

Chapter 4

ARMENIAN CONGREGATIONALISM: FROM MISSION TO MEMBERSHIP

Vahan H. Tootikian

Vahan H. Tootikian is the pastor of Armenian Congregational Church of Greater Detroit, Michigan. Author of *The Armenian Evangelical Church* (1982) and *Reflections of an Armenian* (1980).

THE HISTORY OF Armenian Evangelicalism goes back to the second quarter of the nineteenth century. On July 1, 1846 thirty-seven men and three women established the Armenian Evangelical Church in the mission chapel in the Pera section of Istanbul (then Constantinople), Turkey. Four years later, on November 27, 1850, the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Medjid granted formal recognition to the newly established church.

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), composed of Presbyterian and Congregational mission-minded people, played a decisive role in the rise of the Armenian Evangelical Church. Founded in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1810, and incorporated in 1812, the Board was one of the earliest missionary societies. Its aim was “to evangelize the heathen in foreign lands.”(1) One of the Board’s prominent mission fields was the Middle East, where missionaries began work in 1819 with instructions to “evangelize” the Jews and the Muslims.(2) Resistance from these two established religious groups frustrated the best efforts of the missionaries, so they changed their strategy; they turned to native Christian agents to reach the non-Christians. To this end they approached various Eastern Orthodox churches. All except the Armenian Apostolic Church proved obdurate. Why?

ARMENIAN EVANGELICALS

The Armenians seem to have been imbued with a tremendous desire for learning and social progress. As a result, many of them were receptive and broad-minded toward the American missionaries and their projects.(3) This spirit of educational progress among Armenians opened the way for closer contact with the Armenian clergy and laypeople.

When the missionaries of the American Board began their work among Armenians, in 1831, the Armenian community in the Ottoman Empire was experiencing a cultural renaissance, a revival of thinking in the social, economic, and intellectual realms. So the soil was fertile and ready for a religious awakening. In 1836 a group of reformists established a secret society named *Parebashdoutian Miapanautune* (The Society of the Pious), in order to reform the Armenian Apostolic Church.(4) The organization of this Society may properly be said to mark the beginning of Armenian Evangelicalism.(5)

The reformists met the strong resistance and opposition of the ruling Armenian magnates, the

amiras, and the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople. Failure to reform the Armenian Apostolic Church continued to be a basic source of conflict. The reformists pushed their demands, which provoked strong retaliation from the Armenian patriarchate. Persecution and the formal act of excommunication by Patriarch Matteos Choochajian forced them to organize themselves into a separate religious community, the Protestant Millet.(6) All along the American missionaries stood by the Evangelicals and gave them spiritual, moral, and financial support.

Within a decade after its birth the Armenian Evangelical Church had grown by leaps and bounds. In order to administer the increased scope of the missionary work that followed the growth, and because of geographical proximity and organizational considerations, Armenian Protestantism was organized into church Unions. The first Unions were organized in Turkey, in the 1860s: Bithynia Union(1864), Eastern Union (1866), Cilician Union (1867), and Central Union (1868).(7) Then, at the turn of the century, two Unions were organized in America: the Armenian Evangelical Union of Eastern States (1901) and the Armenian Evangelical Union of California (1908). In May of 1914, immediately before the start of World War I, the Armenian Evangelicals organized the first Union in Armenia: the Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches of Ararat.(8) Thus before World War I the Armenian Evangelicals throughout the world counted seven Unions, with 178 churches.(9)

The Turkish genocide of the Armenians between 1915 and 1922 wiped out all the Armenian Evangelical Unions and most of the churches and their members in Turkey. The survivors of the massacres, “the Remnant,” managed to organize two Unions in the 1920s in their new lands of adoption: the Armenian Evangelical Union of Syria and Lebanon (Cilicia) (10) and the Armenian Evangelical Union of France. Armenian Protestantism was reduced to four Unions. Since the merger of the two Unions in America, in 1971, the Armenian Evangelical Church has comprised three Unions.

WORK OF THE AMERICAN BOARD

In 1870 the two denominations that supported the American Board divided the supervision of the mission field between themselves; the Congregationalists were to be in charge of the native Protestants in Turkey and the Balkan countries and the Presbyterians were to assume responsibility for Arabic-speaking countries and Iran.(11) From then on the Armenian Evangelical churches in Turkey, and those of their members who escaped or survived the Turkish horrors and settled in the Near East and America, became closely affiliated with the Congregational denomination.

The American missionaries rendered invaluable services to the Armenian people, especially in the areas of education, philanthropy, culture, politics, and religion.

Education. Through their educational institutions, ranging from kindergarten to college, the American missionaries supplemented in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Armenian intellectual renaissance initiated by the Mekhitarists in the eighteenth century. To have

an idea of the educational contribution of the American missionaries to the Armenians one has to look at the statistical account of the American schools as of 1913, the year preceding World War I: 10 colleges, with 1,748 students; 46 boarding and high schools, with 4,090 students; 3 theological seminaries, with 24 students; 8 industrial schools; 2 schools for the deaf and the blind; and 369 other schools directly or indirectly connected with the American Board, with 19,361 students. By the end of the war, in 1918, most of these schools had ceased to exist.(12)

Education became an attainable goal for all Armenians, without discrimination. Thousands of Armenian young people received their higher education at the American Board's institutions of higher learning, and many graduated from these schools to assume leadership roles in the Armenian community. Higher education became a viable option even for females, who, until the advent of institutions run by the American missionaries, had been excluded.

The missionary schools graduated a large number of women who, in turn, became educators of the younger generations of Armenians. In fact, toward the end of the nineteenth century the majority of teachers in Armenian elementary schools were female graduates and undergraduates from American missionary colleges, seminaries, and teacher-training institutions.(13) As a result of higher education, the status of women was elevated in a male-dominated society.

Philanthropy. The American Congregational missionaries rendered a valuable service to the less-privileged Armenians by their constant assistance. Through their orphanages, nursing homes, hospitals, and dispensaries they ministered to the physical needs of many. In the interior provinces of Turkey, where there were no medical facilities, the health services provided by the missionaries played a providential role. Countless lives were saved, thanks to the medical skill of missionary physicians and nurses.

During World War I, when 1.5 million Armenians were massacred with unparalleled brutality and another million were uprooted from their ancestral homeland and driven into the deserts of Syria without benefit of experienced leaders, the American Congregational missionaries assumed the role of good Samaritans. They mobilized all their resources and came to the aid of the battered Armenians. Because of their vision and initiative, the Near East Relief was organized, in 1915. A philanthropic and lifesaving institution second to none in that part of the world, the Near East Relief embraced and served almost every area need — social, educational, physical, and economic. It provided food for the starving survivors of the massacres, rescue homes for girls who had escaped from Muslim harems, medical care, relief for the sick, and orphanages. Moreover, it opened elementary schools for children and vocational schools for young adults and organized community health and recreational programs and industrial enterprises to teach various trades. During its fourteen-year existence the Near East Relief raised and expended \$85 million for Armenians, and as Howard M. Sachar maintains, “it quite literally kept the entire Armenian people in the Near East alive.”(14)

Literature and culture. One of the most valuable services the American missionaries performed was the translation of the Holy Bible into modern Armenian (Ashkharapar) by a competent team of linguists and scholars under the capable leadership of Elias Riggs. Until the middle of the nineteenth century the only Bible available to the Armenians was the classical Armenian

(Krapar) Bible, which none but a small educated elite could read or understand. The Ashkharapar scripture made the Bible accessible to almost all Armenians.

In addition, the American missionaries published grammars, commentaries, religious books and educational pamphlets in modern Armenian. The missionary press in New York made a great contribution to the development of modern Armenian by publishing in the vernacular.(15)

Political freedom and social justice. The American Congregational missionaries played a decisive role in the whole area of political freedom and justice for the Armenian populace in the Ottoman Empire. The oppressive Ottoman rule and the Turkish government's harassment militated against the Armenians in Turkey economically, socially, and politically, insofar as their religious life was concerned.

Because of the Armenians' historical claim to ancestral lands and their demands for basic human rights the Turks considered them a political threat, treated them as second-class citizens, and denied them certain fundamental freedoms. For more than four centuries the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire were forced to live in absolute obedience to Turkish rule. The American missionaries, coming from a free and democratic country, advocated the principle of the inviolability of freedom of thought and conscience. This principle struck a responsive chord among Armenians, who, throughout their history, had cherished freedom even at the cost of their lives.(16)

Religious and spiritual values. The Congregational missionaries made a contribution to the spiritual realm of Armenians by introducing new methods of developing a vital Christian community, by laying the foundation for the proper understanding of the role of the laity in the mission of the church, by encouraging Christian outreach, by making the Bible accessible to laypeople in a vernacular edition they could read, and by encouraging the study of the scripture. Not only did they meet the needs of the emerging Armenian Evangelical Church, but they also brought about a spiritual revival among the Armenian people.(17)

In short, the Congregational missionaries made major contributions — contributions sufficient to ensure them an important place in the cultural history of the Armenian nation.

It must be said, however, that in spite of all their great contributions, the American missionaries were not wholeheartedly welcomed by all Armenians. The Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul (then Constantinople), for instance, became apprehensive in view of the headway the American mission had made among Armenians. The Patriarchate and some lay leaders of the Armenian Apostolic Church saw in the reform movement the meddling influence of the missionaries in the internal life of their church — an intrusion. The intruders in this case were foreigners with a completely different theological and psychological background. These Armenians argued that the motives of the missionaries were not so much the spread of the gospel (i.e., evangelism) as the spread of American Protestantism (i.e., proselytism). But the Armenian Evangelicals, along with the American missionaries, have insisted that the rationale for the missionaries' presence was to revive the Armenian Apostolic Church so that it in turn could reach out to non-Christian groups such as the Jews and the Muslims.

Unfortunately, the question of evangelism vs. proselytism remains unresolved. In the end, the issue is a matter of personal interpretation. Two views persist. Some people insist that since the Armenians were already Christians and did not need the good news, they were converted to Protestantism. Their evidence? The creation of an Armenian Protestant Church. Others insist that the American missionaries evangelized the Armenian nation. Their argument is that the early Armenian Evangelicals were not coerced into changing their religion, nor were they required to join a foreign Protestant denomination. By and large, Evangelical Armenians consider themselves evangelized; non-Evangelical Armenians consider the Armenian Evangelicals as proselytized.

Whatever the relative merits of these two conclusions may be, no one can deny that the American missionaries rendered invaluable services to the Armenian people.

IMMIGRANTS RELATE TO CONGREGATIONALISM

Because of their close association with Congregational missionaries, Armenians who immigrated to the United States during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth century began to organize Armenian Congregational churches. The churches were composed primarily of Armenian immigrants who had fled the oppression and persecution of the Turkish government. These immigrants organized their churches not by deliberate choice, but “by pressure of necessity.”(18) They were unfamiliar with the language and the customs of their new country, and in some cases they were not welcomed by the congregations of the local American Protestant churches.(19) They wanted to worship in their own language and they wanted one another’s company.

During the initial period of organization most of the Armenian Congregational churches in America were founded by laity, because most Armenian Evangelical ministers were still in their homeland. These churches were the “exact facsimile of the churches the early immigrants had left behind”(20) They were typically Armenian in all respects — language, traditions, customs, and patterns of thought and belief. Thus these churches provided places of worship for an immigrant people who were by language and culture identified with the old country. They gave guidance for the spiritual growth and solidarity of the Armenian Evangelical constituency and provided benevolent and financial support for Armenians in need overseas.(21)

Although the majority of the twenty-four Armenian Evangelical churches in the United States were founded before World War I, it was not until after the Turkish massacres of the Armenians that a stream of immigrants reached America and strengthened Armenian Protestantism numerically as well as financially.(22)

The first Armenian church established on the North American continent was an Armenian Congregational church — the Armenian Congregational Church of the Martyrs in Worcester, Massachusetts — founded in 1881.(23)

All the early members and ministers of the Armenian Evangelical churches in America were

immigrants from Cilicia and Armenia, survivors of persecutions and massacres. They were determined to salvage and serve the Armenian Remnant and to preserve the Armenian heritage by founding new churches and cultural organizations. The majority of the early Armenian Evangelicals in America cherished the Congregational way of worship and church polity that they had learned about from the Congregational Board missionaries. They wanted to organize churches in which they could enjoy all the freedoms that their conscience directed.(24)

The Armenian Evangelical Union of Eastern States, which included all the Armenian Evangelical churches east of the Mississippi River, was founded in 1901, in Worcester, Massachusetts. Later, in 1960, when the Armenian Evangelical churches of Toronto and Montreal joined the Union, the name was changed to Armenian Evangelical Union of Eastern States and Canada.

The California Union was organized in May 1908 and was first called the Armenian Congregational Union of California, but so that Armenian Presbyterian churches might join in, its name was changed to the Armenian Evangelical Union of California.(25)

In their early days most of the Armenian Congregational churches in America received moral and financial support from the Congregational churches,(26) but the majority soon became self-sufficient. Moreover, they even extended aid to Armenian churches in the homeland and helped further the reestablishment of Armenian Evangelical churches in the Armenian diaspora.(27)

Within a brief span of time the Armenian Congregational churches organized viable Christian Endeavor Societies, missionary committees, women's and men's clubs, fellowships, church schools, and other auxiliary groups. They participated in the benevolent efforts of Armenian relief, such as Armenian General Benevolent Union, the Near East Relief, the Wheat Relief Campaign, and other compatriotic organizations.(28) The Armenian Congregational churches also provided strong leadership in Armenian community affairs. Their spiritual and lay leaders, for instance, played a decisive role in the founding of the Knights of Vartan, a pan-Armenian brotherhood. They became the largest single group of contributors to one of the most influential magazines in the Armenian diaspora, *Hayastani Gotchnag*.(29) The support of both the pastors and parishioners of the Armenian Evangelical constituency in the United States combined to make the Armenian General Benevolent Union the largest Armenian benevolent organization in the world.

Understandably, the attitude of the first generation of Armenian immigrants was one of ethnocentrism. Both internal and external forces tended to keep them united and reinforced in their distinctiveness. This attitude sought the assurance of their long-range stability.

THE SECOND GENERATION

The native-born children of immigrants were able to follow a different road in reacting to their American environment. The new attitude of the American-born generation resulted from the common English language, uniform secular education in the public schools, uniform political

institutions, and general economic and business relationships. In this way acculturation was effected principally in the fields of education, politics, economics, and religion. (30)

The offspring of Armenian immigrants, the generation that was born in the adopted country of their parents, went through a transitional period. Members of this generation had mixed feelings about their heritage, never being wholly certain whether it was best to disown it entirely or to seek some happy but seemingly elusive middle ground. It was this generation, for example, that changed the language policy of the Armenian Evangelical churches. Until the late 1940s the principal language of the Armenian Evangelical churches and the then existing two Unions was Armenian; English, the second language, was used predominantly by youth and its organizations. The first church to reverse its language policy was the Cilician Armenian Memorial Church of Watertown, Massachusetts, in 1949.(31) In this respect it became the pioneer of an experiment and by its success gave other Armenian Evangelical churches an example to follow.

The autonomy of individual Armenian Evangelical churches also opened the way to denationalization. For example, in some Armenian Evangelical circles in America a strong controversy existed from the mid-1950s to the early 1960s concerning the issue of ethnicity versus denationalization. Some ministers openly advocated the abandonment of unique Armenian characteristics of their churches in favor of community churches open to all nationalities. Others insisted that the *raison d'être* of an Armenian church is its unique character, that the abandonment of this *Armenian* character in Armenian Evangelical churches is a betrayal of Armenian history "written in the blood of countless martyrs."(32) A few churches toyed with the idea of becoming community churches, of dropping the appellation Armenian from the church name, of abandoning their ethnic heritage, and of opening the church to the community at large in order to attract and recruit members from the local community. Some of these churches even employed non-Armenian ministers. But their experimentation proved to be counterproductive. Not only did they fail to attract any new members from the local communities, but they also lost some of the current members in protest against changes that reflected, in their view, an "unwise policy."(33)

ARMENIAN MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

One great source of pride and glory of Armenian Evangelicalism in general and of Armenian Congregational churches in America in particular is the Armenian Missionary Association of America (AMAA). Founded on June 7, 1918, in Worcester, Massachusetts, the AMAA was not only a compassionate attempt to help the Armenian remnant materially and morally, but also a prophetic voice that perhaps more than any other influence in the postwar years kept the embers alive. Sustained at first only by their zeal and fervor, the exiled Armenian Evangelicals mustered the courage to live on as a tiny community in the Middle Eastern countries. The AMAA provided guidance at a time when a great deal of uncertainty and confusion prevailed. A joint Outreach Committee was organized, composed of representatives of the AMAA and the American Board. This joint benevolent committee devised a plan to aid the needy and developing Armenian Evangelical churches and organizations in the Near East. Gradually, the

American Board decreased its contribution and the AMAA increased its portion.(34)

Since its inception the AMAA has been not only the missionary arm of the Armenian Congregational churches in North America, but also the “golden chain” binding all Armenian Evangelicals throughout the world. It has drawn them together and has become a source of assistance embodying intense concern for all Armenians in need, always answering the call for help. As a nonprofit, nonpolitical missionary and philanthropic organization, the AMAA has supplied vision and material support as well as moral inspiration to Armenians everywhere. It has achieved an outstanding record of service in educational, cultural, physical, spiritual, and moral spheres — a service broader today than ever before — and has consistently contributed to a myriad of worthy causes. The AMAA has developed a missionary outreach in thirteen countries, serving underprivileged Armenians through numerous missionary projects, such as child education sponsorships, college and seminary scholarships, medical and general relief provisions, widespread missionary outreach and activities, encouragement of neophyte mission centers, financial aid to religious publications and meeting the needs of the destitute and forgotten.

ARMENIAN EVANGELICAL UNION OF NORTH AMERICA

Another proud accomplishment of the Armenian Evangelicals in America was the creation of the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America (AEU-NA). The AEU-NA was the product of the merger of the Armenian Evangelical Union of Eastern States and Canada, Inc., and the Armenian Evangelical Union of California, Inc. After more than six decades of separate existence the twenty-one churches and three fellowships of these two Unions united, in 1971, into one Christian group “to uphold one another in their needs, to work together in mutual respect,..., to work for the Kingdom of God, to promote their general welfare and their missionary outreach.”(35)

Since its inception the AEU-NA has embarked on a number of ventures and has accomplished some important undertakings, including:

- The 75th Anniversary One-Million-Dollar Campaign for the purpose of promoting religious, educational, and cultural programs as well as sustaining and strengthening the Armenian Evangelical churches in North America
- 1 The establishment of two new churches — one in Hollywood, California, and the other in Cambridge, Ontario
 - 2 The organization of new fellowships in California — one in San Diego and the other in San Jose
 - 3 The creation of a Long-Range Planning Committee to evaluate and reassess the present status of the AEU-NA and to chart a new course for the future

- 4 The establishment of a Christian Education camp (Camp Arev) in California
- 5 The publication of a newsletter, *AEU-NA Forum*, and a bulletin, *AEU-NA Update*
- 6 The merger of the Armenian Protestant Youth Fellowship and Armenian Christian Endeavor Union of California into one body — Armenian Evangelical Youth Fellowship
- 7 The establishment of the Armenian Evangelical Social Service Center in Hollywood, California
- 8 The creation of the office of Executive Secretary
- 9 The creation of a Task Force on Ecumenicity for the purpose of strengthening ties with the Armenian Apostolic Church
- 10 The participation in the First World Conference of Armenian Evangelicals convened by the AMAA
- 11 Publication of the *Armenian Evangelical Hymnal* in 1976

CONTEMPORARY SITUATION

Today Armenian Evangelicals in America are a small minority. Their constituency comprises twenty churches, with a total communicant membership of about four thousand and an additional four thousand supporting members, youth, and church school pupils. By the 1950s fourteen of these churches were part of the Congregational Christian denomination. In 1957, when the Evangelical and Reformed Church united with the Congregational Christian Churches to form the United Church of Christ, all fourteen of these Armenian Congregational churches⁽³⁶⁾ decided to become part of the larger body. Since then they have been contributing financially and spiritually to the denomination. They have dual allegiances: Ethnically, they are Armenian Evangelical and belong to the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America; denominationally, they are loyal to the United Church of Christ.

Some of these Armenian Congregational churches are small in number. Not only do they lack a central wellspring of vitality, but they are also battling for survival. They have been experiencing declining membership and attendance. Others, particularly those in California, have managed to do more than merely survive. Owing to the influx of Armenian immigrants from the Middle Eastern countries and Soviet Armenia they are growing numerically and have been showing signs of vitality, including some significant achievements in terms of building programs, finances, and religious and ethnic activities.

Overall, the contributions of the Armenian Congregational churches in America to contemporary denominational and ethnic life are noteworthy despite the churches' minority status and their

many problems.

At present the Armenian Congregational churches not only support generously the local Associations and Conferences, but many of their ministers and lay leaders also serve the denomination through various agencies, boards, and committees. It is heartwarming to note that in the past two decades more than a score of Armenian Congregational pastors have ministered or still are ministering to non-Armenian churches.

In some ways Armenian Congregationalism has come of age; it is no longer a dependent movement. It is self-supporting and self-reliant and has developed its own material, intellectual, and spiritual resources to the extent of not only helping itself but also going beyond.

NOTES

1. William E. Strong, *The Story of the American Board* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1910), p. 3.
2. Edwin M. Bliss, *A Concise History of Missions* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1897), p. 128.
3. O. G. H. Dwight, *Christianity Revived in the Near East* (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1850), pp. 327—29.
4. American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Annual Report (Boston, 1836), p. 15.
5. Stepan Eutudjian, *Dzakoumn Yev Entatzn Avedaranaganootyan Ee Hais* (The Rise and Course of Evangelicalism Among Armenians) (Constantinople: Arax Press, 1914), pp. 10-15.
6. Yeghia S. Kassouny, *Loossashavigh* (The Path of Light: History of the Armenian Evangelical Movement) (Beirut: American Press, 1947), pp. 19-24. Also, Dicran J. Kherlopian, *Vossgemadian* (Golden Anniversary. A History of the Armenian Evangelical Movement and the Armenian Evangelical Union of the Near East), vol. 1 (Beirut: Armenian Evangelical Union of the Near East, 1950), p. 4. The word millet is derived from the Arabic *milla*, used in the sense of religious community. In the Ottoman Empire the non-Muslim subjects were organized in semiautonomous bodies called millets.
7. Leon Arpee, *A History of Armenian Christianity* (New York: Armenian Missionary Association of America, 1946), pp. 240—41.
8. The Armenian Evangelical historian Yeghia Kassouny states that although the “Union of the Armenian Evangelical Churches of Ararat” was organized in May of 1914, the Armenian Evangelicals could not hold Union meetings before 1919 because of World War I. They started holding meetings after Armenia became an independent republic. Annual conventions were held regularly until 1926. By 1927, because of government restrictions, the

Union was dissolved as church life was disrupted. Kassouny, op. cit., pp. 452—54.

9. A. A. Bedikian, “The Armenian Evangelical Churches in America,” *The Bulletin* (a quarterly publication of Armenian Evangelical Union: New York, 1962) 8, no. 3:25.

10. The Armenian Evangelical Union of Syria and Lebanon (Cilicia) assumed the name Union of Armenian Evangelical Churches in the Near East (UAEC-NE) in 1930.

11. James S. Dennis, *Foreign Missions After a Century* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1893), p. 180.

12. Yervant H. Hadidian, “American Contribution to Armenian Culture,” *Armenian/American Outlook* (New York: Joint Publication of the Armenian Evangelical Union and Armenian Missionary Association of America, Inc.) 9, no. 1:3—4.

13. Gorun Shrikian, *Armenians Under the Ottoman Empire and the American Missions Influence* (Ph.D. diss. Concordia Seminary in Exile in cooperation with Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1977), 450-51.

14. Howard Sachar, *The Emergence of the Middle East: 1914-1924* (New York: Knopf, 1969), p. 345.

15. Vahan H. Tootikian, *The Armenian Evangelical Church* (Detroit Armenian Heritage Committee, 1982), p. 29.

16. Ibid., p. 30.

17. Ibid., p. 31.

18. Bedikian, op. cit., p. 23.

19. In the annals of the Armenian Evangelical churches in America there are a number of cases of discrimination against Armenian Evangelicals in the cities of Boston, Worcester, and Fresno by local Congregational Church members. But these in no way reflected a segregationist policy on the part of official church bodies.

20. Bedikian, op. cit., p. 23.

21. Vartkes Kassouni, “The Past Our Honor—The Future Our Challenge,” *Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Booklet of the First Armenian Presbyterian Church* (Fresno: n.p., 1974), p. 6.

22. The mass immigration of the Armenians to America began after the massacres of 1895, and later, after the Turkish atrocities of 1915, which forced thousands of refugees to find shelter on distant American shores. In 1910 the figure reached 70,000, rising to 130,000 in 1920. Today the Armenians in the United States number somewhere between 500,000

and 600,000.

23. Herald A. G. Hassessian, "The 75th Anniversary of the Armenian Church of the Martyrs, Worcester, Mass.," *Armenian/American Outlook* 4, no. 3:17—18.

24. *Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church, 1901—1976* (Fresno: Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church, 1976), p. 4.

25. Hagop Chakinakjian, "The Armenian Evangelical Union of California," *Armenian Evangelical Union Bulletin*, 7, nos. 3 and 4 (1961):23.

26. Harry M. Missirlian, "Our Armenian Heritage," *Pilgrim's Progress* (Fresno: weekly publication of Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church) 3, no. 140(1975):1.

27. A. A. Bedikian makes a significant observation concerning the relationship of the Armenian Evangelical churches in America to those of the homeland. He writes: "The providential fact should be noted that the Armenian Evangelical churches in the land of their nativity had attained some maturity during their first fifty years of their history. . . . They had, in a sense, mothered the churches in the United States, in their childhood; these, in turn, attaining robust adulthood, responded to the call of the stricken mother in her agony of death and gave her life." See Bedikian, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

28. Chakmakjian, *op. cit.* 8(1962):31.

29. Two long-time and most prominent editors of *Hayastani Gotchnag* were two veteran Armenian Evangelical ministers, the Rev. Khachadour Benneyan and the Rev. Antranig Bedikian. Also, a host of Armenian Evangelical intellectuals, with their scholarly articles, gave the magazine a most enviable status.

30. Zaven Arzoumanian, "The Armenian Religious Cultural Community of America," *The Armenian Church* (New York: Organ of the Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, 1978) 9:3.

31. Yervant H. Hadidian, "Our Thirteen Years Together," *The Armenian Memorial Church Bulletin* (Watertown: monthly publication of Armenian Memorial Church, MS. 1963), p. 2.

32. A. A. Bedikian, "A Time for Reevaluation of the Mission of Our Churches," *Armenian Evangelical Union of America and Armenian Missionary Association of America* (Barrington, VT: Armenian Information Bureau, 1960), p. 1.

33. Tootikian, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 63—64.

35. *Armenian Evangelical Union of North America Constitution and By-Laws* (Detroit, 1974), p. 1.

36. The fourteen Armenian churches are First Armenian Church, Belmont, MA; Armenian Congregational Church, Chicago; Armenian Congregational Church of Greater Detroit, Southfield, MI; Immanuel Armenian Congregational Church, Downey, CA; Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church, Fresno, CA; Armenian Martyrs' Congregational Church, Havertown, PA; Armenian Evangelical Church, New York City; Armenian Cilicia Congregational Church, Pasadena, CA; Armenian Euphrates Evangelical Church, Providence, RI; Armenian Ararat Congregational Church, Salem, NH; Calvary Armenian Congregational Church, San Francisco; United Armenian Calvary Congregational Church, Troy, NY; Armenian Memorial Church, Watertown, MA; The Armenian Congregational Church of the Martyrs, Worcester, MA.