History Through Stained-Glass Windows

An Interactive Qualifying Project submitted to the Faculty of WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Science

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Date: 30 April 2019

Report Submitted to:
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Advisor

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Abstract

The goal of this project is to research the thirteen stained-glass windows in the nave of the Armenian Church of Our Savior. For each window, the scene depicted will be researched to determine the story or event from the Bible with which it represents, as well as the meaning of specific symbols used. Much of the research will be conducted online through religious articles and websites, interviews with the local priest, and the local Gordon Library at WPI. The aesthetic and emotional value of the windows to the parishioners will be evaluated, and the impact on the parishioners of knowing the stories behind the scenes depicted in the stained-glass windows will be assessed. The results of the research project will be documented in an educational brochure for print and electronic format.
Executive Summary

The Armenian Community of the Church of Our Savior located on Salisbury Street is a thriving Armenian American Community. The Church has beautiful stained-glass windows depicting many biblical scenes. The problem presented by members of the parish are that many individuals in the community are not really aware of the symbolism and biblical stories portrayed in the church windows. Creating religious cultural similarities between Americans and Armenian Immigrants was an important factor in welcoming and acceptance of Armenian Immigrants by the American public. Creating the similarity helped in accepting the Armenian immigrants into established American culture. The goal of this research is to produce a parish brochure that contains the photographs and biblical stories behind each of the stained-glass windows. Additionally, members of the community were surveyed to assess the impact of the information found on the brochure on their understanding of the biblical stories.

Armenians first settled in the New England region of the United States from the Ottoman Empire with the help of Protestant missionaries. It was the height of the Industrial Revolution in America, and labor was in high demand. Armenians first immigrated to Worcester, Massachusetts in large numbers between 1894 and 1930. About sixty thousand immigrated from about 1890 to 1914 just before World War I. Another thirty thousand survivors immigrated between about 1920 and 1924. The largest migration took place following World War II, though it is difficult to estimate how many immigrated during this wave. Most Armenian Immigrants found work in Worcester, Massachusetts at The Washburn & Moen Manufacturing Company; one of the largest in the world at the time. The company manufactures wire and associated products such as barbed wire and telegraph wire.

Armenian immigrants created a movement based in Worcester that made it their goal to establish a church in the city. Armenians of like mind began to gather socially in order to have a voice to combat discrimination. This eventually led to the creation of an Armenian Board that petitioned for donations from Armenian Immigrants from across the Northeast and used the money to establish the first Armenian Apostolic church in the western hemisphere. The establishment of a Christian Armenian church would give Armenians a place to gather socially while at the same time putting in plain view for the locals of Worcester their shared religious beliefs with Armenian immigrants. Citizens of Worcester held more respect for immigrants after the church was built.

The establishment of the Armenian Apostolic Church was a key moment for Armenians in America, as the citizens of Worcester became more accepting of the Armenian immigrants after the Church was
built. Having a Church with which to identify gave the Armenians status and influence within the greater Worcester community. Enrichment of Armenian culture within the city of Worcester made its citizens more welcoming of Armenians. Part of the culture the church brought to the region was a connection to the biblical stories passed down from generation to generation in the Armenian and Christian culture.

Photographs were taken of each of the thirteen windows in the nave of the Armenian Church of Our Savior. The photographs were edited for appearance and organized by their location in the church. The photographs were taken on a Samsun Galaxy Note 9 phone. The scenes or saints depicted in each of the windows was determined through interviews with the local priest, Der Aved. A short background on Armenian history in America is provided for background, with research being conducted at the local Gordon Library at WPI. Following the background, a table illustrates the thirteen windows and shows their relative location within the nave of the church. For each bible scene depicted, the story in the scene was researched using religious websites to determine the events of the scene and their significance in the Church. For each saint, their history, contribution to Armenian history and culture, and religious significance were researched via the WPI Gordon Library website and religious and history websites. The stories from each of the windows follows the table depicting their locations.

The stained-glass windows in the nave of the Armenian Church of Our Savior tell not only a story of Christian history through bible stories, but also offer a culturally rich history of the Armenian people and their longstanding ties with Christianity, and struggle to maintain an identity despite being surrounded by hostile countries. Their deeply entrenched identity allowed them to flourish as a community in America. Armenians’ Christian history allowed them to connect with the citizens of Worcester and become integrated and accepted into American society. The stained-glass windows of the Armenian Church of Our Savior enrich the Armenian community by telling a history of Saints and Apostles that held firmly to their beliefs and shaped Armenia into the strong and independent nation that it has become.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Karen Oates, of Worcester Polytechnic Institute, for all the hours spent with editing, format, and content, as well as providing information, guiding me in the right direction, and giving help whenever it was needed. I would also like to thank Ruth McKeogh for her assistance in submitting a resource request to the IRB.

A special thanks is extended to Der Aved Terzian and his wife Vivian of the Armenian Church of Our Savior for making this project possible. Der Aved’s knowledge and experience were instrumental in getting the project started. I would especially like to thank them for taking their time out of the busy schedules to assist with the project.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Armenian Community of the Church of Our Savior located on Salisbury Street is a thriving Armenian American Community. The Church has beautiful stained-glass windows depicting many biblical scenes. The problem presented by members of the parish are that many individuals in the community are unaware of the symbolism and biblical stories portrayed in the church windows. The goal of this research is to produce a parish brochure that contains the photographs and biblical stories behind each of the stained-glass windows. Additionally, members of the community were surveyed to assess the impact of the information found on the brochure on their understanding of the biblical stories.

In this Introductory section the history of the Armenian diaspora settlement in the United states and the establishment of the Armenian church in America is reviewed.

1.1 Armenian Immigration to the New World

The Armenian people have suffered years of genocide that began in 1890, by the failing and increasingly nationalistic Muslim Ottoman Empire. In the years surrounding 1915, a second wave of genocidal attacks from Ottoman Turks began, many Armenians sought to find a better life in America (1915 genocide - frequently asked questions). Many Armenians already in America began to lose hope of ever returning home. The ability to maintain their customs, religion and language became a central focus of the diaspora community.
Armenians first settled in the New England region of the United States from the Ottoman Empire with the help of Protestant missionaries. It was the height of the Industrial Revolution in America, and labor was in high demand.

Armenians first immigrated to Worcester, Massachusetts in large numbers between 1894 and 1930. About sixty thousand immigrated from about 1890 to 1914 just before World War I. Another thirty thousand survivors immigrated between about 1920 and 1924. The largest migration took place following World War II, though it is difficult to estimate how many immigrated during this wave (Takooshian, 2019). Most Armenian Immigrants found work in Worcester, Massachusetts at The Washburn & Moen Manufacturing Company; one of the largest in the world at the time. The company manufactures wire and associated products such as barbed wire and telegraph wire.

The map (Figure 2) illustrates the historic Armenian region. It is bordered nearby by majority Muslim and hostile Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. The only neighboring country that has international relations with Armenian is the Republic of Georgia; and while Russians are friendly with Armenians, they have a very small shared border. Figure 2 below shows a broader regional view, with Armenia highlighted in red. As seen in the map, the country is landlocked and within the Caucasian Mountain region, leaving the country with few of its own natural resources or opportunities for trade.

1.2 Establishment of the Armenian Church in America

Armenians suffered harsh discrimination from the majority “white” American citizens of Worcester for their willingness to work long hours for lower wages (Apkarian-Russell, 2000). Americans did not see Armenians as “white” until 24 Dec, 1909 when a Massachusetts court settled the issue (Ghoogasian, 2017). This lasted until the community of Armenian immigrants created a movement based in
Worcester that made it their goal to establish a church in the city. Armenians of like mind began to gather socially in order to have a voice to combat discrimination. This eventually led to the creation of an Armenian Board. The Board petitioned for donations from Armenian Immigrants from across the Northeast and used the money to establish the first Armenian Apostolic church in the western hemisphere. “On February 2, 1890, the following resolution was adopted by the Board: "Whereas the Armenian people, by reason of persecution are immigrating to America, in order to preserve these immigrants from becoming alienated, we hereby decide to build a church and we direct Rev. Hovsep Sarajian to undertake the necessary negotiations for that purpose (Consecration of the Armenian Church of Our Savior). Americans at the time knew little of Armenian culture, history, or religion, and were unaware that Armenians shared their Christian faith. The establishment of a Christian Armenian church would give Armenians a place to gather socially while at the same time putting in plain view for the locals of Worcester their shared religious beliefs with Armenian immigrants. Citizens of Worcester held more respect for immigrants after the church was built.

The Armenian Board gave immigrants a voice in the community, led by a priest of a familiar religion. Armenians were able to quickly get support from as far away as Washington D.C. The money was used to build the Armenian Church of Our Savior at 61-65 Laurel Street, Worcester, Massachusetts in 1891 (Consecration of the Armenian Church of Our Savior). As the congregation grew and more room was needed for a Sunday school and cultural hall, the church was sold and rebuilt at its current location at 87 Salisbury Street in 1952 (acoos.org, 2019). The establishment of the church helped to cement Armenian culture in the community by bringing with its art, music, food, and theatre.

With the church established in Worcester and Armenian culture taking root, Worcester provided a community where incoming Armenians could integrate better into American society.
The establishment of the Armenian Apostolic Church was a key moment for Armenians in America, as the citizens of Worcester became more accepting of the Armenian immigrants after the Church was built. Having a Church with which to identify gave the Armenians status and influence within the greater Worcester community. Enrichment of Armenian culture within the city of Worcester made its citizens more welcoming of Armenians. Part of the culture the church brought to the region was a connection to the biblical stories passed down from generation to generation in the Armenian and Christian culture.

The goal of this project is to research the thirteen stained glass windows in the nave of the Armenian Church of Our Savior. For each window, the scene depicted will be researched to determine the story or event from the Bible with which it represents, as well as the meaning of specific symbols used. If donors’ names are available, history into the donors and why they donated will also be researched and provided in the brochure. We also ask, what is the aesthetic and emotional value of the windows to the Parishioners. Finally, we assess the impact on the Parishioners of knowing the stories behind the scenes depicted in the stained-glass windows. The results of the research project will be documented in an educational brochure for print and electronic format, to be provided to the Parishioners of the Armenian Church of Our Savior.
Chapter 2: Background

As a means of understanding the Armenian community’s relationship with stained-glass to express biblical figures, the following background has been developed.

2.1 Armenian Church History

Early in the fourth century, the Kingdom of Armenia became the first country to adopt Christianity as the state religion under the rule of King Tiridates (Wilken, 2012). The church itself was founded sometime in the first century by Apostles Bartholomew and Thaddeus. The first leader of the church was St. Gregory the Illuminator. St. Gregory was declared the first Catholicos, a patriarch and leader of the Armenian Church, by King Tiridates. Shortly afterwards, St. Gregory built the Etchmiadzin Cathedral in Vagharshapat, which became the administrative headquarters of the Armenian Church.

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2.2 Stained-glass Art in Ancient Churches

Contributing to education, culture and art, stained glass windows have been used in churches and cathedrals since the mid-1100s (Kosloski, 2017). Creating dramatic natural light effects was popular with Gothic architecture, and the expensive, artfully crafted windows served multiple purposes. During the Middle Ages, few people were literate and could not read the bible. Consequently, many churches used stained glass art to depict important events in the Bible. The pictures told stories from Genesis to Revelation, depending on the size of the church; the most important stories often being highlighted in smaller churches, in rural areas where the literacy rates were very low (Lee, 1976). While being essential to teaching significant events and reinforcing beliefs, stained glass also enhances the beauty of the church with the use of natural light which elicited emotion from the beauty and connection to the bible. Many churches could not afford to have artisan create stain glass window and turned to volunteer artisans and or the donation of the church members. Donations were sought from the wealthy. Today, much of that tradition remains however each donor is recognized with their name beneath the window do honor the donor (Kosloski, 2017).

Before people were literate, windows with illustrations from Bible stories were used to help people connect with the Bible on a closer level. With colorful depictions enhancing natural light, these images enhance the overall beauty of the church, and instill a feeling of closeness to the story depicted. The public display of an important Christian event using artistic methods brings Armenian Christian culture into the public eye, which helped the citizens of Worcester relate to their Armenian neighbors and ease integration into society for Armenians.

2.3 The use of Stained-glass in Armenia

Information on the historical roots of stained-glass in Armenia is limited. The type of sand used to make glass, silica sand, is made up almost purely of fine quartz crystals. Quality silica sand is not available for mining in Armenia, and to be able to make glass natively, sand would have to have been imported. Ancient churches are devoid of stained-glass or they have been added much later in history. Quality glass making silica sand is generally mined in Australia, China, India, and the United States. Rocks and stones are the materials used in ancient Armenian churches and are devoid of windows with glass.
Chapter 3: Methodology

There are five parts to the research project each with its own research objectives and goals. Each of the goals will be followed by the methodology used to address the stated goals.

3.1 Photography of the Windows at the Church of Our Savior

Photographs of the windows will be taken to appear clear and aesthetically pleasing for the final educational brochure. Photos were taken with a Samsung Galaxy Note 9 phone. Each photograph was edited for appearance and clarity. The position and direction of the windows was record and used as the guide and orientation in the final product. Optimized photos will be included in the final educational brochure. The brochure will be printed on 8.5”x11” bright white 24lb paper. The photographs were taken in the Nave of the Armenian Church of Our Savior and positioning of the windows are described in the results section.

3.2 Research on the Symbolism and History Depicted in the Stained-glass Windows.

The meaning of the stain glass art and the symbolism behind the images of each window was researched in multiple ways. The major source of the narratives of each window was the WPI Gordon library. Internet research into religious articles was used to determine the story and significance behind each window. Armenian Christian texts was translated by the parish priest, Der Aved Terzian. From the interpretation, the bible story told, or saint depicted was the starting point for the symbolism and story behind the symbolism. Religious articles and reference websites were used to research the symbolism behind each scene or saint depicted. Der Aved was consulted regarding the scenes depicted in the windows.

A short story based on the research conducted will be written for each of the windows, including detailed descriptions of symbolic meaning and the importance of any saints depicted. There is special emphasis on Saint Gregory within the Armenian Church, and this will be addressed and discussed. The location of the window inside the church will also be detailed.

3.3 Assessing the Impact of the Stained-glass on the Parish Community.

In order to address the impact of the windows on the parish community a convenient survey methodology was employed. A survey containing questions on general background knowledge and interest on the windows was distributed to 10 parishioners who attend the Armenian Church of Our Savior on a regular basis. The survey will be coordinated through the project advisor, Dr. Karen
Kashmanian Oates. The survey questions addressed interest in the stories behind the scenes in the stained-glass windows in the nave of the church. The list of questions is here:
  
  How much of an interest have you taken in the stained-glass windows in the nave of the church?
  How familiar are you with the saints and bible stories depicted in the stained-glass windows?
  How much do you think the church would benefit from an educational brochure detailing information about the stained-glass windows?
  How interested are you in learning more about the stained-glass windows in the church?
  How would you rate your interest in the cultural significance of the stained-glass windows?
  How much of an impact do the windows currently have on your experience during church service?

An analysis of the impact will be included in the results section. Coordination with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was conducted to ensure proper procedures were followed in conducting a survey with the public. Surveys were collected and analyzed using Google survey software.

3.4 Developing a Parish Brochure

The Parish Brochure was created using the stories of the stained-glass windows of the nave of the Armenian Church of Our Savior using Microsoft word software. A copy of the brochure is included in digital format in Appendix B. A paper printed copy was also provided to professor Karen Oates, IQP advisor and sponsor, Der Aved Terzian of the Armenian Church of Our Savior.
Chapter 4: RESULTS

Each of the objectives listed in the background, required a specific method of research. The results of this study are listed by objective and method used.

4.1 Photography

Each of the photographs were recorded in their position in the church sanctuary and listed in the Table below. Each stain glass window has been given title based on the image the window depicts. Through the given tiles research on the history was initiated. Table 2 describes the 13 stained-glass windows and their position within the church sanctuary.

Table 2: The Windows in the Nave of the Armenian Church of Our Savior

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Left Side Nave (Facing Altar)</th>
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4.2 Historical Stories and Images in the Thirteen Sanctuary Windows.

In the following results sections the results of the research which encompassed both library research and interviewing Der Aved.

4.2.1 Saint Gregory of Datev

Saint Gregory of Datev is known for his advancement of learning and culture while serving as an abbot at Tatev Monastery (Wiener, 2019). He was named after Saint Gregory the Illuminator, founder of the Armenian Christian Church, after his parents prayed for a child. He began his education at a young age and quickly excelled. After making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem he was ordained a priest, and after the death of his mentor, he became the head of the Tatev Monastery, gaining numerous followers (sacredtradition.am, 2019). After his death, he was interred on the monastery grounds.

In this window is depicted Saint Gregory in what appears to be the front of Tatev Monastery, located in the city of Tatev in southeastern Armenia, shown in Figure 8. Below him are a group of individuals that likely represent Saint Gregory’s followers and students. The group is dressed in monastic robes and appear to be involved in a discussion, with some of the group looking up to Saint Gregory; looking up to their teacher for guidance.

This window celebrates the enrichment to learning, Christianity, and culture that Saint Gregory contributed to Armenian Christian history. Tatev Monastery hosted one of the most important universities in Armenian medieval history, where science, religion, and philosophy were taught (ancient-origins.net, 2019). He dedicated his life to spreading enlightenment, more than living up to his namesake Gregory the Illuminator.
4.2.2 Jesus on the Cross

The crucifixion of Jesus is one of the most important lessons from the Bible. God sacrificed his only son to the cross to pay for the sins of humanity. It is the act of self-sacrifice that is one of the most important lessons taught. Throughout Jesus’ life, he dedicated himself completely in service to God, to set an example for his followers. It is a story of how God suffered and died in the same way that people do, in order to bring them closer to Him. It is because of this sacrifice to atone for mankind’s sins that the Cross has become the defining symbol of Christianity. Immediately after Jesus’ death there was an earthquake that tore the veil of the Temple Mount that some say represents the breaking of the barrier between God and man, through Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross.

In the window two individuals are depicted on Jesus’ left and right sides. On Jesus’ right is a woman with blue robes and a hood, likely a representation of Jesus’ mother, Mary, who stood present at his crucifixion. On Jesus’ left stands a figure with blue robes, yellow hair, and a halo. This figure likely represents the disciple John, whom it is reported to have looked after Jesus’ mother Mary at his request, taking her into his home after Jesus’ death on the cross (Zavada, 2019).
4.2.3 Saint Santoukhd

Saint Santoukhd is particularly important to Armenian Christians. The daughter to the King of the province of Ardar, Santoukhd was converted to Christianity after Jesus’ apostle Thaddeus traveled to Armenia to spread Christianity. Saint Santoukhd traveled in secret to a meeting held by Thaddeus and was immediately baptized as a Christian. Her father, the king, was displeased with her daughter’s conversion and ordered all of the believers slain. When the soldiers attempted to kill Thaddeus, “...a tremor and a bright light streaked across the sky frightening the unbelievers...” causing them to arrest Thaddeus and the princess instead. Despite torture at the hands of her father, Santoukhd refused to renounce her beliefs, and was executed. After her death, it is said that a fiery light from heaven shone over her body for three days.

The king’s reaction to his daughter’s conversion only created a sense of solidarity for Christians and gained them many supporters and converts. Thousands of Armenians were baptized the night that Saint Santoukhd was martyred. When she was baptized, Thaddeus declared that a sign from heaven showed that she was a holy virgin. Virginity is a sign of morality, which is important to the Christian faith (gotquestions.org, 2019). This added special significance to her martyrdom. She has been included in many Armenian poems and other literature in reverence to her sacrifice.

Figure 11: Saint Santoukhd
4.2.4 Saint Sahag/Saint Gregory of Nareg (Narek)

In the top panel of this window is Saint Sahag. Saint Sahag Bartev was the son of Saint Nerses the Great, and the last of the line of Saint Gregory the Illuminator. He was head of the Armenian Church from 387 AD. This was during a time when Armenia was stuck between the Byzantium Empire on one side and the Persian Empire on the other, hostile to each other and to Armenia. Saint Sahag is known mostly for his literary works; having received higher education in Byzantium and Caesarea. He is most well known for the first translation of the Holy Bible into Armenian. While head of the church, he established many schools and improved upon existing ones. His literature was so important, that it was one of the main reasons that Armenia was able to retain their independent identity. The works of Saint Sahag inspired many other Armenian writers, greatly contributing to the culture of the Armenian people. (armenianprelacy.org, 2019b)

The bottom panel displays an image of Saint Gregory. Saint Gregory was born to a family of writers in the city of Narek in 950 AD. He entered the monastic life at a young age, receiving education under the guidance of his father, a bishop, and the abbot at Narek Monastery. He became a priest, living in the monastery of Narek where he taught at the school. He was a writer like his family and a poet and is most well-known for his Book of Lamentations, or Prayer Book. He is considered Armenia’s greatest poet and first mystic. (Avakian, F., 2019b) The contributions to Armenian literature and poetry have enriched the
Armenian Christian culture. Even today his command of the Armenian language is considered unparalleled (Avakian, F., 2019b). His dedication in service to God and to spreading knowledge strengthened the Armenian Apostolic Church and continue to inspire its followers.

This panel displays the images of Saint Sahag and Saint Gregory between a bible opened to Proverbs, 1:2, stating “To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding.” The saints are both reading from a book, representative of their dedication to Armenian Christian literature. Saint Sahag wears a blue robe with gold trim. Saint Gregory is wearing brown monastic robes proper for his life as a monk. It is appropriate that these two saints be displayed on the same panel, as they both contributed greatly to Armenian Christian culture through their literature. The passage from proverbs represents the saints’ dedication to knowledge through improvement in schools and teaching, as well as through their religious writings.

4.2.5 The Resurrection

According to the Bible, on the day of Jesus’ resurrection there was ‘a great earthquake; for an angel of the lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone, and sat upon it/ His appearance was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow/ and for fear of him the watchers [the Roman soldiers on guard] did quake, and became as dead men. (BibleStudyTools Staff, 2017).” The scene in this window depicts the angel standing guard over Jesus’ tomb, while the Roman soldiers, shown wearing red plumed helmets of the Roman legion, are bowed before the tomb. Above them is Jesus surrounded by a golden aura, his spirit coming from the open tomb.

One of the most important stories in the Bible, this window and similar representations of the Bible are chosen for stained-glass for their educational and cultural enrichment. One author believes the foundation of Christian belief rests on the Resurrection, quoting John, 11:25-26 "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" (Fairchild, 2019). Another author says that the Feast of the Resurrection is the
center of liturgical life. It “is the central theme of Christianity and it has been preserved in its purity in the Armenian Orthodox Tradition” (Ajamian, 2019).

On 7 April, 2015, the Armenian Catholicos stated during a ceremony “Throughout our history we have survived persecutions by remaining steadfast to the message of the Resurrected Christ. One hundred years ago, dark plans were put into action to destroy us. Today, however, we celebrate not only the Resurrection of Jesus but also the resurrection of our people, who have survived and thrived throughout the world” (armenianorthodoxchurch.org, 2019).

4.2.6 Saint Mesrob/Saint Nerses I

Saint Mesrob Mashtots, shown in the top window panel, was born in a small town in Taron Province in ancient Armenia (cir. 365 AD) to a family of modest means. His education focused on Greek literature, and he served at the Armenian Royal Court before joining the church. While working as a missionary in southeast Armenia, Mesrob realized that it would be easier to spread his teachings if Armenians were able to read the Bible for themselves. Since Armenia had no written language, Mesrob petitioned the king for support in developing one. With the king’s support, Mesrob traveled to several countries to study languages. Disappointed in his search he returned to Armenia where he encountered a Greek calligrapher. Realizing that he could use Greek letters on which to base a new alphabet, Mesrob compiled 28 consonants and 8 vowels to form it. The language has remained unchanged except for the addition of two characters to account for foreign sounds. (Cartwright, 2019a). The first words that Mesrob wrote with his new language was Proverbs, 2:1, stating “To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding” (armenianprelacy.org, 2019b).

The importance of having a written language to coincide with the Armenian spoken language cannot be understated. The language proved easy to learn and spread quickly. With literacy rates soaring, people were able to read the Bible and Christianity spready quickly throughout Armenia. Mesrob’s contribution to language, and the spread of literacy and Christianity throughout Armenia earned him status as a saint.
Saint Nerses I, shown in the bottom panel, was an Armenian Catholicos, or leader of the Armenian Church, who lived in the fourth century. A direct descendant of Saint Gregory the Illuminator, he is most well-known for convening the Council of Ashdishad, the first such council of bishops of the Armenian Church (armenianprelacy.org, 2019c). It was during this council that Nerses brought his concern for how the church was involved in society. As a result of the council, canons (authoritative religious text) were written which would allow the church to establish institutions that served the people, such as hospitals, monasteries and convents, and inns for travelers to stay. It was Nerses’ concern for the people that earned him the title “Shnorhali” (the Great) (armenianprelacy.org, 2019c).

Nerses was highly educated and full of conviction. It was his dedication to the people and to the church that made him strive to better the church as an organization. He recognized that unity between the church and its patrons was essential to a strong homeland. Nerses’ primary concern throughout his tenure as Catholicos was primarily the happiness of his people and bringing them closer to God.

In this window is depicted a cross with two wheat stalks between the images of Saint Mesrob and Saint Nerses. Traditionally in Christianity, wheat represents bounty of the harvest, productiveness, penitence and modesty, and resurrection (Brauner, 2019). The cross represents the saints’ dedication to Christianity through their work. The work of both saints helped Armenia stand out as independent and Christian country. The Armenian’s identity and culture were vastly enriched by the work of these two saints, a contribution that is especially important given Armenia’s neighbors. With the ability to contribute to Christian literature and culture through language, Armenians were able to resist being overtaken by hostile neighbors’ cultures.
4.2.7 The Transfiguration of Jesus

In this window, Jesus is depicted in white with a halo, standing beside the Prophets Moses on the left, seen carrying the Tablet of the Ten Commandments, and Elijah on the right. Below is depicted the three apostles that Jesus brought to witness his Transfiguration; Peter, James, and John.

As Jesus prepared to travel to Jerusalem, he told his apostles of his impending torture and death. Jesus’ words were met with outrage by the apostles. Jesus rebuked them and brought his apostles to a high mountain (Ghevond Ajamian, 2019).

Peter, James, and John traveled with Jesus to a high mountain where the Prophets Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke with Jesus. The disciples heard the voice of God command them to listen to His Son. The three disciples cowered at the voice of God, as pictured in the stained-glass window, Figure 14. The mountain that Jesus and his three disciples climbed was Mount Tabour, Lower Galilee, Northern Israel. The Transfiguration is one of the most important events in the Armenian Church. It is one of the five principle feasts of the Armenian Church (Ash, 2018). The Transfiguration is an important event because it was a visible sign of the power of God, in front of reliable witnesses. The Fest of the Transfiguration takes place on the 14th Sunday after Easter (98 days) (Galstyan, 2016).
4.2.8 Saint Movses Khorenatsi

Saint Movses Khorenatsi was an Armenian historian from the 5th century. In addition to studies at Edessa, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Athens, Movses also studied with Mesrob Mashtots. Known as the father of Armenian history, Movses’ most important work is his History of the Armenians. While there were other Armenian historians during his time and before him, his work is considered the most important. It is the most complete history of ancient Armenia, providing complete and comprehensive coverage of the country up to Movses’ lifetime (Cartwright, 2019b). Recently, his book has been used to uncover the forgotten city of Ararat in Armenia (Anonymous, 2019).

This panel displays an image of Movses wearing blue and white robes, holding a Bible. Below his image is written “Saint Movses of Khoren.”

Having a comprehensive written history gave the Armenians a sense of identity and origin. Of note, Movses included an origin story that included a connection with the Bible, connecting the Armenian nation further with their Christian identity.

4.2.9 Saint Vartan and Saint Ghevond

In this window is depicted Saint Vartan on the Right, depicted as a warrior wearing armor ready for battle. Beside him is Saint Ghevond, a priest and chaplain of Saint Vartain’s Army, wearing purple robes and carrying a cross, standing over the image of an idol. The idol has been knocked over, and Saint
Ghevond is denouncing the idol; a symbol of Persian Zoroastrian fire worship. Behind the two figures is a white flag with a Greek Christian cross displayed.

Saint Vartan was an important Armenian military commander, leading the Battle of Avarayr (May 26, 451 AD) (Avakian, F., 2019c). On the eve of the battle, Saint Ghevond prepared a service, giving communion to each of the Armenian soldiers, and baptizing many neophytes (Avakian, A. S. & Movsesian, 2003). Saint Vartan led an uprising against a Persian attempt to force Zoroastrianism on Armenians. Despite overwhelming odds, Saint Vartan’s 60,000 soldiers fought bravely against the 300,000 invaders. The tenacity with which the Armenians fought caused the Persians to reconsider forcing their religion in Armenia (Seferian, 2015).

Saint Vartan perished during the battle, but his nephew Vahan continued to lead the Armenian Army against future Persian incursions (Avakian, A. S. & Movsesian, 2003).
Saint Gregory the Enlightener (or Illuminator), shown in the middle panel of this window, is the father of the Armenian Church. After baptizing King Tiridates in 301 A.D., he became the first Catholicos of the Armenian Church. His father was an Iranian, Prince Anak, sent to assassinate King Khosrov. The remaining family of the Armenian king took vengeance upon Anak and killed all in his family except for Anak’s son and daughter, who were raised as Christians by their nanny in Cappadocia. Anak’s son, originally Suren, was given the name Gregory (britannica.com, 2019b).

After receiving an education at a Greek school, Gregory returned to Armenia and earned a position in the king’s court as a palace functionary. While serving the king, he was asked to attend a battle victory celebration where he refused to participate in pagan rituals. For this, the king imprisoned and tortured Gregory, before condemning him to a Khor Virap prison known as ‘the pit’ (Cartwright, 2019c). It is said he survived because a widow from the nearby castle threw bread to him every day. After thirteen years, the king became ill and his sister received a vision that only Gregory could heal him. Gregory was brought to the king and prayed for the king’s recovery. When the king recovered, he converted to Christianity and made it the official state religion; with Gregory as head of the church (Anoushien, 2019).

In the top panel of this window is Saint Thaddeus. Saint Thaddeus, also known as Judas (or Jude), was one of Jesus’ twelve apostles. He is remembered as Thaddeus so he is not confused with Judas Iscariot (the betrayer) (Saunders, 2013). He was born in a small town in Galilee to a family of farmers. His father was a relative of St. Joseph and his mother a relative of the Virgin Mary. Following the Ascension, he traveled throughout the Middle East and Southwest Asia (stjudelewes.org, 2019). Despite his closeness to Jesus, little is known of this apostle, though he is highly regarded, especially in Armenia (Saunders, 2013). Thought to have been the first person to bring Christianity into Armenia, his significance in the Armenian Church is particularly important.

This window displays Saint Thaddeus in the top section, who was martyred young. While scholars disagree where, it is often contended that the location was somewhere in Armenia. In the middle
section is pictured Saint Gregory the Illuminator, and below the head of the Armenian Church, Etchmiadzin Cathedral. These two significant saints are appropriately displayed in the same window pane for their role in Armenia’s Christian history.

4.2.11 The Birth and Baptism of Jesus

This windowpane depicts two of the most important events in Christian history. The birth of Jesus, which marked the coming of the Lord and savior of humanity, and his baptism, which set an example for his followers to follow God’s commandments. These events are depicted in the same window panel because they are two of the most defining events of Jesus’ life and his impact on the world.

Jesus was born to the Virgin Mary and her betrothed Joseph, a carpenter, sometime during the reign of King Herod (King of Judea, subordinate to the Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus). While Mary was pregnant, the emperor called for a census of the entire empire, requiring that Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem where Joseph’s family was from. Upon arriving to Bethlehem, there was no room in any inns, and Jesus was born in a manger. Shortly after his birth, he was visited by three wise men who brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. While traveling to pay homage to the baby Jesus, the three wise men thwarted an attempt by King Herod to assassinate Jesus (religionfacts.com, 2019).

In the bible, Jesus traveled to Bethany beyond the Jordan River to meet with John the Baptist. John refused to baptize Jesus at first, saying it was Jesus who should baptize him. Jesus insisted that he be baptized ‘to fulfil all righteousness’ and John acquiesced. Symbolically the baptism was the beginning of
Jesus’ ministry and an example to his followers (Rustom Mkhjian, 2019). Baptism is a symbol of repentance, and in becoming baptized in the Jordan River, Jesus was repenting for the sins of all souls (at the time) into heaven (Piper, 2016).

**4.2.12 Saint Bartholomew/ Saint Tiridates, Saint Ashkhen, Saint Khosrovitoukht/Saint Hiripsime**

In the top panel of this window is an image of Saint Bartholomew. Little is known of Saint Bartholomew, and he is mentioned few times in the Bible. He is most well-known for his missionary work in several countries, including Armenia (franciscanmedia.org, 2016). It is thought that an individual Jesus refers to as Nathaniel may be Bartholomew; Bartholomew is a surname meaning son of Talmai (britannica.com, 2019a). According to some historians, Bartholomew accompanied Saint Thaddeus in Armenia, and is thus regarded, alongside Saint Thaddeus, as one of the patron saints of the Armenian Church (armenianprelacy.org, 2019d). Saint Bartholomew was martyred by flaying and beheading for converting Armenians to Christianity (britannica.com, 2019a).

The three saints displayed in the middle panel are Saint Tiridates(left), Saint Ashkhen(middle), and Saint Khosrovitoukht(right). Saint Tiridates is the Armenian King who was converted to Christianity by Saint Gregory the Illuminator, and subsequently declared Christianity the official state religion. As described in previous windows, he Imprisoned Gregory for refusing to participate in pagan rituals, and thirteen years later healed the king of a mysterious illness which prompted Tiridates’ conversion to Christianity. This was a momentous event for the country of Armenia as it separated their Identity from their Iranian rulers. This unifying factor has brought Armenians together and allowed their country to thrive despite Iranian attempts to assimilate it.
King Tiridates’ sister, Saint Khosrovitoukht, received the vision that led to Gregory’s release from the pit and healing of the king’s sudden illness (as previously described). The madness that overcame the king is said to have come shortly after he had Hripsime, a missionary traveling with nuns from Rome, assassinated. Saint Hripsime is displayed in the third panel beside an image of the church named in her honor. The king had desired Hripsime for her beauty and she had rejected him due to her strong Christian conviction (Noradounghian, 2019). Following King Tiridates recovery and conversion, Ashkhen, and Khosrovitoukht built a church at the site of her martyrdom in her honor (Aprahamian & Cowe, 2015).

These four saints played an integral role in the establishment of the Armenian Church. The window panel displays Saint Bartholomew in the top section, Saints Tiridates, Ashkhen, and Khosrovitoukht in the middle pane, and an image of Saint Hripsime inset on a background of Saint Hripsime Church, shown in figure 3.

4.2.13 The Ascension of Jesus

In this window, Jesus is depicted in heaven, accompanied by angels, making the sign of benediction over an earthly group below. In this window the group is represented by the apostles, with Mary at the center. The apostles are said to have witnessed The Ascension, and Mary was told of it by Jesus, and may have witnessed it (catholic.org, 2019).

An author of a religious magazine describes depictions of The Ascension as being divided into two planes, the terrestrial and celestial where Jesus is depicted in a mandorla, or almond shaped frame, which is used to represent a halo. Mary’s head
connects the two planes, with her head nearly touching the mandorla; signifying her holiness and connection to Jesus. There were many similar depictions of The Ascension created in both Eastern and Western Churches. In all of the depictions the angels are rejoicing, and the disciples stand beside Mary looking up at Jesus (LaForce, 2018).

The Feast of The Ascension takes place 40 days after The Resurrection. It has been celebrated since ancient times and always falls on a Thursday. The Armenian Church begins the Feast on the evening before, after Vespers (evening prayers)(Avakian, F., 2019a). As one of the major events in Jesus’ life, The Feast of The Ascension is part of the Armenian Church’s Resurrection/Easter Feasts(armenianprelacy.org, 2019a)

4.3 Results of Survey

The six survey questions were grouped into three categories of two each. The first two questions concern interest in the stained-glass windows of the Armenian Church of Our Savior. The second pair of questions determined interest in learning more about the windows. The final pair of questions sought the cultural impact of the stained-glass windows on the parishioners.

In order to quantify the results, values were arbitrarily assigned to be low for a response of 1 or 2, moderate for a response of 3, and high for a response of 4 or 5.

The first and second survey questions, concerning current interest and familiarity with the stained-glass windows of the church, and its results, are shown below.

Survey results indicate that parishioners have moderate to high interest in the windows of the church, while knowledge of the saints and bible stories depicted in the windows of the church seems to be moderate, with some parishioners saying they were very knowledgeable.
The third and fourth survey questions, seeking to determine interest and effectiveness of a parish brochure and desire to learn more about the windows, are shown below.

The survey shows a strong interest in learning more about the windows in the church and would greatly value an educational brochure for the windows.

The fifth and final questions of the survey determine the cultural significance and impact of the stained-glass windows. The questions and results are shown below.

These results show that the cultural impact of the windows is significant to the parishioners of the church. The cultural significance would likely be enhanced through the creation of an educational brochure detailing the stories of each of the stained-glass windows of the nave of the church.

4.4 The Parish Brochure

The parish brochure was developed using the stories of the 13 windows of the nave of the Armenian Church of Our Savior. The brochure was created using Microsoft Word software, and includes the descriptions of each of the windows, and the story to go along with it detailing the scene of saint depicted. The windows were arranged in the brochure according to their position within the nave of the church, and the pictures of each window were included with the stories in the brochure. Each story was formatted to fit within one page. The brochure was printed on 8.5”x11” bright white 24lb paper paper.
5. Discussion and Conclusion

The stained-glass windows in the nave of the Armenian Church of Our Savior tell not only a story of Christian history through bible stories, but also offer a culturally rich history of the Armenian people and their longstanding ties with Christianity, and struggle to maintain an identity despite being surrounded by hostile countries. Their deeply entrenched identity allowed them to flourish as a community in America. Armenians’ Christian history allowed them to connect with the citizens of Worcester and become integrated and accepted into American society. The stained-glass windows of the Armenian Church of Our Savior enrich the Armenian community by telling a history of Saints and Apostles that held firmly to their beliefs and shaped Armenia into the strong and independent nation that it has become. The stained-glass windows tell the history of Christianity in Armenia. This rich history gives Armenian Americans a cultural identity that connects them fellow Armenians across the globe.

The survey conducted on the parishioners of the Armenian Church of Our Savior revealed that many parishioners take an interest in the stained-glass windows of the church, and while some background on the stained-glass windows is known, survey results indicate a strong interest in learning more about the windows. Parishioners indicated an interest in the cultural significance of the windows; importantly, the survey revealed that the stained-glass windows have significant impact on overall church experience.

The results of the conventional survey are somewhat biased due to the limited number of responses, with only 10. Many of the participants who responded to the survey regularly attend services at the Armenian Church of Our Savior, and some attend bible study. If there was a wider distribution of the survey to members of the church who do not attend regularly, the survey would have better reflected the general background knowledge of the stained-glass windows, addressed question two of the survey.

As a continuation of this project, the brochure and background information can be integrated into the Armenian Church of Our Savior legacy database. This can be done by formatting the brochure for electronic format. In addition, there are a considerable number of other stained-glass windows in the church whose stories may be researched and compiled into a more comprehensive educational booklet. Such a booklet would surely help to further enrich Armenian-American ties, by providing a link between shared Christian culture, and Armenian’s significant Christian background.
Appendix A

Institutional Review Board
FWA #00015024 - HHS #00007374

Notification of IRB Approval

Date: 01-Apr-2019

PI: Oates, Karen K

Protocol Number: IRB-19-0570

Protocol Title: History Through Stained-Glass Windows

Approved Study Personnel: Oates, Karen K~Rodeen, Adam~

Effective Date: 01-Apr-2019

Exemption Category: 2

Sponsor*:

The WPI Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed the materials submitted with regard to the above-mentioned protocol. We have determined that this research is exempt from further IRB review under 45 CFR § 46.104 (d) (2.) For a detailed description of the categories of exempt research, please refer to the IRB website.

The study is approved indefinitely unless terminated sooner (in writing) by yourself or the WPI IRB. Amendments or changes to the research that might alter this specific approval must be submitted to the WPI IRB for review and may require a full IRB application in order for the research to continue. You are also required to report any adverse events with regard to your study subjects or their data.

Changes to the research which might affect its exempt status must be submitted to the WPI IRB for review and approval before such changes are put into practice. A full IRB application may be required in order for the research to continue.

Please contact the IRB at irb@wpi.edu if you have any questions.

*if blank, the IRB has not reviewed any funding proposal for this protocol
Appendix B

Survey Questions

Stained-Glass Window Survey

1. How much of an interest have you taken in the stained-glass windows in the nave of the church?
   Mark only one oval.

   1 2 3 4 5
   Not interested  Very interested

2. How familiar are you with the saints and bible stories depicted in the stained-glass windows?
   Mark only one oval.

   1 2 3 4 5
   Unfamiliar  Very Familiar

3. How much do you think the church would benefit from an educational brochure detailing information about the stained-glass windows?
   Mark only one oval.

   1 2 3 4 5
   No Benefit  Great Benefit

4. How interested are you in learning more about the stained-glass windows in the church?
   Mark only one oval.

   1 2 3 4 5
   Not Interested  Very Interested

5. How would you rate your interest in the cultural significance of the stained-glass windows?
   Mark only one oval.

   1 2 3 4 5
   Not Interested  Very Interested

6. How much of an impact do the windows currently have on your experience during church service?
   Mark only one oval.

   1 2 3 4 5
   No Impact  Significant Impact
The Stained-Glass Windows of the Armenian Church of Our Savior
Saint Gregory of Datev

Saint Gregory of Datev is known for his advancement of learning and culture while serving as an abbot at Tatev Monastery. He was named after Saint Gregory the Illuminator, founder of the Armenian Christian Church, after his parents prayed for a child. He began his education at a young age and quickly excelled. After making a pilgrimage to Jerusalem he was ordained a priest, and after the death of his mentor, he became the head of the Tatev Monastery, gaining numerous followers. After his death, he was interred on the monastery grounds.

In this window is depicted Saint Gregory in what appears to be the front of Tatev Monastery, located in the city of Tatev in southeastern Armenia, shown in Figure 8. Below him are a group of individuals that likely represent Saint Gregory’s followers and students. The group is dressed in monastic robes and appear to be involved in a discussion, with some of the group looking up to Saint Gregory; looking up to their teacher for guidance.

This window celebrates the enrichment to learning, Christianity, and culture that Saint Gregory contributed to Armenian Christian history. Tatev Monastery hosted one of the most important universities in Armenian medieval history, where science, religion, and philosophy were taught. He dedicated his life to spreading enlightenment, more than living up to his namesake Gregory the Illuminator.
The crucifixion of Jesus is one of the most important lessons from the Bible. God sacrificed his only son to the cross to pay for the sins of humanity. It is the act of self-sacrifice that is one of the most important lessons taught. Throughout Jesus’ life, he dedicated himself completely in service to God, to set an example for his followers. It is a story of how God suffered and died in the same way that people do, in order to bring them closer to Him. It is because of this sacrifice to atone for mankind’s sins that the Cross has become the defining symbol of Christianity. Immediately after Jesus’ death there was an earthquake that tore the veil of the Temple Mount that some say represents the breaking of the barrier between God and man, through Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross.

In the window two individuals are depicted on Jesus’ left and right sides. On Jesus’ right is a woman with blue robes and a hood, likely a representation of Jesus’ mother, Mary, who stood present at his crucifixion. On Jesus’ left stands a figure with blue robes, yellow hair, and a halo. This figure likely represents the disciple John, whom it is reported to have looked after Jesus’ mother Mary at his request, taking her into his home after Jesus’ death on the cross.
Saint Santoukhd

Saint Santoukhd is particularly important to Armenian Christians. The daughter to the King of the province of Ardar, Santoukhd was converted to Christianity after Jesus’ apostle Thaddeus traveled to Armenia to spread Christianity. Saint Santoukhd traveled in secret to a meeting held by Thaddeus and was immediately baptized as a Christian. Her father, the king, was displeased with her daughter’s conversion and ordered all of the believers slain. When the soldiers attempted to kill Thaddeus, “…a tremor and a bright light streaked across the sky frightening the unbelievers…” causing them to arrest Thaddeus and the princess instead. Despite torture at the hands of her father, Santoukhd refused to renounce her beliefs, and was executed. After her death, it is said that a fiery light from heaven shone over her body for three days.

The king’s reaction to his daughter’s conversion only created a sense of solidarity for Christians and gained them many supporters and converts. Thousands of Armenians were baptized the night that Saint Santoukhd was martyred. When she was baptized, Thaddeus declared that a sign from heaven showed that she was a holy virgin. Virginity is a sign of morality, which is important to the Christian faith. This added special significance to her martyrdom. She has been included in many Armenian poems and other literature in reverence to her sacrifice.
Saint Sahag/Saint Gregory of Nareg

Saint Sahag Bartev was the son of Saint Nerses the Great, and the last of the line of Saint Gregory the Illuminator. He was head of the Armenian Church from 387 AD. This was during a time when Armenia was stuck between the Byzantium Empire on one side and the Persian Empire on the other, hostile to each other and to Armenia. Saint Sahag is known mostly for his literary works; having received higher education in Byzantium and Caesarea. He is most well-known for the first translation of the Holy Bible into Armenian. While head of the church, he established many schools and improved upon existing ones. His literature was so important, that it was one of the main reasons that Armenia was able to retain their independent identity. The works of Saint Sahag inspired many other Armenian writers, greatly contributing to the culture of the Armenian people.

Saint Gregory was born to a family of writers in the city of Narek in 950 AD. He entered the monastic life at a young age, receiving education under the guidance of his father, a bishop, and the abbot at Nareg Monastery. He became a priest, living in the monastery of Narek where he taught at the school. He was a writer like his family and a poet and is most well-known for his Book of Lamentations, or Prayer Book. He is considered Armenia’s greatest poet and first mystic. The contributions to Armenian literature and poetry have enriched the Armenian Christian culture. Even today his command of the Armenian language is considered unparalleled. His dedication in service to God and to spreading knowledge strengthened the Armenian Apostolic Church and continue to inspire its followers.

This panel displays the images of Saint Sahag and Saint Gregory between a bible opened to Proverbs, 1:2. The saints are both reading from a book, representative of their dedication to Armenian Christian literature. Saint Sahag wears a blue robe with gold trim. Saint Gregory is wearing brown monastic robes proper for his life as a monk. It is appropriate that these two saints be displayed on the same panel, as they both contributed greatly to Armenian Christian culture through their literature. The passage from proverbs represents the saints’ dedication to knowledge through improvement in schools and teaching, as well as through their religious writings.
The Resurrection

According to the Bible, on the day of Jesus’ resurrection there was ‘a great earthquake; for an angel of the lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone, and sat upon it/ His appearance was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow/ and for fear of him the watchers [the Roman soldiers on guard] did quake, and became as dead men.” The scene in this window depicts the angel standing guard over Jesus’ tomb, while the Roman soldiers, shown wearing red plumed helmets of the Roman legion, are bowed before the tomb. Above them is Jesus surrounded by a golden aura, his spirit coming from the open tomb.

One of the most important stories in the Bible, this window and similar representations of the Bible are chosen for stained-glass for their educational and cultural enrichment. One author believes the foundation of Christian belief rests on the Resurrection, quoting John, 11:25-26 ”I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” Another author says that the Feast of the Resurrection is the center of liturgical life. It “is the central theme of Christianity and it has been preserved in its purity in the Armenian Orthodox Tradition.”

On 7 April, 2015, the Armenian Catholicos stated during a ceremony “Throughout our history we have survived persecutions by remaining steadfast to the message of the Resurrected Christ. One hundred years ago, dark plans were put into action to destroy us. Today, however, we celebrate not only the Resurrection of Jesus but also the resurrection of our people, who have survived and thrived throughout the world.”
Saint Mesrob/Saint Nerses Shnorhali

Saint Mesrob Mashtots was born in a small town in Taron Province in ancient Armenia (cir. 365 AD) to a family of modest means. His education focused on Greek literature, and he served at the Armenian Royal Court before joining the church. While working as a missionary in southeast Armenia, Mesrob realized that it would be easier to spread his teachings if Armenians were able to read the Bible for themselves. Since Armenia had no written language, Mesrob petitioned the king for support in developing one. With the king’s support, Mesrob traveled to several countries to study languages. Disappointed in his search he returned to Armenia where he encountered a Greek calligrapher. Realizing that he could use Greek letters on which to base a new alphabet, Mesrob compiled 28 consonants and 8 vowels to form it. The language has remained unchanged except for the addition of two characters to account for foreign sounds. The first words that Mesrob wrote with his new language was Proverbs, 2:1, stating “To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding.”

The importance of having a written language to coincide with the Armenian spoken language cannot be understated. The language proved easy to learn and spread quickly. With literacy rates soaring, people were able to read the Bible and Christianity spread quickly throughout Armenia. Mesrob’s contribution to language, and the spread of literacy and Christianity throughout Armenia earned him status as a saint.

Saint Nerses I was an Armenian Catholicos, or leader of the Armenian Church, who lived in the fourth century. A direct descendant of Saint Gregory the Illuminator, he is most well-known for convening the Council of Ashdishad, the first such council of bishops of the Armenian Church. It was during this council that Nerses brought his concern for how the church was involved in society. As a result of the council, canons (authoritative religious text) were written which would allow the church to establish institutions that served the people, such as hospitals, monasteries and convents, and inns for travelers to stay. It was Nerses’ concern for the people that earned him the title “Shnorhali” (the Great).

Nerses was highly educated and full of conviction. It was his dedication to the people and to the church that made him strive to better the church as an organization. He recognized that unity between the church and its patrons was essential to a strong homeland. Nerses’ primary concern throughout his tenure as Catholicos was primarily the happiness of his people and bringing them closer to God.

In this window is depicted a cross with two wheat stalks between the images of Saint Mesrob and Saint Nerses. Traditionally in Christianity, wheat represents bounty of the harvest, productiveness, penitence and modesty, and resurrection. The cross represents the saints’ dedication to Christianity through their work. The work of both saints helped Armenia stand out as independent and Christian country. The Armenian’s identity and culture were vastly enriched by the work of these two saints, a contribution that is especially important given Armenia’s neighbors. With the ability to contribute to Christian literature and culture through language, Armenians were able to resist being overtaken by hostile neighbors’ cultures.
The Transfiguration of Jesus

In this window, Jesus is depicted in white with a halo, standing beside the Prophets Moses on the left, seen carrying the Tablet of the Ten Commandments, and Elijah on the right. Below is depicted the three apostles that Jesus brought to witness his Transfiguration; Peter, James, and John.

As Jesus prepared to travel to Jerusalem, he told his apostles of his impending torture and death. Jesus’ words were met with outrage by the apostles. Jesus rebuked them and brought his apostles to a high mountain.

Peter, James, and John traveled with Jesus to a high mountain where the Prophets Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke with Jesus. The disciples heard the voice of God command them to listen to His Son. The three disciples cowered at the voice of God, as pictured in the stained-glass window, Figure 14. The mountain that Jesus and his three disciples climbed was Mount Tabour, Lower Galilee, Northern Israel. The Transfiguration is one of the most important events in the Armenian Church. It is one of the five principle feasts of the Armenian Church. The Transfiguration is an important event because it was a visible sign of the power of God, in front of reliable witnesses. The Fest of the Transfiguration takes place on the 14th Sunday after Easter (98 days).
Saint Movses Khorenatsi

Saint Movses Khorenatsi was an Armenian historian from the 5th century. In addition to studies at Edessa, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Athens, Movses also studied with Mesrob Mashtots. Known as the father of Armenian history, Movses’ most important work is his *History of the Armenians*. While there were other Armenian historians during his time and before him, his work is considered the most important. It is the most complete history of ancient Armenia, providing complete and comprehensive coverage of the country up to Movses’ lifetime. Recently, his book has been used to uncover the forgotten city of Ararat in Armenia.

This panel displays an image of Movses wearing blue and white robes, holding a Bible. Below his image is written “Saint Movses of Khoren.” Having a comprehensive written history gave the Armenians a sense of identity and origin. Of note, Movses included an origin story that included a connection with the Bible, connecting the Armenian nation further with their Christian identity.
In this window is depicted Saint Vartan on the Right, depicted as a warrior wearing armor ready for battle. Beside him is Saint Ghevond, a priest and chaplain of Saint Vartain’s Army, wearing purple robes and carrying a cross, standing over the image of an idol. The idol has been knocked over, and Saint Ghevond is denouncing the idol; a symbol of Persian Zoroastrian fire worship. Behind the two figures is a white flag with a Greek Christian cross displayed.

Saint Vartan was an important Armenian military commander, leading the Battle of Avarayr (May 26, 451 AD). On the eve of the battle, Saint Ghevond prepared a service, giving communion to each of the Armenian soldiers, and baptizing many neophytes. Saint Vartan led an uprising against a Persian attempt to force Zoroastrianism on Armenians. Despite overwhelming odds, Saint Vartan’s 60,000 soldiers fought bravely against the 300,000 invaders. The tenacity with which the Armenians fought caused the Persians to reconsider forcing their religion in Armenia.

Saint Vartan perished during the battle, but his nephew Vahan continued to lead the Armenian Army against future Persian incursions.
Saint Gregory the Enlightener/ Saint Thaddeus

Saint Gregory the Enlightener (or Illuminator), shown in the middle panel of this window, is the father of the Armenian Church. After baptizing King Tiridates in 301 A.D., he became the first Catholicos of the Armenian Church. His father was an Iranian, Prince Anak, sent to assassinate King Khosrov. The remaining family of the Armenian king took vengeance upon Anak and killed all in his family except for Anak’s son and daughter, who were raised as Christians by their nanny in Cappadocia. Anak’s son, originally Suren, was given the name Gregory. Son, originally Suren, was given the name Gregory.

After receiving an education at a Greek school, Gregory returned to Armenia and earned a position in the king’s court as a palace functionary. While serving the king, he was asked to attend a battle victory celebration where he refused to participate in pagan rituals. For this, the king imprisoned and tortured Gregory, before condemning him to a Khor Virap prison known as ‘the pit.’ It is said he survived because a widow from the nearby castle threw bread to him every day. After thirteen years, the king became ill and his sister received a vision that only Gregory could heal him. Gregory was brought to the king and prayed for the king’s recovery. When the king recovered, he converted to Christianity and made it the official state religion; with Gregory as head of the church.

In the top panel of this window is Saint Thaddeus. Saint Thaddeus, also known as Judas (or Jude), was one of Jesus’ twelve apostles. He is remembered as Thaddeus so he is not confused with Judas Iscariot (the betrayer). He was born in a small town in Galilee to a family of farmers. His father was a relative of St. Joseph and his mother a relative of the Virgin Mary. Following the Ascension, he traveled throughout the Middle East and Southwest Asia. Despite his closeness to Jesus, little is known of this apostle, though he is highly regarded, especially in Armenia. Thought to have been the first person to bring Christianity into Armenia, his significance in the Armenian Church is particularly important.

This window displays Saint Thaddeus in the top section, who was martyred young. While scholars disagree where, it is often contended that the location was somewhere in Armenia. In the middle section is pictured Saint Gregory the Illuminator, and below the head of the Armenian Church, Etchmiadzin Cathedral. These two significant saints are appropriately displayed in the same window pane for their role in Armenia’s Christian history.
The Birth and Baptism of Jesus

This windowpane depicts two of the most important events in Christian history. The birth of Jesus, which marked the coming of the Lord and savior of humanity, and his baptism, which set an example for his followers to follow God’s commandments. These events are depicted in the same window panel because they are two of the most defining events of Jesus’ life and his impact on the world.

Jesus was born to the Virgin Mary and her betrothed Joseph, a carpenter, sometime during the reign of King Herod (King of Judea, subordinate to the Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus). While Mary was pregnant, the emperor called for a census of the entire empire, requiring that Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem where Joseph’s family was from. Upon arriving to Bethlehem, there was no room in any inns, and Jesus was born in a manger. Shortly after his birth, he was visited by three wise men who brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. While traveling to pay homage to the baby Jesus, the three wise men thwarted an attempt by King Herod to assassinate Jesus.

In the bible, Jesus traveled to Bethany beyond the Jordan River to meet with John the Baptist. John refused to baptize Jesus at first, saying it was Jesus who should baptize he. Jesus insisted that he be baptized ‘to fulfil all righteousness’ and John acquiesced.

Symbolically the baptism was the beginning of Jesus’ ministry and an example to his followers. Baptism is a symbol of repentance, and in becoming baptized in the Jordan River, Jesus was repenting for the sins of all souls (at the time) into heaven.
In the top panel of this window is an image of Saint Bartholomew. Little is known of Saint Bartholomew, and he is mentioned few times in the Bible. He is most well-known for his missionary work in several countries, including Armenia. It is thought that an individual Jesus refers to as Nathaniel may be Bartholomew; Bartholomew is a surname meaning son of Talmai. According to some historians, Bartholomew accompanied Saint Thaddeus in Armenia, and is thus regarded, alongside Saint Thaddeus, as one of the patron saints of the Armenian Church. Saint Bartholomew was martyred by flaying and beheading for converting Armenians to Christianity.

The three saints displayed in the middle panel are Saint Tiridates (left), Saint Ashkhen (middle), and Saint Khosrovitoukht (right). Saint Tiridates is the Armenian King who was converted to Christianity by Saint Gregory the Illuminator, and subsequently declared Christianity the official state religion. As described in previous windows, he imprisoned Gregory for refusing to participate in pagan rituals, and thirteen years later healed the king of a mysterious illness which prompted Tiridates’ conversion to Christianity. This was a momentous event for the country of Armenia as it separated their identity from their Iranian rulers. This unifying factor has brought Armenians together and allowed their country to thrive despite Iranian attempts to assimilate it.

King Tiridates’ sister, Saint Khosrovitoukht, received the vision that led to Gregory’s release from the pit and healing of the king’s sudden illness (as previously described). The madness that overcame the king is said to have come shortly after he had Hripsime, a missionary traveling with nuns from Rome, assassinated. Saint Hripsime is displayed in the third panel beside an image of the church named in her honor. The king had desired Hripsime for her beauty and she had rejected him due to her strong Christian conviction. Following King Tiridates recovery and conversion, Ashkhen, and Khosrovitoukht built a church at the site of her martyrdom in her honor.

These four saints played an integral role in the establishment of the Armenian Church. The window panel displays Saint Bartholomew in the top section, Saints Tiridates, Ashkhen, and Khosrovitoukht in the middle pane, and an image of Saint Hripsime inset on a background of Saint Hripsime Church.
The Ascension of Jesus

In this window, Jesus is depicted in heaven, accompanied by angels, making the sign of benediction over an earthly group below. In this window the group is represented by the apostles, with Mary at the center. The apostles are said to have witnessed The Ascension, and Mary was told of it by Jesus, and may have witnessed it.

An author of a religious magazine describes depictions of The Ascension as being divided into two planes, the terrestrial and celestial where Jesus is depicted in a mandorla, or almond shaped frame, which is used to represent a halo. Mary’s head connects the two planes, with her head nearly touching the mandorla; signifying her holiness and connection to Jesus. There were many similar depictions of The Ascension created in both Eastern and Western Churches. In all of the depictions the angels are rejoicing, and the disciples stand beside Mary looking up at Jesus.

The Feast of The Ascension takes place 40 days after The Resurrection. It has been celebrated since ancient times and always falls on a Thursday. The Armenian Church begins the Feast on the evening before, after Vespers (evening prayers). As one of the major events in Jesus’ life, The Feast of The Ascension is part of the Armenian Church’s Resurrection/Easter Feast.
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