In the New Church

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We were in church
but it wasn’t our service.
We were confessing
but not in our language.

The priest had a beard,
but neither thick nor long enough
to veil the sorrows of the heart.

There were crosses on the altar
but none of them Armenian
flaring at the edges
like the fires of Van.

There were no censers
filled with myrrh
wafting our prayers
of intercession.

There were Stephen and Mark
but not Sahag or Mesrob.
There were Ann and Mary
but not Sandoukht or Sirvart.

Christ’s body was in the bread
but no other body.
There was His blood in the wine
but no other blood.
There was the liturgy
bringing us to our feet,
the choristers singing hosannas
from the book of praise,

but there was another book
keeping us invisibly on our knees,
written in the names of our fathers
and for our other voices.