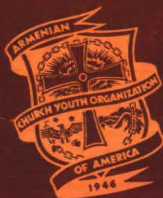


A·C·Y·O·A

7th Annual Assembly



S E P T E M B E R 4 . 5 . 6 . 7 . 1 9 5 3

• C L E V E L A N D • O H I O

*Compliments of your*

**HEADQUARTERS HOTEL**

**THE CARTER**

*Cleveland, Ohio*

*Seventh Annual Assembly of the*



ARMENIAN  
C H U R C H  
Y O U T H  
O R G A N I Z A T I O N  
O F A M E R I C A

September 4-5-6-7-1953

THE CARTER HOTEL • CLEVELAND, OHIO



# DEDICATION

**T**HE Armenian Church Youth Organization of America in dedicating this book to a beloved church leader, the late Catholicos Garegin I, will be paying a humble homage to the great churchman who for more than half a century untiringly devoted his life, energy, and knowledge to the welfare of the Armenian people for the advancement of its culture and for the spread of Truth as proclaimed by the Church which he so devoutly served.

His Holiness Catholicos Garegin I was ordained into the priesthood of the Armenian Church in 1897 at Etchmiadzin at the age of 30. From this time on we find him busy at work in the service of his people in the capacity of priest, educator, bishop, primate, and catholicos. During his early days the church authorities had already recognized his abilities and appointed him to the diocese of Tiflis as locum tenens, and later he was called to Erivan to become the principal of the Armenian School. Subsequently, he served as the dean of the Seminary at Etchmiadzin and editor of ARARAT, the Armenian church periodical.

Soon after this period Archbishop Garegin was committed to travel through Crimea and Eastern Europe, and finally to the United States to revitalize the loyalty of the parishes toward the Holy See at Etchmiadzin and to bring financial assistance to the local clergy.

Meantime, the Armenian Diocese in the United States, though free from political upheavals, was in a dormant state and needed the revival of its spirit. At this time, to our great fortune, the late Catholicos of Etchmiadzin appointed Archbishop Garegin as a pontifical legate to the Armenians of the United States. It was indeed the untiring work of this great churchman that revitalized the life of the Armenian churches in this country. It was not long before the Armenian people in the United States appreciated his administrative and spiritual leadership and requested his stay in this country as the Primate of the Armenian Church of America. His vast store of knowledge in church history, art, and literature brought inspiration to the parish life of every church in America and to their congregations.

It was a natural sequence, therefore, that when the See of Cilicia was left vacant, he was enthusiastically chosen by the delegates to occupy this See.

There are no better words that can summarize the life of this great clergyman and scholar than the words of St. Paul, who said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." Let us therefore bow our heads in deep reverence to his living spirit.



GAREGIN I  
*Catholicos of the Armenians of Cilicia (†1952)*



## ACYOA PRAYER

O Lord our Saviour Jesus Christ, Who art the Way, the Truth, and the Life, give us, the youth of the Church of Armenia, we beseech Thee, the wisdom to know, to love, and to serve Thee in our personal lives and in the corporate life of our Organization.

Thou that leadest men in thy Way, lead us, thy children, that we may be able to serve the Church and thy people, with courage and vision, and in the faith of our forefathers. Inspire us, O Lord, and open our eyes to thy light, that we may cherish and profit by the heritage which our forefathers have left to us, and that we may be aware of our responsibilities as citizens of our beloved country.

Fill us, O Christ our God, with thy Holy Spirit, that we may be the obedient and unselfish servants of the Will of our Heavenly Father, to whom, together with Thee and the Holy Spirit, is befitting Glory, Dominion and Honor, now and always and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

## ACYOA PLEDGE

I solemnly promise and declare upon my honor, that as a member of the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America, I shall, to the best of my ability, be a faithful son of the Armenian Church; shall be a devoted upholder of the Armenian cultural heritage; shall be a loyal citizen of the United States; and I shall diligently abide by the objects, policies, and decisions of the Armenian Church Youth Organization of America. I shall not strive for personal recognition and pleasure, but will serve our Church, our Community, and our Country, for the greater glory of God.





His Holiness

## KEVORK VI

Patriarch-Catholicos of All Armenians

Born in Nor Nakhichevan, 1868

Ordained a vardapet 1913

Consecrated bishop 1917

Elected Locum Tenens 1941

Elected catholicos June 22, 1945

Anointed catholicos June 24, 1945



# CLEVELAND'S ARMENIAN COMMUNITY AND CHURCH LIFE



**S**CENE: Cleveland, Ohio YEAR: 1892  
CHARACTER: Melko Berejik . . . .  
Cleveland's first Armenian.

It wasn't until 17 years later, however, in 1909, that a true settlement began.

From the beginning of Armenian colonization in Cleveland to the present time, interest in the religious aspect has been high. In 1911, a Cleveland Armenian church parish was organized. The following year Meshag Srpazan held the first Divine Liturgy in this city, at Grace Episcopal Church on East 91 street. During the 1927-28 period, Cleveland had a regular parish priest, Father Vahan Nazaretian, although it had no church. During Father Nazaretian's stay, religious activity reached a high point. Several clergymen were invited to stay in Cleveland during the 1930's but the community was never strong enough to keep and support one. Neither did dreams of purchasing a church ever materialize.

The greatest impetus toward a sincere and concerted effort to build a church came in 1941. With the warm encouragement of the late Catholicos Garegin, who was then an archbishop, a Church Purchasing Committee was founded. Catholicos Garegin gave a great moral boost to the community, showing his own faith in

them by donating the initial \$50 toward the sum for building a church.

Officers for the first Purchasing Committee were Kevork Arslanian, chairman, with Nigol Nigolian, Hagop Achabadian, George Panossian, Dick Kilimian and Jack Chalabian as committeemen.

In 1949, under Dikran Garabedian's chairmanship, the Council elected a second Church Purchasing Committee. Souren Aghajanian served as chairman, with Kevork Arslanian as secretary, and Karekin Demirjian as treasurer.

After much consideration, the Committee, in 1950, gave its approval on a plan to construct a church and a hall. A \$50,000 campaign was started, and \$20,000 had been collected when construction costs went up and made building supplies scarce.

Since the last Parish Council took office, with Dr. K. K. Goekjian as chairman, the community has secured the privilege of meeting in St. Alban's Episcopal Church, and has had religious services at least six times a year. The past few years have been successful ones for the Council. Vartanantz has been celebrated each year. The Council gave encouragement to the church choir by giving two scholarships to the study seminars of the Association of Armenian Church Choirs for two successive years.



# CLEVELAND'S ARMENIAN COMMUNITY AND CHURCH LIFE

(continued)

During this time, Cleveland's community had the honor of becoming the first to raise its complete quota for the Cathedral and Cultural Center now being constructed in New York. Cleveland fulfilled its \$6,000 quota in two years, the allotted time being four years. This Council has also supported a "Cleveland student in the Antelias Theological Seminary in Lebanon.

After a conference with Archbishop Tiran during the past Easter season, the Parish Council decided to continue negotiation for the purchase of St. Alban's Episcopal Church. Meanwhile, the Building Committee was authorized to continue looking for a lot. Members of the present Church Parish Council, who deserve much credit for their efforts, enthusiasm and spirit are: Dr. K. K. Goeckjian, chairman; Hagop Hatcherian, vice-chairman; Khosrov Vosgerichian, secretary; Richard Demirjian, treasurer. Committee members are Mike Chekemian, Hachig Baghdasarian, and Paul Apkarian.

Souren Aghajanian is the present chairman of the Building Committee, with Kevork Arslanian, secretary, and Karekin Demirjian, treasurer.

Cleveland's ACYOA Chapter was founded in 1946, after delegates attended the Constitutive Assembly in Providence,

R. I. Ever since 1946, Cleveland has had representatives at the ACYOA Assemblies. ACYOA'ers in Cleveland have directed their efforts and talents toward increasing the Church Building Fund and tried always to abide by the rules of a good ACYOA Chapter.

When Jack Hacherian was chairman in 1949, the Cleveland Chapter of the ACYOA contributed more than \$1,000 to the Building Fund. Every year proceeds from various affairs sponsored by the Chapter are donated to this Fund. Under Rose Bannaian's chairmanship active membership increased to 41; the religious and cultural program was enlarged and broadened in scope; and a revised Armenian directory was published. "Firsts" to her credit include a club initiation and a set of by-laws for the Chapter. Sam Arslanian is incoming chairman.

Cleveland's Church Choir was born just four years ago, in 1949. Lillian Tookman, who offered her collection of records and liturgical music to the group, was elected choirmistress. Beginning with her were Paul Apkarian, Rose Bannaian, Ann Chobanian, Rose Hacherian, Sam Mirakian, and Mary Vartevarian. About two years ago, through contributions, \$200 was collected to purchase dulmatics for the choir members. The 14-member

choir sings at all the masses held in Cleveland. Organist is Louise Kurkjian. Mary Vartevarian is treasurer of the choir, and Alice Seferian serves as secretary. Deacon Margos Demirjian helps to familiarize the choir members with the liturgical service. A former teacher experienced in musical education, Mrs. K. K. Goeckjian, is advisor to the group.

In March, 1948, the present Ladies' Auxiliary, with 31 initial members, began functioning as a group. Their main purpose is a money-raising one, with the proceeds being turned in to the Church Building Fund. Forming the executive body of the Ladies' Auxiliary this year are: Mrs. Anahid Aghajanian, president; Mrs. Violet Baghdasarian, vice-president; Mrs. Nevart Tarkanian, recording secretary; Mrs. Mary Vosgerichian, corresponding secretary; and Mrs. Grace Arslanian, treasurer.

One of the newest and most ambitious projects on the agenda for Cleveland's church activities is the formation of a Church School to be held every Sunday beginning in September. Plans for the project are being made by Mrs. Helen Atkian. A Church School Committee and several volunteer teachers are helping Mrs. Atkian.

*Note: Because of space limitations, many names have been omitted. Some dates are approximations. In no measure is this intended as a complete history.*







ARCHBISHOP TIRAN

## A Message from Archbishop Tiran

**I** AM GLAD that your chapter is working diligently for the preparation of the ACYOA Annual Assembly. I fervently hope that we shall have a successful Assembly and mark another milestone on the road to great achievements in our purposes. The Lord's vineyard needs a great many labourers and the ACYOA should inspire the men and women in its ranks to become such labourers.

“The purpose of our Youth Organization is in a sense within itself. Its aim is primarily the education of its members to be good church members, to lift up their hearts, to enlighten their minds, and to forge a strong bond of fellowship among themselves, so that they can have a fuller spiritual life. The success of our Organization should be measured by its advancement towards the achievements of these ideals. Every little step in this direction taken by any member of the ACYOA or by any of its chapters, is worthy of the highest praise, and will be rewarded by our Lord and Saviour many-fold in His infinite mercy.

“I pray for God's blessings upon your work and remain with paternal affection,”

**ARCHBISHOP TIRAN**

Primate of the Armenian Church  
of North America



# To You From Us...WELCOME!

**C**LEVELAND'S Chapter of the Armenian Church Youth Organization extends a warm welcome to you — clergy, delegates, and guests, to our Seventh Annual Assembly.

This Assembly is the first to be held in Cleveland . . . “the best location in the nation.” And our agenda includes many activities designed especially for you.

May this Assembly and visit to Cleveland be a highlight in your treasure book of memories.



**CLEVELAND  
CHAPTER**



**HOST**



## The Apostolicity of the Armenian Church

**T**HE ONE holy and catholic Church of Christ is apostolic. That is to say, ever since the apostles of Christ all the orthodox bishops of the Church have ordained those who succeeded them, the first bishops being the apostles themselves. Thus through successive ordinations all the orthodox bishops form a chain of which they themselves are, as it were, the successive links. As electricity through a wire, the Holy Spirit runs through the succession of duly consecrated bishops.

In the Armenian Church we address our bishops as "SRPAZAN". Literally this word means "of holy lineage". Every time we address them using this word "srpazan", we refer to the holiness of their episcopal dignity and rank.

The term "apostolic" has another meaning. To understand this other meaning we must visualize the first group of the twelve apostles as a seed out of which grew the Church. Jesus Christ continued to live, after His ascension, in and among His apostles. His disciples became, together, the

body of Christ. Their teachings were according to the teachings of Christ because they were inspired by the same Holy Spirit. Through the ordinations that they performed the apostles gradually expanded their group (namely the Church) which, with the centuries, reached its present day vast size.

In both of these meanings the Armenian Church is apostolic. Our bishops are the direct descendents of the apostles. Christianity was brought to Armenia by two apostles: Thaddeus and Bartholomew.

The Patriarch-Catholics of all Armenians is the head of the bishops of our Church. Georg VI, now reigning in Etchmiadzin, is our 129th patriarch-catholikos. In the following pages are presented the short biographical sketches of ten of our catholicoi who have played outstanding roles in the history of our church and people.

*Grateful acknowledgement is due to Mr. Edward Aghajanian for contributing the ten stories appearing in this booklet.*



**BOSTON  
CHAPTER**



The First  
Christian Nation  
in the World



## SAINT GREGORY THE ENLIGHTENER 302-325 A. D.

**G**OD WILLED that Christianity be established in the land of Armenia through the courage and vision of a great saint. This saint was Gregory, known by our people through the centuries as "the Enlightener". With the king and people that he converted, he built the first edifice in the world planned in a way as to serve specifically as a church. He called it Etchmiadzin—meaning literally "the Only-begotten descended"—because Christ Himself, the Only-Begotten, had appeared to him in a vision and indicated the place where the church was to stand. It was a sumptuous edifice. It has undergone several alterations but it still keeps its original beauty and is the spiritual center of Armenian Christendom. The Catholicos of all Armenians resides at Etchmiadzin. There were however short and long periods in our history during which the Pontifical See wandered about . . . Thus the history of Etchmiadzin tells the history of the Armenian people.

Christianity was introduced into Armenia long before Saint Gregory the Enlightener. Two of the Apostles of Christ, Thaddeus and Bartholomew, preached it in our land and there they were martyred. They had ordained their successors and it was the good fortune of Saint Gregory to occupy the episcopal see of Armenia and see Christianity be proclaimed a state religion some fifteen years before the same event happened in Constantinople.

Gregory himself was not born in a Christian family. His father was Anak, a man commissioned by the king of Persia to perform the sad task of liquidating King Khosrov of Armenia who belonged to the Parthian (Parthev) dynasty. The king of Persia was of the Sassanid dynasty and the rivalry between the two houses was old and intense.

Anak did manage to assassinate Khosrov but at the cost of his own and most of his family's life. His son,

Gregory, was saved and taken to Caesarea, a center of Christian learning. There did Gregory receive his education.

In the meanwhile Terdat, the son of Khosrov, had likewise been taken away from the troubled land of Armenia, as an infant. He had then gone to Rome to complete his military education. Toward the end of the third century he was returning to his own country to rule it as its legitimate king. On his way back he met Gregory whom he had known before. He was not aware, however, of Gregory's identity, nor of his religious convictions. He appointed him to the Chancellor of the court.

In a banquet celebrating his resumption of Armenia's throne the king found out that Gregory was a Christian. He then knew that he was also the son of his father's killer.

The many ghastly tortures to which Gregory was subjected could not make him change his convictions. He was finally thrown into "the Deep Pit in order to become food to creeping beasts." But the saint survived with God's mercy and the secret help of the king's sister, Hosrovidouht.

Then the king himself became dangerously sick. His sister and others thought of the man in the Pit and of his new religion. He was brought in the king's presence and did cure him. This miracle at last convinced the court. They and thousands with them were baptized including of course the King.

Saint Gregory had done his appointed work. He consolidated this work by having many churches built besides Etchmiadzin, establishing Christian feasts, removing the vestiges of heathenism and organizing Christian communities. He then retired and died as an ascetic in the solitude of a mountain.





**CHICAGO  
CHAPTER**



## SAINT NERSESS I THE GREAT 353-373 A. D.



**S**AINT NERSESS, known in Armenian history as “the Great”, was eighteen when his grandfather was martyred. He did not know, then, that his own life would be spent in sacrificial service to God and that he himself would meet his death prematurely due to his uncompromising loyalty to Christ and His teachings. Like Saint John the Baptist, who publicly chastized Herod, Saint Nersess the Great fearlessly denounced the unprincipled behaviour of the king, Pap, and was finally the victim of a crime that sought to put an end to his lacerating and true-remarks.

Nersess was married at an early age and chose as a partner in life a studious lady, Santoukht. They had their only son that they called Sahak who was destined to become the father of Armenian literature. Historians report that the happy family life of Saint Nersess the Great did not last long. Three years after Sahak's birth his wife died in Caesarea. Nersess found consolation in further studies with such friends as Gregory Nazianzus, Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa.

Early in the fourth century the state of the church in Armenia was not a very glorious one. The fame of Nersess had in the meanwhile spread as a scholar and a capable administrator. He had already become the chief secretary of the court. On the request of the king he was ordained a deacon and then went to Caesarea to become a bishop. According to one tradition Basil of Caesarea was consecrated bishop during the same service. During the consecration the Holy Spirit descended on them as a dove, and

when Saint Nersess was celebrating his first Divine Liturgy, a column of light appeared and his face shone as that of Moses.

The king of Armenia was then Arshak. His private life, we are told, was far from decent and in order to avoid the judgment of the Catholicos he had him deposed. When Arshak's son, Pap, succeeded him, the relations between the king and the Saint showed signs of improvement until Pap himself began to pattern his own life on that of his father.

Nersess the Great exercised a great influence also on the political destiny of the country but his standards were the moral principles of Christianity. We catch a glorious glimpse of him at one time, praying on a mountain top while a fierce battle against the superior forces of the enemy was waged at the foot of the height where the Saint was praying, knowing that the Armenian armies were on the side of justice. This was the famous battle of Tzirav that was won by the Armenians.

But the time came when Pap could not bear Nersess's voice of righteousness. He had him poisoned. Saint Nersess died when he was forty four years of age.

Above all his other virtues, Saint Nersess the Great was loved by his people for the kindness of his heart. He had houses built on the dangerous roads of the country where travelers could find refuge and rest. His own table was shared very often by poor people. At an age when this conviction was difficult to have, he was convinced of the equality of all men and dealt with people accordingly.



**DETROIT**  
Senior  
**CHAPTER**



## SAINT SAHAG I PARTHEV 387-436 A. D.



The Armenian  
Alphabet

**T**HE LATTER years of the fourth century were far from being a brilliant period in the history of our people. In the year 390 Armenia was divided into two sections—Roman and Persian. The Armenian king of the Persian section, Artashir, did not prove to be a capable administrator and disrupted disputes among the *nakharars* made it possible for the Persian king to annul Armenian royalty and reduce the Persian section of Armenia into a Persian province.

St. Sahak was the Catholicos of all Armenians during this period. The king of Persia deposed him because he did not join the *nakharars* in their protests to Ctesiphon, the capital of Persia, against the Armenian king, which protests brought about the dissolution of the Armenian-Persian kingdom. St. Sahak was the son of St. Nersess the Great. He was born in 354 and was the last male descendant of St. Gregory the Enlightener. We know that the early Catholicos of the Armenian Church were married in their youth, and according to the convictions of the time the son of a catholicos would succeed him on the Pontifical See. It must be noted, however, that our bishops did not have wives after their consecration. These were either dead or separated voluntarily.

St. Sahak himself did not have a son and was concerned about his successor when he had, one day, the following vision, while still a deacon.

He was in the church one Good Friday evening at the city of Val'arshapat, the capital of Armenia. Suddenly a great altar appeared to him covered with white linen on which was placed a radiant cross. Then one side of the altar opened up, disclosing a table with bread and clusters

of grapes on it. An olive tree with four branches stood nearby. On the other side of the altar appeared a Chair supporting a golden globe and a parchment scroll inscribed with golden letters. A multitude of children were standing around the Chair. Then suddenly all these children grew up and went up to heaven from the altar.

This vision that tradition has preserved for us explained the value and mission of St. Sahak with regard to our Church. The multitude around the Chair may be said to represent Vardan and his soldiers who shed their blood for the Armenian Church and went to heaven as saints. (Vardan was the husband of St. Sahak's only daughter, Sahakanoush). The bread and clusters of grapes represent his sacrificial service to the Lord, and the scroll on the Chair with its golden letters announce St. Sahak's decisive contribution to the translation of the Bible into the Armenian language, after the invention of the Armenian alphabet.

On the request of the *nakharars* St. Sahak resumed his pontifical duties, and died in 436 in the village Blour of Bagrevand at the age of 82.

With St. Mesrop, St. Sahak is the most monumental personality in the history of Armenian letters. He sponsored St. Mesrop's project along with the king Vramshapouh. With his profound knowledge of Greek and his erudition in the fields of music, rhetoric and philosophy, he contributed a great deal to the grammar and beauty of the Armenian language. He revised and approved finally the translation of the Bible and himself translated many valuable works. He also established canons and wrote several *sharakans*.



**DETROIT**  
Junior  
CHAPTER



First Freedom  
of Worship



## SAINT JOHANNES MANDAKOUNY 478-490 A. D.

**I**N THE autumn of 485 Vahan Mamikonian was made Marzpan of Armenia. This event meant that the destiny of our land was now in the hands of a Christian Armenian who, moreover, was a very devout leader and had fought for the true religion of his fathers for many years. The marzpan were governors who were subject more or less to the Persian king. Unlike modern governors, however, they had vast powers and had over their subjects rights of life and death, of property and destiny. Their will was law. After many years of direct Persian domination and religious persecution, Armenia was lucky indeed to come at last under the rule of such a good leader as Vahan Mamikonian. With a treaty signed at Nowarsak with the Persian authorities, the Armenians could now enjoy complete religious freedom. They had earned this right as a direct result of the heroic battle of the Vardanian, the details of which are well known.

The elevation of Vahan Mamikonian to the rank of marzpan was being celebrated at the Cathedral of Dowin when the Catholicos of the time, St. Johannes Mandakouny, delivered his famous oration recorded by Lazar of Pharbe. He was jubilant as were all those present over the success of Vahan Mamikonian, but he was also concerned with the possible repercussions of the change of regime in the land of Armenia. There are many, he said, who sided with the Persians when they were so ruthlessly persecuting our people because of our glorious faith. Only recently the enemies of Christianity could victimize people against whom they had personal grievances, betraying and denouncing them to the Persian authorities. Now, he said, the roles are reversed. The rulers became slaves and those who were in favor are in disgrace. It is possible, St. Johannes Mandakouny continued, that those who are now

in favor may be anxious to avenge themselves of their enemies. Perhaps many of you, he said, are impatiently waiting for the opportunity when you can destroy those who were trying to destroy you. But he warned them in the name of the Lord whose followers they could now freely profess to be, against such action. During this speech, as in his other twenty-six famous orations that have reached us, Mandakouny preached forgiveness for offenders and love for enemies.

It is as a model of spiritual leadership that the name of St. Johannes I Mandakouny has left a deep mark in the memory of our people through the centuries. But St. Johannes was also a scholar and a practical leader. When Marzpan Vahan consolidated his government and established his capital in Dowin, St. Johannes transferred his Pontifical See from Etchmiadzin to that city.

St. Johannes also introduced a series of canons having to do with the customs of our Church, the main intention being to intensify the devotion of the people and preserve our holy tradition. We see the results of the activity of this Catholicos mainly in the text and order of our rites. It is quite possible that the rites of the Armenian Church were systemized for the first time by St. Johannes. St. Sahak and St. Mesrop had written most of the prayers used in our sacraments and services. In our Zhamagirk (Book of Hours), the litany "Zarthoutsealks" and the prayer, "Zken gohanamk", of the Night Service are attributed directly to Mandakouny. He has also written several *sharakans*. The canons of the rites of Baptism and Confirmation as well as of the Consecration of Bishops and the blessing of churches bear also the mark of his authorship.

When he died St. Johannes Mandakouny had almost completely changed the religious-spiritual atmosphere in our country.





**EVANSTON  
CHAPTER**



## NERSESS II OF BACREVAND 548-557 A. D.



**T**HE EARLY history of the Syrian Church, with which we are in communion, is marked by dissensions and controversies. There were, however, a group of priests, deacons, monks and many of the faithful in Mesopotamia who stayed clear of the bad influence of heresies that were working havoc at the time. This group of devout believers needed to have the truth of their faith confirmed by a recognized authority. They also wanted to have their own bishop. They designated for this purpose a priest of the Convent of Sarep. His name was Abdisho (literally meaning 'Servant of Jesus'). Now the question was to have him consecrated by an orthodox bishop of an orthodox church. The most authoritative bishop to whom they could turn was the Catholicos of the Armenian Church: Nersess II of Bacrevand.

With a delegation Abdisho was sent to Catholicos Nersess. He carried a letter of recommendation to our spiritual head who was addressed as: "Nersess, Catholicos of Great Armenia, Good, Truthful and God-loving; Just Shepherd and Spiritual Father; Light of the World and Pillar of Faith; Preacher of Righteousness and Disciple of the Apostles; Companion of the Saints and Friend of the Just; Beloved of Christ and Guardian of His Cross . . .".

A detailed confession of faith was incorporated into the text of the affidavit, that the theologians of the Syrian Church were submitting to the Armenian Catholicos for approval. If, the Syrians said to the Catholicos, you consecrate Abdisho, we will recognize him as our lawful bishop and an orthodox successor of the Apostles.

Nersess II examined Abdisho's background and faith and he did consecrate him and considered him the equal, thereafter, of the bishops of the Church of Armenia. As such the lawful head of the Syrian Church attended the Armenian Ecclesiastical Council of Dowin, and we see him listed as: "Abdisho, bishop of the orthodox Syrians."

This event makes it abundantly clear that approval by the spiritual authorities of the Armenian Church was a

mark of truth in religious-spiritual matters; it further indicates that consecration by the Armenian Catholicos meant guarantec of apostolic succession.

To our own people Nersess II rendered great services. He succeeded, for instance, in bringing about the recall of Denshabouh. This man was the Persian High Commissioner in Armenia and with a blatant disregard to the religious freedom that our people had earned some seventy five years prior to his appointment, he tried to spread the Mazdeistic worship of fire. We had secured religious freedom as a result of heroic battles waged by Vardan and then by Vahan Mamikonian. A treaty was signed to this effect by Vahan in 485. Nersess protested to the Persian ruler against the violation of this treaty by Denshabouh and the latter had to relinquish his office. He was replaced in 552 by Vishnaz Vahram who was specifically instructed by King Khosrov (of Persia) to respect our Christianity and not to prevent those of our people who were forced to embrace Mazdeism from returning to the religion of their fathers.

The Council of Dowin that we referred to above is one of the most important in the history of our Church. It was convened in the Cathedral of Saint Gregory the Enlightener of Dowin with eighteen bishops and many lay dignitaries present. Restrictive and punitive measures against the followers of a powerful heretic, Nestorius, were adopted. These Nestorians had infiltrated Armenia by way of Persia as merchants and were spreading vice and moral laxity and doctrines contrary to orthodoxy. The first step taken against these "enemies of Christ God" was the destruction of the "place of refuge of their impiety", namely the Convent of Manajihr. 87 canons were adopted at this council.

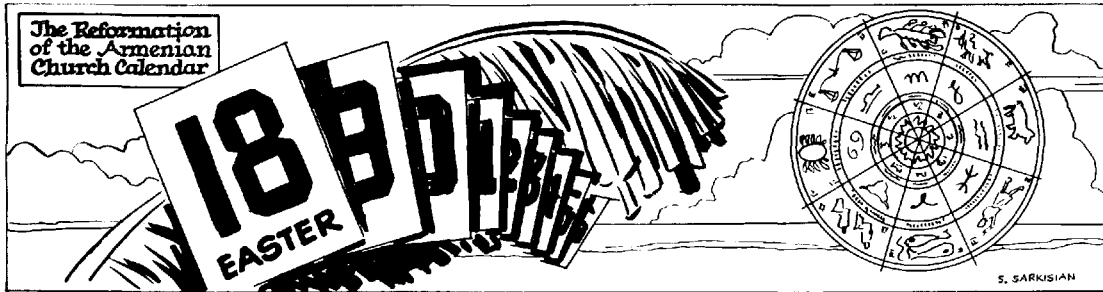
Nersess II of Bacrevand died in 557. He will be remembered mainly as an alert and eager guardian of our true faith.



**HARTFORD  
CHAPTER**



## MOSES II OF ELIVARD 574-604 A. D.



**I**F YOU look at the cover page of a church calendar published in Etchmiadzin, you will see on it three dates. The one is our current European date and the other two are Armenian dates. The year 1953, for example, corresponds to the "Original Armenian Date" of 4445-4446; on the other hand the current year is, according to the "Calendar of the Armenians", 1402-1403. The Armenian Calendar was composed by Catholicos Moses II of Elivard.

553 AD was for the Christian Church a year "of confusion of feasts and of the arts of determining dates". This confusion was due to the previous incorrect calculations of the phases of the moon.

We know that the dates of many Christian feasts revolve around the date of Easter which changes with every year. Originally the process of finding when Easter should occur was patterned on the old Jewish calendar, with this difference that it was made to coincide with the Sunday following full moon in order to avoid celebrating it with the Jews. After the Council of Nicea it became necessary to have a Christian Calendar in order to be able to determine the Easter date of years to come. This Calendar was formed a few years later by Andreas of Byzantium. This astronomer noted that within a cycle of 95 years the full moon would fall on the same day of the month. However later calculations proved the inadequacy of the system and Andreas adopted a new cycle of 200 years which enabled him to calculate correctly the Easter dates until the year 552. But in 553 his predictions did not correspond to facts and the Church could no longer calculate dates of Easter ahead of time. The problem was

solved in 561 when a group of 36 scientists at Alexandria adopted as basis of their calculations a new cycle of 532 years.

Due to political difficulties in Armenia, our Church could not concern herself with problems of calendar during these years. Nevertheless, when Moses of Elivard became Catholicos in 574 he was determined to have the problem settled once and for all, as far as the Armenian Church was concerned. We must not, he said, "beg informations from other nations" all the time. We must be able, he thought, to calculate the dates of our own feasts.

The Armenians would have adopted perhaps the findings of the scientists of Alexandria, were it not for the fact that they already had a calendar of their own without any provision for leap years, whereas the calendar formed at Alexandria was based on the Roman Calendar, which took account of the earth's taking more than 365 days to turn around the sun. Further, Armenian scientists had to compose certain differences between the two calendars (Alexandrian and Byzantine) that came to them from the West. Consequently "upon orders issued by Moses, the great philosophers and scientists" met in a council at Dowin, and formed the Armenian Calendar. This council took place in 584. It considered 552 (mentioned above) as the first year of "the Armenian Calendar". The first year of the Armenian Calendar corresponded to the 3043rd year of the Original Armenian Calendar already in use. Hence the three dates that appear on our traditional church calendars.



**H A V E R H I L L  
C H A P T E R**





## SAINT JOHANNES III OF ODZOUN 717-728 A. D.

**T**HE REIGN of Johannes III of Odzoun corresponds to an important period of our history, during which we were under Arab domination and were governed by "wostikans". The term *wostikan* literally means "policeman". These *wostikans* would receive their orders from the Emir residing in Damascus.

Johannes III is one of the most impressive personalities in our history both physically and intellectually. He is described as very handsome in appearance, tall and broad-shouldered. Nor is this description of his physical appearance given casually. The historians make it a point to impress their readers with the unusual pulchritude of this clergyman. His fame as such reached as far as Damascus and Omar, the emir of the Arabs expressed his curiosity and wanted to see the Armenian Catholicos. He extended him an invitation for this particular purpose.

Johannes arrived in Damascus clad in a very opulent fashion. Omar himself is known in history as a man of simple taste. Nevertheless when he saw Johannes of Odzoun he "marvelled at him in amazement". When they were through with the formal greetings, the Emir wanted to know how this servant of Christ could justify this extravagance in clothes and the extreme care that he took of his appearance. Your prophet Jesus, he said, was meek and humble; he wore simple habits and told his followers to do likewise.

Jesus and his Apostles, Johannes answered, could command respect with a power that we, simple individuals do not have. They could work miracles. They did not need any external signs to safeguard their prestige. But we have to use, he said, external signs in order to indicate our function and position. You yourself, he said, wear weapons and all manner of ornaments to command respect. I have further remarks to make, he said, if you kindly instruct the gentlemen here present to withdraw for a moment.

With a sign of the hand the Emir bid everybody to leave them alone.

Then the Catholicos took all his outer garments off. His tortured skin was covered with sackcloth. Upon further investigation the Emir found out that the private life of this prince of the Church was one of prayer and fasting. The Emir was deeply moved. "Ask, he said to the Catholicos, whatever thou wishest, and I will do it". The wishes of the Catholicos were very simple. He wanted the Emir to put an end to coercive ways of making his people embrace Mohammedanism; he wanted his clergymen, who were already poor, to be exempt of taxes; he wanted that permission be granted to Christians, wherever they may be, to worship their God freely. The wishes of the Catholicos, which were all granted, were according to the new policy of the Armenians, which was political harmony with the Arabs provided they enjoyed freedom of religion.

The physical comeliness and the saintly private life of Johannes of Odzoun were equalled by his intellectual power. He was educated in the Greek institutions of learning. His knowledge of "poetic works, the grammatical science, Aristotle's categories and the educational system of Theon" are noted by his historian. He was known as "Johannes the Philosopher" and is one of the authorities of our Church in matters of theology. He was eager not only to educate his people but also to strengthen them spiritually. 32 cannons were established to this effect at the Council of Dowin convened in 720.

Johannes of Odzoun has left us many orations and a very valuable Commentary on the Services of the Armenian Church. In this Commentary the official teaching of our Church is formulated with regard to many points.

Johannes III is one of the great fathers of our Church.

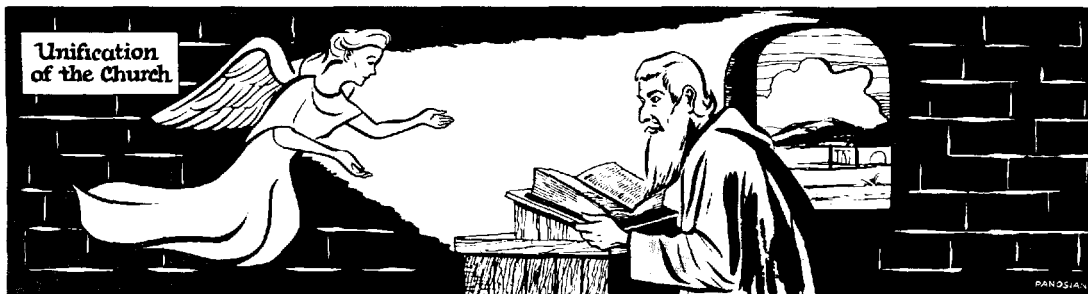




**LOWELL  
CHAPTER**



## SAINT NERSESS THE GRACEFUL 1166-1173 A. D.



**P**ERHAPS no other individual in Armenian church history has made a greater contribution towards the ideal of a united Christendom than the 12th century Father of our church, Nersess the Graceful (Shnorhali). Most of his work and writings come to us from the period of his bishopric, for it was only in his 66th year that Nersess became Catholicos, and death overtook him seven years later in 1173.

Nersess was born in 1100 A.D. in the castle of *Dsovk* which was ruled by his father, Apirat. Nersess was only 11 when his father died; and both he and his older brother Gregory, 5-6 years his senior, received their education in the monastery of Shoul'er.

Upon the death of Basil, the reigning Catholicos, Gregory, the older brother of Nersess was elected religious head of the nation in the newly established See at *Dsovk*. Owing to the pressure of the Persians from the East and the fear of the Arabs from the South, the See had recently been moved to that city from Etchmiadzin.

Gregory ordained Nersess a priest; later consecrated him bishop and the latter served him faithfully as his secretary throughout Gregory's 50 years' reign.

In Nersess' time Armenia rose to her second greatest level of religious and literary accomplishment. This period is called the Silver Age of Armenian history, comparable only to the Golden Age of the 5th century, when the Bible received its first translation into Armenian. Historically too this was a period of considerable political movement—the kingdom of the Bagratides in Armenia had fallen and the new Roubenian kingdom

in Cilicia was flourishing. The Crusades carried many soldiers through Cilicia on their way to Jerusalem and these endangered the new kingdom politically and militarily. But the greatest danger to the Armenian Church lay in the attempt of Rome, aided and assisted by the Crusaders, to proselytize and to convert the Armenian Christians into Roman Christianity.

Nersess met the situation with self-confidence. He had already been in communication with the leaders of the Greek church during his brother's reign as Catholicos, for the purpose of ironing out dogmatic differences and bringing about the ultimate intercommunion of the two Eastern churches. His letters and writings, preserved in our libraries, were considered by the Greek Fathers to represent the orthodox dogmatic position of the Armenian Church. Unfortunately, Nersess died before the procedural measures could be taken at an Episcopal Synod which he had planned to hold soon.

He was buried in the castle of Romeklah, near the river Euphrates, and was laid to rest beside his brother.

Nersess was a poet, a musician and a theologian. Most of his letters are available to us. He has also written gnomes (practical advices), a long prayer in poetic form called: "Jesus, Son, Only-begotten of the Father" which has been rendered into English by Jane S. Wingate.

It is significant that the feast of Saint Nersess is celebrated in the Armenian Church in October, together with that of all the Holy Translators of the 5th century.



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## GREGORY IX MUSABEGIANTZ 1439-1441 A. D.



**G**REGORY IX is the last of one line of succession of catholicoi and the first of another. He is the last of the catholicoi "of all Armenians" residing at Etchmiadzin and the first of the catholicoi "of the Great House of Cilicia" having spiritual jurisdiction over the Armenians of Asia Minor, now including our people of Syra, Lebanon and Cyprus. He is historically important because he reigned during a critical time of our church history, during which the transfer of the Pontifical See from Siss back to Etchmiadzin took place. It was one of our most important theologians, Gregory of Tathev, who saw the necessity of this transfer and lent to the project his considerable prestige. He was given the title "Yeramedz" (Thrice Great). The leader and head of the movement was a monk, Thomas of Medzop. This monk, although advanced in age, was extremely energetic and active.

The transfer of the Pontifical See back to Etchmiadzin was necessary in the better interests of the Armenian Church.

Following the pattern of the political destiny of our people, the Pontifical See had moved with the Marzpanes to the city of Dowin, with the Ardzrounics to Al'thamar, with the Bagratides to Ani and finally with the Roubenians to Roumkaleh and Siss. These peregrinations weakened the Church greatly and after the complete loss of Armenian political independence in 1375 she was rather disorganized. The purpose of our spiritual heads in going from city to city was to follow the mass of the faithful and the civil government. After 1375 when the Armenians had no state at all, there was no reason why the Pontifical See should be kept

in Siss, the capital of Cilicia (a state in the South of modern Turkey). This city was not the original and lawful site of the See, nor its being there had, any longer, any practical use.

Before leaving his own convent at Medzop Thomas prayed for divine illumination as to the wisdom of his plan with regard to the future of his beloved Church. Then he opened his Bible to read it, when the following verse leapt to his view: "and (Jesus) came into his own country; and his disciples followed him" (Mark 6:1). The Pontifical See, he said to himself, must go back to its own country! As he was about to start his mission, a man came and told him of a dream in which soldiers clad in red, green and white (the colors of the Church) had told him that they were the army of Etchmiadzin; and they went there flying, the man said. It took our church a whole year (1440) to prepare for an assembly with the transfer of the See as the main business on the agenda. About this time our most venerated relics, the gold-covered bones of the right hand of Saint Gregory the Enlightener "disappeared" from Siss, and they were "found" in Etchmiadzin.

The Assembly convened in 1441 and it was decided with a majority vote that the transfer should take place. The dreams of Gregory of Tathev and Thomas of Medzop and of the more sensible elements of our people had come true. A new catholicos, Kirakos of Virap, was elected at Etchmiadzin. Gregory IX, however, remained in Siss, as the first Catholicos of the Armenians of Cilicia.



**RACINE  
CHAPTER**



## MGRDITCH I OF VAN 1892-1907 A. D.



**T**HE POPULARITY that Mgrdich I, Catholicos of All Armenians, enjoyed and the esteem in which he was held are seldom shown by a people toward one of its leaders. Although he met with sharp and often vicious criticisms in his most eventful life, the people's love for him remained widespread and warm. People were not satisfied with calling him "Father"—that would sound too formal. They spontaneously called him "hyr-ik" which is almost the equivalent of "dad".

Khrimian Hyr-ik was elected Patriarch of Constantinople in 1869. He was accused by the "yerespokhans" of not abiding by the traditions of our church and by its Constitution. He resigned in 1873. In a famous address to the "yerespokhans" explaining his resignation, this is what he had to say:

"According to the Constitution the National Religious Council is to . . . develop a religious sense among our people . . . to keep intact the dogmas and traditions of the Armenian Church . . .

"These are becoming and proper formulations . . . But have you ever thought that rights must go along with duties? You tell us what our duties are but it does not occur to you that our (clergymen's) rights must also be respected . . ."

"I am confronted with a situation and do not know what to do. The parish of Arabkir wants a priest and we do not have one; Aken wants a priest and we do not have one; the priest of Chmishkadsak has fled and we cannot replace him; there is no priest in Ewtokia and the parish is troubled with factions and fights; Erzinka wants a priest and we do not

have one; Terdjan has been asking for a priest for years and we cannot spare one; Amassia, Marzwan, Moush, Van, Baghesh want priests and we do not have priests. I could hardly spare a lame priest, whom I sent to the Catholicos of Cilicia because the shortage of priests there was even worse! And yet, yerespokhans of the Armenian people, you are indifferent and (concern yourselves with the letter of the Constitution)!"

In the midst of such distressing problems Khrimian Hyr-ik was not discouraged, even after tasting in 1890 the bitterness of exile. He wrote several books, travelled extensively, won the people's esteem and was elected in 1892 Catholicos of All Armenians.

The only language Khrimian Hyr-ik knew was Armenian, yet he was in constant touch with the great Powers of the world, and made every effort to have the condition of the Armenians of the Diaspora improved and to prevent constant onslaught on their lives and property.

After returning from the Imperial Assembly of Berlin (1878) where the Armenian Cause was discussed, Khrimian Hyr-ik was asked about the outcome. "Our spoons, he said, were made of paper and we could not share in the meal. The nations, he said, that had spoons of steel could eat at their hearts' content".

In 1903 he issued an order against the Czar's order of confiscating the church properties of Etchmiadzin and he succeeded.

The stormy, yet devoted life of Khrimian Hyr-ik came to an end in 1907, October 29. He was 87 years old, when he was laid to rest.





# ARMENIAN CHURCH YOUTH ORGANIZATION OF AMERICA

## *Seventh Annual Assembly*

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CLEVELAND, OHIO

### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

#### FIRDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1953

9:00 P.M. till ?

Mixer party for Delegates and Guests—Main Ballroom—Hotel Carter

#### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 1953

9:00 to 12 noon	Registration — Mezzanine — Hotel Carter
12:00 to 1:00 P.M.	Recess for Lunch
1:00 to 6:00 P.M.	First Session — Petit Room — Hotel Carter
6:00 to 8:00 P.M.	Recess for Dinner
8:00 to 12:00 P.M.	Ball — Rainbow Room — Hotel Carter

#### SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 1953

8:30 to 10:30 A.M.	Church Services — Trinity Cathedral — Euclid Ave. and East 22nd St., Cleveland, Ohio
11:00 to 1:00 P.M.	Luncheon for Delegates — K. Geokjian's Residence 18301 S. Woodland Rd., Shaker Heights, Ohio
12:00 Noon	Telecast — "Bashdon Jashou" — WNBK
1:00 to 6:00 P.M.	Second Session — Petit Room — Hotel Carter
7:30 to 10:30 P.M.	Banquet — Rainbow Room — Hotel Carter
10:30 to ?	"Hayastan Hop" — Main Ballroom — Hotel Carter

#### MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1953

9:00 to ?	(Until Agenda is completed) Third Session — Petit Room — Hotel Carter
11:00 to ?	Picnic for all — Taylor's Valleyview Grove, 12820 Tinkers Creek Rd., Valleyview Village, Ohio

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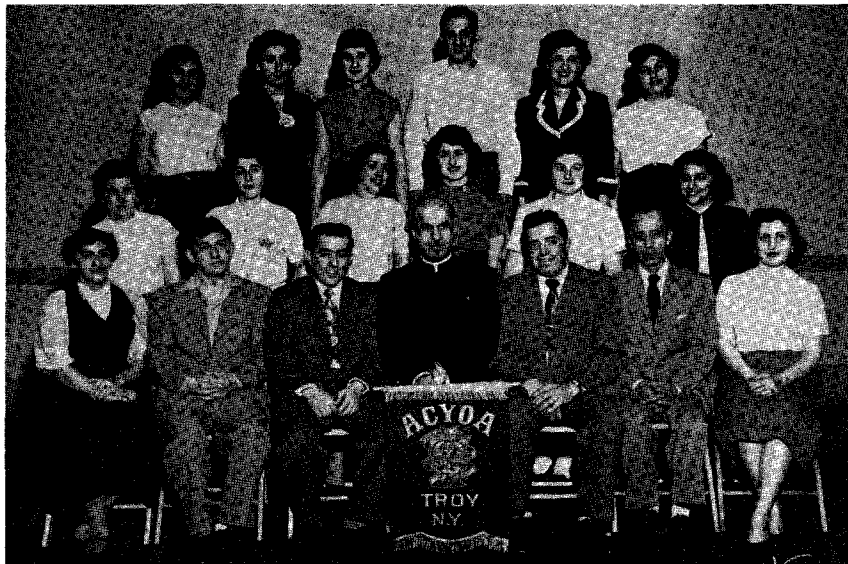
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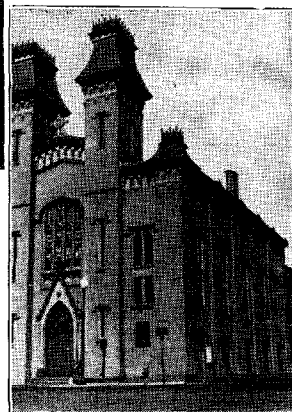


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