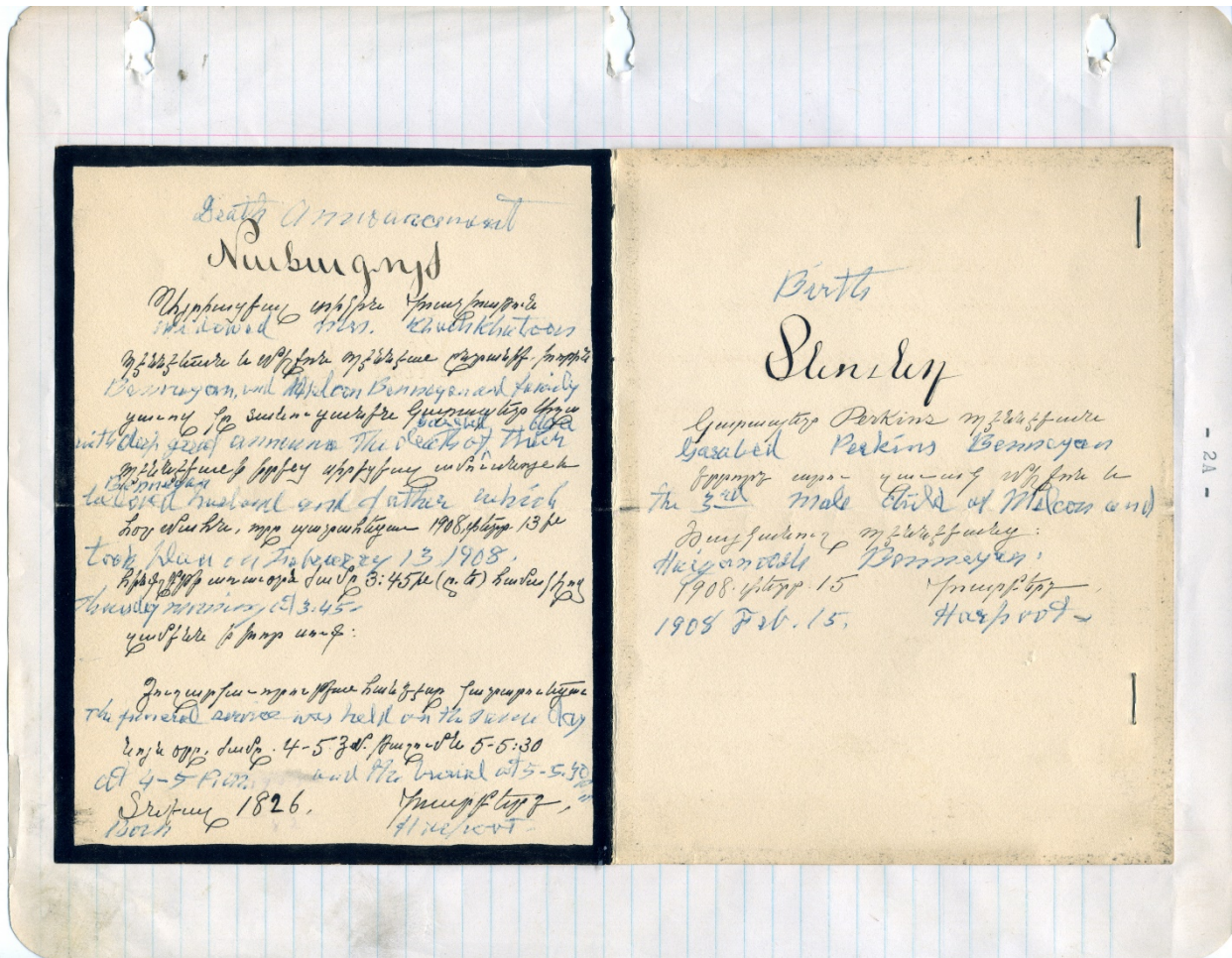


**Memoir by Rev. Mardiros K. Stone, excerpt from his book, "My God and I"  
1959, Pasadena, California**

## **INTRODUCTION**

I was born in Harpoot, Turkish Armenia, on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of March, 1879, of humble parents, yet well recognized in the community. My father, Kevork Movses, the mason (in his day one was recognized by his trade as the family name), was the main architect, builder, mason, stone cutter, in the county. The Moslems called upon him to build their mosques and other particular buildings. His father, Movses, was the mason, so the rest of the tribe eventually were called the "Masons". To make a distinction between the rest of the sons, my father was named the "Stone-cutter", since he had a shop for that purpose—and the only successful one. He would go to the mountains and quarry the stones, and have them brought down to the shop where he cut them into buildings, or tomb-stones. Once I went with him to the quarry and helped him to quarry some of the stones. I was then about ten or twelve years of age.

The name Harpoot is the Englishized form of the name KARPET which means, I think, "STONE-FORT". In this town there is the ruins of a big fort. I have been very curious to know what valuable treasures may be found in this fort if the archaeologists were permitted to excavate the ruins. Someday, perhaps, it will be done. So be it!



Scanned from MK Stone's original handmade book, "My God and I."

My father was the oldest of four sons of his father. We have no record of his birth, but, judging from the age of his oldest brother, Garabed, he must have been about 70 when he died. Uncle Garabed was born in 1826 and died on February 13, 1908, at the age of 82. But my father did not live that long. He inhaled too much dust from stone cutting, which, I believe, shortened his life. He died on August 16, 1893. I never forgot that date for two reasons: the loss of my father which made me feel I was an orphan now; and the remorse I felt because of the way I treated him in his last days. It happened thus: Uncle Garabed's son, Khachador, was getting married and we were invited to the wedding. Special guests of the groom, according to the custom of that country, were to go with the groom and his family to the home of the bride where a sumptuous dinner was prepared by the bride's folk for the groom and his guests. This was a special honor, and we were to travel quite a distance in a stage coach. For a fourteen-year-old boy this was an exceptional occasion, since I was one of the selected guests to go with the other honored guests. This wedding took place on

Monday, August 14, 1893. My father had been sick for more than two years, mostly in bed. He suddenly took worse on Friday the 11<sup>th</sup> of August. Relatives were called, and the wedding plans were discussed. They asked my father if he thought they should postpone the wedding. He said, 'No, have the wedding, but watch for Wednesday'. (He died on Wednesday at 9.30 a.m.) I was my father's secretary while he was sick. Several times I had written some items for him, but he did nothing with them. During this last sickness, on the day of the wedding, he asked me again to write those things. Not realizing his end was near I refused to do so because of the wedding and my special invitation. Mother advised me to do the writing, but I cried and refused to give up the wedding trip. One of my older sisters, whose class-mate was the bride-to-be, sympathized with me, so I went to the wedding instead. Next day, Tuesday, my father asked me again. That day was the day when in a special ceremony the gifts were to be opened. Again I wanted to go, again my mother advised me to stay and do the writing, and again my sister sympathized with me, and again I went away. Wednesday morning father was propped against the wall (he could not lie down on account of his heart), and we all gathered around since he was unconscious. All the relatives were called in, and about nine or nine-thirty they pronounced him dead. I had seen only once more one die. Father's sister Elizabeth, who made her home with us, died in our house when I was five or six. Mother was in the kitchen and had asked me to watch auntie. I saw something happen to her, so I called mother and told her "Something happened to auntie". She came and said auntie was dead. She died in the same room and in the same manner—propped against the wall. When I realized father was gone the remorse overwhelmed me. Our next door neighbor came to comfort mother. She asked mother if father had said anything before he died. Mother, then, related the incident I mentioned above. The neighbor's boy was my best playmate, so she had me near her with her arms around me, trying to comfort me, and telling me how now I was like her son who had lost his father only lately. Then she tried to tell me how sad it was I did not write the letters, "now he is gone". I felt like knocking her down and getting away from her. She did not realize how much I was suffering already. But I said nothing. Mother saw my suffering and tried to explain the situation but the damage was done and nothing could heal the wound. I carried this wound and the remorse with me till about five years after my definite conversion (Dec. 31, 1899). I had tried to clean my past with apologies, etc., as much as it was possible. But always this remorse stayed with me and disturbed my peace. One Sunday morning I woke up and was thinking of this remorse. I was in tears for sometime. Then, a bright light



came to me: Why not ask God to ask your father for forgiveness. I believed God had forgiven, but I felt I should also ask my father. I did that very thing. I asked God; and a new peace came into my soul which has never left me. My father never punished me physically. My mother did that by pinching me somewhere around my arms. My father always read the Proverbs when I needed correction. He could not have done better to impress me. I think corporal punishments should be done away with as soon as possible.



Scanned from MK Stone's original handmade book, "My God and I."

My father married twice. His first wife, Mary, died in about 1866, leaving two children: Mardiros, after whom I was named (He died at the age of 19, engaged to be married); and Khoomar who came to America, and died here in Pasadena on Nov. 19, 1939, at the age of 78 (this age may not be accurate). My mother was married twice, also. First in 1866. This marriage did not last a year. Her first husband died within a year. She married my father in 1868 (She was born in 1850). She bore ten children: five of us still living. Her first-born, Baghdasar in 1869, died in Pasadena on July 24, 1939. Next came two girls: Mariam and Sooltan both of whom died in early childhood days. The next two were also girls named after the other two who died: Mariam and Sooltan. Both married ministers: Mariam married Rev. Mardiros Baghdasarian of Van. During the Armenian massacre of 1896 they moved to Tiflis in Russian Armenia, and in 1900 they came to the United States and settled in Boston, finally in 1922 they moved to California and settled in Pasadena where he died on July 3, 1941. My sister Mariam—known to the whole tribe as “Mariam abla”—is still living and will be 86 years old on February 12 this year—1959. I came next, born on March 17, 1879. They tell me I was a sickly child in my early childhood days. I remember having convulsions as early as at two years of age. I began to gain in health after my convulsion period, and I have been very healthy since. After me was born another girl, Aghavni. She also died in early childhood. Then came another girl on March 27, 1884, Elizabeth. She married Mihran Samuel Constantian, a minister’s son. Then comes a boy, Philip, born on August 27, 1887. Then comes the last, Aghavni, name changed to Ivy. She also married a minister’s son, Philip S. Devirian. Philip died a few years ago leaving two boys and a girl.



*Scanned from MK Stone's original handmade book, "My God and I."  
According to Arax's immediate family, she died December 16, 1916.*

The above mentioned second Sooltan married also a minister, Rev. Asdvadzador Yeghoyan. He was the pastor of our home town. He lost his first wife during the massacre of 1895 at child-birth. Before my sister's marriage, at my suggestion she changed her first name from Sooltan to Arax, a short form of Araxis, an Armenian river in Russian Armenia. After the massacre we all came to America with the exception of Arax and her family. She bore 9 children; one became a minister, and one grandson also is a minister now. During the first world war (1917), which started in 1914, Arax died in Harpoot. Later her husband and the children came to the United States. Her youngest child, now Mrs. Elaine Pampeyan, was born on Jan. 23, 1915.



## **CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENT PERIOD: 1879-1896.**

I grew up in an atmosphere of home, love, health, religion, and schools. We did not have plenty of goods of this world, but we had plenty to eat, we were kept comfortable, and respectable and above the average of the community and the city. Our house was just outside of the mission compound on the upper slope of the mountain which made up the city of Harpoot. This city was the capital of the province in its early days. But in my days Mamurat-ul-Aziz, three miles below in the valley, was the capital. Harpoot was the headquarters of the Congregational Church missions for many decades. They had an up-to-date educational system from kindergarten to college, and a theological school in addition. For a while they had their own printing plant where they printed all the text books, etc. But this latter was closed later by the order of the Turkish government. For a while American missionaries were the teachers. Soon they were able to use their own graduates. The schools drew many students from all over the vilayet (province). Here in these mission schools I received my education from the kindergarten to the sophomore class of the college. At first the college was known as the Armenian College, but the Turks objected to the name so later it was known as the Euphrates College. It was named after the river Euphrates. The first world war destroyed this whole institution, and the whole Armenian race was massacred or driven away into other less desirable locations.

As a child I was rather reserved and somewhat timid. But very soon the school authorities discovered my native qualities as a good student. I was told that the president of the college, Rev. Crosby H. Wheeler had said to my folks that he had his eye on me to make me one of his professors. I was greatly elated when I heard of this statement. I discovered soon myself that I had a native proneness for education. The schools were on tuition basis, and I was very much afraid someday my father will take me out of school, for financial reasons, and put me in his business as he had done to my brother Baghdasar. Every September I would cry, for fear that I will not be able to go to school. Mother would assure that father will not do it, but I retorted back that he had done to brother and he would do to me too. But he never did. My tuition was furnished and I went back to school. One time, when I was in the fourth grade, the principal told me that I was to stay in that grade another year. When I protested they said they had talked with my folks and it was agreed on, not because I was not able, but because of my health. I was the youngest in the classes always, and they used to call me "Bugelig" (tiny). For that reason everyone, except I, had agreed it was best for

me to stay another year in the same grade. It hurt me deeply, even to this day I feel that hurt when I think of it. I cried, and argued, and pleaded with all, but of no use. When my classmates were promoted and I was not, I felt like running away. Perhaps it helped my physical health but I am sure it did not help my mental pride. I discovered this pride in another form later. When I was promoted to the High School I felt so big that I would not look at the boys in the grammar school anymore: I was above them! Perhaps modern psychoanalysts will interpret this as the reaction of a wounded mind to overcome the past humiliation when I was kept back. Be that as it may, I was still called "Tiny", in the High School and in the College too. I was still young and small in comparison to some large boys who had come from some of the villages surrounding the City of Harpoot.

Even in my childhood days I was very serious-minded boy. Besides school and studies I was trying to solve some theological questions in my mind. Early in my grammar school days I would ask myself where did I come from? The Infinite-Regress process of reasoning never got me anywhere on my search of my origin. I would go from parents to Adam, and then to God as the creator. Then I would ask 'Who created God?' The answer was another God, another God, another God, to infinity. By that time I would be in school and forget all about it till next morning on the way to school, and I would go over the same reasonings over and over. I continued this for several years. Finally I was forced to believe that at the end somewhere there was a God who never was created. It had to be so, there was no other way out of this Infinite-Regress. When I got myself to believe this, then I threw out all the chains of Gods overboard, and declared the first God was the eternal God. I cannot describe in words how I felt at that moment when I faced the real Creator of my soul, and that I could go to him for any other solutions I may find hard for me to solve. In other words I began the practice of prayer, but I called it visits with God. I felt secure, I felt I had laid the foundation of my faith which no one could destroy now. I felt elevated above. It was my mental emancipation. I had found it for myself, that I was not taking anybody else's saying or opinion. It was mine, my discovery, my faith, my God! I BELIEVED IN GOD! This I call my mental conversion. From now on my path was clear in all my thinkings, doings, believings, and decisions. What a discovery! I was out of the wilderness onto a new and progressive country. I felt I had found the key for further discoveries in my search for more truths.

Perhaps my extreme serious-mindedness, and searching of abstract realities of life made me a visionary boy instead of a boy of visions. But can a boy find out things that



are in the field of psychology and religion, unless he goes into those fields? Perhaps that was the reason my half-sister, Khoomar, said often that I was good for nothing but to become a preacher. I hated that expression of hers. I wanted to be a teacher, not a preacher. I never had the desire in my teen age life to be a preacher. I loved the school and it was my idol: I worshipped it. I went to church as a matter of custom. Everybody went, so did I. My aim was to be teacher, not a preacher. (I wonder if that is the reason both of my boys became teachers. In-heritance? Perhaps.) Yet I had some inclinations toward religion also. For instance, in my younger boyhood days in the winter when the streets were full of snow and no chance for outside plays, I would stay in the house, and in the warm room I would cut paper crosses and paste them on the wall from one end to the other. No one ever scolded me for disfiguring the wall as mothers will today. Those crosses will stay on the wall till dropped by themselves. Was this a sign that my sister was right?: 'I was good for nothing but be a preacher?' Or, was this a premonition of what I had to go through in later years? Be that as it may, this Visionary boy was after the mental and spiritual truths, and there he finally landed without any regret. The God whom I had met in my mental search had taken the leadership of my life. Sometimes I wish I had known that God was leading me. Perhaps I might have escaped many a dark paths in search of mental and spiritual satisfactions.

My moral training was perfect: no alcohol, no tobacco, no gambling, no fighting, besides the teachings of the Bible on other lines. My sister Mariam told me to come to her if any boy would molest me in any way. She was so understanding! And I did that very thing. Once I got tired of one boy always tantalizing me, so, I jumped on him and gave him a good beating, to my surprise. Just as I was beating him good the head professor was passing by and he saw. He said, "O! O! Mardiros!" I was such a goodie, goodie type of a boy, and it was inconceivable for me to beat another boy! Shamefully I left the boy and ran home. I told my sister Mariam about it, and it was then that she told me to come to her. But one thing I was pleased with: that boy never bothered me after that. As to alcohol, I signed the temperance pledge when I was in the middle grammar school grades. I was so sincere that when I was traveling for America in 1896 I was on a French steamer crossing the Atlantic. There they brought the water in jugs that had contained wine previously. Therefore I would not drink that water. We had no access to the water only when they opened the fountain, only on every other day. So, I would remain waterless for two days. There was plenty wine for anyone wished to drink. But I kept my pledge and I was proud of myself. The use of

tobacco was also taboo for us younger ones. Once I tried while everybody was away from home. I took one puff and became so choked that I said, "If that is all the fun the smokers get they are welcome, I did not want any. We played cards, we played backgammon, but we never gambled. Gambling was wicked, only bad folks gambled. I was not altogether saintly, however. I had my mischievous occasions too. The Turks we hated with all our hearts and we were proud of it. The Mohammedans are duty bound to pray five times a day, no matter where they may be. Even when they are working they must stop at once when the "Prayer-Caller" would chant his prayer from the minarets. He must stop and pray wherever he may be. There was a Turkish workman once hired by the missionaries to do some common labor on the grounds around the schools. It was the recess hour for us. I saw this workman stop his work, spread his coat on the ground and began bowing in prayer. I was dared by one boy to run in front of the man just as he was bowing. I did, and that meant he was worshiping me. They could have killed me for that. But the man said nothing but went on with his prayer. I felt relieved, but never dared to do any such stunts anymore. In this boyhood period of mine the most influential people in my life were, my mother, my sister Mariam, my uncle Garabed, and his son, the Rev. H.G. Benneyan. And the ones least influential were my half sister, Khoomar, a perfect critic and least understanding of me, although she was a school teacher, principal, and who had a very bright mind. Had she been born and raised in America she would have been a great researcher of some field of education, or, even in science; and my Uncle Jacob who was considered the sheriff of the tribe of relatives. He was very strict with his own children, and we all were afraid of him.

Here is an example how Uncle Garabed understood people so well. There was a small orchard just outside of the town which my uncle leased every summer. The family moved there for the summer months. We all were very happy to walk over there any time we wanted. The orchard was on the way over to M.Aziz, the Vilayet's capital. One day my half sister, Khoomar, wanted to go to M.Aziz to visit a friend. No woman dared to go alone anytime. So she wanted me to accompany her there. It was during one summer day. I consented. Coming back we were passing a vineyard full of grapes hanging from the vines. It was hot, so I told my sister I was going to pick some of the grapes. She advised me not to. But I did anyway. As I was coming back to the road I saw the keeper of the vineyard coming from the other end toward me. I got scared. When he came he asked what I had. I told him he could have it all back. But he said "No, you can have it", and he grabbed my hat and started to go. Just then some

members of the board of my sister's school were passing by. She explained to them what had happened. They begged of the keeper to give my hat back, but they failed. We walked to my uncle's orchard and we found several women there. I was crying with great shame for what I had done, more from a wounded pride than because of the loss of my hat. My uncle came just then, and when he saw the situation, angrily he ordered everyone to leave the boy alone and go away. They did so, and I thought how fine uncle was. When we got to town I told my sister Sooltan, or Arax later, what had happened. She said don't worry about it, that she would get another hat for me. She understood too. Arax and I were very chummy, and I promised later, after the massacre, that when I go to America I would have them all come there too, and I will get her a piano, etc., etc. But that did not happen. She died during the first world war (1917), and I never saw her again.

One thing my uncle Garabed said to me when he said good-bye to me as I was leaving home for America was, as he whispered into my ear, "You have a big place in my heart." I was 17 then, and I never forgot it. It kept me from many temptations as I began my new life here in this glorious United States. After my conversion—Dec. 31, 1899—I wrote to my uncle and told him about his statement as his parting blessing. Here is one incident of my mother's influence. In the home country we had a fast day once in a year, when fasters were not supposed to eat anything. One year I told my folks that I was going to fast too. My two sisters, Mariam and Sooltan, laughed at me and said I would not keep it. But I said I would, and I started. No breakfast, time went on till about noon or a little before. I was starving, yet I did not dare to tell anyone. Finally I went to mother and told her I was hungry. She said alright and took me to one room and we knelt down together and she asked me to pray before I could eat. We both prayed and then she gave me something to eat. I must have been about eight or ten years old, then. Such was the atmosphere I was raised in, very healthy, wholesome, religious, and mental training. These were the legacies, besides a healthy body, that my parents left me. None could be better. I thank God for all these. One more incident before I end this paragraph. This relates to my cousin, uncle Garabed's older son, Rev. Khachadoor G. Benneyan. (From now on he will be referred to as Benneyan.) Benneyan was my teacher and principal of the high school in our home town. A very understanding man, just like his father, Uncle Garabed. He came to this country before I did. After the massacre I lost all hope of becoming a teacher in my Alma Mater in Harpoot. Had I stayed there it would have been sure death for me. So reluctantly I decided to come to America and go into the business my older brother

was in, Monumental work, the trade of my father. I hated that trade, but I could not see any other way out but to say good bye to school and education. For I knew when I came to this country I had to go into the stone business. For since my father died (1893) my brother Baghdasar had been the bread-winner for the whole family. So, I felt it was my duty to help him out in providing for the rest of the family. But after I got here—in Bakersfield—and started to work I found out that my brother and I were miles apart in our outlook for life. He was fair example of my father, but I was “visionary” for something else. I began to miss my school days and studies. Day after day he and I were farther apart. We stood together in business but our minds did not harmonize. I became more and more morose, despondent, discouraged. Life meant nothing to me anymore. Out of duty I stayed on the job. The very thing I loved the most was taken away from me. I was even tempted to meditate on suicide which I could never do, I was too much of a coward to do anything of that kind. I wrote a letter to Benneyan in despair and tried to explain my feelings. He was the only one I could approach with confidence in those days. After I finished the letter I read it over. To my utter disgust I found out that I had failed to put down on paper my feelings. I sent the letter anyway. He sent such a fine comforting and encouraging letter which held me steady till I found my way out after my conversion. Through all these God was leading me safely, but I did not know it at the time. Little more on these later when I describe my conversion.

Now I come to the most eventful time of this adolescent period, the massacre of 1895. It changed my viewpoint on life, disillusioned me completely, made me to give up my schooling, made me to take up a trade I hated the most. But it made me to migrate to America and join my brother Baghdasar who had come here in 1889. This massacre also gave me another view of my religious convictions. I was 16, but I felt grown up to 25.

From our town we could see village after village burning, and the refugees coming to town for help and shelter. Being the headquarters of the American missionaries we hoped that nothing will happen to our city, for the sake of the Americans, at least. For weeks we were jittery. Sunday, November 10, we went to our early church service at 7.00 a.m. While the service was going on news came that another village had been massacred, and another, and another. Finally, the news came that the Kurds were at the entrance of the city. The meeting was dismissed and we all went to our homes. Benneyan’s parents lived just across the street from the house of the retired President’s home where they were sheltered. They sent word to us to come there too.



We picked up a few edible things and some necessary clothes and over we went, only one half block from our home. There we stayed all that day and night. Meantime several Turkish leaders came and requested from our community people to surrender all arms, and give all money we had to protect us from the attack of the Kurds. (They did not tell us the Kurds were doing all at the order of the Turkish officials). So they got all they could, and then, next morning about 9.00 a.m. the shout was heard from the border, and the Kurds rushed into the city. The President's home was just outside of the compound. So they opened the compound and we crossed the street into the compound. Meanwhile the bullets were flying everywhere. The whole community, near the compound were on the march to the compound. Some were wounded, but none of our people got even a scratch. Soon the compound was in danger. So the order came to vacate the compound. The missionaries and about 100 other people rushed to the college building nearby. We and about 200 girls of the boarding school of girls, and many others, got out from the back of the compound, and were led to one of the town inns (hotels). All day and all that night we were urged to accept Mohammedanism and save our lives. The inn-keeper, especially, was very anxious for us to do so. They came to my cousin Sookias, who was the only watch maker of the town, and asked him to get us all to pretend that we had changed our religion. But no one moved that direction. Night was coming, and we were told that in the morning they will come and demand change of our religion or else we were to be killed. I heard my uncle Jacob saying if they come he was going to pull the building down and thus commit suicide. I was afraid of that because I knew when my uncle said anything he would do it. I went to mother about it, but she assured me that he will not do anything of that kind. One of the Theological students was with us. He had his girl friend with him. He was telling her how to cut her vein and kill herself, and he would do the same in case they were approached by the enemy. The dark night made the atmosphere all the more gloomy. Benneyan was greatly worried about the 200 girls who had followed him thinking he knew the best. He was planning to find out what had become of the missionaries. That night I had the worst struggle of my life. I did not want to die. I was not ready, for, while I had believed in God I had not decided for Christ yet. Ever since the day I discovered my faith in God I had been talking with him, rather to him, for more light. I wanted to know if Jesus was his son, and whether the Bible was his word as the christians claimed. I prayed constantly, "God, I believe in you, and I want to serve you. Show me some way if Jesus is your son, and if the Bible is your word." I promised to serve him all the days of my life. I was in an

unsettled condition when the massacre broke up. I could not accept Mohammedanism, yet I could not say I was a Christian. For I did not want to be a christian just because my parents were. I wanted to have a faith of my own, as my faith had been some years before in God. About four o'clock a.m. of Nov. 12, I came to a decision that I will not accept Mohammedanism; and if they insisted, I would bow my head and tell them to chop it off. That was easily said but not so easy to do. But I really meant it. I went to my mother and told her my decision. She was glad, yet she was not crying. What gave her the peace I did not understand. I knew I had a new peace which I had never experienced before. I was not afraid anymore. This I call a conversion to a cause. (Later I found out another conversion by which Christ had changed my life and gave me a new life, a new birth. This happened on Dec. 31, 1899.)

The morning came, but no one had approached us yet. Meanwhile Benneyan had gotten hold of one of my classmates who had offered to go to the school grounds, about one mile away, and find out what had become of the missionaries. My classmate did. He found a white cloth and made a turban with it around his hat. Thus he would not be suspected to be an Armenian. We all waited anxiously for the result. For an hour or so we had not heard a word. We feared my classmate had been murdered. Finally some soldiers came and inquired for "khoja Benneyan": (teacher Benneyan). We all thought he was to be the first to be killed. My uncles advised him not to appear. But he did. The soldiers said they had orders from the missionaries for Benneyan and his family and friends, and the 200 girls to go with them to the college building. Quite a few people who were not included in the order, pleaded with Benneyan if they also could go. He told them he had no orders but they can follow him and the rest. So, quite a few came with us. There were soldiers on both sides of the streets to protect us. How important we felt as we marched unmolested. We found all the missionaries safe, and many others who were there. We lived in that building for a week, fed, by the government, on half-baked bread. We were about 400 of us. I was made the superintendent of the distribution of the bread. Several babies were born there. We were a big family, all distinctions being exterminated. My uncle Jacob and his family had rented the upper rooms of our big 3-story house before the massacre. Now he wanted to go and see what had become of the home. He got a soldier, and his son Khosrov, my chum, and me, and we went to investigate the situation. We found the house intact and not burned. We went to the sub-basement where we had stored some valuable pieces of furniture and sister's laces, etc. We found them undisturbed. Thinking the massacre was over now we left them there, I

brought my mother's brother's Bible which was the best looking, and I found a big quilt of ours on the street, left there because of its weight. We seven of us slept under that quilt for over a year. A few days after, uncle went once more and found the house burned and everything taken. Thus ended the old life, and we began a new one. My uncle Garabed found a house near by for rent, and we went with them this time. Gradually the schools opened and everything began to move as usual. I stayed there one year and then on November 30, 1896 I left home for the United States. I got my passport with the understanding that I will not return back anymore, which I was more than glad to promise. I have kept my promise. There were not many killed in our town. The reason was, we heard afterward, that the wife of the Governor of the vilayet was greatly disturbed when she saw the town burning. She could not sleep, so she called her husband and begged of him to stop the whole thing. The Governor wired at once to Constantinople (now known as Istanbul) for advise. The message was that the people here are not fighting, they are peaceful folks. The answer was to stop killing but to continue plundering. Another rumor, we heard, was that the order was to kill first the "khojas". This word has a double meaning: it may mean the old people, or it may mean the teachers. The Kurds, we were told, took the first meaning, therefore quite a few old people were killed in our town. A third rumor we heard was that the Turks had inquired of the German Kaiser what to do with the Armenian race. He had recommended genocide. So the Turks consistently have carried the massacre plan every ten or fifteen years, thus gradually the race has been exterminated. The last massacre was during the second world war when all were either killed or driven out to other countries. They drove the people, men, women, and children, on foot away. Many died from exhaustion, many were butchered on the way. Few survivors finally reached their destination and became refugees anywhere they could be allowed to stay. My uncle Jacob and wife, their daughters Margaret, Anna, Zaroohi, son-in-law John, were killed or died by exhaustion on the way. Our town minister, who married my sister Arax after I left home, and after my sister had died at home (1917), of child-birth, was one of them who succeeded to reach the northern shores of the Mediterranean sea, and later succeeded to migrate to America with his eight children and his third wife. (His first wife died during the 1895 massacre leaving one girl—Sara.) Thus Armenians in Turkey were wiped out completely. A million or two are still existing in Russian Armenia, and quite a number in Iran, originally known as Persia. However, the old regime in Turkey lost out, and the new Young Turks brought a revolution under Ataturk as their leader. Ataturk brought many reformatations after

the Armenians were exterminated. They dropped their Arabic alphabet, and adopted the Roman alphabet which they are using now for their literature. They separated the church from the state as it is in the United States, drove away the Caliphate (the head of the Moslem religion), and thus began to be aligned along civilized nations. They can stand many more reformations which we hope the future will develop. At least they are not Communists. They form the Moslem gate against the Communists who try to carry their undesirable politics into other lands. I think the civilized nations are glad to have the Turkish cooperation.

Before I close this section I wish to mention two more incidents which happened while we were still in the inn with the 200 girls of the school with us. The girls were thirsty and were yelling for water. Some Turks were informed of the need of water. When Benneyan heard of this he called me and my cousin Khosrov and told us not to ask the Turks to get the water, but that we should go and bring the water in our hats (his humorous manner of speech). We two went and were getting the water when two soldiers got hold of us and were to kill us. But a friendly Turk happened to come along and ordered the soldiers to let us alone. "Why do you bother these innocent boys?" The soldiers let us alone and we went back to the inn.

The second incident was concerning the pressure for us to accept the Mohammedan religion. Benneyan acted very bravely and showed to the zealous Mohammedans how much of a chance they had to convert us. He took his Bible which he had given to his future wife as an engagement gift with the ring. (The custom there was to give a Bible and the engagement ring at the regular engagement ceremony. So far as I can remember this ring was the only ring the brides received.) His wife, Satenig, had brought this Bible with her when they left their home. Benneyan opened the 91<sup>st</sup> Psalm and read it openly to all present with a loud voice, and then offered a loud prayer. The result was that we were never more molested so far as our religion was concerned. We thank God for such brave men who will not change their religion just to save their lives. Benneyan died on May 19, 1944. Later this incident was mentioned with proper praise for him in the Armenian paper he edited for many years. The proof of Christianity is not its philosophy, nor its theology, nor its social creed, good as these are. The proof lies in its martyrs' blood like the blood of Abel which spoke to God direct. The Armenian race can write another Hebrews chapter 11. The Church of Jesus Christ is built on Christ himself. We have a living Christ who is still active in changing the lives of men with the new birth brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit.



## **POST-MASSACRE, OR LIFE IN BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA 1896-1908.**

The massacre convinced everybody that the sooner people migrated away the better for all concerned, especially the males, young and old. So, soon as the traveling was safe plans were made for my cousin Khosrov and me to leave for America where both of us had brothers and other cousins. Khosrov was the younger son of my uncle Jacob. He and I were born in the same house—my father’s house—grew up together, attended school together, and now left together for a far country. We were so much together that we were called “pair of pigeons”. He was 10 days less than two years younger than I was. When we left home I was 17½ and he was nearly 16: pair of inexperienced “pigeons”, snapped away from home-protected life into a strange country of strange customs and life, with new types of temptations; yet, into a country of “liberty and justice for all”; land of churches and missionaries, opportunities for all for work or schools. This was what we two squabs were facing in the future. Fortunately we were going to brothers who would look after us and give us the direction we needed. So we left home in the late forenoon, in good-byes and tears, no more to see our loved ones, two tender-hearted kids going out into the world to make a new kind of living. But what was that when we were escaping the sword of the Turk or Kurds. I was fortunate that all of my people, with the exception of my sister Arax, finally came to America. Khosrov’s folks did not come, but finally they all were killed as I related above. At parting we all were crying on each other’s shoulders but Khosrov. He had never been emotional in his life. While his parents were good and church people, yet my uncle’s strict rules showed the lack of understanding the young. This was what Khosrov was missing at our departure—craving understanding on the part of his father. The first night we camped beyond the Capital, the first evening away from home. Especially I was very home sick. From childhood up to the present time I hate to be away from home. I do not mind day time, but, O! the nights! However, I was not half as home-sick as Khosrov was. We spread our beddings on the floor, took out some eats the folks had prepared for us, and, facing each other we tried to eat, Khosrov hardly ate anything. Being the older I thought it was my place to comfort him. We were not traveling alone. We had many grown up, friends, who were to look after us. There were about 200, I think, orphan girls being transferred to an orphanage near Constantinople. They were government

responsibilities, and we had an escort to go all the way with us till we arrived at The Sea of Marmora. We did not lack protection but we missed our folks, the home cooking, warm beds, plays and teasings, and, even, children's quarrels; in other words, we missed the home atmosphere to which we both were accustomed. Pair of squabs! away from their nests, with no mother to tuck us in at night as my mother did always. Do you blame me for not forgetting that first night? Remember, we were only pair of squabs! All of a sudden I felt aged! I was the older and I must uphold my cousin. He was suffering worse. He turned to me and said, "Mardiros, I would have given anything if I could have cried like you did when we left home. I tried but could not. You cried like a baby. What ever possessed me to leave home? I had everything I wanted. (They lived much more comfortably than we did. His brother was a successful Rug merchant, and the folks at home were well provided. My brother was in the monumental business and he did not make as much as Khosrov's brother did.), I want to go back home." Had he cried he would not have suffered so much. After some reminiscences of our longed for homes we both fell into sleep. The next 14 days we were not so home-sick. We were traveling through new countries and were seeing new things. And so through snow and slush, through valleys and mountains, part walking to keep us warm, we finally arrived at the shores of the Black Sea, at the port of Samson. It was our first experience of seeing a big body of water, the first battleship—a Russian. We were crossing snowy mountains as we approached the sea. The coachman would tell us soon we shall see the sea. The cloud-fleeced sky mingled with the snow-capped mountains so much that we, the green ones thought we were seeing the sea. The coachman would try to tell us "It is right there, can't you see? way out there." We were teased, and we thought we did see in the mixture of the beautiful scenery. Finally, and to our amazement we saw the sea right in front of us as we descended. I was awe-stricken and frightened, fearing the carriage will roll over into the sea. Then we saw the Russian battleship. We were in a new world and new country. The newness of everything was so impressive that soon we forgot the home-sickness we felt on the first night. We left home on November 30, 1896, and arrived at Samson on December 19, 1896. We waited till the 26<sup>th</sup> of December when the French steamer, the Paquet, arrived to cross us to Marseille, France. The Paquet stopped in front of Constantinople for 1½ days. Some boatmen came near our ship and tried to induce the passengers to come and see the great Capital of Turkey. Some did go and we never saw them anymore. We were afraid, for we knew we were still in Turkish territory. The officers of the ship told us not to fear for we were on French territory

and the Turks could not come aboard. We were safe on the ship but not out of the ship. We felt better after this assurance. Several of us promised to kiss the ground of the first free country we would step on. So, when we landed in Marseille I reminded others about our promise. They backed out, but I did not. We were on the side of a passing train, and I tried to imagine I was free, no more fears of the Turks. The train, the electric lights, the walks in the streets, all these were new experiences for us, and we were drinking in to our content. We were away from the folks, but we were free, and soon we shall be able to bring the folks also to the wonderful free country. Under these newness of life I forgot even my school life and my adventures in the field of religion. But they came back with greater force when I once got over the routineness of the new life. On January 4, 1897, we landed at Marseille, and after two days stay we took the train for Le Havre where we were to take another ship to cross the Atlantic ocean with. From Marseille we came to Paris at six p.m., and took another train at midnight for the port Le Havre. This second voyage of mine was rather hectic, with the rough sea, and having separated from Khosrov who went from Le Havre to London to visit his sister. On January 16, 1897, we sighted the City of New York and the statue of Liberty. On the 17<sup>th</sup> we landed in New York. They took us to Ellis Island for inspection. Each of us had to show if we had any money with us. I had only a dollar or two, expecting to see either Khosrov's brother or Benneyan. The inspector held me back, but my companion ahead of us handed secretly his money to me. The officer saw it and demanded explanation. My companion explained that we were together. The officer did not believe, but let me pass. Now I was really free and in the United States. I had my cousin's address in New York so I went there, and found out that he was there only occasionally. I went back to my companions and found out that one of them was going to Worcester. That was where I had to go since Benneyan was there as the pastor of the Armenian church of Worcester, Mass. My companion loaned me the money for my ticket, and thus I arrived at Worcester. I stayed with Benneyan about three weeks till we got in touch with my brother in Bakersfield, California, for my transportation to California. I had an uncle in Worcester, my mother's brother, who loaned me the money. This gave me another voyage experience. I took the steamer from New York by way of water to Galveston, Texas—ten days' trip. Then on February 21 I arrived at Bakersfield, on a Sunday and met my brother whom I had not seen since 1889.

In 1889 my brother Baghdasar left home with six other cousins for America. The others were John and Movses Pashgian, my father's sister's—Badaskhan Pashgian—

sons; Melkon Benneyan, my uncle Garabed's younger son; Mrs. Maritsa Dingian, my uncle Jacob's daughter, her husband Manoog, a dentist in London, and who had waited seven years engaged to get married, and they were newly-weds on this trip; and Hrant (later called Herbert) my uncle Jacob's older son and brother of Khosrov.

As I mentioned previously, my father took my brother out of school in order to help him in the business. Previously he had taken my uncle Philip's son David at the age of 16 and trained him in the business which was needed since his father had died and David was the oldest one to make the living for the rest of the family—his mother, two brothers and one sister. David had come to America before 1889 and found work in Vermont with the Vermont Marble Company, and where later his brother Kasper also had come. When my brother came to this country he also went to Vermont and worked for the same company. My brother was 20 when he left home. That year my father had contracted to build a mosque for the Turks. The Mohammedans always have a minaret as part of their church from which the muezzin (the crier for the hour of prayer) would cry loudly five times a day, and when all will kneel down and pray wherever they may be. My father let my brother build the minaret for this mosque all by himself. The minaret was nearly finished when the seven cousins left for the United States. He took a picture of this minaret for recommendation for his ability. A copy of this picture is accompanying this page. He is the one on the top. The balcony where a figure is standing is the place for the muezzin stands, and walks around while he chants his prayer-form cry for the hour of prayer. My sister Elizabeth thinks the two men with arms around each other are my cousins John Pashgian and Benneyan (these two were very chummy). There is a bare possibility that the young fellow standing between the minaret and the two chummy fellows is yours truly, although I do not remember my being on the scene when the picture was taken. I was ten then. The possibility lies in the fact that I was frequent visitor to the shop, and I remember climbing up and down the minaret while it was in the construction. Inside the minaret is the spiral stairway which reaches the balcony of the muezzin. I have spent many an hour in this building.





*Scanned from MK Stone's original handmade book, "My God and I."*

My father was a very religious man. He would leave his shop Wednesday afternoons at four and come to the church for weekly prayer meetings. He would not even go home to change his work clothes. That would take time. When he was laying the foundation of this mosque, secretly he put a bible and a song book in it with a prayer that someday it will become a christian church. He told this only to my mother. Had the Turks known this they would have killed him on the spot. My mother told this to us after she came to this country. How I would like to see that day when his prayer will be answered, and I would like to preach the first sermon from that pulpit. But I do not think I shall live to see that day. Perhaps his grand son, Rev. Zenas Yeghoyan, my sister Arax's son may have that privilege; or, her grandson, Rev. Joseph Alexanian may be able to enjoy that privilege.

On page 8 I mentioned how my father would go to the quarries and quarry his own rocks he would need. When he took my cousin David with him he took him once to help him to quarry the stones. On their way back they met some highway robber who threatened to kill my father and David. Such killing were very common in those days. My father, instead of resisting them, started to pray earnestly to God to help them. Mohammedans are very superstitious, and strong believers in God. According to their belief it was alright to kill the Gavvours (equivalent to the term gentiles for the Jews.). However, my father's prayer scared the robbers and they fled away. The picture of the minaret did its work and my brother was employed at once.

Soon after this the two cousins moved to San Bernardino and started a Marble shop there. They sent for their mother, sister and younger brother, and thus established a new home for the family. They became very successful in their business. Soon they wrote to my brother to come also and work for them. He did, and in a year or two he left them and started a shop of his own in Bakersfield, and there was where I came to help start another Stone Brothers Marble Shop like my cousins had done in San Bernardino.



The picture below is the picture of our shop in Bakersfield, taken in about 1903: The first figure is my Brother Baghdasar, aged 34; the middle one is Philip, aged 16; and the other one is yours truly, aged 24.



*Scanned from MK Stone's original handmade book, "My God and I."*

Feb. 21, 1897! Here I am in Bakersfield, California, U.S.A.!!! about seven o'clock a.m. No one to meet me, I knew no one, no one knew me or cared who I was. The Southern Pacific Railroad stops at Kern City, three miles east of Bakersfield. It does not go through Bakersfield, Santa Fe does. The two companies were fighting each other. I gathered my limited English together and made a sentence of a question: "Do you know B.K. Stone?" I asked this question to several people. Then someone came and asked me You are looking for B.K. Stone? These Americans speak so fast that before I translate a word the speaker is through with his sentence I was just as much in the dark as I was before I asked the question. But I heard him say "B.K. Stone". "Yes", I said. My brother had not heard from me. He thought I was coming by train from New York. But for financial reasons I had to travel part by water. He had told many people

that his brother was coming. Not having heard for ten days, the local news papers were keeping the news up to date. A Mr. Young was the reporter who always stopped at the shop and got local news from Brother. Later he became a good friend of mine too. This man who mentioned my brother's name was a truck driver, and was at the depot for trade. He had read about my delay and knew also my brother through trade. So he said, yes, he is expecting you. He said he'll take me over. We got to the house at about nine o'clock a.m. at the corner of G and 23<sup>rd</sup> streets, Bakersfield. My brother was not expecting me, so he was much surprised to see me, but gladly. He paid the transfer man, and then I was left alone with my brother at the end of my journey of Nov. 30, 1896 - Feb. 21, 1897.

*Mardiros' book, "My God and I," continues with his new life in the United States and becoming a Methodist Minister. His handmade book was retyped by his grandson Ken Stone who had it bound. Scans of the original handmade book made by Nickie Stone Hovhannessian, Mardiros' granddaughter.*

*Mardiros married his sweetheart Edna Tryphena Cody on July 14, 1922 in Pasadena, California. They remained married for 53 years until his death on September 2, 1975. They had two sons, Don Philip and Paul Mardiros.*

