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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the work of Nersēs the Great, who was one of the most prominent ecclesiastical leaders of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the 4th century. In Armenian church history, Nersēs is esteemed as a founder of the philanthropic movement. There is, however, no consensus regarding the origins of Armenian philanthropy. Through an examination of late antique Armenian sources, this work will explore important similarities and some differences between the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs and those of Basil of Caesarea. This exploration suggests that Nersēs' philanthropic movement was a part of a broad movement that began to emerge in Greek world prior to Eustathius or Nersēs. An introductory chapter examines the 4th century historical environment of Armenia Major, which allows us to appreciate how various political, religious and social challenges influenced the emergence of the philanthropic movement of Nersēs. The second chapter considers, first, the sources that tell us about the origins of Nersēs's philanthropic movement and, second, it addresses the dating of the Council of Aštišhat. In the third chapter, I investigate the similarities and differences between the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs and the Basiliada. The fourth chapter considers social justice in Armenian and Basilian traditions of philanthropy. In the 5th chapter, I show how the sponsorship of philanthropy was organized in both traditions and that parallels exist between the two traditions in relation to their concern with tax relief for the poor. In the 6th chapter, I consider a few important questions concerning the possible relationship between Eustathius and Armenia. In the seventh chapter I question the standard view that the charitable agencies of Nersēs did not continue after his death because of the antichurch policy

of the Armenian King Pap (369-375). My conclusion suggests that the observed parallels between the philanthropic movement of Nersēs and Basiliada enables us to hold that they both stem from a common tradition, that particularly the West could have served as a source of inspiration for the philanthropic movement of Nersēs.

**THE ORIGINS OF ARMENIAN PHILANTHROPY:
NERSĒS THE GREAT AND THE QUESTION OF THE
GREEK INFLUENCE**

(CRITICAL EXAMINATION)

BISHOP GEVORK (ARMAN) SAROYAN

DOCTORAL THESIS

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God bless and protect you ALL.

INTRODUCTION

Christian philanthropy originates from the teachings of Christ, who claimed the poor to be blessed and who criticized the vanity of wealth and excess. The political and cultural changes which accompanied the rise of Christianity across the Eastern and Western halves of the Roman Empire in the fourth and fifth centuries presented a profound challenge to the prevailing moral and ethical values of the classical world. In particular, by bringing questions relating to poverty into sharper focus, complex ethical questions were raised about wealth, scarcity, acquisition, and distribution all within the larger concern of alleviating suffering and injustice. During the same period, the pastoral vision and strategy of the developing Armenian church can be seen to have arisen both as a response to ethical concerns raised by the prevalence of poverty in society, as well as from a perceived need to mitigate the plight of the poor.

Nersēs the Great (353 – 373) is revered in Armenian Church history as a founder of Armenian philanthropy. Over 50 years separate the Armenian conversion (301) from the onset of Nersēs' period of greatest activity. Most scholars accept that it was through his efforts that Christianity became the national religion in more than just name. In particular, it was Nersēs' sustained efforts to unite people in philanthropic endeavor regardless of social status or condition which enabled Christianity to become embedded in the day-to-day life of Armenia. In the process, it laid the foundation for the esteem in which Nerses has subsequently been held in Armenian history.

The adoption of Christianity in Armenia as a state religion inaugurated a new era in the history of Armenian-Roman relationships. After the decree of the Edict of Milan, this became politically and strategically stronger in the face of a resurgent Zoroastrianism in the Sassanid Persian Empire. In such circumstances, the promotion of Christianity became an essential strategy for preserving Armenia's political, ideological, and cultural identity. Armenian Church historians perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, identify the concern to preserve national autonomy as a consistent element within both the Armenian conversion story (301) and the philanthropic movement of Nersēs (353). Over the course of the last century, sustained interest in the question of the origins of Armenian philanthropy led researchers to examine it from different angles and perspectives. These included Christian Philanthropy, church history, Armenian history, and the history of Armenian medicine.

A review of recent scholarship reveals an absence of any consensus regarding the origins of Armenian philanthropy. The one point of agreement is that the movement initiated by Nersēs did not survive his death. The view advanced by some of the earliest interpreters, that Nersēs philanthropic movement was influenced by Basil the Great, is no longer tenable. In the very early 350s, the date at which Nersēs launched his movement, Basil was still a student in Athens. The suggestion that Euthasius of Sebaste's *ptochotropheion* (a house to nourish the poor) could have served as a model for Armenian philanthropy is not supported by clear evidence.

Nevertheless, through an examination of late Antique and Medieval Armenian sources this research aims to illuminate the similarities and difference between the

philanthropic institutions of Nersēs and Basiliada. This comparison will question the conclusions of those scholars who reject the idea of any connection between these two schools of philanthropy and in the process open-up and pursue fresh lines of enquiry. This investigation does not exclude the possibility that Eustathius' program could have been familiar in the western part of Armenia, where the Roman influence was stronger. However, it will also reveal a lack of evidence that the particular program of Eustathius found a foothold in Armenia during the 4-5th centuries.

Thus, there is no sound evidence that Nersēs was influenced directly by Eustathius of Sebaste, or that Basil was inspired by the work of Nersēs. It seems more likely that the culture of Christian philanthropy began to emerge in Greek world prior to Eustathius and Nersēs, and that they both were part of a broader movement. On the base of the observed similarities between the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs and Basiliada I will flesh out further the argument that the inspiration of Nersēs for philanthropy should be looked for in his Greek education and close relationship with Greek circles, both ecclesiastical and political. In addition, I will challenge the accepted view concerning the destiny of Nersēs' philanthropic movement by demonstrating that it did continue after his death, even if there was also significant change.

I have both made use of historical critical methods to read source materials, and tried to draw together intellectual and social history. Throughout the dissertation I have also focused on the interpretation of key terms which are often misunderstood and mistranslated.

Synopsis

In the first chapter of my dissertation, I will give a brief outline of the historical environment of 4th century Armenia showing the political, cultural and religious situation before the official conversion of Armenia, the difficulties of identifying from where Christianity was brought to Armenia, and how the historical sources describe the acceptance of the new religion. This will enable us to establish the historical context in which the philanthropic activity of Nersēs initially arose.

The study of the scholarly discussion on the philanthropic movement of Nersēs reveals that conclusions are primarily drawn from *The Epic Histories*. The history of Moses Xorenats'i is often rejected as a source because much scholarship sees it is the product of later centuries. However, as I shall argue in the second chapter of this dissertation, while the arguments against a fifth century date for Xorenats'i are mostly convincing, a thorough examination of Xorenats'i's version of Nersēs' story enables us to see that the latter contains some details that are not found in *The Epic Histories* and which may derive from an early version of Nersēs' life.

In the third chapter of my dissertation by contrasting and comparing the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs and Basiliada I draw parallels between the two movements. I make the following arguments:

(a) The Armenian word **aghk'atanots'* [poorhouse] is understood and used in the sense of hospital in the 5th century Armenian literature. Thus, the Armenian poorhouse and the Basiliada carried out a very similar mission. The only

significant difference is that the Basiliada has incorporated within itself a guesthouse whereas in the Armenian Church tradition guesthouses were separate.

(b) Guesthouses had played a key role in both the Armenian and Caesarean philanthropic traditions. In both contexts, guesthouses served similar vulnerable groups, such as strangers, travelers, and migrants.

(c) The differences between the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs and Basiliada are contextual, these institutions being conditioned by both the nature of their resources as well as by the vision of their respective spiritual leaders.

In the fourth chapter of my work, I demonstrate that both movements sometimes use different language and terms in outlining their visions of philanthropy, however, for either tradition the exemplary lifestyle of the early Christian community serves as an ideal of genuine benevolence.

Chapter 5 consists of two parts. The first examines how the sponsorship of philanthropy was organized in both contexts, and what was the efforts of the state in this regard: did it support or create challenges for the Church in implementing the work of charity? In the second part I will show that not only the poor, widows, orphans, and elders relied on patronage of the Church, but also the oppressed and captives. In particular, it will be shown that Nersēs' advocacy against "exorbitant taxes" is closely parallel to Basil's efforts for 'tax relief of the poor.'

In Chapter 6, I discuss some important questions regarding the relationship of Eustathius of Sebaste with Armenian philanthropy, and particularly on the development of the philanthropic movement of Nersēs. Chapter 7 questions the

accepted view that the charitable agencies of Nersēs did not continue after his death. It makes the point that this view is solely derived from reports of *The Epic Histories* regarding the anti-church policy of the Armenian King Pap (369-374), which does not reflect the 5th century situation. I demonstrate that the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs continued in existence throughout late antiquity.

The conclusion revisits the question of the origins of Armenian philanthropy. The fundamental similarities between the charitable foundations of Nersēs and the Basiliada suggest that both most likely derive from the same source. This suggestion is further supported by the evidence regarding the Greek connections of Nersēs; education in Caesarea of Cappadocia, affiliation with Greek Christianity, Roman orientation, close links with the Greek circles etc. My conclusion is that before Eustathius and Nersēs the culture of philanthropy already had taken some roots in Greek world, and they both, as well as Basil were parts of this growing movement bringing also their own vision and contribution for its development in the life of the Church, and particularly in Eastern Christendom. In this light I maintain that the West could have served as a source of inspiration for the philanthropic movement of Nersēs.

Through my work I hope also to have thrown some more light on the subtle connections and influences that are involved -often at a subterranean level- in the gestation and early development of ecclesiastical movements and traditions more generally.

CHAPTER ONE: Armenia between East and West

Introduction

Nersēs the Great dominates one of the most crucial periods in Armenian history, the fourth century. In order to understand why we have to shed light on his philanthropy, one of the most discussed themes of the fourth century Armenian Church history. With all due respect to the valuable works that already exist on this topic, I believe that there is a need for a re-examination, and the addition of some nuance. Professor Nina Garsoïan has contributed hugely to this topic, and while I build on her work throughout, there is more that may be contributed.

Many scholars agree that Nersēs' philanthropic activity was a key feature in Armenia's Christianization. However, the supporters of this view have not explored deeply enough the historical context in which this philanthropic activity initially arose or have not asked deeply enough how various political, religious and social challenges influenced the emergence of it in the Armenian Church tradition. Their primary focus has been the origins of Armenian philanthropy. In this introductory chapter, I will first give a brief outline of the historical environment of 4th century Armenia showing the political, cultural and religious situation before the official conversion of Armenia, the difficulties of identifying from where Christianity was brought to Armenia, and how the historical sources describe the acceptance of the new religion. Second, I will describe further what possibilities and challenges resulted from the proclamation of Christianity in Armenia as the state religion for the country, and to what extent it increased the competition of influence between Rome and Persia, and what role the Armenian Church played in

these developments. Third, I will illustrate some aspects of the 4th century Armenian Church showing what it looked like in that period of history, its distinctive features, the degree of Christianization of society, and what challenges the Armenian Church had to face. Understanding these themes this will help us to appreciate what factors could have motivated the growth of the culture of philanthropy in the Armenian Church tradition.

1.1 Armenia in the 4th century

The territory of historical Armenia is located to the east of Asia Minor (Armenian Highland), between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. Speaking about 4th century Armenia demands certain clarifications, for it does not talk about a political unity. Until 387,¹ Armenia was administratively divided into two regions,² which were known as Armenia Major and Armenia Minor.³ “Armenia Minor was

¹Armenia Major in 387, because of competition between the Roman Empire and Persia, was divided into parts, according to the agreement signed between two rival states the eastern provinces of Armenia became part of Persia, while the western one to Roman Empire. See Թ. Հակոբյան, *Հայաստանի պատմական աշխարհագրություն*, Երևան, 1968, էջ 101-105 (T. Hakobyan, *Historical Geography of Armenia*, Yerevan, 1968, pp. 101-105), Ա. Աբրահամյան, *Հայաստանը վաղ ֆեոդալիզմի շրջանում*, հատոր II, էջ 26 (A. Abrahamyan, *Armenia in the Age of Early Feudalism*, vol. II, p. 26).

² Philip Rousseau in his referenced book writes, “Armenia fell into at least three regions, which seem naturally divided one from another in the light of the history and as a result of geography: the west, Armenia Minor, exposed to Hellenistic, Roman, and ultimately Christian influence; the north, more remote from both its powerful neighbors; and the south, adjacent to Syria, where local governors and aristocrats had long been susceptible to Roman influence, and where cities and peoples were naturally absorbed into Roman strategy, based upon Antioch, and reaching north as well as east”. This description can cause confusion; for there is an impression that only Minor Armenia was Christian. The author attempts to associate Christianity with Romanization. When in 301 Greater Armenia adopted Christianity as a state religion the Roman emperor Diocletian in 303 a persecution against Christians, which continued during the reign of Maxim emperor (305-312). Also, Rousseau’s division of Armenia is very arguable, it is not clear whether he speaks of political division, or regional, administratively we deal here with two units Greater Armenia and Minor Armenia.

³ See Թ. Հակոբյան, *Հայաստանի պատմական աշխարհագրություն*, էջ 91-101. (T. Hakobyan, *Historical Geography of Armenia*, Yerevan, pp. 91-101)

between Pontus and Cappadocia, while across the great river, Armenia Major extended along part of the wide Parthian frontier”.⁴ The territory of late antique Armenia, being located at a crossroads of continents, according to the *Peutinger Table* (an ancient Roman map), was crossed by five important trade routes which connected the East and West: Black Sea-Europe, Mediterranean-Assyria-Egypt, Rome-Europe, India-China, Northern Caucasus-Russia.⁵ As it was observed by Stopka, “due to this the cities of Armenia, like all the municipalities in the region, were multi-ethnic. Syrians, Greeks, and Jews, who engaged in brisk trading, lived side by side with the local Armenians”.⁶ Centuries later the presence of these ethnic groups played an instrumental role in the spread of Christianity to Armenia.

Both the Roman and Parthian Empires tried to control the natural bastion of the Armenian highlands. S. Der-Nersessian points out that, “by dominating the valley of the Euphrates, the eastern powers had easy access into Asia Minor, while the valleys of the Euphrates and the tributaries of the Tigris provided a convenient route for the western powers into Iran and Mesopotamia.” In addition to these logistic conveniences, she calls attention to the military potential of Armenia, the control of which increased the strength of each of the opposing sides⁷. In other words, the geographical position and military potential of Armenia helped to stimulate rivalry between Rome and Parthia for many decades. The dynasty of the Armenian Aršacids came to an end about 12 A.D. as a result of these persistent struggles of both empires over Armenia. “After the extinction of the national

⁴ M. Bunson. *Encyclopedia of the Roman Empire*. New York. 1994, p. 30.

⁵ See A. Мартиросян, Армения по карте Пейтингера (IV в.), «Պատմա-արևմտագիտական Հանդես», N. 2, 2002, էջ 142-147, (Historical-Philological Journal, N 2, 2002, pp. 142-147).

⁶ K. Stopka, *Armenia Christiana, Armenian Religious Identity and the churches of Constantinople and Rome (4th -5th century)*, Translated by Tereza Baluk-Ulewiczowa, Jagiellonian University Press, Krakow, 2017, p. 19

⁷ S. Der-Nersessian, *The Armenians*, p. 28.

dynasty, the Parthians and the Romans each strived to hand Armenia over to a princess that would be the most devoted to their respective causes,” rightly observes V. Kurkjian.⁸ In 66 A. D. Tiridates I established the Armenian branch of the Parthian Arsacids, which two centuries later would become an Armenian dynasty, known in Armenian as Aršakuni.⁹ C. Toumanoff further indicates that, however, Roman “friendship” was demanded from Tiridates: in 66 he traveled to Rome to be installed on his throne by Nero, in the meanwhile, as a Parthian prince, he was forced to admit “the family ascendancy of the head of the Arsacids, the great king”.¹⁰ In 72 Armenia Minor fell firmly into Roman hands.¹¹ As regards to Armenia Major, with the rule of Arsacids its social structure has experienced changes over time. “Parthian political, social, and cultural influences became dominant in Armenia,” observes Bournoutian in his recent publication. He also notes that Parthian nobles and family members immigrated to Armenia,

⁸ V. Kurkjian, *A History of Armenia*, New York, 1958, pp. 89-90.

⁹ G. Bournoutian. *A History of the Armenian people*. vol. I, Pre-History to 1500 A.D. California. 1995, p. 55.

¹⁰ C. Toumanoff, Arsacids, vii. The Arsacid dynasty of Armenia, in <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/arsacids-vii>

¹¹ Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկեր*, հատոր II, էջ 72 (H. Manandian, *Works*. vol. II, p. 72) It should be noted that in the Armenian historical sources the information regarding Minor Armenia is very scarce and blurring, as the Armenian specialist of Byzantine studies Nicoghayos Adontz has noticed the role of Minor Armenia at some degree is undermined in Armenian studies, see N. Adontz, *Armenia In the Period of Justinian: The Political Conditions Based on the Naxarar System*, Translated with partial revisions a bibliographical note and appendices by Nina Garsoïan, Lisbon, 1970, pp. 55-74, Թ. Հակոբյան, *Հայաստանի պատմական աշխարհագրություն*, էջ 105-111 (T. Hakobyan, *Historical Geography of Armenia*, Yerevan, pp. 105-111). Today, historiography has difficulties deciding the exact borders of Minor Armenia, because of the political vicissitudes it was changed over the centuries. Since the first century, it had comprised part of the province of Cappadocia. Through the reforms of Diocletian at the end of the 3rd century, it was separated from the province of Cappadocia, and entered into the structure of the Roman Empire as an independent province. In the second half of the 4th century, it was divided into two parts, First Armenia and Second Armenia. Until the reforms of Justinian II, the territorial division was not changed. In 536, when the Armenian lands of the empire were divided into four administrative units First Armenia, Second Armenia, Third Armenia and Fourth Armenia, the territory of Minor Armenia was included into the first three. In the 7th century Minor Armenia was invaded by Arabs. See N. Adontz, *Armenia In the Period of Justinian*, pp. 55-74, Թ. Հակոբյան, *Հայաստանի պատմական աշխարհագրություն*, էջ 105-111 (T. Hakobyan, *Historical Geography of Armenia*, Yerevan, pp. 105-111), Բ. Հարությունյան, *Փոքր Հայք*, see Հայկական Սովետական Հանրագիտարան, հատոր XII, Երևան, 1986, էջ 373-374 (B. Harutjunyan, “Armenian Minor” in *Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia*, vol. XII, Yerevan, 1986, pp. 373-374).

particularly after the fall of the Aršacids of Persia: “Greek language, gods, theater and other aspects of Hellenism were familiar to the upper classes of both Armenia and Parthia.”¹² In the same way, on the model of the Parthian feudal system, high-ranking aristocrats were awarded hereditary offices and assumed significant political power within the administrative structure of the country. V. Kurkjian further points out that “Parthian feudality...found unparalleled conditions for prospering in Armenia, a country naturally adapted to partition.”¹³ Accordingly, the Aršacid feudal pyramid was made up of the king at the top followed by the nobles known as *nakharars*: “Nakharar status was inherited, and raising one to that rank, which was rarely performed, was the exclusive right of the sovereign.”¹⁴ Though, what was the relationship between the *nakharars* and the king? The heads of the great clans were “autonomous sovereign lords or dynasts and royal officials” allocated lands and other properties in return owing “service (*caiyut`iwn*), and oaths of fidelity” to governing throne.¹⁵

The Roman-Parthian struggle over political advantage continued in the second and third centuries of Aršacid rule in Armenia. In this competition, Armenia strived to keep its political independence by adopting a balanced approach between the two great powers¹⁶. However, with the eastern policy of Roman emperor Diocletian (284-305), a new era began in the history of the Mediterranean and Minor Asia.

¹² G. Bournoutian, *A History of the Armenian people*. vol. I, pp. 56-57.

¹³ V. Kurkjian, *A History of Armenia*, p. 319.

¹⁴ Rouben Paul Adalian, *Historical Dictionary of Armenia*, Second Edition, Plymouth, 2010, p. 466.

¹⁵ See N. Garsoian, “Naxarar,” <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/naxarar>.

¹⁶ See Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկեր*, հատոր II, *Քննական տեսությունն հայ ժողովրդի պատմության*, Երևան, 1978, էջ 9-141, (H. Manandian, *Works. A Critical Study of the History of the Armenian People*, vol. II, Yerevan, 1978, pp. 9-141), Լևո, *Երկերի ժողովածու, Հայոց Պատմություն*, հատոր I, Երևան, 1996, էջ 322-487 (Leo, *Collections of Works, History of Armenia*, vol I, Yerevan, 1966, pp. 322-487), Ա. Աբրահամյան, *Հայաստանը վաղ ֆեոդալիզմի շրջանում*, հատոր II, էջ 34-37 (A. Abrahamyan, *Armenia in the Age of Early Feudalism*, vol. II, pp. 34-37).

The competition for the conquest of Armenia between the two empires took a more acute turn at the end of the III century. By then the Eastern regions of Armenia was under the control of Persians, while the western part of Armenia was dominated by the Romans. In 276 the Romans has recognized Tiridates III as the king of the western side of Armenia.

The Persian King Nerseh (293-302), attracted by the aggressive plans of his ancestors, attempted to conquer the western part of Armenia and the Mediterranean. In 297, the Roman army, with the support of Armenian troops, defeated the Persians; Tiridates III with the aid of Romans conquered the Eastern regions of Armenia, which were under the umbrella of Iran ¹⁷. In 298, the two sides agreed to sign a peace contract, which was known in history as the Treaty of Nisibis.¹⁸ With the Treaty of Nisibis, Armenia was recognized as an independent country, the Romans were acknowledged as their sponsors, and Persian troops were removed from Armenia.¹⁹ The Romans recognized Tiridates as the king of united Armenia Major, known in the history of the Armenians as Tiridates III (298-330).²⁰ As modern scholars have observed, “the reaffirmation of the Aršacids in

¹⁷ See M. Grant, *History of Rome*, New York, 1997, p. 396, E. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, London, 1998, pp. 215-222.

¹⁸ See Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկեր*, հատոր II, էջ 95-119 (H. Manandian, *Works*. vol. II, p. 95-119), Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն, հատոր II, 1984, էջ 147-154 (*The History of the Armenian People*, vol. II, 1984, pp. 147-154), Լեո, *Երկերի ժողովածու*, հատոր I, էջ 401-402 (Leo, *Collections of Works*, vol I, pp. 401-402).

¹⁹ Ա. Աբրահամյան, *Հայաստանի վաղ ֆեոդալիզմի շրջանում*, հատոր II, էջ 27 (A. Abrahamyan, *Armenia in the Age of Early Feudalism*, vol. II, p. 27).

²⁰ *The Epic Histories Attributed to P'awstos Buzand* (Buzandaran Patmut'iwnc'), Translation and Commentary by N. G. Garsoïan, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1989), Book, III, ch. I, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, in «Մատենագիրք Հայոց», հատոր II, Անթիլիաս-Լիբանան, 2003, գ. Գ., գլ. Ա. (P'awstos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*'), in Armenian Classical Authors, vol. II Antelias-Lebanon, 2003, Book III, ch. I), Moses Khorenats'i, *History of the Armenians*. Translation, Introduction and Commentary on the Literary Sources by R.W. Thomson. Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, 1978, Book II, ch. 82, cff. Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, in «Մատենագիրք Հայոց», հատոր II, Անթիլիաս-Լիբանան, 2003, գ. Բ., գլ. ԶԲ, (Moses Khorenats'i, *History*, in Armenian Classical Authors, vol. II Antelias-Lebanon, 2003, Book II, ch. 82).

the East coincided with the interests of Rome”.²¹ With the 40-year Treaty of Nisibis, a friendly relationship was established between Armenia Major and the Roman Empire.²² Though Armenia was going through a challenging time, and it was urgent to find long-term solutions to protect country's sovereignty from external interference. In such circumstances Tiridates III found the solution in the new faith, in Christianity.

1.2 The Arrival of Christianity

At the end of the 3rd century and the beginning of the 4th, the Christian religion had become dominant in the east of the Roman Empire, more precisely “in the ancient city states of Asia Minor...from which it could expand to other eastern territories”.²³ Armenia was among these territories: since the end of the second century missionaries seem to have come from Syria, Cappadocia and Armenia Minor.²⁴ But what can we say about the religious situation in Armenia at that time? Stopka observes that “alongside the traditional local gods of Iranian origin, the deities worshipped in Armenia included the gods of Greece, Asia Minor, and Syria”.²⁵ The Hellenistic Age in turn had increased its influence on the Armenian paganism as well, which included the Hellenized forms of various systems of

²¹ Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն, հատոր II, 1984, էջ 69 (*The History of the Armenian People*, vol. II, 1984, p. 69).

²² The Nisibis treaty acknowledged the territorial unity of Armenia Major which was recognized through the contract signed between the Armenian King Tigran the Great and Roman General Pompeii in 66 B. C., see Հ. Մանանդյան, *Տիգրան Բ. յեւ Հռոմը*, Յերեվան, 1940, էջ 186-200 (H. Manandyan, *Tigran the Great and Rome*, Yerevan, 1940, pp. 186-200).

²³ M. Grant, *History of Rome*, p. 402.

²⁴ Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն, հատոր II, 1984, էջ 73 (*The History of the Armenian People*, vol. II, 1984, p. 73).

²⁵ See K. Stopka, *Armenia Christiana*, p. 19, cff. Ս. Հարությունյան, *Հին Հայոց Հալստալիքները, Կրոնը, Պաշտամունքն ու Գիցարսներ*, Երևան, 2001, էջ 30-32 (S. Harouthunyan, *Ancient Armenian Beliefs, Religion, Cults and Gods*, Yerevan, 2001, էջ 30-32), cff. Մ. Աբեղյան, Երկեր, Ա, Երևան, 1966, էջ 42 (M. Abeghyan, ‘Works’, vol. 1, Yerevan, 1966, p. 42).

beliefs and practices characteristic of eastern Mediterranean natives.²⁶ On the other hand, it has been observed by specialists that Armenians also “preserved strong regional traditions which appear to have been incorporated into Zoroastrianism, a religion adopted by them probably in the Achaemenid period.”²⁷ Nonetheless, the elimination of the Parthian Arsacid Dynasty by the Sassanids and the anti-Hellenistic reaction in Persia, which was expressed in the stabilization of Zoroastrianism, received an adverse reaction in Armenia.²⁸ The Armenian Arsacids were becoming archenemies of the Sassanids and so Zoroastrianism seems to have been viewed by Armenians as an unwelcome foreign import.²⁹ We cannot, however, say much about this period. As Bournoutian notes: “few sources on this period have survived due to the zealous eradication of Hellenistic culture by the Sassanids, who...had a particular hatred for the Parthian Arsacids and their Armenian kinsmen.”³⁰ The Armenian Arsacids were thus probably looking for ways to free themselves from Sassanid influence.

About 300 CE, Tiridates III proclaimed Christianity in Armenia as the state religion.³¹ But which are the major routes by which Christianity was brought to

²⁶ See Հայոց Պատմություն: Հնագույն ժամանակներից մինչև մեր օրերը, Երևան, 2012, էջ 156-165 (*Armenian History: From Ancient Times Until Our Days*, Yerevan, 1912, pp. 156-165).

²⁷ J. Russell, “Armenia and Iran iii. Armenian Religion,” in <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/armenia-iii>

²⁸ According to historical-archeological studies Zoroastrianism was a state religion in Armenia in the 6th century B.C. See J.R. Russell, *Pre-Christian Armenian Religion*, see in *Armenian and Iranian Studies*, Harvard Armenian Texts and Studies, 9, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2004, pp. 371-388. See also Russell, *On the Armeno-Iranian roots of Mithraism*, Ibid. pp. 553-563, J. Forsyth. *The Caucasus. A History*. Cambridge. New York. 2013, p. 26, cff. Encyclopaedia Iranica, ed. by E. Yarshater, vol. II, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London and New York, 1987, pp. 438-444.

²⁹ See Հր. Ք. Արմէն, *Գահ եւ Աթոռ (Արշակունիք եւ Լուսստորիչեաններ)*, See in Պատմական քննարկումներ, Պէրոյթ, 1968, էջ 211-229 in Պատմական քննարկումներ, Պէրոյթ, 1968, էջ 119-150 (H. Armēn, “Throne and See (Arsacids and Gregorids)”, in *Historical Discussions*, Beirut, 1968, pp. 211-229).

³⁰ G. Bournoutian. *A History of the Armenian people*. vol. I, p. 56

³¹ Socrates, Sozomenus: *Church Histories*. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. II, Second series. Ed. by P. Schaff, D.D., LL.D. and H. Wace, D.D., Massachusetts, 1995, p. 264. The date of the conversion of Armenia to the Christian faith still remains debatable in the scholarship. Malachia Ormalyan and Sirarpie Der Nersessian use the traditional date 301 A.D., (see Մ. Օրմանեան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցին*, Երևան, 1993, էջ 29 (M. Ormalyan, *The Church of Armenia*, Yerevan, 1993, p. 29), S. Der nersessian, *Armenia and the Byzantine Empire*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University

Armenia? Researchers have identified two main Christian centers where from the new religion could have spread to Armenia: either from Asia Minor via Cappadocia-Sebaste-Melitene or from Edessa and Nisibis. If Christianity arrived primarily from Edessa then Syriac Christianity would have been dominant, while Cappadocia, Sebaste and Melitine represented the Greek branch of Christianity.³² H. Melkonyan calls attention to the fact that with the establishment of Parthian Arsacids in Armenia new possibilities were opened for Syrian and Jewish merchants and artisans to grow roots in Armenia. The wide economic relations of Armenians with Assyrians enabled Christianity to penetrate to Armenia from the South via trade routes. Further he maintains that Assyrian merchants and missionaries first of all presented the new religion to their compatriots who lived in Armenia, namely Assyrian and Jewish communities. Accordingly, these communities in return paved the way for the Assyrian missionaries to gain converts in Armenian society.³³ Another specialist of Armenian-Syrian ecclesiastical relations Yervand Ter-Minasyan suggests that special consideration should be given to the report of Moses Xorenac'i, according to which Bardaisan of Edessa (154-222 AD) traveled to Armenia to disseminate Christian teaching. He also draws attention to the fact that both Moses Xorenac'i and *Hippolytus of Bostra* ascribe to Bardaisan an Armenian origin. These references to the missionary work of Bardaisan allowed Ter-Minasyan to further suggest that systematic evangelization of Armenia had already begun by the end of the second century.

Press, 1945, p. 29) while Nina Garsoian and George Bournoutian hold the year 314, 314-315 (see N. Garsoian, "Armenia: History of," in J. R. Strayer, ed., *The Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983, p. 475, G. Bournoutian. *A History of the Armenian people*. vol. I, p. 64).

³² Եր. Տեր-Մինասյան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցին*, Էջմիածին, 2014, էջ 28-29 (Er. Ter-Minasyan, *The Church of Armenia*, Etchmiadzin, 2014, pp. 28-29).

³³ Հ. Մելքոնյան, *Հայ-Ասորական Հարաբերությունների Պատմությունը* (III-V դարեր), Երևան, 1970, էջ (H. Melkonyan, *From the History of Armenian-Assyrian Relationships*, Yerevan, 1970, p. 9).

Ter-Minasyan additionally notes that there is no historical evidence that allows us to maintain that before Gregory the Illuminator any missionary came to Armenia from Cappadocia.³⁴ Thus, on the foundation of Ter-Minasyan's argument one can maintain that before the official conversion of Armenia Syriac Christianity was dominant there. With the establishment of the Episcopal House of the Gregorids an ongoing competition began within the Church between the supporters of Syriac and Greek Christianity, which I will discuss below.

Proclamation of Christianity in Armenia as the state religion consequently aimed to secure Armenia's political, ideological, and cultural identity; with the help of Christianity Tiridates the Great sought to create an identity that would minimize the dependence of Armenia on the Persian and Roman empires. From now on Armenia begins to develop its own Christian culture in dialogue with the Greek/Syriac Christian world.³⁵ At the same time, it should be noted that the acceptance of Christianity in Armenia was also inconsistent with the traditional Greco-Roman religions. However, Rome seems to have tolerated the rise of Christianity in Armenia since it was directed against Sassanid Iran and Zoroastrianism. The anti-Zoroastrian policy of the Armenian King Tiridates in Eastern and Western parts of Armenia was equal to anti Sassanid that is anti-Persian policy, an important circumstance that could not be tolerated by Tizbon.³⁶ In brief, the interests of Rome at this point in history coincided closely with Armenia's: afterwards Armenia was closely connected with the Roman Empire not only politically but also culturally, a relationship which became stronger after the

³⁴ Ibid. pp. 29-31.

³⁵ See Լևո, *Երկերի ժողովածու*, հատոր I, էջ 402 (Leo, *Collections of Works*, vol I, p. 402).

³⁶ Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն, հատոր II, 1984, էջ 71 (*The History of the Armenian People*, vol. II, 1984, p. 71).

decree of the Edict of Milan.³⁷ Diarmaid MacCulloch was specifically referring to the Armenian conversion when he wrote “In cultures beyond the empire, Christianity expressed itself in other languages than Greek or Latin. These Christians might have very different priorities and perspectives from those within the Roman imperial frontiers and they went to produce Christian traditions very different in character”.³⁸

The story of the Armenian conversion was written down by a 5th century author named Agathangelos, “a pseudonym for the author of the standard Armenian account of the life of St. Gregory The Illuminator and of the conversion of King Trdat The Great at the beginning of the 4th c.”.³⁹ This work is also known as the *History of Armenians*.⁴⁰ Although the author claims to have been an eyewitness of the Armenian conversion story, it seems that the *History* could not have been composed before the 5th century.⁴¹ The book of Agathangelos has been preserved in two major recensions, the Armenian Agathangelos (Aa) and a Greek

³⁷ Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկեր*, հատոր II, էջ 133 (H. Manandian, *Works*. vol. II, p. 133), cff. Ա. Աբրահամյան, *Հայաստանի վաղ ֆեոդալիզմի շրջանում*, հատոր II, էջ 80, Ա. Տեր-Միքելեան, *Հայաստաննայց եկեղեցին եւ բիզանդական ժողովոց պարագայք, պատմական յառաջադրություն*, Մոսկուա, 1892, էջ 11-15 (A. Ter-Mikelyan, *The Armenian Church and the Circumstances of Byzantine Councils*, Historical Analysis, Moscow, 1892, pp. 11-15), Վ. Իսկանյան, *Հայ Բյուզանդական հարաբերությունները IV-VII դդ.*, Երևան, 1991, էջ 44-46 (V. Iskanyan, *Armenian-Byzantine Relations IV-VII c.*, Yerevan, 1991, pp. 44-46).

³⁸ D. MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity. The First Three Thousand Years*, Penguin Books, London, 2009, p. 176.

³⁹ Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*, translation and commentary by R.W. Thomson. Albany. State University of New York Press, *The Life and History of Saint Gregory*, ch.I, cff. Ագաթանգեղոս, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, in «Մատենագիրք Հայոց», հատոր. 2, Ե դար, Անթիլիաս-Լիբանան, 2003, Վարք եւ Պատմություն Սրբոյն Գրիգորի, գլ. Ա., (Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*, in *Armenian Classical Authors*, vol. 2, Antelias-Lebanon, 2003, *The Life and History of Saint Gregory*, ch. I).

⁴⁰ See Մ. Աբեղյան, *Հայոց Հին Գրականության Պատմություն*, Երկեր, հատոր I (*Սկզբից մինչև X դար*), Երևան, 1944, p. 157 (M. Abeghyan, *History of Ancient Armenian Literature in Works*, vol. 1, Yerevan, 1944, p. 157), cff. Ա. Տեր-Ղևոնդյան, *Ագաթանգեղոս, Հայ Մշակույթի Նշանվոր Գործիչներ (V-XVIII դարեր)*, Երևան, 1976, էջ 26 (A. Ter-Levondyan, “Agathangelos” in *Notable Figures of Armenian Culture, V-XVIII c.*, Yerevan, 1976, p. 26).

⁴¹ Բ. Սարգիսյան, *Ագաթանգեղոս եւ իր բազմադարեան գաղտնիքն*, Վենետիկ, 1890, էջ 286-313 (B. Sargisyan, *Agathangelos And His Centuries-old Secret*, Venice, 1890, pp. 286-313), cff. Մ. Աբեղյան, *Հայոց Հին Գրականության Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 158-159 (M. Abeghyan, *History of Ancient Armenian Literature*, vol. 1, pp. 158-159), R. Thomson, Introduction, pp. xxi-xcvii.

translation of it accomplished likely between 464 and 468 (Ag); (2) the Arabic *Life of St. Gregory* (Va) and the Greek version of this edition (Vg). Bedrosian writes “the Armeno-Greek Agat’angeghos and the Greaco-Arabic *Life of St. Gregory* are parallel despite the different ordering of events and the absence or presence of episodes from one or the other”.⁴² Although the traditional characteristics of the genre of hagiography are present in this *History*, nevertheless it contains historical material which is relevant for the reconstruction of the life and times of St. Gregory, and makes reference to the people and events that played a significant role in the 4th century history of Armenia. Toumanoff in his review calls attention to the fact that the obviously fifth century list of princes which Adontz composed according to Parpec’i and Elisaeus varies from the one list that we know from all four versions of “*Agat’angeghos*”. For instance, nine princes are present in the latter list but are not present in the *History* of Parpec’i. Additionally, he points out that the regions represented by many of the princes were part of an Armenian state in the fourth, but not in the fifth century. On the base of this he concludes that “the list of princes found in the two recensions of the story of the Conversion of Armenia reflect the situation anterior to the fifth century, that is, one contemporaneous with the Conversion itself.”⁴³ However, it should be noted that Agathangelos’ *History of Armenians* in its preserved edition is a product of a 5th century needs and aspirations, consequently it also reflected the concerns of that time. Moreover, the thorough reading of the *History* reveals that the perspective of the supporters of Greek Christianity dominates. R. Thomson in speaking about the

⁴² R. Bedrosian, “The Sparapetut’iwn in Armenia in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries”, in *Armenian Review* Vol. 36 #2 (1983), p. 10.

⁴³ C. Toumanoff, Review of Garitte’s study in *Traditio*, Vol 5, (1947), pp. 382-383.

main points of the text of this story notes that some of the records “are confirmed by evidence from other sources, other aspects are not so confirmed.”⁴⁴

It appears that the proclamation of Christianity in Armenia as the state religion met in some places resistance from members of the pagan priesthood. According to Agathangelos’ story, Gregory the Illuminator was supported by the royal army to spread Christianity throughout the land: “Then straightway the king by sovereign edict, with the agreement of all, entrusted blessed Gregory with the task of obliterating and extirpating the former ancestral deities of his forefathers, falsely called gods”.⁴⁵ The author in his description has no doubt embellished the battle between the royal army and the pagan priesthood with mythical elements typical to the genre of hagiographical narratives. However, one can conclude that Armenia’s conversion into Christianity involved considerable conflict, which was accompanied by the extermination of rich religious and cultural heritage: the pagan temples were “destroyed, burnt, ruined and razed it.”⁴⁶

With the establishment of Constantinople as the center of the Empire, the Romans became more closely connected with the East, and consequently Armenia obtained a more vital military strategic role.⁴⁷ The Roman-Armenian political alliance was

⁴⁴ R. Thomson, *Mission, Conversion, and Christianization: The Armenian Example*, p. 31, in *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* vol. 12/13 (1988/89).

⁴⁵ Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*, The Conversion to salvation of the land of Armenia Through the holy Martyr, ch. 10, cff. Ագաթանգեղոս, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, Դարձ Փրկութեան Աշխարհիս Հայաստան Ընդ Ձեռն Ան Սրբոյն Նահատակի, գլ. Ժ (Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*, The Conversion to salvation of the land of Armenia Through the holy Martyr, ch. 10).

⁴⁶ V. Kurkjian, *A History of Armenia*, New York, 1958, pp. 118-119.

⁴⁷ The religious factor of Armenia was used by the rulers of the Roman Empire against the external enemy, such as Persia in that period of the history, and for the internal intrigues of the monarchy. As an example, it can be pointed out that Constantine in his fight against his eastern colleague Licinius, who was a pagan, has made an “alliance with the Armenians who had recently become Christians. When Licinius harried Christians near the Armenian frontier and prohibited synods, Constantine had an excuse for a crusading war culminating in a victory on the Bosphorus in September 324 which left him the sole ruler”. See H. Chadwick, *The Early Church*, Penguin Books, 1973, p. 129.

strengthened by the agreement signed between Constantine the Great and Tiridates III.⁴⁸ The new situation had become a turning point and caused radical changes in the relationships between Sassanids, Rome and the adjacent countries.⁴⁹ Additionally, the struggle for the influence over the policy of Armenia Major between the Roman Empire and Persia, as Philip Rousseau has rightly noticed, “...had made the area a sensitive buffer zone”.⁵⁰ On the one hand, Armenia Major was attempting to maintain the political support of the Roman Empire, and on the other hand, to keep a friendly relationship with Persia.⁵¹ However, this peace began to tremble after the death of Constantine in 337. It appears that the conversion of Armenia to Christianity and the Roman rulers’ supporting of Armenia drove Šāpur II to declare war against them. “When Constantius came to the throne (337-38), war began; Šāpur II laid siege to Nisibis three times, and there was constant warfare, which did not go in favor of either side.”⁵² These developments in turn explains why the Armenian *nakharars* of Persian orientation and the remnants of the pagan class becomes active again after the death of king Tiridates, which would

⁴⁸ See Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկեր*, հատոր II, էջ 133-134 (H. Manandian, *Works*. vol. II, pp. 133-134), Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն, հատոր II, p. 78 (*The History of the Armenian People*, vol. II, 1984, p. 78). Opinions divide with regard to the date; it swings between the years 312-324, see Ն. Շահնազարյան, *Հայ-Իրանական և Հայ-Հռոմեական հարաբերությունները*, էջ 214-215 (N. Shahnazaryan, *Armenian-Iranian And Armenian-Roman Relationships*, pp. 214-215), Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկեր*, հատոր II, էջ 133-134 (H. Manandian, *Works*. vol. II, pp. 133-134), Ա. Աբրահամյան, *Հայաստանը վաղ ֆեոդալիզմի շրջանում*, հատոր II, էջ 30-31 (A. Abrahamyan, *Armenia in the Age of Early Feudalism*, vol. II, pp. 30-31)

⁴⁹ Եր. Տեր-Մինասյան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցին*, էջ 36-37 (Er. Ter-Minasyan, *The Church of Armenia*, pp. 36-37).

⁵⁰ Ph. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, London, 1998, p. 279, cff. D. Bundy, *Early Asian and East African Christianities*, in *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Constantine to c. 600*, vol. II, p. 138, Հ. Մանանդյան, *Ֆեոդալիզմը Հին Հայաստանում*, էջ 268 (H. Manandian, *Feudalism in Ancient Armenia*, p. 268), Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկեր*, vol. II, էջ 169 (H. Manandian, *Works*. vol. II, p. 169), Der-Nersessian, *The Armenians*, p. 28.

⁵¹ See Թ. Նեոլդե, *Պատմության Մասունեան տերությունն*, թրգ. Ն. Քարամեան, Վաղարշապատ, 1896, էջ 22-31 (T. Nöldeke, *History of Sassanid Empire, Translated from German by N. Qaramyan, Vagharshapat, 1896, pp. 22-31*), T. Daryae, “Šāpur II” in <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/shapur-ii>, Վ. Բայբուրդյան, *Իրանի պատմություն*, Երևան, 2005, էջ 128-133. (V. Bajburdyan, *History of Iran*, Yerevan, 2005, pp. 128-133).

⁵² T. Daryae, “ŠĀPUR II,” <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/shapur-ii>.

have happened in the year 330.⁵³ Thus, in the book of *The Epic Histories* we find the following evidence regarding the issue:

“But a certain event occurred at the time that the great *high-priest Vrt’anēs had come alone with a few [attendants] to perform the sacrifice of praise. Then, those who had secretly kept until then to the ancient heathen idol-worshipping customs – up to two thousand in number – *gathered together and plotted to kill the *high-priest of God, Vrt’anēs. They had been partially emboldened to commit this [deed] by [the instigation] of the king’s wife, for the holy man had rebuked her for her secret adultery and dissolute ways.”⁵⁴

The author of *The Epic Histories* reports that the Armenian queen, the wife of the King *Khosrov Kotak* (Khosrov III the Small, 330-338) has organized the killing of the Chief Bishop Vrt’anēs. The latter was the eldest son of Gregory the Illuminator; he was the leader of the community of Greek orientation.

A fifth-century account known in the Armenian literature as *The Epic Histories* attributed to P’awstos (Faustos) Buzand is the prime source of the Armenian fourth century history. It describes Armenian history since King *Khosrov Kotak* (Khosrov III the Small, 330-338) and covers events down to the division of Armenian between Rome and Persia in 387, about a half century of history. As has already been noticed

“Pawstos lacks chronology in the strict sense: he does not mention in which king’s regnal year an event occurred or how long each king reigned. However, he does know the correct sequence of Armenian kings from Xosrov II Kotak (330-339) to Varazdat (374-378) and mentions each one by name...although

⁵³ Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն, հատոր II, 1984, էջ 81 (*The History of the Armenian People*, vol. II, 1984, p. 81).

⁵⁴ *The Epic Histories*, Book 3, ch. iii, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ, գլ. Գ, (P’awstos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*, Book 3, ch. iii).

he lacks numeral chronology, the thematic unity on occasion substitutes, nonetheless, for an absolute chronology”.⁵⁵

Further, despite many controversies concerning his text P’awtstos’ information still has the greatest value in the learning something concerning the social history of early Christian Armenia: the feudal order, the State, the relationships of noble houses and the Church, beliefs and customs, and particularly concerning the thorough and persisting pressure of Zoroastrian Persia on the newly converted country. Contemporary researchers have noted that *The Epic Histories* largely reflects the lost oral tradition of the Iranian epic as well as to more familiar Classical and early Christian forms.⁵⁶ H. Manandyan in his *Critical Survey of the history of the Armenian people* has compared the evidence of *The Epic Histories* with the *Roman History* of Ammianus Marcellinus. On the basis of his comparative analysis Manandyan has shown what should be deemed historically reliable in *The Epic Histories* and what should be considered epic and poetry.⁵⁷ At the same time, the dating of the book to the 5th century allows one to hold that the concerns of the time should have left some impact on the creation of it. The thorough study of the text also reveals that some parts of it were written purely from the perspective of the supporters of Greek Christianity. The author openly takes sides with the House of Gregorids, and particular importance is given to the Church of Caesarea in Cappadocia and its relationship with the House of Gregorids. At the same time, the writer is critical to the representatives of the other ecclesiastical House, the House of Albianos, which was on the side of the community of Syrian Christianity. Thus, these trends and tendencies consequently have left their influence on the portrayal

⁵⁵ R. Bedrosian, “The Sparapetut’iwn in Armenia in the Fourth and Fifth Centuries”, p. 12.

⁵⁶ See N. Garsoian, Introduction pp. 1-55, *The Epic Histories*, J. Russell, “Faustus” <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/faustus->

⁵⁷ See Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկեր*, հատոր II, էջ 157-248 (H. Manandian, *Works*. vol. II, pp. 157-248).

of events and figures, which compels us to adopt a more critical approach to the text to distinguish historical facts from the views and assumptions of the author.

1.3 The Armenian Church in the Fourth Century

“Both in the time of Tiridates and his successors, the Christian church and its leaders played a vital role not only in religious matters of the country, but also in political ones”.⁵⁸ However, what did the Armenian Church look like during that period? Before the 5th century, the rite in the Armenian Church was carried out either in Greek or in Syriac languages.⁵⁹ But, at the same time, as Nina Garsoian has observed, Armenia shaped its own ecclesiastical organization. Further she noted that “Two hereditary ecclesiastical families are known from the start: that of St. Gregory the Illuminator, in which the patriarchate was a hereditary office, and that of Albanos of Manazkert, bishop of the royal court, whose descendants repeatedly disputed the first place to the Gregorids”.⁶⁰ The hereditary system of the priesthood was peculiar to the Armenian ecclesiastical tradition until the first half of the 5th century.⁶¹ Gelzer thinks that it was shaped on the model of Jewish hereditary priests and also the Armenian pagan tradition,⁶² while Garsoian relates it with the concept of hereditary office typical to the “naxarar”⁶³ system” of Arsacid Armenia. At the same time, she rightly observes that the hereditary system of

⁵⁸ Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկեր*, հատոր II, էջ 127 (H. Manandian, *Works*. vol. II, p. 127), Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն, հատոր II, 1984, էջ 142 (*The History of the Armenian People*, vol. II, 1984, p. 142).

⁵⁹ See R. Thomson, *Mission, Conversion, and Christianization: The Armenian Example*, p. 37.

⁶⁰ N. Garsoyan, *The Arshakuni Dynasty (A. D. 12-[180?]-428)* in *The Armenian People From Ancient Times to Modern Times*, vol. I, edited by Richard G. Hovannisian, St. Marine Press, New York, 1997, p. 83.

⁶¹ Հ. Մանանդյան, *Ֆեոդալիզմը Հին Հայաստանում*, էջ 127 (H. Manandyan, *Feudalism in Ancient Armenia*, p. 127).

⁶² See Հ. Գելցեր, *Փաւստոս Բուզանդի կամ Հայկական Եկեղեցւոյ սկզբնաւորութիւն*, թրգմ. Հ. Թորոսյան, Վնն., 1896, էջ 80-109 (H. Gelts'er, *Phaustos Buzand or the Origins of the Armenian Church*, trans. by H. Torosyan, Venice, 1896, pp. 80-109).

⁶³ Naxarar- chiefs of Armenian noble families, called *nakharars* in Arsacid Armenia.

priesthood was “in direct opposition to the fourth canon of the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) mandating episcopal elections.”⁶⁴ Thomson, reflecting on the formation of the Armenian Church, points out that the Church developed in accordance with a social and political structure characteristic of that country: “it is clear from the nomenclature of the bishops given by the early texts that their sees were not the transitory commercial centers known as cities and built in various places by succeeding monarchs, but rather the estates of the great noble families.”⁶⁵

With reference to Armenian monasticism, Ter-Minasyan has rightly observed that its origins should be looked for in the Assyrian tradition.⁶⁶ The following extract from *The Epic Histories* further allows us to discern some associations with Syriac ascetic tradition:

“There were two anchorite [anapadawork’] religious living-in-the-mountains. The name of one, who was a Syrian by race and who lived on the mountain Arewc [“Lion”], was Shalita [sic]. The name of the other was Epipan [Epiphanius]. He was a Greek by race, and he lived on the great mountain called the Throne of Anahit, which was the home of the pagan gods. Both of them were the disciples of Daniel, whom we mentioned earlier.”⁶⁷

⁶⁴ See N. Garsoian, “Naxarar,” <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/naxarar>, cff. Մ. Օրմանեան, *Ազգասպարտում, Հայ Ուղղափառ Եկեղեցւոյ Անցքերը Սկիզբէն Մինչև Մեր Օրերը Յարակից Ազգային Պարագաներով Պատմութեամբ*, հատոր I, Սբ. Էջմիածին, 2001, էջ 102-103, 132-133, 153, 165-166, 178, 206 (M. Ormanyan, *National History, Events of the Armenian Orthodox Church from the beginning to our days related with national circumstances*, vol. I, Holy Etchmiadzin, 2001, pp. 102-103, 132-133, 153, 165-166, 178, 206), cff. Լեո, *Հայոց Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 422-425 (Leo, *Collections of Works*, vol I, pp. 422-425).

⁶⁵ R. Thomson, *Mission, Conversion, and Christianization: The Armenain Example*, p. 34.

⁶⁶ Եր. Տեր-Մինասյան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցու Յարաբերությունների Ասորւոց Եկեղեցիների Հետ. Հայկական և Ասորական Աղբիւրների Համեմատյան*, Էջմիածին, 2009, էջ 37-39 (Er. Ter-Minasyan, *Relations Between Armenian and Syrian Churches: According to Armenian and Syrian Sources*, Holy Etchmiadzin, 2009, pp. 37-39).

⁶⁷ *The Epic Histories*, Book V, ch. xxv, cff. «Արք երկու կրօնաւորք անապատաւորք մինչ դէռ նստէին ի լերինն, անուն միում Ծաղիտա, և էր սա ազգաւ ասորի, և նստէր յԱռեւծ լերինն, և միումն անուն եպիփան, և էր սա ազգաւ Յոյն, և նստէր սա ի մեծի լերինն ի տեղի դիցն՝ գոր կոչէն այժոռ Անահտայ, և էին սորա երկոքին լեալ աշակերտք սրբոյն Դանիելի մեծի՝ գոր վերագոյնն յիշեցաք...», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Ե, գլ. ԻԵ, (P’awstos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*, Book 5, ch. xxv).

And who was Daniel? Daniel himself also was a Syrian: “He was of Syrian *race and held the dignity of the chief *throne of *Taron*, of the great and first church of the *mother-of-the-churches in all Armenia.”⁶⁸ The author of *The Epic Histories* calls him “the Great man of God Daniel.” The reference of *The Epic Histories* that two known anchorites Shalita and Epipan were the disciples of Daniel the Syrian allows one to suggest that the Armenian asceticism may have developed under the influence of Syrian tradition. Further, the following allusion to the status and authority of Daniel the Syrian reveals the importance of Syriac Christianity in 4th century Armenia:

“[Daniel] had been a pupil of the great Grigor and the supervisor and head of the churches in the province of Taron the appanage of Grigor. He had the authority of the office of supreme justice in this region, and he held this authority alone. Moreover, he was the overseer, law-giver, supervisor and guardian of all the churches of Greater Armenia, in every locality, and he also preached in foreign parts – in the regions of Persia – and turned innumerable [men] from error.”⁶⁹

Later Daniel was promoted to the patriarchal see, but shortly was killed by the order of the Armenian king Tiran.⁷⁰

As a result of the struggle between the competing authority of Rome and Persia, two powerful and very different visions of political orientation formed in Armenia during the 4th century.⁷¹ Community of supporters, along with family members of the monarch and a large number of nobles, saw themselves economically and

⁶⁸ Ibid. Book III, ch. xiv, cff. «Եւ էր սա ազգաւ սարի. և ունէր սա գաստիճան աթոռոյն գլխաւորութեան Տարօնոյ, ի մեծն և նախ գառաջին եկեղեցին ի մայր եկեղեցեացն ամենայն Հայաստանեաց:», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ, զլ. ԺԴ., (P’awstos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*’, Book III, ch. xiv).

⁶⁹ Ibid. Book III, ch. xiv., cff. «Աշակերտ եղեալ էր սա մեծին Գրիգորի, վերակացու և գլխաւոր եկեղեցեացն նահանգին Տարօնոյ, Գրիգորի ձեռական՝ իշխանութեանն կողման մասին գործակալութեանն մեծի դատաւորութեանն, ուներ զիշխանութիւնն զայն առանձինն. Այլ վերակացու և հրամանատար տեսուչ և հոգաբարձու ամենայն եկեղեցեացն Հայոց մեծաց ընդ ամենայն տեղիս, այլ և ի կողմանս Պարսից յօտար տեղիս քարոզեաց սա, և անթիւս ի մոլորութենէ դարձոյց:», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ, զլ. ԺԴ., (P’awstos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*’, Book III, ch. xiv).

⁷⁰ Ibid. cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ, զլ. ԺԴ., (P’awstos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*’, Book III, ch. xiv).

⁷¹ Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն, *Հնագոյն ժամանակներից մինչև մեր օրերը, խմբ. Մ. Ներսիսյանի*, Երևան, 1972, էջ 149-156 (*The History of the Armenian People, From Ancient Times Until Our Days*, Ed. By M. Nersisyan, Yerevan, 1972, pp. 149-156).

culturally connected with the Persian state and did not wish to separate or alienate themselves from Persia. The conflict between the two fractions is closely linked to the regional division of Armenia. The south and south-eastern provinces of Armenia, particularly Armenian Mesopotamia, Ałjnik‘ Korduk‘, Vaspurakan, Tarōn-Turuberan, saw themselves economically and culturally connected with the Persian state and did not wish to separate or alienate themselves from Persia. These provinces were orientated towards the influence of Syrian Christianity, this affiliation was basically conditioned by the following two factors: a. the presence of the Syrian community was stronger there, b. these provinces had a border with Iran in the 4th century. The author of *The Epic Histories* number of times mentions the above-referenced provinces in speaking about the key figures of Syrian Christianity, who played an important role in the Christianization of Armenian in the 4th century. Thus, the following extracts reveal the presence of Syrian Christianity within the mentioned provinces:

“At that time, however, the holy elder, the *chorepiskopos Daniel, [who was] an admirable man, was still alive. He had been a pupil of the great Grigor and the supervisor and head of the churches in the *province of *Taron*... He was of Syrian *race and held the dignity of the chief *throne of *Taron*, of the great and first church of the *mother-of-the-churches in all Armenia.”⁷²

“The holy elder, the * chorepiskopos Daniel spoke these words before King Tiran and before the *princes, the *chiefs, and the entire host...But when he [king Tiran] had heard all this, raging in the wrath of his iniquitous fury, he commanded them to strangle [Daniel] to death on the spot... Then his body was taken up by his beloved holy disciples, among whom the chief was named

⁷² *The Epic Histories*, Book III, ch. xiv, cff. «Բայց յայնժամ դեռ ևս կենդանի էր ծերունի սուրբն մեծն քորեպիսկոպոսն Դանիել, այր սքանչելի: Աշակերտ եղեալ էր սա մեծին Գրիգորի, վերակացու և գլխաւոր եկեղեացն նահանգին Տարօնոյ... Եւ էր սա ազգաւ ասորի. և ունէր սա զաստիճան այթռոյն գլխաւորութեան Տարօնոյ, ի մեծն և նախ զառաջին եկեղեցին ի մայր եկեղեցեացն ամենայն Հայաստանեաց: Այս ինքն նախ և զառաջին և գլխաւոր տեղին պատուական. զի յառաջ նախ անդ շինեալ էր գտուրք եկեղեցին, և ուղղեալ սեղան յանուն տեառն», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Գ, գլ. ԺԳ, (P‘awstos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*, Book III, ch. xiv).

Šalita, who had been appointed by him *spiritual-teacher in the *realm of *Korduk*’, and the second Epi ‘pan, who had also been appointed by him as *spiritual-teacher for the *district of *Ałjnik*’ and of Great Cop ‘k’; together with the ministers of the *camp. And they went and took his body to the place where his cell had formerly been in the *land of *Taron*, which is the *mother church of Armenia, near the spring where Grigor had baptized a multitude of the forces of the *realm, at the place called Hac ‘eac ‘Draxt’”.⁷³

Thus, the quoted passage reveals that in Tarōn, Korduk’, Ałjnik’ and Great Cop ‘k’ the presence of Syrian Christianity was stronger: It is attested that chorepiskopos Daniel the Syrian had appointed “his beloved holy disciples... Šalita, and Epi ‘pan” as *spiritual-teacher in these regions “together with the ministers of the *camp.” As refers to the presence of Syrian communities in the above-mentioned regions of Armenia contemporary historian Babken Harut‘yunyan in his article entitled “The Ecclesiastical Dioceses of the Armenian Church” shows that during the period of the office of **Marzpan* (prefecture), since 428 two Assyrian dioceses are present in the ecclesiastical structure of the Armenian Church: *First Assyrian Diocese* and *Second Assyrian Diocese*. He correctly highlights that these dioceses represented Assyrian communities of Armenia within the jurisdiction of the Armenian Church. The *First Assyrian Diocese* is the Diocese of Tmorik, which is identical with Tarōn-Turuberan.⁷⁴

⁷³ Ibid. «Չայս բանս խօսեցաւ սուրբ ծերունին Դանիէլ քորեպիսկոպոսն առաջի թագաւորին Տիրանայ, և առաջի իշխանացն, պետացն և ամենայն զօրացն: Եւ մինչ դեռ խօսէր նա զայս ամենայն, հիացեալ զարմացեալ թագաւորն միտ դնելով լուռ և եթ կայր: Եւ եղև իբրև զայս ամենայն լուաւ, բորբոքեալ ի բռնաւորութիւն դառնութեան ամբարշտութեան ցասման իւրոյ. Չոր տայր հրաման անդէն խեղդամահ առնել զնա... Ապա բարձին զմարմին նորա սուրբ սիրելիք իւր աշակերտք, որոյ գլխաւորին անուն էր Շաղիտա, որ ի նմանէ իսկ աշխարհին Կորդուաց վարդապետ տուեալ էր. և երկրորդին անուն Եպիփան, որ զաւառին Աղձնեաց և մեծաց Շոփաց ի նմանէ իսկ վարդապետեալ էր, և ընդ նոսա պաշտօնեայք բանակին: Եւ զնացին տարան, եղին զմարմինն ի տեղւոջն՝ ուր յառաջագոյն էր կայեանք խցկանն իւրոյ յերկրին Տարօնոյ, որ էր մայր եկեղեցեացն Հայոց, մօտ յակն աղբերն՝ ուր առնէր Գրիգոր զմկրտութիւնսն աշխարհագոր բազմութեանն, ի տեղւոջն՝ որ անուանեալ կոչի Հացեաց դրախտ»:

⁷⁴ Բ. Հարությունյան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցու Թեմական Բաժանումը Գրիգոր Լուսավորչի Հովիտայնություն Երջանում*, Պատմա-բանասիրական հանդես, Երևան, 2000, № 2. էջ 108-

The other group of people was headed by the Grigorid patriarchs of the Armenian Church who had received Greek education in Caesarea and were oriented towards the Greeks. Also, nobles who were living near the borders of Rome and were living under the influence of Rome, were more prone towards Rome; and thereafter Byzantium with whom they felt connected not only economically but also culturally. From here on, there started an internal conflict between the two communities⁷⁵. This competition between two political groups consequently has found its reflection in the ecclesiastical life of the Armenian Church as well. The history of the Armenian Church between the IV and V centuries as was observed by Yervand Ter-Minasyan is “about the conflict between those two parties due to the influence of the Syrians and the Greeks. There was a continuous change of success between the dueling sides, and the temporary winner depended on their sponsoring side’s political victory”.⁷⁶ The House of Gregorids was closely linked to the supporters of Greek orientation, while the House of Albanos was coupled with the community of Syrian orientation. The study of the historical evidence reveals that the competition between these two houses changed into the competition between Greek and Syrian Christianity. One of the most vivid examples of this competition we find in the following passage concerning the resignation of Saint Nersēs:

“But the holy *katolikos Nersēs never saw again the face of King Aršak up to the day of his destruction. And instead of Nersēs, a certain *Č’unak* by name was appointed in his place as the head of the Christians, and he was the *slave

127 (B. Harut’yunyan, “The Ecclesiastical Dioceses of the Armenian Church During the Patriarchate of Gregory Illuminator”, *Historical-Philological Journal*, no. 2., 2000, pp. 108-127),
⁷⁵ See also Եր. Տեր-Մինասյան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցու Յարաբերությունները Ասորոց Եկեղեցիների հետ*, էջ 13-58 (Er. Ter-Minasyan, *Relations Between Armenian and Syrian Churches*: pp. 13-58).
⁷⁶ Եր. Տեր-Մինասյան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցին*, էջ 39 (Er. Ter-Minasyan, *The Church of Armenia*, p. 39).

of the *slaves of the king. Then the king gave the order to summon all the bishops of the *realm of Armenia so that they would come to ordain Č'unak to the *katolikate of Armenia. But not a single one of them agreed to come except only for the bishops of *Aljnik'* and *Korduk'*, who came and ordained Č'unak in accordance with the command of the king. And Č'unak was a docile man, and he had no tongue whatever for rebuke or admonition, but he agreed with the king in whatsoever he did.”⁷⁷

The quoted passage clearly tells us that the resignation of Nersēs actually was supported only by the provinces, where Syrian Christianity was dominant. This in turn explains the report of *The Epic Histories* whether why not a single one of the bishops agreed to come to the ordination of Č'unak “except only for the bishops of *Aljnik'* and *Korduk'*, who came and ordained Č'unak in accordance with the command of the king.” The feelings of the author of *The Epic Histories* about the personality of Č'unak, whom he considers “*slave of the *slaves of the king,” clearly speaks in support to the claim that they both the writer and Č'unak represent two opposing sides. As it was already mentioned in the corresponding chapter of this dissertation the author of *The Epic Histories* is always prone to the House of Gregorids, which is firmly associated with the Greek Christianity. Further close examination of the material of *The Epic Histories* shows that especially the above-mentioned provinces cooperated with Iran against Aršakid kings. Correspondingly we get the following evidence in relation to this:

“And [the nobles] began to disperse from the Armenian royal-*camp, abandoning Aršak their king. The first to start departing were the *greatest-

⁷⁷ *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. xv, cff. «Այլ սուրբ կաթողիկոսն Ներսէս այլ ոչ ես յաւել տեսանել զերեսս թագաւորին Արշակայ մինչև յօրն նորին կորստեան. այլ փոխանակ Ներսիսի զՉունակ ոմն անուն, և կացուցին փոխանակ նորա գլուխ Քրիստոնէութեանն. և էր ըստրուկ ի ստրկաց արքունի: Ապա հրաման տայր թագաւորն կոչել՝ զամենայն եպիսկոպոսս Հայոց աշխարհին, զի եկեացեն ձեռնադրեցեն զՉունակն ի կաթողիկոսութեան Հայոց: Եւ ոչ մի ոք ոչ հաւանեաց գալ. բայց միայն Աղձնեաց և Կորդուաց եպիսկոպոսք եկին, և զՉունակն ձեռնադրեցին կաթողիկոսութիւն ըստ հրամանի թագաւորին: Եւ էր Չունակն այր զգօն, և ոչ ինչ ունէր լեզու յանդիմանութեան կամ խրատու, այլ հաւանեալ էր թագաւորին զինչ և նա գործիցէ», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Դ, գլ. ԺԵ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. xv).

*nobles: first the **bdeašx* of *Aljnik* ‘...and the entire naxarardom of *Aljnik* ‘. And the forces and the *family of the *house of the *region of *Aljnik* ‘ revolted against Aršak king of Armenia and went off to present themselves to Šāpuh king of Persia. They raised a wall on the *side of Armenia called the Joray *side, pierced gates through it, and separated their *realm from Armenia.”⁷⁸

Thus, the quoted passages from the book of *The Epic Histories* do not leave any doubt that in the 4th and 5th centuries in the above-mentioned provinces of Armenia Major, in particular *Aljnik* ‘ *Korduk*’, *Tarōn-Turuberan* and *Great Cop* ‘k’ the presence of Syrian Christianity was influential. The resignation of Nersēs from the see of Catholicos and the protest against the ordination of Č ‘unak discovers that there was a tough competition between the Syrian and Greek Christianity. Iran, on the other hand, has used the factor of Syrian Christianity both to strengthen its political influence in Armenia and weaken the growing impact of Greek Christianity, which was led by the House of Gregorids.

The philanthropic movement of Nersēs the Great also can be seen as a part of this competition taking into account the fact that in his time Nersēs was one of the most influential figures, not to say the leader, of the community of Greek orientation. Scholars have frequently pointed out that one of the characteristics of the political history of Aršacid Armenia was the battle between the central power and the nobles.⁷⁹ In Aršacid Armenia as well, like in any European feudalistic monarchy, the political aspirations of the feudal nobility was sometimes found

⁷⁸ *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. I, cff. «Եւ սկսան սորորել գնալ ի բանակէն Հայոց թագաւորին. Թողին զիրեանց արքայն Արշակ: Բայց նախ այսմ գնալոյ սկիզբն առնէին մեծամեծ աւագանին: Նախ բղեաշին Աղձնեաց... և զօրն և տունն տոհմին Աղձնեաց կողմանն ապստամբեցին յարքայէն Հայոց Արշակայ, և չոգան կացին առաջի արքային պարսկաց Շապիոյ. և պարիսպ ածէին ի Հայոց կուսէ՝ որ Ձորայն կոչեն, դրունս դնէին. և զատուցին զիրենաց աշխարհն ի Հայոց», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Դ, գլ. Ծ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. I).

⁷⁹ See Ա. Աբրահամյան, *Հայաստանը վաղ ֆեոդալիզմի շրջանում*, հատոր II, էջ 34-35 (A. Abrahamyan, *Armenia in the Age of Early Feudalism*, vol. II, pp. 34-35).

itself in opposition to the monarchy. Thus, it was not surprising that the Armenian Aršacids would have tried to widen their influence and rights over noble houses in order to create a strong, centripetal power. In turn the feudal powers would have been interested not only in preserving, but also in broadening their separate and independent rights.⁸⁰ The competition between the different groups of nobles for the consolidation of their right of landowning and political power was turning into a fight against the centripetal policy of the Aršacid dynasty.⁸¹ The tension especially reached to its climax during the reign of king Tiran (338-350): the centralization policy of the state's power had led to the point that the whole *nakharars* of the country, particularly those oriented towards Rome, were opposed to the court.⁸² For not only did this controversy threaten the feudal rights of the Armenian *nakharars*, it also endangered the future existence of these families.⁸³ Supposedly, Tiran's policy created tension between the church and the state as well, the king attempted to subject the church to political interests, which was met with a strong reaction on behalf of the clergy. Modern scholars suggest that through time, the Church had become the owner of large amounts of land and was in competition with not only the *nakharars* but the king as well. Thomson further observes that "The lands belonging to the patriarch [Grigorids] were his in the same way as family estates belonged to the magnates of the realm, and they were passed on by inheritance".⁸⁴ This comment concerns not only Gregorid patriarchs but also

⁸⁰ Հ. Մանանդյան, *Ֆեոդալիզմը Հին Հայաստանում*, էջ 267-268 (H. Manandyan, *Feudalism in Ancient Armenia*, pp. 267-268).

⁸¹ Լևո, *Երկերի ժողովածու*, հատոր I, էջ 430 (Leo, *History of Armenia*, vol I, p. 430), Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն, vol. II, 1984, p. 82 (*The History of the Armenian People*, vol. II, 1984, p. 82).

⁸² *The Epic Histories*, Book III, ch. xii-xviii, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմոյթիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ, գլ. ԺԲ-ԺԸ., (P'awstos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*, Book III, ch. xii-xviii).

⁸³ See Ա. Աբրահամյան, *Հայաստանը վաղ ֆեոդալիզմի շրջանում*, հատոր II, էջ 39 (A. Abrahamyan, *Armenia in the Age of Early Feudalism*, vol. II, p. 39), cff. Հայոց պատմություն, խմբ. Պրոֆ. Հր. Լ. Սիմոնյան, էջ 66 (*History of Armenia*, Edited by Hr. R. Simonyan, p. 66).

⁸⁴ R. Thomson, *Mission, Conversion, and Christianization: The Armenain Example*, p. 34.

the holders of other episcopal sees considering the hereditary system of offices and of a succession of the Armenian Church in Late Antiquity.⁸⁵ Ideologically the Church was inclined to support the monarchs, which would allow for the union of the country, but as feudal, it was prone to support the nobles.⁸⁶ Leo completes this discussion by noticing that “In Armenia were composed two states - lay and spiritual. Being representatives of different interests, they occupied opposite positions to each other and entered in the field of mutual skirmish”.⁸⁷ The following passage found in the book of *The Epic Histories* allows us to see some truth in Leo’s remarks:

“But King Tiran and the other *noble *magnates among the *naxarars*, as well as the whole of the *realm, did not behave at all according to God’s will or follow any wisdom. Especially the king and the *princes killed, unrestrainedly shedding just blood in vain, and they committed many other sins...Consequently, the blessed *patriarch Yusik perpetually opposed [them] with skillful, temperate words of Christian reproach...And so, King Tiran with others from the *nobility presented himself on a day of annual [celebration] to enter into the church, but [Yusik] spoke out against him and said: “you are unworthy! Why have you come? Do not go inside!” For this, they dragged him at once into the church. beaten with rods and shattered, the holy *high-priest of God, the blessed youth Yusik was flung there battered and half dead.”⁸⁸

⁸⁵ See also N. Garsoian, “Naxarar,” <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/naxarar>.

⁸⁶ Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն, Հնագույն ժամանակներից մինչև մեր օրերը, էջ 144 (*The History of the Armenian People, From Ancient Times Until Our Days*, p. 144).

⁸⁷ Լեո, *Երկերի ժողովածու*, հատոր I, էջ 437 (Leo, *History of Armenia*, vol I, p. 437).

⁸⁸ *The Epic Histories*, Book III, ch. XIII, cff. «Իսկ թագաւորն Տիրան եւ այլ մեծամեծ աւագանին նախարարացն, կամ աշխարհն ամենայն, ոչ ինչ ըստ աստուծոյ կամացն վարս յանձն առեալ իմաստուն ինչ գնացեալ լինէին: Քան զամենայն մանաւանդ թագաւորն կամ իշխանն սպանութիւնս՝ անխտիր ի հեղուլ զարիւն արդար ի տարապարտուց գործէին, եւ այլ մեղս բազումս. Որ իբրեւ օր մի յաւուրց տարեկան, դիմեաց գալ թագաւորն Տիրան հանդերձ այլովք աւագանուովն մտանել յեկեղեցին. Իսկ նա ընդդէմ բարբառեալ ասէր. Չես արժանի, հի՛մ գաս, մի՛ գար ի ներքս: վասն որոյ անդէն ի ներքս քարշէին գնա յեկեղեցուջն, բրածեծ եղել ջաղջախեալ քահանայապետն աստուծոյ սուրբ, երանելի մանուկն Յուսիկ, կիսամահ կոշկոճեալ ընկեցեալ լինէր», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ, գլ. ԺԳ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III, ch. XIII).

The described incident between the high-priest Yusik and King Tiran shows that there was a conflict between the lay and spiritual powers. As we will see further in this research this is not the only one, the book of *The Epic Histories* renders some others as well, particularly in case of high-priest Nersēs and King Aršak and his son Pap (369-374). The commentary of the author on the shortcomings of King Tiran and noblemen in this case is an easy argument made up by the writer. *The Epic Histories* usually takes sides with Gregorid patriarchs when they are in disagreement with Aršacid rulers. Now that there was tension between the court and *nakharars*, the Armenian clergy were rebellious suggests Ashot Abrahamyan. Further, he observes that there was another reason for the rise of tension between Tiran and the clergy, and it was because of Tiran's apathy towards the rise of paganism.⁸⁹ Not too long before, Christianity had not spared any blood or effort in the ideological war between the pagans; and they could not stand by and let the court show a positive attitude towards the pagans. According to the author of *The Epic Histories*, not all were enthusiastically embracing the new religion during the reign of Tiran: the culture *was still* informed by traditional *pagan values*. The following extract of *The Epic Histories* gives us a glimpse of the religious situation of Armenia in the first half of the 4th century:

“And at that time, they took the king as their example of evil, began to model themselves on that example, and to do the same. For from antiquity when they had taken on the name of Christians...[They did not receive it] with understanding as is fitting with hope and faith but only those who were to some degree acquainted with Greek or Syriac learning [were able] to achieve some partial inkling of it. As for those who were without skill in learning and who were the great mass of the people – the *naxarars* as well as the peasantry

⁸⁹ Ա. Աբրահամյան, Հայաստանը վաղ ֆեոդալիզմի շրջանում, հատոր II, էջ 40 (A. Abrahamyan, *Armenia in the Age of Early Feudalism*, vol. II, p. 40), Լեո, Երկերի ժողովածու, հատոր I, էջ 437-445 (Leo, *History of Armenia*, vol I, pp. 437-445).

– even had spiritual-teachers...not one of them could keep in mind a single thing of what he had heard: not a word, not half a word, not a minimal record, not a trace...So they too, having savage, barbarous minds, consumed themselves with vile thoughts in perverse practices, [and] in ancient pagan customs.”⁹⁰

The picture of *The Epic Histories* of the level of Christianization of Armenia in the first half of the 4th century sounds quite realistic. The author clearly states that the new faith was not totally understandable even for the educated elite. This can be explained in the light of the following two interrelated factors: a. a few decades were not enough for the Church to uproot paganism from the land; b. the liturgy and the scriptures in the Armenian Church were not in the native language before the 5th century, but in Greek and Syriac. Further, R. Thomson completes these observations by noticing that “The spread of Christianity throughout Armenia was a slow process. Enduring success only became possible after the development of a script for Armenian so that religious services and the scriptures could be understood.”⁹¹ The above-mentioned circumstances clearly show that the level of Christianization of the Armenian society was low, and there was a need of something new that would allow the Church to attract the interest of people towards the new religion.

⁹⁰ See *The Epic Histories*, Book III, ch. xiii, cff. «Յայնմ ժամանակի զթագավորն իրեանց օրինակ չարի առնէին, և նովին օրինակաւ ձևել սկսան, և նոյնպէս գործել: զի ի վաղնջուց, յորմէ հետէ առին նորա զանուն քրիստոնէութեանն...Ոչ էթէ որպէս պարտն էր գիտութեամբ յուսով կամ հաւատով, բայց միայն սակաւ ինչ զհանգամանս գիտէին հելլէն կամ ասորի դպրութեանց, որք էին հասու ինչ այնմ փոքր ի շատէ: Իսկ որք արտաքոյ քան զգիտութիւն արուեստին էին այլ խառնադանն բազմութիւն մարդկան ժողովրդոց նախարարացն և կամ շինականութեանն, էթէ զգայգ և զցերեկ նստեալ վարդապետացն...Ոչ որ ի նոցանէն և ոչ մի ոչ, և ոչ մի բան, և ոչ կես բանի, և ոչ դոյզն յիշատակ ինչ, և ոչ նշմարանս ինչ զոր լսէին, և ոչ կարէին ինչ ունել ի մտի...Սոյնպէս և դեգերեալ մաշէին յանուղղայ կրթութիւն ընդ ջքնոտի մտացն ի հնութիւն հեթանոսութեանց սովորութեանց, բարբարոս խուժադուժ միտս ունելով», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ, գլ. ԺԳ. (P’awstos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*, Book III, ch. xiii). About this issue see also cff. Լևո, *Երկերի ժողովածու*, հատոր I, էջ 437 (Leo, *History of Armenia*, vol I, p. 437), Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն, հատոր II, 1984, էջ 85 (*The History of the Armenian People*, vol. II, 1984, p. 85).

⁹¹ See R. Thomson, Foreword, in Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*, translation and commentary by R.W. Thomson. Albany. State University of New York Press, 1976, p. xiii.

Further, we learn that in time the relationship between the church and the king became volatile: as a result of the deepening crisis, Tiran ordered both the death of Catholicos Yusik and his successor Bishop Daniel the Assyrian: Yusik was the representative of the Gregorid House and Daniel was in close relationship with them.⁹² This confrontation between the Church and the state stopped when the position of the Chief Bishop was given to the representative from the House of Albanos, Paren. Paren seems to have been far less a proponent of the Greek vision for Armenia and the Church in Armenia.

Thus, the review of the historical developments that took place in ancient Armenia in the end of the 3th and during the first half of the 4th centuries enables us to argue:

1. that the proclamation of Christianity as the state religion aimed at securing Armenia's independence from the political, cultural and religious influences of two competing powers - Persia and Rome. Christianity also provided an additional foundation to strengthen relations with the Roman Empire. Rome was interested in sustaining Armenia as a stronghold against its main enemy Persia.⁹³
2. that, despite the fact that during a short period of time the Church gained much influence in the political life of the country, Christianity was still unable to grow roots in all layers of society. It appears that the new religion remained *new* for some groups in Armenia. On the one hand, pagan religion remained active, especially

⁹² See *The Epic Histories*, Book III, ch. xii-xiv, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ, գլ. ԺԲ-ԺԴ. (P'awstos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*, Book III, ch. xii-xiv), Moses Khorenats'i, *History of the Armenians*, Book III, ch.14, cff. Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ, գլ. ԺԴ., (Moses Khorenats'i, *History*, Book III, ch.14). About this see also Լեո, *Երկերի ժողովածու*, հատոր I, էջ 441 (Leo, *History of Armenia*, vol I, p. 441), Եր. Տեր-Մինասյան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցին*, էջ 33 (Er. Ter-Minasyan, *The Church of Armenia*, p. 33).

⁹³ Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն, *Հնագույն ժամանակներից մինչև մեր օրերը*, էջ 138 (*The History of the Armenian People, From Ancient Times Until Our Days*, p. 138).

when the tension between the state and the Church grew deeper. On the other hand, Persia strived to enforce its influence on Armenia through Zoroastrian propaganda: some of the Armenian *nakharars* (lords) of Persian orientation were converted to Zoroastrianism.⁹⁴

3. that the political divide in Armenia between two influential parties – those who supported Rome and those who supported the Sassanid State - created a need for the Church to become a unifying factor in society. To achieve this objective, the Church had to build a platform, allowing her to work with different groups in society. In this situation, the task of Christianization was still imperative. The fact that the killings of two catholicoses - Yusik and Daniel the Assyrian - does not seem to have been followed by any great protest from Armenian society, at least shows that the affiliation of society with the Church was not yet strong. To have the support of society against such challenges the Church had to raise its influence in the community.

This brief sketch of the political, religious, social, cultural, and intellectual environment in the 4th century Christian Armenia provides, I suggest, key background when we seek to understand the rise of the philanthropic movement of Nersēs in the Armenian Church.

⁹⁴ “Now Meruzan Arcruni had revolted against the king of Armenia long ago, even in the days of king Arshak. He had given his hand to the king of Persia of his own free will, accepted the Mazdean religion, and apostatized from the Christian faith” see *The Epic Histories*, pp. 224-225, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, էջ 412 (P‘awstos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*’, p. 412).

CHAPTER TWO

Introduction

Scholars of Armenian Church history are mostly in agreement that after St. Gregory the Illuminator, St. Nersēs is the second most prominent figure in the early centuries, bringing a new spirit to the mission of the Armenian church.⁹⁵ A Late Antique Armenian writer Moses Xorenac'i, speaking of Nersēs philanthropic movement writes: "Summoning a council of bishops in concert with the laity, by canonical regulation he established mercy, extirpating the root of inhumanity, which was the natural custom in our land."⁹⁶ The links made in this statement allow us to see the close relationship between the story of Armenia's conversion to Christianity at the beginning of the fourth century and the philanthropic movement of Nersēs, which began only some fifty years later. Karapet Ter-Mkrtchyan had this in mind when he stated: "During [Nersēs's] patriarchate, ecclesiastical life developed significantly in Armenia, and Christianity indeed became the religion of the nation"⁹⁷.

⁹⁵ Կ. Տէր-Մկրտչեան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցւոյ Պատմութիւն*, հատոր I, էջ 113 (K. Ter-Mkrtchyan, *The Armenian Church*, vol I, p. 113), cff. Մ. Օրմանեան, *Ազգասպառնմ*, հատոր I, էջ 187 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*; vol. I, p. 187), Ա. Չամիհեան, *Հայոց եկեղեցւոյ Պատմութիւն, Նոր Նախիջեան*, 1908 էջ 31-42 (A. Zaminian, *History of the Armenian Church*, vol. 1, New Nakhijevan, 1908, pp. 31-42).

⁹⁶ Moses Khorenats'i, *History of the Armenians*, Book III, ch.20., cff. «Ժողով արարեալ եպիսկոպոսաց եւ համօրէն աշխարհականօք, կանոնական սահմանադրութեամբ հաստատեաց զողորմածութիւն, իվելով եւ զանգթութեանն արմատ, որ բնաբար սովորութեամբ էր յերկրիս մերում», see in Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ, գլ. Բ., (Moses Khorenats'i, *History*, Book III, ch.20).

⁹⁷ Կ. Տէր-Մկրտչեան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցւոյ Պատմութիւն*, հատոր I, էջ 113 (K. Ter-Mkrtchyan, *The Armenian Church*, vol I, p. 113), cff. Մ. Չամչյանց, *Հայոց Պատմություն*, հատոր I, Երևան, 1985, էջ 441-442 (M. Chamchian, *Armenian History*, vol. I, Yerevan, 1985, pp. 440-443), Հ. Սուրբեան, *Մեծն Ներսէս Պարթեւ*, «Բազմավէպ», vol. IԵ, no. Դ 1877, Վենետիկ, p. 328 (H. Suqryan, "Nerses the Great Partew" *Bazmavep*, vol. XXXV, no. IV, 1877, Venice, p. 328), Մ. Օրմանեան, *Ազգասպառնմ*, հատոր I, էջ 187 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*; vol. I, p. 187), Ա.

In this chapter I will consider, first, the sources that tell us about the origins of Nersēs's philanthropic movement. Second, I will address the dating of the Council of Aštišhat, which played a significant role at the beginning of Nersēs' philanthropic movement. Referring also to Greco-Roman sources I will argue that the Armenian philanthropic project most likely began in the beginnings of 350s.

2.1 The Main Historical Sources

In Armenian literature there are three historical sources that contain useful reports of Nersēs' philanthropic movement: *The Epic Histories* ascribed to Faustus of Byzantium, the *History of the Armenians* by Moses Khorenac'i (Moses from Khoren),⁹⁸ and the *Life of Nersēs* written by Mesrop Vayots'dzorets'i.⁹⁹ However, an analysis of existing discussion concerning Nersēs' philanthropic movement indicates that scholars draw their conclusions mainly from the *The Epic Histories*.¹⁰⁰ This may partly be explained by the fact that the author of *The Epic*

Զամինեան, *Հայոց եկեղեցու Պատմություն, Նոր Նախիջևան*, 1908 էջ 31-42 (A. Zaminian, *History of the Armenian Church*, vol. 1, New Nakhijevan, 1908, pp. 31-42), Arch. Tiran Nersoyan, *Armenian Church Historical Studies: Matters of Doctrine and Administration*, New York, 1996, p. 67.

⁹⁸ In this research for the *History of Moses Khorenats'i* I will use the translation of R. W. Thomson (see Moses Khorenats'i, *History of the Armenians*. Translation, Introduction and Commentary on the Literary Sources by R.W. Thomson. Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, 1978, pp. 1-61), for *Buzandaran Patmut'iwnk* I will use the translation of Nina Garsoian (see *The Epic Histories Attributed to P'awstos Buzand* (Buzandaran Patmut'iwnc'), Translation and Commentary by N. G. Garsoian, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1989).

⁹⁹ Մեսրոպ Վայոցձորեցի, *Մեսրոպայ Երիցու Վայոցձորեցու պատմություն Սրբոյն Ներսիսի Հայոց Հայրապետի*, in «Սասննագիրք Հայոց», *Ժ դար*, հատոր XI, Անթիլիաս-Լիբանան, 2010 (Mesrop Vayots'dzorets'i, *The History of Saint Nerses Partev the Patriarch of Armenians by Presbyter Mesrop of Vayots Dzor*, in *Armenian Classical Authors*, vol. 11 Antelias-Lebanon, 2010). See also Մեսրոպ Երեց, *Պատմություն Սրբոյն Ներսիսի Պարթևի Հայոց Հայրապետի*, Սոփերք Հայկականք, հատոր VI, Վենետիկ, 1853 (Presbyter Mesrop, *The History of Saint Nerses Partev the Patriarch of Armenians*, in *Armenian Writings*, vol. 6, Venice, 1853).

¹⁰⁰ See Հ. Թոփչյան, Ծագումն Հայ վանականության, in «Լոյս», N 15, 1905, էջ 468-470, (H. Topchyan, "The Origins of Armenian Monasticism", translated by Zharangavor (Seminarist) from the German, *Light* (weekly magazine), no. 15, (1905), pp. 468-470), Կ. Մուրադյան, Բարսեղ Կեսարացին եւ Հայերը, «Լրաբեր հասարակական գիտությունների», 1968, N 9, էջ 49-51 (K. Muradyan, "Basil of Caesarea and Armenians", *Reporter of Social Sciences*, no. 9 (1968), pp. 49-51), Կ. Տեր-Մկրտչյան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցու Պատմություն*, vol. I, Սբ. Էջմիածին, 2011, էջ 113-118 (K. Ter-Mkrtychyan, *History of the Armenian Church*, vol. I, Holy Etchmiadzin, 2011, pp. 113-

Histories is concerned with events in the 4th century, and is especially interested in the influence of Nersēs. Moses Xorenac‘i’s version of Nersēs’ story is in comparison relatively short and at first glance seems to be an abbreviation of *The Epic Histories*. At the same time, many scholars use only the *The Epic Histories*, because they hold reservations regarding Moses Xorenac‘i’s date.¹⁰¹ In regard to the dating of *The Epic Histories* there is, however, a scholarly consensus that the work was composed in the 5th century.¹⁰²

As regards to the dating of the *History* of Xorenac‘i: “since the end of the 19th century, a controversy, at times acrimonious, has raged between scholars as to the date of the work”.¹⁰³ Some think that it was written in the 5th century,¹⁰⁴ while others believe that it could not have been composed prior to the eighth, or even the

118), N. Garsoïan, “Introduction to the problem of early Armenian monasticism” in *Revue des Études Arméniennes*, Tome 30, Paris, 2003-2004, pp. 177-236.

¹⁰¹ See N. Garsoïan, “Introduction to the Problem of Early Armenian Monasticism”, *Revue des Études Arméniennes* 30, 2005-2007, pp. 177-236. See also her following articles on Movses Khorenats‘i, N. Garsoïan, Reviews, “History of the Armenians. Moses Khorenats‘I”, *Speculum, A Journal of Medieval Studies*, Volume 55, Number 4, 1980, pp. 806-807, Nina Garsoïan, MOVSĒS XORENAC‘I, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/movses-xorenaci>

¹⁰² See Մ. Աբեղյան, Հայ Հին Գրականության Պատմություն, Երկեր, vol. III, Երևան, 1968, էջ 189-195 (M. Abeghyan, *History of Ancient Armenian Literature in Works*, vol. 3, Yerevan, 1968, pp. 189-195), Ա. Մարտիրոսյան, Փավստոս Բուզանդ, in Հայ վշակույթի նշանավոր գործիչները, V-XVIII դարեր, Երևան, 1976, էջ 35-44 (A. Martirosyan, “P‘awstos Buzand” in *Notable Figures of Armenian Culture, V-XVIII c.*, Yerevan, 1976, pp. 35-44)

¹⁰³ N. Garsoïan, “MOVSĒS XORENAC‘I” in <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/movses-xorenaci>.

¹⁰⁴ See F. Conybeare, “The date of Moses Khoren” in *Byzantische Zeitschrift*, Munich, 1901, no. 3-4, pp. 489-504, Հ. Արմեն, Պատմություն Խորենացիի քննադատության, Երուսաղեմ, 1954 (H. Armēn, *History of the Criticism of Khorenats‘I*, Jerusalem, 1954), *Խորենացի, Եղիշէ եւ Հ. Ներսէս Ալիկնեան*, «Սինն», Երուսաղեմ, 1951, N 1-2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, էջ 24-29, 88-93, 114-116, 147-149, 171-173, 208-212, 239-241, 304-307 (“Khorenaci, Elishe, and Fr. Nerses Akninyan”, in *Zion*, Monthly, Jerusalem, 1951, N 1-2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 1951, pp. 24-29, 88-93, 114-116, 147-149, 171-173, 208-212, 239-241, 304-307), Եր. Տեր-Մինասյան, Հայոց գրականության սկզբնավորությունն ու զարգացումը, «Պատմաբանասիրական Հանդես», 1970, N. 2, էջ 57-80 (Er. Ter-Minasyan, “The Origins and Development of the Armenian Literature”, *Historical-Philological Journal*, N 2, 1970, pp. 57-80), Գ. Սարգսյան, Հելլենիստական Դարաշրջանի Հայաստանը և Մովսէս Խորենացին, Երևան, 1966, էջ 5-22 (G. Sargsyan, *Armenia in Hellenistic Epoch of History and Moses Khorenats‘I*, Yerevan, 1966, pp. 5-22), Մովսէս Խորենացի, in Հայ Մշակույթի նշանավոր Գործիչները, V-XVIII դարեր, էջ 70-86 (“Moses Khorenats‘I”, in *Prominent Figures of Armenian Culture, V-XVIII c.*, pp. 70-86), Ա. Թոփչյան, *Մովսէս Խորենացու հունական աղբյուրների խնդիրը*, Երևան, 2001 (A. Topchyan, *The problem of the Greek Sources of Moses Khorenats‘I*, Yerevan, 2001), Ա. Մուշեղյան, *Մովսէս Խորենացու Դարը*, Երևան, 2007 (A. Mousheghyan, *The Epoch of Movses Khorenats‘i* Yerevan, 2007).

early ninth century.¹⁰⁵ The main arguments of those scholars who are critical of an early date depend upon historical-geographical anachronisms found in Moses's *History*. Nina Garsoïan mentions the following four main problems:¹⁰⁶

1. She rightly calls attention to the fact that before the 10th century there is no reference to Xorenaci's *History* and we do not find his name mentioned among the disciples of Maštoc'.¹⁰⁷ Those who favor an earlier date maintain that a number of different authors – both from the fifth century and afterwards - were confused with Xorenaci.¹⁰⁸ Although this explanation may sound reasonable to some, it is no more than a supposition. In fact, it does not provide an acceptable answer for the questions that Garsoïan raises. In fact, it does not provide an acceptable answer for the questions that Garsoïan raises. I am convinced by her argument that Xorenaci's *History* should have been referenced by 5th or 6th century authors if he really dated from that period of history, and the fact that we do not find his name mentioned among the disciples of Maštoc' raises suspicion that Xorenaci actually lived in the 5th century.

¹⁰⁵ Ա. Գարիէր, *Նորագոյն Աղբերք Մովսիսի Խորենացոյ, Քննադատական ուսումնասիրությունը*, թարգմանություն, Վիեննա, 1893, էջ 1-31, (A. Carrière, *New Sources of Moses Khorenats 'I; Critical Studies*, Vienna, 1893, pp. 1-31), Г. Халатьянц, *Армянский эпос с истории Моисея Хоренского*, ч. I (Исследование), Москва, 1896, Г. Халатьянц, *Армянские Ариакиды*, Москва, 1903, Գր. Խալաթեանց, Մովսէս Խորենացու նորագոյն աղբերաների մասին, in «Հանդէս ամսօրեայ», Վիեննա, 1897, N. 10, էջ 289-293, N. 11, էջ 337-343, N. 12, էջ 353-359 (Gr. Khalatyants, "About the New Sources of Moses Khorenats'I", in *Monthly Review*, Vienna, 1897, N. 10, pp. 289-293, N. 11, pp. 337-343, N. 12, pp. 353-359), Մովսէս Խորենացու նորագոյն աղբերաների մասին, քննադատական ուսումնասիրությունը, Վիեննա, 1898 (*About the New Sources of Moses Khorenats 'I; Critical Studies*, Vienna, 1898), Յ. Դաղբաշեան, Փ. Բիւզանդացի եւ իւր Պատմութեան խարդախողը, քննություն Մ. Խորենացու աղբերաների մասին, Վիեննա, 1898, (Y. Daghbashyan, 'Phaustos Buzandatsi and the Falsifier of His History: A Critical Examination of the Sources of Khorenatsi', Vienna, 1898) R. Thomson, *Introduction*, pp. 1-61, S. Der-Nersessian, *The Armenians*, New York, 1970, p. 88, N. Garsoïan, "MOVSĒS XORENAC'I" in <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/movses-xorenaci>.

¹⁰⁶ See N. Garsoïan, "MOVSĒS XORENAC'I" in <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/movses-xorenaci>

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Հ. Աճառյան, «Հայոց անձնանունների բառարան», հատոր III (H. Ajarian, *Dictionary of Armenian Personal Names*, vol. III).

2. Garsoïan’s second argument refers to the fact that Xorenaci dedicated his *History* to the Bagratuni house, and spends considerable time praising their virtues. But the Bagratuni attained the kingship of Armenia only in 884. She argues that a 5th century dedication to the same house is doubtful because “the head of this house, Varaz-Tiroc’, had disgraced himself in the great Armenian revolt of 450-51 against the Sasanians by siding with the pro-Persian party of the apostate Vasak Siwni against the national hero and martyr St.Vardan Mamikonean, as attested by all contemporary accounts.” Further, Garsoïan draws attention to the fact that the glorification of the Bagratuni has led Moses to record a number of chronological and historical distortions, such as the placing of Nersēs at the first œcumenical council of Constantinople in 381. Garsoïan concludes that Xorenaci’s repeated emphasis on the Bagratuni is “understandable after the death of prince Sahak Bagratuni at the battle of Bagrewand in 772, which gave to his house a martyr comparable to the glory of St. Vardan.”¹⁰⁹

In relation to Garsoïan’s second argument scholars in favor of an early date hold that the Bagratuni house with its rank as “crown holder” is known as to the 5th century Armenian historians as well as to the 6th century Byzantine authors.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, I agree with Garsoïan’s observation that the Bagratuni house reached the climax of its power only in 884. Xorenaci’s great stress on the importance of the Bagratuni house appears to be in contradiction with the 5th century historical and political context of Armenia. With reference to Garsoïan’s conclusion that the glorification of the Bagratuni house has led Xorenaci “to record a number of chronological and historical distortions, such as the placing of St. Nersēs I, in 381

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ա. Մուշեղյան, *Մովսես Խորենացու Գաղթը*, էջ 333-342 (A. Mousheghyan, *The Epoch of Moses Khorenats I*, pp. 333-342), cff. N. Garsoïan, “MOVSĒS XORENAC’I”.

at the œcumenical council,”¹¹¹ I believe this may be considered a late edition. Most likely the author aimed to show the faithfulness of the Armenian Church especially to the first three œcumenical councils. Such a concern could have arisen in the context of the Chalcedonian controversy, in which the Armenian Church constantly stressed the importance of the first three ecumenical councils.

3. Garsoïan’s third argument points out that “although the author claims to “trace all the genealogies from father to son... [to] describe briefly but faithfully the origin of all the Armenian noble families as they are found in certain Greek historians” (I.i), he focuses primarily on the royal aspects of early Armenian history and shows in his Third Book a society reflecting traces of evolution from the centrifugal aristocratic pattern found in the works of 5th-century Armenian authors toward a more centralized organization.”¹¹² Garsoïan argues that this focus on royalty is another sign that the author wrote during the 9th century when Armenia regained its independence at the time of the Bagratuni royal dynasty. This argument is also convincing.

4. Garsoïan’s final argument is that a belief familiar to Armenian authors of the 5th century such as *The Epic Histories* is unknown to Xorenaci: “For all of his demonstrated acquaintance with non-Christian, Iranian material, the Zoroastrian ideology with its concept of the *xwarrah* or “royal glory” which accompanied the legitimate king even after his death, a belief familiar to Armenian authors of the 5th century such as the *Buzandaran Patmut’iwnk’*, is unknown and

¹¹¹ N. Garsoïan, “MOVSĒS XORENAC’I”

¹¹² Ibid.

incomprehensible to Movsēs by his own admission.”¹¹³ This is also a convincing argument.

However, despite all these problems, Garsoïan maintains that

“the pre-eminence of the work remains undeniable as a repository of otherwise lost pre-Christian material...for providing the only known general account of early Armenian history... it transcends the earlier and more provincial accounts limited to the history of the Armenians to address various aspects of the Armenian lands as a single unit rather than to their 5th-century tripartite political division and to integrate this single identity into the historiography of late Antiquity.”¹¹⁴

Giusto Traiana in his recent paper entitled *Ancient Armenia: Evidence and Models* further completes Garsoïan’s remarks regarding Xorenac‘i’s *History* by noticing:

“Despite the poor reputation of Movsēs Xorenac‘i, whose date is still under dispute, his *History of Armenia* allows us to reconstruct the structures of the kingdom... Of course, it would be absurd to put together in a positivistic frame the elements provided by, say, Strabo, Tacitus, or Movsēs Xorenac‘i, without a thorough examination of all the problems presented by these texts. Moreover, the gaps in the historical narrative would never allow us to create a continuous account. By disavowing the Armenian “Father of History,” [Xorenac‘i] we actually throw the baby out with the bath water. To exclude this “disturbing” source, as several Western scholars do, is not a solution. In fact, once Xorenac‘i’s *History* is properly “decoded,” its historical value can be reassessed, as it actually yield solid factual information on the political history, on the social system of ancient Armenia, and also on some episodes of non-Armenian history.”¹¹⁵

¹¹³ N. Garsoïan, “MOVSĒS XORENAC‘I” in <https://iranicaonline.org/articles/movses-xorenaci>

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ G. Triuna, *Ancient Armenia, Evidence and Models*, <https://www.ejournals.eu>.

For my dissertation I do not need to argue that the whole *History* of Xorenaci was written in the 5th century, and for the most part Garsoïan’s arguments against such a position are convincing. However, the comparison of data from *The Epic Histories* with Xorenaci’s version of Nersēs’ story will enable me to argue that the latter may contain details that not found in *The Epic Histories* and which may derive from an early version of Nersēs’ life. The following details found in Xorenaci’s version of Nersēs’ story are particularly important for my discussion:

1. In Xorenaci’s version of Nersēs’ story we find some information regarding the origins of Armenian philanthropy not present in *The Epic Histories*. Thus, we learn that Xad of Marag, who was entrusted the supervision of the poorhouses of Nersēs’ was “his [Nersēs’] deacon”.¹¹⁶ While in *The Epic Histories* we do not find any evidence that Xad was the deacon of St. Nersēs: “The man Xad was originally from the district of Karin, from the village of Marag, and he was a pupil of the chief-bishop Nersēs”.¹¹⁷ In her article on the origins of Armenian philanthropy Garsoïan also refers to Xorenaci’s version of Nersēs’ story in relation to deaconess of Xad: “Specifically, Khad of Marag, Nersēs’ pupil and deacon, whom the patriarch left as his vicar and set as supervisor over all his charitable foundations during his own long exile...”¹¹⁸
2. A comparative study reveals that Xorenaci’s version contains some evidence, which is helpful to a critical reading of the text of *The Epic Histories*, as well as may refer to early stage of Nersēs’ foundations. Allow me to identify three

¹¹⁶ Moses Khorenats’i, *History of the Armenians*, Book III, ch.20., cff. Մոկլտւ Խոբեմաղի, Պատմնյօղիւ Հայոց, գ. Գ, գլ. Ի., (Moses Khorenats’i, *History*, Book III, ch.20).

¹¹⁷ *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. 12., cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, Պատմնյօղիւ Հայոց, գ. Գ, գլ. ԺԲ., (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. 12).

¹¹⁸ N. Garsoïan, “Introduction to the problem”, p.182, cff. “Disciple and deacon of St. Nersēs I, who ordained him bishop of Bagrevand and *Aršarunik...*”, see *The Epic Histories*, Appendix I: *Prosopography*, p. 428.

examples: (a) With the help of Xorenaci we will be able to restore the authentic meaning of the word **aghk'atanots*' (=poorhouse) used by the author of *The Epic Histories* in regard to the charitable institutions of Nersēs, which has been misinterpreted; (b) in Xorenaci's account we come across with the use of the word **van* (=lodging) in relation to charitable agencies of Nersēs. The study of Late Antique and Medieval Armenian sources discovers that in the text of Xorenaci' this word is used in the sense of lodging, which is typical to the 5th century use of that word. (c) Xorenaci's version enables us to offer interpretation for the terms **ayrentots*' (=asylum for widows) and **orbantots*' (=asylum for orphans) used by the author of *The Epic Histories*.

Thus, these details allow us to contend that Xorenaci's version of Nersēs' story is not a simple re-telling or an abbreviation of *The Epic Histories*, but is actually a different variant which allows the reconstruction of some important elements relating to the emergence of Armenian philanthropy. This in turn allows us to agree with the theory of Adontz; that an early adaptation of Nersēs' life must have existed, which served as a resource for the author of *The Epic Histories*.¹¹⁹ In writing about the work of Nersēs Xorenaci most probably had at his disposal some early sources, which perhaps were not known to the author of *The Epic Histories*, or his version contains certain material that has some connections with the 5th century Armenian Church.

¹¹⁹ Ն. Ադոնց, Փափսոսու Բուզանդը որպէս պատմիչ, in *Երկեր*, հատոր II, 2006, էջ 112 (N. Adontz, "Faustus of Byzantium as a historian", in *Works*, vol. II, 2006, p. 112).

Additionally, there is the ‘*Life of Nersēs*’ written by Mesrop Vayots‘dzorets‘i.¹²⁰ Literary criticism has shown that this writing originates from the 10th century.¹²¹ An examination of the content further reveals that it is an expansion of the material found in *The Epic Histories*. N. Adontz has rightly noticed that: “If it is not an extract from the work Faustus of Byzantium, then it is directly derived together with Faustus from a common source”. According to Adontz, “The Life differs from Faustus in giving the leading role not to Aršak II, but to the Patriarch Nersēs I, Aršak’s contemporary and opponent, around whom it groups the events”.¹²² This observation, far from devaluing the historical significance of the *Life*, supports the argument for its importance for any study dedicated to the origins of Armenian philanthropy. Above all, it allows us to see how the work of Nersēs was viewed from a historical distance of several centuries and gives a wider perspective to considerations of the development of his charitable institutions over time.¹²³

Based on *The Epic Histories* scholars such as M. Ormanian, H. Manandyan, N. Garsoïan, B. Harutyunyan established key aspects of the life and work of Nersēs, such as the Council of Ašhtišhat and the origins of the philanthropic

¹²⁰ Մեսրոպ Վայոցձորեցի, *Մեսրոպայ Երիցու Վայոցձորեցու պատմութիւն Սրբոյն Ներսիսի Հայոց Հայրապետի*, in «Մատենագիրք Հայոց», Ժ դար, հատոր XI, Անթիլիաս-Լիբանան, 2010 (Mesrop Vayots‘dzorets‘i, *The History of Saint Nerses Partev the Patriarch of Armenians by Presbyter Mesrop of Vayots Dzor*, in *Armenian Classical Authors*, vol. 11 Antelias-Lebanon, 2010). See also Մեսրոպ Երեց, *Պատմութիւն Սրբոյն Ներսիսի Պարթևի Հայոց Հայրապետի*, Սոփերք Հայկականք, հատոր VI, Վենետիկ, 1853 (Presbyter Mesrop, *The History of Saint Nerses Partev the Patriarch of Armenians*, in *Armenian Writings*, vol. 6, Venice, 1853).

¹²¹ Հ. Անադյան, *Հայոց Անձնանունների Բառարան*, հատոր III, (H. Ajarian, *Dictionary of Armenian Personal Names*, vol. III), cff. Գ. Չարբհանալեան, *Պատմութիւն հայկական հին դարերէն*, Վենետիկ, 1897, էջ 561-568 (G. Zarbhanalian, *History of Armenian Ancient Literature*, Venice, 1897, pp. 561-568). More fully refers to the authorship of this work Georg Ter-Vardanyan in the introduction of the recent publication of the *The History of Saint Nerses* (see Գ. Տէր-Վարդանեան, Մեսրոպ Վայոցձորեցու Ներսէս Ա. Պարթև Կաթողիկոսի պատմութիւնը, էջ 631-665 (G. Ter-Vardanyan, *The History of Catholicos Nerses I Partev by Mesrop of Vayots Dzor*, pp. 631-665).

¹²² N. Adontz, *Armenia In the Period of Justinian: The Political Conditions Based on the Naxarar System*, Translated with partial revisions a bibliographical note and appendices by Nina Garsoïan, Lisbon, 1970, p. 186.

¹²³ See also Գ. Տէր-Վարդանեան, *Մեսրոպ Վայոցձորեցու Ներսէս Ա. Պարթև Կաթողիկոսի պատմութիւնը*, էջ 631-665 (G. Ter-Vardanyan, *The History of Catholicos Nerses*, pp. 631-665).

movement, Nersēs' connections with the Empire, and his disagreement with the policy of Aršacid kings, namely Aršak II and his son Pap. Concerning the hagiographical aspect of the *The Epic Histories*, the above-mentioned scholars have already shown what should be considered historically trustworthy about Nersēs.¹²⁴ On the other hand, there are some important aspects, such as Nersēs' education in Caesarea of Cappadocia, of which the author of *The Epic Histories* offers his readers little information. At the same time in the book of *The Epic Histories* is found some other evidence regarding Nersēs' Greek connections which may provide us with a few important details, that enable us to nuance the established picture of the origins of Armenian philanthropy and particularly the question of the influence of Nersēs. With reference to Nersēs' connection with known ecclesiastical figures of the time, the Armenian sources only allow us to make guesses. Additionally, Greco-Roman sources, such are *The Ecclesiastical History* of Socrates Scholasticus, the *Ecclesiastical History* of Sozomenus, and the Letters of St. Basil are also helpful in reconstructing some important points regarding as the situation of the Armenian Church in the second half of the 4th century, as well as the relationship of Eustathius of Sebaste with the Church of Armenia Major, as I will show in subsequent chapters.

2.2 Nersēs the Great and the Council of Ašhtišhat (353)

From his paternal side, Nersēs was a lawful descendant of the Gregorid house and from his maternal side, he belonged to the Aršakuni royal family. Nersēs

¹²⁴ See Մ. Օրմանեան, *Ազգասպասում*, հատոր I, էջ 181-247 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, vol. I, pp. 181-247), Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկեր*, հատոր II, էջ 161-227 (H. Manandian, *Works*, vol. II, pp. 161-227), N. Garsoïan, "Introduction to the problem", pp. 177-236, *The Epic Histories*, see Appendices and Indices, pp. 341-574, «Հայոց պատմություն», հատոր II, Միջին դարեր (IV դար - XVII դարի առաջին կես) Գիրք առաջին (IV դարի սկիզբ - IX դարի կես) Երևան, 2018, էջ 71-143 (*The Armenian History*, Vol. I Middle Ages (from IV c.-to the first half of XVII c.) First book (from the beginning of IV c. to the middle of IXc.), Yerevan, 2018, pp. 71-143).

was the grandchild of Patriarch Yusik, while his grandmother was the daughter of King Tiran.¹²⁵ Nersēs was educated in Caesarea of Cappadocia¹²⁶ and “presumably married there”.¹²⁷ Xorenaci states that while Nersēs was studying in Caesarea he went to Byzantium (Constantinople), where he entered into marriage with the daughter of a nobleman named Aspion.¹²⁸ Garsoïan observes very rightly that *The Epic Histories*, however, does not tell us anything either about that journey to Byzantium or the marriage of Nersēs.¹²⁹ Though the *Vita* of St. Nersēs offers us another version in which the latter is married to Sandukht at Caesarea, the daughter of Vardan Mamikonian: she dies after childbirth.¹³⁰

Nersēs returned to his homeland when Aršak became the king of Armenia Major.¹³¹ Recent scholarship places the accession date of Aršak at 350.¹³² Thus,

¹²⁵ See *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. 3., cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ, գլ. Գ., (P’awstos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*, Book IV, ch. 3.), Moses Khorenats’i, *History of the Armenians*, Book III, ch. 20., cff. Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ, գլ. Ի., (Moses Khorenats’i, *History*, Book III, ch. 20), cff., Մեսրոպ Վայոցձորեցի, *Մեսրոպայ Երիցու Վայոցձորեցոյ պատմութիւն Սրբոյն Ներսիսի Հայոց Հայրապետի*, գլ. Ա., (Mesrop Vayots’dzorets’i, *The History of Saint Nerses Partev*, ch. 1).

¹²⁶ See *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. 3., cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ, գլ. Գ., (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. 3), Moses Khorenats’i, *History of the Armenians*, Book III, ch. 16., cff. Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ, գլ. ԺԶ., (Moses Khorenats’i, *History*, Book III, ch. 16), cff. Մեսրոպ Վայոցձորեցի, *Մեսրոպայ Երիցու Վայոցձորեցոյ պատմութիւն Սրբոյն Ներսիսի Հայոց Հայրապետի*, գլ. Բ., (Mesrop Vayots’dzorets’i, *The History of Saint Nerses Partev*, ch. 2).

¹²⁷ See *The Epic Histories*, see Appendix I: *Prosopography*, p. 395.

¹²⁸ See Moses Khorenats’i, *History of the Armenians*, Book III, ch. 16., cff. Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ, գլ. ԺԶ., (Moses Khorenats’i, *History*, Book III, ch. 16).

¹²⁹ See *The Epic Histories*, see Appendix I: *Prosopography*, p. 395.

¹³⁰ See Մեսրոպ Վայոցձորեցի, *Մեսրոպայ Երիցու Վայոցձորեցոյ պատմութիւն Սրբոյն Ներսիսի Հայոց Հայրապետի*, գլ. Գ., (Mesrop Vayots’dzorets’i, *The History of Saint Nerses Partev*, ch. 3). Mamikonyan family was a noble dynasty which played an important role in the political life of Armenia between the 4th and 8th century. The representatives of Mamikonyan House were hereditary commanders-in-chief (*sparapet*) and royal tutors (*dayeak*) (see Հ.Ն. Անդրիկեան, *Բիւզանդի Մամիկոնեանները*, Վենետիկ, 1904 (H. N. Andrikyan, *Buzand’s Mamikonyan Family*, Venice, 1904), Հ. Արմէն, *Մամիկոնեանները Արշակունեաց օրով*, in Պատմական քննարկումներ, Պէյրուժ, 1968, էջ 119-150 (H. Armēn, “Mamikonyans in the days of Arshakuni”, in *Historical Discussions*, Beirut, 1968, pp. 119-150), Ա. Սահակյան, *Մամիկոնյանների Քաղաքական Վերելքը և Տոհմաբանական Լեզները (V-VII դդ.)*, no. Է, Էջմիածին, 2001, էջ 18-34 (A. Sahakyan, “The Political Rise and Genealogical Legend of Mamikonians (V-VII c.)”, Review «Etchmiadzin», N 7, 2001, pp. 18-34).

¹³¹ See Մեսրոպ Վայոցձորեցի, *Մեսրոպայ Երիցու Վայոցձորեցոյ պատմութիւն Սրբոյն Ներսիսի Հայոց Հայրապետի*, գլ. Բ., (Mesrop Vayots’dzorets’i, *The History of Saint Nerses Partev*, ch. 2).

¹³² See N. Garsoïan, *The Arshakuni Dynasty (A. D. 12-[180?]-428)*, p. 88, cff. «Հայոց պատմութիւն, դասագիրք բարձրագոյն ուսումնական հաստատութիւնների համար», խմբ.

the return of Nersēs to Armenia probably happened in the same year.¹³³ The election of Nersēs as the chief Bishop of Armenia Major took place at the beginning of the reign of King Aršak.¹³⁴ Regarding the year of this event, various dates have been offered in existing studies: 351¹³⁵, 352¹³⁶, and 354.¹³⁷ However, 353 is also possible. Xorenac‘i maintains that: “In the third year of the reign of Aršak, Nersēs the Great, son of At‘anagines, son of Yusik, son of Vrt‘anes, son of Saint Gregory, became archbishop of Armenia.”¹³⁸ As already mentioned, the third year of Aršak II must be dated to 353, for recent scholarship dates sees his rule commencing in the year 350.¹³⁹

The first years of the reign of Aršak II is described by the scholars as a period of peace.¹⁴⁰ Leo maintains this tranquility was a consequence of the fact that “The competition between the east and the west had stopped for a while”.¹⁴¹ Rome and

պրոֆ. Հր. Ռ. Միմնյանի, Երևան, 2012, էջ 66 (*History of Armenia; A Textbook for the University Students*, Edited by Hr. R. Simonyan, Yerevan, 2012, p. 66).

¹³³ Հ. Անանյան, *Հայոց Անձնանունների Բառարան*, հատոր IV (H. Ajarian, *Dictionary of Armenian Personal Names*, vol. IV), cff. Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկեր*, հատոր II, էջ 162 (H. Manandian, *Works*, vol. II, p. 162), «Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն», 1972, էջ 143 (*The History of the Armenian People*, 1972, p. 143), Վ. Վարդանյան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցին Վաղ Միջնադարի Քաղաքական Խաչադրոհներում*, Էջմիածին, 2005, էջ 102 (V. Vardanyan, *The Armenian Church in Early Medieval Political Crossroads*, Holy Etchmiadzin, 2005, p. 102).

¹³⁴ See Ե. Դուրյան, *Ազգային Պատմություն*, Երուսաղեմ, 1934, էջ 241-242 (E. Duryan, *National History*, Jerusalem, 1934, pp. 241-242).

¹³⁵ See Ա. Չամիսեան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցու Պատմություն*, հատոր 1, էջ 32 (A. Zaminian, *The Armenian Church*, vol. 1, p. 32).

¹³⁶ See V. Kurkjian, *A History of Armenia*, New York, 1958, p. 125.

¹³⁷ See Մ. Օրմանեան, *Ազգայատում*, հատոր I, էջ 183-186 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, vol. I, pp. 183-186), Ա. Աբրահամյան, *Հայաստանը Վաղ Ֆեոդալիզմի Շրջանում* հատոր II, Երևան, 1959, էջ 45 (A. Abrahamyan, *Armenia in the Age of Early Feudalism*, Yerevan, vol. 2, 1959, p. 45), N. Garsoïan, *The Arshakuni Dynasty (A. D. 12-[180?]-428)*, p. 88.

¹³⁸ Moses Khorenats‘i, *History of The Armenians*, Book III, ch. 16, cff. : «Յերրորդ ամի թագաւորութեանն Արշակայ եկաց եպիսկոպոսապետ Հայոց մեծն Ներսէս, որդի Աթանազիսեայ, որդւոյ Յուսկան, որդւոյ Վրթանայ, որդւոյ սրբոյն Գրիգորի», Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Գ, գլ. ԺԶ., (Moses Khorenats‘i, *History*, Book III, ch. 16).

¹³⁹ See ft. 125.

¹⁴⁰ See «Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն», հատոր II, Երևան, 1984, էջ 87 (*The History of the Armenian People*, vol. II, Yerevan, 1984, p. 87), cff. «Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն», 1972, էջ 149 (*The History of the Armenian People*, 1972, p. 149), Լեո, *Հայոց Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 447 (Leo, *History*, vol I, p. 447).

¹⁴¹ Լեո, *Հայոց Պատմություն*, հատոր I էջ 447 (Leo, *History*, vol I, p. 447), cff Հ. Մանանդյան, *Ֆեոդալիզմը Հին Հայաստանում (Արշակունիների ու Մարզպանության Շրջան)*, *Յերեւան*, 1934, էջ 162 (H. Manandyan, *Feudalism in Ancient Armenia*, (In the Period of Arshakunis and Prefecture) Yerevan, 1934, p. 162).

Persia were busy with the wars in their provinces, and the Armenian border was temporarily experiencing serenity.¹⁴² There is a suggestion that Aršak II returned to the policy of Tiridates the Great, establishing close cooperation between the state and the church.¹⁴³ Scholars agree that during the beginning of the reign of Aršak, the supporters of Greek cultural influence vision had a strong influence over the policy of the country.¹⁴⁴ For example, Manandyan points out that the main partners of the king were Patriarch Nersēs and the commander of the army Vasak Mamikonean.¹⁴⁵ Hrand Armen notes that the institute of the patriarch accumulated great authority and wealth during the time of Nersēs: “The church becomes the most significant feudal power of the country, more influential than any great noble house, thanks to the web of Episcopal Sees, through which the authority of the church spreads over the entire Armenian world”.¹⁴⁶ The good relationship between the church and the state created an environment of cooperation, and one of the main consequences was the convening of the council of Ašhtišhat.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴² See «Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն», հատոր II, 1984, էջ 88 (*The History of the Armenian People*, vol. II, 1984, p. 88), cff. Լևո, Հայոց Պատմություն, հատոր I, էջ 447 (Leo, *History*, vol I, p. 447).

¹⁴³ See «Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն», 1972, էջ 149 (*The History of the Armenian People*, 1972, p. 149), cff. «Հայոց պատմություն, դասագիրք բարձրագույն ուսումնական հաստատությունների համար», խմբ. պրոֆ. Հր. Ռ. Սիմոնյանի, Երևան, 2012, էջ 66 (*History of Armenia; A Textbook for the University Students*, Edited by Hr. R. Simonyan, Yerevan, 2012, p. 66), Ս. Օրմանեան, Ազգայաբանություն, հատոր I, էջ 188 (M. Ormānyan, *National History*, vol. I, p. 188).

¹⁴⁴ Լևո, Հայոց Պատմություն, հատոր I, էջ 149 (Leo, *History*, vol I, p. 449).

¹⁴⁵ Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկեր*, հատոր II, էջ 163 (H. Manandian, *Works*, vol. II, p. 163), cff. «Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն», հատոր II, 1984, էջ 88 (*The History of the Armenian People*, vol. II, 1984, p. 88), Հ. Ն. Անդրիկյան, *Բիզանդի Մամիկոնեանները*, էջ 34-36 (H. N. Andrikyan, *Buzand's Mamikonyan Family*, pp. 34-36).

¹⁴⁶ Հ. Արմեն, *Մամիկոնեանները Արշակունեաց օրով*, էջ 135 (H. Armēn, “Mamikonyans in the Days of Arshakuni”, p. 135), cff. Ա. Աբրահամյան, *Հայաստանը վաղ ֆեոդալիզմի շրջանում*, հատոր II, էջ 39, 47 (A. Abrahamyan, *Armenia in the Age of Early Feudalism*, vol. II, pp. 39, 47), Հ. Մանանդյան, *Ֆեոդալիզմը Հին Հայաստանում*, էջ 132-133, 276-277 (H. Manandyan, *Feudalism in Ancient Armenia*, pp. 132-133, 276-277).

¹⁴⁷ Some specialists think that the council of Ašhtišhat was a National-Ecclesiastical Council, see Ն. Մելիք-Թանգյան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցական Իրավունքը*, Սբ. Էջմիածին, 1903, վերահրատարակություն 2011, էջ 259-261, (N. Melik'-T'angyan, *The Church Law of Armenians*, Holy Etchmiadzin, 1903, Reprinted 2011, pp. 259-261). However, we do not have a clear evidence that it really was a National-Ecclesiastical Council, it may be that it just was an ecclesiastical council. The National-Ecclesiastical Council is the highest-legislative body of the Armenian Church, consisting of lay and spiritual high-ranking authorities. Their members represent the interests of the whole nation. This body has the right to elect the Chief bishop of the Church, as

Referring to the council of Aštišhat, the author of *The Epic Histories* writes: “He [Nersēs] went and reached to the sides of the region of Taron and gathered all bishops of Armenia. They assembled in the village of Aštišhat, where the first time was built a church, because it was the mother church and the church council place of ancestors. All came willingly to the council and had a useful meeting to reform the worldly orders, to define common rules for the faith. In this council they define orders and canons, organized and make the whole nation of Armenia as one order of monks, except marriage....He ordered the same thing to be done throughout the realm-in every district and every region, on every side and in every corner within the confines of Armenia: *to indicate the most suitable places to be set aside for the building of poorhouses and to collect the sick, the lepers, the paralytics and all those who suffered: there leper-houses and nursing homes were designated for them, and food and clothes for the poor.* ¹⁴⁸ For this was the order of the great chief-bishop Nersēs ... that these people should remain exclusively in their own lodgings and should not go out as miserable beggars: indeed, they should not set foot outside their door, but everyone should owe them protection...”¹⁴⁹

Referring to the activity of Nersēs the Great, Xorenac’i gives us a more extensive description:

“Having returned from Byzantium to Caesarea, he [Nersēs] came to Armenia and restored all the just administration of his fathers, and he went even

well as to make decisions regarding the faith and order of the Church (see Ա. Ղազարյան, «Եկեղեցական ժողովներ», in «Քրիստոնյա Հայաստան». Հանրագիտարան, Երևան, 2002, էջ 296-297 (A. Ghazarian, “Church councils” in *Christian Armenia: Encyclopedia*, Yerevan, 2002, pp. 296-297), Ն. Մելիք-Թանգյան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցական Իրավունքը*, էջ 253-256, 711-712 (N. Melik’-T’angyan, *The Church Law of Armenians*, pp. 253-256, 711-712).

¹⁴⁸ The italicized passages referenced from *The Epic Histories* present my translated version: the translation of N. Garsoian is sometimes biased, as will be shown throughout this thesis. The same approach is adapted to R. Thomson’s English translation of the *History* of Moses Khorenats’i.

¹⁴⁹ *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. 4., cff. Փավստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Դ, գլ. Դ., (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. 4).

further. For the good order that he had seen in the land of the Greeks, especially in the royal city, he imitated here. Summoning a council of bishops in concert with the laity, by canonical regulation he established mercy, extirpating the root of inhumanity, which was the natural custom in our land. For lepers were persecuted, being considered impure by the law; and those suffering from elephantiasis had to flee lest the disease spread from them to others. Their retreats were deserts and remote places, their hiding places were rocks and forests, and they found no consolation for their misery from anyone. Furthermore, the paralytics were neglected, unknown travelers were not received, and strangers were not lodged.

So, he ordered in every province for poorhouses to be built in remote and uninhabited places to offer relief to the suffering on the model of the Greek hospitals. And he set aside for them towns and fields, fertile in fruits of the land, in milk from herds, and wool, that these through their taxes might cater for their needs from a distance and the inmates would not leave their dwelling. This he entrusted to a certain Khad, who was his deacon from the meadows of Karin. *He also prescribed that lodgings be built in every village to serve as inns for strangers, and places to feed the orphans and aged and for the care of the poor*.¹⁵⁰

Some scholars suggest that the Council should have happened in the same year that Nersēs became the chief Bishop of Armenia Major, and date the council to 354.¹⁵¹ Nonetheless, taking into account the fact that the current scholarship dates the accession of Aršak to 350, one may argue that the council should be dated in 353 as it appears in Xorenaci's: "In the third year of the reign of Aršak, Nersēs the Great, son of At'anagines, son of Yusik, son of Vrt'anes, son of Saint Gregory,

¹⁵⁰ Moses Khorenats'i, *History of The Armenians*, Book III, ch. 20., cff. Մովսես Խորենացի, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Գ, գլ. Ի., (Moses Khorenats'i, *History*, Book III, ch. 20).

¹⁵¹ Մ. Օրմանեան, *Ազգայնամուլ*, հատոր I, էջ 183-186 (M. Ormanyán, *National History*, vol. I, pp. 183-186), Լևո, *Հայոց Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 449 (Leo, *History*, vol I, p. 449), Ե. Պետրոսյան, *Հայ Եկեղեցու Պատմություն*, Երևան, 2016, էջ 64 (E. Petrosian, *History of the Armenian Church*, Yerevan, 2016, p. 64), «Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն», հատոր II, 1984, էջ 90 (*The History of the Armenian People*, vol. II, 1984, p. 90).

became archbishop of Armenia.”¹⁵² We don’t know for certain whether the philanthropic movement of Nersēs started right after the Council of Aštišhat, or sometime later. However, one thing is clear that it should have been initiated sometime between 350 and 354. Garsoïan also maintains that the foundations of Saint Nersēs went back to the very beginning of his pontificate in the fifties of the fourth century.”¹⁵³

Aside from this calculation, there is another argument which allows us to date the origins of Armenian philanthropy in the beginnings of 350s. We learn from the *Ecclesiastical History* of Socrates Scholasticus that in the Council of Antioch (363) “Isacocis of Armenia Major,” represented the Armenian Church.¹⁵⁴ This evidence is coherent with the reports of *The Epic Histories*, according to which, at some point during his reign, Nersēs was forced to resign temporary from the position of the Chief Bishop because of the disagreements with the policy of the king Aršak II.¹⁵⁵ Current scholarship relates the removal of Nersēs to the pro-Arian position of Aršak: “Aršak, following the example of the Byzantine emperors, maintained a pro-Arian position, and when Nersēs objected, Aršak replaced him with a more cooperative catholicos.”¹⁵⁶ However, who was “Isacocis of Armenia Major”? Ormanian thinks that Isacocis should be identified with Shahak serving a second

¹⁵² See Moses Khorenats’i, *History of The Armenians*, Book III, ch. 20., cff. Մովսես Խորենացի, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. Ի., (Moses Khorenats’i, *History*, Book III, ch. 20).

¹⁵³ See N. Garsoïan, “Introduction to the problem”, p. 182.

¹⁵⁴ The *Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus*, Revised, with notes, by The Rev. A. C. Zenos, D.D., in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. II, Second Series, Edited by Philip Schaff, D.D., LL.D. and Henry Wace, DD, Hendrickson Publishers, 1995, p. 95.

¹⁵⁵ See *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. xiii-xv., cff. Փավստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. ԺԳ-ԺԵ., (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, գ. Դ., գլ. ԺԳ-ԺԵ).

¹⁵⁶ G. Bournoutian, *A History of the Armenian People*, vol. I, California, 1995, p. 66, N. Garsoïan, *The Epic Histories, Appendix I, Prosopography*, pp. 366-367.

term,¹⁵⁷ while Acharian and others prefer to identify Isacocis with Č'unak.¹⁵⁸ The author of *The Epic Histories* reports that Č'unak was promoted to the patriarchal see of Armenia Major after the resignation of Nersēs.¹⁵⁹ Garsoïan also believes that Isacocis should be identified with Shahak, however, her solution differs from the above mentioned views. Referring to the reports of *The Epic Histories* that only three bishops agreed to participate in the consecration of Č'unak she considers the latter a non-canonical bishop. Consequently, Garsoïan finds controversial the participation of Č'unak at Jovian's "orthodox" council.¹⁶⁰ This suggestion seems quite reasonable, it is a good argument for identifying Isacocis with Shahak. However, what she further proposes seems to me less plausible. Garsoïan suggests we accept the simultaneous tenure of both Shahak and Nersēs, referring to the following evidence from the letter of Basil: "To our right godly and holy brethren who are ministering in Italy and Gaul, bishops of like mind with us, we, Meletius, Eusebius, Basil... Chosroes, Iosaces, Narses,"¹⁶¹ Garsoïan follows the well-established opinion that the last three names are of Armenian bishops.¹⁶² If Garsoïan's hypothesis offers answer for Isacocis and Nersēs, then the question of

¹⁵⁷ See Մ. Օրմանեան, *Ազգայնամասնութիւն*, հատոր I, էջ 205-207 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, vol. I, pp. 205-207), N. Garsoyan, *L'Eglise Armenienne et Le Grand Schisme D'Orient*, p. 40. According to the reports of *The Epic Histories* Shahak hold the position of the Chief Bishop of the Church of Armenia Major before the election of Nersēs. See *The Epic Histories*, Book III, ch. xvii., cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. ԺԷ., (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III, ch. xvii).

Ormanian, however, believes that Shahak was not a Chief Bishop, but just locum tenens. See Մ. Օրմանեան, *Ազգայնամասնութիւն*, հատոր I, էջ 176-178 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, vol. I, pp. 176-178).

¹⁵⁸ See Հ. Անադյան, *Հայոց Անձնանունների Բառարան*, հատոր IV (H. Acharian, *Dictionary of Armenian Personal Names*, vol. IV), Ա. Չամիհեան, *Հայոց եկեղեցու Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 36 (A. Zaminian, *The Armenian Church*, vol. 1, p. 36), Հր. Արմէն, *Պայ Արշակունի*, էջ 142 (H. Armen, *Pap of Arshakuni*, p. 142).

¹⁵⁹ See *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. xv., cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. ԺԵ., (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. xv).

¹⁶⁰ *The Epic Histories*, see Appendix I: *Prosopography*, pp. 366-367.

¹⁶¹ St. Basil, Letter 99, see <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3202092.htm>

¹⁶² Կ. Մուրադյան, *Բարսեղ Կեսարացիին և նրա «Վեցորեան» հայ մտանկագրության մեջ*, Երևան, 1976, էջ 109 (K. Muradyan, *Basil Caesarean and his 'Hexameron in Armenian Literature*, Yerevan, 1976, p. 109).

Chosroes remains open. The mention of three Armenian names does not inevitably suggest simultaneous office of three patriarchs. The evidence that these three Armenian bishops, one of whom was Nersēs the Great, participated in the Council of Antioch (363) is not enough to prove Garsoïan’s thesis regarding simultaneous tenure of Shahak and Nersēs. It may simply have been that the Armenian Church was represented by two heads. The fact that Socrates Scholasticus mentions only the name of Isacocis speaks in favor of the suggestion that the latter headed the church of Armenia Major at that time. This suggestion further is supported by the evidence of *The Epic Histories* that Nersēs returned to his throne when Pap the son of Aršak, through the help of the Byzantine Empire, became the king of Armenia Major in 369.¹⁶³ Modern scholarship maintains that the resignation of Nersēs should be placed between the years 359-367.¹⁶⁴ This evidence additionally allows us to maintain that the philanthropic movement of Nersēs most likely began in the beginning of 350s.

Regarding the council of Ašhtišhat, scholars argue that Nersēs convened it to “institute new regulations for the Armenian Church”.¹⁶⁵ Accounts of Nersēs’ reforms have led researchers to compare him with Basil the Great, particularly regarding the integration of the culture of philanthropy with the practice of faith, which reminds them of the charitable organization of Basil, which eventually

¹⁶³ *The Epic Histories*, Book V, ch. i., cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Ե. Գլ. Ա., (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book V, ch. i), Moses Khorenats’i, *History of The Armenians*, Book III, ch. 36., cff. Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. ԼԶ., (Moses Khorenats’i, *History*, Book III, ch. 36).

¹⁶⁴ Պ. Անանեան, *Գրիգոր Լուսաւորչի ձեռնադրութեան թուականը և պարագաները*, Վենետիկ, 1960, 95-98 (P. Ananian, *The Date for the consecration of St Gregory the Enlightener and related circumstances*, Venice, 1960, pp. 95-98).

¹⁶⁵ Մ. Օրմանեան, *Ազգայաբանութիւն*, հատոր I, էջ 186-187 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, vol. I, p. 186-187), cff. Ա. Չամիհեան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցու Պատմութիւն*, հատոր I, էջ 32-33 (A. Zaminian, *The Armenian Church*, vol. 1, pp. 32-33), N. Garsoïan, *The Arshakuni Dynasty (A. D. 12-[180?]-428)*, p. 88.

became known as the “Basiliada.” Received tradition maintains that the fourth century Armenian Patriarch Nersēs had accomplished his reforms using Basil the Great as an example.¹⁶⁶ In contrast, there are other scholars who either think that Nersēs initiated his philanthropic movement independently of Basil, or do not even mention Basil’s name.¹⁶⁷ For instance, Ormanyan maintains that Nersēs has copied what he had seen in Byzantium.¹⁶⁸ Apparently, Xorenaci’s version of Nersēs’ story has led Ormanyan to this conclusion.¹⁶⁹ Other researchers have attempted to establish some connections between the philanthropic movement of Nersēs and the

¹⁶⁶ See Հ. Թոփչյան, Ծագումն Հայ վանականության, see «Լոյս», no. 15, 1905, էջ 468-470, (H. Topchyan, “The Origins of Armenian Monasticism”, in *Light*, no. 15, 1905, pp. 468-470), Կ. Մուրադյան, *Բարսեղ Կեսարացին և նրա «Վեցօրեան» հայ մատենագրության մեջ*, Երևան, 1976, էջ 106-109 (K. Muradyan, *Basil Caesarean and his ‘Hexameron in Armenian Literature*, Yerevan, 1976, pp. 106-109), Գիւտ Եպիսկոպոս, *Արեւելեան Անապատականը եւ «Նարեկը»*, Երուսաղեմ, 1937, էջ 116-119 (Bishop Gjut, *Book of Narek and the Oriental Monk*, Jerusalem, 1937, pp. 116-119), Տ. Եարտրմեան, *Հայ Վանականության Պատմությունը եւ Վարդապետներու Դասակարգը, Ծագում, Չեւադրում, Չարագում (Դ-ԺԸ դարեր)*, Պրրպէնք, 2015, էջ 23-27 (T. Eartēmean, *The History of the Armenian Monasticism and the Rank of “Vartabed”s: Origin, Development and Growth (IV-XVIII centuries*, Burbank, 2015, pp. 23-27). Ա. Հասիսյան, Սուրբ Բարսեղ Հայրապետ Կեսարացի (329-379), Ժամանակաշրջանը, կյանքն ու գործունեությունը, «Էջմիածին», no. Ը, 1977, էջ 31-32 (A. Hatityan, “Saint Basil Patriarch of Caesarea (329-379), his time, life and activity”, in Review «Etchmiadzin», no. 8, 1977, pp. 31-32), Հ. Արմէն, *Պսոպ Արշակունի*, Երուսաղեմ, 1958, էջ 89-91 (H. Armen, *Pap of Arshakuni*, Jerusalem, 1958, pp. 89-91), T. Nersoyan, *Armenian Church Historical Studies: Matters of Doctrine and Administration*, New York, 1996, p. 67.

¹⁶⁷ Յ. Տէր-Մովսիսեան, *Անապատականներ եւ Վանականությունը*, in «Արարատ»-ի ժառանգությունը, Սր. Էջմիածին, 2009, էջ 314- 315 (H. Ter-Movsisyan, “Hermits and monks”, in *The Heritage of the Monthly “Ararat,”* 2, Archbishop Husik Ter-Movsisyan, ‘The Collected Works’, Holy Etchmiadzin, 2009, pp. 314-315), Ե. Դուրեան, *Ազգային Պատմություն*, էջ 245-246 (E. Duryan, *National History*, pp. 245-246), Գեորգ-Մեսրոպ, *Պատմություն Հայ Եկեղեցույ*, հատոր I, Կ. Պոլիս, 1913, էջ 115-117 (Georg-Mesrop, *History of the Armenian Church*. vol. I, Constantinople, 1913, pp. 115-117), Ա. Չամիհեան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցու Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 31-36 (A. Zaminian, *The Armenian Church*, vol. 1, pp. 31-36).

¹⁶⁸ Մ. Օրմանեան, *Ազգայաբանում*, հատոր I, էջ 186-187 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, vol. I, pp. 186-187).

¹⁶⁹ Xorenaci’s version of Nersēs’ story attributes Nersēs’ philanthropic impulse to his Greek education and experience. In his account of Nersēs this is mentioned more than once: “When he [Nersēs] returned from Byzantium to Caesarea...”, “For the good order that he had seen in the land of the Greeks, especially in the royal city, he imitated here...”, see Moses Khorenats’i, *History of The Armenians*, Book III, ch.20., cff. «Եւ էր այնուհետեւ տեսանել զաշխարհս մեր ոչ որպէս զբարբարոսս այլանդակեալս, այլ իբրեւ զբաղաբացիս համեստացեալս», Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Գ, գլ. Բ., (Moses Khorenats’i, *History*, Book III, ch.20). However, we are not certain that this evidence may be relied upon, in *The Epic Histories* we do not find any data that during his studies at Caesarea Nersēs also spent time in Byzantium. (See *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. 3, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Դ, գլ. Գ., (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. 3).

ptochotropeion (a house to nourish the poor) of Eustathius of Sebaste.¹⁷⁰ These earlier scholarly traditions were especially challenged by the publication of N. Garsoïan’s article “Introduction to the problem of Early Armenian Monasticism”¹⁷¹. Garsoïan argues that the influence of Basil on the philanthropic movement of Nersēs “cannot be sustained on the grounds of either chronology or typology”¹⁷². Further Garsoïan notes that from the *Letters* of Basil we learn that his charitable institutions “do not seem to have antedated the great famine of 368 and the first mentions of hospices appear in 372-373, whereas the foundations of Saint Nersēs went back to the very beginning of his pontificate in the fifties of the fourth century.”¹⁷³ In relation to typology she calls attention to the fact that the Basiliada was a “single, fast, all-purpose urban foundation whose services were carried out by monks”, which is not the case for St. Nersēs “small and far flung numerous foundations”, scattered throughout Armenia.¹⁷⁴

Garsoïan’s persuasive arguments on the grounds of chronology seem to have put an end to scholarly discussion regarding the influence of Basil on the origins of Armenian philanthropy. However, while I agree that the charitable institutions of Nersēs seem different from those of Basil, I will suggest that a comparative study of the historical data allows us to draw parallels between the two foundations in terms of institutional structure and mission. I also believe a comprehensive discussion will help us to interpret some interrelated developments that occurred

¹⁷⁰ F. Loofs, *Eustathius Von Sebaste und die Chronologie der Basilius-Briefe*, Halle, 1898, p. 54, Markwart, *Die Entstehung der Armenischen Bistümer*, Rom, 1932, pp. 93, 96-97, L. Խաչիկյան, *Փոքր Հայքի Առաջնական Շարժումների Պատմությունից* (IV դար), Երևան, 1951 (L. Khach’ikyan, *From the History of the Social Movements of Armenia Minor* (IV c.), Yerevan, 1951).

¹⁷¹ See N. Garsoïan, “Introduction to the problem”, pp. 177-236.

¹⁷² *Ibid.* 180-183.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* 182.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 181-182.

in Eastern Christianity in Late Antiquity, especially the rise of the philanthropic movement in the Greco-Armenian world.

2.3 Previous scholarship on the charitable foundations of Nersēs

Before beginning that work in detail I want to consider in more detail the existing scholarship. In his article “Byzantine Hospitals,” Timothy S. Miller observes that “Byzantine hospitals have not been treated by most general histories of the Eastern Roman Empire.”¹⁷⁵ This is equally true of Armenian hospitals. In her valuable work *Medicine and Society in Early Europe*, Mary Lindemann rightly notes that “Much medical history remains focused on the western European and, especially, the English past”.¹⁷⁶ It appears that in Armenian studies very little research has been completed that specifically examines the history of hospitals in Armenia.¹⁷⁷

In fact, the only substantial discussion on the history of hospitals in Armenia

¹⁷⁵ T. S. Miller, “Byzantine Hospitals” in J. Scarborough, ed., *Byzantine Medicine: Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, No. 38, Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks Publication Office, 1984, pp. 53-63.

¹⁷⁶ M. Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 6.

¹⁷⁷ In their studies dedicated to the history of medicine in Armenia, L. Oganessian, S. Vardanyan maintain that during the early period of the history of Armenia, leper houses had also been operating next to pagan temples (see Л. А. Оганесян, *История Медицины в Армении*, Ереван, 1946, сс. 73-74), cff. Մ. Վարդանյան, *Բժշկությունը Հին և Միջնադարյան Հայաստանում*, Երևան, 1982, էջ 6 (S. Vardanyan, *Medicine in Ancient and Medieval Armenia*, Yerevan, 1982, p. 6), *Հայաստանի Բժշկության Պատմություն. Հնագույն ժամանակներից Մինչև Մեր Օրերը*, Երևան, 2000, էջ 29 (*History of the Armenian Medicine. From the Ancient Times to Our Days*, Yerevan, 2000, p. 29). However a thorough examination of this opinion shows that both authors had based their information on the works of Ch’amch’yan and Alishan (see Մ. Չամչյան, *Հայոց Պատմություն*, հատոր I, Երևան, 1985, էջ 441-442 (M. Chamchian, *Armenian History*, vol. I, Yerevan, 1985, pp. 441-442), Ղ. Ալիշան, *Յուշիկը Հայրենեաց Հայոց*, հատոր I, Վենետիկ, 1869, էջ 307-308 (L. Alishan, *Souvenirs of the Armenian Homeland*, vol. I, Venice, 1869, pp. 307-308). The last two scholars took their information from the life of the Christian martyr T’eodor Salahuni (see Պատմություն սրբոյն Թեոդորոսի եւ վարուց նորա..., in Համարադրատ Յայսմաւորք, հատոր V, Մայիս, Սբ. Էջմիածին, 2010, էջ 170-173 (“History and the life of St. Theodoros” in *Concordance Synaxarion* (Yaysmawurk’), vol. V. May, Holy Etchmiadzin, 2010, pp. 170-173). However, this claim is questionable because of the lack of historical evidence. Moreover, the account of the martyrdom of T’eodor Salahuni cannot serve here as a reliable source for the study of the Armenian pagan tradition. In the Armenian 5th century historical sources there is no mention of the various individuals who interacted in the life of T’eodor Salahuni. The life of Theodore Salahuni is found in the *Synaxarion of Presbyter Israel*, which was composed in the 13th century. See Ավդալբեգյան Մ., «Յայսմաւորք» ժողովածուները և նրանց պատմագրական արժեքը, Երևան, 1982 (M. Avdalbegyan, *Synaxarion collections and their historical value*, Yerevan, 1982):

concerns the charitable foundations of Nersēs. The charitable foundations of Nersēs have been briefly touched on by scholars engaged in researching early Armenian history, church history, and the history of medicine in early Armenia. The Armenian history specialists usually restrict their discussions to the reports of *The Epic Histories*, and are descriptive in tone.¹⁷⁸ Specialists in church history also focus on the reports of *The Epic Histories*, but have also been much interested in the question of Greek influence; as a rule, they have defended or rejected it without offering any comparative analysis in connection with the Byzantine hospitals of the same period.¹⁷⁹ This omission continues in the publications dedicated to the history of medicine in Armenia. For instance, in her recent book on the hospitals of Nersēs, S. Vardanyan does not assess them in relation to Byzantine philanthropic foundations or medieval Western philanthropic agencies.¹⁸⁰ A critical examination of the literature thus makes clear that there is still much for scholarship to explore in connection with the philanthropic foundations of Nersēs. Garsoïan’s work is most certainly a key point of reference, but much remains to be done.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ See Հ. Արմեն, *Պատմություն Արշակունիի*, էջ 86-94 (H. Armen, *Pap of Arshakuni*, pp. 86-94), Լեո, *Հայոց Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 450-452 (Leo, *History*, vol I, pp. 450-452), Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկեր*, հատոր II, էջ 164-165 (H. Manandian, *Works*. vol. II, pp. 164-165), G. Bournoutian, *A History of the Armenian People*, vol. I, California, 1995, pp. 65-67.

¹⁷⁹ See Կ. Տեր-Մկրտչյան, *Հայոց եկեղեցու Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 116-118 (K. Ter-Mkrtychyan, *The Armenian Church*, vol. I, pp. 116-118), Մ. Օրմանեան, *Ազգասպասում*, հատոր I, էջ 186-189 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, vol. I, pp. 186-189), Ա. Չամիսեան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցու Պատմություն*, հատոր 1, էջ 31-34 (A. Zaminian, *The Armenian Church*, vol. 1, pp. 31-34), Ե. Պետրոսյան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցու Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 46-47 (E. Petrosian, *History of the Armenian Church*, pp. 46-47).

¹⁸⁰ See Ս. Վարդանյան, *Բժշկությունը Հին և Միջնադարյան Հայաստանում*, (S. Vardanyan, *Medicine in Ancient and Medieval Armenia*).

¹⁸¹ In addition, the above-mentioned discussions give the impression that the culture of philanthropy in the Armenian Church tradition begins and ends with Nersēs. (see Մ. Օրմանեան, *Ազգասպասում*, հատոր I, էջ 260-263 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, vol. I, pp. 260-263), Լեո, *Հայոց Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 482-483 (Leo, *History*, vol I, pp. 482-483), Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկեր*, հատոր II, էջ 214-227 (H. Manandian, *Works*. vol. II, pp. 214-227), «Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն», Երևան, 1951, էջ 98-99 (*History of the Armenian People*, part I, Edited by B. N. Arakelyan and A. Hovhannisyan, Yerevan, 1951, pp. 98-99), N. Garsoïan, “Introduction to the problem”, p. 183.

This chapter has laid a foundation for the study of the origins of Armenian philanthropy. The book of *The Epic Histories* is the main source of our research. The other sources that provide us with some information about the philanthropic movement of Nersēs are the *History* of Xorenaci and the *‘Life of Nersēs* written by Mesrop Vayots‘dzorets‘i in the 10th century. Although, in the scholarship there is an ongoing debate over the dating of Xorenaci’s *History*, I have shown that his version of Nersēs’ story 1. may contain some material that derives from an early source, 2. contains some evidence, which is helpful to a critical reading of the text of *The Epic Histories*. With reference to Armenian and Greco-Roman sources I have also shown that the philanthropic movement of Nersēs most likely emerged in the early 350s. In relation to previous scholarship I noted that Garsoïan’s assessment challenged received traditions concerning the influence of Basil the Great on the origins of Armenian philanthropy.

In the dissertation I will reassess the differences and similarities between the charitable foundations of Nersēs and Basil, stressing that there are more similarities between the two schools of philanthropy than differences. I will discuss also the possibility of influence from Eustathius of Sebaste on the philanthropic movement of Nersēs, and argue that Nersēs’s foundations include wider field of services than Eustathius’s *ptochotropheion*. In order to do so I will focus on the following two arguments of Garsoïan:

1. Basiliada and the foundations of Nersēs were quite different in type, the Basiliada was a single, vast, all-purpose urban foundation, whose services were carried out by monks,¹⁸²

¹⁸² N. Garsoïan, “Introduction to the problem”, p. 181.

2. We have no contemporary indication that Saint Nersēs had sought models for his foundations in the West.¹⁸³

Ultimately, I will argue that the inspiration for Nersēs' project may well have come from the Greek environment. These contributions to a new assessment of the early philanthropic experience of the Armenian Church tradition can greatly contribute to appreciating the origins and development of the philanthropic culture in Eastern Christendom in general.

Thus, in the third chapter of my dissertation that follows I will draw parallels between the charitable institutions of Nersēs and Basiliada. This will enable us to appreciate from critical perspective what differences and similarities exist between the two schools of philanthropy, are the differences so essential as some of the scholars argue, or rather there are some touching points which may allow us to argue that there was a common source of inspiration for both movements of philanthropy?

¹⁸³ Ibid. 182.

Chapter Three

Parallels between the Charitable Foundations of Nersēs and Basil:

Introduction

Scholars dependent on *The Epic Histories* claim that Nersēs established different types of charitable organization: poorhouse, hospital, guesthouse, leper-house, asylums-for-widows and for-orphans.¹⁸⁴ But, we must ask, did Nersēs establish *different* charitable foundations, or joint foundations that offered a range of services as did the foundation of Basil of Caesarea? Further, had the organizations of Nersēs any connection with monastic life?¹⁸⁵ For instance, Garsoïan believes that the charitable foundations of Nersēs were specialized in particular fields of care: they were scattered in Armenia with different missions, while the Basiliada “was a single, vast, all-purpose urban foundation whose services were carried out

¹⁸⁴ Մ. Օրմանյան, *Ազգայաբանություն*, հատոր I, էջ 187-188 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, vol. I, pp. 187-188), N. Garsoïan, “Introduction to the Problem”, pp. 180-183. In her translation of *The Epic Histories*, N. Garsoïan translated the Armenian word *aghk’atanots* ‘ into *almshouse* (see *The Epic Histories*, pp. 114-115). In this chapter I will show that the word *poorhouse* is a better choice, and thus, when quoting her translation, I have revised the text to indicate *poorhouse* instead of *almshouse*.

¹⁸⁵ In the scholarship there is no agreement on the question of whether or not the charitable foundations of Nersēs should be viewed in the context of his monastic reforms. In respect to this question, three main views can be distinguished in the Armenian studies, a. some of the researchers see the philanthropic movement of Nersēs as separate from his monastic reforms (see Մ. Օրմանյան, *Ազգայաբանություն*, հատոր I, էջ 85-87 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, vol. I, pp. 85-87), Nina Garsoïan, “Introduction to the problem”, pp. 180-183), b. others mention this connection very briefly without offering any convincing evidence (see Կ. Տէր-Մկրտչեան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցու Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 115-118 (K. Ter-Mkrtychyan, *The Armenian Church*, vol. I, pp. 115-118), Գիւտ Եպիսկոպոս, *Արեւելեան Անապատականը եւ «Նարեկը»*, էջ 117-119 (Bishop Gjut, *Book of Narek and the Oriental Monk*, pp. 117-119), and c. the last group of scholars speak about this connection very vaguely, and from their tone it is not clear whether the philanthropic movement of Nersēs should be viewed in the context of his monastic reforms or not (see Տ. Եսարոբյան, *Հայ Վանականության Պատմությունը եւ Վարդապետներու Դասակարգը* (T. Eartēmean, *The History of the Armenian Monasticism*). In my discussion I will show that there is no clear evidence to argue that there is a connection between Nersēs’ philanthropic movement and his monastic reforms at least in the 5th century.

by monks”¹⁸⁶. The argument of this chapter will be that there are, in fact, some fundamental similarities between Basil’s foundation and those developed by Nersēs. Before we begin, I would like to offer one observation about sources. One might argue that while we learn about the Basiliada from the late 4th century sources, the Armenian material, which tells us about the philanthropic movement of Nersēs, begins to appear only in the first half of the 5th century. The earliest Armenian source that tells us about the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs is the *Canons* of the council of Šahapivan (444). Of course, I am not inclined to claim that what we find in the 5th century Armenian sources regarding the charitable foundations of Nersēs exactly reflects the 4th century situation. However, what we find in the 5th century Armenian sources suggests some important parallels between the Basiliada and Armenian philanthropic institutions in their earliest stages of development. These parallels will allow us to suggest that both traditions may stem from a common tradition.

3.1 The Poorhouse of Nersēs

In the book of *The Epic Histories* regarding the philanthropic movement of Nersēs, we encounter different institutions such as: poorhouse, hospital, leper house and hostelry, asylums-for-widows and for-orphans.¹⁸⁷ Also majority of the researchers, such are Ter-Mkrtchyan, Ormanyan, Armen that have explored the charitable foundations of Nersēs in their discussions usually refer to the above-

¹⁸⁶ Saint Basil. Letter XCIV. To Elias, Governor of the Province // Saint Basil. The Letters. With An English Translation By Roy J. Deferrari, Ph.D. Of The Catholic University Of America In Four Volumes, Vol. II, London, 1928.

¹⁸⁷ *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. iv, Book V, cp.xxxi, Book VI, ch. v., cff. Փաւստոս Բնիգաւնդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. Դ., գ. Ե., գլ. ԼԱ., գ. Զ., գլ. Ե., (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. iv, Book V, cp.xxxi, Book VI, ch. v).

mentioned organizations.¹⁸⁸ The author, however, speaks of the other charitable foundations quite briefly. This, I hope to show, is because the references here to hospitals and leper-houses, are actually to the same institution.

Most scholars have understood the word **aghk'atanots'* (=poorhouse), as a place where the poor received food and shelter¹⁸⁹. We find the following evidence in *The Epic Histories*:

“He performed them first himself and then taught the same to everyone else. He ordered the same thing to be done throughout the realm-in every district and every region, on every side and in every corner within the confines of Armenia: to indicate the most suitable places to be set aside for the building of *poorhouses* and to collect the sick, the lepers, the paralytics and all those who suffered: there leper-houses and nursing home were designated for them, and food and clothes for the poor”.¹⁹⁰

“So greatly did he love the poor, that although he had built poorhouses in all of the districts and set up maintenance for them there, so that they should have no other concern but to rise from their beds, nevertheless he did not keep his palace without them, but the halt and the blind and the crippled , the deaf, the

¹⁸⁸ See Վ. Տեր-Մկրտչյան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցու Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 116-118 (K. Ter-Mkrtychyan, *The Armenian Church*, vol. I, pp. 116-118), Մ. Օրմանյան, *Ազգասպասում*, հատոր I, էջ 187-188 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, vol. I, pp. 187-189), Հ. Արմեն, *Պասյ Արշակունի*, էջ 89 (H. Armen, *Pap of Arshakuni*, p. 89).

¹⁸⁹ Վ. Տեր-Մկրտչյան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցու Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 117 (K. Ter-Mkrtychyan, *The Armenian Church*, vol. I, p. 117), Մ. Օրմանյան, *Ազգասպասում*, հատոր I, էջ 187-188 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, vol. I, pp. 187-188), Հ. Մանանդյան, Երկեր, հատոր II, էջ 160 (H. Manandian, *Works*. vol. II, p. 160), Հ. Արմեն, *Պասյ Արշակունի*, էջ 89 (H. Armen, *Pap of Arshakuni*, p. 89), N. Garsoïan, “Introduction to the problem”, pp. 180-183.

¹⁹⁰ *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. iv., cff. «Նախ ինքն առնէր, եւ ամենեցուն զնոյն ուսուցանէր. առհասարակ զնոյն աւրինակ առնել հրամայէր յամենայն աշխարհս եւ ի զաւառս եւ ի կողմանս կողմանս, ի կոյս կոյս, ի խորշս խորշս սահմանացն Հայոց. յայտարարեալ զպատեհ պատեհ տեղիսն զատուցանել, շինել աղքատանցս, եւ ի ժողովել զախտաժէտս եւ զաւրկունս եւ զմարմնահարս եւ զամենայն ցաւոտս. եւ նոցուն կարգեցին աւրկանցս եւ դարմանոց եւ ռոճիկս եւ պատանս աղքատաց», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. Դ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. iv).

paralytic, the needy, and the indigent sat down and feasted together with him.”¹⁹¹

In the first quotation, the author of *The Epic Histories* speaks of “the sick, the lepers, the paralytics and all those who suffered.”¹⁹² In the second passage, the author states “So greatly did he love the poor, that although he had built poorhouses in all of the districts...”¹⁹³ If the first quotation addresses the illness of its clients, then the second refers to their social status; its clients were poor. Moreover, it is also clear from the second quotation that the most prominent group among the poor included are those who are ill or suffer some significant disability. This suggests that the poorhouse was not simply a place where the poor could find food and shelter, as Ormanyan, Manandyan, Armen and Garsoïan suggest in their interpretations,¹⁹⁴ but it was a place where the poor could specifically receive medical treatment.¹⁹⁵ Further this conclusion is supported also by the manner in which *The Epic Histories* speaks of the personal involvement of Nersēs in the work of charity: “He washed and anointed all with his own hands, and bound [their wounds]; he personally fed his nourishment to each one of them and spent everything for their needs”¹⁹⁶. Of course, one can rightly detect the presence of the

¹⁹¹ Ibid. «Եւ այսպէս առ յոյժ աղքատսիրութեանն, զի թէպէտ եւ շինեաց զամենայն աղքատանոցս ընդ ամենայն զաւառս, եւ կարգեաց նոցա անդէն դարմանս, այսպէս զի ըստ իւրեանց անկողինս մահնացն մի՛ ուրէք աշխատ լիցին ելանել, սակայն և զիւր տանարն առանց նոցա ոչ առնէր, այլ կաղք և կոյրք և մարմնահարք, խուլք և հաշմեալք և ցանկանեալք և կարօտեալք ընդ նմա և ի նորա ակըմբի դարմանէին բազմեալք», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. Դ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. iv).

¹⁹² Ibid. Book IV, ch. iv., cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. Դ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. iv).

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ See U. Օրմանյան, *Ազգայնագիտութիւն*, հատոր I, էջ 187-188 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, vol. I, pp. 187-188), Հ. Մանանդյան, Երկեր, հատոր II, էջ 160 (H. Manandian, *Works*, vol. II, p. 160), Հ. Արմեն, *Պսոպ Արշակունի*, էջ 89 (H. Armen, *Pap of Arshakuni*, p. 89), N. Garsoïan, “Introduction to the problem”, pp. 180-183.

¹⁹⁵ *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. iv, Book V, cp.xxxi, Book VI, ch. v., cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. Դ, գ. Ե., գլ. IԱ, գ. Չ, գլ. Ե (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. iv, Book V, cp.xxxi, Book VI, ch. v).

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. Book IV, ch. iv., cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. Դ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. iv).

hagiographical element in the portrayal of the image of Nersēs. However, it also allows us to make certain assumptions about the mission of the poorhouse at least in 5th century Armenia.

Additionally, we should note that *The Epic Histories* uses, as a synonym for the word **aghk'atanots* ' [poorhouse], the term **hivand'atanots* '. The literal translation of the word **hivand'atanots* ' is “hospital” both in Ancient and Modern Armenian languages.¹⁹⁷ Thus, in speaking on the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs the author maintains:

“And in the days of the high-priesthood of Nersēs, rest houses for strangers, hospitals, and hostelryes were built by order of the high-priest in all inhabited places, and in every village, and in all the regions of Armenia in general”.¹⁹⁸

“And the same Nersēs had built hospitals in every town and every region, establishing maintenance [*řočik*] and care for them”.¹⁹⁹

In the first quote, the list of charitable agencies of Nersēs includes the hospitals as well, and in the second quote the word hospital is noted specifically. At the same time, it is worth noting that the word **aghk'atanots* ' [poorhouse] is missing from the quotes regarding the establishment of hospitals. Moreover, the emphasis on “establishing maintenance [*řočik*] and care” for the hospitals is also found in regard to the poorhouses as well, “he had built poorhouses in all of the districts and set up

¹⁹⁷ See «Նոր Բառգիրք Հայկազգեան լեզուի», հատոր II, Վենետիկ, 1837, (*New Dictionary of Classical Armenian*, vol. II, Venice, 1837), cff. Ստ. Մալխասեանց, *Հայերէն Բացատրական Բառարան*, հատոր III, Երևան, 1944 (S. Malkhasian, *Armenian Explanatory Dictionary*, vol. III, Yerevan, 1944).

¹⁹⁸ *The Epic Histories*, Book V, ch.xxxi., cff. «Իսկ յաւուրս քահանայապետութեան Ներսիսի ամենայն գաւառք Հայոց յամենայն ի շէնս եւ ի գիւղս յամենայն կողմանս Հայոց առհասարակ ի հրամանէ քահանայապետին էին շինեալ աւտարատունք հիւանդանոցք աւտարանոցք», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Ե., զլ. ԼԱ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book V, ch. xxxi).

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.* Book V, ch. xxxi., cff. «Եւ յամենայն աւանս էր շինեալ նորին Ներսիսի եւ հիւանդանոցս, յամենայն կողմանց եւ ոռնիկս եւ դարմանս կարգեալս», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Ե., զլ. ԼԱ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book V, ch..xxxi).

maintenance for them there”.²⁰⁰ Thus it may well be that the author of *The Epic Histories*, in speaking of the poorhouses and hospitals of Nersēs, means one and the same foundation.

Most scholars have derived the mission of the poorhouse solely from the title, but this does not well reflect the meaning of the word **aghk‘atanots‘* [poorhouse] as it is used in the Late Antique Armenian context. This is most likely the main reason that the researchers, in referring to the philanthropic movement of Nersēs, speak about the poorhouses and hospitals separately, as two different organizations with separate missions.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Ibid. Book IV, ch. iv., cff. «Եւ այսպէս առ յոյժ աղքատսիրութեանն, զի թէպէտ եւ շինեաց զամենայն աղքատանոցս ընդ ամենայն զաւառս, եւ կարգեաց նոցա անդէն դարմանս», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. Դ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. iv).

²⁰¹ Կ. Տէր-Մկրտչեան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցու Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 116-117 (K. Ter-Mkrtychyan, *The Armenian Church*, vol. I, pp. 116-117), Մ. Օրմանյան, *Ազգասպառույթ*, հատոր I, էջ 187-189 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, vol. I, pp. 187-189), Լեո, *Հայոց Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 452 (Leo, *History*, vol I, p. 452), Հ. Մանանդյան, Երկեր, հատոր II, էջ 164-165, 214 (H. Manandian, *Works*. vol. II, p. 164-165, 214), Հ. Արմեն, *Պայ Արշակունի*, էջ 89 (H. Armen, *Pap of Arshakuni*, p. 89), N. Garsoïan, “Introduction to the problem”, pp. 180-183, Տ. Եարտըմեան, *Հայ Վանականության Պատմությունը եւ Վարդապետներու Դասակարգը*, էջ 24 (T. Eartëmean, *The History of the Armenian Monasticism*, p. 24). One of the clear examples of this misunderstanding is the discussion of modern history specialist Hrand Armen on the functions of the charitable agencies of Nersēs. He maintains that the mission of the poorhouse was only to provide the poor with food and shelter, for as he immediately specifies, the purpose of this initiation was to stop begging. It is obvious that the author thinks that Nersēs fought against poverty by offering them the patronage of the Church. After time he notes that Nersēs had also founded hospitals for the sick. In order to emphasize its difference from the mission of the poorhouse, he states that it was accomplished following the lead of Basiliada. Thus, Armen has not read the evidence of *The Epic Histories* from a critical point of view; otherwise, he would have easily found out that a poorhouse and hospital are the same foundations. Obviously, on the one hand the literary implication of the word **aghk‘atanots‘* [poorhouse] has misled Armen to think that it was a shelter solely for those people who were not able to find their daily bread. On the other hand, the reference of the text of *The Epic Histories* regarding the establishment of the hospitals has made the author to conclude that it was something different than a poorhouse. Thus, Armen was negligent to the fact that a poorhouse accomplished the very same mission of a hospital as is the case with Basiliada. A deeper look at the reference of *The Epic Histories* to the clients of the poorhouse, would have immediately disclosed this aspect. However, the authority of the traditional view has not allowed even the critical scholars to be truly critical in their discussions. See Հ. Արմեն, *Պայ Արշակունի*, էջ 89 (H. Armen, *Pap of Arshakuni*, p. 89). Ibid, pp. 86, 89. *The Epic Histories*, Book 4, ch. iv, Book 6, ch. v, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. Դ., գ. Զ., գլ. Ե. (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book 4, ch. iv, Book 6, ch. v).

In her English translation of *The Epic Histories* Garsoïan chooses the word almshouse for the Armenian word **aghk'atanots*'. It is not clear in what sense she uses the word almshouse, in the sense of its late Anglo-American development: “a private house built in the past where old or poor people could live without having to pay rent,”²⁰² or in the sense of hospital?²⁰³ From Garsoïan’s article on the early Armenian monasticism one gains an impression that she has not used the word almshouse in the sense of hospital. Otherwise she would notice the parallel between Basiliada and the Armenian poorhouse. Moreover, in her discussion Garsoïan does not consider St. Basil’s use of the word *ptochotropheion* for the Basiliada, the literal meaning of which is poorhouse. This creates another connection between Basiliada and the Armenian **aghk'atanots*' -poorhouse.²⁰⁴ Other late antique Armenian historical sources bear out my argument. In Xorenatsi’s version of Nersēs’ story we read: “So he ordered in every province poorhouses to be built in remote and uninhabited places to offer relief to the suffering on the model of the Greek hospitals. And he set aside for them towns and fields...”²⁰⁵ For Xorenatsi’ the Armenian poorhouse was established on the model

²⁰² Cambridge Dictionary, see in <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/almshouse>

²⁰³ Clay Rotha Mary in her important book entitled *The Medieval Hospitals of England*, speaking on the first period of almshouses (927-1170) notes that “Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, about 1141, invited help for “the hospital house of Dover, which two brethren, Osbern and Godwin, are diligently building for the reception of the poor and strangers.” This hospital of St. Bartholomew (Buckland) was also used for lepers.” See Rotha Mary Clay, *The Medieval Hospitals of England*, London, 1909, p. 5. This perception of the word almshouse suggests that it assumed a hospital which also has a guesthouse and an asylum for lepers. Thus this reference reflects the description of *The Epic Histories* regarding the mission of *aghk'atanots*' [poorhouse]. Additionally the mention of lepers demonstrates another strong connection between the English interpretation of hospital and the report of *The Epic Histories*; where the author counts lepers among the clients when speaking about the establishment of *aghk'atanots*' as I will show further in my discussion.

²⁰⁴ The mistranslation of the word *aghk'atanots*' [poorhouse] is also found in the Russian translation of *The Epic Histories*. It was translated as “дом для призрения бедных”, that is -a house of the care for the poor. See *История Армении Фавстоса Бузанда*, перев. М.А. Геворгияна, Ереван, 1953, Книга IV, гл. iv.

²⁰⁵ Moses Khorenats'i, *History of the Armenians*, Book III, ch.20, cff. «Իսկ նորա հրամայեալ ըստ զաւարաց զաւարաց շինել աղքատանցս ի խորշս եւ ի գերծ տեղիս. զի փոխանակ հիւանդանոցացն Յունաց լինիցին ի մխիթարութիւն մարմնոց վշտացելոց: Եւ բաժանեաց ի նոսա զաւանս եւ զազարակս», Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. Ի (Moses Khorenats'i, *History*, Book III, ch.20).

of the Greek hospitals. Also the scholars, such as Ter-Mkrtchyan, Ormanyan, Manadyan, Armen and etc. in their discussions concerning the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs have missed the explanation of the word *poorhouse* by Xorenats‘i.

Further study of Late Antique Armenian sources reveal that we do not have any other examples of the word **aghk‘atanots‘* being used in the 5th century sources, apart from *The Epic Histories*. It appears that such evidence has not survived. However, we have later evidence where the word **aghk‘atanots‘* [poorhouse] is being used in relation to philanthropic movement of Nersēs, with reference to hospitals. In the book of *The History of Taron* by Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean, which the current scholarship dates to the 10th century²⁰⁶, we find the use of the word **aghk‘atanots‘*:

“Do not make the martyrrium’s buildings a habitation for monks but establish in it priests and chorepiskopoi. Assign *dastakerts* for it, [too], and build in it hospitals for the poor [*aghk‘atanots‘*], so that those who should come for a cure will not complain, even as those who made the pilgrims lie down to sleep at the door of the Tabernacle [of Congregation].”²⁰⁷

This citation is taken from the correspondence between Gregory the Illuminator and the Patriarch Leontius of Cæsarea, more precisely from the second Letter of Leontius. It has already been demonstrated by Avdoyan and Greenwood that the

²⁰⁶ See Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean, *The History of Tarōn [Patmut‘iwn Tarōnoy]*, *Historical Investigation, Critical Translation and Historical and Textual Commentaries*. Trans. Levon Avdoyan, Atlanta, 1993, pp. 1-48.

²⁰⁷ Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean, *The History of Tarōn [Patmut‘iwn Tarōnoy]*, The Second Letter, verse 43, cff. «Իսկ գշինուածս մատրանն մի՛ շինեսցես բնակութիւն կրանաւորաց, այլ կացուցես ի նմա քահանայս եւ քորեպիսկոպոսս: Որոշեսցես ի նմա դաստակերսոս եւ շինեսցես ի նմա աղքատանոցս, որպէս զի որք գայցեն ի բժշկութիւն, մի՛ լիցի տրտունջ, որպէս առ դրան խորանին ննջեցուցանելին զուխտաւորսն», Յովհան Մամիկոնեան, *Պատմութիւն Տարանայ*, in «Մատենագիրք Հայոց», հատոր V, Անթիլիաս-Լիբանան, 2003, Պատճեն երկրորդ, տուն 17 (Yovhan Mamikonean, *History of Taron*, in *Armenian Classical Authors*, vol. 5, Antelias-Lebanon, 2003, The Second Letter, verse 43).

reimagined conversion of Armenia by the anonymous author of *The History of Tarōn* highlighting the contribution of the metropolitan of Caesarea, was a response to the Byzantine expansion eastwards in the second half of the tenth century.²⁰⁸ The use of the words of Greek origins, such are “martyrium,” “chorepiskopoi” and poorhouses/hospitals for the poor [*aghk‘atanots*] may allow one to suggest that the author tries to show closeness of the Armenian Church tradition with Greek Christianity, including the culture of philanthropy.

Further we find the word **aghk‘atanots‘* [poorhouse] in the *History of Armenians* written by 10th century author Yovhannēs Draskhanakert‘ts‘i Catholicos. He uses the word **aghk‘atanots‘* in speaking on the philanthropic movement of Nersēs. Thus, we read:

“He uprooted all the roots of meanness and instead of them promoted mercy. He builds also poorhouses to comfort the sorrowing bodies of men, those with elephantiasis, lepers and disabled and all those who were subject to danger. He appointed maintenance for them from the villages and properties, for they would not go out from their lodgings”.²⁰⁹

The listing of the clients already testifies that the author uses the word **aghk‘atanots‘* in terms of hospital, as the author maintains it was established “to

²⁰⁸ See Pseudo-Yovhannēs Mamikonean, *The History of Tarōn [Patmut‘iwn Tarōnoy]*, pp. 1-48, cff. T. Greenwood, “Negotiating the Roman Past in Later Tenth-century Armenia,” see in anuary [Medieval Worlds](#), Volume 10., 2019, pp. 130-150.

²⁰⁹ «Եւ նախ ապա զամենայն անզթութեան արմատս խլեալ, փոխանակ ի ներքս ածէ զողորմութիւն. շինէ եւ աղքատանոցս առ ի մխիթարութիւն վշտացեալ մարմնոց մարդկան, ուրկաց եւ բորոտից, եւ հաշմից եւ բոլոր վտանգելոց, ռոնիկս նոցա կարգեալ ի գիւղից եւ ի գերդաստանաց, զի ո՛չ լիցի նոցա արտաքս ըստ բնակութիւնս իւրեանց ելանէ», Յովհաննէս Դրասխանակերտցի, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, in «Մատենագիրք Հայոց», Ժ դար, հատոր XI, Անթիլիաս-Լիբանան, 2010, գլ. ԺԲ (Yovhannēs Draskhanakertets‘i, *History of Armenia*, in Armenian Classical Authors, vol. XI, Antelias-Lebanon, 2010, ch.12). However the translator of the modern Armenian version of the *Armenian History* of Yovhannēs Draskhanakert‘ts‘i Gevorg Tosunyan has kept the word **aghk‘atanots‘* [poorhouse] in his translation (see Հովհաննէս Դրասխանակերտցի, *Հայոց Պատմություն*, աշխ. թրգմ. և ծանոթ. Գ. Բ. Թոսունյանի, Երևան, 1996, էջ 49 (Yovhannēs Draskhanakertets‘i, *History of Armenia*, trans. to modern Armenian and commentaries by G. B. Tosunyan, Yerevan, 1996, p. 49). Unfortunately, a reader of modern Armenian would never associate the word **aghk‘atanots‘* with “hospital,” and a better translation is needed.

comfort the sorrowing bodies of men, those with elephantiasis, lepers and disabled and all those who were subject to danger”.

Interestingly, in 1785, Ch‘amch‘yan, in his voluminous *History of Armenians*, considering the philanthropic movement of Nersēs, does not even use the word **aghk‘atanots*‘: he just maintains that as a result of the philanthropic movement of Nersēs, hospitals were established all over the country.²¹⁰ Thus it is evident that he identified **aghk‘atanots*‘ with the hospital for the poor. Unfortunately, his interpretation has not attracted any attention from modern scholars.²¹¹

I believe that we can make a little more progress by considering the mission of “poorhouses” in relation to what we know of the social structure of late 4th and 5th century Aršacids Armenia.²¹² Bournoutian identifies the following four groups in Late Antique Armenian society: first on the scene are the *nakharars* or noblemen,

²¹⁰ Մ. Չամչյանց, *Հայոց Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 441 (M. Chamchian, *Armenian History*, vol. I, p. 441).

²¹¹ Interestingly the creators of the *New Dictionary of Classical Armenian* have given two definitions for the word *aghk‘atanots*‘: a shelter for the poor, and a hospital for the poor (see «Նոր Բառգիրք Հայկազգեան լեզուի», հատոր I, 1836 (*New Dictionary of Classical Armenian*, vol. I, 1836). Without a doubt they understood that the word *aghk‘atanots*‘ in the book of *The Epic Histories* was used in the sense of a hospital, however they were mistaken in thinking that it was also used in the sense of a shelter for the poor. What is most important is that the text of *The Epic Histories* does not allow us to conclude this assumption, thus one cannot prove that the word *aghk‘atanots*‘ is used in the sense of a shelter for the poor, this interpretation above all else is excluded. Thus it follows that those authors that have seen hospital and poorhouse as different institutions with various missions were evidently not familiar with one of the definitions of the word *aghk‘atanots*‘ by the authors of the *New Dictionary of Classical Armenian*, that is *aghk‘atanots*‘ [poorhouse] as a hospital.

²¹² Manandyan and Adontz on the base of Late Antique Armenian sources have studied the social division of Armenia. They are not in agreement in every point, as well as they accept that the sources do not tell us much about each aspect. See Հ. Մանանդյան, *Ֆեոդալիզմը Հին Հայաստանում*, էջ 90-240 (H. Manandyan, *Feudalism in Ancient Armenia*, pp. 90-240). Հ. Մանանդյան, *Գյուղատնտեսությունը Հին Հայաստանի շինականների դրոշման մասին մարզագետության շրջանում*, in Հ.Ս.Ի.Հ. Պետական Համալսարանի գիտական տեղեկագիր, № 1, Երևան, 1925, էջ 3-45 (H. Manandyan, “Remarks on the condition of the peasants of Ancient Armenia in the period of Prefecture”, in *Scientific bulletin of Armenian SSR State University*, № 1, Yerevan, 1925, pp. 3-45), N. Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, pp. 327-371. Ն. Ադոնց, Հայ հին շինականը, in Ն. Ադոնց, *Երկեր*, հատոր I, Երևան, 2006, էջ 97-141, 573-574 (N. Adontz, “The Ancient Armenian Peasant” in *Works*, vol. 1, Yerevan, 2009, pp. 97-141, 573-574).

then comes the *sebuhs*, or minor princes, and the *azats* [free men] or knights that were exempt from corporeal punishment and with the exception of the *azats*, from taxes. The rest of the society belonged to the category of *ramik*, which included city dwellers and enserfed peasants (*shinakans*). He further holds that “the *ramik* served as the infantry in time of war and paid the bulk of the taxes. The artisans and traders, some of whom were foreigners, lived in the cities.”²¹³

Taking into consideration the fact that the majority of the society belonged to the category of *ramik* one may suggest that in the Armenian context the poorhouses mainly have served the needs of *ramik*. However, the picture of the social division of Armenia allows me to suggest that the poorhouses could have equally served as to *azats* [free man], as well as artisans and traders, some of whom were foreigners and might appear in need. Moreover, the care of the poorhouse should have been available particularly for those who had no money at all, that would be strangers traveling from one large estate to another in the hope of food or just the poor who were outside of the class division. Bournoutian in his discussion on Late Antique social division of Armenian society observes that “the institution of slavery was, by this time, waning.”²¹⁴ In brief, it should have been open to everyone in need regardless the social class belonging and nationality.

²¹³ G. Bournoutian. *A History of the Armenian people*. vol. I, p. 58. About social structure of Arsacid Armenia see also Հ. Մանանդյան, *Ֆեոդալիզմը Հին Հայաստանում*, էջ 90-240 (H. Manandyan, *Feudalism in Ancient Armenia*, pp. 90-240). Հ. Մանանդյան, *Դիտողություններ Հին Հայաստանի շինականների դրության մասին մարգարտության շրջանում*, in Հ.Ս.Խ.Հ. Պետական Համալսարանի գիտական տեղեկագիր, № 1, Երևան, 1925, էջ 3-45 (H. Manandyan, “Remarks on the condition of the peasants of Ancient Armenia in the period of Prefecture”, in *Scientific bulletin of Armenian SSR State University*, № 1, Yerevan, 1925, pp. 3-45), N. Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, pp. 327-371. Ն. Ադոնց, Հայ հին շինականը, in Ն. Ադոնց, *Երկեր*, հատոր I, Երևան, 2006, էջ 97-141, 573-574 (N. Adontz, “The Ancient Armenian Peasant” in *Works*, vol. 1, Yerevan, 2009, pp. 97-141, 573-574).

²¹⁴ G. Bournoutian. *A History of the Armenian people*. vol. I, p. 58.

Thus, on account of these remarks I would suggest that **aghk'atanots* [poorhouse] of Nersēs has basically offered medical treatment for the poor and those who were not able to pay for their health care. In this case, it is possible that the permanent asylum in the poorhouses were reserved for only those with leprosy, considering the fact that it was a contagious illness, and dangerous for the community.²¹⁵ I will offer more detailed discussion of this question in the next section of the chapter.

3.2 Leper-houses

Most scholars speak of Nersēs's leper-houses as if they were separate from his poorhouses. At the very least, scholars fail to mention the possibility that the leper-houses were part of the poorhouse, as was the case with the Basiliada.²¹⁶ In this section of the chapter, I will demonstrate that the leper-houses actually were established as parts of the poorhouses. Let us begin by noting a problem evident even in the modern Armenian translation of *The Epic Histories*:

“He performed them first himself and then taught the same to everyone else. He ordered the same thing to be done throughout the whole Armenian world, in every province, on every side and in every corner within the borders of Armenia. They searched and found proper places to be set aside for the building of poorhouses, where should have been collected the sick, the lepers, the handicaps, the paralytics: They have decided to build leper-houses and allocate for them food and medical treatment and for the poor shelter .”²¹⁷

²¹⁵ It goes without saying that in the case of leprosy or even other serious illness, it was not difficult to receive the agreement of the master/feudal, for even from a pragmatic point of view if the person is not able to work then he/she does not represent any economic interests for the owner.

²¹⁶ Մ. Օրմանյան, *Ազգասպառուս*, հատոր I, էջ 187-188 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, vol. I, pp. 187-188), Ն. Մելիք-Թանգյան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցական Իրավունքը*, էջ 261 (N. Melik'-T'angyan, *The Church Law of Armenians*, p. 261), Լևո, *Հայոց Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 452 (Leo, *History*, vol I, p. 452), Հ. Արմեն, *Պսոս Արշակունի*, էջ 89 (H. Armen, *Pap of Arshakuni*, p. 89), Ե. Պետրոսյան, *Հայ Եկեղեցու Պատմություն*, էջ 64 (E. Petrosian, *History of the Armenian Church*, p. 64).

²¹⁷ cff. «Որոշեցին շինել ուրկանոցներ, սահմանել նրանց սնունդ և դարման, իսկ աղքատների համար պատսպարան» (see Փավստոս Բուզանդ, *Հայոց պատմություն*, թարգմ. և ծան. Ստ. Մալխասյանց, Երևան, 1987, գ. Դ., գլ. Դ (Phaustos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*, trans. and commentaries by Step. Malkhasyants', Yerevan, 1987, Book IV, ch. iv).

This text implies that lepers were simply gathered together with others in the poorhouse.²¹⁸ However, the next few sentences create a misunderstanding: “They have decided to build leper-houses, allocate for them food and medical treatment and for the poor shelter.”²¹⁹ From this statement one can easily derive that separate from the poorhouses, leper-houses were also established. Further comparison of the modern Armenian text with the English translation discovers that the same ambiguity is present there as well. Thus, Garsoïan offers the following translation:

“He performed them first himself and then taught the same to everyone else. He ordered the same thing to be done throughout the realm-in every district and every region, on every side and in every corner within the confines of Armenia: to indicate the most suitable places to be set aside for the building of almshouses for the poor and to collect the sick, the lepers, the paralytics and all those who suffered: leper-houses were designated for them, assistance and maintenance as well as shelters for the poor”.²²⁰

The above quoted translation of Garsoïan speaks vaguely between the relationship of the leper-house and poorhouse. At the same time, the second half of the key sentence - “leper-houses were designated...” - contradicts the description of the first half: “to indicate the most suitable places to be set aside for the building of the poorhouses and to collect the sick, the lepers, the paralytics and all those who suffered”²²¹. If the lepers were gathered in the poorhouse, why was it suddenly decided to establish leper-houses as well? The answer may be that in the modern Armenian and English translations the word **nots ‘un* (=there) has been omitted. If

²¹⁸ Ibid. գ. Դ., գլ. Դ (Phaustos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*, Book IV, ch. iv).

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. iv, cff. «Նախ ինքն առնէր, եւ ամենեցուն զնոյն ուսուցանէր. առհասարակ զնոյն արիինակ առնել հրամայէր յամենայն աշխարհս եւ ի գաւառս եւ ի կողմանս կողմանս, ի կոյս կոյս, ի խորշս խորշս սահմանացն Հայոց. յայտարարեալ զպատեհ պատեհ տեղիսն զատուցանել, շինել աղքատանցս, եւ ի ժողովել զախտաժէտս եւ զարկունս եւ զմարմնահարս եւ զամենայն ցաւոտս. եւ նոցուն կարգեցին արկանցս եւ դարմանոց եւ ռոնիկս եւ պատանս աղքատաց», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. Դ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. iv).

²²¹ *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. iv, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. Դ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. iv).

we add the word **nots 'un* (=there) back in the sentence may be translated: "...to collect the sick, the lepers, the paralytics and all those who suffered: *there* [**nots 'un*] leper-houses were designated for them...".²²² This correction allows us to maintain that at least in the 5th century Armenian philanthropic tradition the leper-house was *part of* the poorhouse. In addition, the study of other Armenian historical sources further supports my argument as I will show next.

Thus, Xorenatsi's version of Nersēs' story after mentioning the attitude of society towards lepers, speaks of the establishment of poorhouses. From his interpretation, one can assume that the foundation of the poorhouses was largely a response to the sufferers of leprosy and elephantiasis. Thus, we read:

"Summoning a council of bishops in concert with the laity, by canonical regulation he established mercy, extirpating the root of inhumanity, which was the natural custom in our land. For lepers were persecuted, being considered impure by the law; and those suffering from elephantiasis had to flee lest the disease spread from them to others. Their retreats were deserts and remote places, their hiding places were rocks and forests, and they found no consolation for their misery from anyone. Furthermore, the paralytics were neglected, unknown travelers were not received, and strangers were not lodged.

"So he ordered in every province poorhouses to be built in remote and uninhabited places to offer relief to the suffering on the model of the Greek hospitals. And he set aside for them towns and fields, fertile in fruits of the land, in milk from herds, and wool, that these through their taxes might cater for their needs from a distance and the inmates would not leave their dwelling."²²³

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Moses Khorenats'i, *History of the Armenians*, Book III, ch.20, cff. «Ժողով արարեալ եպիսկոպոսաց եւ համօրէն աշխարհականօք, կանոնական սահմանադրութեամբ հաստատեաց զողորմածութիւն, իվելով եւ զանգթութեանն արմատ, որ բնաբար սովորութեամբ էր յերկրիս մերում: Քանզի բոբոտք հալածեալ լինէին, իբր պիղծ համարեալ յօրինաց. եւ զուրուկս փախստեայս առնէին, զի մի՛ ի նոցանէ յայս փոխեցի ախտն. որոց դադարք՝ անապատք եւ ամայիք, եւ ծածկոյթ՝ վէմք եւ մացառք, ոչ յումեքէ գտանելով միսիթարութիւն թշուառութեանցն: Առ այսոքիւք եւ հաշմք անդամովք ոչ խնամեալ լինէին, եւ

Xorenatsi's evidence is in continuation with the text of *The Epic Histories* regarding the claim that the leper-house was a part of the poorhouse. In addition, both the evidence from *The Epic Histories* and Xorenats'i regarding the location of the poorhouse suggests that because of the lepers and sufferers from elephantiasis "remote and uninhabited places" were chosen for the foundation of the poorhouses.²²⁴

The comment by the author of *The Epic Histories* regarding a change of attitude towards lepers must also be noted:

"And in the days of Nersēs there were absolutely no poor to be seen begging anywhere within the entire territory of Armenia. But everyone brought what they needed right there to their asylums, that is to say the leper-houses, so that they lacked for nothing there and were satisfied".²²⁵

The Epic Histories specifically identifies the category of beggars as lepers. Because of their illness they reportedly could not work, and begged in order to live. This elucidation allows us to argue with Armen, who thinks that poorhouses were established in order to stop begging.²²⁶ Further it should be noted that this quotation

հիւրք անձանօթք ոչ ընդունէին, եւ օտարք ոչ ժողովէին: Իսկ նորա հրամայեալ՝ ըստ զաւառաց զաւառաց շինել աղքատանոցս ի խորշս եւ ի գերծ տեղիս. զի փոխանակ հիւանդանոցացն Յունաց լինիցին ի մխիթարութիւն մարմնոց վշտացելոց: Եւ բաժանեաց ի նոսա զաւանս եւ զագարակս, պտղաբերել յարդեանց անդաստանաց եւ ի կթից արօտականաց եւ ի գեղմանց. զի պաշտեսցեն զնոսա հարկաւ, բացէ ի բաց, եւ նորա մի՛ ելցեն ըստ բնակութիւնս իւրեանց», Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. Ի (Moses Khorenats'i, *History*, Book III, ch.20).

²²⁴ We also find this interpretation in the *Armenian History* of Yovhannēs Draskhanakert's'i Catholicos (10th century). Like Xorenats'i, he does not mention leper-house separately, and among the clients of the **aghk'atanots* ' he first mentions "those with elephantiasis, lepers and disabled..." See Յովհաննէս Դրասխանակերտցի, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց* գլ. ԺԲ (Yovhannēs Draskhanakertets'i, *History of Armenia*, ch. 12).

²²⁵ *The Epic Histories*, Book V., ch. xxxii, cff. «Իսկ յամսն Ներսիսի գաղքատս բնաւ ամենեւին ի մոյր ոչ տեսանէր ընդ ամենայն սահմանսն Հայոց. այլ անդէն ի հանգստեան նոցին, այսինքն յաւրկանոցսն, ամենայն մարդիկ տանէին զամենայն պիտոյս նոցա. անդէն իսկ անկարաւտ յամենայն ումեքէ լցեալ էին», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Ե, գլ. ԼԲ էջ 400 (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book V., ch. xxxii).

²²⁶ Հ. Արմեն, *Պատմութիւն Հայաստանի*, էջ 89 (H. Armen, *Pap of Arshakuni*, p. 89).

demonstrates that poorhouses offered shelter particularly for lepers: “But everyone brought what they needed right there to their asylums, that is to say the leper-houses...” The following text from *The Epic Histories* support this suggestion:

“There leper-houses and nursing homes were designated for them, and food and clothes for the poor”.²²⁷ I believe this sentence should be seen in connection, in the context of the care of lepers. Accordingly, I propose that the leper-houses offer not only medical treatment, but also lifelong care for the poor considering that leprosy was an incurable disease.²²⁸

²²⁷ *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch iv, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. Դ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch iv).

²²⁸ In relation to this discussion it should be noted that Garsoïan offers a different translation for the first quote which as I will show below is biased from the original text. Thus, instead of “*there leper-houses and nursing homes were designated for them, and food and clothes for the poor*” cff. «կարգեցին արկանոց եւ դարմանոց եւ ռնիկս եւ սասանս սղբասուց» (see Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. Դ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV., ch. iv) she proposes the following translation: “leper-houses were designated for them, assistance and maintenance as well as shelters for the poor” (*The Epic Histories*, Book IV., ch. iv). More to the point the translations of the following words need revision: *assistance, maintenance and shelters for the poor*. The Armenian word **darmanots* ‘, which in Ancient Armenian simply means *hospital or nursing home* as shown below, was translated by Garsoïan as *assistance*. Most likely she followed to or agreed with the Modern Armenian translation of Malkhasyants’, for he has also chosen the word *assistance* for **darmanots* ‘ (Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Հայոց պատմություն*, թարգմ. և ծան. Ստ. Մալխասյանց, գ. Դ., գլ. Դ (Phaustos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*, trans. and commentaries by Step. Malkhasyants’, Book IV., ch. iv). In the *New Dictionary of Classical Armenian* the word **darmanots* ‘ has only two related meanings: *nursing home* and *hospital* («Նոր Բառգիրք Հայկազգեան լեզուի», հատոր I (*New dictionary of Classical Armenian*, vol. I). Further, the word **rochik* also has other meanings in ancient Armenian which was not taken into account by Garsoïan. In the *New Dictionary of Classical Armenian*, **rochik* is defined first as *food* («Նոր Բառգիրք Հայկազգեան լեզուի», հատոր II (*New dictionary of Classical Armenian*, vol. II). It is noteworthy that in his version Malkhasyants’ has translated the word **rochik* into *food* (Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Հայոց պատմություն*, թարգմ. և ծան. Ստ. Մալխասյանց, գ. Դ., գլ. Դ (Phaustos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*, trans. and commentaries by Step. Malkhasyants’, Book IV., ch. iv). However, Garsoïan has not accepted his translation, she chooses to use the word *maintenance* for the word **rochik*. The word *maintenance* has some relation with the word *food* but it is not quite the same thing. Also, the word **patans* was translated as *shelters for the poor*. In this instance Garsoïan has simply followed the correction by Malkhasyants’. In his translation, Malkhasyants’ maintains that the word **patans* most probably is a distortion of the word **patsparan* (=shelter). Thus, in his commentaries we read the following note: “In the text is written “And **patans*= clothes for the poor”. The word **patans* in this meaning does not fit here. We think the text is modified, instead it should be **patsparans*=shelter. Thus, we amended it in our translation (see Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Հայոց պատմություն*, թարգմ. և ծան. Ստ. Մալխասյանց, էջ 429 (Phaustos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*, trans. and commentaries by Step. Malkhasyants’, p. 429). However I disagree with this change and with all those scholars and translators who consider this alteration correct (The Russian translator of *The Epic Histories* follows the modification of S. Malkhasyants’ (see *История Армении Фавстоса Бузанда*, Книга IV, гл. IV). In the *New Dictionary of Classical Armenian*, the word **patans* is defined also as *clothes*. This explanation for the word **patans* completely corresponds with the context of the text, moreover it completes the meaning of the sentence. In the critical publication of the book of *The Epic Histories* we do not find any other

Further, a thorough examination of the historical evidence seems to indicate that it is most likely the poorhouses were directly under the patronage of the chief Bishop. Thus, the author of *The Epic Histories* in speaking on Bishop Xad maintains: “He was also entrusted by St. Nersēs with the supervision of the poor, and in this, too, he showed particular solicitude”.²²⁹ Xorenatsi’s version reads as follows: “So he ordered in every province poorhouses to be built in remote and uninhabited places to offer relief to the suffering on the model of the Greek hospitals... This he entrusted to a certain Khad, who was his deacon from the meadows of Karin”.²³⁰ In relation to Xad’s supervision of poorhouses, Garsoïan may confuse matters when she writes:

“nor do we find the slightest indication that their “trusted”, “God fearing” overseers were monks. Specifically, Xad of Marag, Nerses’ pupil and deacon, whom the patriarch left as his vicar and set as supervisor over all his charitable foundations during his own long exile, is never identified as a monk but rather as a married man with grown children, as was Nerses himself.”²³¹

In the first place, we do not know that Nersēs appointed Xad “as supervisor over all his charitable foundations”; the evidence speaks only of the “poorhouses,” the “guesthouses” may not have been included. In the second place, Garsoïan’s statement could lead one to conclude that Xad was a deacon when the patriarch

variation for the word **patans* in other manuscripts (Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. Դ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV., ch. iv). Thus, if the later scribes had found it to be incorrect, they would definitely have corrected it, an approach which was common in the late antique and medieval Armenian art of manuscripts. Thus, all things considered, I offer the following reading of the discussed passage reliable: “*there leper-houses and nursing homes were designated for them, and food and clothes for the poor*” cff. «կարգեցին արկանոցս եւ դարմանոց եւ ռոճիկս եւ պատանս աղքատաց» (see Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. Դ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV., ch. iv).

²²⁹ *The Epic Histories*, Book IV., ch. xii, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. ԺԲ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV., ch. xii).

²³⁰ Moses Khorenats’i, *History of the Armenians*, Book III, ch.20, cff. Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. Ի (Moses Khorenats’i, *History*, Book III, ch.20).

²³¹ N. Garsoïan, “Introduction to the problem”, p.182.

appointed him as his vicar. The author of *The Epic Histories*, however, emphasizes that Nersēs ordained Xad as Bishop and left him as the Vicar: “Therefore when the chief-bishop Nersēs was about to go on his journey to the land of the Greeks, he ordained Khad bishop of Bagrevand and Aršarunik“, left him as vicar in his place, and set out”.²³²

3.3 Guesthouse

In *The Epic Histories* we find evidence regarding the establishment of the guesthouses. The author in speaking of the philanthropic movement of Nersēs mentions that along with the poorhouses, guesthouses were also established. “And in the days of the high-priesthood of Nersēs, rest houses for strangers, hospitals, and hostelries were built by order of the high-priest in all inhabited places, and in every village, and in all the regions of Armenia in general”.²³³ In further speaking on the personal involvement of Nersēs in the work of charity he maintains: “He gave relief and maintenance to widows, orphans, and the indigent, and the poor daily rejoiced with him, for his hall [*tačar*] and table were ever [open] to the poor, the alien, and the stranger... Thus, every stranger found repose and rest under his roof”.²³⁴

²³² *The Epic Histories*, Book IV., ch. xii, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. ԺԲ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV., ch. xii), cff. Հր. Անադյան, *Հայոց Անձնանունների Բառարն*, հատոր II, Երևան, 1942 (H. Ajarian, *Dictionary of Armenian Personal Names*, vol. II, Yerevan, 1942).

²³³ *The Epic Histories*, Book V, ch. xxxi, cff. «Իսկ յաւուրս քահանայապետութեան Ներսիսի ամենայն զաւառք Հայոց յամենայն ի շէնս եւ ի գիւղս յամենայն կողմանս Հայոց առ հասարակ ի հրամանէ քահանայապետին էին շինեալ աւտարատունք հիւանդանոցք աւտարանոցք», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Ե, գլ. ԼԱ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book V, ch. xxxi).

²³⁴ *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. iv, cff. «Այրեաց եւ որբոց եւ ջքաւորաց հանգիստ եւ դարման առնէր, եւ աղքատք զարիանապագ ընդ նմա ուրախ լինէին. եւ տաճար իւր եւ սեղան զարիանապագ աղքատաց եւ աւտարաց էր եւ հիւրոց: Եւ այսպէս առ յոյժ աղքատսիրութեանն, զի թէպէտ եւ շինեաց զամենայն աղքատանոցս ընդ ամենայն զաւառս,

The last passage, of course, has a certain hagiographical inclination. As might be expected one may justly ask who were these strangers? In relation to this I would like to call attention to the meanings of the Armenian word *otar**, which is used for ‘stranger’ in classical Armenian. Both *The Epic Histories* and Xorenatsi’s version of Nersēs’ story, use the words *otaranocs** or *otaratun**, which mean inns or houses for strangers. In classical Armenian the word *otar** has two main meanings, stranger and immigrant.²³⁵ *The Epic Histories* offers us a little more:

“And in the days of the high-priesthood of Nersēs, rest houses for strangers, hospitals, and hostelries were built by order of the high-priest in all inhabited places, and in every village, and in all the regions of Armenia in general. And everyone in the land of Armenia mercifully supplied them with food remembering the poor and oppressed, the afflicted and the strangers, the mistreated, wanderers, pilgrims, visitors, and wayfarers. And St. Nersēs had set supervisions and care for them everywhere”.²³⁶

Thus, it appears that the guesthouses were intended to serve a wide range of those travelling. Thus, a thorough reading of the texts of *The Epic Histories* reveals that the author does not offer detailed information on the mission of the guesthouse. Do we find in Xorenatsi’s version of Nersēs’ story any further details? In general, he

եւ կարգեաց նոցա անդէն դարմանս, այսպէս զի ըստ իւրեանց անկողինս մահճացն մի՛ ուրեք աշխատ լիցին ելանել, սակայն եւ զիւր տանարն առանց նոցա ոչ առնէր, այլ կաղք եւ կոյրք եւ մարմնահարք, խուլք եւ հաշմեալք եւ ցանկանեալք եւ կարաւտեալք ընդ նմա եւ ի նորա ակմբի դարմանէին բազմեալք: Եւ ինքն իւրովք ձեռաւքն լուանայր զամենեսեան, աւժանէր պատեր, եւ ինքնին իսկ ջամբէր նոցա զիւրաքանչիւր կերակուրս, եւ զամենայն ինչ ի պէտս նոցա ծախէր. եւ ամենայն աւտարք ընդ նմա, հովանեաւ նորա հանգուցեալք, դաղարէին», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Դ, գլ. Դ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. iv).

²³⁵ «Նոր Բազմիք Հայկազեան լեզուի», հատոր II (*New dictionary of Classical Armenian*, vol. II).

²³⁶ *The Epic Histories*, Book V, ch. xxxi, cff. «Իսկ յաւուրս քահանայապետութեան Ներսիսի ամենայն զաւարք Հայոց յամենայն ի շէնս եւ ի զիւրս յամենայն կողմանս Հայոց առ հասարակ ի հրամանէ քահանայապետին էին շինեալ աւտարատունք իիւանդանոցք աւտարանոցք. եւ ամենայն մարդիկք երկրին Հայոց էին պտղաբերք եւ ողորմածք առ ի յիշել զաղքատս եւ զնեղեալս, զառապեալս եւ զաւտարս, զհարստահարս, զնշդեհս, զպանդուխտս, զհիւրս, զանցաւորս. եւ էր նոցա կարգեալ վերակացուս սրբոյն Ներսիսի, եւ դարմանս ի տեղեաց տեղեաց», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Ե, գլ. ԼԱ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book V, ch. xxxi).

seems to follow the evidence of *The Epic Histories*: “He [Nersēs] also prescribed that lodgings be built in every village to serve as inns for strangers, and places to feed the orphans and aged and for the care of the poor.”²³⁷ At the same time, Xorenaci’s version allows us to learn about some other forms of charity as well. Thus, it appears that *vans (=lodgings) were established in the villages “to serve as inns for strangers” as well as “places to feed the orphans and aged and for the care of the poor.”²³⁸ While the author of *The Epic Histories* speaks about the other forms of charity provided in rather vague terms, Xorenatsi’ mentions clearly the existence of soup kitchens. As we shall see towards the end of the chapter, the existence of these soup kitchens offers us another parallel between the philanthropic movement of Nersēs and the Basiliada.

3.4 Asylums-for-widows and for-orphans

In the book of *The Epic Histories* we find evidence also of two other charitable foundations, such are “asylums-for-widows and for-orphans.” Thus, the author in speaking on the antichurch policy of Armenian King Pap, who succeeded to his father Aršak II maintains: “And so, he began to manifest his hatred toward his [Nersēs] earlier canons, and he began to order openly to the realm the destruction of the asylums-for-widows and for-orphans that Nersēs had built in the various districts... ”.²³⁹

²³⁷ Moses Khorenats’i, *History of the Armenians*, Book III, ch.20, cff. Մովսես Խորենացի, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Գ, գլ. Ի (Moses Khorenats’i, *History*, Book III, ch.20).

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ *The Epic Histories*, Book V, ch. xxxi. «Եւ սկսաւ նախանձ վարել ընդդէմ յառաջագոյն կանոնելոցն ի նմանէ. եւ սկսաւ հրաման տալ յայտնապէս յաշխարհին աւերել զայրենոցսն եւ զորբանոցսն՝ զոր շինեալ էր Ներսէս ի գաւառս...», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց* գ. Ե., գլ. ԼԱ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book V, ch. xxxi).

In the last chapter of my work, I will refer to the issue of antichurch policy of King Pap more detailed. Now I would prefer to answer the question whether Nersēs has established also special agencies for the care of widows and orphans or it just refers to certain types of charity? In relation to the reference of “asylums-for-widows and for-orphans” one would assume that we deal here with specialized institutions. I believe that the report of Xorenats‘i regarding the task of **vans* [lodgings] allows us to suggest that the author of *The Epic Histories* in relation to “asylums-for-widows and for-orphans” does not speak about separate institutions but rather means the same **vans* [lodgings] where also the care of the widows and orphans were carried out. Furthermore, the *Haykazyan Dictionary* for the words **ayrenots‘* (=asylum for widows) and **orbanots‘* (=asylum for orphans), only refers to *The Epic Histories*: it appears that *The Epic Histories* is the only source of reference for these words.²⁴⁰ This, of course, supports the theory that these terms, most likely, had rare use in Classical Armenian. In addition, for the word **orbanots‘* (=asylum for orphans) the *Haykazyan Dictionary* states that it is the literary translation of the Greek word ορφανοτροφείον, which means a place for feeding orphans.²⁴¹ This explanation perfectly matches with the data of Xorenats‘i, that in **vans* [lodgings] places were allocated to feed the orphans, widows and so on. I believe, in the light of this report should be understood also the use of the word **ayrenots‘* (=asylum for widows) by the author of *The Epic Histories*. The Armenian word **ayrenots‘* (=asylum for widows) is equivalent to the Ancient Greek word χηροτροφείον. The *Dictionary* of Lampe gives the following definition for the word χηροτροφείον –

²⁴⁰ «Նոր Բառգիրք Հայկազգեան լեզուի», հատոր, I, II (*New Dictionary of Classical Armenian*, vol. I, II).

²⁴¹ Ibid. հատոր II (*New Dictionary of Classical Armenian*, vol. II). See also *Λεξικό της Νεοελληνικής, Θεσσαλονίκη*, 2002.

(χηροτροφέω) - home for widows, Soz. h. e. 5.15.²⁴² Of course, this definition does not tell us the exact mission of χηροτροφεῖον. However, the semantic component of the word χηροτροφεῖον allows us to note that it consists of two words- χηρο from χήρα, which means widow, and τροφέω-to care, to feed. Thus, the reference of Xorenatsi' regarding *vans [lodgings] and the composite of lexical units of the word χηροτροφεῖον enables us to reconstruct the use of the word *ayrenots' (=asylum for widows) in *The Epic Histories*. Accordingly, the Armenian word *ayrenots' (=asylum for widows) in the book of *The Epic Histories* is used as -a place for feeding the widows. Thus, it is not unlikely that Sozomenos could use the word χηροτροφεῖον in the same sense. This simply allows us to maintain that the use of terms ayrenots' (=asylum for widows) and *orbanots' (=asylum for orphans) by *The Epic Histories* should not be interpreted in terms of present understanding of these concepts, as most of the Armenian interpreters were inclined to believe, but simply a place where orphans and widows were feed. It should be noted that in Late Antique and Medieval Armenian sources we find clear evidence concerning the care of widows and orphans, however we do not collect data regarding *ayrenots' (=asylum for widows) or *orbanots' (=asylum for orphans) as specialized charitable agencies. For instance, the canons of the Council of Šahapivan (444) define penitence for different sins, which also include material compensation. According to those canons' material compensation should be paid for the maintenance of the needy, poor, sorrowed, widows and orphans.²⁴³ Further another 7th century work known as the *Canons* of Saint Sahak on the

²⁴² G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford University Press, 1961, p. 1525.

²⁴³ The Canons of the Council of Šahapivan, *Constitutions and Cannons*, ch. I, II, III, IV, V, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XI, cff. Կանոնք Շահապիվանի, in Վ. Հակոբյան, *Կանոնադիրք Հայոց*, հատոր I, Սահմանք եւ Կանոնք, Ա, Բ, Գ, Դ, Ե, Է, Ը, Թ, Ժ, ԺԱ, ԺԲ (Canons of Šahapivan in V. Hakobyan, *The Book of Canons*, vol. I, *Constitutions and Cannons*, ch. I, II, III, IV, V, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XI).

responsibilities of the bishop call particular attention to the care of the needy, poor, widows and orphans:

“For the divine treasure of which thou hast been appointed overseer and steward was given as a succor for the **distressed and the orphans and widows**, and as a provision against any worldly misfortune which may overtake us. But on no other object whatever hast thou authority to spend it, for the treasures were given in order to the salvation of souls,”²⁴⁴

This evidence simply allows us to hold that the use of the words **ayrenots* ‘ (=asylum for widows) and **orbanots* ‘ (=asylum for orphans) by the author of *The Epic Histories* may simply refer to certain type of charity. The historical data in hand does not allow us to make other suggestions than this.

3.5 The famine of Caesarea

In this section my goal is to show that, despite what existing scholarship states, there are actually some significant parallels between the foundations of Nersēs and Basil of Caesarea’s project. Historians relate the philanthropic activity of Basil with the catastrophe that struck in Caesarea in AD 369 resulting in a disastrous lack of food all over Cappadocia. It was rightly observed by historians that "in fact,

²⁴⁴ See Fr. C. Conybeare, *The Armenian Church: Heritage and Identity*, New York, 2001, CHAPTER V.-Of the same, how it is proper for bishops to keep the treasures of the church, and to whom and how they shall be distributed, cff. «Չի գանձ աստուածային որում տեսուչ եւ մատակարար կազմեցար՝ ներելոց եւ որբոց եւ այրեաց տուաւ յապաւինութիւն եւ եթէ միանգամայն ինչ աշխարհի վտանգ հասանիցէ, բայց յայլ իրս ամենեւին չէ իշխանութիւն ծախել, զի յարագս հոգւոց փրկութեան տուան գանձքն», Սահակ Պարթև, *Կանոնք Մրթոյն Մահակայ Հայոց Հայրապետի*, in «Մատենագիրք Հայոց», հատոր I, Ե դար, Անթիլիաս-Լիբանան, 2003, Նորին. Թէ որպէս պարտ է եպիսկոպոսաց պահել զգանձս եկեղեցոյ կամ որոց որպէս մատակարարել (Sahak Partev, *Canons of the Armenian Patriarch St. Sahak*, in *Armenian Classical Authors*, vol. 1, Antelias-Lebanon, 2003, Of the same, how it is proper for bishops to keep the treasures of the church, and to whom and how they shall be distributed).

it is impossible to understand Basil's ministry without describing this period of tragedy."²⁴⁵

The funeral *Oration* of Gregory as well as the sermons of Basil on social issues allow us to reconstruct the consequences of famine on the population of Caesarea. In the words of Gregory of Nazianzus it was “the most severe one ever recorded [in Cappadocia].”²⁴⁶ E. Smither in his valuable study entitled *Missionary Monks*, on the basis of Basil's letters, expresses an opinion that “the famine probably lasted for four years and resulted in additional difficulties.”²⁴⁷ However, famine was not the only challenge that faced the population of Caesarea during that period. “From an economic perspective, Caesarea was not terribly prosperous.”²⁴⁸ Further, Holman observes that “Basil's famine sermon refers back to an extremely cold, dry winter that had been followed by an unusually hot, dry spring, and this led to catastrophic agricultural crisis as wells and rivers dried up and crops failed, those able to hoard grain increased their vigilance and the market prices.”²⁴⁹ Faithful to his calling, Basil assumed the responsibility of encouraging 'magistrates and the rich of the city' to support his social program. In this context Basil launched the foundation of a center that later came to be known as the Basiliada, a “complex of

²⁴⁵ E. Smither, “Basil of Caesarea: An Early Christian Model of Urban Mission”, in *Reaching the City: Reflections on Urban Mission for the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Gary Fujino, Timothy R. Sisk, and Tereso C. Casino, Evangelical Missiological Society Series No. 20, Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2012, pp. 59-75.

E. Smither, “Basil of Caesarea: An Early Christian Model of Urban Mission”, p. 3 http://www.edsmither.com/uploads/5/6/4/6/564614/smither_ems_2011_basil.pdf (accessed August 30, 2019).

²⁴⁶ St. Gregory Nazianzen. *Oration 43. “Funeral Oration on the Great S. Basil, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia.”* in *Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers. Cyril of Jerusalem, Gregory Nazianzen*. Vol. VII. Second series. Ed. P. Schaff, D.D., Massachusetts, 1995, p. 407.

²⁴⁷ E. Smither, *Missionary Monks: An Introduction to the History and Theology of Missionary Monasticism*, Cascade Books, Eugene, Oregon, 2016, p. 31.

²⁴⁸ E. Smither, “Basil of Caesarea: An Early Christian Model of Urban Mission”, p. 2 http://www.edsmither.com/uploads/5/6/4/6/564614/smither_ems_2011_basil.pdf (accessed August 30, 2019).

²⁴⁹ S. Holman, *Hungry Are Dying*, pp. 68-69.

buildings to the housing of travelers, the sick, and the poor, an early form of public charity called “The Brand-New City”²⁵⁰

3.6 The Basiliada: the care of the sick

With respect to the charitable project of Basil, it was rightly observed by Timothy Patitsas that “we don't have a very detailed or precise account of his antipoverty program in Caesarea.”²⁵¹ However, we do have enough evidence to suggest that the hospital played a key role in the philanthropic mission of the Basiliada. Thus, Basil speaks about the hospital in the letter addressed to Elias and two other letters addressed to Amphilochius. If in the letter to Elias he only talks about the care of the sick, then in the letters addressed to Amphilochius he uses the Greek word *ptochotropheion*:

To Elias, Governor of the Province:

“And whom do we wrong when we build places for strangers, for those who visit us while on a journey, for those who require some care because of sickness, and when we extend to the latter the necessary comforts, such as nurses, physicians, beasts for travelling and attendants?”²⁵²

To Amphilochius, as if from Heracleidas:

²⁵⁰ P. Fedwick, *The Church and the Charisma of Leadership in Basil of Caesarea*, West Broadway, Eugene, 1979, p. XVII.

²⁵¹ T. Patitsas, “St. Basil's Philanthropic Program and Modern microlending Strategy for Economic Self-Actualization”, in *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society*, edited by S. Holman, Holy Cross, 2008 p. 268.

²⁵² Saint Basil. Letter XCIV, p. 151.

“But when I came near enough to Caesarea to observe the situation, refraining, however, from visiting the city itself, I took refuge in the neighboring poor-house (*ptochotropheion*), that I might gain there the information I wished. Then I laid before the most God-beloved bishop, who had come to visit the place according to custom, the matters as to which your Eloquence had instructed us. And though it was impossible for us to keep in memory what he said in reply, and it passed beyond the limits of a letter, yet in general on the subject of poverty he said that this was the measure, —that each should limit his possession to the last tunic”.²⁵³

To Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium:

“Accordingly we urge you to arrive three days beforehand, in order that you may also make great by your presence the memorial chapel of poorhouse (*ptochotropheion*).”²⁵⁴

Further, in the *Oration* of Gregory we come across a passage which represents special importance for our discussion. It describes the mission of the Basiliada in terms of aid to the poor and the sick:

“What more? A noble thing is philanthropy, and the support of the poor, and the assistance of human weakness. Go forth a little way from the city, and behold the new city...where disease is regarded in a religious light, and disaster is thought a blessing, and sympathy is put to the test.... There is no longer before our eyes that terrible and piteous spectacle of men who are living corpses, the greater part of whose limbs have mortified, driven away from their cities and homes and public places and fountains, aye, and from their own dearest ones, recognizable by their names rather than by their features: they are no longer brought before us at our gatherings and meetings, in our common intercourse and union, no longer the objects of hatred, instead of pity on account of their disease.... Basil's care was for the sick, and the

²⁵³ Saint Basil. Letter CL. To Amphilochius, As If From Heracleidas, p. 367.

²⁵⁴ Saint Basil. Letter CLXXVI. To Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium, p. 461.

relief of their wounds, and the imitation of Christ, by cleansing leprosy, not by a word, but in deed.”²⁵⁵

The above-referenced quotations allow us to see tangible parallels between the mission of Armenian poorhouses and Basiliada. From the content of the data, it is clear that one of the priorities of the Basiliada was to offer medical care for the strangers and poor, exactly what was accomplished by the poorhouses of Nersēs. Thus, the heart of both philanthropic movements is the love for the poor, and the care for them. Further although the reflections of Crislip on the services of Basiliada do not focus on the meaning of the word *ptochotropheion* (poorhouse), nevertheless, it supports my suggestion that poorhouse is associated with a hospital. Thus, he maintains: "The terms by which it [Basiliada] was called highlight some of the hospital's functions. Apart from its eponymous appellation, contemporary writers referred to the hospital by a number of general terms, Basil himself variously calls it a *ptochotropheion* (poorhouse), a *xenodocheion* (hostel), a *katagogion* (rest house)."²⁵⁶ Crislip further completes this discussion by noting that "It was as a poorhouse (*ptochotropheion*) that the Basileias was commonly designated."²⁵⁷

Of course, Crislip's observation is correct in regard to Basil variously using different words for Basiliada, such as *ptochotropheion* (poorhouse), a *xenodocheion* (hostel), and a *katagogion* (rest house). *The Patristic Greek Dictionary* of Lampe offers the following explanation for the word

²⁵⁵ St. Gregory Nazianzen. Oration 43, p. 416.

²⁵⁶ See A. T. Crislip, *From Monastery to Hospital; Christian Monasticism and the Transformation of Health Care in Late Antiquity*, The University of Michigan press, 2008, p. 104.

²⁵⁷ A. T. Crislip, *From Monastery to Hospital*, p. 107, cff. Gary B. Ferngren, "Medicine and religion: a historical perspective", in *Oxford Textbook of Spirituality in Healthcare*, Edited by Mark Cobb, Christina M. Puchalski, Bruce Rumbold, Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 6.

ptochotropheion: “almshouse, hospital, used also as hostel, guest house, managed by a chorepiscopus.” Further it adds also two other functions: “accommodating bishop” and “containing chapel.”²⁵⁸ For the above-referenced explanations of the word *πτωχοτροφείον* has served as a source the records of Saint Basil concerning Basiliada: each definition of *ptochotropheion* reflects one aspect of its mission as I will show further in this chapter. However, Lampe below gives also other example taken from Epiphanius’ Panarion 75. 1, according to which Eustathius of Sebaste appointed a particular priest in charge of a “xenodocheion,” “which in Pontus is called a ptochotropheion:”

"Aerius was the fellow student of Eustathius the son of Sebastius, of Sebaste, in the country called Pontus, or Lesser Armenia. For Eustathius and Aerius were ascetics together. (6) When Eustathius attained the episcopate... he [Eustathius] made him [Aerius] a presbyter immediately afterwards, and entrusted him with the hospice, which in Pontus is called an alms-house. For they make arrangements of this kind out of hospitality, and the leaders of the churches there lodge the crippled and infirm, and supply as best they can."²⁵⁹ The fact that the same institution is called “xenodocheion,” in Sebaste and “ptochotropheion” in Pontus deserves special attention. It allows us, at least, to note some association between the Armenian and Pontian traditions of philanthropy. The Armenian word **aghk‘atanots‘* (poorhouse) used by the author of *The Epic Histories* is the literal translation of the Greek word *ptochotropheion*. This similarity also enables us to suggest that both traditions most probably have stem from a common tradition. Also, the reference of Epiphanius that the hospice intended to “lodge the crippled and the infirm” supports the idea that probably in the 370s and even earlier in Greco-Roman world there were a number of these

²⁵⁸ G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford University Press, 1961.

²⁵⁹ The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis: Books II and III. De Fide, Second, revised edition Translated by Frank Williams, Leiden • Boston, 2013, p. 504.

institutions and that this was their mission as it will be argued in corresponding chapter of my work.

Further from the quoted passages to the letters addressed to Amphilochius it is obvious that poorhouse is not just one of a multitude of buildings that consisted Basiliada, but the main one. The fact that the poorhouse also has a chapel adds weight to my theory.²⁶⁰ Smither suggests that “some of the residents probably included children that had been abandoned by their parents during the famine.”²⁶¹ His suggestion makes sense. It allows us to propose that not only the poor but also the children and the orphaned have received care here, as well as the travelers about whom we learn in the letter addressed to Elias.²⁶² However, I do not find it plausible that the poorhouse offered a *permanent* shelter for the poor. I believe the permanency could have referred only to the orphans that were deprived of any assistance to live on their own, as well as to the lepers, as the study of the Armenian poorhouse allows us to suggest. This misinterpretation of the word *ptochotropheion* “poorhouse” explains why some of the scholars in speaking on the ministries of Basiliada have considered poorhouse separately from the hospital.²⁶³ This confusion is perhaps influenced by the fact that neither the letters of Basil nor the funeral *Oration* of Gregory convey details about the poorhouse, although they do allow us to discern some hospital functions and suggest that the care of the sick is important.

²⁶⁰ Saint Basil. Letter CLXXVI, p. 461.

²⁶¹ E. Smither, *Missionary Monks*: p. 39, cff. *Mission in the Early Church*, p. 137

²⁶² Saint Basil. Letter XCIV, p. 151.

²⁶³ See P. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 140, 142, 143, cff. J. R. Mook, “The Church Fathers on Genesis, the Flood, and the Age of the Earth”, in *Coming to Grips with Genesis, Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth*, Terry Mortenson, Ph. D. Thane H. Ury, Ph. D. Editors, Master Books, USA, 2012. p. 32.

Further from the letter to Elias we learn that Basil had hired nurses and doctors to help the sick. A few scholars have taken this evidence seriously. Thus, Miller observes that the presence of doctors implies that Basil had created possibilities which included medical treatment for the sick, most likely to alleviate their suffering, but perhaps also to help them recover from their disease.²⁶⁴ This observation is ratified by Brett McCarty and Warren Kinghorn when they note: "Basil, who had received a classical education alongside Julian in Athens, founded what many consider to be the first hospital, a space marked by the combination of professional medical care, inpatient facilities, and charitable care."²⁶⁵ Gregory Nazianzen provides important further information:

“The effect produced is to be seen not only in the city, but in the country and beyond, and even the leaders of society have vied with one another in their philanthropy and magnanimity towards them. Others have had their cooks, and splendid tables, and the devices and dainties of confectioners, and exquisite carriages, and soft, flowing robes; Basil's care was for the sick, and the relief of their wounds, and the imitation of Christ, by cleansing leprosy, not by a word, but in deed.”²⁶⁶

“As to all this, what will be said by those who charge him with pride and haughtiness? Severe critics they are of such conduct, applying to him, whose life was a standard, those who were not standards at all. Is it possible that he who kissed the lepers, and humiliated himself to such a degree, could treat haughtily those who were in health: and, while wasting his flesh by abstinence, puff out his soul with empty arrogance?”²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ T. Miller, “Byzantine Hospitals”, pp. 54-55.

²⁶⁵ B. McCarty and W. Kinghorn, “Medicine, Religion and Spirituality in Theological Context”, in *Spirituality and Religion Within the Culture of Medicine: From Evidence to Practice*, ed by Michael Balboni and John Peteet, Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 345.

²⁶⁶ St. Gregory Nazianzen. Oration 43, p. 416.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 417.

Only a few scholars who discuss Basil's foundations mention the existence of the leper-house. For instance, Smither notes very briefly: "Sterk suggests that some patients suffered from leprosy."²⁶⁸ Susan Wessel in her important study *Passion and Compassion in Early Christianity* further calls attention to another oration of Gregory *On Love of the Poor*, " which according to her Gregory "delivered in 366/7 to publicize the fund-raising effort for the leprosarium Basil was planning to build as part of the Basilicas."²⁶⁹ Thus, this evidence allows us to maintain that Basiliada actually would have also had a leper-house. In addition, if the oration was delivered in 366/7 it means that he had this plan before the famous famine of Caesarea. On the base of this evidence one may hold that care of lepers was actually a priority for Basil's social program. The fact that in the letters of Basil we do not find any reference with regard to the lepers could merely be influenced by the fact that the leper-house was seen as an inseparable part of the hospital. It is interesting to note that the same attitude of the change towards the lepers is emphasized more strongly in the *Oration* of Gregory.

There are, then, good reasons for claiming that the Basiliada and the **aghk'atanots* ' [poorhouse] of Nersēs institutions pursuing similar missions, with hospital care, and especially care for lepers at their heart. If Xorenatsi's version of Nersēs' story paints it with realistic colors, then the *Oration* uses more emotional language, articulating the effect of the new humanness:

“There is no longer before our eyes that terrible and piteous spectacle of men who are living corpses, the greater part of whose limbs have mortified, driven away from their cities and homes and public places and fountains, aye, and

²⁶⁸ A. Sterk, *Renouncing the world Yet Leading the Church: The Monk-Bishop in Late Antiquity*, Harvard University Press, London, 2004, p. 69.

²⁶⁹ S. Wessel, *Passion and Compassion in Early Christianity*, Cambridge University Press, 2016, p. 40.

from their own dearest ones, recognizable by their names rather than by their features: they are no longer brought before us at our gatherings and meetings, in our common intercourse and union, no longer the objects of hatred, instead of pity on account of their disease... He did not therefore disdain to honour with his lips this disease...Basil's care was for the sick, and the relief of their wounds, and the imitation of Christ, by cleansing leprosy, not by a word, but in deed".²⁷⁰

This in its turn reveals the complex challenges that faced these philanthropic movements. The *Oration* of Gregory reveals that the same challenges experienced in Greek society, in regard to leprosy patients, were found in the Armenian context.

3.7 Basiliada: the care of the strangers and travelers

For a full picture of Basil's project, we must now discuss the role of care for strangers – a feature we have already observed in the Armenian context. The Letters of Basil provide us with firm evidence that the Basiliada also included a guesthouse. Thus, in the letter of Basil to Elias we find the following evidence:

"And whom do we wrong when we build hospices for strangers, for those who visit us while on a journey, for those who require some care because of sickness, and when we extend to the latter the necessary comforts, such as nurses, physicians, beasts for travelling and attendants?"²⁷¹

Gregory Nazianzus also mentions the care of strangers as well:

"Of his care for and protection of the Church, there are many other tokens... the support of the poor, the entertainment of strangers, the care of maidens..."²⁷²

²⁷⁰ St. Gregory Nazianzen. *Oration* 43, p. 416.

²⁷¹ Saint Basil. Letter XCIV.

²⁷² St. Gregory Nazianzen. *Oration* 43.

"Widows also will, I imagine, praise their protector, orphans their father, poor men their friend, strangers their entertainer, brothers the man of brotherly love, the sick their physician..."²⁷³

This evidence shows that the care of strangers was an important feature in Basil's philanthropic project. In speaking about the care of strangers in the late antique Greek world Andrew Crislip notes that the attitude towards strangers was not very favorable: "There was no social safety net for those who fell outside the strands of citizenship and patronage that held together ancient cities and towns, whether poor or stranger".²⁷⁴ Thus, it appears that in their social status, strangers were equal to the poor, deprived of any kind of support. Basil's endeavors to promote a culture of hospitality in Caesarean society should be evaluated in this light.

This observation allows us to maintain that Caesarean society met the same challenges in relation to strangers as Xorenatsi's version of Nersēs' story maintains with regard to the Armenian context: "He [Nerses] also prescribed that lodgings be built in every village to serve as inns for strangers".²⁷⁵

From the letter to Elias one may conclude that guesthouse and the hospital were the same institution:

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ A. T. Crislip, *From Monastery to Hospital*, p. 108.

²⁷⁵ Moses Khorenats'i, *History of The Armenians*, Book III, ch.20, cff. «Եւ հիւրք անձամօթք ոչ ընդունէին, և օտարք ոչ ժողովէին», Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. Ի (Moses Khorenats'i, *History*, Book III, ch.20). In his translation of the word **hjurk*', which in classical Armenian simply means guest, (see «Նոր Բառգիրք Հայկազգեան լեզուի», հատոր II (*New dictionary of Classical Armenian*, vol. II) Thomson has translated it to "travelers". Of course, the word, "guests" found in the text of Khorenats'i could also refer to travelers. However, I choose to keep the word as *guest* given the fact that the authentic translation of this word allows us to further make important observations regarding the spirit of hospitality in the Armenian philanthropic tradition as I will show further.

"And whom do we wrong when we build hospices for strangers, for those who visit us while on a journey, for those who require some care because of sickness, and when we extend to the latter the necessary comforts, such as nurses, physicians, beasts for travelling and attendants?"²⁷⁶

It is obvious that the hospices provide the strangers with shelter, as well as with medical care. Accordingly, it makes most sense to imagine the same institution, the Basiliada, offering care for different vulnerable groups. Further Holman's discussion on Late Antique philanthropic institutions sheds some light on this question. Thus, she develops the view that the concept of guesthouse during the time has experienced some development. If in the beginning it offered care for the strangers and travelers, then later on it included also the poor. Thus, this explanation allows us to hold that the guesthouse and the poorhouse actually were not two different institutions, but perhaps the same institution that offered care to different vulnerable groups of people. This explains why Basil in speaking of Basiliada does not differentiate hospital from guesthouse but speaks of them as one complex institution. Andrew Crislip states that Basil "incorporated the church hostel as a function of his hospital." Further he observes that: "So central, in fact, was the hostel to the hospital that in later Byzantine literature a hospital came simply to be called a *xenon*, or "guesthouse"; the term was entirely equivalent to *nosokomeion*, "place for the care of the sick."²⁷⁷

Brett McCarty and Warren Kinghorn in their thoughtful essay "Medicine, Religion and Spirituality in Theological Context" go a step further with respect to this question. They develop the thesis that Basil was the one who "provided a further

²⁷⁶ Saint Basil, Letter XCIV.

²⁷⁷ A. T. Crislip, *From Monastery to Hospital*, p. 109.

institutional innovation that has proved decisive for the history and practice of medicine.” According to their suggestion Basil combined together professional medical care, inpatient facilities, and charitable care:

“In bringing these three aspects together, Basil was both institutionally innovative and theologically creative. By combining professional medical care with the institutional models of the xenodocheia and ptochotropheia, Basil united Jesus’ admonition to care for the sick, as seen in Matthew 25, with the emphasis on hospitality found in the parable of the Good Samaritan.”²⁷⁸

The claim that the author of the combination of xenodocheia and ptochotropheia is Basil the Great needs further support. From Holman's observation it is not apparent that these developments happened as a result of Basil's philanthropic movement. She only notes that xenodocheia during the time had developed into ptochotropheia. In other words, she accepts that some development took place during the time, but she is careful to ascribe it to Basil, knowing his contribution in the development of philanthropy in eastern Christianity. However, a thorough study of Basil's letters allows us to maintain that Basiliada presented itself as a combination of xenodocheia and ptochotropheia. The fact that Basil saw his foundations as performing both functions, does not mean that he was the one who developed this connection. Thus, the finding observed by Brett McCarty and Warren Kinghorn is at least true in relation to Basiliada. This discussion further supports Christine Pohl by observing: "Gradually these hospitals were differentiated into separate institutions according to the type of person in need:

²⁷⁸B. McCarty and W. Kinghorn, “Medicine, Religion and Spirituality in Theological Context”, p. 345.

orphans, widows, strangers, sick, and poor. Often, however, they served various functions."²⁷⁹

In regard to the administrative side of caregiving offered in the guesthouse then we do not have enough evidence to describe how the supervision of the strangers were organized in Basiliada.²⁸⁰ However, the existing materials allow us to maintain that the strangers and travelers received housing, food, and medical treatment in the Basiliada. Further, in speaking about the Christian culture of hospitality throughout Mediterranean world, Crislip clarifies that not only should destitute travelers be counted among the strangers, but also those "stranded in foreign territories without money or relatives to aid them" but also refugees and shipwreck victims.²⁸¹ This clarification is important in the sense that it allows us to understand which vulnerable groups were included in the care for strangers or the guesthouse. Further the reference to refugees also widens the circle of strangers in Caesarean context. In turn, this clarification allows us to understand why in his letter to Elias, Basil focuses specifically on the medical treatment of the travelers:

"And whom do we wrong when we build hospices for strangers, for those who visit us while on a journey, for those who require some care because of sickness, and when we extend to the latter the necessary comforts, such as nurses, physicians, beasts for travelling and attendants?"²⁸²

In this text the word *stranger* is used in a general sense, it can apply to all kind of strangers. In reference to the phrase "who visit us while on a journey" then it most probably refers to travelers as well as to migrants. Crislip also observes that

²⁷⁹ C. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition*, Grand Rapids, Cambridge, 1999, p. 44.

²⁸⁰ E.g. see S. Holman, *God Knows There's Need*, p. 62.

²⁸¹ A. T. Crislip, *From Monastery to Hospital*, p. 108.

²⁸² Saint Basil, Letter XCIV.

"During this period of social and political transformation, there were also migrations of population in Anatolia and Syria as the rural poor were driven by changing economic conditions from the countryside into the cities."²⁸³ The fact that Basil's foundation included small workshops used for teaching and practicing trades supports this suggestion.²⁸⁴ Most probably the workshops served not only supported the poor in developing their skills, but also migrants, who as Crislip justly observes "were thus left, destitute, without work, without aid from family or state...as the refugees were not eligible even for the meager benefits of food bestowed upon the poorer members of the demos."²⁸⁵ Thus, it appears that refugees were actually in a very bad situation: the local poor could have received food, but the migrants were totally deprived of any support from local communities. This very extreme condition of the strangers was what Christine Pohl has in mind when she notes: "Christians established many hospitals (*xenodochia*) in the fourth century to care for the strangers, but particularly for poor strangers who had no other resources."²⁸⁶

Thus, it appears that Basil's social initiatives towards strangers and travelers not only aimed to change the attitude of society to them, but also to integrate migrants into the social structure of the host society. Despite the fact that "Basil never describes the "job training" or "occupations" he mentions in his letter to the governor,"²⁸⁷ it is obvious however that his initiative was something innovative in the culture of philanthropy in general. Further, Holman completes this theory by

²⁸³ A. T. Crislip, *From Monastery to Hospital*, p. 109.

²⁸⁴ T. Patitsas, "St. Basil's Philanthropic Program and Modern Microlending Strategy for Economic Self-Actualization", p. 269.

²⁸⁵ A. T. Crislip, *From Monastery to Hospital*, p. 109.

²⁸⁶ C. Pohl, *Making Room*, p. 44.

²⁸⁷ S. Holman, *God Knows There's Need*, p. 62.

noting that "the program's focus on unprecedented or at least relatively novel institutions is a reminder that, from the first, the Basileias meant that people were helping other people they could see and get to know. Some spirit of mutuality could more easily arise under those conditions."²⁸⁸

In the case of these workshops, The Armenian evidence does not allow us to maintain that the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs had offered such services for the strangers. This is something contextual, typical to Basiliada.

3.8 The care of the orphans, widows, and the poor

In relation to the Armenian philanthropic foundations, I have shown that orphans, widows, and elderly people were also provided with care. While the letters of Basil do not supply us with any evidence that these vulnerable groups of people were part of his social programs, other texts make this clear. In the sermon *In Time of Famine and Drought* we come across the following passage, which allows us to hold that the care of orphans and widows also was included in Basil's social agenda:

“Who washes the feet of strangers, rinsing away the dust of travel, so that in time of need that person might entreat God, seeking an end to the drought? Who supports the child without parents, so that God might in turn support the wheat, which is like an orphan battered down by the unseasonable winds? Who ministers to the widow afflicted by the hardship of life, so that the provisions we need might now be measured back to us? Tear up the unjust contract, so that sin might also be loosed. Wipe away the debt that bears high rates of interest, so that the earth may bear its usual fruits”²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ S. Holman, *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society*, Holy Cross, 2008, p. 282.

²⁸⁹ St. Basil the Great, *On Social Justice*, Translation with Introduction and Commentary by C. Paul Schroeder, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 2009, p. 78.

Although, the sermon refers to the famous famine of Caesarea, particularly the soup kitchen, the reader however can get the impression that the care of these vulnerable groups of people is already an established reality. This is also supported by the fact that among these groups *strangers* are included also. It is a fact that the care of strangers was not the priority of the famine relief. Thus, I believe, this passage reflects the developments that preceded the famine. The *Oration* of Gregory further supports my suggestion. It provides us with evidence that Basiliada offered care for these vulnerable groups:

“Widows also will, I imagine, praise their protector, orphans their father, poor men their friend, strangers their entertainer, brothers the man of brotherly love, the sick their physician, whatever be their sickness and the healing they need, the healthy the preserver of health, and all men him who made himself all things to all that he might gain the majority, if not all”.²⁹⁰

The comments of the author do not leave any doubt that widows, orphans, and the indigent were provided with an environment of care and hope within the walls of Basiliada. Thus, this suggestion allows us to hold that the care of these vulnerable groups should not be merely seen in the context of famine. On the contrary, the consistent reading of the material allows us to hold that it had a continual character, as is the case with the Armenian philanthropic movement.

We should also note that in the scholarship we find different interpretations regarding the relationship of the soup kitchen and the Basiliada. Many scholars speak as if these were different projects. Rousseau, on the contrary, with reference to Gregory's mention of a soup kitchen, claims that it reminds one of

²⁹⁰ St. Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration 43*, p. 422.

Basileiados.²⁹¹ This is a controversial claim, but the evidence of Gregory allows us to discern some continuity between the soup kitchen and the Basiliada, or to put it another way, to see that the soup kitchen may have helped to suggest the need for the wider project of the Basiliada. Further the observation of Smither on the establishment of Basiliada supports this suggestion: "it seems that the devastation caused by the famine of 368 especially drove him to launch this project."²⁹² Hence, it appears that in the early stage of famine, Basil accomplished his charitable work mainly through the soup kitchen, which later on was incorporated into the system of Basiliada. In this light, the social project of Basil not only aimed to attain food security for everyone, but also to develop a sense of responsibility for each other. It was in this context that Basil's social gospel was put to the test or laid the foundation of the New City. In other words, Basil challenged the accepted sociopolitical system and worldview by providing a new hermeneutic for restructuring the social environment and worldview.

3.9 Philanthropic institutions of Nersēs and monasticism: is there a connection?

The discussion of this chapter further allows us to answer the question whether had the organizations of Nersēs any connection with monastic life or not? Historian Leo believes that the governance of the charitable institutions of Nersēs was most probably given to the monastic orders that he had increased so vastly during his time.²⁹³ Garsoian in her above-referenced article already has shown that monastic

²⁹¹ P. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 139-140.

²⁹² E. Smither, *Missionary Monks*, p. 39.

²⁹³ Լեո, Հայոց Պատմություն, հատոր I, էջ 452 (Leo, *History*, vol I, p. 452).

orders have appeared in the Armenian church tradition since the 7th century.²⁹⁴ However, *The Epic Histories* mentions that Nersēs along his charitable agencies has established also female ascetic communities. Thus, in speaking about the antichurch policy of the Armenian king Pap (369-374) he maintains:

“And so, he [King Pap] began to manifest his hatred toward his [Nersēs] earlier canons, and he began to order openly to the realm the destruction of the asylums-for-widows and for-orphans that Nersēs had built in the various districts, and also the destruction of the walled and fortified dwellings-of-virgins [kusastank‘] in various districts and towns that the same Nersēs had built for them, for the care over their well-kept vows.”²⁹⁵

However, *The Epic Histories* does not provide us with any evidence that these solitary communities had any connection with the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs. On the other hand, the further description of the way of living of these female communities may allow us to suggest that actually they were isolated from the world:

“For the blessed Nersēs had built these *dwellings in every *district during his lifetime so that all those who were consecrated virgins might assemble there in fasting and in prayers, and receive their food from the *world and their own families”.²⁹⁶

Likewise, Xorenatsi’s version of Nersēs’ story does not offer any evidence in support for the claim that the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs had some association with solitary communities. Most likely, the laity should have been

²⁹⁴ See N. Garsoïan, “Introduction to the problem”. About this question see also *The Epic Histories, Commentary*, Book IV, ch. iv, commentary 19, p.272.

²⁹⁵ *The Epic Histories*, Book V, ch. xxxi. «Եւ սկսաւ նախանձ վարել ընդդէմ յառաջագոյն կանոնելոցն ի նմանէ. եւ սկսաւ հրաման տալ յայտնապէս յաշխարհին աւերել զայրենոցսն եւ զորբանոցսն՝ զոր շինեալ էր Ներսէս ի գաւառս, եւ աւերել զկուսաստանսն ի գաւառս գաւառս եւ յաւանս յաւանս պարսպեալս եւ ամրացեալս, որ նորին Ներսիսի էր շինեալ վասն ամրապահս առանգոցն զգուշութեան:», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Ե., գլ. ԼԲ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book V, ch. xxxii).

²⁹⁶ *The Epic Histories*, Book V, ch. xxxi. «Քանզի յիւրում կենդանութեան երանելոյն Ներսիսի էր շինեալ. շինեաց զայս կուսաստանս յամենայն գաւառս, զի որ միանգամ կուսանք եւ հաւատացեալք իցեն՝ անոր ժողովեցին ի պահս եւ յաղաթս, եւ կերակրել յաշխարհէ եւ յիւրաքանչիւր ընտանեաց:», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Ե., գլ. ԼԲ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book V, ch. xxxii).

involved in the governance of the charitable agencies of Nersēs. This suggestion may also be supported by the fact that the Armenian Church was actually one of the most influential feudal houses of the 4-5th century Armenia. So, it had sufficient means to provide the needed human resources for the management of these agencies. As it will be shown further in the corresponding chapter of my dissertation the first evidence regarding the connection between the Armenian philanthropic institutions and monasticism is found in the 7th century sources. In the same way some scholars question the claim that the services of Basiliada were carried out by monks.²⁹⁷ Holman in speaking on the administrative and distributive activities of Basiliada observes that “It is often believed that they included members of his [Basil’s] monastic community, but there is no proof of this for Basil’s particular endeavor.”²⁹⁸ All we learn from the *Letters* of Basil is that nurses and physicians were involved in the mission of Basiliada²⁹⁹. Thus, the suggestion that Basiliada also might be run by laity may enable us to argue for more links between the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs and Basiliada.

CONCLUSION

Thus, on the base of this discussion what we were able to establish? Firstly I showed that the Armenian word **aghk’atanots* ‘is understood and used in the sense of hospital in the 5th century Armenian literature. This then establishes a first parallel between the Greek and Armenian institutions. I have also argued that at least in the 5th century in the Armenian philanthropic tradition the leper-houses were part of poorhouses. Thus, I believe, this is another argument to support the

²⁹⁷ Cff. N. Garsoïan, “Introduction to the problem”, pp. 181-182.

²⁹⁸ S. Holman, *God Knows There’s Need: Christian Response to Poverty*, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 62.

²⁹⁹ Saint Basil, Letter XCIV.

relationship between the Armenian poorhouse and Basiliada. Further, a comparison reveals that guesthouse had played a key role in both the Armenian and Byzantine philanthropic traditions, alongside the poorhouse or hospital. An examination of historical evidence allows us to maintain that in both contexts, guesthouse in fact served the same vulnerable groups, such as strangers, travelers, and migrants. The only difference that actually can be pointed out regarding the mission of the guesthouse is the fact that in Basiliada, strangers also received medical care, while the Armenian sources do not ascribe such service to guesthouses. This was, of course, influenced by the fact that in the Armenian context guesthouse was separate from the poorhouse, while in the Byzantine experience it was a part of the poorhouse. It was also suggested that it may be possible that the charitable agencies of Nersēs and Basiliada were run by laity: this can serve as another link between the two schools of philanthropy. Both the Armenian and Caesarean traditions offered pastoral responses to similar philanthropic agendas from their own perspectives. In this light, Garsoïan’s claim that “Basiliada... was a single, vast, all-purpose urban foundation...” does not mean at all that there were no connections between “Numerous foundations... throughout Armenia...”³⁰⁰ The comparative study demonstrates that whatever numerous foundations of Nersēs actually accomplished, were the same fulfilled by an all-purpose foundation of Basil.³⁰¹ The only difference that can actually be

³⁰⁰ N. Garsoïan, “Introduction to the problem” pp. 180-183.

³⁰¹ However, one may argue that Basiliada also included institutions that we do not find in the Armenian context. For instance, in speaking on the philanthropic institutions of Basil, Smither adds that Basiliada incorporated storehouses with a food supply (see E. Smither, *Missionary Monks*, p. 39). He does not mention where he draws this evidence from, but only supports his suggestion by referring to the work of Rousseau (see P. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, p. 142). The funeral oration of Gregory, which offers the most extensive description of the social program of Basil, does not explicitly mention the existence of storehouses. It is supposable that Basiliada would have had storages, taking into consideration the ministries that were offered by it. However, I do not think that storehouse should be seen as a charitable institution as Smither attempts to suggest, but only as a means to implement the mission of Basiliada in a general sense. Simultaneously, it should be

pointed out is the capacity of both movements. Thus, to sum up this discussion, I would like to maintain that the projects of Basil and Nersēs are similar in some important and fundamental respects.

remembered that most of the researchers that were studying the charitable institutions of Basil do not mention the storehouses.

Chapter Four: Two schools of philanthropy: The quest for social justice

Introduction

In previous chapters we have established that in structure and mission there are considerable similarities between the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs and those of Basil, certainly in the 5th century, and most likely in the fourth. In this chapter I explore similarities and differences between Basil's philanthropic vision (primarily as presented in his sermons on social justice³⁰²) and that of the Armenian tradition, primarily as it is presented in *The Epic Histories*. In comparison to Basil's sermons the book of *The Epic Histories* is relatively modest: it offers rather unsystematic observations on the character of Nersēs's philanthropic vision. Nevertheless, enough evidence exists to show that similarities exist alongside differences of emphasis that probably stem from a variety of contextual factors. My procedure will be to alternate discussions of Basil and Nersēs in order to make clear their distinctive features.

4.1 Wealth and social justice

The usual addressees of Basil's sermons on social justice were the rich and wealthy. It is not accidental that two of his four sermons on themes are about the

³⁰² In respect to this the scholars identify the following four sermons, which allow us to form an understanding of Basil's social teaching: *To the Rich* (serm. 7), *I Will Tear Down my Barns* (serm. 6), *In Time of Famine and Drought* (serm. 8), and *Against Those Who Lend At Interest* (serm. in Ps 14b). I use the translation of these sermons found in St. Basil the Great, *On Social Justice*, trans C. Paul Schroeder (Crestwood NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2009). Some may rightly also include in the list his famous *Asketikon* as I will show further in this chapter.

rich: *To the Rich* and *I Will Tear Down My Barns*. If Matthew 19:16-22 served as a source of inspiration for the first sermon, then Luke 12:16-21 was the source for the second. In the first sermon Basil shows the dangers of the attachment to wealth, while the second explains the vanity of riches. However, does the content of these sermons allow one to maintain that Basil was opposed in all cases to wealth and riches? The claim of Basil “For the more you abound in wealth, the more you lack in love”³⁰³ may leave the reader with the impression that he was so opposed. E. Morrison in *St. Basil and His Rule: A Study in Early Monasticism* notes that “his denunciations are so severe that he has been claimed as a Socialist who denied all rights of property.” Morrison justifies Basil’s forcible language by maintaining that “a strong reminder of the duty of charity was needed.” In particular, his observations on free labor, taxation and usury shed light on the causes of poverty.³⁰⁴ The observations of Druzhinina further allow us to develop an idea about the challenges that Basil faced: “Living in the situation where climatic conditions and cultural traditions generated poverty, St. Basil was able to reconcile his theological views and his practical actions with existing social concerns.”³⁰⁵

However, Basil does not actually condemn wealth itself, but what he deems unacceptable attitudes towards wealth and money: “Let those who account greed a virtue and amass far more wealth than they actually need demonstrate now the value of the things they have treasured up.”³⁰⁶ Thus, it appears that what Basil deems unacceptable is greed, the intense desire to have something that is not

³⁰³ St. Basil the Great, *Serm.* 7.1 (Schroeder, 43).

³⁰⁴ E. Morrison, *St. Basil and His Rule*, p. 123.

³⁰⁵ O. Druzhinina, *The Ecclesiology of St. Basil the Great: A Trinitarian Approach to the Life of the Church*, Pickwick Publications, Eugene, Oregon, 2016, p. 164

³⁰⁶ St. Basil the Great, *Serm.* 8. 4 (Schroeder, 79).

necessary for one's own survival. G. Risse rightly observes that "Famine and disease, of course, were then prominent causes for social upheaval. To Basil, these were also symptomatic of a community's moral malaise, which often could be traced to the rich and their greed."³⁰⁷

Basil places special importance on the commandment of love. According to Basil, acts of charity for the poor serve as the foundation for alleviating poverty:

"It is evident that you are far from fulfilling the commandment, and that you bear false witness within your own soul that you have loved your neighbor as yourself. For if what you say is true, that you have kept from your youth the commandment of love and have given to everyone the same as to yourself, then how did you come by this abundance of wealth?"³⁰⁸

In relation to this passage Schroeder concludes that "the focus is not on the individual's relationship to wealth and possessions, but rather on the fact that having great wealth while others lack daily necessities constitutes a violation of the law of love."³⁰⁹ I agree that for Basil, greed is a result of ignorance of the commandment of love, however, Schroeder's claim that "the focus is not on the individual's relationship to wealth and possessions" is not convincing. In the mind of Basil, fulfillment of the commandment of love is closely related with social responsibility. For example, consider this passage:

"Why then are you wealthy while another is poor?...Are you not a robber? The things you received in trust as a stewardship, have you not appropriated them for yourself? ... The bread you are holding back is for the hungry, the clothes you keep put away are for the naked ...The silver you keep buried in the earth is for the needy."³¹⁰

³⁰⁷ G. Risse, *Mending Bodies, saving Souls: A History of Hospitals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) p. 76.

³⁰⁸ St. Basil the Great, *Serm.* 7.1 (Schroeder, 43).

³⁰⁹ St. Basil the Great, *On Social Justice*, Introduction, p. 24.

³¹⁰ St. Basil the Great, *Serm.* 6. 7 (Shroeder, 69-70).

Here we see that Basil deems it important to put other people's needs at least equal to our own, and thus our social responsibility for others is actually closely related to the question of how we view our own possessions. One may argue that his philanthropy is not inclusive: only the wealthy and the rich can contribute to the work of charity, merely because they have appropriate resources. In other words, one may complain that the philanthropic movement of Basil was a class privileged movement. However, in the sermon *In Time Famine and Drought* Basil maintains that the work of charity refers both to the wealthy and to the poor. Thus, we read:

“Are you poor? You know someone who is even poorer. You have provisions for only ten days, but someone else has only enough for one day. As a good and generous person, redistribute your surplus to the needy. Do not shrink from giving the little that you have; do not prefer your own benefit to remedying the common distress.”³¹¹

Thus, regardless of social status, everyone is called to charity according to his/her ability. Of course, it is difficult to tell how effectively Basil's message worked, or whether the poor were widely involved in his philanthropic activity. I am more inclined to think that Basil's point remained theoretical! In addition, it is apparent that Basil did not further develop this aspect of his philanthropic thinking. His sermons do not provide us with any evidence that he touched upon this question frequently during his ministry. This at least allows us to maintain that the question of the involvement of society in the work of charity was not given the same degree of urgency as we will find in the Armenian context.

That Basil's exhortation to philanthropy was mostly directed to the wealthy should be considered in relation to the fact that Basil's only resource for charity were the

³¹¹ St. Basil the Great, *Serm.* 8. 6 (Shroeder 83).

wealthy themselves. Van Dam has correctly observed that “in his sermons Basil employed several different tactics simultaneously...The people who needed persuading were of course local notables, the wealthy landowners with grain in their granaries.”³¹² Morrison’s observation on the resources of Basil further indirectly supports this suggestion: “But the ordinary diocesan administration of relief was probably insufficient for the mass of poverty which was everywhere to be found.”³¹³

Basil also seems to be clear that social hierarchies are, to some extent divinely ordained:

“O mortal, recognize your Benefactor Consider yourself, who you are, what resources have been entrusted to you, from whom you received them, and why you received more than others. You have been made a minister of God’s goodness, a steward of your fellow servants. Do not suppose that all this was furnished for your own gullet Resolve to treat the things in your possessions as belonging to others.”³¹⁴

God is the giver of everything, and thus what we have, if we have resources, is entrusted to us by God and we are responsible for the well-being of others. But of course, this vision also assumed that God allows some people to be born into poverty and some to be born with a “silver spoon.” Olga Druzhinina, reflecting on this homily notes: “Then at the end, the rich ‘might receive the reward of benevolence and good stewardship, while the poor are honored for patient endurance in their struggles.’ From this perspective, a lack of riches is useful to the poor, because they have the good chance ‘to conform to the requirements and

³¹² R. Van Dam, *Kingdom of Snow: Roman Rule and Greek Culture in Cappadocia*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2002, p. 46.

³¹³ E. Morison, *St. Basil and His Rule*, p. 124.

³¹⁴ St. Basil the Great, *Serm.* 6. 2, (Shroeder 61).

commandments of the Lord through obedience and patience in time of troubles”³¹⁵
–she concludes. Rousseau in relation to this discussion further notes: "That looks like reinforcement of the social status quo in the name of some higher hope."³¹⁶
Druzhinina fails to note that Basil actually encourages the poor to reconcile with the sufferings of poverty, to accept them as God given. Thus, Basil avoids identifying the causes and effects of poverty on society, allowing society to remain divided between the rich and poor.

However, Holman in her important study *God Knows There is a Need*, argues that Basil’s philanthropy actually aimed to overcome differences between rich and poor. She notes:

“Thus, rather than hoarding grain, lending it at usurious interest, or going into debt during the famine, Basil urges his congregation to live simply and imitate God’s generosity, since God without distinction gives rain and food to all on the earth, just and unjust. By this divine imitation, Basil suggests, differences between rich and poor could be leveled. Such economic leveling was one of Basil’s social ideals.”³¹⁷

I agree with Holman’s claim that economic leveling was one of Basil’s social ideals. However, does this suggest that in Basil’s understanding the charity was considered the only means to overcome poverty, to change unjust systems? Basil does not openly claim that wealth inequality is a result of unequal distribution within society. Nevertheless, the fact that he calls his congregation to imitate God’s generosity may allow us to suggest that the economic equality is disturbed as a result of unjust treatment of each other. This may allow us to advise that in Basil’s social vision God’s justice is a model, on the base of this model the differences

³¹⁵ O. Druzhinina, *The Ecclesiology of St. Basil the Great*, pp. 149-150.

³¹⁶ P. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, p.138.

³¹⁷ S. Holman, *God Knows There's Need*, p. 124.

between rich and poor could be leveled. Thus, Basil does not simply command his congregation to charity, but he inspires them to think and act differently. In other words, to become God-like.

A comparison of the Armenian evidence with what we find in Basil's sermons allows us to see similarities and differences between the two schools of philanthropy. The study of *The Epic Histories* may allow us to suggest that by the fifth century, the Armenian focused on addressing social injustice and developing a broadly based Christian social responsibility. However, considering the fact that the Christianization of Armenia was a slow process and it took a while, it is reasonable to think that the vision of a society-wide culture found in the book of *The Epic Histories* in the 5th century reality could have been aimed at rich literate people. Perhaps that is why the author of *The Epic Histories* represents the teaching of Nersēs on philanthropy in relation to all classes of society beginning with those who have authority:

“He commanded the entire realm beginning with the king, the magnates in general, and all those who had authority over their fellows, to show mercy to their servants, and their inferiors, and their followers, to love them like members of their own families, and not to oppress them unjustly with exorbitant taxes, reminding [them] that they too had a Lord in heaven. He likewise ordered the servants to be obediently faithful to their masters so that they might receive a reward from the Lord”³¹⁸.

³¹⁸ *The Epic Histories*, Book III, ch. iv, cff. «Եւ ամենայն աշխարհին պատուիրէր, եւ գլխովին թագաւորին, առհասարակ ամենայն մեծամեծացն, եւ ամենեցուն՝ որոք ի վերայ ընկերին ունիցին իշխանութիւն, գութ ունելով ընդ իւրեանց ծառայս եւ ընդ կրտերս եւ ընդ աշակերտս, եւ սիրելի իբրեւ զընտանիս, եւ մի՛ անարժանս եւ ասել ի տարապայմանս հարկօք նեղել քան զչափն. յուշ առնելով, զի եւ նոցա տէր գոյ յերկինս: Սոյնպէս եւ ծառայից պատուիրէր՝ կալ յարդարն հնազանդութեան իւրեանց տերանց, զի ի տեսնն է լինիցի նոցա վարձք». Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. Դ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III, ch. iv).

The Epic Histories presents Nersēs addressing the powerful, but emphasizing social responsibility- the transformation of mind that takes place when we feel ourselves responsible for others, especially those who are under our authority. It seems that Nersēs could make such a broad address to his society, from the royal family down to all others in authority, and that he could address such issues as unfair taxation. However, this picture does not look very different from that in Basil: the main difference is that in a smaller context Nersēs is able to address the King directly; Basil assumes he has no power over the emperor, nor over taxation! *The Epic Histories* presents Nersēs philanthropic vision as extending even further, to all parts of society:

“He constantly spoke these and similar words to them, ceaselessly instructing and admonishing by day and night...He urged everyone to ardent spiritual love: [both] the mightiest and the inferior, the honored and the lowly, the rich and the poor, the *azat* [freemen] and the peasant”.³¹⁹

The author of *The Epic Histories* purposely lists social classes in order to convey to his readers that everyone was called to participate in the philanthropic movement of Nersēs. Even if such passages represent the perspective of the fifth century, surely we are justified in arguing that they demonstrate the legacy of Nerses’ work in the previous century. The following passage points also to the involvement of all classes in Armenian philanthropy:

“He displayed particular zeal in the regulation of charity; first assuming the doing of good himself, then giving to others the example of good deeds, and in general, he opened the closed doors of the mind to the good through the exhortation of his spiritual-teaching...All the believers distributed whatever

³¹⁹ Ibid. «Չայս եւ այսպիսի ինչ, եւ որ ինչ այսմիկ նման էին բանք, խաւսէր հանապազ, գոխւ եւ զգիշեր ոչ դադարէր ի խրատելոյ եւ ի բողոքելոյ... զհոգեւոր սիրոյն եռանդն ածէր առ ամենեսին, առ մեծամեծս եւ առ պատուականս եւ առ անարգս, առ հարուստս եւ առ աղքատս, առ ազատս եւ առ շինականս», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. Դ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III, ch. iv).

they possessed equally and willingly to the poor, and they did this of their own accord, with joy and vigilance”.³²⁰

Even if this picture is rather idealistic, it reveals a vision of all Christians participating in acts of charity toward the poor. We may also see this passage as revealing that Nersēs and his companions perhaps saw such charity as an intrinsic part of Christian discipleship. *The Epic Histories* also allow us to suggest that in Armenian philanthropy, responsibility for the poor and oppressed is presented as a matter of righteousness and justice. Consider how the work of Nersēs is described here: “He fought for the truth until death and encouraged and made joyful the champion of righteousness. He nurtured and nourished the fruit of righteousness with the rain of his spiritual-teaching to attain blessings.”³²¹

Compare with this the words of Manuel Mamikonean General in Chief of the Armenian army, where the words *righteousness* and *mercy* are used to describe the philanthropic activity of Nersēs:

“Strive all the more for righteousness and mercy. For our great patriarch Nersēs always commanded this, he put it in practice himself every hour of his life and taught it to others. For he comforted the poor, the homeless, the captive, the abandoned, the stranger, [and] the wanderer. He said: ‘There is nothing greater and more honorable before the Lord than mercy and almsgiving’”.³²²

³²⁰ Ibid.. «նա եւ կարի իսկ գողորմածութեան կարգացն փոյթ արարեալ ցուցանելոյ, նախ ինքն առնելով առ իւր անձն բարի, եւ ապա այլոց արինակ բերեաց դնելով, առ հասարակ վարդապետական բանին զամենեցուն զփակեալ դրունս մտաց ի բարին յորդորելով բանայր...ամենեքեան հաւատացեալք ընդ աղքատս իւրեանց զիւրեանց ինչս մատակարարեալ հաւանութեամբ հաւասարութեամբ, եւ ինքեանք լրջմտութեամբ զուարթութեամբ գործէին», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. Դ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III, ch. iv).

³²¹ Ibid. «Եւ վասն ճշմարտութեանն մինչեւ ի մահ մարտնչէր, եւ զաջողակ արդարութեանն քաջակերեալ խնդացուցանէր. եւ իւրով վարդապետութեանն անձրեւաւն պարարէր սնուցանել զշայեկան արդարութիւնսն արինութիւնս ընգալու», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. Դ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III, ch. iv).

³²² *The Epic Histories*, Book V, ch. xIiv. «Չի որ միանգամ յուսոյ յարութեան ակն ունին, միւսանգամ կենդանութեան եւ զախտեանն Զրիստոսի, չէ պարտ լալ գնոսա: Այլ իմ ցայժմ յուսով երկիւղիւ կեցեալ, բայց դուք մի՛ թիւրիցիք ի պատուիրանացն Աստուծոյ. աւելի զարդարութենէ փոյթ արասցիք, եւս առաւել գողորմութենէ: Չի մեզ մեծ հայրապետն Ներսէս զայս համակ պատուիրէր. եւ ինքն յամենայն ժամ ի կենդանութեանն զսոյն գործէր, եւ այլոց

The author does not here offer any dense account the word *righteousness*, even though continual use of the word shows its importance. But further relevant evidence can be produced. In the prayer of Nersēs, God is pictured as the paradigm of philanthropy: “Who art mighty and powerful and just in all things, and Who lovest to show mercy to the oppressed and the anguished.”³²³ The philanthropy of God is here pictured in relation to his justice. Thus, the use of the words *righteousness* and *justice* in relation to philanthropy naturally calls attention to the root causes of social injustice.

This discussion allows us to discern that the Armenian perception of justice is understood in terms of caring for one another. It is obvious that caring for the other offers more than simply the work of charity supposes. However, in the sermons of Basil we come across also with the word mercy, which is not used just in the sense of charity. As we will see further for Basil mercy is understood owing to one another or willingness to share.

4.2 Sharing equally or works of mercy

In his sermons Basil resolutely exhorted the wealthy to provide some of their assets as an investment for future rewards. With respect to this he maintains:

ուսուցանէր առնել. զի ողորմէր աղքատաց, տնանգաց, գերեաց, ամայեաց, աւտարաց, պանդխտաց. զի այսպէս ասէր նա. Քան զողորմութիւն առնել, կամ քան զտուրս տալ, այլ ինչ մեծ էւ պատուական առաջի Աստուծոյ չիք», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Ե., գլ. ԽԴ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book V, ch. xIiv).

³²³ *The Epic Histories*, Book V., ch. iv. «Եւ յամենայնի ամենեւին քո միայնոյ կատարեսցին կամք քո ամենագաւր, որ հզարդ էս էւ կարող էւ արդար յամենայնի, էւ սիրես ողորմել նեղելոց էւ տագնապելոց», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Ե., գլ. Դ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book V., ch. iv).

“You showed no mercy; it will not be shown to you. You opened not your house; you will be expelled from the Kingdom. You gave not your bread; you will not receive eternal life”.³²⁴

Basil thus puts the love for one’s neighbor at the center of the relationship with God: everything given by God should be shared with others. Druzhinina, reflecting on the trinitarian nature of Basil’s philanthropy, points out that in St. Basil’s understanding, the ministry of mercy is born from the accomplishment of the commandment of God to love one’s neighbor. According to her it is founded: “on the imitation of his or the love of the Father, and of the Savior, and of the Spirit toward all humanity.” Further, Druzhinina argues that St. Basil’s conception of compassion is based on his theological presuppositions regarding the “relationship of the Triune Creator to human beings.” Thus, she concludes that his service to the poor and the destitute is his implementation of this teaching in the life of the Church.³²⁵

In his sermon *I Will Tear Down My Barns* Basil develops this thesis by stating that everything beneficial comes from God: “fertile soil, temperate weather, plenty of seeds, cooperation of animals, and whatever else is required for successful cultivation.” However, the source of this benefit is not always understood properly by human beings, which results in an “unwillingness to share”. Basil relates this lapse directly with the fact that man forgets that “he shared with others a common nature, nor did he think it necessary to distribute from his abundance to those in

³²⁴ St. Basil the Great, *Serm.* 7.4 (Schroeder, 49).

³²⁵ O. Druzhinina, *The Ecclesiology of St. Basil the Great*, pp. 147-148.

need.”³²⁶ Thus, we are called to share our abundance because we share a common nature with our fellows.

Shroeder calls attention to the use of the Greek adjective κοινός, meaning “shared” or “common” that is repeatedly used in Basil’s homilies on social themes. He argues that Basil uses the term to emphasize a central argument: “the world was created for the common benefit of all, and given by God to humanity for their shared use.”³²⁷ Further, in his sermon *In Time of Famine and Drought* Basil develops the notion that the practice of sharing paves the way for spiritual growth and releases us from the primal sin:

“Give but a little, and you will gain much; undo the primal sin by sharing your food. Just as Adam transmitted sin by eating wrongfully, so we wipe away the treacherous food when we remedy the need and hunger of our brothers and sisters.”³²⁸

This theology of sharing is further developed in the sermon *I Will Tear Down My Barns*. Here Basil dedicates a few passages to describing the results of famine, and depicting the changes of the seasons.³²⁹ Basil develops the notion that the change of the “character of the seasons” is a result of not sharing. Thus, we read:

“What then is the cause of this disorder, this confusion? What brought about this change in the nature of the seasons? ...Has the one who governs all ceased to exist? Or has the master artisan forgotten his providential care? ...A wise person would not say this. Rather, the reason why our needs are not

³²⁶ St. Basil the Great, *Serm.* 6.1 (Schroeder, 60).

³²⁷ St. Basil the Great, *On Social Justice*, Introduction, p. 31.

³²⁸ St. Basil the Great, *Serm.* 8. 7, (Shroeder 86).

³²⁹ W. K. Lowther Clarke, *St. Basil the Great: A Study in Monasticism*, Cambridge, 1913, p. 21.

provided for as usual is plain and obvious: we do not share what we receive with others.”³³⁰

Basil further discusses the concept of sharing in relation to human responsibility for natural disasters. It is worth noting that Basil does not touch upon the issue either in the sermon *To the Rich*, or in the treatise *I Will Tear Down my Barns*. Perhaps we might say that for a time, this question was not of great importance in his social thinking. However, Basil could not avoid explaining to his audience why the famine in Caesarea happened. Thus, in *In Time of Famine and Drought* Basil maintains that natural disorders happen because of not sharing with others:

“the reason why our needs are not provided for as usual is plain and obvious: we do not share what we receive with others... Though we have a God who is generous and lacks nothing, we have become grudging and unsociable towards the poor... For this reason, we are threatened with righteous judgment... This is why the fields are arid: because love has dried up.”³³¹

Basil thus aims to develop a sense of community responsibility among the rich, calling them to share with others. However, one could argue against the idea that he deems the rich responsible for the catastrophe: later in the same treatise he states “for both rich and poor are tested through suffering”³³² With respect to this Rousseau observes that:

“Basil admitted that the majority were now suffering for the sins of the few. Perhaps he wished to focus upon the profiteers the wrath of the disadvantaged, proving that he had some power over the masses as well as over the mighty.”³³³

³³⁰ St. Basil the Great, *Serm.* 8. 2, (Shroeder 75-76).

³³¹ *Ibid.* (Shroeder 76).

³³² St. Basil the Great, *Serm.* 8. 5, (Shroeder 80).

³³³ P. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, p. 138.

However, it should be noted that Basil's interpretation of a natural disaster is controversial. In addition, he uses both *punishment* and *test* in relation to famine, two terms which allow for very different interpretations. All the same, it should be noted that his concept of equal sharing challenges the existing economic divisions in society between rich and poor.

Turning now to the Armenian context, *The Epic Histories* shows us that in the Armenian philanthropic tradition the accent is put on the notion of mercy. The following descriptions by the author of *Epic Histories* provide a consistent pattern:

“Likewise, he built, ordered, and consolidated; he taught many other *mercies* to the realm and regulated many canonical rules of his fathers”.³³⁴

“Just like the prophets and the apostles he taught compassion [saying]: “Your sins must be expiated through *mercy* and your iniquities through charity and gifts to the poor.” He also reminded them of the disciples who designated for ministry to the poor the great protomartyr and first deacon, Stephen, and his companions...He likewise spoke of Aycemnik [“Gazelle”], of her great *mercies* and the compassionate lamentations of the widows, and of her restoration to life by the great Peter after she had passed away and died”.³³⁵

Even if, in the second passage, one argues that the word *mercy* simply implies charity, in the first passage one cannot argue that the sentence “he taught many other *mercies*” simply refers to the work of charity! Further the testament attributed

³³⁴ *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. iv. «Շինեաց սոյնպէս, կարգեաց կազմեաց եւ հաստատեաց, բազում եւ այլ ողորմութիւնս ուսուցանէր աշխարհի. բազում կարգս կանոնաց հայրենիս կարգէր», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. Դ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. iv).

³³⁵ *Ibid.* «Եւ ինքն ամենեցուն ըստ մարգարէիցն եւ կամ ըստ Առաքելոցն նմանութեան զողորմածութիւնս ուսուցանէր. եւ եթէ զմեղս ձեր ողորմութեամբ պարտ է քաւել ձեզ, եւ զանարէնութիւնս ձեր գթութեամբ եւ տրաւք աղքատաց: Եւ սոյնպէս տարաւ եցոյց՝ զառաքեալսն յուշ առնելով, որ պաշտան աղքատաց, զմեծն եւ զնախավկայն զառաջսարկաւազն Ստեփանոս եւ զընգերս նորա...Սոյնպէս եւ զԱյծեմնիկն իւր ողորմածութիւնքն եւ խանդակաթ այրեացն ողբումն, ի ձեռն մեծին Պետրոսի, եւ զիրաժարեալն զգնացեալն զմեռեալն միւսանգամ այսրէն դարձուցանէր ի կենդանութիւն», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. Դ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. iv).

to Manuel Mamikonean, General in Chief of the Armenian army, illustrates how one should understand the word mercy:

“I have lived until now in the hope and fear [of the Lord]; do not transgress the Commandments of God; strive all the more for righteousness and mercy. For our great patriarch Nersēs always commanded this, he put it in practice himself every hour of his life and taught it to others. For he comforted the poor, the homeless, the captive the abandoned, the stranger, [and] the wanderer. He said: ‘There is nothing greater and more honorable before the Lord than mercy and almsgiving’”.³³⁶

Thus, it appears that the word mercy suggests comforting the poor, the homeless, the captive, the abandoned, the stranger, the wanderer, etc. In other words, the word mercy is expressive for philanthropy in general in *The Epic Histories*. In relation to this I would like to call attention to the meaning of the word **vogormutjun*, which is used for *mercy* in classical Armenian. The Hajkazyan Dictionary offers the following two meanings for the Armenian word **vogormutjun*- *charity* and *humaneness*.³³⁷ Thus, this allows us to maintain that the word mercy is used in late antique Armenian literature in a twofold sense: it concerns our social responsibilities, as well as to the work of charity in general.

Xorenats‘i’s version of Nersēs’s story further supports this suggestion, even if the evidence is actually from a later period. He uses the word *mercy* to describe the philanthropic movement of Nersēs, or, to put it more simply, the word *mercy* in the

³³⁶ Ibid. Book V., ch. xIiv. «Չի որ միանգամ յուսոյ յարութեան ակն ունին, միւսանգամ կենդանութեան եւ գալստեանն Թրիստոսի, չէ պարտ լալ գնոսա: Այլ իմ ցայժմ յուսով երկիրդիւ կեցեալ, բայց դուք մի՛ թիրիցիք ի պատուիրանացն Աստուծոյ. աւելի զարդարութենէ փոյթ արասցիք, եւս առաւել զողորմութենէ: Չի մեզ մեծ հայրապետն Ներսէս զայս համակ պատուիրէր. եւ ինքն յամենայն ժամ ի կենդանութեանն զոյն գործէր, եւ այլոց ուսուցանէր առնել. զի ողորմէր աղքատաց, տնանգաց, գերեաց, ամայեաց, աւտարաց, պանդխտաց. զի այսպէս ասէր նա. Քան զողորմութիւն առնել, կամ քան զտուրս տալ, այլ ինչ մեծ եւ պատուական առաջի Աստուծոյ չիք», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Ե., գլ. ԽԴ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book V., ch. xIiv).

³³⁷ «Նոր Բազմիրք Հայկազեան լեզուի», հատոր II (*New dictionary of Classical Armenian*, vol. II).

text below is applied universally to philanthropy: “Summoning a council of bishops in concert with the laity, by canonical regulation he [Nersēs] established *mercy*, extirpating the root of *inhumanity*, which was the natural custom in our land.”³³⁸ From the quoted passage it is obvious that the author uses the word *mercy* especially in the sense of humanness.³³⁹ In addition, the word **vogormutjun* is used also in *The Epic Histories* with regard to the salvific work of Christ. Thus, in the prayer attributed to Nersēs, mercy is described as one of the qualities of God:

“Everywhere and in all ways let only Thy almighty will be done, Who art mighty and powerful and just in all things, and Who lovest to show mercy to the oppressed and the anguished. Thou knowest that which profiteth us, O Lord, and to prepare for us what pleaseth Thee. For if affliction profit us, augment it. And if mercy be pleasing to Thee, grant it to us”.³⁴⁰

The following phrase “Who lovest to show mercy to the oppressed and the anguished...” creates a certain association with the key fundamentals of philanthropy. Thus, it appears that by showing “mercy to the oppressed and anguished” we participate in the salvific work of God. Thus, in this light one can interpret philanthropy as the fulfillment of the salvific work of Christ. Building a culture of mercy aimed to strengthen social bonds and community identity among

³³⁸Moses Khorenats’i, *History of The Armenians*, Book III, ch. 20, cff. Մովսես Խորենացի, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. Բ (Moses Khorenats’i, *History*, Book III, ch. 20).

³³⁹ However, it should be noted that in her translation Garsoian has used different synonyms for the Armenian word **vogormutjun* [mercy]: she translates it variously, such as *charity* and *compassion* (“Likewise, he built, ordered, and consolidated; he taught many other charities to the realm and regulated many canonical rules of his fathers”, “Just like the prophets and the apostles he taught compassion [saying]: “Your sins must be expiated through compassion and your iniquities through charity and gifts to the poor” (see *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. iv, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. Դ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. iv). Her use of different synonyms for the word **vogormutjun* does not allow the reader to discern the theological subtleties of the Armenian philanthropic thought. Thus, in the text of *The Epic Histories* I prefer to keep the word *mercy* as a consistent translation of the Armenian word **vogormutjun*.

³⁴⁰ *The Epic Histories*, Book V., ch. iv. «Եւ յամենայնի ամենեւին քո միայնոյ կատարեսցին կամք քո ամենազար, որ հզարդ եւ եւ կարող եւ արդար յամենայնի, եւ սիրես ողորմել նեղելոց եւ տագնապելոց: Չաւգուտն մեր դու գիտես, տէր, եւ պատրաստել մեզ որպէս եւ քեզ հաճոյ իցէ. զի եթէ իցէ մեզ աւգուտ նեղութիւնք յաճախեա մեզ. եւ եթէ հաճոյ է առաջի քո ողորմութիւն, շնորհեա մեզ», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Ե., գլ. Դ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book V., ch. iv).

the people. The Armenian perception of the word *mercy* may be paralleled with Basil's concept of equal sharing, which can be seen as another converging point between the two schools of philanthropy.

4.3 Usury

Timothy Patitsas argues that “one of Basil’s nemeses among the non-poor were what we would term “loan sharks”—people who lend to the financially desperate at highly usurious rates.”³⁴¹ Smither complements this observation by noting that “Basil's first audience included money lenders—those who were exploiting the poor during the economic crisis and lending to the financially desperate at highly usurious rates.”³⁴² The sermon *Against Those Who Lend At Interest* pictures the disruptive effects of usury on society, which, as Basil states in the introduction to his speech “is denounced in many places in Scripture”.³⁴³ Basil strongly criticizes those who use the misfortune of the needy to their own advantage; this attitude is the “height of inhumanity.”³⁴⁴ Holman notes that “the famine offered greedy land-owners an opportunistic chance to profit from such loans.”³⁴⁵ The observations of Van Dam should be understood in this light: “The problem Basil faced was therefore not the complete lack of grain, but rather its hoarding by local notables and merchants intent upon profiteering during a time of diminished resources...Basil’s goal was to convince these men to release their grain either for

³⁴¹ T. Patitsas, “St. Basil's Philanthropic Program and Modern Microlending Strategy for Economic Self-Actualization”, p. 269.

³⁴² E. Smither, “Basil of Caesarea: An Early Christian Model of Urban Mission”, p. 4. http://www.edsmither.com/uploads/5/6/4/6/564614/smither_ems_2011_basil.pdf (accessed August 30, 2019)

³⁴³ St. Basil the Great, *Serm. in Ps 14b*, 1, (Shreuder 89).

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.* (Shreuder 90)

³⁴⁵ S. Holman, *God Knows There's Need*, p. 59.

sale in the local markets or as outright gifts to the people.”³⁴⁶

Obviously, the poor were much more exposed and vulnerable to natural disaster, or natural disaster created a high-risk environment for them. Taking a loan in turn caused poverty or increased the depth of poverty. Thus, to protect the socially defenseless situation of vulnerable groups Basil even offers, to use the modern phrase, “social risk management”:

“Do you have utensils of bronze, clothing, a beast of burden, vessels for all your needs? Sell them all; choose to give up everything rather than your freedom... It is better to take care of your needs little by little with your own devices, than to be raised up all at once by outside means, only to be completely stripped of everything you have. If, then, you have anything at all to sell, why do you not alleviate your need with these resources? And if, on the other hand, you have nothing with which to make repayment, then you are remedying evil with more evil. Do not allow the moneylender to lay siege to you. Do not allow yourself to be tracked and hunted down like some kind of prey.”³⁴⁷

Smither notes that Basil went further and called directly on “usurers—anyone who lends at interest - to stop oppressing the poor and to offer interest-free loans instead.”³⁴⁸ Basil goes further than this, suggesting that borrowing money is no less immoral than charging interest: “Borrowing is the origin of falsehood, the source of ingratitude, unkindness, perjury.”³⁴⁹ And, again: “If the lender is your friend, do not ruin the friendship. If the lender is an enemy, do not allow yourself to fall into the hands of your foe”.³⁵⁰

Basil further develops his criticism to those who borrow money by calling attention

³⁴⁶ R. Van Dam, *Kingdom of Snow*: p. 45.

³⁴⁷ St. Basil the Great, *Serm. in Ps 14b, 2*, (Shreuder 92).

³⁴⁸ E. Smither, *Missionary Monks*, p. 34.

³⁴⁹ St. Basil the Great, *Serm. in Ps 14b, 2*, (Shreuder 92).

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

to the fact that some people borrow not because of need, but just to keep up with the latest trends in lifestyle. Thus, he maintains:

“Most borrowers are rather people who devote themselves to unconstrained expenditures and useless luxuries, those who serve the passionate desires of women. “I shall have fine clothing embroidered with gold,” she says, “and it is only fitting that the children should have beautiful outfits as well. There shall be bright and colorful dress for all the slaves, and plenty of food for the table.”³⁵¹

The quoted passage reveals that Basil deems unacceptable the competition for living a rich, luxurious life. Further Basil’s commentary on luxurious lifestyles reveals that the question of usury should not be seen merely in the context of famine. In this sense the quoted passage provides us important insights on life and society in Byzantine Cappadocia in late antiquity.

In addition, to protect vulnerable groups from financial abuses, Basil consistently emphasized the value of human freedom and dignity: human beings should not fear losing their material possessions, all we should care about is preserving our freedom: “Now you are poor, but free. By borrowing, however, you will not become rich, and you will surrender your freedom. The borrower is a slave to the lender, a slave rendering involuntary service for the profit of another.”³⁵²

Indeed, the sermon as a whole allows us to maintain that here at least Basil speaks more on the dangers of borrowing money, than on the practice of usury. This aspect of Basil’s social action has perhaps not received sufficient scholarly attention. For some authors the concept of philanthropy is strictly associated with the notion of charity. This in turn explains why some scholars when speaking of Basil’s social

³⁵¹ St. Basil the Great, *Serm. in Ps 14b*, 4, (Shreuder 96)

³⁵² St. Basil the Great, *Serm. in Ps 14b*, 2, (Shreuder 93).

work limit their discussion to his charitable activities. However, a comparative examination of Late Antique Greco-Armenian philanthropic thought allows us to state that this is an insufficient approach. I would argue that in both Greek and Armenian tradition the concept of charity is not clearly distinguished from social justice. Holman and Smither are particularly helpful in noting that this is true with respect to Basil.³⁵³

Turning now to the Armenian context, *The Epic Histories* unfortunately offer us no evidence regarding the question of usury. Does this mean that it was not included in the social program of Nersēs? The silence of *The Epic Histories* perhaps allows one to suggest that the extent or effects of usury may have not yet represented a challenge for society. The XV *Cannon* of the Council of Šahapivan (444) slightly touches upon the question of money lending: “[Do] “not lend money and demand it with interest”; “Return immediately the debt of the debtor.”³⁵⁴ However, this reference is not enough to have a clear understanding was it a major issue in the 5th century Armenian society or not. The study of other Armenian late Antique sources shows that a critique of usury actually was fervently promulgated by Armenian church writers from the 7th century.³⁵⁵ We simply do not know what

³⁵³ S. Holman, *God Knows There's Need*, p. 59, E. Smither, “Basil of Caesarea: An Early Christian Model of Urban Mission”, pp. 59-75, E. Smither, “Basil of Caesarea: An Early Christian Model of Urban Mission”, p. 2.

http://www.edsmither.com/uploads/5/6/4/6/564614/smither_ems_2011_basil.pdf (accessed August 30, 2019).

³⁵⁴ The Canons of the Council of Šahapivan, *Constitutions and Cannons*, ch. XV, cff. Կանոնք Շահապիվանի, in Վ. Հակոբյան, *Կանոնագիրք Հայոց*, հատոր I, Սահմանք եւ Կանոնք, ԺԶ, (Canons of Šahapivan in V. Hakobyan, *The Book of Canons*, vol. I, *Constitutions and Cannons*, ch. XV).

³⁵⁵ In the sermons erroneously attributed to Yovhannēs Mandakuni Catholicos (478-490) we find enough material on the issue of money-lending (see Յովհան Մանդակունի, *Ծառք, Ծառ Դ., Ծառ Է., Ծառ Թ., Ծառ ԲԱ.*, (Yovhan Mandakuni, *Homilies, Serm. IV., Serm. VII., Serm. IX, Serm. XXI*). The critical scholarship has established that the sermons were actually created in the 7th century (see Կարապետ եպիսկոպոս, «Հովհան Մանդակունի եւ Հովհան Մայրազունցի», «Շոգակաթ», Էջմիածին, 1913, էջ 84-113 (K. Ter-Mkrtychyan, Yovhan Mandakuni and Yovhan Majravanetsi, “Shogakat,” Etchmiadzin, 1913, pp. 84-113), Հ. Բենդերյան, *Հովհան*

was the case in earlier centuries.

Conclusion

Brian Daley maintains that Basil has adopted the Greek ideal of philanthropy into Christian life, aiming to build a Christian social network.³⁵⁶ It is obvious that Basil prefers to speak with his audience in a language which is already familiar to them, that is why he knowingly “transforms pagan philanthropy into a Christian virtue...”, as Hildebrand observes.³⁵⁷ However, a thorough study of Basil’s social thinking further reveals that for him the exemplary lifestyle of the early Christian community serves as an ideal of genuine benevolence. He compares and contrasts non-Christians with the first Christian Church. If the Greeks accepted responsibility to care for those bound to them by ties of kinship, then Christians practiced benevolence towards all, developing the sense of belonging in community.³⁵⁸ By this Basil shows the inclusive nature of Christian philanthropy. Thus, the comparison discovers that the Armenian perception of philanthropy is actually not very different from the one we find in the social vision of Basil about sharing with the others. The only difference here is that Basil presents the biblical ideals through the system of Greek philosophy, while the author of *The Epic Histories* aims to reflect a philanthropy that is a tool of evangelism. The referenced passage from *The Epic Histories* further supports the practice of the early Church as the sources of inspiration for the Armenian tradition of philanthropy:

Մայրաքաղաքի, Երևան, 1973, էջ 44-62 (H. Qenderyan, *Yovhan Majragometsi*, Yerevan, 1973, pp. 44-62).

³⁵⁶ Brian E. Daley, SJ, “Building a New City: The Cappadocian Fathers and the Rhetoric of Philanthropy”, 1998 NAPS Presidential Address, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 7, no. 3, 1999, pp. 431-461.

³⁵⁷ S. Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 118-119.

³⁵⁸ P. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 137-138.

“Just like the prophets and the apostles he [Nersēs] taught compassion [saying]: “Your sins must be expiated through compassion and your iniquities through charity and gifts to the poor.” He also reminded them of the disciples who designated for ministry to the poor the great protomartyr and first deacon, Stephen, and his companions, who opened up the Heavens and was thereby worthy to see the Son at the right [hand] of God His Father. He likewise spoke of Aycemnik [“Gazelle”], of her great charity and the compassionate lamentations of the widows, and of her restoration to life by the great Peter after she had passed away and died”.³⁵⁹

Thus, from the referenced passage one can conclude that one of the challenges of Armenian philanthropy was Christianization of the nation, to put faith in Jesus Christ in action. This was main task for the Armenian Church as in the 4th century as well as in the 5th one, when the author of *The Epic Histories* wrote his account. This in turn explains why the author in speeches and exhortations attributed to Nersēs often quotes lengthy passages from the Bible. He uses every chance to introduce the reader why we should care for the poor and vulnerable, in other words, he teaches them the key principles of Christian stewardship. I agree with the observations of Armenian Church history specialists that Christianity had indeed become the religion of the nation, due to the philanthropic movement of Nersēs.³⁶⁰ However, it should be noted that this transformation is fully realized at a conceptual level only in the 5th century, when the Bible became available in

³⁵⁹ *The Epic Histories*, Book IV., ch. iv. «Եւ ինքն ամենեցուն ըստ մարգարեիցն եւ կամ ըստ Առաքելոցն նմանութեան զողորմածութիւնս ուսուցանէր. եւ եթէ զմեղս ձեր ողորմութեամբ պարտ է քաւել ձեզ, եւ զանաւրէնութիւնս ձեր գթութեամբ եւ տրաւք աղքատաց: Եւ սոյնպէս տարաւ եցոյց՝ զառաքեալսն յուշ առնելով, որ պաշտաւն աղքատաց, զմեծն եւ զնախապկայն զառաջսարկաւազն Ստեփանոս եւ զընգերս նորա՝ զորս ընտրեցին, որ զերկինս երաց, եւ զՌրդին ընդ աջմէ Հաւր աստուծոյ այս գործով արժանի եղեւ տեսանել: Սոյնպէս եւ զԱյծեմնիկն իւր ողորմածութիւնքն եւ իսանդակայթ այրեացն ողբումն, ի ձեռն մեծին Պետրոսի, եւ զիրաժարեալն զգնացեալն զմեռեալն միւսանգամ այսրէն դարձուցանէր ի կենդանութիւն», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, էջ 317 (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, p. 317).

³⁶⁰ Կ. Տէր-Մկրտչեան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցոյ Պատմութիւն*, p. 113 (K. Ter-Mkrtychyan, *The Armenian Church*, p. 113), Մ. Օրմանեան, *Ազգասպասում*, p. 187 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, p. 187).

Armenian language. Thus, in this sense the book of *The Epic Histories* is one of these examples, which attempts to educate his listeners in biblical truths. It appears that both schools of philanthropy aimed at evangelization of their congregations. In both contexts it serves not only as a means to change the attitude toward the poor and the needy, but to educate them with biblical truths.

Chapter Five: Philanthropy and Patronage

Introduction

My comparison between the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs and Basiliada reveals that the services that were offered by numerous foundations of Nersēs, were very similar to those undertaken by the one foundation of Basil. This chapter falls into two halves. In the first part of the chapter I will discuss how the sponsorship of philanthropy was organized in both contexts and argue that even though the sponsorship of philanthropy was organized differently in each context, this was mainly conditioned by the available resources of each movement. In the second half of the chapter, I consider the manner in which the groups over which the Church exercised patronage in both the Armenian and Caesarean contexts, focusing in particular on the Church's relationship to the oppressed and to captives.

Part I: Philanthropy

5.1 The Armenian context

When he refers to the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs, the historian Leo notes that if he had been reliant simply on donations from individuals, it would have been impossible to establish and maintain so many large institutions. In fact, we have every reason to believe that the state was providing resources for these agencies. Leo maintains that the Armenian King Aršak was supporting Nersēs; otherwise, there is no plausible explanation for such a great contribution on behalf of the

state.³⁶¹ However Leo does not provide us with firm evidence to prove his thesis. In addition, the book of *The Epic Histories* is silent regarding the support by the state when it would surely have enhanced Nersēs' reputation to mention such support.³⁶²

However, what do the sources tell us about church-state cooperation in relation to the philanthropic movement of Nersēs? The reports of *The Epic Histories* concerning the Council of Aštišhat (353) allows us to suggest that the philanthropic project of Nersēs was at the least fully in accord with the wider Armenian community:

“He [Nersēs] went and reached to the sides of the region of Taron and gathered all bishops of Armenia. They assembled in the village of Aštišhat, where the first time was built a church, because it was the mother church and the church council place of ancestors. All came willingly to the council and had a useful meeting to reform the worldly orders, to define common rules for the faith . . . He ordered the same thing to be done throughout the realm-in every district and every region, on every side and in every corner within the confines of Armenia: to indicate the most suitable places to be set aside for the building of poorhouses and to collect the sick, the lepers, the paralytics and all those who suffered: there leper-houses and nursing homes were designated for them, and food and clothes for the poor”.³⁶³

The comment that Nersēs acted freely, that “all came willingly to the council...to reform the worldly orders,” may support the suggestion that the council of Aštišhat (353) acted in agreement with the state.

³⁶¹ Ան, Հայոց Պատմություն, հատոր I, էջ 452 (Leo, *History*, vol I, p. 452).

³⁶² *The Epic Histories*, pp. 111-116, 133-136, 211-213, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, Պատմութիւն Հայոց, էջ 314-318, 334-336, 399-401 (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, pp. 314-318, 334-336, 399-401).

³⁶³ *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. 4., cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, Պատմութիւն Հայոց, գ. Դ, գլ. Դ., (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. 4).

Further the reports of Xorenats'i's version of Nersēs' story on the council of Aštišhat may allow us to make some more important suggestions regarding the issue. It mentions clearly that Nersēs had the agreement of the state to launch his philanthropic movement, or accomplished it in accord with the King Aršak:

“Summoning a council of bishops in concert with the laity, by canonical regulation he established mercy, extirpating the root of inhumanity, which was the natural custom in our land.”³⁶⁴

Perhaps this comment of Xorenatsi allows us to see that the council involved by clergy and laity. However, how the philanthropic movement of Nersēs was sponsored still remains unclear. The author of *The Epic Histories*, speaking on the establishment of the poorhouses of Nersēs, states very clearly that the patriarch actually allocated funds to support the missions of these agencies:

“So greatly did he love the poor, that although he had built poorhouses in all of the districts and set up maintenance for them there”.³⁶⁵

“And the same Nersēs had built hospitals in every town and every region, establishing maintenance [*ročik*] and care for them”.³⁶⁶

These passages at least allow us to maintain that the sponsorship of the charitable institutions of Nersēs was provided by the Church. The suggestion that the Church had the needed financial resources for the missions of the charitable agencies of Nersēs is further backed by Xorenats'i's version of Nersēs' story. In speaking about the establishment of charitable foundations, we read:

³⁶⁴ See Moses Khorenats'i, *History of The Armenians*, p. 274, cff. Մովսես Խորենացի, *Պատմություն Հայոց* էջ 2031 (Moses Khorenats'i, *History*, p. 2031).

³⁶⁵ *The Epic Histories*, p. 115, «Եւ այսպէս առ յոյժ աղքատսիրութեանն, զի թէպէտ եւ շինեաց զամենայն աղքատանոցս ընդ ամենայն զաւստս, եւ կարգեաց նոցա անդէն դարմանս», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, էջ 317 (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, p. 317).

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.* p. 211, «Եւ յամենայն աւանս էր շինեալ նորին Ներսիսի եւ հիւանդանոցս, յամենայն կողմանց եւ ռոճիկս եւ դարմանս կարգեալս», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, էջ 399 (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, p. 399).

“So he ordered in every province poorhouses to be built in remote and uninhabited places to offer relief to the suffering on the model of the Greek hospitals. And he set aside for them towns and fields, fertile in fruits of the land, in milk from herds, and wool, that these through their taxes might cater for their needs from a distance and the inmates would not leave their dwelling.”³⁶⁷

This passage clearly shows that the Church allocated some of its properties for the maintenance of the poorhouses. In addition, Xorenats‘i also allows us to make a further suggestion regarding the sponsorship of the charitable agencies of Nersēs: “that these through their taxes might cater for their needs from a distance and the inmates would not leave their dwelling.”³⁶⁸ This sentence suggests that the needs of the clients of the charitable foundations of Nersēs were provided for through the taxes on the properties of the same agencies. We do not, however, have any earlier evidence that this was so.

Another passage from *The Epic Histories* opens up more interesting possibilities, when we read:

“And in the days of the high-priesthood of Nersēs, rest houses for strangers, hospitals, and hostelries were built by order of the high-priest in all inhabited places, and in every village, and in all the regions of Armenia in general. And everyone in the land of Armenia mercifully *supplied them with food* remembering the poor and oppressed, the afflicted and the strangers, the mistreated, wanderers, pilgrims, visitors, and wayfarers. And St. Nersēs had set supervisions and care for them everywhere”.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁷ Moses Khorenats‘i, *History of the Armenians*, pp. 274-275, cff. Մովսես Խորենացի, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, էջ 2031 (Moses Khorenats‘i, *History*, p. 2031).

³⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 274, «զի պաշտեսցեն զնոսա հարկաւ, բացէ ի բաց, եւ նոքա մի՛ էլցեն ըստ բնակութիւնս իրեանց», Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, էջ 2031 (Moses Khorenats‘i, *History*, p. 2031).

³⁶⁹ *The Epic Histories*, p. 212. cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, էջ 400-401 (P‘awstos Buzand, *History*, pp. 400-401).

Manandyan, in his valuable research *Feudalism in Ancient Armenia*, notes that there was a fruit tax for the Church, which was applied to everyone.³⁷⁰ The reference of the author of *The Epic Histories* regarding the supplication of the food for the poor, oppressed strangers, travelers and so on, allows us to think that he speaks about the practice of the fruit tax.³⁷¹ It is possible that here the author does not speak about voluntary gifts, but explains that the charitable foundations of Nersēs were sponsored through the fruit tax.³⁷² However, one may ask how far are we certain that the fruit tax existed in Nersēs' time? Further in speaking about the antichurch policy of the Armenian King Pap (369-374) against the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs the author of *The Epic Histories* states: "And as for the regulations of *ptut and tasanords* [tithe and fruit], that had been laid down as a custom from ancient times to give to the church, he gave the following order to the realm concerning them: "Let no one give them".³⁷³ *The Epic Histories* develops the idea that the practice of the fruit tax was an established reality in the Armenian

³⁷⁰ Հ. Մանանդյան, *Ֆեոդալիզմը Հին Հայաստանում*, էջ 140 (H. Manandyan, *Feudalism in Ancient Armenia*, p. 140).

³⁷¹ In his book *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, in speaking about the types of taxes in Armenian feudal society, N. Adonts does not say anything about the fruit tax, but very generally notes; "The Armenian Church was feudal in structure; it reproduced the social and economic regulations customary in *naxarar* society, and preserved them in part after the disappearance of the secular feudal nobility. Consequently information taken from ecclesiastical life is also relevant for *naxarar* society" (N. Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, p. 366).

³⁷² However, the English translation of the text of *The Epic Histories* is altered from the original version. We assert that Garsoïan has not translated the Armenian word **ptghaberk'* (=to bring food) in agreement with the context of the text. She has replaced the word **ptghaberk'*, with the word *generous*: "And everyone in the land of Armenia was generous and compassionate in remembering the poor and oppressed..." (See *The Epic Histories*, p. 212, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, էջ 400-401 (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, pp. 400-401). This translation does not express an important nuance which allows us to read the text in a different light. Malkhasyants', the translator of the modern Armenian version, takes into account the meaning of the word **ptghaberk'* and broached the discrepancy in his translation. Thus, he offers the following translation: "And everyone in the land of Armenia mercifully supplied them with food remembering the poor and oppressed..." See Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Հայոց պատմություն*, թարգմ. և ծան. Ստ. Մալխասյանց, էջ 351 (Phaustos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*, trans. and commentaries by Step. Malkhasyants', p. 351). Actually, the translation of Malkhasyants' is closer to the true context of the text, which Garsoïan has not considered in her translation.

³⁷³ *The Epic Histories*, Book V, ch. xxxii. « Եւ զկարգս պտղոյն եւ զտասանորդացն՝ որ ի նախնեացն կարգեալ սովորութիւն էր տալ յեկեղեցին, վասն այնորիկ հանէր հրաման ընդ աշխարհ՝ զի մի՛ որ տացէ», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Ե., գլ. ԼԲ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book V, ch. xxxii).

Church tradition before Nersēs, it seems that the latter to be adapting a tax given for the clergy to the clergy’s philanthropological projects.

The practice of the fruit tax however was not something new in the Church of Armenia Major. Further, Abraham Zaminyan in his *Armenian Church History* presumes that it was established in the Church of Armenia Major since the time of Gregory the Illuminator.³⁷⁴ The *History* of Agathangelos relates directly the practice of the fruit tax in the Church of Armenia Major to the establishment of the Armenian Church, to the period of Gregory the Illuminator. Thus, we read:

“Similarly the king [Tiridates III] throughout his whole realm decreed that four fields in every estate and seven fields in each town should be dedicated to the use of the ministering priesthood, for them to offer the fruits to the Lord”³⁷⁵ But, even if the fruit tax existed since the time of Gregory the Illuminator, it was only in the time of Nerses that it began to be used to support charitable agencies.³⁷⁶

³⁷⁴ Ա. Չամիհենեան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցու Պատմություն*, հատոր 1, էջ 53-54 (A. Zaminian, *The Armenian Church*, vol. 1, pp. 53-54).

³⁷⁵ See *Agathangelos, History of the Armenians, The Conversion to Salvation of the Land of Armenia Through the Holy Martyr*, ch. 13, cff. «Սոյնպէս եւ թագաւորն յամենայն իշխանութեան իւրում առ հասարակ՝ գրեաց չորս չորս հողս երդոյ յամենայն ազարակ տեղիս, իսկ յաւանսն եօթն եօթն հողս երդոյ՝ ի ծառայութիւն սպասաւորութեան քահանայութեանն, նուէր պտղոյ Տեառն մատուցանէր», Ագաթանգեղոս, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, Գարձ Փրկութեան Աշխարհիս Հայաստան Ընդ Ձեռն Առն Սրբոյն Նահատակի, գլ. ԺԳ. (Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians, The Conversion to Salvation of the Land of Armenia Through the Holy Martyr*, ch. 13).

³⁷⁶ Abraham Zaminyan refers to *The Epic Histories* where in regard to the anti-church policy of King Pap the author notes, “And as for the regulation of *ptul* and *tasanords*, that had been laid down as a custom from ancient times to give to the church, he gave the following order to the realm concerning them. “Let no one give them”. However, while Abraham Zaminyan maintains that the practice of the fruit tax has a tradition behind, probably beginning from the time of Gregory the Illuminator, then the *History* of Agathangelos provides us with evidence that the practice of the fruit tax in the Church of Armenia Major began with Gregory the Illuminator. It is clear that, Zaminyan is not familiar with the evidence of Agathangelos, otherwise he would base his theory on that note.

5.2 Caesarean Church experience

The situation was very different in the case of Basil, in part because of his complicated relationship with state officials. In addition, Basil experienced difficulties with his clergy. Paul Fedwick rightly observes that: “To appreciate properly Basil’s understanding of the presence and exercise of leadership and care in the church, we should be aware of the historical circumstances which provided the immediate background for his position.”³⁷⁷

It has been rightly pointed out that "the emperors differed in their theological persuasions and many fourth-century emperors had Arian leanings."³⁷⁸ This, of course, has its unavoidable consequences on the activity of Basil, considering his Nicene convictions. Smither further observes that Basil experienced conflicts with political leaders, such as Emperor Julian (361-363), the apostate who sought to revive paganism, as well as with the Arian Emperor Valens, who divided Cappadocia in half, restricting Basil’s authority in the region.³⁷⁹ However, from the letter of Basil to Elias we learn that the monk Bishop succeeded in coming to an agreement with the state authorities. His reference that Valens had “allowed us to govern the churches ourselves” further supports this suggestion.³⁸⁰ In addition, the fact that the building of Basiliada was not impeded by state officials should be seen as an achievement.

³⁷⁷ P. Fedwick, *The Church and the Charisma of Leadership in Basil of Caesarea*, p. 37.

³⁷⁸ E. Smither “Did the Rise of Constantine Mean the End of Christian Mission” in *Rethinking Constantine History, Theology and Legacy*, ed. By E. Smither, James Clark & CO, 2014, p. 137.

³⁷⁹ E. Smither, *Missionary Monks*, p. 30.

³⁸⁰ Saint Basil, Letter XCIV, p. 151.

The successful accomplishment of Basil's plan has allowed Smither and Patitsas to claim that Basileas was built on land perhaps donated by the emperor.³⁸¹ However, neither of the scholars identify their source of reference. We do not have any firm evidence to suggest that the Emperor supported the establishment of Basileas.³⁸² Basil himself never says that he received such support from the emperor, a fact on which he would surely have commented.

Further I want to suggest a new interpretation of Basil's claim that the building of Basiliada was not welcomed unanimously but had given rise to 'criticisms' and 'slanders'.³⁸³ The following sentence further supports this suggestion: "But to whom do we do any harm by building a place of entertainment for strangers...?"³⁸⁴ This allows us to suggest that Basil had run into difficulties with the authorities.³⁸⁵ The fact that Basil speaks about it in the letter to Elias, governor of the province, can serve as important support for this suggestion. In his letter Basil does not specify who was behind the criticism.³⁸⁶ However, completing the Basiliada would have required considerable resources, and it cannot be ruled out that Basil had used the resources of his own diocese to carry out his vision of the new city, giving rise to slander and criticism, for as Rousseau observes rightly "The

³⁸¹ E. Smither, *Missionary Monks*, p. 37, cff. E. Smither, *Mission in the Early Church*, p. 137, T. Patitsas, "St. Basil's Philanthropic Program and Modern microlending Strategy for Economic Self-Actualization", p. 270.

³⁸² Andrew Crislip in his study *From Monastery to Hospital* clarifies the source of this information: "In the early fifth century the historian Theodoret reports that the emperor Valens donated at least a sizable portion of the hospital's land. "[t]he emperor was so delighted that he gave him some fine lands which he had there for the poor under his care, for they being in grievous bodily affliction were especially in need of care and cure" (see A. T. Crislip, *From Monastery to Hospital*, p. 104). Further, Crislip does not consider the reliability of this information, however, the fact that it was not mentioned in either the *Letters* of Basil or the *Oration* of Gregory already questions the plausibility of Theodoret's report. In addition, it is obvious that Theodoret is inclined to show how nicely Valens treated Basil.

³⁸³ Saint Basil, Letter XCIV, pp. 149-153.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 151.

³⁸⁵ Cff. P. Fedwick, *The Church and the Charisma of Leadership in Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 37-41.

³⁸⁶ E. Smither, *Missionary Monks*: p. 28.

project must have taken, however, several years to develop fully."³⁸⁷ In addition, the philanthropic activity of Basil was not limited by the walls of the Basiliada; he attempted to make his social vision part of the mission of the Church very broadly. Smither rightly observes that: "While clergy in Caesarea were quite involved in administrating the work of the basileas, Basil also encouraged church leaders in Cappadocia and Asia Minor to make ministry to the poor a priority in their churches. Despite some church leaders resisting this admonition at times, evidence suggests that other bishops under Basil's leadership initiated a number of smaller projects for the poor in Cappadocia."³⁸⁸ Thus, it may well be that the "slander" and "criticism" Basil faced could have arisen from within the Church, as people saw Basil's personal projects taking up too much of the finances available in the diocese.

Druzhinina, in commenting on Basil's organizational talents notes with admiration: "He used his considerable rhetorical and organizational talents in the church to improve the living conditions of the poorest and the discriminated members of society. With the assistance of different people, including state officials..."³⁸⁹ In my opinion this account does not reflect the reality that faced the Bishop of Caesarea. Her comments give an impression that the wealthy class and state officials gladly and open-heartedly welcomed Basil's idea of feeding the poor and clothing the needy. I believe it is quite different to define what Basil wanted and what he actually accomplished. In relation to this I believe Van Dam's conclusions on Basil's endeavors sound more realistic: "As a priest Basil obviously

³⁸⁷ P. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, p. 139.

³⁸⁸ E. Smither, *Missionary Monks*, p. 41.

³⁸⁹ O. Druzhinina, *The Ecclesiology of St. Basil the Great*, p. 164.

was unable to employ force against local aristocrats, or even to threaten its use. Nor did he choose to appeal for the assistance of Valens and his court, perhaps because the emperor supported a heterodox version of Christian theology, or of the provincial governor. Instead, he relied entirely on his rhetorical persuasiveness.”³⁹⁰

Thus, the historical evidence does not provide us with much information regarding the sponsorship of the Basiliada. It appears that for Basil mainly the Church and the wealthy class served as a source of sponsorship for philanthropy. However, this does not exclude the possible involvement of the state officials in the philanthropic projects of Basil: it seems likely that Basil needed to obtain at least their sympathy.

Conclusion

This discussion allows us to establish that under Nerses’s guidance the church accomplished its philanthropic mission through making use of existing incomes and taxes set aside for the Church. The support of the state for this philanthropic movement most probably was moral, rather than financial. The attitude of the state to Saint Basil seems to have varied from support to hostility. However, the fact that he succeeded may well imply that he had enough reputation with the authorities to accomplish his philanthropic project. We can say little about the sponsorship of Basil’s philanthropic movement, just that it was probably reliant upon gifts from the Church and the wealthy members of society. The most obvious similarity that

³⁹⁰ R. Van Dam, *Kingdom of Snow*, p. 47.

is discernable between the two movements is the fact that neither of them was dependent on state financial sponsorship

Part II: Philanthropy and patronage of the Church

Introduction

The historical evidence that the charitable institutions of Nersēs aimed at offering relief for the poor, widows, orphans, and elders allows us to make only few general comments regarding the patronage of the Church. The problem is that we know a little about the aforementioned groups of people, and only very limited information about their relationship with the state and with the feudal system. However, *The Epic Histories* provides us with some evidence that not only the poor, widows, orphans, and elderly were directly under the patronage of the church through the philanthropic agencies, but also the oppressed and captives were considered eligible to apply for the patronage of the church.³⁹¹ In this section I will examine the evidence of *The Epic Histories* concerning the protection of the rights of oppressed peasants and captives, and compare that information with what we know of the situation in Caesarea.

5.3 The Armenian experience

The scholars that have examined the philanthropic movement of Nersēs say little about the patronage of the church in their discussions.³⁹² Manandyan in his

³⁹¹ *The Epic Histories*, pp. 114-115, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, էջ 317 (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, p. 317).

³⁹² Մ. Օրմանեան, *Ազգայնամասն*, էջ 186-192, 260-263 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, pp. 186-192, 260-263), Լեո, *Հայոց Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 449-453, 482-483, (Leo, *History*, vol I, pp. 449-453, 482-483) Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկեր*, հատոր II, էջ 161-166, 214-227 (H. Manandian, *Works*. vol. II, pp. 161-166, 214-227). The specialists of the social history of Armenia have also not found it important to consider the patronage of the church in the late antiquity. See «Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն», մաս I, 1951, էջ 79-86 (*History of the Armenian People*, part I, 1951,

important study *Feudalism in Ancient Armenia* slightly touches on the issue at hand. He observes that the Church in late antiquity was specifically one of the influential institutions of the country because of its wealth.³⁹³ All the same, Manandyan does not specifically consider the patronage of the Church, particularly in relation to the philanthropic movement of Nersēs.

In the book of *The Epic Histories*, we come across a passage which allows us to maintain that the philanthropic movement of Nersēs was concerned with the treatment of all peasants who might be considered “oppressed.” Thus, we read:

“He commanded the entire realm beginning with the king, the magnates in general, and all those who had authority over their followers, to love them like members of their own families, and not to oppress them unjustly with exorbitant taxes, reminding [them] that they too had a Lord in heaven. He likewise ordered the servants to be obediently faithful to their masters so that they might receive a reward from the Lord”.³⁹⁴

Thus, in the agenda of the philanthropic movement of Nersēs, the question of heavy taxes was included. By the word servant, the author of *The Epic Histories* obviously means the class of *ramik [peasant], to whom the movement was basically addressed, as I have reflected on previously. However, one can argue that this question should not be seen necessarily in the context of the philanthropic movement, Nersēs may just be referring to this issue as would have any Church

pp. 79-86), «Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն», հատոր II, 1984, էջ 126-132 (*The History of the Armenian People*, vol. II, 1984, pp. 126-132).

³⁹³ Հ. Մանանդյան, *Ֆեոդալիզմը Հին Հայաստանում*, էջ 126-147 (H. Manandyan, *Feudalism in Ancient Armenia*, pp. 126-147).

³⁹⁴ *The Epic Histories*, p.114. «Եւ ամենայն աշխարհին պատուիրէր, եւ գլխովին թագաւորին, առհասարակ ամենայն մեծամեծացն, եւ ամենեցուն՝ որոք ի վերայ ընկերին ունիցին իշխանութիւն, գութ ունելով ընդ իւրեանց ծառայս եւ ընդ կրտսրս եւ ընդ աշակերտս, եւ սիրել իբրեւ զընտանիս, եւ մի՛ անարժանս եւ անելի տարապայմանս հարկաւք նեղել քան զչափն. յուշ առնելով, զի եւ նոցա տէր գոյ յերկինս: Սոյնպէս եւ ծառայից պատուիրէր՝ կալ յարդարն հնազանդութեան իւրեանց տերանց, զի ի Տեառնէ լինիցի նոցա վարձք», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, էջ 316-317 (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, pp. 316-317).

father or leader. However, I do not share this view in light of the fact that the issue of economic rights, as the context of the quoted passage reveals, is directly related to the root problem, the overcoming of which composes the heart of the philanthropic movement of Nersēs: the question of poverty. Further the command “not to oppress them unjustly with exorbitant taxes” supports my view. Although we do not have any evidence in the text that because of the "exorbitant taxes" some suffered under the yoke of poverty, it is obvious however, as to why this question would appear on the agenda of the Armenian philanthropy.

In addition, it is apparent that the author of *The Epic Histories* also presents the issue of “exorbitant taxes” in the context of the philanthropic movement of Nersēs. By doing this the author emphasizes that it is not detached from the logic of the movement but comprises the heart of it. At the same time the author of *The Epic Histories* adds that Nersēs “ordered the servants to be obediently faithful to their masters.” This is actually what one finds in the teaching of the Apostle Paul on the relationship of slaves and masters. (Ephes. 6:5-10). It is obvious why the author of *The Epic Histories* refers to the teachings of Paul; he simply wants to show the connection of the philanthropic thinking of Nersēs with apostolic tradition. In addition, he wants to show that Nersēs adopted a balanced approach towards the issue of poverty, if on the one hand he defends the rights of servants, then on the other hand he stresses obedience to their lords.

However, one may rightly ask the question whether the patronage of the Church for the economic rights of the oppressed was limited only within criticism or did it produce concrete results as well? I think the answer to this question is found in the

following passage of *The Epic Histories*, which is actually a continuation of the previous one, for it reveals not only the consequences of the exorbitant taxes but also demonstrates in what ways the church has supported the oppressed. Thus, we read:

“He [Nersēs] saved many captives [who were] oppressed or afflicted and obtained their release from captivity – freeing some through his preaching of the fear of Christ’s glory, and others with ransoms – and he sent each one [of them] back to his home”.³⁹⁵

It is obvious that in speaking of saving of “many captives [who were] oppressed or afflicted, of obtaining “their release from captivity – freeing” the author of *The Epic Histories* does not mean war captives, but probably those who were in debt to their masters. Thus, it appears that the Church supported the captives not simply “through his [Nersēs’] preaching of the fear of Christ’s glory” as the author of *The Epic Histories* attempts to depict, but a legal one, as the paying of compensation suggests. This in turn allows us to maintain that Nersēs has used the resources of the church to strengthen the influence of his philanthropic movement, and to broaden the patronage of the church through the help of the oppressed as well. Christoph Marksches in his book on the *Structures of Earliest Christianity* in speaking about the patronage of the bishop endorses our suggestion by pointing out that “The support of the poor...was connected with the rise of powerful episcopal figures in the cities. They took the place of patrons for the common good and accordingly felt themselves responsible...Community life was also stamped by ready financial support and visits for those who had been arrested

³⁹⁵ Ibid. 114-115. «Եւ բազում նեղելոց եւ տառապելոց գերեաց փրկութիւն եւ գերեդարձ առնէր, զորս ահիւ քարոզութեան փառացն Քրիստոսի զկէս, եւ զայլս գնովք փրկանաւք ազատէր, եւ յիւրաքանչիւր տեղիս դարձուցանէր: Այրեաց եւ որբոց եւ չքաւորաց հանգիստ եւ դարման առնէր, եւ աղքատք զաւրիանապազ ընդ նմա ուրախ լինէին. եւ տանար իւր եւ սեղան զաւրիանապազ աղքատաց եւ աւտարաց էր եւ հիւրոց» Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, էջ 317 (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, p. 317).

and were in prison.”³⁹⁶ In this light, the report of *The Epic Histories* regarding the contribution of the Church in “their release from captivity – freeing” is typical example of the support of the poor, of Church patronage. Thus, the evidence of *The Epic Histories* is in line with what Christoph Marksches’ observation regarding the rise of powerful episcopal figures in the cities of the empire. The only difference that can be pointed out here is that in the Armenian context sees of the bishops “were not the transitory commercial centers known as cities and built in various places by succeeding monarchs, but rather the estates of the great noble families.”³⁹⁷ This simply allows us to suggest that every bishop in his diocese should have tried to solve the problem with the feudal.

This discussion allows us to maintain that the reference of *The Epic Histories* to the rights of the oppressed suggest that Nersēs’ philanthropic movement was not only engaged in providing care for the poor, but also called attention to the root problems; in other words, it raised the issue of the structural sins. Thus, the structures should be changed if we expect a real change in our life: if we strive for the betterment of it. As the quoted passage observes, the intervention of the church was not limited to criticism, but it produced practical results as well. Further the support of oppressed and afflicted captives allows us to maintain that the patronage of the Church actually extended more widely than was previously suspected.

³⁹⁶ C. Marksches, *Between Two Worlds; Structure of Early Christianity*, Translated by John Bowden from the German, SCM Press, London, 1999, p. 171.

³⁹⁷ R. Thomson, *Mission, Conversion, and Christianization: The Armenain Example*, p. 34.

5.4 The question of church patronage in Caesarean Church

In reference to the philanthropic activity of Basil, a thorough analysis of his social action reveals that his humanitarian efforts to widen the care of the Church for the poor embraced a concern to reconfigure the function and role of a bishop within the Roman social order. Further Peter Brown's reflection on the new role of the Church in society comes to support this suggestion:

“Nowhere was the Christian representation of the church’s novel role in society more aggressively maintained than in the claim of Christian bishops to act as ‘lovers of the poor.’” The theme of "love of the poor" exercised a gravitational pull quite disproportionate to the actual workings of Christian charity in the fourth century. It drew into its orbit the two closely related issues of who, in fact, were the most effective protectors and pacifiers of the lower classes of the cities and of how wealth was best spent by the rich within the city."³⁹⁸

Additionally, in the *Sermon to the Rich* Basil's concern is not only to show the detrimental impact of greed and to encourage the well off to share with those less fortunate, but he also focuses attention on the person in the position of authority:

"Great rivers begin from tiny streams, but eventually acquire irresistible magnitude by means of small additions, so that they violently sweep away whatever lies in their path: thus it is with those who advance to positions of great power. From those who previously held dominance, they receive the ability to treat many others unjustly. They oppress those who remain unscathed through those who are already victims of injustice; as wickedness overflows, it gives them an opportunity to expand their power. Those who have already been badly mistreated render them a kind of involuntary assistance by inflicting harm and injustice upon others in turn."³⁹⁹

³⁹⁸ P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity Towards a Christian Empire*, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992, p. 78.

³⁹⁹ St. Basil the Great, *On Social Justice*, p. 51.

Interestingly, in this passage Basil speaks of unjust treatment as well as the victims of injustice. However, it is not clear from the way he expresses himself, exactly who he has in mind when he talks of those "in positions of great power". In other words, Basil does not specify to whom his words are addressed, for he makes a general statement regarding the possession of power. One may argue that Basil actually does not mean the political authorities and leaders, but it seems that his addressee is the rich. The title of the *Sermon to the Rich* already implies that his audience is not that of the state officials, but the wealthy class of Caesarea. Rousseau in relation to this observes that Basil urges his listeners that the possession of power demanded that one should regard one's fellows as one's equals. Control over the lives of others should make one realize that one could not afford to treat them any worse than oneself further concludes he.⁴⁰⁰ I am inclined to think that the phrase "in position of great power" may equally refer to both the rich and state officials. Further the focus of Basil on the rich does allow one to think that he avoided to call the attention of the state authorities to the root causes of social inequality. I believe Smither answers this question. He points out that through his letters and personal meetings, Basil advocated for tax "relief for the poor, tax-exempt status for priests, and tax exemption for his Basileas ministry".⁴⁰¹ This, of course, implies that the monk Bishop had also challenged political leaders in pursuit of his humanitarian efforts of poverty relief.⁴⁰² It was rightly observed by Sterk that in his capacity as a patron Basil sought "to act consistently with his understanding of both monastic vocation and episcopal responsibility [and] attempted to apply the principles of the gospel in confronting the social and

⁴⁰⁰ P. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 138-139.

⁴⁰¹ E. Smither, *Missionary Monks*: p. 36

⁴⁰² Cf. S. Morris, *The Early Eastern Orthodox Church*, p. 49

political realities of his day, even . . . [using] . . . the tactics of petition and mediation.”⁴⁰³ This aspect of Basil's philanthropic efforts Brown had in mind in his important study *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, by maintaining that "Basil's patronage has also reached deep into the urban populace of Caesarea itself."⁴⁰⁴ Further Smither completes this suggestion by drawing attention to the authority of a bishop in Roman society: “While patrons were a normal part of the Roman social fabric, in the post Constantine era, bishops were accorded a level of authority and often functioned as judges and mediators in the court system.”⁴⁰⁵

This, of course, questions the claims of writers, such as John G. Panagiotou, who maintains that “Basil was not an ancient version of a promulgator of “Liberation Theology”. He believes that the lover of the poor “never saw his role of addressing an injustice and relating it back to Christ and working for social change in humanistic political terms.”⁴⁰⁶ I am not inclined to argue that the social program of Basil reminds us of the key tenets of liberation theology with implications for the restructuring of unjust societies. However, a thorough study of Basil's social action allows us to maintain that he took the issue of social justice seriously in the struggle for liberating the poor and oppressed from unjust economic, political, and social conditions. Further on the basis of Basil's sermons on social issues, in her research Holman distinguishes the range of economic fraud and corruption that caesarean society faced in circumstances of famine:

⁴⁰³ A. Sterk, *Renouncing the world Yet Leading the Church*, pp. 68- 69.

⁴⁰⁴ P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity*, p. 102.

⁴⁰⁵ E. Smither, *Missionary Monks*, p. 36.

⁴⁰⁶ J. Panagiotou, “St. Basil the Great and Christian Philanthropy” <https://pravoslavie.ru/76134.html>

"Even without debt a poor family might need to sell children or essential goods to survive. A small farmer could lose his land if a greedy neighbor took him to court on false charges and bribed the judge."⁴⁰⁷

Thus, the description of the situation reveals that the famine of Caesarea at the same time brought with itself a human rights crisis, which had a detrimental impact, especially on the poor. Basil clearly understood that the proper role of the Church in such a situation should be to think of ways of promoting social justice. In this light one can really discern in his philanthropy elements of liberation theology.

Basil's endeavors for restructuring of the tax policy constitutes a call for an economic reform geared to meet the needs of all, especially those on the economic margins. His enterprise for economic justice was influenced by the conviction that fair taxation would create equal opportunities for the community. In addition, his efforts to exempt Basiliada from taxes was not only aimed at creating extra resources for charity but intended to challenge the attitude of authorities towards philanthropy. In this light it should be understood the observation of Smither that "Basil did not reject this opportunity to influence political leaders and even model for the government how to solve important social and economic problems."⁴⁰⁸ Thus Basil's leadership for social justice has paved the way for the bishops in a Christian empire to reshape the hierarchy of clerical office into the role of Roman patron.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁷ S. Holman, *God Knows There's Need*, p. 59. Smither clarifies what means selling the children: they were sold to slavery (E. Smither, *Missionary Monks*: p. 35). From the voice of Holman one can get an impression that the parents sold their children in order to survive. In other words, they were led by their self-centered interests. However, it should be noted that in Late Antiquity not always selling the children could be interpreted from that point of view. Selling the children to slavery sometimes was the only way to save their lives. In this light sometimes it could just grow from absolute necessity and it demonstrates how desperate was the situation in times of disaster.

⁴⁰⁸ E. Smither, *Missionary Monks*, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁰⁹ Cff. Paul J. Fedwick, *The Church and the Charisma of Leadership in Basil of Caesarea*.

In this sense Basil has indeed become both a spiritual and a material patron for his community.

An examination of Basil's sermons on social justice issues reveals the new emerging image of patron-Bishop, or as Brown prefers to define it "lover of the poor". In relation to this Holman rightly observes that "in making responses to need and the poor a significant element in the deliberate political application of Christian rhetoric, such writers redesigned existing cultural philanthropic ideals in new ways."⁴¹⁰ Only in this light can it be explained why Basil "opposed his own new city for the poor (his Basileias) to the boastful city of Caesarea."⁴¹¹ Thus, it appears that through simultaneously ministering to the poor, needy, and suffering, Basil used his position as a bishop to be an advocate of new social ideals. Or to put it in the language of contemporary ethicist S. Hauerwas the "social ethics of the Church".⁴¹²

Conclusion

Thus, the comparison reveals that the role of the patronage of the church was manifested not very differently in both the Armenian and Caesarean contexts. In both churches a further shared perspective is evident in relation to "exorbitant taxes" as the author of *The Epic Histories* describes it or 'tax relief of the poor' as advocated by Basil. Moreover, it becomes apparent that the main task of both

⁴¹⁰ S. Holman, *God Knows There's Need*, p. 55.

⁴¹¹ P. Van Nuffelen, "Social Ethics and Moral Discourse in Late Antiquity" in *Reading Patristic Texts on Social Ethics: Issues and Challenges for Twenty-First-Century Christian Social Thought*, ed. By J. Leemans, B. J. Matz, I. Verstraeten, The Catholic University of American Press, Washington D. C. 2011, p. 58.

⁴¹² See S. Hauerwas, *A community of Character: Towards a Constructive Christian Social Ethics*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1981.

traditions was to change not only the consciousness of society in relationship to the needy, but also to challenge the existing political, economic, and social systems. Further, this should not be considered merely in the light of the growing authority of the Church, but rather in the context of the social mission of the Church in the life of society. On the other hand, it's reasonable to assume that given contextual differences as well as the distinctive individual nature of the vision of both Nersēs and Basil, the actual expression of what was a shared ideal might naturally take somewhat different forms.

Chapter Six: Eustathius of Sebaste and the Armenian Church

Introduction

In previous chapters I argued that there are similarities between the Basiliada and the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs. Could the fact that Basil himself was influenced by Eustathius of Sebaste enable one to suggest that the philanthropic movement of Nersēs also could have some connections with Eustathius? What Eustathius’s program was about? Referring to the canons of the council of Gangra the scholars have established that Eustathius taught women to abandon their husbands, wear men’s clothes and cut their hair short. His program included as well the rejection of property ownership, in particular by the church, the refusal to pay a “church tax,” denial of certain liturgical practices; contempt for married clergy; invalidation of traditional marriage; and finally, equality of slaves and women with men; to practice anachoresis’ provides the basis and justification for these teachings.⁴¹³ The relationship of Eustathius of Sebaste with the Armenian Church tradition has been a matter of discussion in the scholarship since the end of the 19th century. Friedrich Loofs promoted the thesis that the philanthropic movement of Nersēs was inspired by Eustathius.⁴¹⁴ This thesis was further developed by other scholars, such as Markwart,⁴¹⁵ Khachikyan,⁴¹⁶ and Najaryan⁴¹⁷ with different perspectives. This chapter considers a few important questions

⁴¹³ S. Elm, *Virgins of God*, pp. 108-111.

⁴¹⁴ F. Loofs, *Eustathius Von Sebaste und die Chronologie der Basilius-Briefe*, Halle, 1898, p. 54.

⁴¹⁵ Markwart, *Die Entstehung der Armenischen Bistumer*, Rom, 1932, pp. 93, 96-97.

⁴¹⁶ L. Խաչիկյան, *Փոքր Հայքի Սոցիալական Շարժումների Պատմությունից* (IV դար), Երևան, 1951 (L. Khach’ikyan, *From the History of the Social Movements of Armenia Minor* (IV c.), Yerevan, 1951).

⁴¹⁷ Հ. Նաջարյան, *Եվստաթեսու Սերաստուսցին, Բարսեղ Մեծը և Հայաստանում Վանականության Կազմավորումը*, «Էջմիածին», 1983, no. Ե-2, էջ 77-86 (H. Najaryan, “Eustathius of Sebaste, Basil the Graet and the Formation of Monasticism in Armenia” Review «Etchmiadzin», 1983, no. 5-6, pp. 77-86).

concerning the possible relationship between Eustathius and Armenia. The first part examines whether the evidence available allows us to make some suggestions that Eustathius's program or his asceticism could have some relationship with Armenian Major or the Armenian Church. The second part considers the theory of Khachikyan concerning the possible connection of Eustathius's program with the establishment of the city of Aršakawan by the Armenian King Aršak II (350-368). The third part discusses whether the 5th century Armenian sources provide us with clear evidence that Eustathius's asceticism has found a foothold in Armenia or presented a challenge for the Armenian Church. In the final part of this chapter I will show how far men and women were separated in ascetic communities in Armenia by arguing that Armenian context is more like Basil and less like Eustathius.

Part I. Eustathianism and the Armenian Church: Critical reading of Greco-Roman sources

One of the main issues concerning the relationship of Eustathius of Sebaste with the Armenian Church tradition refers to the interpretation of the available evidence found in Greco-Roman sources. I will argue that the evidence regarding the monastic activity of Eustathius in Armenia and related events has been misinterpreted by some scholars, which led them to identify the toponym Armenia with the Armenian Church.

6.1 The relationship of Eustathius of Sebaste with Armenia

The Armenian Late Antique historical sources do not provide us with any information regarding the relationship of Eustathius with Armenia or the Armenian Church. We find ample evidence in the Greco-Roman sources regarding the relationship of Eustathius with Armenia: namely in the *Church History* of Sozomenos,⁴¹⁸ the *Ecclesiastical History* of Socrates⁴¹⁹ and the conciliar Letter of the Council of Gangra issued to the churches in Armenia.⁴²⁰ Sozomen tells us that Eustathius had established monastic life in Armenia. With respect to this he reports:

“It is said that Eustathius, who governed the church of Sebaste in Armenia, founded a society of monks in Armenia, Paphlagonia, and Pontus, and became the author of a zealous discipline, both as to what meats were to be partaken of or to be avoided, what garments were to be worn, and what customs and exact course of conduct were to be adopted.”⁴²¹

The Socrates also presents us with some information on the relationship of Eustathius with Armenia:

“But Eustathius bishop of Sebastia in Armenia was not even permitted to make his defense... Eustathius indeed was subsequently condemned by a Synod convened on his account at Gangra in Paphlagonia; he having, after his deposition by the council at Cæsarea, done many things repugnant to the ecclesiastical canons...”⁴²²

Further we learn about this relationship from the conciliar Letter of the council of Gangra: the Greek and Latin versions of the Letter have the following heading:

⁴¹⁸ *The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen*. Book III, Chapter 14, see in Nicene and Post-Nicene fathers, second series, Socrates, Sozomenus: Church Histories, vol. 2, ed. by P. Schaff, D.D.LL.D. and H. Wace, D.D., Massachusetts, 1995.

⁴¹⁹ *The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus*. Book II, chapter XLIII, see in Nicene and Post-Nicene fathers, second series, Socrates, Sozomenus: Church Histories, vol. 2, ed. by P. Schaff, D.D.LL.D. and H. Wace, D.D., Massachusetts, 1995.

⁴²⁰ *The Council of Gangra. Synodical Letter of the Council of Gangra*. see in Nicene and Post-Nicene fathers. Second series. *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*. vol. 14, ed. by P. Schaff, D.D.LL.D. and H. Wace, D.D., Massachusetts, 1995, pp. 91-101.

⁴²¹ *The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen*, Book III, Chapter 14.

⁴²² *The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates Scholasticus*, Book II, chapter XLIII.

“Eusebius, Ælian, Eugenius, Olympius, Bithynicus, Gregory, Philetus, Pappus, Eulalius, Hypatius, Proaeresius, Basil and Bassus, assembled in the holy Synod at Gangra, to our most honored lords and fellow-ministers in Armenia wish health in the Lord”.⁴²³

Sebaste was the administrative center of Armenia Minor.⁴²⁴ But what was the relationship between the Church of Armenia Major and the Church of Armenia Minor; was the latter within the jurisdiction of the Armenian Church? To answer to this question, one needs to take a look at the political history of Armenia Minor in late antiquity.

By the fourth century two different territories were referred to as Armenia.⁴²⁵“Armenia Minor was between Pontus and Cappadocia, while across the great river, Armenia Major extended along part of the wide Parthian frontier,”⁴²⁶ although this may state the boundaries between the two regions too

⁴²³ The Council of Gangra, p. 91.

⁴²⁴ Թ. Հակոբյան, Ստ. Մելիք-Բախշյան, Հ. Բարսեղյան, «Հայաստանի եւ հարակից շրջանների տեղանունների բառարան», Երևան, 1986-2001 (Թ. Hakobyan, St. Melik'-Bakhshyan, H. Barseghyan, *Dictionary of Toponyms of Armenia and the Adjacent Regions*, Yerevan, 1986-2001).

⁴²⁵ See Թ. Հակոբյան, *Հայաստանի պատմական աշխարհագրություն*, Երևան, 1968, էջ 91-101 (T. Hakobyan, *Historical Geography of Armenia*, Yerevan, 1968, pp. 91-101). It should be recalled that in the Armenian historical sources the information regarding Minor Armenia is very scarce and blurring. Related to this issue Adontz has rightly pointed out that the role of Minor Armenia at some degree is undermined in Armenian studies (see N. Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, p. 56, cff. Թ. Հակոբյան, *Հայաստանի պատմական աշխարհագրություն*, էջ 105-111 (T. Hakobyan, *Historical Geography of Armenia*, pp. 105-111). The historiography today has difficulties deciding the exact borders of Minor Armenia. It was suggested that as a result of political vicissitudes, it was changed over the centuries. Since the first century it had comprised part of the province of Cappadocia. Through the reforms of Diocletian at the end of the 3rd century, it was separated from the province of Cappadocia, and entered into the structure of the Roman Empire as an independent province. In the second half of the 4th century it was divided into two parts, First Armenia and Second Armenia. Until the reforms of Justinian II, the territorial division was not changed. In 536 when the Armenian lands of the empire were divided into four administrative units First Armenia, Second Armenia, Third Armenia and Fourth Armenia, the territory of Minor Armenia was included into the first three. In the 7th century Minor Armenia was invaded by Arabs (see *ibid.* 105-111, cff. Բ. Հարությունյան, *Փոքր Հայք*, in *Հայկական Սովետական Հանրագիտարան*, vol. XII, Երևան, 1986, էջ 373-374 (B. Harutjunyan, “Armenian Minor” in *Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia*, vol. XII, Yerevan, 1986, pp. 373-374), N. Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, pp. 55-74.

⁴²⁶ M. Bunson. *Encyclopedia of the Roman Empire*, New York. 1994, p. 30.

simply. Roman influence was first established in Armenia Minor in 66 B.C.⁴²⁷ In AD 118 under Roman Emperor Trajan, Armenia Minor was generally incorporated into the province of Cappadocia.⁴²⁸

In 296 under the reforms of the Emperor Diocletian, Armenia Minor had become a separate province with its own metropolitan See.⁴²⁹ This event directly influenced the modification of the demographic picture of Armenia Minor: other non-Armenian territories were incorporated into Armenia Minor.⁴³⁰ In relation to this H. Tashyan observes: “And so *small Armenian* dioceses were composed, which however continued to remain very much Greek, as much were Cappadocian and Pontian dioceses.”⁴³¹ With respect to the jurisdictional status of the Church of Armenia Minor, N. Adontz further notes that “Lesser Armenia, organically bound to the Empire, was also subject to the general pattern in ecclesiastical matters. First, as a part of Cappadocia, it had belonged to the eparchy of the metropolitan of Caesarea; then, having been made into a separate province, it had a metropolitan of its own at Melitene.”⁴³²

⁴²⁷ See Բ. Հարությունյան, *Փոքր Հայք*, էջ 373 (B. Harutjunyan, “Armenia Minor” p. 30).

⁴²⁸ Թ. Հակոբյան, *Հայաստանի պատմական աշխարհագրություն*, էջ 105-111 (T. Hakobyan, *Historical Geography of Armenia*, pp. 105-111).

⁴²⁹ N. Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, pp. 281, 55-74, cff. «Հայաստանի եւ հարակից շրջանների տեղանունների բառարան» (*Dictionary of Toponyms of Armenia and the Adjacent Regions*).

⁴³⁰ Լեո, *Հայոց Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 167 (Leo, *History*, vol I, p. 167).

⁴³¹ Հ. Տաշյան, *Հին Հայաստանի արևմտեան սահմանը. Փոքր-Հայք եւ Կողովեկ (Սեբաստիա)*, Վիեննա, 1948, էջ 465 (H. Tashyan, *The Western Border of Ancient Armenia: Armenia Minor and Koghopene (Sebastia)*, Vienna, 1948).

⁴³² N. Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, p. 281. In Greco-Roman world ecclesiastical provinces arose out of the division of the Roman Empire into provinces: Church assumed for its organizational structure the administrative structure of the Empire (see E. Benz, *The Eastern Orthodox church: Its thought and Life*, London, 2009, p.78, cff N. Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, pp. 276-280).

Thus, this brief outline allows us to maintain that the Church of Armenia Minor jurisdictionally has no relationship with the Church in Armenia Major, the area of Armenia not under direct Roman control.⁴³³ This observation becomes very relevant in relation to the Letter of the Council of Gangra, where Eustathius was condemned by the Church for his extravagant asceticism.⁴³⁴ The note's salutation: "honored lords and fellow-ministers in Armenia"⁴³⁵ has allowed scholars sometimes to conflate the word *Armenia* with the Armenian Church.⁴³⁶ Susanna

⁴³³ Alongside this the study of the structure of the Church of Armenia Major reveals that the Church of Armenia Minor jurisdictionally has no affiliation with the Armenian Church: apart from that it is not mentioned among the dioceses of the Church of Armenia Major (see Բ. Հարությունյան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցու Թեմական Բաժանումը Գրիգոր Լուսավորչի Հովհաստությունից Երջանում*, Պատմա-քանասիրական հանդես, Երևան, 2000, № 2. էջ 108-127 (B. Harut'yunyan, "The Ecclesiastical Dioceses of the Armenian Church During the Patriarchate of Gregory Illuminator", *Historical-Philological Journal*, no. 2., 2000, pp. 108-127), Կ. Մատթեոսյան, *Հայաստանի Թեմերը. Պատմություն և Արդիականություն*, Էջմիածին, no. Բ-Գ, 1998, էջ 185-190 (K. Matt'ewosyan, "Dioceses of Armenia: History and modernity", Review «Etchmiadzin», no. 2-3, 1998, pp. 185-190). After the first division of Armenia Major between Rome and Persia (387), the dioceses of the Roman Armenia jurisdictionally have become a part of the Imperial Church (see Բ. Հարությունյան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցու Թեմական Բաժանումը*, էջ 111 (B. Harut'yunyan, "The Ecclesiastical Dioceses of the Armenian Church" p. 111). Further B. Harutjunyan invites attention to the fact that in the Late Antique and medieval lists of the dioceses of the Armenian Church we find allusion of two Assyrian Dioceses, *First Assyrian Diocese* and *Second Assyrian Diocese*. He correctly highlights that these dioceses represented Assyrian communities of Armenia. Despite the fact, these dioceses were within the jurisdiction of the Armenian Church because those areas administratively were part of Armenia during the period of the office of **Marzpan* (prefecture). Thus, this simply implies that the political borders had affected the jurisdictional frontiers of the Church. By the same token should be understood the jurisdictional status of the Church of Armenia Minor. See *ibid.* 111-112.

⁴³⁴ In the scholarship there is no agreement with regard to the date of the Council of Gangra. Some specialists prefer to date it between 340-376 (see П. Михайлов, Гангрский Собор, *Православная Энциклопедия*, Том X, с. 403, A. M. Silvas, *The Date of Gangra and a Point of Comparison Between Basil's Small and Great Asketikon*, in *STUDIA PATRISTICA*, VOL. XLI, Papers presented at the Fourteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford, Orientalia, Clement, Origen, Athanasius, *The Cappadocians, Chrysostom*, ed. By F. Young, M. Edwards and P. Parvis 2003, Louvain, 2006, pp. 409-410, Barnes, Timothy D. "The Date of the Council of Gangra", in *The Journal of Theological Studies*, no. 40, 1989, pp. 121-124, Ferguson Everett. "Gangra" in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson, New York, Garland Publishing, 1998, p. 452.

⁴³⁵ *The Council of Gangra*. vol. 14, 91.

⁴³⁶ J. Hefele, *A History of the Councils of the Church: From the Original Documents*, vol. II, A. D. 326 to A. D. 429, Edinburgh, T&T Clarks, 1876, p. 337, Լ. Խաչիկյան, *Փոքր Հայրի Անցարկական Ծարժանների Պատմությունից*, էջ 39-40 (L. Khach'ikyan, *From the History of the Social Movements*, pp. 39-40), Վ. Հակոբյան, *Դաննասգիրք Հայոց*, հատոր I, էջ 580-581 (V. Hakobyan, *The Book of Canons*, vol. I, pp. 580-581), Հ. Նազարյան, *Եվստաթեսու Մեքսաստուցին*, էջ 78 (H. Najaryan, "Eustathius of Sebaste", p. 78), П. Михайлов, Гангрский Собор, с. 403, *Creeeds, Councils and Controversies, Documents illustrating the history of the Church AD 337-461*, ed. By J. Stevenson, SPCK, London, 2011, pp. 2-4; A. P. "Gangra, Local Council of", in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. II, Oxford, 1991, p. 821, A. M. Silvas, "The Date of Gangra and a Point of Comparison Between Basil's Small and Great Asketikon", p. 409, A. Sterk, *Renouncing the world Yet Leading the Church*, pp. 25-32.

Elm, for instance in her very valuable and important work *Virgins of God* in speaking about the Eustathius's monastic philosophy writes:

“We do not possess an account of this philosophy or ‘discipline’, or of its consequences, in Eustathius’ own words. Any reconstruction of his convictions has to be unraveled from other sources, mainly a few allusions in Basil of Caesarea’s later writings, and the twenty canons issued by the fathers at Gangra, who hardly strove to represent an historically accurate, unbiased picture. Their letter to the Armenian bishops summarizes the improprieties committed by Eustathius and his supporters...”⁴³⁷

This commentary may create an impression that the letter of Gangra was addressed to the Armenian Church. Elm several times mentions about Armenia, (particularly in pages 106, 108, 130, 133) in speaking about Eustathius as a founder of monasticism, however she does not specify that it refers to Armenia Minor. While in the *Letter of Gangra* the word *Armenia* is used in administrative terms, which does not necessarily imply ethnic belonging. This judgment is supported by the comments of N. Adontz regarding the empire’s provincial division:

“Roman provincial divisions were never based on ethnic grounds, so that in speaking of Lesser Armenia we must take this term as an administrative rather than an ethnic unit. Furthermore, her administrative frontiers were often altered through contraction or expansion with regard to the adjoining provinces”⁴³⁸

Thus, the phrase: “honored lords and fellow-ministers in Armenia...” does not necessarily imply ethnic belonging, or to put it more simply that the bishops were Armenians.⁴³⁹ Further a closer reading of the Armenian translation of the *Letter of*

⁴³⁷ S. Elm, *Virgins of God, Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, pp. 107-108.

⁴³⁸ N. Adontz, *Armenia in the Period of Justinian*, pp. 56-57.

⁴³⁹ It is expected that among the bishops of the Church of Armenia Minor were some or many by Armenian origin. However, it does not necessarily mean that the phrase of the heading of the *Letter*

Gangra allows us to make some suggestions with regard to this question. V. Hakobyan, who published the critical text of the Armenian translation of the *Letter* and the *Canons* in regard to the Armenian translation identifies two versions: the version of the Armenian Church Canon law, and another version that is found in a group of manuscripts in the Matenadaran.⁴⁴⁰ Hakobyan misses an important detail that is specific to both Armenian versions. The Greek and Latin versions of the Letter have the following heading: “Eusebius, Ælian, Eugenius, Olympius, Bithynicus, Gregory, Philetus, Pappus, Eulalius, Hypatius, Proaeresius, Basil and Bassus, assembled in the holy Synod at Gangra, to our most honored lords and fellow-ministers in Armenia wish health in the Lord”.⁴⁴¹ However, the toponym *Armenia* is missing from both Armenian translations.⁴⁴² One kept only the names of the participants, the other completely omitted the full heading. Why did the Armenian translators omit the toponym *Armenia*? Two reasons present themselves as possibilities; first they knew that it was addressed to the Church of Armenia Minor which was not within the jurisdiction of the Armenian Church, and second, they most probably thought that any mention of *Armenia* would cause the readers

of Gangra “honored lords and fellow-ministers in Armenia” should necessarily be associated with the Armenian ethnicity or the Armenian Church (see Ա. Ալբոյաճեան, *Պատմություն հայ զանդախտություններին*, հատոր I, Գահիրե, 1941, էջ 131 (A. Alboyadjian, *History of the Armenian Emigration*, vol. I, Cairo, 1941, p. 131). The letters of St. Basil provide us with enough evidence that some of the bishops of the Church of Armenia Minor were of Armenian ethnicity (see Saint Basil. *The Letters*, Letter N XCIX, p. 452- 453) “I made peace between the Armenian bishops, and made them a suitable address, urging them to put away their customary indifference, and resume their ancient zeal in the Lord’s cause”, “I was also careful to inquire into the calumnies promulgated against our brother Cyril, the Armenian bishop, and by God’s grace I have found them to be started by the lying slanders of his enemies”. “Select Library of The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of The Christian Church”, Second Series, vol. 8, St. Basil: Letters and Selected Works, Translated with Notes by the Rev. Blomfield Jackson, M. A., New York Christian Literature Company 1890-1900, Letter XCIX p. 452.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid: NN 648, 649, 650, 651, 2964, 3369, 3562.

⁴⁴¹ The Council of Gangra, p. 91.

⁴⁴² See Վ. Հակոբյան, *Կանոնագիրք Հայոց*, հատոր I, էջ 190-201, 580 (V. Hakobyan, *The Book of Canons*, vol. I, pp. 190-201, 580).

to associate Eustathius or Eustathianism with the Church of Armenia Major, and thus omitted it from the text.⁴⁴³

However, taking into account the geographical closeness of Armenia Minor particularly with the western part of Armenia Major, where the Roman influence was stronger, it is quite reasonable to think that the name of Eustathius or his ascetic teaching might be familiar in that part of the kingdom. I have already observed that scholars have identified two main Christian centers where from the new religion could have spread to Armenia: Cappadocia-Sebaste-Melitene or Edessa and Nisibis. Agathangelos, in his *History*, attempts to establish closer links between the Church of Armenia Major and the Church of Sebaste. According to his reports, after receiving ordination from the Archbishop of Caesarea on his way back to Armenia, Saint Gregory the illuminator stopped in Sebaste:

“They arrived in the city of Sebaste, and there they lodged not a few days. He [Gregory the Illuminator] found there a good number of brethren whom he persuaded to accompany him so that he might elevate them to the priesthood in his own country; and a very large number he took with him. And he was greatly honored by the bishops of the land and the nobles of the people.”⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴³ As regards to the date of the Armenian translation of *The Letter of Gangra* then it is difficult to establish when exactly it was translated. In the Late Antique Armenian sources, we find evidence only with regard to the translation of the canons of the *First* and *Third* Ecumenical councils (see Moses Khorenats'i, *History of The Armenians*, Book II, ch. 90, Book III, ch. 61, cff. Մովսէս Խորենացի, Պատմութիւն Հայոց, գ. Բ., գլ. Դ, գ. Գ., գլ. ԿԱ (Moses Khorenats'i, *History*, Book II, ch. 90, Book III, ch. 61). Thus, there is nothing to indicate that the *Letter* and the *Canons of Gangra* were familiar to the Church of Armenia Major in the second half of the 4th century. However, the Armenian editions of the *Letter* allow us to make some suggestions with regard to the date of the translation. Thus, because of the fact that from the Armenian translation is missing the allusion of *Armenia* allows us to suggest that it should have been translated to Armenian at least in the first half of the 5th century, when still the memory of Eustathianism was fresh.

⁴⁴⁴ Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*, The Conversion to Salvation of the Land of Armenia Through the holy Martyr, ch.11, verse 806, cff. «Ետուն ողջոյն, և յուրի անկեալ անտի ի շնորհս տեառն մերոյ Յիսուսի Քրիստոսի՝ գային հասանէին ի քաղաքն Սեբաստացւոց, և անդ յեցան յերեկօթս աւուրս ոչ սակաւս: Եվ անդ գտանէր բազմութիւն եղբարց, զորս հաւանեցուցանէր ընդ իւր գալ, զի վիճակեցուցէ զնոսս ի քահանայութիւն յիւրում աշխարհին, և բազում գունդս գունդս յանախեալ առնոյր ընդ իւր, «և մեծարանօք յեպիսկոպոսաց աշխարհին և յիշխանաց և ի ժողովրդոց», Ագաթանգեղոս, Պատմութիւն Հայոց, Դարձ Փրկութեան

I am not going to argue whether the evidence of Agathangelos is historically reliable or not. However, this reference might indicate that in the 4th and 5th centuries there were close connections between the Armenian Church, particularly the Armenian branch of Greek Christianity and the centers, such as Cappadocia-Sebaste-Melitene. Thus, does this observation further allow us to suggest a possible relationship between Nersēs and Eustathius as well? There are two important arguments that encouraged some scholars to develop these suggestions: a. both Eustathius and Nersēs lived and worked in the same period of history, b. they both established charitable institutions. Further in succeeding sections of this chapter I will discuss the following two questions:

1. Does the historical evidence allow us to support the suggestion that the ascetic teaching of Eustathius could have found a foothold in Armenia Major?
2. What is the probability that Nersēs learned about philanthropy from Eustathius, in Sebaste?

Part II, Eustathius of Sebaste and asylum city Aršakawan: Critical examination of Khachikyan's thesis

In the midst of the last century the Marxist scholar L. Khachikyan published research on the social movements of Armenia Minor (4th century), in which he argued that the asylum seekers from the city of Aršakawan bear similarities to the followers of Eustathius of Sebaste,⁴⁴⁵ In relation to this he further maintains that

Աշխարհիս Հայաստան, գլ. ԺԱ., սոդ 806(Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*, The Conversion to Salvation of the Land of Armenia Through the holy Martyr, ch.11, verse 806).

⁴⁴⁵ L. Խաչիկյան, *Փոքր Հայրի Սոցիալական Շարժումների Պատմությունը*, էջ 57-67 (L. Khach'ikyan, *From the History of the Social Movements*, pp. 57-67).

the philanthropic movement of Nersēs was influenced by Eustathius of Sebaste.⁴⁴⁶

In the following pages I will analyze Khachikyan's claims.

6.2 The asylum seekers of Aršakawan

Khachikyan argues that by establishing Aršakawan, Aršak II (350-368) sought to attack the inherent intolerable inequalities in a feudal system in which the Church and nobility exploited the great mass of the people.⁴⁴⁷ Regarding the establishment of Aršakawan we find information in the *The Epic Histories* and in the *History of Xorenats'i*.

The Epic Histories records the following:

“It was around that time that the king built himself a **dastakert* [settlement, estate] in the designated valley of the district of Kog. And he ordered a royal edict proclaimed in every district of his dominion and announced on every public square in his realm, and he filled all the regions and districts with the royal proclamation [standing] that: “Should anyone be indebted to anyone, or should anyone anywhere have wronged anyone else, or should anyone have been summoned to judgment, let every one of them come and settle in this **dastakert*. Should anyone have shed the blood of anyone, or have harmed anyone, or have carried off anyone's wife, or be in debt, or have taken anyone's possessions, or be in fear of anyone, let him come to this place and he shall not be subject to judgment and law. But should anyone be indebted to someone and the creditor come there, let him be taken without judgment or justice and thrown out.” As soon as the royal edict was proclaimed, every thief and robber, [every] shedder of blood, murderer, liar, and harmful seducer, [every] cutpurse, despoiler, false witness, slanderer, destroyer,

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid. 67-71.

⁴⁴⁷ The scholarship puts the establishment of Arshakavan at the end of the 350s (see Թ. Հակոբյան, *Պատմական Հայաստանի Բարձրանդը*, Երևան, 1987, էջ 69 (T. Hakobyan, *Cities of Historical Armenia*, Yerevan, 1987, p. 69).

pillager, and miser immediately collected there. Many did every kind of damage and took cover there: many wives left their husbands and hid there, many men left their wives and hid there taking another man's wife, many servants fled after taking their master's goods and hid there, many holders of deposits took the deposits that they had in safekeeping and hid there; and thus they spoiled and ruined the entire land. For although complains multiplied indeed, there was no judgment and no one's rights were taken up by the royal court... Then King Aršak ordered the **dastakert* called Aršakawan after his own name, and a royal palace [aparank'] was also built there."⁴⁴⁸

The references specifically regarding the flight of slaves from their lords, and divorced men and women, allowed Khachikyan to see parallels between Eustathianism and Aršakawan.⁴⁴⁹ The contents of the 3rd and 14th canons of the

⁴⁴⁸ *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. xii. «Չայնու ժամանակաւ շինեաց իւր արքայն դաստակերտ մի ի հովիտն անուանեալ ի Կոզ գաւառի: Եւ ետ հրաման ընդ ամենայն գաւառս իշխանութեան իւրոյ, եւ հրամայեաց կարգել քարոզ ընդ ամենայն տեղիս աշխարհացն հրապարակին իւրոյ. եւ ամենայն կողմանս գաւառաց իւրոց յի առնէր հրամանաւն արքունի, զի եթէ որ ումեք ինչ պարտիցի, եթէ որ ուրուք ուստեք ինչ վնասեալ իցէ, կամ որ ումեք ինչ դատպարտիցի, ամենեքեան եկեցեն ի դաստակերտն շինեցեն: Եթէ արիւնահան որ իցէ, կամ վնաս ուրուք արարեալ իցէ, կամ զկին ուրուք տարեալ իցէ, կամ պարտապան իցէ, կամ որ զուրուք կարասի ունիցի, կամ որ յումեքէ երկիւղած ինչ իցէ, եւ եկեցէ յայնտեղի, դատ եւ իրաւունք մի՛ լիցին: Իսկ եթէ որ ումեք ինչ պարտիցի, եւ որում պարտիցին՝ եկեալ յայնտեղին, առանց դատի եւ իրաւանց կայցին եւ ի դուրս տարցեն:

Իբրև ել հրաման յարքայէն, ժողովեցան այնուհետեւ յայնտեղի ամենայն գողք եւ աւազակք, արիւնահանք, սպանողք, սուտք եւ մարդէրոյզք վնասակարք, գանձահատք, զրկողք, ստադատք, զրախաւսք, գերփողք, յափշտակողք, ժլատք: Բազում վնասս վնասս առնէին, եւ անդրանկանէին. բազում կանայք զարս թողուին, եւ անդր անկանէին. բազում արք զիրեանց կանայս թողուին, եւ զայլոյ կանայս առեալ՝ անդր անկանէին. բազում ծառայք զիրեանց տերանց զգանձս ըմբռնեալ, փախուցեալք անդր անկանէին. բազում աւանդառուք գաւանդս լի զպահեստս բարձեալ, անդ անկանէին. գերփէին աւերէին զերկիրն ամենայն... Ապա տայր հրաման արքայն Արշակ դնել անուն դաստակերտին յիւրակից անունն Արշակաւան. եւ շինեցին եւս անդ ապարանս արքունի», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. ԺԲ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. xii). In his *History*, Xorenats'i writes the following: "But Aršak even more presumptuously undertook a senseless project. On the rear side of Mount Masis he built a town as a gathering place for criminals, and he ordered that whoever took refuge and dwelt there should be free from the laws of justice. Immediately the whole valley was filled with a sea of men; for trustees, debtors, slaves, delinquents, thieves, murderers, divorced men, and other such people fled there for refuge, and there was no punishment or investigation. The princes often complained but Aršak did not listen to them. They eventually complained to Shapuh. **Moses Khorenats'i**, *History of The Armenians*, Book III, ch. 27, see ff. Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. ԺԷ (Moses Khorenats'i, *History*, Book III, ch. 27).

⁴⁴⁹ See L. Խաչիկյան, *Փոքր Հայքի Սոցիալական Շարժումների Պատմությունից*, էջ 57-67 (L. Khach'ikyan, *From the History of the Social Movements*, pp. 57-67).

Council of Gangra are specifically referenced by Khachikyan to show similarities.⁴⁵⁰ The 3rd article with regard to slaves' states: "If any one shall teach a slave, under pretext of piety, to despise his master and to run away from his service, and not to serve his own master with good-will and all honor, let him be anathema".⁴⁵¹ The 14th article is against women that leave their husbands: "If any woman shall forsake her husband, and resolve to depart from him because she abhors marriage, let her be anathema."⁴⁵² It is difficult to exactly reconstruct the teaching of Eustathius, because of the scarcity of documentation. In her *Virgins of God*, Susanna Elm believes that Eustathius and his followers were accused "because they took the Scriptures literally." To support her theory, she references Paul Galathians 3:28: "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus"⁴⁵³ Referring to the canons of the council of Gangra Susanna Elm observes that Eustathius's teachings particularly is addressed two groups – women and slaves – and encouraged them to change their current condition on the basis of 'the dress'. Eustathius taught women to abandon their husbands, wear men's clothes and cut their hair short. Elm concludes: that "it appears that the women who followed Eustathius did not simply cast aside their female clothes and exchange them for male attire, but assumed an entirely new role."⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid. 66-67. This parallel later on was picked up by Najaryan. However, he does not add anything new, but just states that the asylum seekers of Arshakavan reminds us of the followers of Eustathius. Moreover, it should be emphasized that in his article Najaryan does not mention the work of Khach'ikyan (see Հ. Նաջարյան, *Եվստույթնու Մկրտությունը*, էջ 79-80 (H. Najaryan, "Eustathius of Sebaste", pp. 79-80).

⁴⁵¹ The Council of Gangra, p. 93.

⁴⁵² Ibid. 98.

⁴⁵³ S. Elm, *Virgins of God*, p. 130.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid. pp. 108-109.

Khachikyan’s thesis may create an impression that he sees the question detached from the context of the text. *The Epic Histories* actually has little to say regarding slaves, it just notes that: “many servants fled after taking their master’s goods and hid there”.⁴⁵⁵ In comparison, the corresponding article of Gangra allows one to think that Eustathians had certain reservation in relation to the institution of slavery. The phrase of the canon of Gangra “If any one shall teach a slave, under pretext of piety to despise his master and to run away from his service...”⁴⁵⁶ has allowed some to suggest that the followers of Eustathius “found the practice of slaveholding incompatible with the gospel. They seem to have urged slaves to reject their subordination as slaves...”⁴⁵⁷ Accordingly, the conflict between slaves and masters in the case of the followers of Eustathius, was on religious grounds. *The Epic Histories* speaks of servants leaving their masters and stealing from them. Unfortunately, we have no way of verifying this account, and so it is very difficult to see any certain parallel between Eustathius’s teaching and the depiction of slaves at Aršakawan.

Further, in relation to the previously married men and women who sought asylum in Aršakawan, *The Epic Histories* does not provide us with any evidence that allows us to associate them with Eustathians. It just states, “many wives left their husbands and hid there, many men left their wives and hid there taking another man’s wife”.⁴⁵⁸ One cannot conclude, on the basis of this passage, that these people

⁴⁵⁵ *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. xii, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. ԺԲ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. xii).

⁴⁵⁶ The Council of Gangra, pp. 91-101.

⁴⁵⁷ J. Glancy, “Christian Slavery in Late Antiquity”, in *Human Bondage in the Cultural Contact Zone: Transdisciplinary Perspectives on Slavery and its Discourses* (eds.) R. Hormann, G. Mackenthun, Munster, Waxman 2010, p. 75, cff. Ilaria L. E. Ramelli, *Social Justice and the Legitimacy of Slavery: The Role of Philosophical Asceticism from Ancient Judaism to Late Antiquity*, Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 227.

⁴⁵⁸ *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. xii, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. ԺԲ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. xii).

had taken refuge in Aršakawan because they opposed marriage.⁴⁵⁹At the same time, the author of *The Epic Histories* plainly states that they remarried!

At the same period of time in the Armenian Church, other developments took place that demand consideration: the issue of marriage was addressed in the Council of Aštišhat (353), but from a radically different perspective. *The Epic Histories* maintains that the Council of Aštišhat defined certain regulations concerning the sacrament of marriage:

“He also [taught] that marriage should be lawful, and neither to deceive and nor betray one’s spouse, and above all to refrain from incestuous marriages with close family relations within the clan, especially from intimacy with daughters-in-law or anything of the kind as had once been [the custom]. And he [set down] the canon... holding of intercourse during menses, for he held all such things to be impure before the Lord.”⁴⁶⁰

The passage quoted from *The Epic Histories* reveals that serious steps were taken in the Armenian Church to put in good order the rite of marriage. If the Eustathian perception of marriage had represented any danger to the Armenian Church, then the Council of Aštišhat (353) would definitely reference it.

It will help to spend a little more time with Khachikyan’s views on the origins of the philanthropic movement of Nersēs. He writes:

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. ԺԲ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. xii).

⁴⁶⁰ *The Epic Histories*, Book IV, ch. iv. «Եւ զի լինիցին յամուսնութեան օրինաւորք, մի՛ ստել եւ մի՛ դաւ բերել իւրեանց ամուսնութիւնընդալ կողմանց. եւ փախչել աւելի ի մերձաւոր եւ յազգին տոհմակից խառնակութեան ամուսնութենէն, եւ մանաւանդ ի մերձաւորականինուոց, եւ որ զամ մի այսմ նման լեալ էր ինչ: Եւ կանոն՝ հրաժարել ամենեւին ի մեռելոսուոյ եւ յարենէ ուտելոյ, եւ դաշտանի կնմերձենալոյ. զայդ ամենայն պիղծ համարէր առաջի տեսն», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. Դ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book IV, ch. iv).

“One of the important sides of the movement of Sebaste was the establishment of hospitals, orphanages and almshouses.... In order to raise the reputation of the Church and stop the social movement of Aršakawan Nersēs gave the part of the church estates to the benevolent organizations establishing hospitals, leper houses and orphanages in different parts of Armenia.”⁴⁶¹

Khachikyan is actually developing Markwarts theory regarding the influence of Eustathius on the philanthropic movement of Nersēs. Further I will show that they both do not back up their thesis with convincing arguments. Markwart builds his argument on the evidence that Nersēs was part of a delegation that went to the Emperor Valentinian, ⁴⁶² suggesting that on his return journey Nersēs met with

⁴⁶¹ L. Խաչիկյան, *Փոքր Հայրի Սոցիալական Ծարժամների Պատմությունից*, էջ 69 (L. Khach'ikyan, *From the History of the Social Movements*, p. 69). According to Khachikyan's theory the philanthropic movement of Nersēs should have begun after the establishment of Arshkavan (see *ibid.*, 68-69). This claim is in a complete contradiction with historical evidence. As it was already mentioned the scholarship puts the establishment of Arshakavan in the end of 350s (see Թ. Հակոբյան, *Պատմական Հայաստանի Քաղաքները*, էջ 69 (T. Hakobyan, *Cities of Historical Armenia*, p. 69). If we follow to Khach'ikyan then the philanthropic movement of Nersēs should have been initiated in the beginning of 360s. However, the historical data suggests that in 359 Nersēs has resigned from the See of the Chief Bishop of Armenia Major because of the conflict with Arshak II (see *The Epic Histories*, pp. 145-146, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, էջ 345 (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, p. 345). After the resignation of Nersēs Shahak occupied the See of the Chief Bishop in 359-367 (see Մ. Օրմանեան, *Ազգայնագրություն*, հատոր I, էջ 204-207 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, vol. I, pp. 204-207). In 369 Nersēs returns when the son of Arshak, Pap through the help of the Byzantine Empire, becomes king of Armenia Major (see Մ. Օրմանեան, *Ազգայնագրություն*, հատոր I, էջ 102-103 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, vol. I, pp. 102-103), Հ. Արմէն, *Պապ Արշակունի*, էջ 224-228 (H. Armen, *Pap of Arshakuni*, pp. 224-228). Thus, the historical records demonstrate that the philanthropic movement of Nersēs could not be initiated after 359. Hence, this chronological outline in turn approves the accepted dating for the beginning of the philanthropic movement of Nersēs, that is the Council of Aštišhat a. d. 353. Further by contrasting the philanthropic movement of Nersēs with Arshakavan Khach'ikyan questions the involvement of Arshak II in the Council of Aštišhat, which is contradictory to historical records as it was already shown (see *ibid.*, 371). In addition, Moses Khorenacy reports us that the Council of Aštišhat (353) was not just an ecclesiastical synod of Bishops, but a National-Ecclesiastical Council: “Summoning a council of bishops in concert with the laity, by canonical regulation he established mercy, extirpating the root of inhumanity, which was the natural custom in our land” (see Moses Khorenats'i, *History of The Armenians*, p. 274, cff. Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, էջ 2030-2031 (Moses Khorenats'i, *History*, pp. 2030-2031). The author clearly states that next to the clergy also the lay authority took part in the Council of Aštišhat (354). In other words, the Council was called to incarnate the expectations of wider society.

⁴⁶² Moses Khorenats'i, *History of The Armenians*, Book III, ch. 21, cff. Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. ԻԱ (Moses Khorenats'i, *History*, Book III, ch. 21).

Eustathius in Sebaste, which is where he learned about his hospice.⁴⁶³ Taking into consideration the observations regarding the close links of the Armenian Church with centers of Greek Christianity it is quite possible to suggest that Nersēs should have known about Eustathius of Sebaste. The fact that Nersēs “had been nurtured and taught by faithful spiritual-teachers in the city of Caesarea of Gamirk’...”⁴⁶⁴ as the author of *The Epic Histories* writes further allows us to suggest that he should have been also aware of all controversies related with the person of Eustathius and his ascetic views. All the same, what are the weak and strong points of Markwart’s theory?

Markwart dates the visit of Nersēs to Byzantium in 357. It should be noted that 357 is the earliest suggested date for the establishment of *ptochotropheion*: “Sometime between 357 and 377, Eustathios, bishop of Sebastea in Asia Minor, built a renowned *ptochotropheion* (a house to nourish the poor) for his city”⁴⁶⁵ notes Timothy Miller, one of the modern specialists on Byzantine hospitals. It was already shown that on the base of historical records the critical scholarship dates the origins of Armenian philanthropy in the beginnings of 350s. So, one may argue that even if we accept 357 as the earliest suggested date for the building of *ptochotropheion* in Sebastes, then it appears that the philanthropic movement of Nersēs began earlier. However, this may seem a rather weak argument for others,

⁴⁶³ See Markwart, *Die Entstehung der Armenischen Bistumer*, p. 229. In addition, so far none of the researchers that were engaged in the study of this question has called attention to the fact that the Late Antique Armenian sources do not report us anything regarding the visit of Nersēs to Eustathius in Sebaste.

⁴⁶⁴ *The Epic Histories*, p. 109. «Ապա յալանէ յանուանէ իսկ ինդրեցին աշխարհաժողով զօրքն բազմութեան զայն, որ անուանեալ կոչէր Ներսէս, զորդի Աթանազենի, զթոռն քահանայապետին Յուսկան... ի տղայութենէ սնեալ եւ ուսեալ ի կեսարացոց քաղաքին Գամրաց ընդ հաւատարիմ վարդապետօք. եւ ցանկալի եղեալ իւրոյն համարուեստն զուգակցացն», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, էջ 311 (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, p. 311).

⁴⁶⁵ See T. S. Miller, “Byzantine Hospitals”, p. 54.

partly because some of these dates are not at all certain, and because even if these dates are correct Eustathius may have been thinking about this for years, and could have spoken of it long before it happened.⁴⁶⁶

Further even if we accept that the hypothetical meeting between Eustathius and Nersēs could have taken place sometime in the beginning of 350s, that Eustathius might have established his *ptochotrophein* (a house to nourish the poor) in Sebaste before 357 it is not enough to then suggest that the philanthropic movement of Nersēs was influenced by Eustathius.⁴⁶⁷ I have shown in the previous chapter of my dissertation that the Armenian philanthropic movement has included a wider perspective than that of just feeding the poor. Apart from this, Miller draws attention to the fact that even though the fourth-century writer Epiphanius portrays the Eustathian *ptochotropheion* as one intended for those crippled with disease, it was not, however, a hospital. For Miller the main argument is that we do not have any evidence that physicians were working there nor do we have any indication in any other way that Eustathian *ptochotropheion* had advanced beyond providing food and shelter for the sick. In other words, Epiphanius account “does not offer any evidence that the bishop had founded a hospital” – Miller concludes.⁴⁶⁸ In summary, *ptochotropheion* was only one of the elements of Nersēs’ social program. All we can say about the possible relationship between the Armenian philanthropic movement and *ptochotropheion* of Eustathius is that Nersēs might have known also about it, but we do not have a strong evidence to speak about the

⁴⁶⁶ It should be stressed that the theory of Markwart so far was not discussed in the scholarship from a critical perspective. For instance, H. Manandyan in his voluminous study dedicated to the Armenian history refers to Markwart’s interpretation on the origins of Armenian philanthropy, however, Manandyan does not offer a critical analysis of Markwart’s arguments (see Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկիր, հստոր II*, էջ 164-165 (H. Manandian, *Works*. vol. II, pp. 164-165).

⁴⁶⁷ See T. Miller, “Byzantine Hospitals”, p. 54.

⁴⁶⁸ T. Miller, “Byzantine Hospitals”, p. 54.

influence. At the same time the observed similarities between Basiliada and the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs allows us to search Nersēs' inspiration for philanthropy somewhere else in the Greek world.

Thus, it appears therefore that Khachikyan had attempted to reinterpret Markwart's thesis: the only substantial difference being that he omitted the account of Nersēs visit to Sebaste. However, Khachikyan's reinterpretation in reality adds nothing to the debate, and his ideological allegiances have greatly influenced his interpretation of Eustathian asceticism as a social movement against the yoke of feudalism.⁴⁶⁹

Part III, 6.3 The relationship of Eustathian asceticism with the Armenian theological tradition: Celibate practice of Yusik and the question of hereditary priesthood

In his article dedicated to the origins of Armenian monasticism, Najaryan develops the view that Eustathian asceticism was echoed in the Armenian Church during the 4th century. He supports his thesis by calling attention to the celibate practice of Yusik, which according to him, is reminiscent of the Eustathian rejection of marriage.⁴⁷⁰ In this section I discuss whether Najaryan's interpretation of the evidence he offers is convincing.

⁴⁶⁹ Լ. Խաչիկյան, *Փոքր Հայրի Արևմտահայկան Շարժումների Պատմությունից*, էջ 26-57 (L. Khach'ikyan, *From the History of the Social Movements*, pp. 26-57). Khach'ikyan even invents a special term for Eustathianism naming it as a *movement of Sebaste*, which, in my understanding, is purely an expression of his Marxist viewpoint.

⁴⁷⁰ Հ. Նաջարյան, *Եվստաթևու Անբաստանացին*, էջ 79 (H. Najaryan, "Eustathius of Sebaste", p. 79).

Who was Yusik? We primarily learn about the life and work of Yusik from *The Epic Histories* and the *History of Xorenats'i*.⁴⁷¹ Yusik was the eldest son of high-priest Vrt'anēs⁴⁷². He married the daughter of King Tiran at a young age, most likely around age 12.⁴⁷³ According to *The Epic Histories*, this marriage did not last long: Yusik's wife passed away when their children were still small.⁴⁷⁴ After the death of his father Yusik was elevated to the See of the Chief Bishop of Armenia Major (341-347).⁴⁷⁵ In *The Epic Histories* we find the following about the celibate practice of Yusik:

“As for Yusik, he was nurtured by Tiran, the son of king Xosrov, and Tiran, the king's son, gave his daughter to marriage to Yusik, the son of Vrt'anēs. And while he was [still] a youth he knew her once on the first night, and his wife conceived. Then he immediately saw in a vision that he would have two sons and they would not be fit for the ministry of the Lord God; and he repented his marriage. He wept and implored God, repenting, with great anguish. He had been forced by the king into marriage as a youth, yet this [too] was done through the grace of God, so that thereafter there should come

⁴⁷¹ *The Epic Histories*, Book III., ch. v, xii-xiii, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. Ե, ԺԲ-ԺԳ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III., ch. v, xii-xiii), Moses Khorenats'i, *History of The Armenians*, Book III., ch. 11-14, 16, cff. Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. ԺԱ-ԺԴ, ԺԶ (Moses Khorenats'i, *History*, Book III., ch. 11-14, 16).

⁴⁷² *The Epic Histories*, Book III., ch. v, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. Ե (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III., ch. v), Moses Khorenats'i, *History of The Armenians*, Book III., ch. 11, cff. Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. ԺԱ (Moses Khorenats'i, *History*,).

⁴⁷³ *The Epic Histories*, Book III., ch. v, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. Ե (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III., ch. v).

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. Ե (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III., ch. v).

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.* ch. xii, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. ԺԲ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III., ch. xii), Moses Khorenats'i, *History of The Armenians*, Book III., ch. 11, Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. ԺԱ (Moses Khorenats'i, *History*, Book III., ch. 11). The promotion of Yusik to the See of the Chief Bishop of Armenia Major according to specialists should have happened in 341 (see Մ. Չամչյանց, *Հայոց Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 684 (M. Chamchian, *Armenian History*, vol. I, p. 684), Հ. Գելց'եր, *Փաւստոս Բուզանդ կամ Հայկական Եկեղեցւոյ սկզբնաւորութիւն*, էջ 88 (H. Gelts'er, *Phaustos Buzand or the Origins of the Armenian Church*, p. 88), Մ. Օրմանեան, *Ազգայաւստում*, հատոր I, էջ 71-72 (M. Ormalyan, *National History*, vol. I, pp. 71-72), *Ամենայն Հայոց Կաթողիկոսներ հանրագիտարան*, Մ. Էջմիածին, 2008, էջ 148 (*Catholicoses of All Armenians*. Encyclopedia, Holy Etchmiadzin, 2008, p. 148).

forth from him chief shepherds to serve the precepts of the Gospels for the good of the realm and the prosperity of the church. Although he did not go near his wife except for that one night, yet the woman bore twins, as he had seen in his earlier vision, and the first was called Pap and the second Atanaginēs. And after his intercourse with his wife on that one night he did not know her again because of his youthful virtue”.⁴⁷⁶

The last sentence of the quoted passage “after his intercourse with his wife on that one night he did not know her again...” has caused Najaryan to draw a parallel between the celibate experience of Yusik and the Eustathian rejection of marriage.⁴⁷⁷ The canons of the Council of Gangra state that Eustathians forbade marriage for anyone, and taught that married people were deprived from the hope of salvation, and refused to participate in the Eucharist that was celebrated by married priests.⁴⁷⁸ It is important to distinguish between what might have been true and what is later added. I think to have a realistic view of what Eustathians actually believed it should be noted that there is very little evidence for the last two of these three charges. Further the historical reliability of this passage from the book of *The Epic Histories* is extremely doubtful. It is obvious that Yusik’s story derives elements from the hagiographical tradition. Further, a careful examination of the text of *The Epic Histories* does not allow us to suggest any connection between Yusik’s celibate lifestyle and Eustathian asceticism. *The Epic Histories* offers an

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid. ch. v., «Իսկ զՅուսիկ սնուցանէր Տիրան որդի թագաւորին Խոսրովու. եւ ետ արքայորդին Տիրան գղուսոր իւր կնութիւն Յուսկանն որդւոյ Վրթանիսի: Եւ մինչ դեռ մանուկն էր, յետ միանգամ յառաջնում զիշերին մտանելոյ՝ յղացաւ կինն: Եւ իսկ եւ իսկ ետես ի տեսեանն՝ զի երկու էին մանկունքն, եւ ոչ հաճոյ ի պաշտօն տեսոն Աստուծոյ. եւ զղջացաւ զամուսնանալն: Լայր եւ աղաչէր զԱստուած, եւ ապաշխարէր մեծաւ տառապանօք: Եւ յամուսնանալն բռնադատեցաւ ի թագաւորէն իբրեւ զմանուկ. սակայն եւ այն ըստ Աստուծոյ շնորհացն գործէր, զի որք առ յապայն յառնելոց էին ի նմանէ հովիւքն զիսաւորք, որք յօգուտ աշխարհին եւ ի շահ մշակութեան եկեղեցեաց յաւետարանական հրամանացն սպասաւորել: Այլ սակայն նա ըստ այն մի զիշերն այլ ոչ եմուտ առ կինն իւր. եւ ծնաւ կինն երկաւորիս, որպէս եւ ետես ի տեսեանն յառաջագոյն. եւ կոչեցին զանուն առաջնոյն Պապ, եւ զերկրորդին Աթանագինէս: Եւ յետ միոյ զիշերոյ ի կինն մերձենալոյ այլ ոչ եւս մերձեցաւ ի նա, վասն առաքինութեան մանկութեան», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, Պատմութիւն Հայոց, գ. Գ., գլ. Ե (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III., ch. v).

⁴⁷⁷ Հ. Նաջարյան, *Եվստասյթնու Սերբաստուցին*, էջ 79 (H. Najaryan, “Eustathius of Sebaste”, p. 79).

⁴⁷⁸ The Council of Gangra, pp. 91-101.

explanation for Yusik's celibacy, which unfortunately was not deemed important enough for Najaryan to discuss in his article. Thus, we read:

“And while he was [still] a youth he knew her once on the first night, and his wife conceived. Then he immediately saw in a vision that he would have two sons and they would not be fit for the ministry of the Lord God; and he repented his marriage...And after his intercourse with his wife on that one night he did not know her again because of his youthful virtue”⁴⁷⁹

Yusik thus repents his marriage because of the worthlessness of his sons for the ministry of God. It appears that the central issue is not the celibacy but having deserving offspring for the ministry of God. In the first chapter of this dissertation I observed that the priesthood in the Armenian theological tradition was hereditary through the first half of the 5th century. Further study of the book of *The Epic Histories* reveals that the issue of the continuation of Gregorids House occupies a central place for the author.⁴⁸⁰ The importance to the Gregorids of having offspring

⁴⁷⁹ *The Epic Histories*, Book III., ch. v. «Եւ մինչ ղեռ մանուկն էր, յետ միանգամ յառաջնում զիշերին մտանելոյ՝ յղացաւ կինն: Եւ իսկ եւ իսկ ետես ի տեսեանն՝ զի երկու էին մանկունքն, եւ ոչ հաճոյ ի պաշտօն տեսնն Աստուծոյ. եւ զղջացաւ զամուսնանայն:... Եւ յետ միոյ զիշերոյ ի կինն մերձենալոյ այլ ոչ եւս մերձեցաւ ի նա, վասն առաքինութեան մանկութեան», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, Պատմութիւն Հայոց, գ. Գ., գլ. Ե (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III., ch. v).

⁴⁸⁰ Additionally, a thorough study of the material of *The Epic Histories* allows us to sustain that the author does not touch upon the question of hereditary priesthood only in relation to Yusik, but rather this topic has occupied a relevant place in his book: he speaks about it with respect to all representatives of the House of Gregorids (see *The Epic Histories*, Book III, ch. v, xix, Book IV, ch. iii-iv, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, Պատմութիւն Հայոց, գ. Գ., գլ. Ե, ԺԹ., գ. Դ. Գլ. Գ-Դ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III, ch. v, xix, Book IV, ch. iii-iv). This simply suggests that the question of the continuation of the House of Gregorids is one of the central issues of *The Epic Histories*. Historian Leo has rightly pointed out that the author of *The Epic Histories* is too committed to the House of Gregorids (see Լէո, Հայոց Պատմութիւն, հատոր I, էջ 437 (Leo, *History*, vol I, p. 437). This remark is further confirmed by the fact that the author of *The Epic Histories* treated unequally the representatives of the House of Albanos. First of all, speaking of them he offers us insufficient data, as though they are not enough important. Apart from that, from the tone of *The Epic Histories* it is apparent that he is not so friendly with them. He ignores even the fact that the House of Albanos by the right was the second after Gregorids (see *The Epic Histories*, Book III, ch. xvii, Book VI, ch. ii-iv, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, Պատմութիւն Հայոց, գ. Գ., գլ. ԺԷ, գ. Զ., գլ. Բ-Դ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III, ch. xvii, Book VI, ch. ii-iv). This sensitiveness to the continuation of Gregorids House in the leadership of the Church could be connected with the fact that the author of *The Epic Histories* has a Greek orientation (see Մալխասյան, Բանասիրական Հետազոտություններ, Երևան, 1982, էջ 72-73 (St. Malkhasyants', *Philological Investigations*, Yerevan, 1982, pp. 72-73). As it was already mentioned in the political life of the state the House of Gregorids was associated with the Greek party not to say was leading it (see Ե. Տէր-Մինասեան, Հայոց Եկեղեցին, էջ 38-40 (Er. Ter-Minasyan, *The Church of Armenia*, pp. 38-40).

for the leadership of the Church starts with the Chief Bishop Vrt'anēs (son of Gregory the Illuminator and father of Yusik). With respect to this, the author offers his readers the following story:

“Vrt'anēs, however, was married, though childless, and for a long time he implored God that He should not deprive him of the blessing of children, but that one of his progeny should stand before him in the service of the Lord. And in his old age the Lord heard his prayer. His wife conceived and bore twin sons, and he named the elder Grigoris after his father, and the second Yusik. They were nurtured in the presence of the king of Armenia, and care was taken to teach them the knowledge of the Scriptures”.⁴⁸¹

The plausibility of the passage has secondary importance for this discussion. From the comments of the author, it is obvious that the key topic is not the childlessness of Vrt'anēs, but the continuation of Gregorid's legacy, the priesthood.⁴⁸² Further, the divine involvement in the procreation of the progeny of the Gregorids reveals

⁴⁸¹ *The Epic Histories*, Book III, ch. v, «Իսկ Վրթանէս էր ամուսնացեալ եւ անորդի. եւ բազում ժամանակս ինդրէր նայ Աստուծոյ. զի մի՛ գրկեսցի նայ աւրհնութենէն գաւակի, այլ ի պտղոյ նորա կացցէ առաջի նորա ի պաշտաւն Տեառն: Եւ ի ծերութեան նորա լուսաւ Տէր աղաթից նորա. յղացաւ ամուսին նորա, եւ ծնաւ երկուս որդիս երկուորեակս, եւ կոչեաց զանուն երիցուն յանուն հաւր իւրոյ Գրիգորիս, եւ երկրորդին Յուսիկ, որք սնան զառաջեալ թագաւորին Հայոց, եւ ուսման զրոց փոյթ ի վերայ կալան ուսուցանել զնոսա», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ. Գլ. Ե (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III, ch. v).

⁴⁸² Additionally, a thorough study of the material of *The Epic Histories* allows us to sustain that the author does not touch upon the question of hereditary priesthood only in relation to Yusik, but rather this topic has occupied a relevant place in his book: he speaks about it with respect to all representatives of the House of Gregorids (see *The Epic Histories*, Book III, ch. v, xix, Book IV, ch. iii-iv, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. Ե, ԺԹ, գ. Դ. Գլ. Գ-Դ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III, ch. v, xix, Book IV, ch. iii-iv). This simply suggests that the question of the continuation of the House of Gregorids is one of the central issues of *The Epic Histories*. Historian Leo has rightly pointed out that the author of *The Epic Histories* is too committed to the House of Gregorids (see Լէո, *Հայոց Պատմութիւն*, հատոր I, էջ 437 (Leo, *History*, vol I, p. 437). This remark is further confirmed by the fact that the author of *The Epic Histories* treated unequally the representatives of the House of Albanos. First of all, speaking of them he offers us insufficient data, as though they are not enough important. Apart from that, from the tone of *The Epic Histories* it is apparent that he is not so friendly with them. He ignores even the fact that the House of Albanos by the right was the second after Gregorids (see *The Epic Histories*, Book III, ch. xvii, Book VI, ch. ii-iv, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. ԺԷ, գ. Զ, գլ. Բ-Դ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III, ch. xvii, Book VI, ch. ii-iv). This sensitiveness to the continuation of Gregorids House in the leadership of the Church could be connected with the fact that the author of *The Epic Histories* has a Greek orientation (see Մալխասյան, *Բանասիրական Հետազոտություններ*, Երևան, 1982, էջ 72-73 (St. Malkhasyants', *Philological Investigations*, Yerevan, 1982, pp. 72-73). As it was already mentioned in the political life of the state the House of Gregorids was associated with the Greek party not to say was leading it (see Ե. Տէր-Մինասեան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցի*, էջ 38-40 (Er. Ter-Minasyan, *The Church of Armenia*, pp. 38-40).

that the sacrament of marriage is understood as central for the hereditary priesthood: marriage secured the blessing of the continuation. However, if in the story of Vrt'anēs the author of *The Epic Histories* states the importance of having offspring for the continuation of priesthood, then in relation to Yusik's story he puts the accent on having deserving offspring. The author of *The Epic Histories* has dedicated almost an entire chapter to the wicked sons of Yusik. This discussion is of special importance, particularly in relation to the following extracts:

“Then it was planned to bring to the priesthood a son of St. Yusik for the spiritual-teaching of his ancestors. And so, they seized Pap and At'anaginēs without their consent and with the unanimous agreement of the bishops forcibly compelled them to receive ordination as deacons, against their will. But they trampled underfoot the grant of /spiritual dignity, of their own accord served as soldiers in the turbulent military profession and were struck down. They chose the earthly life, likewise took the king's sisters as wives, and rejected the inheritance of God”.⁴⁸³

It is not unlikely that throughout Yusik's story, the author of *The Epic Histories* echoes the challenges that faced the Armenian Church in late antiquity in relation to hereditary priesthood. The wicked life of Pap and At'anaginēs allows us to suggest that most probably the hereditary priesthood allowed unworthy candidates to become priests. It may be that because of the abuses of the hereditary system of priesthood the Armenian Church already in the first half of the 5th century decided to preserve the rank of bishop only for celibates. Based on the Canons of the Council of Šahapivan (444) N. Melik-Tangyan observes that *Canons* concerning

⁴⁸³ *The Epic Histories*, Book III, ch. xv. «Ապա խորհուրդ արարին մատուցանել զորդի սրբոյն Յուսկան ի քահանայութիւն հարցն վարդապետութեանն: Ապա առանց իւրեանց կամացն ըմբռնեցան, եւ բռնաբարեցան ի միաբանութեան եպիսկոպոսացն. զի կալեալք, ակամայ առեալք զձեռնադրութիւն սարկաւագութեան՝ հարկեցան Պապն եւ Աթանագենէս: Որոց ընդ ոտն հարեալք զաւանդն հոգեւորն պատուի, անձամբ զանձինս իւրեանց, խտորատուր յարուեստն զինուորութեանն զինեցան, եւ յերկիր կործանեցան: Եւ ընտրեցին զերկրաւոր կեանս, եւ առին եւս իւրեանց կանայս զորս թագաւորին, եւ մերժեցին զանձինս իւրեանց ի ժառանգութենէ Աստուծոյ», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. ԺԵ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III, ch. xv).

the bishops conveys the impression that they were celibates. Due to this, he concludes that in 444 there were already no married bishops in the Armenian church, somewhat earlier than in most other churches.⁴⁸⁴ This is also supported by the fact that in the *Canons* we find articles concerning only the divorce of priests, adultery of their wives, sons and daughters.⁴⁸⁵ Thus, it is not unlikely that referring to the story of Yusik’s unworthy sons, the author of *The Epic Histories* raises the question of commendable priesthood.

Najaryan has missed another comment by the author of *The Epic Histories* that may be of importance. The author emphasizes:

“[It was] not that he considered marriage polluting, but that he was in doubt from the vision he had seen as to the reason that such an unworthy child should ever be born from him; for he longed not for earthly children but for such as would stand in the service and ministry of the Lord God. And holding all earthly things as naught, he held as good not that which is passing, but that which is above, [and] looked with longing towards the heavenly life. He held it good to serve Christ alone, and considered it his glory.”⁴⁸⁶

The claim by the author: “[It was] not that he considered marriage polluting...” clearly shows that the author is familiar with those ascetic teachings that counsel abstinence in place of marriage even when marriage is understood as a sacrament.

⁴⁸⁴ see Ն. Մելիք-Թանգյան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցական Իրավունք*, էջ 267 (N. Melik‘-T‘angyan, *The Church Law of Armenians*, p. 267).

⁴⁸⁵ See “The Canons of the Council of Šahapivan” trans. By Vahan S. Hovhannessian. *Revue des Études Arméniennes*, no. 37 (2016-2017), *Constitutions and Cannons*, ch. II, cff. Կանոնագիրք Հայոց, հատոր I, Սահմանք եւ Կանոնք, Բ, (V. Hakobyan, *The Book of Canons*, vol. I, *Constitutions and Cannons*, ch. II).

⁴⁸⁶ *The Epic Histories*, Book III, ch. v. «Եւ յետ միոյ զիշերոյ ի կինն մերձենալոյ այլ ոչ եւս մերձեցաւ ի նա, վասն առաքինութեան մանկութեան. իբրեւ ոչ էթէ զամուսնութիւնն ինչ աղտեղի համարէր, այլ կասկածէր նա ի տեսլենէն՝ զոր ետես, էթէ ընդէր բնաւ ի նմանէ այնպիսի զաւակ անպիտան ծնանիցի: Քանզի ոչ երկրաւոր զաւակի ցանկացեալ էր, այլ այնպիսումն՝ որ ի սպասաւորութիւն սպասու պաշտաման ծառայութեան Տեառն Աստուծոյ կացցեն: Եւ զամենայն իսկ զերկրաւորս առ ոչինչ համարեալ, ոչ լաւ համարեցաւ զանցաւորս՝ այլ զվերինն. երկնակեաց կենացն ցանկացեալ հայեր: Լաւ համարէր զծառայելն միայն Քրիստոսի՝ անձին փառս համարէր», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. Ե (P‘awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III, ch. v).

This observation could refer to the teaching of Eustathius as well as to Messalian beliefs.⁴⁸⁷ Alongside this, it should be noted that in the Armenian sources we find important information about different heresies and sects that the Church of Armenia Major encountered between the 4-5th centuries.⁴⁸⁸ For this discussion, the book of a 5th century Armenian theologian Eznik Koxbaci's entitled as *Refutation of Sects* is especially important. Here the author criticizes the perceptions of Marcion, Mani, and Messalians that reject marriage and advocate celibacy. Thus, he maintains:

“Also, the virgins do not keep virginity because they consider the marriage, which is given by God, corruption, such as Marcion, Mani and Messalians accept. Thus, if they made vow in that mind then the idea of virginity would not be perverted. But because of much love for God they abstain from good creatures of God in order to resemble the angels of God, among who there is no male or female, also to show the same virtue in this world due to the word, that “there are those who choose to live like eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, in order in the resurrection to be equal to angels” (cff. Mathews 19:12, 22:30) And the apostle calls the virgins faithful, but looking

⁴⁸⁷ To Messalians were attributed diverse ascetic practices, such as poverty, celibacy, and fasting (see M. Loos, *Dualist Heresy in the Middle Ages*, Prague, 1974, p. 72). The Armenian Church in the Council of Šahapivan (444) strict decrees has issued against Messalian heretics (see *The Canons of the Council of Šahapivan, Constitutions and Cannons*, ch. XIX., cff. Վ. Հակոբյան, *Կանոնագիրք Հայոց*, հատոր I, Սահմանք եւ Կանոնք, ԺԹ (V. Hakobyan, *The Book of Canons*, vol. I, *Constitutions and Cannons*, ch. XIX). However, the Armenian canons in speaking of Messalians do not mention of their practice of celibacy, but rather accuse them of immoral conduct. N. Melik-Tangyan in relation to this rightly observes that from the canons of Šahapivan it is difficult to understand what exactly teaches Messalianism, however the issued punishments allow us to conclude that their some practices were associated with perversion (see Ն. Մելիք-Թանգյան, *Հայոց Եկեղեցական Իրավունք*, էջ 277 (N. Melik'-T'angyan, *The Church Law of Armenians*, p. 277).

⁴⁸⁸ See Moses Khorenats'i, *History of The Armenians*, Book II, ch. 66, Book III, ch. 58, cff. Մովսես Խորենացի, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Բ., գլ. ԿԶ, գ. Գ., գլ. ԾԸ (Moses Khorenats'i, *History*, Book II, ch. 66, Book III, ch. 58), Koriun, *The life of Mashtots*, translated by Bedros Norehad, New York, 1964, ch. XVI, cff. Կորիւն, *Վարք Մեսրոպայ Վարդապետի*, in «Մատենագիրք Հայոց», Ե դար, հատոր I, Անթիլիաս-Լիբանան, 2003, գլ. ԺԷ (Koriwn, *The Life of Mashtots*, in *Armenian Classical Authors*, vol. 1, Antelias-Lebanon, 2003, ch. XVI), Եզնիկ Կողբացի, *Եղծ աղանդոց*, in «Մատենագիրք Հայոց», Ե դար, հատոր I, Անթիլիաս-Լիբանան, 2003 (Eznik Koghbat's'i, *Refutation of the Sects*, in *Armenian Classical Authors*, vol. 1 Antelias-Lebanon, 2003) .

at the nature he does not dare openly to order to remain virgin, but implying leaves it on their free will, as the Lord hints but not forces.”⁴⁸⁹

If Eustathian asceticism caused troubles in Armenia Major, then Eznik Koxbaci would definitely include his name among those who had the wrong perception of marriage. Even if Eustathian asceticism had penetrated Western Armenian, where Roman influence was stronger, most likely it did not succeed to grow roots there.⁴⁹⁰ Further the careful study of the canons of the council of Šahapivan (444) concerning the perversion of the sacrament of marriage by Messalians⁴⁹¹ does not support the view that Eustathianism had progressed in Armenia Major, otherwise it would find its reverberations in the *Canons* of the council.⁴⁹² I would like also to call attention to the work of Yervand Ter-Minasyan dedicated to the origins and development of medieval sects.⁴⁹³ In his research, Ter-Minasyan has identified those sects which since late antiquity have found a foothold in Armenia Major. However, among the ranks of these sects, he did not include Eustathianism.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁸⁹ «Նա եւ կուսանք սրբոյ եկեղեցւոյ ոչ վասն այնորիկ պահեն զկուսութիւն, եթե՛ զամուսնութիւն տուեալ յԱստուծոյ՝ պղծութիւն համարիցին, որպէս Մարկիոնն եւ Մանի եւ մծղնեայք: Չի եթե՛ յայն միտս ուխտաւոր էին, ապա եւ կուսութիւն չէր յանգարի կուսութեան: Այլ վասն առաւել սիրելոյ զԱստուած, ի բարւոք արարածոց Աստուծոյ հրաժարեն. զի նմանեալք հրեշտակաց Աստուծոյ, ուր ոչ արուն է եւ ոչ էգ, ցուցանիցեն եւ յերկրի գնոյն առաքինութիւն. ըստ այնմ՝ թե՛ են ներքինիք, որ զանձինս իւրեանց արարին ներքինիս վասն արքայութեանն երկնից, լինել ի յարութեանն հաւասար հրեշտակաց: Եւ Առաքեալ՝ այր հաւատարիմ՝ կոչէ զկուսանսն: Բայց հայեցեալ ի բնութիւնն՝ չիշխէ յայտ հրաման տալ, այլ ակնարկելով յաւժարեցուցանէ. որպէս եւ Տէրն ակնարկէ, այլ ոչ ստիպէ» Եզնիկ Կողբացի, *Եղծ տղանդոց*, գ. Դ., գլ. ԺԳ (Eznik Koghbat's, *Refutation of the Sects*, Book IV, ch. xiii).

⁴⁹⁰ Լ. Խաչիկյան, *Փոքր Հայքի Սոցիալական Շարժումների Պատմությունից* (L. Khach'ikyan, *From the History of the Social Movements*), N. Garsoïan, “Nerses le Grand, Basile de Cesaree et Eustathe de Sebaste”, pp. 145-69, Հ. Նաջարյան, *Եվստաթեսու Սերաստացին*, էջ 77-86 (H. Najaryan, “Eustathius of Sebaste”, pp. 77-86).

⁴⁹¹ “The Canons of the Council of Šahapivan”, *Constitutions and Cannons*, ch. II-VII, XII-XIII, cff. Կանոնագիրք Հայոց, հատոր I, Սահմանք եւ Կանոնք, Բ-Է., ԺԲ-ԺԳ (V. Hakobyan, *The Book of Canons*, vol. I, *Constitutions and Cannons*, ch. II-VII, XII-XIII).

⁴⁹² The strict attitude of the Armenian Church toward Messalians (see The Canons of the Council of Šahapivan, *Constitutions and Cannons*, ch. XIV, XIX-XX, cff. Կանոնագիրք Հայոց, հատոր I, Սահմանք եւ Կանոնք, ԺԴ, ԺԹ-Ի (V. Hakobyan, *The Book of Canons*, vol. I, *Constitutions and Cannons*, ch. XIV, XIX-XX) allows us to claim that the same destiny would share also Eustathianism in case of representing any danger for the Armenian Church.

⁴⁹³ Ե. Տեր-Մինասյան, *Միջնադարյան արանդների ծագման և զարգացման պատմությունից*, Երևան, 1968 (E. Ter-Minasyan, *From the History of the Origins and Development of Medieval Sects*, Yerevan, 1968).

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 63-217.

Does this discussion allow one to hold that the records of *The Epic Histories* regarding the celibate practice of Yusik are historically not reliable? The vision of Yusik regarding his unworthy sons is of course imaginary; however, the story of Yusik's celibacy might have some connection with the records of *The Epic Histories* regarding his marriage and related developments. *The Epic Histories* tells us that: "his wife died; and [so] Yusik ...was concerned about his [orphaned] children and raised in anguish..."⁴⁹⁵ Further the chronology of *The Epic Histories* puts the elevation of Yusik to the position of the Chief Bishop after the death of his wife.⁴⁹⁶ Chamchyan, Gelzer, and Ormanyan find this chronology of events reliable in their discussions.⁴⁹⁷ In relation to this Ormanyan reasons that after the death of his wife, Yusik dedicated himself to asceticism based on the following evidence of *The Epic Histories*:

"He preferred opprobrium for Christ's [sake] to the greatness of kings. He chose for himself the ways of mortification and led a virtuous life from the age of twelve. He imitated his father and took his brother Grigoris as an example and unflinchingly bore the yoke of Christ until his death".⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁵ *The Epic Histories*, Book III, ch. v. «մեռաւ կին նորա... Յուսիկ հոգացեալ վասն իւր ծննդոց մնացելոց զաւակին, եւ վասն այսորիկ հոգալով կայր», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. Ե (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III, ch. v).

⁴⁹⁶ "And likewise, the holy youth Yusik succeeded to the position of the patriarchs of Armenia", *The Epic Histories*, Book III, ch. xii. «Եւ ընդ նմին սուրբն երանելի մանուկն Յուսիկ յաջորդեաց գտնելի հայրապետացն Հայոց», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. ԺԲ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III, ch. xii).

⁴⁹⁷ See U. Չամչյանց, *Հայոց Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 684 (M. Chamchian, *Armenian History*, vol. I, p. 684), Հ. Գելցեր, *Փաւստոս Բուզանդ կամ Հայկական Եկեղեցւոյ սկզբնաւորութիւն*, p. 88 (H. Gelts'er, *Phaustos Buzand or the Origins of the Armenian Church*, p. 88), Ս. Օրմանեան, *Ազգայաբանութիւն*, հատոր I, էջ 71-72 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, vol. I, pp. 71-72).

⁴⁹⁸ See U. Օրմանեան, *Ազգայաբանութիւն*, հատոր I, էջ 155 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, vol. I, p. 155), cff. *The Epic Histories*, Book III, ch. v. «Լաւ համարեցաւ զնախատինսն Քրիստոսի, քան զմեծութիւն թագաւորացն. զճգունս վարուց ընդրեալ անձին իւրոյ, յերկոտասանամենից եւ ի վեր առաքինանայր: Որ իւրոյ հարցն նմանեալ, եւ գեղբարն իւրոյ Գրիգորի զարինակ բերեր անձին իւրոյ. գորիստոսեան լուծն առանց ամենայն յապաղութեան ձգեր մինչեւ ի վաղջան», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. Ե (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III, ch. v).

Thus, it is reasonable to think that after the death of his wife, Yusik would have chosen a celibate life.⁴⁹⁹ First, by family right, Yusik should have inherited the episcopal see of his father, which obviously excluded a second marriage for him. In addition, the fact of his marriage to the daughter of King Tiran may suggest that from his childhood, Yusik was prepared for the position of the Chief Bishop. His marriage was obviously of a political nature.⁵⁰⁰ Thus, it is possible to suggest that the story of the celibate practice of Yusik may have some association with the above-described developments.

Part IV, 6.4 How far men and women were separated in ascetic communities in Armenia

The Epic Histories does provide us with evidence regarding ascetic communities in late antique Armenian church tradition. However, the comparison shows that he mentions male communities several times, while he touches upon female communities only in relation to the antichurch policy of the Armenian King Pap (369-374). From the reports of *The Epic Histories* one may assume, that the name of Nersēs the author relates particularly to the establishment of female ascetic communities. Thorough analysis of the evidence of *The Epic Histories* enables us to establish that male communities existed in the Armenian tradition before Nersēs, but it was especially Nersēs that founded also female ascetic communities in Armenia. This innovation provides us with another parallel with Basilian monastic

⁴⁹⁹ *The Epic Histories* chronicles that Yusik's youngest brother St. Gregoris had been ordained bishop of Caucasian Albania and Iberia at age 15 and travelled through those lands preaching Christianity (see *The Epic Histories*, Book III, ch. v-vi, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. Ե-Չ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III, ch. v-vi).

⁵⁰⁰ See Լեւոն Հայոց *Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 439-441 (Leo, *History*, vol I, pp. 439-441), cff. «Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն», հատոր II, 1984, էջ. 80 (*The History of the Armenian People*, vol. II, 1984, p. 80).

tradition. Thus, in the book of *The Epic Histories* we find the following description of late antique Armenian convents:

“And so, he began to manifest his hatred toward his earlier canons, and he began to order openly to the realm the destruction of the asylums-for-widows and for-orphans that Nersēs had built in the various districts, and also the destruction of the walled and fortified dwellings-of- virgins [kusastank‘] in various districts and towns that the same Nersēs had built for them, for the care over their well-kept vows. For the blessed Nersēs had built these *dwellings in every *district during his lifetime so that all those who were consecrated virgins might assemble there in fasting and in prayers, and receive their food from the *world and their own families. King Pap ordered to destroy them and ordered the consecrated virgins handed over to foul intercourse”.⁵⁰¹

The quoted passage enables us to establish that Saint Nersēs, along with his philanthropic project, has also developed female ascetic communities in Armenia. Unfortunately, the information of *The Epic Histories* is limited, which does not allow us to reconstruct some important details of Armenian convents. However, its description provides us some evidence to draw parallels between Armenian and Basilian ascetic female communities. First of all, from the picturing of the author, it becomes clear that female ascetic communities in the Armenian church tradition were separate from male ascetic communities. We see the same in Basilian monastic tradition, where male and female communities were separate from one another consisting of "a double monastery under Basil's guidance."⁵⁰² The second

⁵⁰¹ *The Epic Histories*, Book V, ch. xxxi. «Եւ սկսաւ նախանձ վարել ընդդէմ յառաջագոյն կանոնելոցն ի նմանէ. եւ սկսաւ հրաման տալ յայտնապէս յաշխարհին աւերել զայրենոցսն եւ զորբանոցսն՝ զոր շինեալ էր Ներսէս ի գաւառս, եւ աւերել զկուսաստանսն ի գաւառս գաւառս եւ յաւանս յաւանս պարսպեալս եւ ամրացեալս, որ նորին Ներսիսի էր շինեալ վասն ամրապահս առանգոցն զգուշութեան: Քանզի յիւրում կենդանութեան երանելոյն Ներսիսի էր շինեալ. շինեաց զայս կուսաստանս յամենայն գաւառս, զի որ միանգամ կուսանք եւ հաւատացեալք իցեն՝ անդր ժողովեցին ի պահս եւ յաղաթս, եւ կերակրել յաշխարհէ եւ յիւրաքանչիւր ընտանեաց: Չայն աւերել հրամայէր Պապ թագաւորն, եւ զկուսանսն հաւատացեալս տայր հրաման ի խառնակութիւն պղծութեան:», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Ե., գլ. ԼԲ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book V, ch. xxxii).

⁵⁰² S. Elm, *Virgins of God*, p. 104.

thing we learn about the convents of Nersēs is that they were “walled and fortified dwellings-of-virgins.” This description might allow one to suggest that perhaps these convents were closed areas for the people, and the nuns were not allowed to go out. The reference of *The Epic Histories* that they “receive their food from the *world and their own families” further may support my suggestion. This could create another parallel with Saint Basil’s monastic communities, for it somehow reminds us of Macrina, Basil’s sister and Emelia’s move to Annesi, which as Susanna Elm observes, “has frequently been interpreted as a conscious retreat into solitude, as the essential step initiating a life of monastic contemplation.”⁵⁰³ Further in the Letter of saint Basil addressed to the clergy of Neocaesarea regarding “both men and women...who have crucified the flesh with, the affections and lusts thereof” we read the following: “they take no thought for food and raiment, but remain undisturbed beside their Lord, continuing night and day in prayer.”⁵⁰⁴ Perhaps among the community brothers/sisters some had the responsibility to supply food for the rest, or it was provided them from outside. Susanna Elm notes that “Emelia and Macrina’s household included numerous servants and slaves...” Thus, it is quite possible that they solved the problem of the food. From the reports of *The Epic Histories* one may assume that most likely, the sisters of the Armenian convents did not go out for food, but received it “from the world,” or again there were appointed some officials that dealt with this question. The reference of *The Epic Histories* receiving food from “their own families” might be explained in the light of the fact that Nersēs established the convents “in various districts and towns.” This may allow us to think that these convents were not too far from their homes. Further the above reference of Saint Basil regarding night and day prayer

⁵⁰³ Ibid. 79.

⁵⁰⁴ Saint Basil. Letter CCVII, To the Clergy of Neocaesarea.

could serve as another touching point between the Armenian convents and Basilian communities. The author of *The Epic Histories* in speaking of the mission of convents emphasizes: “so that all those who were consecrated virgins might assemble there in fasting and in prayers.” Asketikon of Saint Basil in turn, dedicates several pages to self-control/fasting and prayer.⁵⁰⁵ Thus, this brief comparison enables us to see some similarities between the convents of Saint Nersēs and Basilian monastic communities. This comparison reveals that the Armenian female ascetic communities bear resemblance to Basilian monastic tradition, at least in the 5th century.

Conclusion

In this chapter we were able to establish that the records of Greco-Roman sources concerning the relationship of Eustathius of Sebaste with Armenia refers to the Church of Armenia Minor, which was within the jurisdiction of the Empire. This does not exclude the possibility that the teaching of Eustathius may have been known particularly in the western part of Armenia, where the Roman influence was stronger. In the second section of this chapter I have argued that there is no clear evidence to associate the establishment of Aršakawan with Eustathius. The analysis of historical material allows us to support the accepted interpretation that the foundation of Aršakawan should be seen in the political interests of King Aršak II. As regards the suggestion that Eustathius of Sebaste could have influenced Nersēs then it was pointed out that the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs included a wider range of services than the mission of *ptochotropheion* allows us to suggest.

⁵⁰⁵ *The Asketikon of St. Basil the Great*, Oxford Early Christian Studies, Anna M. Silvas, Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 205-218, 243-249.

In the third section of this chapter it was argued that the theory of Najaryan does not do justice to the historical evidence of *The Epic Histories*. From the comments of the author it is obvious that the motivation for Yusik's celibate practice has no association with Eustathius or his teaching, but may be seen in the context of the institution of hereditary priesthood on which Najaryan does not mention in his discussion. If Eustathius exercised any influence on Yusik it was very indirect; simply insofar as Eustathius was part of a wider movement within asceticism to provide help to their fellow Christians. Finally, it was shown that in 4-5th century Armenian church tradition we find the same pattern of separation of men and women ascetic communities, which we find in the case of double monasteries under Basil's guidance. This enables us to argue that the Armenian context bears more resemblance to Basil and less like Eustathius.

The fact that the Armenian Church and particularly the Armenian branch of Greek Christianity in the 4th and 5th centuries was in close relationships with ecclesiastical centers, such as Caesarea and Sebaste, does not exclude the possibility that Nersēs' was inspired by other traditions within the Greek world. In the next, and final, chapter of my work I will offer fresh suggestion whether where else the origins of Armenian philanthropy could be looked for in the realm of Eastern Christendom.

Chapter 7: The Destiny of the Charitable Foundations of Nersēs

Introduction

Many scholars claim that after the death of Nersēs his institutions did not continue because of the anti-church policy of King Pap (369-374).⁵⁰⁶ In her article *Introduction to the problem of early Armenian monasticism* Garsoian makes the following claim: “Nersēs’ own foundations were destroyed by the king after the patriarch’s murder and there is no evidence that they were re-built by his son Saint Sahak. They do not, therefore, seem to have served as the original stage for the later foundations”.⁵⁰⁷ In this chapter, I will consider whether the evidence of *The Epic Histories* allows this judgement, and argue that the charitable agencies of Nersēs continued their existence through the 5th century as well as during the middle ages.

7.1. Anti-church policy of Pap Aršakuni

What do the historical sources tell us about Pap Aršakuni? Pap Aršakuni was the son of Aršak II who with the backing of Roman power became the king of Armenia

⁵⁰⁶ Մ. Օրմանեան, *Ազգասպասում*, հատոր I, էջ 260-263 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, vol. I, pp. 260-263), Լեո, *Հայոց Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 482-483 (Leo, *History*, vol I, pp. 482-483), Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկեր*, հատոր II, էջ 214-227 (H. Manandian, *Works*. vol. II, pp. 214-227), «Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն», մաս I, 1951, էջ 98-99 (*History of the Armenian People*, part I, 1951, pp. 98-99), Ա. Աբրահամյան, *Հայաստանը վաղ ֆեոդալիզմի շրջանում*, հատոր II, էջ 64-68 (A. Abrahamyan, *Armenia in the Age of Early Feudalism*, vol. II, pp. 64-68). Perhaps Kostanyan should be considered as an exception among these scholars. In his study on the Armenian monasteries he very rapidly ascertains that the philanthropic foundations of Nersēs continued down the centuries. To assist his claim, Kostanyan makes reference to some historical sources (see Ա. Կոստանեանց, *Հայոց Վանքերը*, Մոսկով, 1886, էջ 27-30 (K. Kostanyants’, *The Armenian Monasteries*, Moscow, 1866, pp. 27-30). However, Kostanyants’ remark has not received attention in Armenian studies. It was not further developed.

⁵⁰⁷ N. Garsoian, “Introduction to the problem”, p. 183.

Major in 369.⁵⁰⁸ In Armenian historiography, he is known as the one who strived to create a centripetal power.⁵⁰⁹ However, his reign did not last long, because his policy of restoring relationships with Persia⁵¹⁰ met with Imperial opposition leading directly to Roman connivance in his death.⁵¹¹ Among the Late Antique Armenian sources two main writings speak of Pap Aršakuni: *The Epic Histories* and the *History* of Xorenats'i. However, whilst the author of *The Epic Histories* shows a determination to record the antichurch policy of Pap, Xorenats'i does not report anything on the issue.⁵¹² In addition, Ammianus Marcellinus introduces Pap as a modest person who became a victim of slander and evildoing.⁵¹³ Thus, it appears that the view King Pap as a monarch opposed to the Church is completely derived from *The Epic Histories*, where we find the following references:

⁵⁰⁸ *The Epic Histories*, Book V, ch. i, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Ե., գլ. Ա (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book V, ch. i), Moses Khorenats'i, *History of The Armenians*, Book III, ch. 36, cff. Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. ԼԶ (Moses Khorenats'i, *History*, Book III, ch. 36). See also «Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն», հատոր II, 1984, էջ 102 (*The History of the Armenian People*, vol. II, 1984, p. 102), G.A. Bournoutian. *A History of the Armenian people*. vol. I, p. 67.

⁵⁰⁹ See Լեո, *Հայոց Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 482-483 (Leo, *History*, vol I, pp. 482-483), Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկեր*, հատոր II, էջ 214-217 (H. Manandian, *Works*. vol. II, pp. 214-217), Ա. Աբրահամյան, *Հայաստանը վաղ ֆեոդալիզմի շրջանում*, հատոր II, էջ 64-66 (A. Abrahamyan, *Armenia in the Age of Early Feudalism*, vol. II, pp. 64-66), Հ. Արմէն, *Պապ Արշակունի էջ 235-288* (H. Armen, *Pap of Arshakuni*, pp. 235-288).

⁵¹⁰ See Լեո, *Երկերի ժողովածու*, հատոր I, էջ 485 (Leo, *History*, vol I, p. 485), Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկեր*, հատոր II, էջ 221 (H. Manandian, *Works*. vol. II, p. 221).

⁵¹¹ See *The Epic Histories*, Book V, ch. xxxii, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Ե., գլ. ԼԲ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book V, ch. xxxii), Moses Khorenats'i, *History of The Armenians*, Book III, ch. 39, cff. Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. ԼԹ (Moses Khorenats'i, *History*, Book III, ch. 39).

⁵¹² See Moses Khorenats'i, *History of The Armenians*, Book III, ch. 36-39, cff. Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. ԼԶ-ԼԹ (Moses Khorenats'i, *History*, Book III, ch. 36-39).

⁵¹³ «Հայ ժողովրդի պատմության քրեատմաստիս», (Հնագույն ժամանակներից մինչև IX դարի կեսերը), հատոր I, Երևան, 1981, էջ 507 (*Reader of the History of the Armenian People*, (From Ancient Times to the First Half of the IX Century), vol. I, Yerevan, 1981, p. 507). In regards to a 4th century historian Ammianus Marcellinus' (325 x 330 – after 391) *History*, Manandian rightly pointed out that it has a useful importance for the study of the 4th century history of Armenia (see Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկեր*, հատոր II, էջ 427, 430 (H. Manandian, *Works*. vol. II, pp. 427, 430). Ammianus in his *History* speaks of the political relationship between Rome and Armenia Major in 353-378; these years almost coincide with the leadership of Nersēs. It is important to note that on the base of Ammianus' reports the historians have made some corrections in relation to *The Epic Histories* (see Հ. Արմէն, *Պապ Արշակունի էջ 304-305* (H. Armen, *Pap of Arshakuni*, pp. 304-305).

“And so, he began to manifest his hatred toward his earlier canons, and he began to order openly to the realm the destruction of the asylums-for-widows and for-orphans that Nersēs had built in the various districts, and also the destruction of the walled and fortified dwellings-of-virgins [kusastank‘] in various districts and towns that the same Nersēs had built for them, for the care over their well-kept vows...And the same Nersēs had built hospitals in every town and every region, establishing maintenance [ʻročik] and care for them. And he left trusted men as overseers for the sick and the poor. He also entrusted them to such men as were God-fearing and who awaited the eternal Judgment and the coming of Christ. But the king drove each overseer from his position of supervision and razed the places to the ground. He drove out everyone who had been placed as overseer for the indigent and the poor, and the promulgated an order to the entire realm under his dominion: “Let the poor go out and beg, and let no one dare give them anything at that place, for if they do not, [the poor] will go out, entreat, beg, and find what they can.” And as for the regulations of *ptut and tasanords* [tithe and fruit], that had been laid down as a custom from ancient times to give to the church, he gave the following order to the realm concerning them: “Let no one give them”.⁵¹⁴

“And in the days of the high-priesthood of Nersēs, rest houses for strangers, hospitals, and hostelries were built by order of the high-priest in all inhabited places, and in every village, and in all the regions of Armenia in general...But

⁵¹⁴ *The Epic Histories*, Book V, ch. xxxii. «Եւ սկսաւ նախանձ վարել ընդդէմ յառաջագոյն կանոնելոցն ի նմանէ. եւ սկսաւ հրաման տալ յայտնապէս յաշխարհին աւերել զայրենոցսն եւ զորբանոցսն՝ զոր շինեալ էր Ներսէս ի գաւառս, եւ աւերել զկուսաստանսն ի գաւառս գաւառս եւ յաւանս յաւանս պարսպեալս եւ ամրացեալս, որ նորին Ներսիսի էր շինեալ վասն ամրապահս առանգոցն զգուշութեան: Քանզի յիրում կենդանութեան երանելոյն Ներսիսի էր շինեալ. շինեաց զայս կուսաստանս յամենայն գաւառս, զի որ միանգամ կուսանք եւ հաւատացեալք իցեն՝ անդր ժողովեցին ի պահս եւ յաղաթս, եւ կերակրել յաշխարհէ եւ յիրաքանչիւր ընտանեաց: Չայն աւերել հրամայէր Պապ թագաւորն, եւ զկուսանսն հաւատացեալս տայր հրաման ի խառնակութիւն պղծութեան: Եւ յամենայն աւանս էր շինեալ նորին Ներսիսի եւ հիւանդանոցս, յամենայն կողմանց եւ ռոնիկս եւ դարմանս կարգեալս, եւ արս հաւատարիմս թողեալ տեսուչս հիւանդացն եւ աղքատացն. նոյնպէս եւ այնոցիկ յանձն արարեալ որք երկիրդածքն էին յԱստուծոյ, որք դատաստանացն յաւիտենականացն եւ զպստեանն Քրիստոսի սպասէին: Չվերակացուսն հալածէր թագաւորն յիրաքանչիւր տեսչութենէ, եւ զտեղիսն ի բաց աւերէր: Չոր վերակացուսն կարգեալ էր յաղագս ջրաւորացն եւ աղքատաց տեսուչ, գնոսս ի բաց հալածէր. եւ հրաման տայր ամենայն աշխարհի իշխանութեանն իւրոյ. Աղքատքն բայց էթէ ի մոյր ելցեն. Այլ անդր որ ինչ մի՛ իշխեսցէ տանել, էթէ ոչ նոքա եկեացն ժտեացն աղաչեացն, ապա թէ գտանել հազիւ ինչ կարացն: Եւ զկարգս պտղոյն եւ գտասանորդացն՝ որ ի նախնեացն կարգեալ սովորութիւն էր տալ յեկեղեցին, վասն այնորիկ հանէր հրաման ընդ աշխարհ՝ զի մի՛ որ տացէ», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Ե., գլ. ԼԲ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book V, ch. xxxii).

after his death, King Pap destroyed all this. He was contemptuous of the honor of the church. Many regulations and beneficial laws and canons set down by the patriarch Nersēs were relegated to oblivion and the regulations overturned”.⁵¹⁵

Is this evidence trustworthy? Scholars have agreed that the author of *The Epic Histories* was influenced by his commitment to the Gregorids and to the House of Mamikonean.⁵¹⁶ Many of the scholars are inclined to think that the portrayal of Pap found in *The Epic Histories* cannot therefore be held to be an accurate representation of the true state of affairs.⁵¹⁷ However, that Pap sustained an anti-Church policy has largely remained unquestioned.⁵¹⁸ I have already observed that in the 4th century Armenia the church was one of the most influential feudal houses, if not the biggest. It is hardly surprising that the State had no wish to see the

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., «Իսկ յաւուրս քահանայապետութեան Ներսիսի ամենայն գաւառք Հայոց յամենայն ի շէնս եւ ի գիւղս յամենայն կողմանս Հայոց առ հասարակ ի հրամանէ քահանայապետին էին շինեալ ատարատունք հիւանդանոցք ատարանոցք. եւ ամենայն մարդիկք երկրին Հայոց էին պողպերք եւ ողորմածք առ ի յիշել գաղքատս եւ զնեղեալս, զտառապեալս եւ զաւտարս, զհարստահարս, զնշդնես, զպանդուխտս, զհիւրս, զանցաւորս. եւ էր նոցա կարգեալ վերակացուս սրբոյն Ներսիսի, եւ դարմանս ի տեղեաց: Իսկ յետ մահու նորա ատերեաց զայն ամենայն թագաւորն Պապ, եւ անարգեաց զպատիւ եկեղեցւոյ. եւ բազում ինչ կարգ եւ կանոնաց ուղղութեան յարինուածոց՝ զոր եղ հայրապետն Ներսէս, եւ անցեալ դարձեալ ի մոռացաւնս զամենայն կարգեալն տապալէր», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Ե., գլ. ԼԲ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book V, ch. xxxii).

⁵¹⁶ Լեո, *Հայոց Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 448-449 (Leo, *History*, vol I, pp. 448-449).

⁵¹⁷ «Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն», հատոր II, 1984, էջ 105 (*The History of the Armenian People*, vol. II, 1984, p. 105). As it has been demonstrated by most of the history specialists (see Ե. Մուրատեան, *Քննական Պատմութիւն Արշակ Երկրորդի եւ Անոր Պապ Որդւոյն*, Աղեքսանդրիա, 1900, էջ 141-152 (E. Muradyan, *Critical History of Arshak II and His Son Pap*, Alexandria, 1900), Մ. Օրմանյան, *Ազգայատում*, հատոր I, էջ 244 (M. Ormanyan, *National History*, vol. I, p. 244), Հ. Արմէն, *Պապ Արշակունի*, էջ 244-251 (H. Armen, *Pap of Arshakuni*, pp. 244-251) and philologists (Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Հայոց պատմություն*, թարգմ. և ծան. և ներածություն Ստ. Մալխասյանց, Երևան, 1981, էջ 518 (Moses Khorenats’i, *History of the Armenians*, trans., preface and commentaries by St. Malkhasyants, Yerevan, 1981, p. 518), the author of *The Epic Histories* is disposed against King Pap, he pictures him as an immoral person, who is captive of his own corruption. He attempts to convince his readers that there was tension between the king and the patriarch: according to him Nersēs constantly rebuked Pap for his corrupted way of life (see *The Epic Histories*, Book V, ch. xxiv, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Ե., գլ. ԻԴ էջ 391-393 (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book V, ch. xxiv). Also, including, Pap is blamed for the death of Nersēs. According to the author of *The Epic Histories* he poisoned Nersēs (see Ibid. Book V, ch. xxiv, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Ե., գլ. ԻԴ (P’awstos Buzand, *History*, Book V, ch. xxiv). Contemporary historiography considers the wicked image of King Pap false, created as a result of party interests.

⁵¹⁸ See ft. 593.

emergence of a stronger rival questioning its authority.⁵¹⁹ Scholars such as Leo, Manandyan and Yeremyan have argued that the anti-church policy of Pap was primarily occasioned by the poor economic condition of Armenia, something resulting from the wars with Persia. According to them, the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs became a burden for the state which was left with option other than to get rid of them.⁵²⁰ However, I have already shown that the charitable foundations of Nersēs were not sponsored by the state, but by the church. Nevertheless, the reference of *The Epic Histories* that King Pap forbade contributions of the *ramiks* [peasants] *ptut and tasanords* [tithe and fruit] to the Church, may somewhat support the theory of the above-referenced scholars that the order of the King might have been influenced also by the poor economic condition of the country. In my view it is quite possible that the longing of King Pap to create a centripetal power overlapped with poor economic situation of Armenia, which drove him to oppose the growing influence of the Church.

One important question, however, remains. Those scholars who have reflected on the issue have not asked how long this policy lasted? In fact, after the death of Nersēs, Pap did not live very long. In his article on the identity of the author of *The Epic Histories* Armenian researcher Galust Ter-Mkrtchyan concludes that King Pap was murdered only one year after Nersēs' death⁵²¹. On these grounds one may argue that even though King Pap was strongly opposed to the Church and

⁵¹⁹ *The Epic Histories*, Book III, ch. xii, xiv, Book IV, xv, cff. Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., զլ. ԺԲ, ԺԴ, գ. Դ., ԺԵ (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, Book III, ch. xii, xiv, Book IV, xv).

⁵²⁰ Լեո, *Հայոց Պատմություն*, հատոր I, էջ 481-483 (Leo, *History*, vol I, pp. 481-483), Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկեր*, vol. II, էջ 208-211 (H. Manandian, *Works*. vol. II, pp. 208-211), «Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն», հատոր II, 1984, էջ 104 (*The History of the Armenian People*, vol. II, 1984, p. 104).

⁵²¹ Գ. Տեր-Մկրտչյան, Փաւստոսի ձեռագրերը, in *Հայագիտական ուսումնասիրություններ*, զիրք I, էջ 367.

particularly the mission of the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs, the persecution was temporary in nature. This at least may change how we view the consequences of the persecutions depicted in *The Epic Histories*. Do other late antique and Medieval Armenian sources allow us to agree that, with the death of Nersēs, his charitable agencies ended?

As I have already noted, the earliest source on Armenian philanthropy is the *Canons* of the Council of Šahapivan (444). In these *Cannons* we find the use of the word *leprosarium* eleven times, particularly in the IV, V, X, XII, XIX *Cannons*. For instance, in the IV *Cannon* we read:

“And, while they [i.e., the man and his wife] are still in opposition and paying penalties, if a [another] woman dares to become the wife of the arrogant wife-repudiator while one year has not yet passed, it becomes evident why he left the first woman. The [second] woman must be seized and be brought to the leprosarium to grind one year for the lepers. If she is a noblewoman and does not go to a leprosarium, she must pay a fine of one hundred drams to the lepers”.⁵²²

Thus, it seems that some of Nersēs’s foundations survived. Further a thorough study of the *Canons* of Šahapivan reveals that the maintenance system for the care of vulnerable groups of people continued to thrive in the 5th century. The *Canons* define penitence for different sins, which also include material compensation. According to those material compensations should be paid for the maintenance of the needy, poor, sorrowed, widows, orphans and lepers.⁵²³ The likelihood is that

⁵²² The Canons of the Council of Šahapivan, *Constitutions and Cannons*, ch. IV., see also ch. X, XII, cff. Կանոնք Շահապիվանի, in Վ. Հակոբյան, *Կանոնագիրք Հայոց*, հատոր I, Սահմանք եւ Կանոնք, Դ, cff. see also Ժ, ԺԲ (Canons of Šahapivan in V. Hakobyan, *The Book of Canons*, vol. I, *Constitutions and Cannons*, ch. IV, see also. X, XII).

⁵²³ The Canons of the Council of Šahapivan, *Constitutions and Cannons*, ch. I, II, III, IV, V, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, cff. Կանոնք Շահապիվանի, in Վ. Հակոբյան, *Կանոնագիրք Հայոց*, հատոր I, Սահմանք եւ Կանոնք, Ա, Բ, Գ, Դ, Ե, Է, Ը, Թ, Ժ, ԺԱ, ԺԲ, ԺԳ, (Canons of Šahapivan

the money was not directly delivered to these vulnerable groups, but most probably channeled through the charitable foundations which tended to their needs. Interestingly the *Canons* of Šahapivan addresses both **azats* [=free men] and **ramiks* [=peasants]: as a rule, the **azats* have certain privileges in comparison to **ramiks*, the first are charged less than the second. Also the wives of **azats* are freed to perform their penance in the leper-house purely by making financial compensation.⁵²⁴ Interestingly, the *Canons* of Šahapivan also have a strictly defined penance for a priest or deacon found to have been involved in Messalianism; it orders them to spend the rest of their life in penance in leprosarium.⁵²⁵ Thus, the study of the *Canons* of Šahapivan reveals that at least the leper-houses continued to function in the 5th century Armenian Church tradition. Further, the general reference of the *Canons* regarding the care for the poor, sorrowed, widows and orphans may well suggest that most likely the other institutions also continued their mission in the 5th century Armenian church history.

Further research allows us to establish a connection between Armenian guesthouses and the “*solitary-communities (vank)” of the 7th century. There are two sources in which we find important information regarding this relationship: the first is the ecclesiastical *Canons* attributed to Saint Sahak and the second is the collection of sermons called *Hajakhapatumq Jark* (“Faithful Speech”) attributed to Gregory the Illuminator. Scholarship has already shown that the *Cannons* of

in V. Hakobyan, *The Book of Canons*, vol. I, *Constitutions and Cannons*, ch. I, II, III, IV, V, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII).

⁵²⁴ Ibid., III, IV, V, VI, VII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV cff. Կանոնք Շահապիվանի, in Վ. Հակոբյան, *Կանոնագիրք Հայոց*, հատոր I, Սահմանք եւ Կանոնք, Գ, Դ, Ե, Չ, Է, Թ, Ժ, ԺԱ, ԺԲ, ԺԳ, ԺԴ Էջ 445-446 (Canons of Šahapivan in V. Hakobyan, *The Book of Canons*, vol. I, *Constitutions and Cannons*, ch III, IV, V, VI, VII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV).

⁵²⁵ Ibid. XIX, cff. Կանոնք Շահապիվանի, in *Կանոնագիրք Հայոց*, հատոր I, Սահմանք եւ Կանոնք ԺԹ (Canons of Šahapivan in V. Hakobyan, *The Book of Canons*, vol. I, *Constitutions and Cannons*, ch. XIX).

Saint Sahak were created in the 7th century.⁵²⁶ As refers to the *Collection* of sermons *Hajakhapatumq Jark'*, I will argue that it was created in the end of the first half of the 7th century.

The *Canons* of Saint Sahak provides us with important evidence concerning particularly the guesthouses. Thus, we read:

“For this reason the name of *vank* [monastery] is happily chosen, since they give without grumbling to all who are in want; and their aid is freely expended not on strangers alone, but still more on the village in which it is built, since it is their custom to tend the sick and comfort the sorrowing.”⁵²⁷

“These feasts shall be kept perpetually in *vank* [monastery] and in consecrated places, in order that the ministrants of the place and strangers may eat; for priests although they are married and monks and all the members of the clergy must not sojourn in hamlets, but only in a *vank*, save in places where there is none.”⁵²⁸

⁵²⁶ See Ն. Ակինյան, *Քննություն Սուրբ Սահակին վերագրուած կանոններու*, Վիեննա, 1950, էջ 1-78 (N. Akinyan, *Critical Examination of the Canons Attributed to Saint Sahak*, Vienna, 1950, pp. 1-78).

⁵²⁷ Fr. C. Conybeare, *The Armenian Church: Heritage and Identity*, New York, 2001, CHAPTER IV. Of the same Saint Sahak as to how the order of the clergy and of the separate wanq was fixt, verse iv, cff. Նորին սրբոյն Սահակայ. Թէ որպէս սահմանեցաւ կարգ ուխտի եւ որոշման վանաց, Կանոն ԼԸ «Վասն այսորիկ իսկ եւ դիպողագոյն եղաւ անուն վանք, զի անտրտում որոց պիտոյից է՝ տացեն. եւ ոչ միայն առ անտարս է անգուտ նոցա յանախեալ, այլ առ անել եւս գեաւոջն յորում շինեցաւ, քանզի արբէն է նոցա սփոփել զհիւանդս եւ մխիթարել զգաւորս», Սահակ Պարթև, *Կանոնք Սրբոյն Սահակայ Հայոց Հայրապետի*, in «Մատենագիրք Հայոց», հատոր I, Ե դար, Անթիլիաս-Լիբանան, 2003, Նորին սրբոյն Սահակայ. Թէ որպէս սահմանեցաւ կարգ ուխտի եւ որոշման վանաց, (Sahak Partev, *Canons of the Armenian Patriarch St. Sahak*, in *Armenian Classical Authors*, vol. 1, Antelias-Lebanon, 2003, Of the same Saint Sahak as to how the order of the clergy and of the separate wanq was fixt).

⁵²⁸ Ibid. chapter IV. Of the same Saint Sahak as to how the order of the clergy and of the separate wanq was fixt, verse IV, verse vi, cff. Նորին սրբոյն Սահակայ. Թէ որպէս սահմանեցաւ կարգ ուխտի եւ որոշման վանաց, Կանոն Խ, «Այսորիկ տաւնք: Ի վանս՝ յուխտաւորեալ տեղիսն երթիցէ նախանն, զի կերիցեն պաշտաւնեայք տեղւոյն եւ հիւրք. զի քահանայից, թէպէտ եւ ամուսնացեալք իցեն, եւ արեղայից եւ ամենայն իսկ ուխտի մանկանց չէ արժան ի շէնս անթել, այլ ի վանս. բայց թէ ուր ոչն գուցեն ...», Սահակ Պարթև, *Կանոնք Սրբոյն Սահակայ*, Նորին սրբոյն Սահակայ. Թէ որպէս սահմանեցաւ կարգ ուխտի եւ որոշման վանաց, (Sahak Partev, *Canons of St. Sahak*, Of the same Saint Sahak as to how the order of the clergy and of the separate wanq was fixt).

“I would also remind all you *religious monks*, inasmuch as you have withdrawn from the earthly life and have given yourselves up to God and to the things of God; let your actions resemble your nominal professions, and let reverence, watchfulness, love of the services be dear unto you. Uphold in yourselves the exemplar of the angelic life, love of strangers and love of your brethren”.⁵²⁹

In the quoted passages, the anonymous author speaks about the mission of **vank‘*, [monastery] and the callings of monks. For the word monastery the author uses the word **vank‘*, which is actually the nominative plural form of the word **van* [lodging]. The description of the mission of the monks completely coincides with the evidence concerning both the location and the task of the **vans* [lodgings] described by Xorenatsi’s version of Nersēs’ story. If the last contends that in the villages **vans* [lodgings] were built to serve as guesthouses, places to feed orphans, the aged and care for the poor, then the *Canons* state that the mission of **vank‘* [monastery] is to care for strangers, to tend the sick and the distressed. Thus, one may try to see some association between the **vans* [lodgings] described by Xorenatsi’ and the mission of **vank‘*, [monastery] found in the *Canons* of Saint Sahak. However, we do not have enough evidence to argue for this relationship,

⁵²⁹ Fr. C. Conybeare, *The Armenian Church*, CHAPTER III. Of the same. The conduct of priests towards the laity, and the obedience of the same laity and their right conduct towards the priests, verse xxiii, cff. Նորին կարգ քահանայից առ ժողովրդականս եւ նոցին ժողովրդականաց հնազանդութիւն եւ կարգ ուղղութեան առ քահանայս, Կանոն ԼԵ, «Յիշեցուցանեմ եւ ձեզ կրաւնասէր վանականաց ամենեցուն, վասն զի հրաժարեալ էք ի կենաց երկրաւորաց, եւ պարապեալ Աստուծոյ եւ աստուածայնոցն, զի նմանեցէ անուանդ խոստովանութեան եւ զործքդ. եւ եղիցի ձեզ սիրելի՛ պարկեշտութիւն, արթնութիւն, պաշտանսիրութիւն, նմանութիւն բերել յանձինս հրեշտակական վարուց, աւտարսիրութիւն եւ եղբայրսիրութիւն», Սահակ Պարթև, *Կանոնք Սրբոյն Սահակայ*. (Sahak Partev, *Canons of St. Sahak*, Of the same. The conduct of priests towards the laity, and the obedience of the same laity and their right conduct towards the priests). In this passage however, Conybeare’s translation has not followed closely to the original text. He changes some phrases as well as adds words that actually distorts the content of the passage. Thus, instead of “I would also remind all you religious monks” («Յիշեցուցանեմ եւ ձեզ կրաւնասէր վանականաց ամենեցուն») he translated it in the following way: “I would also remind all you that are vowed to religion in resthouses” (Fr. C. Conybeare, *The Armenian Church*, Ibid.). First and foremost without any reason he re-phrased the expression **krōnasēr vanakanats‘* (կրաւնասէր վանականաց = religious monks) into *vowed to religion in resthouses*. Further it is not clear what he means using the term *resthouses*, for it is impossible for the readers to identify it with the monastery, in the case that the author clearly speaks of the monastery.

we can state only that Xorenats’i uses the word **van* in the sense of lodging, which is typical to the 5th century use of the term, while in the *Canons* of Saint Sahak we come across with a usage of the word **vank* in the sense of monastery. In her important article Garsoïan shows what semantic evolution experienced the term *vank* from the 5th to the 7th century: only from the 7th century it was associated with cenobial type of monasteries.⁵³⁰ However, the evidence of the *Canons* concerning the mission of **vank* [monastery] at least allows us to state that beginning with the 7th century the Armenian guesthouses were attached to the monasteries, and the monks were involved in the care for the strangers.

I would like further to draw attention to some important aspects of the *Canons* of Saint Sahak, which allow us to discern important details characteristic of Armenian philanthropy. Here the author alongside with the word *stranger* uses another synonym, that is the word **hiwr*,⁵³¹ which both in classical and modern Armenians means guest.⁵³² However, Conybeare’s English uses only the term “stranger.” I believe that we should follow the original version of the text translating the word **hiwr* not as a *stranger*, but as a *guest*. Moreover, I would want to maintain that the use of the word **hiwr* [guest] reveals a theological connotation of the word *stranger*. The use *guest* enhances the meaning of the word *stranger*, implying that

⁵³⁰ N. Garsoïan, “Introduction to the problem”, pp. 189-190.

⁵³¹ See Fr. C. Conybeare, *The Armenian Church*, chapter IV. Of the same Saint Sahak as to how the order of the clergy and of the separate wanq was fixt, verse VII, Fr. C. Conybeare, *The Armenian Church*, CHAPTER IV. Of the same Saint Sahak as to how the order of the clergy and of the separate wanq was fixt, verse I, cff. Նորին սրբոյն Սահակայ. Թէ որպէս սահմանեցաւ կարգ ուխտի եւ որոշման վանաց, Կանոն Խ, «Այսորիկ տաւնք: Ի վանս՝ յուխտաւորեալ տեղիսն երթիցէ նախանն, զի կերիցեն պաշտաւնեայք տեղւոյն եւ հիւրք... Երթիցէ ի վանս, զի հանգիցեն ի վերայ նորա յայնր մտեալ հիւրքն եւ աւրինեցեն», Սահակ Պարթև, *Կանոնք Սրբոյն Սահակայ*, Նորին սրբոյն Սահակայ. Թէ որպէս սահմանեցաւ կարգ ուխտի եւ որոշման վանաց, Կանոն ԼԶ (Sahak Partev, *Canons of St. Sahak*, Of the same Saint Sahak as to how the order of the clergy and of the separate wanq was fixt).

⁵³² See «Նոր Բառգիրք Հայկազեան լեզուի», հատոր II (*New dictionary of Classical Armenian*, vol. II).

the *stranger* is a *guest*. Thus, from the perspective of the above passage I want to claim that at least in the 7th century in Armenian philanthropic tradition the word *stranger* is not restricted only to care for the other, but it also promotes the notion that a stranger should be accepted as a guest. The word *guest* supposes a certain culture of honoring, which means that a stranger should be accepted with special respect, distinctive to the culture of hospitality.

Further the collection of Sermons called *Hajakhapatumq Jark'* [Faithfull Speech] also provides us with important evidence concerning the governance and maintenance of guesthouses. Received tradition considered this a 5th century work.⁵³³ Vardan Hacuni has, however, rightly pointed out that the *Collection* shows evidence of the *Canons* of the Council of Chalcedon. Hacuni demonstrates that certain extracts of sermon XXII bears resemblance to the 4th, *Canon* of the Council of Chalcedon. Hacuni deduces that the *Collection* most probably was composed in the 5th century by an Armenian Chalcedonian.⁵³⁴

A careful reading of the *Homily* suggests that the author intentionally has chosen certain terms, such as *chgnavor* [ascetic], and *exbajr* [brother] to appear to be writing in the 4th century. However, simultaneously he uses developed forms of other terms - *miabanutjun* [order], *vank* [monastery], which are characteristic of 7th century Armenian. In other words, the usage of these different terms, in particular, *chgnavor* [ascetic] and *miabanutjun* [order] allows one to observe certain elements

⁵³³ See L. Տեր-Պետրոսյան, *Դասեր հայ եկեղեցական մատենագրությունից, Ե դար, Սոչի*, 1993, էջ 25-41 (L. Ter-Petrosyan, *Lectures on Armenian Ecclesiastical Literature, Vth Century*, Sochi, 1993, pp. 25-41).

⁵³⁴ Վ. Հազունի, Երբ շարադրած են «Յանախապատում ճառք», «Բազմավկա», Վենետիկ, 1930, էջ 401-406 (V. Hacuni, “When the “Truthful Speech” was Written,” “Bazmavep,” Venice, 1930, N. 10, pp. 401-406).

of anachronism in this homily. Thus, considering the usage of the words such are *miabanutjun* [order] and *vank* [monastery] I believe the referenced Homily should be dated in the 7th century. This argument is important for this discussion for it supports Garsoian's thesis regarding the semantic evolution of the term *vank* from the 5th to the 7th century.

However, in the *Homily* addressed to solitaries we find interesting information regarding some administrative aspects of guesthouses:

“And the overseers of the guests should not ignore the needy, but the care of the guest according to the need of each should be provided joyfully. And there is no need to complain about the problems, but with love and patience they should supply all with words and works. They should not break the fast or the prayer because of the guest in order not to be deprived from the gifts of God but let all the officials be sober in times of prayer in order not to be condemned with the idlers. And everything should be agreed with the overseer, for his every order should be acceptable for everyone by the will of God. And it is proper that the overseer must be aware of everything that is provided by them.”⁵³⁵

First of all, from the content of the referenced passage it is apparent that the guesthouses were attached to the *vank** [monastery]. Further the author uses the term **tesuch 'k' hiwrots 'n* [overseers of the guests]. It is difficult to establish

⁵³⁵ «Եւ տեսուչք հիւրոցն մի' անտես առնել զկարաւտեալսն, եւ զհիւրին դարմանսն ըստ իւրաքանչիւրոցն զպէտսն լնով զուարթամտութեամբ. եւ մի' աղմկել առ խնդիրսն, այլ սիրով եւ անխռով զամենեսեան յուղարկել բանիւք եւ իրաւք: Եւ ինքեանք մի' յուծցեն պատճառանաւք հիւրոյն զպահս եւ զաղաւթս, զի մի' զրկեսցին ի վարձուցն Աստուծոյ. այլ զգաստասցին ամենայն գործաւորք ի ժամ աղաւթիցն, զի մի' ի հեղգացելոցն ի դատաստանս անկանիցին: Եւ յամենայն իրս ի կամաց վերակացուին եղիցի հրաման. զի ասացեալն ի նմանէ ընդունելի եղիցի ամենայն յամենայնի ի կամս Տեառն: Եւ որ ինչ նոքաւք մատակարարին, նմա պարտ է զիտել զամենայն որպէս արժանն է», Սրբոյն Գրիգորի Հայոց Լուսաւորչի ասացեալ նառս յաճախապատումս եւ յուսաւոր վարդապետութիւնս յաղագս աւգոտի յողաց, in «Մատենագիրք Հայոց», հատոր I, Ե դար, Անթիլիաս-Լիբանան, 2003, Ճառ ԻԳ, Խրատք ճգնաւորաց, Երանելոյն Սրբոյն Գրիգորի խրատք ճգնաւորաց, (Truthful speeches and luminous teachings delivered by Gregory the Illuminator for the use of listeners, in Armenian Classical Authors, vol. 1, Antelias-Lebanon, 2003, Homily 23, Admonitions to solitaries by Blessed St. Gregory).

whether the role of the *overseers of the guests* was functioning in Armenian guesthouses since Nersēs the Great, or it should have been considered a later development. However, this evidence allows us to hold that at least in the 7th century there were special officials in *vank** [monastery] who were in charge of the guesthouses. Garsoïan does not refer to the material found in *Hajakhapatumq Jark* ‘[Faithfull Speech], particularly Homily XXIII addressed to solitaries.

Further the IV Council of Dvin, (648) provides us with some evidence about hospitals. In speaking on the responsibilities of the bishops, the *Canons* mention their visits to the hospitals.⁵³⁶ Interestingly in the *Canons* another word is used for the poorhouse that is **tkaranots* ‘, which literally means a place for ill people - with strong connotations therefore of a hospital.⁵³⁷ Indeed, there is a possibility that the word ‘poorhouse’ was replaced by that of ‘hospital’ whilst avoiding any mention of the social status of the hospital’s clients. From the tone of the canon one may suggest that each bishop might have had at his disposal more than one hospital, for the *Canon* also uses the word hospital in the plural sense.⁵³⁸,

The *Canons* of Armenian Catholicos Sahak II (673-703) briefly mention hospitals in speaking about the possibility of lepers becoming monks. The *Canon* commands that the lepers should live in the hospital, and they should not become monks.⁵³⁹ However, another canon maintains that a monk should not leave the monastery if

⁵³⁶ Կանոնք Դրւնայ Սուրբ Ժողովոյն, in Վ. Հակոբյան, *Կանոնագիրք Հայոց*, հատոր II, Կանոն Դ (Canons of Sacred Council of Dvin, in V. Hakobyan, *The Book of Canons*, vol. II, ch. IV).

⁵³⁷ «Նոր Բառգիրք Հայկազեան լեզուի», հատոր II (*New dictionary of Classical Armenian*, vol. II).

⁵³⁸ Կանոնք Դրւնայ Սուրբ Ժողովոյն, in Վ. Հակոբյան, *Կանոնագիրք Հայոց*, հատոր II, Կանոն Դ (Canons of Sacred Council of Dvin, in V. Hakobyan, *The Book of Canons*, vol. II, ch. IV).

⁵³⁹ Կանոնք վերջնոյ Սահակայ Կաթողիկոսի, in Վ. Հակոբյան, *Կանոնագիրք Հայոց*, հատոր I, Ե, Զ (Canons of Sahak II Catholicos, in V. Hakobyan, *The Book of Canons*, vol. I, ch. V, VI).

he catches leprosy.⁵⁴⁰ Further the Canons of Partav (771) also talk about hospitals; here we find the word **ankelanots*‘, which is simply a synonym for the word hospital.⁵⁴¹ In the 17th canon we read the following: “the hospitals and similar foundations which were established in previous times and for which taxes were collected from the provinces, were partially destroyed”. Up until that time, bishops, freemen, and governors should have been concerned with restoring the destroyed buildings and collecting the defined taxes in order to care for the needy.⁵⁴² Thus, this *Canon* not only allows us to maintain that in the 8th century the culture of philanthropy had experienced a revival, but it also may imply that behind it stood a long-running tradition.

Conclusion

Thus, this discussion allows us to establish that the question of King Pap’s antichurch policy has been misinterpreted. There is in fact quite strong evidence that Nerses’s foundations, while the target of this policy for a while, continued or were partially revived, and had a significant influence on later Armenian conceptions of philanthropy for many centuries.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid. Է, (Canons of Sahak II Catholicos, in V. Hakobyan, *The Book of Canons*, vol. I, ch. VIII)

⁵⁴¹ «Նոր Բառգիրք Հայկազեան լեզուի», հատոր I (*New Dictionary of Classical Armenian*, vol. I).

⁵⁴² Կանոնք Սիոնի Հայոց Կաթողիկոսի, in Վ. Հակոբյան, *Կանոնագիրք Հայոց*, հատոր II, Կանոն ԺԷ (Canons of the Armenian Catholicos Sion, in V. Hakobyan, *The Book of Canons*, vol. II, ch. XVII).

Conclusion

The relationship of the philanthropic movement of Nersēs to the Greek environment

Even if the theory of Basil's influence on Nersēs is open to criticism, as was correctly pointed out by Garsoïan, the parallels between the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs and the Basiliada question her conclusion that "We have no contemporary indication that Saint Nersēs had sought models for his foundations in the West."⁵⁴³ Through a critical examination of the historical evidence I have shown that there are fundamental similarities between the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs and Basiliada; with a few exceptions they both offered the same services to different vulnerable groups of people in society. The differences between the two schools of philanthropy seem to be shaped by a variety of contextual factors, as well as by the slightly differing visions of Nersēs and Basil. In the following pages I will conclude my argument by considering the evidence concerning Nersēs' Greek connections: education in Caesarea of Cappadocia, affiliation with Greek Christianity, Roman orientation etc. which further supports my suggestion that the West could have served as a source of inspiration for the philanthropic movement of Nersēs.

⁵⁴³ N. Garsoïan, "Introduction to the problem", p.182.

Nersēs the Great and the Greek environment

Most of the scholars who have considered the philanthropic project of Saint Basil suggest that he could have been influenced by his teacher and friend Eustathius of Sebaste, who prior to him had established a *ptochotropheion* (a house to nourish the poor) for his city.⁵⁴⁴ Similarly, I think Nersēs' education and connections also should have played a decisive role on the formation of his vision as a Church leader. So, what do the sources tell us about Nersēs' background, where he was educated, what type of training he received? Both *The Epic Histories* and Xorenatsi's version of Nersēs' story state that Nersēs received his education in Caesarea of Cappadocia. Thus, *The Epic Histories* offers the following:

“Then the mass of the general-council-of-the-realm looked at, named and asked for the one who was called Nersēs, the son of At'anaginēs [sic], the grandson of the high-priest Yusik... From his boyhood, [however], he had been nurtured and taught by faithful spiritual-teachers in the city of Caesarea of Gamirk' and had earned the love of his companions”⁵⁴⁵

Xorenats'i states the same: “They did not leave any adult children suitable for that [position], save a young son of At'anaginēs' called Nersēs. He was being educated

⁵⁴⁴ Rousseau with regard to this issue makes several observations: “The disciple of Eustathius and the author of the *Contra Eunomium* was naturally interested in practical religion as well, in developing a sense of social responsibility among Christians,” “The generally 'Eustathian' quality of the program makes it likely that such ideas had been active in his mind for some time before that. In other words, such practical charity, for all our caveats about motivation, was quickly established as a feature of Basil's pastorate and simply continued across the years of his consecration as a bishop.” (See P. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 136, 141). Smither in his important study also expresses a similar opinion by noting “While rejecting Eustathius' theology, Basil did emulate his mentors concern for urban ministry and care for the poor.” (E. Smither, *Missionary Monks*, p. 28.). In his other book *Mission in the Early Church* Smither claims that “While Basil was influenced by others to act on behalf of the poor including his family and Eustathius...” (E. Smither, *Mission in the Early Church*, p. 137).

⁵⁴⁵ *The Epic Histories*, p. 109. «Ապա յականէ յանուանէ իսկ խնդրեցին աշխարհաժողով զօրքն բազմութեան զայն, որ անուանեալ կոչէր Ներսէս, զորդի Աթանագենի, զթոռն քահանայապետին Յուսկան... ի տղայութենէ սնեալ եւ ուսեալ ի կեսարացոց քաղաքին Գամիրաց ընդ հաւատարիմ վարդապետօք. եւ ցանկալի եղեալ իւրոյն համարուեստն զուզակցացն», Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, էջ 311 (P'awstos Buzand, *History*, p. 311).

in Caesarea...”⁵⁴⁶ The statement of *The Epic Histories* that “he had been nurtured and taught by faithful spiritual-teachers in the city of Caesarea” seems to indicate that Nersēs has received *theological* education in Caesarea.

I have observed already that in the East side of Armenia Syrian Christianity was influential, while in the western side of Armenia Greek Christianity was dominant. In this light it may be argued that Caesarea of Cappadocia was not chosen for Nersēs by accident. Agathangelos states that not only Gregory the Illuminator but also his two sons Vrt’anēs and Aristakēs, were educated in Caesarea.⁵⁴⁷ Considering the close associations of the House of Gregorids with the Church of Caesarea and Greek Christianity, Nersēs’ education in a Greek environment may have been aimed at deepening the relationship between the two churches. It is to be expected that the representatives of the House of Gregorids would have supported the interests of their own party and promoted the deepening of a relationship with Greek Christianity. Nersēs himself was one of the most prominent representatives of the House of Gregorids.

In addition, thorough examination of historical evidence allows us to suggest that Nersēs in Byzantium most likely has connections with broader circles, which may well refer to as the state officials as well as the ecclesiastical leaders of the time.

⁵⁴⁶ Moses Khorenats’i, *History of The Armenians*, pp. 269-270. «ոչ թողլով զաւակ հասակեայ պատշան այնմ, բայց մանուկ մի որդի Աթանազենի, որում Ներսէս անուն ճանաչէր, որ ի Կեսարիայ էր ի հրահանգս...», Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, էջ 2026-2027 (Moses Khorenats’i, *History*, pp. 2026-2027).

⁵⁴⁷ Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*, The Conversion to salvation of the land of Armenia Through the holy Martyr, ch. 1, 13, cff. Ագաթանգեղոս, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, Դարձ Փրկութեան Աշխարհիս Հայաստան Ընդ Ձեռն Առն Սրբոյն Նահատակի, գլ. Ա, ԺԳ (Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians*, The Conversion to salvation of the land of Armenia Through the holy Martyr, ch. 1, 13).

This is another important aspect, which should be considered in discussing the question of the origins of the Armenian philanthropy. So, both *The Epic Histories* and Xoenatsi' provide us with some evidence, which enables us to suggest that Nersēs was one of the key figures of the time that had played an important role in Roman-Armenian political affairs. Thus, *The Epic Histories* states that King Aršak has sent Nersēs to imperial court as an ambassador to settle a complication between the two sides:

“Because of the existence of a covenant of peace and alliance between the *realm of Armenia and the *emperor of the Greeks, it then seemed good to the king of Armenia to send with great pomp the great *katolikos* of Armenia, Nersēs in person, together with ten of the *greatest Armenian satraps to the *emperor to renew the *covenant of accord and peace. And so, they set out and came to the *imperial palace [*palat*] of the kings of the Greeks... As for the *princes who had come with St. Nersēs from the *land of Armenia, [the emperor] sent them forth with great treasures... And he also sent [back] to the king of Armenia the Aršakuni hostages who were in the *imperial- *palace, for they were the nephews of King Aršak in the male line – the name of one being Gnel and of the other Tirit.”⁵⁴⁸

In the account of Xoenatsi' we find the following:

“When the latter [emperor] had reached the borders of Armenia, Aršak was frightened and sent Nersēs the Great to meet him. Begging for reconciliation, he paid in full the tribute that had been withheld and dispatched Nersēs the Great with splendid gifts. When he [Nersēs] arrived, he persuaded the king to

⁵⁴⁸ *The Epic Histories*, Book 4, ch. v, cff. «Ապա վասն խաղաղութեան ուխտին միաբանութեան դաշինն, որ էր աշխարհին Հայոց ընդ կայսերն Յունաց, դէպ եղև առաքել անդր կազմութեամբ մեծաւ արքային Հայոց. զի ինքնին մեծ կաթողիկոսն Հայոց Ներսէս, և ի մեծամեծացն Հայոց սատրապս տասն ընդ նման առնել, զի երթիցէ. Ի մէջ կայսերն և ի մէջ իւրեանց զուխտն հաւանութեան և խաղաղութեան նորոգեացեն: ապա չոգան գնացին հասին ի կայսերական պաղատն թագաւորացն Յունաց... Իսկ յայն իշխանաց՝ որ ընդ սրբոյն Ներսէսի երթեալ էին յերկրէն Հայոց, գնոսա բազում գանձիւք լցեալ արձակէր... Եվ արձակեաց ևս զպանդանդսն զԱրշակունիսն թագաւորին Հայոց, որ կային ևս ի կայսերական պաղատինն. Չի են նորա եղբորորդիք արքային Արշակայ, զի միում անունն ճանաչէր Չնել, և միւսումն անունն Տիրիթ... », Փաւստոս Բուզանդ, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Դ, գլ. Ե, (P'awstos Buzand, *History of the Armenians*, Book 4, ch. v).

make peace and was greatly honored by them [the royal court]. He also received the hostages at his request and returned. And he brought as a wife for Aršak a maiden called Olympias from the imperial family.”⁵⁴⁹

The critical scholarship puts the visit of Nersēs’ delegation to royal city between 353-357.⁵⁵⁰ The above-referenced passages include questions of political importance, such are reconciliation between two sides, hostages and bride for the King. The fact that the chief-priest was chosen by the Armenian King as an ambassador to perform these tasks at least allows us to suggest that Nersēs was an acceptable figure for the imperial court. Thus, the above-referenced evidence enables us to establish that Nersēs’ connections “in the royal city,” should have referred the imperial court as well. At the same time the above quoted evidence may allow us to suggest that in Byzantium Nersēs probably observed that even in the capital city there were some sort of poorhouses. This indication further can be supported by the observation of Susanna Elm regarding the existence of philanthropic institutions in Constantinople previous to Eustathius and Basil. Thus, in speaking on their philanthropic activity, she notes very rightly:

“Between the years 330 and 350, Macedonius and Marathonius had already established a ‘feeding-place for the poor’ and what our fifth-century sources characterize as ‘monasteries’ for men and women in Constantinople. Between 336 and 358 Basil of Ancyra sent to his colleague Letoios, bishop of Melitene, his treatise prescribing the norms by which ascetics ought to be integrated into a functioning congregation, and stressing service to the poor and care for the dead (e. g. washing of corpses). When the other Basil became bishop of

⁵⁴⁹ Moses Khorenats’i, *History of the Armenians*, Book III, ch.21, cff. «Որոյ հասեալ ի սահմանս Հայոց զարիւրի Արշակ եւ առաքէ ընդ առաջ նորա զմեծն Ներսէս. Եւ ի հաշտութիւն մաղթեալ տայ լիով զխաւիանեալ հարկսն, եւ պայծառ պատարագաւք ընդ նմին իսկ արձակէ զմեծն Ներսէս: Որոյ երթեալ եւ ի հանդարտութիւն զթագաւորն շրջեալ մեծարի ի նոցանէ յոյժ. Նա եւ զպատանդսն խնդրեալ առնու. եւ դառնայ: Եւ կոյս մի անուն Ողոմայիաղայ, յազգէ կայսեր, կին ածէ Արշակայ... », Մովսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. ԻԱ (Moses Khorenats’i, *History*, Book III, ch.21).

⁵⁵⁰ Հ. Մանանդյան, *Երկեր*, հատոր II, էջ 164 (H. Manandian, *Works*. vol. II, p. 164).

Caesarea, he was also the superintendent of a famous hospice and ‘feeding-place for the poor’.”⁵⁵¹

Thus, from the quoted paragraph it appears that Eustathius and Basil were not the only Church leaders who had established hospices, prior to them the model of the hospice had already been put into practice in the royal city. This suggestion at least enables us to maintain that both Eustathius and Basil were only parts of a broad movement to support such institutions. Meanwhile it is part of the background to Nersēs’ work. Thence, on the basis of Elm’s observation it may well be suggested that the inspiration of Nersēs for philanthropy could come specifically from Byzantium.⁵⁵² The observed similarities between the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs and Basiliada allows one to argue that the origins of the Armenian philanthropy should be found especially in the West. Because of the similarities Rousseau finds it possible that Nersēs served as an inspiration for Basil’s philanthropic activity: “It is not unlikely, therefore, that Basil, after his return from Athens to Cappadocia three years or so later, would have learned of this distinguished figure [Nersēs] and might have begun to follow his career with some interest.”⁵⁵³ There is no firm evidence to argue whether Basil was influenced from Eustathius of Sebaste or Nersēs the Great, what I suggest is that the culture of

⁵⁵¹ S. Elm, *Virgins of God*, p. 130.

⁵⁵² Regarding Nersēs’ Greek experience Xorenats’i further provides us with additional information, which is not found in *The Epic Histories*. According to Xorenatsi’s version Nersēs’ Greek experience was not restricted within Caesarea, but he also had spent some time in Byzantium or “in the royal city” as he prefers to call it. “In the third year of the reign of Aršak, Nersēs the Great, son of At’anagines, son of Yusik, son of Vrt’anes, son of Saint Gregory, became archbishop of Armenia. Having returned from Byzantium to Caesarea, he came to Armenia and restored all the just administration of his fathers, and he went even further. For the good order that he had seen in the land of the Greeks, especially in the royal city, he imitated here. Summoning a council of bishops in concert with the laity, by canonical regulation he established mercy, extirpating the root of inhumanity...” (See Moses Khorenats’i, *History of The Armenians*, Book III, ch. 20, cff. Մոսէս Խորենացի, *Պատմություն Հայոց*, գ. Գ., գլ. Ի (Moses Khorenats’i, *History*, Book III, ch. 20). Given that in my research I am treating Xorenats’i as a later text I am not sure that this evidence can be relied upon.

⁵⁵³ P. Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, p. 280.

Christian philanthropy began to emerge in Greek world prior to Nersēs and Eustathius.

Thus, what we have accomplished overall through this research? In the introductory chapter of my work, I have argued that the rise of the philanthropic movement of Nersēs needs to be seen in relation to its historical environment, which allows us to appreciate how various political, religious, and social challenges influenced the emergence of it in the Armenian Church tradition. I have described also what challenges resulted from the proclamation of Christianity in Armenia as the state religion, and to what extent it increased the competition of influence between Rome and Persia, what the Armenian church looked like in that period of history, particularly the degree of Christianization of society. In the second chapter I considered what sources tell us about the origins of Nersēs' philanthropic movement and the questions concerning the dating of Xorenatsi's *History*. I have addressed also the dating of the Council of Aštišhat, showing that the Armenian philanthropic movement might have been initiated in the beginnings of 350s. Through a critical examination of the historical evidence further in the third chapter, it was shown that there are fundamental similarities between the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs and Basiliada; with a few exceptions they both offered the same services to different vulnerable groups of people in society. One of the most notable examples of this connection can be the analogy between the Armenian **aghk'atanots*' [poorhouse] and the hospital functions of Basiliada. Most of the researchers have not deeply understood the meaning of the word **aghk'atanots*' [poorhouse] in the text of *The Epic Histories*, which has led them to miss this relationship. In the fourth chapter I have shown that the agenda of each

movement served the needs of the given context: issues of wealth and social justice, sharing equally, mercy/ works of mercy and et cetera, in each situation have been understood and applied in their own way. Despite this, enough evidence exists to show that similarities and differences of emphasis probably stem from various contextual factors. In both traditions, philanthropy serves as a means to change the attitude toward the poor and the needy and educate them with biblical truths. The first part of the fifth chapter argues that the sponsorship of philanthropy was organized in both contexts according to their available resources. In the Armenian situation, the Church allocated certain properties and adopted the practice of the fruit tax for the missions of these foundations. In the Caesarean context, the mission of Basiliada was basically dependent on the rich elite of the city and the gifts of the Church. In both circumstances we do not have clear evidence to speak of the involvement of the state in terms of financial support. The second part of the same chapter demonstrates that the philanthropic mission of the Church also has increased its patronizing role in the life of society by offering protection those in need, particularly the working-class Plebeians/*ramiks* (peasants). The protection of the destitute in both traditions aimed to change not only the consciousness of society in relationship to the poor, but also to challenge the existing political, economic, and social systems. The reference of *The Epic Histories* regarding the support of the church of the oppressed and captives provides us with another parallel with Saint Basil's efforts made for 'tax relief of the poor.' In the sixth chapter I have discussed a few important questions concerning the possible relationship between Eustathius and Armenia: a. it was shown that the available evidence concerning the relationship of Eustathius with Armenia refers to Roman Armenia, which, however, does not exclude the possibility that the western part of

Armenia, where the Roman influence was stronger could have known about Eustathius' program, b. it was argued that Khachikyan's thesis regarding the possible relationship of Eustathius' program with the city of Aršakawan is not supported by clear evidence. I have discussed also the weak and strong points of Khachikyan's interpretation of Markwarts thesis regarding the possible influence of Eustathius on the philanthropic movement of Nersēs. It was stated that the mission of Eustathius' *ptochotropheion* reflects only one of the aspects of Nersēs' social work; whereas the Armenian philanthropic movement has included a wider perspective than just feeding the poor, d. In the final part of this chapter I have considered how far men and women were separated in ascetic communities in Armenia by arguing that Armenian context is more like Basil and less like Eustathius. In the seventh chapter of my work I challenged the accepted view that the charitable agencies of Nersēs ended with his death. I have argued that this view is solely derived from reports of *The Epic Histories* regarding the anti-church policy of the Armenian King Pap (369-374), which does not reflect the 5th century situation. With reference to evidence available it was demonstrated that the philanthropic institutions of Nersēs continued in existence throughout late antiquity. In the final chapter we were able to establish that the historical records concerning the background of Nersēs, his connections with the Greek circles, and finally his political orientation should be given due attention in relation to his philanthropic movement. The above-referenced arguments concerning the links of Nersēs with the Greek environment further add weight to my thesis that both the Armenian and Caesarean schools of philanthropy may stem from a common tradition.

Appendix: Technical Terms

The main purpose of this Appendix is to note the usage of the technical terms in the text of the dissertation that have been identified by an asterisk within the body of the thesis. In keeping with standard international practice, the system of transliteration for Armenian used throughout is that of American Library Association/Library of Congress (1997), except for bibliographic information and direct quotations, which have been preserved without change.

| Transliteration | Armenian word | Meaning |
|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Azat | Ազատ | freeman or freemen |
| Azatani | Ազատանի | Freemen |
| aghk‘atanots‘ | աղքատանոց | Poorhouse |
| ayrenots‘ | Այրենոց | asylum-for-widows |
| Anazatani | Անազատանի | unfree men |
| ankelanots‘ | Անկելանոց | Hospital |
| Barekargel | բարեկարգել | to reform |
| darmanots‘ | դարմանոց | hospital or nursing home |
| eghbayranots‘ | եղբայրանոց | Brotherhood |
| zdprots‘sn i vansn | զոպրոցսն ի վանսն | schools in the monasteries |
| Kargel | Կարգել | to establish |
| krōnasēr | կրօնասէր | religious monks |
| vanakanats‘ | վանականաց | |

| | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| <i>*Hivand'atanots'</i> | հիւանդանոց | Hospital |
| Hiwr | Հիր | Guest |
| Marzpan | Մարզպան | Prefecture |
| Nakharar | Նախարար | Nobel |
| nots'un | Նոցուն | There |
| Shinakan | շինական | Peasant |
| Shinakans | շինականս | Peasants |
| orbanots' | Որբանոց | asylum-for-orphans |
| Patans | Պատանս | Clothes |
| Patsparan | Պատսպարան | Shelter |
| ptghaberk' | պտղաբերք | fruit-bearer (to bring fruit, gifts) |
| rochik | ռոճիկ | Maintenance |
| rochiks | ռոճիկս | |
| Van | Վան | Lodging |
| Vans | Վանս | Lodgings |
| vank' | Վանք | Monastery |
| <i>teghi snndean</i> | տեղի սննդեան | Places to feed |
| tesuch'k' | տեսուչք հիրոցն | overseer of the guests |
| hiwrots'n | | |
| tkaranots' | տկարանոց | Poorhouse |
| tnankanots' | Տնանկանոց | asylums for the needy |
| <i>Otaranock</i> | Օտարանոցք | guest house |
| <i>Otaratunk</i> | Օտարատունք | guest house |

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