

who were faithfully keeping many of the traditions of the Mother Church including the Armenian language. The latter were favorably disposed towards unity.

The first such attempt at unity with Catholic Armenians was made on 3 July 1810. At the meeting convened by Patriarch Hovhannes Tchamasherdjian (1802-1813), Armenian Catholics submitted a list of conditions which the representatives of the Mother Church found unacceptable.⁵⁵ In a second effort at reconciliation, Patriarch Boghos Krikorian (1815-1823) called a special conference on 23 October 1817. Although Catholic Armenian representatives, including the Mekhitarists, favored unity with the Apostolic church, the pontifical vicar and the Collegian Catholics adamantly opposed it. The latter were successful in preventing the continuation of the ongoing talks and aborting conciliatory gestures.⁵⁶ As in the first instance, in this second one too, *amiras* were instrumental in bringing the two sides together. They took part in the preliminary discussions as well as in the formal meetings. Twelve *amiras* participated in the second conference of unity.

The third such attempt at unity was ordered by the Ottoman government. Proponents of this new attempt were such major *amiras* as Harutiun Bezdjian, Krikor Balian, Djanig Papazian, Hovhannes Erganian, Harutiun Noradungian and Garabed Aznavurian. After three months of negotiations and discussion, a declaration of faith called *hraver siro*, “call to love,” was formulated as a compromise between the Apostolic and Catholic doctrines (2 April 1820). Hardly had some initial steps been taken in implementing this decision when the Collegians intervened once more, and through devious means and provocative declarations, aroused the populace and disrupted the *rapprochement* between the two sides. The government had to use force to restore order and peace in the community. As a result many Armenians were arrested, a few were hanged, among them eighty-year-old Krikor *Amira* Sakaian, while others were sent into exile, including Harutiun *Amira* Bezdjian and Garabed *Amira* Aznavurian (September 1820).⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ormanian, *Azgapatum*, 3:3396-3399; A. Berberian, *Patmutiun*, p. 449.

⁵⁶ A. Berberian, *Patmutiun*, pp. 82-83; Ormanian, *Azgapatum*, 3:3442-3447.

⁵⁷ A. Berberian, *Patmutiun*, pp. 108-135; Ormanian, *Azgapatum*, 3:3457-3471.