

“As a college student, I was challenged by the teaching of Dr. Edward Panosian in a required class called the History of Western Civilization. I will never forget the passion of Dr. Panosian’s teaching of history and the clarity with which he taught about two different world views that have defined our past. He instilled into me a love for history and how it can inform us as we address the challenges of this generation. Chris Anderson has written a compelling story that is much more than the biography of a humble but significant person in the field of education. His book tells the story of an oppressed people and the new opportunities in America that not only changed the life of Dr. Panosian but also influenced thousands because of his teaching. Ed Panosian began each class with ‘a moment of review and then on we go.’ After you read this book, you will be more informed about the past and more inspired for the future.”

— **Asa Hutchinson**, Governor of Arkansas

“What a story! What a man! What a life! I can see Dr. Panosian in my mind riding his bicycle, smiling with grace toward all his students, and standing before his class as if he were an actor on stage. I’ll never forget his lectures in my two semesters of Church History. Ed Panosian represents the best of Bob Jones University in every way. A compelling life message of a true giant!”

— **Steve Pettit**, president of Bob Jones University, Greenville, South Carolina

“Part of true piety is not only honoring God, but also giving honor to whom honor is due. A servant of Christ like Edward Panosian rarely receives honor in this life. Here, Chris Anderson writes as a friend and former student, granting readers an interesting glimpse into this honorable man’s life, times, family, and work. Anderson honors Panosian, but he does not glorify him. That distinction is reserved for the Master Whom Panosian and Anderson both serve. If God is glorified by the faithful service of His saints, then He is the Hero of Panosian’s story.”

— **Kevin Bauder**, professor at Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Minneapolis

“Among all the gifts given by the Holy Spirit to believers, there is none more useful and variegated than the gift of teaching. Dr. Panosian is a brilliant teacher with an extraordinary ability to make historical figures come alive. Now, we have the remarkable story of his life and the amazing Providence that prepared him for such a unique ministry, skillfully brought to life in writing by another gifted teacher, Pastor Chris Anderson.”

— **Phil Johnson**, executive director of Grace to You



Chris Anderson with Ed Panosian, 2017; photo by Zuly Rabelo

PANOSIAN

A Story of God's Gracious Providence

CHRIS ANDERSON

Panosian: A Story of God's Gracious Providence

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for Ed and Betty Panosian

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INTRODUCTION

GOD'S GRACIOUS PROVIDENCE

“What are thought to be chance occurrences are just so many proofs of heavenly providence, especially of fatherly kindness.”

—John Calvin¹

“I being in the way, the LORD led me.”²

Those who have sat under the teaching ministry of Dr. Panosian for even a short time have doubtless heard him borrow the ancient testimony of Abraham’s servant as his own. Genesis 24:27 rejoices in God’s providence—His orchestration of even minor events to accomplish His purposes. With apologies to the Bard, there are no “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.”³ God is sovereign over everything, from international affairs to personal affections. Even when we are unaware of it (as most of the world is), God is ordering even the minute details of the universe to accomplish His purpose and display His glory.

Dr. Panosian has taught thousands that the fingerprints of the sovereign God are all over human history. More than twenty years ago he wrote the following regarding the benefits of history for the Christian student:

¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill. trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960) I: 60.

² Genesis 24:27 KJV.

³ Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, Rebecca Niles, eds., *Hamlet* (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, n.d.), accessed August 27, 2018. www.folgerdigitaltexts.org.

If history is the record of God's incessant supervision over men and nations—the memorial of God's mercies, His blessings for obedience and His judgment for disobedience, the working out of His sovereign pleasure ruling and overruling the free but responsible wills of men—then it is to be studied because of what it *is*. History shows the providence of God—His “seeing before”—on behalf of His people.⁴

Ed Panosian's story is a story of God's providence.

Most know Dr. Edward M. Panosian as a professor at Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina, where he taught history for over half a century. Dr. Panosian is an icon. His wisdom, his passion, his appearance, his wit, his impossibly patient speaking pace, and his voice—what a *voice!*—all combine to make him a larger-than-life legend. He has taught more students than any other professor in the history of BJU. He is almost universally respected. But he is not well known—as a *man*, I mean, not an icon. My goal is to remedy that.

The Panosian story is challenging to tell. It is the story of a man, but it is also the story of his ancestors, their homeland, and their oppressors. In fact, the book will be roughly half over before its principal character is even born! The two halves of the story may feel like two very different books that have been pasted together. They are not. Dr. Panosian and I believe that understanding his story is impossible without understanding the story of his parents and their nearly miraculous survival. For that reason, inserted throughout the story are pertinent histories of the Armenians, of the declining Ottoman Empire⁵, of World War I, and of the Armenian Genocide

⁴ Edward Panosian, “A Case for History in the Christian School” in *The Providence of God in History* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 1996), 2–3.

⁵ By the year 1900, the once vast Ottoman Empire had been dismembered and distributed among the greater nations of Europe. What remained was essentially modern-day Turkey. Throughout the book, the terms “Ottoman Empire” and “Turkey” are used interchangeably. At points in the book, the Panosians or newspapers refer to their homeland as “Syria” or “Syrian Turkey” or even “Armenia.” The borders in that region of the world have shifted significantly in the last century. While the other designations aren't inaccurate, this book will typically refer to the homeland of Dr. Panosian's parents as “Turkey” or “the Ottoman Empire.”

(1915–1920). These aren't diversions from the history of the Panosian family; they are intrinsic to it.⁶

Much of the Panosian story takes place in Turkey. I was greatly helped by a trip I took to Turkey in 2008, little knowing that that journey was preparing me for this one. More providence! Even more helpful, in the months surrounding the writing of this book I consumed many insightful resources on the Armenian Genocide and World War I, which I often cite in footnotes. I have relied upon many respected historians, but I found four books to be especially helpful:

- *Armenia's Golgotha*, the memoirs of genocide survivor Grigoris Balakian which provide an eyewitness account of the Turks' treachery.
- *The Burning Tigris*, written by Grigoris Balakian's great-nephew, Peter Balakian. This is perhaps the most thorough book on the history of the genocide, beautifully written by an author who won a Pulitzer Prize in 2016 for his poetry.
- *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*, a firsthand account of the genocide, written by the U.S. Ambassador to Turkey during the genocide. This is especially useful because it was written by a respected American official and because Morgenthau is neither an Armenian, nor a Christian, and therefore cannot be charged with either of those biases as an author. Morgenthau labored valiantly (though ultimately in vain) to protect the Armenians.
- *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, an epic (900-page) historical novel by noted Austrian author Franz Werfel, published in 1933. The book did a great deal to make the public aware of the terrors of the genocide during the years following World War I.

⁶ Dates at the beginning of each chapter in this book are significant. Because the book follows multiple characters in multiple locations and times, the chapters are not strictly chronological.

Ironically, Morgenthau and Werfel were both Jews, and their writings about the genocide are haunting in light of the horrors which their own people would face less than a generation later.

The details of the genocide are grotesque, and they are hard to read. Grigoris Balakian believed that the terrors the Armenians suffered at the hands of the Turks were unprecedented—"the likes of which had never before been recorded in even the bloodiest pages of history."⁷ The cruelty of which humans are capable is apt evidence of our depravity. I've shared enough details to accurately depict the terrors of the genocide without piling story upon story in sickening succession. If the details I share seem excessive, know that I exercised considerable restraint.

Although the book describes unthinkable cruelty, it would be unjust to paint all Turks or all Muslims with one broad brush. When I speak of the atrocities of "the Turks," I do so with an eye on the leaders of the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the twentieth century when the genocide took place. It would be unfair to characterize an entire nation by the actions of its leaders, much less by the actions of leaders who ruled one hundred years ago. To repurpose Romans 9:6, "not all Turks are 'Turks'" as I use that term in this book. Humane Turks and kind Muslims existed then as now, as the book will demonstrate.

Along those lines, one might wonder what Dr. Panosian feels toward those responsible for the deaths of many of his family members and the decimation of his people. He provided the answer in a booklet he authored fifteen years before I undertook this project:

I hate no one except the Devil and his works, though in the flesh I might have reason to hate. . . . While I am an Armenian-American, I have no hatred. I am a redeemed Christian. My parents came to know the Lord. I hate no one.⁸

Whenever possible, I have quoted Dr. Panosian directly. The man is a master communicator, and it is my hope that those who read his

⁷ Grigoris Balakian, *Armenia's Golgotha*, trans. Peter Balakian (New York: Vintage, 2009), 48.

⁸ Edward M. Panosian, *Islam and the Bible: Considering Islam Biblically* (Greenville, SC: Emerald House, 2003), 1–2.

words—especially those who know his voice—will imagine actually hearing him again.

As I interviewed the Panosians and asked their close acquaintances to share their memories, I realized that there are scores of former students who have vivid memories of things Dr. Panosian said and did. I used social media to reach out to graduates of BJU, asking them to share some of their favorite recollections of Dr. Panosian. I was unprepared for the deluge of nostalgia, affection, and gratitude that my request unleashed. For thousands of people, the Panosian story feels very much like their own story—that’s the depth of attachment they feel. For that reason, I have sprinkled many of their memories throughout the book. Their fondness for their beloved professor reminded me what a privilege and responsibility was mine to be researching and writing this book. I hope it will inform and inspire readers, whether or not they are already familiar with Ed Panosian.

The Panosian story needed to be told while its principal character was still able to share it. It is one of suffering and survival, of cruelty and courage. Above all, it is a story of God’s gracious providence. As Dr. Panosian has reminded us again and again, “History is *His story*.” May He be glorified through its telling! *Soli Deo Gloria!*

PART ONE

“IN GREEN PASTURES”

CHAPTER ONE

A PIN CUSHION TO PRIZE

1987 — ELMIRA, NEW YORK

“Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.”

—James 3:4

Little objects may contain massive memories. That’s true in this story.

An egg. A pouch of tobacco. A dried fig. A coal box. A shoe. A collection of jewelry. A sum of not quite twenty-five dollars. An assassin’s bullet. A fistful of candy. A stick. A magazine advertisement. A perfectly fitted costume. A doctor’s prescription. A hospital bed. A bicycle or two. A custom-made chair. A scrapbook. Some 3x5 index cards. And most important of all, a pin cushion.

Sara Panosian, the mother of Ed Panosian, entered paradise on March 2, 1987, almost three months after her family had gathered around her to celebrate her eighty-fifth birthday. She underwent surgery to treat her stomach cancer, and she awoke in the presence of her Savior. On a shelf in her home sat her most prized worldly possession: a simple pin cushion. Her son describes it, slowly, his voice swelling and cracking with emotion:

It was a little pin cushion—a sewing cushion—which looked like an apple, made of felt, stiffened. It had a removable top, and inside were pins and so forth. She kept it to her dying day.

Sara Panosian—Sara Momjian before her marriage to Nazar Panosian—had seen brutal and beautiful things during her eighty-

five years on earth. She had witnessed the worst and best that human beings could do. She had experienced unspeakable sorrows and unexpected joys.

So what made this object, a simple pin cushion, such a treasure?

It held more than pins. It held *hope*, and it had for almost eighty years.

CHAPTER TWO

TWO UNFORGETTABLE HOURS

2017 — ATLANTA, GEORGIA
AND GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA

“I like this idea. I think it’s something I can do. Now . . . tell me how.”

—Ed Panosian

My friendship with Dr. Panosian is a recent one. Yes, I was introduced to him in 1990, when I enrolled at Bob Jones University and had him as my professor for a History of Civilization course, along with hundreds of other freshmen.⁹ For the next seven years, I saw him around campus, watched him in Shakespearean plays, and heard him perform narrations that would make James Earl Jones jealous. But I didn’t know him. He certainly didn’t know me. Along with thousands of other students, I felt a deep affection for Dr. Panosian. But I didn’t know “Ed.”

By the time we became friends, two of my daughters were students at BJU. Astonishingly to me, they didn’t have any awareness of the man who in my mind was part of the very fabric of the institution. When Rebekah and Rachel arrived as students in 2015 and 2017, he had already enjoyed over a decade of his well-deserved retirement. They had no real reason to know him. That chapter of the university’s story had closed—or almost closed. In God’s good providence, an event in 2017 allowed me to reconnect with Dr. Panosian. As a result, we’re adding a bit more to that not-quite-closed chapter, for the benefit of both my generation and my daughters’.

⁹ History of Civilization is known at BJU, where Dr. Panosian taught for over fifty years, as “History of Civ,” the title that will be used throughout the rest of this book.

The year 2017 marked the five-hundredth anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, and Killian Hill Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, where I pastor, planned to celebrate the occasion with a Bible conference. I wanted a two-pronged approach: a historian would teach on the *events* of the Reformation, and a theologian would preach on the *doctrines* of the Reformation, summarized as the “Five Solas”—*Sola Scriptura*, *Sola Fide*, *Sola Gratia*, *Solus Christus*, and *Soli Deo Gloria*. I secured a respected theologian to preach. Now I needed a church historian. Who better to ask than Dr. Panosian? To be honest, I checked with some mutual friends to be sure that he was still physically and mentally up to the task. He was eighty-seven, after all. Assured by them that he was as lucid as ever, I extended the invitation, and he readily accepted. During the conference we were treated to exceptional preaching from Phil Johnson of Grace to You Ministries and riveting history from Ed Panosian.¹⁰ Their speaking styles complemented each other so well. Dr. Panosian is patient, measured, and dramatic. Phil Johnson is an absolute machine gun of exegetical insights. We learned a great deal, and Christ was exalted.

Several former students who attended the conference were struck with the fact that Dr. Panosian was essentially unchanged from the time of their instruction, whether twenty years ago or sixty. He was still both refined and kind—still both august and humble—still the consummate gentleman.

Following the conference, I volunteered to drive Dr. Panosian from Atlanta back to his home in Greenville, South Carolina. I arrived at the hotel to find Dr. Panosian waiting in the lobby. He was early; I was not. I believe I was wearing jeans; he certainly was not. But he greeted me like we were old friends: “Ah, Chris! So good to see you! Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to get me back to my home.” *Warm and courteous as ever*, I thought. As I helped him with his luggage, he handed me a pile of carefully written cards—thank you notes to everyone who had hosted him during the conference. He

¹⁰ A recording of each message can be found at sermonaudio.com/khbc.

asked me to have the stamped envelopes addressed and mailed out by the church secretary. How thoughtful. How exquisitely polite!

Typical, I thought. Or at least typical of Dr. Panosian, if not of most people in our day of texts, emails, and emojis.

It was during the two-hour drive north on I-85 that one of my favorite college professors became one of my friends. An icon became a man. Dr. Panosian became Ed. Well, that's not really true; I still feel uncomfortable calling him Ed. But I got to know *him*.

Shortly after our departure, I asked him to tell me his story: "I would love to hear about your family . . . how you came to Christ . . . what brought you to BJU, and what kept you there." I had no idea what I set in motion with that request. For the next two hours, I was transported to the years surrounding World War I—to Turkey, to an orphanage in Beirut, Lebanon, and eventually to Ellis Island, under the watchful eyes of the Statue of Liberty. He told the history of his family with deep emotion and dramatic flair, for an audience of one.

I learned that Dr. Panosian's story is inseparable from the larger story of his people, the Armenians. His name, like the name of almost all Armenians, displays his heritage. He explained: "The 'ian' means 'son of' and is the patronym of all Armenians. I am *Panos*—the son of Panos—meaning, Stephen." Explaining the meaning behind his name provided him with an irresistible opportunity to display his winsome, self-deprecating humor: "The obvious emphasis of 'Panosian' is on the *nose!*" I smiled, and again I muttered in my mind: *Typical*.

Dr. Panosian is unashamedly Armenian. To be honest, until the last few years, I had no idea who the Armenians were, or are, other than jokes that confused them with the theological opponents of Calvinists—the Arminians. But the story of the Armenian people should be known. It is filled with horrors and heroes, with persecution and perseverance.

During that car ride, I heard harrowing episodes from the Armenian Genocide, the calculating work of Turkish Muslims to eliminate Armenians from the face of the earth. By the end of World War I, one and a half *million* Armenians had been murdered in what is sometimes

called “the hidden holocaust.”¹¹ I learned that most of Ed Panosian’s forebears were slain in the ethnic cleansing perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire. And I learned that his parents only narrowly—and providentially—escaped with their lives.

My ignorance of these events was an embarrassment to me. I’m reasonably well-read. And yet, for most of my life, I hadn’t heard or read anything about the Armenian Genocide. In contrast, I have known about the Jewish Holocaust of World War II since I was a young boy. I learned of it in classes, in museums, and in dramatic presentations like *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Corrie Ten Boom’s *The Hiding Place*, and the 1970s television miniseries *Holocaust*, which left a deep impression on me as an elementary student. But Armenians and their suffering surrounding World War I? I was completely uninformed. Mercy, I was uninformed *despite having traveled to Turkey* and despite studying its history and sites beforehand!¹²

I would never suggest that the world has been too mindful of the Jewish Holocaust. But we have neglected the tragic plight and heroic fight of the Armenians. Indeed, to this day, the Turkish government denies that the genocide even happened. The Armenian holocaust should be known. Dr. Panosian and I hope this book can help to rectify that, at least in a small way.

Driving Dr. Panosian home that day in 2017 was a divine appointment, another example of God’s good providence. My only regret later was that I didn’t record the conversation. But I had an idea. Truth be told, I have a hundred ideas a day . . . about two of which are actually feasible. But this was a great one! I told Dr. Panosian that this story must be shared. I asked him to consider allowing me to write his biography, starting with the story of his parents’ escape from Turkey. He

¹¹ Peter Balakian, *The Burning Tigris* (New York, Perennial, 2004), xiii.

¹² In my defense, the three guidebooks I have on Turkey are painstaking in their effort to avoid mentioning the Armenian Genocide, presumably in deference to the Republic of Turkey. For example, John Freely’s book *Istanbul: The Imperial City*, says nothing of the slaughter of 1.5 million Armenians. The closest Freely comes in the book’s almost 400 pages is to record that 6,000 Armenians were killed “in reprisals” for an attack carried out by “Armenian terrorists” on August 26, 1896. John Freely, *Istanbul: The Imperial City* (London: Penguin, 1998), 287.

said he would give it some thought. I dropped him off, thanked him for the riveting conversation, and we both went about our lives.

Just over a month later, I watched a beautiful, disturbingly vivid movie about the Armenian Genocide called *The Promise*. I was captivated. Because it has some objectionable elements, I can recommend it only with reservations. But it fanned the flames of my interest in the story of Ed Panosian's family. What I had heard on the two-hour car ride I now saw in a two-hour movie. The film nudged me again to pursue the Panosian project.

I immediately wrote Dr. Panosian an email—my preferred means of communication during our months of collaboration, not his, though he has been more than accommodating. I expressed my zeal to tell his story. I asked for an interview, and he agreed. Within the week, we were seated together in South Carolina in his home on the back campus of Bob Jones University. He greeted me at the door with his customary warmth and enthusiasm. He took my jacket and led me into the living room—a room that feels exactly like you'd expect a history professor's home to feel, complete with fascinating décor, beautiful rugs, elegant antiques, and black and white photos. Predictably, the Panosian home echoes with the perpetual tick-tick-ticking of a grandfather clock, a soothing and sobering reminder of the relentless passing of time.

We settled onto his couch, and he prepared to tell his story to me again—this time with a recorder between us. I prayed, asking the Lord to bless our endeavor. Then, in his inimitable voice, he started the conversation with two declaratives and an imperative: "I like this idea. I think it's something I can do. Now . . . tell me how."

For the next two hours he took me again to Turkey, telling me of his family, their experiences, and their personalities. This time he was ready with notes he had jotted down, anecdotes our conversation had brought to his recollection, and a century-old picture of his mother. Multiple times during the conversation, his voice betrayed his emotion, especially when speaking of his father. Listening to those talks again while working on the book has been a joy.

He mentioned as an aside that his wife Betty—"the American" as his mother had called her—knew as much of his family's history as he did. His mother had taken Betty into her confidence during times when Ed was off with his brothers or cousins, leaving the ladies home with plenty of time to visit. Betty was entrusted with details that few other family members had heard.

I knew Betty Panosian as my "Storytelling" professor during my undergrad years at BJU. She has a sweet intensity to her. She's a small lady, but she is unmistakably strong. My favorite, somewhat humiliating memory of her class involved a speech I was assigned to give. I was to tell a children's story which took place on a farm. *How hard could it be?* I thought, not realizing that my teacher—my judge—had a lifetime of experience reading stories to children.

I began, reading the farm story much as I would have read Chaucer or Shakespeare or the classified ads. I could immediately tell that she wasn't impressed. I had learned in freshman speech to read my audience's nonverbal cues. Her furrowed brow was a bit unsettling, but I forged ahead, trying to appear undaunted. I came to a portion where an unusually wise hen speaks, and I read the hen's lines in my normal voice. Mrs. Panosian had heard enough. She cut me off, almost offended: "That is *not* what a hen sounds like. If you want to hold your audience's attention, you need to *become your character!* Make us *believe* you!" Her voice had risen with passion, but just as quickly, it returned to normal. Kindly, she instructed me to try again. It didn't go especially well. She wasn't satisfied until I had set aside my inhibitions and read the lines—ridiculously, I thought—in the voice of a hen. It taught me as much about my own pride as about the craft of storytelling. Diminutive Professor: 1. Mortified Student: 0.

During a brief break in my interview with Dr. Panosian, we enjoyed some refreshments Mrs. Panosian had prepared: cookies and our choice of coffee or tea, all served on nice dishes. *Typical*, I thought again. I asked her if she would be willing to help with this project. She deadpanned that her schedule was "*sooo* busy these days." In her retirement she spends most of her time in her home. She said she would be glad to offer me whatever help she could.

Within three days, I had again driven north to Greenville, and I was back in their home, recorder in hand. I interviewed them together this time, seated at their dining room table. Whenever I listen to the recording, several things make me smile. I was delighted by how they prodded each other's memories. I was surprised at how often we all laughed. And I was thankful for their eagerness to help. Mrs. Panosian had an appointment, and I kept offering to wrap things up so she wouldn't be late. "We still have some time," Dr. Panosian insisted. I tried again a few minutes later. "I'm watching," he said. "We still have ten minutes." And yet once more. "We can continue for five more minutes. It will only take me a few minutes to get her to her appointment." He was enjoying this, and so was I. It was an afternoon I'll not soon forget.

This book is their story, and they've shared it graciously and lucidly, though they are both well into their ninth decade of life. Sitting between them at their dining room table, I knew I was uniquely privileged. I was writing about an amazing portion of world history with a legendary history professor. I was writing a moving story with an accomplished storytelling professor. And all the while, I was unearthing the untold testimony of *the* Edward M. Panosian—a treasure of my alma mater and a giant of the faith.

The only hesitation that either of the Panosians showed during the writing process was a deep desire that Christ, not they, be magnified. Throughout our time together, both were genuinely embarrassed by all the attention. Several months into the project, as we regularly exchanged emails, Dr. Panosian reminded me, "I wish only for heaven's honor." It had been so from our earliest meetings together. That afternoon around their family table, Mrs. Panosian expressed the same desire to be rewarded in heaven, not on earth. And in response, her husband recalled the epitaph that Dr. Bob Jones Jr. had written for his father's funeral: "His record is on high."

Panosian concurred with Dr. Jones: "That's where it matters." Our mutual desire, then, is expressed perfectly by the psalmist: "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory" (Psalm 115:1).

PART TWO

**“IN THE PRESENCE OF
MINE ENEMIES”**

CHAPTER THREE

A PROUD AND PERSEVERING PEOPLE

THE PAST 3,000 YEARS — ARMENIA

“No one remembers the Armenians but the Armenians.”

—Dawn Anahid MacKeen¹³

“History had long been unkind to Armenia, which in ancient times was the most powerful independent kingdom on the eastern border of the Roman Empire and in the fourth century became the first nation to make Christianity its official religion.”

—G. J. Meyer¹⁴

Although they didn't know each other, Ed Panosian's parents—Nazar Panosian and Sara Momjian—were both born to families who were part of the Armenian minority in Turkey, the decaying remnant of the once great Ottoman Empire. Armenians comprised approximately two million of the thirty million people who populated 1910 Turkey. They were a despised minority.

But they had been there first. They were natives of the land, pre-dating their oppressors by two and a half millennia.

The Armenians are one of the oldest civilizations of the Near East—a proud, industrious, and resilient people. Henry Morgenthau, the American Ambassador to Turkey during World War I and an outspoken defender of the Armenians during Turkey's atrocities against them, wrote of them with admiration:

¹³ Dawn Anahid MacKeen, *The Hundred-Year Walk: An Armenian Odyssey* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), 6.

¹⁴ G. J. Meyer, *A World Undone* (New York: Delacorte Press-Random House, 2006), 334.

In the northeastern part of Asia Minor, bordering on Russia, there were six provinces in which Armenians formed the largest element in the population. From the time of Herodotus [fifth century BC] this portion of Asia has borne the name of Armenia. The Armenians of the present day are the direct descendants of the people who inhabited the country three thousand years ago. Their origin is so ancient that it is lost in fable and mystery. . . . What is definitely known about the Armenians, however, is that for ages they have constituted the most civilized and most industrious race in the eastern section of the Ottoman Empire. . . . Everywhere they are known for their industry, their intelligence, and their decent and orderly lives. They are so superior to the Turks intellectually and morally that much of the business and industry had passed into their hands.¹⁵

During that first drive with Dr. Panosian, I asked him if the term “Armenian” describes an ethnicity or a religion? The answer is *yes*. The Armenian people have inhabited the Near East for over three millennia. And for over half of that time, they have been a Christian people.

Ancient Armenia was the first country to declare Christianity as its national religion, doing so almost a century before the Roman Empire officially embraced Christianity. Panosian explains:

[Armenia’s official turn to Christianity] was surely nominal: the king ordered his people to convert, and it did not mean universal conversion to Christ. But officially as a nation in AD 301 in response to the missionary work of one Gregory the Illuminator, the king Tirdat embraced Christianity and declared it to be the official religion of the nation.¹⁶

Nearly two millennia later, Armenians are also among the *last remaining* Middle Easterners to claim Christ. While the rest of the region succumbed to the Islam of the conquering Ottoman Empire beginning in the fifteenth century, Armenians held tenaciously to their Christian faith, though it has cost them dearly. Ambassador Morgenthau (himself a Jew) called the Armenians “a little island of Christians surrounded by backward peoples of hostile religion and hostile race.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story* (self-pub., CreateSpace, 2017), 194.

¹⁶ Panosian, *Islam and the Bible*, 1.

¹⁷ Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story*, 194.

Because they are a religious minority in one of the world's most difficult places, the history of Armenian Christians is a bloody history. Francis Whiting Halsey described their plight vividly in 1919: "Since Noah's ark rested on Mount Ararat it is doubtful whether the inhabitants of those mountains have ever enjoyed any long spell of peace."¹⁸ Over and over again, Armenians have gained religious freedom, only to face a new form of oppression and be forced to fight for liberty yet again. The patron saint of the Armenian church is Vardan Mamikonian (387–451), who fought the Persians at the Battle of Avaryar. Mamikonian lost his life in order to gain the religious freedom of Armenian Christians in his day. His story of tragedy and triumph for religious freedom is a microcosm of the history of his people.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Armenians were oppressed and systematically murdered by the Turks. While the suffering of the Armenians under their Muslim neighbors had gone on since the Ottomans' conquest of the region in the fifteenth century, it reached an especially savage level between 1895 and 1915, continuing without reprieve and climaxing in two ghastly events:

- In 1895, Turkish Sultan Abdul Hamid II was responsible for the slaying of two hundred thousand to three hundred thousand Armenians; he stopped only because he was threatened by Russia, Great Britain, and France. His role in the ethnic cleansing earned him the infamous nickname "the Bloody Sultan."
- In 1915, Abdul Hamid's plans to solve what Turks called "the Armenian problem" by exterminating the Armenians were revived by the very men who had deposed him—"the Young Turks" and, eventually, "the Three Pashas."¹⁹ The brutality of these men was even worse than Hamid's. They

¹⁸ Francis Whiting Halsey, *The Literary Digest History of the World War* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1919), VIII: 34.

¹⁹ "The Young Turks" were a reform group who deposed Hamid and promised to institute a constitutional government. At their ascendance, even Armenians anticipated a future of safety and security. However, the new government soon splintered into a power struggle, eventually won by Grand Vizier Talaat Pasha, who ruled alongside war minister Enver Pasha and naval minister Djemai Pasha—"the Three Pashas."

systematically killed almost one million Armenians in one bloody year.

In the twenty years between 1895 and 1915, more than one and a half million Armenians—75% of the Armenian population—were murdered by Turkish soldiers and citizens.²⁰ This great crime is remembered as “the Armenian Genocide,” what historian John Buchan calls “one of the most wholesale and cold-blooded massacres” in history.²¹

The persecution of the Armenian people didn’t begin or end with the genocide. Their suffering has been relentless. With the fall of the Ottoman Empire at the conclusion of World War I, Armenians were granted independence by the victorious Allies (Britain, France, and Italy). But tragically, those powers were so fatigued by The Great War that they failed to support the Armenian government they had helped to establish. The fledgling Armenian state was soon overrun by Turkish forces under the lead of Mustafa Kemal, affectionately known as “Atatürk,” the founder of modern Turkey. Thus, the Armenians were suppressed again by the Turks, this time under a new name: the Republic of Turkey. To free themselves from the rule of the murderous Turks, they eventually submitted instead to a new oppressor: atheistic Communists from Russia following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Under Communist rule, the religious persecution continued. Even in recent years, just to the south of modern Turkey, many of the Christians who were martyred by Saddam Hussein in Iraq’s “religious cleansing” were ethnic Armenians. As Ambassador Morgenthau wrote almost a century ago, “Their long existence has been one unending martyrdom.”²²

Amazingly, in a turnabout like the Israelis’ return to their homeland in 1948, the Armenian nation has finally regained independence in its own land, or at least a portion of its own land. After hundreds of years of a virtual exile on their own soil, the Republic of Armenia was

²⁰ In addition to 1.5 million Armenian Christians, the Turks killed hundreds of thousands of Assyrian and Chaldean Christians as well, and focused their post-war persecutions on Greek Christians, tens of thousands of whom were killed in 1922.

²¹ John Buchan, *A History of the Great War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1922), II: 395.

²² Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau’s Story*, 194.

formed in 1991 with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Modern Armenia is landlocked, bordered by Turkey on the west, Iran on the south, Azerbaijan on the east, and Georgia on the north. The population of modern Armenia is now around three million, 98% of whom are ethnic Armenians. Millions more have been scattered around the world—the Armenian *diaspora*.

The Armenian Apostolic Church is one of the Eastern Orthodox churches. In many ways, it is but one step away from Roman Catholicism. It is steeped in icons and works-based attempts to gain God's favor. "Incense, but no gospel," as Panosian puts it. But there are notable exceptions. There are priests who preach the gospel in the Armenian Apostolic Church. And there are families, like the Momjians and Panosians in this story, who have embraced the gospel by trusting in Jesus Christ alone. In fact, many of the western missionaries who went to Turkey to convert Muslims to Christianity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries found that they had greater success evangelizing religious but lost Armenians instead.

Smpat Chorbadjian is one example of an Armenian who turned from the formalism of the Armenian church and was born again by faith in Jesus Christ. In his book *Surviving the Forgotten Armenian Genocide*, he tells of his escape from the Turks during World War I. He also tells of his escape from the guilt of his sins through his faith in Jesus Christ. Chorbadjian came to understand that he was unable to save himself from his sins. He needed a Savior. He shares the prayer which he offered at the time of his conversion:

Lord Jesus, you know I'm a sinner, and if I die in my sins I will go to hell. But you are merciful, and I know if I come to You, You will not turn me away. Therefore, this morning I come to you, with all my sins. Forgive my sins, and after this, give me the strength to turn from my sins and help me. Amen.²³

²³ Smpat Chorbadjian, *Surviving the Forgotten Armenian Genocide: A Moving Personal Story*, ed. Patrick Sookhdeo (McLean, VA: Isaac Publishing), 99.

His faith is the same faith of Ed and Betty Panosian. Dr. and Mrs. Panosian are born-again Christians. Though moral people in the eyes of the world, they know that they are guilty sinners in the eyes of God. Like Chorbadian, they have repented of their sins and cried out to Jesus to do for them what they could not do for themselves—to save them. Since receiving Christ as their Savior, they have dedicated their lives to sharing the gospel with all who will hear, and it is fitting that this book should do the same. The hope of the sinner lies neither in his own good deeds nor in his association with any particular church.²⁴ The only Savior for sinners is Jesus Christ—alone.²⁵

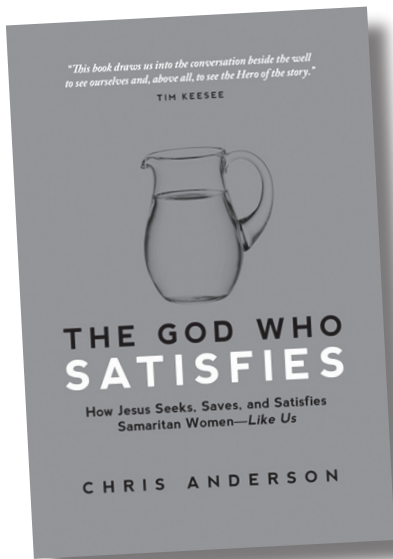
The Scriptures repeatedly speak of the Messiah as a “root” or “sprig” (Isaiah 4:2; Jeremiah 33:15; Zechariah 3:8–9; 6:12). It’s a beautiful image. It pictures the stump of a fallen tree, which appears lifeless. With astounding resiliency, a sprig will often grow out of what seems to be a dead stump. The Messiah arose from the nation of Israel, though King David’s royal line had apparently been cut off centuries before.

The sprig is a fitting symbol for the Armenians, as well. They have been cut off by countless oppressors. They have lost wars. They have gone into exile in other nations. They have existed as a despised minority, surrounded and suppressed by their enemies. In the wake of the Armenian Genocide, this people group appeared to be finished. Yet, they continue to exist. Just when the Armenian stump looks to be dead, a sprig emerges, and the stunning story of this heroic people continues.

²⁴ Ephesians 2:8–9 KJV: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

²⁵ John 14:6 KJV: “Jesus saith unto him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.’”

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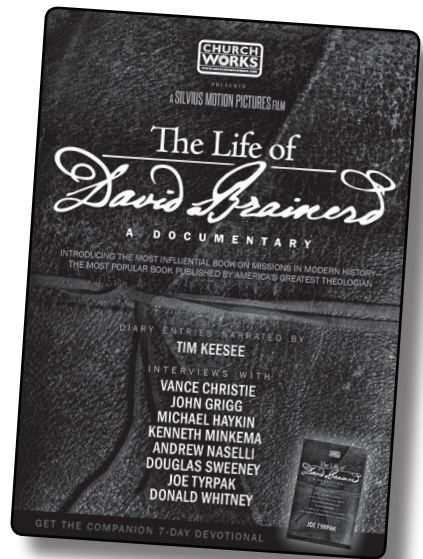


“In this little book, a gifted poet transitions to prose. I have known Chris Anderson for over two decades, first as a student and then as a fellow laborer in the work of the Kingdom. This book’s focus on the Samaritan woman is full of Christ and the glorious gospel of grace. Written in an easy-to-read, popular style full of real-life illustrations, the book effectively links helpful background facts and precisely-stated theological truths to experiential application. It is a book that can be used for evangelism as well as for warming the believer’s heart to renewed gratitude for what Christ has abundantly supplied.”

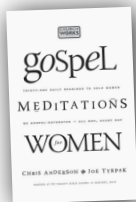
—**Michael P. V. Barrett**, dean and professor at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary and author of *Complete in Him* and *Beginning at Moses*

“This DVD documentary represents an excellent introduction to the life and ministry of the famed missionary. Together the interviewees paint a picture of Brainerd that is informed by the best scholarship, is honest about his various struggles and failures, but remains warmly sympathetic to Brainerd’s life, thought, and missionary zeal. The film itself reflects quality craftsmanship and includes many beautiful shots of locations that were prominent in Brainerd’s life, original manuscripts of his writings, and portraits, statues, and other memorials of figures discussed in the documentary. The film should prove a helpful resource for use in local church Sunday School classes, small groups, and discussion groups.”

—**Nathan A. Finn**, dean and professor at Union University and writer for the Jonathan Edwards Center at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School



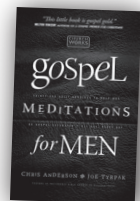
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Gospel Meditations for Women

“Wrestling with guilt and frustration, far too many Christian women are living below the privileges of their spiritual inheritance. The solution is not found in any strengthened resolve of duty, but rather in having souls settled in the blessed liberty of Christ through the sweet enjoyment of the gospel. A union of sound doctrine and practical teaching, *Gospel Meditations for Women* beautifully highlights those unbinding messages of grace that so powerfully ignite joyful passion for Christ and holy living. What an invaluable resource!”

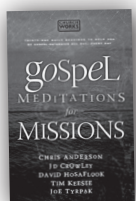
—**Holly Stratton**, conference speaker and blogger at *LifeHurts.us*



Gospel Meditations for Men

“A full month of meaty, masculine meditations. This is a wonderful resource for men seeking to deepen their understanding and build spiritual stamina. Each day’s reading is a rich feast. Devotional material of this quality for men is extremely hard to come by!”

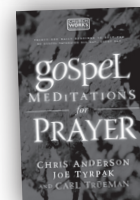
—**Phil Johnson**, executive director of Grace to You, and the founder of *Pyromaniacs* and *www.spurgeon.org*



Gospel Meditations for Missions

“By almost any standard—the intentionality of local churches to train, assess, and prepare prospective missionaries; the length of time it takes a missionary to raise support; the little sense of gospel partnership we have with the missionaries we do support—Western Christians don’t do missions very well. The reason we don’t do missions well is that we’ve not thought about missions well. This book has our poor thinking about missions in its crosshairs.”

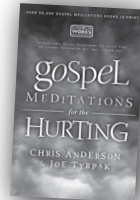
—**Matthew Hoskinson**, pastor of The First Baptist Church in New York City and author of *Assurance of Salvation*



Gospel Meditations for Prayer

“Brief and biblical, these meditations are full of sharp edges. They lead us to pray as cross-bearing disciples of Christ. Yet Anderson, Tyrbak, and Trueman comfort us with Christ’s perfect grace for fallen people. So *Gospel Meditations for Prayer* is an encouraging book, but one designed to stretch you.”

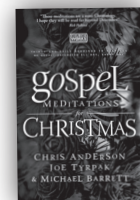
—**Joel Beeke**, president of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, and editor of *Taking Hold of God: Reformed and Puritan Perspectives on Prayer*



Gospel Meditations for the Hurting

“These meditations are Word-centered prescriptions that blow away the meaningless Christian platitudes often used to mask unanswerable pain. Until that day when Christ Himself wipes away all tears from our eyes, the Scriptures provide strength, help, and hope in this broken world. Let this book guide you to Christ, the only sure and lasting Refuge.”

—**Tim Keeisee**, author of the *Dispatches from the Front* DVD series and book and executive director of Frontline Missions International



Gospel Meditations for Christmas

“This work is more than a mere devotional and collection of meditations for Christmas. These meditations are a mini Christology. I hope they will be read far beyond December. There is too much truth here to be relegated to the Christmas season alone. I highly recommend this work for your greater understanding and worship of Jesus Christ.”

—**Rick Holland**, pastor of Mission Road Bible Church, Kansas City, and professor of Homiletics at The Expositor’s Seminary