

**A History of the Armenian
Holy Apostolic Orthodox Church
in the United States
(1888–1944)**

Oshagan Minassian

B.D., Armenian Theological Seminary, 1951;

M.R.E., Boston University, 1962

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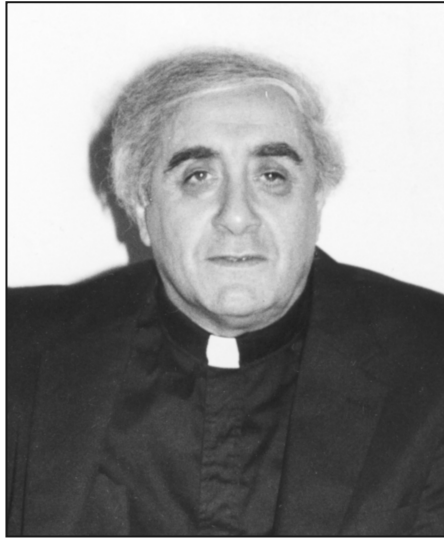
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Preface

A History of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church in the United States (1888–1944) is the doctoral dissertation of Very Reverend Father Oshagan Minassian, who passed away on July 26, 2008, before realizing his dream of seeing this work published. This study is the culmination of extensive research and many years of hard work. Its publication makes a considerable contribution to the field of church history in the United States.



Reverend Father Oshagan Minassian, c. 2000.

The author was born in Aleppo, Syria, on August 22, 1930. Baptized Tsolag, he was given the name Oshagan in 1951 during his ordination as a celibate priest in the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem. Father Oshagan served as a dedicated clergyman until the end of his life. He was known for his deep commitment to the Armenian Apostolic Church and, specifically, for his work in the field of Armenian music.

In 1944, he entered the Armenian Theological Seminary of Antelias, Lebanon. There, his passion for music found fertile ground, as he apprenticed with composer Hampartsoum Berberian. Early in his ministry, Father Oshagan served as an instructor of liturgical music and history at the Armenian Seminary of Jerusalem. Then, in 1953, he was invited by Archbishop Tiran Nersoyan, Primate of the Eastern

Diocese of the Armenian Church in the United States, to tend to the spiritual needs of the parishioners of the Holy Cross Armenian Church of Lawrence, Massachusetts.

However, his career as a pastor was destined to be short-lived. In 1955, the young priest suffered an accident that resulted in a spinal cord injury. Father Oshagan used a wheelchair for the rest of his life, but this did not break his will or stop his quest for knowledge or involvement with his ministry. He earned a master's degree in religious education from Boston University in 1962, a doctorate in theology in 1974, and a master's degree in sacred music in 1982.

For almost four decades, Father Oshagan instilled the love and joy of Armenian music and songs in the hearts of worshippers and music lovers. He founded the Erevan Choral Society and was the conductor of the Erevan Choral Orchestra, under the auspices of the Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Having known Father Oshagan for many years, I'm certain that had he lived to see this work through to publication, he would have dedicated it to his beloved mother, Diramayr Sirvart Minassian.

A History of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church in the United States (1888–1944) is presented here in its entirety and without interference with regard to the opinions and judgments expressed by its author. The only changes introduced into the text pertain to minor factual corrections, revised renditions of the titles of Armenian sources, and modified transliteration of Armenian proper names.

Vatche Ghazarian, Ph.D.

Transliteration of the Armenian Alphabet

The transliteration system applied in this work is a slightly amended version of the system used by the author. It is based primarily on the Romanization convention adopted by the Library of Congress for Western Armenian.

Proper names associated with sources originally produced in English were kept intact. Hence, the occurrence of variations, such as Pōladian vs. Poladian, Karekin vs. Garegin, or Hovsēp'ian vs. Hovsepian.

Ա	A	ա	a	Ն	N	ն	n
Բ	P	բ	p	Շ	Sh	շ	sh
Գ	K	գ	k	Ո	O	ո	o
Դ	T	դ	t	Չ	Ch'	չ	ch'
Ե	E	ե	e	Պ	B	պ	b
Զ	Z	զ	z	Ջ	Ch	ջ	ch
Է	Ē	է	ē	Ռ	R	ր	r
Ը	Ĕ	ը	ĕ	Ս	S	ս	s
Թ	T'	թ	t'	Վ	V	վ	v
Ժ	Zh	ժ	zh	Տ	D	տ	d
Ի	I	ի	i	Ր	R	ր	r
Լ	L	լ	l	Յ	Ts'	ց	ts'
Խ	Kh	խ	kh	Ի	W	ւ	w
Օ	Dz	ծ	dz	Փ	P'	փ	p'
Կ	G	կ	g	Ք	K'	ք	k'
Հ	H	հ	h	Օ	Ō	օ	ō
Ձ	Ts	ձ	ts	Ֆ	F	ֆ	f
Ղ	Gh	ղ	gh				
Ճ	J	ճ	j	Եւ	Ew	եւ	ew
Ս	M	մ	m	Ու	Ou	ու	ou
Յ	Y	յ	y				

Acknowledgments

In 1972, when I began studying the history of the Armenian Church in the United States, I found myself handicapped by the lack of a comprehensive survey of Armenian Church history comparable to the excellent monographs on different denominations in the United States. This gap persuaded me to prepare a study to fill the void, despite the magnitude of the undertaking, which became clearer as research progressed. Many organizations and individuals have facilitated the writing of this book.

A grant from the Armenian General Benevolent Union of New York has helped defray the typing expenses.

I am particularly grateful for the assistance extended to me by the staff of the Boston University School of Theology Library, especially Mr. William Zimpher, whose suggestions on basic bibliographical data and dissertation writing aids have been most helpful.

Without the assistance of Mr. Vahan Topalian of the Armenian Cultural Foundation of Arlington, Massachusetts, who graciously allowed me use of his priceless collection of Armenian-language periodicals and fundamental books published here and abroad, this study would have been virtually impossible or seriously limited.

I owe special thanks to Mr. Dikran Boyajian of Watertown, Massachusetts, who was most gracious in providing material from his personal files. My gratitude is also extended to His Beatitude Archbishop Torkom Manoogian, Patriarch of Jerusalem and, when this study was written, Primate of the Diocese, with whose permission the surviving minutes of the Diocesan Convention were put at my disposal by the Secretary of the Diocese, Mr. Souren Manuelian. Records and documents provided by the Parish Councils and Fathers Arden Ashjian of Fair Lawn, New Jersey; Shnork Kasbarian of Worcester, Massachusetts; and Hayg Donigian of Providence, Rhode Island, have been of great assistance in enabling me to recreate the history of the earliest periods of the Armenian Church in the United States.

I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Father Papken Maksoudian of Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Dr. Krikor Maksoudian of New York, who provided me with books from their personal collections as well as with bibliographical data.

I have contracted a debt of gratitude toward my dear friends who have helped me in one way or another: Deacon Hovhannes Kasbarian of Scarsdale, New York; Dr. Richard H. Dekmejian of Binghamton, New York; and Father Ghevont

Samourian of Lexington, Massachusetts, who shared in my findings and offered their helpful criticisms.

Special thanks and gratitude are due to Renate D’Arcangelo and her assistant typist, Karin Young, who helped me with the tedious tasks of typing the manuscript in a short period of time. I have to mention my secretary, Nancy Moscofian, because without her self-effacing attitude and her patience, this study would not have been completed.

My filial gratitude goes out to my mother, who provided me with moral support and tender care on the home front.

I am especially indebted to Dr. Harrell F. Beck, Professor of Old Testament at Boston University School of Theology, under whom I have had the good fortune and privilege of studying. His critical observations have been indispensable in shaping its style and content.

To Dr. Earl Kent Brown, Professor of Church History, and my teacher and advisor, I am deeply grateful for his invaluable criticisms and insights, and for sharing with me his knowledge of the history of the Armenian Church in the United States. I am particularly grateful for his patience, moral support, and guidance.

In paying all these tributes, it should be mentioned that in no way are these people responsible for the views expressed in this study. Its interpretations and shortcomings are solely the responsibility of the writer.

Introduction

Scope of This Study

This book traces the history of the Armenian Church in the United States from its beginnings in 1888 to 1944.

Armenians arriving in the United States had more obstacles to face than other, more firmly entrenched immigrant groups. The Armenian immigrants passionately clung to their cultural heritage, to their ancient church, and to a language that was hardly known or heard in their adopted country. However, little by little, the Armenians became part of America, and their church, hitherto intensely nationalistic, slowly took on a different aspect. Still maintaining its identity, at the same time it contributed to become an integral part of the social, cultural, and religious life of America.

Until this time, there has been no substantial work, in either Armenian or English, providing a thorough account of the history of the Armenian Church in the United States. The present study fills this gap. It is intended to give Armenian-Americans a better sense of their identity, and also to contribute to the understanding of the Armenian Church among non-Armenians.

Much of what has hitherto been published about Armenians has been of a fragmentary or extremist nature, penned by pioneer sociologists, misguided journalists, and representatives of majority groups, at a time when the antiforeign and racist mentality was at its peak in the United States. At the opposite pole stand the accounts of Armenian writers, often tinted with ultranationalistic, panegyric, and emotional emphases. A balanced treatment is clearly needed. With few exceptions, the Armenian Church has not, until very recently, received more than a token recognition by scholars, probably because it is considered a “young church” in the United States, and more than this, an immigrant church, whose language, up till now, has made it virtually unknown or unknowable to most Americans.

Members of the Armenian Church living in the United States constitute the most important segment of the Church outside Armenia, Europe, and the Middle East. They have great potential for growth and are becoming a significant factor in the religious history of the American people. For a true picture of the history of the larger Armenian Church in modern times, and of the direction in which it is going, its American segment deserves close study.

The present study, although primarily concerned with an account of the church, will also shed light on the history of Armenian immigration and ethnic life in the United States. Such a history will thus provide data for some future sociological study of the Armenian community.

Sources and Documents

The research for this study was based on diocesan and government documents, Armenian-language newspapers, letters, diaries, books, and pamphlets. Other sources of information include lengthy interviews with clergymen, organization leaders, journalists, business and professional men active in Armenian-American church and community affairs. I also interviewed many of the immigrants who came to this country and their offspring.

Valuable sources on Armenian immigration to the United States are various congressional documents concerning the Armenian immigration and the annual reports of the Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization.¹ Statistics on parishes, priests, and church membership have been extracted from parish history questionnaires of the diocese,² the Bureau of the Census publication Religious Bodies,³ and the National Council of Churches' Yearbook of American Churches.⁴

Primary sources for the history of the Armenian Church in the United States include the records of the annual Diocesan Conventions, the annual reports of each Primate, the yearly reports of the Diocesan Council, and minutes of the meetings of the Church Trustees of the Armenian Church of Our Saviour (Worcester, Massachusetts) and the Holy Translators Church (Providence, Rhode Island). The annual reports are housed at the Diocesan Center, 630 Second Avenue, New York, New York. The minutes of the Church Trustees meetings are housed at the Armenian Church of Our Saviour, 87 Salisbury Street, Worcester, Massachusetts, and Saints Sahag and Mesrob Church, 70 Jefferson Street, Providence, Rhode Island.

The back files of the Armenian-language press (especially Tsayn Hayreneats', Hairenik, Gotchnag, Azk, Baikar, and Hayasdaneayts' Yegeghets'i) cover approximately seventy-five years and contain both articles and editorials pertinent to our topic. These publications are often highly flavored to satisfy the editorial preferences of the papers, but I have found them useful if employed judiciously.

Finally, much valuable local information is derived from pamphlets, leaflets, and church directories.

The lack of systematized records and data concerning the beginnings and development of the Church and the diocese is a major hindrance to the historian's task. Many experiences and reflections of Armenian clergymen and church officials that would have revealed the temper of the times have remained unrecorded.

Previous Research in the Field

No comprehensive scholarly study, in either Armenian or English, on the Armenian Church in the United States has ever been written. Some partial efforts in this direction have been undertaken in Armenian. An article titled “Amerigahay Kaghout’ë ew ir Dzakoumnerë” (“The Armenian-American Community and Its Origins”) by Archbishop Moushegh Seropian, the editor of *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ë* (“The Armenian-American Yearbook”),⁵ traces the history of the Armenian Church up to 1898. His proposed continuation, presenting the histories of individual Armenian churches and colonies in the United States, was left unfinished. A second study, by Reverend Ardēn Ashjian, is titled *Vijagats’oyts’ ew Badmout’iwn Arachnortagan T’emin Hayots’ Amerigayi* (“Statistics and History of the Armenian Diocese of America”).⁶ This book presents the history of the Armenian diocese and various churches from their beginnings through the year 1948. Both studies provide necessary data concerning Armenians and the Armenian Church but tend to be narrative rather than critical.

Notes

- ¹ U.S. Department of Justice, *Annual Report of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*, 1864–1944.
- ² Mimeographed copies of parish history questionnaires sent out by the Diocese of the Armenian Church, New York, 1972.
- ³ U.S. Department of Justice, *Annual Report of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*, 1864–1944.
- ⁴ Benson Y. Landis (ed.), *Yearbook of American Churches* (New York: National Council of the Churches of Christ, 1916–1971).
- ⁵ Moushegh Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout’ë ew ir Dzakoumnerë*” (“The Armenian-American Community and Its Origins”), *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ë* (“The Armenian-American Yearbook”) (Boston: Cilicia Press, 1912), pp. 12–82; 1913, pp. 36–125.
- ⁶ Ardēn Ashjian, *Vijagats’oyts’ ew Badmout’iwn Arachnortagan T’emin Hayots’ Amerigayi* (“Statistics and History of the Armenian Diocese of America”) (New York: Lēylēgian Press, 1949).

From Noah's Ark to America

The Armenians: History at a Glance

Historical Armenia, homeland of the Armenian immigrants, centered around biblical Mount Ararat and occupied a territory between 37° and 41°15' north latitude and 37° and 47° east longitude—an area of approximately 100,000 square miles. Mount Ararat, highest point 17,000 feet, is the legendary resting place of Noah's Ark.⁷ The Armenian uplands were situated between the Caucasus and the Black Sea in the north, Mesopotamia in the south, Cappadocia to the west, and the Caspian Sea to the east. The western portion of this territory was known as Armenia Minor, whereas Armenia proper was often referred to as Armenia Major. Cilicia in Asia Minor, on the northern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, became the home of the Armenians during the Middle Ages and was known as Lesser Armenia. Armenia reached the height of its territorial expansion during the reign of the Armenian king Tigranes the Great (94–56 BC). During that period, in addition to the two Armenias (Major and Minor), it embraced Cappadocia, Syria, Mesopotamia, and parts of Parthia and Palestine.

Today, only 11,175 square miles of this territory constitute the Armenian Republic. It borders in the north and east on the republics of Georgia and Azerbaijan, and in the west and southeast on Turkey and Iran.

Historically, Armenians are one of the oldest races—contemporaries of the ancient Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Hittites, the Assyrians, and a host of others who have become extinct. Historians offer various hypotheses concerning the origins and development of the Armenian people. Some maintain that Armenians today are the descendants of the aborigines of Urartu, who developed a civilization of their own as early as 3000 BC. Others consider them descendants of the ancient Hittites, who thrived about the same time. Still others maintain that Armenians originally came from Thrace in Eastern Europe between the seventh and eighth centuries BC.⁸ The most commonly accepted view is that Armenians are the result of a merger between the natives of the Ararat region and newcomers from Europe. These newcomers called themselves Armen, whereas the natives referred to themselves as Hay and their country as Hayasdan.⁹

Situated on the crossroads of the East and West, from the time it emerged as a well-defined state, for twenty-six centuries Armenia was plagued by successive hordes of predatory empires such as the Medo-Persians, Seleucids, Sassanians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Byzantines, Seljuks, Mongols, and Ottoman Turks. To survive the political, economic, and social upheavals of centuries and to continue to exist as a people has been the saga of the Armenians. This amazing power of

survival can be ascribed to the people's grit, toughness, and endurance, as noted by H. F. B. Lynch, an English explorer who traveled through Armenia in 1893 and 1898.¹⁰

With each invasion Armenia was repeatedly devastated. Its cultural monuments were destroyed, its trade broken, its agriculture ruined, its economy paralyzed. In spite of these calamities and thanks to their creative energy and resilience, the Armenians were able to heal their wounds and to start the work of reconstruction all over again.¹¹ According to David Marshall Lang, the preservation of a national spirit and the resurrection of Armenians were made possible because

The Armenian is one of nature's individualists, a leaven for the conformist mass of the human race. Logically he should have given up the struggle and lain down to die long ago. But he refused and still refuses to surrender, and here lies the key to understanding the nature of this dogged, invincible, little people, whose contribution to human civilization is out of all proportion to its numerical strength.¹²

The "Armenian Question" rose in 1877–1878 during the Russian-Turkish War.¹³ The reforms promised to Armenia by the San Stefano Treaty (Article 16) never materialized. The Ottoman Empire instead carried through its massacres of 1894–1896 in the Armenian provinces, where some 300,000 Armenians fell victim to Ottoman atrocities. In 1908 Sultan Abdul Hamid II was overthrown by revolutionaries known as the Young Turks. One year later a massacre in Cilicia claimed the lives of more than 30,000 Armenians. At the outbreak of World War I, the Young Turks ordered the massacre of more than a million and a half Armenians, to end the so-called Armenian Question once and for all. But on May 28, 1918, Armenians won their freedom, defeating the Turkish army at Sardarabad and declaring Armenia an independent republic. In 1920 Armenia became Sovietized. After that, substantial progress was achieved in the arts, sciences, and industry, despite the restraints of Soviet rule.

The Armenian Church: A Short Survey

The importance of the Armenian Church in Armenian history cannot be overstated. There can be no complete understanding of Armenian history without an appreciation of the history of the Armenian Church, because the two histories are so intimately intertwined. Indeed, especially after the loss of Armenian independence, the history of the Church and people became one, as they have remained to this day.¹⁴

The Armenian Church considers itself to be of apostolic origin, because Christianity was first introduced into Armenia by the apostles Saint Thaddeus (AD 35–43) and Saint Bartholomew (AD 44–60), both of whom preached in Armenia and suffered martyrdom there.

These two apostles are referred to as the “First Illuminators of Armenia” because they were responsible for the establishment of the first Christian church. After the martyrdom of these two apostles, their evangelical labors in Armenia were continued by the bishops they had consecrated. The progress of Christianity in Armenia before the country’s official conversion in 301 was carried on by these bishops and their subordinates despite religious persecutions imposed by the kings of Armenia during the years 110, 230, and 280.¹⁵

Armenia adopted Christianity as its state religion in AD 301, during the reign of King Tiridates III.¹⁶ The proclamation of Christianity in Armenia marked an important event in the annals of the Christian Church, because it preceded by twelve years the Edict of Milan (AD 313), by which the Roman emperor Constantine the Great accorded Christianity equal status with paganism in the Roman Empire.

The conversion of Armenians to the new faith at the dawn of the fourth century was the handiwork mainly of Saint Gregory the Parthian, called the “Enlightener” or “Illuminator” of Armenia. Saint Gregory was a descendant of a noble Parthian family and was brought up in a Hellenic cultural environment. He received his ecclesiastical training at Caesarea, an early center of Christianity. After many years of persecution and suffering, Saint Gregory succeeded in converting King Tiridates, who assisted the saint in converting all of Armenia to Christianity in 301. Saint Gregory became the first Catholicos (all-embracing, supreme head) of the Armenian Church. His Catholicosal consecration was received at the hands of Leonitus, bishop of Caesarea.

In 303, Saint Gregory built the first Christian cathedral and the monastery of Ēchmiadzin (“place where the only Begotten Son descended”) in the capital city of Vagharshabad, as directed by Our Lord in a vision. This cathedral, now located

in the Republic of Armenia, is one of the world's oldest church buildings in continuous use.

Saint Gregory immediately began the work of ecclesiastical organization. New bishoprics, monasteries, and schools were established. Church rites and discipline were promulgated. The ministry and educational function of the Church, however, were not without their difficulties. Because there existed no Armenian alphabet, the Scriptures were read in Greek or Syriac, which were not readily understood by the people.¹⁷ The task of endowing the Armenian language with an alphabet fell to Saint Mesrob Masht'ots' (355–438), a learned *Vartabed* (archimandrite, or celibate priest) with the support of Catholicos Sahag and King Vramshabouh of Armenia. His exhaustive research, involving considerable travel and interviews with leading scholars of the time, resulted in the development of the thirty-six-character Armenian alphabet in 406.

After the completion of the alphabet, the translation of the Bible became imperative. Saint Mesrob and a host of Church divines called *T'arkmanich'ner* labored under the wise guidance of Catholicos Sahag (348–435) to translate the Bible—a task that took some thirty years to complete (406–436).¹⁸ This was followed by the translation of the Liturgies of the Church Fathers, the patristic literature, and the works of ancient philosophers, grammarians, and scientists.¹⁹ This intensive literary activity in the field of translation was soon enriched by the original writings of the Armenian Church divines and scholars in the fields of sacred poetry, liturgy, hagiography, exegesis, history, and theology. Writers such as Ezniq Goghpat's'i, Hovhan Mantagouni, Goriwn Vartabed, and Ghazar P'arbets'i, as well as Saints Sahag and Mesrob, ushered in the fifth-century "Golden Age" of Armenian literature.²⁰

The impact of Christian literature was soon put to a test when the Armenians resolved to bear arms against the Persians in defense of Christianity in 451. The Armenians, refusing to embrace Zoroastrianism, rose in open revolt against the Persians under the leadership of General Vartan Mamigonian. Vartan and his small army fought the vastly superior Persian army at Avarayr, where Vartan and 1,036 of his men were killed. An Armenian clergyman, Ghewont Erêts', was distinguished for his zeal and courage on the battlefield.

Concurrent with the Battle of Avarayr was the Fourth Ecumenical Council at Chalcedon (451). No delegates from the Armenian Church were sent to attend the council, partly because of the war, and partly because the Armenians considered the aims of the council to be more political and temporal than theological.

Not until some forty years after the Council of Chalcedon were the Armenians drawn into the controversy surrounding it, through a dispute between the Syrian Church and the Nestorians.²¹ The Armenian Church was strictly anti-Nestorian and pro-Syrian; indeed, the Syrian Jacobite Church of the Antiochian Rite had asked

the Armenian Church to support its position in the interchurch conflict. To settle the issue, the Armenian Catholicos Papkēn called a Council of the Armenian Church in 506 at Touin. This council rejected the acts of the Council of Chalcedon and officially proclaimed the adherence of the Armenian Church to the profession of faith that had been accepted by the first three ecumenical councils. The decision of the Armenian Church was followed by interminable controversies among the Armenian Church and other churches. The Armenian Church was branded as a “monophysite,” “schismatic,” or “separated” church. The charge of monophysitism was baseless, because the Armenian Church repudiated monophysitism as a heresy. In the Christological controversies, the Armenian Church reiterated its belief in the unconfused unity of the divine with the human in Christ, based on the confession of Cyril of Alexandria at the Council of Ephesus in 431. The position of the Armenian Church is shared by the Oriental Orthodox family of churches—the Syrian Orthodox Church (Syrian Jacobite Church), the Syrian Orthodox Church in India (Malabar Jacobite Church), the Coptic Orthodox Church, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Although ethnically, culturally, and historically quite different, these have always maintained the unity of faith.²²

Between 640 and 650, Armenia was overrun by Arab invaders. As a result of the Arab domination, the Greek-Armenian dispute diminished in intensity. In the political and religious spheres, Armenians held divided sympathies toward the Byzantine and Arab rulers. From the ninth to the eleventh centuries, the Armenian Bagratid Dynasty held power in Armenia, while the Catholicosate was removed from Ēchmiadzin to the Bagratid capital city of Ani in 992. After the fall of the Bagratids in 1042–1045, a large part of Armenia was occupied by the Byzantine Empire, which pursued its policy of proselytism there, though with little success. In 1048, Seljuk Turks invaded Armenia, which prompted the Armenians to seek refuge in Byzantine Cilicia. An Armenian nobleman, Rūpēn (also known as Ruben), established himself in Cilicia and became the founder of the Rubenid Dynasty in 1080. With this political change the Catholicosate of Ēchmiadzin, after various wanderings, was moved from Romkla (a castle on the river Euphrates) to Sis, the new capital of Cilician Armenia, in 1293. That city remained the headquarters of the Armenian Church until 1441, when the Catholicosate permanently returned to its original site in Ēchmiadzin. During this period the Armenian Church was engaged in an ecumenical dialogue with the Greek and Latin churches. Saint Nersēs the Graceful (1102–1173) had distinguished himself as the initiator of attempts at union on the part of the Armenian Church.

The return of the Catholicosate to Ēchmiadzin was vigorously advocated by the Armenian clergy, properly known as the “Band of Eastern Divines,” who opposed their Armenian Latinophile brethren in Cilicia. As a result of the Crusaders’ arrival in Cilician Armenia in 1097, the propaganda of the Latin Church, and the

pro-Latin policy of the Cilician kings of Armenia, in 1333 there appeared a Latino-Armenian brotherhood—*Fratres Unitores*—aiming to make the Church of Armenia a satellite to the See of Rome. The Band of Eastern Divines invited the reigning Catholicos, Krikor Mousapēgian, to move to Ēchmiadzin, and when he refused, the Ecclesiastical Assembly that met at Ēchmiadzin in 1441 elected Giragos of Virab the new Catholicos. Thus reestablished, the See of Ēchmiadzin became the Catholicosate of All Armenians, with the Catholicosate at Cilicia as a special subordinate see. In addition to these two Catholicosates, the Armenian Church has traditionally maintained two patriarchates—in Jerusalem (since the seventh century) and Constantinople (since 1461).

When Sultan Mehmet II the Conqueror (1451–1481) took Constantinople in May 1453, he determined to make it the seat of the Ottoman Empire. Immediately the sultan issued an edict by which he granted to all Cilician subjects of the empire the right to organize their communities under their own ecclesiastical leaders, who were given absolute authority in civil and religious matters as well as in criminal offenses that did not come under the Muslim religion or code of law. Thus, in the Ottoman Empire, the term *millet* (nation, religious community) came to be applied to lawfully organized and legally recognized religious communities—those of the Greek Christians, the Armenian Christians, the Jews, and others. As such, the Christian Church, whether Greek or Armenian, became at once a civil and a religious institution. The sultan invested Bishop Hovagim of the Armenian Church of Bursa with the honor and authority accorded to a patriarch and raised his Diocese of Bursa to encompass a jurisdiction beyond the city of Constantinople into the farthest regions within the borders of the Ottoman Empire. The patriarch was thus made not only the ecclesiastical leader of a given community, but also its political head or *millet bashi*.

In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the Armenian community in Turkey, especially in Constantinople, became the scene of bitter controversies between Armenian Church communicants and their Catholic and Protestant compatriots. Separatism was encouraged and supported by missionaries and European governments of Catholic and Protestant persuasion. On January 5, 1831, the Sublime Porte issued a *berat* (edict) granting Armenian Catholics the right to form their own separate Catholic *millet*. In 1850 a similar edict called for the establishment of the Protestant *millet*.

One significant event in the history of the Armenian Church in Turkey was the adoption of the National Constitution for the Administration of the Church and the Nation in 1863. This gave more power to the representatives of laypeople and had a more communal and national character than its counterpart in Eastern Armenia, the *Polojenye* (supreme regulation for governing the Armenian Church in Russia). Supreme authority was placed in the national General Assembly, in which lay

delegates outnumbered the clergy. The General Assembly elected the patriarch as well as the religious and civil councils making up the executive branch of the government. Although the national constitution brought about improvements in education by increasing the number of schools and strengthened the Church through the adoption of a more systematic administration, it encouraged secularism to such an extent that the spiritual mission of the Church was overlooked, as Armenian political factions fought to usurp its place.

With the approach of the nineteenth century, the Armenian Church in Eastern Armenia came under the close supervision of the tsarist Russian authorities. A constitution for the Armenian Church, called *Polojenye*, was enacted by Emperor Nicholas in 1836. This edict increased the clergy's power in the governing of the Church while reducing the participation of the laity. The Russification of the Armenian people and the absorption of the Armenian Church into Russian Orthodoxy was vehemently resisted by the Armenians. The nineteenth century in Eastern Armenia was a period of religious and cultural reawakening. Many new parish schools were opened throughout the county. A new seminary, the Kēorkian Jemaran, was founded in Ēchmiadzin, and the important theological and Armenological review, *Ararat*, began publication in 1868. In the last decade of the nineteenth century and the opening years of the twentieth, the assimilation policy of the Russian government intensified, culminating in the confiscation of Armenian Church properties in 1903. Catholicos Mgrdich' I Khrimian (1892–1907), with the support of the clergy and the people, defied the Russification policy and eventually brought its worst abuses to an end.

In response to the request of the Armenian community in the United States, Catholicos Khrimian dispatched Archbishop Hovsēp' Sarajian as Primate of the Armenian Church in America in 1898. A decade earlier, Sarajian had become the first Armenian priest to set foot in the United States, in response to a petition from the three hundred Armenian immigrants in Worcester, Massachusetts.

The Pioneers (1618–1882)

Armenian settlers came to America as early as the seventeenth century. First among these courageous Armenians who crossed the uncharted ocean in 1618 to Jamestown Colony in Virginia was one known as “Martin the Armenian.”²³ He was followed in 1653 by two Armenian silk workers, who distinguished themselves as experienced and highly reputable masters of their craft and as promoters of the silk industry. With the scanty records of these early Armenian settlers, the curtain falls on Armenian immigration to America until 1834, when an Armenian student, Khach’adour Osganian, made his way from Constantinople to New York. Osganian journeyed under the sponsorship of the Armenian Protestant missionaries.²⁴

The immigrants who followed in the footsteps of Osganian up to 1882 came to America as either students, merchants, workers, or adventurers. These newcomers were all unmarried men, ranging in age from sixteen to thirty. Only a few—chiefly the students—intended to make America their permanent home. The merchants were primarily concerned with seeking new trade in the New World for their firms back home. The workers, on the other hand, hoped to find their fair share of benefits and opportunities, which had been denied them in the Old World. To this group, the prospect of returning home one day a wealthy man was the primary motive for the journey across the sea.

In contrast to these were the adventurers whose concepts and motives for migrating to America were of an entirely different sort. These “soldiers of fortune” were led on by tales of the riches awaiting them in the New World. America was the “land of the goose that laid the golden egg,” whose gorges and mountains concealed treasures of unimaginable magnitude.

Despite the lack of concrete evidence, it appears that the Armenians made their way to the New World, individually or in small groups, in company with the native populations of countries such as Poland, Hungary, France, Holland, and England, where Armenian colonies were in existence. The Armenians from these countries were engaged in trade and commerce, an area in which they proved most adept. Franz Leoherri suggests that the pace of American business would not have appealed to these Armenian merchants, who would thus have no inclinations to remain in America.²⁵

The Armenian immigration movement to the United States has been characterized in different ways by historians. In an unsigned article appearing in the Armenian newspaper *Gotchnag*, the writer divides Armenian immigration into three phases: the period of students, 1848–1875; the period of commerce, 1875–

1896; and the period of workers, 1896–1904.²⁶ Archbishop Moushegh Seropian challenges this classification, writing that “these three periods equally have had within them the classes of students, merchants and workers.”²⁷ Still another source states that the phases of immigration “may be distinctly divided into two periods: the period of commerce and education, and the period of immigration.”²⁸

Two major factors gave impetus to the Armenian immigration movement: the coming of the Protestant missionaries and the improvement of Ottoman-American relations.

With the coming of the Protestant missionaries, more Armenians were exposed to American influence and thus motivated to emigrate. Many of the first immigrants were students and merchants; the great influx of workers followed.

The signing of the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between the United States and the Sublime Porte on May 7, 1830, gave a new turn to Ottoman-American relations. The treaty granted American merchants and vessels favored treatment and granted American citizens immunity from arrest and imprisonment in the Ottoman Empire.²⁹ American vessels called at the major Ottoman ports, such as Smyrna and Constantinople, bringing Armenian merchants into contact with those of the Ottoman Empire. One Philadelphia merchant, David Offley, who had been training at Smyrna, married an Armenian woman.

Protestant Missionary Influence

Another force that influenced Armenian youths in the Ottoman Empire to emigrate to America was the efforts of Protestant missionaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. The first missionary contact with the Armenian community was made by Levi Parsons and Pliny Fisk in 1821 in Jerusalem; it continued, during the next decade, in Constantinople through the efforts of William Goodell, Eli Smith, and Henry Dwight, graduates of Andover Theological Seminary. These relationships ushered in a new experience for the Armenians, enabling them to learn more about the land called America. Although the Armenians viewed the American missionaries with wonder, the Turkish attitude was one of apprehension. They regarded the missionaries, like all foreigners, with suspicion and misgiving. But they had special cause to suspect the missionaries, whose program was heavily focused on the Muslim population. The laws of the empire expressly forbade any conversion from Islam to Christianity.³⁰

A wide variety of opinion exists among both Armenian and American writers concerning the role of the missionaries as catalysts in motivating the Armenians to emigrate to the United States. Those who belong to the Armenian Orthodox Church criticize the missionaries for promoting emigration. Aris Israēlian writes:

And thus the missionaries began to educate in their schools a generation, according to their own plans. The focal point of the educational process thereafter was America. Around this nucleus revolved the entire body of “scientific” knowledge that the student received. The subject matter of history and geography courses centered on America. Science was already of American origin . . .³¹

A period of increased missionary activity opened when the American Board’s Bebek Seminary was founded in Bebek on the Bosphorus in 1840. Cyrus Hamlin, a charismatic and energetic leader, was in charge of the school. It, and similar missionary institutions, both in Turkey and later in America, afforded the Armenians the opportunity to pursue higher education of both a religious and secular nature.

The American missionary enterprise in Turkey sponsored theological schools and colleges in Constantinople, Babek, Bursa, Smyrna, Trebizond (Trabzon), Erzerum, Aintab, and Harput. A handful of missionaries favored the idea of educating the youth in their native land. But most American missionaries, either directly or indirectly, encouraged the young people to go to America in order to pursue their higher education and to remain there if possible. Carl Wittke writes that “by 1894, there were perhaps three thousand Armenians in the United States, largely as a result of the efforts of American missionaries.”³²

The effect of American missionary work in Turkey was not confined to religious life and activities. The missionaries, either consciously or unconsciously, stimulated a desire among the Armenians for the American way of life and American customs. They instilled a feeling of respect and admiration for American ideals, the American pursuit of free enterprise, and American practicality. Even more important, they inculcated a deep-seated confidence in America’s integrity.

The prestige enjoyed by the United States among the Armenians in Turkey was mainly the by-product of the peaceful influence of American educational institutions and the missionaries themselves. Spiritually, every mission was an open window through which the natives could view with wonder the New World of America. The Armenians are said to be the first among the ethnic minorities in Turkey to experience the “American Dream.”

The Students

Missionary activities influenced many Armenian young people to flock to the educational centers of the United States in order to pursue studies in theology, medicine, engineering, and science. These students in America won the admiration and respect of many educators because of their high aptitude and the excellence of their scholarship.

The student movement to the United States can be divided into three distinct groups.

The first group consists of students sent to America under the auspices of Protestant missionaries in order to further their clerical education. Upon completing their religious training, they were expected to return to the homeland as preachers to minister to the needs of the Armenian Protestant communities.

The second group included students who emigrated to the United States to train in theological studies. Although some of these also returned to their homeland to labor for a few years, their intention was to bring their families to America and to make it their permanent home.

The third group of students shifted the focus of their studies from theology to other professions. Many began in theology but soon transferred into medicine. For this last group, America was of necessity their permanent home.

The first student to come to the United States under missionary sponsorship, as mentioned earlier, was Khach'adour Osganian in 1834. He remained in America for six years, then returned to Constantinople. In 1854 he came again to the United States, establishing residence in Newark, New Jersey. He wrote articles for the *New York Herald*, often attacking his own missionary sponsors for their proselytizing activities.³³

Armenian students were enrolled in colleges and universities throughout America, majoring in philosophy, theology, pedagogy, economics, medicine, and commerce. During the course of their studies, many were involved not only in Armenian affairs, but also in the sociopolitical life of America. Among the names recorded during the Civil War, one finds numerous Armenians who fought in the army.

There were numerous physicians also, among them Garabed Kalousdian, Baronig Madt'ēosian, and the chief surgeon of the Philadelphia hospital, Simon Minasian. Armenian officers included Armenag of Khas, Narinian of Smyrna, and Zora T'atēosian.³⁴

Upon completion of their studies, a few of the students returned to their homeland. Of those who remained in America, some held themselves aloof from all things Armenian, whereas others participated actively in Armenian life, especially after the massacres of 1894–1896. Many of these former students were now self-supporting businesspeople or professionals and thus were in a position to help other needy Armenian students and to support Armenian charitable organizations. They were instrumental in laying the foundation for the organization of Armenian communities in the United States.

The Merchants

Armenians have always been distinguished in commerce, much as the Phoenicians and Greeks were in ancient times. The goddess Anahid of the pre-Christian religion, patroness of Armenia, was called the Golden Mother, the Dispenser of Wealth, and above all, the Protector of Commerce, Agriculture, and Labor. Armenia was geographically situated on the great trade route from Judea to Europe and had access by the four rivers Euphrates, Tigris, Araxes, and Chorokh to Chaldea, Syria, Persia, and Constantinople. From the very beginning the Armenians transported the products of their country and the Orient to distant foreign lands.

When the gates of Turkey were opened to American merchants in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the Armenian merchants of Smyrna and Constantinople also opened their branch offices in New York, Boston, Chicago, and other American cities. The opening of the East to the West meant that Oriental commerce also found a healthy market throughout the United States.³⁵ The Oriental rug business was introduced into America by the Armenians, and even to this day they are regarded as authorities and experts in this trade. American fruit growers, especially the grape growers of California, owe much to the Armenians who settled there.

An important segment of Turkish-American trade, especially in such Turkish products as fruits, nuts, silver, manufactured wool, hides and skins, and licorice root, was handled by Armenian merchants with commercial offices both in Turkey and in the major cities of America.

The Workers

Until 1880, Armenian workers in the United States were few. They were to be found mainly in the factories of New York, Boston, and Worcester. Their economic and social conditions were very poor. They had been encouraged to emigrate by the missionaries, who helped them with funds for passage and helped them find jobs in manufacturing firms.

In the 1870s a growing number of workers had contemplated establishing Armenian colonies in America. The more business-minded among them provided firsthand information concerning the prospects of America for the public at home. Armenian papers printed articles inviting Armenians to depart for the United States. James Gordon Bennett, with whom Osganian journeyed to America in 1854, proposed that the latter establish an Armenian colony in Ohio, where Bennett owned a great deal of land.³⁶ Another individual, Mik'ayēl T'op'hanēlian, emigrated to America in 1864 prompted by a similar hope. His dreams did not find realization. Several others with similar ideas saw their efforts end in failure.

These first workers underwent the same hardships as other immigrant workers in America. Rising prices, ruthless factory exploitation, ethnic prejudice, lack of skills, unfamiliarity with the English language, and the strange norms of American society contributed to the plight of the great mass of workers.

Most immigrant workers were young males who had ventured to America in hopes of providing monetary assistance to relatives left behind. Some expected to return home as soon as they had saved enough money to realize their goals. These immigrants were called *bantoukhedner* in Armenian and were the pioneers of Armenian immigration. Others were undecided as to whether they should remain in the United States. Many elements of immigrant life reflect this temporary or tentative state of affairs. However, the tragic massacre of 1894–1896 persuaded many Armenian immigrants to remain in the safety of the United States. What had been only a temporary port now became a permanent home.

Extent of Armenian Immigration before 1882

The early records of the Commissioner General of Immigration, beginning with the year 1820, make no reference to the Armenians. In immigration statistics the Armenians were counted as nations of the various countries from which they had emigrated—chiefly Turkey and Russia. The Turkish and Russian governments failed to keep accurate records of the departures, so precise figures on the flow of Armenian immigrants are lacking.

Although estimates differ, it is generally agreed that most immigrants from Turkey were Armenians rather than Turks.³⁷ This inference is based on the fact that the Armenians had good reason to leave Turkey because of widespread persecutions. The records of the U.S. Commissioner General of Immigration provide the following statistics:³⁸

Year	Immigrants from Turkey
1820–1830	21
1831–1840	7
1841–1850	44
1851–1860	83
1861–1870	129
1871–1882	<u>478</u>
	762

These figures suggest that the Turkish government did not encourage Armenians to emigrate to other lands, probably because their skills were vital to

the country. After 1869 the Ottoman government pursued a policy that forbade expatriation of Ottoman subjects without imperial consent. This policy was firmly enforced, especially during the outflow of subjects in 1907. An imperial decree reiterated the government's position, prohibiting the departure of Ottoman subjects except on the deposit of a satisfactory guarantee to return.³⁹ The figures cited earlier also indicate gradual growth of immigration, partly due to the factors discussed previously, namely Protestant missionary influence and the improvement of Ottoman-American relations.

The records of the U.S. Commissioner General of Immigration reveal that the first immigrants came from the European part of the Ottoman Empire. This was undoubtedly because residents of European Turkey had more contact with missionaries and European merchants and therefore displayed a desire to emigrate earlier.

Armenian Immigration to the United States: Causes and Effects (1882–1944)

There were three major causes for the movement of Armenian immigration from Turkey to the United States. First was the wish to escape from political oppression by the Ottoman government; second was the desire to escape religious persecution; third was the need for improved economic conditions.⁴⁰

Political Oppression

In 1878, Turkey, as one of the signatory nations of the Treaty of Berlin, solemnly promised to undertake political reforms in six Armenian-populated *vilayets* or provinces of the empire. Instead, however, the sultan armed and licensed the belligerent elements of the Muslim population to wage war against the Christians—resulting in the Armenian massacres of 1894–1896.

The figures of the Commissioner General of Immigration indicate that in the years preceding the great massacres, the number of Armenian emigrants from Turkey to America did not exceed three thousand. A sudden upward surge occurred in the years following the massacres. In 1894, only 298 people had come to America from the Ottoman Empire; in 1895, this number swelled to 2,767; in 1896 to 4,139; in 1897 to 4,732; and in 1898 to 4,275—totaling 16,211 immigrants in a five-year period.⁴¹ Although these figures do not indicate the nationalities of these Ottoman subjects, there can be no doubt that they were mostly Armenians, forced to leave their homes because of the massacres. The massacre of 1894–1896 claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Armenians.⁴² International outrage, strong at first, subsided in time, leaving a martyred nation alone to mourn her dead and to lament for her youth who were leaving home to come to America, where only the unknown awaited them. “The word ‘Armenian’ has a connotation of horror; we are accustomed to see it followed by ‘atrocities’, ‘Massacre’, ‘outrage’; it has become an adjective of incredible suffering,” observed Charlotte Perkins Gilman in the periodical *Armenia*, expressing her indignation at these national crimes.⁴³

The 1908 Young Turk Revolution (Committee of Union and Progress) brought about new hopes of reform and was hailed throughout the world as the dawn of a new era for Turkey. Armenians took part in the universal rejoicing. However, the Young Turks soon dispelled all illusions by staging the massacres of Adana in 1909. “Turkification” was the core of their platform. The English historian Arnold J.

Toynbee noted that “from the beginning of their regime the Young Turks . . . pursued their nationalistic programme of butchery.”⁴⁴

Six years later—in the spring of 1915—the Turks unveiled their plan to destroy the Armenian people. They began the wholesale deportation of the Armenian population, young and old alike, into the wilderness of the Arabian desert. The Honorable Henry Morgenthau, former U.S. Ambassador to Turkey, thus characterized the criminal activities of the Young Turks government: “The facts contained in the reports received at the Embassy from absolutely trustworthy eyewitnesses surpass the most beastly and diabolical cruelties ever before perpetrated or imagined in the history of the world.”⁴⁵

From 1907 through 1914 the exodus of immigrants from Turkey reached its height. The figures recorded in the annual reports of the Commissioner of Immigration for this period list 219,885 immigrants entering the United States.⁴⁶ This comparatively large growth can be attributed to the deteriorating political, religious, and economic conditions of the Armenian minority in the Ottoman Empire.

Religious Persecution

The *millet* system that the Ottomans created, by which Christian and Jewish minorities became autonomous groups, helped guarantee the survival of the Armenian Church and nation. On the other hand, it caused the Church to suffer a setback by becoming involved in matters other than those of an ecclesiastical nature.⁴⁷ The patriarchal elections were manipulated to satisfy the whims of the palace. Meanwhile, being a *millet* member meant second-class citizenship, higher taxes, and unchecked persecution by Muslim government officials. Implicit in Sultan Abdul Hamid’s anti-Armenian policy was his leadership of the Pan-Islamic movement. The Young Turks invoked Pan-Islamism in justifying the Armenian massacres of 1915. The Young Turks did not stop at depriving Armenians of life and property; they also directed their activities against the faith of the people through government sanctions against the Church. These measures culminated in the deportation of the Armenian patriarch and in the transfer of the Catholicosate of Cilicia from Sis to Jerusalem, where a new administrative system for the Church was adopted under the name of the Catholicosate and Patriarchate of Turkey. Thus the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople was reduced to a mere vicarage, and the Catholicos-Patriarch of Jerusalem was given a synod through which to govern the church. The aim of the Turkish government was twofold: to minimize the jurisdiction and rights of the Catholicos of All Armenians over the Armenians of Turkey and to sever the ties of Armenians in Turkey with those in Caucasia. In 1918, after the defeat of Turkey and the arrival of the Allied fleet in the harbor of Constantinople, the Turks were forced to reestablish the Armenian Patriarchate.⁴⁸

Most of the uprooted Armenians relocated themselves in the Middle East. Some of these wanted to depart for America but were unable, because the United States was on the verge of adopting new policies for immigrants. Few Armenians chose to convert to Islam in the perilous days of 1915. Most had been given a choice to convert or to be deported and/or massacred. They chose the latter.

Economic Motivations

Although Armenian immigration is attributed primarily to political and religious causes, it cannot be wholly explained on these grounds. The movement was also motivated by economic causes. The Armenian population of Turkey had grown weary of the economic straitjackets placed on it by the government. Poverty hung over every Armenian home in the empire's villages and towns.

The Armenians in Turkey distinguished themselves especially in matters of money and finance. As bankers, financiers, merchants, money changers, and hucksters, they performed useful services in the empire. Many amassed large fortunes through these callings and won respectability in society. The economic talents of the Armenians frequently generated considerable resentment among their neighbors. The Turks felt that the economic progress of the Armenians must be checked at any cost, even by the use of state power. The government withdrew all protection from Armenian merchants, artisans, and farmers, and their taxes were increased to crushing levels. Poverty and hunger drove thousands of people from their native land, finishing the job that ethnic and religious persecution had begun.

Arrival in America

In order to alleviate some of the difficulties and hardships encountered by Armenian immigrants, the Armenian Colonial Association of New York was formed in 1909 with a branch in Chicago. The association was financially supported by wealthy Armenians, among them Mihran Karagēōzian and Garabed T. P'oushmanian. The main objectives of the association were to extend aid in a brotherly spirit and by practical means to all Armenian immigrants in destitute circumstances and in need of assistance, and to promote their intellectual and moral life.⁴⁹ The association was effective in helping incoming immigrants at Ellis Island. It served as a labor bureau, trying to locate jobs for the new arrivals. It also helped immigrants who met with difficulties at Ellis Island. It provided financial assistance to Armenians who gave evidence of dire circumstances. And it offered free public education courses on American society and culture.

Often home for the new arrivals was nothing more than a single room in a slum tenement house. The immigrant's first reaction may have been one of

disappointment. What a startling contrast between the peaceful village he left behind and the noise and confusion of the crowded streets of this industrial city! In the old country, everyone spoke Armenian and/or Turkish, but here many strange tongues made him feel as though he were lost in a modern Babel. His one consolation was his friends and relatives, who after working hours might take him to an Armenian restaurant or club to be introduced to other Armenian immigrants like himself. A new immigrant, for obvious reasons, was the main attraction. There he would feel at home once more, exchanging news from home and discussing the latest employment trends in America.

The End of the Open Door

In the 1920s, the quota system severely curtailed immigration to the United States. Isolationism, nativistic ideologies, and protests brought about the Quota Law of 1924.⁵⁰ Joseph Grabill writes that “mission executives in the United States sought vainly to increase immigration quota for the Armenians.”⁵¹ The Quota Law caused more hardship and suffering for the Armenians. Ships arriving in New York brought many who were refused admission into the country. A minority report signed by Representatives Isaac Siegel of New York and Adolph J. Sabath of Illinois depicts the plight of the Armenian immigrant:

Credible evidence was presented to the committee showing that a large number of unfortunate Armenians had their passports visaed many months before the quota law was enacted. Notwithstanding the fact that they suffered most during the war, on arrival here they found themselves barred by the present quota law which this resolution seeks to extend for another year.⁵²

The Calvary of the Armenians seemed to have no end. After grim days at home under Turkish tyranny and then the storm-tossed journey to America, they arrived here only to find the doors of the New Canaan closed before them. The following excerpt from a poem by Isabel Fiske Conant, “Armenians at Ellis Island,” is suggestive of the mood of the times:

It's since the war that man has done its worst
And stricken is the sentry at our gates;
Torch-bearing liberty . . . And now again
Another group is here. This time we know
What waits for them, deport . . . with what pain
Must Christ's old wounds reopen . . . if they go!
Spare His torn feet and hands . . .⁵³

Domestic Problems and Their Causes

The Armenians in America congregated in industrial centers, living in neighborhoods almost exclusively populated by Armenians. If America was confusing to the Armenian immigrant, he, in his turn, with his different appearance and customs, was bewildering to the American. Too often the old-stock American failed to appreciate the newcomers and resented their presence. Some of this prejudice was due to the immigrants' own unwillingness to compromise with America.

Once the immigrant decided to make America his permanent home and to establish himself economically, it was not too difficult to witness the erosion of the Armenian spirit. For the children of uprooted immigrant parents, there was no other language but English and no other country but America. To them, loyalty was a one-way street, while their parents divided their loyalty between America and Armenia. An immigrant's nostalgia for the customs of his home could never endure his children's apathy toward their ethnic background. The Armenian immigrant brought with him memories and experiences from the Old World, determined to carry on his heritage as much as possible in the new environment. This heritage included the Armenian Church and language, love of the fatherland, and its customs and traditions. The American-born Armenian essentially valued but one of these—the Church. And the survival of that Church was contingent on the understanding that in the course of time it was to be “Americanized” if its continued existence in this society was to be justified.

Armenian Settlements

From the 1880s onward, Armenian immigrants appear to have followed a pattern in reaching America. Upon arrival, they most often went to the home of a relative or village acquaintance. There they would find help in securing lodging and information about employment, as well as much-needed advice about the customs of the new land. They might also deliver a message or souvenir from a close relative or a friend in Turkey. Usually these contacts were previously arranged so that new immigrants would be met on their arrival.

The geographic and occupational distribution of immigrants depended somewhat on the location of the immigrants who preceded them. A relatively large number of Armenians settled in New York and Worcester, Massachusetts, in the early 1880s. Later centers were Boston, Providence, and Fresno. By America's entry

into World War I, the largest concentrations of Armenians were as follows:⁵⁴

State	Number
New York State	17,391
Massachusetts	14,192
Rhode Island	4,923
Illinois	3,313
California	2,564
New Jersey	2,115
Pennsylvania	<u>2,002</u>
	46,500

The Language Barrier

Most Armenian immigrants were handicapped by their lack of fluency in English. This posed a serious problem at first, because it was a barrier to adjusting to life in America. English had few similarities with the language they already spoke. Even if they learned English, they still retained an accent. Some chose to speak only Armenian, depending on fellow Armenians to act as interpreters.

Many Americans in the beginning assumed that Armenian immigrants who could not speak English correctly were uneducated. Often American employers did not realize that many Armenians were well educated in their native tongue. There were fewer illiterates among the Armenians than any other group in the “new” immigration. Of all the Armenian men, women, and children admitted into the United States between 1899 and 1917, only 23.9 percent could not read or write in Armenian. A simple comparison with other nationalities reveals the following picture.⁵⁵

Nationality	Percent Illiterate in Their Native Language
Portuguese	68.2
Southern Italian	53.9
Syrian	53.3
Bulgarian	41.7
Russian	38.5
Polish	35.4
Romanian	35.0
Greek	26.4
Hebrew	26.0
Armenian	23.9

It was some consolation to the Armenian immigrant that a great number of Americans understood their problems and treated them humanely. These people offered help in overcoming the language barrier rather than viewing the problem with prejudice.

Economic Factors

Armenians, like other minority groups, were resented for providing cheaper labor. Organized labor championed the cause of American-born workers and supported strong legislation restricting immigration. As long as there was an urgent need for more workers, immigration was not considered a serious threat to American labor. When business prospects were less than promising and jobs became scarce, labor leaders opposed immigration with every weapon at their command. The rank-and-file workers also expressed their antforeign sentiments through outbursts of violence.

A charge sometimes leveled against immigrants was that they accepted jobs at certain factories, mines, and other companies where workers were on strike. The unwitting immigrants were regarded as “scabs” and quite often endured humiliation and violent assaults.⁵⁶ The language barrier, ignorance about trade union procedures and activities, and the urgent need for cash compounded the immigrant’s labor problems.

Living Conditions

Most Armenians, having settled in the tenements of large cities, wanted to be with their *ergrats’i* (“countrymen”), who spoke the same language, observed the same customs and traditions, and celebrated the same religious holidays. Armenians naturally desired the company of their compatriots, extending aid and sympathy to each other whenever illness or misfortune visited them.

Forced to live in the decaying areas of the city and faced with discrimination, Armenians were criticized for congregating in ghettos. Thus many cities and towns came to have “Little Armenias” almost entirely inhabited by Armenians.⁵⁷ The crowding, noise, and unsanitary conditions of these sections of the large cities were repugnant to the old-stock Americans and to the immigrants themselves.

In the beginning, nearly all the Armenian immigrants were single males who had come to America with the idea of rapidly attaining a few riches and hurrying home. They usually lived in nonfamily groups. Usually three or four people, and sometimes as many as eight or ten, shared an apartment and divided the rent, which was generally between \$1.50 and \$2.50 per month for each tenant. One of the men usually assumed precedence and managed the apartment for the others, as well as

serving as cook and housekeeper. The system was known as *khoumana*, the Turkish expression for this type of a living arrangement. There were also instances in which the lodging was provided by a married compatriot. In some cases the men took turns buying and cooking the food; others ate at Armenian restaurants and coffeehouses. Sleeping quarters in these houses were far from adequate, and often the immigrants fell victim to disease. Many Armenian immigrants became disillusioned and chose to return to the homeland and the villages of their birth.

Others persisted in their struggle to adapt to America. In their attempts to create a more meaningful and tolerable way of life, they took pains to improve their environment, and just as often they strove to escape ghetto life altogether.

Religious Differences

Another factor contributing to anti-immigrant sentiment stemmed from religion. Until the outbreak of the American Revolution, the colonists were mainly of English and Scotch stock, supplemented by northern Europeans and Irish. These immigrants were predominantly Protestant, and that gave a fundamentalist coloring to American religious life from the beginning.

The Armenian Orthodox immigrant was often bewildered by the diversity of religious background in America. The absence of Armenian Orthodox Churches in America disarmed the Armenian immigrant of any denominational preference. However, militant Armenian Protestant ministers pursued a deliberate campaign of solicitation and proselytization among orthodox Armenians.

In 1888, the vast body of Armenian Orthodox, disgusted by the policy of proselytization (especially by the American Board), petitioned the Armenian Orthodox Patriarch in Constantinople for a priest. This request marked the beginning of the establishment of the Armenian Church in America.

Patterns of Adjustment

Nearly all the Armenian immigrants in their adjustment to the new surroundings appear to have grouped themselves into one of two categories. The first quickly integrated itself with the interests and activities of American society; the second found it difficult, if not impossible, to adapt to the social and economic conditions of the new land.

The newcomers preferred to reside and work in large cities. Their prime concern was to find suitable work and satisfactory remuneration. In the beginning many Armenians, especially skilled artisans, had little difficulty in finding work. However, the numerous unskilled laborers remained a major concern of the Armenian communities. Many of these unskilled workers became petty street traders before going on as successful shopkeepers.

With an increasing commitment to the idea of remaining in America, young men who had achieved any degree of financial security began to marry. After marrying and acquiring American citizenship, many immigrants began adopting American customs and ideas more rapidly. Once the dream of returning to the homeland diminished and the foundations for an Armenian ethnic community had been laid, the process of assimilation began.

Economic Adjustment

Many of the immigrants came to America penniless, friendless, and totally ignorant of the language and customs of their adopted country. Eventually, educators, artists, businesspeople, and professionals also joined the caravan of immigrants. Many of them became laborers in the mines, mills, and factories. Those with special skills in the crafts found work in manufacturing plants; others went forward in small-scale businesses. The more fortunate professionals were able to work in their own fields.

The immigrants proved to be industrious and eager to further themselves economically. Even the poorest itinerant peddlers desired to make a place for themselves with their own businesses. This desire helps explain the large numbers of grocers, confectioners, barbers, bakers, tailors, shoemakers, engravers, and printers to be found in the Armenian communities.

The Armenians also contributed significantly to the development of American science and technology. Many distinguished themselves in areas such as medicine, architecture, engineering, construction, manufacturing, business, and agriculture.⁵⁸

These immigrants' success, in spite of the many conflicts and obstacles they had to overcome, is no mean achievement. It enabled their American offspring to enjoy the full advantages and security that America had to offer.

Family and Related Problems

Because of the early expectation that many immigrants who departed for America would one day return to the homeland, women generally stayed at home. After some time, the absence of men in the Armenian villages became a serious problem. Entire villages were often inhabited only by defenseless children and women, left to fend against the marauding Turks and Kurds.

The immigrant men in the United States had several alternatives open to them. Some took as their mates young women of Armenian parentage born in the United States. Others either journeyed to the homeland in search of a wife or secured a note through correspondence with a friend or relative back home.⁵⁹ As a rule, the Armenian immigrant wanted to marry an Armenian woman for the simple reason that he preferred a spouse of his own nationality and religious background.

Despite the great impact of these physical and psychological dislocations, certain aspects of Armenian family life continued to survive. Love of home and children was strong and binding, and supreme happiness existed in rearing a large family, teaching them habits of hard work, and providing for the future. Rarely did one find an Armenian father who was not eager to have his children receive a good modern education. All were part of Armenian family life in the old country.

Although Armenian immigrants had much to be thankful for in the way of material prosperity, political and religious freedom, and educational opportunity, a serious cause of distress was the attitude of their children. Many parents were disturbed over the lack of respect shown by their American-born children, a situation that seemed beyond their control. What most distressed immigrant parents was their children's refusal to identify with their parents' ethnic values.

Compromise with America

The difficulties encountered during the years following the new immigration were numerous. Even today, some modern immigrants retain unhappy impressions of their experiences in the United States. Yet there was progress. Despite the obstacles, most immigrants learned enough English for their daily living. Young immigrants often combined long hours of work with evening study that gained them coveted degrees and licenses in medicine, law, engineering, and accounting.⁶⁰

For some Armenian immigrants, integration into American life was slow and painful. Adjustment to the rigors of an industrial society with its different customs

and traditions made them feel socially handicapped. Coupled with this was the unwillingness of old-stock Americans to accept them, forcing immigrants to seek the company of their compatriots in an Armenian colony.

Yet over the course of time, Armenians proved remarkably receptive to Americanization. Various American and Armenian-American organizations urged immigrants to become American citizens.⁶¹ Efforts to learn English were increased. During the Spanish-American War and World War I, abbreviated or Anglicized names became widespread. The Armenian-language press exhorted its readers to buy U.S. government bonds and urged the youth to enlist in the armed forces.⁶² Thousands of Armenians who had not previously sought to become citizens volunteered to join the military.

A compromise with America meant an attempt to break loose from the familiar past and to embrace aspects of the American way of life. This new life was a mixed blessing to the immigrant. To make that life more secure and familiar, Armenians transplanted some of the religious, social, and cultural traditions of the Old World into the new. At the same time, they adopted new Western attitudes.

Immigrant Organizations and Community Life

Collectively, Armenian immigrants established a variety of institutions and organizations within their communities that fulfilled their sociocultural needs and also served as links with the old country. These institutions gave continuity and security to their existence as an ethnic group. They built churches that conducted services in the mother tongue and set up Armenian schools. Political parties were organized, and newspapers and magazines were published in Armenian. Societies and associations sponsored cultural and social activities to benefit the poor of the homeland. The men patronized the popular restaurants, coffeehouses, and clubs.

Among all of these immigrant institutions, the Church became the core of community life, because it embodied everything Armenian. Immigrants considered the Church the soul of the nation and the citadel of Armenian spirit. Discussion of the Church per se will await the later chapters of this study. Here we shall discuss some of the ethnic organizations that, together with the Church, helped preserve the national heritage from the “melting pot.”

Armenian Political Parties

After the fall of the Armenian kingdom in 1375, various individuals or groups strove to regain freedom and equality for the Armenian people. These nationalistic efforts were often shared by the Armenian Church and church members who functioned as both a religious and intellectual force in the national struggle. Since its inception, the Armenian Church has been a stronghold for the preservation of religious and cultural endeavors of Armenians, both in the homeland and in the diaspora. The administration of the Church is shared by both clergy and laity. The lay administrators of the Church were often members of various political parties. In the new nationalism of the nineteenth century, the political activities of the clergy often became a source of spiritual and moral strength and inspiration.

In the nineteenth century, Armenian nationalists focused on the liberation of the six provinces of Turkish Armenia from Ottoman domination. Inspired by the European revolutionary movements of 1830 and 1848, the first manifestation of the Armenian revolutionary movement against the Ottoman regime came in 1862 at Zeitun. In the following decades, Armenian revolutionary leaders concerned themselves with international socialism. Numerous Armenian revolutionary organizations and secret political parties were formed on Turkish, Russian, and Persian soil.

First among these political parties was the Armenagan Party. Founded in Van, Turkey, in 1885, it was dedicated to promoting education and national self-protection. It eschewed terrorism and remained aloof from socialism.

The Social Democratic Hnch'ag Party was formed in Geneva, Switzerland, by seven Russian Armenian students of Marxist persuasion in 1887. These young men in their twenties were the sons of bourgeois families. Their views were based on humanitarian and socialistic principles. To achieve national independence for Turkish Armenia they were willing to bear arms, if necessary. After the political freedom of Turkish Armenia was won, they pursued political and social aims. Their centralized organization was ready to carry out their immediate objectives against the Ottoman government through propaganda, agitation, and terrorism.

The Armenian Revolutionary Federation, commonly known as the Tashnag Party, resulted from a merger among various Armenian revolutionary groups, primarily in Russia and Persia. The political unification of these groups came about in 1890 in Tiflis, Georgia. Unlike the Hnch'ag Party, the Tashnag Party advocated Armenian reforms within the framework of the Ottoman Empire, resorting to rebellion, if need be, to achieve the political and economic freedom of Turkish Armenia. The platform of the Tashnag Party contained socialistic principles, and decentralization was considered essential to the smooth operation of the various branches of the party. Like the Hnch'ag Party, the Tashnag Party advocated the use of force and terrorism to achieve its aims. Both parties, but the Tashnag in particular, made the middle class and the clergy targets of their propaganda, depicting them as exploiters of the workers. Clergymen often fell victim to the annihilation policy of these two groups.

The Reformed Hnch'ag Party (Veragazmeal Hnch'ag Party) was the result of a split within the ranks of the Social Democratic Hnch'ag Party in 1896. The dissenters objected to the socialistic principles in the party's platform and also criticized its indiscriminate fighting. The "Old Wing Hnch'ags" were also criticized for their failures in party administration. Consequently, these dissenters formed the Reformed Hnch'ag Party in 1898.

The Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (Ramgavar Azadagan Party) was organized in September 1921, in Constantinople, Turkey. Its roots date back to October 1908, when a segment of the Armenagan party and the Armenian Union (those who favored a union between the Old Hnch'ag Party and Reformed Hnch'ag Party), called the Ideological Union, merged with the Reformed Hnch'ag Party to form the Armenian Constitutional Democratic Party (*Hay Sahmanatragan Ramgavar Gousagts'out'awn*).⁶³

This latter group in 1921 joined the Reformed Hnch'ag Party, to form the Ramgavar Azadagan Party. The Ramgavar Party remained apart from extremist political activities and adopted a conservative course. It carried out cultural,

charitable, and religious services for the welfare of the Armenian people and was antirevolutionary and antisocialist.

The Armenian political parties were introduced gradually into the United States. First among these was the Hnch'ag Party in 1892; then followed the Tashnag Party in 1898; and in 1908 the Sahmanatragan Ramgavar Party.⁶⁴ Because of their radical ideas, these political parties were often criticized by Armenian communities here and abroad. In their revolutionary radicalism and anticlerical secularism, the Hnch'ag and Tashnag parties antagonized many Armenians. The parties themselves, though apathetic to the mission of the Church and the clergy, wished to control the Church as a means of dominating the people.⁶⁵

Unfortunately, the Armenian Church became involved in the impassioned politics of these contending parties. These party disputes infected Armenian communities throughout the United States and were carried on with increasing bitterness. Community after community became divided because of these quarreling factions. Though the party leaders saw themselves as heroes, many Armenians deplored their unwillingness to submerge personal interests in the higher interests of the community at large.

Despite these negative aspects, the political parties had a positive influence as well. They often sponsored social and cultural functions, and they maintained political clubs called *agoumpner* where adherence of each party gathered.

One thing was certain—the immigrant generations could not help but sympathize with the revolutionary causes. On the other hand, their U.S.-born children had little interest in anything so removed from the mainstream of American life. Every immigrant organization, at one time or another, would have to confront this situation.

The Armenian-Language Press

The Armenian-language press was indispensable to the life of the Armenian community. It served as the bridge between the Old World and the new and provided immigrants with valuable information concerning events in the old country. It also helped them become better acquainted with things American, thus facilitating their adjustment.

The major newspapers were owned either by individuals or by political organizations, though a few relatively insignificant periodicals were also published under clerical auspices. Some papers did more harm than good by publishing news, articles, and editorials that promoted new dissensions among the people. The political papers in particular divided the Armenian populace beyond repair, often involving the Armenian Church in their quarrels.⁶⁶

Most of the Armenian-language newspapers faded away as rapidly as they

appeared. But there were two important exceptions: *Hairenik* ("Fatherland") and *Baikar* ("Struggle").⁶⁷ Published in the Greater Boston area, both served as the official organs of two rival political parties, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Tashnags) and the Armenian Democratic Liberal Party (Ramgavars).

The first Armenian-language paper in the United States was *Arekag* ("Sun"), published in 1888 in Jersey City, New Jersey, and edited by Haygag Ēginian.⁶⁸ The next to appear was *Ararad*, founded in New York in 1891. This was a short-lived weekly with an English section designed to attract English-speaking readers.⁶⁹ *Hayk'* was another early paper in the United States, edited by Dr. M. S. Gabriel. Gabriel's strongly moralistic editorial policy brought him bitter opposition from the revolutionary press. The last issue of *Hayk'* appeared in 1898.

In 1899 two influential new weeklies appeared, *Tsayn Hayreneats'* and *Hairenik*. Both were first published in New York but subsequently moved to Boston. The first represented the Reformed Hnch'ag Party, the second the Tashnag Party. From their inception these two papers have been engaged in a bitter journalistic struggle.⁷⁰

Gotchnag ("Bell") first appeared in Boston in 1900 and remained a very conservative paper, aloof from all controversial issues.⁷¹ It enjoyed the support of the Armenian Protestant Missionary Association. In 1918 *Dawros* appeared and pursued a moderate course in community affairs.

Armenia, appearing in 1906, was an English-language monthly edited by Arshag Dēr Mahdēsian. This monthly devoted to Armenian literature, culture, and history attempted to gain the cooperation and friendship of the "Friends of America" Society, especially Mrs. Alice Stone Blackwell, the well-known editor of *Woman's Journal*.

The Armenian press faced many difficulties in the United States. The reading audience was very limited, largely confined to the first generation. The second generation never showed much enthusiasm for the Armenian newspapers, being either unable or unwilling to read them, thus leaving the fate of Armenian journalism in the United States in a precarious situation.⁷²

The Armenian-language papers often criticized clergy who did not support their particular ideology. The nonpolitical papers were less biased with respect to the clergy. In general, the press reported very little on Church life, which was overshadowed by intense political debate. What was reported would appear in columns devoted to news releases issued by the diocese.

Societies and Associations

Numerous societies and associations, called *hayrenagts'aganner* ("compatriotic associations") played an important part in the life of the communities. In most

instances these organizations worked closely with local Armenian churches in conducting their educational and charitable activities.

Nearly every district or province from which the immigrants had emigrated was represented in the United States by a society or association bearing its name. These societies, with some exceptions, died out almost as quickly as they were started. A few organizations were longer-lived.

The major task of these organizations was the collection of funds to support schools, orphanages, hospitals, and the needy in the homeland. Funds were also allocated for the improvement of churches and religious sites.

Many of these local associations also provided essential social services to early immigrants in America. These included the Armenian Educational Society (founded in 1906), the Armenian Colonial Association of New York (founded in 1909), and the Armenian Students' Association (founded in 1910).⁷³

The Armenian Red Cross, later known as the Armenian Relief Society, performed outstanding service during World War I and the Cilician campaign of 1922. They have since been reduced to the role of localized women's auxiliaries of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation.

The Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) was founded on April 15, 1906, in Cairo, Egypt. This organization distinguished itself with its charitable, cultural, and philanthropic endeavors. Vahan K'iwrk'jian founded the first chapter of the AGBU in the United States in 1908. The AGBU's activities of relief and rehabilitation after World War I included providing food, clothing, and shelter for countless Armenian refugees in Middle Eastern and European countries.

Armenian-Language Schools

The preservation of Armenian as the liturgical language, as a means of communication between parents and their children, and as part of the national heritage had high priority for immigrants. Before World War I, the community seems to have displayed a more serious interest in preserving the Armenian language than it has in more recent times.

Teaching Armenian to American-born children created major problems, for both parents and children. There was the danger of antagonizing the children. To this day, many individuals still recall their unpleasant childhood experiences in learning the language. Community leaders faced difficulties in locating competent teachers, acceptable books, classroom facilities, and the financial means to operate the schools. Both religious and lay leaders were anxious to do something about the language problem lest their children lose knowledge of Armenian altogether. The problem stemmed from the inability to project the intrinsic value of learning Armenian to the children.

In each locality that maintained a church and priest, Armenian classes were held in the basement of the church, with the priest usually serving as teacher. Where church facilities were not available, classes were accommodated in community centers, rented halls, back rooms of Armenian clubs, or even vacant stores. Children of various ages were crowded into one classroom and instruction was usually given late in the afternoon, after the public school day had ended. Criticism was heard on all sides. Children complained because of the surroundings and the schedule. Most attended simply because they had no choice in the matter. This new generation seemed satisfied to have no other language but English and no other country but America.

Predictably, such feeble attempts to perpetuate the Armenian language were unsuccessful. Fluency in the language has declined steadily. Not until the 1960s did a concerted movement arise to revive the teaching of Armenian. This has manifested itself through the establishment of several full-time Armenian schools in large urban centers. However, it is too early to judge the success of this new experiment.

Armenian Restaurants and Coffeehouses

The appearance of restaurants and coffeehouses in the Armenian neighborhoods seemed to be the logical solution for loneliness and the need for entertainment for the newcomers. Armenians preferred to dine where they could obtain their ethnic food and hear their native tongue spoken.

No large investment was required to operate a restaurant or coffeehouse. Exclusively made in patronage, they served as community centers after working hours, where newcomers would go to meet their compatriots and to exchange views of the day. Often the walls of these places were decorated with portraits of Armenian national heroes and church leaders. In these coffeehouses the newcomers could find their favorite menus, including Turkish coffee and other native delicacies. They became social centers in every Armenian settlement.⁷⁴

News of the homeland, impromptu political debate, discussions of Church affairs and the clergy, and reminiscences with friends were the main topics of restaurant conversation. As time passed and many Armenians grew successful and started families, these restaurants and coffeehouses began to disappear. They gave way to political clubs called *agoump*, which were sponsored by the different political parties. These also became centers of activity for the community, but they never replaced the Church's pervasive presence in the daily life of the community.

Notes

- ⁷ Gen. 8:4; 2 Kings 19:38; Isa. 37:38; Jer. 51:27.
- ⁸ Herodotus, *History*, VII, 73; Strabo, *Geography*, XI, 8; Jacques DeMorgan, *The History of the Armenian People* (Boston: Hairenik Press, n.d.); Dz. B. Aghaian et al., *Hay Zhoghovrti Badmout'wn* ("History of the Armenian People"), I (Erevan, Armenia: Armenian SSR Academy of Sciences, 1971).
- ⁹ H. A. Manantian, *A Brief Outline of Armenian History* (New York: Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, 1964), pp. 33–35.
- ¹⁰ David Marshall Lang, *Armenia: Cradle of Civilization* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970), p. 39.
- ¹¹ Because of these calamities, most Armenians migrated from the fatherland and established colonies in Persia, India, Turkey, Syria, Egypt, the Transcaucasus, Crimea, Poland, Hungary, Holland, England, Russia, and the Balkans, thus creating the Armenian diaspora of the modern age. Terenig Poladian, *The Role of Armenia in History* (Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1970), p. 6.
- ¹² Lang, *Armenia: Cradle of Civilization*, p. 44.
- ¹³ Shavarsh Toriguian, *The Armenian Question and International Law* (Beirut: Hamaskaine Press, 1973), pp. 17–28.
- ¹⁴ Mgrdich' Mouradian, *Badmout'wn Hayasdaneayts' Arak'elagan Sourp Egeghets'woy* ("History of the Holy Apostolic Church of Armenia") (Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1972), pp. 23–24; Papkēn Giwlēsērian, *Hay Egeghets'i* ("The Armenian Church") (Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1930), pp. 178–199.
- ¹⁵ Mouradian, *Badmout'wn Hayasdaneayts' Arak'elagan Sourp Egeghets'woy*, pp. 30–38.
- ¹⁶ Maghak'ia Ōrmanian, *Hay Egeghets'in* ("The Armenian Church") (Antelias, Lebanon: Catholicosate of Cilicia Press, 1952), p. 5.
- ¹⁷ During this period, in the Armenian Church there was an order of *Verdzanogh T'arkmanich* ("Readers and Translators") who read and interpreted the Bible to the faithful.
- ¹⁸ The translation of the Bible into Armenian was first made from a Syriac version. Later this translation underwent a thorough revision, being compared with a Greek Septuagint text brought from Constantinople by Armenian students.
- ¹⁹ Armenian Church liturgy, in addition to prayers composed by Armenian Church fathers, also contains parts of the liturgies ascribed mainly to Saints Athanasius, Basil the Great, and John Chrysostom. Among several translations of the Armenian liturgy into English, the most generally known is the one contained in F. E. Brightman, *Liturgies, Eastern and Western* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896). An authoritative historical study is the work of Hovsēp' Kat'rjian, *Sourp Badarakamadoys'k Hayots'* ("The Sacred Missals of the Armenians") (Vienna: Mekhitarist Press, 1897). The best English translation and commentary is provided by Tiran Nersoyan, *Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Church* (New York: Delphic Press, 1950). Some of the writings of the ancient authors are now lost except in these Armenian translations—for instance, the Chronicle of Eusebius of Caesarea. For a more detailed list of such works, see Karekin Sarkissian,

- A Brief Introduction to Armenian Christian Literature* (London: Paster Press, 1960), pp. 21–24.
- ²⁰ Abraham Zaminian, *Badmout' iwn Hayots' Hin Kraganout' ean* ("History of Ancient Armenian Literature"), 2nd ed. (Beirut: Hoys Press, 1941); Norayr Bogharian, *Hay Kroghner* ("Armenian Writers") (Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1971).
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The Spiritual Pastorate in America (1888–1898)

The Need for a Native Church

The starting point of Armenian Church history in the United States was Worcester, Massachusetts, where Armenian immigrants had already established a settlement in the closing years of the 1880s. In their strange new surroundings, the immigrants found their path strewn with many difficulties. These problems, from both within and outside the fold, retarded the development of religious consciousness. However, despite these manifold obstacles, the children's pennies, the widow's mite, and the laborer's contribution of time and money made it possible in February 1890 for the Worcester community to purchase a small parcel of land on Laurel Street and, in the same year, to build a small wooden church. The *Worcester Telegram* sent reporters to cover the story because it was so difficult to comprehend that a mere handful of Armenians could actually start an Armenian church.⁷⁵

In this first period in the history of the Church in the United States, confusion, dissension, and a lack of centralized authority prevailed. Many capable individuals were denied a role in Church affairs, whereas other, more ambitious men worked to outdo each other. The meaning of democracy was misinterpreted, and some even used the Church as a means to further their own ambitions. No definite division of duties existed in the administrative life of the Church between pastor and lay workers. Often "trusteeism" and politics plagued Church affairs.

Generally the priests were underpaid and as poor as the immigrants themselves. Most were men of humility and piety, though others used the priesthood simply as a means for material gain. Unfortunate indeed was the pastor whose religious ideas and political preference ran counter to those of a board member, vocal minority, or faction.

This period of the spiritual pastorate in America witnessed the efforts of three pastors sent by the Patriarch of Constantinople and the Catholicos of All Armenians in Ēchmiadzin.⁷⁶ During these years, the church in Worcester came under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Later, in 1898, it was transferred to the jurisdiction of Ēchmiadzin. Then the pastorate was elevated to a diocesan establishment, which created many difficulties for the Worcester church and brought about the need for a bishop. It was hoped that episcopal authority would usher in an era of peace and order. But this was not to be the case for a long time.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the average American had very rarely heard of the Armenians. Even prominent journalists, clergymen, professors, and statesmen regarded them as "Christianized Turks," or else confused them with Arminians—the followers of the Dutch theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560–

1609).⁷⁷ Rejection and agitation by hostile neighbors, such as the Irish and Italians, no less than the proselytism of American and Armenian Protestants, convinced Orthodox Armenians of their need for a native church.⁷⁸ John Aroian, the son of one of the founders of the Worcester church, relates that these “foreigners” had earlier attended the Swedish church on Sundays. Pastor Gundaarson of this church was most sympathetic to their cause and often expressed his thoughts and feelings concerning their plight:

I know you Armenians are the oldest Christians, but folks in Worcester have never heard of you and do not know this. You will be subjected to continuous abuse and beatings until you found an Armenian Church here.⁷⁹

Such a church, to which the immigrants could belong and with which they could identify, became an ever more pressing social necessity. The church, more than any other immigrant institution, would become the mainstay of their lives. It symbolized their national aspirations and memories of the life left behind. A true Armenian, the immigrant felt, was loyal both to his or her religious faith and to the fatherland. Loyalty to Armenia implied loyalty to the Church. The two were indivisible.

Formation of the Armenian Club (1888)

Through the middle of 1888, most Armenian Orthodox immigrants attended services sponsored by Protestant ministers and churches. Some became members of various denominations, and proselytizing activities were pursued by both American and Armenian Protestant ministers. One such minister, Asadour Antrēasian, was infamous among the Armenians for his seemingly antinational activities.⁸⁰ To resist his efforts, the Armenians banded under the leadership of Mik‘ayēl T‘op‘hanēlian, an Armenian immigrant from Constantinople.

In September 1888, Mgrdich‘ P‘ort‘oukalian, a well-known revolutionary leader, arrived in Worcester. P‘ort‘oukalian, who edited a Marseilles weekly called *Armenia*, was in America to address the Armenian community.⁸¹ On September 3, 1888, P‘ort‘oukalian was scheduled to appear before the people of Worcester, so the Armenians requested the use of the Protestant church on Summer Street. Both the Armenian minister, Antrēasian, and his American counterpart denied the request, the latter announcing that “I cannot open the House of God before revolutionary Armenians.”⁸²

Consequently, the Armenians were forced to lease a small hall on Main Street and conduct their lectures and meetings there. P‘ort‘oukalian’s speech was dynamic and patriotic, urging the people to consider forming their own native church.

To whatever extent the Armenians are persecuted in Muslim lands, nevertheless they have been able to preserve their nationality and their church. But in Christian lands, especially America, there exist numerous obstacles which are detrimental to the preservation of nationality and religion. Accordingly you must make every effort to found your own church. Wherever the Armenian has gone he has taken with him his Church, his press, and his school. Without these three integral forces, he cannot preserve his identity.⁸³

P'ort'oukalian's speech inspired the people to hold a preliminary meeting that same evening, during which they elected a standing committee charged with organizing a society. The members of this committee were Hovhannēs Eazējian, Mardiros T'omajian, Ōhan T'ashjian, Hagop K'sdigian, and Mik'ayēl T'op'hanēlian, the chairman. Under the leadership and guidance of these men was established the first national organization of the Worcester community, the *Gajar Haygagan* or Armenian Club.⁸⁴

The first Membership Meeting of the Armenian Club was held on September 16, 1888, at 418 Main Street, Worcester. Once again the members emphasized the need for their own church. Controversy arose over the question of including Armenian Protestants. There were also differences over administrative procedures. But the meetings continued on subsequent Sundays, preceded by the recitation of the Lord's Prayer and the Credo.

The issue of the Armenian Protestants was resolved at a meeting held on October 7, 1888, at which the club unanimously voted to exclude them from membership in their organization. As a result, the Armenian Protestants formed a separate organization under the leadership of Asadour Antrēasian. Opposition to this group was strong, particularly on the part of T'op'hanēlian and his supporters. Religious intolerance in both camps led to countless disputes, draining energies and shortening tempers. The situation erupted with the filing of a petition with the Turkish embassy in Washington by the Armenian Protestants.⁸⁵ The petition alleged that the members of the Armenian Club were engaged in revolutionary activities and in anti-Sultan propaganda. Their claims were to have far-reaching repercussions.

The Letter to Constantinople

The news of this petition spread rapidly among the Armenians in Worcester, where it caused considerable apprehension and anxiety. They feared for the lives of their families and relatives in the homeland, who were still subject to Ottoman authority. T'op'hanēlian was designated to depart for Washington as the Armenian Club's envoy and to mediate with the ambassador.

Simultaneously an explanatory letter, dated November 3, 1888, was dispatched to the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, Patriarch Khorēn Ashēkian. The signers requested his intercession with the Sublime Porte on their behalf. The patriarch's prompt response, dated December 12, 1888, advised the Worcester Armenians that the patriarchate would be able to extend its jurisdiction to include them and thus defend them before the imperial government only through a clerical representative in their community.⁸⁶

The letter created an aura of optimism among the Worcester settlers and encouraged them to seek a priest of their own. Two letters were forwarded to the patriarch in January 1889, indicating the benefits to be gained by the presence of a pastor, not only in Worcester but in other cities throughout the United States where Armenians were residing in large numbers. The second letter, dated January 27, concluded with the remark that the pastor “. . . according to a majority opinion is desired to be celibate priest rather than a married clergyman.”⁸⁷

Brothers at Opposite Poles

The efforts of the Armenian Club to secure a clergyman created mixed feelings among some Worcester Armenians. Those who did not share the optimism of the club members argued that the presence of an Armenian priest in the United States might create undesirable situations.⁸⁸

One dissenting faction was the Armenian Protestants, who were most anxious to have Cyrus Hamlin intercede and persuade T'op'hanēlian to abandon the plan. A further source of opposition came from the Armenian Union of New York, claiming that the Armenian Club had no right to act independently because it was subject to the political and regulations of the union.⁸⁹ All efforts to sway the club members to this way of thinking were in vain, as the Armenian Club was determined to preserve its independence and identity.

There followed a period during which letters were exchanged between the two organizations. The New York group wished to send a delegation to Worcester for further talks and negotiations concerning the problem of the clergyman. The Armenian Club complied with their wishes and extended an invitation to the delegates, with the understanding that they would abide by the limits and rules set by the Armenian Club.⁹⁰ The Armenian Club continued to exclude Armenian Protestants from participating in the organization in order to counteract Protestant propaganda, which was rampant in the communities. This policy remained in effect until the arrival of the priest.

The First Superior: Father Hovsēp‘ Sarajian (1889–1893)

Patriarch Khorēn Ashēkian submitted the Worcester community’s request to the Religious Council for immediate consideration, upon which the council designated Father Hovsēp‘ Sarajian as the first pastor of the Armenian Church in the United States.⁹¹

From the fragmentary reports, it is possible to depict Father Sarajian as a man of medium height and slight build, nearly forty years old. He was born in Constantinople and received his religious training at the Seminary of Saint James in Jerusalem.⁹² He seems to have been a sincere, modest, and unselfish person who displayed an abiding and immense love for his flock. Little information is available concerning his journey to the United States other than the fact that forty dollars was sent to H. Ip‘ēgian in New York with instructions to play host to the priest upon his arrival. A delegation from Worcester was also sent to welcome the pastor. However, immediately after his disembarkation at Castle Island on July 22, 1889 (according to T‘op‘hanēlian), or July 25, 1889 (according to Seropian), Father Sarajian left, unnoticed, for Worcester, without having contacted his welcoming committee.⁹³

Thus Father Sarajian began his labors among his immigrant flock. One American reporter described the newly arrived pastor as a person “. . . who appears on the streets in his odd fitting priestly robes and a queer shaped purple velvet head cover.”⁹⁴ The reporter’s comments were hardly reassuring to the newcomer; they fell short of a warm welcome.

The Celebration of the First Armenian Divine Liturgy in America

The Armenian immigrants of Worcester, long deprived of the spiritual nourishment of their own faith and church, turned out in large numbers to the first *Badarak* or Divine Liturgy. Several non-Armenians were also in attendance. The services were held at the Reform Club Hall on Main Street on July 29, 1899.⁹⁵ The services opened with the reading and presentation of Father Sarajian’s credentials by the president of the Armenian Club, T‘op‘hanēlian. The Patriarchal Encyclical or *Gontag* was also read. As the faithful stood in rapt attention and awe, they heard the words that designated Father Sarajian as the duly appointed spiritual superior of America, responsible not only for Worcester, but for Boston, Jersey City, New York, and other centers of Armenian settlement. Despite the large numbers in attendance, approximately 324 people, the collection plate contained a mere twenty-seven cents.⁹⁶

That same evening the Armenian Club hosted a reception for the new pastor at Temperance Hall on Main Street. The best wishes of the club were conveyed to Father Sarajian by President T'op'hanēlian, pledging full cooperation from the people of Worcester, who had waited so long for a priest to speak to them in their native tongue. Now that Father Sarajian would assume the presidency of the club, T'op'hanēlian submitted his resignation and Father Sarajian was given a vote of confidence by those assembled.

Father Sarajian then spoke of his happiness at the state of affairs he found in Worcester. He expressed the hope that the people would continue to work in harmony and goodwill for the betterment of all. At the close of the meeting the new pastor was given a standing ovation, after which the immigrants filed to the platform to kiss his hand, according to the custom of the Church. One thought dominated the minds of the congregation as they left for home: Steps needed to be taken at once to secure permanent quarters in which to hold services. The Armenian Church in America was in the making!

The Formation of the First Church Trustees

The Church Trustees quickly displaced the Armenian Club in the affairs of the Church and the life of the entire Armenian community. The trustees were responsible for the financial management of the Church and for the hiring and firing of the parish priest.

Father Sarajian assumed his post in Worcester when a strong nationalistic atmosphere prevailed among the people. The political parties, especially the Hnch'ag and Tashnag, were particularly active and did not wish to come under the control of ecclesiastical regulations. The immigrants, in their turn, hardened by years away from their ancestral home, had developed an aggressiveness and individualism that often proved difficult to manage. Father Sarajian had many obstacles to overcome in his work of organizing the Church Trustees in Worcester.

The first body of Church Trustees appointed by Father Sarajian consisted of seven members. From its inception, the group aroused much dissension because its members had not been elected. Father Sarajian responded by increasing the number of trustees to twelve. The members were Kēork T'ashjian, Kēork Awedisian, Yaghoub T'orosian, Garabed T'ashjian, Minas Aroyian, Mardiros Baghdigian, Mardiros Gjigian, Hovhannēs Yaghjian, Nazar Norsigian, and Baghdasar T'ashjian. At the first meeting, held on August 20, 1899, Garabed T'ashjian was elected chairman, Baghdigian secretary, and Aroyian treasurer.⁹⁷ As the first order of business, Father Sarajian was given the responsibility of preparing a set of bylaws. A subcommittee was elected to provide the pastor's annual salary of \$500. Policies were adopted for fund-raising procedures and for administering financial assistance

to charitable organizations. The pattern of church organization and administration established in Worcester would later become the prototype for other communities that followed.

Need for Pastoral Visitation

Pastoral visitation was one of the most deeply felt needs among the Armenians. Armenian colonies throughout the United States were like flocks without a shepherd. Some immigrants attended services of local churches on Sundays, but most were sorely lacking unspiritual nourishment. Father Sarajian labored fervently to address this need, making visitations to the communities along the East Coast.

On September 1, 1889, the pastor celebrated the Divine Liturgy at Paine Memorial Hall in Boston. Following the services, he baptized the child of K. Ēk'sērijian; this was the first Armenian baptism to take place in the New World.⁹⁸

Father Sarajian continued his travels and celebrated the Divine Liturgy in various Armenian communities, usually in the facilities of the Protestant Episcopal churches. From the outset the Episcopal Church manifested a keen interest in the Armenian immigrants. The Reverend T. J. Lacey has said: "The Episcopal Church has recognized a protective responsibility towards these people, owing to the close resemblance between the Armenian Church and our own."⁹⁹ The Armenians were freely offered the use of Episcopal churches for their services. Reverend Lacey described the respectful attitude of the Episcopalians toward the Armenian faithful in these terms:

Our Church aims to stand in a relation of helpfulness to these Armenian brethren, endeavoring to strengthen them in their own church rather than to win them to ours.¹⁰⁰

To express appreciation for the solicitude of the Episcopal Church, the Armenian Patriarch Khorēn Ashēkian sent a letter to Bishop Potter on behalf of the patriarchate and the Armenian communities in the United States. The letter was well received by the Episcopalians and was reproduced in their periodical, *The Churchman*.

Upon the completion of his visitations, Father Sarajian returned to Worcester to continue the work he had begun there. The temporary quarters in which church services were held were proving to be inadequate, and the need for a more permanent place of worship was clear. Sentiment was strong for the building of a church in Worcester.

Building the First Armenian Church (1891)

Although the erection of a church building offered much promise for the future, it also became a source of community tension and discord.

At a regular meeting of the Church Trustees on February 2, 1890, the following resolution was adopted:

Whereas the Armenian people, by reason of persecution and abject poverty, are emigrating to America, in order to preserve these immigrants from being alienated, we hereby decide to build a church, and we direct the Very Reverend Hovsēp⁶ Sarajian to undertake the necessary negotiations for that purpose.¹⁰¹

Pledges and membership dues for the new church were collected. Delegates were even sent abroad to seek financial assistance from individuals and organizations. The Church Trustees appealed to other Armenian communities in America to aid them in their endeavor. The Armenians in Worcester were encouraged by a Catholicos encyclical received on February 22, 1890, applauding their efforts to build a church. Such zeal, Catholicos Khrimian noted, was characteristic of Armenian colonies in the diaspora.¹⁰²

Two opposing points of view existed. Some wished to build a new church edifice on a parcel of land; another group favored renovating an existing building.¹⁰³ After much deliberation, they decided to purchase a 5,200-square-foot lot at 61–65 Laurel Street, in a section inhabited mostly by Armenians. The land was bought for \$1,275, and a construction contract with Bigelow Architects was signed for \$6,270. The foundation for the church was laid on July 15, 1890, and construction was completed in January 1891. The overall cost was estimated at \$9,460.60.¹⁰⁴

The consecration day of the first Armenian church in America, January 18, 1891, was bitterly cold and windy. The new church was named the Armenian Church of Our Saviour. In time this church would indeed become the savior of the Worcester Armenians, translating the vital principles of Christianity and ethnic values into the daily lives of the people.

The consecration ceremony itself was most impressive. Father Sarajian, wearing the flowing robes of his office and assisted by the deacons, led the service.¹⁰⁵ The church was filled to capacity, with many Armenians from surrounding cities attending. A reporter from the *Worcester Telegram* described the proceedings:

[Father Sarajian's] sermon was mainly congratulatory of the progress his countrymen had made while in this country. The Church which they were dedicating, he said, was merely a beginning—others were sure to follow.¹⁰⁶

This first consecration of an Armenian church building was indeed a fitting beginning to the long journey that would eventually lead to the establishment of the Armenian diocese in America.

Spiritual Leadership in Dispute: Resignation (1893)

The spiritual pastorate, begun with such enthusiasm in 1889, ceased to exist in 1893 because of individual and factional strife. In the years following 1893, the church in Worcester became the scene of incessant conflict between opposing groups, each desiring to control the leadership of the church and to shape the policies of the community.

Personality clashes and differences in opinion about the church building soon made T'op'hanēlian a violent opponent of the pastor. T'op'hanēlian wrote to Armenian Church headquarters in Constantinople and Ēchmiadzin, belittling Father Sarajian and condemning the work he was doing in Worcester. He also wrote articles in various Armenian periodicals, strongly criticizing Sarajian's efforts to found a church.¹⁰⁷

The planned organization and systemization of church work in Worcester ran into financial difficulties during Father Sarajian's periodic absences on pastoral visitations. The criticism this brought Father Sarajian tarnished his image among the people.

In 1892 the situation came to a breaking point. On May 22, a library was opened adjacent to the church. Father Sarajian emphasized to the Church Trustees and the people that no revolutionary books or periodicals were to be put on the shelves. Despite his warnings, the pastor's words were ignored.

The opening ceremonies for the library were held on August 26, 1892. Father Sarajian did not attend, excusing himself under the pretext of a business trip. He was charged with causing division among the Church Trustees and criticized for his prejudice against Protestants. This bitterness and resentment erupted in a fight on March 27, 1893, between supporters of the pastor and those of the Hnch'ag Party. Local police had to intervene. Reporters were quick to supply exaggerated accounts. The violent confrontation humiliated the Armenians in the eyes of their neighbors. Father Sarajian was publicly disgraced over his role in it.¹⁰⁸

Father Sarajian had already submitted his resignation to the Church Trustees on September 4, 1892. The trustees refused to accept it and moved to invite an assistant pastor to help Father Sarajian. The patriarchate in Constantinople did not seriously consider their request, so the trustees sent another message to Constantinople on August 25, 1893, while Father Sarajian was away. It read, "The Church is closed. The priest is not here. Do you wish to dispatch someone or not?"¹⁰⁹ This time the response was prompt, and a new superior was sent to the United States.

Nothing more clearly reveals the extraordinary humanity of Father Sarajian than his humility and inner greatness. He was simple and affectionate, in both his religious vocation and his personal life. His sermons were delivered in simple words but never lacked inspiration. His love for his people emanated from the depths of his priestly soul. His fatherly concern for his entire flock could only be misinterpreted by those who viewed him through partisan glasses. The spark he kindled was not easily extinguished, even by his departure from the United States. But Sarajian had fallen victim to a period of exaggerated nationalism, in which virtue was often overlooked in favor of ethnocentrism. To an enlightened churchman like Sarajian, it was impossible to compromise Christian virtue with the doubtful ramifications of fanaticism.

But five years later, Father Sarajian was destined to return America—this time as bishop, to initiate the establishment of the Armenian diocese.

The Second Superior: Father Maghak'ia Dērounian (1894–1897)

Father Dērounian's pastorate was marked by turmoil, both in the homeland and in the Armenian communities of the United States. It spawned the Great Massacres of 1894–1896, which brought hordes of new Armenian immigrants to the United States. The internal problems, quarrels, and controversies confronting Father Sarajian continued to plague Father Dērounian. Father Dērounian's tenure saw the Worcester church shifting its allegiance from the Patriarchate of Constantinople to Ēchmiadzin. His pastorate is generally considered unsuccessful. Information concerning it is limited.

Election and Arrival

From among three nominees for the pastorate of Worcester, Father Maghak'ia Dērounian was selected by the Religious Council of the Patriarchate to assume the pastoral mission in the United States. The Church Trustees of Worcester gave their approval to his election on October 22, 1893. This was verified by the Mixed Assembly of the Patriarchate on November 23, 1893, and Father Dērounian thus became the Second Superior of the Spiritual Pastorate of the United States.¹¹⁰

Father Dērounian was born in 1846 in Diarbekir, Turkey. He received his religious training at Saint James Monastery in Jerusalem between 1866 and 1871, when he was ordained a celibate priest. Before his arrival in the United States, he had held administrative posts in the dioceses of Cyprus (1873–1874); Baghdad, Iraq (1874–1880); Malatia, Turkey (1883–1884); and Aleppo, Syria (1887–1889).¹¹¹

A telegram dated February 27, 1894, informed the Worcester parish that Father Dērounian would arrive in New York soon. Upon his arrival in New York, Father Dērounian was welcomed by community leaders, among them Dr. A. Ayyvazian, H. T'awshanjian, and H. Arshagouni. Father Sarajian undertook the responsibility of officially introducing Father Dērounian to the Church Trustees of Worcester on March 28, 1894.¹¹²

The Friends of Armenia

The start of the Armenian massacres of 1894–1896 coincided with Father Dērounian's arrival in Worcester. The massacres sent a wave of horror throughout the civilized world. A Committee of Inquiry was appointed by the signatories of the Berlin Conference. This committee began its investigation, but the massacres

continued into 1896. In August of that year, the Bank Ottoman in Galata, a section of Constantinople, was captured by Armenian revolutionaries, a desperate move calculated to dramatize for the world the nation's plight. Meanwhile, Armenian blood continued to be shed in the streets of Constantinople.

As news of the massacres reached the world, a society called the Friends of Armenia was organized under the leadership of Julia Ward Howe, an advocate and champion of great causes of human liberty. The intent of the society was to disseminate information about Armenians by means of the American press.¹¹³ Another sympathizer was Alice Stone Blackwell, who headed the Press Committee, which distributed leaflets regarding Armenian affairs.¹¹⁴ As Armenian refugees continued to arrive in Massachusetts, Miss Blackwell worked diligently to aid them in finding employment and adjusting to their new life. According to Annie C. Marshall:

Miss Blackwell used all her powers of pen and voice in pleading for the martyred people. At last her name became so obnoxious to the Sultan of Turkey that he bracketed it with Mr. Gladstone's and ordered that these two names were never to be mentioned in a newspaper.¹¹⁵

The Friends of Armenia labored assiduously to induce America to intervene on behalf of the Armenians. Mass meetings were organized in major American cities, and American lay and religious leaders condemned the Ottoman atrocities. But America hesitated to act alone in the matter. Father Dērounian was criticized by many for his absence from the mass meetings of protest against Turkey. His silence was due to his fear that such action might result in retaliation against the Patriarchate in Istanbul. Some Armenians in America argued that his cautious stance made him unfit to serve as pastor.¹¹⁶

Transfer of the Spiritual Jurisdiction from Constantinople to Ēchmiadzin

With time, the rift among the people over Dērounian's silence widened, with detrimental effects on the life of the church in Worcester. On August 11, 1895, the trustees officially requested that the patriarchate send them an assistant pastor. They favored Bishop Eznig Abahouni, known for his revolutionary sympathies. The response from the patriarchate instructed them to be patient a while longer.¹¹⁷

One Church Trustee, Minas Aroyian, visited the Church headquarters in Constantinople and Ēchmiadzin to discuss the situation in America. He wished to seek their assistance in the effective supervision of the pastorate of America.¹¹⁸ We know few details about this trip or its outcome.

Father Dērounian resigned on September 17, 1896. The Church Trustees

appealed to the Holy See of Ēchmiadzin for a new pastor, alleging that “the pastors from Turkey were pro-Turkish, while the bishops from Ēchmiadzin were nationalistic and linguistic.”¹¹⁹ As a result of this request, the diocese of America came under the jurisdiction of the Holy See of Ēchmiadzin.¹²⁰

The Patriarch of Constantinople, Archbishop Maghak‘ia Ōrmanian, was instrumental in transferring the supervision of the Worcester church to Ēchmiadzin. In his monumental work, *Azkaḅadoun* (“History of the Nation”), Archbishop Ōrmanian characterizes the atmosphere of the times and relates the problems of his administration under Sultan Hamid.¹²¹ New problems and concerns were created for the Church by the vastly increasing number of immigrants who took refuge in Europe and America after the massacres of 1894–1896. These refugees were mostly residents of Turkish Armenia, and consequently their spiritual needs were administered to by the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople. With the influx of immigrants into European and American Armenian colonies, political leaders carried on their anti-Ottoman propaganda from their new homes. Sultan Hamid tried to persuade Patriarch Ōrmanian to use the powers of his office to quell the activities of these revolutionaries, or, at least, to minimize their influence among the people. The patriarch wished to avoid such political involvement, so he replied to the sultan that as patriarch of Armenians within the Ottoman Empire, he had no authority over Armenians living outside the empire. Meanwhile, he had already informed the Catholicos Mgrdich‘ I Khrimian in Ēchmiadzin that because of the sultan’s policies it was difficult for him to minister properly to the needs of Armenians in Europe and America. Thus Patriarch Ōrmanian invited his superior in Ēchmiadzin to take charge of the new parishes of Europe and America. Political wisdom dictated a clear course of action.

Catholicos Khrimian responded positively to Patriarch Ōrmanian’s suggestion and elevated the spiritual pastorates of Europe and America to the level of a diocesan establishment, claiming the right of spiritual jurisdiction over them.¹²²

The End of Father Dērounian’s Pastorate

Ēchmiadzin was notified of Father Dērounian’s resignation. The Church Trustees requested that the Catholicos dispatch Bishop Khorēn Sdep‘anē as spiritual superior to the United States. A telegram was sent to Catholicos Khrimian reading, “*Yegeghets ‘in Pagvaz a. Badaskhanir*” (“The church is closed. Reply.”)¹²³ However, no answer came from Ēchmiadzin; the trustees then requested that Father Dērounian remain for another two months, not in the capacity of a “superior primate,” but as a locum tenens. The council informed him, “We have received your resignation and hereafter you are relieved from your pastoral office, after a period of two months.”¹²⁴

At a meeting of the Church Trustees on February 28, 1897, an angry and indignant mood prevailed among the members. There still had been no reply from Ēchmiadzin. Another cable was dispatched, reiterating the need for a bishop in Worcester. Acknowledgment finally came from the Catholicos: “I have designated Father Masht‘ots‘ as superior. Forward the travel expenses.”¹²⁵ Other communities were informed of the cable and were asked to contribute toward the travel costs of the new pastor.

As the pastorate of the second superior, Father Dērounian, reached its close, it became apparent that disputes and bitter quarrels had again caused its failure. The immigrant community lacked both wisdom and education to contend with the situation. Nevertheless, it was enthusiastic as it prepared to receive its third superior—one who was said to be both learned and spiritually gifted.

The Third Superior: Father Masht'ots' P'ap'azian (1897–1898)

The period of Father P'ap'azian's pastorate was one of intense rivalry between lay and clerical leaders. Even more disturbing was the incessant struggle fought among the clergy themselves. The difficulties in the administration of the church stemmed from the fact that the duties of lay and clerical personnel were ill-defined. Old World politics and loyalties threatened the religious life of the communities, especially when the clergy themselves became involved in political disputes. This period witnessed growing political influence in ecclesiastical matters and the creation of ambitious schemes by Armenian political parties to control the church.

Father P'ap'azian was born in Van, Turkey; the year is not known. His father, Mesrob, served as priest of the local church. His brother, Vrt'anēs, was a well-known writer, and another brother, Vahan, was a prominent Tashnag leader. Father P'ap'azian studied at the Seminary of Armash in Turkey, graduating in 1896, and was ordained a priest by Archbishop Ōrmanian. Before his arrival in America in 1897 he had served as locum tenens of Bulgaria.¹²⁶

Father P'ap'azian's pastorate in America proved turbulent. His sympathies for the Tashnag Party made him unpopular with non-Tashnag Armenians. In 1906 he resigned from the priesthood, and two years later he left for Constantinople, where he became editor of a Tashnag newspaper, *Azadamard*. During the massacre of 1915, he shared the fate of other intellectuals, becoming a victim of the killings.

Beginning amid Obstacles

At a Church Trustees meeting on June 2, 1897, Father Maghak'ia Dērounian was officially replaced by Father Masht'ots' P'ap'azian.¹²⁷ At Father P'ap'azian's insistence, it was agreed that Father Dērounian should stay in Worcester for another month in order to help the new pastor adjust to his new responsibilities.

It was at this time that several celibate and lay priests (married priests)¹²⁸ arrived from Constantinople. Among them were Father Vahram Msrlan, Father Sdep'an Sdep'anian, Father Khat Markarian, Father Vaghinag Sisagian, and Father Aharon Melk'onian. During the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, June 13, 1897, Father P'ap'azian read the pontifical encyclical of Catholicos Khirmian, designating him "General Pastor." Father P'ap'azian expressed his wish to write a letter of gratitude to the Catholicos on behalf of the community of Worcester. However, the Church Trustees opposed this desire, because the Catholicos had failed to send them a bishop, whose presence, they thought, would have helped

unify the Armenian communities scattered throughout the United States. The Church Trustees protested that the independent pastorate of Father Vaghinag Sisagian in Providence, Rhode Island, established by Catholicos Khrimian, might set a precedent for other independent communities in America and impede the central authority of Worcester. They asked the pastor to write a letter of gratitude to the Catholicos that would also illustrate their anxieties over the situation and needs of the community.¹²⁹ They also asked Father P'ap'azian to communicate with various communities in the United States and strengthen the ties between them. The pastor announced his wish to convene a national assembly with the participation of representative delegates for the preparation of jurisdictional bylaws to be presented to His Holiness for ratification.

It was agreed that the pastor would make pastoral visits, notifying the communities of his intent by letter.¹³⁰ As his credentials he carried with him the encyclical of the Catholicos. A portion of it loosely defined the nature and extent of the superior's jurisdiction, a matter which later proved fatal to his pastorate.

Rapprochement with the Armenian Protestants

In a report to the Church Trustees, Father P'ap'azian commented upon his visits to the Armenians in Brighton, Boston, Chelsea, and Maiden. He stated his liberal views on religious and social issues, and the people responded positively by electing trustees for local parishes and conducting a fund-raising campaign for the Worcester church.¹³¹ However, at a meeting held on July 1, 1897, in Worcester, the Church Trustees voiced their disapproval of the pastor's approach to the Armenian Protestants. They believed that the Protestants should not be allowed to participate in the affairs of the Armenian church, nor should they be elected to any office of the church, especially that of Church Trustee, as had happened in Malden.¹³²

Father P'ap'azian offered the following reasons in defense of his position:

1. The question of the relationship with the Protestants should be determined by the liberal spirit of the Armenian Church. It is purely a canonical matter and out of the sphere of the Church Trustees' responsibility.
2. Violent intolerance in Worcester is illustrated by the bitter quarrels, misunderstandings, and prejudices exercised by both sides. These separatist sentiments, inherited from the Middle Ages, and religious controversies must recede if everyone is to take part in Armenian national affairs as brothers.
3. In communities where there were no church organizations in existence, Armenians gathered without regard to any denominational difference to pray, sing, and preach only as Armenians. This system of tolerance, he

explained, is necessary for minorities in a land known as the “melting pot.” Most Armenians in Maiden were Protestants, but in spite of this they had accepted his invitation to come to a meeting. They agreed to organize their own community life under the supervision of the Armenian church in Worcester and conduct religious services every Sunday, singing hymns and reciting prayers of the Armenian Church. He concluded by adding that the mere fact that three members of the trustees were born Protestant did not make them guilty. These men were willing to abide by the rules of the Armenian Church.¹³³

On September 25, 1897, an extraordinary assembly took place in Worcester concerning protests voiced against P‘ap‘azian by Boston Armenians. Father P‘ap‘azian had allegedly approved the election of nine Protestant trustees in Boston, from a total of twelve. The trustees loudly condemned Father P‘ap‘azian’s activities and his “strange and heretical” policy, which was detrimental to the best interests of the Armenian Church. They further accused the pastor of attempting to force on them the presence of Protestant ministers at their regular meetings and rousing the people against them. The Church Trustees felt that the time had come to present their case to the public and to end the farce that was just another manifestation of what they called Father P‘ap‘azian’s theatrical genius.

Mik‘ayēl T‘op‘hanēlian was delegated by the Church Trustees to travel to Boston and to gather information concerning this problem.¹³⁴ He reported that the allegations concerning the matter were all true. Thirty-five Armenians, both Orthodox and Protestants, had participated in the elections. Nine out of twelve elected trustees were indeed Protestants, and of the remaining three, the religious loyalty of one, G. Selian, was uncertain. Most of the elected were avowedly anti-Orthodox, a fact well known to Father P‘ap‘azian while in Boston. T‘op‘hanēlian also reported that P‘ap‘azian had conducted negotiations with Protestant missionaries and had reached an agreement with them, pending approval of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. He did not see the actual document, but according to reliable sources the board would assign seven Protestant ministers to work among the Armenians. During Protestant services, the people would be permitted to sing Armenian Church chants, and in orthodox Armenian Divine Liturgy services, Armenian Protestant hymns could be sung. According to this document, whenever and wherever an Armenian clergyman conducted a church service, he was to be accompanied by a Protestant minister who would deliver the sermon. Also, no Armenian clergyman would be allowed to visit a parish unless he first notified one of the seven ministers. T‘op‘hanēlian concluded:

We must always be on guard for no one really knows what this priest’s next

move will be. If we reject his suggestions, we will be at odds with him. If we accept his innovative doctrines, the people and the Church will be imperiled. Father Masht'ots' is using his staff to crush the Armenian Church with one blow, thereby introducing new and strange heresies into our fold which have no other design but to create chaos in our beloved Church.¹³⁵

Bishop Moushegh Seropian, a classmate of P'ap'azian, considered this report by T'op'hanēlian grossly exaggerated. He deemed that the situation arose because of Father P'ap'azian's youth and his excessive zeal for serving his people.¹³⁶ But the incident deepened the rift between the pastor and the Church Trustees. Evidently this was more a clash of personalities than a quarrel within the community itself. If it made T'op'hanēlian a target of public contempt, it also threatened Father P'ap'azian's spiritual leadership. The pastor's well-intentioned but impractical and hasty decisions marked the beginning of his end.

Rift between Pastor and Church Trustees

This secret feud between the pastor and the Church Trustees mounted, awaiting only the opportune time to erupt and incite hate, rage, and ridicule. The chairman of the trustees, T'op'hanēlian, assailed his opponents with bitter invective. On the other hand, the pastor's personal vindictiveness drove away many whose support he might otherwise have won by conciliation. The alienation of the individuals responsible for the church hall further inflamed the situation. The trustees appointed a committee of twelve of the pastor's opponents for the maintenance of the church hall. The pastor, as president, went on record with his objections to the appointments. The enraged chairman addressed the recording secretary, saying that the president had no right to speak during the meeting; the only role he was to play was that of a mediator.¹³⁷ A heated argument ensued, leading to a debate as to whether Father Masht'ots' was the General Superior of America or simply the pastor of the Worcester church. The matter was tabled until the next meeting.

The debate was continued on August 31, 1897. The chairman stated that he considered the pastor an official of the Church and president of the Church Trustees, not a member entitled to voice his opinions or cast a vote. He added that the pastor was accorded all due respect and honor by allowing him to occupy a chair, but that he could simply act as a mediator and vote only in case of a tie. The pastor rebutted him, declaring that no resolution could be settled without his confirmation and that the Church Trustees could not pass any decision without first consulting him.¹³⁸

The pastor excused himself from attending a meeting held on September 2, 1897, instead submitting a letter to the trustees in which he requested a final decision and settlement of the issues discussed at the previous meetings. The

consensus among the trustees was that before a resolution could be passed, the pastor should be consulted and given the opportunity to voice his views. At another meeting two weeks later, it was learned that the pastor had forwarded a letter to the chairman, in which he declared that henceforth he considered himself relieved of the duty of presiding over meetings. He also wrote that he was no longer obligated to work with the Church Trustees and preferred to work independently. The trustees notified the Catholicos of these events. Two of them, Hagop Kazanjian and Minas Aroyan, were delegated to meet privately with P'ap'azian to ease the tensions between him and the trustees.¹³⁹ On October 14, 1897, the two delegates reported the failure of their mission. In order to bring an end to their unfortunate situation, the Church Trustees resolved to resign corporately, leaving the burden of their responsibilities on the pastor.

The trustees notified the Catholicos and the Armenian newspapers, both in America and abroad, of their resignation. The pastor was denounced for his selfish ambition and his pretension in regarding himself as the General Superior of America rather than merely the pastor of Worcester, as he was named in the encyclical of the Catholicos.¹⁴⁰

Meanwhile, the pastor pursued another course. He took his case directly to the public, blaming the Church Trustees for all the discord and animosity in Worcester. At a Membership Meeting on October 10, 1897, the allegations of the Church Trustees were rejected. The Membership Meeting elected an investigating committee to study both sides of the issue and report its findings to the assembly.

Between October 11 and October 29, the investigating committee examined the situation, met with the respective parties, and submitted its findings to the Membership Meeting. Before the tribunal, Father P'ap'azian appeared as the plaintiff and the Church Trustees as the defendant. The committee reported on the three different sessions of its investigation. At the first session, on October 11, they had requested the minutes of meetings from the pastor and the Church Trustees. The trustees had refused to submit minutes. On October 14, during the second session, a letter from the secretary of the Church Trustees had informed the committee that no records would be sent. If they wished further explanations they must appear at a meeting of the Church Trustees. At the final session on October 14, the investigating committee had listened to the complaints of the pastor. The Church Trustees did not participate. The conclusions of the committee were as follows:

1. That both the pastor and the Church Trustees were guilty because they concealed their breach, which had occurred on September 10, from the public.
2. That the Church Trustees had attempted to control the pastor and his duties

as Superior General. The chairman had resorted to every means to create scandals within the community. Thus the Church Trustees were responsible for being anticonstitutional and for being accomplices of the chairman. The discriminatory references made by Krikor Boyajian and Khacha'adour Harout'wnian were of an unrepeatable nature.

3. That the pastor was oversensitive in submitting his resignation.
4. That the Church Trustees never cooperated with the investigating committee but rather created many obstacles. The pastor was most cooperative and behaved courteously, honorably, and gracefully. The committee dismissed Mik'ayēl T'op'hanēlian and Krikor Boyajian from Armenian affairs and ostracized them as men of unworthy, notorious, and questionable character.¹⁴¹

The Membership Meeting forthwith dissolved the Church Trustees.

This was the situation when the newly elected Church Trustees received the encyclical from the Catholicos concerning these latest affairs on August 19, 1897. The encyclical was read in church and was also published in Armenian newspapers. It referred to Father P'ap'azian as "spiritual pastor of the Armenians of Worcester and its surroundings."¹⁴² In order to prevent a recurrence of similar misunderstandings between the pastor and future Church Trustees regarding the pastor's jurisdiction, the encyclical clearly advised the former:

It is your duty and calling to serve as the pastor of the town of Worcester and its surroundings outside the jurisdiction of Father Vaghinag. You shall have as your permanent residence the town of Worcester, where the Church of Our Saviour is located. You are free and duty-bound periodically to visit those areas outside the jurisdiction of the rest of the clergy as the need arises, in particular to administer sacraments.¹⁴³

The encyclical had little or no effect. In spite of all efforts to end the deplorable situation in the church, matters remained relatively unchanged. One meeting followed another, but to no avail. Men of goodwill and impartial standpoint were asked to mediate. The newly elected Church Trustees and the pastor were still divided over the matter of pastor jurisdiction, and no remedy seemed to be forthcoming. At a meeting on December 15, 1897, Baghdasar T'ashjian, a trustee opposed to the pastor, thunderously accused P'ap'azian of disruptive and meddlesome activities. Then T'ashjian, Hagop Kazanjian, and Minas Aroyian announced their resignations from the trustees and left the meeting. Once again the trustees faced a deadlock. Hopes for reconciliation had disappeared, and Church affairs were in a degenerating.

On May 15, 1898, the pastor spoke pessimistically and hopelessly of the prolonged divisiveness in the church and emphasized the need to trust in God for an end to the conflict. However, the solution lay far beyond the group of the pastor and trustees. A decade had passed since the building of the first immigrant church. New responsibilities and demands confronted the church. A new and larger establishment was required for the religious community. This need eventually led to the evolution of the church into a diocesan establishment.

The Finale

As a last resort, Father P'ap'azian asked Father Vaghinag Sisagian of Providence to intervene and mediate an end to the turmoil. On June 2, 1898, Father Sisagian reported that he had contacted several disgruntled individuals in Worcester, including former Church Trustees, who voiced the following complaints and criticism against the pastor:

1. The pastor is a close friend of the Armenian Protestants.
2. The pastor overburdens the treasury with new and unnecessary expenses.
3. The pastor often leaves the church closed because of his visitations to different cities.
4. Most of the pastor's sermons have nationalistic themes and are rarely of a religious nature. Therefore the people attend Protestant churches to hear sermons of a religious content.¹⁴⁴

The Church Trustees requested that Father Sisagian continue his negotiations. A meeting was held on June 3, 1898, at a local restaurant. Fourteen individuals were present, but the pastor's archrival, T'op'hanēlian, was not invited. The unanimous assertion of the opposition was that a permanent peace among the people required the resignation of Father P'ap'azian.¹⁴⁵

On June 6, 1898, Father P'ap'azian announced that he had no intention of leaving his post unless he became convinced that his resignation would result in peace, and until such time as a new pastor was elected to replace him. He further suggested that the resolutions of the October 17, 1897, meeting be nullified. These were the decisions forbidding several individuals from participating in church and community affairs. The Church Trustees consented but remained emphatic on the point that the former chairman, T'op'hanēlian, be cast out from the Armenian community as a demagogue, anarchist, traitor, and impostor. The following postscript by Father P'ap'azian appears at the end of the minutes of the meeting for June 6, 1898:

As an Armenian clergyman, I forgive those who have trespassed against me, abiding with the decisions of the honorable Parish Council and my confirmation of the proceedings of today's session.¹⁴⁶

A telegram from Ēchmiadzin, dated June 24, 1898, prompted an urgent meeting that was convened two days later. The cable, addressed to New York Trustees chairman H. S. T'awshanjian, was forwarded to Worcester. It read:

The Armenians of New York and Worcester have repeatedly requested a bishop for the United States. We have decided to confer the rank of bishop upon Sarajian. Therefore your final and official decision is necessary as to whether Sarajian is acceptable to your two communities. If so, cable us and forward his travel expenses.¹⁴⁷

Upon Father P'ap'azian's suggestion, it was decided that the consent of Father Sisagian and the community of Providence first be obtained, because of the importance of the matter. The majority of the one hundred people in attendance at the meeting favored the passage of a resolution on the issue. Those who were absent would be polled for their opinion. However, those at the meeting failed to reach a decision, because one group insisted that it was unconstitutional to have only the Armenians of Worcester vote upon the election of a Primate for the entire United States. They demanded that an election of national impact must be conducted on a national scale by a convention representing major cities throughout the nation.

Another faction believed that they were merely expected to answer the telegram, and it was not their place to question the validity of the law nor to contest the will of the Catholicos. No decision was reached, but it was agreed to reconvene that evening. Only forty-two people out of the five hundred members of the church appeared for the meeting. Overwhelmingly, the assembly reaffirmed the need for a bishop in the person of the Most Reverend Hovsēp' Sarajian. The meeting was then adjourned.¹⁴⁸ Father P'ap'azian and Father Sisagian jointly wired Ēchmiadzin, "We plead with you to await our letters concerning the General Bishop Superior."¹⁴⁹

On July 17, 1898, Father P'ap'azian addressed the Membership Meeting, reflecting on the experiences of his pastorate, and especially his material, intellectual, and moral defeats. He revealed that, on June 19, 1898, he had submitted his resignation to the Catholicos. It was now up to the people of Worcester to determine whether they wished him to remain until the arrival of the new pastor. If they desired him to remain, certain requirements had to be met. These included a salary of forty dollars, relief from administrative duties, involvement only in ecclesiastical matters, and one day a week for visitations, house calls, and other religious duties. If these were not suitable to them, then there was but one choice

for him—to depart from Worcester immediately, leaving the care of the church to the trustees and the people, and his own future to destiny. The Church Trustees were notified of Father P'ap'azian's resignation in a letter of August 9, 1898. The trustees unanimously accepted the resignation, deeming his departure from Worcester most beneficial at that time.¹⁵⁰

The church was left in a total state of chaos. The community was without moral and spiritual guidance. Uncertainty loomed over the immigrant community. Antagonism, conflict, ignorance, and hatred were at work among them. Matters were at such a low ebb that to maintain the church, the community of nearly a thousand had to turn to the *jamagoch*, the custodian, to borrow fifty dollars.¹⁵¹

Yet hope had not completely vanished. The immigrants learned from the Marseilles-based weekly *Armenia* that Hovsēp' Sarajian, who had once come to America as a priest, was now returning as a bishop to lay the foundations of a diocesan establishment. He appeared to be the only solace for the bereaved and scattered immigrant colonies and the panacea for their ills. In a remarkable reversal, the minutes of the Church Trustees meeting observe that “our gratitude is boundless toward our God-ordained Catholicos Hayrig (Father), who has heeded our pleas and has granted us our own leader.”¹⁵² This reversal was probably motivated by a deep sense of reverence toward the Catholicos. The insight with which the pontiff at Ēchmiadzin had solved the acute problems of the Armenian-American community instilled them with ever greater respect than before.

The Armenian Church in Providence: The Beginnings (1897–1899)

The Armenian community in Providence, Rhode Island, dates back to the late 1870s, when several immigrants came to settle in this industrial city, finding employment in jewelry, textile, machine, and tool-manufacturing firms. By the late 1890s, some five hundred Armenians had arrived in Providence and surrounding towns.¹⁵³ The pioneers of the community were Melk'on Markarian, Asadour Mavian, and Mesrob Ėvarian. Among these early settlers was Dikran Khohararian, a native of Diarbekir, Turkey, who settled in Providence in 1885. His familiarity with English helped him secure manufacturing jobs for other immigrants. With the increase in immigration to Providence in the 1890s, Armenian religious, charitable, cultural, and political organizations began to sprout up.¹⁵⁴

Father Sarajian, the first spiritual pastor of Armenians in America, had occasionally visited Providence since September 1889.¹⁵⁵ He held services in rented halls there. As the community grew, the need for a permanent pastor became apparent. The Providence community appealed to the pontiff at Ėchmiadzin and the Patriarch of Constantinople. The first parochial organization of Armenians in Providence was handed by Father Vaghinag Sisagian of Constantinople. His pastorate began on May 30, 1897, and ended with his death in 1899.¹⁵⁶

Father Sisagian was born in Nor Kiwgh, a suburb of Bursa, Turkey, with the name Eghia.¹⁵⁷ He attended the Armenian seminaries in Sis, Turkey, and Jerusalem. In 1882 he was ordained by Bishop Ghewont Shishmanian, Primate of Giwrin, Turkey.¹⁵⁸ On May 15, 1896, Father Sisagian was assigned to Saint Kēork Church in Samatia, a suburb of Constantinople.¹⁵⁹ During his tenure in Samatia he won popularity as a dynamic preacher. He was also actively involved in underground activities of the Armenian revolutionaries.¹⁶⁰ To escape the Hamidean Massacre of Constantinople in August 1896, Father Sisagian was forced to seek refuge in Bulgaria.¹⁶¹ During his stay in Romania, he received an invitation from the Church Trustees of Providence to serve as their pastor. The invitation was confirmed by Catholicos Mgrdich' I Khrimian.

Father Sisagian arrived in Providence on May 30, 1897. His pastorate coincided with the period of the third spiritual pastorate of America, when Father Dērounian was replaced by Father Masht'ots' P'ap'azian.

Father Sisagian celebrated his first Mass on June 6, 1897, in Diamond Hall. His first task as pastor of Providence was the formation of a new twelve-member board of Church Trustees on June 13, 1897.¹⁶² Those elected were Awedis Dērōyian, Bōghos Alajian, Bōghos Eaghjian, Setrag Soghigian, Khach'adour Sahagian,

Kalousd Bōrch‘agian, Zak‘ar Sarkisian, T‘ovmas Jēlalian, Kasbar Parechanian, Garabed Paraghamian, Setrag Samourian, and Moushegh Maksoudian. Kalousd Bōrch‘agian was made chairman. On June 18, the outgoing Church Trustees transferred the church records and treasury (containing \$12.78) to the new trustees.¹⁶³

As Armenian activities increased, the people of Providence felt the necessity for a community center to accommodate their needs. Consequently, the Church Trustees rented a hall on Exchange Place in Providence.¹⁶⁴ However, they encountered numerous financial difficulties and had to appeal to the surrounding communities of Pawtucket, Woonsocket, Central Falls, Fall River, and even Hartford and New Britain, Connecticut, for assistance.¹⁶⁵ The Church Trustees decided that Father Sisagian would celebrate the Divine Liturgy every other Sunday morning and that the hall would be used in the evenings for lectures. On the other two Sundays of each month, Father Sisagian was to visit the surrounding towns under the jurisdiction of the Providence parish.¹⁶⁶

The appointment of Father Masht‘ots‘ P‘ap‘azian to the Armenian church in Worcester in March 1897 created friction between him and Father Sisagian over jurisdictional matters.¹⁶⁷ The Catholicos had not designated any clear-cut lines of authority, and consequently, as noted earlier, Father P‘ap‘azian regarded his appointment as that of spiritual pastor of all Armenian communities in the United States. But Father Sisagian considered his own pastorate to be independent of Father P‘ap‘azian’s jurisdiction.¹⁶⁸ To resolve their differences, both clergymen appealed to Catholicos Khrimian. On September 25, 1897, the Catholicos notified Father P‘ap‘azian that his authority extended only to the parish of Worcester and its surrounding communities and that Father Sisagian held jurisdiction over those areas already assigned to him—that is, Providence and its surrounding communities.

A meeting on November 7 in Worcester sought to settle differences on various aspects of the religious and administrative life of the church. It was attended by Fathers P‘ap‘azian, Sisagian, and Markarian. There it was decided to divide the Armenian diocese into four jurisdictional areas: Father P‘ap‘azian’s authority extended over the state of Massachusetts; Father Sisagian’s over Rhode Island; Father Markarian’s over Chicago; and Father Melk‘onian’s over Fresno. New York State was to be divided equally between Fathers Sisagian and P‘ap‘azian.¹⁶⁹

The church in Providence assisted the sick, poor, and needy of its community, though on a limited scale. Financial support was also extended to orphanages, refugees, hospitals, and schools in the homeland.

Religious life in the Providence community was curtailed shortly after it began. Father Sisagian, who had been ailing for some time, was stricken with a heart seizure on July 5, 1899, and hospitalized four days later. He died at midnight on July 14. Funeral services at the Evangelical Church in Providence were attended

by Bishop Sarajian, Primate of the Armenian Church. Father Sisagian was laid to rest in North Burial Cemetery. It was not until 1937, however, that a humble tombstone was erected on his grave, mainly through the efforts of Father Zkōn Ch'arkhoujian.¹⁷⁰ The seed of the church planted by Father Sisagian did not grow to maturity until 1913, when Armenian immigrants were finally able to own their church building in Providence.¹⁷¹

Other Parishes

In the years preceding the establishment of the Diocese of the Armenian Church in the United States, the communities of Worcester and Providence had organized themselves into church parishes. Both had their own place of worship and pastor and served as the prototypes for other parishes throughout the United States. In addition to these two, other parishes were in the making. Although they had no church building of their own, their religious needs were administered by Armenian pastors, who conducted services in local Episcopal churches. Such parishes were Boston, Massachusetts, and Manchester, New Hampshire (under Father Khat Markarian); Lowell and Lawrence, Massachusetts (under Father Sdep'an Dēr Sdep'anian); New York City and West Hoboken, New Jersey (under Father Vahram Msrlian); and Fresno, California (under Father Aharon Melk'onian). These pastors were assisted in their work by local Church Trustees.

Whenever requested, these clergymen also visited other Armenian communities that had no local Armenian church or organized Church Trustees. They encouraged the local Armenians to organize themselves into ecclesiastical bodies and to secure their own permanent pastor.

The individual histories of these parishes will be presented in the chapters devoted to the periods in which their church buildings were consecrated.

Notes

⁷⁵ John Aroian, mimeographed article, Arlington, MA, November 1972.

⁷⁶ Information concerning the early church in Worcester and the activities of the first two spiritual pastors, Sarajian and Dērounian, is lacking because of the loss of church documents. This is further complicated by the unavailability of Armenian-language papers.

⁷⁷ Arshag Mahdesian, "Armenia, Her Culture and Aspirations," *New Armenian*, XIV (March–April, 1922), pp. 23–26; (May–June, 1922), pp. 43–45.

⁷⁸ *Amerigahay Kaghout'ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*, "Amerigahay Darets'oyts'ē" ("The Armenian-American Yearbook") (Boston: Cilicia Press, 1913), pp. 48–49.

⁷⁹ John Aroian, mimeographed article, Arlington, MA, November 1972.

⁸⁰ Manoug K. Jizmējian, *Badmout'iwn Amerigahay K'aghak'agan Gousagts'out'eants'* ("History of Armenian-American Political Parties") (Fresno, CA: Nor Or Press, 1950), pp. 7–8.

⁸¹ Dikran Mgount, *Hay Gghern Amerigayi Mēch* ("Armenian Clergy in America") (New

York: n.p., 1945), pp. 6–7, pp. 114–116.

- ⁸² Jizmējian, *Badmout'awn Amerigahay K'aghak'agan Gousagts'out'eants'*, pp. 8–9; Mgount, *Hay Gghern Amerigayi Mēch*, p. 6; Babalē, “*Veradznount*” (“Renaissance”), *Armenia*, May 23, 1906.
- ⁸³ P'arnag A. Atamian, “*Amerigahay Egeghets'in ew Egeghets'aganout'awnē (1888–1911)*” (“The Armenian Church of America and the Clergy (1888–1911)”), *Amerigahay Darets'oyts'ē*, 1912, p. 106; Jizmējian, *Badmout'awn Amerigahay K'aghak'agan Gousagts'out'eants'*, p. 8; Mgount, *Hay Gghern Amerigayi Mēch*, pp. 6–7; *Dedication of the Cultural Center of the Armenian Church of Our Saviour*, December 8, 1968, Worcester, MA.
- ⁸⁴ Jizmējian, *Badmout'awn Amerigahay K'aghak'agan Gousagts'out'eants'*, p. 9; *Dedication of the Armenian Church of Our Saviour Cultural Center*, December 8, 1968, Worcester, MA.
- ⁸⁵ Although the original document did not survive, it is cited in Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout'ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets'oyts'ē*, 1913, pp. 53–54.
- ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 54–55.
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 61–62; M. T'op'hanēlian, “*T'ght'agts'out'awn*” (“Report”), *P'ounch*, August 1889.
- ⁸⁸ Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout'ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets'oyts'ē*, 1913, p. 57.
- ⁸⁹ The Armenian Union, founded on February 13, 1886, in New York, tried to establish a bond among Armenians in America. See “*Haygagan Miout'awn Hameriga*” (“Armenian Union in America”), *Hayk'*, February 15, 1891, pp. 28–29; Hovhannēs Arshagouni, “*Niw-York'i Haygagan Miout'awn*” (“Armenian Union of New York”), *Arax*, July 14, 1906, pp. 292–293; A. Ayvazian, “*Amerigahay Ėngerayin Gazmagerbout'awnnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets'oyts'ē*, 1912, pp. 170–176.
- ⁹⁰ Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout'ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets'oyts'ē*, 1913, pp. 57–58.
- ⁹¹ K. Pambouk'ian (comp.), “*Niwt'er Amerigahay Kaghout'i Badmout'ean Hamar*” (“Materials Concerning the History of the Armenians of America”), unpublished material (Constantinople: Archives of the National Patriarchate, 1972), p. 1.
- ⁹² Ardēn Ashjian, *Vijagats'oyts' ew Badmout'awn Arachnortagan T'emin Hayots' Amerigayi* (“Statistics and History of the Armenian Diocese of America”) (New York: Lēylēgian Press, 1949), p. 18; Mgount, *Hay Gghern Amerigayi Mēch*, p. 7. Biographical data concerning Father Sarajian's life before his arrival in America is not available. His pastorate, which lasted until 1893, will be treated in Chapter IV. Information on the years between 1894, his departure from America, and 1898, his return, is scanty, except for the fact that he served in the Diocese of Adrbadagan, Persia.
- ⁹³ Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout'ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets'oyts'ē*, 1913, pp. 61–62; T'op'hanēlian, “*T'ght'agts'out'awn*,” *P'ounch*, August 5, 1889.
- ⁹⁴ “A Native Priest among Them,” *Worcester Telegram*, July 29, 1889.
- ⁹⁵ Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout'ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets'oyts'ē*, 1913, p. 62; *Worcester Telegram*, July 29, 1899; *Dedication of the Armenian Church of Our Saviour Cultural Center*, December 8, 1968, Worcester, MA.

- 96 Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout’ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, 1913, p. 67; T’op’hanēlian, *T’gh’t’agts’out’iwn*, *P’ouch*, August 5, 1889.
- 97 Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout’ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, 1913, p. 68; *Dedication of the Armenian Church of Our Saviour Cultural Center*, December 8, 1968, Worcester, MA.
- 98 Atamian, “*Amerigahay Egeghets’in ew Egeghets’aganout’iwnē*,” *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, 1912, p. 107.
- 99 T. J. Lacey, *Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A.*, 2nd ed. (New York: Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 1920), pp. 77–78; Thomas J. Lacey, “Our Armenian Neighbors,” *New Armenia*, XI (January 1919), pp. 1–2.
- 100 Lacey, *Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A.*, p. 80.
- 101 *Dedication of the Armenian Church of Our Saviour Cultural Hall*, December 8, 1968; *Houshamadean Hisnameay Dōnagadarout’ean Sourp P’rgich’ Egeghets’woy Ousdri* (“Jubilee Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Church of Our Saviour”), May 1944, Worcester, MA., p. 42; Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout’ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, 1913, p. 70; “*Veradznount*” (“Renaissance”), *Armenia*, May 23, 1906.
- 102 Khrimian Hayrig, “*Ar Kaght’agan Haygazouns Hameriga*” (“To the Immigrant Armenians of America”), *Gotchnag*, January 1, 1921, p. 28.
- 103 Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout’ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, 1913, p. 70.
- 104 Ibid.
- 105 (pseud.), “*Sourp P’rgich’Egeghets’i Oust’ēr*” (“The Armenian Church of Our Saviour at Worcester”), *Hayk’*, February 1, 1891, p. 24.
- 106 “Only One in This Country,” *Worcester Telegram*, January 19, 1891.
- 107 Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout’ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, 1913, p. 72; T’op’hanēlian, “*T’gh’t’agts’out’iwn*,” *P’ouch*, August 4, 1890.
- 108 “The Priest in the Fight,” *Worcester Telegram*, March 27, 1893. See also “*Ousdri Hayots’ Verchin Tēbk’ern*” (“Recent Events of the Armenians of Worcester”), *Hayk’*, May 1, 1893, pp. 123–126; “*Ousdri Hayots’ Mēch Medz Griv Mē*” (“A Great Melee among the Armenians of Worcester”), *Hayk’*, April 1, 1893, pp. 92–95.
- 109 Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout’ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, 1913, p. 74.
- 110 Ibid., p. 75.
- 111 After a three-year stay in Armenia, Father Dērounian returned to Ēchmiadzin, where he was elevated to the rank of bishop and was designated as Primate of Persia from 1898–1901. From 1903–1908 he retired to Saint James Monastery in Jerusalem. From 1909–1922 he served as preacher in various churches in Constantinople and also as a member of the Religious Council of the American Patriarchate. He died in 1922. Mgrdich’ Aghawnouni, *Miapank’ ew Ayts’elouk’ Hay Erousaghēmi* (“The Congregation and Visitors of Armenian Jerusalem”) (Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1929), pp. 241–242.
- 112 Ibid., p. 98. See also MOUNT, *Hay Gghern Amerigayi Mēch*, p. 8.
- 113 The Friends of Armenia,” *Armenia*, I (October 1904), p. 43.

- 114 “*Dasnameag*” (“Tenth Anniversary”), *Gotchnag*, March 26, 1904, pp. 1373–1374.
- 115 Annie C. Marshall, “The Armenians in America,” *Armenia*, III (April 1907), pp. 41–42.
- 116 Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout’ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, 1913, pp. 98–102.
- 117 “*Amerigahay Egeghets’in ou Egheghets’aganout’iwnē*,” *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, 1912, p. 11.
- 118 Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout’ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, 1913, p. 103; Atamian, “*Amerigahay Egheghets’in ou Egheghets’aganout’iwnē*,” *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, 1912, p. 11.
- 119 Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout’ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, 1913, p. 103.
- 120 Ibid.
- 121 Maghak’ia Ōrmanian, *Azkabadoum* (“History of the Nation”) Vol. III, Book 3 (Beirut: Sevan Press, 1961), cols. 5102–5105.
- 122 Ibid.
- 123 “*Artsanakrouit’iwn*” (“Minutes of the Meetings: 1897–1901 of the Church Trustees of the Armenian Church of Our Saviour”), Worcester, MA, February 7, 1897, p. 3.
- 124 Ibid.
- 125 “*Artsanakrouit’iwn*,” Worcester, MA, February 28, 1897, p. 51; Seropian, “*Amerigahay Khaghout’e ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, 1913, p. 104.
- 126 Maghak’ia Ōrmanian, *Khohk’ ew Khōsk’* (“Thoughts and Reflections”) (Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1929), p. 445.
- 127 “*Artsanakrouit’iwn*,” Worcester, MA, June 2, 1897, p. 15.
- 128 Lay priests are married clergy who are not elevated in the hierarchal structure of the Church and whose services are limited to parish ministry.
- 129 “*Artsanakrouit’iwn*,” Worcester, MA, June 13, 1897, pp. 20–21.
- 130 Ibid., p. 21.
- 131 “*Artsanakrouit’iwn*,” Worcester, MA, June 24, 1897, p. 24.
- 132 “*Artsanakrouit’iwn*,” Worcester, MA, July 1, 1897, pp. 28–29; Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout’ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, 1913, p. 106.
- 133 “*Artsanakrouit’iwn*,” Worcester, MA, July 1, 1897, pp. 28–29.
- 134 “*Artsanakrouit’iwn*,” Worcester, MA, September 25, 1897, p. 59.
- 135 “*Artsanakrouit’iwn*,” Worcester, MA, October 14, 1897, pp. 64–65.
- 136 Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout’ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, 1913, p. 106.
- 137 “*Artsanakrouit’iwn*,” Worcester, MA, August 26, 1897, p. 54; Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout’ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, 1913, p. 107.
- 138 “*Artsanakrouit’iwn*,” Worcester, MA, August 31, 1897, p. 55.
- 139 “*Artsanakrouit’iwn*,” Worcester, MA, September 23–24, 1897, pp. 59–60.
- 140 “*Artsanakrouit’iwn*,” Worcester, MA, October 14, 1897, pp. 62–63; Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout’ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, 1913, p. 107.
- 141 “*Artsanakrouit’iwn*,” Worcester, MA, October 22, 1897, pp. 79–81.

- 142 “*Artsanakrout ‘iwn*,” Worcester, MA, December 12, 1897, p. 123; Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout ‘ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets ‘oyts ‘ē*, 1913, p. 117.
- 143 Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout ‘ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets ‘oyts ‘ē*, 1913, p. 118. Father Vaghinag Sisagian was the pastor of the Providence area.
- 144 “*Artsanakrout ‘iwn*,” Worcester, MA, June 2, 1898, p. 147.
- 145 “*Artsanakrout ‘iwn*,” Worcester, MA, June 6, 1898, p. 148.
- 146 “*Artsanakrout ‘iwn*,” Worcester, MA, June 6, 1897, p. 149.
- 147 Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout ‘ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets ‘oyts ‘ē*, 1913, p. 123; “*Artsanakrout ‘iwn*,” Worcester, MA, June 26, 1897, p. 152.
- 148 “*Artsanakrout ‘iwn*,” Worcester, MA, June 26, 1897, p. 153.
- 149 Ibid.
- 150 “*Artsanakrout ‘iwn*,” Worcester, MA, August 8, 1898, p. 169.
- 151 “*Artsanakrout ‘iwn*,” Worcester, MA, September 18, 1898, p. 180.
- 152 Ibid.
- 153 Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout ‘ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets ‘oyts ‘ē*, 1912, p. 35; *Ardzat ‘eay Hopelean Srpots ‘ T’arkmanch ‘ats ‘ Hayasdaneayts ‘ Egeghets ‘woy P’rawidensi* (“Silver Jubilee of Saint Sahag–Mesrob Church of Providence”), Providence, RI, 1913–1939, p. 4; “*Artsanadedr Sourp T’arkmanch ‘ats ‘ Egeghets ‘woy Hokapartsout ‘ean*” (“Records of the Trustees of the Holy Translators Church”), Providence, RI, June 1897–April 1903.
- 154 Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout ‘ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerisiahay Darets ‘oyts ‘ē*, 1912, pp. 36–52.
- 155 Ibid., p. 36; T’op’hanēlian, “*T’ght ‘agts ‘out ‘iwn*,” *P’ounch*, September 30, 1889.
- 156 “*Mahakoyzh Dēr Vaghinag Dzayrakoyñ Vartabed Sisagiani*” (“Obituary of Very Reverend Father Vaghinag Sisagian”), *Hairenik*, July 22, 1899.
- 157 Biographical data on Father Sisagian is fragmentary. The date of his birth is given as 1851 in Izmit, Turkey, in *Ardzat ‘eay Hopelean*, p. 22.
- 158 Aghawnouni, *Miapank ‘ ew Ayts ‘elouk ‘ Hay Erousaghēmi*, p. 232.
- 159 Letter from Father Vaghinag Sisagian to Very Reverend Father Kapriēl Jēvahirjian, locum tenens of Constantinople, January 8, 1898. Quoted in “*T’ghtagts ‘out ‘iwnner ou Badjēnner Vaghinag Vartabed Sisagiani Goghmēn*” (“Collection of Letters of Father Vaghinag Sisagian”), September 1897–1899, Providence, RI, p. 82.
- 160 “*Mahakoyzh Dēr Vaghinag Dzayrakoyñ Vartabed Sisagiani*,” *Hairenik*, July 22, 1899. According to this article, Father Sisagian supported Tashnag ideology rather than that of other Armenian political organizations. This, however, must be approached with caution, because non-Tashnag sources nowhere criticize Father Sisagian for his political leanings.
- 161 The sultan was enraged because of the capture of the Bank Ottoman in Constantinople by twenty-six Tashnag youth on August 26, 1897. The reason for the capture was to call the attention of European powers to the plight of the Armenians.
- 162 “*Artsanadedr*,” June 1897–April 1903, Providence, RI, p. 1. No mention is made of the use of a church constitution or bylaws for the election proceedings. It is simply stated that the election took place “according to the rules.” It had been upon his

instructions that the trustees had made their choice of Father Sisagian.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁶⁴ *Ardzat‘eay Hopelean*, p. 6. The request of the Armenian Church Trustees to use the facilities of a local Episcopalian church was not received favorably by the authorities of that church.

¹⁶⁵ “*Artsanadedr*,” June 1897–April 1903, Providence, RI, pp. 5–8, 11.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 14. Armenian political organizations were allowed use of the center with no monetary obligations. A collection place was usually circulated. A library was also housed in the building.

¹⁶⁷ Atamian, “*Amerigahay Egeghets‘in ew Egeghets‘aganout‘iwně (1888–1911)*,” *Amerigahay Darets‘oyts‘ě*, 1912, pp. 12–13.

¹⁶⁸ Letter from Father Sisagian to Father Khat Markarian, Boston, October 25, 1897. Quoted in “*T‘ghtagts‘out‘iwnner*,” pp. 56–57.

¹⁶⁹ Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout‘ě ew ir Dzakoumnerě*,” *Amerigahay Darets‘oyts‘ě*, 1913, pp. 109–110, 121–122; letter from Father Sisagian to Catholicos Khrimian, November 8, 1897. Quoted in “*Tght‘agts‘out‘iwnner*,” pp. 68–69.

¹⁷⁰ “*Artsanadedr*,” June 1897–April 1903, Providence, RI, p. 92; *Ardzat‘eay Hopelean*, p. 6.

¹⁷¹ *Ardzat‘eay Hopelean*, pp. 9–12.

**Foundation of the Diocese of the
Armenian Church in America
(1898–1906)**

Beginnings of the Diocesan Organization: First Primate, Bishop Hovsēp‘ Sarajian

A decree issued on July 2, 1898, by Catholicos Khrimian marked the inception of the Diocese of the Armenian Church in the United States.¹⁷² It was patterned after the dioceses of the mother country and was under the direct ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Holy See in Ēchmiadzin, Armenia. Serious problems, such as the growth of immigration, the shortage of clergy, and political rivalries, confronted the Church in those early years and, to a degree, have persisted to the present time.

From the outset, the Armenian Church of America was drawn into passionate “Old World politics” and factionalism. However, a portion of the blame rested with the clergymen. Since their inception, the Armenian political parties had endeavored to reduce the influence of the Church on the people. The Armenian Church had traditionally enjoyed an almost theocratic relationship with its people due to the nation’s frequent periods of political subjugation. The parties, especially in the late 1890s, developed an anticlerical attitude that was inspired by the stance of European revolutionaries. In their anxiety to deprive the Church of a significant role in the community and restrict it to a purely ritual function, they failed to recognize the dangerous ramifications of such a policy. First, the Armenians had no independent or autonomous governmental structure anywhere. Hence, political parties in the diaspora could play no legitimate role in their respective countries of operation. Second, political parties could hardly be considered legally instituted representatives of the Armenian minorities in the diaspora. Hence the political parties could at best play but an artificial role in a cultural enclave in, and subject to, a disinterested foreign country. The Church, however, was the one national institution that could justify its existence and represent its people in any country of the diaspora, Christian or non-Christian.

The undisciplined and presumptuous role of the political parties in the diaspora rapidly took root in the United States. In the absence of established ethnic traditions and institutions in America, the parties were able to take a leading role in the community and entrench against the inevitable growth and establishment of the Church in America. Their opposition to the Church as a rival to their own power accounts for much of the conflict that characterized the American church scene, making it difficult for the Church to develop as an institution.

Bishop Sarajian arrived in the United States on October 7, 1898, to assume his new duties as the first Armenian Primate of the Diocese of America. He spent the

first two weeks in New York, where he celebrated the Divine Liturgy on October 16 in the Church of Saint John Chrysostom, by permission of the Episcopal trustees. During the Divine Liturgy or *Badarak*, Father Khat Markarian, one of the assisting priests, read the *Hayrabedagan Gontag* (“Pontifical Encyclical”) in which Catholicos Khrimian exhorted his children in the following words:

I have examined [Sarajian] and found him to be qualified and appropriate as pastoral leader of America, for which reason I have elevated him to the rank of bishop and titled him Primate of the Armenians in America. Therefore, you displaced Armenians in America, heed the call of your courageous leader, follow his leadership, discharge his beneficial biddings, and mark his counsel.¹⁷³

Bishop Sarajian arrived in Worcester on October 23, 1898. By establishing a diocese in the United States, in place of the spiritual pastorate, the Holy See was ensuring the successful continuation of the immigrant church.

Reorganization of the Armenian Church of Our Saviour in Worcester

The new Primate faced numerous problems: poor church attendance, religious apathy, secularism, shortage of pastors, and financial difficulties.

The first Membership Meeting of the Worcester parish was convened on October 1, 1898. It was attended by delegates from the surrounding towns of Worcester County and the Blackstone Valley, which fell under the jurisdiction of the Worcester parish. Primate Sarajian introduced a set of bylaws consisting of seven headings and forty articles dealing primarily with administration and procedure.¹⁷⁴

The need for a new pastor to replace Father Masht’ots’ P’ap’azian was raised. It was decided not to appeal overseas for a pastor, because Garabed Martougēsian, an Armenian Protestant preacher in America, had expressed a desire to return to the fold of the Armenian Church. Consequently, Martougēsian was ordained into the diaconate on October 8 and into the sacred priesthood on October 15. This was the first priestly ordination of the Armenian Church in America.¹⁷⁵

To make full use of the facilities of the church, and as a source of income, it was decided to rent the church hall to various Armenian organizations for their functions, on the condition that lectures or gatherings must not conflict with the moral and religious welfare of the community.¹⁷⁶ It was also decided that no political organization should be allowed to use the hall, because the bitter quarreling and fighting that characterized most of their meetings was an embarrassment to the Armenian Church and community. Exceptions would be made only if the political

organizations agreed to hold a function under the supervision of the committee overseeing the hall. The Primate consented to this arrangement. It prompted activities on the part of the Primate's opponents that eventually forced Sarajian to submit his resignation.

First Clergy Conference (1901)

The first Clergy Conference, convened by the Primate, on June 4–5, 1901, was an important event of the diocese's formative years. Of some twelve priests living in America at the time, those who attended the conference were the Reverend Fathers Ghewont Martougēsian of Worcester, Sahag Nazarēt'ian of New York, Arsēn Vehouni of Lawrence, Masht'ots' P'ap'azian of Boston, and Subdeacon P'arnag Atamian, a student from the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge.¹⁷⁷

The first order of business was the reading of the Pontifical Encyclical issued on July 2, 1898, concerning the elevation of the spiritual pastorate of America to the status of a diocese. The clergy were concerned with locating candidates for the priesthood who could serve for various communities. The priests drew up a preliminary draft of the Constitution of the Armenian Church in America, consisting of eighty-two articles.¹⁷⁸

A major area of concern was the clergy's role, their duties, and their assignment to parishes. Some clergymen possessed insufficient certification; others had been defrocked but were still exercising the priestly office and still traveling in various cities, causing administrative problems for the newly established diocese.¹⁷⁹ Catholicos Khrimian issued an encyclical on October 9, 1901, ordering the immediate retirement of clerics who were not officially bound to the diocese.¹⁸⁰

For a number of years, the shortage of qualified priests constituted the single greatest concern for the Armenian Church in America. Often clerical prestige suffered, as well as the prestige of the Church, whose decrees came to be ignored by the people. However, men of great respect and dedication supported the Church in her early days of organization and helped bring it through the early years of struggle.

First Diocesan Convention (1902)

The first Diocesan Convention of the Diocese of America was convened by Bishop Sarajian in Worcester on June 12, 1902. The primary issue was the presentation of the draft constitution for the diocese based on the preliminary constitution drafted by the Clergy Conference of 1901.¹⁸¹ The newly drafted constitution consisted of ten headings and ninety articles, which are summarized here:

I. Organization (Articles 1–5)

The diocese is an inseparable part of the Catholicosate of All Armenians in Ēchmiadzin, headed by a bishop as its Primate.

Communities that have a parish church will have under their jurisdiction all neighboring communities having no church and will be called *Hovouagan T'em* (Parish). Areas with no local Armenian church, pastor, or Church organizations in their immediate vicinity will be directly under the jurisdiction of the diocese.

Each parish may have its local bylaws adapted to its respective situation. These bylaws are to be prepared by the local pastor and the Membership Meeting. Areas with no local Armenian Church will have bylaws set forth by the diocese.

II. The Primate (Articles 6–13)

The Primate will serve as a link between the communicants of the Church and the pontiff in Ēchmiadzin.

In the absence of a Primate, the diocese is to be governed by a locum tenens until the election of a Primate.

A Primate is elected from a slate of nominees prepared by the Central Executive Committee. In case of a deadlock, the Diocesan Convention will request from the Catholicos a new list of nominees or will request that he designate a Primate.

The headquarters of the Diocese will be located in Worcester; this location is subject to change.

The Primate shall oversee the proper execution of the doctrines, canons, and rituals of the Armenian Church. The Primate shall pay annual visits to parishes.

The Primate is the chief executive and president of the Central Executive Committee and Diocesan Convention and overseer of parishes. He has no power to dismiss an official of the Church or to dissolve any Church organization before consulting with the Central Executive Committee. He may temporarily suspend any official at his discretion. The final decision rests with the Diocesan Convention and the Catholicos.

Any complaint filed against the Primate must be submitted to the Central Executive Committee, pending decision of the Diocesan Convention.

III. Parish Pastors (Articles 14–24)

The parish priests are the ex officio presidents of their parish administrations and organizations.

Their duties include preaching, administering sacraments, teaching the Armenian language, making pastoral visitations, encouraging charitable organizations, maintaining church ledgers, and adhering to the Diocesan

Constitution. The pastor must submit extraordinary issues to the Primate and should not operate outside his own jurisdiction.

Parish priests must submit their resignations to their parish Membership Meetings, who in turn submit the same to the Primate.

IV. Diocesan Convention (Articles 25–33)

The Diocesan Convention shall be composed of the priests and elected delegates from each parish and is the official representative body of the Armenian Church in America.

In the case of a complaint against the Primate at a Diocesan Convention, the ranking clergymen shall preside over the convention.

The Diocesan Convention shall elect a Primate (for life). Diocesan delegates are elected every four years.

V. Central Executive Committee (Articles 34–49)

The Central Executive Committee is composed of a Religious Committee and a Finance Committee.

The Religious Committee of the Central Executive Committee is composed of four priests and the Primate and, under the presidency of the Primate, shall expedite all religious and spiritual matters.

The Finance Committee of the Central Executive Committee is elected every four years and shall have five members. The Finance Committee shall expedite all financial matters of the diocese. The combined Central Executive Committee shall expedite all other matters.

The Chancellery of the Central Executive Committee shall be made up of the chairman of the Religious Committee and the secretary of the Finance Committee.

VI. Parish Membership Meetings (Articles 50–55)

The parish Membership Meeting shall elect a pastor, consider annual budgets, and expedite local matters.

VII. Church Trustees (Articles 56–67)

The election of Church Trustees is ratified by the pastor.

The Church Trustees shall meet periodically under the presidency of the pastor to expedite parish matters.

Where an insufficient population does not provide for Church Trustees, an official shall be appointed by the Primate to attend to the matters of that jurisdiction.

VIII. Finance (Articles 68–76). These articles deal with church income and disbursements.

IX. Election Rules (Articles 77–89)

X. Amendments (Article 90)

The Catholicos confirmed the constitution on September 6, 1902, with an encyclical. He ordered it to be put into immediate use for the administration of the parishes. The encyclical made it clear that the constitution was subject to change or amendments dependent on growth and change in the parishes.¹⁸² The right to make revisions was the prerogative of the Diocesan Convention by ratification of the Catholicos.

The parishes were asked to conform to the central authority of the diocese. The convention closed in apparent harmony, but this did not endure long. Both lay and Church leaders ignored the convention's decisions, and political pressures were applied by the political parties, most notably the Reformed Hnch'ag Party.

Polish Appeal to the Armenian Church

Shortly before the Diocesan Convention was called, Bishop Sarajian found himself involved in an interesting ecumenical conversation. It was initiated by the Polish National Catholic Church in America.

The efforts of Polish immigrants to create Polish religious institutions had met only resistance from the American Catholic hierarchy, which consisted largely of Irish and German clergymen. At the turn of the century there were nearly two hundred Polish parishes in the United States. The demand for new parishes outstripped the Roman Catholic Church's willingness or ability to create them. There were no Polish bishops, and the Poles said the Irish-German hierarchy had little concern for their welfare. They saw themselves relegated to second-class membership with no rights, only obligations. They particularly resented orders to give up teaching the Polish language and culture in their parish school. Discontent blazed into open revolt, and mass upheavals took place in numerous Polish communities such as Chicago, Buffalo, and Cleveland, as well as smaller communities in New England and New Jersey.¹⁸³

Father Francis Hodur, a Polish Catholic priest, was instrumental in organizing the first congregation of separated Polish Catholics in Scranton, Pennsylvania. According to a charter adopted by the Church, members were given the right to share in management along with the priests. Soon other congregations also took steps to divorce themselves from the mainstream of Roman Catholicism.

In April 1902, two Polish priests requested an audience with Bishop Sarajian. They carried a personal letter from Father Hodur requesting that one of the priests be allowed to receive an episcopal ordination at the hands of Bishop Sarajian, in order to establish a canonical see for their new congregation. Bishop Sarajian replied that he could not accommodate their request without official instructions from the Catholicos of All Armenians in Ēchmiadzin. However, Bishop Sarajian did promise to notify Ēchmiadzin at once about this request.¹⁸⁴

At a conference on October 16, 1902, a resolution was passed that the new denomination would recognize the Catholicos of All Armenians as their spiritual head rather than the pope of Rome, whom they had ceased to recognize for the past six years. The resolution further revealed that Father Francis Hodur was to be elevated to the rank of bishop and that, thereafter, any type of clerical ordination would be subject to the confirmation of the Armenian Catholicos. The resolution concluded on an optimistic note, trusting that their request would be considered most seriously and their wish granted accordingly.¹⁸⁵

It is unclear what happened next.

However, by 1904 the first synod of the new Polish National Catholic Church was held in Scranton. Father Hodur was chosen bishop-elect and initiated a program of intense nationalization in the parishes.

Mission in the Name of God and Country

From a political point of view, the period of Bishop Sarajian's primacy was of crucial importance for the physical and spiritual survival of the Armenians, both at home and in America. Armenians on both sides of the Atlantic looked to one another for assistance. Once again the Church in America was called upon.

The volatile relations between Turkey and America had taken a turn for the worse over the issues of naturalization of Armenians. Turkey declared that Ottoman subjects obtaining foreign naturalization without her prior consent were not truly naturalized and would be treated as Turkish nationals when they returned to their country of origin. This was contrary to the position of the United States, which admits no dual citizenship to her citizens, native born or naturalized.

Many times Armenian-Americans visiting the homeland were trapped in Turkey. Some were jailed indefinitely or harassed.¹⁸⁶ Coupled with this problem was the great suffering of Armenians in Turkey. As a result, an Armenian delegation went to Washington to seek America's help for the Armenians in Turkey.¹⁸⁷

The year 1903 ushered in new misfortunes for the Armenians. The properties of the Holy See in Ēchmiadzin were confiscated by the tsarist government, signaling another phase of the Russification policy in the Caucasus. This was followed by the persecution of the Tartar movement, incited by the Russian government against the Armenians. The impact of these events in the old country on the immigrants in the United States was great. As a result, once again the Church became the central focus of community activity.

Confiscation of Armenian Church Properties in Armenia (1903)

The attempt at enforced Russification of the minorities living in Russia began in the days of Nicholas I (1825–1855). During the reign of Nicholas II (1894–1917), Russification became more systematic, especially when Prince Grigorii Golitzin was appointed governor-general of the Caucasus in 1896. Golitzin declared war on the Armenians, ordering the closing of their entire network of schools. Upon the recommendation of the Primate, Tsar Nicholas II issued a decree on June 12, 1903, that ordered the confiscation of Armenian Church properties.¹⁸⁸ Golitzin contended that part of the income from these properties was being used to aid the revolutionary movement in Turkey.¹⁸⁹ He regarded the Armenian Church as the bulwark of Armenian nationalism, because it provided a bond of unity for the nation to which the Armenians were devotedly attached.

Thus, by Prince Golitzin's order, the viceroy, Prince Nakashidze, demanded that the Catholicos surrender to the police the title deeds of the Church's properties and the keys to its safe. The Catholicos refused, explaining that he was not the owner of the property, but only its trustee for the whole Armenian nation, not only in Russia but the world over. The police, at that point, forced themselves into the monastery of Ēchmiadzin, looted it, and subjected the aged and venerable Catholicos to shameful indignities.

The entire nation supported the Catholicos in his heroic stand. Reaction was immediate and overwhelming, as thousands of Armenians walked from Erevan to Ēchmiadzin, a distance of fourteen miles, to express their sympathy. Even anticlericalists rose to the defense of the Armenian Church in her struggle with the Muscovite Colossus, like Armenians the world over.¹⁹⁰ The Armenian Patriarchate presented a memorandum to Tsar Nicholas II on January 14, 1904.¹⁹¹ Memorials protesting the injustice were organized in Persia, India, and America and throughout Europe. Complaints were heard from around the world, because Ēchmiadzin and the other religious institutions in Armenia had been built over the centuries through the corporate contributions of Armenian colonies on different continents.

The Armenian communities in the United States, under the leadership of Bishop Sarajian, held a convention to prepare a memorandum to be forwarded to the tsar through the Russian embassy in Washington.¹⁹²

On August 17, 1905, a cablegram sent by Catholicos Khrimian from Tiflis to Archbishop Sarajian announced:

I am able to inform you that the Viceroy of the Caucasus has communicated to me that the Emperor has issued a *ukase* [decree] granting the return of the Armenian Church and school property on the basis of the law of the time of Kēork IV the Catholicos.¹⁹²

The Russian autocracy had miscalculated and underestimated the unflinching attitude and vigorous resistance of the venerable Catholicos and his people.

Archbishop Sarajian, Delegate-at-Large

In May 1904, Catholicos Khrimian delegated two high-ranking clergymen, Archbishop Hovsēp' Sarajian of America and Archbishop Sahag Ayvadian of Persia and India, to call on the European powers and direct their attention to the alarming state of affairs in Armenia.¹⁹³ The two were accompanied by Dr. Jean Louis Melik'off, who represented the Armenians in the Caucasus. It was decided that the Armenian deputation would conclude their mission by calling on President Theodore Roosevelt and Secretary Hay at the White House. They hoped to enlist

the American government's aid in stopping the Turkish oppression of the Armenian Church and people. During the absence of Archbishop Sarajian, the Reverend Father Arsēn Vehouni of Providence was designated as locum tenens.¹⁹⁴

While the deputation was visiting the European dignitaries, the sultan in Turkey summoned the Armenian Patriarch, Archbishop Maghak'ia Ōrmanian, demanding an explanation of the scheme.¹⁹⁵ The sultan was not satisfied with his reply and ordered a wire sent to the Catholicos in Ēchmiadzin demanding an end to the delegation's mission. Patriarch Ōrmanian argued that to interfere with the decision of the Catholicos was far beyond the sphere of his jurisdiction. The sultan then summoned the Catholicos of Cilicia, Sahag II Khabayian, and attempted to persuade him to intercede. The sultan even went so far as to decorate the Catholicos, promising to make the See of Cilicia the Catholicosate of All Armenians within the Ottoman Empire. Despite these offers, Catholicos Sahag remained firm.¹⁹⁶

On September 29, 1904, the Armenian delegation representing the Catholicos of All Armenians called on President Theodore Roosevelt at the White House. The president received the delegation most cordially and expressed his sympathy for the plight of the Armenians but did not indicate any concrete steps he would take to aid them. The delegation presented to the president a personal letter from the Catholicos in which the pontiff appealed to the president to use the influence of his office to move the Great Powers of Europe to intercede and save his nation from further Turkish atrocities.¹⁹⁷ The two bishops also brought with them a weighty memorandum signed by prominent European statesmen, educators, publicists, and ordinary citizens, who in their turn urged President Roosevelt to come to the aid of the martyred nation.

James Bronson Reynolds, president of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology, was instrumental in arranging the meeting with the president. He attended the interview of the two bishops with President Roosevelt. At the conclusion of the conference, the president asked Reynolds to remain; then he said:

I am ashamed to do what I have just done . . . I sympathize deeply with the cause of Armenia. I believe I was the first to make the statement that in the massacres of 1895 and 1896 the Armenians killed by the Turks outnumbered the killed on both sides in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. But mere kind words such as these men have received everywhere are valueless. What they need and what alone will help them is to send a fleet of battleships to Constantinople. To such a protest alone the Turks will listen. Unfortunately you know and I know that the Senate will not sanction such action.¹⁹⁸

Church and Politics: The Critics of the Primate

The period of Sarajian's primacy was the high-water mark of the Armenian political parties and their factional influence in the life of the community and in the Church. They created political dissension in Worcester, New York, Providence, and Boston, mobilizing all their energy toward this end. They did not hesitate to discredit the clergy in the eyes of the public. Journalism was their weapon. As time passed, the breach between the political parties and the Church widened to such an extent that the spiritual life of the Church often came to a standstill. Most of the people preferred to remain aloof from the parties' revolutionary activities and stay faithful to the fellowship of the Church.¹⁹⁹ The internal conflicts within the parties themselves deterred many immigrants from uniting with them.

Armenian businessmen were often harassed and intimidated by the members of political parties when they did not support their revolutionary activities financially. One major charge made by the political parties against the Church was that of conservatism. They regarded Archbishop Sarajian as the personification of that conservatism, who had to be eliminated at any cost. Both the Reformed Hnch'ag and Tashnag parties made full use of their newspapers in repudiating the Primate.²⁰⁰

The editor of *Tsayn Hayreneats'*, K. B. Ch'it'jian, a Hnch'ag follower, noted in one of his editorials that T'ovmas Ch'arshafjian, later editor of the Tashnag paper *Hairenik*, invited him to join forces to ridicule and ostracize Archbishop Sarajian to such an extent that he would be forced to leave the United States.²⁰¹

Another criticism directed against Archbishop Sarajian asserted that he had too many close friendships with well-to-do people.²⁰² Allegedly the Primate had persuaded his rich friends not to donate to the political parties.

On October 21, 1905, as the archbishop was about to retire to his quarters at the Union Square Hotel in New York, a young man forced his way into the room, threatening him with a revolver. He proceeded to tell the Primate, "I come to inform you on behalf of our party, the Reformed Hnch'ag, that we are determined to eliminate any obstacle that lies in our path."²⁰³ The archbishop replied most calmly, "I am not one to fear death, for from the day when I knelt before the altar to receive my cowl of celibacy, I ceased to live for the mundane."²⁰⁴

The Reformed Hnch'ag Party further criticized the archbishop through a series of editorials in the newspaper *Tsayn Hayreneats'*. They attacked him vehemently, hoping to expedite his resignation from the primacy.²⁰⁵ Early in 1906 the stage was set for a final showdown. The critics of the Primate did not hesitate to call him "an

aged Asian *soft'a* [outcast] who in his senility has already ceased effectively to function as Primate.” They continued to add the following remarks:

For our part, let it once and for all be promulgated that . . . our columns be henceforth closed to all messages, appeals, and announcements which allude to the “Primacy” of Sarajian. And thus we initiate this policy by refusing to publish an appeal by the “Primate” Sarajian on behalf of our needy brethren in the Caucasus.²⁰⁶

Despite his denunciation of the political parties, the Primate came to be liked by many for his honesty and sincerity.²⁰⁷ Nonetheless, his personal integrity, administrative abilities, and ecclesiastical leadership became the subject of many intense debates during the Diocesan Convention of 1906, which he ordered convened, but over which he did not preside. The delegates, led by a Reformed Hnch‘ag contingency, stormed into the convention, ready to obtain the Archbishop’s resignation.

Developments in the Church

With the passage of time, the problems of the primacy grew more acute and the criticism more vituperative. Most of the people, however, were sympathetic to their archbishop, who continued to operate in his own way.²⁰⁸ On September 2, 1906, he convened the Second Diocesan Convention in the Armenian Church of Our Saviour, Worcester. Before the convention he forwarded a letter to Father Bōghos Kaft'anian, instructing him to preside over the convention and to proceed with the task of electing a new Primate. He cited ill health and fatigue as the reasons for his resignation. He also expressed the hope that the convention would immediately notify the Catholicos of this matter so that His Holiness could make the necessary arrangements for a new Primate for the diocese.²⁰⁹

On the opening day of the convention, the Primate was in West Hoboken, New Jersey. The delegates, who were concerned about the Primate's absence, passed a resolution condemning his negligence.²¹⁰ This issue afforded the Primate's antagonists an excellent opportunity to weaken the position of his adherents. During four tense and stormy sessions, the delegates attacked the incumbent archbishop for his failure to supply sound leadership and his lack of competency in dealing with matters that posed a challenge to his office. The following list of shortcomings was compiled by the delegates:

1. The archbishop's unwillingness to execute the constitution.
2. His reluctance to enroll Armenian students in theological seminaries to prepare for the sacred priesthood.
3. His indecisiveness in all matters.
4. His indifference to criticism directed against him.
5. His apathy toward the parishes and his biased treatment of his flock.

On the other hand, the convention also pointed out a positive side of the Primate and the problems he faced:

1. His deep commitment and love for the Church and his demeanor as a pious and honorable cleric.
2. The difference of the religious life of the diocese.
3. Lack of financial means for the diocese.²¹¹

Before the adjournment of the convention, the delegates passed a final

resolution, worded most forcefully, in which they condemned the primacy of Archbishop Sarajian and unanimously accepted his resignation. By majority vote Father Bōghos Kaft'anian was chosen for the office of locum tenens. According to the twenty-second article of the constitution, the delegates requested from the Catholicos a slate of three nominees for the post of Primate, which would include the name of Archbishop Eznig Abahouni.²¹² Amid crises and controversy, Archbishop Sarajian's administration came to an end, and political factions could not be absolved of major complicity in it.²¹³ Under the name of Father Bōghos Kaft'anian in the "*Artsanakrout'awn*" ("Minutes of the Diocesan Convention") appears a line that reads, "I sign, without agreeing, but as president." It gives a clue to the deep underlying conflict that expressed itself in the entire controversy over the primacy of Sarajian.²¹⁴

When the news of the Primate's resignation reached Ēchmiadzin, it was not at all favorably received by the Catholicos. The appeal for a new primate was rejected, and the Catholicos even annulled the proceedings of the convention, declaring them unconstitutional.²¹⁵ Upon Sarajian's repeated insistence that he be relieved of his duties, the Catholicos finally yielded and ordered the authorities in America to proceed with the election of a new Primate. The Catholicos had nominated Archbishop Eznig Abahouni and Kēork Iwt'iwjian for the slate, asking that a third name be supplied by the Armenians of America. Simultaneously, he ordered Archbishop Sarajian to remain at his post until the arrival of the new Primate. As an expression of his genuine sentiment and paternal sympathy for the ex-Primate, the Catholicos sent him an episcopal ring, set with a ruby and inscribed with the words, "Tend my sheep."²¹⁶

After his resignation Archbishop Sarajian remained in the United States for five years, serving various parishes throughout the country. He was invited to serve as pastor of Holy Cross Church in West Hoboken, New Jersey. From April 1908 to 1911 he served at the Holy Trinity Church in Fresno, California. A year later, upon the request of the people of Van in Turkey, the locum tenens of the Mother See of Ēchmiadzin instructed Sarajian to depart from America to serve in the Diocese of Van. An obituary dated November 3, 1913, issued by the diocese, reported the death of Archbishop Sarajian on October 2, 1913, in Van.²¹⁷

New Churches

This section of each chapter will hereafter be concerned with Armenian churches that were consecrated during the incumbency of each Primate or locum tenens. According to Armenian Church tradition, the anniversary of a church is observed on the date of *consecration* rather than the date of construction. Churches that were rebuilt or had new buildings added will be discussed under the period of their initial consecration.

During the primacy of Archbishop Sarajian, one church was consecrated—Holy Trinity Church in Fresno, California (1990). Saint John Chrysostom Church in New York City will be treated here also, although the building was simply rented in April 1900. No sources indicated whether the church was consecrated at a later date or for how long it was in use. The Armenians of Providence used their community center for religious services. In addition to these communities, there were other cities with large Armenian populations, such as Boston; Lawrence, Massachusetts; Troy, New York; and Chicago, where church services were held in rented halls or local Protestant churches. Visiting clergy served these communities.

Although these communities often expressed a great desire to own their churches, they were unable to do so for several reasons.

First, the years from 1898 to 1906 witnessed a heavy influx of Armenian immigration to America. This necessitated both individual and corporate assistance by the local Armenians to the newcomers as well as to their families and relatives in the homeland. Second, the era was characterized by intense Armenian revolutionary propaganda in America as well as elsewhere in the Armenian diaspora. The youth were indoctrinated with revolutionary ideology, and all efforts were concentrated on the purchase of arms, revolutionary enterprises, and reconstruction of the homeland. Often Tashnags and Reformed Hnch'ags coerced wealthy Armenians into providing financial assistance to revolutionary activities, and many fell victim to the parties' belligerence.²¹⁸ They accused people of collaborating with the clergy against the revolutionaries.²¹⁹ Tashnag leadership was convinced that the Armenians needed community centers rather than churches.²²⁰ Church building was generally considered a disastrous venture to be avoided by all available means. The Reformed Hnch'ag leadership, on the other hand, showed indifference toward church-building efforts, whereas its membership actually favored the building of churches.

Saint John Chrysostom Church, New York, New York

As early as 1834 the first Armenian student, Khach'adour Osganian, had settled in New York City. During the next decade other Armenian students, merchants, and workers came to the city in pursuit of better fortunes and opportunities. According to a list compiled from the annual report of the Commissioner of Immigration from 1899 to 1917, out of a total of 55,057 Armenian immigrants, 17,891 indicated their intention of remaining in the state of New York.²²¹ Most of these immigrants became successful in their chosen careers as lawyers, doctors, engineers, professors, and skilled laborers. Armenian political groups were very active, and educational and charitable organizations, as well as the Armenian-language press, flourished.²²²

As early as the 1880s, the Armenians in New York rivaled those of Worcester in their influence in the religious sphere. Yet the Armenians in New York did not acquire their own church until 1921. Their religious needs were administered by temporary pastors. When Archbishop Sarajian arrived in New York on October 7, 1898, as Primate of the diocese, Father Khat Markarian was in charge of the parish.²²³ Services were being held at Saint John Chrysostom Episcopal Church on West 41st Street, though they were allowed the use of Saint John Church, the people were intent on obtaining a place of their own. But the community was divided. The Tashnags opposed the purchase of a church and considered such an expenditure unwise and unwarranted. They admonished the youth that their commitment should be to revolutionary ideology rather than to religion.²²⁴ Non-Tashnags, on the other hand, showed great interest in the acquisition of a church. Of this group, the Reformed Hnch'ags displayed a passive indifference.

It was in this tense atmosphere that the Church Trustees resolved in 1900 to rent Saint John Church for \$1,200 a year to provide for regular church services and better organization within the community.²²⁵ On April 1, 1900, Archbishop Sarajian celebrated the Divine Liturgy there. A large throng heard the archbishop praise the efforts of the community to acquire their own place of worship. He exhorted them to share the expense, not relying solely on the wealthy. He then invited the chairman, Hovhannēs T'awshanjian, to speak and initiate the fund-raising. Total contributions amounted to \$1,620 on that day. Twenty-one years later, the Armenians of New York acquired their own building, Saint Illuminator Church, on 27th Street.

Holy Trinity Church, Fresno, California

The earliest Armenian settlers in Fresno were two brothers, Hagop and Garabed Seropian.²²⁶ Originally from Merzofan, Turkey, they moved from Worcester to Fresno in 1881. A year later, three more young Seropians left Worcester to join their

brothers in Fresno. The news of the Seropian brothers' success encouraged others to follow in their footsteps. In the latter part of the 1880s, Armenian immigrants began migrating directly from the homeland to Fresno and other parts of California. These Armenians found employment in agriculture. Their letters to friends and relatives in the East and the homeland told of the deep rich soil, cheap land, and ideal climate of California.²²⁷ Consequently, by the 1890s some two hundred Armenians had settled in Fresno and were engaged in fruit farming, especially in the production of grapes, figs, peaches, and apricots. Today a large number of these successful Armenians own great vineyards that produce table grapes, wine, and different varieties of raisins.²²⁸

The first Armenian organization formed in Fresno was the Library Union. Its aim was to foster education and to preserve the Armenian identity among the young immigrants.²²⁹ In 1892 the Library Union acquired its modest building, where immigrants gathered for study and social activities.²³⁰

As early as 1883 religious activities appeared to have taken place. The Armenian Orthodox attended the First Congregational Church together with the Protestant brethren until disagreements broke out in the late 1880s.²³¹ The Armenian Protestants then joined the local Presbyterian church, and the members of the Armenian church used the library building for worship.²³² Father Aharon Melk'onian, who came to the United States in 1894, was the first Armenian priest to serve the community of Fresno. Because there was no church, services were often held on prairies or river banks.

By the late 1890s the need for an Armenian church building intensified. Consequently, a building committee was organized in October 1899.²³³ On February 25, 1900, the first board of Church Trustees was elected, and on April 1, the ceremonies of laying the foundation of the church took place. The new church was located on the corner of F and Monterey Streets. Primate Sarajian consecrated the new edifice on October 14, 1900, naming it the Holy Trinity Church.²³⁴ The Primate remained in Fresno for several months, attending to the organization of the parish. A Membership Meeting was convened on December 16, at which a new board of Church Trustees was elected. On December 22 the incorporation of the church according to the laws of California was completed.²³⁵

Over the next eight years, three priests served the community of Fresno. Father Sahag Nazarēt'ian served the parish from 1902 to 1906, when he retired. His successor, Father T'eotoros Isahagian, served for eleven months (January–December 1907) before resigning.²³⁶ Archbishop Sarajian, who had resigned from the primacy in 1906, assumed the pastorate of Holy Trinity Church in April 1908, and he remained there until his departure from the United States in May 1911. During his stay in Fresno, Archbishop Sarajian laid plans for a monastery in Fresno for the training of seminarians. However, no definite steps were taken toward the

realization of that dream, and it was discarded as unrealistic by his critics.²³⁷

Archbishop Sarajian was succeeded by Father Vartan Kasbarian of Bursa, Turkey, who arrived in Fresno on April 6, 1912.²³⁸ Under the guidance of the new pastor, the Church Trustees formulated plans for the building of a new church and organized a building committee under the chairmanship of Hagop Nshigian. Land was purchased on the corner of M and Ventura Streets.

On July 9, 1913, fire destroyed Holy Trinity Church.²³⁹ Armenians of the parish were allowed to use a local Episcopal church. Plans were shortly undertaken for the construction of a new church, with groundbreaking ceremonies on November 1, 1913. The cornerstone of the new edifice was laid on January 4, 1914. The membership of the parish contributed \$10,000 toward the cost of the building. On December 13, 1914, the new church—Holy Trinity—was consecrated by Archbishop Moushegh Seropian.²⁴⁰ Father Vartan Kasbarian remained as pastor until 1934, when he resigned after the murder of Archbishop Ghewont Tourian (often referred to as Leon Tourian). Within Holy Trinity Church, the rival Tashnag and Ramgavar Parties became embroiled in feuds and dissension. The new pastor, Father Kegham Kasimian, arrived from Saint James Seminary in Jerusalem. His sympathies lay with the Tashnag Party. In February 1937, Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp'ian, Plenipotentiary of the Catholicos, arrived in Fresno in an attempt to reconcile the rival factions within the church. His efforts, however, were fruitless, and the people remained divided.

This division became official when the non-Tashnag Armenians withdrew on July 2, 1939, forming their own parish, later known as Saint Paul's Armenian Parish of Fresno. On March 31, 1940, the new parish applied and was accepted for membership into the Western Diocese of California. Father Arsēn T'orosian was made temporary pastor, and facilities of the local Episcopal church were used. In July 1943, Saint Paul's Parish purchased the First Armenian Presbyterian Church on Fulton and Santa Clara Streets. Father Nersēs Ōdian of Detroit arrived on November 29, 1947, to serve as pastor of the church. One year later, the community had grown to such a degree that the need was felt for a new church. Consequently, a building committee was formed under the chairmanship of Khach'ig Ch'oukhajian, and efforts were concentrated for the next several years on fund-raising. In October 1952, the First Baptist Church was purchased for \$75,000, and its acquisition was finalized on August 30, 1953. The building was completely renovated and was consecrated on January 23–24, 1954. Archbishop Diran Nersoyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese, presided at the ceremonies.

Notes

- 172 “*Gontag Ar Masht’ots*” (“Encyclical to Masht’ots”), *Armenia*, January 15, 1898, p. 10.
- 173 Ardēn Ashjian, *Vijagats’oyts’ ew Badmout’iwn Arachnortagan T’emin Hayots’ Amerigayi* (“Statistics and History of the Armenian Diocese of America”) (New York: Lēylēgian Press, 1949), p. 21, “*Gontag Ar Masht’ots*,” p. 10.
- 174 “*Artsanakrout’iwn*” (“Minutes of the Meetings: 1897–1901 of the Church Trustees of the Armenian Church of Our Saviour”), Worcester, MA, October 1, 1899, pp. 204–210.
- 175 Ibid., p. 203; “*Vartabedagan Ōdzoum*” (“Ordination into the Priesthood”), *Tsayn Hayreneats’*, October 14, 1899.
- 176 “*Artsanakrout’iwn*,” Worcester, MA, October 1, 1899, p. 211.
- 177 Father Sahag Nazarēt’ian was a former member of the Brotherhood of the Mekhitarists in Venice, an Armenian Catholic monastery. The lack of complete recorded proceedings of this conference makes it unclear why some clerics attended and others did not. Most likely, geographical distance and lack of travel expenses were determining factors. Ashjian, *Vijagats’oyts’ ew Badmout’iwn Arachnortagan T’emin Hayots’ Amerigayi*, pp. 23–24; P’arnag A. Atamian, “*Amerigahay Egeghets’in ew Egeghets’aganout’iwnē (1888–1911)*” (“The Armenian Church of America and the Clergy (1888–1911)”), *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē* (“The Armenian-American Yearbook”) (Boston: Cilicia Press, 1912), p. 114.
- 178 *Sahmanatrout’iwn Hokewor Garavarout’ean Hayasdaneayts’ Sourp Egeghets’woy Arachnortagan Vijagin Amerigayi* (“Constitution of the Spiritual Government of the Holy Armenian Church of the Diocese of America”) (Venice: San Lazzaro Press, 1903), p. 23.
- 179 Some clergymen had come to America without obtaining permission and credentials from their Primates in the dioceses of the homeland. Consequently, they were defrocked by the Catholicos or their Primates, who notified the Worcester diocese of the matter.
- 180 Hovsēp’ Sarajian, “*Bashdōnagan Azt*” (“Official Notice”), *Tsayn Hayreneats’*, March 1, 1902.
- 181 *Sahmanatrout’iwn*, 1903, p. 23. The preliminary constitution drafted by the Clergy Conference in 1901 is not available.
- 182 Ibid., p. 5.
- 183 Helen Buckley, “The Polish National Catholic Church of American Origin,” *Outlook*, May 1958, pp. 2–3.
- 184 *Amerigayi Lehats’ik’ ew Sourp Ēchmiadzin* (“The Poles in America and Holy Ēchmiadzin”), *Loumay*, September–October 1902, pp. 264–265; “*Amerigayi Lehats’inere*” (“The Poles of America”), *Loumay*, November–December 1902, pp. 295–298.
- 185 “*Amerigayi Lehatsinerē*,” pp. 295–298.
- 186 “Our Responsibilities toward the Armenians,” *Armenia*, I (August 1905), pp. 40–43.
- 187 “The Armenian Delegation in Washington,” *Armenia*, I (November 1904), pp. 27–33.

- 188 “The Return of Armenian Church and School Property,” *Armenia*, I (August 1905), pp. 44–45.
- 189 Kapriël Lazian, *Hayasdan ew Hay Tadē* (“Armenia and the Armenian Question”) (Cairo: Nor Asdgh Press, 1946), pp. 127–133.
- 190 Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia on the Road to Independence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 17–21.
- 191 H. (pseud.), “The Day of Peril of the Armenian Church in Russia,” *Armenia*, II (October 1906), pp. 37–47; II (November 1906), pp. 3–42.
- 192 Ibid.; “*Hayrigi Herakirē*” (“The Cablegram of Hayrig”), *Tsayn Hayreneats* ‘, August 30, 1905.
- 193 “The Armenian Deputation,” *Armenia*, I (October 1904), pp. 40–41; “*Vehap’ar Gat’oghigosi Goghmēn Ewrobayi Medz Dērout’iwnnerin Ghrgouadz Badouragout’iwnē*” (“The Deputation Sent to European Powers by the Venerable Catholicos”), *Armenia*, August 6, 1904.
- 194 “*Hayer Amerigayi Mēch*” (“Armenians in America”), *Armenia*, August 6, 1904.
- 195 “*Semafori T’ghat’agts’out’iwnē Haygagan Kordzerin Ngadmamp*” (“The Report of Semafor Concerning the Armenian Affairs”), *Armenia*, August 27, 1904.
- 196 “*Gat’oghigosē ew Soultanē*” (“The Catholicos and the Sultan”), *Armenia*, November 9, 1904.
- 197 “The Armenian Delegation in Washington,” *Armenia*, I (November 1904), pp. 27–33.
- 198 James Bronson Reynolds, “Roosevelt and Armenia,” *New Armenia*, XIV (November–December, 1922), p. 81.
- 199 Varouzhan, “*Ov Ē Amerigahay Kaghts’geghē*” (“Who Is the Cancer of the Armenians of America”), *Arax*, March 31, 1906, pp. 171–172.
- 200 Hovhannēs Ch’obanian, “*Amerigahay K’aghts’geghē*” (“The Cancer of Armenians of America”), *Tsayn Hayreneats* ‘, January 17, 1906.
- 201 K. B. Ch’it’jian, “*Panawor Griw! Azniv Zēnk*” (“Rational Fight! A Noble Weapon”), *Tsayn Hayreneats* ‘, April 7, 1900.
- 202 Editorial, “*Hay Ggherē Ardasahmani Mēch*” (“The Armenian Clergy in the Diaspora”), *Tsayn Hayreneats* ‘, June 14, 1905, pp. 1–2.
- 203 Rosdom, “*Namag Niw-Eorkēn*” (“Letter from New York”), *Arax*, November 11, 1907, pp. 21–22.
- 204 Dikran Mgount, “*Our Gert’ank*” (“Where Are We Heading”), *Armenia*, March 22, 1905.
- 205 Editorial, “*Hay Ggherē Ardasahmani Mēch*” (“The Armenian Clergy in the Diaspora”), *Tsayn Hayreneats* ‘, May 24, 1905, p. 1; June 7, 1905, pp. 1–2; June 14, 1905, pp. 102; June 28, 1905, p. 1.
- 206 “*Amōt Mē*” (“An Infamy”), *Tsayn Hayreneats* ‘, February 21, 1906, p. 1.
- 207 Rosdom, “*Namag Niew-Eorkēn*,” pp. 21–22.
- 208 Ibid.
- 209 “*Bashdōnagan Azī*” (“Official Notice”), *Tsayn Hayreneats* ‘, September 12, 1906.
- 210 “*Artsanakrout’iwn Eresp’okhanagan Ēnthanour Zhoghovoy*” (“Minutes of the Diocesan Convention”), Worcester, MA, September 2, 1906, p. 4.
- 211 Ibid., p. 5.

- 212 “*Artsanakrout’iwn Eresp’okhanagan Ėnthanour Zhoghovoy*,” Worcester, MA, September 3, 1906, pp. 6–7.
- 213 “*Mēt’odē*” (“The Method”), *Gotchnag*, March 2, 1907, p. 131; “*T’ghat’agts’out’iwn Ousdrēn*” (“Report from Worcester”), *Gotchnag*, September 15, 1906, p. 589; September 22, 1906, p. 605.
- 214 “*Artsanakrout’iwn Eresp’okhanagan Ėnthanour Zhoghovoy*,” Worcester, MA, September 3, 1906, p. 8.
- 215 “*Amerigayi Hayeri Arachnort’out’iwnē*” (“The Primacy of the Armenians of America”), *Armenia*, December 26, 1906.
- 216 “*Amerigayi Hayeri Arachnort’out’iwnē*” (“The Primacy of the Armenians of America”), *Armenia*, April 10, 1907.
- 217 “*Bashdōnagan*” (“Official [Notice]”), *Gotchnag*, November 15, 1913, p. 1114.
- 218 “*Namag Niw-Eōrk’ēn*” (“Letter from New York”), *Gotchnag*, August 3, 1907, pp. 491–492.
- 219 M. Minasian, “*Ggheragan T’alanē*” (“The Clerical Plunder”), *Hairenik*, March 10, 1900.
- 220 Editorial, “*Vdankē*” (“The Danger”), *Hairenik*, August 3, 1901.
- 221 Malcom, *The Armenians in America*, pp. 71–72.
- 222 The Armenian Colonial Association of New York City, with a branch in Chicago, was started in 1909, supported by a group of wealthy Armenians. The association provided valuable services to incoming immigrants at Ellis Island by securing employment for them and extending financial aid to the needy.
- 223 Atamian, “*Amerigahay Egeghets’in ew Egeghets’aganout’iwnē*,” p. 113.
- 224 Minasian, “*Ggheragan T’alanē*.”
- 225 “*Pats’oumn Sourp Hovhannēs Haygagan Egeghets’woy Niw-Eōrk’i*” (“The Opening of Saint John Armenian Church in New York”), *Tsayn Hayreneats’*, April 14, 1900.
- 226 Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout’ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, pp. 56–63.
- 227 Ibid., p. 60; Haygag Ėginian, “*Amerigahay Hoghakordzout’iwnē Khaghaghagani Ap’ants’ Vray*” (“Farming by Armenians on the Shores of the Pacific”), *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, 1912, pp. 220–234.
- 228 William Saroyan, an American writer and playwright and Pulitzer Prize Winner, was born in Fresno in 1908 to Armenian immigrant parents. In his short stories he has portrayed rather whimsically and sentimentally the way of life of these people.
- 229 Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout’ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, 1912, p. 60.
- 230 Vahē Hayg (ed.), *Houshamadean* (“Souvenir Book”) (Fresno: 1953).
- 231 No definite reasons are offered for the estrangement. Seropian notes that a missionary named Collins contributed to the deepening of differences among the two groups. Another writer, P. A. Atamian, notes that the minister and church officials complained about the strong aroma of the Armenians’ food. Atamian, “*Amerigahay Egeghets’in ew Egeghets’aganout’iwnē (1888–1911)*,” *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, 1912, p. 123.
- 232 Hayg, *Houshamadean*.
- 233 Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghout’ē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*,

1912, p. 64.

²³⁴ V. M. Ch'arshafjian, "T'ghtagts'out'iwinner" ("Reports"), *Hairenik*, April 14, 1900.

²³⁵ "Articles of the Incorporation of the Trinity Armenian Church of Fresno," December 22, 1900.

²³⁶ Seropian, "Amerigahay Kaghout'ë ew ir Dzakoumnerë," *Amerigahay Darets'oyts'ë*, 1912, pp. 66–68.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Hayg, *Houshamadean*.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

Years of Trial (1906–1913)

Period of Locum Tenens: Father Bōghos Kaft'anian (1906–1908)

Between 1906 and 1913, neither the Armenian Church nor the Armenian communities changed very much. Father Bōghos Kaft'anian, a Catholic priest who had converted to the Orthodox faith, was one of the controversial figures of the time. Though they respected him for his eloquence and seniority, both the clergy and most of the people had reservations concerning his conversion. Another controversial clergyman was Archbishop Eznig Abahouni, who remained in office only one month. Archbishop Moushegh Seropian, a gifted and scholarly person, renewed the centuries-old feud between the two Holy Sees of Ēchmiadzin and Cilicia.

Each of these three men, in his own time, enjoyed the support and respect of his followers but also contributed to the turmoil of the church. Each had an opportunity to contribute much to its spiritual growth and well-being, but each was so involved in intrigues that he failed to seize it.

As mentioned in Chapter IV, after Archbishop Sarajian's resignation, Father Bōghos Kaft'anian, pastor of the Armenian Church of Our Saviour, assumed the duties of locum tenens. At the same time, Father Kaft'anian continued with his duties as pastor of the Worcester church.

This period of locum tenens was extremely intense and turbulent. Political "civil war" plagued nearly every Armenian community. Armenian political factions were struggling for domination within the Church and communities alike. The Tashnag Party was unyielding in its aggressive and uncompromising attitudes against the Church and clergy, considering them obsolete objects in Armenian life, to be discarded at any cost.²⁴¹ The Reformed Hnch'ag Party condemned the clergy as conservative. This was the atmosphere during which Father Kaft'anian entered office as locum tenens. Each rival organization vied for his loyalty, favor, and support. However, Father Kaft'anian worked according to his own philosophy to restore peace to an exhausted Church and community.

Kaftan'ian was born in 1863 in Constantinople and trained at the Armenian Catholic Mekhitarist Monastery of Saint Lazzaro in Venice, Italy. Before coming to the United States, he had held several administrative and pastoral posts in Italy and Constantinople. He appealed to Archbishop Sarajian in May 1904 to be received into the Armenian Orthodox Church. The Primate notified Ēchmiadzin and Constantinople of Father Kaft'anian's intentions, asking them to consider the matter.²⁴² Catholicos Khrimian, in an encyclical dated June 25, 1904, received Father Kaft'anian into the fold of the Armenian Church in the capacity of an

ordained priest.²⁴³ On January 29, 1905, Father Kaft'anian was officially received into the Diocese of the Armenian Church in America. During the reordination ceremony, Archbishop Sarajian replaced the Roman Catholic beret with the cowl of celibacy of the Armenian Church. Around this time, political terrorists of the Reformed Hnch'ag Party committed an assassination that endangered the reputation of the law-abiding Armenian community. Hovhannēs T'awshanjian, a well-known Armenian businessman of New York, became the victim of blind hatred.²⁴⁴ During the trial that followed this murder, it was revealed that Father Ghewont Martougēsian, pastor in New York and a Reformed Hnch'ag activist, had also been involved in the assassination. The priest had a long record of involvement in revolutionary activities dating back to his days as a Protestant minister. The court sentenced him to two years of hard labor. Archbishop Sarajian, a close friend of T'awshanjian, notified the Catholicos at Ēchmiadzin of these events, requesting stern pontifical action against Martougēsian.

A telegram arrived from Ēchmiadzin on August 3, 1907: "In accordance with your request, we have defrocked Martougēsian."²⁴⁵ The court also found Martougēsian guilty of conspiring to murder Mihran Karagēōzian, a New York industrialist, in 1905, when the latter had refused to assist the Reformed Hnch'ag Party.²⁴⁶

Primacy of Archbishop Eznig Abahouni (September–October 1908)

On January 18, 1907, Archbishop Sarajian once more notified Ēchmiadzin of his resignation, pleading with the Catholicos to relieve him of his duties. The Catholicos finally confirmed it, although reluctantly. An encyclical dated February 16, 1907, ordered Archbishop Sarajian to remain at his post until the arrival of the new Primate. The Catholicos also instructed him to convene a Diocesan Convention as soon as possible to elect a new Primate. The two nominees sent by the Catholicos were Archbishop Eznig Abahouni and Archbishop Kēork Iwt'iwjian. The assembly was given the right to select the third candidate.

Consequently, the Third Diocesan Convention convened on May 30, 1907, in Worcester, Massachusetts, presided over by Archbishop Sarajian, with fifteen delegates in attendance. The archbishop declined to have his name added to the slate of nominees. Consequently, Abahouni was unanimously elected as the new Primate.²⁴⁷

In America the news of the election generated both satisfaction and despair among the people. The supporters of Sarajian opposed the tactics employed by the supporters of the newly elected Primate. They collected four thousand signatures on a petition, which they forwarded to the Catholicos in Ēchmiadzin, requesting that he not confirm the election. However, the dissension subsided as time passed. Meanwhile, Catholicos Khrimian confirmed the election of Abahouni by an encyclical in 1907 and notified the Central Executive Committee to forward travel expenses for the archbishop.²⁴⁸

Born in 1843 at Kum Kapu, Istanbul, Turkey, Abahouni received his education in Istanbul. In 1866 he entered the Noubar Shahnazarian Seminary in Istanbul, and he was subsequently ordained by Bishop Nersēs Varzhabedian. He was elected Primate of Rodosto in 1873, and in 1876 Primate of Arapkir, where his revolutionary outbursts soon attracted the attention of Sultan Abdul Hamid. On May 2, 1879, he was elevated to the episcopacy, serving as Primate in Arapgir until 1891. In that year, he was assigned as Bishop of Diarbekir by the Patriarch. A year later he was banished to Jerusalem by the sultan, remaining there until 1895. He returned to Istanbul in 1896, where again he was searched and arrested for possession of arms as a result of the revolutionary incident in which Armenians had seized the Ottoman Bank. He was released the same year as a result of an amnesty on the occasion of the installation of Maghak'ia Ōrmanian as the new Patriarch. In 1905 he fled to Egypt, continuing on to Ēchmiadzin, where the Catholicos Khrimian designated him Bishop of Azerbaijan.²⁴⁹

For some reason the travel allotment from America did not reach Abahouni in time, and fifteen long months elapsed between Abahouni's election and his arrival in the United States. From the beginning, mixed feelings existed toward this churchman. He headed the list of nominees for bishop for America and was regarded as a man of remarkable courage and stamina. However, those who supported him overlooked the fact that he was now a tired and ailing man of sixty-five. His antagonists considered him to be an old, ambitious, stubborn, and inflexible person. When the news of his election was received abroad, the well-known Armenian writer Arp'iar Arp'irian published a satirical article in which he challenged Archbishop Abahouni's competence.²⁵⁰

The newly elected Primate waited out the fifteen months before his travel expenses were sent in Egypt. Finally a letter from Abahouni dated July 2, 1908, and addressed to the Diocese of Worcester informed them that he was leaving Alexandria on July 16 for Le Havre in France, there to sail for America. He arrived in New York on August 21, 1908, and two days later the people of Worcester welcomed their new Primate.²⁵¹ Almost immediately he met with difficulties. Four days before the convention was scheduled to take place (September 6), the event was postponed indefinitely. Archbishop Abahouni then traveled to New York, whereupon Dr. P'arnag Atamian, chairman of the Diocesan Board in Worcester, was summoned there on September 22 for the discussion of a very crucial matter.²⁵²

Upon his arrival in New York, Dr. Atamian found everything ready for Archbishop Abahouni's departure. Atamian pleaded that the convention be convened and the Primate submit his resignation officially. However, Archbishop Abahouni remained steadfast in his decision. Two recent events reflected the archbishop's state of mind and may have prompted his decision.

On September 5, 1908, Abahouni celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the Holy Cross Church in West Hoboken, New Jersey. His sermon was highly critical and sarcastic in tone. He contended that his delay in arriving in America was due to an epidemic of cholera that had broken out in the port city of Batumi, Georgia. He also alluded to the fact that he had served as Primate of Aturpatakan (Persian Azerbaijan) before coming to the United States. To a stunned congregation he announced:

You stole me from them, and I, Eznig, persistent and steadfast in my purpose was forced to leave my flock. You, not I, are responsible for this delay in my arrival at my post. I have finally arrived in America and have assumed my duties as Primate. If you heed my counsel and cooperate with my plans, then and only then will I remain as your Primate. However, if you treat me as you did my predecessor, Archbishop Hovsēp' Sarajian, I will not remain here another second. The steamship that brought me here is ready to take me back

immediately. A Primate's duty is to lead his people, and they, in their turn, must follow their leader. If the people attempt to lead the Primate, alas that they should think that way.²⁵³

The second episode occurred in New York City during an observance in honor of the new Turkish constitution. Archbishop Abahouni's wishes for the health and longevity of Sultan Hamid met vociferous disapproval from the audience.

These two factors stripped Abahouni of the support of his former admirers. Consequently, he submitted his resignation to Father Kaft'anian on September 7, 1908, after holding office for only one month. He stated in his letter that he found his health too weak and the challenges too overwhelming to continue in his duties as Primate and to administer properly the national and ecclesiastical needs of the diocese.²⁵⁴ On October 8, 1908, the archbishop boarded the ship that would return him to his homeland, leaving a diocese thoroughly enmeshed in bitter quarrels and confusion. It was the start of a situation that would have many unpleasant results.

Ominous Events (1908–1910)

An official notice issued in 1908 by the Church Trustees in Worcester signaled the future course of events in the diocese. It declared that Father Bōghos Kaft'anian was only in charge of the pastorate of the Church of Our Saviour in Worcester. Because that community alone provided the salary for the priest, his prime obligation was to his own parish. The problem of the locum tenens was not their concern. It was further announced that if Father Kaft'anian needed to visit cities, he must notify the Parish Council as to his intent.²⁵⁵

Two years later, in 1911, the Worcester church again challenged Father Kaft'anian as the locum tenens. Soon other parishes joined in the opposition to his authority. No compromise was possible; it was a showdown and Father Kaft'anian would soon be the loser.

On December 3, 1909, the new Catholicos of All Armenians, His Holiness Madt'ēos II Izmirliants', had issued his first encyclical concerning the Diocese of the Armenian Church in America.²⁵⁶ This encyclical was forwarded to Father Kaft'anian, who was instructed to take immediate steps to convene a Diocesan Convention for the election of a new Primate. Because Archbishop Abahouni was now confined to his sickbed and therefore unable to attend to his duties, the Catholicos considered his resignation automatic.²⁵⁷ The Catholicos also urged the locum tenens to supply him with pertinent data concerning the size and number of parishes in the diocese, a list of clergy, information on Armenian schools in the United States, and general statistics on Armenian communities in America. To comply with the wish of Catholicos Izmirliants', Father Kaft'anian instructed the pastors and the Church Trustees by means of a letter that the Diocesan Convention would be held on February 22, 1910.²⁵⁸

The convention was held in West Hoboken, New Jersey, presided over by the locum tenens.²⁵⁹ A detailed report was prepared to be forwarded to the Catholicos. It stated that as of 1910, there were twelve organized parishes and eleven clergymen in the United States; only four of the clergymen were officially in charge of parishes. The convention passed the following resolution: "Although the election of a Primate is desirable, considering the chaotic situation, we have decided to postpone it."²⁶⁰

Upon the request of the Catholicos of Ēchmiadzin, the Patriarchate of Constantinople was invited to provide three names for the forthcoming election. The first list submitted contained the names of Archbishop Hovsēp' Sarajian, Archbishop Maghak'ia Dērounian, and Archbishop Moushegh Seropian. This list was not favorably received by the Catholicos.²⁶¹ A bid was made for a new list of

nominees, this slate bearing the names of Reverend Knēl Kalēmḳ'earian, Bōghos Kaft'anian, and Arsēn Vehouni.²⁶²

In Worcester, the Church Trustees made public their contention that Father Kaft'anian had no right to claim the office of locum tenens. Their reasoning was based on the seventh article of the constitution, stating that whenever the office of Primate was vacant, the Central Executive Committee was to take the responsibility of designating a locum tenens.²⁶³ Hence, with the election of the former Primate, Archbishop Abahouni, Father Kaft'anian ceased to be locum tenens of the diocese. Reference to the locum tenens was made in the letter of resignation submitted by Archbishop Abahouni to Father Kaft'anian, but this should not have given Father Kaft'anian false hopes for that office.²⁶⁴

On July 24, 1910, the Catholicos dispatched an encyclical addressed directly to the Diocesan Convention in Worcester. Enclosed were the lists of nominees for the election of Primate.²⁶⁵ A news release dated December 24, 1910, informed the Armenians of the sudden death of His Holiness Catholicos Madt'ēos Izmirliants'. The Church Trustees of Worcester announced that a Diocesan Convention was to be convened on February 26, 1911, in Worcester to choose a new Primate.

During this critical period, a bishop of high intellect and administrative ability appeared: Archbishop Moushegh Seropian, the ex-Primate of Adana, Turkey. He had left Turkey as a visitor but was refused permission to return by the Turkish officials. He became an idol to those who were disenchanted with Father Kaft'anian. A struggle was to develop between these two churchmen. Both sides were forced to fight bitterly for the rights they claimed, and the faithful of the Church came to see them both as opportunists.

Hope and Disillusionment: Archbishop Moushegh Seropian

The archbishop, born Ardashēs Seropian in 1869 at Arslan Beg in Nicomedia, was sent to the monastery of Armash in 1889. Ordained in 1895, he served as Primate of Arapgir from 1897 to 1903. In 1904 he became Primate of Adana. The Catholicos of Cilicia elevated him to the episcopacy in 1906, officially receiving him into the jurisdiction of the Cilician Catholicosate, a factor that was to become later an object of controversy.²⁶⁶

Election of the Primate: Archbishop Seropian

During the Adana Massacre in Turkey, in 1909, Archbishop Seropian had been visiting Egypt. He was notified by the Turkish authorities not to return to his diocese in Adana, as he was *persona non grata*. While in Egypt he received an invitation from the Armenians in Boston to become their preacher. He consulted with the Catholicos of Cilicia and the Patriarch of Constantinople, who advised him to wait a while, pending the outcome of his case before the Turkish authorities.²⁶⁷

Archbishop Seropian came to America in 1910. He was a well-known clergyman with an inclination for intellectual pursuits, the author of several books on ecclesiastical subjects. Soon after his arrival in the country, he grew dissatisfied and impatient with the dry and sterile thinking of the Armenian clergymen there and condemned them without distinction.

Archbishop Seropian came to New York on November 19, 1910, where he was welcomed with great enthusiasm and pomp. He was an eloquent speaker and a dynamic preacher, attracting multitudes to his celebrations of the Divine Liturgy and lecture series.²⁶⁸ While in New York he received an invitation to attend a function sponsored by the Armenian Tashnag Party, which he declined. This incident became the prelude to a wave of anti-Seropian propaganda; the Tashnag periodical *Hairenik* henceforth led the critics of Archbishop Seropian. In his defense stood the Armenian newspaper *Azk*.²⁶⁹

On July 24, 1910, Catholicos Izmirliants' had dispatched his encyclical for the convocation of a Diocesan Convention. It was addressed to the Central Executive Committee in Worcester.²⁷⁰

However, the convention was not held until February 26, 1911, after the Catholicos's death. Father Kaft'anian presided over the convention. The most important issue on the agenda was the election of the Primate. The nominees were Father Knēl Kalēmīk'earian, Father Bōghos Kaft'anian, and Father Arsēn Vehouni.

The results of the election were subject to Catholicos confirmation. Father Kaft'anian requested that his name be withdrawn, thereby making possible the addition of Archbishop Seropian's name to the slate by a vote of twenty-one to one. The results of the voting pointed to Archbishop Seropian as the victor, with sixteen votes in his favor, five for Father Kalēmḳ'earian, and three abstentions.²⁷¹

The delegates agreed to give Archbishop Seropian a period of one month in which to decide about accepting the position of Primate. In the event of a refusal, it was agreed to invite Father Kalēmḳ'earian to assume the primacy.²⁷² The following day Father Kaft'anian, on behalf of the Diocesan Convention, wired Archbishop Seropian in Boston: "The Diocesan Convention of America has elected you Primate. We send you our congratulations."²⁷³ However, Archbishop Seropian declined the offer of the primacy, stating his reasons in a letter. The Church Trustees of Worcester pleaded with the Central Executive Committee not to accept Archbishop Seropian's refusal.²⁷⁴ A similar appeal was made to Archbishop Seropian himself, admonishing him not to forsake the opportunity to come to the rescue of his immigrant community, thereby saving them from the threat of alienation and assimilation and possibly from extinction.²⁷⁵

The Aftermath

Even before Archbishop Seropian's election, rumors were in circulation that he would never receive confirmation from Holy Ēchmiadzin. This assumption was based on the fact that Seropian was a member of the jurisdiction of the See of Cilicia and thus would not be allowed to serve in a diocese under the jurisdiction of Ēchmiadzin. Even before the official objection from Ēchmiadzin, events occurred which had a bearing on his reluctance to accept the post.

When the news of the resignation reached Father Kaft'anian, he notified the secretary of the convention of the need to report the election and resignation of the Primate to Ēchmiadzin. Archbishop Seropian had already forwarded a copy of his resignation to the chairman, Dr. P'arnag Atamian. In a letter of April 12, 1911, to Father Kaft'anian, Atamian expressed the urgent need for an immediate meeting of the Central Executive Committee. Father Kaft'anian's reply was that Archbishop Seropian's letter of resignation would be submitted to the Central Executive Committee and that he would send Father Madt'ēos Mannigian, the pastor of Worcester, to represent him, being himself unable.²⁷⁶

Father Mannigian accepted the news reluctantly, but scheduled the meeting for May 14 in Worcester. Because of a conflict by Father Kaft'anian's scheduling of a meeting for the Religious Council in New York on May 16, the Central Executive Committee meeting in Worcester was canceled.²⁷⁷ A news release dated May 18, 1911, reported that the Religious Council had concentrated its attention on the

problems of clergymen who, upon coming to this country, needed to provide their official credentials and could perform their priestly duties only after being approved by the diocese. The Religious Council found Archbishop Seropian responsible for the dissension within the Armenian communities. They charged him with defiance of ecclesiastical authority and notified him that he was no longer permitted to serve in the diocese, on the grounds that he belonged to the jurisdiction of Cilicia. Archbishop Seropian was reminded that his presence had caused enough disturbance and his departure was deemed desirable.²⁷⁸

The nine participating clergymen of the Religious Council cabled the Patriarch of Constantinople, pleading with him, "In the name of God, please remove Archbishop Seropian from America, for he has become a scourge and meddler for the Armenians of America."²⁷⁹ The Religious Council had made its position clear; the Central Executive Committee showed strong support for Archbishop Seropian. Two distinct and opposing camps had emerged.

The Central Executive Committee met on June 14, 1911, in Boston to settle this problem. Father Kaft'anian did not attend. The debate centered on Archbishop Seropian's letter of resignation, which contained unflattering comments about the clergy of America. "The Armenian clergy of America are fundamentally lacking," it said, "in the calling of their spiritual vocation and in competence and moral responsibility."²⁸⁰ The clergy demanded that Archbishop Seropian retract his views. When the lay representatives ignored their demands, the priests angrily walked out. The Central Executive Committee continued its order of business. The members of the Central Executive Committee were firm in their conviction that Archbishop Seropian, a man of high distinction, was indispensable as a Primate. Unanimous support was given to him, and it was pledged to submit the matter to the supreme ecclesiastical authorities at Ēchmiadzin for consideration. Another decision resolved to terminate automatically the office of locum tenens held by Father Kaft'anian because Archbishop Seropian was elected Primate. Hence, until the confirmation of the present election and in keeping with Article 42 of the Constitution, the Council unanimously chose Archbishop Seropian as locum tenens.²⁸¹

Father Kaft'anian was informed of the decision of the Central Executive Committee, and the two opposing camps confronted one another. The Religious Council received support from Ēchmiadzin and Constantinople in its condemnation of Archbishop Seropian. Once again, the old feud between Ēchmiadzin and Cilicia was revived. The election of Archbishop Seropian was contested, and the odds seemed strongly against him. An ominous air of skepticism surrounded him and his supporters.

Holy Ėchmiadzin's Refusal to Confirm

Two official decrees issued in June 1911 by Constantinople and Ėchmiadzin instructed the diocese in America to suspend Archbishop Seropian immediately from all of his ecclesiastical activities in the United States. In a letter to Father Kaft'anian dated June 13, 1911, the patriarch stated that Archbishop Seropian had departed for America with no official authorization from Turkey. He added that as a member of the jurisdiction of Cilicia, Seropian had no right to hold any office outside the jurisdiction of the See of Cilicia. He also noted that only clergy with proper credentials were allowed to serve in the diocese.²⁸²

On June 29, 1911, an official communiqué arrived from the locum tenens of Ėchmiadzin, Archbishop Kēork Sourēnians'. It supported the assertion that the activities of Archbishop Seropian in America had to be terminated:

Archbishop Moushegh may not officiate over Armenians in America either as Primate or as locum tenens. Be informed of this our decision, as well as that of the Patriarch of Constantinople. We urge that you notify Archbishop Seropian of its content.²⁸³

The refusal to grant confirmation to the election of Archbishop Seropian resulted in mixed feelings among the people. Those who supported Archbishop Seropian felt increasingly resentful of Ėchmiadzin, to such an extent that some advocated total separation from Ėchmiadzin and submission to Cilicia. A leading Armenian-language newspaper in Constantinople, the *Piwzantion*, sharply criticized both Constantinople and Ėchmiadzin, accusing the former of inciting agitation. It did not spare its criticism of the deputy locum tenens, Archbishop Sourēnians', writing that by taking a direct stand against Archbishop Seropian and by being an unwitting tool of the reactionaries, Archbishop Sourēnians' had shown that he lacked the competence to be the incumbent of the Holy See of Ėchmiadzin. The paper was also critical of Father Kaft'anian, calling him a disruptive force in the life of the Church.

On August 5, 1911, a letter from the executive of the General Assembly of the Patriarch was forwarded to Bishop Vahram Mangouni, president of the Religious Council of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople. The letter described in somber fashion the religious life of the Armenian community in America. It noted that on any given Sunday, only twenty to thirty people out of two thousand attended services.²⁸⁴ It charged Father Kaft'anian and his collaborators with upsetting the religious tranquility of parishes. It spoke most sympathetically of Archbishop Seropian, stressing that a man of his stature would have been extremely useful in bringing law and order into the organizational life of the Church and thus limiting

the devious activities of some incorrigible clerics. Furthermore, it stated that the authorities in Ēchmiadzin should not dwell too strongly on the issue of Cilicia, because most Armenians in America had emigrated from provinces of Turkish Armenia rather than from the Caucasus. Sternness might only be interpreted as offensiveness by these immigrants.²⁸⁵

At this point, a brief historical sketch concerning the relations of Ēchmiadzin and Cilicia is necessary for an understanding of the objections raised to the election of a Cilician Bishop in a diocese under the jurisdiction of Ēchmiadzin.

Relations between Ēchmiadzin and Cilicia: The Background

Since the fourth century, the Mother See of Holy Ēchmiadzin has been the site of the supreme ecclesiastical authority of the Armenian Church. It was there that Saint Gregory the Illuminator laid the foundation of the first Armenian Church structure in AD 301. For political and military reasons, the Pontifical See was occasionally displaced geographically but always returned to its traditional site.²⁸⁶ In 1441 Armenian Church monastics (*Arewelian Vartabedner*) from the monasteries in the Eastern provinces of Armenia pressed to have the Catholicos See turned from Cilicia to Holy Ēchmiadzin. The Cilician clergy opposed the Eastern Armenians. An assembly at Ēchmiadzin elected Giragos Virabets'i as Catholicos of All Armenians.²⁸⁷ The Catholicos who remained in Cilicia was Krikor Mousapēgian (1439–1451?); he subsequently became the founder of the See of Cilicia.

From that day forward the relationship between these two Holy Sees has been a teetering one, with peace often giving way to bitter quarreling, antagonism, and even schism. Two incidents are worth noting. The first occurred in the seventeenth century when the Bishop of Ancyra took his ordination at the hands of the Catholicos of Cilicia. That led the Catholicoi on both sides to resort to mutual condemnation. Finally, a meeting in Jerusalem in 1652 was held between the two Catholicoi, P'ilibos of Ēchmiadzin and Nersēs of Cilicia, to iron out their differences. It was agreed that neither Catholicos would be allowed to consecrate a bishop for a diocese outside his jurisdiction.²⁸⁸

The second conflict took place in the nineteenth century between Catholicos Kēork IV (1866–1882) of Ēchmiadzin and Mgrdich' I K'ēfsizian (1871–1894) of Cilicia. The Catholicos of Cilicia challenged the authority of the Catholicos of All Armenians and pursued a secessionist policy.²⁸⁹ Their differences stemmed more from personal ambitions than from religious matters. Each declared the other a schismatic. The antagonism between the two Holy Sees finally came to an end during the incumbencies of Mgrdich' I Khrimian (1892–1907), Catholicos of Ēchmiadzin, and Sahag II Khabayian (1903–1939), Catholicos of Cilicia. A telegram of reconciliation was sent by Catholicos Khrimian to Catholicos Sahag

upon the latter's election as Catholicos of Cilicia. Thus a spirit of love, peace, and harmony came to prevail in the relationship of the two Catholicos.²⁹⁰

The position of Ēchmiadzin in Archbishop Seropian's case was clear. It feared that the old feud between Cilicia and Ēchmiadzin would cause once more a difficulty Ēchmiadzin wished to avoid. However, the attitude of the Catholicos of Cilicia was ambiguous and unclear.

The Controversy Deepens

The Central Executive Committee of the diocese sent a letter dated June 16, 1911, to Catholicos Sahag of Cilicia requesting that Archbishop Seropian be permitted to remain in the United States for the spiritual benefit of the Armenians. The answer from Cilicia was most favorable. The Catholicos included a copy of another letter, addressed to the deputy locum tenens, Archbishop Sourēnians' in Ēchmiadzin.²⁹¹ In this letter the Catholicos explained the situation in America and requested the cooperation of the locum tenens in finalizing the confirmation of Archbishop Seropian as Primate.²⁹²

Ēchmiadzin interpreted the letter and the mediatory efforts of Catholicos Sahag as part of a plan to extend the jurisdiction of the See of Cilicia at the expense of the Holy See of Ēchmiadzin. This was also the feeling of the patriarch of Constantinople. Thus, Ēchmiadzin and Constantinople combined their efforts against the Cilician Catholicos.²⁹³

The supporters of Archbishop Seropian claimed unfair treatment, and, expressing their disgust with the Constantinople Patriarchate and with Ēchmiadzin, they threatened dissension and schism. A weekly magazine, *K'aghak'ats'i* ("Citizen"), published in California, became the staunch advocate of revolution against the Mother See. It even questioned the validity of Ēchmiadzin's jurisdiction over the Armenians of America:

Until now it had not occurred to anyone to oppose Ēchmiadzin. But if the Mother See continues to obstinately tread upon the will of the people, then our only alternative is to insist upon organizing a Diocese under the jurisdiction of Cilicia, composed of residents of several western states.²⁹⁴

Once word of this dissension became widespread among the people, others joined in, both individually and in groups. Earlier, the Central Executive Committee had cautioned Ēchmiadzin not to antagonize the Armenian immigrants who came from Cilicia and had traditionally lived within the jurisdiction of the Cilician See. These people generally felt a genuine warmth and respect for Archbishop Seropian.²⁹⁵

On November 23, 1911, a petition was presented to Catholicos Sahag of Cilicia by the Cilician Armenians of America, declaring their intention to be separated from Ēchmiadzin and to create a diocese under the jurisdiction of Cilicia.²⁹⁶ Catholicos Sahag quickly responded to their appeal, exhorting them to be more patient not to allow trivialities to upset their faith, against which even the swords of tyrants had proved helpless. At the same time, however, the Catholicos lashed out strongly against Ēchmiadzin and Constantinople, condemning their actions as vindictive. He made an appeal for the cause of unity, so that Armenians, as an undivided body, could preserve their existence in the fold of the Armenian Church, as “one flock and one Shepherd.”²⁹⁷

With the passage of time, the long and bitter conflicts following the election of Archbishop Seropian lost their vigor and the blame and censure against Ēchmiadzin subsided, only to be revived intermittently by malcontents.

A Period of Decline

Because of Holy Ēchmiadzin's reluctance in approving Archbishop Seropian's election, the life of the diocese took a turn for the worse. Bitter controversies, public contempt, rivalries among laymen and clerics, and sacrilege became the order of the day. The Church became the battlefield for the quarrels of Armenian factions. The political organizations attempted, by every means possible, to discredit churchmen who did not favor them.²⁹⁸ The clerics, in turn, acted irresponsibly and in a manner unbecoming their profession, through their vituperations and gossipmongering, thereby renewing the politicians' anger.

The Catholicosal Election and the American Delegation

The Catholicosal election was scheduled to take place at Ēchmiadzin on December 24, 1911. For the first time, the American diocese was invited to participate. This was an honor not to be taken lightly for a diocese that had not yet exercised its right to vote in an assembly involving all Armenians.

A communiqué dated September 27, 1911, from the Synod of Holy Ēchmiadzin was forwarded to Father Kaft'anian, officially announcing the forthcoming election to be held on December 24 in Ēchmiadzin. The communiqué instructed Father Kaft'anian to designate a lay representative to accompany him to the assembly in Ēchmiadzin. The note added that necessary petitions had already been filed for visas and had been forwarded to the Russian embassy in Washington. All that remained was the election of the lay delegate, and instructions were included concerning this.²⁹⁹

The Catholicosal elections set the scene for more turbulence. In Armenia support was strong for Archbishop Eghishē Tourian, the former Patriarch of Constantinople, a scholarly man who was the favorite of the Tashnag Party. The second candidate was another former Patriarch of Constantinople, Archbishop Maghak'ia Ōrmanian, a church historian, theologian, and anti-Tashnag. The third aspirant was Bishop Garabed Dēr Mgrdich'ian, a churchman educated in Berlin. All three had their supporters and antagonists in the United States, as well as the homeland. However, the controversy in America revolved more around the nomination of the lay delegate rather than these churchmen.

Father Kaft'anian, the locum tenens, was bitterly opposed by those who felt that his collaboration with the Tashnag Party was opposed to religion and the welfare of the Church.³⁰⁰ To oppose Father Kaft'anian, the Central Executive

Committee convened an Extraordinary Convention to elect the lay delegate who would represent the American diocese. The meeting took place on November 12, 1911, in Worcester, and was presided over by Father Bōghos Shahnazarian, pastor of Holy Cross Church in West Hoboken. The convention contended that Father Kaft'anian could not represent the American diocese in Ēchmiadzin because he did not hold an official position in the Church or any ties with the Armenians in America. The convention then elected Father Shahnazarian as the locum tenens of the diocese. It also decided that the locum tenens of Holy Ēchmiadzin would cast the vote on behalf of the diocese at the election convention and that Maghak' K. Bērbērian would be the official lay delegate.³⁰¹ The issue was further complicated when Bērbērian was denied participation at the convention in Ēchmiadzin because his credentials were unsatisfactory. B. H. Ambrougian, who was elected lay delegate at a separate convention held in Providence at the same time, under the locum-tenency of Father Kaft'anian, was given the right to participate in the assembly meeting. The assembly in Ēchmiadzin was not sensitive to the demands of Maghak' Bērbērian to unseat Ambrougian. The reason provided by Ēchmiadzin for its opposition to Bērbērian was that the meeting that elected him as delegate was not presided over by Father Kaft'anian, the locum tenens. On the other hand, Bērbērian argued that since November 2, 1911, Father Kaft'anian had not been in charge of any parish and, according to the twenty-fifth article of the constitution, could not possibly preside over the convention.³⁰²

On December 13, 1911, the assembly in Ēchmiadzin elected Archbishop Kēork Sourēniant's' Catholicos of All Armenians.³⁰³ Armenian immigrants once again looked toward the East with the hope of solutions for their problems.

Decay of Clerical Standards

The clergy in America was in an intolerable state. Many clergymen, all from the old country, showed the Church in an unfavorable light. These men were often malcontents who had sought the priesthood solely for security and material gain.³⁰⁴ Lack of education compounded their ineffectiveness. They often shared equal blame with the political leaders of the day for the scandalous events in the Church and community that threatened to undermine the authority of the primacy. Clerical rivalry and a gross lack of hierarchical discipline contributed to a state of virtual anarchy.³⁰⁵

It was not uncommon to hear that a priest or Parish Council had been summoned to court to settle differences—a situation viewed with dismay by the Armenian communities. One such incident involved the Armenian Church of Our Saviour of Worcester, against which Father Kaft'anian brought charges. He claimed that the deeds and properties of that church legally belonged to him.³⁰⁶ This was

typical of other such situations existing throughout the communities of America. Divided loyalties, doubts, conflicts, and intrigues were compounded by political interests.³⁰⁷ These conflicts subsided temporarily with the arrival of the plenipotentiary, whose mission was to bring about harmony and discipline.

The Plenipotentiary Delegate of Ēchmiadzin: Archbishop Kēork Iwt'iwjian (1913)

Holy Ēchmiadzin had been kept informed of the gradual decline of the organizational structure and religious life of the diocese and the Armenian immigrants by numerous individuals and official bodies. These suggested that the Holy See intervene to restore peace and order.

The Catholicos, shortly after his election, took action, directing the Primate of Europe, Bishop Kēork Iwt'iwjian, to embark for America as the plenipotentiary delegate of Holy Ēchmiadzin.

Upon his arrival, the plenipotentiary opened negotiations. He encountered difficulties but tried always to maintain clear understanding and firmness mixed with diplomacy.

Call to a Mission

For health reasons, Bishop Iwt'iwjian's doctors were not in favor of his undertaking the journey to America.³⁰⁸ Ten months lapsed from the time of his appointment before he was granted permission to proceed with his plans for the journey. A telegram was sent from Ēchmiadzin to Father Arsēn Vehouni in Worcester:

Soon Bishop Iwt'iwjian, the Primate of Europe, will arrive in America as the plenipotentiary delegate. Father Kaft'anian and Bishop Moushegh Seropian have been dismissed. Please advise the people to be calm and not to make other arrangements.³⁰⁹

This telegram was sent by the Central Executive Committee to the editor of *Gotchnag* as a news release with an attached note adding that Archbishop Seropian had already declined his election.

The minutes of the Central Executive Committee of July 25, 1912, mention that Father Kaft'anian, by order of the Catholicos, had been relieved of his duties as locum tenens. No mention is made of Archbishop Seropian.³¹⁰ This omission appears to have been deliberate, especially because Archbishop Seropian was the chairman of the Central Council over which he presided. In the ensuing months, the Central Executive Committee communicated with the Catholicos and Bishop Iwt'iwjian concerning the latter's mission.

It was confirmed that Bishop Iwt'iwjian would reside in Worcester. The council appealed to the Catholicos to review the reports sent to him for his election of the best-qualified candidate for the primacy of America.³¹¹ In a letter dated May 2, 1913, Bishop Iwt'iwjian informed the council of his choice of Father Vehouni as his vicar to oversee matters in the diocese until his arrival.³¹²

Bishop Iwt'iwjian was welcomed by representatives of various Parish Councils in West Hoboken on August 6, 1913. He was ushered to Holy Cross Church, where the faithful greeted him enthusiastically and in turn received his blessings.³¹³

Negotiations and Elections

On August 18, 1913, Bishop Iwt'iwjian, as plenipotentiary delegate, presided over the Worcester meeting of the Central Executive Committee. During the course of the meeting he revealed the existence of several letters sent by Father Kaft'anian to the Catholicos at Holy Ēchmiadzin, continuing allegations that the Central Executive Committee had not remained impartial in the controversy and that Archbishop Seropian was responsible for agitation in the Church.³¹⁴ The council vehemently challenged these accusations. Father Kaft'anian was invited to a meeting on August 22 in order to restate his charges personally.³¹⁵ Before adjourning, the Central Executive Committee submitted its unanimous resignation. This move was made to allow the bishop a free hand in conducting private negotiations with interested parties and bodies. The bishop refused to accept the resignation of the committee and requested that they remain in office until the convocation of a new convention scheduled for September 20–21, 1913, in the Church of Our Saviour.³¹⁶

Bishop Iwt'iwjian approved the validity of the Diocesan Convention of November 12, 1911, which had elected Seropian. His decision was objected to by the trustees of the New York church and thereafter by the trustees of other churches. A series of open letters addressed to Bishop Iwt'iwjian appeared in various newspapers, expressing concern and disagreement with the decisions of Bishop Iwt'iwjian. Some went so far as to question his judgment.³¹⁷ The Parish Council of New York bluntly rejected the invitation of the bishop to attend the convention scheduled for September 20–21. They charged Iwt'iwjian with partisanship and bias.³¹⁸

In a proclamation of September 11, 1913, Bishop Iwt'iwjian took issue with his critics, especially the Church Trustees of New York.³¹⁹ He charged the trustees with misconduct, arrogance, overtly inciting unrest, and violation of the constitution. Bishop Iwt'iwjian resolved to suspend the trustees of New York for rebellion in violation of the twelfth article of the constitution. He charged the trustees of West Hoboken with overseeing the religious affairs of New York until further notice from the Diocesan Convention.³²⁰

The bishop presided at a Clergy Conference on September 19, 1913. The clerics were asked to submit credentials of their ordination and official licenses allowing them to work in the Diocese of America. Those who were unable to attend were asked to mail in their documents or suffer serious penalties.³²¹

At the Diocesan Convention held on September 20, 1913, twenty-two clergy and lay delegates participated. On September 21, by a sixteen-vote margin, Father Vehouni was elected the new Primate of America.³²²

His mission accomplished, Bishop Iwt'iwjian departed for Manchester, England, on October 15, 1913.³²³ Public reaction to the work of the Catholicosai Legate was mixed. Some considered his mission a triumph; others criticized its methods.³²⁴ The new Primate inherited the burden of problems of the Church. He took office amid well-wishes and unfriendly shouts. The road ahead was to prove difficult, not only for the Primate, but for all of the Armenians in the world who were to feel the effects of the horrible tragedy of 1915.

New Churches

Despite the trying years from 1906 to 1913, and despite the air of uncertainty that gripped the Armenian communities, three churches were built and consecrated. The building of churches involved the Armenian communities of the West Coast more than those of the East. This was due to the migration of Armenians westward across the United States and to the presence of Archbishop Sarajian in California.

Holy Cross Church, Union City, New Jersey

Early Armenian immigrants arrived as early as 1880 from Diarbekir, Turkey, in what was then known as West Hoboken, New Jersey.³²⁵ The region of Diarbekir was known for its expert silkworm cultivators and silk weavers. The Armenian immigrants who came to seek their fortunes in America were often attracted by the silk-weaving industry in Jersey City and West Hoboken. They found employment in the Gibbernard and Schwantzenback silk mills in these two cities.

Life for these immigrant Armenians was difficult, as they struggled with only the meager wages they earned from the mills. Prominent among these early settlers in Jersey City was Haygag Ēginian, the first to emigrate to that city, in 1881. In 1888 he founded the first Armenian-language paper in America, *Arekag* (“The Sun”).³²⁶ Another immigrant, T’ovmas Ch’arshafjian, followed in the footsteps of Ēginian. He settled in West Hoboken, where in May 1899 he began publication of *Hairenik*, later to become the official organ of the Tashnag Party.³²⁷

In the spring of 1899, Archbishop Sarajian made a pastoral visitation to West Hoboken and arranged for Father Vahram Msrlian to celebrate the Divine Liturgy in a local Protestant church. This was the first Armenian Mass to be celebrated in New Jersey.³²⁸ Since the beginning of 1899, a seven-member board of Church Trustees had been at work under the chairmanship of Armenag Shishmanian reviewing possibilities for the building of a church in that community.

On April 12, 1899, a meeting was held at Shishmanian’s house to discuss plans for a church.³²⁹ Archbishop Sarajian was present, urging that a modest church building be constructed. Others, under the leadership of an influential Armenian, Hovsēp’ Sarafian, preferred the construction of a complex housing a church, a school, dormitories, and other facilities, to be located on two hundred acres of land. After much deliberation, the founding group supported Archbishop Sarajian’s plan.³³⁰

On September 15, 1899, a group of representatives from the Armenian community entered a plea with the Clerk of the Court of Common Pleas of the

County of Hudson to incorporate the Armenian Church of New Jersey.³³¹ Archbishop Sarajian was invited again to the community in November 1899 to address the people on the building of the new church. He emphasized that he did not favor any plan calling for a recreation hall in the basement of the church.³³² The archbishop's position on this particular issue was met with protest by the Tashnag audience led by T'ovmas Ch'arshafjian. He urged the people to discard the Primate's plan altogether, instead building a hall to be used as an Armenian-language school and for social gatherings. Ch'arshafjian added that a small room could be set aside as a place of worship. The discussion and arguments intensified to such an extent that Archbishop Sarajian left the meeting.³³³

Another attempt to resolve the issue of the building of a church was held on March 15, 1900.³³⁴ Once again, rival groups disagreed over the need for a social center or a church building.

In 1903, the Church Trustees purchased a lot on the northern corner of Angelique Street and Clinton Avenue (now 27th Street and New York Avenue, respectively), for \$1,900.³³⁵ Fund-raising activities ensued in which Archbishop Sarajian played a prominent role, raising \$5,000 single-handedly, \$3,000 of which was contributed by three New York philanthropists, Giwlbēngian, Karagēōzian, and T'awshanjian.³³⁶

On December 9, 1905, the board of Church Trustees applied to the Court of Common Pleas of Hudson County of the State of New Jersey to change the name of the church from Armenian Church of New Jersey to Holy Cross Armenian Apostolic Church.³³⁷ On September 16, 1906, ground-breaking ceremonies were held, and the church was consecrated on January 27, 1907, by Archbishop Sarajian as Holy Cross Church.³³⁸ Archbishop Sarajian was pastor of the church until 1908, when disputes with the Reformed Hnch'ag Party prompted his move to California.³³⁹

Plans for a church center also got underway. But two world wars and the Great Depression intervened, and consequently the parish center was not realized for many years. Finally, in the spring of 1952, Khorēn Shahbazian, a North Bergen manufacturer, purchased the Old City Theater on 27th Street and Bergenline Avenue, which was converted into a social center and dedicated on December 14, 1952.³⁴⁰

Saint Gregory Church, Fowler, California

Armenian immigrants settled in Fowler (in Fresno County) in the 1890s, attracted by the fruit farming and vineyards.³⁴¹ Many came from the Armenian community of Fresno. By the first decade of the new century, a strong need had emerged in the community for an Armenian church.

The building of the church was completed in the early months of 1910 and was consecrated on April 17 by Archbishop Sarajian.³⁴² Archbishop Sarajian had been serving the parish since his resignation from West Hoboken in 1908. On June 12, 1910, a meeting of the parish resolved to have the church incorporated.³⁴³ On July 14, 1910, the board of Church Trustees applied to the Court of Pleas of the County of Fresno of the State of California to have the church named Saint Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church of Fowler.³⁴⁴ In 1911, Archbishop Sarajian retired from his pastorate and departed for Van, Turkey. No permanent pastor was appointed to fill the vacancy left by Archbishop Sarajian.

In 1914 the Armenians in Fowler became divided over the status of a defrocked clergyman, Ghewont Martougēsian.³⁴⁵ One segment of the community expressed their disapproval of Martougēsian's performance of priestly duties and informed the diocese of their objections. The diocese asked the Church Trustees of Fowler to discourage Martougēsian from administering sacraments to the faithful. The trustees, however, did not heed these exhortations, causing a rift between the two. As the situation deteriorated, both parties appealed to the courts to intervene. The situation was alleviated when Martougēsian agreed to comply with the wishes of the Primate, pending the decision of the pontiff in Ēchmiadzin.³⁴⁶

Saint Mary Church, Yettem, California

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Armenian community in California was predominantly settled in and around Fresno. Driven by economic considerations, however, an Armenian Committee was formed in Fresno in 1900 to investigate the possibilities of acquiring land within a forty- to fifty-mile radius of Fresno for the establishment of new Armenian settlements.³⁴⁷ Unfortunately the activities of this committee were discontinued because of conflicts and disunity among its members.³⁴⁸

Through the efforts of an Armenian immigrant, Kapriēl Baghdoyian, from Malatia, Turkey, an Armenian settlement was established in 1901 on forty acres of land forty-two miles southeast of Fresno.³⁴⁹ The place was known as Lowell, but by special permission from the federal government and the local chamber of commerce, the area was renamed Yettem ("Paradise"). By 1912 the community included some three-hundred Armenians. The chief occupation of the residents of Yettem was farming and fruit and vegetable growing. The preservation and observance of ethnic customs and habits of the homeland make this Armenian community unique among all others in the United States.

Saint Mary Church was built in 1911 at a cost of \$3,000. It was consecrated by Archbishop Moushegh Seropian on July 6, 1911. In 1947 the church underwent a complete renovation.

Notes

- 241 Zog-Dērvish, “*Amerigayi Arach’nortout’iwnē*” (“The Primacy of America”), *Hairenik*, June 21, 1907.
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- 312 “*Artsanakrout'iwñ Getronagan Varch'out'ean*,” Worcester, MA, May 21, 1913, p. 30.
- 313 *Hay Kaght'aganout'iwñē* (“Armenian Immigration”), *Gotchnag*, August 6, 1913, p. 802.
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- 323 “*Ewrobayi Arachnortin Amerigayēñ Veratartsē*” (“The Return of the Primate of Europe from America”), *Armenia*, December 14, 1913.
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- 325 In 1925 the townships of West Hoboken and Union Hall were consolidated into the city of Union City.

- 326 Arsēn Diran, *Amerigahay Mamoulē* (“The Armenian-American Press”), *Amerigahay Darets ‘oyts ‘ē*, 1912, pp. 127–129.
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- 328 *Fiftieth Anniversary*, Holy Cross Armenian Apostolic Church, Union City, NJ, January 27, 1957, p. 12.
- 329 Armenian Church of New Jersey,” December 11, 1905, p. 1. Typescript.
- 330 Dikran Mgount, *Hay Gghern Amerigayi Mēch* (“Armenian Clergy in America”) (New York: n.p., 1945), pp. 13–14.
- 331 “Certificate of Change,” December 11, 1905, p. 4.
- 332 A series of incidents following the building of the Worcester church prompted the archbishop’s firm stand. The hall of the church had been used by various political organizations, and their behavior had been less than proper.
- 333 Mgount, *Hay Gghern Amerigayi Mēch*, p. 15.
- 334 “*T’ghtagts ‘out ‘iwnner*” (“Reports”), *Tsayn Hayreneats ‘*, March 31, 1900.
- 335 Mgount, *Hay Gghern Amerigayi Mēch*, p. 15.
- 336 Ashjian, *Vijagats ‘oyts ‘ ew Badmout ‘iwn Arachnortagan T’emin Hayots ‘ Amerigayi*, p. 253.
- 337 “Certificate of Change,” December 11, 1905, p. 4.
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- 341 Seropian, “*Kalifornioy Kaghout ‘ē*” (“The Community of California”), *Amerigahay Darets ‘oyts ‘ē*, 1912, p. 70.
- 342 Ibid.
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- 344 Ibid.
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- 346 A more detailed presentation of Saint Gregory Parish in Fowler cannot be presented here because of the lack of source materials.
- 347 Seropian, “*Kalifornioy Kaghout ‘ē*,” *Amerigahay Darets ‘oyts ‘ē*, 1912, p. 70.
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Nationalism vs. the Primacy (1913–1917)

A New Primate: Father Arsēn Vehouni (1913–1917)

It was hoped that many of the problems of the church would be alleviated with the election of Father Arsēn Vehouni. Father Vehouni initiated his work as Primate by attempting to unite the Armenian community and reorganize the diocese into a more efficient structure. In the midst of clerical problems and uncertain public opinion, Father Vehouni attempted to create a new diocesan image. His election was received with mixed feelings by the people.

The period of Father Vehouni's primacy coincided with World War I. While the world was in bitter conflict, the Turks unveiled their plan of genocide on April 24–25, 1915. The Turkish dictators Talaat Bey and Enver Pasha claimed the lives of more than one million Armenians. World and Armenian reaction was immediate. Many Armenians from the Ottoman Empire fled to the United States.

The new Primate was quickly plunged into bitter feuds and dissension. The foremost issue confronting him was his alleged lack of cooperation with the Armenian National Defense Union. After the members became disillusioned with Father Vehouni's primacy, Vehouni withdrew the diocese from the union—an act that was to bring about his downfall and a schism in the diocese.

A Catholicosai encyclical of November 2, 1913, confirmed the election of Father Arsēn Vehouni as the third Primate of the diocese of the Armenian Church of America. Born in Scutari, near Istanbul, Turkey, he was the son of the presbyter of the Holy Cross Church. He was ordained a celibate priest at the hand of Archbishop Souk'ias Barzants'. He resided temporarily in the monastery of Ēchmiadzin before being assigned to serve in Romania and Bulgaria. In 1901 he came to America, where he was made the pastor of the Lawrence, Massachusetts, parish. From 1901 to 1904 he served as pastor of Providence. On February 1, 1905, he departed for Romania to assume the pastorate of the Armenian Church in Bucharest. He was subsequently appointed vicar of Smyrna, Turkey. In 1910 he was assigned to serve the Worcester, Massachusetts, parish by the Patriarch of Istanbul at the request of the Church Trustees. He served in Worcester until his election as Primate.

The Newly Elected Primate at Work

The election of Father Vehouni allayed the fears of many faithful who were apprehensive over the delay of the official proclamation of the election by His Holiness.³⁵⁰ The first meeting of the Primate and the Central Executive Committee was held on January 7, 1914, during which the encyclical from the Catholicos installing Vehouni was read.

In his first year of office, Father Vehouni concentrated his efforts on reorganizing the diocese. His next concern was parish visitations. The pastors of the New York, Fowler, and Los Angeles parishes had embroiled themselves in serious problems, which the Primate eventually settled. Father Vehouni was also called on to mediate in the case of several clergymen who had acted against the best interests of the Armenian Church. Father Kaft'anian, the former locum tenens, became one of the greatest obstacles to centralization of authority by encouraging dissension among the parishes.

Reorganization of the Diocesan Office

Even before his confirmation as Primate was received, Father Vehouni busied himself with the task of putting the diocesan office in order. Letters, official papers, and documents had been strewn about haphazardly and were yet unfiled. He took the initiative in collecting and assembling these and organizing office procedures more efficiently.³⁵¹

Next the Primate presided at the meetings of the Central Executive Committee and the Religious Council, already overburdened with difficult and complex issues awaiting solution. He found the diocesan treasury in a deplorable state and took steps to create a sound diocesan budget; he assigned annual financial quotas to each of the eighteen parishes, the amount to be based on their membership figures. New York, one of the largest parishes, paid a quota of \$350, in contrast to \$25 paid by the Portland, Maine, parish, one of the smallest.³⁵² In his pastoral visitations, the Primate urged financial support for the diocese. He emphasized the need for individual contributions from each and every parishioner, thereby avoiding complete reliance on well-to-do members for financial assistance. This practice led to some criticism. Despite his efforts, by the end of 1914 the Primate had succeeded in collecting only \$633 out of a proposed budget of \$1,700.³⁵³

Father Vehouni continued to urge the people toward recognition of the diocese as the Church's central authority and mother institution. Strangely enough, one of

the major points of criticism later leveled against Father Vehouni was mismanagement of diocesan funds.³⁵⁴

In Search of Peace and Order

During his first year in office, the Primate visited various parishes of the diocese in the hope of establishing peace and order. An encyclical from the Catholicos dated November 14, 1914, instructed Father Vehouni to labor among his flock in an attempt to restore harmony among bitterly opposed factions, “that all may be one.”³⁵⁵ The encyclical also stated that the North American diocese must extend its jurisdiction to include parishes of Canada and South America.

Deeply aware of the dissension among parishes and their strained relations with the diocesan central authority, the Primate pleaded for the creation of a genuine spiritual and ecclesiastical atmosphere within the diocese. The three parishes of New York, Fowler, and Los Angeles were plagued with strife and misunderstanding. In his annual report at the Diocesan Convention in 1914, Father Vehouni emphatically stated that the treacherous obstacles confronting these parishes were being created by Father Kaft’anian, the former *locum tenens*.³⁵⁶

Because of their rebellious attitudes, the Church Trustees in New York had been suspended by the order of Bishop Iwt’iwjian, the plenipotentiary. Father Vehouni labored long and hard to restore peace and cordial relations between the diocese and the New York parish.³⁵⁷

In Fowler, California, conflict centered on Father Ghewont Martougēsian, a priest who had been defrocked since 1907. Yet the Church Trustees allowed him to preach in the local Armenian church after regular Sunday morning church services, and once he even went so far as to wear the full garb of a priest, totally disregarding the interdict imposed on him. As misunderstandings increased among differing parties, court appearances became more frequent. In the end, the judge ruled that Martougēsian be allowed to preach, but as a layman. This decision was contested by the local Church Trustees of Fowler, and a hearing was scheduled for May 27, 1914. The Primate was subpoenaed to appear in court with the documents verifying that the Catholicos had suspended Martougēsian from his priestly duties. However, Father Vehouni was unable to supply these papers because all official papers of the diocese were still in the possession of Father Kaft’anian, who refused to relinquish them.³⁵⁸ The supporters of Martougēsian declared that no legal charter bound their church, Saint Gregory Armenian Church, to the American diocese. Rather, they insisted, it was a separate and independent institution. The judge, however, consented to allow the diocese to produce evidence that Saint Gregory was indeed founded as a branch of the American diocese under the jurisdiction of Holy Ēchmiadzin.³⁵⁹

Pending a decision by the court, the Primate made plans to return to Worcester. Before his departure, however, he received an unexpected letter from Martougēsian, requesting an audience with him. Martougēsian expressed the desire to refrain from further conflicts with the diocese, to subject himself to the authority of the Primate, and to reconcile his differences with the Church Trustees of Saint Gregory Church. He further pleaded with Father Vehouni to intercede on his behalf with the Catholicos, requesting that he be restored to his priestly duties. The Primate assured Martougēsian that he would do everything in his power to grant him a fair hearing with the Catholicos in Ēchmiadzin. Thus, disunity within the parish of Fowler came to an end. The parishioners gathered for a celebration of the Divine Liturgy by the Primate, whose sermon for the day emphasized the theme that it was better to be concerned with that which united rather than that which divided.

From Fowler the Primate returned his attention to the parish of Los Angeles, where the pastor, Father Sahag Nazarēt'ian, had aroused much controversy by leading a secular life and operating a personal business in addition to his priestly duties. He administered various sacraments and rituals without consulting the local church authorities. One segment of the parish, those from Caucasian Armenia, supported him in his actions, ignoring the diocesan ban imposed on him. Those from Turkish Armenia did not support him but secured their own pastor, Father T'eot'oros Isahagian, whose appointment was confirmed by the Catholicos.³⁶⁰ The Caucasian Armenians and Father Nazarēt'ian disregarded the Primate's advice to refrain from these dissenting activities, and the conflict deepened. On January 25, 1914, an encyclical from the Catholicos instructed Primate Vehouni to make a final appeal for Father Nazarēt'ian to curb his activities.³⁶¹ Father Nazarēt'ian conceded, and Father Isahagian resigned. The opposing trustees were also reconciled, and a standing committee was formed that elected Father Isahagian as the temporary pastor. Once again prudence and moderation bore fruit, and a mission begun amid terrific obstacles ended in peace and order.

The Problem of Unruly Priests

One of the problems within the Armenian Church arose from a team of unqualified priests. Among these dissenting personalities was the former locum tenens, Father Kaft'anian, who presented one of the major obstacles to centralization of authority by encouraging dissension among the parishes and priests. He ignored many appeals to return the official documents and office equipment of the diocese. He also declined to respond to the personal calls and letters of the Primate. Thus Father Vehouni was forced to report to Ēchmiadzin Father Kaft'anian's unwillingness to cooperate. An indictment issued on July 30, 1914, from Holy Ēchmiadzin defrocked Father Kaft'anian.³⁶²

This encyclical not only enumerated Father Kaft'anian's many errors, but dealt generally with the problem of unqualified priests who were more involved in temporal activities than in the advancement of spiritual goals. The Catholicos authorized the Primate to take the necessary steps in dealing with these priests in a spirit of charity and mercy. Those who remained incorrigible and troublesome would be subject to severe punishment and defrocking.³⁶³

In his report to the Diocesan Convention of 1914, Primate Vehouni stated that his policy toward the offending clergymen had been one of sympathetic clemency. But he could no longer pursue this conciliatory policy with those who persisted in sowing seeds of dissension and chaos.³⁶⁴ He particularly attacked the roaming priests who, in open defiance of the central authority, preyed on innocent people for their own financial and partisan interests.³⁶⁵ The local papers often reported stories about these clerics. It was some consolation that they remained a small minority.

The Primate and His Critics

As the Diocesan Assembly convened on November 26–27, 1914, in Worcester, the Primate reported his activities since his installation. He spoke of the renewed orderliness of the church. Among new priests who had arrived from abroad to reinforce the ranks of the clergy in this country were Fathers Vagharshag Arshagouni, Vahram Nazarēt'ian, Shahē Kasbarian, Dirayr Markarian, and Bedros Vartanian. The Holy Translator's Church in Providence had been built and consecrated by Archbishop Moushegh Seropian in 1914. His report was not received with universal approval.³⁶⁶ At the conclusion of his report, Primate Vehouni left the hall to allow the delegates to voice their opinion freely. "It became evident," wrote one delegate, "that the relationship between the Primate and his co-workers had deteriorated considerably during the course of one year. Disharmony arose between the Primate and nationalists concerning his domineering attitude toward the National Defense Union. One faction contemplated asking for the resignation of the Primate."³⁶⁷ Men who had supported the Primate in his election a year before now became his ardent critics. A different spirit now prevailed.

Compounded with their problems at home was the news of the Turkish atrocities against besetting the Armenians. This specter hung over the Armenian-American communities and intensified the convulsive state of the immigrant churches in America. Loyalty to the homeland took priority, and all efforts were directed toward aiding its cause. It was expected that the Church would play a leading role, becoming a bridge of conciliation between quarreling brethren. But the Primate was accused of apathy toward the role of the leading nationalistic organization, the Armenian National Defense Union of America.

The Armenian National Defense Union of America

On January 7, 1914, the Central Council of the Armenian Church resolved to create an interparty committee to achieve unity among the disputing Armenian factions in America for the purpose of confronting the national crisis in Turkish Armenia. Official letters were forwarded to the headquarters of the four major political parties.³⁶⁸ The Reformed Hnch'ag and Tashnag parties at first declined the invitations, and the proposal seemed doomed.³⁶⁹ Those who believed in the merit of such a proposed organization continued to labor for its realization; prominent among them was Archbishop Moushegh Seropian of Boston. Archbishop Seropian firmly believed that such an organization must operate on a national level and function under the supervision of the Armenian diocese and the Primate.³⁷⁰ Hence, on November 22, 1914, in Worcester, Massachusetts, the organization known as the National Defense Committee was founded. The Reformed Hnch'ag Party, the Hnch'ag Party, and the Ramgavar Party rallied around the Church; the Tashnag Party failed to participate, though the Primate initiated many fruitless negotiations with the Tashnags. Later the Armenian General Benevolent Union and the Armenian Evangelical Church joined the movement. The organization came to be known as the Armenian National Defense Union of America.³⁷¹ The Union sought to secure funds and to forward them to relief agencies in Turkey and Russia. It hoped to secure the sympathy of the American public for Armenians in those countries.

The union coordinated its activities in Europe with Bōghos Nubar Pasha, the representative of His Holiness, the Catholicos of All Armenians.³⁷² Nubar Pasha was the head of an Armenian diplomatic mission appointed by the Catholicos, had made Paris his headquarters, and was in continual contact with the Allies to secure their assistance on behalf of the Armenians at the proposed Peace Conference in Versailles in 1919.³⁷³ Thus the aims and desires of all ecclesiastical and political parties were one, from the standpoint of diplomacy and national interests and destiny.

By August 9, 1916, it became clear that a growing tension existed between the primate and the members of the National Defense Union. The controversy centered on Vehouni's refusal to subvert his hierarchal allegiance to the Catholicos by favoring decisions made by the union to delegate observers to the Caucasus. At one of the regular meetings of the Central Council of the diocese, the Primate informed the council of the deliberations of the National Defense Union. The Central Council gave its support to the Primate and notified the National Defense Union accordingly. It also decided that if the union persisted in its decision, a meeting of the Primate,

the Diocesan Commission, and the Central Council would take action against it. On August 30, 1916, a conference was convened that decided to cease the Liaison Committee's participation in the meetings of the union until the role of the Primate in that organization was more clearly recognized. A telegram from Ēchmiadzin was read at that conference, reaffirming such a course of action.³⁷⁴ The Primate, holding firm, declared that the Armenian Apostolic Church had terminated its participation in the National Defense Union.³⁷⁵ Many thought that the Primate was seeking leverage and was scheming to take all the authority into his own hands. Even his associates, who maintained a more moderate position, were dismayed at his arrogance, which hindered the cause of unity. In the coming months, all of these sentiments became more aggravated, resulting in his impeachment.

The Last Acts of the Primate

Before Father Vehouni's resignation in 1917, two significant events occurred. The Diocesan Convention convened in New York from October 29–31, 1916. And an illuminated parchment from the pontiff, Kēork V, was presented to President Woodrow Wilson on December 14, 1916.

The Primate was an uncompromising man and was unable to achieve tranquility. After the Diocesan Convention of October 29–31, 1916, the uneasy relationship of the Primate and the diocesan leaders deteriorated, resulting in his condemnation by the Diocesan Convention on February 18, 1917.

The Gathering Storm

At the Diocesan Convention in October 1916, the Primate was accused by his adversaries of distorting facts. A series of complaints that had lain dormant since the Diocesan Convention of November 1914 now emerged. One was that he had never occupied himself with the reexamination of the constitution of the diocese. At that convention a committee had been formed to revise the bylaws in conjunction with the Primate.³⁷⁶ At the convention of October 1916, the Primate was advised not to issue administrative directives because they only added to the confusion within the parishes.

A second complaint concerned the financial situation of the diocese. Father Vehouni had failed to make financial records and reports available. He was charged with obstructing the work of reconciliation between political factions and straining relations with Armenian Protestants.³⁷⁷ The situation intensified when Father Vehouni was accused of misinterpreting a pontifical encyclical, dated June 1, 1916, dealing with matters concerning the Armenian communities in America.³⁷⁸

At the Diocesan Convention in Worcester, Father Vehouni revealed that he had severed his relations with the National Defense Union of America. The convention instructed him to renew his negotiations with the National Defense Union and to cooperate in the decisions and recommendations regarding national interests. However, no conciliation was in sight. His antagonists decided to depose him.

Primate Vehouni with President Wilson

In gratitude for America's aid to and sympathy toward the Armenian people, Catholicos Kēork V sent an illuminated parchment to the president of the United

States. Father Vehouni presented the document on December 14, 1916.³⁷⁹ He was accompanied by Senators Henry Cabot Lodge and John W. Weeks of Massachusetts, along with officials from Massachusetts, California, Ohio, Texas, Iowa, and New York and distinguished representatives of the Armenian community.

The Primate solemnly addressed the president and thanked him on behalf of the Catholicos and the Armenians for the aid extended to them. He reflected on the colors used in the illumination of the parchment. Red symbolized the blood of innocent victims; black signified the dark fate to which the Armenians had been subjected; and the gold in the center represented the hearts of the Armenian people, so filled with deep gratitude toward the president and people of the United States. The president responded with kindness and affection, confessing that America had not done her full share to deserve such gratitude from Armenia:

We have tried to do what was possible to save your people from the ravages of war. My regret is that we have been able to accomplish so little. There have been many suffering people as a result of that terrible struggle and the lot of none has touched the American heart more than the suffering of the Armenians.³⁸⁰

This was the second time that an Armenian clergyman had the honor of being a guest of the president of the United States in the White House. Once again in the Oval Office there resounded the pleas of an Armenian venerable who resided at the foot of Mount Ararat. The memorial read:

Mr. President:

Joining our children in their progress, we beseech the Lord of All that the humane compassion of yourself and your nation may not diminish and that we may not be left forsaken under the hand of the oppressor, but by your assistance may be delivered and rescued from the heavy yoke. May you be given long life and strength in the grace and help of the Lord.³⁸¹

In the years following 1916, President Wilson appeared more than once to fulfill his pledge that “at an opportune time more would be accomplished.”³⁸² On the eve of the declaration of the independent Armenian Republic in 1918, President Wilson declared Armenia’s right of self-determination. In 1920, he supported the admission of the Armenian Republic into the community of free nations.

Schism in the Church

Long and bitter fights were waged between the Primate and his opponents for control of the Church. Neither Vehouni nor his adversaries showed a conciliatory attitude. The opponents of the Primate were determined to defeat him. Dissension in the Church posed the threat of a definite schism. Many thought that the Armenian Church in America had reached an end.

Prelude to Impeachment

In the opening days of 1917, Armenian newspapers echoed rumors of the possible resignation of the Primate.³⁸³ It was believed that Father Vehouni had forwarded his resignation to the Catholicos for consideration. No explanation was provided to the media. According to articles 8, 9, and 30 of the constitution, it is the prerogative of the Diocesan Convention to accept or deny the resignation of the Primate. So if the rumors of the Primate's resignation were true, the only motivation for that action was that he knew well that a diocesan assembly would not be sympathetic to him. On the other hand, he would have a better chance if His Holiness would invite the delegates to reach a compromise with the Primate.

One recurring controversy during the tenure of Father Vehouni concerned the reluctance of the Tashnag Party to join the Armenian National Defense Union of America. At the Diocesan Convention in Worcester on October 29–31, 1916, a committee was elected to negotiate with the Tashnag Party. It was decided, in the event that negotiations proved fruitless, to convene a Diocesan Convention on February 18, 1917, the sole item on the agenda being the issue of unity.³⁸⁴ The Tashnag Party stated that their reluctance in joining the union stemmed from the fact that too many personal conflicts were involved in the deliberations of this organization.³⁸⁵ One of the major obstacles was the case of the Primate.³⁸⁶ Father Vehouni was charged with defying the resolution passed by the convention that he conduct discussions with interested groups. He refused to attend regular meetings, and the resulting dissension was much to the satisfaction of the Tashnag Party.³⁸⁷

Another criticism directed against the Primate was his agreement with the Tashnag Party that the respective organizations within the Union should ratify the designated representatives of the other organizations. This stipulation clearly indicated the intentions of the Tashnags—to veto those who opposed them. The Tashnag Party had assumed the role of “defending” the very Primate whom they had persecuted in the recent year. The Primate was openly abused for his new

policies by people within the diocese. Not only was his leadership challenged, his abilities as a clergyman were questioned. The Armenian press called for a final confrontation. Voices from all segments of the community demanded the Primate's resignation.³⁸⁸

The Confrontation

On February 18, 1917, the Diocesan Convention was convened in Worcester, amid intense emotions. Father Vehouni was determined to preserve the dignity of his office, and the delegates were equally determined to banish him.

The convention was convened to review the problem of unity. The Tashnag Party stated its position. Others felt that it was unnecessarily hesitant about joining with other organizations in the Armenian National Defense Union. When the discussion came to a stalemate, the representative from Boston moved to deal with the problem of the Primate and listen to both sides of the controversy. A heated discussion followed concerning articles 7, 13, 29, and 42 of the Diocesan Constitution.³⁸⁹ In particular, article 4, which states that the agenda of the convention is prepared by the Central Executive Committee, to whom all complaints against the Primate must first be presented, was disputed.³⁹⁰ The Primate forbade further discussion. In spite of his warnings, the convention continued its deliberations with the consent of the majority. At this point the Primate, accompanied by his supporters, left the convention. A delegate was dispatched to invite the Primate to return to the convention and personally answer criticisms directed against him. To this the Primate replied, "I have dissolved the Convention. The Convention cannot continue and I will not attend it."³⁹¹

Upon his refusal to reappear before the convention, his resignation was called for by the majority of the delegates. The convention decided to inform the Central Executive Committee of their decision to proceed with the election of a new locum tenens within the next two weeks. In case of a delay, the Executive Committee of the convention was given the right to extend an invitation to Father Vartan Kasbarian of Fresno to assume the office of locum tenens. In the event of Kasbarian's refusal, the Central Executive Committee would extend the same invitation to Bishop Papkēn Giwlēsērian.

On February 23, 1917, Father Vehouni issued a refutation titled "*Bashdōnagan Pats'adrout'awn*." There he emphatically condemned the call for his resignation and the proceedings of the Diocesan Convention, defending his legal incumbency pending the final decision of the Catholicos.³⁹² The Central Executive Committee failed to carry out the resolutions as directed by the convention. The Central Executive Committee invited Father Kasbarian to become the locum tenens. He declined, and Bishop Giwlēsērian was called upon. He accepted, but only under

certain conditions, which he did not disclose publicly.

The Armenian community thus experienced a political division that split the Church. The non-Tashnag faction adopted a more solicitous policy toward the Church and aligned themselves with the pontiff in Ēchmiadzin. The Tashnag Party, in their support of Father Vehouni, were uncompromising in their relationship with the diocese. The refuge they had taken in the noncanonical anti-primacy they had established in Providence in February 1917 under the leadership of Father Arsēn Vehouni was short-lived. The arrival of the plenipotentiary, Archbishop Khorēn Mouradpēgian, from Ēchmiadzin in 1912 resulted in the reunification of the parishes and rendered the Providence contingency obsolete. Father Vehouni departed that year for Istanbul. He served on the Religious Council of the Patriarchate there until his lonely death in 1929.³⁹³

New Churches

The acquisition of Holy Translators Church in Providence, Rhode Island (1914), Saint Vartanants' Church in Lowell, Massachusetts (1916), and Saint Peter's Church in Troy, New York (1916), coincided with the most crucial years for the Armenians in the United States and abroad. The community of Lowell constructed a church building, while Providence and Troy purchased edifices from other denominations.

Holy Translators Church, Providence, Rhode Island

After the death of Father Sisagian in 1899, several pastors served the Providence community and its surrounding towns until 1913.³⁹⁴ Attempts were made in 1905, 1906, and 1911 to acquire a church building, but without success.

The first attempt, in 1905, was to purchase a church building for \$5,000. Primate Sarajian was invited to visit Providence to personally undertake the fund-raising activities.³⁹⁵ The church treasury at that time contained only \$500 in cash. No response came from the Primate. This both angered and embittered church officials toward him.³⁹⁶ Even more disturbing to them was the fact that Archbishop Sarajian had not assigned the parish a permanent pastor.

In 1906 the Church Trustees tried to purchase a Protestant Church on Smith Street in Providence. This also met with failure.³⁹⁷

In 1911, with renewed determination, the community again made plans to acquire a church. The Church Trustees formed a building committee, which in August 1913 negotiated for the purchase of the Baptist Church on Jefferson Street. In October the church was purchased for \$9,500.³⁹⁸ The church underwent a partial renovation. Father Vagharshag Arshagouni from Zeitun, Turkey, became the pastor of the new church, where he served until 1916.³⁹⁹

Father Arshagouni celebrated the first Divine Liturgy in the new church on January 20, 1914. The church was consecrated on June 7, 1914, by Archbishop Moushegh Seropian.⁴⁰⁰

The premises of the church were expanded in 1960 by the construction of the Agavian Auditorium, officially dedicated by Archbishop Sion Manougian in February 1961. Since then the auditorium has served as a central meeting place for the Providence community.⁴⁰¹

Saint Vartanants' Church, Lowell, Massachusetts

In 1875, individual Armenians began to migrate to Lowell, Massachusetts.⁴⁰² It was only after 1885, however, that Armenians in larger numbers settled there, drawn by the great textile mills in the heart of the city. These Armenian immigrants were chiefly from the towns and villages of the province of Harpoot, Turkey.

The first attempts at organization of the Armenian community in Lowell date back to May 5, 1888, with the arrival of a group of young Armenians who were employed at a leading cotton manufacturing firm. Among these were Krikor Krikorian, Margos Khach'adourian, and Moushegh Magarian.⁴⁰³ By the late 1890s, almost every organization characteristic of an Armenian community in the United States was represented in Lowell. At this time the first attempts were made to organize the religious life of the immigrants. Visiting clergymen provided spiritual nourishment to the people, but a need was felt for more organized efforts. Thus in 1910 a Church Ladies Association was formed, which gave impetus to the formation of a building committee under the chairmanship of Margos Dēr Manuēlian on March 23, 1913.⁴⁰⁴ Campaigns and fund-raising drives were initiated. Some anxious parishioners even attempted to accelerate the construction by digging with spade in hand. The church at 60 Lawrence Street was built at a cost of \$10,476.35.⁴⁰⁵

On July 3, 1915, a meeting of the Armenian community took place at Saint John's Chapel on Gorham Street in Lowell. At this meeting a board of Church Trustees was formed, consisting of seven members—Margos Dēr Manuēlian, Nazat Mousheghian, Donabed S. Kazanjian, Mgrdich' Kazanjian, Misak' Ghazarian, Arak'el Arak'elian, and Margos Barsamian. Dēr Manuēlian served as chairman.

Consecration ceremonies for the church were held on April 16, 1916, by Archbishop Moushegh Seropian, and the Divine Liturgy was administered by Primate Vehouni. Asadour Babigian served as Godfather. Father Eghishē Kalch'anjian of Lawrence was appointed pastor of the new church, called Saint Vartanants' Church.

From 1916 to 1931, the Lowell parish had spiritual jurisdiction over the Armenian communities lying to the east, southeast, and northeast. In 1932, with the formation of the Lawrence church and parish, these Armenian communities, by the order of the diocese, came under the jurisdiction of Lawrence.⁴⁰⁶ In 1948 the Lowell parish was further diminished by the annexation of the Salem and Peabody districts to the Holy Trinity Church of Boston (now in Cambridge), and that of Andover to the Lawrence Armenian Church. In addition to serving the people of Lowell itself, the church now ministers to the communities of Nashua, Concord, Manchester, and Pelham in New Hampshire and to Billerica, Bedford, Chelmsford, Tyngsboro, Tewksbury, and Dracut in Massachusetts.

Saint Peter's Church, Troy, New York

The beginnings of the Troy-Watervliet community date back to the 1880s.⁴⁰⁷ Armenian immigrants from the provinces of Harpoot and Cilicia were the first to settle in Troy, attracted by the manufacturing firms in the city.

The religious life of the community began in 1899, when a board of Church Trustees was formed. The parish was allowed to use Saint Paul's Episcopal Church on State Street in Troy.⁴⁰⁸ This they did for twelve years, until, in 1911, a church building was purchased for \$3,000 in Green Island. On October 1911, Father Ghewont Bahlawouni celebrated the first Divine Liturgy in the new church. The consecration ceremonies were performed in July 1916 by Fathers Dirayr Markarian and Drip'on Bidzagian.⁴⁰⁹

In 1927 the Armenians purchased the North Second Street Methodist Church, located at Fifth Avenue and Jacob Street in Troy. The undertaking was headed by Kasbar Dēr Mesrobian, Hagop Aghazarian, and T'oros Dēr Bedrosian of the building committee. The new church was consecrated by the Primate, Archbishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian, on March 25, 1928.⁴¹⁰

In 1955 the Armenian community acquired forty-three acres of land as a gift from Agnes Wiswall, a longtime friend of the Armenian community.⁴¹¹ The site is on a hilltop on 19th Street in Watervliet. The Armenians retained their old church until October 1970, when the construction of a new Armenian church was completed. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the new church on October 18, 1970. On November 16, 1970, the old church was transferred to its new owners, the Bethlehem Temple Church of Troy. The consecration of the new church was performed on September 19, 1971, by Archbishop T'orkom Manoogian, the Primate.⁴¹²

Notes

³⁵⁰ “*Artsanakrout'wn Getronagan Varch'out'ean*” (“Minutes of the Central Council”), December 16, 1913, p. 45; “*Amerigahay Arachnortagan Khntirē*” (“The Problem of the Primacy of Armenians of America”), *Gotchnag*, January 10, 1914, p. 41; “*Adenakrout'wn Amerigahayots' Eresp'okhanagan Zhoghovoy*” (“Minutes of the Diocesan Convention of the Armenians of America”), Worcester, MA, November 26–27, 1914, p. 5.

³⁵¹ “*Adenakrout'wn Amerigahayots' Eresp'okhanagan Zhoghovoy*,” Worcester, MA, November 26–27, 1914, pp. 3–4; D. E. S., “*Amerigahayk*” (“Armenian-Americans”), *Dajar*, December 31, 1914, pp. 409–412.

³⁵² “*Artsanakrout'wn Getronagan Varch'out'ean*,” January 7, 1914, p. 48.

³⁵³ “*Adenakrout'wn Amerigahayots Eresp'okhanagan Zhoghovoy*,” Worcester, MA,

November 26–27, 1914, p. 17.

354 “*Artsanakrout’iwnk’ Eresp’okhanagan Zhoghovoy Ereĳ’ Shrchanneroun*” (“Minutes of Three Diocesan Conventions”), Worcester, MA, February 18, 1917, p. 21.

355 “*Adenakrout’iwn Amerigahayots’ Eresp’okhanagan Zhovhovoy*,” Worcester, MA, November 26–27, 1914, p. 6.

356 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

357 *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.

358 *Ibid.*, p. 8; “*Artsanakrout’iwn Getronagan Varch’out’ean*,” January 7, 1914, p. 49.

359 “*Adenakrout’iwn Amerigahayots’ Eresp’okhanagan Zhovhovoy*,” Worcester, MA, November 26–27, 1914, p. 10.

360 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

361 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

362 “*Bashdōnagan*” (“Official”), *Gotchnag*, October 14, 1914, pp. 1097–1098; “*Adenakrout’iwn Amerigahayots’ Eresp’okhanagan Zhovhovoy*,” Worcester, MA, November 26–27, 1914, p. 13.

363 “*Badjēn Hasdadout’ean Gontagi*” (“Copy of the Encyclical of Institution”), *Gotchnag*, February 21, 1914, pp. 186–187.

364 “*Adenakrout’iwn Amerigahayots’ Eresp’okhanagan Zhovhovoy*,” Worcester, MA, November 26–27, 1914, p. 13.

365 “*Egeghets’agan Khntimer*” (“Ecclesiastical Problems”), *Gotchnag*, February 14, 1914, p. 161; “*Bashdōnagan*” (“Official”), *Gotchnag*, December 26, 1914, pp. 1236–1237.

366 “*Amerigahay Eresp’okhanagan Zhoghovē*” (“The Representative Assembly of Armenians of America”), *Gotchnag*, December 12, 1914, p. 1192.

367 “*Amerigahay Eresp’okhanagan Zhoghovē*” (“The Representative Assembly of Armenians of America”), *Gotchnag*, December 12, 1914, p. 1192.

368 “*Artsanakrout’iwn Getronagan Varch’out’ean*,” January 7, 1914, p. 50.

369 “*Artsanakrout’iwn Getronagan Varch’out’ean*,” August 18, 1914, p. 54; “*Adenakrout’iwn Amerighayots’ Eresp’okhanagan Zhoghovoy*,” Worcester, MA, November 26–27, 1914, p. 21.

370 “*Adenakrout’iwn Amerigahayots’ Eresp’okhanagan Zhovhovoy*,” Worcester, MA, November 26–27, 1914, p. 28.

371 “*Bashdōnagan Haydararout’iwn ew Goch’ Amerigayi Hayots’*” (“An Official Announcement and Appeal to the Armenians of America”), *Gotchnag*, October 2, 1915, p. 872; Kapriēl Lazian, *Hayasdan ew Hay Tadē* (“Armenia and the Armenian Question”) (Cairo: Nor Asdgh Press, 1946), pp. 201–203.

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374 “*Artsanakrout’iwn Getronagan Varch’out’ean*,” September 1, 1916, p. 83.

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376 “*Artsanakrout’iwn Eresp’okhanagan Zhoghowoy Ereĳ’ Shrchanneroun*,” February 18, 1917, p. 20.

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⁴⁰⁴ Ashjian, *Vijagats‘oyts‘ ew Badmout‘iwn Arachnortagan T‘emin Hayots‘ Amerigayi*, p. 135; *Fortieth Anniversary*, Saint Vartanants Armenian Church, 1916–1956, Lowell, MA, October 21, 1956, pp. 97–98.

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⁴⁰⁷ Ashjian, *Vijagats‘oyts‘ ew Badmout‘iwn Arachnortagan T‘emin Hayots‘ Amerigayi*, p. 246.

⁴⁰⁸ *Consecration*, Saint Peter Armenian Apostolic Church, Watervliet, NY, September 19, 1971.

⁴⁰⁹ Sources do not reveal the reason for the delay in the consecration of the church.

⁴¹⁰ “*Adenakrout‘iwnner*,” New York, October 7–8, 1928, pp. 28–29.

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**The Armenian Church of North America
on the Road to Recovery
(1917–1921)**

Historical Background

The period between 1917 and 1921 was a dark chapter in the history of the Armenian Church in America. The Diocesan Convention of February 18, 1917, replaced the Primate with a locum tenens, Bishop Papkēn Giwlēsērian. The deposed Primate adopted a vigorous antidiocesan policy. This continued until the arrival in 1921 of Bishop Khorēn Mouradpēgian, the nuncio of Catholicos Kēork V of Ēchmiadzin, who intervened to restore ecclesiastical authority in the internal life of the Church.

This critical time in the life of the Church coincided with one of the most tumultuous periods in recent Armenian history. It marked the birth and death of the Independent Republic of Armenia (1918–1920), and the subsequent Sovietization of the eastern part of traditional Armenia.⁴¹³ It was a period characterized by intense nationalism and revolutionary activity in anticipation of independence, which Armenia had not known since the collapse of the kingdom of Cilicia in 1375. It fractionalized the Armenian community in America, producing two major opposing camps: one favoring the new republic, the other unwilling to accede to the governing party. The Tashnags, who were in control of the government in Armenia, were determined to exercise supremacy over ecclesiastical matters and dominate the churches in the United States. Toward this end, they supported Father Vehouni's separatist activities, even helping establish a dissident diocese in Providence, Rhode Island.⁴¹⁴

A series of alliances emerged during World War I when, on June 28, 1914, Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary was assassinated at Sarajevo, Bosnia. The Austrians blamed this incident on the Serbians. Europe was soon split into two camps, the Allied Powers and the Central Powers.

Armenian volunteers fought on the side of the Allies, much to the displeasure of the Turks, who sided with the Central Powers. The annus horribilis for the Armenians living in Turkey was 1915. The rulers of Turkey perpetrated a premeditated, systematic plan of genocide against the Armenians by means of massacre, starvation, and deportation.⁴¹⁵ As the massacres continued intermittently, self-defense became imperative for the Armenians. This critical situation mobilized all Armenians and their political parties to bear arms against their common enemy, the Turks. The Tashnag Party played a prominent role in the revolutionary activities of this period.

By November 7, 1917, the Bolsheviks had seized power in Russia. Through the Treaty of Brst-Litovsk, on March 3, 1918, signed between victorious Germany

and Lenin's government, the Russians ceded to Turkey the Turkish-Armenian territories of Ardahan, Kars, and Batumi.⁴¹⁶

The vacuum left by the evacuating Russian forces proved advantageous for Turkish forces, which captured these provinces and penetrated further into Transcaucasia. On March 9, 1918, a Provisional Transcaucasian Government was formed, consisting of Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. Persistent Turkish assaults forced the Armenians to enter into the decisive battles of Sardarabad, Pash Aparan, and Karakilisse. Due to Turkish assaults on the government of Transcaucasia, Georgia proclaimed its independence on May 26, followed on May 28 by Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Tashnag Party exercised great influence in the Armenian Republic, most of the cabinet members being members. The Armenian flag they adopted was made of three horizontal colors: red, blue, and orange. This flag was to become a major source of controversy between the Tashnags and their opponents, especially after the fall of the Independent Republic in 1920.

The creation of the Armenian Republic was the signal for a surge of patriotism, rallying Armenians from all corners of the world, many of whom poured in their voluntary contributions to rebuild the fatherland. The Armenians of America, more than those of any other country, gave proof of their generosity. On November 11, 1918, World War I ended in an armistice. A delegation of the Armenian government proceeded to Paris to present Armenian claims at the Peace Conference. The misery within the Armenian Republic during 1919 and 1920 was beyond description. Hundreds of thousands of Armenian refugees jammed the streets of the infant nation.

On January 19, 1920, the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference at Paris recognized the government of the Armenian state and recommended that a mandate under the League of Nations be provided. The Supreme Council, on April 25, 1920, requested that the United States, through President Woodrow Wilson, take the mandate over Armenia. President Wilson placed the case before Congress, along with a comprehensive report by General James G. Harbord of the U.S. Army, who had headed a committee of investigation into Armenia. The pros and cons of the matter were discussed at length. Finally, on May 31, the United States decided not to take over the mandate, but President Wilson promised aid in drawing the boundaries of the new state of Armenia.

On August 10, 1920, the Allied Powers and Turkey signed the Treaty of Sèvres, which ceded a large portion of eastern Anatolia to the Armenian Republic. A month later, in September, Mustafa Kemal Pasha of Turkey attacked the Armenian Republic, capturing town after town. Once again Armenians were left defenseless against the Turks and faced the raids of the Russian Red Army. The Armenians were forced to make a major decision and to determine whether the republic should follow a pro-Turkish or pro-Russian orientation. During the night of November 30–

December 1, an extraordinary meeting took place in Erevan, composed of prominent members of the government of the Republic and the Tashnag Party, who cast their lot with the Soviets. On December 2, the government signed an agreement with Legran, the Soviet representative in Armenia, transferring power to the Bolsheviks, who declared the Independent Socialist Republic. In spite of the terms of agreement, the leaders of the Tashnag Party were summarily arrested by Bolshevik authorities and exiled to Russia.

Meanwhile, on December 21, all laws and regulations pertaining to Soviet Russia were also applied to Armenia. A wave of irresponsibility, adventurism, and antagonism swept the country. Indiscriminate confiscation of property was perpetrated by the Bolsheviks and Red Army. Armenia was isolated from the outside world.

On February 18, 1921, the Tashnags rallied their forces and briefly recaptured Erevan, only to yield again to the Soviets on April 2. The Tashnag leaders made a mass exodus from Armenia and took refuge in the Middle Eastern and European countries, and subsequently the United States.

In the years to come, this change of government was to bring with it new conditions that had a great impact on Armenians in both Armenia and the diaspora. The effects of the change were felt most acutely in Church affairs, because of the precarious situation of Ēchmiadzin, which often demanded and received more loyalty from the people than did the government. This situation was not to the liking of the Armenian nationalistic leaders, especially the Tashnag, who firmly believed that the Soviet authorities had control over the Holy See of Ēchmiadzin and were using it to influence Armenian public opinion abroad.

At any rate, it became apparent that where the Church organization was concerned, partisan interests were present. In this frame of reference, political differences among Armenian communities in Armenia were sharply accentuated, particularly in the year preceding the assassination of Archbishop Leon Tourian in 1933.

One Tashnag leader has written thus concerning the philosophy of political organizations: "A prime point of focus of Armenian political consciousness, the Armenian Church, is of necessity a prize worth contending for among the political forces within the Armenian communities."⁴¹⁷

Locum Tenens: Bishop Papkēn Giwlēsērian (April–July 1917)

Harout‘iwn (baptismal name) Giwlēsērian was born on March 23, 1868, in Aintab, Turkey, into a highly religious family.⁴¹⁸ He received his elementary education at the local Vartanian School until 1888. In 1889 he entered the newly opened Seminary of Armash, Nicomedia, in Turkey, a major center of theological learning and religious revival. Giwlēsērian studied under two eminent hierarchs and former patriarchs, Archbishops Maghak‘ia Ōrmanian and Eghishē Tourian, who exerted profound influence upon the young seminarian. In 1898 he was ordained into the priesthood by Archbishop Ōrmanian, who renamed him Papkēn. After his ordination until 1909, Father Giwlēsērian served in several dioceses in Turkey and was resident preacher in various churches in Constantinople. In 1910 he was elevated to the rank of bishop.

Bishop Giwlēsērian arrived in New York on October 22, 1914, for medical consultation. From April to July 1917, he served as locum tenens of the diocese, his tenure marked by intense controversy. On July 29, 1920, the Central Executive Committee asked him to serve another term as locum tenens. He remained in this office until the arrival of the new Primate, Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian, from Ēchmiadzin on March 7, 1921. On August 7, 1922, Bishop Giwlēsērian left America to examine the plight of Armenian refugees in Middle Eastern countries. He reported his findings to Catholicos Sahag of Cilicia, Patriarch Tourian of Jerusalem, and the Armenian General Benevolent Union of the United States, which came to the assistance of the needy Armenians.⁴¹⁹

On October 15, 1923, he returned to America and entered into an ecumenical dialogue at Episcopalian headquarters in New York. Bishop Giwlēsērian hoped to secure Episcopal cooperation for the reorganization of Saint James Seminary in Jerusalem. The Episcopalians agreed to appoint one of their clergymen to serve on the teaching staff of the seminary. In November 1924, Bishop Giwlēsērian returned to Jerusalem, at the request of Patriarch Tourian, to assume his duties as dean of the seminary, a post he held until 1930.

In 1930, when the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia was transferred to Antelias, Lebanon, Catholicos Sahag II Khabayian requested that Archbishop Giwlēsērian become his Coadjutor-Catholicos (one who possesses the full titles and prerogatives of a Catholicos). Archbishop Giwlēsērian received his Catholicosal consecration in Aleppo, Syria, on April 26, 1931. Catholicos Giwlēsērian became actively involved in the educational and religious life of the seminary in Antelias. Unfortunately, his activities came to an early end with his premature death on July 9, 1936.

Catholicos Giwlēsērian was regarded by his contemporaries as an influential scholar, effective preacher, well-informed theologian and Church historian, disciplined editor, and energetic organizer and administrator. His literary endeavors included many books and articles on almost subject in religious literature.⁴²⁰

During his eight years of residence in the United States and during his service as locum tenens of the American diocese, Bishop Giwlēsērian was unable to exert any extensive influence on Church life and diocesan machinery, because of the political instability of the community. His ideas and writings, however, are still relevant to the restoration of the Church. He was invited by the diocese to assume the office of locum tenens at a time when the national ecclesiastical life of the Armenians in America was in a tense and deteriorating situation. The Tashnags did not receive him favorably. His ineffectiveness probably stemmed from his own reluctance to involve himself deeply in the political undercurrents of the diocese.

Maneuverings of the Ex-Primate

To counteract the offenses of his critics, Father Vehouni, the former Primate, issued his “Official Explanation” on February 23, 1917. In it, he emphasized that the delegates at the Diocesan Convention of February 18, 1917, were in gross violation of the constitution, and hence their move to have him resign from the primacy was an illegal procedure. Father Vehouni based his arguments on the provisions of articles 13 and 42 of the constitution, which provide that the agenda of the Diocesan Convention must be prepared by the Central Executive Committee and that any criticism directed against the Primate must be reviewed and examined by the Central Executive Committee.⁴²¹

Father Vehouni had misinterpreted Article 13 of the Constitution. It was true that criticism against the Primate should have been sent to the Central Executive Committee for consideration, but it was equally true that the Diocesan Convention, as the supreme governing body of the Church in America, had the authority to deal with issues concerning the primacy.⁴²² It was the prerogative of the Diocesan Convention to discuss matters and issues other than those presented by the agenda to the convention. Father Vehouni had apparently overlooked article 30 in the constitution, which read as follows: “It is the duty of the Diocesan Convention to elect Primates or to retire them from office.”⁴²³

Father Vehouni and his collaborators dispatched a report on February 23, 1917, to the Catholicos, informing him of the latest developments. The Central Executive Committee of the Diocesan Convention sent a full report to the Catholicos describing nine criticisms raised against the Primate, which forced the delegates at the Convention to ask for his resignation. The nine objections involved his ineffectiveness in handling the problem of unity, his management of the diocesan

treasury, the ineffectiveness of his Religious Council, and his divisive policies.⁴²⁴ Another charge was that the Primate was both crude and offensive, often resorting to harsh and incoherent behavior in a manner unworthy of his office and position.⁴²⁵

According to the resolution of the convention, the Central Executive Committee had to elect a new locum tenens within two weeks following the Diocesan Convention. The Central Executive Committee failed to carry out the instructions of the convention, and the executive body of the convention then invited Father Vartan Kasbarian of Fresno to assume office. However, he declined the offer. Upon his refusal, the Central Executive Committee, on April 6, 1917, summoned Bishop Papkēn Giwlēsērian to become the locum tenens.⁴²⁶ Bishop Giwlēsērian reluctantly accepted.

Efforts toward Reconciliation

Bishop Giwlēsērian replied to the Central Executive Committee on April 27 that he would make his decision known on his return from Fresno to Boston.⁴²⁷ His reluctance stemmed from the fact that only on April 3, 1917, had the Tashnag Party joined the Armenian National Defense Union of America.⁴²⁸ According to Bishop Giwlēsērian, the difficulties of the ex-Primate were closely connected with the activities of the union, and this move on the part of the Tashnags would definitely bring a solution to the problem of the primacy. However, during negotiations between the Defense Union and the Tashnag Party, the Tashnags agreed that the problems of the primacy were totally an ecclesiastical issue with no bearing whatsoever on the union.⁴²⁹

On June 12, during a meeting with the Central Executive Committee of the Diocesan Convention, Bishop Giwlēsērian accepted the post of locum tenens on a temporary basis. On June 5, he issued his first pastoral letter to the people of the Armenian Church of America, the pastors, and the official bodies of the diocese and the parishes. The bishop declared that in all sincerity he had accepted “the ever-temporary office of locum tenens, so that law and order would be restored to the Church without violation of the constitution.”⁴³⁰

The pastoral letter was conciliatory in its tone and intended to provide a common ground on which to end the dissension in the Armenian Church. On July 2, the locum tenens announced the forthcoming Diocesan Convention, to be held on July 29, 1917, at Worcester. A convention was imperative because the ex-Primate and his followers gave no signs of conciliation. A handful of dissident priests, members of the Religious Council, were reluctant to obey the locum tenens, and certain Church Trustees displayed an unwillingness to accept a compromise. The diocese was gripped by an embarrassing conflict. The locum tenens issued another conciliatory pastoral letter on June 30, 1917. It pleaded with both lay and clerical

members of the diocese to heed his exhortations and save him from having to adopt a severe policy toward clergymen who ignored their vows and adhered firmly to their obstinate attitude.

The prime concern of the bishop had always been the spiritual welfare of the Church. He was determined to defend the Church against the errors of its opponents.

Relief amid Chaos

The locum tenens presided over the Diocesan Convention of July 29, 1917, at Worcester. A new Central Executive Committee and Religious Council were elected. The prevailing mood was conciliatory. Father Shahē Kasbarian, a delegate from Boston, made a move for reconciliation that was unanimously adopted by the convention. He proposed the formation of a Conciliation Committee to conduct discussions with lay and clerical delegates who were still not cooperating with the new administration.

The delegates were dismayed by Ēchmiadzin's silence concerning the grim state of ecclesiastical affairs in America. The silence was ascribed to the dark events occurring in the Caucasus. The Conciliation Committee was asked to communicate with the Catholicos and request that he exercise his authority to settle the problems of the primacy.

One motion concerned the preparation of Armenian priests for service in America. A committee was formed to work under Bishop Giwlēsērian to investigate possibilities for expediting this matter.⁴³¹

The bishop delivered an address to the convention inviting the delegates to pursue a new course in conducting the affairs of the Church. He reflected that the credibility of the community had waned. A portion of his address was directed to those whose religious priorities were questionable:

How pleasing it would be if those who do not have faith in the spirituality of the Church would not meddle in its administrative work. This would represent not only a praiseworthy act of modesty on their part, but indeed must be an essential first step in reforming the Armenian Church in America.⁴³²

At the conclusion of his address, the locum tenens reminded the delegates that he considered his work done; and, as he had agreed previously, he reiterated his desire to be relieved from his duties as locum tenens. The convention pleaded with him to continue in his post until the election of a new locum tenens. Bishop Giwlēsērian consented.

The dispute between the supporters and opponents of the locum tenens now intensified. It became obvious that Father Vehouni enjoyed the support of the

Tashnag Party, which was also in power in the government of the Armenian Republic. Bishop Giwlēsērian's sympathies ran contrary to the Tashnags, and he received little cooperation from them, rendering his attempts for reconciliation ineffective. It was some time before the abuses ended and the split was remedied.

Locum Tenens: Father Shahē Kasbarian (1917–1920)

The Diocesan Convention elected a new Central Council on July 29, 1917. In turn, the Central Council invited Father Shahē Kasbarian, the pastor of Boston, to assume the office of locum tenens. Father Kasbarian, born in 1882, was a native of Aintab, Turkey. He had completed his religious education at Armash, where he was ordained in 1905 by Bishop Maghak'ia Ōrmanian. Father Kasbarian came to America in 1913 and enrolled at the Episcopal Theological Seminary in Cambridge.⁴³³ He served the Boston parish for seventeen years before departing in 1930 for the Armenian Theological Seminary in Antelias to become the dean. In 1931 he was elevated to the rank of bishop.

Father Kasbarian served the diocese at a time when a former Primate was deliberately provoking a crisis. He stood firmly in defense of the Church and worked untiringly to strengthen the delicate ties between the diocese and antidiocesan parishes. Father Kasbarian was known as a humble man of genuine piety. He vigorously defended his office against great pressures brought upon him by the Tashnag press, which supported the activities of the ex-Primate.⁴³⁴

Transfer of Administration

After Bishop Giwlēsērian resigned from the office of locum tenens at the Diocesan Convention of July 29, 1917, the new Central Executive Committee requested that the bishop continue negotiations with the dissenters. Bishop Giwlēsērian agreed to remain in office in the capacity of deputy locum tenens. When negotiations failed, the Central Executive Committee elected Father Shahē Kasbarian locum tenens until January 27, 1918.⁴³⁵

In the meantime the Central Executive Committee had sent a report on August 25, 1917, to His Holiness in Ēchmiadzin, notifying the pontiff of the impeachment of Father Arsēn Vehouni. Because of political upheavals, several reports, letters, and telegrams sent to Ēchmiadzin remained unanswered. The general feeling among officials of the diocese was that Ēchmiadzin was aware of the situation of the Church in America but preferred to remain silent for reasons of its own.⁴³⁶ On the other hand, sources from the antidiocesan faction reported that normal communications existed between the former Primate and Ēchmiadzin, implying collusion between the two.⁴³⁷

A letter dated November 3, 1917, from Ēchmiadzin addressed to “His Eminence Bishop Papkēn Giwlēsērian, the locum tenens of the Armenian Diocese

of America,” arrived on April 9, 1918, when Bishop Kasbarian had already become *locum tenens*.⁴³⁸ The letter bore the signature of Chancellor Bishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian. It contained seven points, clearly stating that the resignation of Father Vehouni had been accepted and that the election of Bishop Giwlēsērian had been confirmed. It also instructed Father Vehouni to return all diocesan materials to the diocese and to cooperate fully with diocesan officials.

Enclosed in the same envelope was another letter addressed to “Very Reverend Father Arsēn Vehouni, the former Primate of the Armenians of America.”⁴³⁹ It also instructed Father Vehouni to return all diocesan property. The Central Executive Committee forwarded this letter to Father Vehouni but received no reply. Three more letters were sent to him by the Central Executive Committee, but these also went unanswered. Finally, the ex-Primate responded on May 15, 1918, by threatening to convene a separate Diocesan Convention.⁴⁴⁰ Father Vehouni and his supporters announced the removal of the diocese from Worcester to Providence. Every parish was urged to maintain its normal relationship with the Primate, who now resided in that city.⁴⁴¹ Some time passed before Father Vehouni was to show a conciliatory attitude to end the long and bitter dispute.

Suspension of Vehouni

Father Shahē Kasbarian presided over the Diocesan Convention held in Worcester on April 7–8, 1918. Among its deliberations were the revision of the Constitution, the organization of a separate diocese in California, the election of representatives for the Armenian National Union, the recognition of women’s suffrage, the eligibility of twenty-one-year-olds to hold office, the use of organs in the Church, the creation of mixed choirs, and issues pertaining to the former Primate and the unqualified priests and trustees.⁴⁴²

An official letter from Ēchmiadzin, received on April 9, instructed the diocese to elect a new Primate according to the constitution. It cautioned the diocese not to include any candidate belonging to the Brotherhood of Cilicia.⁴⁴³ Father Vehouni was notified of the contents of this letter and was instructed to heed the orders of the Catholicos.⁴⁴⁴ The Central Executive Committee, receiving no reply, was forced to suspend Father Vehouni from serving in the diocese.

Were it not for the Tashnag Party, Father Vehouni would probably have ceased his antidiocese activities and obeyed his superiors.⁴⁴⁵ A secret partnership, now obvious to all, had formed between Father Vehouni and the Tashnag Party, whose sympathies for the ex-Primate were not necessarily genuine.⁴⁴⁶

Tashnag Attempts to Dominate the Church

With the Tashnag Party in power in Armenia, the American branch of that organization displayed an air of professed religiosity after decades of antireligious hostility. In Armenia they established a secular anti-Church government. The Tashnag Party challenged the authority of the Catholicos and used every means to renounce the Church, yet the American Central Committee of the Tashnag Party, long known for its fanaticism, almost overnight became the champion of faith, especially in defense of Father Vehouni. Bishop Giwlēsērian noted that for some time the Central Committee of the Tashnag Party in America was not seriously interested in the Armenian Church in America except as a means to exercise control over the diocese. He emphasized that the leadership of the Tashnag Party in America was determined more than ever to have the primacy under its direct influence and to administer the affairs of the diocese according to political party lines. One indication of this was their insistence that representatives of the Armenian Church in the Armenian National Union be people of Tashnag sympathies.⁴⁴⁷

The Tashnag Party encouraged Father Vehouni in his attempt to convene a dissident Diocesan Convention in Providence on October 20, 1918. Only a handful of delegates participated, later joined by a few clerics long known for their troublesome personalities. At this convention Father Vehouni repudiated the locum tenens, the diocese, and the legal Diocesan Convention. The delegates refused to consider his resignation as Primate. They instructed their Central Executive Committee to instruct the parishes to communicate with Primate Vehouni, who now had his headquarters in Providence, a stronghold of the Tashnag Party.⁴⁴⁸ The dissident Central Executive Committee appealed several times to the Armenian National Union, stressing that they represented the legal authority of the diocese and must participate in the meetings of the union. They were refused each time, much to the regret of the Tashnag Party.⁴⁴⁹ Then the dissident Central Executive Committee passed a resolution refusing to recognize the validity of the Armenian National Union.⁴⁵⁰

Thus the Tashnag Party, which had previously made slanderous statements against Father Vehouni, now defended him against the lawful administration of the diocese. Bishop Giwlēsērian held Father Vehouni solely responsible for the crisis in the Church and condemned him for willingly aiding the ambitious schemes of the Tashnag Party, which became solicitous toward the Church and used every means to infiltrate all its administrative posts.⁴⁵¹

The Quest for Ecclesiastical Unity

World War I ended with the armistice of November 11, 1918. On January 18, 1919, a Peace Conference assembled in Paris. A gradual normalization of world communication systems improved Ēchmiadzin's information on events in the United States. Reports from the diocese necessitated the dispatch of a plenipotentiary from Ēchmiadzin to America to unite the Church and community. Catholicos Kēork V designated Bishop Khorēn Mouradpēgian of the Diocese of Ararat in Armenia for the mission.⁴⁵² Much to the relief of the Catholicos and the Armenians of America, the controversy surrounding the ex-Primate was solved, and with it, the schism was brought to an end. A new Primate was elected. The long road to recovery had begun. But surprisingly, the days of remorse for the Church were not completely over.

Arrival of the Plenipotentiary: Bishop Khorēn Mouradpēgian, May 13, 1920

The abilities of Bishop Mouradpēgian were more of an administrative than scholastic nature. He was a man of strong will, deep insight, and a spirit of sacrifice. He was born in Tiflis, Georgia, in 1873, and entered the priesthood in 1901. In 1932 he became the Catholicos of All Armenians, and he died under obscure circumstances on April 6, 1938.⁴⁵³

As the plenipotentiary of the Catholicos, Bishop Mouradpēgian arrived in America on May 13, 1920. He was met in New York by two rival trustees of the New York Church, one delegation headed by Bishop Giwlēsērian, the other by Father Vehouni.⁴⁵⁴ The bishop was escorted to the headquarters of the Delegation of the Armenian Republic, where he was received cordially by the officials. On May 23, 1920, a banquet was held in his honor at the Waldorf Astoria in New York. The bishop spoke to those assembled of the events that had given birth to the Independent Armenian Republic.⁴⁵⁵

On the following day Bishop Mouradpēgian presided at religious services in Saint Illuminator Church in New York. The church was filled to capacity. In his sermon, the bishop praised the Armenian immigrants for their genuine patriotism and generosity but expressed regret over the division in the Armenian community and the schism in the Church. He exhorted the congregation to a spirit of love, forgiveness, and cooperation.⁴⁵⁶

End of the Schism

Bishop Mouradpēgian resided in New York during his stay in America. The Armenian press was silent concerning his mission and itinerary. However, it was clear from the outset that he was surrounded by Tashnags, a situation not to the liking of diocesan authorities.

As part of an official invitation, Bishop Mouradpēgian informed the public and the diocesan delegates of the forthcoming convention to be held on July 10, 1920, in Worcester.⁴⁵⁷ Several points of the invitation, cited shortly, were indicative of the course to be pursued by the bishop. There was no mention of the Diocesan Convention of February 1918, which deposed Father Vehouni from office as Primate. Instead, it stated that upon the insistence of Father Vehouni, the Catholicos had consented to his resignation. Bishop Mouradpēgian added that because of world strife, normal communications between the Holy See and the outside world had been severed, thereby making it impossible for Ēchmiadzin to be kept informed of events in the United States. The Holy See had been unaware of the appointment of Father Shahē Kasbarian to the office of locum tenens. Because no confirmation had come from the Catholicos to Father Kasbarian, Bishop Giwlēsērian remained the legitimate locum tenens, sanctioned by His Holiness on November 3, 1917.

If this reasoning seemed to be justified, on the other hand, it pointed out the fact that the Diocesan Convention of July 29, 1917, which elected Father Kasbarian as locum tenens, was not constitutional. The invitation also alluded to the Diocesan Convention called by the ex-Primate, which had pleaded with the Catholicos to intervene in order that Father Vehouni might continue his duties as Primate. The Diocesan Convention had one major item on its agenda: to elect a new Primate. The convention was preceded by negotiations between the plenipotentiary and the interested parties. Father Vehouni had made clear his intention of being relieved from all his responsibilities and departing from the United States.⁴⁵⁸ Bishop Mouradpēgian consulted with the two rival Central Executive Committees and ordered July 10–11 as the date of the Diocesan Convention. That convention unanimously elected Bishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian, the Chancellor of Ēchmiadzin, as the new Primate. A new Central Executive Committee was also formed.

During the convention, Bishop Mouradpēgian declared that the Diocesan Convention of February 17, 1917, had been in error on several counts in its attempt to depose the Primate. On the other hand, Father Vehouni was also in error by clinging to the office of primacy. Bishop Mouradpēgian also asserted that the dissident diocese in Providence had ceased to exist. To the satisfaction of the Tashnag Party, the convention decided that the representatives of the diocese must discontinue their participation in the Armenian National Union. The editor of *Gotchnag* charged Bishop Mouradpēgian with partially yielding to the demands of

the Tashnags, who earnestly supported Father Vehouni. A possible explanation for the bishop's compromising attitude may be ascribed to the fact that the Tashnags were in charge of the government of Armenia.⁴⁵⁹

On July 29 the new Central Executive Committee, under the presidency of the plenipotentiary, designated Bishop Papkēn Giwlēsērian as the locum tenens until the arrival of the new Primate.⁴⁶⁰ The era of a dual or rival primacy came to an end. Once again, one diocese and one Central Executive Committee were in charge of a divided flock. Father Vehouni, who had yielded under the pressures of the plenipotentiary, was repentant and anxious to return to good standing. He led the way for other priests to return to the legitimate fold. Those who had supported the separatists were also absolved, and dissension seemed to be dying out in all the parishes.

Epilogue

On August 10, 1920, the plenipotentiary departed for Armenia. He had successfully completed his mission. He carried with him a very important report for Catholicos Kēork V. The document, prepared by Bishop Giwlēsērian, dealt in depth with the Armenian community in America and the role of the Armenian Church. Its purpose was to invite the Catholicos to consider seriously regulating the spiritual and administrative life of the Church, in order that she might become a more effective institution. Some of his thoughts concerning the diocesan structure and clergy were as follows:

The primacy of the United States is not an efficacious issue, since that to which we refer to as the primacy of America in truth does not exist within the context of the Church as it is known in Eastern and Western Armenia. Moreover, that which is alluded to as the primacy is a deficient organization, which from its inception has been an object of exploitation at the hands of irresponsible clergymen, as well as the victim of political intrigues and factional speculations. And the Church has consistently emerged in the midst of controversy.⁴⁶¹

Bishop Giwlēsērian added that sooner or later the Armenian community would be assimilated into American culture and society. As he saw it, assimilation was practically inevitable in America, although no government restriction was forced on the religious faith or practices of any immigrant or ethnic group. He further commented that although the prevailing religious character of this country was Protestant, it was a liberal Protestantism and not to be feared. The Armenian Church, by virtue of her centuries-old mission as the major stronghold outside the homeland,

must, however, achieve a degree of efficiency and order by which to fulfill her mission and adapt to the conditions of this land.⁴⁶²

To achieve a religious and ecclesiastical renaissance, Bishop Giwlēsērian mentioned three points that warranted immediate consideration:

1. Without exception, each Armenian colony must establish a parish with its own church building and administration.
2. The clergy who are to serve in the Armenian Church in America must first receive their secular and religious training in American institutions.
3. The liturgical and ceremonial structure of the Armenian Church must be *officially* adapted to the spiritual and economic circumstances of the Armenians in America.⁴⁶³

Bishop Giwlēsērian concluded his observations with the suggestion that

. . . it is expedient that a new structure with broad jurisdictional prerogatives be instituted for the Armenian Church in America, for instance, one similar to the structure of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, in order that the Armenians in America shall be enabled to govern their church in accordance with the requirements of this country [America] and the immediate needs and demands of the people.⁴⁶⁴

Now, decades later, the prophetic report of Bishop Giwlēsērian is still relevant. The problems he mentioned are still plaguing the Armenian Church. It was the contention of Bishop Giwlēsērian that the tradition of the East must be tempered by the pragmatism of the West.

New Churches

The turbulent years from 1917 to 1921 witnessed the acquisition of only one church, Saint Sahag and Saint Mesrob in West Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Armenians settled in Pennsylvania as early as the 1850s. During the Civil War, names of Armenians who fought in the Union Army can be found, as well as the names of laborers who worked at the arsenal in Philadelphia. Several physicians are also listed, namely Garabed Kalousdian, Baronig Madt'ēosian, and Simon Minasian, surgeon at the Pennsylvania Hospital.⁴⁶⁵ One physician, Mihran Kasabian, is mentioned by Archbishop Seropian in 1912 as the author of a study titled "The Seventy-Five Years of Activity of Armenians in America."⁴⁶⁶

By 1890 immigrants were drawn to Philadelphia by its industrial jobs. The religious life of the Philadelphia community began in the early years of the new century. It was not uncommon to find Orthodox and Protestant Armenians working together in a Protestant Church.⁴⁶⁷

The Primate would occasionally visit the parish, as would the pastor from the community of West Hoboken, New Jersey. Services were held in a Protestant Episcopal church at 5th and Bittenwood Streets. In 1901 Archbishop Sarajian appointed a temporary five-member board of Church Trustees, who were later officially installed in office during the first Membership Meeting of the parish, presided over by Father Masht'ots' P'ap'azian, in October 1902.⁴⁶⁸

With the growth of the Armenian community in Philadelphia in 1913, the need for a church became obvious. A small church on the corner of Pike and Broad Streets was purchased for \$19,000 in 1913.⁴⁶⁹

On March 21, 1917, the Armenians bought a new church, on Pine Street, for \$12,000. The church was consecrated by Archbishop Moushegh Seropian on September 30. Hovhannēs T'emoyan served as Godfather. The church was named Saint Sahag and Saint Mesrob.

It soon became apparent that the services of one church were not sufficient. It was decided to maintain two parishes—one in West Philadelphia and the other in North Philadelphia. In September 1923, the Membership Meeting finalized the separation.⁴⁷⁰ One month later the church was sold for \$30,000. Between the sale of the church and the acquisition of the new one (1923–1925), the community of West Philadelphia held church services in Saint George's Episcopal Church at 61st Street and Hazel Avenue.⁴⁷¹

On July 22, 1925, the West Philadelphians approved the purchase of a large house at Walnut Street with the adjacent lot for \$42,000. The North Philadelphians

claimed \$15,000 as their share from the sale of the old church in 1923.⁴⁷² The church in West Philadelphia came to be regarded as the continuation of the original church in Philadelphia and maintained the name of Saint Sahag and Saint Mesrob.⁴⁷³ However, the years of the Depression prevented the community from carrying out their plans for converting this house into a church. Instead, the second floor was converted into a chapel and the first floor used as a hall. The chapel was consecrated in 1932 by Archbishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian. In 1939 the West Philadelphians again undertook plans for a church. A building committee was appointed by the Membership Meeting. In 1947 a parcel of land on the corner of 63rd and Locust Streets was bought for \$38,000. In September 1950 the Walnut Street Church was sold for \$30,000. A new church building in the traditional Armenian architecture was proposed by the building committee. However, high costs and limited supplies of building materials altered their plans. As an interim measure, the building of a large hall was planned in which services could be held and which would later serve as a community hall.

On December 9, 1951, Archbishop Diran Nersoyian, the Primate, blessed the cornerstones of the newly completed church hall. For the next ten years church services were held there. As the community grew into the western suburbs, the original plans for building a church on Locust Street were abandoned. A new site for a permanent church on Clothier Road in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania, was ratified at the Church Trustees meeting on February 19, 1961. The building committee purchased the Agnes Irwin School for Girls on eight and a half acres of land. The settlement was completed on August 1, 1968.⁴⁷⁴ Executive renovations were made, resulting in a new church edifice, auditorium, classrooms, and other facilities to serve the religious, cultural, and social needs of the Armenian community. The church was consecrated on November 24, 1963, by Primate Archbishop Sion Manougian.

Notes

⁴¹³ Two conflicting interpretations are provided concerning the Sovietization of Armenia. Armenia was Sovietized peacefully on December 2, 1920, as a result of a treaty signed between the Moscow representative Legran and the government of Armenia, according to Tashnag historiography. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, insist that the Sovietization of Armenia on November 29, 1920, was due to an internal revolution carried out by the peasants and the working men of Armenia, who overthrew the government and established the Soviet regime. Sources supporting the Tashnag claim are James W. Gerard, “Armenia, Russia, and the Lausanne Treaty,” *Lausanne Treaty—Turkey and Armenia* (New York: American Committee Opposed to the Lausanne Treaty, 1926), quoted in Sarkis Atamian, *The Armenian Community* (New York:

- Philosophical Library Press, 1955), pp. 242–244; Simon Vrats'ian, *Hayasdan Bolshewig Mourji ew T'rk'agan Sali Michew* ("Armenia between Bolshevik Hammer and Turkish Anvil") (Beirut: Hamaskaine Press, 1953), pp. 134–135. The Bolshevik insistence that November 29 is the date of Armenian emancipation is found in *Hairenik*, June 17, 1954, reprinted from the *Boston Globe*, June 9, 1954; Simon Vratzian, "How Armenia was Sovietized," *Armenian Review*, I (Winter 1948), p. 77.
- 414 Editorial, "Miag Loudzoumē" (The Only Solution"), *Gotchnag*, March 17, 1934, pp. 243–244.
- 415 For a discussion of the Armenian massacres, consult the following: James Bryce, *The Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915–1916* (London: Causton & Sons, 1916); Edward M. Bliss, *Turkey and the Armenian Atrocities* (Philadelphia: Moore, 1896); Arnold J. Toynbee, "The Murderous Tyranny of the Turks," *New Armenia*, September 15, 1917, p. 278; Aram Andonian (comp.), *The Memoirs of Naim Bey: Turkish Official Documents Relating to the Deportations and Massacres of Armenians* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1920).
- 416 Vratzian, "How Armenia was Sovietized," p. 77.
- 417 Vahe A. Sarafian, "The Soviet and the Armenian Church," *Armenian Review*, VIII (June 1955), p. 84; "Orou Hed Ē Zhoghovurtē" ("With Whom Are the People?"), *Hairenik*, October 14, 1934.
- 418 The biographical data concerning Bishop Giwlēsērian is compiled from the following sources: *Hai Anteb*, IX (1968) (this is a volume dedicated to Bishop Giwlēsērian in its entirety); Mgrdich' Aghawnouni, *Miapank' ew Ayts'elouk' Hay Erousaghēmi* ("The Congregation and Visitors of Armenian Jerusalem") (Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1929), p. 46.
- 419 Ashod Ergat', "Kerashnorh Papkēn Ebisgobosi Megnoumē" ("Departure of His Grace Bishop Papkēn [Giwlēsērian]"), *Azk-Bahag*, August 14, 1933.
- 420 He also edited the following periodicals: *Loy's* (Constantinople), 1905–1904; *Dawros* (Boston), 1910–1919; *Sion* (Jerusalem), 1927–1930; and *Hasg* (Antelias, Lebanon), 1931–1936.
- 421 *Sahmanatrout' iwn Hokewor Garavarout' ean Hayasdaneayts' Sourp Egeghets' woy Arachnortagan Vijagin Amerigayi* ("Constitution of the Spiritual Government of the Holy Armenian Church of the Diocese of America") (Venice: San Lazzaro Press, 1903), pp. 10, 15.
- 422 V. M. K'iwrk'jian, "Arachnortagan Khntirē" ("The Problems of the Primacy"), *Gotchnag*, March 17, 1917.
- 423 *Sahmanatrout' iwn*, 1903, pp. 13–14.
- 424 "Artsanakrout' iwnk'," Worcester, MA, February 18, 1917, pp. 17–29.
- 425 "Amerigahay Khntirner" ("Problems of Armenians of America"), *Azk*, March 6, 1917.
- 426 "Deghabah Dēr Papkēn Srpazani Pats 'man Jarē" ("The Opening Address of Bishop Papkēn"), *Gotchnag*, September 1, 1917, p. 1052.
- 427 Ibid., p. 1053.
- 428 "Hay Azkayin Miout' iwnē Gazmouadz" ("The Armenian National Union Organized"), *Azk*, April 6, 1917.
- 429 "Deghabah Dēr Papkēn Srpazani Pats 'man Jarē," p. 1053.

- 430 Papkēn Giwlēsērian, “*Arachnortout ‘iwn Hayots ‘Amerigayi*” (“The Primacy of the Armenians of America”), *Azk*, June 27, 1917.
- 431 “*Artsanakrout ‘iwnk ‘*,” Worcester, MA, July 29, 1917, p. 51.
- 432 “*Deghabah Dēr Papkēn Srpazani Pats ‘man Jarč*,” p. 1057.
- 433 “*Grt ‘agan Garewor Sharzhoum Mē Giligioy Mēch*” (“An Important Educational Movement in Cilicia”), *Gotchnag*, September 6, 1913, p. 877.
- 434 “*Gensakragan Kidzer*” (“Biographical Notes”), *Baika*r, December 7, 1935.
- 435 “*Azkayin Lourer: Amerigayi Hayots ‘Arachnortaranē*” (“National News: The Diocese of Armenians of America”), *Dawros*, January 3, 1918, p. 13; *Artsanakrout ‘iwnk ‘*, April 7–8, 1918, pp. 104–107.
- 436 “*Artsanakrout ‘iwnk ‘*,” Worcester, MA, April 7–8, 1918, p. 111.
- 437 Ibid.
- 438 Ibid., pp. 112–114.
- 439 “*Bashdōnagan Shrchaperagan Azkayin Arachnortarani*” (“Official Announcement of the National Diocese”), *Dawros*, September 26, 1918, p. 625.
- 440 Ibid.
- 441 “*Artsanakrout ‘iwn Azkayin Getronagan Varch ‘out ‘ean*” (“Minutes of the National Central Council”), Worcester, MA, October 21, 1918, p. 89.
- 442 “*Artsanakrout ‘iwnk ‘*,” Worcester, MA, April 7–8, 1918, pp. 91–111.
- 443 Shahē Kasbarian, “*Bashdōnagan*” (“Official [Announcement]”) *Dawros*, April 26, 1918, p. 268.
- 444 Shahē Kasbarian, “*Bashdōnagan*” (“Official [Announcement]”) *Dawros*, September 26, 1918, p. 625.
- 445 “*Hayasdaneayts ‘Egeghets ‘in Amerigayi Mēch*” (“The Armenian Church in America”), *Dawros*, November 28, 1918, p. 763.
- 446 Ibid.
- 447 Ibid.
- 448 “*Artsanakrout ‘iwn*,” October 21, 1918, p. 89.
- 449 Ibid., November 26, 1918, p. 92.
- 450 Ibid., April 8, 1919, p. 95.
- 451 “*Nakhort Arachnort Arsēn Vrt. Vehounii Norakoyn Shahadagout ‘iwnnerē*” (“The Newest Exploitations of the Former Primate, Father Arsēn Vehouni”), *Dawros*, June 2, 1919, p. 390.
- 452 Bishop Khorēn Mouradpēgian, “*Hrawirakir Amerigayi Hayasdaneayts ‘Arak ‘elagan Sp. Egeghets ‘woy Eresp ‘okhanagan Zhoghovoy*” (“Invitation to the Diocesan Convention of the Armenian Apostolic Church”), *Gotchnag*, June 26, 1920, p. 826.
- 453 Editorial, “*Gensakragan Nōt ‘er*” (“Biographical Notes”), *Sion*, XII (May 1938), p. 134.
- 454 “*Hay Kaght ‘aganout ‘iwnē*” (“The Armenian Colony”), *Gotchnag*, May 15, 1920, p. 667.
- 455 Bishop Giwlēsērian was not present, but Father Vehouni was. The remainder of the guests at the head table were all Tashnags. “*Hay Kaght ‘aganout ‘iwnē*” (“The Armenian Colony”), *Gotchnag*, May 29, 1920, p. 713.
- 456 Ibid., p. 712.

- 457 Khorēn Mouradpēgian, “*Hrawirakir*” (“Invitation”), *Gotchnag*, June 19, 1920, p. 827.
- 458 Khorēn Mouradpēgian, “*Amerigayi T’emin*” (“[Letter] to the Diocese of America”), *Gotchnag*, September 4, 1920, p. 1152.
- 459 Editorial, “*Amerigayi Hay Egeghets ‘in ew Cat’oghigosagan Liazorē*” (“The Armenian Church of America and the Plenipotentiary of the Catholicos”), *Gotchnag*, August 6, 1920, pp. 1007–1009.
- 460 Mouradpēgian, “*Amerigayi T’emin*,” p. 1152.
- 461 V. N. Giwlēsērian, “*Papkēn Ebisgobos Amerigayi Mēch*” (“Bishop Papkēn in America”), *Hai Anteb*, IX (1968), pp. 63–64.
- 462 *Ibid.*, p. 68.
- 463 On January 5, 1919, Bishop Giwlēsērian and a handful of well-known Armenians of New York formed the Armenian Theological Student’s Aid Committee to permit Armenian candidates for the priesthood to study at Union Theological Seminary: “*Bashdōnagan Haydararout ‘iwn ew Goch*” (“Official Announcement and Appeal”), *Dawros*, January 10, 1918, p. 27. It is unfortunate that not one student showed interest.
- 464 Giwlēsērian, “*Papkēn Ebisgobos Amerigayi Mēch*,” *Hai Anteb*, IX (1968), p. 71.
- 465 M. nanigian, *Amerigahay Ousanoghout ‘iwnē 1837–1895* (“Armenian Students of America”), *Amerigahay Darets ‘oyts ‘ē* (“The Armenian-American Yearbook”) (Boston: Cilicia Press, 1912), pp. 83–93.
- 466 No specific data is available concerning Kasabian’s years of work or the years he lived. The manuscript of the study is said to be in the possession of his wife: Seropian, “*Amerigahay Kaghoutē ew ir Dzakoumnerē*,” *Amerigahay Darets ‘oyts ‘ē*, 1912, pp. 13–14.
- 467 *Fiftieth Anniversary*, Saint Sahag and Saint Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church, Wynnewood, PA, October 15, 1967.
- 468 *S.S. Sahag-Mesroh Armenian Church of Philadelphia*, 1917–1952, Philadelphia, PA, May 23, 1952.
- 469 The data and figures for the purchase of the church are given differently in various sources. *Consecration*, Saint Sahag and Saint Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church, Wynnewood, PA, November 24, 1963, p. 25; Ardēn Ashjian, *Vijagats ‘oyts ‘ ew Badmout ‘iwn Arachnortagan T’emin Hayots ‘ Amerigayi* (“Statistics and History of the Armenian Diocese of America”) (New York: Lēylēgian Press, 1949), p. 109; and *Fiftieth Anniversary*, Saint Sahag–Saint Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church, Wynnewood, PA, October 15, 1967, all list 1913 as the year of purchase and \$18,000 as the purchase price. *S.S. Sahag-Mesroh Armenian Church of Philadelphia, 1917–1952*, cites March 21, 1917, as the purchase date and the price as \$12,000.
- 470 *Consecration*, Wynnewood, PA, November 24, 1963, p. 24.
- 471 By a similar arrangement, the North Philadelphians were allowed use of the Episcopal churches at 18th and Diamond and 12th and Diamond Streets.
- 472 *Consecration and Dedication*, Holy Trinity Armenian Church, Cheltenham, PA, September 13, 1966.
- 473 The North Philadelphians bought their church, Saint Gregory the Illuminator, in 1927.
- 474 *Consecration*, Wynnewood, PA, November 24, 1963, pp. 22–23.

Traditionalism vs. Liberalism (1921–1928)

Historical Background

The primacy of Archbishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian marked a turning point in the history of the Armenian Church in America. This change should be viewed as a modest beginning toward the realization of the Church's vital role in a Western setting. Unfortunately, the internecine strife of rival political factions that had plagued the Church did not disappear overnight. The secular orientation of the political factions often made the Church and clergy a favorite target of attack.

Nevertheless, the primacy of Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian ushered in an era of relative progress in the diocese. The Primate was a man of scholarly interests and a vigorous defender of age-old ecclesiastical traditions who insisted on strict law and order as the basis of stability in the Church. During this period, ten new churches came into existence, bringing the number of churches in America to nineteen. The first American-born generation, now in their twenties and thirties, called for a more Americanized Church structure. Increasingly the American-born were unwilling to share their parents' sense of identity with their cultural and spiritual heritage. During this period two major administrative developments took place—the transfer of the diocese in 1923 to Boston from Worcester, and then to New York; and the creation of a Western Diocese in California in 1927.

Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian strove to strengthen the central authority of the Church in America through a policy aimed at unity, discipline, efficiency, and financial solvency. From the outset, certain parishes such as New York, Boston, and Los Angeles had pursued a course somewhat independent from the diocese, nearly achieving a state of local autonomy, which they were reluctant to relinquish.

Again, the seemingly incurable diseases of dissension, disorder, and controversy plagued the Church, making it difficult for the new Primate to implement his major policies for the general renewal of the Church. In the face of growing discontent and disfavor with the Central Executive Committee of the diocese and various parish officials, Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian resigned as Primate in 1928. The archbishop, disillusioned and frustrated, now withdrew from the diocesan scene and sought refuge in intellectual endeavors. The Church in America was rent once again.

In the early 1920s the Armenian colony in America, more than any other, became totally involved in the sociopolitical conflicts of the homeland, and, in a surge of Armenian patriotism, expressed its desire to remedy the problems of its brethren.

Political activities in the Armenian-American community developed against this background; partisan issues increasingly dominated the Church and obstructed its religious and spiritual progress, setting the stage for the darkest chapter in the history of the Armenian Church in the United States.

Until 1920, the political mind and national aspirations of the Armenian political organizations were preoccupied with revolutionary activities and were directed against a common and external enemy—the Turks. After the fall of the Armenian Republic in 1920 to the Soviet regime, the relationship between the Hnch'ag Party and the Tashnag Party deteriorated. The Hnch'ags supported the ideology of Communism and preferred a Sovietized Armenia to an independent republic under Tashnag rule. The Ramgavar party adopted a conservative policy. Although it categorically denounced Communism and Tashnag socialism, it asserted that Soviet Armenia was the hope of the Armenian people despite its Communist government. The Tashnag Party was determined to prevent the permeation of Communist ideology into Armenian communities in America.

On November 29, 1920, the northern sectors of Armenia were occupied by the Red Army. On December 2, the Tashnag government of Armenia resigned and was replaced by a coalition government, establishing a Russian-dominated Socialist Republic. On December 21 of the same year, Soviet Russian law was enforced in Armenia.⁴⁷⁵ Two months later, on February 18, 1921, the Tashnags staged an insurrection and recaptured Erevan, the capital city, which they held until April 2, when the Soviets completely banished the Tashnag leadership from Armenia.⁴⁷⁶ The entire cabinet of the old government took refuge in neighboring Persia, anticipating a possible return to Armenia under more favorable political circumstances. The exiled government leaders eventually abandoned all hope of return and dispersed into Egypt, France, America, and other parts of the world. There they continued their political activities with intensified zeal, dividing the communities and ushering in the most tragic period of religious and national dissension, schism, hatred, and internal convulsion in the history of the Armenian nation.

Another misfortune that beset the Armenians was their mass deportation from Cilicia in southern Turkey, by order of France, on September 4, 1921. A treaty signed by France and Kemalist Turkey on October 21, 1921, cast hundreds of thousands of Armenian refugees into foreign countries throughout the Middle East, Europe, and the Western Hemisphere.⁴⁷⁷ Many sought entry into America.

Sahag II Khabayian, the Catholicos of Cilicia, also preferred escape from the city to the fury and reprisals of the Kemalist Turks. For the next nine years, he wandered from one city to another in Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, finally establishing the Catholicosate of Cilicia in 1930 in a small village, Antelias, seven miles north of Beirut, the capital of Lebanon. The Armenians of America offered their aid by forming auxiliary committees that provided financial support to the

Catholicosate for the training of seminarians. It was hoped that priests would be trained there to serve the parishes of the United States.

The debacle of 1921 was followed by a third and more disastrous crisis when, during the Lausanne Conference, on July 24, 1923, the Allied Nations made major concessions to Turkey at the expense of her Christian minorities. Hence the European powers again chose to bury the Armenian Question; the name *Armenia* did not even appear in the Lausanne Treaty of 1923.⁴⁷⁸

A fourth misfortune for the Armenians was a tightening of immigration laws of America by the National Origins Act of 1924.

In spite of all of these political, religious, and economic hardships, the Armenians managed to survive, improve their living conditions, and achieve some economic stability in the countries to which they migrated. Aid and rehabilitation were provided to many of the less fortunate migrants by the Armenians of the United States. Individuals, churches, and organizations contributed most generously to their cause. Among these were the Armenian General Benevolent Union, the Armenian Relief Committee of America, and the U.S. government–sponsored Near East Relief.⁴⁷⁹

In America the Church became thoroughly preoccupied with these political developments, almost to the exclusion of its spiritual ministry. Even more detrimental were the warring political factions that used the Church as an arena in which to settle their differences. Compounding these problems was the growing concern of the Armenians in the United States over the precarious situation of the Mother Church in the homeland under Soviet domination.⁴⁸⁰

Ēchmiadzin under Soviet Rule (1921–1928)

The Soviet government issued a decree on the separation of church and state on February 5, 1918, when Orthodox Church possessions were confiscated and declared state property in Russia.⁴⁸¹ With the establishment of Soviet rule in Armenia in 1920, the Armenian Church was faced with the challenge of surviving under an atheistic and totalitarian government. Initially the Soviets hesitated to attempt the total curtailment of the authority of Ēchmiadzin and the destruction of the Church through the confiscation of her properties. The Soviet authorities were cautious about offending the strong religious sentiments of the vast majority of the population. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks eventually carried out their plan of seizure of ecclesiastical properties despite the pleas and protests of the aging Catholicos, Kēork V.⁴⁸²

After the new regime was established, the Synod of Ēchmiadzin, composed of six bishops, met for a series of conferences. It was deemed necessary in July 1921 to include other high-ranking Armenian churchmen in the deliberations, in order to adopt a unified position toward the policies of the Soviet regime. The general mood of the synod, faced with inevitable political control, was to cooperate with the government and to cement the relationship between Ēchmiadzin and the Soviets. Thereafter the Catholicos issued an encyclical exhorting the faithful to support and assist the local Soviet authorities in the rebuilding of the communities.⁴⁸³

In spite of Soviet harassment of the Church, the Catholicos continued with attempts at reform, a policy he had been pursuing since his election in 1912. Beginning in 1920, successive pontifical encyclicals effected changes: the number of days on which the sacrament of marriage could be conferred was increased; remarriage of secular priests was permitted; the canon of kinship in marriage was reduced to the fifth state; the Gregorian calendar was adopted; and the use of organs in churches was permitted.⁴⁸⁴ On November 24, 1923, the Catholicos formed a Central Committee for the Reformation of the Armenian Church at Ēchmiadzin. This committee was delegated to compile the viewpoints of the Catholicosate of Cilicia and the Armenian Patriarchates of Jerusalem and Constantinople, as well as other religious and lay leaders, in preparation for a National Ecclesiastical Conference.

This conference, however, never materialized, because Soviet authorities prohibited it. It was tragic that the spirit of reformation, however superficial, received this lethal blow at the hands of the Soviets, who intended to destroy the Armenian Church's role as the traditional guide for the nation.⁴⁸⁵

It was not until 1922 that the Soviet decree on the separation of church and state was implemented in Armenia.⁴⁸⁶ By this decree, the Church's claim of universality and unity and the hierarchical authority of the Church were dissolved *de facto* within the borders of Armenia. Ēchmiadzin was denied the right of exercising direct spiritual authority upon the dioceses and parish churches in Armenia. Instead, the faithful were allowed to congregate only in local religious groups, not to exceed more than twenty members. These religious groups were not permitted to associate with one another or to organize on a diocesan level. In 1922, the government's attitude toward the Church was given administrative form by the creation of the Council for Affairs of the Armenian Church as an adjunct to the Council of People's Commissars. In 1924, the Synod of Ēchmiadzin, the supreme body of the Church, was dissolved and replaced by the Supreme Spiritual Council as the executive body. It initially consisted only of high-ranking clergymen, but later laymen also participated. The National Ecclesiastical Assembly was declared to be the legislative body.

Despite these outward changes, the relationship of Ēchmiadzin and the government remained in a state of constant tension. In its intimidation of the Church, the government engaged in and encouraged vociferous antireligious propaganda, paving the way for the revolution incited by the insurgents of the Communist-inspired Living Church movement.⁴⁸⁷

In order to dismantle the Church from within, the Communists ardently supported a group called the Free Church or Reformed Church. This movement, which resembled the Living Church of the Russian Orthodox Church, was founded in Armenia in 1922, with the sponsorship of the Cheka.⁴⁸⁸ It received full-fledged encouragement from Soviet authorities in its attempts to minimize and discredit the authority and hierarchy of the central Church administration. The leaders of the Free Church in Armenia were several former clergymen, including Ashod Shakhian, Penig Vartabed, Erouant Mangouni, and Mesrob Melian.⁴⁸⁹ They published a magazine called *Azad Egeghets'i* ("Free Church"), wherein they proposed an ambitious program for the reorganization of the Church.

In its early years, the Free Church movement received support from liberal-minded priests and bishops, both at home and abroad. The Catholicos, however, emphatically denounced its policies, forbidding any innovation in the Armenian Church under threat of severe penalty.⁴⁹⁰ Among the leaders of the Free Church movement, the former archbishop Ashod Shakhian, the Primate of Leninagan in Armenia, published a brochure in 1924 in Armenian titled *Degenerate Religion*, criticizing the hierarchy of the Armenian Church for its failure to provide proper administration and supervision of the religious life of the faithful. This work aroused much conflict among both religious and lay members of the Church, who demanded the archbishop's immediate removal from office. The archbishop later revealed in

an interview to the newspaper *Khorhrtayin Hayasdan* that more publications would be forthcoming with the intent of orienting people to the exact nature of the goals of the Free Church.⁴⁹¹

A colleague of the archbishop was Penig Vartabed, who in 1924 published two pamphlets condemning the Mother See of Ēchmiadzin. These were titled *The Plundered Monastery* and *Celibacy Is Prodigality—Superstition Is Not Christianity*.

Continuous provocations by the Free Church advocates incurred not only the censure of Ēchmiadzin, but eventually the defrocking of the movement's leaders by order of the Catholicos.⁴⁹²

Unaware of the true intentions of this group, several clergymen and columnists of Armenian-language newspapers in America, such as *Gotchnag* and *Baikar*, supported and encouraged the Free Church movement. One proponent of the movement was former locum tenens Father Shahē Kasbarian. In an article titled "Strengthen the Struggle," published in the October 1925 issue of the *Azad Egeghets' i*, Father Kasbarian strongly criticized the Supreme Spiritual Council at Ēchmiadzin for its administrative inefficiency and reluctance to implement much-needed reforms in the Church.⁴⁹³ Despite the criticism of the Free Church leveled against Ēchmiadzin, most Armenians, both in the homeland and in the diaspora, and the Armenian Church hierarchy almost in its entirety, supported the Catholicos in his repudiation of the Free Church.

It was in testimony to this sentiment that, at the Diocesan Convention of 1927 in Worcester, several delegates favored punitive action against Father Kasbarian. Following a heated discussion, a motion by Maghak' Bērbērian of West Pullman, Illinois, expressed the view that the Free Church movement was detrimental to the central ecclesiastical authority in Ēchmiadzin and therefore should be condemned. It further urged that the Catholicos be given filial obedience and unanimous support in his condemnation of this movement.⁴⁹⁴ The motion was passed.

The Free Church movement did not last long. Many of its followers in Armenia soon realized its true nature and ceased to support it. Soviet authorities also lost interest in the movement, because it proved ineffective in weakening the Church. Deprived of government support after 1926, the movement ceased to have any importance as a source of antireligious propaganda. With the dissolution of the Free Church, the antireligious campaign of the Soviets entered a new phase. A new movement sponsored by the government, the League of Militant Atheists, conducted a propaganda war to weaken the Church establishment from without.

An examination of the Soviet anti-Ēchmiadzin policy reveals that two forces were at work. The radical viewpoint advocated the immediate destruction of Ēchmiadzin; the second viewpoint, although sharing this basic hope, differed in its methods of execution, favoring the eradication of religion through gradual means rather than violence.⁴⁹⁵

Catholicos Kēork V bravely resisted the antireligious propaganda of the Communists and condemned their tactics of persecution and injustice. In later years, an old and feeble man, he subjected himself to self-imprisonment at his residence. Since the Soviet occupation of Armenia in 1920, he had repeatedly referred to himself as “*vshdali*” (“despairing”) in open defiance of the Communist masters of Armenia and their hostility toward the Church. His attitude was less than acceptable to the Communists. However, they spared his life because of the devotion and respect he commanded from the Armenians of the diaspora.

Soviet policies toward Ēchmiadzin also had their impact on the Armenian Church in America and elsewhere, leading to bitter controversy between political groups and in the Armenian press. Soviet authorities were not pleased with high-ranking Armenian clergymen who directly or indirectly disagreed with their ideology. They especially criticized Bishop Krikoris Balak‘ian of Paris; Archbishop Nersēs Melik‘-T‘ankian of Aturpatakan (Persian Azerbaijan); and Primate Archbishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian of Boston.

Much displeasure was expressed by one Soviet Armenian government official, A. Erzngian, who alleged that Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian had turned the Church into an arena for political struggles where observances of May 28 (the anniversary of the independence of the Armenian Republic) were not only held, but presided over by the archbishop himself. He concluded that such activities as those of Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian made Ēchmiadzin a target for antireligious propaganda, bearing out the saying that “hostility breeds hostility.”⁴⁹⁶ Armenag Nazar, the editor of *Baikar*, was highly critical of Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian’s partiality in permitting the May 28 observances, considering it open defiance of the Soviet government of Armenia.⁴⁹⁷

As the Tashnag Party intensified its opposition to Soviet Armenia and consequently alienated itself from Ēchmiadzin, its opponents became highly critical of Tashnag policy. The Tashnags labeled their antagonists Communist sympathizers and champions of the Soviet regime.⁴⁹⁸

Rivalry between Tashnag and non-Tashnag elements threatened the Church in America and elsewhere. To rationalized Tashnag intervention in Church affairs, a Tashnag Armenian-American historian, Sarkis Atamian, offers the following justification:

The aim of the Dashnaktzoutyoun in America as well as in other Armenian communities abroad, was, and still is, the freeing of the Armenian Church from the influence of the Soviet government.⁴⁹⁹

Paradoxically, the Tashnag leaders who championed the cause of the Armenian Church against atheistic Communism were themselves Marxists, including the

party's foremost ideologue, Mik'ayēl Varantian, who wrote that "religion is a frightful disaster, an epidemic of universal proportions."⁵⁰⁰

Fanatical Tashnag opposition to the Soviet regime robbed the party of an objective view of the full radius of relationship of the diaspora to Ēchmiadzin and of a more comprehensive understanding of the patriotic sentiments of non-Tashnag.

On the other hand, the ẖamgavar Party failed to draw a clear distinction between pro-fatherland and pro-Soviet sentiments. In their suspicion of the fundamental antireligious ideology of the Tashnag Party, the ẖamgavars interpreted the Tashnag anti-Soviet policy as anti-Ēchmiadzin.

Bishop Papkēn Giwlēsērian: Interim Locum Tenens (July 20, 1920–March 7, 1921)

The ecclesiastical controversy that had crippled the diocese since 1917 and had led to two rival administrations, in Worcester and Providence, was reconciled at the Diocesan Convention of July 20, 1920, in Worcester. The convention was presided over by the plenipotentiary to the Catholicos, Archbishop Khorēn Mouradpēgian.⁵⁰¹ Archbishop Mouradpēgian was successful in persuading the parties involved to the idea of administrative unity under one diocese. The convention elected Archbishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian, the Chancellor of Ēchmiadzin, as the new Primate. The delegates also elected a new Central Executive Committee to administer diocesan affairs temporarily until the next Diocesan Convention, pending the arrival of the new Primate in the United States. On March 7, 1921, Bishop Papkēn Giwlēsērian assumed office as locum tenens.⁵⁰²

The locum tenens and the Central Executive Committee were confronted by two major problems. First, they were determined to heal the wounds of dissension and normalize the relationship of parishes with the diocese. Second, they hoped to alleviate the diocese's financial difficulties. As a beginning, the Central Executive Committee issued an official communication to the faithful proclaiming the end of the schism and urging them to establish harmonious relations with the diocese. By way of parish visitations, pastoral letters, and personal contacts, the locum tenens succeeded in improving the relationship of the communities with the diocesan authority. Clergymen who did not have their own parishes were given pastoral assignments. The locum tenens and the Central Executive Committee were less successful in overcoming the financial difficulties.

In his eight months in office as locum tenens, Bishop Giwlēsērian strove to execute his duties despite political rivalries and personal conflicts that, although subdued, were always present. Unfortunately, this period of relative peace and goodwill did not last long.

The New Primate: Archbishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian (1921–1928)

Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian was born on April 21, 1867, in Norshēn, a village in the province of Arts‘akh in northern Armenia. His baptismal name was Dikran. He was educated in the village school and later attended the Kēorkian Seminary in Ēchmiadzin, where he was ordained a monk in 1894. He served on the staff of the seminary for a short time and then attended Petrograd University in Russia, where he specialized in history and philology. In 1917, he was elevated to the episcopacy by Catholicos Kēork V, subsequently serving as Chancellor of the Holy See. Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian is considered one of the last great intellectuals of his era to have graduated from the Seminary of Ēchmiadzin.

His background included wide involvement in Church and national affairs in the homeland and extensive administrative experience in schools and dioceses in Armenia. Before his election as primate, Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian had served as the Chancellor of Ēchmiadzin. Fluent in Armenian, Russian, French, German, and, later, English, the archbishop wrote numerous books and articles in Armenian periodicals, especially in *Ararat*, the official publication of Ēchmiadzin. Among his published works, *Frig Tiwan* (“The Archives of Frig”) is regarded as one of the foremost philological treatises on Armenian literature in the Middle Ages.

Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian arrived in New York from Ēchmiadzin on March 7, 1921. He was welcomed by Bishop Papkēn Giwlēsērian and representatives of the Armenian churches and community. His clerical garb and refined manners, combined with his scholarly background and speech, favorably impressed those who had gathered to greet him in New York. He was escorted to Saint Illuminator Armenian Church on 27th Street, where he performed the *Hrashap‘ar* Service (“Processional Hymn”).⁵⁰³

The election of Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian and the era of his primacy were important for several reasons. He came from the land of Ararat and was an eyewitness to the tragic events of the early 1920s in Turkey. For the first time, the incumbent of the American diocese was an Eastern Armenian with the advantage of direct access to the Catholicos at Ēchmiadzin.⁵⁰⁴ In America, as elsewhere, Armenians were preoccupied with the distressing state of Armenia. It was expected that the new Primate would be actively involved in Armenian national affairs.

One task confronting the Primate was the readmission of the diocese into the Armenian National Union, from which it had withdrawn the previous year under

pressure from the Tashnag Party and the insistence of the plenipotentiary, Archbishop Khorēn Mouradpēgian.⁵⁰⁵ Another issue was the general mood of reformation pervading the Armenian Church throughout the world, which called for changes in every phase of Church life. The diocese in America was gripped by this tide of reformation, which proved to be rewarding for the Church and the faithful. The changes were concerned with the modification of sacramental canons, the establishment of Sunday schools, the adoption of the Gregorian calendar, and the formation of Church organizations.

Politically, Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian was regarded by his supporters and critics as a Tashnag partisan. A prominent Tashnag leader and editor of *Hairenik*, Rūpēn Tarpinian (also referred to as Reuben Darbinian), writes:

There was a time when Archbishop Tirayr Hovhannesian, a known sympathizer of the Dashnaks was Prelate of the Armenian Church, when his secretary was a prominent member of the Federation (Tashnag Party) and when the delegates in overwhelming majority were Dashnak sympathizers the Federation could easily have seized the Church.⁵⁰⁶

Many considered the Primate overly authoritarian and traditional, incompatible with the liberal atmosphere of America. Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian, a distinguished scholar and author, was a forceful churchman regarded by his critics as an “unholy terror.” As a result of his extreme traditionalism in the performance of rituals and ceremonies and his dogmatism in the face of controversy, he was branded an archconservative. By nature he was indeed uncompromising, domineering, and impatient with human ignorance and mediocrity. His manner of speech and demeanor displayed an air of sophistication. Various anecdotes about the archbishop portray him as a stubborn man with little kindness, but who mellowed in his later years, especially after his resignation in 1928.

Zarouhi Kalēm̄k‘earian, a writer from New York, nostalgically depicts Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian’s afternoon visits to Fort Tryon Park in New York:

A book under his arm—a paper parcel in his hand, full of bread crumbs—these were for the birds, the pigeons, who knew him and, noticing him from afar, would hop toward him, following him to his familiar bench, where they would make merry.

It is also told that as the archbishop lay in the hospital in his last days, his close friends and neighbors, the Simonians, whose hospitality he had often enjoyed, once paid him a visit. Turning to them with weary and sorrowful eyes, he uttered, “My birds . . . they will be hungry.”⁵⁰⁷

First Efforts toward the Reorganization of the Diocese

On March 10, 1921, Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian arrived at diocesan headquarters in Worcester, Massachusetts. As Primate of the American diocese, he was anxious from the start to be involved with more than just routine affairs.

One of his first official duties entailed presiding at the consecration services of Saint Illuminator Church in New York on April 17, 1921.⁵⁰⁸ The Primate performed the Divine Liturgy, and the sermon was delivered by Bishop Papkēn Giwlēsērian. At this solemn service, the new Primate was introduced to the people through the reading of the pontifical encyclical by Father Hovhan Garabedian.⁵⁰⁹ The encyclical confirmed the credentials of Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian as the new Primate of the American diocese.⁵¹⁰

Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian's message to the congregation was forceful and indicated the policies he intended to pursue as Primate. The main thrust of his address stressed the task that lay ahead—complete renewal of the spiritual life. He urged the diocese and its churches to make themselves more attractive to the faithful and engage national and ecclesiastical matters with authority and effectiveness. The Primate observed that the spirit of discipline in the diocese had been weakened, if not extinguished. He asked everyone to respect discipline in the interest of the welfare of the spiritual life of the faithful. He stressed that young and old alike must share responsibility in the great work of the spiritual and administrative renewal of the diocese. The Primate continued by emphasizing two priorities of the diocese: the renewal and expansion of parish churches and the establishment of Armenian-language schools. These would constitute the foundation of the Armenian community in America. However, he noted, these objectives could be achieved only through a spirit of sacrifice and determination. In conclusion, the Primate clarified the mission of the Armenian Church and exhorted his flock to be keenly respectful toward their Church, which had been, and remained, the moral and spiritual mainstay of the Armenian people.⁵¹¹

One week later, on April 25, a private meeting was held in New York, at which the Primate presided. This gathering was attended by twenty-four well-to-do Armenian community leaders, who unanimously resolved to form the Committee for the Guardianship of the Diocese.⁵¹² Its purpose was to raise between \$10,000 and \$12,000 for the diocese, but the committee's efforts were fruitless due to inadequate planning.⁵¹³

In May 1921, Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian, accompanied by Vahan Kardashian, a graduate of Yale University and an attorney, and General Sebouh of

the Armenian Army of the Independent Republic, called on President Warren G. Harding at the White House.⁵¹⁴ Their audience with the president focused on the Armenian Question and the role of the United States in its solution. The meeting was also attended by such prominent statesmen and civic leaders such as Charles Evans Hughes, secretary of state; James W. Gerard, a New York attorney; Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts; and James L. Barton of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. All these men were considered strong Armenophiles in the United States. They endorsed freedom for the Armenians and the redemption of their lands lost to the Turks. They supported and helped organize lobbying groups such as the Armenia-America Society and the Armenian Committee for the Independence of Armenia.⁵¹⁵ Little is known about the outcome of this meeting with President Harding, but later events indicate that no commitment was obtained from the president.

The Armenia-America Society and the American Committee for the Independence of Armenia were strongly convinced that the Harding administration would usher in more favorable conditions for the Armenians. The Armenia-America Society, with Barton as its unofficial head, subscribed to the concept of a U.S.-financed Armenian national home, that is, an autonomous Armenia in Cilicia, Turkey.⁵¹⁶

Secretary Hughes rejected this idea. On the other hand, Gerard and his supporters, along with the American Committee for the Independence of Armenia, opposing the plans of the Armenia-America Society, desired *de jure* recognition for the Soviet Armenian Republic and the territories specified for Armenia in the Treaty of Sèvres, signed on August 10, 1920.⁵¹⁷

Subsequently, Hughes and Lodge remained noncommittal to the plan for an Armenian national home. The American public lost interest in a confrontation with Turkey on behalf of the Armenians. The Armenians were left completely alone.

The Primate now turned his attention to the reorganization of the diocese. The Central Executive Committee designated August 21, 1921, as the date for the forthcoming Diocesan Convention, to be held at Holy Saviour Church in Worcester, Massachusetts. The diocese urged the parishes to send delegates.⁵¹⁸ According to the account of one reporter, there was a distinct change in the atmosphere of the convention over those of past years. He ascribed the change to the aura of the new Primate.⁵¹⁹

The delegates dealt with several important issues, among them the budget of the diocese, the revision of the Church constitution, reconciliation with the National Armenian Union, the transfer of the diocese from Worcester to Boston, and the training of clergy.⁵²⁰ Much discussion centered on the question of reconciliation. Most delegates favored the return of the diocese to the National Armenian Union, from which it had withdrawn at the last Diocesan Convention on July 20, 1920.

The Central Executive Committee was authorized by the convention to take the necessary steps for this purpose.

A second major issue concerned the transfer of the seat of the diocese. By majority vote it was decided to transfer the diocese from Worcester to Boston. There were two major reasons for this. First, more Armenians were concentrated in Boston, and second, the Armenian press and the central committees of many major Armenian political, cultural, and charitable organizations were located in Boston.

Another concern was the state of the diocesan treasury, which had reached its lowest ebb. The budget for fiscal year 1921 was set for \$15,000, of which \$5,000 would be used to defray diocesan debts.

The Primate's address to the delegates reflected on certain other issues on the agenda. These included a census of Armenians in America, the Armenian schools, the Sunday schools, the reconciliation with the National Armenian Union, the reorganization of the diocese, financial aid to Ēchmiadzin, and the training of clergy. It appeared that the distrust that had prevailed at previous conventions had been dispelled, and the delegates responded favorably to the Primate's plea to focus their energies on a united effort. The Primate pledged to do all within his power to regenerate and reorganize the diocese, elevating it from its present destitute condition to a more respectable state. The archbishop was not optimistic at winning the support and cooperation of the delegates at the convention.

This climate of goodwill did not prevail for long. The Primate became embroiled in administrative problems. Although he was determined to cling to the authority of his high office to solve them, these issues eventually determined the fate of his primacy.

Concerns of a Troubled Church

Reforms in the diocese were needed if the second generation was to become more receptive to the Church.

By the time the new generation reached their late teens, many of them already showed ambivalence toward the Church of their immigrant parents. The Armenian Church would have to modify its antiquated customs and improve the caliber of its priesthood.

Armenag Nazar, the editor of *Azk-Bahag* (later called *Baikar*), wrote controversial editorials on the issue of renewal in the Church. Clergymen often became targets of his criticism, regardless of their rank, personality, or ability. But Nazar offered constructive suggestions:

Today we are living in the twentieth century, and a man of the twentieth century cannot feel, think, and lead a spiritual life as did men of seven hundred and eight hundred years ago. Those institutions that do not progress with the times cannot survive.⁵²¹

In another article, he noted the shortcomings of poorly trained clergymen:

Regardless of what kind of spirit and reformation may be initiated in the Armenian Church, they are destined to be ineffective. They may even become detrimental as long as there cannot be found receptive individuals who can comprehend and apply them in depth. That is, unless a priesthood worthy of its calling is prepared that truly displays spiritual life, education, and industry.⁵²²

Still another major concern for the Church was the loose relationship of parish churches with diocesan authorities. The administration of a growing network of parish churches subjected to diocesan supervision was too complex to be comprehended by a community of immigrants preoccupied with the prospect of returning to their homeland. However, to better serve the parishes, the diocese moved from Worcester to Boston in 1923.

Steps toward Renewal

The four hierarchical sees of the Church strongly advocated reform, but political, social, and economic factors made it difficult for them to effect change. However,

certain positive steps taken by Ēchmiadzin encouraged the diocese in America in its program of renewal.⁵²³

On October 8, 1920, Bishop Giwlēsērian transmitted a report to Catholicos Kēork V in Ēchmiadzin concerning the renewal of the Armenian Church in America.⁵²⁴ In his reply, dated September 1, 1921, the pontiff instructed Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian to communicate with Bishop Giwlēsērian about the report, which contained vital insights for the spiritual and administrative improvement of the Church. The Primate was instructed to meet with lay and clerical personnel in order to study the document in detail. Their deliberations and findings were to be subject to pontifical scrutiny before implementation.⁵²⁵ No information available today indicates that such a meeting took place.⁵²⁶

In his report about the betterment of the Armenian Church in America, Bishop Giwlēsērian observed that from its inception, no serious efforts had been expended to set guidelines and priorities for the management of the Church. According to Bishop Giwlēsērian, the diocese was but a nominal organization, lacking the central authority, funds, and personnel to carry out its mission effectively. Furthermore, the establishment of parish churches was often irregular and spasmodic. The religious life of the communities was often hampered by tension and discord generated by partisan feuding. The average clergyman was pious and dedicated, but his role as spiritual advisor was of questionable quality. He was from the same social stratum as his immigrant parishioners, and his education was limited. It was hoped that the forthcoming Diocesan Convention would address these pressing issues.

On October 7–8, 1923, a Clergy Conference in Worcester preceded the convention. The agenda of this gathering was overburdened with sixteen issues of major concern to the Church. Resolutions were passed regarding the modification of the sacramental canon, the reading of the Bible in the vernacular, the use of the organ during church services, the establishment of Sunday schools, the adoption of the Gregorian calendar, the preparation of priests, rapprochement with the Episcopal Church, the formation of church organizations, and the establishment of a separate diocese in California.⁵²⁷ The Diocesan Convention adopted the resolutions of the Clergy Conference.

In principle, many of the faithful were encouraged by the sight of the Church responding to the needs and demands of the times. But more sophisticated observers found it difficult to share the optimism of their compatriots. Rather, they doubted that the religious and lay leaders of the Church were prepared to implement such demanding programs.

Armenag Nazar once again skeptically voiced his concern and doubt over the state of the Church and the measures to be taken by the Diocesan Convention:

It is a fact that the Armenian Church in America is not in a prosperous and enviable state. The clergy blame the people for being alienated from the Church and for remaining indifferent to its needs. The people in their turn are critical of the priesthood, which has forsaken them and thinks of nothing else but the administration of the sacraments. Of course there are truths and exaggerations in both testimonies. According to my beliefs, to end the complaints and disenchantment, two points warrant attention: (1) The training of a qualified priesthood. Not only is there a lack of clergymen in America, but among them, the qualified are rare. (2) The administration of the Church should be decentralized. Just as it is impractical to petition the Mother See for administrative matters other than those of a doctrinal and basic nature, and await instructions, so it is inconceivable, for example, to supervise the activities of the California churches from Boston or Worcester. Each Diocesan Convention wastes hours in revising the constitution, but all the labor remains futile because without pontifical confirmation they cannot be implemented. Thus the issue before us is inconceivable in our time and surroundings. With a sagacious decentralization of the Armenian churches in America, the churches may flourish and become revitalized.⁵²⁸

Transfer of the Diocesan Center from Worcester to Boston (1923)

During the Diocesan Convention of July 10, 1920, in Worcester, a committee was established to study the possibilities of the removal of the diocese from Worcester to another site with a relatively large Armenian population. The committee reported its findings to the Diocesan Convention of August 21, 1921, in Worcester. On the basis of article 10 of the constitution, the committee argued that the diocese must remain in Worcester.⁵²⁹ Most of the delegates contested the argument of the committee, pointing out that the relevant article of the constitution in no way prevented such a move. The article in question stated:

The Diocesan Center of the Primate of the Armenians in America will be located temporarily in the city of Worcester of the state of Massachusetts, which is not only a center densely populated with Armenians, but also has its own national church and Diocesan House.⁵³⁰

The discussion then centered on the choice of a location for the headquarters of the diocese. New York and Boston were suggested as possible sites. By a majority vote it was decided to remove diocesan headquarters from Worcester to Boston, but the transfer was not completed until early 1923.⁵³¹ Holy Trinity Church of Boston, consecrated in 1923, was used as diocesan headquarters for the next four

years. In the summer of 1927 the diocese was removed to New York, where it has remained to this day.

The period of the 1920s presented a tragic chapter in the history of the Church and homeland of the Armenians. The happenings in the Old World in turn affected the churches in the New. The hierarchs at Constantinople and Ēchmiadzin who assigned priests and confirmed Primates for the United States often gave proof of their inability to understand the problems of the immigrants, thus compounding the difficulties of the local parishes.

Armenag Nazar provides the following observation:

It is wrong to assume that there are numerous difficulties obstructing the reformation of the Armenian Church in America, that it is impossible to undertake any steps without the consent of Holy Ēchmiadzin or the National Ecclesiastical Assembly. A somewhat open-minded outlook in keeping with the times and circumstances, rationality, and comprehension of the liberal spirit of the Armenian Church will be sufficient to prevent the Armenian Church from appealing for every issue to Ēchmiadzin and from expecting decisions and solutions from the Catholicos of All Armenians. This is neither against the better interests or the discipline of the Church and, indeed, is in accord with the wishes of the Catholicos of All Armenians.⁵³²

By late 1923, traditional-liberal controversy between the Primate and his opponents was beginning to take its toll in the Armenian diocese. The Primate, who had once been highly respected, was increasingly finding himself involved in bitter conflict from which he could not extricate himself. For this tragedy both the Primate and his adversaries were to blame.

The Deepening Rift

While the diocese was expanding between 1924 and 1926 through the acquisition of churches, the Primate's relationship with the diocesan leadership posed special difficulties. One major problem concerned the use of the altar stone in churches that were not yet consecrated or in non-Armenian churches during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.⁵³³ The Primate vehemently opposed such use of the altar stone, arguing that it was against the tradition of the Church. His opponents disagreed with his thinking and were determined to fight to the end, knowing full well that the outcome of the controversy would prove fateful to the primacy of Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian.

The Controversy over the Altar Stone

Two California Churches—Holy Cross in Los Angeles, founded in 1923, and Saint Sahag and Mesrob in Reedley, founded in 1924, were being used by the parishioners without having been consecrated by a bishop. The Primate urged the trustees of the two churches to refrain from using the edifices until they were dedicated and consecrated according to the traditions of the Armenian Church. He further suggested that they discontinue the use of the portable altar stone as a substitute for the consecration.

The officials of these two churches replied that because of financial difficulties, they would be unable to meet the expenses involved in a visit of the Primate. This reasoning was not acceptable to the Primate, who insisted that the solemnity of his office, as guardian of ecclesiastical laws, compelled him to preserve and properly execute the traditional rituals of the Church. He could not allow the Divine Liturgy to be celebrated in an unconsecrated church.⁵³⁴

On May 25, 1924, the parish assembly of Holy Cross Church in Los Angeles convened to consider this matter. The assembly expressed its dismay at the uncompromising attitude of the Primate and disregarded the Primate's order to set a definite date for the consecration of their church.⁵³⁵ The Membership Meeting informed the Primate that because of the growing tension in the Los Angeles and Reedley Armenian communities, his visit would hardly be desirable at that time. The Central Executive of the diocese attempted to clarify the position of Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian by stating that his decision forbade only the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and not the performance of other religious services and ceremonies.⁵³⁶ This controversy prompted a heated discussion among the churches,

the Diocesan Convention, and the Armenian press. The consensus was that the use of the portable altar stone had been in practice since time immemorial in Armenia and elsewhere in the diaspora.⁵³⁷ In America, Armenians in many communities did not have their own church. Thus, when churches or halls were rented, arrangements had to be made to prepare suitable altar facilities with altar stones on which to perform the Divine Liturgy. Previous Primates had allowed this practice.⁵³⁸

On September 7, 1925, the Diocesan Convention that met in Boston took the matter into consideration during its third session. By majority vote, it decided to continue the use of the portable altar stones and to petition the Catholicos in Ēchmiadzin in favor of this resolution.⁵³⁹ Ēchmiadzin replied to the diocesan request on October 25, 1925, stating that the Catholicos preferred to postpone his decision on that matter until the deliberations of a future National Ecclesiastical Assembly.⁵⁴⁰

The crisis of the altar stone would persist in the ensuing years, interwoven with other issues, not only posing difficulties for the diocese but with serious consequences for the Primate.

Drafting a New Diocesan Constitution

A perennial issue on the agenda of nearly every Diocesan Convention since the establishment of the Armenian Church in America has been either the drafting of a constitution or the designation of a special committee to work out amendments or revisions. This issue has outweighed all other items in terms of time consumed. Stormy sessions have been devoted to scrutiny of the articles and their reference to a special committee that, in its turn, would carry such articles over to the next Diocesan Convention. To further complicate matters, the preliminary draft of the constitution, as is customary in the Armenian Church, was always sent to Ēchmiadzin for confirmation. It could take months or even years before any communication was received. In the event of a reply, more often than not this would call for further revision and still another confirmation by Ēchmiadzin.

Like his predecessors, Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian, upon assuming office as Primate, became conscious of the need for drafting a new constitution for the diocese. Armenag Nazar, a staunch opponent of the Primate, was one of the first critics of the proposed constitution.

Since the day of assuming office, the Primate has undertaken a problem, and, without consulting previous studies, has undertaken the drafting of a Constitution according to his own mentality and convictions. The work is being shuttled from one meeting to the next. If it ever bears results, it will again be sent to Ēchmiadzin and will remain there until a new Primate and new conventions again will begin to revise the constitution.

A preliminary Constitution prepared by the Primate was presented to the Diocesan Convention that met on September 6–7, 1925, in Boston.⁵⁴¹

Because of the lack of time, it was decided that a seven-member committee headed by the Primate should study the document in depth and seek suggestions and opinions on its usefulness from various parish officials. This committee would then submit its findings, first to the Central Executive Committee no later than January 1, 1926, and then to the next Diocesan Convention for consideration. The delegates discussed several fundamental principles relating to the constitution:

1. Not all authority should be concentrated in the hands of the Primate.
2. The constitution must be abbreviated and made compact.
3. The constitution should provide for moderate and lawful decentralization.
4. The Diocesan Convention must become a permanent administrative organ.
5. The Diocesan Convention should be the supreme legislative body.

It was agreed that during the next Diocesan Convention, major sessions would be designated for the study of the revision of the new constitution.⁵⁴²

Various writers have referred to this constitution. However, their comments reflect more of a negative attitude than a positive one. Nazar, in an editorial in *Baïkar* on September 3, 1925, made the following observations:

A new constitution that has all the shortcomings, if not more, of the present one now in use, and has no additional merit. We accidentally saw a copy of that constitution, which consisted of some 269 lengthy and complicated articles and is a complete hodgepodge out of which even the author himself cannot find his way gracefully. In that constitution are extraneous, meaningless, and even ridiculous articles that do not even comply with local laws and customs. They are unnatural to the present-day mentality and can never be applied. Even more than all this is the spirit of this document, which intends to rob the people of all their rights and to centralize all authority in the hands of the Primate. Even the Diocesan Convention is in a position inferior to that of the Primate. We cannot understand how such a medieval and antiquated book of law can be confirmed by the Diocesan Convention or how it can be put to use in the twentieth century, especially in America.⁵⁴³

A similar criticism was provided by an editorial in *Gotchnag*, the official organ of the Armenian Protestant community:

This constitution is an anachronism. That is, it is incompatible with the

progressive ideas of our times. In this constitution everything is centralized upon the Primate. Without his consent, there can be no meetings, no decisions, and no action. That spirit may have been transferred to Ēchmiadzin from the Orthodox hierarchy of tsarist Russia. It cannot be reconciled with the democratic way of the Armenian Church or with the free atmosphere of America.⁵⁴⁴

The editorial commented that a mere reading of the constitution to the delegates would entail no difficulties. But if the new constitution were to be examined in detail, then the convention would more than likely become the scene for stormy argument.

Disenchantment, alienation, and opposition were increasing on all sides, giving rise to condemnation of the Primate's policies.

The following year, on June 20, 1926, the Diocesan Convention at the Holy Trinity Church in Boston devoted much of its time to examining the new constitution.⁵⁴⁵ The delegates were given the opportunity to get acquainted with fifty-one of the hundred articles of the new constitution and subsequently sanctioned them. The Diocesan Convention, which met on May 15–16, 1927, in Boston, examined and revised articles 51–75 of the new constitution. The convention authorized the Central Executive Committee to proceed with the revision of the remaining twenty-five articles of the constitution and then to forward it to the Catholicos at Ēchmiadzin for ratification.⁴⁸ One year later, on June 5, 1918, the new constitution was sent to Ēchmiadzin. In its initial version the new constitution was not acceptable to the opponents of Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian, but in its revised form it stripped the Primate of much of his authority, to the satisfaction of his adversaries.

In the following months the new constitution became a thorny problem, not only between the Primate and the Central Executive Committee, but also between the Religious Council and the committee. The entire Religious Council supported the Primate. The road to understanding proved to be rough, because neither side was ready for concession or peace.

The revised constitution was confirmed by Ēchmiadzin on July 15, 1929, conditioned on two essential principles included therein:

1. The moderate and lawful decentralization of the diocese.
2. The supremacy of the Diocesan Council as the governing body in the American diocese. A striking feature of this new constitution was the greater emphasis placed on the Central Executive Committee as the executive agency of the Diocesan Convention.

By the time the Catholicos confirmed the constitution on July 15, 1929, Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian had stepped down from the primacy of the American diocese and had retired from his ecclesiastical career.⁵⁴⁶

The Revised Constitution

The new constitution consisted of three chapters with thirty-three articles concerning the administration of the diocese. The highlights of the three chapters in summary form appear here.⁵⁴⁷

I. General Rules (Articles 1–11)

The Armenian churches established in America constitute a spiritual union and are an individual part of the Holy Armenian Apostolic Church. The diocese will function under the jurisdiction of the supreme spiritual authority of the Catholicos of All Armenians in Ēchmiadzin.

In the event that the diocese should cease to exist as an administrative body in the United States, all Church deeds and properties will be transferred to the Catholicosate of All Armenians in Ēchmiadzin.

II. Diocesan Convention (Articles 12–22)

The Diocesan Convention is the representative body of Armenians in America and is the highest authority of the Armenian Church in the United States. All ecclesiastical bodies of churches are subject to its authority. The Diocesan Convention is composed of elected lay delegates and of clergy in charge of parishes. The Diocesan Convention is responsible to supreme spiritual authorities in Ēchmiadzin.

Each parish shall be represented by one delegate for each 100 voting members. The annual Diocesan Convention will be held on the first Sunday in September, the site of which will be determined each year by the Diocesan Convention. Extraordinary special meetings can be held in case of emergency situations upon the invitation of the Primate and the Central Executive Committee.

The agenda of the Diocesan Convention shall be prepared by the Primate in conjunction with the Central Executive Committee. Within one week, the minutes and resolutions of the convention shall be forwarded to the Catholicos for ratification. He is invested with the power of approval or rejection.

The Diocesan Convention has the authority to elect or retire the Primate of the diocese, pending approval of the Catholicos of All Armenians.

III. The Primate of the Diocese (Articles 23–27) and the Central Executive Committee (Articles 28–33)

The Primate of the Diocese (Articles 23–27)

The Primate of the diocese is the president of the Diocesan Convention and the Central Executive Committee.

The Primate is elected by the Diocesan Convention for a period of four years and is approved by the Catholicos of All Armenians.

When the Primacy becomes vacant, the Central Executive Committee shall appoint a locum tenens who shall preside over the Central Executive Committee, conduct the affairs of the Primacy, and, in conduction with the Central Executive Committee, prepare a list of three candidates for the office of Primate.

The duties of the Primate include parish visitations, consecration of churches, ordination of clergy, and supervision of the ceremonies, rites, and creed of the Armenian Church.

Central Executive Committee (Articles 28–33)

The Central Executive Committee is the ruling body of the Diocesan Convention and is elected by the convention for four years.

The Central Executive Committee shall be composed of the Primate and nine members (four clergymen and five laymen).

The duties of the Central Executive Committee include supervision of all ecclesiastical institutions and officials of the diocese, confirmation or revocation of decisions of the Membership Meeting, confirmation or dismissal of Church Trustees, appointment of a locum tenens when necessary, and management of the financial affairs of the diocese.

Division of the Diocese's Jurisdiction in North America (1927)

The diocese witnessed two significant changes in 1927. First, diocesan headquarters were moved to New York City and, second, the Western Diocese of the Armenian Church was established in California under direct jurisdiction of Էժմիածին. Both actions were undertaken in the hope of providing greater administrative solidarity and a better administrative response to the spiritual needs of all the communicants of the Armenian communities. Also, underlying this decision were personality conflicts, ambitions, partisan intrigue, provincialism, and honest differences over policy.

Transfer of the Eastern Diocesan Headquarters to New York (1927)

Even before the transfer of the diocesan headquarters from Worcester to Boston in 1923, there had been a strong desire by the Armenians of New York to locate the diocese there. For various social, political, and cultural reasons, Armenians in New York were convinced that their city was the ideal location.

The desire to move diocesan headquarters to New York was of practical and vital importance because a large Armenian population resided in New York City and its suburbs. Also, the archbishop himself may have preferred to move to New York in order to keep aloof from the headquarters of both the political organizations and their press.

During the Diocesan Convention that met on May 15–16, 1927, in Boston, the Central Executive Committee of the diocese once again urged the immediate removal of diocesan headquarters from Boston to New York.⁵⁴⁸ After lengthy discussion, the majority of the delegates favored New York as the new site of diocesan headquarters. Two months later, the Primate, with his secretary, moved into a two-room office on Fifth Avenue in New York.⁵⁴⁹ On June 1, 1949, diocesan headquarters were relocated to a building on 2nd Avenue. Today the Diocesan House with Saint Vartan Cathedral stands on this site. The consecration of Saint Vartan Cathedral, presided over by Vazkēn I, Catholicos of All Armenians, took place on April 28, 1969.

Creation of the Western Diocese in California (1927)

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, Armenian immigration to the New World had Worcester as its primary destination. The Armenian faith was introduced into

the United States by these immigrants, first in the eastern states and then into California by Armenians migrating westward as early as the 1880s.⁵⁵⁰ Armenian immigrants flowed in the succeeding decades into Fresno, Fowler, and Los Angeles.

The first church in California was built, and subsequently consecrated by the Primate, Archbishop Hovsēp‘ Sarajian, on October 14, 1900. What Worcester had been for immigrating Armenians to the eastern United States, Fresno, California, became for Armenians settling in that state. From this base, Armenian immigration moved into other cities of California.

New churches included Saint Gregory in Fowler in 1910, Saint Mary in Yettem in 1911, Holy Cross in Los Angeles in 1925, and Saint Sahag and Mesrob in Reedley in 1924; other communities were starting to organize themselves into parishes. Because of the distance separating them from the diocesan center in New York and the steady growth of the Armenian community in California, the establishment of a Western Diocese in California became an important issue. Such a move had to be official, and special permission could be granted only by the Catholicos through a pontifical encyclical.

In 1916 the Diocesan Convention favorably received the request of the delegates from California and submitted the resolution to the Catholicos at Ēchmiadzin for disposition. On January 28, 1917, a Diocesan Convention was convened in the hall of Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Fresno, with Father Vartan Kasbarian, the pastor of the church, presiding. Eleven delegates representing the parishes in California participated in the meeting, which dealt with the issue of establishing a Western Diocese of the Armenian Church whose jurisdiction would cover the western states of America. The results of the proceedings were reported to Ēchmiadzin as well as to the diocese in Worcester.

Five months later, in a letter dated June 20, 1917, the pontiff instructed the diocese in Worcester to review the matter in a Diocesan Convention, from its moral, administrative, and economic perspectives, and to report to Ēchmiadzin the results of their deliberations. The pontiff further suggested that a special delegation from California attend the Diocesan Convention to explain and clarify the matter.⁵⁵¹ Subsequently, during the Diocesan Convention of April 7–8, 1918, in Worcester, Vahan K‘iwrk‘jian, the special representative from Fresno, submitted the same report to the delegates that had been forwarded to the Catholicos by the Diocesan Convention of California.⁵⁵² K‘iwrk‘jian explained in detail the reasons and benefits of a positive decision; the primary argument for a separate diocese in California was presented as a matter of geographic expediency. In no way was this diocese to be a counterdiocese to that of the eastern part of the United States. Rather, it was to exist as a full canonical jurisdiction established for purposes of administrative facility.⁵⁵³ A spirit of cooperation and mutual coexistence was to mark the relationship between the jurisdictions.

The Diocesan Convention unanimously gave its consent to the request, contingent upon the decision of the pontiff. It was further agreed that the Californians would remain under the jurisdiction of the Eastern Diocese until pontifical approval was received.

Once again, at the Diocesan Convention in Boston on September 6–7, 1925, the issue of the separate diocese for California was discussed, and it was reiterated that no new information was available.⁵⁵⁴ However, the prolonged uncertainty surrounding the issue came to an end when the delegates of the California parishes met in Fresno on September 6, 1927, and elected Bishop Karekin Khach'adourian of Trebizond, Turkey, as their Primate. They informed the Holy See of their decision.⁵⁵⁵

Subsequently the creation of the Western Diocese in California was made official by a pontifical decree issued on November 28, 1927. It stated:

With this pontifical encyclical, we hereby establish and announce the independent Diocese of the Armenian Church in California, and confirm the election of a Primate by the Diocesan Convention in the person of our spiritual son, Bishop Karekin Khach'adourian.⁵⁵⁶

The Primacy of Bishop Karekin Khach'adourian (1928–1932)

Bishop Khach'adourian was recognized as a dedicated churchman, an eloquent preacher, and a tireless man of letters, as well as an authority in patristic and Church history. Besides his scholarly attributes, he possessed sagacity, a sense of leadership, and administrative talents. Born in Trebizond, Turkey, on November 6, 1880, he went to the Mekhitarist Seminary in San Lazzaro in Venice, Italy, at age sixteen, where he studied at the well-known Armenian Orthodox Seminary of Armash in Eastern Turkey. There he received his theological training under the watchful eye of the scholarly dean, Bishop Eghishē Tourian. In 1901 Khach'adourian received his ordination to the celibate priesthood at the hand of this eminent churchman. For a number of years he served in a pastoral capacity in various churches in Istanbul and other cities of Turkey. He edited numerous religious publications. In 1919 he was named Primate of the Armenian diocese in Trebizond, and in 1922 he was consecrated a bishop by Kēork V, Catholicos of All Armenians.

Prior to accepting the invitation of the California diocese and his embarkation to America, Bishop Khach'adourian sought the confirmation of the Holy See. A letter forwarded to him on November 24, 1927, by the Chancellor of the Holy See, Archbishop Khorēn Mouradpēgian, assured him of the pontiff's confirmation. The Catholicos, in his encyclical, exhorted the new Primate in the following words:

And we admonish you to strive to strengthen the relationship between the two prelaties and administrative bodies of the respective dioceses of the Armenians in America . . . and to solicit the mutual cooperation of each, morally, spiritually, and in brotherhood for the glory and welfare of the Holy Apostolic Church of Armenia and as a consolation to us.⁵⁵⁷

Bishop Khach'adourian arrived in New York on April 25, 1928, and was met by a delegation headed by Father Mamprē Kalfaian, pastor of Holy Cross Church of Union City, New Jersey. On the following Sunday he celebrated the Divine Liturgy and preached in memory of the martyrs of April 24, 1915.⁵⁵⁸

On May 8, 1928, Bishop Khach'adourian and Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian met formally during a Central Executive Committee meeting in Boston. The pontifical encyclicals were read confirming the credentials of Bishop Khach'adourian as Primate of the Western Diocese. The two Primates, with their colleagues, spent their time in discussing fundamental issues pertaining to religious and administrative duties mutually important to the two dioceses.⁵⁵⁹

On June 24, 1928, at a solemn ceremony in the Church of the Holy Trinity in Fresno, California, the pontifical encyclical was read by Father Vartan Kasbarian.⁵⁶⁰

The four-year tenure of Bishop Khach'adourian (from June 1, 1928, to June 30, 1932) was a period of analyses and preparation, as he himself characterized it in his report issued on the occasion of his resignation as Primate.

In 1938 Bishop Khach'adourian was sent as patriarchal legate by Khorēn I, Catholicos of All Armenians, to the Armenian Diocese of South America in Buenos Aires, Argentina. In 1950 he was elected Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, Turkey, an office he discharged with distinction until his death on June 27, 1961.

Patriarch Khach'adourian was a linguist, proficient in classical Greek, English, French, Italian, Spanish, Turkish, and Armenian. He edited various periodicals and authored a score of religious works in Armenian, which includes two volumes of *The Light of the World in Armenia* (1936, 1939), and a new translation of the four gospels into modern Armenian (1939).

A dedicated servant of the Church, he established the Holy Cross Theological Seminary in Constantinople in 1953, one of his crowning achievements. However, the school was closed in 1972. His passing in 1961 removed from the Armenian ecclesiastical scene the last living representative of a generation of churchmen who were known as *Armashagans* (graduates of the once-flourishing seminary in Turkey, now in ruins as a result of the destruction and deportations of 1915).

The successors of Bishop Khach'adourian as Primate in the Western Diocese were Bishop Mamprē Kalfaian (1942–1946), Bishop Shnorhk' Kalousdian (1953–1956, later to become Patriarch of Istanbul), Bishop Papkēn Varzhabedian (1957–1962), Bishop T'orkom Manoogian (1962–1966, later to become Primate of the

Eastern Diocese of North America and Patriarch of Jerusalem), Bishop Eghishē Simonian (1966–1970), and Bishop Vach'e Hovsēp'ian (1971–). The diocese, originally located in Fresno, was transferred to Los Angeles in 1957. By this time there were thirteen churches and some fifteen clergymen in the Western Diocese, which, like the Eastern Diocese, was administered by a Primate and a Diocesan Council.

Resignation of Primate Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian

It became increasingly apparent that the differences between the Primate in New York and his critics were too deep for reconciliation. The criticisms leveled against the Primate concerned his personality, which was considered too harsh and uncompromising. His authoritarian manner with his co-workers on the Central Executive Committee had divided the membership. During the Diocesan Convention, which met in Boston on May 15–16, 1927, a letter was presented for consideration by Armenag Nazar of Boston, a member of the Central Executive Committee. He pointed out the grievances he and others had experienced because of the Primate's behavior. In the letter, Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian was accused of negligence in attending the meetings of the Central Executive Committee and with regard to various duties at the diocesan office. The archbishop was also charged with disobedience toward the pontiff.⁵⁶¹

A vote taken on these criticisms supported the Primate. The protesting group, however, introduced a motion to censure the Primate, urging the formation of a special committee to investigate his actions. In the event that the resolution was not carried, they asserted that they would refer the matter to the pontiff at Ēchmiadzin. While the motion was under discussion, the delegates who protested walked out, with the exception of one of its signatories. The motion was defeated by majority vote.⁵⁶²

Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian presented a detailed report of his accomplishments. He emphasized that the diocese was witnessing an era of spiritual regeneration and that, during his primacy, he had consecrated many churches. In addition, several other parishes were also making efforts to build their own churches. He observed that “a few years ago the luxury of having our own churches was considered nonsense. Today, this is not only considered a luxury, but a necessity to stem the tide of assimilation and to preserve our national heritage.”⁵⁶³

Despite the impressiveness of his report, Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian appeared to have lost his mandate. No reconciliation was in sight. In the months preceding the Diocesan Convention of October 1928, differences over key issues and controversial subjects, such as the new constitution, the altar stone, and the relationship of the lay and religious members of the Central Executive Committee, became more strenuous. Armenag Nazar wrote:

I know that His Grace does not have a policy of replying to questions set forth by the press. He reads them and is affected, but he remains silent . . . because

he often finds that there is no other way. In view of this, I repeat my question.⁵⁶⁴

On August 14, 1928, the Primate submitted his resignation to the Central Executive Committee, stating irreconcilable differences as his reason.

The next Diocesan Convention, convened on October 7, 1928, at Saint Illuminator Church in New York, officially received the resignation of the Primate in absentia. An excerpt of the resignation read as follows:

It has been, and is, our desire to serve and execute our work until such time as we feel that our work is not to be detrimental to the church. In consideration of this, we no longer feel that our extended tenure in the office of Primacy of the Armenian Church in America can be of any further value.⁵⁶⁵

A heated discussion followed the reading of the resignation. It was learned that two major issues had created strong tensions between the Primate and the lay members of the Central Executive Committee. These were the use of the altar stones, of which the Primate had disapproved, and the drafting of a new constitution intended to limit the powers of the Primate. The Religious Council of the Central Executive Committee supported the Primate. Both sides had presented their cases to the pontiff at Ēchmiadzin, requesting a pontifical decision on the matter.⁵⁶⁶

In a letter dated May 8, 1928, the Central Executive Committee requested permission from the pontiff to use altar stones in performing the Divine Liturgy in either unconsecrated Armenian churches or in non-Armenian churches. Meanwhile, on May 5, 1928, the same Executive Committee had sent a second letter to Ēchmiadzin requesting confirmation of the constitution. The Religious Council, on the other hand, had appealed to Ēchmiadzin on May 22, 1928, to prevent the use of the altar stones.⁵⁶⁷ In another letter, dated June 30, 1928, the Religious Council informed the pontiff that the new constitution had drastically circumvented the authority, not only of the Primate, but that of the Religious Council as well, placing it on a level below that of the Central Executive Committee. The Central Executive Committee criticized Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian for intervening with the Holy See to obstruct approval of their appeal.

After hearing both sides of the argument, the Diocesan Convention considered a motion presented by Maghak' Bērbērian of West Pullman, Illinois, concerning the resignation of the Primate. "The Diocesan Convention . . . with heartfelt regret, in accordance with his wishes, accepts the resignation of Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian and expresses its gratitude for his seven years of service."⁵⁶⁸ The majority of the delegates voted in favor of the action, and the matter was closed.

Once again a Primate had resigned and gone into retirement. His entire career was left to the judgment of history. He was thought by many to have been an

authoritarian traditionalist and, therefore, incompatible with the liberal atmosphere of America. However, he was a man of strong principles and convictions. He had wished to leave the office of primacy with a clear conscience, leaving the impression that what he had done was in the best interests of his Church and people. His opponents could not compromise with him. Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian foresaw no means by which to persuade them of his convictions.

New Churches

The increase in the number of churches during the primacy of Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian reached ten, a record that was never again duplicated during any seven-year period in the history of the Armenian Church in America. During this period of church-founding zeal, several church communities also sprouted, including West Philadelphia; Detroit; Lawrence, Massachusetts; Binghamton, New York; and Watertown, Massachusetts. This proliferation occurred mainly because Armenian immigrants had decided to make America their permanent home. Even small communities built churches. The increase in the number of churches throughout the 1920s was also a manifestation of the growing need for spiritual guidance. According to Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian, the Armenian diocese was witnessing an era of spiritual regeneration. The Armenian immigrants, in spite of unemployment, or the fear of it, erected their church edifices with great toil and sacrifice. These edifices meant more than just a beautiful and distinctive house of worship, but symbolized their Armenian Christian heritage and their national identity.

Three churches that are not listed in this section are Saint Illuminator Church in New York, already discussed earlier; Holy Saviour Church in West Pullman, Illinois, on which no information is available other than it was acquired in 1924 for a price of \$3,500; and Saint Peter's Church in Troy, New York, which was discussed in Chapter VI.⁵⁶⁹

Holy Cross Church, Los Angeles, California

The settlers of the Armenian colony of Los Angeles came from the expanding Fresno population. It was not until 1900 that Armenians began to settle in numbers in Los Angeles. These immigrants were primarily occupied with the rug industry. Between 1906 and 1908, some fifty Armenians went from Fresno to Los Angeles. These early arrivals were forced to become petty street traders. The death in 1907 of the venerable Catholicos Khrimian Hayrig, endearingly called "Father," prompted the Armenians in Los Angeles to organize themselves into a religious community.

In 1907, a committee of four men was formed with the goal of building a church. For some time Father Sahag Nazarēt'ian, a convert from the Armenian Roman Catholic Mekhitarist Brotherhood of San Lazzaro in Venice, provided the community with spiritual assistance. For religious services, Armenians in Los

Angeles were given the use of Episcopal churches. Another priest, Father T'ēotoros Isahagian, also provided the Armenians with pastoral services. The presence of these two clergymen in the same community and the backing they received from their supporters generated rivalry and created an unhappy situation in the community. Fortunately, the community pulled itself out of the controversy in 1914 through the efforts of the Primate, Father Arsēn Vehouni. After that, Armenian clergy were invited periodically to celebrate the Divine Liturgy and sought to meet the religious needs of the Armenians. Two brothers, Aṙak'el and Astēr Aṙak'elian, offered preaching in Armenian on religious and moral themes.

In 1917, a layman, Mihran Melik'ian, was ordained into the priesthood by the hand of Bishop Papkēn Giwlēsērian, who renamed him Adom.⁵⁷⁰ Father Adom was to look after the welfare of the Armenian community in Los Angeles and oversee the task of building a church. The need for a church building was apparent. The new pastor was obliged to celebrate the liturgy in various places, even one Christmas on the stairs of a hall.

In January 1921, at the annual Membership Meeting, it was proposed to build a church. A building committee was created, consisting of Krikor Altounian, Antranig Kapriēlian, and Khach'adour Izmirlian. The same night, owing to the enthusiasm of those gathered, \$5,000 was collected. A piece of land on East 20th Street and Maple Avenue was purchased with the consent of the Primate, Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian. Other Armenian communities were called on to support the efforts of the Armenians in Los Angeles to build their church. On March 26, 1922, the ceremony of the laying of the foundation of the church was conducted by Father Vartan Kasbarian. The building of the church was completed in 1925. The consecration ceremonies were held in 1923 (no specific date available) by Archbishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian, the Primate. The new church was called the Church of the Holy Cross.⁵⁷¹

Holy Trinity Church, Boston, Massachusetts

Armenians had begun to settle in Boston in the 1880s. The community began to grow with an influx of Armenian immigrants from various provinces and towns of Cilicia, Harpoot, Aintab, and Marash in Turkey. In the early 1890s the first board of Church Trustees was organized. For many years the Armenians in Boston were without their own house of worship.

Visiting Armenian clergymen were called on to serve the religious needs of the community and held services using the facilities of local Episcopal churches. Often, the sacraments and rites were administered in homes and various rented halls. The reason for the late start in building a church in Boston was shared by other Armenian communities. Most people who had emigrated to the New World

had not intended to make it their permanent home. These immigrants considered themselves transients until the 1920s, when political and economic upheavals in the homeland persuaded them to remain in this country. Armenian immigrants sent money to their relatives in the old country for their support, while at the same time, caring for their own needs in America with relatively limited financial resources. Also, various fund-raising campaigns conducted by different Armenian organizations in the face of national needs and emergencies urged Armenian immigrants to help their unfortunate brethren overseas by way of monetary contributions.

Several clergymen provided spiritual guidance to the Armenians in the Boston area. The first of these pastors was Father Khat Markarian, who served the parish from 1897 to 1898. The pastorate of Father Markarian was marked by an intense controversy between him and a leading layman in the community, Lewon Selian. The latter was disposed toward a rapprochement with the Episcopal Church, a desire that he did not fully define and that left Father Markarian and other parishioners suspecting him of proselytization.

As a result of this conflict, Father Markarian resigned and was called to be pastor of the Armenians in New York. Until 1911, Father Hagop Parechian and Sarkis T'ashjian served the community as spiritual leaders. From 1911 to 1916 Archbishop Moushegh Seropian, the former Primate of Adana, Turkey, took over the pastorate of the Armenians in Boston. In 1913 and in 1914, Archbishop Seropian was joined by Father Shahē Kasbarian, and then by Bishop Papkēn Giwlēsērian, who served the Armenian community.

The credit of organizing the Armenian religious community of Boston on a more solid foundation belongs to Father Shahē Kasbarian, who was called to this duty in 1916. In 1917, when Father Kasbarian was elected locum tenens of the diocese, he continued to hold his pastorate in Boston.

Father Kasbarian spared no effort in attempts to convince his constituents of the necessity of owning their own church. At a meeting of the board of Church Trustees on May 27, 1921, he was able to have the trustees adopt his proposal. The board of trustees then submitted this matter to the attention of the Membership Meeting of the parish. In this meeting, representatives of various surrounding cities and towns under the administrative jurisdiction of the Boston church community took part. The Membership Meeting acted on this proposal favorably and appointed a committee to search for a suitable church structure. After several weeks of searching and negotiating, a former Episcopal church and the adjacent house at 397–401 Shawmut Avenue, Boston (the latter then in use as a public library), were chosen. The Membership Meeting of September 28, 1921, approved the purchase of this property for \$27,000. It was not until January 1, 1922, that the church with the adjacent house became the property of the Armenian community. Beginning in

January 1923, the church underwent considerable renovation for several months, including the rebuilding of the interior to meet the liturgical needs of the Armenian Church. The building was consecrated on November 11, 1923, by the Primate, Archbishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian, assisted by Bishop Papkēn Giwlēsērian, Father Shahē Kasbarian, and Father Eghiazar Ashjian. The edifice was named Holy Trinity Church and the diocesan headquarters, newly transferred from Worcester to Boston, were relocated in the church. This parish church ministered to the spiritual needs of the Armenians in Greater Boston until 1961. The church was then sold, largely because of the exodus of parishioners to the suburbs. On September 17, 1961, the Primate, Archbishop Sion Manougian, consecrated a new church structure at the corner of Brattle and Sparks Streets near Harvard Square, Cambridge, Massachusetts.⁵⁷²

Holy Resurrection Church, South Milwaukee, Wisconsin

The first Armenian settlers came to South Milwaukee in 1910.⁵⁷³ Most were from the province of Caesarea, Turkey. The first board of Church Trustees in South Milwaukee was organized in 1912, and itinerant priests provided religious guidance to the Armenian community until 1924. For religious services the Armenians were allowed to use Saint Mark's Episcopal Church.

In 1924 a church building committee was formed under the chairmanship of Hagop Eēlanjian. In the same year, the Zion Evangelist Church with its adjacent lot was purchased at a price of \$3,200. After complete renovations, the church was consecrated by Archbishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian, assisted by several clergymen, on October 3–4, 1924. Father Vartan Tawit'ian served as first pastor of the parish until 1926. No other information is available concerning this church.

Saint Sahag and Mesrob Church, Reedley, California

The beginning of the Armenian colony in Reedley and the Wahtoke district of California dates back to the 1890s, when a small band of immigrants and farmers lived there. One of the first activities of the Armenians in this region was the building of a small library in 1909 to house chiefly Armenian publications in order to encourage reading and self-education. In 1912 the community managed to operate an Armenian weekday school for children. On April 12 of the same year, the Church Trustees were elected at a meeting presided over by Father Vartan Kasbarian, pastor of the Fresno parish. This body was to oversee the religious needs of the community and eventually was instrumental in the building of a church.

In 1916 the community constructed a hall that they called Saint Mesrob. Sunday morning services were held here, with the Divine Liturgy occasionally

celebrated by visiting pastors. However, in 1922 the hall was destroyed by fire. This incident prompted the Armenian communities of Reedley and Wahtoke to combine their efforts to build a church.

At this time Reedley was experiencing rapid industrial growth, and many Armenians had already left Wahtoke to make their homes in Reedley. Religious services were held either in rented halls or outdoors. Many times the Armenians were allowed to use the facilities of Episcopal churches. However, a serious conflict that developed between the Episcopalians and Armenians during a funeral service convinced the Armenians of the necessity of having their own church.⁵⁷⁴

The first steps toward this end were taken on January 18, 1923, at a meeting held at the home of Zarēt' Nōrōyian. A building committee was chosen that eventually enlarged its membership to eleven, with Kasbar Aslanian as chairman. In 1924 the building committee purchased the Reedley Methodist Church for \$3,500. After undergoing necessary renovations, the building was ready for church services.

Consecration services were held on November 23, 1924. Father Vartan Kasbarian of Fresno, assisted by other clergymen, performed the services. The church was called Saint Sahag and Mesrob Church. The first pastor was Father Khach'ig Krouzian of Detroit, Michigan. He assumed the pastorate in 1925 and served the parish until 1929. In later years the church underwent further renovations and consequently was rededicated on February 7, 1954.

Saint Mesrob Church, Racine, Wisconsin

The first three Armenians to settle in Racine came from Waukegan, Illinois, in 1892. They were Hagop Markarian, Awedis Dēr Margosian, and Khach'ig T'orosian, who had migrated from the village of Khouylou in the province of Harpoot, Turkey.⁵⁷⁵ Soon other compatriots followed them and settled in the area of State Street and Douglas Avenue. Early in the 1900s the Armenian community of Racine saw the growth of political, social, compatriotic, cultural, and other ethnic-oriented organizations. Most of the Armenian community in Racine had migrated from the village of Tomarza, in the province of Caesarea in Turkey.

The first formal Armenian religious service in Racine took place in 1914, when a visiting clergyman from New York, Father Mesrob Sahagian, celebrated the Divine Liturgy in a rented hall on State Street.

In the following year, an unofficial board of trustees consisting of five members was formed, with H. P'ōladian as chairman. Until 1918 this body tended to the administrative needs of the community in conduction with the parish of Chicago; thereafter they became the official governing religious body of the Armenian community in Racine. A local Episcopal church offered the use of its facilities to

the Armenians on Sunday afternoons. By 1922, following an increase in the number of immigrants, the Racine Armenians separated themselves from the Chicago community and formed their own parish together with three other small Wisconsin communities: South Milwaukee, Carolville, and Knaucha.⁵⁷⁶ Father Tawit' Awedisian was called to serve as their temporary pastor. A year later, Father Vartan Tawit'ian was invited to assume permanent pastorship of Racine. The new pastor encouraged the Armenian community in Racine to acquire their own church. Subsequently, at a gathering the Armenians pledged to support such an endeavor. During a visit to Racine on October 12, 1924, the Primate encouraged such plans and formed a building committee headed by Giwlbēng Giwlbēngian, a lawyer. In 1925, the committee furthered the dream of the community by purchasing a Danish Lutheran church located on the corner of State and Wilson Streets in Racine for \$18,000.

After the building had undergone the necessary renovations, the church was consecrated on December 25, 1925, by Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian, assisted by the pastor, Father Tawit'ian, and Father Khach'ig Krouzian, pastor of Saint John Church in Detroit. The Church was named after Saint Mesrob.

Saint Gregory the Illuminator Church, Chicago, Illinois

During the 1890s the Armenian community in Chicago comprised about three hundred immigrants. Most were young working men; a few were students.⁵⁷⁷

Armenians in the Chicago area were slow in acquiring their own parish church because of factional feuding and dissension. Initially the Armenian communities of West Pullman, Racine, South Milwaukee, and Milwaukee were all under the administrative jurisdiction of the Chicago parish. One by one, these communities succeeded in acquiring their own church structures, leaving the Chicago community to settle their difference.⁵⁷⁸

Although many clergymen had visited Chicago, they made no significant attempts to encourage the Armenians of the area to develop a church community.⁵⁷⁹

Only in 1915 did the parish begin to show signs of organization through the efforts of the Reverend Vahram Nazarēt'ian, who had recently come to the United States from Constantinople. He served the parish until 1918 and was succeeded by Father Eghishē Kalch'anjan, who remained in Chicago until 1925.⁵⁸⁰

The Saint Gregory the Illuminator parish came into being in 1926 as a direct result of the labors of the Reverend Vahan Giwldalian, who had come from California in 1925 to assume the pastorship.⁵⁸¹ From the beginning Father Giwldalian displayed great zeal in persuading the parishioners to undertake a campaign to purchase a church building. A drive was spearheaded by Father Giwldalian. On September 4, 1925, during a meeting between representatives of a

Lutheran church and the Armenians, a purchase price of \$25,000 for the edifice at the corner of Hague and Augusta Boulevards was agreed on. Samouël Donian, a prominent benefactor of the community, made the purchase of the church possible through a substantial contribution that was used as the down payment. As the community experienced financial difficulties. Father Giwldalian, accompanied by Donian, made house-to-house solicitations in support of the church. The pledges amounted to \$12,945.

The parish was unable to meet these pledges, and the banks were reluctant to make loans. Once again Donian secured the necessary sum. He also raised the funds for the interior renovations of the church, including the baptismal font, the altar, and other liturgical facilities. On February 20, 1926, the church was consecrated by the Primate, Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian, and was named Saint Gregory the Illuminator Church. Samouël Donian was given the honor of being the patron of the newly consecrated church.⁵⁸²

Saint Gregory the Illuminator Church, North Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The united Armenian community of Greater Philadelphia came into existence as an organized parish on September 30, 1917, when Saint Sahag and Mesrob Church was consecrated.

By 1923 the Philadelphia Armenian community had increased sizably because of continued immigration. It soon became apparent that a single church in that metropolitan area was not sufficient to administer to the religious needs of the widely scattered Armenians. The community members decided to reorganize into two parishes, one in North Philadelphia, the other in West Philadelphia. The decision was reached at a meeting at Saint Sahag and Mesrob Church in September 1924. The Primate, Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian, consented to the resolution.⁵⁸³ After the approval of the Primate, the church at Broad and Pike Streets was sold for \$30,000 on October 4, 1923.

In the period between the sale of the church and acquisition of the new edifice (1923–1925), Armenians in the North Philadelphia section of the city held their church services in the Episcopal churches at 18th and Diamond and 12th and Diamond Streets.⁵⁸⁴ The pastor, Father Eghishē Kalch'anjian, held his parish together and supervised its activities. He also urged his parishioners to embark upon the drive to own a new church.

In 1925 Armenians in Philadelphia once again considered acquiring a new church to meet the spiritual needs of both parishes. At a Membership Meeting in May 1925, presided over by the Primate, the possibility of purchasing a church at 6006 Walnut Street in Philadelphia for \$42,000 was discussed.⁵⁸⁵ The North Philadelphians refused to support this proposal because of the building's distance

from most of the community. The next step was to finalize the separation of the Armenian community in Philadelphia into two parishes—North and West. Their decision received the blessing and approval of the Primate and the diocese.

Because of the separation, the North Philadelphians were given their share of \$15,000 from the sale of their former church, Saint Sahag and Saint Mesrob, in 1923. The North Philadelphians, now a separate parish, formed their own board of Church Trustees and organized a building committee. For the next two years, Armenians were allowed to use Episcopal churches in North Philadelphia. On March 2, 1927, the building committee purchased a church at 16th and Oxford Streets for \$55,000. An additional \$10,000 was allocated for the renovation of the church. Some two hundred Armenian families were living within ten blocks of the church. The pastor was Father Nshan P'ap'azian.

The church was consecrated on April 1, 1928, by Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian and named Saint Gregory the Illuminator Church. Frank Nahigian was honored as Godfather because of his substantial donation to the church fund.

As a result of the schism in the diocese in 1933, several churches became the center of controversy between those loyal to the diocese and those sympathetic to the Tashnags. In a few cases the Tashnags triumphed. In some parishes, like Saint Gregory the Illuminator Church in Philadelphia, both sides claimed legal possession of the edifice. In this instance the matter was taken to court. In 1935 the Armenian community in North Philadelphia lost its church to the dissident group. Between 1934 and 1940 the community in North Philadelphia worshipped in different churches under the pastorship of Father Arsēn T'orosian. In 1941, the North Philadelphia community purchased a new church on the southwest corner of Marshall Street and Susquehanna Avenue for \$40,000. This time the church was consecrated as Holy Trinity Church on December 26–27, 1942, by Primate Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp'ian. Aram Attarian served as the Godfather.

However, the strange story of this community was not yet complete. On December 1, 1964, Holy Trinity Church was totally destroyed by fire. On September 18, 1966, a new church was consecrated in Cheltenham, Pennsylvania, by the Primate, Bishop T'orkom Manoogian, formerly a pastor of the church (1964–1952). Again Aram Attarian served as Godfather.⁵⁸⁶

Notes

⁴⁷⁵ Simon Vratzian, "How Armenia was Sovietized," *Armenian Review*, I (Winter 1948), pp. 89–90; Oliver Baldwin, *Six Prisons and Two Revolutions* (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1925), pp. 31–32; Armen Bardizian, *Hay Egeghets' voy Daknabē* ("The Crisis of the Armenian Church") (Boston: Hairenik Press, 1936).

- 476 Kapriēl Lazian, *Hayasdan ew Hay Tadē* (“Armenia and the Armenian Question”) (Cairo: Nor Asdgh Press, 1946), pp. 295–304.
- 477 Editorial, “*Giligoy Khntirē*” (“The Problem of Cilicia”), *Azk-Bahag*, February 9, 1922.
- 478 Lazian, *Hayasdan ew Hay Tadē*, pp. 317–322; John A. DeNovo, *American Interests and Policies in the Middle East, 1900–1939* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963), pp. 128–166.
- 479 DeNovo, *American Interests and Policies in the Middle East, 1900–1939*, pp. 102–103; Armenian Relief Committee of America, “*Goch ‘Amerigahayerou*” (“Appeal to the Armenians of America”), *Hairenik*, December 28, 1921.
- 480 So widespread and intense was the patriotic feeling that the Armenian-language papers hardly reported any news of the Church and religion. Whenever such items did appear, they were biased and tinted with factional overtones.
- 481 Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 155.
- 482 Editorial, “*Ēchmiadzini Vijagē*” (“The Situation of Ēchmiadzin”), *Gotchnag*, January 29, 1921, p. 199.
- 483 “*Hayrabedagan Gontag Hayasdani Zhoghovourtin*” (“Pontifical Encyclical to the People of Armenia”), *Gotchnag*, January 16, 1921, p. 962.
- 484 Bardizian, *Hay Egeghets ‘woy Daknabē*, p. 71.
- 485 Walter Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1961), p. 154.
- 486 Bardizian, *Hay Egeghets ‘woy Daknabē*, p. 71.
- 487 Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, p. 154; Mary Kilbourne Matossian, *The Impact of Soviet Policies in Armenia* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1962), p. 92.
- 488 Bardizian, *Hay Egeghets ‘woy Daknabē*, p. 9.
- 489 *Ibid.*, pp. 77–78. Erouant Mangouni later became the editor of a periodical, *Anasdouadz* (“Atheists”).
- 490 S. G. Mat’osian, “*Hay Arak’ Egeghets ‘woy Daknabē*” (“The Crisis of the Armenian Apostolic Church”), *Pharos*, March 1928, p. 56.
- 491 Armenia, “*Hay Egeghets ‘in Hayasdani Mēch*” (“The Armenian Church in Armenia”), *Baïkar*, October 1, 1924.
- 492 Armenag Nazar, “*Hayasdaneayts’ Egeghets ‘woy Paregarkout ‘iwn’ ē*” (“The Reformation of the Armenian Church”), *Baïkar*, October 22, 1924.
- 493 Shahē Kasbarian, “*Baykarē Zorats ‘outsēk*” (“Strengthen the Struggle”), *Azad Egeghets ‘i*, October 1925; Bardizian, *Hay Egeghets ‘woy Daknabē*, p. 80. Armen Bardizian is of the opinion that Father Kasbarian’s article was meant to intimidate Ēchmiadzin for the defeat it experienced in 1921 with the election of Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian.
- 494 “*Amerigayi Hayots’ Eresp ‘okhanagan Zhoghovi Adenakrout ‘iwnner*,” Boston, MA, May 15–16, 1927, pp. 21–22.
- 495 Editorial, “*Pnagan Mahov*” (“By Way of Natural Death”), *Hairenik*, July 30, 1927.
- 496 “*Khohrtayin Gařavarout ‘iwnē ew Ēchmiadzinē*” (“The Soviet Government and Ēchmiadzin”), *Baïkar*, December 28, 1925.
- 497 Armenag Nazar, “*Our Gert ‘ay Hay Egeghets ‘in*” (“Where Is the Armenian Church Heading”), *Baïkar*, June 10, 1925.

- 498 Sarkis Atamian, *The Armenian Community* (New York: Philosophical Library Press, 1955), p. 358.
- 499 Ibid., p. 360.
- 500 Bedros Norhad, *The Armenian Church and Its Defenders* (New York: Gotchnag Press, 1958), p. 3.
- 501 Mouradpēgian left the United States for Ēchmiadzin on August 10, 1920.
- 502 “*Adenakrout’iwn*,” Worcester, MA, August 21, 1921, p. 10.
- 503 According to the tradition of the Armenian Church, this service signifies a clergyman’s plea for divine blessing on the mission he is about to undertake as he enters a new city or country.
- 504 Although the Primate’s Eastern Armenian background was advantageous for Ēchmiadzin, it proved less favorable for the Primate himself, because the Armenian community in America consisted largely of immigrants from Turkey. Their national mentality and aspirations were not always in accord with those of their brethren from Armenia proper.
- 505 The Armenian National Union was formed on April 2, 1917, in America, as a response to the Armenian cause. It continued its activities until March 31, 1923, when it was dissolved in view of new political developments that the union found difficult to cope with. “*Azkayin Miout’iwn*” (“National Unity”), *Baikar*, April 1923; “*Adenakrout’iwn*,” Worcester, MA, August 21, 1921, pp. 27–28.
- 506 Reuben Darbinian, “The Armenian Church Break,” in Armenian National Apostolic Church of America, *Crisis in the Armenian Church* (Boston: Hairenik Press, 1958), p. 5.
- 507 Zarouhi Kalēmḵ’earian, “*Medz ew Anēngjeli Martē*” (“The Great and Invulnerable Man”), *Hayastaneayts’ Yegeghets’i*, XVIII (May 1956), p. 151.
- 508 The Church Trustees of this church have been strongly Tashnag-oriented. After the split of the diocese in 1933, the church became a Tashnag stronghold.
- 509 In the following year, in a letter dated March 1, 1922, the Primate informed him of his decision to relieve him from priestly duties. “*Hovhan Dzayrakoyñ Vartabed Garabedian*” (“Very Reverend Father Hovhan Garabedian”), *Azk-Bahag*, March 8, 1922.
- 510 “*Hay Kaght’aganout’iwnē*” (“The Armenian Colony”), *Gotchnag*, April 30, 1921, p. 613.
- 511 Ibid.
- 512 “*Adenakrout’iwn*,” Worcester, MA, August 1, 1921, pp. 14–15.
- 513 Ibid.
- 514 The reference to this visit in *Hairenik* is very brief. From the point of view of Armenian-American relationships, the political developments in the early 1920s may help in understanding the atmosphere of the Armenian community in America. “*Haygagan Geank’*” (“Armenian Life”), *Hairenik*, May 25, 1921.
- 515 Joseph L. Grabill, *Protestant Diplomacy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), pp. 110–111.
- 516 Ibid., p. 257.
- 517 Ibid.

- 518 Archbishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian, “*Bashdōnagan Haydararout‘iwn*” (“Official Notice”), *Gotchnag*, July 23, 1921, p. 990.
- 519 Menawor (pseud.), “*Amerigayi Hayots‘ Eresp‘okhanagan Zhoghovē*” (“The Diocesan Convention of the Armenians of America”), *Gotchnag*, September 3, 1921, p. 1079.
- 520 Ibid., pp. 1080–1081; “*Adenakrout‘iwn*,” Worcester, MA, August 21, 1921, p. 21.
- 521 Armenag Nazar, “*Hayasdaneayts‘ Egeghets‘woy Paregarkout‘iwnē*” (“The Reformation of the Armenian Church”), *Azk-Bahag*, March 4, 1922.
- 522 March 18, 1922. Armenag Nazar was strongly opposed to the system of celibacy in the Armenian Church. He often advocated its immediate termination.
- 523 “*Hayrabedagan Gontag*” (“Pontifical Encyclical”) issued by Catholicos Kēork V on November 11, 1922, *Gotchnag*, July 28, 1923, pp. 946–947.
- 524 Papkēn Giwlēsērian, *Paregarkout‘iwn Hayasdaneayts‘ Egeghets‘woy* (“Reformation of the Armenian Church”), (Antelias, Lebanon: Catholicosate of Cilicia Press, 1940), p. 4.
- 525 Ibid., p. 5.
- 526 A. Nazar, a close associate of Bishop Giwlēsērian, observes that initially Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian designated three people from Boston to study the bishop’s report. Nothing further was heard of the matter, and the issue lay dormant. Armenag Nazar, “*Hayasdaneayts‘ Egeghets‘woy Paregarkout‘iwnē*” (“Reformation of the Armenian Church”), *Azk-Bahag*, March 4, 1922.
- 527 “*Amerigayi Hayots‘ Eresp‘okhanagan Zhoghovē*” (“The Diocesan Convention of the Armenians of America”), *Gotchnag*, October 20, 1923, pp. 1332–1333.
- 528 Editorial, “*Amerigayi Hay Egeghets‘woy Eresp‘okhanagan Zhoghovē*” (“The Diocesan Convention of the Armenian Church of America”), *Azk-Bahag*, November 29, 1922.
- 529 “*Adenakrout‘iwn*,” Worcester, MA, August 21, 1921, p. 21.
- 530 *Sahmanatrout‘iwn Hokewor Garavarout‘ean Hayasdaneayts‘ Sourp Egeghets‘woy Arachnortagan Vijagin Amerigayi* (“Constitution of the Spiritual Government of the Holy Armenian Church of the Diocese of America”) (Venice: San Lazzaro Press, 1903), p. 9.
- 531 Ardēn Ashjian, *Vijagats‘oyts‘ ew Badmout‘iwn Arachnortagan T‘emin Hayots‘ Amerigayi* (“Statistics and History of the Armenian Diocese of America”) (New York: Lēylēgian Press, 1949), p. 85.
- 532 Editorial, “*Hay Egeghets‘in ew Hay Tbrots‘ē*” (“The Armenian Church and the Armenian School”), *Baikar*, October 25, 1923.
- 533 According to Armenian Church tradition, a small stone, called an altar stone, is blessed and placed in the center of the altar of the church where the Divine Liturgy is being celebrated. This stone signifies the sacredness of the altar. In the event that the Divine Liturgy is celebrated in a non-Armenian Church or nonconsecrated church, it is customary to place this stone on the altar.
- 534 Editorial, “*K‘mahaj Garkatrout‘iwn Mē*” (“A Capricious Arrangement”), *Baikar*, May 24, 1924.
- 535 “*Los Anjelēsi Khntirē*” (“The Problem of Los Angeles”), *Baikar*, June 4, 1924.
- 536 Maghak‘ Bērbērian, “*Namag Khmpakrout‘ean*” (“Letter to the Editor”), *Baikar*, June 19, 1924.

- 537 Akoulets'i, "Kaliforniyo Egeghets'inerou Khntirē" ("The Problem of the Churches of California"), *Baïkar*, June 23, 1924.
- 538 Editorial, "Bashdōnagani Mē Art'iw" ("Upon the Occasion of an Official Decree"), *Baïkar*, June 19, 1924.
- 539 "Amerigayi Hayots' Eresp'okhanagan Zhoghovi Adenakrout'iwnner," Boston, MA, September 6–7, 1925, pp. 16–17.
- 540 "Bashdōnagan Zegoyts' Kerakoyñ Hokewor Khorhrti Sourp Ēchmiadznī" ("Official Report of the Supreme Spiritual Council of Holy Ēchmiadzin"), *Gotchnag*, July 7, 1926, p. 1048.
- 541 "Adenakrout'iwn," September 6–7, 1925, Boston, MA, p. 10.
- 542 Ibid., p. 14.
- 543 Editorial, "Hay Egeghets'woy Eresp'okhanagan Zhoghovē" ("The Diocesan Convention of the Armenian Church"), *Baïkar*, September 3, 1925.
- 544 "Amerigahay Eresp'okhanagan Zhoghovē" (The Diocesan Convention of the Armenians of America), *Gotchnag*, August 29, 1925, p. 1089.
- 545 "Adenakrout'iwn," Boston, MA, May 15–16, 1927, pp. 15–16.
- 546 Ibid., p. 51.
- 547 Ibid., pp. 53–67.
- 548 "Adenakrout'iwn," Boston, MA, May 15–16, pp. 14–51, 51.
- 549 These rooms were leased by the diocese until 1947. For the next two years the diocese used a building owned by the Episcopalians on 20th Street in New York City.
- 550 A good survey of early Armenian immigration is provided by Moushegh Seropian, "Kaliforniyo Kaghout'ē" ("The Community of California"), *Amerigahay Darets'oyts' ē* ("The Armenian-American Yearbook") (Boston: Cilicia Press, 1912), pp. 56–75.
- 551 "Artsanakrout'iwnk'," Worcester, MA, April 7–8, 1918, p. 100.
- 552 Vahan K'iwrk'jian was an author, teacher, and community and church leader who became instrumental in 1909 in establishing the American branch of the Armenian General Benevolent Union.
- 553 "Kaliforniyo Hayots' Arachnortaranē" ("The Diocese of the Armenians of California"), *Pharos*, April 28, 1928, p. 76.
- 554 "Adenakrout'iwn," Boston, MA, September 6–7, pp. 21–22.
- 555 *Twentieth Anniversary of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Cross Church*, Fresno, CA, 1922–1942, p. 28.
- 556 "Hayrabedagan Gontag Kaliforniyo Arachnortin Oughghouadz" ("Pontifical Encyclical Addressed to the Primate of California"), *Pharos*, II (September 1928), pp. 179–180.
- 557 "Hayrabedagan Gontag," *Pharos*, II (September 1928), pp. 179–180.
- 558 "Zhamanoum ew Bashdōnagan Ētounelout'iwn Kaliforniyo Hayots' Arachnortin" ("Arrival and Reception in Honor of the Primate of California"), *Baïkar*, May 16, 1928.
- 559 Dēr Hovhannēsian, "Hasdadoum Kaliforniyo Hayots' Arachnortagan Vijagin" ("Institution of the Diocese of the Armenians"), *Baïkar*, June 10, 1928.
- 560 "Hay Geank'ē Freznoyi Mēch" ("Armenian Life in Fresno"), *Gotchnag*, July 21, 1928.
- 561 "Adenakrout'iwnner," Boston, MA, May 15–16, 1927, pp. 10–11.
- 562 One should not overlook the political overtones of this conflict. The majority support

- the archbishop received undoubtedly was provided by delegates of Tashnag orientation.
- 563 “Adenakrout ‘iwnner,” Boston, MA, May 15–16, 1927, p. 43.
- 564 A. N. Nazar, “*Ōrouan Khntirner*” (“Issues of the Times”), *Baikar*, February 4, 1928.
- 565 “Amerigayi Hayots ‘Eresp ‘okhanagan Zhoghovi Adenakrout ‘iwnner” (“Minutes of the Diocesan Convention of Armenians of America”), New York, NY, October 7–8, 1928, pp. 9–10.
- 566 Ibid.
- 567 It is probable, however, that Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian maintained his opposition to the use of the portable altar stones to deter the continued use of rented facilities, which threatened the permanence of an Armenian Church establishment in populous Armenian areas.
- 568 “Adenakrout ‘iwnner,” New York, NY, October 7–8, 1928, p. 11.
- 569 Ibid., p. 30.
- 570 According to custom of the Armenian Church, the person who receives ordination is given a new name by the bishop. This signifies that through ordination the candidate becomes a new man.
- 571 Moushegh Seropian, “*Kalifornioy Hay Kaghout ‘ē*” *Amerigahay Darets ‘oyts ‘ē*, 1912, pp. 71–74.
- 572 *Thirtieth Anniversary Souvenir Book*, Armenian Holy Trinity Church of Boston, MA, 1923–1952; *Tenth Anniversary Souvenir Book*, Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church of Greater Boston, 1961–1971.
- 573 Ashjian, *Vijagats ‘oyts ‘ew Badmout ‘iwn Arachnortagan T‘emin Hayots ‘Amerigayi*, pp. 234–242; “Adenakrout ‘iwnner,” New York, NY, October 7–8, 1928, p. 28.
- 574 No detailed information is available concerning this incident. The only reference to the conflict is found in Vahe Haig, *Memorial Booklet for the Commemoration of the Thirtieth Anniversary of St. Sahag and Mesrob Armenian Apostolic Church*, Reedley, California 1924–1954 (Fresno, CA: Kasparian Press, 1954), p. 19.
- 575 For further details concerning the Armenians in Racine and the development of the parish church, consult Ashjian, *Vijagats ‘oyts ‘ew Badmout ‘iwn Arachnortagan T‘emin Hayots ‘Amerigayi*, pp. 215–225; T‘oros Madaghjian, *Dasnēhinkameag Giragnōreay Tbrots ‘i Sourp Mesrob Hayasdaneayts ‘Egeghets ‘woy, Reysin, Ouisk ‘ansin* (“Fifteenth Anniversary of the Sunday School of Saint Mesrob Armenian Church of Racine, Wisconsin”) (New York: Gotchnag Press, 1958), p. 7; “Adenakrout ‘iwnner,” Boston, MA, May 15–16, 1927, pp. 29–30.
- 576 Ashjian, *Vijagats ‘oyts ‘ew Badmout ‘iwn Arachnortagan T‘emin Hayots ‘Amerigayi*, p. 216; Madaghjian, *Dasnēhinkameag Giragnōreay Tbrots ‘i Sourp Mesrob Hayasdaneayts ‘Egeghets ‘woy, Reysin, Ouisk ‘ansin*, p. 8; “Adenakrout ‘iwnner,” Boston, MA, May 15–16, 1927, pp. 27–28.
- 577 Bedros A. Keljik, *Armenian-American Sketches* (New York: Yeprad Press, 1944), p. 26.
- 578 “Adenakrout ‘iwnner,” Boston, MA, May 15–16, 1927, p. 27.
- 579 Hrach‘ Amadouni, *Shikagoyi Hayasdaneayts ‘Arak‘elagan Soup Krikor Lousaworich ‘Egeghets ‘woy Badmout ‘iwnē, 1925–1940* (“The Story of Saint Gregory the Illuminator Armenian Apostolic Church of Chicago, 1925–1940”), p. 1.

- 580 In 1943 Father Nazarēt'ian assumed the pastorate of his former parish. He remained
in Chicago until 1953, when he retired to Miami, Florida.
- 581 “Adenakrout ‘iwnner,” Boston, MA, May 15–16, 1927, p. 28; Amadouni, *Shikagoyi
Hayasdaneayts ‘Arak’elagan Soup Krikor Lousaworich ‘Egeghets’woy Badmout ‘iwnē,
1925–1940*, p. 2; *Consecration and Dedication of St. Gregory the Illuminator
Armenian Church*, Chicago, IL, October 4, 1964.
- 582 In 1947 the church was heavily damaged by fire. Once again, with a spirit of devotion,
the members campaigned to reconstruct the church. The Armenians used this church
until June 1964, when they moved into a new building on West Diversey Boulevard
in Chicago. The new church was consecrated by Archbishop Sion Manougian on
October 4, 1964.
- 583 Ashjian, *Vijagats ‘oyts’ ew Badmout ‘iwn Arachnortagan T’emin Hayots’ Amerigayi*,
pp. 188–190, 195–196; *Consecration and Dedication of the Holy Trinity Armenian
Church*, Cheltenham, PA, September 10, 1966.
- 584 Armenians in West Philadelphia, in the meantime, were allowed use of the Protestant
Episcopal church, Saint George’s Church, located at 61st Street and Hazel Avenue.
- 585 *Consecration of Saint Sahag and Mesrob Church*, Wynnewood, PA, November 24,
1963, p. 26.
- 586 *Consecration and Dedication*, Cheltenham, PA, September 18, 1966.

The Interim Years

(1928–1931)

Soviet-Ēchmiadzin Relations in a New Phase

During the three years between the resignation of Primate Dēr Hovhannēsian in 1928 and the election of Archbishop Ghewont Tourian as the new Primate on January 31, 1931, the diocese was governed consecutively by two locum tenentes. These were Father Serovpē Nerhabouh (1928–1930) of Saint Illuminator Church and Father Harout'iwñ Sarkisian (1930–1931) of Holy Cross Church, both from New York City. No outstanding achievements were expected through the leadership of these two churchmen. Instead, they were simply asked to supervise the routine tasks and regular business of the diocese, while attending to their pastoral duties in their respective churches and communities.

At the same time, new trends in Armenian national life were apparent throughout the diaspora. The differences among the Armenian political organizations, including their attitudes toward Soviet Armenia and Ēchmiadzin, stirred up enmities that would lead to future flames of bitterness. The two unyielding forces of the drama were the uncompromising political stances of the Tashnag and Ramgavar parties. In spite of these political activities, the Armenian Church in America was able to achieve a degree of physical and spiritual growth, largely through church youth organizations that ran under such names as Brotherhood of the Armenian Church and Sons and Daughters of the Armenian Church. The task was made harder by the Great Depression, which crippled America economically in the late 1920s and early 1930s.⁵⁸⁷

Armenians carried through their church-building programs and contracted heavy debts, ignoring the risks of foreclosure. Political events of the 1920s in the Armenian homeland and the serious situation in Turkey diminished the little hope that remained of returning to the homeland. Partial assimilation was inevitable as Armenians now accepted the fact that America was to be their permanent home. The younger generation was coming of age, with their primary and immediate loyalty to America and not to a distant and almost legendary land. With the growth of the Church, Armenian youth no longer were exposed to the necessity of attending non-Armenian churches. Many of the youth became members of new Armenian churches; others simply preferred not to change their denominational preferences. Unfortunately, Church leaders and their authority often lagged behind the needs and progressive theories of the time. The diocese set great goals but lacked the strength and backing to see them through.

Despite this relative progress, a significant percentage of the early Armenians had already been integrated, and the Armenian Church, which functioned without

any fundamental missionary motivation toward her “lost sheep,” lost some of her members permanently.

If in the 1920s Ēchmiadzin resisted the Communist assault, from 1929 to 1932 she adjusted herself to the new regime and reached a compromise. Despite this compromise, the Communist campaign against the Armenian Church reached new heights and gave indications of still further intensification, and the closing and confiscation of churches and the systematic extermination of the ecclesiastical intelligentsia continued. These particularly violent waves of persecution coincided with a purge within the party and of the non-Communist intellectuals of Armenia as well.⁵⁸⁸ The Soviet Constitution of 1929 placed the Communist state in complete control of all the media and made it a crime to propagate religion or challenge atheism. The only freedom Christians were allowed was limited gatherings for worship.⁵⁸⁹ In short, Communist determination to eradicate religious belief was not intended to be carried out by a sudden blow, but instead moved forward gradually and systematically.

The Church finally succumbed, and the organization was weakened economically through seizure of her lands and holdings, her treasures allegedly being appropriated for famine relief. As a result, the Church and clergy became completely dependent on alms, the Church’s position vis-à-vis the government thus changed dramatically in the late 1920s. Soviet authorities, once defied by the Church hierarchy in the early 1920s, now were tolerated by these churchmen, who even prayed in the churches for the regime. The Church had finally adjusted herself to the new political and social order of Armenia.

On the other hand, Armenian political thought in the diaspora was divided. More than anywhere else, it was in America that the differences of Armenian politics had their strongest impact on the Armenian community and Church.

The Tashnag Party became more and more anti-Soviet, and its hostility grew even stronger against Ēchmiadzin. The Tashnag Party was not reluctant to call Armenians who gave their allegiance to Ēchmiadzin pro-Communists who “championed the Soviet Regime.”⁵⁹⁰ The Tashnag Party viewed Ēchmiadzin purely as an ecclesiastical institution.⁵⁹¹ Ferocious and slanderous editorials appeared in the Armenian press in America, which did not pass unnoticed by ecclesiastical authorities at Ēchmiadzin. The Supreme Spiritual Council, on June 12, 1929, discussed the problem of the feuding factions in the diaspora, especially the position of the Tashnag Party toward Armenia and the Armenian Church. Following this session, a circular was issued by the Supreme Spiritual Council to all Armenian dioceses. The circular was scornful of clergymen who were reluctant to stem the anti-Soviet propaganda conducted by the Tashnag machinery:

The Armenian Church of Holy Ēchmiadzin, in the course of her historical

existence, has always kept herself aloof from political and factional feuds. Today she is conducting her same policy. However, despite the fact that there are Tashnag political leaders who have attempted to make churches and Church assemblies into political podiums, have carried on anti-Soviet propaganda, and have assumed power in various parts of the diaspora, our spiritual leaders have not attempted to obstruct such activities. Taking also into consideration that there are individuals and groups who are spreading subversive and defamatory remarks about Ēchmiadzin, we hereby announce that Ēchmiadzin has no political affiliation or partisanship and is loyal and solicitous to the Soviet regime. We exhort the Primates and spiritual servants throughout all sees to remain likewise loyal to the Soviet regime.⁵⁹²

One controversial diocesan Primate was Archbishop Nersēs Melik'-T'ankian of Persian Azerbaijan, who was considered instrumental in spreading unpalatable news concerning Armenia and Ēchmiadzin.⁵⁹³ This churchman had made it his business to find out as much about the affairs in Ēchmiadzin as he could. His findings, by way of news releases and articles, appeared in the Tashnag press under the pseudonym "*Hay Mart*" ("An Armenian Man"). In a recent issue of *Nayiri*, a Beirut Armenian literary publication, the editor makes the following notes concerning the archbishop:

The news reported by His Grace was unbelievable, and certain newspapers of the diaspora defined the information as fabricated, until, in the course of time, the obscurities vanished, and it became clear that the "*Hay Mart*" was indisputably a truthful correspondent . . . unfortunately.⁵⁹⁴

Archbishop Melik'-T'ankian was anathematized by Soviet authorities and Ēchmiadzin. He was also strongly criticized by the non-Tashnag press, who seized every opportunity to discredit him. Armenian papers in America were at sword's point over the issue of Archbishop Melik'-T'ankian. *Hairenik* rallied to his defense, while *Baïkar* and *Gotchnag* opposed him.

Other news reported by "*Hay Mart*" concerned the state of the Church in Armenia, which revealed the widespread closing of churches, their conversion to movie houses, and the purging and imprisonment of clergy. Another alleged controversy reported by him centered on the forced removal of the Catholicos in favor of Archbishop Khorēn Mouradpēgian of Erevan, who was considered more acceptable by Soviet authorities. Ēchmiadzin immediately reacted to these rumors by categorically denying this report as a fabrication on the part of the opponents of Ēchmiadzin, intended to discredit her.⁵⁹⁵

As the rift deepened between Archbishop Melik'-T'ankian and Ēchmiadzin,

the pontiff was forced to suspend him and order his immediate departure from Iran. The archbishop was given the alternative of returning to the Holy See in Armenia or retiring to the seclusion of Saint James Monastery in Jerusalem. However, he disregarded the pontifical order and remained in his diocese as prelate until his death on September 28, 1948.⁵⁹⁶

The alleged imminent transfer of the Holy See of Ēchmiadzin from Armenia to a more politically secure country became a popular topic of discussion. According to this news, Archbishop T'orkom Koushagian of Cairo, Egypt, was to depart for Jerusalem for formal consultations with Archbishop Eghishē Tourian, the Armenian Patriarch, about the transfer of the see.⁵⁹⁷ Ēchmiadzin denied these rumors and countered by denouncing the Tashnag Party for its ruthless anti-Ēchmiadzin campaign. The communication issued on June 26, 1929, by the Holy See urged Armenians in the diaspora to refrain from partisan feuding and support Ēchmiadzin, which had pledged its loyalty to the government of Armenia.⁵⁹⁸ The Tashnag press reacted by charging that Ēchmiadzin had issued this document in response to pressure from the Soviet Secret Service.

Amid this controversy, Kēork V Vshdali, Catholicos of All Armenians, who was old and seriously ill, died on May 9, 1930.⁵⁹⁹ His popularity had been enormous. Multitudes attended his funeral services as an open demonstration of devotion to the Church.

According to the news media, the Supreme Spiritual Council at Ēchmiadzin had announced the forthcoming National Ecclesiastical Assembly, to be held on October 26, 1930, at the Holy See, wherein the successor of the late Catholicos was to be elected.⁶⁰⁰

According to bylaws issued by the late Catholicos himself on October 22, 1925, the National Ecclesiastical Assembly was given authority to proceed with the election of a new pontiff no later than six months after the death of the reigning pontiff.⁶⁰¹ The American diocese was accordingly informed that the Soviet authorities had no objection to convening the assembly at Ēchmiadzin in the fall of 1930. A letter of the government, dated July 6, 1930, extended its confirmation of the request of the Supreme Spiritual Council for the assembly.⁶⁰² At a special Diocesan Convention on September 14, 1930, at Saint Illuminator Church in New York, Vahan K'iwrk'jian, Armenag Nazar, Maghak' Bērbērian, and Hayg Smsarian were elected delegates to represent the American diocese at the National Assembly in Ēchmiadzin.

To the surprise of Armenians here and abroad, the assembly was abruptly postponed and no future date proposed. According to an article titled "*Inch Gēsē Khorhrtayin Hayasdan Ēchmiadzni Ēndrout'eants 'Masin*" (What *Khorhrtayin Hayasdan* Reports about the Election in Ēchmiadzin), this delay was ascribed to Soviet suspicions that, among the delegates at the assembly, Tashnags might enter

Armenia and influence the outcome of the election in their favor.⁶⁰³ The main thrust of the article was that according to the Soviets' interpretation, the Tashnags had two plans of action. One called for transfer of the Holy See from Ēchmiadzin to the diaspora, with the Holy See to be used as a stronghold against the Communist government of Armenia. The other would keep Ēchmiadzin in its present location, electing a pontiff who would oppose the Soviet regime in Armenia and expedite its overthrow.⁶⁰⁴ Soviet hesitation to allow the election of a new Catholicos lasted until 1932.

Another issue arose in the 1930s over the defection to the West of a former Soviet Secret Service agent, Gregorii A. Agabekov, an Armenian national, who aroused much speculation in the political world.⁶⁰⁵ He wrote a book, *The Cheka at Work*, in which he alleged that the Soviet secret police, the OGPU, had infiltrated the high clerical ranks of the Armenian Church. The Tashnag Party welcomed such news and capitalized on it. Its attack on the accused clerics and on the Holy See became more acrimonious as it labeled both the clergy and the adherents to Ēchmiadzin as Communist agents.⁶⁰⁶ Actually, the clerics accused of loyalty to the Soviets and serving as agents of the Soviets were known for their antagonistic feelings toward the Tashnag Party. One such churchman was shortly thereafter elected to the primacy of the American diocese. This was Archbishop Ghewont Tourian of Manchester, England.

In view of this controversy, the American diocese chose the road of loyalty and submission to the Holy See, supporting it in its policy of maintaining a prudent and reserved attitude toward the Communist regime. The diocese forwarded \$2,000 to Ēchmiadzin as an indication of goodwill and to alleviate the economic difficulties of the Holy See.⁶⁰⁷ Moreover, the parishes were urged to join efforts to help Ēchmiadzin. However, the Tashnags in the diocese were not disposed to lighten their political opposition to the Soviets in order to manifest their "filial obedience" to Ēchmiadzin. With the passage of time, conflicts and tensions were to mount among the feuding groups and cast further gloom on an already burdened diocese.

Period of Locum Tenens I: Father Serovpē Nershabouh (1928–1930)

Archbishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian submitted his resignation to the Central Executive Committee on August 15, 1928.⁶⁰⁸ It was formally accepted by the Central Executive Committee on August 21. Father Serovpē Nershabouh and Father Harout‘iwn Sarkisian were asked to oversee the affairs of the diocese for at least three hours daily. Although serious differences had led to tension between the former Primate and the Central Executive Committee, Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian showed readiness to offer his services wherever needed.⁶⁰⁹

The period of locum tenens of Father Nershabouh was short, lasting only until his death on July 26, 1930. His leadership was passive, devoid of personal initiative. It became obvious then that no major projects were intended by the diocesan authorities, who simply assumed a day-to-day status quo policy.

Biographical Notes

Father Serovpē Nershabouh served the diocese as locum tenens from 1928 to 1930 while retaining the pastorate of Saint Illuminator Church in New York. Nothing is known of his life and work before he came to the United States from Constantinople in December 1910.

The first reference to his name is found in the minutes of the board of Church Trustees meetings of Holy Translators Church in Providence, Rhode Island. The Armenian community of Providence still had no church of its own. However, the Church Trustees were greatly concerned with the religious needs of local Armenians and were searching for a clergyman. Meeting numerous difficulties in their search, the trustees requested a celibate pastor from the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople on May 23, 1910.⁶¹⁰ It was learned by letter on October 4, 1910, at a meeting of the board of Church Trustees, that the Patriarchate had chosen Father Serovpē Nershabouh as pastor for Providence, and transportation costs for the new priest was requested.⁶¹¹

The minutes of the board of Church Trustees meeting of January 3, 1911, show that Father Nershabouh had already arrived in the United States.⁶¹² Much difficulty arose over determining the salary for the new pastor, because the Providence parish lacked a strong ecclesiastical body to oversee such administrative matters. After only fifteen weeks in office, Father Nershabouh was charged with “negligence and

indifference toward his duties and religious services,” opening a rift between himself and the board of Church Trustees.⁶¹³ He was further charged with absence from meetings and a desire to be reassigned to another parish. Because of these conflicts, the Church Trustees decided to withhold his weekly salary of ten dollars for the next seven weeks.⁶¹⁴

In a meeting on June 17, 1911, it was disclosed that Father Nershabouh had notified the Church Trustees of his intent to resign from the parish.⁶¹⁵ The trustees declined his resignation in order to avoid further controversy among members of the community. A committee was designated to conduct formal discussions with the pastor, in an attempt to bring about reconciliation between the quarreling parties. The trustees repeatedly insisted that Father Nershabouh should allot more time to his pastoral duties, but he remained unyielding. A group of church supporters came to the assistance of Father Nershabouh and took issue with the board of Church Trustees.⁶¹⁶ The trustees reacted by declaring that these supporters of Father Nershabouh held no official membership in the local religious organization of the Armenian community, and they then charged both Father Nershabouh and his followers with receiving encouragement from the former locum tenens, Father Bōghos Kaft‘anian, and the Tashnag party.⁶¹⁷

At a Membership Meeting in early November 1911, Father Nershabouh’s attitude was strongly condemned by the membership, resulting in the termination of his pastorate.⁶¹⁸ The membership instructed the Church Trustees to seek a new pastor for the Providence community. For a short time a visiting priest served the parish. The trustees appealed to the diocese to instruct Father Nershabouh to cease his activities, which included administering sacraments and rites without the approval of local religious authorities. They also asked that he be ordered to leave Providence. As a final solution to the matter, the plenipotentiary Archbishop Kēork Iwt‘iwjian was asked to intercede.⁶¹⁹ However, available information does not indicate that the archbishop took any action against Father Nershabouh.

Further reference to Father Nershabouh after this incident is found only in the lists of names of clergy attending the annual Diocesan Conventions, beginning with the year 1921. His name also appears among the delegates representing Saint Illuminator Church in New York.⁶²⁰

In 1928, upon the resignation of the Primate, Father Nershabouh was designated locum tenens. At this time he was serving as pastor of Saint Illuminator Church in New York. He died on July 26, 1930, while on a visit to the parish of Richmond, Virginia.⁶²¹ Archbishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian officiated at the funeral services, held in Saint Illuminator Church.⁶²² In contrast to earlier negative testimonies about Father Nershabouh, the eulogies offered at his funeral depicted the puritanical life he had led and stressed his thirty years of dedicated service to the Armenian Church.⁶²³

Survey of Diocesan Life and Affairs

The Diocesan Convention that met in New York on October 7–8, 1928, officially received the resignation of the Primate, which had been submitted in August to the Central Executive Committee. The convention affirmed the election of Father Nershabouh as locum tenens. The Catholicos approved the appointment of Father Nershabouh as locum tenens in February 1929 and instructed the diocese to elect a new Primate.⁶²⁴

Because of the Depression, and because of mounting partisan conflicts in the parishes, it was deemed prudent not to proceed as the Catholicos had instructed in electing a new Primate.

Several parishes, including Chicago; Providence; Boston; Bridgeport, Connecticut; New Britain, Connecticut; and Union City, New Jersey, were experiencing internal problems and were torn by strife. They often showed little respect for diocesan authority in cases where the latter had attempted to intervene. The Boston and Union City parishes even went so far as to sever their ties with the diocese.⁶²⁵

The parish in Providence, however, presented a more complicated problem. There, the all-too-familiar controversy between the pastor, Father Ghewont Martougēsian, and the board of Church Trustees continued.⁶²⁶ The pastor was accused of contempt in submitting his resignation to the trustees whenever a difference of opinion and interests evolved. The dispute between them necessitated the mediation of the Central Executive Committee.

On November 11, 1928, two members from the Central Executive Committee attended the Membership Meeting in Providence and urged reconciliation. As a result, Father Martougēsian remained in service, only to be released from his pastorate at the end of several months.⁶²⁷

On April 29, 1929, the Central Executive Committee issued an appeal to solicit financial support for the diocese.⁶²⁸ The appeal stressed that Armenians in America until then had raised funds to aid fellow Armenians in the homeland and the diaspora. The time had now come to look after their own needs. Thus, the diocese initiated *Azkayin Dourk'* (a tithe) to be gathered from each community and parish of the Armenian Church.⁶²⁹ By the end of the fiscal year 1930, a total of \$2,723 had been collected, much to the dismay of the diocese, which had anticipated a larger sum.

In the latter part of 1929 Father Nershabouh announced that the Holy See had approved the new constitution, which was to be put into effect on January 1, 1930. Until then the Central Executive Committee had comprised two separate bodies, the Religious Council and the Economic Council, which were combined to form one organ known as the Central Executive Committee. The Religious Council

ceased to function as a separate body, and its duties, mainly of a religious nature, were turned over to the Central Executive Committee.⁶³⁰

Despite widespread economic panic, the Armenian communities continued to manifest a degree of religious vitality. It was widely assumed that hard times would cause Armenians to reevaluate their religious commitments and carry through their church-building programs. However, partisan contests and political extremism had further tragic surprises in store for the Church. Father Serovpē Nerhabouh did not live long enough to see the impending crisis.

Period of Locum Tenens II: Father Harout‘iwn Sarkisian (1930–1931)

Upon the death of Father Serovpē Nerhabouh on July 26, 1930, Father Harout‘iwn Sarkisian, pastor of Holy Cross Church in New York, assumed the office of locum tenens on August 30, 1930.⁶³¹ Father Sarkisian continued to serve the New York parish, in addition to his office as locum tenens. His influence as a leader was more pronounced at the parish than at the diocesan level. It was largely because of his work that Holy Cross Church in New York was acquired.

Biographical Notes

Born in Sewereg, Turkey, in 1867, to parents of modest means, Father Sarkisian received his formal schooling in the seminary of the Armenian monastery in Jerusalem.⁶³² Before he entered the priesthood, he was an educator in Armenian institutions in Turkey and Egypt. He was ordained in 1893 by Archbishop Krikoris Hovhannēsian and was appointed pastor of Armenians of Eodemish in Smyrna, Turkey.

After sharing the tragic fate of his parishioners in Smyrna at the hands of the Turks, he emigrated in 1922 to America. Before assuming the pastorship of Holy Cross Church, Father Sarkisian served for a brief time in the parish of Saint Illuminator Church in New York City. He was called to the pastorate of the Holy Cross Church in January 1929.

Father Sarkisian was reputedly a gentle, humble, and pleasant man to all.⁶³³ Many stories are told of him, including one that relates that he never attended any trustees meeting without first turning over to the board all the donations he had collected from his parishioners for the church fund. Father Sarkisian served his parish for less than two years. However, his compassionate nature won the undying affection of his parishioners. He remained in office as locum tenens until December 1931, when he became ill. He died on February 20, 1932, with Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian officiating at the funeral services. The routine work of the diocese was then carried on under the supervision of the Central Executive Committee.

Ineffectual Times for the Diocese

In the latter part of the September 1930, Bishop Karekin Khach‘adourian, Primate

of the Western Diocese, stopped in New York on his way to Armenia.⁶³⁴ He was on his way to attend the National Ecclesiastical Assembly in Ēchmiadzin to elect a new pontiff. However, this assembly never took place. In New York, Bishop Khach'adourian was asked by the Central Executive Committee, with the consent of Father Sarkisian, to make visitations to various Armenian communities. He agreed, and his itinerary included parishes in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Chicago, where he had the opportunity to meet with the faithful and officiate at religious services.⁶³⁵

The Diocesan Convention was convened on January 31–February 1, 1931, in Saint Illuminator Church in New York. Because Father Sarkisian could not preside over the Convention because of ill health, Father Nshan P'ap'azian, pastor of Saint Peter's Church of Troy, New York, was asked to preside over the sessions of the convention. The election of a new Primate dominated the agenda. The absence of a Primate had caused a state of uncertainty and a feeling of ineffectiveness among the diocesan churches and Armenians in general.⁶³⁶

Various reasons were offered for and against the election of a Primate. One major concern of the Central Executive Committee was the lack of financial means to be allocated as salary for the Primate. Their suggestion was the merger of the two North American dioceses under the spiritual leadership of one Primate. Moreover, a similar desire was expressed by the Californians, with the understanding that each diocese would preserve its independent administration and existence under the aegis of Bishop Karekin Khach'adourian, the incumbent of the Western Diocese.⁶³⁷ This motion received very little support. Instead, the delegates considered two other motions. One argued to postpone the election for an indefinite time; the other insisted on immediate action. The latter motion received majority support. Archbishop Ghewont Tourian of Manchester, England, was chosen as the new Primate. On March 12, 1931, the Supreme Spiritual Council confirmed his election and accordingly notified the diocese.⁶³⁸ It was widely believed that with the election of the new Primate, ineffectual times for the Church would come to an end and a new period of Church leadership be ushered in.

New Churches

In the late 1920s and early 1930s the Armenian Church acquired four new churches. Throughout this transitional period, religious life was somewhat superficial and limited to Sunday morning services, performance of rituals, and ceremonies related to major Church feasts. No Armenian church is reported to have been forced to close her doors because of financial difficulties. However, like many other denominations, the Armenian Church felt the blow of the economic depression of the 1930s. Budgets were slashed, and expenses were drastically curtailed.

On of the new churches, Saint Gregory Illuminator Church, was built in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada, in 1930; the three remaining churches were located in the state of New York. These were Holy Trinity Church, built in Brooklyn in 1929; Holy Cross Church in uptown New York in 1929; and Saint Gregory the Illuminator Church in Binghamton in 1930.⁶³⁹

The transfer of diocesan headquarters may have given impetus to church-building zeal in New York. Economically, the Depression had taken a less heavy toll in the Armenian communities located in New York State.

Holy Trinity Church, Brooklyn, New York

Approximately 3,000 Armenians lived in Brooklyn when Holy Trinity Church was purchased in 1929.⁶⁴⁰ The issue of owning a church was first raised at a meeting in 1926, at which some three hundred parishioners congregated to discuss matters pertaining to the local Armenian schools.

Primate Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian designated a nine-member church building committee. On May 23, 1929, the committee purchased a former Norwegian church for \$47,000. The new building had a seating capacity of three hundred. It was located on the corner of 4th Avenue and 15th Street in Brooklyn. Dikran Bedrosian was instrumental in the acquisition of the church. After the church underwent renovation, it was consecrated. No details are available concerning the dedication and consecration services and its further use by the local Armenians. It is probable that, because of the Depression, the church was forced to be liquidated by Armenians who were unable to meet the payments on the mortgage in the amount of \$20,250.⁶⁴¹

According to information provided by Father Ashjian, the church in Brooklyn went out of existence in the months following the assassination of Archbishop Tourian on December 24, 1933.⁶⁴² A probable reason is that the Armenian

community was internally divided and the parties concerned may have agreed upon the sale of the church.

Saint Gregory the Illuminator Church, Binghamton, New York

In 1912 initial attempts were made in Binghamton to organize the Armenian community. One can find many natives of Hajen, Sebastia, and Harpoot among Binghamton's immigrants. These uprooted Armenians were employed mainly in shoe factories and cleaning businesses. A large number of immigrants in time improved their economic situation.

The first board of Church Trustees was formed in 1923. In 1924 the Ladies' Auxiliary was organized, becoming the leading force in the acquisition in 1928 of a church in which Armenians had usually held their religious services. The church, with a seating capacity of 250, was purchased for \$6,300. On April 6, 1930, the church was consecrated as Saint Gregory the Illuminator by the former Primate, Archbishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian, with V. Aslanian serving as Godfather. The first pastor was a recent immigrant priest, Harout'iwñ Toumayian, who held his post for eight months. It is unfortunate that this parish church for many years did not have permanent pastors but only transient clergy.

Saint Gregory the Illuminator Church, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada

By the turn of the century, several hundred Armenians had already settled in Ontario, Canada. Armenians fleeing from the Turkish massacres to Canada chose to live in St. Catharines, Hamilton, Brantford, Toronto, Georgetown, and Montreal.⁶⁴³ According to a census compiled in 1927 by Father Movsēs Dēr Step'anian, the visiting pastor-at-large of Armenians in Canada, approximately 307 families, or 1,261 Armenians, lived in Canada.⁶⁴⁴ Like Armenians in the United States, these immigrants preferred to settle chiefly in urban regions, where they found employment in factories.

For a long while, the religious needs of the Armenians of Canada were poorly attended to. In 1918, a nominal board of Church Trustees was founded in St. Catharines. In 1925, through the efforts of Lewon Babayian, a Toronto Oriental rug merchant and a well-known community leader, the Armenian Union of Canada was founded. It was hoped that this union would serve as a bond between Armenians who had been residing in Canada for some time and newcomers, helping the latter orient themselves in their civic and social responsibilities.⁶⁴⁵

On November 30, 1930, a church located on Carlton Street was consecrated by the former Primate, Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian, who named it Saint Gregory the Illuminator Church. The consecration was a milestone for the Armenians of

Canada. It was the first church edifice of the Armenian faith on Canadian soil. The purchase was made possible through the generosity of Lewon Babayian, who also served as the Godfather of the church. Father Dēr Step'anian became the parish priest. For economic reasons, in subsequent years the parishes of St. Catharines and Hamilton, Canada, and the parish in Niagara Falls in America were supervised by the same pastor who usually made his residence in Niagara Falls.

Notes

- ⁵⁸⁷ *Khrakhouseli Sharzhoun Mē* ("An Encouraging Movement"), *Baïkar*, September 30, 1928.
- ⁵⁸⁸ Armen Bardizian, *Hay Egeghets'woy Daknabē* ("The Crisis of the Armenian Church") (Boston: Hairenik Press, 1936), p. 40; Aghavni Eēgēnian, "Grōnk' ew Ēchmiadzin" ("Religion and Ēchmiadzin"), *Gotchnag*, January 31, 1931, p. 131; Mary Kilbourne Matossian, *The Impact of Soviet Policies in Armenia* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1962), p. 151.
- ⁵⁸⁹ Nicholas Zemov, *Eastern Christendom* (New York: Putnam, 1961), p. 214; Eēgēnian, "Grōnk ew Ēchmiadzin," *Gotchnag*, January 31, 1931, p. 139.
- ⁵⁹⁰ Sarkis Atamian, *The Armenian Community* (New York: Philosophical Library Press, 1955), p. 358; Ralph Lord Roy, *Communism and the Churches* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1960), p. 406.
- ⁵⁹¹ This generalization may not necessarily apply to leaders of Armenian Communists in the diaspora or to Hnch'ag leaders of a strong Marxist/socialist orientation.
- ⁵⁹² "Ēchmiadzni Kerakoyñ Khorhourti Shrchapteraganē T'emagal Arachnortneroun" ("The Circular of the Supreme Council of Ēchmiadzin Addressed to Diocesan Primates"), *Gotchnag*, August 31, p. 113.
- ⁵⁹³ Archbishop Nersēs Melik'-T'ankian was born on March 16, 1866, in Prnagot', Armenia, and received his religious education at Kēorkian Seminary in Ēchmiadzin. In 1901 he was ordained a priest and in 1914 a bishop. From 1913 until his death on September 28, 1948, he served as Primate of the city of Tabriz, Iran. Among his books, the most noteworthy is *Hay Egeghets'woy Irawounk'nerē* ("Rights of the Armenian Church"), 2 vols. (Shousha, Armenia: n.p., 1903, 1905). For biographical data, consult Vartan Demirjian, "Nersēs Ark'ebisgobos Melik'-T'ankian" ("Archbishop Nersēs Melik'-T'ankian"), *Nayiri*, September 30, 1973, p. 3.
- ⁵⁹⁴ Editorial Notes, *Nayiri*, September 30, 1973, p. 3.
- ⁵⁹⁵ Karekin Hovsēp'ian, "Shrchapteraganē" ("The Circular"), *Gotchnag*, November 2, 1929, p. 1397.
- ⁵⁹⁶ Lewon T'iw't'awnjian, "Ēchmiadzin ew Adrbadagani T'emē" ("Ēchmiadzin and the Diocese of Persian Azerbaijan"), *Baïkar*, July 6, 1930.
- ⁵⁹⁷ "Amenayn Hayots' Hayrabedout'awnē" ("The Catholicosate of All Armenians"), *Baïkar*, July 14, 1929.
- ⁵⁹⁸ Kēork Ch'ēōrēk'jian, "Shrchapteragan Ēchmiadzni Kerakoyñ Khorhourti" ("Circular

- of the Supreme Spiritual Council of Ēchmiadzin”), *Baïkar*, August 18, 1929.
- ⁵⁹⁹ Catholicos Kēork V Sourēnians’ was born on August 28, 1847, in Tiflis, Georgia. He became a bishop in 1882, was elected Catholicos on December 13, 1911, and was subsequently consecrated on July 1, 1912.
- ⁶⁰⁰ “*Harachigay Gat’oghigosagan Ēndrout’iwnē*” (“The Forthcoming Catholicos Election”), *Gotchnag*, August 30, 1930, p. 1095.
- ⁶⁰¹ “*Azkayin Egeghets’agan Zhoghov Koumarelou Hadoug Ganonatrou’t iwn*” (“Special Bylaws for the Convening of the National Ecclesiastical Assembly”), *Baïkar*, June 11, 1930.
- ⁶⁰² Editorial, “*Hayrabedagan Ēndrout’iwn*” (“Pontifical Election”), *Baïkar*, August 28, 1930.
- ⁶⁰³ “*Inch’ Gēsē Khorhrtayin Hayasdan Ēchmiadzni Ēndrout’eants’ Masin*” (“What Khorhrtayin Hayasdan Reports about the Election in Ēchmiadzin”), *Baïkar*, February 22, 1931; “*Adenakrou’t iwn Amerigayi Hayots’ Eresp’okhanagan Zhoghovin*” (“Minutes of the Diocesan Convention of Armenians of America”), New York, NY, January 31–February 1, 1931, p. 35.
- ⁶⁰⁴ The Free Ecclesiastical Council, the new version of the Free Church, urged Armenians not to elect as Catholicos any hierarch who held membership in the Supreme Spiritual Council. “*Echmiadzney Shourch Khntirner*” (“Issues Concerning Ēchmiadzin”), *Baïkar*, June 21, 1931.
- ⁶⁰⁵ Gregorii A. Agabekov, *Die Tschecha an der Arbeit* (Stuttgart: 1932), quoted in Walter Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1961), p. 154; Editorial, “*Aghapegovi Aghmougin Shourch*” (“About the Ado of Aghapegov”), *Gotchnag*, February 21, 1931, p. 229.
- ⁶⁰⁶ “*Aghapegovi Aghmougin Shourch*,” p. 229; Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, p. 154; Armen Bardizian, *Hay Egeghets’woy Daknabē* (“The Crisis of the Armenian Church”) (Boston: Hairenik Press, 1936), pp. 87–90.
- ⁶⁰⁷ “*Adenakrou’t iwn*,” New York, NY, January 31–February 1, 1931, pp. 19, 20, 35.
- ⁶⁰⁸ “*Bashdōnagan*” (“Official Notice”), *Baïkar*, August 25, 1928.
- ⁶⁰⁹ “*Adenakrou’t iwn*,” New York, NY, January 31–February 1, 1931, p. 28.
- ⁶¹⁰ “*Artsanadedr Sourp T’arkmanch’ats’ Egeghets’woy Hokapartsagan Zhoghovnerou*” (“Minutes of the Board of Church Trustees”), Holy Translators Church, Providence, RI, May 23, 1910, pp. 195–196.
- ⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*, September 13, 1910, p. 208; October 26, 1910, p. 212.
- ⁶¹² *Ibid.*, January 3, 1911, p. 217. Archbishop Seropian gives December 29, 1010, as the date of Father Nershabouh’s arrival. Moushegh Seropian, “*Providensi Hay Kahgoutē*” (“The Armenian Colony of Providence”), *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē* (“The Armenian-American Yearbook”) (Boston: Cilicia Press, 1912), p. 40.
- ⁶¹³ “*Artsanadedr Sourp T’arkmanch’ats’ Egeghets’woy Hokapartsagan Zhoghovnerou*” (“Minutes of the Board of Church Trustees”), Holy Translators Church, Providence, RI, April 18, 1911, p. 237.
- ⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, May 23, 1911, p. 239.
- ⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*, June 17, 1911, pp. 240–242.
- ⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*, September 7, 1911, pp. 244–245.

- 617 Ibid., September 7, 1911, pp. 244–245; September 26, 1911, pp. 245–246; P’arṇag A. Atamian, “*Amerigahay Egeghets’ in ew Egeghets’aganout’iwnē (1888–1911)*” (“The Armenian Church of America and the Clergy (1888–1911)”), *Amerigahay Darets’oyts’ē*, 1912, p. 123.
- 618 “*Artsanadedr Sourp T’arkmanch’ats’ Egeghets’woy Hokapartsagan Zhoghovnerou*” (“Minutes of the Board of Church Trustees”), Holy Translators Church, Providence, RI, November 7, 23, 30, 1911; December 5, 20, 11, 1911, pp. 250–254.
- 619 Ibid., August 29, September 15, 1913, pp. 273–276; October 22, 1914, p. 320.
- 620 “*Adenakrout’iwn*,” Worcester, MA, August 21, 1921, p. 4.
- 621 “*Amerigayi Hayots Arachnortagan Deghabah Dēr Serovpē Nerhabouh Vakhjanadz’*” (“The Death of Father Serovpē Nerhabouh, Locum Tenens of Armenians of America”), *Baikar*, July 29, 1930.
- 622 Ėntsag Kalch’enjjan, “*Odzoum ew Houghargaworout’iwn Arachnortagan Deghabah Vakhjaneal Dēr Serovpē Awak Kahanay Nerhabouhi*” (“Last Rites and Funeral Services of the Locum Tenens Father Serovpē Nerhabouh”), *Baikar*, August 6, 1930.
- 623 Ibid.
- 624 Ashjian, *Vijagats’oyts’ ew Badmout’iwn Arachnortagan T’emin Hayots’ Amerigayi*, p. 36; “*Arachnortaranē Lourer*” (“News from the Diocesan Office”), *Baikar*, June 1, 1929.
- 625 “*Adenakrout’iwn*,” New York, NY, January 31–February 1, 1931, pp. 24–25.
- 626 Editorial, “*Prawidensi Ts’awē*” (“The Pain of Providence”), *Baikar*, November 21, 1928; “*Bashdōnagan*” (“Official [Notice]”), *Baikar*, December 5, 1928.
- 627 “*Prawidensi Ts’awē*.”
- 628 “*Goch’ Amerigahayout’ean*” (“An Appeal to the Armenians of America”), *Gotchnag*, May 11, 1929, p. 597.
- 629 “*Adenakrout’iwn*,” New York, NY, January 31–February 1, 1931, pp. 33–34.
- 630 Ibid., p. 22; Serovpē Nerhabouh, “*Bashdōnagan Haydararout’iwn*” (“Official Announcement”), *Baikar*, December 4, 1929.
- 631 “*Adenakrout’iwn*,” New York, NY, January 31–February 1, 1931, p. 21.
- 632 For biographical data concerning Father Sarkisian, consult *Tenth Anniversary, Holy Cross Church*, New York, NY, 1929–1939, p. 20; *Souvenir Booklet*, Holy Cross Church, New York, NY, March 18, 1945, pp. 9–10.
- 633 M. T’ōpalian, “*Houghargaworout’iwn Dēr Harout’iwn Hōr*” (“Funeral Service for Father Harout’iwn [Sarkisian]”), *Zouartnots’*, April 1, 1932, p. 8.
- 634 “*Adenakrout’iwn*,” January 31–February 1, 1931, p. 28.
- 635 Ibid.
- 636 “*Adenakrout’iwn Amerigayi Hayots’ Eresp’okhanagan Zhoghovin*” (“Minutes of the Diocesan Convention of Armenians of America”), New York, NY, October 10–11, 1931, p. 20.
- 637 “*Adenakrout’iwn*,” January 31–February 1, 1931, pp. 37–38.
- 638 Ibid., p. 10; Khorēn Mouradpēgian, “*Amerigahayots’ Azkayin Eresp’okhanagan Zhoghovi Adenabedout’ean*” (“To the Executive of the National Diocesan Convention of Armenians of America”), *Gotchnag*, April 25, 1931, p. 536.
- 639 oly Cross Church in uptown New York will not be treated in this chapter but in Chapter

XI, because that edifice was consecrated in 1937.

⁶⁴⁰ Very little information on this parish is found in “*Adenakrout’iwn*,” October 10–11, 1931, p. 49; Ardashēs Bōghosian, “*Brouk’lini Nor Knouadz Egeghets’in*” (“The Newly Purchased Church of Brooklyn”), *Baïkar*, June 28, 1929.

⁶⁴¹ “*Adenakrout’iwn*,” October 10–11, 1931, p. 49.

⁶⁴² Ashjian, *Vijagats’oyts’ ew Badmout’iwn Arachnortagan T’emin Hayots’ Amerigayi*, p. 161.

⁶⁴³ Ibid., pp. 228–233; “*Adenakrout’iwn*,” Boston, May 15–16, 1927, pp. 31–38; “*Kanadayi Arachin Hay Arak’elagan Egeghets’woy Odzoumē*” (“The Consecration of the First Armenian Apostolic Church of Canada”), *Baïkar*, December 25, 1930.

⁶⁴⁴ “*Adenakrout’iwn*,” Boston, MA, May 15–16, 1927, pp. 37–38.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 34.

Division in the Armenian Church (1931–1933)

Relative Soviet Tolerance toward Ēchmiadzin

Following the resignation of Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian in 1928, the diocese remained for some time without a Primate. It suffered as a consequence. What it needed was an inspiring leader who would contribute to its religious and administrative growth. Such a person was found when Bishop Ghewont Tourian of Manchester, England, was elected Primate in 1931. After assuming office he not only undertook the task of providing an efficient administrative structure for the diocese, but he also labored to further the cause of the Church by establishing Church organizations and Armenian schools.

It was unfortunate that his primacy was short-lived and punctuated by a series of serious incidents, culminating in his assassination on December 24, 1933. These incidents arose over the observance of Armenian Memorial Day on April 24, the display of the Armenian tricolor, and the assault on the archbishop at a church picnic in Westboro, Massachusetts. All these contributed to bring about a split in the Church at the annual Diocesan Convention on September 3, 1933. The Tashnag Party opposed the policies of the Primate, whereas the ẖamgavar Party rallied to his support.

The killers of the Primate were allegedly Tashnag Party members. Because of this, the Tashnags lost favor with Armenians the world over. Although they categorically denied any direct involvement in the tragedy, their claims were believed neither by the public nor by Ēchmiadzin. A handful of clergymen and Tashnag sympathizers subsequently formed their own dissident diocesan Executive Committee and opposed the lawful diocesan authority that had the sanction of Ēchmiadzin. This marked the beginning of the division of the Armenian Church in America.

Two and a half years after the death of Catholicos Kēork V in 1930, Soviet authorities finally allowed the National Ecclesiastical Assembly to convene on November 10–13, 1932, in order to elect a new Catholicos.⁶⁴⁶ Permission to hold such an election was a concession to the Armenians by the Soviets, particularly because the Russian Orthodox Church was being deprived of freedom in normalizing its inner administrative structure. It has been suggested that the purpose of the Communists was to maintain their control over Ēchmiadzin.⁶⁴⁷ The Tashnag Party interpreted this action of the Soviets as a means of gaining the sympathy of the Armenians in the diaspora, using Ēchmiadzin to convert the Armenian dioceses of the diaspora into bases of Communist infiltration and activity, and of reaching the multitude of Armenian immigrants with their propaganda.⁶⁴⁸

The non-Tashnags, however, interpreted the Soviet move as a relaxation of stringent rules and were pleased that the see would no longer be vacant. On November 12, 1932, the Primate of Erevan, Archbishop Khorēn Mouradpēgian, was elected Catholicos of All Armenians by a majority vote at the National Ecclesiastical Assembly.⁶⁴⁹ The Eastern Diocese was represented by two delegates, Bishop Hovsēp‘ Garabedian of Holy Cross Church in New York and Dikran Smsarian of Union City, New Jersey. Three other delegates from America could not attend the assembly for personal reasons.⁶⁵⁰ The people of Armenia and the diaspora alike greeted the news of the election enthusiastically. On November 12, thousands flocked to the Holy See to witness the enthronement of the new Catholicos.

The relative tolerance shown by the Soviets in the earlier years of Catholicos Khorēn’s incumbency gave way to more stringent policies in the later 1930s. The Tashnags held strongly to the conviction that the Holy See was dominated by the Communists and that the Catholicos was simply a captive within the confines of his residence in Ēchmiadzin. On the other hand, non-Tashnag segments disapproved of this interpretation and continued to regard Ēchmiadzin as a religious center free from Soviet interference. The newly elected Catholicos was considered a shrewd diplomat, and it was hoped he would be able to persuade the Soviets to make concessions for the reopening of a number of churches throughout Armenia and for the return of confiscated properties.⁶⁵¹

The Tashnags charged the diocese with excessive loyalty and blind obedience to Ēchmiadzin and alleged that she was subject to Communist influence. Archbishop Tourian became the target of Tashnag attack and was labeled a Communist agent.⁶⁵² As these rumors and accusations increased, the faithful of the diocese and anti-Tashnag political groups displayed even stronger loyalty to the diocese and the Primate. Once again, political polemics became a religious issue to be dealt with emotionally.

The New Primate: Archbishop Ghewont Tourian (1931–1933)

The religious and administrative policies of Archbishop Tourian centered on three major areas: improving the spiritual state of the people through the Church, increasing the awareness of ethnic identity of the youth through Armenian schools, and reorganizing the diocese through the strengthening of diocesan headquarters.⁶⁵³ However, his driving ambition of unification, organization, and promotion of the Armenian faith among the faithful was soon to run into difficulties. The Tashnag Party attacked his religious policy and his methods of implementation. The archbishop often attempted to compromise with the Tashnag Party, but without success. Because the Ramgavar Party lent its support to the Primate, the Tashnags adopted an even more aggressive stand, and it appeared that neither party was willing to forget its factional differences for the sake of unity. Thus began the division in the Armenian Church, which has persisted since the 1930s.

The man who was to become the central character of the darkest page of the history of the Armenian Church in America was born on July 1, 1881, in Scutari, Constantinople, Turkey, of humble parentage. Ghewont Tourian was seventeen when he entered the Seminary of Armash in 1898. He studied under the Armenian Patriarchate Archbishop Maghak'ia Ōrmanian (1841–1918) and Archbishop Eghishē Tourian (1861–1930), two eminent churchmen of great scholarship and administrative ability. He was ordained a celibate priest in 1901 by Archbishop Tourian, to whom he was related.

During the Patriarchate of Archbishop Ōrmanian (1896–1908), the young clergyman served as personal secretary to the patriarch until 1908. Before his elevation to the rank of bishop in 1913, Tourian served as vicar-general under four Armenian Patriarchs of Constantinople. At the same time he was also the preacher at the Holy King Church in Kadekeuy, a suburb of Istanbul, Turkey. During the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 he was in charge of the Diocese of Adrianople, Turkey. From there he was sent to Smyrna as Primate, remaining until 1922. As a result of the Turkish-Greek War, going on since 1919, Smyrna was recaptured by the Turks on September 13–14, 1922.⁶⁵⁴ A three-day fire at Smyrna on September 13–15 destroyed nearly a square mile in the Greek and Armenian sectors, leaving some 200,000 people homeless.⁶⁵⁵ After fleeing Smyrna, Tourian took refuge in Athens, Greece, from which he departed for Manchester, England, there to become the spiritual leader of the Armenian community. He remained in Manchester until his election to the primacy of the Armenian Church in America in 1931.

A reform-minded churchman, Archbishop Tourian combined administrative

abilities with scholarly interests. Among the Armenian-language treatises he wrote are *The Sacrament of Baptism*, *The Origin and Authenticity of the Four Gospels*, *The Simple Sermons* (in five volumes), and *Seminary Sermons*. Two of his works, *The Seven Sacraments of the Armenian Church* and *The Handbook of Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church*, have been published in English. The archbishop distinguished himself as a forceful and eloquent preacher.

The archbishop stood stoutly for the authority of the Holy See and the interests of the pontiff against the attacks and political intrigues of the Tashnag Party. There is much controversy about his handling of Armenian political polemics. Some are of the opinion that he was poorly informed of the political background of the affairs of Ēchmiadzin and of the alleged infiltration of Communism into the Armenian Church.⁶⁵⁶ His actions stirred up Tashnag enmity and bitterness, setting off a chain reaction that caused him to suffer many injustices.

Archbishop Tourian was a man of considerable height and impressive carriage, with refined manners and a resonant voice.⁶⁵⁷ He combined intellectual attainment and practical ability, driving energy, and a pleasing personality. He demanded excellence in others as well as in himself.

Archbishop Tourian arrived in New York Harbor on May 28, 1931, where he was greeted enthusiastically by many. A motorcade escorted him to Saint Illuminator Church on 27th Street, where a solemn traditional procession took place. The assembled received the first benediction of their Primate. In the evening a dinner, attended by both Church and diocesan officials, was given in honor of Archbishop Tourian.⁶⁵⁸ On June 5, an official banquet was tendered in honor of the new Primate in the Lettham Hotel in New York. People of many political affiliations attended this banquet. During the program, remarks delivered by the chairman of the Central Council, Khosrov Babayian, were not well received by certain segments of the people, who thought they indicated Tashnag attitudes toward the Primate. Babayian cautioned the archbishop to be wary of the enthusiastic response he now received from the people:

Don't be deceived by this outpouring of affection, dear bishop. When the time comes, this same group of people knows how to banish their Primate during the thick of the night.⁶⁵⁹

To this the Primate replied in the following words:

If the people support me, I shall not flee and shall remain at my post. However, if my people desert me, then I shall willingly depart without waiting for night to fall.⁶⁶⁰

To politically oriented individuals, Babayian's remarks seemed to forebode future occurrences staged by the Tashnag Party against the Primate. But for the unsuspecting public they were simply often-heard remarks recited on such occasions.

Initial Steps toward Diocesan Reorganization

After assuming office on June 1, 1933, the archbishop undertook immediate measures to have the diocese operate in a more effective way. Administratively, he wished to make the diocese a microcosm of the Armenian Patriarchate in Constantinople.⁶⁶¹ He formed a Religious Council to be responsible for matters of religion alone, an Educational Council to provide curriculum materials to teach the Armenian language to the young, and a Financial Council to be concerned with securing financial resources for the diocese. The Primate was also responsible for issuing regulations for the Ladies' Auxiliary and choirs and directives delineating the roles of pastors and trustees.

Within a few months of his arrival, he had already visited fifteen parishes, from New York to Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. He began his visits on June 7 and continued them through September 27, just before the Diocesan Convention. This was generally well received by the populace. During his visitations, he met with representatives of Church organizations and held discussions of local and national problems of the Armenian Church.

On October 10–11, 1931, Archbishop Tourian presided over the first Diocesan Convention of his primacy, held in Saint Illuminator Church.⁶⁶² At the opening of the convention, the new Primate recited his oath of office in the Church. This ceremony was followed by the presentation of the Primate's report. Archbishop Tourian related to the convention his impressions of the parishes, pastors, board of Church Trustees, and churches that he had visited, and he commended them for their dedicated work. He requested that the trustees maintain closer ties with the Primate. He strongly urged that the churches and Armenian schools work very closely together, as any separation of these two institutions would prove detrimental to the Armenian communities in America.

During his first year of office, Archbishop Tourian consecrated Saint John the Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan, and Holy Ascension Church in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Construction was started on Saint James Church in Watertown, Massachusetts, and Holy Cross Church in Lawrence, Massachusetts. In general, the Armenian communities showed a genuine interest in the Church, as evidenced by the rise in Sunday attendance.

Prelude to Division: Stages in a Drama

The initial months of Archbishop Tourian's incumbency were marked by extensive efforts toward reconciliation within the Armenian community. The archbishop was determined to create harmony among feuding parties and to maintain an open dialogue with the leaders of rival factions. During one of his visitations to the Greater Boston community, he paid an official visit to the headquarters of the two rival groups located at the *Baikar* and *Hairenik* press buildings.

As a rule, the Ramgavar Party supported the policies of the Primate, and the Tashnag Party opposed them. Despite the attitude of the Tashnags, the Primate still desired their cooperation and presence within the diocese. He even celebrated the Divine Liturgy in a Tashnag-sponsored club as a conciliatory move.⁶⁶³ However, no efforts on his part deterred the Tashnag Party from launching fierce attacks against him.

As Tashnag opposition increased, the supporters of Archbishop Tourian were offended. They, in turn, intensified their counterattack. To complicate matters further, the Tashnag Party charged Archbishop Tourian with being an OGPU agent sent to America to wreck the foundation of the Armenian Church and community.⁶⁶⁴ It also indiscriminately accused the Primate of being an impostor and a fraud. The Tashnag Party claimed the role of "Defender of the Faith" and stated its ultimate aim as the "freeing of the Armenian Church from the influence of the Soviet government."⁶⁶⁵

The primacy of Archbishop Tourian was punctuated by a series of serious incidents that the Tashnag Party increasingly interpreted as reflective of his pro-Soviet sentiments. Major controversies revolved around the ban imposed by the Primate on the clergy's attendance at Armenian Memorial Day observances held outside the Church (April 24) and his refusal to speak at the Century of Progress International Exposition in Chicago until removal of the Armenian tricolor.

Archbishop Tourian's feelings about Soviet Armenia were no secret. Into the last section of the Divine Liturgy, "The Blessing and the Dismissal," in which the priest recites aloud "The Prayer amid the Church," Archbishop Tourian had inserted the words "Soviet Armenian Republic."⁶⁶⁶ The Tashnag faction objected to the insertion of the word "Soviet."⁶⁶⁷

The Armenian Memorial Day Controversy

On April 24, 1932, Armenian Memorial Day was observed at Adams Memorial

Hall in New York. The observance of Armenian Memorial Day provided the Tashnag Party with their first opportunity to launch fierce attacks on Archbishop Tourian. They criticized him for allowing these observances to be conducted only in churches and for his restrictions upon the clergy from attending programs outside the Church.

The observance was sponsored by a local Armenian nonpartisan society called the Friends of Martyred Writers. The Primate was asked to preside at this gathering, but he declined, stating that a previous commitment obliged him to be in Canada on that particular day.⁶⁶⁸ The committee then invited the former Primate, Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian, to preside at the Memorial Day observance, to which he consented.

Archbishop Tourian had issued a special directive concerning the observance of Armenian Memorial Day on April 24, 1932. He instructed the clergy to organize programs for this occasion, but these were to be conducted only in the Church. He further forbade the clergy from presiding over or attending any observances held outside the Church. His reason for this was that the Tashnag Party had turned these Memorial Day observances into mass meetings to promote their anti-Soviet and anti-Turkish propaganda.⁶⁶⁹ Archbishop Tourian based his actions on a Catholicosol encyclical decreed on June 26, 1929, by Kēork V, strongly urging Armenian clergy not to become involved in anti-Soviet propaganda.⁶⁷⁰

While in Canada, Archbishop Tourian was informed that Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian would preside at the Memorial Day observance. Consequently, Archbishop Tourian sent a telegram to Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian in New York, dated April 23, 1932. It read, “According to latest Prelacy order, no clergy is allowed to preside at or participate in any *skahantēs* (Memorial Day observance) outside the Church.”⁶⁷¹ As a result, Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian attended but did not preside at the observance. He announced to those gathered in the hall that a telegram received from Archbishop Tourian prohibited him from presiding at this observance, and as an obedient clergyman he was obliged to heed the order.⁶⁷²

This incident created apprehension among Tashnag followers. An editorial in the *Hairenik* related that since the arrival of the archbishop in America, the Tashnag Party had pursued a policy of neutrality toward him.⁶⁷³ The editorial said that the Tashnag Party could no longer remain indifferent in view of the Primate’s “un-Armenian” activities and charged Archbishop Tourian with maintaining amiable relations with the Communists.

It is no longer any secret that the Primate of the Armenians of America is a staunch friend of the Bolsheviks . . . Archbishop Tourian serves the Bolsheviks with fanatic admiration. Apparently, as the agent of the Bolsheviks, he conducts himself in such a manner as to remain pleasing to them.⁶⁷⁴

To supporters of the Primate, these allegations of the *Hairenik* were outrageous. The community flew into a rage.⁶⁷⁵ Amid all the turmoil, moderate voices questioned the policies of both the Primate and the Tashnag Party. But they went unheeded. To all appearances, partisan fanaticism was on the increase, as another incident contributed to the escalation of tension between the archbishop and his adversaries.

The “Smyrna Affair” Dispute

Hostility toward the Primate was rekindled by an article titled “The Not-Too-Distant Past of Archbishop Ghewont Tourian,” appearing in the *Hairenik* under the pseudonym “Izmirts’i.”⁶⁷⁶ The article gave an account of the debacle that Smyrna underwent in 1922 with the arrival of the Turkish army and the fire that encompassed the city. It described the plight and exodus of the people who were left unattended by their spiritual leader, Archbishop Tourian, Primate of the Armenians of Smyrna, who had fled the city earlier. The article charged him with cowardice, negligence, and desertion in the very hour when heroism should have been displayed. The article further maintained that seven days before the holocaust, Archbishop Tourian and other religious heads had been briefed by the Greek mayor of Smyrna to deliver their people into safety. However, Archbishop Tourian had done nothing; instead he had fled the city.

This article plagued the political parties and Armenian communities in the days to come. The already tense atmosphere became more volatile, as tempers flared and writers sought to discredit the archbishop for his conduct during the Smyrna Affair. Five days after publication of the article, Archbishop Tourian replied to his critics “so that history may be written as it actually happened.”⁶⁷⁷

A brief historical background is appropriate at this point to shed light on this controversy.⁶⁷⁸ The Greeks landed in Smyrna on May 14, 1919, with the approval of the Allies. As Primate of the Armenian community, Archbishop Tourian cautioned his flock not to be overjoyed and thereby antagonize the defeated Turkish populace. As the days passed, it became apparent that the Turks were the victors rather than the Greeks. On March 26, 1922, the Allied Powers attempted a settlement of the Greek-Turkish conflict. No armistice was to be granted by the Turks until the Greeks had evacuated Anatolia. On July 29, as an ultimatum to Greece, the Allied Powers forbade the occupation of Constantinople. August 18, 1922, marked the Turkish counteroffensive against the Greeks. As city after city fell to the Turks, the Greek armies fled in confusion to the coast.

Prior to the Turkish conquest of Smyrna on September 9–11, 1922, an Armenian general named T’orkom organized a volunteer army in Smyrna to assist the Greeks. General T’orkom and his military aides requested Archbishop Tourian’s

support for this cause. However, Archbishop Tourian refused any assistance, considering this request too daring and with possible unfortunate repercussions. General T'orkom's activities had become known to Turkish officials and the populace in general. The French Consul in Smyrna advised the archbishop to remain neutral. General T'orkom and his men besieged the diocese and threatened the archbishop. Archbishop Tourian appealed to the Greek High Commissioner of Smyrna to intervene. As a result, the commissioner demanded that General T'orkom leave the city immediately.

As the Turkish army marched toward Smyrna, Christians took refuge in their churches. On September 3, 1922, the Greek Metropolitan Chrysostom and Archbishop Tourian visited the Greek High Commissioner to obtain the latest information on the political and military situation. The Greek metropolitan insisted on seeking aid from the Allies to resist the advancing Turks; the Armenian prelate suggested marine escort to a haven provided by the Allies. The high commissioner advised them to do whatever was necessary, even without his sanction. Upon his return to the diocese, Archbishop Tourian convened a meeting with the leaders of the Armenian community. His suggestion to depart from the city met with the disapproval of the people, who favored the position of the Greek metropolitan. In the next few days it became apparent that the city would soon be occupied by the Turks. Of all the political and religious leaders who had exhorted the people to remain in the city, only the Greek Metropolitan and Archbishop Tourian remained.

On September 9, 1922, the Turkish cavalrymen entered the city. Smyrna was captured by the soldiers of General Neureddin, an officer notorious for his contempt of foreigners. Turkish soldiers surrounded the Armenian quarters, where looting, robbery, and killing went on freely. On September 13–15, a fire destroyed nearly a square mile in both the Greek and Armenian sectors of the city and left 200,000 people homeless. General Neureddin ordered the Turkish mob to treat the Greek Metropolitan harshly, and the churchman was brutally murdered. Marjorie Housepian writes in her book *The Smyrna Affair* that “they tore out the Patriarch’s beard, gouged out his eyes with knives, cut off his ears, his nose, and his hands.”⁶⁷⁹

Armenians also fell victims to the Turkish holocaust. The Turks systematically flushed out the Armenians from their quarters in the city. Assisted by Turkish civilians, the Turkish regulars moved from house to house attacking their victims. Housepian offers the following grim picture of the terror-stricken Armenians:

Women and girls were raped, knifed, or pursued into the streets, where they fell prey to other gangs. . . . Men were either murdered in their homes or lashed together at the wrists and led away to be killed at the edge of the city.⁶⁸⁰

Archbishop Tourian sought refuge at the home of Pierre Sislian, an Armenian

Catholic community leader. However, he was asked to leave two days later because of a proclamation by the Turkish authorities, who threatened court-martial to anyone found to be concealing an Armenian. Through the efforts of Sislian, Archbishop Tourian took shelter at Saint Coeur Catholic Monastery. With the aid of the superior of the monastery, he escaped onto a French battleship. Other unfortunate Armenians lay on barges along the breakwater. Small boats overloaded with human cargo moved from ship to ship, their passengers begging to be taken aboard.

Overall reaction to the *Hairenik* article was one of dismay. It was considered a poor attempt by the Tashnag Party to discredit Archbishop Tourian with political events for which he could hardly be held responsible. In concluding his rebuttal, Archbishop Tourian stated that if the need ever arose to seek the men responsible for the massacres against the Armenians, it would be unnecessary to look for them within the ranks of the clergy. *Gotchnag* commented: “If the need arises to find such men, Archbishop Tourian is the last person to be considered.”⁶⁸¹

Challenge to the Authority of the Primate

Whereas one segment of the Armenian community made no effort to hide its disenchantment with Bishop Tourian, Ėchmiadzin, on the other hand, expressed gratitude and appreciation for the dedication and work of the bishop. By a special encyclical, the Catholicos elevated Bishop Ghewont to the rank of archbishop in 1932.⁶⁸²

The year 1932 marked the thirty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the diocese. Anniversary celebrations were observed by Armenian churches throughout the country with special church services and functions.⁶⁸³ A banquet was sponsored by the diocese at the Bosphorus Restaurant in New York, attended by Armenians of all political and religious leanings. The speakers emphasized the role of the Church and the responsibility of the people toward their mother institution.

As 1932 drew to a close, it became obvious that the Primate and his critics were far from reconciliation. Community-conscious individuals were skeptical about the growing dissensions hindering the effectiveness of the Primate.

A Diocesan Convention, over which the Primate presided, was convened on January 21, 1933, in Saint Illuminator Church in New York.⁶⁸⁴ In his opening remarks, Archbishop Tourian described his efforts to render the activities of the diocese more effective. He made no attempt to conceal his discontent with individuals and organizations that sowed seeds of argument and hatred and blocked efforts for compromise and peace:

I expect the national organizations and societies to support the diocese in the best possible way and not to treat it disrespectfully as they would any archaic

or useless institutions. Any national organization must exhibit a sense of respect toward the diocese because this institution is the heart of the Armenian community.⁶⁸⁵

Following the Primate's address, a report was presented by Hayg Smsarian, a community leader and Church delegate from New Jersey. Smsarian had attended the National Ecclesiastical Assembly at Ēchmiadzin on November 10, 1932, which elected Archbishop Khorēn Mouradpēgian of Erevan as the Catholicos of All Armenians. The Tashnag delegates found his report unsatisfactory and inconclusive. They criticized Smsarian for not objecting to several procedural discrepancies at the assembly in Ēchmiadzin. Soviet-Ēchmiadzin relations were also discussed, and delegates noted that the assembly at Ēchmiadzin had been hastily convened by the order of Soviet authorities, thus intending to prevent a large part of the delegates from the diaspora from attending. However, the Tashnag delegates were pleased with the election of the new pontiff, who, more than any other ranking churchman in Armenia, had been sympathetic to Tashnag ideology, at least in the past.

The Tashnag delegates strongly criticized a second report presented by the Central Executive Committee of the diocese, and they demanded the resignation of the Central Executive Committee and of Archbishop Tourian, on the basis that both had failed to provide effective leadership.⁶⁸⁶

In the following months, criticism against the archbishop intensified, with the intent of reducing his authority and thereby forcing him to resign. As Tashnag aggressiveness increased, however, the archbishop remained more resolute in his position, bringing the conflict into open confrontation. The harsher the treatment the archbishop received from the Tashnag Party, the more respect and support he won from their opponents.

The Crisis of the Armenian Tricolor

A third controversy that contributed immensely to the deepening rift between the Primate and his adversaries centered on the display of the Armenian tricolor on Armenian Day at the Century of Progress International Exposition in 1933. This incident had far-reaching repercussions. In one form or another it detonated a string of explosive situations that separated the Armenian Church in America into the "Tashnag Church" and the "Ramgavar Church."

Since the collapse of the Armenian Republic in 1920, the tricolor, the symbol of an independent Armenia, had become a source of bitter dispute among the Armenians of the diaspora.⁶⁸⁷ The Tashnags held the tricolor in high esteem, because their party still considered itself a government in exile. Armenians of no political affiliation originally also respected the tricolor as long as it symbolized Armenia.

As antagonism among the partisan groups mounted and as the Tashnag Party increased its propaganda against Soviet Armenia, those opposed to the Tashnag Party, as well as those of moderate leanings, began to have second thoughts about the tricolor. It had now become solely identified with the Tashnag Party rather than with Armenia. Consequently, in every Armenian community the tricolor became the source of bitter controversy, and in some instances the cause of bloodshed. Armenian schools, clubs, and mass meetings became scenes of violence, particularly on May 28, when Armenian Independence Day was observed by Tashnag sympathizers.

In America these sentiments exploded on the occasion of the Century of Progress International Exposition (CPIE) in Chicago on July 1, 1933.⁶⁸⁸ Several Armenian merchants were asked by the organizers of the CPIE to participate in the activities of the day. As a result, a group of Armenians, chiefly Protestants, formed the Armenian Committee of the CPIE. This committee was not accountable to the diocese for its activities but was simply a local independent group, responsible to the organizers of the CPIE.⁶⁸⁹ However, the committee considered it appropriate to invite Archbishop Tourian to preside over the festivities of Armenian Day at the CPIE. In compliance with protocol, the Armenian Committee asked the local Armenian Church Trustees to invite Archbishop Tourian to preside over Armenian Day at the CPIE. The Church Trustees extended the invitation to the Primate, anticipating that he also would celebrate the Divine Liturgy and attend the commencement exercises of the Armenian school.

As the news of the archbishop's impending visit to Chicago was announced, the Armenian tricolor issue came to the fore. Archbishop Tourian was hesitant to give an affirmative answer to the committee unless he was assured that the tricolor would not be displayed at the CPIE. The Primate's insistence that no flag be displayed was prompted by his desire to spare Armenians unnecessary controversy and violence. The Armenian Committee complied with the wish of the Primate and decided to fly the American flag rather than the tricolor. The Germans had followed a similar practice.

During a mixed meeting of the Armenian Committee and representatives of various Armenian organizations, the Tashnag representative insisted that Senator King from Washington State speak on the radio on Armenian Day at CPIE. Senator King's political sympathies lay with the Tashnag Party, and he was known for his forceful and uncompromising stand against the Soviets. The non-Tashnag Armenians were reluctant to endorse the senator. As the disagreement deepened, the Tashnag Party became even more adamant in its stand and threatened to boycott Armenian Day at the Exposition unless the Armenian Committee allowed Senator King to speak or the tricolor to be displayed.⁶⁹⁰ The Armenian Committee emphatically rejected the Tashnag ultimatum and agreed not to display the tricolor

on the podium or to allow Senator King to speak. The Primate was subsequently notified of the final decision of the Armenian Committee.

Opening day for the CPIE was set for May 27. Each nationality represented at the exposition was requested to participate in the parade, bearing its own national flag. The Armenians did not march in this parade because of the flag controversy.⁶⁹¹ Archbishop Tourian attended the exposition on July 1. Armenian Day activities at the fair took place at the Hall of Science in an open-air amphitheater. Contrary to previous arrangements and before the designated hour for the beginning of the program, “a woman bearing a flag [tricolor], accompanied by about twenty children bearing similar flags of the same character, walked to the platform and placed said flag on the platform.”⁶⁹² Pandemonium broke loose among the people. The Armenian Committee then informed Major Felix J. Streycckmans that they could not proceed with the ceremonies if the tricolor remained on the platform, because it would arouse mixed feelings among the audience and among various political groups in the community. After much persuasion, the flag was removed from the platform but placed directly in front of the platform. The Armenian Committee made the same objection to this gesture.

Consequently, a squad of fifty policemen was called in to restore order in the audience, which by then was rioting. Major Streycckmans conferred with Archbishop Tourian, who refused to proceed with the ceremonies or to speak until the flags were removed. The Primate explained that if he proceeded with the ceremonies under the tricolor, it would seem that he was taking political sides and was endorsing the following of that flag. This would not only create dissension in America, he argued, but it could result in reprisals against Armenians living in Soviet Russia. The archbishop further stated that this was an American meeting and, therefore, in order to avoid all difficulties he would proceed only under the American flag.⁶⁹³

Major Streycckmans related this information to those responsible for the display of the tricolor and asked for its removal. However, his request was rejected. Consequently, Major Streycckmans made an announcement to the audience relating what the archbishop had told him and informing them that the Armenian Committee would not proceed unless the flags are removed. The question was put to a vote, whereupon about ninety percent of the people present voted in favor of removing the tricolor. A Tashnag spokesman then approached Major Streycckmans, explaining that those who wished the flag to remain had not understood him. One of the leaders was asked to translate what had been said into Armenian, and another vote was taken. Once again the audience voted to remove the flag.

As soon as the outcome of the vote was announced, a Tashnag adherent picked up a camp chair and struck the chief of police of the CPIE, who was in civilian dress. Others joined in the fighting with the police and among themselves. Some

became frightened and ran away. Finally, order was restored and the ceremonies resumed without the flag. No further trouble erupted during the afternoon and evening performances.⁶⁹⁴

However, what followed in the weeks and months ahead was far from calm. As thorny as other issues had been, they were minor compared to this crisis, which irreparably severed the relationship between the Primate and his adversaries. The Tashnag press took up the cudgel and accused the Primate of Communist sympathies, becoming increasingly critical of him. For the Tashnags, the request for the removal of the flag had been tantamount to insulting the Armenian nation.

Nearly every day over the next six months, *Hairenik* carried malicious articles against the Primate. The paper was flooded with letters of protest against him. The Tashnag community began to call the archbishop an “impostor, fraud, and traitor.”⁶⁹⁵ These protesting voices called for the resignation of the Primate, whom they regarded as a man unworthy of his office. An editorial titled “An Undeserving Primate” demanded the archbishop’s removal:

By his undesirable conduct in Chicago, Archbishop Tourian sentenced himself to moral death. The Armenians of America had no recourse but to banish him from his exalted office. The Armenian communities must consider it their national responsibility to morally censure this unworthy clergyman and must mobilize all legal avenues to impeach him.⁶⁹⁶

The supporters of the Primate raised objections and made countercharges, labeling the Tashnag Party a terrorist group whose political and ideological loyalties lay with the Nazis and Fascists.⁶⁹⁷

The Central Executive Committee of the diocese held a meeting to hear the archbishop’s explanations of the latest developments. Subsequently, the Central Executive Committee issued a “Declaration” on July 26, 1933, stating that “the Primate, as always, declared that, as he has proven by his acts in the past, he has respect for our national tricolor.”⁶⁹⁸ The declaration also appeared in the Armenian press of all factions and brought relative peace to the tense atmosphere. However, like the calm before the storm, it was of short duration. Three days later, *Panvor* (“The Worker”), the official publication of the HOG (Committee for Armenia’s Relief), carried on the front page of its July 29, 1933, issue a facsimile of a letter sent to the HOG on July 19 by Archbishop Tourian stating:

I prevented the use of the tricolor on Armenian Day at the Chicago Exhibition because I considered it a manifestation of revolt and disdain against the state organization of present-day Armenia.⁶⁹⁹

Far from letting the matter rest, the Armenian community was enraged. The Tashnag Party condemned the archbishop's partisan politics and his affiliation with the OGPU; the non-Tashnag community contended that the archbishop had been insulted by the Tashnag allegations and that he was indeed a pious churchman dedicated to his service. They further contended that he held no connections with the Soviets, his sole commitment being to Ēchmiadzin and the pontiff.

Although all shades of interpretation were given to the tricolor crisis by individuals and by groups, some thought that prudence was another road on which the Primate might have walked.

Assault on the Primate at the Church Picnic

The Tashnag press gave no indication of ceasing its attacks against the Primate. Instead, it vehemently encouraged its adherents to the extreme and openly advocated the use of violence toward their adversaries. One article in *Hairenik* ended its scornful remarks against the Primate and his supporters with the following words:

The day of judgment will come. It is then that the Armenian people will demand their due from the so-called Armenian traitors. Those who defile our flag cannot be forgiven.⁷⁰⁰

Repudiation of the Primate by their elders set an example for the younger people to follow. *Hairenik* devoted the fourth page of each issue to articles in English for the edification of American-born Armenians. Among these articles often were satirical pieces written by various young people referring to the Primate with such derogatory names as “pig” or “pony.”⁷⁰¹

Anti-Primate propaganda was intensified through mass meetings organized by the Tashnag Party in major cities. This harassment and denunciation of the Primate climaxed in an assault on him at an annual outing sponsored by the Church of Our Saviour of Worcester at the Kapriēlian Farm in Westboro, Massachusetts, on August 13, 1933.⁷⁰² Archbishop Tourian had been invited by the Church Trustees of the Worcester church to celebrate the Divine Liturgy on the Feast of the Virgin Mary, to be followed by a picnic in the afternoon. On the same afternoon a rival outing was held in Grafton, organized by the Tashnag Party. At this outing Tashnag leaders made several references to the tricolor incident and spoke in a derogatory way about the Primate. These utterances incited certain of the young Tashnags against the Primate.

During the course of the afternoon, several of those at the Grafton picnic traveled to Westboro in a truck. As the archbishop was about to pronounce his

benediction, they attacked him from behind.⁷⁰³ Fists, clubs, and stones flew in all directions as supporters of the Primate and their opponents fought. It is believed that more serious casualties would have resulted had it not been for the intervention of the police. Five of the attackers escaped, but two were arrested. The reasons the Tashnag Party offered for the attack was that the archbishop had insulted the Armenian flag.⁷⁰⁴

This episode was deplored by the Armenian community in general. *Hairenik*, however, did not place the entire blame on the assailants.⁷⁰⁵ In an article relating to this episode, the reporter in the *Hairenik* wrote:

The incident in Worcester finally proved that Archbishop Ghewont has become a source of scandal for our community and cannot perform his duties without ushering in new problems for the Armenians of America . . . A Primate who has shown disrespect for the flag and has been attacked can no longer be tolerated by the Armenian community.⁷⁰⁶

Baikar, on the other hand, observed that Worcester was not an isolated issue but the result of a wicked and misguided campaign of scandal that had plagued the Armenian community for the previous twenty-five years. *Baikar* called on the Tashnags to stop these acts of violence and cease to corrupt the minds and souls of the youth. The Primate was reassured of support by the opponents of the Tashnag party, who organized a national movement requesting the dismissal of Tashnags from every office in the diocese.⁷⁰⁷

Non-Tashnags charged the Tashnag Party with plotting against Ēchmiadzin by attempting to divide the Armenians and thus cutting the last ties between Armenians and their fatherland. Armenians everywhere were made aware of the situation and were asked to support the Primate, whose loyalty toward Ēchmiadzin was steadfast.

Division in the Armenian Church

It was factional politics and not religion that caused the turmoil and dissension in the Armenian Church in America. The partisan news media of the Ramgavar and Tashnag parties were constantly at sword's point. The Hnch'ag and Bolshevik Armenians favored more radical and violent confrontations. The Hnch'ags motto was: "Either the Tricolor and the Tashnag Party, or Soviet Armenia."⁷⁰⁸

The atmosphere became increasingly tense as preparations got underway for the annual Diocesan Convention. The less skeptical hoped that the forthcoming convention would establish temporary peace and harmony. Instead, it ushered in a new problem for the Church.

One major issue among the communities was the problem of choosing delegates in parishes that contained these rival factions. Partisan agitation in communities such as Chicago; Philadelphia; Watertown, Massachusetts; and New Britain, Connecticut, touched off such a storm of violence that often the police had to be summoned to maintain peace and order in the conferences where diocesan delegates were to be elected. The forthcoming Diocesan Convention was scheduled for September 2–3, 1933, in Saint Illuminator Church in New York. Reports told of delegates and people coming armed to the sessions.⁷⁰⁹

Disruption of the Diocesan Convention, September 2–3, 1933

The Diocesan Convention convened amid one of the most tense situations in the history of the Armenian Church in America.⁷¹⁰ Bishop Hovsēp' Garabedian presided at the convention. After recitation of the Lord's Prayer, the meeting was called to order, and a letter from Archbishop Tourian, dated September 2, was read:

Your Excellency, Bishop Hovsēp' Garabedian:

Due to ill health and upon the advice of my physician, I am forced not to preside at the Diocesan Convention. I should like to request that Your Grace preside at the convention, read my opening address, and present my blessings and good wishes to the delegates for the success of the convention.⁷¹¹

Traditionally, the convention was open to the public. Because of the exceptionally large and boisterous crowd, it was practically impossible to maintain parliamentary procedure. Delegates were at variance over procedural matters. Political intrigue was apparent behind the commotion. Because of the unusually

tense atmosphere, part of the delegates moved to end the first session and to reconvene on Sunday, holding the session behind closed doors in the church. They appealed to Bishop Garabedian, who consented to the decision. “Due to the exceptional circumstances of this convention, I deem it necessary that the next session be a closed one.”⁷¹²

Contrary to this decision, the Tashnag delegates wished an open session. Ignoring the bishop’s decision, they ruled that the doors of the convention not be shut. Thirty-seven delegates then appealed to Primate Tourian at his residence to have the convention removed to Holy Cross Church or some other appropriate location with a more peaceful atmosphere.⁷¹³ The Primate summoned Bishop Garabedian to his residence and informed him that the remaining sessions of the convention were to be continued in the Grand Suite of the Hotel Martinique in New York City. Bishop Garabedian assured the Primate that his instructions would be implemented.

However, on the following day, September 3, Archbishop Tourian was notified that Bishop Garabedian had not informed the delegates of the new arrangements. Moreover, he had presided at the rump convention of the dissident faction held in the hall of Saint Illuminator Church. Consequently, Father Mamprē Kalfaian, pastor of the Holy Cross Church in Union City, New Jersey, was instructed by the Primate to preside at the legitimate convention in the Hotel Martinique.⁷¹⁴ The chairman of the legitimate convention, Maghak’ Bērbērian, invited the delegates of the rump convention by telephone to join them at the duly recognized and legitimate Diocesan Convention at the Hotel Martinique. This was to no avail, as Khosrov Babayian, a delegate at the rump convention, insisted on the legitimacy of their own convention, which they were determined to continue. In effect, the existence of two conventions marked the beginning of the division of the Armenian Church in America.

Meanwhile, the delegates at the Hotel Martinique continued their proceedings. Father Kalfaian was invited to read the opening address of the Primate, which included the following observations:

There are moments in the lives of individuals, as well as nations, that often become blessed moments, if the individuals perceive the situation in its proper context. This period that we are now undergoing may become the most significant in the history of the Armenians of America.⁷¹⁵

The Diocesan Convention proceeded with its deliberations and unanimously endorsed the policies of the Primate. The delegates at the rump convention voted for the dismissal of the archbishop.⁷¹⁶ Delegates at the rump convention claimed that the Primate and his supporters were the dissenting minority whose political views were strongly pro-Soviet and who were instruments in the hands of the

Bolsheviks.⁷¹⁷ Minutes of the two conventions lack objectivity, thereby making it difficult to determine the size and character of each. Both conventions elected their own Central Executive Committees. Both sides claimed legitimacy and, subsequently, victory. Both sides appealed to Ēchmiadzin for the pontiff's sanction. Thus it was that in early September 1933 the Armenian community in America was torn in two.

Aftermath of the Diocesan Convention

The days following the Diocesan Convention witnessed extreme intensification of tension between those loyal to the diocese and the dissidents as they anxiously awaited Ēchmiadzin's decision about the legitimacy of both conventions. Upon completion of the Diocesan Convention in the Hotel Martinique on September 3, Father Kalfaian, the Central Executive Committee, and the supporters of the diocese presented their filial respect to the Primate and commended him for his courage in the face of the events of the last several months.⁷¹⁸ A telegram dated September 4 was also sent to the pontiff, reaffirming their loyalty to Archbishop Tourian and to Ēchmiadzin.⁷¹⁹ Meanwhile, the dissident faction notified the archbishop of his dismissal, and then informed the pontiff in Ēchmiadzin that Primate Tourian had been deposed.⁷²⁰

As the two factions awaited a reply from Ēchmiadzin, they continued their denunciations of one another. In a letter dated September 5, Archbishop Tourian asked Bishop Hovsēp' Garabedian the reason for his reluctance in announcing to the delegates of the rump convention the change in the location of the Diocesan Convention.⁷²¹ Bishop Garabedian provided the following explanation:

You demand to know why I have not informed the delegates of the change in meeting places. To satisfy Your Grace's demand, I hereby inform you that because of the seriousness of the prevailing situation, I was not able to announce the change in meeting places.⁷²²

The dissident group deplored Bishop Garabedian's attitude and change of position in the entire affair. They accused him of opportunism:

Bishop Hovsēp' Garabedian's reply is ambiguous and may be interpreted as meaning that, in view of the prevailing situation, the order of Archbishop Tourian was indiscreet and therefore he ignored it.⁷²³

It was rumored that Bishop Garabedian preferred to remain silent and preside at the rump convention under threat of his life.⁷²⁴

A telegram dated September 11 was received by Archbishop Tourian from the Catholicos Khorēn I. It caused immense joy and relief in diocesan circles, but became a bitter source of resentment and displeasure to the dissident group. It read as follows:

We announce our satisfaction and blessings to the members of the Diocesan Convention and for the confidence expressed by your community. We express our blessings and confidence in your helpful work and your righteous course of action.⁷²⁵

Ēchmiadzin's position and the pontiff's support of Archbishop Tourian further aggravated the situation and alienated the Tashnag Party. The resulting split in the Armenian Church was so serious that concerned individuals began to consider it a permanent state.

In view of Ēchmiadzin's position, the Central Executive Committee of the diocese issued a "Declaration" on September 20 dealing with the recent controversy. This declaration emphatically resolved that Archbishop Tourian was still the Primate and that the rump convention's decision to depose the Primate was absurd and unconstitutional.⁷²⁶ The declaration stressed that the clergy, Parish Councils, and the populace must remain unwavering in their faith and confidence in the Primate and diocesan leadership.

This declaration was followed by yet another on October 23, issued by Archbishop Tourian.⁷²⁷ The Primate's intent was to counteract the dissident Central Executive Committee, which was disseminating orders and communiqués to pastors and trustees in the name of the diocese, and thus was contributing to the confusion.

Tashnag-sponsored rallies and mass meetings to discredit Archbishop Tourian were becoming frequent in Armenian communities. The Tashnags hoped to show the extent of their disenchantment with the Primate, who they said had disgraced the Armenian tricolor. Father Ghewont Martougēsian of Lowell, Massachusetts, became the principal leader of these demonstrations. He toured many cities, always arousing the audiences with his fiery speeches and such dramatic gestures as kneeling and kissing the Armenian tricolor. Father Martougēsian was repeatedly warned to disassociate himself from such activities, which were said to be unbecoming. He was also reminded not to omit the Primate's name during the "Special Intermission" section of the Divine Liturgy, or his failure to recognize the authority of the Primate would result in severe censure from the Catholicos.

In order to end the crisis and restore national confidence, the Supreme Spiritual Council in Ēchmiadzin passed a resolution during their October 25, 1933, meeting stating that the rump convention was illegal and that its decision to depose the Primate was deplorable. The council sanctioned the actions of the Armenian

Committee and the Primate against the use of the tricolor at CPIE in Chicago. The council further urged Archbishop Tourian to convene a new Diocesan Convention in which both sides were to participate.⁷²⁸ However, these exhortations went unheeded.

Activities of the Dissidents

The separatist tendencies of the dissident group were clearly outlined as their politico-ecclesiastical platform, published in an editorial in *Hairenik*.⁷²⁹

1. Ēchmiadzin under Bolshevik rule has lost her freedom, and consequently the authority of the pontiff has plummeted.
2. Ēchmiadzin has no moral right to keep a person like Archbishop Ghewont Tourian as Primate against the will of the vast majority, especially because he is a source of dissension and friction.
3. All the administrative and executive bodies of our legal Central Executive Committee must immediately cease to recognize the primacy of Archbishop Ghewont Tourian and refrain from continuing any further relationship with him in terms of moral or economic support.
4. In communities where the Church Trusteeship is in the hands of Tourian-supporting Ramgavar trustees, our concerned compatriots must work to replace these officials who are not in agreement with the public will.
5. In communities where, for various reasons, it is impossible to effect the immediate replacement of officials who do not concur with the majority will, our conscientious compatriots must impose every moral and economic pressure upon those Ramgavar officials, so that they will immediately sever their support and official relationship with the deposed Primate and the self-imposed administration of the diocese.

The editorial ended with an appeal to continue the moral and economic boycott against the Primate and the diocese. The dissident group disregarded the Catholicos's decision to reaffirm the Primate in his office. *Hairenik* commented on this in the following way: "It can bear neither a moral nor a practical significance for our community."⁷³⁰

The situation became even more grave when the dissident Central Executive Committee elected its own locum tenens, Father Ēntsag Kazanjian of Saint Illuminator Church in New York.⁷³¹ This church was used as their diocesan headquarters. Father Nshan P'ap'azian of Troy, New York, replaced Father Kazanjian in 1933 as locum tenens. Nine clergymen joined the ranks of the dissident group: Father Ghewont Martougēsian of Providence, Father Nshan P'ap'azian of

Troy, Father Madt'ēos Mannigian of Brooklyn, Father Bśag Sarkisian of Philadelphia, Father Eghishē Kasbarian of Troy, Father Housig Nakhnik'ian of Worcester, Father Mesrob Dēr Hovhannēsian of Boston, Father Bedors Mamprēlian of Detroit, and Father Movsēs Dēr Sdep'anian of Chicago.⁷³² These clergymen formed the Clergy Union of America.

On October 4, 1933, these clergymen forwarded a letter to the pontiff in Ēchmiadzin. They informed him of the proceedings of the controversial Diocesan Convention of the previous month. They also cited their grievances and disenchantment with the Primate, who in their opinion misused his office in the interest of nonecclesiastical preoccupations.⁷³³

In several cities the clergy and dissident members challenged the legality of the Church Trustees and their meetings, which were often scenes of violence necessitating the presence of law enforcement officers to restore peace and order.⁷³⁴

These anti-diocesan and anti-Primate sentiments further intensified in 1933 with the arrival of a Tashnag nationalist, Karekin Nzhteh, a hero of the February 1920 revolution against the Bolsheviks.⁷³⁵ Soon after his arrival in the United States, he was instrumental in the organization of a youth group called the *Ts'eghagrōn* (Armenian Racial Patriots). Nzhteh's rhetoric inspired many of his Tashnag followers to such an extent that they were imbued with intense hatred for the non-Tashnag Armenians, especially the Ramgavar Party. Karekin Nzhteh openly admired Nazism, and his intention was to rekindle within the Armenian youth a strong love for their nation. The *Ts'eghagrōn* youth were constantly indoctrinated with the evils of Bolshevik system. Nzhteh advocated guerrilla warfare against the Soviets in order to overthrow the government of Armenia. He expressed willingness to enter into alliance with any nation in order to fight the Soviets. Unfortunately, in due course, Nzhteh's philosophy, which began as nationalism, evolved into chauvinism and then racism.

The issue over the tricolor afforded the opportunity for Nzhteh to sow the seeds of hatred among his followers. *Hairenik* adopted an even harsher position toward the opposition, advocating total separation from the mainstream of Armenian ecclesiastical life. Bitterness and hatred obliterated all fairness, idealism, and reason among Nzhteh's followers. The Primate and his religious and lay supporters were regarded as pharisaic, poisonous, and notorious agents in the hands of their Soviet masters.⁷³⁶

The Maxim Litvinoff Banquet

Franklin Delano Roosevelt assumed office on March 4, 1933, as president of the United States. As a significant part of the foreign policy of the New Deal, diplomatic relations with Russia were resumed on November 17, 1933, thereby ending the

policy of nonrecognition that had prevailed since the overthrow of the provisional government of Alexander Kerensky in 1917. Trade relations were opened, and the Russian government promised to abstain from propaganda activities within the United States.

Maxim Litvinoff was the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Among the numerous telegrams and messages of congratulations sent to him on the recognition of the Soviet Union by the United States was one from Archbishop Tourian. Upon receiving the message from the Archbishop, Litvinoff telegraphed a reply from Washington. The exchange of greetings was as follows:

On behalf of the Armenians of the United States of America, we beg to convey to you our heartfelt good wishes and our admiration for the noble cause you have so eloquently espoused. It has caused us much genuine pleasure and gratification that your great mission has been crowned with success, which will strengthen the ties between the two greatest republics and advance their mutual interests for the benefits of mankind and universal peace.

Litvinoff responded, "Thanks [for your] kind telegram and your good wishes."⁷³⁷

The Tashnag press took issue with Archbishop Tourian, challenging his claim of the right to speak in the name of the Armenians of the United States; it criticized his hastiness and charged him with conducting propaganda for the Soviet Union and its "noble cause."⁷³⁸

Another complicating factor arose when Litvinoff invited Archbishop Tourian to attend a banquet at the Waldorf Astoria in New York City on November 24. Some thirty prominent Armenians also attended the dinner. *Hairenik* admonished Archbishop Tourian for being the only religious figure to attend the function, while clergymen of other Russian-dominated countries were conspicuously absent. The Tashnag Party blamed the Primate and "prominent Armenians" for their conduct which they felt was an "ominous indication" of pro-Soviet sentiments. The feelings of most of the Tashnags were expressed in the following remarks:

What was a clergyman, whose nation had been raped by the Soviets, and whose Church had ordered him abroad on anything but a spiritual mission in the service of the atheistic Soviet regime—what was such a clergyman doing in all decency at such a function and the *only* clergyman there?

Does this not signify the extent of the Soviets' appreciation of the usefulness of a man who had surrendered the Armenian Church in America to the benefit of the Soviet?⁷³⁹

What such political leaders failed to realize was that the disunity—the enemy within—was a direct result of a power play in the Church.

The Murder of Archbishop Tourian

Early December 1933 witnessed an unusual lull in the confrontations between rival factions, despite the fact that they were still a long way from resolving their differences. On December 18, with the approach of the holiday season, Archbishop Tourian issued his Christmas letter, a portion of which read:

I bid that in all the communities of our diocese and in all areas, love should prevail over hatred, sacrifice over selfishness, forgiveness over vengeance, brotherhood over pride, peace over violence, harmony over turmoil, good over evil, and life should prevail over death for all of us, official and nonofficial, so that the Armenian community may be nobly elevated through moral, national, ecclesiastical, and spiritual means for the glory of the nation, Church, and fatherland.⁷⁴⁰

As it was, because the internal harmony of the Armenian communities already had been deeply ruptured, the archbishop's message came too late in order to be either convincing or effective.

On Christmas Sunday morning, December 24, 1933, the Armenian faithful made their way through the snowy streets to the Holy Cross Church on 587 West 187th Street in New York to hear the Primate celebrate a solemn episcopal Mass. Other parishioners crowded about the entrance of the church, eager to attend the special services and to catch a glimpse of the archbishop.

Inside, a spirit of unrest swept over the gathering. A hush descended as the church organ pealed forth and a censer-bearer led the solemn procession down the aisle. The pungent odor of the incense filled the air. Immediately following the deacon with the censer came fourteen choristers carrying lighted candles. Behind them walked Bishop Hovsēp' Garabedian, rector of the church.⁷⁴¹

The congregation rose reverently as Archbishop Tourian approached, resplendently gowned in his flowing green and gold vestments. On his head rested a towering silver miter. The diamond-bedecked *lanchakhach* (pectoral cross) and *banagē* (medallion) hung from gold chains about his neck. In his left hand he carried a crozier of gold, and in his right hand a jewel-studded crucifix, with which he gave his benediction to the worshippers.

It was 10:28 p.m. when the procession reached the seventh row from the rear. A parishioner leaned out from the right side of the aisle in an effort to kiss the crucifix or the hand of the archbishop as a sign of receiving his paternal blessings.

Suddenly, figures from the pews and center aisle approached the Primate, concealing the activities of a crouching figure within their band. They seized the Primate. Vicious blows struck the miter from his head. Someone within the ring of people thrust a dagger twice toward the Primate's heart. The diabolical deed was over in an instant. The Primate staggered in an apparent effort to support his body with his crozier. It broke from under him, and the Primate lurched forward, then fell onto the floor, his face tilted toward a picture of the Crucifixion that hung on the wall of the Church.

The congregation was stunned by the sudden attack. Pandemonium broke loose, and the Church became the scene of strife and fighting. Some members from the band of assassins were viciously beaten by the infuriated parishioners, while others fled to the exit.

Khosrov Gorgodian, the Primate's bodyguard, helped the archbishop to his feet and assisted him back to the vestry near the entrance of the Church. As the commotion within the church increased, a patrolman, Charles Ubelacher, dispatched earlier by the Wadsworth Avenue Police State of the 34th Precinct, pulled his revolver and rushed inside the church. He was joined by another policeman on guard outside the church. The appearance of the policemen restrained the half-hysterical congregation somewhat. A girl from the choir noticed a bloodstained knife on the floor. It was a large butcher knife with an oak handle and eight-inch blade. She lifted it carefully and carried it to the altar.

Inside the vestry, the fallen archbishop was surrounded by police, detectives, doctors, and a few members of the congregation. The physician who stood by was helpless to restore the life that was fast ebbing away. As the archbishop lapsed into silence, he feebly uttered his last words, "*Öknē indzi Dērs*" ("Help me, my Lord").⁷⁴² Dr. Thomas Gonzales, Deputy Chief Medical Examiner for New York City, pronounced the archbishop dead. The Primate's body was placed in a police car and taken away.

The two prisoners and as many witnesses as could be crowded into another vehicle were driven to the Wadsworth Avenue Police Station. The two who were apprehended were Madt'ēos Lēylēgian, the alleged knife-wielder, and Nshan Sarkisian, who had held the archbishop's arm. Later, seven co-assassins were also apprehended and found guilty of murder in the first degree. In the milling mass inside the church, a mysterious figure had escaped from the scene. In the records of the district attorney, this unknown person became "Mr. X."⁷⁴³

The name of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation or Tashnag Party has frequently been associated with the vicious murder. With a spontaneous cry, the parishioners shouted "Tashnag! The Tashnags are the assassins," as they stood horrified at the appalling tragedy that had been enacted within the sanctity of the house of God.⁷⁴⁴

The New York police were confronted with excruciating difficulties following the murder. Despite the overwhelming number of witnesses, many were reluctant to testify against the alleged assailants. Newspapers reported rumors that others also had been marked for death by the assassins.⁷⁴⁵

The affairs of Holy Cross Church remained in a state of confusion. It could not open its doors for services. Blood had been spilled within the sacred precincts, and reconsecration would be necessary before religious services could be held.

The strangeness of the crime, with its many political and religious aspects, created intense interest and speculation throughout the country. The Armenian press was particularly outspoken in its interpretations of the assassination. Some newspapers demanded immediate punishment of the Tashnags as the instigators of the plot. Others were just as vehement in their demands that the Tashnags be vindicated by giving the prisoners a speedy trial.⁷⁴⁶ The only paper that refrained from condemning the crime was that of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation—*Hairenik*.⁷⁴⁷

The hierarchical sees of the Armenian Church were also unanimous in their condemnation of the crime. The hierarchs of the Church exhorted their faithful, particularly the political factions, to refrain from violence and murder in settling their differences. The pontiff issued an encyclical, dated March 16, 1934, which best represents the prevailing mood and concern of the hierarchy:

With this, our pontifical encyclical, we express our deep sorrow over the senseless and tragic crime perpetrated against our beloved son, the Most Reverend Archbishop Leon Tourian. We condemn the murderers and the murder as a product of a deluded mentality, and I exhort you to be vigilant and drop this purposeless controversy and feud, and especially to stay distant from impulsive actions, which are detrimental and unbecoming to a cultured nation and people.⁷⁴⁸

Other non-Armenian dignitaries and churchmen also castigated the crime and its plotters, sharing with the Armenians in their immense loss.⁷⁴⁹ One was Cosmos Gordon Lang, the Archbishop of Canterbury, with whom the late Archbishop Tourian had a close acquaintance.⁷⁵⁰

Arrangements were made for the Primate's funeral at the Episcopal Cathedral of Saint John the Divine on Monday, January 1, 1934, at 10:00 a.m. The body of the martyred archbishop was borne in solemn procession from Saint Illuminator Church to the cathedral. More than fifty policemen were assigned to guard the body in anticipation of further trouble. Secret agents mingled with the crowd, hoping to gain further information concerning the crime.⁷⁵¹ During a solemn High Mass, the last rites were administered to the archbishop by Bishop Hovsēp' Garabedian and

Father Mamprē Kalfaian, with the assistance of Bishop William T. Manning, Episcopal Bishop of New York, and Archbishop Athenagoras of the Greek Orthodox Church. The entire service lasted three and a half hours, during which individuals of many faiths offered tributes to the archbishop.

Archbishop Tourian's abbreviated primacy represents one of the most critical periods in the history of the diocese. Archbishop Tourian was both criticized and acclaimed, greatly loved and strongly detested. History is full of expensive errors, but few are sadder than the murder of this unfortunate archbishop.

New Churches

Despite the economic instability of the times, four communities were able to acquire their own houses of worship in 1931: Holy Ascension Church in Bridgeport, Connecticut; Saint John the Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan; Saint James Church in Watertown, Massachusetts; and Holy Cross Church in Lawrence, Massachusetts.⁷⁵² With the exception of the church structure in Bridgeport, the communities preferred to build new churches rather than purchase already existing edifices. The building committees of these churches were not eager to fashion them in the traditional architectural style of the Armenian Church. The chief concern of the church officials in each community was simply to have their own building where the faithful could worship and gather socially.

Holy Ascension Church, Bridgeport, Connecticut

Bridgeport, a highly industrialized city, attracted many Armenian immigrants at the turn of the century. By the time of World War I, several hundred Armenians were living there; by the 1930s, approximately four to five hundred Armenians had permanently settled in Bridgeport and the surrounding towns.⁷⁵³

Religious services were held from time to time, especially for baptisms, weddings, and funerals. For these ceremonies, Armenians used the facilities of Saint Luke Episcopal Church on Connecticut Avenue. In the absence of an itinerant priest, local Armenian deacons conducted the religious services for the community. This practice continued until 1926, when the need was felt to organize a more effective parochial community. Consequently, in 1928, a temporary board of Church Trustees was elected. The members of this first council were Sarkis Bajoyian, Hovhannēs Krikorian, Osgan Ch‘ap‘out‘ian, Hovsēp‘ Ourfalian, and Nahabed Ch‘ak‘rian. These men were entrusted with the task of acquiring a church building for the community.

In the initial stages, the Church Trustees enjoyed the cooperation of many members of the community, especially of a group of ladies headed by Haygouhi Krikorian and Haygouhi Nigoghosian. The community elected permanent Church Trustees in 1929, with Awedis Dēmīrjian as chairman. At the same time a Ladies’ Auxiliary was formed, headed by Haygouhi Krikorian.

Land for the new church building was purchased for \$800; however, the idea of building a new church was abandoned, and an existing edifice on Barnum Avenue, a former Methodist Church, was purchased for \$6,000. The church

underwent considerable renovation before it was suitable as an Armenian house of worship. On June 14, 1931, Archbishop Tourian consecrated the church and named it Holy Ascension Church. Zawēn T'at'igian served as Godfather. Since its consecration, the parish has been served by priests whose tenures have been of short duration.

Saint John the Baptist Church, Detroit, Michigan

According to available records, the first Armenian known to have settled in Detroit was a young girl named Ester-Nouart of Merzifon, Turkey. She came to this country under Protestant missionary sponsorship, studied medicine, and earned her medical degree.⁷⁵⁴ By the latter part of the nineteenth century a number of Armenians were living in Greater Detroit and also in the surrounding towns of Ann Arbor, Lansing, Grand Rapids, and Pontiac. But the Armenian community of Greater Detroit did not exist until the first decade of 1900s.

The gradual growth of the young community was accelerated in 1914 by Henry Ford's five-dollar-a-day wage offer, which induced immigrants of many nationalities to flock to Detroit. As in other localities, the early arrivals were almost entirely young males who came seeking their fortunes. In 1915 the Armenian community of Detroit was thought to number some three thousand. It has since grown to become one of the larger Armenian communities in the United States, with an estimated membership of 25,000.

For many years the community, out of necessity, worshipped only periodically, whenever a visiting clergyman stopped to offer the Divine Liturgy in an Episcopal church borrowed for that day. This arrangement, however, proved inadequate, prompting the community to elect a committee to pursue the task of establishing an Armenian church in Detroit. The first Church Trustees, organized in 1912, petitioned the diocese in Worcester for a permanent pastor. In 1913 Father Sahag Nazarēt'ian of Fresno was chosen to serve as pastor for the Detroit community, which did not yet have its own church building. Reverend Woodruff of Saint John's Episcopal Church offered the facilities of his church after 1:00 p.m. on Sundays, thus making it possible for regular Sunday church services to be held.

Father Nazarēt'ian acted quickly in organizing his parish and in arousing the religious fervor of his constituents. His tenure in Detroit, however, came to an early end with his death in 1922. From then until the building of the Detroit church in 1931, four other pastors served the community under adverse conditions.

In the late 1920s, religious services were still being held in Saint John's Episcopal Church. This situation posed many problems, because other denominations also used the facilities, thereby compelling the Armenians to adhere to a tight schedule. In 1928 a building committee was formed under the

chairmanship of Dr. Mihran Dēyirmenjian, and it purchased a lot on Oakman Boulevard at a cost of \$9,000. The time was less than opportune, because the Great Depression was sweeping the country, and the Armenians, like all others, had felt its impact. Father At'ig Dzots'igian was the leading force behind the parish's fund-raising campaign. He showed untiring dedication in realizing the building of the church, which was completed in 1931 at a cost of \$30,000. On November 22, 1931, it was consecrated by Archbishop Tourian and was named Saint John the Baptist Church.⁷⁵⁵ Mgrdich' P. Kalajian served as Godfather.

On January 3, 1939, the Armenian Apostolic Society was organized for the purpose of planning, financing, and constructing a Cultural Hall to accommodate group activities for the entire community. Alex Manoogian became the first chairman of this society.⁷⁵⁶ In 1946 the construction of the Cultural Hall was completed.

Because of the rapid growth of the Armenian community, the exodus of Armenians into the suburbs, and the desire for larger facilities, the Armenians of the Greater Detroit community purchased land located at 22001 Northwestern Highway in Southfield, Michigan. In September 1960 a new Cultural Building was built on the site. On November 20, 1966, the new golden dome of the church was dedicated and consecrated by Archbishop T'orkom Manoogian, the Primate.⁷⁵⁷

Notes

⁶⁴⁶ "Hayrabedagan Ėndrout'ean Shourch" ("About the Catholicos Election"), *Gotchnag*, August 27, 1932, p. 877.

⁶⁴⁷ Walter Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1961), pp. 155–156.

⁶⁴⁸ Armen Bardizian, *Hay Egeghets'woy Daknabē* ("The Crisis of the Armenian Church") (Boston: Hairenik Press, 1936), pp. 128–129.

⁶⁴⁹ "Khorēn Ark'ebisgobos Ėndrouadaz Gat'oghigos" ("Archbishop Khorēn Elected as Catholicos"), *Gotchnag*, November 19, 1932, p. 1178.

⁶⁵⁰ "Adenakrout'iwn," New York, NY, January 21–22, 1933, p. 17.

⁶⁵¹ Dickran H. Boyajian, *The Pillars of the Armenian Church* (Watertown, MA: Baikar Press, 1962), p. 398; Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, pp. 154–155.

⁶⁵² Atamian, *The Armenian Community*, p. 360.

⁶⁵³ "Adenakrout'iwn," New York, NY, October 10–11, 1931, p. 11.

⁶⁵⁴ William L. Langer (ed.), "Asia," *An Encyclopedia of World History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952), p. 1095.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid. Marjorie Housepian, *The Smyrna Affair* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971) provides a fuller background of this event. She bases her account on official government documents, contemporary periodicals, and eyewitness testimony.

⁶⁵⁶ Armenian National Apostolic Church of America, *Crisis in the Armenian Church*

- (Boston: Hairenik Press, 1958), pp. 46–47.
- 657 Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, *Badmout‘ean Hamar* (“For History”), Vol. I (New York: Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, 1934), p. 6.
- 658 “*Kerashnorh Dēr Ghewont Ebisgobos Tourian*” (“His Grace, Bishop Ghewont Tourian”), *Gotchnag*, June 13, 1931, p. 759.
- 659 Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, *Badmout‘ean Hamar*, Vol. II: *Haladzankē Tourian Srpazani Tēm* (“The Persecution Against Archbishop Tourian”) (New York: Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, 1934), pp. 8–9.
- 660 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- 661 “*Bashdōnagan Haydararout‘iwn Azkayin Arachnortarani*” (“Official Announcement of the National Diocese”), *Gotchnag*, April 16, 1932, pp. 433–434.
- 662 “*Adenakrout‘iwn*,” New York, NY, October 10–11, 1931, p. 10.
- 663 Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, *Haladzankē Tourian Srpazani Tēm*, p. 10.
- 664 Atamian, *The Armenian Community*, p. 362; Armenian National Apostolic Church of America, *Crisis in the Armenian Church*, pp. 45–46.
- 665 Atamian, *The Armenian Church*, p. 362.
- 666 Leon Tourian, *The Handbook of Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Apostolic Holy Church* (n.d.), p. 80. The insertion appears in the Armenian section of the book, but is deleted in the English version, p. 81.
- 667 *Haladzankē Tourian Srpazani Tēm*, p. 13.
- 668 “*Abrilean Skadōnē Niweork‘i Mēch*” (“The Observance of April Memorial Day in New York”), *Hairenik*, April 29, 1932.
- 669 Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, *Haladzankē Tourian Srpazani Tēm*, p. 13.
- 670 *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- 671 *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- 672 “*Abrilean Skadōnē Niweork‘i Mēch*.”
- 673 “*Amerigahayout‘ean Nedouadz Tsernots‘ē*” (“The Glove Thrown to the Armenians of America”), *Hairenik*, April 10, 1932.
- 674 *Ibid.*
- 675 Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, *Haladzankē Tourian Srpazani Tēm*, pp. 22–23.
- 676 Izmirts‘i (pseud.), “*Ghewont Ebisgobos Touriani Modawor Ants‘ealē*” (“The Not-Too-Distant Past of Archbishop Tourian”), *Hairenik*, July 2, 1932.
- 677 Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, *Badmout‘ean Hamar*, p. 10.
- 678 Langer, *An Encyclopedia of World History*, pp. 1094–1095; Housepian, *The Smyrna Affair*, pp. 198–211; Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, *Badmout‘ean Hamar*, pp. 5–23.
- 679 Housepian, *The Smyrna Affair*, p. 119.
- 680 *Ibid.*, p. 120.
- 681 Editorial, “*Bayk‘arē Arachnortin Tēm*” (“The Crusade against the Primate”), *Gotchnag*, October 8, 1932.
- 682 Ėntsag Kazanjian, “*Arachnortarani Tiwanēn Gē Haghortoui*” (“News Release from the Diocese”), *Gotchnag*, December 10, 1932, p. 1248.
- 683 “*Shk‘egh Jashgeroyt‘ Arachnortarani Hasdadout‘ean 35–Ameagi Art‘iw*” (“Elaborate Banquet on the Occasion of the 35th Anniversary of the Establishment of the

- Diocese”), *Gotchnag*, December 17, 1932, p. 1273.
- 684 “Adenakrout ‘iwn,” New York, NY, January 21–22, 1933, p. 5.
- 685 Ibid., p. 12.
- 686 “Zhankod Zēnk ‘Mē” (“A Rusty Weapon”), *Gotchnag*, April 8, 1933, p. 317.
- 687 The following essays treat the origin and development of the tricolor: Papkēn Giwlēsērian, “Haygagan Trōshē” (“The Armenian Flag”), *Dawros*, March 22, 1919, pp. 437–438; August 29, 1919, pp. 555–558; Papkēn Giwlēsērian, “Haygagan Zinanshanē” (“The Armenian Insignia”), *Dawros*, March 15, 1919, pp. 164–165.
- 688 Atamian, *The Armenian Community*, pp. 360–362; Ralph Lord Roy, *Communism and the Churches* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1960), p. 407; Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, *Badmout ‘ean Hamar*, Vol. III: *Tourian Srpazan Anmegh Zohē Erakoyñ Trōshin* (“Bishop Tourian Innocent Victim of the Tricolor”) (New York: Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, 1934), p. 10.
- 689 “Haydararout ‘iwn Azkayin Getronagan Varch ‘out ‘ean” (“Announcement of the National Central Council”), *Gotchnag*, August 5, 1933, p. 739.
- 690 Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, *Tourian Srpazan Anmegh Zohē Erakoyñ Trōshin*, pp. 12–13.
- 691 H. K. Hovagimian, “Haygagan Ōrē Shik ‘agoyi Hamashkharhayin Ts ‘outs ‘ahantēsīn Mēch” (“The Armenian Day at World’s Fair at Chicago”), *Hairenik*, July 8, 1933.
- 692 This quotation is taken from a copy of the affidavit filed in Cook County, Illinois, on February 22, 1934, by Felix J. Streyckmans, the chairman of the Committee on Nationalities of a Century of Progress International Exposition, who was in charge of the program. The affidavit has been made available by Attorney Dickran Boyajian of Watertown, Massachusetts.
- 693 *Haygagan Orē ew Kordzatir Hantsnakhoupē*” (“The Armenian Day and the Executive Committee”), *Gotchnag*, August 12, 1933, p. 761.
- 694 Streyckmans, “Affidavit,” February 22, 1934.
- 695 Atamian, *The Armenian Community*, p. 362.
- 696 Editorial, “Anarzhān Aṛachnort Mē” (“An Undeserving Primate”), *Hairenik*, July 12, 1933.
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- 698 “Haydararout ‘iwn Azkayin Getronagan Varch ‘out ‘ean,” *Gotchnag*, August 5, 1933, p. 738.
- 699 Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, *Tourian Srpazan Anmegh Zohē Erakoyñ Trōshin*, pp. 16–17.
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- 701 Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, *Badmout ‘ean Hamar*, Vol. IV: *Gazmagerbeal Ahapegch ‘out ‘iwn* (“Organized Terrorism”) (New York: Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, 1934), p. 12.
- 702 “Bishop Tourian of Armenian Church Beaten,” *Worcester Daily Telegram*, August 14, 1933; Editorial, “Amōt ‘ali P ‘ortse” (“The Disgraceful Attempt [in Worcester]”), *Gotchnag*, August 20, 1933, pp. 797–798.
- 703 “Ousdri Hay Geank ‘ēn” (“Armenian Life in Worcester”), *Gotchnag*, August 26, 1933,

- pp. 810–811; Editorial, “*Ousdri Dkhour Michatēbē*” (“A Sad Episode in Worcester”), *Baïkar*, August 19, 1933.
- 704 “Bishop Tourian of Armenian Church Beaten.”
- 705 Editorial, “*Arachnortin Dzdezn ou Anor Badaskhanadounerē*” (“The Beating of the Primate and Those Responsible”), *Hairenik*, August 17, 1933.
- 706 Ibid.
- 707 Editorial, “*Bēdk’ Ē Harkoui Garkabahout’iwnē*” (“Discipline Must Be Respected”), *Baïkar*, August 24, 1933.
- 708 Editorial, “*Bēdk’ Ē Khorats’ nel Bayk’arē*” (“The Crusade Must Be Intensified”), *Baïkar*, August 29, 1933.
- 709 “*Eresp’okhanagan Zhoghov*” (“Diocesan Convention”), *Baïkar*, September 6, 1933; Roy, *Communism and the Churches*, p. 407.
- 710 “*Adenakrout’iwn Amerigayi Hayots’ Eresp’okhanagan Zhoghovin*” (“Minutes of the Diocesan Convention of Armenians of America”), New York, NY, September 2–3, 1933, p. 5.
- 711 Ibid.
- 712 Ibid., p. 8.
- 713 Ibid., p. 9: “*Amerigahay Eresp’okhanagan Zhoghovē*” (“The Diocesan Convention of the Armenians of America”), *Gotchnag*, September 9, 1933, p. 858.
- 714 “*Adenakrout’iwn*,” New York, NY, September 2–3, 1933, pp. 12–13.
- 715 Ibid., p. 16.
- 716 “*Arachnort Ghewont Ark’ebisgobos Hrazharets’ouadz*” (“Primate, Archbishop Ghewont Deposed”), *Hairenik*, September 6, 1933.
- 717 “*Inch’ Gēsē Amerigean Mamoulē*” (“What the American Press Says”), *Baïkar*, September 7, 1933; “Primate Ousted by Armenians for Flag Slur,” *New York Herald Tribune*, September 4, 1933.
- 718 “*Eresp’okhanagan Zhoghovi Nakhakahē ew Tiwanē Gē Shnorhaworen Arachnort Srpazanē*” (“The President and Executive of the Diocesan Convention Congratulate the Primate”), *Baïkar*, September 10, 1933.
- 719 “*Eresp’okhanagan Zhoghovi Herakirē Amenayn Hayots’ Vehapar Hayrabedin*” (“The Telegram of the Diocesan Convention to the Catholicos of All Armenians”), *Baïkar*, September 10, 1933.
- 720 “*Haydararout’iwn Azkayin Eresp’okhanagan Zhoghovi Tiwani*” (“Announcement of the National Diocesan Convention”), *Hairenik*, September 9, 1933.
- 721 “*Hovsēp’ Ebisgobosi Vgayout’iwnē 27rt-i Mēch Dirogh Gats’out’ean Masin*” (“The Testimony of Bishop Garabedian of the Prevailing Situation in the 27th [Street Church]”), *Baïkar*, September 8, 1933.
- 722 Ibid.
- 723 “*Ramgavarnerou Dghayagan Ch’k’meghank’nerē*” (“The Childish Excuses of the Ramgavars”), *Hairenik*, September 10, 1933.
- 724 After the murder of Archbishop Tourian, Bishop Garabedian submitted his testimony to the district attorney in New York. He revealed that in fear of his life, he was forced to remain silent about the change of meeting place. Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, *Gazmagerbeal Ahapegch’out’iwn*, p. 20.

- 725 “*Vehap’ar Hayrabadē Vsdahout’iwn Gē Haydnē Srpazan Arachnortin*” (“His Holiness, the Catholicos, Expresses Confidence in the Primate”), *Baïkar*, September 12, 1933.
- 726 “*Bashdōnagan Haydararout’iwn Azkayin Getronagan Varch’out’ean*” (“Official Announcement of the Central Council”), *Gotchnag*, October 7, 1933, pp. 954–956.
- 727 *Azkayin Sahmanatrout’iwn Amerigayi Hayots’* (“National Constitution of the Armenians of America”) (New York: 1934), pp. 21–22, 60.
- 728 Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, *Gazmagerbeal Ahapegch’out’iwn*, pp. 21–23.
- 729 “*Ēchmiadzinē Molorets’nelou Jik’erē ew Mer Tirk’n ou Ēnelik’ē*” (“Attempts to Confuse Ēchmiadzin and Our Course of Action”), *Hairenik*, September 13, 1933.
- 730 Editorial, “*Gat’oghigosin Herakirē*” (“The Telegram of the Catholicos”), *Hairenik*, September 15, 1933.
- 731 “*Azkayin Getronagan Varch’out’ean Tiwanēn*” (“From the Secretariat of the National Central Council”), *Hairenik*, September 19, 1933.
- 732 Eghishē’ Kasbarian, “*Amerigahay Azkayin Egeghets’agan Geank’*” (“Armenian-American National Ecclesiastical Life”), *Vdag* (“Armenian Almanac”) (Boston: Haïrenik Press, 1935), p. 61.
- 733 *Ibid.*, pp. 45–47.
- 734 “*Bashdōnagan Zegoyts’ Azkayin Getronagan Varch’out’ean*” (“Official Report of the National Central Council”), *Hairenik*, November 11, 1933.
- 735 The details of his activities as a field worker for the Tashnag Party are beyond the scope of this paper. However, some consideration must be given to his work, which contributed to important occurrences in this country. “*Bost’oni Giragi Ōrouan Medz Zhoghovē*” (“Sunday’s Mass Meeting in Boston”), *Hairenik*, October 12, 1933.
- 736 Editorial, “*Giragi Ōrouan Zhoghovin Imasdn ou Hrahanke*” (“The Meaning and Message of Sunday’s Meeting”), *Hairenik*, October 12, 1933.
- 737 Armenian National Apostolic Church of America, *Crisis in the Armenian Church*, p. 53.
- 738 *Ibid.*
- 739 *Ibid.*, p. 54.
- 740 “*P’arissets’out’ean Kloukh Kordzots’ Mē*” (“A Masterpiece of Phariseism”), *Hairenik*, December 21, 1933.
- 741 Bishop Garabedian kept a scrapbook concerning the murder of Archbishop Tourian. In it are news clippings about the murder and pictures of Primate Tourian. Also included are personal reflections by Bishop Garabedian about the tragedy, in which he holds both the Tashnag and Ramgavar parties responsible. The scrapbook is now kept at the church office of Saint James Armenian Church of Watertown, Massachusetts. It was loaned for the purpose of this study through the courtesy of Father Dajad Davidian.
- 742 Avedis Derounian, “The Assassination of the Archbishop,” *Real Detective*, p. 25.
- 743 Alexander H. Kaminsky, “The Murder of the Archbishop,” *Master Detective*, July 1935, p. 69.
- 744 Derounian, “The Assassination of the Archbishop,” p. 89.
- 745 *Ibid.*
- 746 Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, *Badmout’ean Hamar*, Vol. V: *Azkataw Eghernē*

ew *Tadabardout* 'iwně ("The Nation-betraying Crime and the Condemnation") (New York: Gotchnag Press, 1935), pp. 41–82; Editorial, "*Anartaranali Ojirē*" ("The Unjustifiable Crime"), *Baïkar*, December 30, 1933; "*Ōrouan Tadē Azkayin Ē*" ("The Case of the Day Is National"), *Gotchnag*, January 27, 1934, p. 75.

⁷⁴⁷ Editorial, "*Mdadzoumov, Och' T'ē Zkats'oumov*" ("With Rationale, Rather Than Emotion"), *Gotchnag*, April 21, 1934, p. 363.

⁷⁴⁸ Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, *Azkataw Egheṛnē ew Tadabardout* 'iwně, p. 24.
⁷⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 83–94.

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 83.

⁷⁵¹ Both the *New York Times* on January 1, 1934, and the *New York Herald Tribune* on January 2, 1934, covered the story of the burial of the archbishop. Armenian translations of these stories appeared in *Baïkar*, January 3, 1934.

⁷⁵² Saint James Church in Watertown and Holy Cross Church in Lawrence were consecrated in 1936. The discussion of these communities will be presented in the next chapter.

⁷⁵³ More information of the Bridgeport community is found in the album *Fortieth Anniversary*, Holy Ascension Armenian Church, 1931–1971, Bridgeport, CT; Ashjian, *Vijagats'oyts' ew Badmout'iwn Arachnortagan T'emin Hayots' Amerigayi*, pp. 94–99.

⁷⁵⁴ For more information on the community of Detroit, consult the commemorative book titled *Twenty-Five Years of Progress*, Saint John's Armenian Church, 1931–1956, Detroit, MI; Ashjian, *Vijagats'oyts' ew Badmout'iwn Arachnortagan T'emin Hayots' Amerigayi*, pp. 107–114.

⁷⁵⁵ In subsequent years, the use of the name "Baptist" was discontinued in order not to confuse it with churches of Baptist denomination.

⁷⁵⁶ Alex Manoogian, the lifetime president of the Armenian General Benevolent Union, has distinguished himself in charitable, cultural, and educational philanthropic endeavors.

⁷⁵⁷ The new church displays characteristic features of Armenian Church style, especially recalling Saint Hripsimē, one of the earliest examples of pure Armenian architecture, dating to the seventh century. The architect of Saint John's Church was Sourēn Pilawian. *Consecration and Dedication*, Saint John's Armenian Church, Southfield, MI, November 10, 1966.

**Ecclesiastical Crisis and
Search for Unity
(1933–1939)**

The Situation in Ēchmiadzin

The days following the assassination of Archbishop Tourian were chaotic. Rallies of indignation against the Tashnag Party were held throughout the Armenian community. The American press reported daily developments in the case. In New York City, investigations and arrests of those suspected of complicity were conducted by the police. Radio commentators deplored the Tashnag philosophy as one of terrorism. Nine members of the Tashnag Party were apprehended by the police as the alleged assassins of the archbishop, and their trial was set for June 7, 1934. All nine were charged with conspiracy to murder.

The Tashnag Party denied any direct involvement in the killing of the archbishop. The dissident Central Executive Committee severed relations with Ēchmiadzin. In order to determine control of churches, Armenians of opposing camps had to settle their differences in United States courts. Churches whose membership were dominantly non-Tashnag came under the control of those loyal to Ēchmiadzin.

The dissidents, however, took possession of a few churches, such as Saint Gregory Church in Philadelphia, Saint Stephen Church in New Britain, and Saints Joachim and Anne in West Pullman, Illinois.

Several clergymen made no attempt to conceal their sympathies for the Tashnag Party. Father Nshan P'ap'azian, a zealous Tashnag priest from New York, moved his entire family into the confines of his church, claimed legal shelter, obtained police protection, and eventually won Saint Illuminator Church on 27th Street for his parish.⁷⁵⁸

In order to resolve the crisis, Ēchmiadzin, in 1934, dispatched Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp'ian, chairman of the Supreme Spiritual Council of Ēchmiadzin, as plenipotentiary-at-large. The purpose of his visit was to heal the dissension and to promote solidarity in the Armenian Church in America. However, because of the deep-rooted antagonism of the rival groups, his mission remained unfulfilled.

Between 1933 and 1938, the USSR achieved rapid industrialization and almost complete collectivization of agriculture. Politically and militarily, the Russian experiment was impaired by Japanese aggression. Internally, Soviet life was disturbed by the Great Purge of 1936–1938, which was a direct result of the social and political animosities of the previous years.⁷⁵⁹

A period so full of upheaval was certain to have a far-reaching effect on Armenia and consequently on Ēchmiadzin. Legally, the clergy were still disenfranchised, heavily burdened with taxes, and socially circumscribed. The ban

on religious propaganda remained unchanged. Article 124 of the Stalin Constitution of 1936 stated:

With the aim of securing freedom of conscience for the citizens, the church in the USSR is separated from the state and the schools from the church. Freedom of celebrating religious cults and freedom of anti-religious propaganda is recognized for all citizens.⁷⁶⁰

Until 1936 the climate was relatively tolerant of the Church. The reappraisal of the historic role of the Church and the recognition of the Church as a particularly useful institution to advance the cause of patriotism prompted the state to treat it less harshly. There was a decline in antireligious propaganda on the part of the Communists, including even the League of Militant Atheists. However, by 1936 the situation reversed itself. Religious “prejudice” was discouraged, and again antireligious organizations resorted to condemning religion. By 1937 charges that Armenian churches were engaged in hostile activities against the government grew steadily more serious. According to an unconfirmed report, in October 1937 the Soviet Secret Service had arrested the pontiff and twenty-four priests, all of whom were shortly to go on trial.⁷⁶¹

This revival of hostility toward the Armenian Church culminated in the premature death of Catholicos Khorēn I on the night of April 6, 1938, in the Catholicosial Palace at the Monastery of Ēchmiadzin.⁷⁶²

His death was alleged to have been perpetrated by the Secret Police officers of the NKVD (People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs). Walter Kolarz, a well-known journalist and authority on Soviet affairs, commented on the death of Catholicos Khorēn in the following words:

The most charitable explanation is that he died because proper medical attention was denied to him, but there is good ground to believe that he was in fact assassinated by the Transcaucasian NKVD, of which Beriia was then in command.⁷⁶³

According to the testimony of Archbishop Nersēs Melik’-T’ankian of Tabriz, Iran, Catholicos Khorēn was strangled in his palace by a band of five NKVD Secret Service police because he refused to surrender the treasures of the Church. His burial was carried out in great haste and secrecy, devoid of any of the solemnities usually afforded such a high-ranking churchman.⁷⁶⁴

As antireligious propaganda intensified in Armenia, religious services and practices were also sharply checked. The clergy were subjected to a miserable and humiliated existence. Monks were forbidden to leave their cloisters or to

communicate with people. Police permission was necessary in order to travel to Ēchmiadzin.⁷⁶⁵ The official publication of Ēchmiadzin, *Ararat*, was suspended in 1938. The renewed attack on the Armenian Church was an integral part of the Soviet purges, especially the Great Purge of 1936–1938, which claimed the lives of millions. The Great Purge in Armenia was directed against Armenian nationalism.⁷⁶⁶ Expulsion from the party, exile, arrest, and death were the order of the day. Strangely enough, in Armenia the Great Purge was initiated by the killing of Aghasi Khanjian, a leader of second-generation Bolsheviks, as opposed to the “Old Bolsheviks.” He held the office of First Secretary of the Communist Party of Armenia from May 1930 to July 1936. It was rumored that Khanjian had committed suicide because of a serious case of tuberculosis.⁷⁶⁷

Following the death of Khanjian, Armenian writers, artists, intellectuals, and scholars also became victims of the purge. They were charged with “Trotskyism and nationalism.” Among those put to death, imprisoned, or exiled to Siberian prison camps were Eghishē Ch‘arents‘, Aḡsēl Pagounts‘, Kourkēn Mahari, Vahan T‘ot‘ovents‘, and Zabēl Esayian.⁷⁶⁸

These political and religious developments in the homeland had a definite impact on the Armenian Church and community in America. The Tashnag press became even more belligerent in its attacks on the opposition, labeling them “Communists” or “Communist dupes.” The anti-Tashnag factions charged the Tashnags with Nazism and Fascism.⁷⁶⁹

Panic and Fanaticism in the Church and Community of Armenia

The murder of Archbishop Tourian ushered in an era of panic and fanaticism for the Armenian Church and community throughout the United States. Mass meetings and riots occurred frequently, not only in major cities such as Boston, New York, and Chicago, but also in towns where Armenians resided in relatively small numbers. According to the Tashnag Party, the Communists and their Ramgavar collaborators were at fault for the catastrophic split in the community.⁷⁷⁰ The opposition, in turn, held the Tashnag Party responsible. They claimed that Tashnag ambition to dominate Armenian communities throughout the diaspora was a well-planned scheme, masterminded and executed by the forceful anti-Communist Tashnag leader Vahan Nawasartian, the editor of the Cairo newspaper *Housaper*.⁷⁷¹

Nawasartian's ideological convictions and political ambitions were directed toward the overthrow of the Kremlin. He lived with this obsession all his life. Perhaps it explains the almost pathological degree of hostility and psychological warfare he launched against the anti-Tashnag leaders. He proposed ideological dominance and infiltration of the Armenian Churches in the diaspora for the fulfillment of his political dreams. The Church was to be used as a vehicle in the crusade against Communism. The Armenian Church in the diaspora, he felt, must become the weapon by which the Tashnag Party could fight its sworn enemy. Even Ēchmiadzin was not to be spared in this battle.⁷⁷²

The impact of this plan became apparent with the 1956 Catholicos election of the Great House of Cilicia. Bishop Zareh P'ayaslian of Aleppo, Syria, a longtime sympathizer of the Tashnag Party, was elected, and as a result of the continuing rift between Ēchmiadzin and Antelias, the dissident churches of America were recognized by the See of Cilicia. They were organized under a separate prelacy in New York, subject to the jurisdiction of the Cilician See.⁷⁷³

The Locum Tenens: Archbishop Mamprē Kalfaian (1933–1939)

Following the assassination of Archbishop Tourian, the Central Executive Committee met at the diocesan headquarters on December 28, 1933, to take necessary measures for conducting the business of the diocese. The first item on the agenda was the election of a locum tenens or vicar-general. Father Madt'ēos Hek'imian of New York was nominated, but declined. Thereupon Father Mamprē Kalfaian of Holy Cross Church in Union City, New Jersey, was unanimously elected locum tenens.⁷⁷⁴

Ēchmiadzin was notified of the election, and an immediate confirmation followed on January 11, 1934.⁷⁷⁵

Father Kalfaian was born on February 12, 1893, in Smyrna, Turkey. His parents were wealthy, his father being the chief architect of the Smyrna municipality. Father Kalfaian, whose baptismal name was Aram, received his elementary education at the local Armenian school and his secondary education at the French Marist School in Smyrna. In 1915, during the Armenian massacres and deportations, he escaped with his parents to Cairo, Egypt, where he secured employment in a French bank. It was largely because of the influence and insistence of his devout mother that the young Kalfaian, now twenty-seven, entered the Armenian Seminary at Saint James Convent in Jerusalem. In 1923 he was ordained a celibate priest and was assigned to a pastorate in Jaffa, Palestine. In 1925 he assumed the pastorate of the Armenian Church in Marseilles, France. Two years later, in 1927, he came to the United States and became the pastor of the Holy Cross Church in Union City, New Jersey. He remained in his pastorate until his election as locum tenens in 1933. Throughout his thirty-seven years of service to the Armenian Church, Kalfaian remained a staunch and loyal supporter of Ēchmiadzin and the pontiff. In the difficult years preceding the assassination of Archbishop Tourian, he displayed unwavering loyalty to the Primate. In 1935 he was ordained bishop.

Archbishop Kalfaian remained in office as locum tenens until March 1, 1939, at which time he resigned to assume the pastorate of Saint Leon's Church in Paterson, New Jersey. From 1942 to 1946 he served as Primate of the Western Diocese. In 1945 he was elevated to the rank of archbishop by Kēork VI, Catholicos of All Armenians. From 1946 to 1954 Archbishop Kalfaian served as pastor of various parishes in both the Eastern and Western Dioceses. In 1954 he was elected Primate of the Eastern Diocese, retiring in 1958 after serving one term. Archbishop Kalfaian died on July 17, 1960, in Miami, Florida, at age sixty-seven.

The archbishop was known to his friends and parishioners as a kindly and generous man. He was essentially a humble person, though he loved beauty and pomp in liturgical services. It is said that during his primacy in the Eastern Diocese, a young priest complained to Archbishop Kalfaian that his assignment was beneath his dignity. The archbishop replied that "that kind of deportment is hard for me to understand." He continued:

What do you suppose I will do when I am through serving as Primate; will I fold my hands and do nothing because I happen to be an Archbishop? Of course not, I'll be willing to serve as a pastor in any parish.⁷⁷⁶

This was not a mere show of words, for that was precisely what Archbishop Kalfaian was doing at the time of his death: serving as temporary pastor of the small

Saint John's Church of Miami, Florida, as he had done before in so many other parishes.

The Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee

With the assassination of Archbishop Tourian, the New York police were confronted with a bizarre situation. An atrocious assassination had been conducted in broad daylight. One by one the alleged killers and their collaborators were apprehended by the police, but the murder was far from solved. The suspects, nine members of the Tashnag Party, were Madt'ēos Lēylēgian, Nshan Sarkisian, Osgan Erganian, Martin Mozian, Juan Gonzales Ch'alikian, Harry Sarafian, John Mirijanian, Mihran Zadigian, and Hovhannēs Antrēasian. A systematic interrogation of the members of the congregation at the time of the assassination and of members of the Tashnag Party was conducted, but witnesses were reluctant to testify against the alleged assassins. Painstakingly the details of the homicide were described and pieces put together. The date of the trial was set for June 7, 1934.

The assistant district attorney of the State of New York, Alexander Kaminsky, was appointed prosecutor. His associate was Assistant District Attorney Joseph Cohen. To assist these officials, the Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee was organized on a voluntary basis on December 28, 1933, under the auspices of the diocese.⁷⁷⁷ The former district attorney of the State of New York, Thomas Dewey, was engaged as legal counselor for the committee. It organized mass memorial meetings in major cities, gathered information relating to the crime, rallied witnesses, collected funds to defray the expenses of the trial, published four booklets and a memorial book, and released periodic news items to the press. This committee existed for fifteen months, from December 28, 1933, to March 7, 1935, at which time it was liquidated, having accomplished its tasks. The committee collected \$24,664.15.⁷⁷⁸

Several other committees of short duration came into existence following the murder, pledging to support the cause of justice against the apprehended criminals and also promoting anti-Tashnag propaganda. These groups often found themselves in discord with the Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee. Their differences proved detrimental to the case, often creating new obstacles for the authorities.

Some groups drove antagonism to the extreme in exploiting matters for their own gain. One such group was the United Front of Anti-Tashnags, supported by the Friends of the Soviet Union and the American Committee to Aid Soviet Armenia. This group organized rallies to decry Archbishop Tourian's assassination. The Armenian Progressive League and American Communist Party also supported this group.⁷⁷⁹ The United Front proposed to strike at the Tashnag Party by picketing and boycotting Tashnag businesses and by incriminating it in the eyes of the

public.⁷⁸⁰ However, the rallies conducted by the “United Front of Anti-Tashnags” hindered the meetings sponsored by the diocese. The involvement of Communists gave cause for concern to those who already suspected that the Communists were attempting to gain pockets of influence in the Armenian Church. The United Front was criticized by the Ramgavar Party, which charged it with extremism.

The Ramgavar Party deplored the activities of another group known as the Friends of Soviet Armenia, Anti-Tashnag Popular Committee. The Ramgavars reaffirmed their confidence and loyalty to the Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, branding the Friends of Soviet Armenia as Communist agents. They urged their followers to oppose the Friends, whom they accused of trying to monopolize a cause that rightfully belonged to the Armenian Church and people.⁷⁸¹ Furthermore, the Ramgavar Party reasoned, Communist involvement would give the impression that Archbishop Tourian had been an agent of the Communists.⁷⁸²

Several times the diocese issued news releases in order to inform the public that it was not responsible for any action undertaken by organizations not operating under its jurisdiction. The diocese also stressed that those committees under its jurisdiction were to refrain from any joint campaigning with other committees.⁷⁸³ This was a matter, said the diocese, of discretion to ensure that through the proper course of action, justice would be brought to interested parties.⁷⁸⁴ Diocesan officials were distressed over the frequent rallies, which were marked by hatred, rage, violence, and, in some instances, bloodshed and death. Serious strife was reported between opposing Armenian groups in New York, Boston, Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, and other cities throughout the United States. The diocese saw these encounters as serving only to damage the Armenian community and its name.

As time passed, bitter strife and animosity increased to such an extent that the real tragedy of the death of the Primate seemed to be overshadowed by these tragic factional interests. The Armenian community was gripped by virtual civil war. Instead of exercising restraint, coolness, moderation, and wisdom, people were easily aroused, and slanderous remarks were commonplace. Cries such as “Assassins! Murderers! Internal evil! Boycott! Anathema! Pro-Soviet! Anti-Soviet! Pro-Nazi! Schism in the Church!” became part of popular vocabulary of the day.⁷⁸⁵

Institutionalization of the Division of the Church

As this civil war within the Armenian community expanded, the Tashnags rebelled against the Mother See of Ēchmiadzin. The non-Tashnags were equally uncompromising in their policy toward the see's opponents. Ēchmiadzin urged unity and attempted to prevent further separatist strife. The Tashnags accused Ēchmiadzin and the pontiff of failing to provide spiritual leadership and of partiality in their relations with the communities of the United States.⁷⁸⁶

Father Kalfaian's election as locum tenens was reaffirmed by Ēchmiadzin by an official letter of January 18, 1934, signed by the chairman of the Supreme Spiritual Council of the Holy See, Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp'ian.⁷⁸⁷ The letter instructed the faithful and clergy to refrain from taking sides in the quarrels that were rampant in the communities and to pledge obedience and loyalty to the newly elected locum tenens. The letter continued to urge that the faithful cooperate with the Central Executive Committee in carrying out its duties and cease any activities that might prove detrimental to the unity of the Church. The clergy especially were enjoined to display loyalty to Ēchmiadzin.⁷⁸⁸

The Tashnag Party repudiated the reconciliatory efforts of the Holy See. Their animosity toward Bolsheviks led them to believe the Bolsheviks to be the real perpetrators of the schism, the pontiff being seen as a captive under their aegis. According to the Tashnag press, Bolshevism,

... the evil which is now formally established in Armenia, for many years now has been making organized attempts to subject the Armenians abroad to its arbitrary rule and exploitation, and is using all its strength to destroy all our organizations that aim to influence our national spirit and ideals, and is anxious to use the Armenian churches abroad as mere tools with which to carry out its dark schemes.⁷⁸⁹

The Tashnags denounced the jurisdictional authority and leadership of the Catholicos on the following points:

1. As long as Ēchmiadzin is not free and protected from the direct or indirect pressure and exploitation of Soviet tyranny, the nationalist Armenians will continue to see looming over Ēchmiadzin the shadow of the evil.
2. As long as the center of the Armenian Church, Ēchmiadzin, continues to remain in the clutches of the Cheka, the personification of evil, Armenian

nationalism cannot and will not allow it to utilize the Armenian churches abroad as weapons with which to agitate and enervate the Armenians abroad and bury forever the Armenian cause.⁷⁹⁰

The Tashnags declared that “the Supreme Spiritual Council of Ēchmiadzin is aware of the fact that today in America there exist two rival Central Executive Committees, both with their own churches, officials, and priests.”⁷⁹¹ The defecting priests and the Tashnag-oriented Central Executive Committee displayed great disrespect and indignation for Father Kalfaian. The Tashnag press urged the rebellious priests and parishioners to ignore his instructions and to refuse him loyalty. The following is indicative of the tone of their rebuke:

Even those with but a rudimentary knowledge of politics can understand that Ēchmiadzin, by enforcing these arrogant and unjust orders, will not force the majority of the Armenians of America to yield to the authority of Father Mamprē Kalfaian.⁷⁹²

The efforts of the Tashnag Party worsened the chaotic situation within the diocese. The party was determined to prolong the dissension as long as it saw the Communists manipulating the Catholicos and using his office to influence the Armenian communities and churches the world over. The following manifesto outlines their view of the situation:

Even the most naive have witnessed that Ēchmiadzin, under pressure from Cheka, is forced to take sides rather than remain aloof. Under guise of impartiality it attempts to restore complete unity to the Church.

As long as no means are found and as long as the feuding parties have not established communications, it is natural that the Central Executive Committee of the majority of the Armenians will be forced to maintain its independent existence with its loyal trustees and priests and will not yield to Father Kalfaian and the Central Executive Committee, who represent the minority of the Armenians.

Under these conditions the Central Executive Committee of the majority had but one course to pursue—to remain independent with the anticipation that the minority group will wisely consider reaching an agreement with the majority to restore the unity of the Church. Without this, no tranquility can prevail in this storm-wrecked community.⁷⁹³

On May 23, 1934, ten clergymen issued a manifesto addressed to the Catholicos, objecting to his partiality in settling diocesan disputes.⁷⁹⁴ The ten

clergymen were Fathers Ghewont Martougēsian, Nshan P‘ap‘azian, Mesrob Dēr Hovhannēsian, Bsag Sarkisian, Madt‘ēos Mannigian, Housig Nakhnik‘ian, At‘ig Dzots‘igian, Eghishē Kasbarian, Bedros Mamprēian, and Movsēs Dēr Sdep‘anian. The non-Tashnag press accused these priests of Tashnag sympathies. In the manifesto the clergymen stated that despite their respect for the authority and office of the Catholicos, they could not tolerate Father Kalfaian as the head of the diocese or the Central Executive Committee as the legal authority in power:

It is deeply regrettable to witness that the Supreme Spiritual Council, instead of dissolving the disagreements that are dividing our communities, is ordering us to be subject to officials such as Father Mamprē Kalfaian and the Central Executive Committee, which pursues a course detrimental to justice of the Church and which increases division among the people.⁷⁹⁵

On June 11 and 12 the locum tenens and the Central Executive Committee notified the Catholicos of the illegal activities of these clerics and requested that immediate action be taken against them. The Holy Synod of Ēchmiadzin responded by defrocking Father Martougēsian and Father P‘ap‘azian and suspending the other eight from their priestly duties until further notification from the pontiff.⁷⁹⁶

During this crisis, one church, Saint Illuminator Church in New York City, supported the dissident group. In subsequent years, two other churches, Saint Stephen’s Church in New Britain, Connecticut (1938), and Saint Gregory the Illuminator Church in North Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, were given to the dissidents by court order.

Troubled days and years lay ahead as protests and pleas were raised on both sides. Clergy and laity alike contributed to the ineffectiveness of the diocese. Church regulations and Catholicosal summonses were ignored. Priests were appointed and dismissed at will by Church Trustees. Secession movements came to the fore in various cities. Litigation over church property developed in one community after another. The Tashnag Party accused the Catholicos and the Supreme Council at Ēchmiadzin of being usurpers and of meddling in the administration of lawfully operating churches. The Holy See exercised its prerogative as the supreme ecclesiastical authority of the Armenian Church and declared the dissenting clergymen and their supporters *in schisma*. All indications pointed to imminent plans for an independent church organization.

The Trial of the Nine

The nine people apprehended by the police for the murder of the Primate were all members of the Tashnag Party. Their trial was scheduled to begin on June 7, 1934, at the Court of General Sessions in New York.⁷⁹⁷ Two of the nine, Madt'ēos Lēylēgian and Nshan Sarkisian, received death sentences, which were later commuted to life imprisonment by Governor Herbert H. Lehman of New York. The sentences of the remaining seven ranged from ten years to life.

The following pages present a summary of their dramatic and sensational trial. In the words of Assistant District Attorney Alexander H. Kaminsky, “never in the history of New York has there been a crime so unique.”⁷⁹⁸

Pretrial Investigations

Within minutes of the assassination. Dr. Thomas Gonzales, deputy chief medical examiner for New York City, arrived at Holy Cross Church with Assistant Chief John J. Sullivan and Inspector Francis J. Kear, chief of the Manhattan Detective Bureau. The doctor pronounced the archbishop dead. “There is nothing more I can do here . . . It is a murderous attack, and there was no hope for the archbishop, after he was struck,” he said. Dr. Gonzales then ordered the body of the archbishop placed in a police car and taken to the morgue at Bellevue Hospital for an autopsy.⁷⁹⁹ The two apprehended suspects, Madt'ēos Lēylēgian and Nshan Sarkisian, along with witnesses, were driven to the 34th Precinct Wadsworth Avenue Police Station for questioning. Participating in the interrogation were four detectives and Joseph Cohen, assistant district attorney for New York City, who had been placed in charge of the investigation by District Attorney William Copeland Dodge of New York.⁸⁰⁰

The prime concern of the investigators from the outset was to determine whether the murder of the archbishop had been premeditated or was the spontaneous result of religious frenzy by those antagonistic to the Primate. The investigators felt that “it seemed that the whole affair was a carefully arranged plot.”⁸⁰¹ If this was the case, however, many questions had to be answered. If the killing was the result of a carefully planned and executed plot, why had the assailants chosen so public a place as a church during services in broad daylight? The only explanation the interrogators could offer was the fanatical nature of the men involved. Assistant District Attorney Kaminsky concluded:

They not only wanted to remove the Archbishop from his position of power

over the congregation, but they also wanted to do it in a way spectacular enough to impress their opponents with their power and daring; and squelch all opposition to their purposes for all time. This must have seemed more important to them than the lives of the perpetrators, a possible conclusion among those carried to extraordinary lengths by fanatical religious or political figures.⁸⁰²

The investigators made an exhaustive study of the political and religious turmoil that had beset the Armenians from the fourteenth century onward. What the police found in their inquiries into the politico-religious history that preceded the assassination “was a record of intense suffering, burning hate and bitter and blood feuds, [in] which politics and religion seemed inextricably mixed.”⁸⁰³ Kaminsky concluded: “And now the feverish intensity that underlay the religious struggle had been transported to our shores from the Near East, to develop into a terrifying and bloody climax.”⁸⁰⁴

The solution to the case remained at a standstill despite the overwhelming number of witnesses. The witnesses presented a wall of paralyzing silence. Some appeared in court; others stayed home and feigned illness. Still others claimed ignorance of English. Awedis Dērounian, a columnist who attended the trial, reports that “widespread was the dread that the insidious hand which had felled the Archbishop would strike on any who dared testify against those seen to perpetrate the loathsome murder.”⁸⁰⁵

Of the hundreds of witnesses who were questioned, none could supply the detectives with a direct statement that he or she had seen the murder committed. The police concluded that “either these Armenians wished to settle the feuds in their own way by murderous counterplots; or they were too much in fear for their own safety to disclose what they knew.”⁸⁰⁶

The detectives, unsuccessful in their attempts to induce the witnesses to talk, halted the investigation but requested that all witnesses be at the Holy Cross Church the next day. The members of the congregation were also summoned and requested to occupy the seats they were in on December 24. The detectives restaged the events leading up to the slaying, hoping this would enable witnesses to recall happenings they had forgotten. Captain John Lagarene and Vincent Tarese conducted the questioning with the assistance of an interpreter, Bedros Isgenderian, an Armenian patrolman from the Coney Island Precinct in Brooklyn.⁸⁰⁷ In place of the actual defendants, pictures of the five prisoners—Madt‘ēos Lēylēgian, Nshan Sarkisian, Osgan Erganian, Martin Mozian, and Juan Gonzales Ch‘alikian were used.

Following the investigation in the church, 620 people were systematically interrogated and their statements were carefully tabulated. The detectives used all means to gather information, traveling as far as Philadelphia, Boston, and

Providence to visit Tashnag headquarters.⁸⁰⁸ Because the Tashnags were under suspicion, orders were issued to the Fifth Detective Squad to raid Tashnag headquarters at the Armen Garo Club on 3rd Avenue in New York City and obtain the membership roster and list of members present at the “tea party” held on December 22, two days before the assassination. Some 150 card-bearing Tashnags had attended this function, including all of the defendants except Zadigian.⁸⁰⁹

The case aroused intense interest throughout the country, and newspapers devoted considerable space to the murder and the motivation that prompted it. The Armenian press was particularly outspoken in its interpretations of the assassination. Some demanded immediate punishment of the Tashnags as the instigators of the plot.⁸¹⁰ An official declaration issued on December 28, 1933, by the Central Committee of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation denied Tashnag involvement in the assassination and exhorted its followers to show self-control in those critical moments.⁸¹¹

The Tashnag community at large refused to believe that the murder was committed by their comrades. They insisted that the “Mr. X” who had disappeared from the church was the real assassin, planted by the Communists themselves.⁸¹² This was also the contention of the defense attorney, Joab H. Banton, former district attorney of New York City. He issued a statement suggesting that the Bolsheviks committed the murder to discredit the Tashnags.⁸¹³ The Bolsheviks did not hesitate to attempt to discourage such suspicions; their publication *Panvor* wrote:

The Tourian murder is a godsend from heaven. Even if the Tashnags did not murder the archbishop, they should have murdered him. His murder must be pinned on them at all cost, because now we have a good excuse to smash the Tashnags.⁸¹⁴

Throughout the country, rallies, memorial services, and demonstrations were held as the nine prisoners were arraigned. Angry mobs lined the streets outside the courthouse, hissing at the prisoners as they walked by. Rival factions attacked one another with ice picks and knives, accusing each other of the murder. “Death to All Murderers! Death to All Tashnags!” read the banners of the mobs that paraded outside the courthouse while the men suspected of the archbishop’s murder appeared before the grand jury.⁸¹⁵

With nine of the men in custody, it became easier to get witnesses to talk. Some came voluntarily to the district attorney’s office to tell what they knew. One star witness was Garabed Zadigian, who volunteered a startling piece of information to the district attorney. Just before the murder, he said, he had seen a length of gleaming steel in the hand of Madt’ēos Lēylēgian. He had not revealed this before because he had been afraid of reprisal.⁸¹⁶

The district attorney's office now felt that, notwithstanding the missing "Mr. X," the case could go to trial with the other nine conspirators and have a well-knit case.

Trial and Verdict

The trial opened at the Court of General Sessions in New York on June 7, 1934, with Judge Joseph E. Corrigan presiding.⁸¹⁷ It was marked by heated clashes between attorneys. People from all walks of life attended, and it was obvious that throughout the sessions hatred against the Tashnags was intense.

The jury was composed of twelve members, all non-Armenian. The defense attorneys were former senator Thomas I. Sheridan and former district attorney Joab H. Banton.

Madt'ēos Lēylēgian was alleged to have rushed at the archbishop's torso with a double-edged butcher knife; Nshan Sarkisian had been seen to pin back the arms of the archbishop while Lēylēgian struck the fatal blows; Osgan Erganian had been seen to knock the miter off the archbishop; Martin Mozian was seen getting on a pew to attack the archbishop; Juan Gonzales Ch'alikian was seen pouncing on the archbishop from behind; Mihran Zadigian was seen standing on a pew, holding the archbishop; and Hovhannēs Antrēasian, witnesses testified, had taken the part of ringleader.⁸¹⁸ More than 120 witnesses were subpoenaed, of which the state used 42. The defense presented 35 witnesses.⁸¹⁹

Difficulties were encountered from the very beginning. Vahan Kardashian, one of the defense attorneys, was taken seriously ill, and Sheridan asked for an adjournment until October.⁸²⁰ "If Your Honor denies this motion," he said, "Mr. Banton and I will withdraw from the case." Judge Joseph E. Corrigan denied the motion, adding that if defense counsel withdrew, he would appoint them to the case as officers of the court.⁸²¹

The prosecution traced the Christmas killing to the incidents at the World's Fair in Chicago on June 1, 1933. Based on the facts he had disclosed, the district attorney was convinced that there had been a plot on the part of the Tashnag organization, which had opposed the archbishop and was determined to punish him.⁸²²

This murder may have been committed by a religious fanatic, by a Soviet agent, or for hundreds of reasons. No one really knows who killed the archbishop.⁸²³

Fourteen witnesses connected Lēylēgian with the crime; five accused Sarkisian. Lesser charges were entered against the remaining seven.⁸²⁴ Garabed Zadigian and Sarkis Dēmırjian were the principal witnesses at the trial.

On June 25, defense attorney Thomas Sheridan demanded that a mistrial be declared because on two separate occasions, two jurors had entered the judge's chambers. Judge Corrigan explained that the two jurors had received death threats; the first was the foreman of the jury, William E. Schillinger, and the second was Harry H. Fiedler. Sheridan examined the threats, which were written on postcards postmarked New York and signed "T." Sheridan then requested that the two jurors be dismissed and a mistrial be declared; the initial *T* gave the impression that the cards had been sent by the Tashnags, and Sheridan suspected a subterfuge:

It is probable that it is again the Eastern mind which is attempting to shift the blame to the Tashnags or is trying to make it appear that they are written by the Tashnags. I don't know.⁸²⁵

Judge Corrigan declined the defense's motion for a mistrial after ruling that the two threatening notes would not influence the decision of the jurors. The trial proceeded.

Each defendant took the stand on his own behalf and denied the crime, while admitting their Tashnag membership. The prosecution referred to the defendants as political and religious fanatics.

On July 11 Sheridan presented his summation for the defense, lasting approximately one and a half hours.⁸²⁶ He considered the testimony of star witness Garabed Zadigian doubtful and depicted Lēylēgian as a victim of circumstances. Sheridan wanted to show that more than anything else, religious fanaticism was at work in the crime, stemming from an Eastern mind and psychology.⁸²⁷ The defense then proceeded to dispute the notion that the Armenian Revolutionary Federation was entirely dedicated to terrorism and that the crime was plotted and executed by that party. Turning to the jury, Sheridan concluded that from the outset, a mood of hate had prevailed in the case—hate against not only the nine men but against the Tashnags in general. His remarks ended with the following words:

I ask that you acquit these men, because if there was a reasonable doubt of guilt, there is a doubt in this case. Well you know that this case was reeking with perjury . . . Could anyone tell all that happened, all they saw in that short time, at that rate of speed?

These people, some of them, have perjured themselves, to aid in the conviction of these nine men. Apikian expressed the truth when he said that it was all in a "mood of hate."⁸²⁸

On July 12 the prosecution presented its summation, lasting four hours. Kaminsky described the nine defendants as zealots, extremists, and fanatics who

were responsible for the murder of the archbishop according to a previously worked-out plan.⁸²⁹ Prosecutor Kaminsky was pointed in his charges against the conspirators:

These men are exhibitionists. They want to teach the world a lesson. It does not profit them to kill ordinary persons. They kill an Archbishop. In that killing they protest to the world. They want to teach the world that the Archbishop should not oppose what they think is right.⁸³⁰

Kaminsky emphatically implicated the Tashnag Party in the murder.⁸³¹ Based on all testimony heard, the prosecutor pointed out Lēylēgian as the killer of the archbishop and went on to show that he had a clear-cut case against each of the nine. He climaxed his discussion in the following words:

I ask no vengeance. I ask no wholesale convictions. All I ask from you is the fulfillment of the oath you gave when you took your seat. To do justice. A crime has been committed. To my mind it has been proven that each one individually participated in the crime. I have labored in this case. You have been very patient. I leave you with this last word. Abide by it. Be true to your oath. Do your duty fearlessly, so that Justice may prevail.⁸³²

On July 13, the thirty-seventh day of the trial, at 6:45 p.m., Judge Joseph E. Corrigan addressed the jury and stressed the importance of the case, from the point of view of both the defendants and the state. He explained at length the meaning of terms such as *homicide*, *manslaughter*, and *credibility of witnesses*. He summed up his deliberations by explaining the four degrees of murder on which the jurors were to base their decisions:

First, murder in the first degree, wherein there is premeditation and deliberation on the crime to be committed, with an intent to kill. Second, murder in the second degree, where there is the intent to kill, but no premeditation. Third, manslaughter in the first degree, wherein there is no intent to kill, but there is the presence of a dangerous weapon. And, fourth, manslaughter in the second degree, wherein there is no intent to kill and no weapon.⁸³³

The jury reached a verdict at 1:25 the next morning, July 14, 1934, under highly dramatic circumstances. The defendants were brought into court and listened intently to the fate the jury had decided for them. William E. Schillinger, foreman of the jury, read the verdict. “We find Madt’ēos Lēylēgian and Nshan Sarkisian guilty as charged in the indictment. The other seven are guilty of manslaughter in

the first degree.”⁸³⁴ As he finished reading, the nine stolidly maintained their coolness that had been characteristic of them throughout the trial.

On July 24, Judge Corrigan imposed the death sentence by electric chair at Sing Sing on Lēylēgian and Sarkisian. He ordered sentences for the remaining seven ranging from ten to twenty years of imprisonment. The decision held that “the defendants, acting in concert, had conspired to kill the Archbishop.” The electrocutions were scheduled for September 3, 1934, in order that the defense would have time to appeal to the Court of Appeals.⁸³⁵

On the evening of July 24, the attorney general of New York, William Copeland Dodge, in a radio broadcast, spoke on the decision of the court. His speech was titled “The Human Side of the Law.” The attorney general concluded that the Armenian Revolutionary Federation was opposed to the Soviet Union, which explained its antagonism toward the archbishop, who was friendly to Soviet Armenia. This fact, he continued, had impelled the defendants to kill the Primate. His speech dealt with three major themes:

First, Archbishop Ghewont Tourian is a victim of political revenge. Second, that foreign-born communities of America should not transport from their lands to these shores the feuds of their native land. Third, that in America freedom of thought is tolerated, but crime committed in the name of an ideology are punishable.⁸³⁶

On September 24, 1934, the Central Committee of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation made an official appeal to individual chapters of the organization to initiate campaigns to aid the prisoners. Voluntary contributions poured in to meet the expenses of the trial and to aid the families of the defendants.⁸³⁷ The non-Tashnags, on the other hand, took the opportunity to charge Tashnag leadership with political extremism and terrorism.

Defense counsel immediately filed notice of appeal, and on August 24, 1934, the death sentences were commuted to life imprisonment.⁸³⁸ On February 26, 1935, the Court of Appeals of Albany rejected the motion and ordered the execution of the original verdict against the defendants.⁸³⁹ On March 26, 1935, the state Supreme Court upheld the verdict of Judge Corrigan’s court, and the date of the execution was set for April 11, 1935.

However, on April 9, 1935, Governor Herbert H. Lehman commuted the death sentences of Lēylēgian and Sarkisian to life imprisonment. They were within seventy-two hours of their scheduled march to the death chair when the order arrived. “I am commuting the sentences of Lēylēgian and Sarkisian on account of the most unusual circumstances of this case,” said Governor Lehman in issuing the order.⁸⁴⁰

The terrible and unholy crime committed in the name of political differences was indeed a source of national embarrassment for most Armenians. The partisan press, already divided, once again took issue with one another over the verdict. The Tashnags bore the burden of public anathema after the decision was handed down on July 14. One predictable reaction was denial of any guilt on the part of the defendants. The Tashnag Party also officially announced that it had no part in the crime. They even contested the court proceedings and claimed bias on the part of the prosecuting attorneys and the court.⁸⁴¹ The Tashnag Party further criticized the district attorney, saying that he had no direct evidence and that his circumstantial evidence rested on assumptions, prejudicial testimony, and unsupported assertions. They blamed the Communists for the tragic cleavage. *Hairenik* commented:

The social and economic boycott launched by one part of the Armenian community in this country against the other, the disruption of the unity of our people, the split in our Church, the hectic efforts on the part of certain Armenian organizations to convict nine innocent Armenians who were recently sentenced by the New York Court, all constitute a part of the same Communist scheme to destroy the institutions of this country, making certain gullible Armenians their instruments.⁸⁴²

At the forty-first Representative Convention of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation in 1934, a declaration was issued in which the organization denied any involvement in the plot to murder the archbishop. Instead, the declaration adamantly insisted that the Soviet Union was responsible. The statement ended with an appeal to followers not to forsake the Tashnag cause and to stand firm in extending moral and financial support to their innocent friends in prison in order to secure their freedom.⁸⁴³

The Aftermath: Widespread Anarchy

The verdict of the trial left the community divided. Labels and name-calling were frequent, and terms such as “inner enemies,” “inner Turk,” “Bolsheviks,” “Nazis,” and “Chekists” were commonplace. Even the murdered archbishop was called a “monster” and his body referred to as a rotten corpse.⁸⁴⁴

A second aspect of this division was the split in the Church, which was cutting deeper into the life of the community. The Tashnag Party firmly stood by its claim that the wrongdoers “were only those who had given proof of their unshaken loyalty to Ēchmiadzin.” This latter group was labeled as pro-Soviet and their Church as dissident. The Tashnag press often took issue with Ēchmiadzin and repeatedly made charges against the Catholicos, whom they considered a tool of the Communists.

The Tashnag Party refused to end their mutiny against the authority of Father Mamprē Kalfaian, the locum tenens of the diocese, who enjoyed the paternal support of the Catholicos.

The ten clergymen who had cast their lot with the Tashnag Party in rebelling against Father Kalfaian were supported by the dissident Central Executive Committee, whose locum tenens was the defrocked Father Nshan P’ap’azian.⁸⁴⁵ It was this body that, on February 1, 1934, had dispatched a telegram to the Catholicos requesting his intervention on their behalf.⁸⁴⁶ The response from Archbishop Kēork Ch’ēōrēk’jian, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Ēchmiadzin, brought them total disappointment:

It is the will of the pontiff and his order that you recognize the temporary diocesan body, that you dissolve your Central Executive Committee, and advise those clergymen under your jurisdiction to comply with the authority of the locum tenens. The plenipotentiary of the Catholicos, invested with full powers to deal with the situation, will soon leave for America.⁸⁴⁷

The dissident group lost no time in repudiating the orders of the pontiff. Their answer expressed a spirit of separatism. The cable read: “The Central Executive Committee continues as previously to perform its duties in accord with the constitution and unwritten law.”⁸⁴⁸ Communication between the dissidents and Ēchmiadzin ceased.

The Tashnag Party argued that the real cause of the present hostility within the community were Father Kalfaian and the Central Executive Committee of the diocese. They rejected the directives of the Catholicos defrocking P’ap’azian and

Martougēsian, and instead praised their courage. The Tashnag Party warned Ēchmiadzin in the following words:

The people are superior to Ēchmiadzin, and Fathers Martougēsian and P'ap'azian are the servants of the people, an expression of their will. Thus they will continue to labor as in the past. Ēchmiadzin must realize that she has to deal with the great mass of the people and not only with a group of clergymen.⁸⁴⁹

However, the Catholicos notified the diocese that the case of the punished clergymen would not be reconsidered “until they realize their error and, guided with a sense of discipline, become subject to the legitimate diocesan authority which is confirmed by the Catholicos.”⁸⁵⁰ Once again the order was challenged by the Tashnags, who rejected it on the usual grounds, that behind it stood the specter of the Soviet Secret Service.⁸⁵¹

In spite of Tashnag attempts to diminish his authority, the Catholicos often forwarded encyclicals to his flock in America, instructing them to be mindful of their spiritual welfare and to seek national and ecclesiastical unity. On August 20, 1934, the Catholicos directed an encyclical to Father Kalfaian, encouraging him to exercise patience and wisdom in executing the duties of his office. The Catholicos further urged that Father Kalfaian labor to strengthen and reorganize the churches under his leadership until ecclesiastical unity under lawful diocesan authority was restored.⁸⁵²

In response to the requests of many parishes, the Central Executive Committee unanimously decided on July 26, 1935, to elevate Father Kalfaian to the rank of bishop. He was deemed worthy of that office because of the fortitude and loyalty he had displayed during the turbulent civil war in the Church.⁸⁵³ The Catholicos in Ēchmiadzin informed the diocese of its confirmation of the elevation of Father Kalfaian.⁸⁵⁴ On October 31, 1935, Bishop Kalfaian returned to New York from Ēchmiadzin. Impassioned opposition arose against his elevation, and many were unwilling to submit to his authority.

In Cranston, Rhode Island, on March 17, 1935, an attempt was made on the life of Father Martougēsian as he was leaving a private home after funeral services.⁸⁵⁵ The assailant, George Nazarian, shot at Father Martougēsian three times, wounding him in the arm. Nazarian confessed to committing the crime in the spirit of revenge because, he said, Father Martougēsian had been the mastermind behind the murder of Archbishop Tourian.⁸⁵⁶ Once again the community was plunged into convulsions, especially in Tashnag quarters.⁸⁵⁷

The dissident Central Executive Committee announced its plans for the convocation of a Diocesan Convention on October 26, 1934, at Saint Gregory the

Illuminator Church in New York. The agenda included the organization of the Diocese of America, a reexamination of the national constitution, election of a Primate, and an approach to the problem of the Armenian-language schools.⁸⁵⁸

Father Kalfaian issued a statement on September 28, 1934, refuting the legality of the dissident Central Executive Committee and its claim to be the ecclesiastical government of the community.⁸⁵⁹ The leaders of the Tashnag Party were seeking to establish a dissident self-governing diocese and to lay plans for the organization of their own churches outside the jurisdiction of Ēchmiadzin. In an editorial in *Hairenik* titled “The Forthcoming Representative Assembly,” the separatists recommended that the administrative power of the Catholicos be terminated:

We must delete from the Constitution those articles which afford executive powers to the Catholicos. The Catholicos must remain only as a spiritual head in matters concerning the doctrines and rituals of the Armenian Church. The settlement of all other issues, especially administrative, should become the realm of the Religious Council and the Diocesan Convention.⁸⁶⁰

The dissident convention met on October 26, 1934, amid animosity and contempt. Superficial enthusiasm pervaded the convention as representatives attempted to hide feelings of skepticism. The authority of the Catholicos was outwardly welcome, but his jurisdiction and intervention in administrative affairs were circumvented. At the same time the spiritual leadership of Father Kalfaian was rejected. Instead, Father Nshan P’ap’azian was recognized as the *locum tenens* and as head of the Tashnag-oriented Central Executive Committee.⁸⁶¹ Condemnation and excommunication were demanded for the perpetrators of the split in the Church, as non-Tashnags came to realize that the Tashnag Party would never give up its burning ambition for political leadership. They advised their parishioners that “the separation of the Tashnag element from the Armenian Church and the Diocese of the Church is not an *evil*, but a *blessing*. The unity of the Armenian Church has not been shaken, but solidified.”⁸⁶²

A Mission to End the Ecclesiastical Crisis

Ēchmiadzin was anxious to bring about a solution to the ecclesiastical crisis in America. On August 1, 1934, a telegram signed by Archbishop Kēork Ch'ēōrēk'jian, chairman of the Supreme Spiritual Council in Ēchmiadzin, requested that the Diocesan Convention scheduled for October be postponed until the arrival in America of the plenipotentiary of the Catholicos.⁸⁶³ Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp'ian, a member of the Supreme Spiritual Council, was designated as this plenipotentiary-at-large. His mission was to visit the Armenian colonies of the Middle East and Europe, as well as the United States, in an attempt to establish peace and harmony, and particularly to heal the dissension in the Church in America. Another aspect of his mission was a fund-raising campaign for the Holy See.

Archbishop Hovsēp'ian was a profound scholar, an eloquent preacher, and a well-known authority in paleography, manuscript illumination, and church architecture. He responded to the challenge of his mission with earnestness. Because of the deep-rooted antagonism between rival groups in America, however, he failed to reunite the diocese.

Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp'ian (1867–1952): Biographical Notes

Archbishop Hovsēp'ian was born to humble parents on December 17, 1867, in the village of Maghavouz, province of Gharapagh, in northwestern Armenia.⁸⁶⁴ He received his elementary schooling in the village school and in 1882 enrolled at the Kēorkian Seminary in Ēchmiadzin. After seven years of study he was ordained a deacon in June 1899, convinced that priesthood was the best road by which he could serve his Church and nation.

The young deacon had already impressed his clerical elders and teachers with his studiousness. They wished him to pursue his higher education in European institutions. Consequently, he journeyed to Germany, arriving in Berlin on August 3, 1890. He enrolled in the University of Leipzig, pursuing theological and philosophical studies. Four years later, in 1894, he earned his doctorate in theology.⁸⁶⁵ His thesis was titled “The Origin of the Doctrine of One Will According to Armenian and Greek Sources.”

Upon his return to Ēchmiadzin, he was ordained into the sacred priesthood in March 1898 and was assigned a teaching post in the seminary. As a scholar he participated in numerous scientific expeditions to various historical sites at home

and abroad and also made many photographic copies of historical manuscripts for publication. His findings have been collected in numerous volumes, among which are *Khrch'out'ean Arouesdē Hin Hayots' Mēch* ("The Art of Paleography in Ancient Armenia"), *Khaghpagiank' Gam Broshiank' Hayots' Badmout'ean Mēch* ("Khaghpagiank' and Broshiank' in Armenian History"); *Niwt'er ew Ousoumnasirout'iwnner Hay Arouesdi ew Mshagoyt'i Badmout'ean* ("Material and Studies for the History of Armenian Art and Culture"), and *Hishadagarank' Tserakrats'* ("Memorabilia Manuscripts").⁸⁶⁶

In May 1917, Father Hovsēp'ian was elevated to the rank of bishop. One year later, on May 26, he took part in the Battle of Sardarabad, where the Armenians, though ill-equipped and ill-trained, displayed heroic courage and patriotism against the Turkish army.⁸⁶⁷ Bishop Hovsēp'ian was a source of inspiration for the Armenian volunteers, literally jumping from trench to trench, exhorting the Armenian defenders to resist the enemy. The presence of their spiritual father proved rewarding to the soldiers. Dressed in the black cassock and pointed cowl of the Armenian clergy, he was reminiscent of the ancient hero Ghewont Erets'.⁸⁶⁸

After the Sovietization of Armenia in 1920, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian became head of the Department of Armenian Art and Archaeology at the University of Erevan. He also served on the Committee for the Preservation of Historical Treasures and was an associate member of the Institute of Science.

Subsequently, as a part of the harsh policy of the Communists toward the Church, church treasures and properties were confiscated and heavily taxed. Archbishop Hovsēp'ian was ordered by Catholicos Kēork V to undertake a fund-raising campaign to improve the financial standing of the monastery at Ēchmiadzin. The faithful in Armenia, in spite of their fear of political oppression, came to the rescue of their Mother Church in her darkest hour of trial and impoverishment.

The Plenipotentiary-at-Large

Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp'ian's visit to the major Armenian ecclesiastical centers and Armenian colonies included two tasks: to urge Armenian nationals everywhere to bury their differences and reunite for the perpetuation of their faith and culture, and to solicit funds to alleviate the financial difficulties of the Mother Church in Ēchmiadzin.⁸⁶⁹ To accomplish his mission, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian was delegated by Catholicos Khorēn I with special authority to settle issues confronting parishes or colonies.⁸⁷⁰

The archbishop's itinerary included stops in the Middle East and Europe. From the outset his appointment aroused the curiosity and suspicion of Armenians.⁸⁷¹ The editorials of *Hairenik* expressed extreme skepticism over the outcome of the plenipotentiary's mission. The Tashnags were strongly convinced that instead of

peace and stability, new internecine strife would result. What further inflamed Tashnag opposition to Archbishop Hovsēp'ian was his frequent patriotic statements praising the economic and cultural achievements of Soviet Armenia. The Tashnag press saw these statements as overzealous propaganda on behalf of the Bolsheviks.⁸⁷² Such arguments were repudiated by the non-Tashnags, who were enthusiastic over the accomplishments of Armenia. The Tashnag charges of “Soviet agent” or “spy” with reference to the archbishop were rejected by the non-Tashnag press, which condemned the Tashnags’ relentless efforts to discredit Ēchmiadzin. The Armenian Bolsheviks in America also expressed extreme negativism toward the Holy See and the mission of the plenipotentiary.

In a discussion of the unhealthy climate of the Armenian communities, *Gotchnag* summarized the situation in the following words:

There are two strongholds remaining for us: Soviet Armenia and the Catholicos See of Ēchmiadzin. What a deplorable state they are in. Torrents of bombs are falling upon them, not from alien hands, but from Armenian hands—the enemy within. Yes, the target of the *Tashnags* ‘out’iwn is “Armenia reborn,” and of the Communist, Ēchmiadzin. These two forces, though opposed to each other, continue their strategy of propaganda with similar viciousness. The strategy of the Communists, especially the fanatics in America, is more contemptible in their role as traitor. The Tashnag press accuses Ēchmiadzin of being an agent of the Cheka while the Communists accuse the pontiff and his plenipotentiary, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian, of sabotaging against the Soviet Union in alliance with the Fascist enemy, the Tashnag Party.⁸⁷³

Most Armenians, nevertheless, gave indications of rallying to the support of Archbishop Hovsēp'ian, fully realizing that the Catholicos would do all he could to terminate the dissension.

The task confronting the plenipotentiary was formidable. The situation in America was volatile after decades of agitation. Problems other than those of an ecclesiastical nature plagued the Church in America. The mission of the plenipotentiary demanded wisdom, charity, and understanding to bring about order from chaos and render the Armenian Church in America a better instrument for religious work.

Roadblocks to Reconciliation

Archbishop Hovsēp'ian arrived in the United States on April 8, 1936. It was his first visit to America.

Archbishop Hovsēp'ian in America

When Archbishop Hovsēp'ian arrived in New York harbor he was warmly welcomed by Bishop Mamprē Kalfaian, the locum tenens; Bishop Hovsēp' Garabedian; and a throng of Armenians.⁸⁷⁴ From there the archbishop was escorted to Saint Gregory the Illuminator Church on 30th Street, where the traditional dedication service was held and the faithful received the blessings of His Excellency. As he outlined the purpose of his mission to America, the archbishop made a favorable impression on his listeners. He also conveyed to them the patriarchal blessings and news of cultural and scientific developments of the homeland.

From there the crowd moved into Holy Cross Church, where the tomb of the martyred Archbishop Tourian rested. Here Archbishop Hovsēp'ian officiated at the Service for the Repose of Souls. The main thrust of the archbishop's talk in the church urged the faithful to act charitably toward one another rather than to wallow in controversy and dispute.⁸⁷⁵ After the ceremonies, a reception was held at the Bosphorus Restaurant, where several hundred people paid homage to the plenipotentiary and wished him well in his mission.

The archbishop made his headquarters at the Hotel Seville in New York. From there he embarked on extensive parish visitations to Philadelphia; Washington; New Britain, Connecticut; Boston; and Detroit. Wherever he went he was received by the Armenian community and church organizations. His itinerary included officiating at religious services and preaching and speaking at church gatherings and testimonials. His lectures on the Armenian Church, Armenian history, and the homeland and people attracted huge crowds. His eloquence, logic, depth and thoroughness, and sincerity and openness not only enchanted his audience but commanded their respect and adoration.⁸⁷⁶ He admonished the faithful to secure ways and means of establishing peace and urged them to remain loyal to the authority of Catholicos Khorēn at Ēchmiadzin.

The plenipotentiary had brought with him three encyclicals from the pontiff that designated him as the plenipotentiary and instructed him to find a means of establishing peace.⁸⁷⁷ These encyclicals invested Archbishop Hovsēp'ian with full

powers to solve the discord and admonished the Armenians of the United States to sow peace rather than partisanship, love instead of hate, brotherly affection in place of fratricidal strife. The encyclicals made a strong appeal to the faithful to raise funds for the renovation of the cathedral and monastery in Ēchmiadzin.⁸⁷⁸ They also appealed to the faithful to support the homeland in her attempt to rebuild.

From the outset the archbishop was subjected to pressures. He was bombarded with calls and communications from committees, fraternal societies, and political organizations, as well as spiritual and lay leaders. Despite the outward appearance of calm, the situation in the United States remained uneasy. Both sides insisted on the correctness of their own position.

A storm erupted when Archbishop Hovsēp'ian issued his first letter, titled "For the Benefit of Peace and Clarity of Mind," on September 15, 1936. In it, he admonished the feuding parties to terminate their civil war in the Church. He proposed a "four-year plan of reunification to end the crisis and the split in the Church."⁸⁷⁹ The document described the unhealthy situation and turmoil within the Church. The archbishop stated:

We have formulated a plan whereby the present temporary Central Executive Committee will invite the membership of the Diocesan Convention, convened in the Hotel Martinique from September 2–3, 1933, to end the crisis intelligently. Our goal is to form a new, impartial, Church-loving and patriotic executive for a four-year term, whose jurisdiction will extend over all. We are negotiating with the dissident faction to terminate the existence of those organizations, such as the Diocesan Convention and its Central Executive Committee, which are not recognized by the authority in Ēchmiadzin. We have requested the priests of the dissident group to abide by disciplinary measures and to pledge obedience to the Central Executive Committee of the diocese and to the pontiff.⁸⁸⁰

The reaction among the opposing groups to Archbishop Hovsēp'ian's letter was one of dismay and criticism. They made it clear that, although both craved unity, both factions had their own concepts of reunification.

The Diocese's Position

Archbishop Hovsēp'ian met with the Central Executive Committee of the diocese and community leaders to discuss the schism. The Central Executive Committee presented an elaborate memorandum to the plenipotentiary pointing out the difficulty of easing tensions between the dissidents and those loyal to the Catholicos.⁸⁸¹

An editorial of *Baïkar* titled “The Declaration of the Plenipotentiary of the Catholicos” strongly rejected the four-year plan of reunification proposed by Archbishop Hovsēp‘ian.⁸⁸² The editorial commented that before the arrival of the plenipotentiary, the pontiff at Ēchmiadzin had been kept well informed of developments in the crisis of the Church in America. Consequently, the Catholicos had issued several encyclicals condemning the dissident faction, the Tashnags, and the priests who collaborated with them in activities detrimental to the Church. On the other hand, the editorial observed that several other encyclicals had sanctioned the present administration of the diocese under the spiritual leadership of Bishop Kalfaian, the legitimate locum tenens. In reference to the exclusion of Tashnag element from the Church, the editorial vindicated its position:

Because of the geographical distance, the pontiff was unaware that the isolation of the Tashnag segment of Armenians contributed to the solidification of spiritual unity and tranquility of the inner life of the Armenian Church and community. The removal of the Tashnag element, which is a source of disruption, separation, and politicization of the Church, has contributed to the welfare of the Church and national affairs.⁸⁸³

The archbishop was reminded that within the four months since his arrival, he should have realized that those loyal to the diocese had stood in defense of the authority of the Holy See at Etchmiadzin. The very survival of the community, the editorial continued, depended on the following premise:

Our people have restored peace and unity to the Church by isolating from the Church and national life those terrorists—the evil from within—who murdered the archbishop and poisoned Armenian national life.⁸⁸⁴

A rapprochement with the dissident group, the editorial stated, would usher in a new era of strife and bloodshed. It further rejected the proposal of Archbishop Hovsēp‘ian to create administrative unity:

Any arrangements made in the name of the unity and harmony of the Church, both administrative and spiritual, necessitate the cooperation of that segment of Armenians who are dedicated to the preservation of the best interests of the Armenian Church and fatherland.⁸⁸⁵

This was the atmosphere in which the diocesan delegates gathered to attend the long-delayed Diocesan Convention of October 10–11, 1936, at Holy Cross Church in New York.⁸⁸⁶ The convention was presided over by Archbishop

Hovsēp'ian and Bishop Mamprē Kalfaian, the locum tenens, and consisted of four sessions. The convention passed several resolutions, most significant among which was to continue the affairs of the Church under the aegis of the duly elected Central Executive Committee of 1933 and the incumbent locum tenens.⁸⁸⁷

In the third session the plenipotentiary delivered his address to the delegates. He began by tracing the intricate steps of the ecclesiastical controversy. At several points he noted that several columnists had taken advantage of the general apathy and misunderstanding prevalent among the public, thereby casting doubt on his mission. The main thrust of his address emphasized the creation of an impartial Central Executive Committee to whose authority all would subscribe. Archbishop Hovsēp'ian stated:

We wish to form an impartial Central Executive Committee agreeable to all, dedicated to pursue only the ecclesiastical policy, without rendering the Church an arena for political activities. We intend to examine and find the source of the evil, that erroneous contention that gives priority to political issues over the interests of the Church, such as love, brotherhood, spiritual nourishment, and cultural values that unite the people and preserve the institution. Our Church has fulfilled this mission throughout its history.⁸⁸⁸

For the realization of his plan, the archbishop outlined ten points:

1. The Church would be free from any political administration, and all would be subject to and contribute toward her culture and benevolent endeavors.
2. A new Central Executive Committee would be elected, with the approval of the plenipotentiary, for a four-year period, consisting of individuals who are impartial, Church-loving, and patriotic.
3. A new Primate would be elected for a four-year term under the auspices of the new Central Executive Committee and with the consent of the plenipotentiary.
4. In order to restore unity and peace to the Church, the dissident Central Executive Committees and the Diocesan Convention would be dissolved. Also, the newly designated Central Executive Committee and the Diocesan Convention held at the Hotel Martinique would be requested to resign voluntarily.
5. The suspended priests must plead for forgiveness, pledging their loyalty to the new Central Executive Committee and the spiritual authority in Ēchmiadzin.
6. All churches of the diocese, together with their trustees and pastors, must pledge obedience to the new Central Executive Committee.

7. For an indefinite period, no Diocesan Convention would be convened, and local Church Trustees would be subject to the new Central Executive Committee.
8. The opposing camps must refrain from confrontations, burying their past differences.
9. An advisory board would be formed to serve as a liaison between the diocese and the pontiff in Ēchmiadzin.
10. The restoration of unity to the Church and the creation of a new Central Executive Committee as outlined in the nine preceding points would be expected pending the approval of the pontiff.

Archbishop Hovsēp'ian also disclosed to the delegates that he had been assured by the Tashnag negotiators that the suspended priests were willing to subject themselves to the pontifical tribunal and dissolve the Church bodies operating under the illegitimate Central Executive Committee.

As he concluded his address, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian requested that he be excused from the convention in order to grant the delegates an opportunity to express themselves in an unrestrained atmosphere. However, the delegates insisted that he remain in the convention to answer any questions they might have.⁸⁸⁹

Only a few delegates shared the views of the plenipotentiary. Those who did were quickly and scornfully silenced by the rest. The delegates rejected the archbishop's plan, which they considered an oversimplification of the ecclesiastical crisis and too favorable to the dissident group.⁸⁹⁰ They felt that a compromise with the dissidents would endanger the peace and harmony of the churches and communities loyal to the diocesan authority and humiliate the pontiff in Ēchmiadzin.⁸⁹¹

The archbishop then responded with great sorrow and remorse in the following words:

I see that my appeal has failed completely. I repeat again that my appeal has not been understood. You have placed me in a difficult position. My wish is that you support the authority and integrity of the Mother See, but I cannot make myself understood. Perhaps my Armenian is poor. It is the pontiff's wish, as well as mine, to restore unity to the Church. It appears that the time is not yet opportune. I have fulfilled my duties before God and in clear conscience. If I have not succeeded, what can I do? Thus, let matters remain as they are, and I will report accordingly to the pontiff. This will be the lesser of two evils. I am defeated, but I repeat, you have not understood me. It is the wish of the pontiff that if I do not succeed, I must comply with the existing situation. I wish you success!⁸⁹²

At the beginning of the fourth session, the chairman announced that the Central Executive Committee and the locum tenens would remain in office and continue their work until the next Diocesan Convention. An air of relief pervaded the convention. The delegates proclaimed their enthusiasm over the archbishop's last statements and pledged to stand solidly behind him in his efforts to solicit funds for Ēchmiadzin. The following cable was dispatched to the Catholicos:

After listening to the arguments of the delegates at the convention held on October 11, 1936, at the Holy Cross Church in New York, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian has arrived at the decision that the time is not ripe to achieve the needed unity. In the name of the pontiff he has ordered the locum tenens and the Central Executive Committee to remain in office and continue their duties.⁸⁹³

As an epilogue to the narrative of that convention, it is reported that when the delegates toasted the Catholicos and his plenipotentiary at the banquet, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian uttered the following:

I am a defeated man. I stand for honest deeds. These words of yours are a great consolation to a defeated man. Cable the pontiff that, although you defeated your plenipotentiary, yet we have perpetual respect and love for you.⁸⁹⁴

On June 24, 1937, a Catholicosal encyclical was received from Ēchmiadzin expressing satisfaction over the results of the Diocesan Convention.⁸⁹⁵ Yet the pontiff was still determined to prove the supremacy of his spiritual authority over factional fanaticism.

The Attitude of the Dissident Group

In the beginning the dissident group adopted a quasi-conciliatory attitude toward the unity mission of the archbishop. As time passed and the "wait and see" policy wore off, their press hurled attacks against the pontiff and his representative. The Tashnag Party, it claimed, had entered the controversies involving the Church only to block Soviet efforts to dominate the Church for political maneuverings. An editorial in *Hairenik* shortly after the arrival of the plenipotentiary in America stated:

We have always wholeheartedly defended the unity of the Armenian Church and have opposed those who have wanted to disrupt her. If the Armenian Church is split in two today, that responsibility does not rest with us. Our stand

has always been, and still is, that the Church remains aloof from factional controversies and political struggles. Today, as in the past, we cannot tolerate the use of the Armenian Church to further the interests of a foreign political organization alien to both the Armenian Church and people.⁸⁹⁶

From the outset the dissidents assumed that the opposite camp would attempt to sabotage the mission of the archbishop in order to maintain the status quo they enjoyed. The Tashnag accused the opposition of creating an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, disturbing the minds of the people with volatile issues with which to prejudice and influence them against Archbishop Hovsēp'ian's negotiations with them.

The Tashnags were convinced that their opponents had deliberately isolated the archbishop from contact or association with them. The fact that Archbishop Hovsēp'ian resided in the Hotel Seville in New York, the very same hotel in which Archbishop Tourian had stayed, represented to them a ʔamgavar attempt to abort the plenipotentiary's mission. They further charged that unity was being hindered by barriers created by leaders of the diocese and their ʔamgavar, Hnch'ag, and community collaborators.⁸⁹⁷ The Tashnag interpretation stated that the ʔamgavars represented but a small minority in the community and thus were in constant fear of losing influence to the Tashnags in Church and community affairs and organizations.⁸⁹⁸

The Tashnags rallied the support of their followers by launching an all-out campaign against their opponents and the archbishop, whom they accused of partiality. Illustrative of this was an editorial titled "The Poor Beginning of a Mission," in which the archbishop was criticized for ignoring the dissident group, their leaders, the priests, and the churches. The editorial expressed dismay that the archbishop had placed them in a humiliating situation by supporting the tactics of diocesan authorities. It complained that "since his arrival in America, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian has visited only the churches that belong to the ʔamgavar-Bolshevik segment of Armenians and has entirely ignored the churches of his adversaries."⁸⁹⁹ They also claimed that the committee to raise funds for Ėchmiadzin consisted solely of non-Tashnags.⁹⁰⁰

The conflict between the Tashnags and non-Tashnags intensified after the Diocesan Convention of October 10–11, 1936, especially when the Tashnags convened their own Diocesan Convention on November 14–15 at Saint Gregory the Illuminator Church in New York.⁹⁰¹ The dissident group felt that the plenipotentiary had not succeeded in his mission and that the time had come for the Tashnag group to proclaim its stand regarding the unity of the Church. Consequently, an invitation was forwarded to Archbishop Hovsēp'ian to attend the Diocesan Convention of the "freedom-loving Armenians in the majority."⁹⁰² If he

failed to attend the convention, the archbishop would be giving evidence that fear of Soviet authorities prevented him from doing so. If that was the case, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian would have to face the inevitable consequences:

It is obvious that as long as the minority coalition of the Ramgavar-Hnch'ags refuses to join with the majority of the Armenian communities of America to form one general diocese, and if the pontiff, for understandable reasons, cannot make his wishes known to the minority coalition that is on friendly terms with the Soviets, the pontiff must be ready to recognize the churches of the majority of the Armenians in America as a separate diocese. Either unity of churches or two separate legitimate dioceses—the plenipotentiary must reckon with either of these two alternatives.⁹⁰³

The minutes of the dissident convention reveal that before the meeting, their Central Executive Committee had officially invited the archbishop to attend the convention. The invitation was extended again after the first session of the conference.⁹⁰⁴ However, much to the regret of the delegates, an emissary reported that the archbishop declined to attend:

I cannot attend, first because tomorrow I will celebrate the Divine Liturgy. Secondly, your comrades are well aware why I cannot attend. Do not insist that I come. I have told Dr. Karagēōzian what you ought to do. Remain loyal to the Mother See and report to me the proceedings and results of your Diocesan Convention.⁹⁰⁵

It was further learned from the report presented by Dr. Karagēōzian at the convention that, one week after the archbishop's arrival in America, Dr. Karagēōzian had met on April 18 and 25 with the archbishop. These two preliminary meetings paved the way for future discussions regarding the unity of the Church. They were followed by more substantial conferences, in which compromises were reached, agreeable to both sides. The topics dealt with such volatile matters as the Armenian tricolor, the celebrations in honor of the anniversary of the Armenian Republic, and April 24 observances. The archbishop wanted the dissident group to give all these things up. Finally, an agreement was reached that for the time being these issues were not to be discussed; they were dropped from the agenda of anticipated future talks.⁹⁰⁶ The Tashnag group had agreed on a draft drawn up by the archbishop consisting of eleven points that guaranteed the administrative unity of the Church in America. However, Dr. Karagēōzian continued, the Diocesan Convention of October 11, 1936, had vanquished all hopes of reconciliation, as even the archbishop had pronounced his

defeat and yielded the last-minute Catholicos instructions to maintain the existing situation if it proved impossible to restore the administrative unity of the Church.⁹⁰⁷

Criticism and Praise of Archbishop Hovsēp'ian

It was unfortunate that leaders on both sides lost sight of the fact that unity required a degree of sacrifice and accommodation. Both sides viewed the problem from their own standpoint and found it difficult to adopt any broader perspective. Problems other than those of an ecclesiastical nature plagued the communities. The inner strife of the Church had eroded the administrative effectiveness of the spiritual organisms of most communities. Church officials were in despair; priests feared losing their posts; and the people had doubts as to the fate of their religion. New grievances continued as lawsuits were brought into court. Priests were retained or discharged at the will of the trustees. The clergy were often regarded with suspicion as a result of their lack of tact. Incompetence among the lay leadership also contributed to the controversy between clergy and lay leaders.

While the Tashnag camp denounced Archbishop Hovsēp'ian for his “pro-Soviet” leanings, the Armenian Communist *Panvor* stepped up its campaign against the archbishop with equal vigor. *Panvor* stated that “the plenipotentiary has come to the diaspora and America under the auspices of the Armenian Church in order to make the two segments of the Armenian bourgeoisie—the Ramgavars and the Tashnags—sit at the round table and reconcile their differences by forming a *united front* against Soviet Armenia.”⁹⁰⁸ They even went so far as to attach importance to the fact that Archbishop Hovsēp'ian had journeyed to America on a German liner. They criticized him as a tool in the hands of the traitor Khanjian and the Fascist Tashnags.⁹⁰⁹

This well demonstrates that the conflict of the Church focused particularly on political rather than ecclesiastical issues. From the outset, political zealots in all camps attempted to turn the Church into an arena for their political conflicts.

Leaders in various communities grew restless over the deplorable situation of the Church and became concerned with restoring the prestige and authority of the diocese. A new leadership, energetic and determined to bring an end to the uncertainty, was girding itself for a more productive role in the Church. This group opposed those who suggested that the archbishop return to the homeland.

Toward a Normalization of Church Affairs

On May 1, 1937, at the Diocesan Convention held at Holy Cross Church in New York, Archbishop Mamprē Kalfaian, the locum tenens, expressed his desire to be relieved from his duties. However, on May 3, at the regular Central Executive Committee meeting, he yielded to the wishes of the committee and remained in his post.⁹¹⁰ The two crucial items on the agenda were the election of a new Central Executive Committee and a new Primate. The Central Executive Committee was elected, but the election of a new Primate was tabled until the following year by a vote of 40 to 20.⁹¹¹ The delegates reached this decision because the Depression and ecclesiastical strife had drained the finances of the diocese.

At the convention, the Central Executive Committee abrogated its jurisdiction over the South American diocese. Because of the geographical distance it was not deemed feasible to provide adequate religious and administrative assistance to these churches. Archbishop Karekin Khach'adourian's designation by Ēchmiadzin in 1937 as plenipotentiary to Buenos Aires, Argentina, automatically brought an end to the jurisdictional authority previously held by the diocese over South American churches.⁹¹²

It was announced at the convention that Archbishop Hovsēp'ian was about to return to Ēchmiadzin. The delegates received the news with deep regret. Before his departure from America, scheduled for July 14, 1937, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian took ill on June 11 and was hospitalized in Boston with bronchial pneumonia.⁹¹³ He was not discharged until September 1, 1937, and on his release he remained in the United States because new circumstances demanded his presence here. Both young and old sincerely desired the continuation of his stay in the United States. Many wished to have him elected Primate of the diocese. An editorial in *Baïkar* titled "What We Expect from the Plenipotentiary" set the stage for the campaign. The editorial expressed the love and confidence of the faithful for the archbishop and their desire to have him stay in the United States:

The Armenian community of America is in great need of a leader of the stature of Archbishop Hovsēp'ian, whose scholarly and spiritual tenets are of distinct value.⁹¹⁴

A year later, at the Diocesan Convention assembled on September 3–4, 1938, at Holy Cross Church in New York, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian was unanimously elected Primate of the American diocese.⁹¹⁵ In his acceptance address, the newly

confirmed Primate stated that if his election was confirmed by Ēchmiadzin, he would tirelessly endeavor for the betterment of the diocese on a spiritual and administrative level. It was hoped that after many stormy years, the Church in America would experience a period of peaceful reorganization and spiritual regeneration under the leadership of Archbishop Hovsēp'ian.

However, the path of the new Primate was strewn with many obstacles. Ēchmiadzin was reluctant to confirm his election, noting that his presence in the Holy See was indispensable.

New Churches

The period of the locum tenens Archbishop Kalfaian (1933–1939), witnessed the construction of three additional churches: Holy Cross Church in Lawrence, Massachusetts, consecrated on June 21, 1936; Holy Cross Church in New York City, consecrated on May 17, 1939; and Saint James Church in Watertown, Massachusetts, consecrated on October 21, 1937.

Holy Cross Church, Lawrence, Massachusetts

The earliest Armenian immigrants settled in Lawrence as early as the 1890s.⁹¹⁶ The first Armenian who arrived in this city was Simon Arch'igian, a native of Huseynig, Harpoot, Turkey, who arrived in 1883. From 1900 on it was chiefly families and single males who settled in the city. They were primarily employed in textile manufacturing firms, an industry for which the city of Lawrence was famous throughout the United States. The Armenians of Lawrence came mainly from the regions of Harpoot, Ch'mshgadzak, Ch'nkoush, and Arapgir, Turkey.

Although there was no Armenian church in Lawrence, from 1905 to 1907 Father Arsēn Vehouni provided spiritual guidance to the people of the city.⁹¹⁷ The first attempt to organize the Armenians into a parish was made on December 12, 1912, when approximately one hundred Armenians gathered to elect their first board of Church Trustees.⁹¹⁸

Religious services were held in two Episcopal churches located on Garden and Jackson Streets. There was no permanent pastor in charge of the parish, which, by the 1920s, had grown to a thousand members. Visiting priests conducted religious services and fulfilled the needs of the people.

As the Armenian community grew, the need for a church edifice was strongly felt. Consequently, the Church Trustees, on November 1, 1923, appointed a building committee, which they authorized to purchase a suitable building or plot of land for a new church. On November 21, 1927, land on East Haverhill Street was purchased.⁹¹⁹ In 1931 Father Ghewont Martougēsian conducted the ceremonies for the laying of the foundation. He had been serving the parish as pastor since 1929. According to eyewitness testimony from individuals with whom the writer has spoken, enthusiasm on that day knew no bounds. Factory workers, after long hours of toil, rushed to the site of the church to pick up shovels, anxious to see the completion of the building. The ladies provided the lunches for the workers, and the Ladies' Aid Society of the parish became a moving force behind the church-

building endeavors, especially with their bazaars and banquets, which raised money for the church.

The cornerstone of the church was laid on August 28, 1931, with Archbishop Ghewont Tourian, the Primate, officiating at the ceremony. The Great Depression had brought fund-raising at the campaigns to a standstill, and work on the church ceased. However, as economic conditions in the country improved, work on the building was resumed. The church was consecrated on June 21, 1936, by Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp'ian.⁹²⁰ The redemption of the mortgage on the church took place on February 3, 1944. The total cost of the church amounted to \$79,000.

Armenians living in the neighboring towns of Methuen, Andover, and Salem, New Hampshire are affiliated administratively with the church in Lawrence.

Saint James Church, Watertown, Massachusetts

The first Armenians to settle in Watertown were ten young immigrants who sought employment in a small branch factory of the Hood Rubber Company in 1896.⁹²¹ By 1902, approximately four hundred Armenians were employed at the Hood Rubber Company, and a "Little Armenia" had begun to develop within the town. In 1909 an influx of Armenians from Cilicia, escaping from the Adana massacre, migrated to the United States. A sizable portion of them chose to settle in the suburbs of Boston.

In 1924 the Armenians in Watertown, led by Haygaz Akellian and Lewon Krikorian, expressed a desire to have an Armenian church. As the idea for a church gained momentum, several meetings were convened at the Coolidge School in Watertown. The first of these meetings took place on July 21, 1924, when a committee was formed to raise funds.⁹²² At a second meeting on December 14, 1924, a building committee was formed, headed by Haygaz Akellian. The committee was authorized to purchase a suitable site for the church.⁹²³ This was done on March 14, 1927, when land was purchased on 475 Mount Auburn Street, Watertown, the present site of the church.

In 1928 the first board of Church Trustees was formed at the request of the diocese. Father Shahē Kasbarian of the Holy Trinity Church in Boston served the religious needs of the community until the first pastor, Father Madt'ēos Mannigian, arrived in 1930. He served until 1931.⁹²⁴

The community of Watertown was about to start construction of their church when the Great Depression hit. All construction ceased for a time. Finally, in 1931 a number of men, tired of waiting, gathered tools and set out for the empty lot.⁹²⁵ The following day they were joined by still others as news of the activity circulated. Donations, although in small amounts, poured in to the trustees, and when the sum was large enough, a steam shovel was hired for a day. "I can still see the women

bringing coffee and bread and cheese to the workers,” nostalgically reminisces Varoujan Samuelian, editor of the *Armenian Mirror Spectator*, who at that time as a youngster.⁹²⁶

The first Armenian Divine Liturgy was celebrated on September 22, 1889, at Episcopal Grace Church in New York, with Father Hovsēp‘ Sarajian officiating.⁹²⁷ By 1901 three pastors were providing spiritual administration to the Armenians of metropolitan New York: Fathers Khat Markarian, Sahag Nazarēt‘ian, and Vahram Msrlan. Religious services were held in various rented halls. In 1916 Bishop Papkēn Giwlēsērian became preacher to the Armenians of New York. As a result of a disagreement concerning the purchase of a church located on 27th Street (Saint Illuminator’s Church) in 1918, a group of trustees and their followers rented a hall on 17th Street where they held religious services.

This group organized themselves under the name of Saint Gregory the Illuminator Parish Church.⁹²⁸ By the early 1920s, however, a large number of the Armenians belonging to Saint Gregory the Illuminator Parish had moved to the Washington Heights area in uptown New York.⁹²⁹

On September 24, 1926, a meeting was held in the Universalist church where Armenians held their services in uptown New York. A building committee was elected, with Dr. Garabed Eghiaian as chairman. The committee first considered the purchase of the Universalist church but later decided on a Lutheran church, which was purchased on January 1, 1929, for \$72,000.⁹³⁰

The first Armenian Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the new church on January 6, 1929, Armenian Christmas Day. In 1933 Archbishop Tourian was murdered in the church, and it was closed to the public until 1937. It was reconsecrated on May 17, 1937, by Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp‘ian. During the period of financial difficulty the church underwent in the Depression years and later, Hayg Kavouk‘jian, a dedicated benefactor, generously supported the church.⁹³¹

Following the assassination of Primate Tourian in 1933 in Holy Cross Church, his body was temporarily kept at Ferncliff Cemetery in New York. The Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee was concerned with finding a suitable site for the remains of the martyred archbishop. The committee was anxious to transport the body to Ēchmiadzin. Ēchmiadzin consented to this proposal at first, but later decided it would be more appropriate to bury the archbishop in Holy Cross Church, where he had been martyred. It was the wish of the pontiff that a memorial service blessing the tomb of the archbishop be held every year.⁹³²

In compliance with the wishes of the Catholicos, the Diocesan Convention passed a resolution on May 1, 1937, to lay the Primate to rest in Holy Cross Church. Subsequently a memorial chapel was built adjoining the church vestry. On November 6, 1938, the body of the martyred archbishop was buried in the chapel with a solemn service for the repose of souls. In 1939 a marble tombstone was

erected bearing the following inscription: “Leonce Archbishop Tourian, Primate of Armenians in America. Born 1 January 1879. Martyred 24 December 1933.”⁹³³

In the following years the church proved too small for the growing community. On November 9, 1952, the old church was demolished and work was started on the new. The new church was completed in December 1953 and consecrated on October 17, 1954, by Archbishops Mampṛē Kalfaian, Diran Nersoyian, and Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian.

Once a growing church community, Holy Cross Church has now lost many of its former members to newly established Armenian churches in the suburbs of New York.

Notes

- ⁷⁵⁸ Sarkis Atamian, *The Armenian Community* (New York: Philosophical Library Press, 1955), p. 373.
- ⁷⁵⁹ During the Great Purge, the NKVD, under Stalin’s general instructions, exterminated, in all the republics of the Soviet Union, the ambitious generals, Old Bolsheviks, “bourgeois nationalists,” and dangerous ecclesiastical leaders who were suspected of collaborating with a foreign government to overthrow the Soviet regime.
- ⁷⁶⁰ John Shelton Curtiss, *The Russian Church and the Soviet State 1917–1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1953), p. 273.
- ⁷⁶¹ Editorial, “*Madnelē Verch Bidi Hampouren*” (“They Will Kiss after Betrayal”), *Baikar*, May 21, 1937; A. N. Nazar, “*Ēchmiadzini Herakirnerēn Hedoy*” (“Following the Cablegrams of Ēchmiadzin”), *Baikar*, June 1, 1937.
- ⁷⁶² Vahe Sarafian, “The Soviet and the Armenian Church,” *Armenian Review*, VIII (Winter 1955), p. 97; Mary Kilbourne Matossian, *The Impact of Soviet Policies in Armenia* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1962), p. 161; Walter Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1961), p. 156.
- ⁷⁶³ Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, p. 156.
- ⁷⁶⁴ According to eyewitness reports given to Archbishop Melik‘-T‘ankian, the body of Catholicos Khorēn was unceremoniously dumped out of a cathedral installation building by the assassins. His remains were buried in an unmarked grave by aged Armenian nuns. Armenian National Apostolic Church of America, *Crisis in the Armenian Church* (Boston: Hairenik Press, 1958), p. 52.
- ⁷⁶⁵ K. Tzitzernak (pseud.), “Aghasi Khanjian,” *Armenian Review*, III (Winter 1950), p. 56.
- ⁷⁶⁶ Editorial, “*Nor Tserpagalout iwnnerē*” (“The New Arrests”), *Baikar*, April 3, 1937.
- ⁷⁶⁷ Tzitzernak, “Aghasi Khanjian,” *Armenian Review*, III (Winter 1950), pp. 58–59. Other émigré sources say that Khanjian was shot by Lavrentia Beria, first secretary of the Transcaucasian Regional Committee, in Tiflis, Georgia, on July 9, 1936.
- ⁷⁶⁸ A. Atan, “*Hay Geank*” (Armenian Life”), *Hairenik Amsakir*, XIV (October 1936), pp. 164–165; XV (November 1936), pp. 157–158.

- ⁷⁶⁹ Noyn Hokepanout 'ean Ergou Darper Ardahaydout 'iwněřē" ("Two Interpretations of the Same Spirit"), *Baika*r, April 23, 1937; Atamian, *The Armenian Community*, pp. 378–379.
- ⁷⁷⁰ *Hairenik Weekly*, August 24, 1934; Atamian, *The Armenian Community*, pp. 362–375.
- ⁷⁷¹ Antranig Dzarougian, "Sp 'iwr 'k 'i Dasnameagnerē," ("The Decades of the Diaspora"), *Nayiri*, February 1, 1970, p. 8.
- ⁷⁷² Ibid.
- ⁷⁷³ Armenian National Apostolic church of America, *Crisis in the Armenian Church*, pp. 16–23.
- ⁷⁷⁴ "Adenakrout 'iwn Amerigahay Azkayin Eresp 'okhanagan Zhoghovnerou" ("Minutes of the Diocesan Conventions of Armenians of America"), New York, NY, April 16, 1939, p. 17.
- ⁷⁷⁵ "Bashdōnagan Haydararout 'iwn Azkayin Getronagan Varch 'out 'ean" ("Official Announcement of the National Central Council"), *Gotchnag*, January 27, 1934, p. 88.
- ⁷⁷⁶ Editorial, "Archbishop Mampre Calfayan," *Armenian Church*, IV (September 1961), p. 3.
- ⁷⁷⁷ "Adenakrout 'iwn," New York, NY, October 10–11, 1936, pp. 17–19.
- ⁷⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 28.
- ⁷⁷⁹ *Daily Worker*, December 28, 1933, p. 6; Ralph Lord Roy, *Communism and the Churches* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1960), pp. 409–410; Editorial, "Polshewignerou Ch 'arashouk ' Ent 'ats 'k 'ē" ("The Evil Course of the Bolsheviks"), *Hairenik*, January 6, 1934.
- ⁷⁸⁰ Editorial, "Miats 'eal Jagadi Herosnerē" ("The Heroes of the United Front") *Hairenik*, January 21, 1934.
- ⁷⁸¹ "Bashdōnagan Haydararout 'iwn" ("Official Notice"), *Baika*r, March 9, 1934.
- ⁷⁸² Editorial, "Nertashang Kordzounēout 'iwn" ("Harmonious Collaboration"), *Gotchnag*, February 10, 1934, p. 124.
- ⁷⁸³ Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, "Bashdōnagan" ("Official [Notice]"), *Gotchnag*, March 10, 1934, p. 232.
- ⁷⁸⁴ Ibid.
- ⁷⁸⁵ The following are worth considering for the non-Tashnag viewpoint: "H.H.T. Amerigayi Getronagan Gomidēi Bashdōnagan Haydararout 'iwnē" ("Official Announcement of the Central Committee of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation"), *Baika*r, January 3, 1934; "Tashnagts 'out 'iwnē Hay Zhoghovourtin Arčew" ("The Tashnags Before the Armenian People"), *Baika*r, January 7, 1934; "Zhoghovrtayin Zayroyt 'in Arč 'ew" ("Before the Fury of the People"), *Baika*r, January 24, 1934; "Zhoghovrtayin Ts 'asoumēn Sahmrgadz" ("Shaken by the People's Outraged"), *Baika*r, February 11, 1934. The following offer the Tashnag thesis: "Arteōk ' Gē Khorhin T 'ē Our Gē Danin Ays Khaghout 'ē" ("Are They Aware of Where They Are Leading This Community"), *Hairenik*, January 1934; "Akhdawor Park 'ern ou Miats 'eal Jagadē" ("Contagious Values and the United Front"), *Hairenik*, January 11, 1934; "Hagatashnagts 'agan Bayk 'ari Dzirakirn ou Poun Nbadagē" ("The Plan and True Purpose behind Anti-Tashnag Propaganda"), *Hairenik*, January 31, 1934.
- ⁷⁸⁶ "Echmiadzni Nor Hrahanknerē" ("The New Ordinances of Ēchmiadzin"), *Hairenik*,

January 7, 1934.

787 “*Arachnortaran Hayots ‘Amerigayi*” (“Diocese of the Armenians of America”),
Gotchnag, March 10, 1934, p. 232.

788 Ibid.

789 Editorial, “*Our Gē Kdnoui Ch ‘arik ‘ē*” (“Wherein Lies the Evil?”), *Hairenik*, February
 20, 1934.

790 Ibid.

791 Editorial, “*Echmiadzni Nor Hrahankē*” (“The New Edict of Ēchmiadzin”), *Hairenik*,
 March 8, 1934.

792 Ibid.

793 Editorial, “*Inch ‘Ēnel*” (“What to Do”), *Hairenik*, March 1934.

794 “*Amerigahay Egeghats ‘agannerou Poghok ‘ē Vahap ‘ar Hayrabadin*” (“The Complaint
 of the Armenian Clergy of America to the Pontiff”), *Hairenik*, June 13, 1934.

795 Ibid.

796 “*Adenakrout ‘iwn*,” New York, NY, October 10–11, 1936, pp. 14–16.

797 Avedis Derounian, “The Assassination of the Archbishop,” *Real Detective*, p. 90;
 Archbishop Leon Tourian Committee, *Badmout ‘ean Hamar*, Vol. V: *Azkataw Eghernē
 ew Tadabardout ‘iwnē* (“The Nation-betraying Crime and the Condemnation”) (New
 York: Gotchnag Press, 1935), p. 95.

798 Derounian, “The Assassination of the Archbishop,” p. 91.

799 Alexander H. Kaminsky, “The Murder of the Archbishop,” *Master Detective*, July
 1935, pp. 11–12, 66.

800 Ibid., p. 12.

801 Ibid.

802 Ibid., p. 13.

803 Ibid., p. 14.

804 Ibid., p. 15.

805 Derounian, “The Assassination of the Archbishop,” p. 89.

806 Kaminsky, “The Murder of the Archbishop,” p. 65.

807 Derounian, “The Assassination of the Archbishop,” p. 89.

808 “*Sbanout ‘ean Tawatirnerē Gē P ‘ndrouin Bost ‘oni Mēch*” (“The Conspirators of the
 Assassination Are Being Sought in Boston”), *Baïkar*, January 4, 1934.

809 Derounian, “The Assassination of the Archbishop,” p. 90; Kaminsky, “The Murder of
 the Archbishop,” p. 65.

810 Editorial, “*Ōrouan Tadē Azkayin Ē*” (“Today’s Case Is National”), *Gotchnag*, January
 27, 1934, p. 75; Editorial, “*Baderazmē Azkin Tēm*” (“The War against the Nation”),
Gotchnag, February 3, 1934, p. 99.

811 “*Bashdōnagan Haydararout ‘iwn*” (“Official Announcement [of the Central Committee
 of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation]”), *Hairenik*, December 29, 1933; Editorial,
 “*Niw Eork ‘i Ojirē*” (“The New York Murder”), *Hairenik*, December 29, 1933.

812 Atamian, *The Armenian Community*, p. 372.

813 “*Bashdban P ‘asdapani Haydararout ‘iwnnerē*” (“The Declarations of the Defense
 Attorney”), *Hairenik*, December 30, 1933.

814 *Hairenik*, October 13, 1934.

- ⁸¹⁵ “*Pandargealnerē Tartseal Tadaran Gē Darouin*” (“The Prisoners Are Again Escorted to Court”), *Baïkar*, January 12, 1934; “*Zhoghovourtin Zayroyt’ē Ch’i Hantardir*” (“The Anger of the People Does Not Subside”), *Baïkar*, January 18, 1934.
- ⁸¹⁶ Kaminsky, “The Murder of the Archbishop,” p. 70; Derounian, “The Assassination of the Archbishop,” p. 90.
- ⁸¹⁷ “*Niw Eork’i Tadararout’iwnē Gē Sgsi*” (“The New York Trial Begins”), *Baïkar*, June 8, 1934; “*Niw Eork’i Tadararout’iwnē Sgsdaz*” (“The New York Trial Has Begun”), *Hairenik*, June 9, 1934.
- ⁸¹⁸ “*Nahadag Arachnortin Sbanout’ean Tadē*” (“The Trial of the Martyred Primate”), *Baïkar*, June 13, 1934; “*Tadararout’ean Ēnt’ats’k’ē*” (“The Course of the Trial”), *Gotchnag*, June 16, 1934, p. 569.
- ⁸¹⁹ Derounian, “The Assassination of the Archbishop,” p. 90.
- ⁸²⁰ “*Niw Eork’i Tadararout’iwnē Sgsdaz*,” *Hairenik*, June 9, 1934. Vahan Kardashian, one of the defense counsel, passed away on the same evening at 8:30 p.m. “*Vahan Kardashian Meradz*” (“Vahan Kardashian Dead”), *Hairenik*, June 13, 1934.
- ⁸²¹ Kaminsky, “The Murder of the Archbishop,” p. 90; “*Niw Eork’i Tadararout’iwnē Sgsdaz*.”
- ⁸²² This information is from an eight-page typescript titled “Charge to Jury” by Judge Joseph E. Corrigan, delivered on July 13, 1934, just before the jury retired to cast their verdict on the nine accused of the murder.
- ⁸²³ “*Tourian Ark’ebisgobosi Sbanout’eamp Ampasdanouadz 9 Tashnagts’agannerou Tadararout’iwnē Niw Eork’i Mēch*” (“The Trial of the Nine Tashnags Accused of the Murder of Archbishop Tourian in New York”), *Hairenik*, June 13, 1934.
- ⁸²⁴ “*Aganades S. Dēmīrjani Vgayout’iwnē*” (“Eyewitness Testimony of S. Dēmīrjani”), *Baïkar*, June 13, 1934; “*Tourian Srpazani Sbanout’ean Tadē*” (“The Trial of the Murdered Bishop Tourian”), *Gotchnag*, June 23, 1934, p. 592.
- ⁸²⁵ “*Tourian Srpazani Sbanout’ean Tadē*” (“The Trial of Bishop Tourian’s Murder”), *Gotchnag*, July 21, 1934, p. 687.
- ⁸²⁶ Thomas I. Sheridan, “Summation of the Defense,” July 11, 1934. This document was provided through the courtesy of attorney Dickran Boyajian, who was an eyewitness reporter during the trial. The text is eight double-spaced pages and presents a summary of the defense rather than the full text.
- ⁸²⁷ “*Tourian Srpazani Sbanout’ean Tadē*” (“The Trial of Bishop Tourian’s Murder”), *Gotchnag*, July 21, 1934, p. 686.
- ⁸²⁸ Sheridan, “Summation of the Defense,” July 11, 1934, p. 8.
- ⁸²⁹ Alexander H. Kaminsky, “Summation for the State,” July 12, 1934, p. 2.
- ⁸³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4. The reference is to the incidents in which the archbishop was assaulted several times by the Tashnags.
- ⁸³¹ “*Tourian Srpazani Sbanout’ean Tadē*,” (“The Trial of Bishop Tourian’s Murder”), *Gotchnag*, July 21, 1934, pp. 687–688.
- ⁸³² Kaminsky, “Summation for the State,” July 12, 1934, p. 19.
- ⁸³³ Joseph E. Corrigan, “Charges to Jury,” July 13, 1934, p. 8.
- ⁸³⁴ Kaminsky, “The Murder of the Archbishop,” p. 70; Derounian, “The Assassination of the Archbishop,” p. 91; Editorial, “*Artarout’ean Haght’anagē*” (“The Victory of

- Justice”), *Gotchnag*, July 21, 1934, p. 675.
- 835 “*Ojrakordznerou Tadavjirē*” (“The Sentence of the Criminals”), *Gotchnag*, July 28, 1934.
- 836 Editorial, “*Ēntahanour Tadakhaz Doji Jaṛē*” (“The Speech of Attorney General Dodge”), *Gotchnag*, August 4, 1934, p. 723.
- 837 H.H.T. Amerigayi Getronagan Gomidē, “*Goch ‘Azkaynagan Hayout‘ean*” (“Appeal to the Nationalistic Armenians”), *Hairenik*, September 26, 1934.
- 838 “*9 Ēngernerou Tadavjiri Verak‘nnout‘ean Ēnt‘ats‘k‘ē*” (“The Course of the Appeal of the Verdict of the 9 Comrades”), *Hairenik*, August 24, 1934.
- 839 “*Verak‘nnich ‘Adeanē Gē Hasdadē Lēylēgiani ew Sarkisiani Mahabadizhi Vjirē*” (“The Court of Appeals Reaffirms the Death Sentence of Lēylēgian and Sarkisian”), *Gotchnag*, March 9, 1935, p. 232.
- 840 “The Murder of the Archbishop,” p. 70.
- 841 Editorial, “*New Eork‘i Tadavarout‘ean Artiwi*” (“On the Occasion of the Trial of New York”), *Hairenik*, June 15, 1934; Atamian, *The Armenian Community*, p. 369.
- 842 *Hairenik Weekly*, August 24, 1934; Editorial, “*K‘ani Mē Dzanōt‘ P‘asder*” (“Few Known Facts”), *Hairenik*, August 5, 1934.
- 843 “*Haydararout‘iwn*” (“Declaration”), *Hairenik*, August 14, 1934. On December 12, 1958, Governor Averill Harriman of New York signed an order granting freedom for Madt‘ēos Lēylēgian and Nshan Sarkisian. The two were released on December 17, 1958. *Hairenik* commented that “this news should cause happiness to the hearts of all freedom-loving Armenians. The release of these two men marks the end of a twenty-five-year tragedy that caused sorrow for the entire community. A sad page in Armenian life has ended and a new page of peace has been opened.” “*Ēngerner M. Lēylēgian ew N. Sarkisian Azad Gartsagouin*” (“Comrades M. Lēylēgian and N. Sarkisian Are Released”), *Hairenik*, December 14, 1958; December 21, 1958.
- 844 “*Hamperout‘iwnē Geank‘ Ē*” (“Patience Is Life”), *Gotchnag*, September 8, 1934, p. 843.
- 845 Kēork Ch‘ēōrēk‘jian, “*Kerakoyñ Khorhrti Oroshoumē Ergou Garkaloudzout‘eants‘ Shourch*” (“The Decision of the Supreme Spiritual Council about the Two Defrocked Priests”), *Gotchnag*, August 18, 1934, p. 783; Editorial, “*Baragdich‘ Egeghets‘aganner Gē Badjouin*” (“Provocative Priests Are Punished”), *Baïkar*, August 17, 1934.
- 846 Armen Bardizian, *Hay Egeghets‘woy Daknabē* (“The Crisis of the Armenian Church”) (Boston: Haïrenik Press, 1936), p. 266.
- 847 Ibid., p. 267.
- 848 Ibid.
- 849 “*Echmiadzni Anartar Hramannerē*” (“The Unjust Directives of Ēchmiadzin”), *Hairenik*, August 16, 1934.
- 850 “*Bashdōnagan Haghortakrout‘iwn Azkayin Aṛachnortarani*” (“Official Communiqué by the National Diocese”), *Baïkar*, October 12, 1934.
- 851 Editorial, “*Ch‘egayi Nor Sbaṛanalikē*” (“The New Threat of Cheka”), *Hairenik*, October 16, 1934.
- 852 “*Azkayin Aṛachnortaran*” (“National Diocese”), *Gotchnag*, October 6, 1934.
- 853 “*Haydararout‘iwn Azkayin Getronagan Varch‘out‘ean*” (“Official Announcement of

the National Central Council”), *Gotchnag*, August 10, 1935, p. 759.

854 “*Ebisgobosagan Tsernatrout ‘iwn*” (“Episcopal Ordination”), *Gotchnag*, September 7, 1935, p. 856.

855 “*Mahap’orts Garkaloydz Martougēsian Vartabedi Vray*” (“Assassination Attempt on the Defrocked Priest Martougēsian”), *Gotchnag*, March 23, 1935, p. 280; Editorial, “*Tadabardeli Ojir Mē*” (“A Deplorable Crime”), *Gotchnag*, March 23, 1935, p. 286; “*Hayr Ghewont Vartabed Martougēsiani Mahap’ortsin Manramasnout ‘iwnnerē*” (“Details of the Assassination Attempt on Father Martougēsian”), *Hairenik*, March 21, 1935.

856 “*Hayr Ghewont Vartabed Martougēsiani Mahap’ortsin Manramasnout ‘iwnnerē*.”

857 “*Berjakhōs Hamemadout ‘iwn Mē*” (An Elucidative Comparison), *Hairenik*, March 22, 1935.

858 “*Bashdōnagan Hrawēr*” (“Official Invitation”), *Hairenik*, September 6, 1934.

859 “*Bashdōnagan Haghortakrout ‘iwn Azkayin Arachnortarani*” (“Official Communiqué of the National Diocese”). *Baïkar*, September 28, 1934.

860 Editorial, “*Kalik’ Eresp’okhanagan Zhoghovē*” (“The Forthcoming Diocesan Convention”), *Hairenik*, September 16, 1934.

861 “*Inch’ Ashkhadank’ner Gadarets’ Amerigayi Hayots’ Azkayin Eresp’okhanagan Zhoghovē*” (“Accomplishments of the National Diocesan Convention of Armenians of America”), *Hairenik*, October 16, 1934; October 18, 1934; “*Deghegakir Azkayin Getronagan Varch ‘out’ean*” (“Report of the National Central Council”), *Hairenik*, October 19, 1934; October 20, 1934.

862 “*Bēdk’ Ē Tatrin Tawerē Echmiadzni Tēm*” (“Plots against Ēchmiadzin Must Cease”), *Baïkar*, October 4, 1934.

863 “*Adenakrout ‘iwn*,” New York, NY, October 10–11, 1936, p. 12.

864 These biographical notes are based on materials provided by the late Bishop Terenig P’ōladian, former dean of the Antelias Seminary and close associate of Archbishop Hovsēp’ian. It is titled *Autobiography*, as told by Father P’ōladian, and traces the life of Archbishop Hovsēp’ian from his birth until 1905. The narrative from 1905 to 1952 was continued by Father Knēl Jerejian, former director of the press of the Catholicosate of Cilicia. Both materials appeared in a dedicatory issue of *Hask*, XVII (July–September 1952), pp. 211–232; Dickran H. Boyajian, *The Pillars of the Armenian Church* (Watertown, MA: Baïkar Press, 1962), pp. 389–412.

865 Boyajian, *The Pillars of the Armenian Church*, p. 382; Yeghishe Gizirian, “*Garegin Hovsepian, Scholar*,” *Armenian Church*, XIV (October 1971), pp. 3–5.

866 Hovsēp’ian’s published and unpublished articles appears in the dedicatory issue of *Hask*, XVII (July–September 1952), pp. 264–269.

867 Bedros Norhad, “Ghewont Yeretz at the Battle of Sardarabad,” *Armenian Church*, V (June 1962), p. 4.

868 Ghewont Erēts’ was an Armenian clergyman who fought with Saint Vartan the Brave against the Persians in AD 451 to defend Christianity against the Persian Zoroastrians. He became a symbol of faith and courage for Armenian soldiers.

869 Antranig Dzarougian, “*Sp’iwṙk’i Dasnameagnerē*” (“The Decades of the Diaspora”), *Nayiri*, February 1, 1970; Editorial, “*Hayrabedagan Badouragē*” (“The

- Plenipotentiary of the Catholicos”), *Sion*, IX (February 1935), p. 37; “*Gatoghigosagan Badouragē*” (“The Plenipotentiary of the Catholicos”), *Hairenik*, July 29, 1934.
- 870 “*Echmiadzni Badouragin Ardasahmanean Arakelout‘ean Nbadagē*” (“The Purpose of the Plenipotentiary’s Mission to the Diaspora”), *Gotchnag*, December 15, 1934, p. 1195.
- 871 Editorial, “*Hayrabadagan Nouragē*” (“The Plenipotentiary of the Catholicos”), *Gotchnag*, December 22, 1934, p. 1203.
- 872 Editorial, “*Echmiadzni Tēm Bayk‘arin Nbadagē*” (“The Aim of the Struggle against Ėchmiadzin”), *Baïkar*, April 30, 1935.
- 873 Editorial, “*Oghpam Zk‘ez Hayots‘ Ashkharh*” (“Woe to the Land of Armenia”), *Gotchnag*, December 11, 1937, p. 1297.
- 874 “*Gat‘oghigosagan Nourag Kerashnorh Dēr Karekin Ark‘ebisgobos Hovsēp‘ian Niw Eork‘ Hasaw*” (“The Plenipotentiary to the Catholicos Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp‘ian Arrived in New York”), *Gotchnag*, April 18, 1936, p. 376.
- 875 “*Gatoghisoagan Nourag Kerashnorh Dēr Karekin Ark‘ebisgobos New Eork‘ Gē Zhamanē*” (“The Plenipotentiary to the Catholicos Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp‘ian Arrives in New York”), *Baïkar*, April 10, 1936.
- 876 Kh. Bēdishian, “*Gat‘oghigosagan Nourag Kerashnorh Karekin Ark‘ebisgobos Hovsēp‘iani Arachin Tasakhosout‘iwnē*” (“The First Lecture of the Plenipotentiary of the Catholicos Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp‘ian”), *Baïkar*, April 26, 1936.
- 877 Hovhannēs Awakian, “*Hantisawor Badarak*” (“High Mass”), *Gotchnag*, May 16, 1936, pp. 470–471.
- 878 Subsequently, a fund-raising committee was formed and a campaign was initiated. In spite of the Depression, the archbishop succeeded in raising \$35,000. K. Hovsēp‘ian, “*Sourp Echmiadzni Norokout‘ean ew Bahbanout‘ean Anhrazheshdout‘iwnē*” (“The Necessity of Renovation and Restoration of Holy Ėchmiadzin”), *Gotchnag*, June 13, 1936, p. 567; Boyajian, *The Pillars of the Armenian Church*, p. 402.
- 879 “*Amerigahay Zhoghovrtean Mdk‘eri Baydzarout‘ean ew Khaghaghout‘ean Hamar*” (“For the Illumination and Mental Tranquility of the Armenian People”), *Baïkar*, September 24, 1936.
- 880 Ibid.
- 881 “*Adenakrout‘iwn*,” New York, NY, October 10–11, 1936, p. 21.
- 882 Editorial, “*Gatoghigosagan Nourag Srpazanin Haydararout‘iwnē*” (“Declaration of the Plenipotentiary”), *Baïkar*, September 25, 1936.
- 883 Ibid.
- 884 Ibid. This view was even adopted by *Gotchnag*, the Armenian Protestant periodical sympathetic to Ėchmiadzin. The reference to the Tashnags in an editorial stated that their separation was not ill fortune, but that on the contrary, it gave the Church the opportunity to free itself from intrigues and feuds and to dedicate itself to its true mission.
- 885 Ibid.
- 886 “*Adenakrout‘iwn*,” New York, NY, October 10–11, 1936, p. 3.
- 887 Ibid., pp. 33–34.
- 888 Ibid., p. 31.

- 889 Mgrdich‘ T‘ōp‘alian, “*Amerigahay Azkayin Eresp‘okhanagan Zhoghov*” (“National
Diocesan Convention of Armenians in America”), *Gotchnag*, October 24, 1936,
p. 1026.
- 890 Ibid.
- 891 “*Adenakrout‘iwn*,” New York, NY, October 10–11, 1936, p. 34.
- 892 Ibid.; H. Hovnanian, “*Amerigahay Azkayin Eresp‘okhanagan Zhoghov*” (“National
Diocesan Convention of Armenians in America”), *Baika*r, October 15, 1936.
- 893 Ibid.; “*Arachnortaran Hayots‘ Amerigayi*” (“Diocese of Armenians of America”),
Gotchnag, October 31, 1936, p. 1048.
- 894 “*Amerigahay Azkayin Eresp‘okhanagan Zhoghov*” *Gotchnag*, October 24, 1936, p.
1027.
- 895 “*Hayrabedagan Gontag*” (“Pontifical Encyclical”), *Baika*r, August 14, 1937.
- 896 Editorial, “*Karekin Arkebisgobos Hovsēp‘ianē Amerigayi Mēch ew Ir Arakelout‘iwnē*”
 (“Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp‘ian in America and His Mission”), *Hairenik*, April
14, 1936.
- 897 Editorial, “*Baragdich‘nerou Nor Khagherē ew Karekin Srpazani Arakelout‘iwnē*,”
Hairenik, April 21, 1936.
- 898 Editorial, “*Baragdichnerē Gē Sharounagen Irents‘ Sew Kordzē*” (“The Provocateurs
Continue Their Dark Activities”), *Hairenik*, May 5, 1936.
- 899 Editorial, “*Arak‘elout‘ean Mē Tsakhogh Sgzpnaworout‘iwnē*” (“The Poor Beginnings
of a Mission”), *Hairenik*, June 5, 1936.
- 900 Ibid.
- 901 “*Bashdōnagan Haydararout‘iwn*” (“Official Announcement”), *Hairenik*, November
8, 1936.
- 902 Editorial, “*Eresp‘okhanagan Zhoghovi Artiw*” (“Upon the Occasion of the Diocesan
Convention”), *Hairenik*, November 11, 1936.
- 903 Editorial, “*Amenayn Hayots‘ Gat‘oghigosi ew Anor Liazor Nergayats‘outs‘ichi
Bardaganout‘iwnē*” (“The Responsibility of the Catholicos of All Armenians and His
Plenipotentiary”), *Hairenik*, November 14, 1936.
- 904 “*Adenakrout‘iwn Amerigayi Hayots‘ Arak‘elagan Egeghets‘woy Eresp‘okhanagan
Zhoghovin*” (“Minutes of the Diocesan Convention of the Apostolic Church of
Armenians in America”), New York, NY, November 14–15, 1936, *Hairenik*, December
4, 1936.
- 905 “*Adenakrout‘iwn*,” New York, NY, November 14–15, 1936, *Hairenik*, November 25,
1936.
- 906 “*Adenakrout‘iwn*,” *Hairenik*, December 1, 1936.
- 907 “*Adenakrout‘iwn*,” *Hairenik*, November 25, 1936.
- 908 Hovsēp‘ian, “*Pat‘sartsag Skhalē Himk‘ Pats‘artsag Zrbardout‘ean*” (“The Absolute
Accusation Rests on Absolute Error”), *Gotchnag*, December 18, 1937, p. 1330.
- 909 Ibid., p. 1331.
- 910 “*Bashdōnagan Haghortakrout‘iwn - Arachnortaran Hayots‘ Amerigayi*” (“Official
Communiqué of the Diocese of the Armenians of America”), *Gotchnag*, May 29, 1937,
p. 541.
- 911 “*Adenakrout‘iwn*,” New York, NY, May 1–2, 1937, p. 69.

- 912 “Adenakrout ‘iwn,” New York, NY, September 3–4, 1938, p. 77.
- 913 “Bashdōnagan Haghortakrout ‘iwn - Arachnortaran Hayots ‘Amerigayi” (“Official Communiqué of the Diocese of the Armenians of America”), *Gotchnag*, July 17, 1937, p. 708; July 24, 1937, p. 730.
- 914 Editorial, “Inch ‘Gagngalenk ‘Nouirag Srpazanēn” (“What We Expect from the Plenipotentiary”), *Baïkar*, November 27, 1937.
- 915 “Adenakrout ‘iwn,” New York, NY, September 3–4, 1938, p. 104.
- 916 Ardēn Ashjian, *Vijagats ‘oyts ‘ew Badmout ‘iwn Arachnortagan T‘emin Hayots ‘Amerigayi* (“Statistics and History of the Armenian Diocese of America”) (New York: Lēylēgian Press, 1949), p. 128.
- 917 *Ibid.*, p. 131.
- 918 *Twenty-Fifth Anniversary*, Holy Cross Church, Lawrence, MA, 1956.
- 919 *Ibid.*
- 920 *Ibid.*
- 921 Souvenir Book, *Twentieth Anniversary*, Saint James Armenian Apostolic Church, Watertown, MA, 1931–1951; *Silver Anniversary*, Saint James Armenian Apostolic Church, Watertown, MA, 1957; *Thirtieth Anniversary*, Saint James Armenian Apostolic Church, Watertown, MA, 1931–1961.
- 922 Ashjian, *Vijagats ‘oyts ‘ew Badmout ‘iwn Arachnortagan T‘emin Hayots ‘Amerigayi*, pp. 263–270.
- 923 *Ibid.*
- 924 Souvenir Book, *Twentieth Anniversary*, Saint James Armenian Apostolic Church, Watertown, MA, 1931–1951.
- 925 Varoujan Samuelian, “The Church,” *Silver Anniversary*, Saint James Church, Watertown, MA, 1957.
- 926 *Ibid.*
- 927 Ashjian, *Vijagats ‘oyts ‘ew Badmout ‘iwn Arachnortagan T‘emin Hayots ‘Amerigayi*, p. 160.
- 928 *Ibid.*, p. 162. Church services continued to be held in this hall until 1925, when they were moved into another building on 30th Street, where they remained until 1946. In 1958 a three-story building was purchased and the first floor converted into a church. In March 1950 this church was consecrated by Archbishop Sion Manougian and named Saint Gregory the Illuminator. *Fifth Consecration Anniversary*, Saint Gregory Illuminator Church, 1950–1955, pp. 22–24.
- 929 *Tenth Anniversary*, Holy Cross Church of Armenia, New York, NY, 1929–1939.
- 930 *Twentieth Anniversary*, Holy Cross Church of Armenia, New York, NY, 1929–1949.
- 931 *Ibid.*
- 932 “*Heṛakir Vehap ‘ar Hayrabadēn*” (“Telegram from the Catholicos”), *Baïkar*, June 7, 1934.
- 933 *Twentieth Anniversary*, Holy Cross Church of Armenia, New York, NY, 1929–1949.

The End of an Era

(1938–1944)

Ēchmiadzin and the Soviets: A Period of Relative Tolerance

The election of Archbishop Hovsēp'ian in 1938 as Primate marked the beginning of an era of recovery, although progress proved to be slow and difficult. After several years of ecclesiastical controversy that sapped the strength of the Armenian community and the Church, it was hoped that this election would restore peace and order. Moreover, the new Primate was seen as a source of inspiration, and it was anticipated that he would reinstate the authority of the diocese through well-defined objectives and effective programs attractive to both young and old members of the Church.

The reign of Archbishop Hovsēp'ian witnessed the high-water mark of Armenian faith and ethnic heritage. To traditionalist members of the Armenian community, the Primate's election was heartening as a means of preserving the Armenian spirit in America.⁹³⁴ The principle of national existence or racial identity was fostered by institutions such as the Church, the Armenian press, the Armenian-language schools, and various charitable and compatriotic organizations.

The new Primate was also conscious of the need to preserve these religious and ethnic traditions. His scholastic background prepared him well for his challenge. However, his traditionalism generated mixed feelings among the people, especially the second generation, who often complained of their inability to understand church services that were conducted in Armenian by priests ill-equipped for the American setting. The traditionalist members were determined to cling to their Armenian heritage and to maintain strong ties with the homeland. The uncompromising attitude of community and Church leaders further widened the gulf between the generations. Archbishop Hovsēp'ian made earnest efforts to appeal to the younger generation, but to little avail. It was only under his successor, Archbishop Diran Nersoyian of London, England, that the diocese began to identify more closely with the American scene. With the termination of Archbishop Hovsēp'ian's primacy in the mid-1940s, an era in the history of the Armenian Church in America ended.

The Great Purge of 1936–1938 in Armenia was directed against Armenian nationalism. The “cleansing” of the Communist Party, government members, and officials began with the death of its first victim, the Communist Party secretary, Aghasi Khanjian, in July 1936. His death was followed by those of hundreds of others from all walks of life. The most frequent charge brought against the Church at this time was that the clergy collaborated in nationalistic plots to overthrow the government.

Soviet officials had become suspicious of Catholicos Khorēn I and doubted his loyalty; therefore, he had to be eliminated. His premature death occurred on April 6, 1938, at his residence in the monastery of Ēchmiadzin.⁹³⁵

Patriarch T'orkom Koushagian of Jerusalem was the first to be informed of the death of Catholicos Khorēn. In a telegram from Ēchmiadzin on April 11, 1938, he was told that the Catholicos had suffered a severe heart attack on the night of April 6 and had been unable to receive immediate medical attention. The cable was signed by the deputy locum tenens, Archbishop Kēork Ch'ēōrēk'jian.⁹³⁶ Patriarch Koushagian acted on this message and wired thirty dioceses throughout the world, including the American diocese, of the death of the Catholicos.⁹³⁷ He also sent a telegram to the deputy locum tenens expressing his condolences and requesting additional details concerning the death of the Catholicos. No reply was received from Ēchmiadzin, however, until April 23, when a telegram verified the accuracy of the official government medical bulletin concerning the cause of death. The cable also disclosed that on the basis of a pontifical will, an encyclical dated April 18, 1936, designated Archbishop Ch'ēōrēk'jian as deputy locum tenens. The diocese was notified of these events in a letter dated May 24, 1938.⁹³⁸

The news of the death of the Catholicos shocked Armenians of the diaspora. Although one segment of the community did not question the circumstances surrounding his death and the designation of Archbishop Ch'ēōrēk'jian as deputy locum tenens, the Tashnag press was singularly critical of Armenians and high-ranking clergymen who wished to remain silent about the situation in Ēchmiadzin.⁹³⁹ The Tashnag view was based on information received through hundreds of refugees from Armenia and the Soviet Union. Archbishop Melik'-T'ankian of Tehran, Iran, interviewed hundreds of refugees, both Armenian and other nationals, even Turks, to learn the truth of the situation.⁹⁴⁰

His investigations revealed that the government had demanded a tax of forty thousand rubles from the Catholicos. The Catholicos replied to government officials that he was unable to meet these demands because of the lack of funds at Ēchmiadzin. He requested additional time to obtain the necessary funds from Armenians abroad. The Cheka denied his request, however, and insisted that the Catholicos relinquish the treasures of the Church. The Catholicos adamantly refused.

Thus it was that, shortly after midnight on April 6, a group of NKVD agents allegedly arrived at the monastery and proceeded to the residence of the Catholicos. They were denied entrance by his personal servant. The commotion awoke the Catholicos, who quickly dressed and took with him the keys to the museum vault. Meanwhile, the Secret Service agents had already broken into his residence and met him in the reception hall. In the ensuing confrontation, the agents forced the Catholicos to surrender the keys to the museum and treasures of the cathedral. When

the Catholicos resisted, the agents encircled him and seized the keys, turning deaf ears to his pleas for help. In the fight the agents brutally choked him to death, leaving his body on the ground. From there they rushed to the cathedral, where they emptied the vault of its contents and, taking the stolen treasures, fled to their headquarters in Erevan.

After the crime, the members of the Ėchmiadzin Brotherhood remained secluded in their cells, according to reports. For three days the body of the martyred Catholicos remained unattended on the floor of the reception hall. No one dared approach the body, not even a member of the Supreme Spiritual Council. Finally, the body of the Catholicos was laid to rest unceremoniously on the fourth day in a hastily dug grave in the courtyard of the monastery by six Armenian nuns.⁹⁴¹ The murder of the Catholicos did not become general knowledge. The authorities simply reported it as death by natural causes. Archbishop Ch'ēōrēk'jian was forced to sign the death certificate.

The premature death of the pontiff caused a deep sense of loss and bewilderment among Armenians in America and the world over. Significant among such expressions was an editorial titled “The Great Mourning” in *Sion*, the monthly magazine of the Armenian Patriarch in Jerusalem. The editorial reflected on the aura of mystery surrounding the death of the Catholicos and cast doubt on the accuracy of the official reports of the circumstances of his death and burial.⁹⁴²

The death of Catholicos Khorēn was a great loss for the Armenian Church. He possessed a profound perception of the political situation in Armenia and had carefully maneuvered Soviet authorities into adopting a less severe attitude toward the Armenian Church. The Tashnag Party, however, considered him weak and ineffective in preserving the rights and integrity of the Church. They regarded him only as an instrument in the hands of the Soviets.⁹⁴³

A forty-day mourning period was proclaimed in the diocese by locum tenens Archbishop Kalfaian. The pontiff's death was commemorated at church services throughout the world. In America the late pontiff was best remembered for his role as plenipotentiary in 1920, when he had opened the doors of understanding between the supports of Father Arsēn Vehouni and those of the locum tenens Father Shahē Kasbarian.

The death of the pontiff marked the climax of the antireligious campaign in Soviet Armenia. The renewed attack on the Church resulted in the imprisonment and deportation of numerous priests and their families and the confiscation of hundreds of churches and shrines.

Archbishop Kēork Ch'ēōrēk'jian assumed office as *Deghagal* (deputy) locum tenens.⁹⁴⁴ He was seventy years old at the time and had experienced harsh treatment by the Soviets; however, the policy he pursued as deputy locum tenens was one of loyalty to the Soviet government of Armenia. The Tashnag press could not justify

his attitude and regarded him as a puppet of the Communist regime.⁹⁴⁵ Much controversy centered on a Catholicosal encyclical allegedly issued by the late Catholicos that was made public by the Supreme Spiritual Council in July 1938. The encyclical, dated April 18, 1936, revealed that Catholicos Khorēn had designated Archbishop Ch'ēōrēk'jian as deputy locum tenens, to succeed him on his death. The validity of this encyclical was verified by the Supreme Spiritual Council.⁹⁴⁶

The Tashnag Party immediately contested the authenticity of the encyclical and claimed that it was a forgery by the Cheka.⁹⁴⁷ Archbishop Hovsēp'ian denied allegations that Archbishop Ch'ēōrēk'jian was a traitor or agent of the Cheka. He stated that the designation of Archbishop Ch'ēōrēk'jian as locum tenens by the Catholicos was in accord with centuries-old traditions of the Church.⁹⁴⁸ This issued remained in the fore for some time, however, and continued to incite further conflict.

Archbishop Ch'ēōrēk'jian manifested only civic loyalty to the Soviet government and not ideological rapprochement as suggested by the Tashnag press. With the German attack on the USSR on June 22, 1941, the situation changed in Armenia, and Soviet policy became more tolerant toward religion in general.⁹⁴⁹ From the start of the war, the leaders of the Church and Ēchmiadzin supported the Soviet Union. Prayers were offered in churches for the safety of the fighting men and for the defeat of the Axis Powers. Archbishop Ch'ēōrēk'jian earnestly supported the war effort, as did his counterparts in the Russian Orthodox Church.

At the outbreak of the war it was reported that certain Armenian communities and priests in the war zones in the Ukraine, Kiev, Kharkov, and Crimea had befriended the Germans, regarding them as their liberators from Soviet rule. The Church, however, remained loyal to the Soviet government.⁹⁵⁰

The Tashnag Party was caught in an internal conflict. One segment held a solicitous attitude toward Nazism and its anti-Communist obsession based on the Nazi promise for a free and independent Armenia under a German mandate.

The other segment hated Nazism and feared the consequences of liberation by the Germans. At the same time, hope lingered that somehow the war might weaken the Soviet Union sufficiently to allow the emergence of a free Armenia.⁹⁵¹

On December 15, 1942, the Armenian National Council was organized in Berlin under the patronage of the Ministry of the Eastern Occupied Areas. The council was composed of prominent Tashnag leaders, among them Professor Ardashēs Abeghian, Karekin Nzhteh, and Trō Ganaian. The council appealed to Alfred Rosenberg, Nazi Minister of Eastern Occupied Areas, to make Soviet Armenia a German colony.⁹⁵² Tashnag political adventurism was strongly criticized by their opponents and labeled as politically bankrupt and morally corrupt. Tashnag opponents feared the consequences if Nazi hordes reached Armenia and liquidated Armenian families

whose sons and husbands were fighting in the ranks of the Red Army.

An editorial in the *Armenian-Mirror Spectator*, titled “Incorrigible,” harshly criticized the Tashnags:

No, these leaders and their blind followers can never be the liberators of the Armenian people. Their fratricidal terrorism, their fanatical and obtuse stupidity and incurable political opportunism have turned them into grave diggers of the remnants of a people. They conspired with the Nazis in the darkest and most critical period in the history of our people as they had schemed and plotted in the past with the Tatar Musawatists, Georgian Mensheviks, with the Turks and the Kurds against Soviet Russia knowing too well that the plot was also aimed against Soviet Armenia.⁹⁵³

Throughout the war against Germany there were no antireligious demonstrations to speak of in the Soviet Union. On the contrary, cordial relations developed between Ēchmiadzin and the Kremlin. This cordiality was manifested in many ways. Sunday was again recognized as a holiday on which the faithful were allowed to attend church. Permission was granted to convene an all-Armenian National Ecclesiastical Assembly in 1940 in which delegates from dioceses in the diaspora were invited to participate for the election of a new Catholicos. The American diocese was notified of this assembly on September 20, 1940, by the Supreme Spiritual Council in Ēchmiadzin and was requested to send five delegates.⁹⁵⁴ Another telegram, dated December 12, 1940, from Archbishop Ch‘ēōrēk‘jian informed the diocese that the assembly was scheduled for April 10, 1941.⁹⁵⁵ The assembly convened from April 10–13, 1941, but did not elect a new Catholicos as expected.

The following reasons were offered for the postponement of the Catholicosal election:

1. Wartime difficulties and restrictions on travel, which deterred a large number of delegates from risking the journey to Armenia.
2. The lack of a sufficient number of high-ranking clergymen to consecrate a Catholicos in accordance with the traditions of the Armenian Church.
3. The lack of a quorum present on the appointed date, April 10, 1941. Only forty-nine of the ninety-two delegates were present.

Consequently, the assembly merely confirmed the archbishop as deputy locum tenens.⁹⁵⁶ At the conclusion of the conference, a statement was issued praising the Russian political leaders for their farsightedness and for maintaining peace in the world.⁹⁵⁷

Late in 1942, religious tolerance was generally acknowledged in Armenia, and prayers for Soviet victory were raised. Archbishop Ch'ēōrēk'jian expressed gratitude to the government for its solicitude toward the needs of the Church. In a message on September 20, 1942, the archbishop urged Armenians of the world to unite in combating Hitlerism. His message, titled "An Appeal to All Armenians," praised the Armenians of America for their friendship and good relations with the homeland and condemned those who collaborated with the enemy and betrayed the fatherland. The message concluded by stressing the need for unity among Armenians against the common foe and the need for support of the Soviet regime, which was the God-given protector of the law.⁹⁵⁸

Throughout the duration of the war, the Armenian Church continued to serve the nation.

On January 24, 1943, Archbishop Ch'ēōrēk'jian wired Stalin that the Armenian faithful in America and elsewhere were raising funds for the "*Sasounts 'i Tavit*" Tank Column." He reported that Ēchmiadzin was donating nearly one million rubles for the building of planes and tanks. Stalin's response praised the clergy for their deep loyalty to country and government.⁹⁵⁹

Harmony between Church and government was further evidenced by the formation of a Council for the Affairs of the Armenian Church on November 14, 1943. This council served as adjunct to the Council of Ministers of Soviet Armenia.⁹⁶⁰ Its functions were to ensure harmonious relations between church and state, to oversee the opening of new churches, to arrange for theological institutions, and to draft legislation relating to the Church. One outgrowth of these endeavors, in January 1944, was the revival of the official publication of Ēchmiadzin.⁹⁶¹

At the conclusion of the war, Church administration was normalized, and it was deemed possible by the Supreme Spiritual Council to convene a National Ecclesiastical Assembly for the election of a new Catholicos. The only candidate for the office was the deputy locum tenens, Archbishop Ch'ēōrēk'jian. On April 19, 1945, he was received by Stalin at the Kremlin.⁹⁶² Before his meeting with Stalin, the Catholicos met with President Ivan Vassilievich Polyanzky of the Council for Affairs for Religious Cults to discuss matters affecting the Armenian Church. President Polyanzky later participated in the conversations between Stalin and the Catholicos.⁹⁶³

This visit was significant in that it took place on the eve of the fall of Berlin and shortly before the collapse of Germany in May 1945. No official record of the meeting is available, but all indications suggest that relations between Church and government were cordial. It was expected that the locum tenens would remain loyal to the Soviet government when elected Catholicos. In return, Ēchmiadzin would receive a number of concessions from the government that would consolidate her authority at home and abroad. The visit to Stalin secured the convening of the

National Ecclesiastical Assembly, the reopening of the theological seminary at Ēchmiadzin, and the recovery of a number of churches. All these concessions were made public and official by the decree of Stalin.⁹⁶⁴

Two months after the meeting, on June 16, 1945, the National Ecclesiastical Assembly was inaugurated and presided over by His Holiness Karekin Hovsēp'ian of Cilicia. It remained in session until June 25.⁹⁶⁵ Participating in the assembly and the ceremony of anointment and enthronement were patriarch-elect Giwregh of Jerusalem; Archbishop Kēork Arslanian, Acting Patriarch of Constantinople; and other high-ranking churchmen. The Soviet government was represented by Ivan Polyanzky and the Armenian Republic by Sourēn Nersēsi Hovhannēsian, president of the Armenian Council for Affairs of the Armenian Church.⁹⁶⁶ Nearly all the major Armenian colonies throughout the world were represented. A total of eleven delegates were present, five from the United States. On June 22 Archbishop Ch'ēōrēk'jian was elected Catholicos Kēork VI by a vote of 100 to 1. The only dissenting vote was his own.⁹⁶⁷

Ivan V. Polyanzky greeted the assembly and conveyed the blessings of the government. He praised the Church and its leaders for their service to the fatherland and paid tribute to the Armenian Church in the following words:

From the very beginning of the Armenian nation, this people, which has seen so many failures, has suffered so much . . . the Armenian Church has always stood by the people, has helped to revive its national autonomy, has reared its children in national consciousness and contributed to the nation's cultural advancement.⁹⁶⁸

The assembly responded to Stalin's solicitousness with a message full of praise. The newly elected Catholicos credited Stalin as the "liberator of the Armenian people and the leader who realized the rebirth of the Armenian States."⁹⁶⁹

On June 22, 1945, Catholicos Kēork VI was enthroned in an elaborate ceremony at Ēchmiadzin Cathedral by His Holiness Karekin Hovsēp'ian, Catholicos of Cilicia. The rites were attended by representatives of the Armenian and Russian governments and by clergy and laity. Ten new bishops were ordained. Among them was the Right Reverend Diran Nersoyian, the American Primate.

Although the Armenian Church made substantial gains during the war because of the benevolent attitudes of the Soviet regime, many signs of weakness remained in the Church. Few young people and only a fraction of the adults attended church. There was a shortage of priests, and very few candidates for the priesthood existed. In his report to the assembly, Archbishop Ch'ēōrēk'jian noted that in 1943 the brotherhood of Ēchmiadzin had only two members in residence, though in 1945 this number rose to eleven.⁹⁷⁰ Tolerance on the part of the Soviet regime did not

necessarily mean any basic reversal of the traditional Marxist hostility to religion.

Succeeding years showed that religion was still essentially not compatible with communism. Social leaders in the USSR felt the necessity to conduct an antireligious propaganda campaign, especially aimed at the younger generation.

The Election of the Primate: Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp'ian

Archbishop Mamprē Kalfaian was still in office as locum tenens when the Diocesan Convention of September 3–4, 1938, elected Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp'ian the new Primate. His election was welcomed, especially because it came so soon after the tragedy of Archbishop Tourian's death. Community and Church leaders hoped that, as Primate, the archbishop would provide wise leadership and direct the energies of the people into constructive channels. However, this was not to be for some time. Ēchmiadzin was reluctant to confirm the election of Archbishop Hovsēp'ian, and it was only after eight months that his election was confirmed.

Before the Diocesan Convention of September 1938, a Fresno Armenian paper, *Nor Or*, reported on August 26, 1938, that Archbishop Hovsēp'ian was about to terminate his itinerary in America and return to Ēchmiadzin. The article also revealed that deputy locum tenens Ch'ēōrēk'jian in Ēchmiadzin deemed Archbishop Hovsēp'ian's presence in the Holy See essential and that Archbishop Hovsēp'ian had replied to Ēchmiadzin's request for his return before undertaking his journey.⁹⁷¹

On September 3, the opening day of the Diocesan Convention, an editorial in *Baikar* reflected that Archbishop Hovsēp'ian's departure from America was deeply regretted by the people and that he definitely would have been elected Primate had he not been called to Ēchmiadzin.⁹⁷² The agenda of the upcoming convention did not include the election of a Primate. The Central Executive Committee urged the delegates to postpone the election for the following reasons:

1. Because of the lack of time and unforeseen circumstances, the Central Executive Committee was unable to present a slate of candidates for the election.
2. Because of the sudden death of the Catholicos, ecclesiastical affairs in Ēchmiadzin were at a stalemate. Thus, the granting of a confirmation for the Primate would pose difficulties.
3. The recent improvement of relations between Ēchmiadzin and the See of Cilicia might be beneficial to the American diocese in that she could procure pastors for the churches in America.
4. The election of a new Primate would prove to be economically unwise at this time because there was a scarcity of diocesan funds.⁹⁷³

This resolution generated heated debate among the delegates who considered the decision of the Central Executive Committee unacceptable. Yielding to the

wishes of the majority, the chairman proceeded with the election of a Primate. A nominating committee was appointed and submitted a slate of three candidates. Voting was by secret ballot, and during the fourth session of the convention on September 3, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian was elected Primate by a majority vote.⁹⁷⁴ In his acceptance speech, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian expressed gratitude for the confidence entrusted to him. He pledged to fulfill the challenging tasks of his high office if his election was confirmed by the Holy See.⁹⁷⁵

The news of Archbishop Hovsēp'ian's election was cabled to Ēchmiadzin by the Central Executive Committee on September 7, 1938, and the confirmation of his election was also requested.⁹⁷⁶ Although Armenians in America were pleased with the outcome of the election, Ēchmiadzin was reluctant to extend its confirmation. Consequently, on November 15 Ēchmiadzin wired Archbishop Hovsēp'ian to depart immediately for Paris.⁹⁷⁷ On November 16, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian and the Central Executive Committee appealed to Ēchmiadzin to reconsider the decision. It was not until two months later, however, that Ēchmiadzin responded, informing them that arrangements had been made for the archbishop to return to Ēchmiadzin by way of Paris. The cablegram added that an explanatory letter addressed to both the chairman of the Diocesan Convention and the Central Executive Committee was forthcoming.⁹⁷⁸

At a regular meeting of the Central Executive Committee in November, Ēchmiadzin's refusal was discussed. The members of the committee were distressed at the attitude Ēchmiadzin had adopted in disregarding the needs of the diocese. Archbishop Hovsēp'ian observed that, after the untimely death of Catholicos Khorēn I on April 6, 1938, his own presence in the diaspora would be more beneficial for Ēchmiadzin. He also noted that this was why he had consented to submit his candidacy for Primate. Ēchmiadzin's feelings on the matter were obvious, as indicated by her order that he proceed to Paris. The archbishop announced that he had decided to leave the United States in early December unless the situation was altered.⁹⁷⁹

When the needs of these events became public, Ēchmiadzin's refusal to grant confirmation was viewed with deeper regret by the faithful.⁹⁸⁰ People in diocesan circles challenged the wisdom and legality of the decision, which they regarded as negligent of the needs and aspirations of the Armenians of America.

The partisan press also took sides in the issue. An editorial in *Baïkar*, dated February 16, 1939, and titled "A Denied Confirmation," commented that the election of Archbishop Hovsēp'ian would have been beneficial and advantageous to the restoration and normalization of the authority of the Mother See and churches throughout the world. The archbishop would have served as a bridge between Armenians at home and abroad. The editorial concluded by stating that until the causes for denial were proven to be just and legitimate, Ēchmiadzin had made a

grave mistake and her decision was against the best interests of the diocese in the United States.⁹⁸¹

On the other hand, the Tashnag press accused Archbishop Ch'ēōrēk'jian, the deputy locum tenens, of unnecessarily meddling in the Armenian Church in the United States and of being a usurper. In view of growing criticism against Ēchmiadzin, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian emphasized the need for a disciplined and filial attitude toward Ēchmiadzin. The Central Executive Committee, faced with uncertainty, pleaded with Ēchmiadzin to reconsider its decision.

At this time the people's reaction was expressed by the formation of "Popular Committees" in nearly every Armenian community. Their intent was to persuade Ēchmiadzin to reverse her decision. They demanded that the Central Executive Committee become aware of this matter and act with firmness and persistence.⁹⁸²

Ēchmiadzin's silence also brought about a reaction among the Hierarchical Sees, which intervened on behalf of Archbishop Hovsēp'ian. They deplored Ēchmiadzin's policy toward one of her most worthy and noted sons. One example of this reaction appeared in an editorial titled "The Plenipotentiary Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp'ian, Primate of the Armenians of America," in *Sion*, the periodical of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem. The editorial commented that although Ēchmiadzin preferred to remain silent in regard to the election of Archbishop Hovsēp'ian, she was adamant about his departure from America.⁹⁸³ The editorial continued to point out that Church governing bodies in America must pursue this matter until they succeeded, because a Primate of the stature of Archbishop Hovsēp'ian would not only benefit the Armenians of America, but would also bring credit to the Mother See in Ēchmiadzin.⁹⁸⁴

On January 25, 1939, the Central Executive Committee sent a telegram to Ēchmiadzin, pleading that the deputy locum tenens reconsider their request for a confirmation because it represented the feelings of thousands of faithful. His election, they wrote, would contribute to the integrity of the supreme authority of Ēchmiadzin.

They also requested that the archbishop be allowed to postpone his departure from America until the cable was answered.⁹⁸⁵ Ēchmiadzin reiterated that it was imperative for Archbishop Hovsēp'ian to depart for Paris and be subject to the orders of the Supreme Spiritual Council.

Neither side was ready for compromise. Ēchmiadzin now considered Archbishop Hovsēp'ian's actions in open defiance of the authority of the Supreme Spiritual Council and the deputy locum tenens. The Tashnag and Communist presses also joined forces with Ēchmiadzin in criticizing Archbishop Hovsēp'ian. They labeled him "the great rebel."⁹⁸⁶

Archbishop Hovsēp'ian replied to his critics and stated his position in an article titled "On the Occasion of Being Elected to the primacy of America." In this article

Archbishop Hovsēp'ian stated his reasons for variance with Ēchmiadzin:

If I consent to accept the office of Primacy, even on a temporary basis, it will be for valid reasons. America is one of the major Armenian colonies of the Diaspora and is in need of reorganization. It is necessary to create here a national and ecclesiastical life and climate by which she will become a bridge between other colonies and the homeland. Even if Ēchmiadzin remains adamant in her refusal to grant confirmation to the election, my conscience and principles will not allow me to rebel against the Central Spiritual Council of which I am a member. It is our duty and right to voice our views in the vital issues which concern the well-being of the Mother See. The final decision rests with the Mother See. In the meantime, we ask clarification from Ēchmiadzin in view of her decision. This we ask only in the spirit of filial responsibility, not dissension. It is my conviction that under the present circumstances it is not wise to depart from America. If Ēchmiadzin heeds my voice it is for the best, and if she does not, I must comply with her wishes, having fulfilled my duties and leaving the rest to God. Without Ēchmiadzin's confirmation of the election, I will not under any circumstances assume the office of Primate.⁹⁸⁷

The people of the American diocese had come to realize that they needed to organize and strengthen themselves under the aegis of a learned and capable spiritual leader. To community-minded leaders and the populace, the problems of Ēchmiadzin were obscured by the more pressing and immediate needs of the American diocese. One such problem of immediate concern arose with the resignation of Archbishop Mamprē Kalfaian as *locum tenens*.

The New Locum Tenens: Father Sion Manougian (March 1, 1939–May 9, 1939)

For some time Archbishop Kalfaian had indicated his desire to resign from office. Whatever his reasons for resignation, he fulfilled his responsibilities as locum tenens in one of the stormiest periods in the history of the Armenian community and Church in America. Except for the tense period during the trial of the Archbishop Tourian case, he provided the Church with orderly leadership.

Archbishop Kalfaian tendered his resignation in writing on March 1, 1939. It was accepted by the Central Executive Committee at a meeting held on March 9 in its New York office.⁹⁸⁸

At this meeting the committee elected Father Sion Manougian, pastor of Holy Translators Church in Providence, Rhode Island, as locum tenens and wired Ēchmiadzin for confirmation. The reply was received on March 26; Archbishop Ch'ēōrēk'jian confirmed Father Manougian's election and, accordingly, he assumed the leadership of the Armenian Church in America.⁹⁸⁹

Father Manougian was born in 1906 in a small village, Giwrashen, in the province of Vasbouragan in the eastern sector of Turkey. He was left an orphan as a small child and in 1921, along with 850 other orphans, he was placed in an orphanage in Jerusalem. He enrolled as a student in Saint James Seminary in Jerusalem in 1923 and was ordained into the priesthood in 1930. For the next eight years he held administrative posts in the monastery until he was invited by Bishop Kalfaian in 1938 to serve in the Providence parish.⁹⁹⁰

Father Manougian was consecrated as bishop in 1945 by Catholicos Kēork VI at Ēchmiadzin. From 1946 to 1952 Bishop Manougian served in Detroit and over parishes of the Middle West, first as pastor of Saint John Church in Detroit, and later as vicar-general of the diocesan Primate in that area.

Following the election of Archbishop Karekin Khach'adourian of South America as Patriarch of Istanbul in 1950, Catholicos Kēork VI appointed Bishop Manougian as apostolic delegate to the South American diocese of the Armenian Church in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Bishop Manougian left Detroit for his new post in October 1952. He was made an archbishop by Catholicos Vazken I in 1955.

On November 16, 1958, the Diocesan Convention of the North American diocese elected Archbishop Sion Manougian Primate. On January 13, 1959, Archbishop Manougian arrived in New York to assume his office. During his tenure the construction of the cathedral and cultural center in New York was begun. In

addition, thirteen new churches were built and more than thirteen parish and school buildings were erected.

Archbishop Manougian was the author of more than a dozen books on the history, doctrine, and discipline of the Armenian Church.⁹⁹¹ A traditionalist of a gentle and peaceful nature, he provided leadership to the large diocese at a time of rapid change. He avoided useless controversy and made his seven and a half years of office a period of relative calm and progress.

It was not easy for Father Manougian to provide leadership to a diocese plagued with a number of obstacles, foremost among which was the denial of confirmation of its Primate. One month after assuming office, on April 16, 1939, Father Manougian presided at an extraordinary Diocesan Convention held at Holy Cross Church in New York. The sole purpose of the convention was to appeal to Ēchmiadzin once again for confirmation.

Before the proceedings began, the chairman was presented with petitions bearing thousands of names demanding the confirmation of the Primate-elect.⁹⁹² The delegates stressed the positive gains to be obtained through the leadership of Archbishop Hovsēp'ian. They felt his guidance would benefit the welfare of the Church and would advance spiritual goals. They considered Ēchmiadzin's uncompromising and authoritarian position contrary to the democratic ideas the ecclesiastical structure of the Church.⁹⁹³ The convention finally resolved to make a final appeal to Ēchmiadzin requesting confirmation of the primacy of Archbishop Hovsēp'ian, at least on a temporary basis, "in order to permit him to reorganize the affairs of the diocese and to strengthen ties between the Holy See and Armenian colonies throughout the world."⁹⁹⁴

This latest appeal from the convention in New York was answered promptly by Ēchmiadzin, which confirmed the Primate's election on a temporary basis, on April 25, 1939. The cablegram informed the diocese that an official letter confirming the "temporary" primacy of Archbishop Hovsēp'ian was in the mail.⁹⁹⁵

According to a communication released from the diocesan office on June 5, 1939, and signed by Father Sion Manougian, a written confirmation of the primacy of Archbishop Hovsēp'ian had been received on May 5, 1939, from Archbishop Ch'ēōrēk'jian in Ēchmiadzin.⁹⁹⁶

Spiritual and Cultural Resurgence

The diocesan organization Archbishop Hovsēp'ian inherited in May 1939 was heavily ridden with financial difficulties.⁹⁹⁷ He introduced a dollar-per-person annual assessment plan that replenished the diocesan treasury to some extent. His parish visitations and settlement of troublesome affairs after the assassination of Archbishop Tourian helped contribute to the peaceful reorganization of the religious life of the faithful. His scholarly learnings were expressed through his implementation of public lecture series, forums, concerts, and cultural gatherings. As a result, his term in office witnessed a resurgence in spiritual zeal and cultural activities.

Loursaworch'i Louma (The Mite for the Illuminator)

The Holy See at Ēchmiadzin was a major area of concern for Archbishop Hovsēp'ian. The monastery was deprived of financial resources by the taxation imposed upon it by the government. After he arrived in the United States, the archbishop was anxious to solicit funds for Ēchmiadzin. In 1937 the Diocesan Convention adopted a resolution to form a *Loursaworch'i Loumayi Hantsnakhoup* (Mite for the Illuminator Committee).⁹⁹⁸

Archbishop Hovsēp'ian displayed his fund-raising abilities during the campaign and was successful in inspiring the public to donate generously, in spite of the Depression. A total of \$35,000 was collected for the renovation and restoration of the cathedral and monastery of Ēchmiadzin.

Every church in the United States carried a contribution box marked “Ēchmiadzin Fund” or *Loursaworch'i Louma*.

Hayasdaneayts' Yegeghets'i (Armenian Church)

In October 1939, the diocese began issuing its first official semi-monthly publication, called *Hayastaneayts' Yegeghets'i*. Archbishop Hovsēp'ian had urged the diocesan delegates at the conventions on May 2, 1937, and September 4, 1938, to publish such a periodical to distribute diocesan news and to cultivate religious and cultural interests among the faithful of the Armenian Church.⁹⁹⁹

The periodical was devoted to religious, ethical, literary, historical, and artistic subjects. It was to serve as the official publication of the diocese in America, was nonpolitical, and was “dedicated to the ideal of instructing the Church's spiritual

children in the principles set down by the founder of the Christian Church,” as written by Archbishop Hovsēp‘ian in his introductory editorial.

When the first issue appeared, the reaction of the people was generally favorable. The diocese received many letters of congratulations. An editorial in the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* titled “A New Publication” commented that “the publication of a newspaper or magazine is an expensive luxury, and often a prohibitive necessity. Especially to undertake the publication of an Armenian periodical is often to court martyrdom.”¹⁰⁰⁰ The publication was indeed a brave attempt to keep the spiritual and intellectual light burning in the Armenian communities. Numerous noted Armenian writers contributed articles to the periodical. Archbishop Hovsēp‘ian’s own contributions were invaluable.

Public Lecture Series

In keeping with his efforts to develop the best in Armenian culture, Archbishop Hovsēp‘ian proclaimed October to be a month of culture to be observed each year in elaborate ceremonies.¹⁰⁰¹ The diocese contributed by sponsoring a popular lecture series that was held every week at Saint Gregory the Illuminator Church in New York. The topics were usually of a religious, ethical, historical, and cultural nature and avoided controversial or political issues.¹⁰⁰²

The first lecture in the series was given by Archbishop Hovsēp‘ian, who selected for his topic the national epic *David of Sasoun*.¹⁰⁰³ It was hoped that similar public lecture series would soon be undertaken in other communities. In the ensuing months and years the diocese sponsored and observed celebrations, recalling names and great moments in Armenian history. Often musical programs by Armenian artists were also included in the well-attended series. Nearly two thousand people were present at the millennial celebration of *David of Sasoun*, which took place on April 21, 1939, at the Pythian Temple in New York City. In commenting on the significance of the work, Archbishop Hovsēp‘ian referred to it as “the epic which reveals our people’s belief in religious freedom, and in the protection of their religious life, and it epitomizes the eternal and unquenchable fire of Armenian faith.”¹⁰⁰⁴

The Diocesan Auxiliary Committee

In response to the growing financial needs of the diocese, Archbishop Hovsēp‘ian, with the consent of the Central Executive Committee, was instrumental in organizing the Diocesan Auxiliary Committee in March 1940. The Central Executive Committee of the Diocesan Auxiliary consisted of twelve members. The aim of the Diocesan Auxiliary was to support the diocese financially and morally

in its endeavors to promote national culture for the welfare of the Armenian Church and community.¹⁰⁰⁵

The Diocesan Convention held in New York in 1940 instituted a “voluntary taxation” plan to help finance the administration of the diocese. A dollar-per-person annual assessment plan was conducted by the Diocesan Auxiliary and its branches in various communities to make this financial drive a success.¹⁰⁰⁶ The Diocesan Auxiliary won public recognition for its enthusiastic efforts to enhance Armenian heritage and to solicit financial resources for the diocese.

The Annual Clergy Conference and Clergy Training Program

Another program instituted by Archbishop Hovsēp'ian was the annual clergy conference, first held in Troy, New York, on September 3–5, 1940.¹⁰⁰⁷ The Primate assembled all the clergy of the diocese for several days before the Diocesan Convention to discuss matters pertinent to church organization, rituals, and social and moral issues in order to provide the pastors with vital insights to meet the challenges of the modern world.¹⁰⁰⁸

Closely allied with the clergy conference was the desire to solve the problem of trained clergy in the diocese. The problem of preparing trained clergymen for the Armenian Church in America was discussed by a score of priests and lay leaders at a special meeting held on May 27, 1940, at the office of the diocese. It was decided to elect a subcommittee to formulate a well-studied plan to present to the Central Executive Committee and then to the Diocesan Convention for ratification.¹⁰⁰⁹

At the Diocesan Convention held on September 27–28, 1941, at Holy Cross Church in New York, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian reported on the preliminary investigations of the committee and presented a plan for the training of Armenian clergymen at the General Theological Seminary in New York City. The convention allocated \$1,500 for the realization of this plan.¹⁰¹⁰ However, the project never materialized, despite the determination of the archbishop and his committee to solve this important problem. “Granted the will, no task is impossible,” the Primate often remarked.¹⁰¹¹

It was not all surprising that after much had been said and written concerning the necessity of preparing a cadre of trained clergymen for the Armenian Church, no tangible solution materialized. No one could deny that the task was a difficult one. Paradoxically, the major obstacle was not the financial situation, but the difficulty in finding worthy candidates willing to dedicate themselves to the service of the Church.¹⁰¹²

Another solution to the shortage of parish priests was the employment of *Shrchoun Hoviw* (ministers-at-large) for churches in America.¹⁰¹³ Several priests

were asked to serve in this capacity, but the program was discontinued because it proved to be both financially and administratively impractical.

Views on Unity

After assuming office, the Primate was often questioned as to why he did not attend, preach at, and officiate at the Divine Liturgy in the two churches considered dissident, Saint Illuminator in New York and Saint Gregory the Illuminator in North Philadelphia the churches that had remained loyal to the diocese numbered twenty-one. He was also asked why he did not participate in services or give benediction to the people congregated in the dissident churches, among whom there certainly were to be found many God-fearing people who did not approve of the present situation in the Church. The archbishop replied to these questions by stating:

As a representative of the Catholicos of All Armenians, we cannot attend churches that do not submit to the disposition of the supreme authority. We cannot take part in services and rites conducted by suspended and even defrocked priests, unless the unity and disrupted order of the Church is restored.¹⁰¹⁴

Archbishop Hovsēp'ian further explained that he could not cooperate with an assembly and Central Executive Committee that defied the authority of the Catholicos.

In reply to the question of what needed to be done to end the unfortunate situation within the Church, the archbishop felt that it was due to partisan politics of certain groups. To those who suggested removal of the present members of both executive committees and the election of an impartial Central Executive Committee, he replied:

That which the highest authority has accepted and confirmed we cannot dissolve. And let us add that the present Committee under one leadership is keeping strictly within ecclesiastical line, and has done nothing that might be construed to be factional or partisan.¹⁰¹⁵

Thus, the only road remaining open to the dissident churches was, he concluded, “to voluntarily dissolve the unconfirmed Assembly and its subordinate Central Committee, and to turn over, unconditionally, the administration of the Churches to us.”¹⁰¹⁶

Wartime Patriotism

During World War II, soldiers of Armenian parentage performed outstanding service for the freedom and victory of the Allied cause. Compatriots of the Armenian-American GIs fought with outstanding gallantry in the Allied forces of France and the Soviet Union.¹⁰¹⁷ Nearly 18,500 Armenian-American men participated in World War II as infantrymen, fliers, marines, sailors, and coastguardmen for the United States.¹⁰¹⁸

The Armenian people and the Church in America supported their government with great exuberance during World War II. Armenian communities throughout the country made their humble contributions to the war effort through such programs as War Loan Drives, Red Cross campaigns, the USO, and National War Fund appeals. The Armenian Church greeted the news of America's entry into the global war with official pronouncements reflecting its approbation of this course of action and affirmed its complete loyalty to the national cause. The diocese was equally eloquent in its support of the homeland as Armenia carried its crusade against Nazi invasion.

As a result of this patriotic sentiment, a number of groups were organized to encourage friendship with and provide aid to Soviet Armenia. Among these were Armenian War Relief, the David of Sasoun Tank Column Committee, and the American Committee for Armenian Rights. Archbishop Hovsēp'ian, in spite of his age, made extensive parish visitations, exhorting congregations to do their utmost in providing full and brotherly aid to Soviet Armenia and the Armenian war victims of the diaspora.

The diocese launched two fund-raising campaigns, Armenian War Relief in 1942 and the David of Sasoun Tank Column in 1943. Unfortunately, the enthusiasm surrounding these campaigns was impaired by partisan strife. The Ramgavar and Hnch'ag parties and the AGBU supported the diocesan efforts and cooperated with the two committees. The Armenian Progressive League, on the other hand, pursued an independent course and was reluctant to join with the others until all the funds raised by Armenian War Relief were allocated to Armenia. Much criticism was leveled against this group because of their rigid position. The Tashnags alleged that the Progressive League was pursuing a totally "narrow, factional, and political course and that its only objective in national life was to contribute toward Communist propaganda in America."¹⁰¹⁹

The major objection raised by the Tashnag Party to these diocesan committees was that they intentionally excluded them from participation. Consequently, they

continued, the committees would not be able to gain national recognition and thereby expect Tashnag moral or financial support because they made no attempt to include in their membership all segments of the Armenian community.¹⁰²⁰

The fact that the Armenian diocese sponsored these projects did not necessarily indicate that the diocese held pro-Soviet views, as Tashnag charges suggested. Rather, they reflected the beliefs of most Armenians, who wished to maintain and strengthen ties with the fatherland, and they were an expression of Christian and humanitarian sentiment toward their brethren afflicted by the war.

The Armenian War Relief Committee

In September 1941, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian reminded Armenians in America that “dark clouds have gathered over the Armenian homeland, because Armenians have not escaped involvement in the present world conflict. With the attack of Germany upon Russia, the devastating waves of the war have reached Armenia, a member of the Soviet Union.” In an article in the September issue of the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* titled “Dark Clouds over the Horizon of Armenia,” Archbishop Hovsēp'ian raised the crucial question:

What will be the fate of the people? We cannot remain unconcerned. There are two factors in our concern: our people within the boundaries of the Armenian homeland and those outside.¹⁰²¹

At the Diocesan Convention on September 27–28, 1941, at Holy Cross Church in New York, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian reiterated his anxiety about the grave situation facing Armenia with the invasion of Germany. He called on the delegates to form a committee, under the diocese, to extend aid to the war-stricken people of Soviet Armenia.¹⁰²² An official press release that appeared in the Armenian papers announced that the Diocesan Convention had authorized the Primate, with the cooperation of the Central Committee, to form an organization for the purpose of sending aid to Soviet Armenia.¹⁰²³

Before the formation of the Armenian War Relief Committee, another group, called the Armenian “V” (Victory) Committee, was organized under the chairmanship of Captain James Chankalian. Its purpose was to provide medical aid to Soviet Armenia and the Soviet Union and to coordinate all efforts for the relief of Soviet Armenia and the USSR.

The Armenian “V” Committee cooperated with Russian War Relief, formally known as the American Committee for Medical Aid to the Soviet Union. The Armenian committee was to dispatch its aid through the American committee.¹⁰²⁴ This committee claimed to be nonpartisan, nonsectarian, and without any

ideological orientation. It had resolved to merge with any special committee formed by Archbishop Hovsēp'ian.

In a press release issued on October 17, 1941, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian announced the formation of a new body called the Armenian War Relief Committee. This group was to assume the work begun by the Armenian "V" Committee, sending medical aid to the Soviet Union and to Armenian victims of the war in the Near East and Europe. It also was to be nonsectarian and nonpolitical, and its membership was to represent all segments of the Armenian community. Archbishop Hovsēp'ian was to serve as president of the committee. Several weeks later it became evident, however, that the "V" Committee had not dissolved. Its unwillingness to do so stemmed from its belief that the Armenian War Relief Committee had deviated from its initial objective when it decided to add to its original aim a second one—the sending of aid to Armenian victims of the war in the Near East and Europe. It argued that there already existed an independent campaign by the Armenian General Benevolent Union for destitute Armenian refugees in the Near East.

At this point, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian advised that both projects be combined under his leadership. He explained that by merging the two groups, much unnecessary competition would be avoided.¹⁰²⁵ Consequently, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian issued a new press release encouraging the people "to gather, hand-in-hand and heart-to-heart around the present national committee, casting aside all factional and other differences so as to make it possible to dispatch with haste all available brotherly aid to the Soviet Union of which Soviet Armenia is a part, and to the Armenian war sufferers of the Diaspora."¹⁰²⁶

In November a delegation from the Armenian "V" Committee called on Archbishop Hovsēp'ian and expressed their readiness to dissolve and to transfer all accounts to the Armenian War Relief Committee.¹⁰²⁷ Arrangements were made to organize meetings in all Armenian communities in the country. The sum of \$102,096.84 was raised by the Armenian War Relief Committee during the 1941–1942 campaign, according to an official statement released by Archbishop Hovsēp'ian.¹⁰²⁸ In addition to raising funds, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian believed that this campaign promoted moral, patriotic, and cultural zeal and interest among the people.

The David of Sasoun Tank Column Campaign

A part of the war was being waged at the doorstep of the Armenian homeland. The diocese in America supported the fatherland's cause which was also the cause of the United States, their adopted country. In 1943 the diocese sponsored a campaign to raise funds for the David of Sasoun Tank Column of the Soviet Army, responding

to the appeal of the deputy locum tenens, Archbishop Ch'ēōrēk'jian of Ēchmiadzin. Perhaps more important than their financial aid was the moral support that the Armenian Church in America continued to give to the cause of Ēchmiadzin and Armenia.

On January 22, 1943, Archbishop Ch'ēōrēk'jian sent a telegram to Stalin at the Kremlin, hailing him for his leadership and applauding the Red Army for driving the Germans from their land. Archbishop Ch'ēōrēk'jian continued:

I contribute to the fund for the construction of the tank column named after David of Sasoun, precious panagia (cross) adorned with diamonds and other gems, platinum and diamonds worth 80,000 rubles, also one thousand English pounds sterling and 50,000 Rubles. I request your order to open a special account in the State Bank of USSR. Simultaneously, I am addressing special messages to religious Armenians throughout the world to contribute their savings to the construction of the tank column named David of Sasoun.¹⁰²⁹

To this telegram Stalin replied in the following manner:

Please convey to religious Armenians and the clergy of Ēchmiadzin Catholicosate who have contributed funds to build tank column named David of Sasoun, my greetings and the gratitude of the Red Army. Instruction about opening special account in the State Bank of USSR given.¹⁰³⁰

The message from Ēchmiadzin struck a responsive chord in the hearts of Armenians living in America. The mood of patriotism was described in the following words:

Contributing toward the construction of a tank column named after that great hero, "Sassuntzi David," is living once again the thrills of his epic exploits. Because today the sons of Armenia are performing glorious and super human feats on the battlefields with many other peoples of the Soviet Union.¹⁰³¹

On February 21, 1943, under the presidency of Archbishop Hovsēp'ian, a meeting was held at diocesan headquarters to exchange opinions concerning the formation of a committee for the David of Sasoun Tank Column. Subsequently a Central Committee was formed, and Archbishop Hovsēp'ian was requested to make an immediate appeal for the campaign.¹⁰³²

On March 17, 1943, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian informed Armenians in America that the American government had granted him permission to organize a campaign for contributions to the David of Sasoun Tank Column. The Primate appealed to

all Armenians “without discrimination, to forget secondary differences under present urgent conditions and for the sake of helping our fatherland, to gather about this Committee which will have its branches in all large and small communities wherever possible.”¹⁰³³

The David of Sasoun Tank Column Campaign was initiated by the diocese on April 11, 1943, at Manhattan Center in New York City. On that day nearly \$10,000 was contributed to the cause.¹⁰³⁴ The entire David of Sasoun Tank Column Campaign collected a total of \$105,600, which was transferred to Archbishop Ch‘ēōrēk‘jian in Ēchmiadzin by the committee in charge.¹⁰³⁵ During the campaign an unfortunate misunderstanding created confusion in the minds of the Armenian public as the result of an editorial in *Lraper* on April 17:

We are happy to announce to the Armenian-Americans that the President’s War Relief Control Board has granted permission to the David of Sasoun Tank People’s Committee to solicit funds, in the meanwhile appreciating the efforts still being carried on by the committee to realize unity, in spite of difficulties raised against it.¹⁰³⁶

The David of Sasoun Tank Column Central Committee appealed to the President’s War Relief Control Board in Washington to substantiate the veracity of the statement made in the editorial of *Lraper*. The reply from the government to the diocese denied that authorization had been given to any group other than the diocesan-sponsored committee already in charge of the campaign.¹⁰³⁷

It is interesting to observe the reaction of this community of immigrants during the war years to the heroic resistance of their compatriots before the invading enemy; these men, especially those of the older generation, were proud of their national identity and their Armenian ancestry and wanted everyone to be aware of it. The more assimilated believed in the glory that is America, not the glory that was Armenia. Nevertheless, there were no conflicting loyalties. Aiding Armenia or the Soviet Union was aiding the Allies with whom the Americans were in sympathy.

Mission and Vision

Since his arrival in the United States as plenipotentiary in 1936, and up to the time of his election as Catholicos in 1943, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian's prime concern had been to heal the ecclesiastical breach, restore the spiritual welfare of the Armenians, and reorganize the churches of the diocese. Although he was not able to heal the schism in the Armenian Church, his gentle forbearance and unfailingly wise leadership soothed frayed tempers and directed people's energies toward more constructive channels.

During the Diocesan Convention at Worcester on October 2–3, 1943, the archbishop presented his resignation from the primacy, as he had been named Catholicos of Cilicia. In his last report to the Diocesan Convention, he urged the delegates to strive toward the final realization of unity and toward the erection of an Armenian cathedral with a diocesan complex. However, the problem of unity proved particularly acute, and the time was not yet ripe for the diocesan complex.

The Cathedral and Diocesan House

Like Archbishop Dēr Hovhannēsian, who had been Primate in 1926, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian in 1942 favored a strong central diocesan authority. He felt the need for a cathedral to give a sense of unity to the Armenian community and to emphasize the place of religion in American life. He strove diligently for the realization of this goal.¹⁰³⁸ In his report to the Diocesan Convention in 1942, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian introduced the idea for a cathedral and Diocesan House.¹⁰³⁹ He urged the delegates to initiate a campaign for the building of a cathedral in New York without further delay. He also advised the convention to delegate the Central Executive Committee to take preliminary steps for this purpose. The delegates gave their unanimous support to the motion.¹⁰⁴⁰ However, the campaign was postponed because of the wartime emergency campaigns. Archbishop Hovsēp'ian and his coworkers were most anxious to see a cathedral built:

We have one concern—that we may go astray, lose our identity, and eventually our national and ecclesiastical image because of a lack of knowledge, organization, and because of the indifference.¹⁰⁴¹

Archbishop Hovsēp'ian felt that the creation of a strong religious and cultural organization and the systematic implementation of spiritual and educational

programs would stem the tide of assimilation. The design of the cathedral was to be in the distinctive traditional style of Armenian Church architecture.

Although Archbishop Hovsēp'ian reiterated the need for a cultural and diocesan complex at the 1943 Diocesan Convention, the task was left to his successors, Archbishops Diran Nersoyian, Mamprē Kalfaian, Sion Manougian, and T'orkom Manoogian. In 1959 the Diocesan House was completed. On Sunday, April 28, 1968, the new Armenian Cathedral of Saint Vartan was consecrated by His Holiness Vazkēn I, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians.

Last Appeal for Unity

Archbishop Hovsēp'ian's mission to America demanded that he serve as a bridge builder between feuding brethren. His initial attempts in 1936 ended in failure, and even after his election as Primate his voice often went unheeded. Before leaving the United States to become Catholicos of Cilicia, he made a last effort to fulfill the mission of unity, which until then had gone unaccomplished.

At the Clergy Conference on October 1–2, 1943, which preceded the Diocesan Convention, a resolution on unity was passed. It read as follows:

In accord with the requirements set forth by the Primate, the time has come to terminate the schism that has disrupted the internal life of the church.¹⁰⁴²

Encouraged by the support he received from the clergy, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian presented a forceful speech to the Diocesan Convention:

The most important issue confronting the Armenian Church is the problem of schism. No time must be lost in semantics. To claim that “there is no schism,” “that no relation with the Tashnags is desirable,” and that “the doors of the church are open to all” is void of truth. The tragedy lies in the fact that tens of thousands of people are not with us and do not subject themselves to the authority of our diocese or to the Catholicos of All Armenians. For several years now various sacraments and rites have been performed by suspended clergymen and even by defrocked priests, with no objections from the faithful. This deplorable situation only contributes to the further decay of the ecclesiastical institutions. Therefore, we cannot remain indifferent. The spirit of dissension has deeply penetrated the family. The time has come to find an ecclesiastical remedy for the situation.

One thing must be learned, that all of us are duty-bound to correct our errors and that no political disagreements or controversies should be settled under the roofs of churches. It is imperative that the Diocesan Convention and the

Central Executive Committee of the dissident group, which lack confirmation by the Catholicos, herewith be dissolved. The dissident Board of Trustees and the suspended clergymen may request in writing that the pontiff reconsider their case. Let the lamentable experiences of the past serve as guideposts for today.¹⁰⁴³

This appeal generated a long, heated argument. The Primate's motion on unity was defeated by a vote of nine to twenty.¹⁰⁴⁴ The archbishop requested that his objection to the decision be recorded to read that "this refusal is detrimental to the Armenian Church."¹⁰⁴⁵ Fathers Terenig P'ōladian, Zkōn Dēr Hagopian, Mesrob Semerjian, and Ghewont Arabian also requested that their objections against the decision of the convention be recorded.¹⁰⁴⁶

When news of the convention's refusal was made public, the reaction of the dissident churches was one of regret and frustration. Moreover, the partisan press again charged that the diocese alone was responsible for the continuation of the dissension within the community.¹⁰⁴⁷ The dissident Church had also failed its test in history. In its charges against its opponents, it had repeatedly given evidence of an equally rigid and uncompromising stand. The Diocesan Convention of the dissident Church was held on November 6–7, 1943, in Boston. The following resolution on unity reveals the firm stand they had adopted:

In scrutinizing the question of the administrative unity of the Armenian Church of America and in becoming acquainted with the decision of the Diocesan Convention of the other faction, the Diocesan Convention regretfully records attempts to protract the dissension of the Armenian Church in America. The convention remains resolute that its position and course are generally in harmony with the spirit, discipline, and welfare of the Armenian Church. It believes that the justice it seeks will be realized in the principles of law and order, that freedom and independence will return to the Armenian Church, and that the unity of the Armenian Church in America will be restored. Likewise, the Diocesan Convention resolves that as long as the spirit of reconciliation and unity is denied by its opponents, it finds it difficult to pursue the possibility of reconciliation.¹⁰⁴⁸

Archbishop Hovsēp'ian's last appeal repaired some of the damage that political parties had done in the past. Although he did not succeed in establishing brotherhood among the people, he reawakened the spirit of unity and set the stage for future dialogue with the dissidents by his successors. He was indeed a personality of prophetic stature. Often the voices of prophets remain unheeded by the generation of their own day!

The Ladder of Greatness

Throughout Archbishop Hovsēp'ian's eventful life, it was his destiny to shoulder the most difficult tasks in the service of his people and Church. According to a much-circulated anecdote, during one of the banquets held in honor of his Jubilee Celebration in 1944, he asked God to extend his life another fifteen years in order that he could complete the tasks he had set out to accomplish. The master of ceremonies for the banquet responded by wishing the archbishop not fifteen additional years, but fifty-one. The archbishop replied that if this were to be, fifty of the fifty-one years he would dedicate to the Church, and the remaining one to himself.

During his short tenure of office, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian grew in esteem and stature. In 1943–1944 the diocese expressed its gratitude to him by sponsoring Jubilee Celebrations in his honor. When he was called to become Catholicos of the See of Cilicia in 1943, his departure from America was a distinct loss for the Armenian community in America, but a great gain for that historic see.

Jubilee Celebrations

The Diocesan Convention of 1941 adopted a resolution to observe throughout the diocese the seventy-fifth anniversary of Archbishop Hovsēp'ian's birth and the fiftieth anniversary of his priesthood.¹⁰⁴⁹ However, because of wartime uncertainties and diocesan commitments, the Jubilee Celebrations were postponed. Archbishop Hovsēp'ian's election to the throne of the See of Cilicia in 1943 obligated the Central Committee of the diocese to hasten to form a special Jubilee Committee to prepare for the celebrations. The Jubilee Celebrations took place between September 1943 and April 1944 in various cities throughout the United States. They were inaugurated in Chicago and were climaxed by a Pontifical Mass and Jubilee Banquet in New York.

The celebrations revealed that, despite his fame and high office, this great man remained gracious and humble to the very end. In evidence of this, the Catholicos-elect expressed his desire to donate all the proceeds of the Jubilee Celebrations to the Catholicosate of Cilicia for the training of seminarians.¹⁰⁵⁰ A total of \$42,822.52 was forwarded to the Catholicosate. Consequently, the diocese formed an Auxiliary Committee to aid the Catholicosate in the training of seminarians to serve as pastors in American parishes. Throughout the country, churches were urged to form such committees, and individuals were encouraged to sponsor seminarians.

On June 29, 1944, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian was heard on radio giving a speech that marked the end of the celebrations. Among many observations he made, one was prominent. He stated that “as the individual can become immortal by his life, aspirations, and work, so also can a nation. Spiritual values make a nation immortal.”¹⁰⁵¹

So it was that a child born in an obscure village of Artsakh, of poor parentage, was guided by divine providence from being a youthful acolyte through the sacred portals of Ēchmiadzin. He was chosen to fill the vacant chair of the Holy See of Cilicia at Antelias, Lebanon.

Election of Archbishop Hovsēp'ian as Catholicos of Cilicia

A telegram dated May 10, 1943, from Beirut, Lebanon, announced that at the convention held on the same day at Saint Illuminator's Mother Church of the Catholicosate of Cilicia, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian had unanimously been elected as Catholicos of Cilicia. The telegram added that his prompt arrival was eagerly awaited. It was signed by Archbishop Khat Achabahian, locum tenens of the Catholicosate.¹⁰⁵²

On May 18, 1943, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian responded to Archbishop Achabahian in the following words:

We are grateful to you and the convention of delegates for your trust in us. It was necessary to obtain our consent. We are advanced in age and have other obligations toward the Holy See of Ēchmiadzin, but we humbly bow before the will of God and the wishes of our people.

As soon as safety of travel permits we will make the necessary arrangements and start on our voyage with Terenig Vartapet P'ōladian.¹⁰⁵³ Inform us about the condition and the needs of the see. Pray to God to help us in our heavy obligation and calling.¹⁰⁵⁴

From the establishment of the Catholicosate in Antelias, three Catholicoi had preceded Archbishop Hovsēp'ian. “No better choice could have been made,” editorialized the Armenian press at the time. However, Archbishop Hovsēp'ian's departure from the United States was delayed by wartime difficulties. Although most Armenians in the United States and abroad welcomed the archbishop's election to the Cilician See, others were not so enthusiastic. Recriminations against the Catholicos-elect appeared in the Armenian papers. Archbishop Hovsēp'ian responded in a most courteous and Christian manner, not in an effort to justify himself, but to elucidate the issues that led to the attack. One controversy appeared in two Armenian papers, *Mshag* from Fresno and *Lraper* from New York, both of

Communist orientation. An editorial titled “*Tawin Artiwnkē*” (“The Outcome of the Plot”) appeared in *Mshag* on June 11, 1943, accusing Archbishop Hovsēp‘ian of secretly collaborating with the enemies of Archbishop Karekin Khach‘adourian, former Primate of the Western Diocese (1928–1934), who was also a candidate for the Catholicos seat. The editorial continued to claim that Archbishop Hovsēp‘ian responded to these charges in the following words:

The editorial of your June 11 issue is a complete misrepresentation of reality, because I personally have had no involvement whatsoever either with the past or present Catholicos election at Antelias.¹⁰⁵⁵

Lraper also printed an editorial titled “*Irok‘ Jhoghovrten Kaghdni*” (“Truly, a Secret from the People”), which appeared in its July 15, 1943, issue. The editorial criticized the archbishop’s views on unity in the Armenian Church. It charged:

It is obvious that the archbishop, under the guise of Church unity, actually pursues political unity with the Tashnag Party. It will be no surprise to us to learn that the election of Archbishop Hovsēp‘ian as Catholicos of the Cilician See was made possible through negotiations with the *Führer* four months ago.¹⁰⁵⁶

These claims were refuted by the diocesan office as mere fabrications and thus unforgivable.

These allegations in the press were not well received by those who believed that Archbishop Hovsēp‘ian’s election to the Catholicosate of Cilicia was in the best interests of the Armenian Church and people. His supporters advised the followers of *Lraper*’s political ideology to return to the mainstream of Armenian life and direct their energies into more constructive channels.

On October 3, 1943, Father Diran Nersoyian of London, England, was unanimously elected by the Diocesan Convention in Worcester to succeed Archbishop Hovsēp‘ian.¹⁰⁵⁷ Although Archbishop Hovsēp‘ian’s imminent departure saddened the Armenian community, they were assured that Father Nersoyian was a worthy successor, handpicked by Archbishop Hovsēp‘ian.¹⁰⁵⁸

The New Catholicos of Cilicia

On January 2, 1945, accompanied by Father Terenig P‘ōladian, Archbishop Hovsēp‘ian boarded a U.S. Navy freighter in New York, en route to Lebanon.¹⁰⁵⁹ The trip lasted almost two months. After stops in Egypt and Palestine, where he was received enthusiastically, Archbishop Hovsēp‘ian arrived in Lebanon on March

23, 1945. From the border to Antelias, the Catholicos-elect received an unprecedented welcome by the Armenian faithful as well as by other Lebanese. State officials, representatives of all creeds, and people from all walks of life greeted him by the thousands, as signs were carried bearing the words, “Long live our Holy Father,” “Welcome Holy Father,” “Long live the Armenian Catholicos,” and “We wholeheartedly welcome His Holiness the Catholicos of Cilicia.” As the motorcade proceeded, doves were released and the car of the Catholicos was showered with flowers. As they approached the monastery, cathedral bells rang out, their echoes reverberating in the nearby hills and gorges of the village of Antelias. At the entrance to the cathedral, Archbishop Khat Achabashian, locum tenens, embraced the Catholicos-elect and delivered to him the patriarchal staff. The clergy entered the church in procession, after which Archbishop Hovsēp’ian delivered the sermon.

On April 8, 1945, the ordination and consecration ceremonies of the new pontiff were held in the Cathedral. Scores of dignitaries and faithful thronged the church and grounds.¹⁰⁶⁰ The enthronement ceremonies were conducted by six archbishops. After signing the forehead of Archbishop Hovsēp’ian with holy chrism, the officiating archbishops kissed his forehead and gave the *Oghchoyn* (Kiss of Peace). They covered his head with a white veil, handed him the patriarchal insignia and staff, and proclaimed him Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia.

Immediately after assuming office, Catholicos Hovsēp’ian left for Ēchmiadzin, where he presided at the National Armenian Church Assembly on June 22, 1945, which elected Archbishop Kēork Ch’ēōrēk’jian, locum tenens, as Catholicos of All Armenians.¹⁰⁶¹ The presence of Catholicos Karekin as head of the See of Cilicia at the anointment ceremonies of the Catholicos of All Armenians at Ēchmiadzin indicated a renewal of relations between the two Catholicosal sees, which had long been estranged. Supremacy and primacy of honor were accorded to Ēchmiadzin, as Catholicos Karekin believed was its prerogative. From the day of his consecration, he declared in no uncertain terms the supremacy of the See of Ēchmiadzin.

Catholicos Karekin’s preoccupations in Antelias were many. His accomplishments included the purchase of investment properties; the addition of the seminary museum-library; augmentation of the staff of the seminary with qualified personnel; increasing the quality and size of the monthly publication *Hask* and turning it into a philological periodical; and construction of a summer residence for the Catholicos with a school and chapel on the premises. His tireless efforts and creative zeal enabled Antelias to become a spiritual and intellectual center. His tenure witnessed an unprecedented spiritual and intellectual renaissance.

Neither age, ill health, nor the advice of his doctors persuaded this dedicated servant of God to decrease the pace of his activities or to limit his arduous studies. By 1950 his great vitality waned, and it was apparent that he was seriously ill. On

May 19, 1950, while in Egypt, he suffered a coronary thrombosis. From then on his health deteriorated. Periodic signs of recovery were only illusions, in spite of his strong desire to prolong his life.

On Saturday, June 21, 1952, at 5:40 a.m., when the first rays of the sun flooded the room of this aged and fatigued Catholicos who lay motionless and unconscious, his soul departed from the flesh to seek a new abode in eternity. Life on earth was no more. Catholicos Karekin Hovsēp'ian had completed the long climb up the ladder of perfection.

New Churches

The primacy of Archbishop Hovsēp'ian witnessed the consecration of three new Armenian churches: Holy Resurrection Church in New Britain, Connecticut (1941); Saint Leon's Church in Paterson, New Jersey (1941); and Saint John Church in West Allis, Wisconsin (1942). Saint Leon's in Paterson and Saint John in West Allis were the first churches to be built in these communities. Armenians in New Britain and North Philadelphia were obliged to acquire new edifices to replace their former churches, which were lost to the dissident groups in compliance with court decisions. The North Philadelphians lost Saint Gregory the Illuminator Church in 1934.¹⁰⁶² Their new church was purchased in 1941 and was consecrated in the name of the Holy Trinity on December 26–27, 1942, by Archbishop Hovsēp'ian.¹⁰⁶³ The court verdict on the litigation over Saint Stephen's Church in New Britain had also favored the dissident group in 1938.¹⁰⁶⁴ Because of the war, financial resources were scarce for the building of new churches. When the war ended in 1945, the diocese became more actively engaged in furthering its spiritual responsibility and conducted a massive campaign for new churches. With the communities' increasing affluence came the demand for visual splendor, and the style of traditional Armenian Church architecture was used in new buildings employing modern Western architectural techniques.

Holy Resurrection Church, New Britain, Connecticut

The first Armenians settled in New Britain in the 1890s.¹⁰⁶⁵ The newcomers found employment in manufacturing firms. Because of the limited space in the town, the immigrants lived close together and thus retained their ties with one another and with the homeland.

As early as 1900, the first Church Trustees were organized. Itinerant priests made their stops in this community and celebrated the Divine Liturgy in rented halls or church edifices. Fortunately, the Armenians were allowed use of the facilities of the local Saint Mark's Episcopal Chapel.

The Armenians of this community, however, aspired to their own church building. Karekin Kēorkian was instrumental in providing the leadership for this goal. By the middle of the 1920s the entire community was inspired with the desire for a new church. On November 8, 1925, cornerstone-laying ceremonies were conducted by the Primate, Archbishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian. Consecration of the church took place on September 12, 1936, and the church was named Saint

Stephen's Church. Father Karekin Dēōvletian served as pastor of the community.

After the split in the Church, the two factions of Armenians appealed to the local courts for ownership of the church. Those loyal to the diocese lost the church to the dissident group in 1938.¹⁰⁶⁶ In 1940 those loyal to Ēchmiadzin purchased a building that was consecrated on March 19, 1941, after undergoing the necessary renovations. Archbishop Hovsēp'ian conducted the ceremonies and named the new church Holy Resurrection.

Saint Leon's Church, Paterson, New Jersey

Armenian immigrants from many parts of the homeland came to Paterson, New Jersey. Predominant among the early settlers were Armenians from the region of Dikranagerd (Diarbekir) in Turkey. Immigration to Paterson dates back to the 1880s.¹⁰⁶⁷ Most of the early migrants gained employment in textile factories. Following the Armenian massacres of 1894–1896, the Armenian population of Paterson rose to five hundred.¹⁰⁶⁸

The first Armenian church services were held in the local Episcopal church in 1898. Father Hovsēp' Sarajian celebrated the Divine Liturgy. From then on, itinerant priests served the community. For Sunday religious services, the faithful of Paterson attended Holy Cross Armenian Church in Union City, New Jersey, built in 1907.

By 1929 the Armenians of Paterson felt the need for their own church and pastor. They were encouraged by Father Mamprē Kalfaian, pastor of the Holy Cross Church in Union City. The Great Depression, however, necessitated abandonment of the project. In 1932 at a Membership Meeting presided over by Primate Tourian, a building committee was formed. Among the members of this group were the Dishian Brothers—Bōghos, Hayg, Dikran, and Manoug—as well as Mihran and Erouant K'iwrk'jian and Harout'iwn Soghigian. In February 1934, Saint Luke Episcopal Church on Bloomfield Avenue was purchased for \$6,000. Despite the financial difficulties of the Depression, the community spent \$10,000 for renovations to the building. The first pastor of the parish was Father Hovhannēs Kawoukjian, who served from 1936 to 1938. After resigning as locum tenens, Archbishop Mamprē Kalfaian served the parish from 1938 until 1941. Archbishop Kalfaian labored unselfishly and contributed sums of money for various purposes. On October 4, 1941, the church building was consecrated by Primate Karekin Hovsēp'ian. By the 1950s, it proved too small to accommodate the growing community. Consequently, in 1958 three acres of land were purchased on Saddle River Road in Fair Lawn, New Jersey, as a site for a new church.¹⁰⁶⁹ In January 1963, a building committee to spearhead the drive for a new church building was elected, with E. George Dabagian as chairman. On September 22, 1963, ground-

breaking ceremonies were held, followed by a fund-raising kickoff dinner in the afternoon. Pledges and donations totaled \$80,000.

Construction of the new church was begun in March 1965, and on April 10, 1965, cornerstone-laying ceremonies were conducted by Primate Sion Manougian. Consecration took place on September 18–19, 1965. Several individuals served as Godfathers for the new church, their contributions exceeding \$20,000.

Saint John Church, West Allis, Wisconsin

The parish of Saint John Armenian Church in West Allis was formed in the 1920s.¹⁰⁷⁰ Most of the settlers there came from the region of Caesarea in Turkey. The first Church Trustees were organized in 1923. In 1934 a Ladies' Educational Association was formed to assist the trustees in their work. This group sponsored an Armenian weekday school. With the building of a church in 1942, this association became the Women's Church Auxiliary.

Before the building of the church and the acquisition of a permanent pastor, visiting priests served the needs of the community. The labors of several dedicated men culminated in the building of a church on West Washington Street in 1942 at a cost of \$6,000. Sahag Mouradian stood prominent among his peers and served as Godfather for the church, consecrated on May 11, 1942, by Archbishop Hovsēp'ian.

Later years brought the need for larger and more modern facilities. The community purchased new land in Greenfield, Wisconsin, in the late 1960s for the new church and cultural center. The dedication of the cultural center, part of a two-phase construction, took place on September 27, 1970.

Notes

⁹³⁴ Editorial, “*Goghchounenk' Arachnort Srpazanē*” (“We Welcome the Bishop Primate”), *Baïkar*, September 11, 1938.

⁹³⁵ A. J. Arberry (ed.), *Religion in the Middle East* (Cambridge University Press; 1969); Vahe A. Sarafian, “The Soviet and the Armenian Church,” *Armenian Review*, VIII (June 1955), p. 97; Dzovets'i (pseud.), “*Nor Vgayout'iwinner Gatoghigosi Sbanout'ean Masin*” (“New Testimonies Concerning the Murder of the Catholicos”), *Hairenik*, May 22, 1938.

⁹³⁶ Editorial, “*Deghegadouagan Not'er*” (“Reportable Notes”), *Sion*, XII (May 1938), p. 138.

⁹³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹³⁸ *Namag Gat'oghigosagan Deghagalēn* (“Letter from the Deputy Locum Tenens”), *Baïkar*, July 26, 1938.

⁹³⁹ Dzovets'i, “*Nor Vgayout'iwinner Gat'oghigosi Sbanout'ean Masin.*”

- 940 Ibid.; Armenian National Apostolic Church of America, *Crisis in the Armenian Church* (Boston: Hairenik Press, 1958), p. 52.
- 941 Armenian National Apostolic Church of America, *Crisis in the Armenian Church*, p. 52, “Nor Vgayout ‘iwnner Gat’oghigosi Sbanout ‘ean Masin.”
- 942 Patriarch T’orkom Koushagian, “Medz Soukē” (“The Great Mourning”), *Sion*, XII (May 1938), pp. 131–133.
- 943 Editorial, “Khorēn I Gatoghigosi Mahouan Art ‘iw” (“On the Occasion of the Death of Khorēn I Catholicos”), *Hairenik*, April 15, 1938.
- 944 Father Zawēn Ch’inch’inian, “Eranashnorh Dēr Kēork VI Hayrabed” (“His Blessed Memory Kēork VI Catholicos-Patriarch”), *Sion*, XXVIII (June 1955), pp. 154–156; Editorial, “Gensakragan Agnarg” (“Biographical Sketch”), *Sion*, XIX (June–August 1946), pp. 70–71.
- 945 Walter Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1961), p. 157.
- 946 Khorēn A. Gatoghigosi Deghagal Nshanagogh Gontagē” (“The Encyclical of Khorēn I on the Appointment of the Deputy Locum Tenens”), *Baïkar*, July 24, 1938.
- 947 Karekin Hovsēp’ian, “Gatoghigosagan Deghagali Antsi ew Bashdōni Shouchē Andeghi ew Anhimn Aghmoug” (“Unnecessary and Unfounded Ado about the Person and Office of the Deputy Locum Tenens”), *Hairenik*, September 16, 1928.
- 948 Ibid.
- 949 After signing a nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union, Hitler launched an invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939. The British and French came to the defense of Poland, and World War II began.
- 950 Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, p. 160; Ralph Lord Roy, *Communism and the Churches* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1960), p. 411; Mary Kilbourne Matossian, *The Impact of Soviet Policies in Armenia* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1962), p. 194.
- 951 Roy, *Communism and the Churches*, p. 410.
- 952 “Document Reveals Tashnag Collaboration with Nazis,” *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, September 1, 1945, p. 1.
- 953 Editorial, “Incorrigible,” *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, September, 1, 1945, p. 2.
- 954 “Hay Egeghets ‘agan Geank” (“Armenian Ecclesiastical Life”), *Hayasdaneayts ‘Yegeghets ‘i*, II (September 1940), p. 17.
- 955 “Hay Egeghets ‘agan Geank” (“Armenian Ecclesiastical Life”), *Hayasdaneayts ‘Yegeghets ‘i*, II (December 1940), p. 75.
- 956 “Badjēnner” (“Copies [of The Minutes of the Sessions of the Conference]”), *Hayasdaneayts ‘Yegeghets ‘i*, II (December 1941).
- 957 Ibid., p. 79.
- 958 “Hay Egeghets ‘agan ew Azkayin Geank” (“Armenian National and Ecclesiastical Life”), *Hayasdaneayts ‘Yegeghets ‘i*, IV (February 1943), pp. 193–194.
- 959 “Hay Egeghets ‘agan ew Azkayin Geank” (“Armenian National and Ecclesiastical Life”), *Hayasdaneayts ‘Yegeghets ‘i*, IV (March 1943), p. 217.
- 960 Matossian, *The Impact of Soviet Policies in Armenia*, p. 194; “Hayasdan” (“Armenia”), *Hayasdaneayts ‘Yegeghets ‘i*, VII (January 1945), p. 30.
- 961 Ēchmiadzin Bashdōnat ‘ert ‘ē” (“The Ēchmiadzin Official Organ”), *Gotchnag*, July 8,

1944, pp. 651–652.

⁹⁶² Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, p. 160.

⁹⁶³ Kēork Ch'ēōrēk'jian, "Zegouts 'oum Sourp Ēchmiadzni Partsrakoyñ Hokewor Ishkhanout'ean Ir K'arameay Kordzouneout'ean Masin, 1941–1945" ("Four-Year Report of Activities, Submitted to the Supreme Spiritual Council, 1941–1945"), *Hayasdaneayts' Yegeghets'i*, VII (June 1945), p. 145.

⁹⁶⁴ Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, p. 160.

⁹⁶⁵ "Ēndrout'iwñ, Tsernatrout'iwñ ew Odzoum Amenayñ Hayots' Vehapay Hayrabedi Dēr Kēork VI Srpaznakoyñ Gat'oghigosi" ("Election, Consecration, and Anointment of His Holiness Kēork VI, Catholicos of All Armenians"), *Sion*, XIX (August 1945), p. 77.

⁹⁶⁶ Terenig P'ōladian, "Ngarakrout'iwñ Sourp Ēchmiadzin Koumarouadz Azkayin Egeghets'agan Zhoghovi" ("Description of the National Ecclesiastical Assembly of Holy Ēchmiadzin"), *Hayasdaneayts' Yegeghets'i*, VII (October 1945), pp. 290–300.

⁹⁶⁷ "Gevorg Cheorekjian Consecrated Catholicos of All Armenians," *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, July 29, 1945, No. 1.

⁹⁶⁸ Kolarz, *Religion in the Soviet Union*, p. 162.

⁹⁶⁹ Terenig P'ōladian, "Ngarakrout'iwñ Sourp Ēchmiadzin Koumarouadz Azkayin Egeghets'agan Zhoghovi," *Hayasdaneayts' Yegeghets'i*, VII (October 1945), p. 299.

⁹⁷⁰ The report is not clear as to whether these men were ordained priests or were simply brothers residing at the monastery of Ēchmiadzin.

⁹⁷¹ "Badouirag Srpazanē Bidi Megni" ("The Plenipotentiary Bishop Will Depart"), *Baïkar*, September 2, 1938.

⁹⁷² Editorial, "Amerigahay Arachnorti Ēndrout'iwñē" ("The Election of the Primate of the Armenians of America"), *Baïkar*, September 3, 1938.

⁹⁷³ "Adenakrout'iwñ," New York, NY, September 1938, pp. 82–83.

⁹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁹⁷⁶ Central Executive Committee, "Amerigahay Geank'" ("Armenian-American Life"), *Gotchnag*, September 17, 1938, p. 906.

⁹⁷⁷ "Adenakrout'iwñ," New York, NY, April 16, 1939, p. 117.

⁹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁹⁸¹ Editorial, "Merzhoudz Vawerats'oum Mē" ("A Denied Confirmation"), *Baïkar*, February 16, 1939; E. Mesiaian, "Amerigahay Egeghets'in Arants' Arachnorti" ("The Armenian Church of America without a Primate"), *Baïkar*, March 1, 1939.

⁹⁸² "Adenakrout'iwñ," New York, NY, April 16, 1939, p. 112.

⁹⁸³ Editorial, "Nouirag Karekin Ark'ebisgobos Arachnort Amerigahayots'" ("The Plenipotentiary, Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp'ian, Primate of the Armenians of America"), *Sion*, XIII (January 1940), p. 4.

⁹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸⁵ "Adenakrout'iwñ," New York, April 6, 1939, p. 119.

⁹⁸⁶ Karekin Hovsēp'ian, "Amerigayī Arachnort Ēndrelou Khntri Aritw" ("On the Issue of

- Being Elected to the Primacy of America”), *Gotchnag*, April 15, 1939, p. 316.
- 987 When it was learned that Archbishop Hovsēp‘ian was ordered by Ēchmiadzin to leave the country in the latter part of 1939, the chairman of the Diocesan Convention, Dickran Boyajian, urged him to remain as Primate of the United States, because his contributions would be more beneficial there than in Ēchmiadzin. The archbishop replied that his services in this country could be rendered only after confirmation and blessings from Ēchmiadzin were received. Mr. Boyajian has provided the copies of the letters exchanged between them. Personal letters, Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp‘ian to Dickran Boyajian, Watertown, MA; Hovsēp‘ian, Watertown, MA; Hovsēp‘ian, “*Amerigayi Arachnort Ēndrelou Khntri Artiw*,” *Gotchnag*, April 15, 1939, p. 361.
- 988 After his resignation, Bishop Kalfaian accepted the pastorate of Saint Leon’s Church in Paterson, New Jersey. He served the Western Diocese as Primate from 1942 to 1946. His second term as Primate of the Eastern Diocese (1954–1958) coincided with another crisis resulting from the usurpation of the Catholicosate of Cilicia, which admitted the dissident Armenian churches of America to its jurisdiction. This deepened the division caused by the assassination of Archbishop Tourian.
- 989 “*Adenakrout‘iwn*,” New York, NY, April 16, p. 120.
- 990 By virtue of his humility, sagacity, and wide experience, first as a parish priest and later as Primate of both dioceses of North and South America, Archbishop Manougian provided effective spiritual leadership to the Armenian Church. He wrote thirteen treatises on religious themes. Two of these provide biographical data: *Egeghets‘agani Mē Geank‘i Hankrouannerē* (“The Sequences of the Life of a Churchman”) (Beirut: Doniguian & Sons, 1968); *Nor Ashkharhēn Hin Ashkharh* (“From the New World to the Old”) (Beirut: Doniguian & Sons, 1973).
- 991 Among his works are *The Armenian Church and Its Doctrine* (Detroit: n.p., 1951); *K‘risdoneagan Vartabedout‘iwn* (“Christian Doctrine”) (Buenos Aires: n.p., 1954); *Lousashogh Tēmker* (“Luminous Figures”) (Boston: Baikar Press, 1949). For information about Primate Manougian, see “Primate Elected,” *Armenian Guardian*, XII (December 1958), p. 5; “Our Primate,” *Armenian Guardian*, XIII (April 1959), pp. 8–9.
- 992 Editorial, “*Verchin Eresp‘okhanagan Zhoghovē*” (“The Last Diocesan Convention”), *Gotchnag*, April 29, 1939, p. 399.
- 993 V. S. Malkhasian, “*Amerigahay Geank*” (“Armenian-American Life”), *Gotchnag*, April 29, 1939.
- 994 “*Adenakrout‘iwn*,” New York, NY, April 16, 1939, p. 120.
- 995 “*Amerigahay Geank*” (“Armenian-American Life”), *Gotchnag*, May 6, 1939, p. 439.
- 996 “Prelateship of Archbishop Hovsepian Confirmed,” *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, June 14, 1939, p. 1.
- 997 “*Arachnortagan T‘emi Eresp‘okhanagan Zhoghovner*” (“Diocesan Conventions of the Diocese”), New York, NY, September 27–28, 1941; Providence, RI, November 7–8, 1942; Worcester, MA, October 2–3, 1943; New York, NY, January 29–30, 1944 (typescript); New York, NY, September 21–22, 1940, p. 26.
- 998 “*Adenakrout‘iwn*,” September 3–4, 1938, pp. 80, 95.
- 999 “*Amerigahay Geank*” (“Armenian-American Life”), *Gotchnag*, September 2, 1939,

p. 946.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Editorial, "A New Publication," *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, October 18, 1939, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰¹ "Arachnortagan T'emi Eresp'okhanagan Zhoghovner" ("Diocesan Conventions of the Diocese"), New York, NY, September 21–22, 1940, p. 22.

¹⁰⁰² Karekin Hovsēp'ian, "Zhoghovrtagan Lsaran Arachnortarani Ghavorout'ean Dag" ("Popular Lecture Series Sponsored by the Diocese"), *Gotchnag*, December 9, 1939, p. 1318.

¹⁰⁰³ The epic *David of Sasoun* has won its place in world poetry. Armenia was invaded during the seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries, by Arabs. These invasions resulted in many hardships and trials for the people, including poverty and slavery. The response was an ardent defense of national and religious freedom by the Armenians who repeatedly resisted the oppressors, confident of victory, which finally came. The half-legendary hero of their struggles was David of Sasoun, whose exploits were handed down from generation to generation.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Armine Dikijian, "Prelacy Celebrates David of Sasoun Epic," *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, April 24, 1940, p. 8.

¹⁰⁰⁵ "Dzrakir Ganonakir Arachnortarni Ōzhantag Miout'ean" ("Bylaws of the Diocesan Auxiliary Committee"), *Hayasdaneayts' Yegeghets'i*, II (October 1940), p. 9; "Hay Egeghets'agan Geank'" ("Armenian Church Life"), *Hayasdaneayts' Yegeghets'i*, II (August 1940), pp. 8–9.

¹⁰⁰⁶ "Azkayin Eresp'okhanagan Zhoghov" ("National Diocesan Convention"), *Hayasdaneayts' Yegeghets'i*, III (October 1941), p. 14.

¹⁰⁰⁷ "Arachnortagan T'emi Eresp'okhanagan Zhoghovner" ("Diocesan Conventions of the Diocese"), New York, NY, September 27–28, 1940, p. 26.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Archbishop Hovsēp'ian expressed his regret to the Diocesan Convention that so few clergymen showed serious interest in participating in the Clergy Conference.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Among the members of the subcommittee was Reverend H. G. Benneyan, a member of the Armenian Protestant community.

¹⁰¹⁰ "Arachnortagan T'emi Eresp'okhanagan Zhoghovner" ("Diocesan Conventions of the Diocese"), New York, NY, September 27–28, 1941, pp. 10, 15.

¹⁰¹¹ Editorial, "The Problem of Trained Clergy," *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, June 18, 1941, p. 2.

¹⁰¹² This was also the case in the time of Bishop Giwlēsērian, whose initiative in attacking the problem of trained clergy remained unrealized. It was only in the 1960s, with the opening of Saint Nersess Theological School, that the concept was materialized.

¹⁰¹³ "Arachnortagan T'emi Eresp'okhanagan Zhoghovner" ("Diocesan Conventions of the Diocese"), New York, NY, September 21–22, 1940, p. 14.

¹⁰¹⁴ Garegin Hovsepian, "A Problem of the Armenian Church," *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, June 12, 1940, p. 1.

¹⁰¹⁵ *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, June 12, 1940, p. 5.

¹⁰¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰¹⁷ Approximately 10,000 Armenian soldiers served with the French forces and about 300,000 with the Soviet armies. James H. Tashjian, *The Armenian American in World War II* (Boston: Hairenik Association, 1952), pp. X–XI.

- 1018 Pictures and information concerning these men can be found in the following periodicals: *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, *Hairenik Weekly*, *Baïkar*, and *Hairenik*.
- 1019 Editorial, “Nor Baṛagdoumē Hankanagout ‘ean Mē Shourch” (“The New Dissension about a Fund-Raising Campaign”), *Hairenik*, March 26, 1943; Editorial, “Tsakhogh Tsernargi Mē Tshakhogh Vakhjanē” (The Failed Outcome of a Failed Initiative), *Hairenik*, September 2, 1943.
- 1020 Editorial, “Nor Baṛagdoumē Hankanagoutean Mē Shourch” (“The New Dissension about a Fund-Raising Campaign”), *Hairenik*, March 26, 1943.
- 1021 Garegin Hovsepian, “Dark Clouds over the Horizon of Armenia,” *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, September 17, 1941, p. 1.
- 1022 “Arachnortagan T’emi Eresp’okhanagan Zhoghovner” (“Diocesan Conventions of the Diocese”), New York, NY, September 27–28, 1941, pp. 11–12.
- 1023 Karekin Hovsēp’ian, “Haygagan Hantsnakhoupē” (“The Armenian Committee”), *Hayasdaneayts’ Yegeghets’i*, III (November 1941), p. 35.
- 1024 “Organize Armenian ‘V’ Committee for Medical Aid,” *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, September 17, 1941, p. 1.
- 1025 Karekin Hovsēp’ian, “Hay Egeghets’agan Geank” (“Armenian Church Life”), *Hayasdaneayts’ Yegeghets’i*, III (November 1941), p. 1.
- 1026 “Primate Issues Official Statement Urging All to Unite under Banner of the Armenian War Relief,” *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, November 12, 1941, p. 1.
- 1027 “‘V’ Committee to Submit Accounts to Armenian Relief,” *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, December 3, 1941, p. 1.
- 1028 “Final War Campaign Totals \$102,096.84,” *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, September 16, 1942, p. 1.
- 1029 “Catholicos of Echmiadzin Congratulates J. Stalin,” *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, January 27, 1943, p. 1.
- 1030 Ibid. Throughout the war, the Russian Church also continued to serve the nation. In September 1943, Metropolitan Sergii, Acting Primate, reported that in answer to his appeals the faithful had donated eight million rubles, much of it for the Dmitrii Donskoi Tank Column. John Shelton Curtiss, *The Russian Church and the Soviet State, 1917–1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1953), p. 295.
- 1031 Editorial, “Message from Echmiadzin,” *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, January 27, 1943, p. 2.
- 1032 “Form New Committee for David of Sasoun,” *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, March 10, 1943, p. 1.
- 1033 “New Committee Organized for David of Sasoun Tank Column Campaign Headed by Archbishop Garegin,” *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, March 24, 1943, p. 1.
- 1034 Armine D. Bozian, “David of Sasoun Campaign Opens with Big Contribution,” *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, April 14, 1943, p. 1.
- 1035 “Amerigahay Geank” (“Armenian-American Life”), *Gotchnag*, January 29, 1944, p. 113.
- 1036 “David of Sasoun Tank Column Committee Issues Statement,” *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, April 28, 1943, p. 1. *Lraper* is the official publication of the Armenian League, which is of Communist orientation.

1037 Ibid.

1038 Actually, the Diocesan Convention of 1926 had apportioned \$100,000 for the building of a cathedral. Because of the Great Depression the idea was abandoned.

1039 Hovsēp'ian, "Srpazan Arachnorti Zegout'soumē Eresp'okhanagan Zhoghovin" ("The Report of the Primate to the Diocesan Convention"), *Hayasdaneayts' Yegeghets'i*, IV (January 1943), p. 170.

1040 "Azkayin Eresp'okhanagan Zhoghov" ("National Diocesan Convention"), November 7–8, 1942, *Hayasdaneayts' Yegeghets'i*, IV (February 1943), p. 200.

1041 Karekin Hovsēp'ian, "Mayr Egeghets'i ew Arachnortaran" ("Mother Cathedral and Diocesan House"), *Hayasdaneayts' Yegeghets'i*, IV (August 1943), p. 371.

1042 "Azkayin Eresp'okhanagan Zhoghov" ("National Representative Convention"), *Hayasdaneayts' Yegeghets'i*, V (January 1943), p. 146.

1043 "Azkayin Eresp'okhanagan Zhoghov" ("National Representative Convention"), *Hayasdaneayts' Yegeghets'i*, V (January 1944), pp. 140–143.

1044 "Arachnortagan T'emi Eresp'okhanagan Zhoghovner" ("Diocesan Conventions of the Diocese"), Worcester, MA, October 2–3, 1943, p. 8.

1045 Ibid.

1046 Ibid.

1047 Editorial, "Mer Azkayin Eresp'okhanagan Zhoghovin Arti" ("On the Occasion of Our National Representative Convention"), *Hairenik*, November 7, 1943.

1048 "Eresp'okhanagan Zhoghovi Oroshoumer" ("Diocesan Convention Resolutions"), *Hairenik*, December 22, 1943, p. 3. For the complete text, see *Hairenik*, December 16–19 and 22, 1943.

1049 "Amerigahay Geank'" ("Armenian-American Life"), *Gotchnag*, September 16, 1944, p. 905.

1050 Karekin Hovsepien, "Spiritual Values Make a Nation Immortal," *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, July 29, 1944, p. 7.

1051 Ibid.

1052 "Archbishop Garegin Hovsepien Elected Catholicos of Cilicia," *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, May 28, 1943, p. 1.

1053 *Vartabed* or *Vardapet* is a reference to a celibate priest in the Armenian Church. Father Terenig P'ōladian, later bishop, received his degree of doctor of philosophy from New York University in February 1944. He accompanied Archbishop Hovsēp'ian to Antelias, where he became dean of the seminary.

1054 "Archbishop Garegin Hovsepien Elected Catholicos of Cilicia," *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, May 28, 1943, p. 1.

1055 "Hay Egeghets'agan ew Azkayin Geank'" ("Armenian Ecclesiastical and National Life"), *Hayasdaneayts' Yegeghets'i*, IV (July 1943), pp. 345–346.

1056 Ibid.

1057 Zkōn Dēr Hagopian, "Dēr Diran Vartabed Nersoyian Arachnort Hayots' Amerigayi" ("Father Diran Nersoyian Primate of Armenians of America"), *Hayasdaneayts' Yegeghets'i*, V (September 1944), p. 388.

1058 For biographical data on Father Nersoyian, see Zkon Der Hagopian, "The New Primate Is an Able Scholar and Administrator," *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, November 18,

- 1943, pp. 1–2; Arten Ashjian, “Tragedy Befalls the Armenian Church,” *Armenian Guardian*, XI (October 1958), pp. 3–5; Ralph A. Yagjian, “Patriarch Tiran Nersoyian,” *Digest*, IV (1957–1958), pp. 65–70.
- ¹⁰⁵⁹ A detailed description of this journey is given in the *Armenian Mirror-Spectator* in a series of articles by Terenig P’ōladian, July 14, 21, and 28, 1945.
- ¹⁰⁶⁰ Terenig Poladian, “Catholicos Garegin Hovsepien Consecrated at Antelias,” *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, August 4, 11, 1945.
- ¹⁰⁶¹ “Gevorg Cheorekjian Consecrated Catholicos of All Armenians,” *Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, July 28, 1945, p. 1.
- ¹⁰⁶² “*Azkayin Eresp’okhanagan Zhoghov*” (“National Diocesan Convention”), Providence, RI, November 7–8, 1942.
- ¹⁰⁶³ *Consecration and Dedication*, Holy Trinity Armenian Church, Cheltenham, PA., September 18, 1966.
- ¹⁰⁶⁴ “*Adenakrout’iwn*,” New York, NY, September 27–28, 1941, pp. 8–9.
- ¹⁰⁶⁵ Information concerning Holy Trinity Church is compiled from the following sources: “*Adenakrout’iwnner*,” May 15–16, 1927, Boston, pp. 38–39; “*Adenakrout’iwn*,” New York, NY, September 27–28, 1941, pp. 8–9; *Third Annual Assembly of the ACYOA*, September 3–5, 1949, Armenian Church of the Holy Resurrection, New Britain, CT, pp. 7–9.
- ¹⁰⁶⁶ “*Adenakrout’iwn*,” New York, NY, September 27–28, 1941, pp. 8–9.
- ¹⁰⁶⁷ Ashjian, *Vijagats’oyts’ ew Badmout’iwn Arachnortagan T’emin Hayots’ Amerigayi*, pp. 183–186; *St. Leon’s Armenian Apostolic Church 25th Anniversary Celebration*, May 22, 1960; *Second Anniversary, St. Leon’s Armenian Church*, Fair Lawn, NJ, October 1, 1967.
- ¹⁰⁶⁸ *Second Anniversary, St. Leon’s Armenian Church*, 1967.
- ¹⁰⁶⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁷⁰ Ashjian, *Vijagats’oyts’ ew Badmout’iwn Arachnortagan T’emin Hayots’ Amerigayi*, pp. 272–275; *Armenian Directory* (Midwest Communities Illinois–Wisconsin–Indiana 1966); *Dedication of St. John’s Church Cultural Center*, September 27, 1970.

Conclusions: Crisis and the Church

The foregoing chronological analysis presents the main developments in Armenian church history in the United States from 1888 until 1944. Looking at this overall sweep of Church history, it is possible to reach some conclusions about the underlying forces that shaped the Church's history in the New World.

A frequent theme that has been encountered in our previous analysis is that of communal crisis. The problem most likely to interest the historian is the search for the causes of the crisis in the Church. Because crisis was so prevalent, in both the Armenians' past in Turkey and their American present, it is possible to see it as a main link between the two existences. To be sure, the Turkish past clearly shaped their American present. It is from this past-present continuum, as presented in the foregoing study, that one should seek the deeper causes of Church crisis.

National Character

Perhaps the most basic source of community instability is what sociologists call *national character*. This is defined as "relatively enduring personality characteristics and patterns that are model among the adult members of a society."¹⁰⁷¹ In the Armenians' case, one must examine their 3,000-year span of national existence to discern the collective experiences that left a deep imprint on the nation's consciousness. Although such an effort falls outside this study, the historical memory of the Armenian people is replete with persistent sufferings and sometime heinous experiences, particularly in the last 1,500 years of Armenian history. A number of national character traits or cultural patterns sprang from the very nature of collective historical experience.

Centuries of persecution and servitude produced a people suffering from the worst forms of collective and personal paranoia, perhaps unmatched in the annals of ethnic history save by that of the Jews. In this context, such character traits as deep mutual mistrust, cynicism, and vengefulness became a part of the Armenians' psyche. Moreover, lacking a tradition of independent existence and self-rule, the Armenians could not readily develop political consciousness, maturity, and discipline, despite their phenomenal sense of nationalism, which predated even that of the European nation-state.

Coexistent with these negative character traits were the goodness, faith, and love that the Holy Armenian Church provided in generous measure. The Church's teachings were an antidote intended to neutralize the negative traits bred by the Armenians' hostile environment. As stressed previously in the present study, the Church was the sole "haven for the Armenian soul,"¹⁰⁷² which, beyond its healing

role, moderated the underlying disruptive psychological traits that often bordered on personal masochism and group nihilism.

Culture Shock

Our historical account of the early years of Armenian settlement shows that the Church soon became forcefully drawn to center stage of troubled community life. But the crisis besetting Church and community did not spring solely from negative traits of national character, but also from the “culture shock” experienced by most immigrants who had transplanted themselves into a milieu radically different from their land of birth. Sudden freedom after age-old captivity, no less than the modernized culture and mores of America, was simply too socially and psychologically disorienting. In today’s terminology, these poor immigrants were in the midst of an identity crisis, a disruptive phase that can affect the growth of people, communities, and even nations.

The Leadership Factor

The third cause of Church turmoil was what might be called a leadership crisis. To be sure, both spiritually and in the more tangible areas of education and experience, the Church leadership was unequal to the new challenge in America. The clergy, both as a group and individually, were tried in conflict after conflict but were found wanting. Historically the caliber of the clergy had not been generally very high; after the massacres of 1915, it deteriorated further. In view of this reality, the clergy’s and the Church’s traditional role as instruments of peacemaking could not be fulfilled, and the Church’s spiritual mission faltered.

Taken together, this collective portrait of the Church’s leaders, whether they served as Primate or locum tenens, allows a number of generalizations to be deduced. Seventeen men served at the top of the hierarchy, two of whom (Sarajian and Giwlēsērian) served twice. These seventeen men served over a period of fifty-five years, their tenures averaging 3.2 years. Without counting Bishop Diran’s ten years, only two clerics served more than five years, and ten served for less than two years. Clearly, tenure at the top was unstable. Given such brief tenures, there could be little time for efficient planning and rational administration. The fact that only six of these men were full-fledged Primates also points to crisis at the top.

In terms of crisis and hierarchical affiliation, the group was not too homogeneous. Half of the sixteen clerics came from provincial and rural areas; the remainder had urban origins. More significantly, only two of the sixteen were Russian Armenians; fourteen came from the Ottoman Empire. Among the latter, seven were from Constantinople, thus reflecting the centrality of the Ottoman

capital in Armenian Church life. This fact becomes more obvious when it is noticed that the immediate hierarchical affiliation of nine clerics was to the Constantinople Patriarchate.

The remaining background characteristics—education, personality, political affiliations, and career conclusion—are related to the quality of church leadership as provided by the Primates and locum tenens. In terms of education, most of the group had little more than a seminary-level education, mostly at the Armash Seminary in Turkey, the Saint James Seminary in Jerusalem, or the Kēorkian Seminary in Ēchmiadzin, Armenia. Only four clerics possessed European-type higher education beyond that of their seminaries—Archbishops Dēr Hovhannēsian and Hovsēp‘ian held postgraduate degrees from Russian and German universities, respectively; Bishop Kasbarian had graduated from the Episcopal Theological Seminary of Cambridge, Massachusetts. The rest, with the exception of Archbishops Seropian, Giwlēsērian, and Nersoyian, simply were not equipped educationally to serve the diocese of the United States. Also, many of their specializations in school were not relevant to their complex and difficult mission in America.

The shortcomings in education were often compounded by personality traits that included traditionalism, controversiality, vindictiveness, pride, and stubbornness, harming their efforts and detracting from their spiritual and administrative effectiveness. Of course, some had higher-order character traits—humility, courage, dynamism, administrative ability, compassion, scholarship. Yet not many of these positive traits occurred together in one individual. All considered, in terms of both character and education, Archbishop Hovsēp‘ian stood higher than the other clergymen, to be followed by Archbishops Seropian, Giwlēsērian, and Nersoyian. The others were not well suited in education and temperament for service in the United States. It is noteworthy that both Giwlēsērian and Hovsēp‘ian reached the second-highest position in the Church hierarchy—the Catholicosate of Cilicia. Archbishop Nersoyian became Patriarch of Jerusalem and later head of Saint Nersess Seminary. Of the rest, one (Tourian) was assassinated, three were defrocked, and many retired or died in office.

Politicization of Community Life

The fourth cause of instability in the Church was the politicization of Armenian life. The reawakening of Armenian national consciousness under European intellectual influences had given rise to the Armenian revolutionary movements and parties. In time, the conflict between parties began to disturb the peace of the Armenian communities and of the Church. In America, serious conflict came early but intensified after the Sovietization of Armenia in 1920. The latter politicized the

Church and the community as never before, bringing the Church establishment to the edge of chaos during the 1930s. This unfortunate politicization occurred for two reasons:

1. The nature of Communist ideology and Soviet rule, which almost automatically led to the ideological polarization of the Armenian Church and community in the diaspora.
2. The anti-Soviet policies of the Tashnag Party, which, having lost power to the Soviets in Armenia, aimed to build an alternate base of power in the diaspora. In contrast to the period 1888–1944, the history of the Armenian Church in the United States since World War II has been relatively peaceful. At least the factions in the community have been able to learn to pursue their conflicting interests within the established norms of civility. In other words, there have been no disruptive or cataclysmic incidents similar to Archbishop Tourian's murder.

The Confusion of National Destiny and Christian Mission

Political interference in the life of the Church was only one aspect of the general confusion between the Church's primary spiritual mission and her subordinate activities concerning the destiny of the Armenian nation. Despite efforts by the Church leadership, no significant success was achieved in dealing creatively with this problem, which continues to be a potent source of crisis. Often the Church has been obliged to play a secular role, which has diverted it from its spiritual mission.

Nevertheless, some innovative clergymen used the ethnic and cultural awareness of the people to enhance the Church's spiritual mission. In other words, if the road to an Armenian's heart passed through his or her ethnicity, so be it. But, ultimately, one must accept the reality that ethnic and political issues always took priority in Church meetings.

Jurisdictional Conflicts and Hierarchical Centers

The jurisdictional rivalries among the Church's four hierarchical centers were another primary cause of crisis. It is important to note the successive transfer of authority over the Armenian flock in America from one hierarchical center to another. For example, the initial authority to establish the American spiritual pastorate came from Constantinople, but the decision to establish a diocese came from the Holy See in Ēchmiadzin. Nevertheless, the influence of Constantinople on diocesan affairs was unrivaled until 1915; only after 1920 could the Holy See of Ēchmiadzin make its influence felt in the United States. With the removal of the

Cilician Catholicosate from Sis in Cilicia (now part of modern Turkey) to Antelias in Lebanon, the influence of that see increased, much to the dismay of Ēchmiadzin. The 1940s saw a cooling of the Ēchmiadzin-Antelias competition, only to be followed by the influence of the Jerusalem patriarchate in the United States. The geographical and political remoteness of Ēchmiadzin made it difficult for the authorities to evaluate and deal with the problems of the diocese in the United States. The diversity of political systems in the various countries in which the hierarchical sees were located contributed to the inconsistency of their policies and further compounded the problem of hierarchical discipline.

Structural-Organizational Problems

Structural and organizational problems arose from the inadequacies of the Church constitution and bylaws. The promulgation and interpretation of the constitution and bylaws were based on Old World concepts that did not fit the American environment, the frequency of new amendments, and the lack of clarity regarding the area of authority of laymen and clergy, resulted in constitutional nitpicking. The result was frequent confrontations between the Primate and the Central Executive Committee, paralleled at the parish levels by conflicts between the priests and Church Trustees.

Geographical Dispersion of American Settlements

Geographical dispersion was another factor contributing to the Church's difficulties. Both in terms of effective communication and efficient administration, the great distances between communities in America represented a liability to Church life. For example, it was difficult to supervise Californian farmers' parishes from a base in the urbanized East Coast of the United States. It was even harder to enforce discipline over long distances. The diffusion of parishes and their relative isolation produced a diversity of local habits, traditions, and policies and resulted in dangerous inconsistencies in their educational programs.

Multiple Waves of Migration and Their Efforts in Americanization

The church remained in perpetual flux because as soon as one wave of immigrants became acculturated into American society, another wave followed. Thus, the cultural cleavage between the early and later settlers produced tensions and instability. Moral, spiritual, and intellectual attitudes toward the Church varied greatly between American-born and foreign-born Armenians. This incongruity was further compounded by the differing attitudes of the older and newer immigrants.

The later immigrants were rudely confronted by an Armenian Church that had already undergone significant changes from the one they had left in the Old World.

The Persistence of Tradition

The persistence of traditionalism in the Armenian Church in a sea of American modernity has been and continues to be a major source of conflict for the Church. The balancing of traditionalism and modernity requires exceptional talent. In view of the Church's role as guardian of Armenian culture, it experienced difficulty in adapting its traditional ways to the modern American ethos. The sociological changes in American life that resulted from World War II reflected on the abrupt change of direction toward a more liberal policy for the Armenian Church.

This critical account of Armenian Church history should not hide the achievements and strengths of this institution. The Armenian Church not only has succeeded in surviving in the “foreign” American environment, but has also registered significant advances including the preparation of a young, well-educated, and competent clergy; an increase in the scope of religious and cultural activities; and an ambitious building program—all achieved with a minimum of alteration to the Church's traditional character. Indeed, there is something very remarkable about the Armenian Church as it has evolved through the centuries and as it has functioned in the American context. Although it has made notable attempts to adjust to American circumstances, it has given up little of her traditional essence. It has preserved its ethnic-national character; the sacred classical language remains the main medium of worship; and the sacramental and doctrinal base remains intact. Indeed, the Church of Armenia has compromised little for her survival in the giant democratic melting pot that is the United States. Of course, reluctance to change is against the conventional wisdom of America; not only are Americans used to change, but the environment encourages it. Yet the Armenian Church has not survived as long as it has by rapid reform, but by being itself—the national repository of the spiritual values of old Armenia. As one of the world's oldest religious communities alive today, its will to survive as the embodiment of the First Christian Nation appears indomitable.

Notes

¹⁰⁷¹ Alex Inkeles, “National Character and Modern Political Systems,” quoted in Nelson W. Polsby et al. (eds.), *Politics and Social Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963), p. 173.

¹⁰⁷² From a poem by the celebrated Armenian poet Vahan T'ĕk'ĕian, “*Egeghets'in Haygagan*” (“The Armenian Church”).

Appendix I

List of Churches in Order of Consecration

No.	Date	Name	Place	Primate/Locum Tenens
1	Jan. 5, 1891	Church of Our Saviour	Worcester, MA	Fr. Hovsēp‘ Sarajian
2	June 6, 1897	Holy Translators	Providence, RI	Fr. Vaghinag Sisagian
3	April 1, 1900	Saint John Chrysostom	New York, NY	Fr. Hovsēp‘ Sarajian
4	Oct. 14, 1900	Holy Trinity	Fresno, CA	Same
5	Jan. 27, 1907	Holy Cross	Union City, NJ	Fr. Bōghos Kaft‘anian
6	April 17, 1910	Saint Gregory	Fowler, CA	Same
7	July 6, 1916	Saint Mary	Yetter, CA	Same
8	April 16, 1916	Saint Vartanants‘	Lowell, MA	Fr. Arsēn Vehouni
9	July 1916	Saint Peter’s	Troy, NY	Same
10	Sept. 30, 1917	Saint Sahag and Saint Mesrob	West Philadelphia, PA	Same
11	1923	Holy Cross	Los Angeles, CA	Archbishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian
12	Nov. 11, 1923	Holy Trinity	Boston, MA	Same
13	Oct. 3, 1924	Holy Resurrection	South Milwaukee, WI	Same
14	Nov. 23, 1924	Saint Sahag and Mesrob	Reedley, CA	Same
15	Dec. 25, 1925	Saint Mesrob	Racine, WI	Same
16	Feb. 20, 1926	Saint Gregory the Illuminator	Chicago, IL	Same
17	April 1, 1928	Saint Gregory the Illuminator	North Philadelphia, PA	Same
18	May 23, 1929	Holy Trinity	Brooklyn, NY	Fr. Serovpē Nershabouh
19	April 6, 1930	Saint Gregory the Illuminator	Binghamton, NY	Same
20	Nov. 30, 1930	Saint Gregory the Illuminator	St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada	Fr. Harout‘iwn Sarkisian
21	June 24, 1931	Holy Ascension	Bridgeport, CT	Archbishop Ghewont Tourian
22	Nov. 22, 1931	Saint John the Baptist	Detroit, MI	Same
23	June 21, 1936	Holy Cross	Lawrence, MA	Archbishop Mamprē Kalfaian
24	Oct. 31, 1937	Saint James	Watertown, MA	Same
25	May 17, 1937	Holy Cross	New York, NY	Same
26	March 19, 1941	Holy Resurrection	New Britain, CT	Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp‘ian
27	Oct. 4, 1941	Saint Leon’s	Paterson, NJ	Same
28	May 11, 1942	Saint John	West Allis, WI	Same

Appendix II

Sites, Dates, and Presiding Churchmen of Diocesan Conventions (1902–1944)

Date	Place	Presiding Churchmen
June 12, 1902	Worcester, MA	Archbishop Hovsēp‘ Sarajian
September 2, 1906	Worcester, MA	Father Bōghos Kaft‘anian
May 30, 1907	Worcester, MA	Archbishop Hovsēp‘ Sarajian
February 22, 1910	West Hoboken, NJ	Father Bōghos Kaft‘anian
February 26, 1911	Worcester, MA	Bishop Moushegh Seropian
November 12, 1911	Worcester, MA	Father Bōghos Shahnazarian
July 7, 1912	Worcester, MA	Father Arsēn Vehouni
September 20, 1913	Worcester, MA	Archbishop Kēork Iwt‘iwjian
November 26–27, 1914	Worcester, MA	Father Arsēn Vehouni
October 29–31, 1916	Worcester, MA	Father Arsēn Vehouni
February 18, 1917	Worcester, MA	Father Arsēn Vehouni
July 29, 1917	Worcester, MA	Bishop Papkēn Giwlēsērian
April 7–8, 1918	Worcester, MA	Father Shahē Kasbarian
July 10, 1920	Worcester, MA	Bishop Khorēn Mouradpēgian
August 21, 1921	Worcester, MA	Archbishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian
October 23, 1923	Boston, MA	Archbishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian
September 6–7, 1925	Boston, MA	Archbishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian
June 20, 1926	Boston, MA	Archbishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian
May 15–16, 1927	Boston, MA	Archbishop Dirayr Dēr Hovhannēsian
October 7–8, 1928	New York, NY	Father Serovpē Nerhabouh
September 6–7, 1930	New York, NY	Father Harout‘iwn Sarkisian
January 31–February 1, 1931	New York, NY	Father Nshan P‘ap‘azian
October 10–11, 1931	New York, NY	Archbishop Ghewont Tourian
September 2–3, 1933	New York, NY	Archbishop Ghewont Tourian
October 10–11, 1936	New York, NY	Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp‘ian
		Archbishop Mamprē Kalfaian
May 1–2, 1937	New York, NY	Archbishop Mamprē Kalfaian
September 3–4, 1938	New York, NY	Archbishop Mamprē Kalfaian
April 16, 1939	New York, NY	Father Sion Manougian
September 21–22, 1940	New York, NY	Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp‘ian
September 27–28, 1941	New York, NY	Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp‘ian
November 7–8, 1942	Providence, RI	Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp‘ian
October 2–3, 1943	Worcester, MA	Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp‘ian
January 29–30, 1944	New York, NY	Archbishop Karekin Hovsēp‘ian

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Boston, MA: September 6–7, 1925; May 15–16, 1927

New York, NY: October 7–8, 1928; January 31–February 1, 1931; October 10–11, 1931; January 21–22, 1933; September 2–3, 1933; October 10–11, 1936; May 1–2, 1937; September 3–4, 1938; April 16, 1939

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