup>52</sup> The concepts of "damned soul" and the "call of blood" play a vital role for Armenian missionaries, who consider it necessary to note that "This land can be cleansed only through forgiveness and through an

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<sup>52</sup> Interview in Yerevan, 09.09.2012

outstretched hand and taking the first step, otherwise we will be forever stuck in a dead end”<sup>53</sup>.

It is also necessary to note that, in the Kurdish population, there are cases where the religion of Islam is mocked. In recent times, a number of cases have been seen in the Kurdish environment where men have refused circumcision<sup>54</sup>. However, it is difficult however to know whether the reason for refusing circumcision is the result of preaching by Christian preachers or whether it is simply a spontaneous expression of protest. It is also necessary to note that the Kurdistan Workers’ Party has quite a tolerant stance towards Armenians and the unrecognized Kurdish Parliament has recognized the Armenian Genocide.

One should also take into consideration that the Kurds belong to the Sunni Shafia sect, this also has an influence on the attitude of the Kurds towards the Turks. On the internet, for example, the Kurdistan Workers’ Party has disseminated videos where Kurds mock Islam and its symbols. It is interesting that different representatives of the Turkish government constantly mention that the Kurdistan Workers’ Party is composed of Armenian and Assyrian elements. This is yet another case of the Turkish authorities’ attitude towards ethnic and religious minorities and the political decisions that stem from this attitude.

The perception by the Evangelical community of their missionary role and, based on this, the religious/denominational identification by the missionaries of the local population is specific and worth mentioning. Very

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<sup>53</sup> Interview with Turkologist R. Melkonyan, 10.08.2011

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Turkologist R. Melkonyan, 10.08.2011

often, the Kurds and the Turks are defined as “nomadic tribes” who must be “shown the Christian light”. In addition to this generalized missionary script, Armenian Evangelists believe that “we Armenians have a special mission, as bearers and carriers of Christianity, not only to our generation but also to our neighbors and the Genocide was, to some extent, the result of the work we had not done<sup>55</sup>”. This memory of the Genocide and its connection to the overall activities of the missionaries works because the Armenian missionaries see the Turks not as enemies but as “lost brothers”.

In the conditions where the script mentioned above is given primary importance the effort by Armenian Evangelists towards the dissemination of Christianity in Turkey seems to be natural, because they are deeply convinced that spreading the word of the Gospel would also facilitate the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the Turks and the dissemination of tolerance between the two bordering peoples.

In different parts of Turkey, the Alevi and Zaza groups, who are trying to reestablish their identity, often have the wish to be able to return to their roots. Many people in these groups are also those who are trying to reestablish their Armenian identities and who wish their official documents to state their belonging to the Christian faith. This process is legal in nature and should take place through a court system. However, for many of the Armenians who have reestablished their identities, the document which states their faith is for them the Church’s certificate of baptism.

The Armenian Apostolic Church, represented by the Patriarchate in Istanbul, does not provide such certificates because, as an official center

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<sup>55</sup> Interview in Gyumri, 18.09.2011

operating in Turkey, it avoids fulfilling these functions in order not to have problems with the Turkish government. This gap is mostly filled by the Armenian Evangelical Church, which is considered a structure sponsored by the USA and is therefore in a safer situation compared to the Armenian Apostolic Church.

One should also take into account the fact that the memory of the Genocide and the relevance of that threat actually allow for more work to be done by the Armenian Evangelical Church than by the Armenian Apostolic Church. However, the certificate given by the Armenian Evangelical Church does not mention the denomination, but simply uses the term “Christian”, which is important on the path to reestablishing one’s identity.

The Armenian Evangelists preach under the auspices of the “light of forgiveness”, which facilitates the “Armenian footprint” (memories of the Armenian Genocide, discussions around the cultural heritage and so on) in Turkey’s Eastern regions. However, the missionaries have specifically mentioned that in some parts of Turkey, a perception of Christians and Armenians as one and the same makes it more difficult to disseminate Christianity among the Turks and Kurds. On this point, Turkologist R. Melkonyan mentioned in his interview, “In Eastern parts of Turkey they always understand this as ‘Armenian’. In those regions the identification of Christians and Armenians as the same is very obvious. I say this because there have been many cases when we have spoken for hours on this topic and in the end I’ve asked ‘Are you Armenian?’ to which the reply has been, ‘Al-Hamdulillah, müslümanüm’ (‘Thank God, I am Muslim’). To the question ‘But your father is Armenian, isn’t he? So you are an ethnic



Armenian, aren't you?' they reply, 'Yes, but thanks be to God, I am a Muslim.' Christians and Armenians are completely the same to them. They call the Armenians *giavurs* and sometimes the fanatics call Armenian the language of *giavurs*. This has taken shape in their minds over centuries; one of the most important points in anti-Christian sentiment was in the second quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – the Tanzimat reforms of 1839, which the Sultan announced in Vienna in order to suppress the Bulgarian and Greek movements, through which equal rights were given to the Christians and Muslims. This led to a wave of protest from Muslims who asked how it was possible for Muslims and *giavurs* to have the same rights and that pressure grew to the extent that Armenian bishops and priests in the villages would request that declaration not to be read out in order not to incite the Muslims against them. So this thinking comes from those times, then in 1856, after the Crimean War and the Berlin Congress the situation worsened. The Muslims got the impression that every time they weakened, the Christians tried to gain from that situation<sup>56</sup>.”

Nevertheless, one should mention that in Turkey's Eastern regions, especially in Van which is considered a center, most of the preachers are Iranian by nationality, and the Iranian Evangelical Church which has an Iranian as its pastor is the most active in the “missionary field”<sup>57</sup>.

This research revealed yet another level in the self-perception of the missionary work. The Evangelical preachers, during the course of their activities, would come up against the work of the non-democratic Turkish institutions, as a result of which their activities have sometimes put their

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<sup>56</sup> Interview with Turkologist R. Melkonyan 10.08.2011

<sup>57</sup> Interview in Yerevan, 09.09.2011

lives in danger. It is for this reason that the missionaries make specific mention of the importance of the formation of civil society, which would greatly help the emancipation of religious minorities and the protection of their rights. This emancipation and the formation of civil society were seen as the two best means for the work of missionaries to continue and expand. In this sense, the Christian religious organizations, according to missionaries, is a means for Turkey to integrate more quickly into the European family and to be a member of the European Union.

## **8. The cultural scripts developed during the study**

During the study, in order to clarify the issues raised and the results obtained we considered the most effective method to be the description of “keywords” (which describe the key cultural concepts for a given group or community) and “cultural grammar”, which is based on the revelation of intuitive rules which emphasize the peculiarities of the thinking, emotions and speech of the native speaker of a language<sup>58</sup>. The cultural norms which

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<sup>58</sup> See Wierzbicka A., “Japanese Key Words and Core Cultural Values“, *Language in Society* 20, pp. 333-385, 1991. Вежбицкая А., «Японские культурные сценарии: психология и «грамматика» культуры», в сб. Семантические универсалии и поисания языков, под ред. Т.В. Бульгиной, стр. 653-681, 1999, Москва: Языки русской культуры; Вежбицкая А., «Немецкие «культурные сценарии»: общественные знаки как ключ к пониманию общественных отношений и культурных ценностей», в сб. Семантические универсалии и поисания языков, под ред. Т.В. Бульгиной, стр. 653-681, 1999, Москва: Языки русской культуры; Вежбицкая А., «Значение Иисусовских притч: семантический подход к Евангелиям», в сб. Семантические универсалии и поисания языков, под ред. Т.В. Бульгиной, стр. 730-771, 1999, Москва: Языки русской культуры.

[Wierzbicka A., “Japanese Cultural Scripts: the Psychology and ‘Grammar’ of Culture” in the anthology of Semantic Universals in the Description of Languages” edited by T. V. Bulygina, pp. 653-681, 1999, Moscow: Languages of Russian

form the basis for the given community's characteristic types of collaboration can be obvious and explicitly presented as a cultural script, which can be described through verbal universals, that is to say universal concepts which can be lexicalized in all languages. For future research, this will not only allow one to have a "picture of the world", independent of a specific language, free of ethnocentricities, but will also make it easier to compare different cultures.

The approach for revealing cultural scripts in this study has used in some aspects of the "verbal interaction/behavior" of the interviewees (groups), the keywords have been identified in the interviews. All this was done on the basis of the semantic primes concept proposed by A. Wierzbicka and her colleagues in their studies.

Cultural scripts do not necessarily assume that the cultures are homogeneous or the habits of the community are dictated through a clear and specific list of rules, to which the behavior of the each member of the community always adheres. The assumption is different – that cultures are heterogeneous, and social behavior in general as well as verbal behavior in particular, are very variable. However, a cultural script assumes the existence of a certain cultural paradigm, within which an individual (or a group) acts. Cultural norms can be violated or ignored. However, norms

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Culture; Wierzbicka A. "German Cultural Scripts: Social Signs as a Key to Understanding Social Attitudes and Cultural Values", the anthology of Semantic Universals in the Description of Languages" edited by T. V. Bulygina, pp. 653-681, 1999, Moscow: Languages of Russian Culture; Wierzbicka A., "The Meaning of Jesus' Parables: a Semantic Approach to the Gospels", in the anthology of Semantic Universals in the Description of Languages" edited by T. V. Bulygina, pp. 730-771, 1999, Moscow: Languages of Russian Culture]

which are (consciously or unconsciously) preserved or (consciously or unconsciously) violated are different in the different systems of a culture.

The applicability of the “cultural script” concept within the framework of this research has been specified on two levels. First, the mentioned concept of a “community” consists of the respondents, experts, expert opinions and border populations involved in the survey; second, the “language” has been reduced to the level of a discourse/text, which is limited by the boundaries of this community.

This approach and these specifics allow, one on hand, to state that the scripts above are not generalized but are specific to the extent of the acceptability of the views of the Evangelical community preaching in the various parts of Turkey, in the light of the public opinion regarding Armenia-Turkey relations or the expert community’s view reflecting the general mood as well as of various layers of society - in this case, the bordering population. On the other hand, the system of “language coding” allows one to state that the norms at the basis of these revealed scripts are perceived (whether or not they are accepted) by the whole community who is the native speaker of that language.

The perception of the concept of a “cultural script” will, for the purposes of this research, be hitherto understood with the condition that the two above-mentioned specifics are accepted. In other words, the cultural scripts and the keywords they consist of – which have been revealed during the study, taking into account that language is a generalized consequence of sign systems – are representative for this native speaker community.

There is a close tie between the social life of a community and the vocabulary of a language which it speaks. This is true both for the internal and external aspects of living. In these conditions, it might obviously seem that the unique words characterizing a given culture not only reflect the lifestyle of this culture, but also its mindset. These are *keywords* for the perception and explanation of events in the given community. For example, when there is talk in the community about “forgiveness” (using the word “forgiveness”) they also think about “forgiveness” (using either that word or other concepts linked to that word). It is understandable that *forgiveness* does not just reflect the specific rites existing in the community, but also the specific mindset of the community when it comes to thinking about matters of great importance. In the same way, the word “sin” exists in a whole range of phenomena, events and perceptions, which become keys for the word “*sin*” and communities by giving the label of “sin” seek to comprehend it through the lens which, based on the “rites” of this culture, form the concept of “sin”.

This study is an attempt to use specific keywords to reveal those points which will clarify, to some extent, the paradigm of communicative interaction existing from the religious and cultural aspect of Armenia-Turkey relations. One should also pay attention to the fact that some of the keywords that appear everywhere (such as “spirit of forgiveness”, “believer”, “with more belief”, “enemy”, “lost brother” and others, for example, which turn up everywhere and only clarify in the given specific context) testify to the various norms forming the basis of the coded concepts in each keyword.

As part of the questions posed during this study, it was possible to reveal two main groups of “objects” which are called “strategists” and “practicals” by convention. The “strategists” unite the individuals and activities which generate the ideas and create the discourse in the given religious community. The “practicals” are those representatives of the religious community who try to localize and disseminate the concepts interpreted by the strategists.

## **8.1 “Forgiveness” and “tawba”**

The results of the study show that the core script in the Evangelical community consists of the religious, social and cultural norms coded around the concept of “forgiveness”. “Forgiveness” is understood both from the biblical point of view (as described below, “wanting to live with God”) and from the object to object point of view (the imperative proposal to “ask for forgiveness”).

It was clear from the start that we had to deal with cultural spheres based on two values – Islamic<sup>59</sup> and Christian<sup>60</sup>. In the Armenia-Turkey context, for the Christian cultural sphere a preliminary provision is the perception of a “sin having been committed” by the (Muslim) Turks against the (Christian) Armenians. In the Christian sphere, “committing a sin” is seen as part of a larger system, which is part of a whole chain of processes such as “sinning-realization-remorse-seeking forgiveness-receiving forgiveness”. Consequently, seen through the lens of this chain, the Christian value system tries to make sense of events characteristic of Islam,

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<sup>59</sup> Here, mainly Sunni Islam.

<sup>60</sup> Here, mainly Evangelical Christianity.

without taking into consideration the fact that the latter has a different conceptualization of the “sin-remorse-forgiveness” chain. This concept in the latter group is coded in a linguistic sense as “tawba”. In its primary significance, this word in Arabic means to “stop doing something, to retreat”. In the religious context, in Islamic texts it is usually perceived as a “return (to Allah, renouncing sins)”.

If in the Islamic value system a “sin” is defined simply on the level of “ignorance”, then in the case of Christianity that is not enough. According to Christianity, “sins” influence not only the consciousness but also much deeper levels, such as the soul (according to the concept of “disease of the soul”). What is particularly interesting in this sense is that, based on the Koranic *ayahs* for example, Adam’s sin is considered an “individual sin”, for which Adam repents and gains forgiveness from Allah. This shows that in the Islamic value system the model is of “sin-individual repentance before Allah (individual ‘return’ to Allah) – forgiveness (which will only be clear on Judgment Day)”.

Besides this, there are obvious differences between “forgiveness” given by God in the two value systems. In the Islamic model, the possibility of forgiveness is given on a “Muslim-Allah” individual level, without a mediator connecting the two. “Forgiveness” as well as “sin” are in essence presented by the “tawba-remorse” concept. According to the Shariah, remorse is the idea of rejecting “sin”<sup>61</sup> due to the fear of Allah’s judgment. And “sin” is the feeling of disgust and the realization that one

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<sup>61</sup> Islamic law distinguished between “major” and “minor” sins, but this difference is outside the scope of this research, from the point of view of the study’s objectives.

has gone against the will of Allah. It is also a “sin” to not take every step possible to avoid returning to (and also preventing) “sin”. Besides this, the Shariah outlines the conditions for the Muslim, the fulfillment of which will probably ensure the acceptance of “remorse” by Allah. The conditions are as follows –

#### Stage 1

1. The repentance must be in the name of Allah.
2. The repenter must refuse to commit sins.
3. The repenter must feel a sense of guilt and regret that he has committed sins in the past
4. The repenter must be determined to not commit sins in the future.
5. The repenter must not have committed the sin in a pre-conceived or stubborn manner.

#### Stage 2

6. Repentance must not just be in heart and in word, but also in deed.

#### Stage 3

7. The repenter must remain faithful to his repentance.

#### Stage 4

8. The repentance must come at the right time.

The stages of the concept of “tawba-repentance” depend on the follow circumstances – in the beginning, the intention to repent is announced and the points of the intention (the “declaration”) are repeated out loud, which



signifies that the existence of a problem has been realized and steps are being taken, which are necessary to make this intention a reality (stage 1). In the second stage, a call is made to turn the declaration into reality through specific actions. The third stage proposes subjecting oneself to self-reflection about the correspondence of the declaration and the actions. In the fourth stage, the category of time is introduced, which limits these actions to a person's lifetime.

Thus, a study of the “tawba-repentance” concept allows one to state that “sin” (“having sinned”) – which, as we will show below, is a cornerstone and axiomatic for the Evangelical community that is the object of this study – is different for each of the two value systems, which is not taken into consideration by the Evangelicals. Besides this, the Islamic norms that are being stacked against the scripts built around the (Evangelical) core of “forgiveness” are also structured around the concept of tawba.

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In the context of developing a common approach for Armenia-Turkey reconciliation, the Christian value system proposes the only script known to it - “forgiveness”. More simply put, the Christian value system suggests that a sin has been committed and by the same value system, the “lost brothers” are given the “grace” of Christianity – Christian knowledge is imparted to them, and only the realization and repentance can allow the “lost person” to gain forgiveness, to become a “saved soul”, which is a

“good deed” for a Christian<sup>62</sup>. This proposed conceptualization assumes that forgiveness will not happen on the level of individuals, but the “lost person”, the “lost souls”, the “enemy” *will themselves seek forgiveness from God for the sins committed* and the same people, as “good Christians”, will realize their sins and repent for them, they will already be ready to “seek forgiveness” from others for everything that has been considered a “sin” both by them and others.

Thus, this conceptualization of forgiveness contains within itself a culture-based norm of “I have done something bad (to you)” sin, which – as a part of this script – is seen as a preliminary provision and fact in the Christian-Evangelical discourse and is included in the context of the Armenian Genocide and historical memory.

A frequent use of the “forgiveness” concept can create the impression that it is simply a quantitative element in the preachers’ discourse, based on the reality of the need to preach Christian values. However, it remains a core concept and keyword, around which religious and cultural norms and rules as well as those of community discourse and interaction are built in the studied discourse, and a certain sequence of the latter is dictated.

Moreover, two other important circumstances need to be taken into consideration. The cultural scripts, which are revealed in the discourse of the object groups of the research, are grouped around two main cores – scripts which include historical events in the dissemination of Christian

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<sup>62</sup> Interview in Gyumri 18.09.2011, “And in the end, those saved souls will say before God, ‘At least this person prayed for us’. That is enough for me.”

values and scripts which see the dissemination of Christian values in the context of (the predominance of) historical events.

### **8.1.1.Cultural Scripts, which Include Historical Events in the Dissemination of Christian Values**

(1) In the discourse of preachers who are ethnic Armenians, the interviewees would invariably mention Armenia-Turkey reconciliation, which would be interpreted in the context of Christian values. The norms, which were often seen in verbal acts, are aimed at the conversation partner (“you”). The directed scripts built on these norms – moreover the imperative directed scripts – propose self-reflection to the conversation partner in such a way that it is the speaker who is dictating to the conversation partner and setting the limits for “your” self-reflection. The starting point for Armenia-Turkey reconciliation for such verbal acts is given through the following script – A – *Something bad happened to me,*

*B – Because you did something bad toward me*

*C- You could say something like this*

*D – “I feel something bad”*

*E – You could do something because of this*

This script assumes the imperative to assess in some way the (historical) events that took place between the (Armenian-Turkish) communities. Moreover, according to this script, which has the Christian interpretation of events as its basis, “something very bad” has happened to Man – a creation of God. On an ethnic level, Genocide has taken place (A).

The people who committed the act (B, the Turkish community) are asked to realize what has happened from a Christian (Armenian community) perspective (C). While the realization of the issue is absent (D), the possibility for the communities to interact will also be absent. Only in case of such (C, D) a realization would it be possible for the Turkish community's assessment to be equivalent to that of the Armenian community point of view (E).

Such a script, later made more specific, is what is acted out through various verbal means.

In Script 1, the speaker is trying to understand his own role in the course of events where he clearly sees a problem. As a result, he turns from a passive participant in the script, to whom something has been done (to whom something has happened) into an active bearer, a participant, who has the duty towards someone else's actions; the script starts to center around the speaker, maintaining the primacy of the speaker (the center of primacy turns from passive to reflex active) who dictates imperative self-reflection from his own point of view.

In Script 1, the speaker's reflective inclusion takes place from the point of view of his own value system, based on the Christian perception of "sin", which is a component of the script with the following text –

*"I have done something bad, (because of this) something bad has happened to me" ("sin").*

Two other components (B, C<sub>1</sub>) are added to this kind of perception in Script 1, which changes the causal relationship between the components in the script (B => C<sub>1</sub>, C<sub>2</sub>) forming the following, conceptualization 2 –

(2)A – *Something bad happened to me*

B – *I have done something bad*

C<sub>1</sub> – *because of this something bad has happened to me*

C<sub>2</sub> – *because of this you have done something bad to me*

One example of this script is the extract below from one of the interviews –

*“First of all we believe that Christianity is the only true religion and we want all nations, including the Turks, to recognize God as the one God, as the Savior, Jesus Christ. Secondly, we Armenians have a special mission, as bearers of Christianity and its carriers not just to our generation, but also to our neighbors, and the Genocide was – to a certain extent – the result of the work we had not done. If we had introduced those nomadic tribes – who were either fire worshippers or the followers of some fetishes – if we had introduced them to our God at the time and presented our Christianity, they would have been much more civilized and that attitude of theirs towards us would not have existed. [...] But I think that we are accountable to God for not fulfilling our duties, including not preaching Christianity to those nomadic tribes.”*

In the extract above, Scripts 1 and 2 are present in the form of the “being a bad Christian” key concept, which interprets from the point of view of its own value system as “*we are accountable to God for not*

*fulfilling our duties*” that is to say “sinning and to face retribution for those sins”<sup>63</sup>.

Based on the logic of that same system, in order to break the regularity of the “sin-retribution” chain “I could do something good” is necessary, the only “correct” manifestation of which is the dissemination of one’s own value system towards the other person, in order to also give the other person access to “Christian salvation”. The concept of becoming a “good, kind Christian”, as part of the “living with God” cultural component must be seen with the inclusion of a “to want / to not want” semantic meta-predicate. The first predicate (“to want”) should be seen in the script as “doing something good”. Moreover, in this discourse, the second predicate (“to not want”) is perceived as “he said something bad, I want to do something bad” and is rejected straightaway, for example –

*“People are inspired that the Turks are our brothers, as creatures of God, but their faith is different and they see us as their enemy; but we must not see them as an enemy, we must see them as lost brothers and we must*

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<sup>63</sup> The key concepts of the “bad Christian” and “being accountable”, which constantly came up during the interviews conducted as part of the study, especially in case of the evangelical community, were built and interpreted on the “wanting/not wanting to live with God” cultural components (based on the “distancing oneself from God”, “returning towards God”, “lost brother”). Taking into account the nature and area of the research, we do not consider it necessary to focus on this component in more detail and to include it in the study, based on the results of the following research – see Вежбицкая А., «Значение Иисусовских притч: семантический подход к Евангелиям», в сб. Семантические универсалии и поисания языков, под ред. Т.В. Булыгиной, стр. 730-771, 1999, Москва: Языки русской культуры; [Wierzbicka A., “The Meaning of Jesus’ Parables: a Semantic Approach to the Gospels”, in the anthology of Semantic Universals in the Description of Languages” edited by T. V. Bulygina, pgs 730-771, 1999, Moscow: Languages of Russian Culture]

*begin to treat them in this spirit. And very often they were opposed to this, and the factor of the Genocide, which is so deeply set within us, that [...]. [...] forgiveness is a thing that we must first begin from within, we must not wait for the Turks to ask for forgiveness. We must first be ready to forgive and when we are ready to forgive, we will see those Turks with different eyes. And when the Turks feel this new gaze, then they will ask for forgiveness. While they feel aggression, they will answer with aggression. When they feel that we are ready to forgive and when I go to a Turk to talk about Christ, I receive the spirit of forgiveness. I don't want to seek revenge, I want to give the grace to become Christians and gain salvation”<sup>64</sup>.*

This extract from an interview with a strategist shows, from the two main scripts prevalent in the Evangelical community, that which closes the path to committing a “sin” and “distancing oneself from God” and rejects the “not wanting to live with God” script component, which is manifested in the following key conceptualization – *“I don't want to seek revenge”*. The perception of providing a “grace” to the other person, “making them a Christian” and making “(Christian) salvation” accessible to them, which are built on the “wanting to do a good deed” cultural component and are seen as its main core, around which one can build (and one will build) the first of the main norms of the two communities’ interaction, based on script 3, components D-D<sub>1</sub>-D<sub>2</sub> –

*(3)A – Something bad happened to me*

*B – I have done something bad*

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<sup>64</sup> Interview with one of the Evangelical “strategists” 23.10.2011

*C<sub>1</sub> – because of this something bad has happened to me*

*C<sub>2</sub> – because of this you have done something bad to me*

*D – This is bad to say something like this to people*

*D<sub>1</sub> – “I want to do something bad to you”*

*D<sub>2</sub> – I don’t want this*

This kind of key conceptualization of “forgiveness” (according to Script 3) raises the idea of Armenia-Turkey reconciliation up to a state level - among ethnic non-Armenian “Evangelical strategists” – and states that the Armenian state and Armenian society, “have Christianity” as an advantage in the Armenia-Turkey reconciliation process, which must be perceived as an advantage and used as such.

The discourse is further enriched by another layer by the perception of a mission to preach one’s own values of Christianity and one’s activities. In these conditions “*Something bad happened to me*” and the B, C, D components following it are resolved through component E –

*(4)A – Something bad happened to me*

*B – I have done something bad*

*C<sub>1</sub> – because of this something bad has happened to me*

*C<sub>2</sub> – because of this you have done something bad to me*

*D – This is bad to say something like this to people*

*D<sub>1</sub> – “I want to do something bad to you”*

*D<sub>2</sub> – I don’t want this*



*E – This is good to say something like this to people*

*E<sub>1</sub> – “I want do something good*

*E<sub>1.1</sub> –you will see I am doing something good*

*E<sub>1.2</sub> –you will feel bad because of this;*

*E<sub>1.3</sub> – Because you have done something bad,*

*E<sub>1.4</sub> – you will want to do something good”*

*E<sub>2</sub> – I will feel good*

*E<sub>3</sub> – I want this*

In Script 4, a component of activities E is added, the realization of which is seen by the Christian community as their direct mission. This consists of making the following Christian value available to the other community – *“Realization of one’s sins and confession, this is Christianity and this is what I preach so that a person will feel his sinful nature and will have the boldness to ask for forgiveness”*<sup>65</sup>.

From the point of view of Christianity, only this realization provides for a full acceptance of the sin and freedom from it, which in turn will bring the other to action towards accepting these values and taking steps based on these values – 4 E<sub>1.1</sub> – E<sub>1.4</sub>.

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<sup>65</sup> Interview in Gyumri, 18.09.2011. According to statements often heard among the practicals – “... We try not to talk too much about Armenia-Turkey relations. There was a German missionary there, when we said that we had come with forgiveness he said that it’s the Turks who should ask for forgiveness, isn’t that so? We said yes, but until one of us does not take the first step the other will not and, as a rule, it is us who must take that step.”

*“There is a feeling of guilt towards the Armenians as well; if I am approaching God with a confession of my sins, as a sinner, then part of those sins is also the sin of Genocide. When a person starts to think that he is a sinner and he must ask forgiveness, he thinks, ‘Yes, I am a sinner before God and I must seek His forgiveness, but I am also a sinner before this man and I must seek his forgiveness as well, I am also a sinner before this other one and must seek his forgiveness as well’ – their psychology will improve, become more healthy. So by preaching Christianity in Turkey, we are preparing the ground for Turkish society to accept its mistakes and to ask forgiveness. In the same way that I, as a Christian, accept Adam’s sin, although I did not commit this sin with Eve, I ask for forgiveness on behalf of everyone.”<sup>66</sup>*

In Script 4, the key components are D – the denial – and E – the proposal. Thus, the proposal for the limits of self-reflection for “you”, which Script 1 presents as the imperative component “you must do something”, is presented in a more expanded form, which allows one to see a much deeper picture of Evangelical discourse. The imperative “you must do something” has been transformed to the volitional component “you want to do something good” which is already meaningful, acceptable and desirable for the basic value of “wanting to live with God.”

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<sup>66</sup> Interview in Gyumri, 18.09.2011

### **8.1.2. Script, which sees the dissemination of Christian values from the point of view of (prioritizing) historical events**

One other important peculiarity, which was emphasized above, was that the studied discourse about the dissemination of Christianity started at some point to be seen from the point of view of prioritizing historical events. It is interesting that this shift is not a circumstance that is “understandable in itself” in the case of ethnically non-Armenian preachers, whose discourse more often centers around “recognizing Jesus”, “reconciliation with the Heavenly Father”, “God is Love”, “Christianity is the right religion” and other similar key concepts.

In other words, the emphasis of the discourse of the groups that we have studied changes at some point. As we have already mentioned, the realization of historical memory and its assessment – the imperative for self-reflection – is present in the Evangelical discourse. If, at the starting point (according to point 8.1.1) the priority belongs to the thesis of “making Christian salvation accessible to the lost brothers” and “not seeing the brothers as enemies and not wanting to seek revenge but rather to forgive them” then from the point of view of the same discourse one can make a smooth transition to “the best example and opportunity to win over our enemy through good”. This transition, in reality, changes the priority of the ideas being disseminated in the discourse and the Christian value system is seen as a possible tool only, which can allow one to understand and to provide an option to reflect and overcome historical memory, which is seen as Armenia-Turkey reconciliation.

Regarding the question of how to deal with the consequences of the most painful issue in Armenia-Turkey relations – the Armenian genocide, on the side of the “strategists” there were proposals of transforming the idea to a certain extent and on the side of the practicals this was seen (although during the course of the research it was clearly seen that the practicals were reproducing the strategists). Despite the transformation of priorities in the Evangelists’ discourse, the issue of dealing with the consequences continues to remain a part of the value system of Christian perception. In order to conceptualize this, this study proposed the following script –

(5) A – When I say something like this,

A<sub>1</sub> – “You have done something

A<sub>2</sub> – because of this something bad has happened to me”

B – I could do something

B<sub>1</sub> – This is bad to say to this person

“I want to do something bad toward you”

I don’t want this

B<sub>2</sub> – This is good to say to this person

“I want to do something good toward you

I want this

In this script, the preliminary provision of “doing something good” is put at the heart of the concept of “forgiveness” and it builds around this the historical memory (A), the perception of that memory, its interpretation,

assessment and ideas about steps towards the neutralization of its consequences – in other words, the social-cultural norms – as a result of which the Armenia-Turkey relations begin to be seen mainly in the context of 1915. It is important to note that the conceptualization of the Christian realization of “sin” (also the script component which is present from Script 2 onwards) is present in this script but is no longer a preliminary provision; thus the structural logic of the script is completely different.

In order to change the situation, it is necessary to take certain action. Armenia-Turkey relations are seen from a religious and cultural aspect (B), which says that the steps to be taken are also to be based on that aspect. Based on the Christian value system, the action cannot revolve around the components of “doing something bad” or “sin”, which are in contrast to that value system. Therefore this is not desirable, because it contains within itself the condition of multiplication/reproduction of “sin” (B<sub>1</sub>).

Based on this, the community that is the object of this research proposes (B<sub>2</sub>) to act with tools that are in harmony with its value system – to preach the “spirit of forgiveness”, because this stems from its basic concept of “wanting to live with God”.

The perception takes hold – and becomes a preliminary provision – that models (civil society, democratic society) of a united religion and the community created based on a united religion can provide some guarantees of safety and predictability<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>67</sup> In the Evangelical community, the conviction of the accuracy of such a perception is manifested by the blame directed at other religious denominations in the same ethnic group, which do not share the same views. According to the

The perceptions of the religious groups built around this script are manifested, for example, in the following extracts from interviews taken during the research –

*“[...] first it is God’s will, God’s command to preach the Gospel to different nations, to all nations and second, our nation it is for the safety of our nation and the best example and opportunity to win over our ‘enemy’ – I say enemy in quotes here, or by convention – through good. And finally, those saved souls will say before God, ‘At least this man prayed for us.’ That is enough for me.”*

*“When the Turks become Christians, we will be safer. The Christian Turk will not attack – so this is for our safety, for our security.”*

To summarize the script, one can emphasize that one of the two communities included in the script (“the Christian one”) perceives the other (“the non-Christian one”) in the context of its historical memory. There is therefore a memory present, when these relations were dangerous and lethal. In order to change the situation, the first of the communities involved in the discourse, realizing the necessity to draw the other one into its value system, tries to disseminate its value system to the other and to transform the “anti-community” into the bearer of values familiar to it. According to Script 5, all this will be followed by a shaping of the general field, where the rules of the game are clear and recognizable for both sides. Only when these principles are maintained will one of the communities see

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following extract from an interview with Evangelical strategists – “To my surprise, one of today’s high ranking officials from the Apostolic Church said, ‘The mission of our Apostolic Church has been that we do not force our religion on others.’ I think that we should have done the opposite.”

the guarantee of its safety and security in the principle "*the Christian Turk will not attack*", which can neutralize the religious separation of the communities. The discourse is constructed around the emphasis of the advantages of the "only true religion", which would allow to "win over the others through good", i.e. to overcome historical memory and its consequences.

## **8.2 Script, which sees the dissemination of Christian values from the point of view of (prioritizing) historical events**

The scripts mentioned in the previous two sections (8.1.1 – 8.1.2), are in reality constructed on the basis of one of the two value systems that we studied – Christianity. In order to maintain the integrity of the research it is also necessary to examine the religious, behavioral, social and cultural norms in the value spheres of Islam as well and to see the cultural scripts that reflect them.

In order to do this, it is necessary to understand the concept of *umma*, the Islamic model of social organization. Each person, who is the member of an *umma*, is a believer and is one of their own. Everyone else is a foreigner and is considered the enemy and enemies need to be treated correspondingly. First, it is the fire worshippers who do not wish to accept Allah as the only God, must be destroyed, then the "People of the Book", i.e. the Christians, the Jews, the Zoroastrians, must accept their status (*ahl adh-dzimma*<sup>68</sup>), that is they must obey. In this model of social organization,

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<sup>68</sup> From Islam's point of view, these are people belonging to other religions who have recognized the supremacy of Muslims and have agreed to pay a per capita tax (*jizya*), against which they receive the Muslims' care, protection from external

the “Muslim-fire worshipper-book person” social interaction, the foreign-own dichotomy, “is the same from the point of view of freedom/no freedom, as being enslaved. The foreign person is either not free, or is dead, in reality or in potential, because he is ill with a terrible disease, he does not believe the real God, he does not recognize divine truth, is stubborn in his ignorance, so those moral norms and rules which apply to the ‘healthy’, to those of their own, do not apply to him”<sup>69</sup>.

Taking into account this basic picture, the cultural script which governs the relationship between the Muslims and the “People of the Book” has the following form<sup>70</sup>, depending on whether the latter accept or reject their status –

(6)A – *When I say something like this, “I say something good”*,

*B – I could do something*

*This is good to say, “I want to do something good toward you”*

*I want this*

*C – You could do something*

*C<sub>1</sub> - This is good to say “I want you to do something good toward me”*

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enemies and equal rights with the Muslims of sovereignty over life and personal property.

<sup>69</sup> See Դ. Հովհաննիսյան, «Ազատության և անազատության սահմանը», 2009թ., <http://www.prm.am/index.php/2009-02-18-07-41-11/95-2009-03-10-07-21-26/2431-2010-08-26-18-10-50> [D. Hovhannisyanyan, The Border between Freedom and Imprisonment, 2009, <http://www.prm.am/index.php/2009-02-18-07-41-11/95-2009-03-10-07-21-26/2431-2010-08-26-18-10-50>]

<sup>70</sup> The basis for the development of this script are not just studies on Islam, but also interviews conducted in Turkish circles.



*I want this*

*C<sub>2</sub> – This is bad to say “I don’t want you to do something good toward me”*

*I don’t want this*

*D – I could do something*

*E – I say something good*

The workability of the model can be seen from within the objectives of the research, based on one example. Thus, giving due assessment to the Armenian Genocide continues to remain the core issue in Armenia-Turkey relations. As this script shows, the norms governing “Muslim-Book Person” interaction, in the presence of an *umma*, gives the issue of perceiving the Armenian Genocide a whole new nature in the Turkish cultural sphere.

The People of the Book (Armenians, Greeks, Jews), who form the minorities in a majority (A) which is governed by an Islamic value system, have to adjust themselves to the principles (B) of the latter and they have given the latter the title of patron (*zimmi*) and an agreement has been signed regarding that status. From the point of view of this value system, that which is happening with the Christian minority, fits into the Muslim value system (C). If we look at the Armenian Genocide from the point of view of the Islamic value system, it can be interpreted as a specific case of violation of the “patron-ward” agreement (C<sub>1</sub>-C<sub>2</sub>), which is followed by actions taken to restore the violated reality, which are understandable and acceptable actions (D). Therefore, in this sense it is no coincidence that, even in recent

years, Turkey's official discourse contains references to the support shown to the enemy by the ("ward") Armenians and that this is used both in Turkey's official policy of denial and at the social level of interpretation, explanation and justification. Therefore, the Evangelical community's preliminary provision of "a sin has been committed" as a component of the script is not perceived at all on the Islamic side; the Muslim "is not a sinner, because he has not come out from within the norms of his value system" or, at the very least, those actions have been accepted and understood within his value system (E).

This suggests that when discussing the Armenia-Turkey reconciliation process or, in case the border opens, the religious and cultural adaptation potential one must see the mechanisms which are dictated by the peculiarities of these scripts.

## **9. Results of the study and recommendations based on the results**

The whole course of the study, a number of in-depth interviews, the cultural scripts revealed and the religion-based scripts dictated by the missionaries, all allow one to state that the eastern regions of Turkey today are seeing transformations in the internal religious and cultural fields, which mutually influence civil, political, economic and other spheres. There is a need for a more consistent and multi-lateral approach by the Republic of Armenia towards these changes, which – after the border opens and during the period of closer ties between Armenia and Turkey – could

have great influence on Armenian-Turkish religious and cultural adaptation.

It is obvious that even after the opening of the Armenia-Turkey border, there will continue to be a sense of distrust and in some ways even a feeling of religious and cultural incompatibility in the interaction between the two sides, and one must have a strategy developed and a tactical program against this, which will work with the volume and rate of spread of Christianity, which would allow one to solve the problems that come up through a series of pre-determined actions.

The research, based on the cultural scripts revealed, showed that Protestant preachers – both on the Armenian and on the Turkish sides, are putting religious belonging in first place and ethnic belonging is often lowered in importance or is completely neglected (although in some cases, this reprioritization is not done consciously). That is to say, missionary activity brings the Christian and Christianity to Armenia-Turkey relations and along with them come the perceptions about societies that are built on civil and democratic values, rather than the Armenian or Armenian elements. We propose to view the activities of different (Armenian) preachers from this angle.

In the sense of cultural scripts, the research allowed to reveal that the activities of different religious groups and organizations that are built on these scripts, which are directed at the finding supporters on the Turkish side of the border, are dictated by a few initial principles. The main one of them is one's own version of knowledge and the intention to make that accessible to "the others". In this period of intention, the preliminary

provision is considered to be that the “Armenian Christian” did not do this in his time, and “owes it” to do it today. This is the context in which the tragedy which took place between the Armenian-Turkish communities is seen. Since the side which acted has still not given an accurate assessment of the scale of the tragedy and its consequences, it is not possible to expect the two sides to co-exist.

The proposal for possible co-existence from the religious community studied continues to remain related to the Christian “sin – forgiveness” concept, which assumes a similarity in the value systems on both sides. Only in this case is it possible to say that both communities have carried out their missions – one has disseminated the “true” knowledge, the other has, as a result, realized this and has repented. As it was noted, the activities of the Apostolic Church was minimal in this sense, it was not possible to reveal it in the study.

The cultural scripts, revealed during the study, which form the basis of the perception of the missions mentioned above, can be seen as a sequence of actions, social-cultural norms and rules, which are seen as possible options for Armenian-Turkish reconciliation.

However, in reality, a part of those who have been “shown the light” by groups of preachers only accept the mission of the religious group only superficially and they use it for their own personal gain. Our research in Europe showed that some of newly converted Christians use this simply to settle down in Europe.

From another point of view, the issue of Armenia-Turkey reconciliation has a specific side in the Evangelical community – the

Islamic value system of the target group is completely neglected. As the research showed, “from the Islamic position” the activities of Christian preachers are seen in the cultural and religious spheres as a threat to the Islamic value system. On the other hand, the scripts dictated by the Evangelical groups, which offer clear norms – “sin”, “forgiveness” and so on, are perceived as the logical opposite in the Islamic value system, which sees those historical events in hindsight as in harmony with the need of that time and place, because in assessing those historical events there is a fundamental difference in the basic values of the two systems. This perception is, in turn, laden with a need to re-perceive the whole issue.

It turns out that both sides of the issue are seen only from the point of view of creating a unified value space, in order not to stray from the “true religion” and in order to return to the “true religion”. In this case, however, it is important to clearly realize and take into account one main peculiarity. Jesus, in his sermon on the Mount, says, “But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.” (Matthew, 5:44-45) . This is a completely different principle for social interaction, which ejects the principle of taking over, ruling and subjecting or enslaving from the concept of “foreign-our” but maintains the “foreign-our” dichotomy, changing the idea to “enemy”. The basis, then, is probably that the Christian believer is a subject only of the Almighty and only follows the laws set by Him. As for the “enemies”, they are also His creature and they bear the breath of the Creator in them and

this breath within them must be loved<sup>71</sup>. By focusing the attention on the preachers, this section clearly defines why the issue is realized and a solution is proposed more quickly in the Christian field. As a contrast to this, the Islamic model of “foreign-our” dichotomy is seen in the light of “being or not being a member of the *umma*”, which governs the various levels of interaction of the latter.

The objective of the study, which wanted to see the extent to which the religious and cultural aspect could be an adaptation mechanism in Armenia-Turkey relations after the opening of the border – in order to mitigate the undesirable (leading to clashes) sides of the interaction between the communities, showed that this aspect is in itself quite vulnerable, if not a breeding ground for tension. So the issues which are linked in one way or another to the religious and cultural aspects of this relationship must be put in a better context of “reconciliation”, which the use of additional tools.

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<sup>71</sup> See Դ. Հովհաննիսյան, «Ազատության և անազատության սահմանը», 2009թ., <http://www.prm.am/index.php/2009-02-18-07-41-11/95-2009-03-10-07-21-26/2431-2010-08-26-18-10-50> [D. Hovhannisyan, The Border between Freedom and Imprisonment, 2009, <http://www.prm.am/index.php/2009-02-18-07-41-11/95-2009-03-10-07-21-26/2431-2010-08-26-18-10-50>]