

Philosophical Club of Cleveland Presentation
By Loris Ohannes Chobanian, Ph.D.
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Originally the subject of my presentation was supposed to be the study of the word *control*, the need for humans to control; control of men of women, control of women of men, control among friends, control and abuse of the clergy in positions of power, control and abuse of political appointees, the need for strong countries to exploit smaller countries, the spirit of imperialism, the individual who will dominate a discussion in a meeting of minds such as in a committee, humans who would like to act as alpha dogs as if they are controlling other dogs.

And then it came to me that I should write a short story. I thought of Stephen Vincent Benet's *The Devil and Daniel Webster*. And here is my story.

Yedvart, Jesus and Talaat

Yedvart could not comprehend what was happening. His older sister was only eight years old. The entire family was forced to go to the Armenian Church in Erzerum. The family often went there on Sundays. There were many soldiers with guns. They were not being very nice; they were pushing people towards the church yard.

Right in the middle of the church yard the soldiers had brought down the church bell. The priest was standing next to the church bell. The soldiers cut the priest's head and placed his head in the church bell. Women and children fell on their knees praying. The soldiers seemed to enjoy themselves; they were in a frisky mood and mockingly shouted, "Where is your Jesus? Why doesn't he come and save you now?" and proceeded to cut the throats of the women and children. "Please help me Jesus!" the women pleaded and others were imploring "Jesus, to you I give my soul!" A few of the women and children were lucky to escape. Yedvart, his sister and mother were somehow out of the church and were running. Other members of the family were not so lucky.

At home they found the walls covered with red blood and many members of their large family slaughtered. Their bodies were scattered all over the floors. Soon the soldiers were back and ordered the survivors to take any belongings they could carry, for they were supposed to leave the city for only a short time, they were told. Yedvart's father, together with many of the surviving adult men, was drafted by the Turkish army to work on building roads. Eventually they were all taken to Kamach and were shot dead.

The large procession of pitiful women and children embarked on a trek that was supposed to take them, seven months walking through the Syrian Desert all the way to Mosul. Some had brought along their family pets and cattle, but these were soon confiscated. Yedvart was now wearing his sister's dress. All boys had been summarily executed. By now they had walked all the way to the Euphrates River. It was at that time when the Turkish soldiers discovered that Yedvart was a boy. One of the Turkish soldiers struck Yedvart's head and his brains scattered in his older sister's lap. Their mother was helpless and with child. As the child was born the Turkish soldiers plucked the baby and threw him in the Euphrates River. The real hard core slaughter however, started when they arrived at Der Zohr in Syria. The soldiers were ordered to save ammunition and the bloodbath continued with knives and smashing baby's heads on rocks.

Yedvart as if in a dream, was in a different state of mind. He could see all that was happening very vividly. As he watched he wondered where Jesus was. With all the pleading that the persecuted women had been screaming Jesus' name how come Jesus never showed up?

That is when Jesus did appear. Yedvart was hesitant at first but eventually mustered the courage to say softly: "Where were you? Didn't you hear all that pleading? Have you seen what has been happening?"

Jesus was quiet for a while and then he said: "Judge not, lest you be judged!" Yedvart sat quietly for a long time and then whispered in a soft voice, "How about all those innocent women and children?" Jesus hesitated for a moment and then he said "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." and then added: "Remember what Benjamin Franklin said: 'God helps them that help themselves!'"

By now Yedvart was feeling more at ease. "How do you feel about the three Young Turk leaders Talaat, Enver and Jemal who organized the Armenian Genocide?"

"I know" Jesus said. "Remember there was also the Jewish Holocaust."

"That is another baffling subject that amazes me." Yedvart continued. "The Jews experienced their own genocide yet the official position of the Israeli Government is to minimize the significance of the Armenian Genocide and instead they cozy with the Turks." Jesus was silent and did not answer.

Yedvart eventually broke the silence. "In his posthumous memoirs Talaat Pasha admits that he was the mastermind of the Armenian Genocide and that he coordinated the various agencies of the Ottoman government required for the deportation, expropriation and extermination of the Armenians."

"Let us call on Talaat, he could speak for himself." Jesus advised and soon Talaat appeared.

Yedvart turned to Talaat and said: "We were discussing your leadership in organizing the Armenian Genocide during the First World War in 1915" Talaat immediately interrupted: "Actually the Armenian Genocide had began much earlier than 1915. Sultan Abdul Hamid II, the Ottoman Sultan and head of the state, massacred thousands of Armenians between 1894 and 1896. He was justified in doing so. Armenians were a threat to the security of the Ottoman Empire. They were siding with the Russians during the Turkish - Russian wars. Turkey was losing her possessions in Europe and lands in the outer edges of the empire. Also remember what Enver said: He said 'I have accomplished more toward solving the Armenian problem in three months than Abdul Hamid accomplished in three years.'"

Yedvart chimed in, "For more than two thousand years Armenians had lived in Armenia at the Mount Ararat plateau before the Turks conquered their land. For hundreds of years Armenians had lived under Ottoman rule as second rate Christian citizens and in the late 1800s they had began to demand to be treated fairly. They did not want to pay extra taxes just because they were Christian. They were asking for their human rights and the right to be considered full citizens."

Talaat laughed mockingly and stated: "Consider the Thrasymachian position in the Republic. 'Justice is the property of the stronger'".

Yedvart: "Are you then trying to justify evil? Are you implying that Might Makes Right?"

Talaat responded "I have the conviction that as long as a nation does the best for its own interests, and succeeds, the world admires it and thinks it moral! Why do you think nowadays the great United States is one of Turkey's closest allies?"

Yedvart: "You must be very indebted to Adolf Hitler. After your assassination in 1921 you were buried in Berlin, but in 1943, Adolf Hitler ordered exhumation of your body to be transferred to a mausoleum in Istanbul."

Talaat: "I will always be indebted to Adolf Hitler. He was a great leader. It was unfortunate that Germany was not able to develop the atomic bomb before the United States. Nowadays you would all be saluting Heil Hitler!"

Yedvart: "No, we would pray to Jesus!"

That is when Jesus said -"But I say to you: Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you!"

Talaat: "Big fish eat little fish. It is the law of creation. That is how God created the world."

Yedvart: "And the strong destroy the weak?"

Talaat: "Absolutely! Traitors should be eliminated. What did you expect the Turkish government to do? Reward those infidels? The Holy Koran says 'O you believers, take neither Jews nor Christians for your friends' (Surah 5:51) Also, 'O

you believers, make war on the infidels who dwell around you. Deal firmly with them.’ (Surah 9:123)”

Yedvart: “But, how about the thousands of unarmed women and children, and the very old helpless men? The Armenian Genocide and the Jewish Holocaust are facts of modern history. Isn’t it absurd to argue the lack of perversity in evil?”

Talaat: “Evil? It all depends on from whose point of view. The Turkish position is that the planned Genocide was a positive solution.”

Yedvart: “There are many Turkish scholars who have conclusively established the diabolic intent of the Genocidal act. Consider Taner Akcam’s *A Shameful Act*.” The European Court of Human Rights has ruled in favor of Professor Taner Akcam. Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code violates European Convention on Human Rights.

Talaat: “Whatever! I still think the Armenian Genocide was a necessary act and good for Turkey and I am proud of my actions. It is true that some of the officials abused their authority, and in many places people took preventive measures into their own hands and innocent people were molested. I confess it. I confess also, that the duty of the Government was to prevent these abuses and atrocities. According to Spinoza – Those who believe in the duality theory of evil believe that evil cannot exist without good, or good without evil, as they are both objective states and opposite ends of the same scale. Spinoza further argues that If God is perfect, then how can God allow the existence of evil or suffering? In fact, many acts now considered evil have been termed as acceptable in some societies at different times. And that is why the great United States of America is Turkey’s closest ally. “

There was silence for a long time. Then Jesus said: “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”