ST. NERSESS THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

The St. Nersess Theological Review (SNTR) is published annually by St. Nersess Armenian Seminary. The SNTR considers articles, short notes, review articles, and book reviews in all fields related to Christianity in the Armenian Church; e.g., theology, liturgy, philosophy, ethics, biblical studies, canon law, church history, ecumenics, literature, fine arts, archaeology, and interdisciplinary studies, as well as editions and translations of Armenian patristic texts.

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This special number of
St. Nersess Theological Review
is offered to

Prof. Nina G. Garsoïan

in token of St. Nersess Seminary’s deep appreciation
for her many contributions, both personal and scholarly,
to the field of Armenian Studies.
ST. NERSESS THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

Volume 10
2005

SPECIAL NUMBER
IN HONOR OF PROF. NINA G. GARSOIAN

FOREWORD
In Honor of Prof. Nina G. Garsoian
Michael Daniel Findikyan 1

NINA G. GARSOIAN: CURRICULUM VITAE
AND BIBLIOGRAPHY
Compiled by Edward G. Mathews, Jr. 3

ARTICLES

Saint Nersēs Lambronići on the Psalms
Robert W. Thomson 23

Letter from Jerusalem to the Armenians by Grigor, Bishop of the Arcrunis (6th Century)
Abraham Terian 39

John of Ėlkuran On the Creation of the World
(stanzas 1-150)
Michael E. Stone 51

Solov‘i, Solov‘i...
James R. Russell 77

The Early Armenian Hermit: Further Reflections on the Syriac Sources
Edward G. Mathews, Jr. 141
Vardan Aygekči's Homily on the Ten Integers
Roberta R. Ervine

Spiritual Healings for Physical Ailments: A Late Manuscript of the “Diversity of the Psalter”
(Uzentün qəndəyəndəş/həcl)
S. Peter Cowe

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

iv
IN HONOR OF
PROFESSOR NINA G. GARSOİAN

Michael Daniel Findikyan

St. Nersess Armenian Seminary is pleased to dedicate this volume of the *St. Nersess Theological Review* in honor of Professor Nina Garsoian, the *grande dame* of Armenian Studies. That assertion—and so the motivation of the editorial board—hardly requires protracted justification in these pages, least of all for anyone who has made even the most rudimentary inquiry into the early history of the Armenians. It has become cliché in tributes such as this to tally the students graduated by the honoree and consequently, as an indication of her vast influence in the field at hand, to avow that, indirectly, we are all her students. In fact, an investigation into virtually any area of classical or medieval Armenian history, religion or civilization will sooner or later require the student to consult studies by Professor Garsoian and/or her many accomplished students.

Our honoree’s influence permeates St. Nersess Armenian Seminary. Two of her students serve on the faculty: Roberta Ervine (Associate Professor of Armenian Studies) and Edward G. Mathews, Jr. (Recurring Visiting Professor of Early Christian Languages and Literatures). Professor Garsoian has also periodically lectured at St. Nersess, most recently at an international conference organized by the seminary in 2002 on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of its founding.

Less well known is Prof. Garsoian’s involvement in the earlier history of this seminary. I recently discovered a battered audio cassette recording of a meeting held at St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary sometime in the mid-seventies of the last century. Our seminary’s founder, Abp. Tiran Nersoyan of blessed memory, had recently moved the seminary to New York in order, among other reasons, to establish a joint academic program with St. Vladimir’s for our students. A full-time faculty for St. Nersess still years away, a meeting of the minds was convoked to determine what to do with these Armenians at St. Vladimir’s, then as now a bastion of Byzantine
Orthodox life, learning and scholarship. Participating in the discussions with the founder was a future dean of St. Nersess, Fr. Karekin Kasparian, joined by Dr. Krikor Maksoudian, then a young scholar and protégé of Dr. Garsoian, who would later be ordained a priest of the Armenian Church. Representing St. Vladimir’s were its dean, the late Fr. Alexander Schmemann, together with the late Fr. John Meyendorff. Unmistakable in the mix is the voice of our honoree, who warned of the risk for our seminarians of losing their own Armenian theological patrimony in a sea of Byzantine religious thought; of uncritically adopting, through a kind of osmosis, a religious perspective shaped on an historical track that, while venerable in its own right, was not their own.

Revealed in this vignette are traces of many qualities for which Nina Garsoian has become rightly renowned: her steadfast dedication to the educational enterprise, and her ultra-exacting scholarship; the critical thinker, ready at all times, when justified by the most rigorous assessment of the evidence, to encroach unflinchingly upon the boundaries of scholarly consensus, political correctness or the cozy sanctuary of the status quo. For an overview of Professor Garsoian’s vast erudition, formidable in both its breadth and its depth, one might begin by glancing at her imposing curriculum vitae and bibliography, compiled here by Edward G. Mathews, Jr. As for her refined grace and biting wit, not to mention her virtuosic artistry on the piano, these are reserved for her friends, in whose company we at St. Nersess consider ourselves truly blessed to be counted.

The essays in this volume came about in response to an invitation to students (Erwine, Mathews) and close colleagues (Thomson, Terian, Stone, Russell, Cowe) of Professor Garsoian to submit papers for a scholarly evening organized in her honor at St. Nersess in February 2004. We present this volume to our readers in gratitude for Professor Nina Garsoian’s manifold achievements, along with prayers that the Almighty will grace her with good health and continued prodigious learning and teaching.
NINA G. GARSOI'AN: CURRICULUM VITAE
AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Compiled by Edward G. Mathews, Jr.

CURRICULUM VITAE

PERSONAL

1923  Born in Paris, France, 11 April
      Single

EDUCATION

1940  *The Brearley School, New York*
      —Diploma
1941  *Lycée Français de New York*
      —Baccalauréat
1943  *Bryn Mawr College*
      —A.B. with honors
      (Classical Archaeology and Ancient History)
1946  *Columbia University*
      —A.M.
      (Classical Archaeology)
1958  *Columbia University*
      —Ph.D.
      (Armenian, Byzantine, Mediaeval History)
1961-1962  *Institut Catholique, Paris*
           —Postdoctoral studies in Classical
           Armenian, with Fr. Charles Mercier
1961-1962  *École des Hautes Études, Paris*
           —Postdoctoral studies in Iranian
           Dialectology with Prof. Emile Benveniste
GRANTS AND AWARDS

1940-1943  Bryn Mawr College Alumnae Regional Scholarship
1952-1953  Fulbright Fellowship to Italy
1961-1962  AAUW Foundation Fellowship to France
1962      Ford Foundation Travel Grant to the Near East
1970      ACLS Academy of Sciences of the USSR
          Senior Exchange Programme
1970-1971  National Endowment for the Humanities
          Senior Research Fellowship
1973      ACLS Travel Grant to the International
          Symposium at Veliko Tarnovo (Bulgaria)
1976      ACLS Academy of Sciences of the USSR
          Senior Exchange Programme (bis)
1976-1977  National Endowment for the Humanities
          Senior Research Fellowship (bis)
1981      ACLS Travel Grant to the XVIth International
          Congress of Byzantine Studies, Vienna
1984-1986  National Endowment for the Humanities
          Translation Grant for The Epic Histories
          attributed to awstos Buzand
1985-1986  John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship
1988      Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR
          Anania Širakac‘i Award for Scholarly
          Distinction
1992      Medieval Academy of America
          Elected Fellow
1993      Katholikate of the Great House of Cilicia
          Mesrop Maštoč medal for academic
          excellence
1993      Association Internationale des études
          arméniennes
          Distinguished Lecturer
1994      Patron
2002      The British Academy
          Corresponding Fellow
TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

1956-1965  
*Smith College*
Instructor to Associate Professor of History

1962-1965  
*Columbia University*
Visiting Associate Professor of Armenian Studies

1965-1969  
Associate Professor of Armenian Studies and of History

1969-1977  
Professor of Armenian Studies and of History

1971-1977  
University Senate
Tenured Representative of the Faculty of Philosophy

1973-1977  
Chairman, Department of Middle East Languages and Cultures

1977-1979  
*Princeton University*
Dean of the Graduate School
Professor of Near Eastern Studies and of History

1979-1993  
*Columbia University*
Centennial, then Gevork M. Avedissian Professor of Armenian History and Civilization

1985, 1990  
*University of Rome - La Sapienza*

1992  
Visiting Professor

1986  
*University of Paris - Sorbonne and INALCO*
Visiting Professor

1992  
*Collège de France*
Guest Lecturer

1993 -  
*Columbia University*
Gevork M. Avedissian Professor, Emerita

1994  
*University of Paris - Sorbonne*
Directeur d'études invitée
*Collège de France*
Guest Lecturer
PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

1949-1979 American Historical Association
1949 Medieval Academy of America
1992 - Fellow
1970 - U.S. National Council for Byzantine Studies
1978-1983 Member of the Executive Committee
1972-1976 International Studies and Exchanges Board
1974 - Society for Armenian Studies
1975 President
1975 - Byzantine Conference
1978-1986 Member of the Governing Board
1977-1989 The Ford Foundation
          Trustee
1978-1981 Harvard University Dept. of Near Eastern
          Languages and Cultures
          Chairman of the Visiting Committee
1978-1988 ACLS - Dictionary of the Middle Ages
          Associate Editor for Byzantium and the
          Christian East
1978 - Revue des études arméniennes
1984-1989 Editor
1989 - Director
1980, 1989 Dumbarton Oaks Annual Symposium
          Co-Director
1980-1993 American Council of Learned Societies
1980-1988 Member of the Board
1989-1993 Vice-Chair
1984 - Association Internationale des études
          arméniennes
          Member
1994 - Patron
1987-1993 Harvard University Middle East Center
          Member of the Visiting Committee
1994 - Société Asiatique
          Member
1995 Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo-
          Spoleto
          XLIII Settimana di Studio (20-26 aprile)
1995 -  Dolores Zohrab Liebmann Fund
            Fellowship Selection Committee Member

BIBLIOGRAPHY


That short bibliography was intentionally selective, is now ten years old and, unfortunately, included a number of typographical errors. The following bibliography is intended to be as complete—and, it is to be hoped, as free of errors—as possible, and to include all her publications through the calendar year 2005. The only exception here is that tracking down all her numerous book reviews has proved impossible; thus, only some of the journals where these can be found have been listed.

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1999  L’Église arménienne et le Grand Schisme d’Orient. (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 574; Subsidia, 100) Louvain: Peeters.
COLLECTED STUDIES

1985 Armenia between Byzantium and the Sasanians. (Variorum Reprints, CS 218) London: Variorum. [ABS]

1999 Church and Culture in Early-Medieval Armenia. (Variorum Reprints, CS 648) London: Variorum. [CCEMA]

EDITED BOOKS


TRANSLATED BOOKS


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**CHAPERS IN BOOKS**


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"The Classical World," 57-107\(^1\), 85-148\(^2\), 94-179\(^3\)

"The Forces of Disruption," 109-137\(^1\), 149-191\(^2\), 180-238\(^3\)

"New Syntheses," 139-183\(^1\), 193-252\(^2\), 240-318\(^3\)

"The Emergence of Europe: The Struggle for Leadership in the West," 219-233\(^1\), 288-303\(^2\), 366-385\(^3\).

* Each of these three editions appeared in two and three volume formats. The contributions of Prof. Garsofan appeared in volume 1 of both formats.
   "Early Byzantium," 424-439
   "Later Byzantium," 439-461
   "The Slavs and Early Russia," 461-478
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1982 In Gérard Dédéyan, ed., Histoire des Arméniens. Toulouse: Privat,

1983 In Ehsan Yarshater, ed., The Cambridge History of Iran III/1. Cambridge: Cambridge University,
   "Byzantium and the Sasanians," 568-592.

   "The Aršakuni Dynasty (A.D. 12-[180?]428)," 63-94.
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“Le rôle de la hiérarchie chrétienne dans les rapports diplomatiques entre Byzance et les Sassanides,” Revue des études arméniennes 10 (1973-1974) 119-138. [French revised and expanded version of previous] [=ABS VII]


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“Ašot III Olormac’,” I.210;
“Bagratids,” I.244;
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“Chrysocheir,” I.452-453;
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“Theodosioupolis,” III.2054;
“Tondrakites,” III.2093;
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http://www.iranica.com/articles/ot_grp5/ot_armeno_iran_rel_20041020.html

"Mamikonean,"

"Naxarar,"

"Smbat Bagratuni,"

"Tigran II"
SAINT NERSÉS LAMBRONAC'I ON THE PSALMS

Robert W. Thomson

The commentaries on biblical books by Saint Nersês of Lambron have not attracted as much attention as other writings of his voluminous output. Yet they form an integral part of his spiritual life as he juggled three tasks: his episcopal responsibilities at Tarsus and public duties in the larger sphere of Greek-Armenian contacts; a private life of meditation and study, which was always his primary aim; and the supervision of the monastery of Skewta. Indeed, non-biblical commentaries, like that on the Liturgy, had the primary purpose of encouraging a deeper understanding of the meaning of the ritual among monks; while his first original commentary, that on the Psalms, was the product of meditation and discussion with his spiritual father, as the colophon to the text explains.

Nersês was one of the more prolific medieval Armenian commentators. His initiation into the genre was a translation of

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1 A preliminary version of this paper was read at the Conference on Armenian Spirituality, held at the Bossey Ecumenical Institute in June 2001.
4 In the specifically biblical field his three major original commentaries are those on the Psalms (unpublished), the Twelve Minor Prophets (ed. A. Narinean, Սուրբ Արտաշես Արշենի եկեղեցական ձավաթիվ Համարարվելու [Commentary on the Twelve Holy Prophets], Constantinople: 1826), and “Solomon” (i.e., Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom and the Song, of which only the first two
the *Catena on the Catholic Epistles* that had been started by the scribe Grigor at Lambron, based on a copy of the Greek text brought from Constantinople by Barsel, abbot of the monastery of Drazark. But Grigor died, and Nerses completed the work and revised it "in accordance with grammatical style" as a memorial for those who had labored. The colophon with this information gives the year 612 [AD 1163] for the original translation, corrected by Nerses in 625 [AD 1176] when Nerses was twenty-three years old.5 Two years later he began work on

have been published; see Prince Max, Herzog von Sachsen, *Nerses von Lambron, Erzbischof von Tarsus: Erklärung der Sprichwörter Salomos*, 3 vols., Leipzig 1919, 1921, 1926; and idem, *Nerses von Lambron, Erzbischof von Tarsus: Erklärung des Versammlers*, Leipzig 1929). Nerses also completed and revised a translation of a Greek catena on the Catholic Epistles (see next note), and translated with significant adaptations the Greek *Commentary on Revelation* by Andreas of Caesarea, Ἱησοῦς Χριστός ἡμῶν Ἡσυχαιρητὴς Ἡράκλειον Μώσας [Commentary on the Revelation of the Holy Evangelist John], Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1855. An English translation and study of this last is in preparation by the present author; meanwhile see R.W. Thomson, "Saint Nerses of Lambron and the Book of Revelation," forthcoming in the *Festschrift* for Dickran Kouymjian, to be published by the Society for Armenian Studies.

The *Commentary on the Song of Songs* is not by Nerses in its entirety; the first part is taken from Hippolytus' commentary. Thus in MS 89 of Berlin, folios 155a-168 contain the work of Hippolytus, while the continuation by Nerses runs to f.183b; see N. Karamianz, *Verzeichnis der armenischen Handschriften zu Berlin*, Berlin: Asher, 1888. Cf. also MM4066. Curiously, I have not come across any manuscript that contains all four commentaries by Nerses. If commentaries on these four books are grouped together, usually Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Wisdom are those by Nerses, but that on Song is by Vardan Arevelci or Grigor Taferaci.

the Book of Psalms, completing his commentary in 1182 when he was in his twenty-ninth year.\(^6\)

Yet despite their interest as early works of Nersès and their possible premonitions of later scholarly and spiritual concerns, neither the *Commentary on the Catholic Epistles* nor that on the Psalms has been published. Perhaps it is not surprising that the former, a translation from a surviving original, has not attracted much attention. But a proper study of the Armenian text is clearly desirable, for some of Nersès’ translations are more of a free adaptation than a straight rendering, as in the case of the *Commentary on Revelation*. As for the *Commentary on the Psalms*, its neglect is remarkable.\(^7\) Admittedly, it is long. Potential editors have perhaps been deterred from tackling a text of 852 folios, written in two columns on a large format of 50 by 34 centimeters,\(^8\) and comparing it with a dozen other examples all written before the end of the fourteenth century.\(^9\)

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6 See the brief Life of Nersès by Samuël of Skewrā in Maşevosyan, 255-261, quoted at greater length below.

7 In 1976 the late Fr. Nersès Nersessian of the Mekhitarist Monastery at San Lazzaro told me that he was working on this commentary, but I have not seen any resulting publication. In a brief article eight years ago Fr. Serob Čamurlean pointed to the role of the Psalms in Armenian worship, especially in the monastic and educational spheres, and indicated that he intends to publish this first Armenian commentary on that book. He did not discuss any of Nersès’ sources or his mode of exegesis: S. Čamurlean, «Զամանաքային աշխարհի իրականության ձևակերպման» [A Brief Glance at Nersès of Lambron’s Commentary on the Book of Psalms], *Baznavē* 156 (1998), 60-64. I do not know what progress has been made.

8 See MM 1526, written in Yovhannavank in 1293-4. A colophon on f.856b indicates that it was copied from a manuscript written in 639 [AD 1190] in Skewrā. That manuscript is now in the Venice Mekhitarist collection as no. 1134. Written by Samuël Skewrcai, it is the earliest surviving exemplar of the Commentary, produced during Nersès’ own lifetime. A colophon on f.905 of MM 1526 indicates that Nersès died in 647 [AD 1198].

9 Listed by date these MSS are: [1190] Venice 1134; [1289-96] MM4834, extracts only, f.59a-139b; [1293-4] MM1526; [13th century] MM3796, MM4679 (to Ps 133 only); [1301-1303] MM1527 (used as the basis for the present remarks); [1302] MM6558; [1315] MM3778; [1359] MM8430; [13th-14th century] Venice 1136 (to Ps 131, continued later to Ps 147); [14th century] MM1176 (to Ps 41), MM3465, MM4671.
The purpose of the present article is very modest. Exactly thirty years ago the late Babgen Chukaszyan kindly provided me with a microfilm of the text of Psalm 118 in Matenadaran 1527, folios 545b to 608a. Various distractions, and the comments of Fr. Nersēssian,\(^{10}\) led me to put it aside for many years. But recently my interests have returned to Armenian traditions of biblical commentary. In addition, I have been prompted to write this article in a volume honoring Nina Garsoian by recollecting an earlier piece in the Festschrift offered to her in 1997.\(^{11}\) There I discussed the use of Psalm imagery in a number of Armenian authors down to Grigor Narekacı. This may serve as a continuation.

The study of Armenian exegetical literature is still relatively undeveloped, though recent initiatives such as the printing of major commentaries under the auspices of the Holy See of Ejmiacın have injected new vigor into the field.\(^{12}\) Here I shall have little to say about the influence of this commentary on later Armenian commentaries on the Psalms, such as that of Vardan Arewelci.\(^{13}\) By examining Nersēs' interpretations of certain verses, I hope to make a few comments on his approach to exegesis in general. It will also be interesting to compare his

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\(^{10}\) See note 7 above.


\(^{12}\) A valuable introduction is the bibliography of authors and their commentaries, with references to the manuscripts, in Eznik Eps. Petrosyan and A. Ter-Stepanyan, Մեկ հոկտեմբերի Մետրվերսիոն (Bibliography of Armenian Commentaries on the Holy Bible), Erevan: Hayastani Astvacaşněayin Ėnkerufyoun, 2002.

\(^{13}\) Vardan Arewelci, Մեկ հոկտեմբերի Մետրվերսիոն [Commentary on Psalms], Astrakhan: 1797. Cf. note 11, above.
thoughts with the interpretations in a few earlier commentators, Greek and Syriac. No earlier commentary on Psalms in Armenian has yet come to light, at least of the traditional verse by verse explanation. Some years ago the late Abp. Shahe Ajamian drew attention to an interesting *Prologue to the Psalms* attributed to Dawit Anyalf, also found in the *Girk Patčarac*. Unfortunately neither text has yet been published, so I am unable to take this into consideration.

Less clear is the possible existence of a commentary on the Psalms by the early eighth century scholar Steþannos of Siwnik. His later homonym, also bishop of Siwnik, the historian Steþannos Orbēlean, devotes several pages to a somewhat fabulous account of his predecessor’s life. He states that the earlier Steþannos wrote commentaries on Genesis, Exodus, Job, Ezekiel, and “many others”. Some have attributed one on the Psalms to Steþannos, though to the best of my knowledge this is not attested in any manuscript. More problematical are the works on the Psalms attributed to the late ninth century writer Hamam, best known for his *Commentary on Proverbs*. According to Asolik, in addition to his *Commentary on Proverbs*

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Hamam expounded Job 38.2, composed a commentary on grammar, and wrote a book on the blessings which are at the headings of the psalms. Vardan Arewelci adds the further information that Hamam not only wrote on the blessings at the headings of the psalms, but also produced a book called Anbiсsn. Since this is the first word of Psalm 118, a commentary on the longest of the psalms would seem to be indicated. But neither this nor the work on the headings of the psalms is attested in manuscripts, to the best of my knowledge.

Nonetheless, a fair amount of material exists for comparison. In Syriac there is the extensive commentary by Daniel of Salah written in the 540’s. The Armenian rendering was commissioned by Grigor II Vkayasiri at the end of the 11th century, and would thus have been available in the time of Nerses. Keropē Črakean has studied the characteristics of the Armenian rendering, but the text itself remains unpublished. In Greek we have, amongst a mass of patristic material, numerous commentaries on the Psalms (or some of them) by, or attributed to, Athanasius, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, and Theodoret. These authors are but a few of all those patristic writers who composed commentaries on the

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18 Asolik [Stepanos Tarawecel], Ἡμετέρα Βιογραφία [Universal History], ed. S. Malaksean, St. Petersburg: 1885, III. 3.
Psalter. But I have chosen them as being authors whose names, and whose works (or at least some of them), were known in Armenia. Before examining these in detail, however, let us turn to the circumstances in which Nersēs composed this commentary.

Here the brief “History of the Life of Nersēs”, written by Samuēl of Skewrā and included with the Commentary on the Psalms in Matenadaran 1526 (itself copied in 1294 at the monastery of Skewrā) is helpful. Nersēs had been dedicated as an infant at that monastery in the vicinity of Lambron. Samuēl describes the numerous travels of Nersēs and his perpetual concern for biblical study. From the age of twelve (i.e., 1165 AD) Nersēs was instructed there. In 1173 he went to study with the new Catholicos, Grigor IV Tlay, his maternal uncle. But a few years later he was at the hermitage of Salru, in the region of Tarsus, studying under the vardapet Yovhannēs.

Samuēl of Skewrā describes his life: “[Nersēs] spent much time in his own room, in reading, writing and in prayer. ...His spiritual father and tutor Yovhannēs, would sometimes sit beside him and query the meaning of the Psalms. And as he [Nersēs] elucidated it, [Yovhannēs] begged him to write this down and leave it for the assistance of future generations. Then, in accordance with the will of God and in obedience to his advisor, he began to write down an investigation [knunriwn] of the songs of the Psalter, at the time of his life of twenty-six years, in the year 627 [=1178]. And he finished it in his twenty-ninth year.”

Samuēl later adds that when Nersēs went to meet Frederick Barbarossa in 1190, his own copy of his Commentary on the Liturgy was stolen by brigands. Being worried about the possible loss of the Commentary on the Psalms, he had a new copy written by a certain Gēorg, which was finished by Samuēl

\[\text{22 See Matevosyan, 255-261.}\]
\[\text{23 Nersēs was born in 1153.}\]
that same year. Such losses of manuscripts were all too common. In the next century Vardan was robbed of his Chronicle by brigands; a relative saw it for sale in a market a couple of years later and recovered it for Vardan, who then added an update covering the past two years.  

Nersēs’ Commentary on the Psalms enjoyed great popularity. There are 33 copies in the Matenadaran, and numerous others elsewhere. The oldest dated one is Matenadaran 1526, in which the “Life of Nersēs” by Samuēl follows the text of the commentary. The manuscript itself is large, being 50 by 34 cm; the commentary covers the first 852 folios, written in elegant bolorgir in two columns. In what follows I am reliant solely on the long section of 60 folios dealing with Psalm 118 (f.548b to 608a),  

so conclusions about the general approach of Nersēs to his interpretation of the psalms remain tentative and provisional.

Nersēs begins by noting that in this psalm the investigation of them all is subsumed. Although not first in order, let no one suppose that it is not the first in importance [zawruiwn]. This psalm, which begins “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord,” [v.1] is concerned with the definition of virtue, says Nersēs. The race of mankind has gone astray, and is lethargic with regard to true blessedness and ignorant of the sweetness of spiritual virtue. Nersēs emphasizes that the truly blessed man is not the one who is pure, but the man who after having been stigmatized with the stain of sin turns from passion, and stops walking in the counsels of the impious and on the paths of sinners. Once they have heeded this message, men can progress in virtue; and virtue leads to blessedness. In human terms blessedness can be variously defined. The king, the rich man, and so on, may be said to be blessed, just as one uses the same term “light” for the glory of the sun, of the moon, or of the stars, though the forms of light are different. True blessedness, however, pertains to the spiritual world and is measured by the purity of one’s love for God.

24 See Vardan Arewelci, 161.
25 See page 26, above.
The second verse runs: "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart." What are these testimonies, or witnesses? Although God established witnesses to his existence in the features of the natural world, yet men did not recognize him. So he confirmed his divinity in the dramatic events of the Old Testament, the signs in Egypt or the appearances, as on Mount Sinai. Even so, men disclaimed these and worshipped idols. Here Nersès emphasizes the Incarnation, the purpose of which was to enable the thick and solid mind of man to rise to knowledge of God through relationship with the incarnate body of Christ. Thus the most significant witness is that of Christ to his Father. As for man seeking God with his whole heart, that means with his mind and free will.

This leads to the third verse: "Those who walk in his ways will work no iniquity [anawrēnutiwn], which could also mean impiety]." Nersès stresses that there are two ways, that of good and that of evil, and man has freewill to choose between them. How then does one stick to the path of the law, since our nature is unstable? The vital distinction here is between the iniquitous one [anawrēn] and the transgressor [yanēawor]. Although we are weak, we can repent despite our transgressions, and be purified from sin by the blood of Jesus. God commanded what he knew I could perform. Although my will is weak [hiwandot] and my impious limbs take me captive, yet by my pre-disposed will I can follow the commandments. Hence Nersès prays for strength to carry out in the body what he wills in the mind.

Several themes have already emerged which play a role in succeeding verses. Prayer for spiritual enlightenment is a constant refrain. In v. 18, "Open my eyes" refers to the eyes of the soul; this Nersès associates with the warnings of the Lord that we should remain awake. This means the avoidance of worldly concerns that bring us to death. For those weighed down by carousing, drunkenness and suchlike cannot look up and contemplate God's promises. God arouses us through contrition of the mind on experiencing the trials and bodily troubles which toss us about. This leads on to v. 19, "I am a stranger [panduwr] in the earth." Nersès here reflects on those exiled because of enemies or threats from a king. Although
exiles are in a foreign land, their thoughts remain in the homeland. Such is human nature in this world.

The emphasis in Nersēs on reading and studying the scriptures is due to the fact that the sayings testify to the divinity and humanity of Christ [v. 24]. From such testimonies one can recognize the glory and love of God and be stimulated to fulfill the righteousness of his commandments. Such spiritual realities are sometimes expressed by David through bodily terminology. In the phrase “With my lips I shall declare all the judgments of your mouth” [v. 13], “lips” means intellectual investigation. As lips give form to a word, so the spiritual activity of the soul takes into itself the words of God’s law. Nersēs compares Ps 33: 21, “He keeps all their bones,” or Sg 1:1, “Your breasts are better than wine,” both of which refer to the powers of the Spirit.

There are three parts to the human soul [v. 20]. Just as anger is the fruit of the passionate aspect, while reflection is that of the rational part, so yearning is the characteristic of the concupiscent aspect. This yearning of the blessed man is not for evil but for God’s judgments. In the first place a man has love for that naturally, then he comes to desire what is loved in order to complete it in himself. The Lord came in order to kindle this flame in our hearts, as he said: “I am come to send fire on the earth” [Lk 12:49]. This leads to the imitation of Christ, since God was revealed in the flesh. The testimonies of v. 31 are the knowledge that Christ died on the cross and rose from the tomb. “Put me not to shame” in the second part of the verse refers to the contrast between Christ’s crucifixion and our living luxuriously. While Christ is dead to the world, we live only for it—as if a king went on foot and a servant on horseback. For such conduct the angels despise us.

Nersēs frequently returns to the contrast between the paths of good and evil, of sin and of the commandments. He notes that David makes the psalm reflect the movement of the soul. Man is not always bold or always sluggish; these alternate, leading now to weakness and now to love of God. Just as the sun is sweet after clouds, even sweeter for the ascetic is the power of prayer after indolence [v. 8]. Our path follows the course of this life. We go from one city to the other, that is
from the womb to the tomb [yargandēn...i gerezmann], avoiding dangers from left and right as we pass over crags and precipices [v. 9]. In v. 29 Nersēs draws a parallel between the visitor to a city, who is unfamiliar with it and asks someone for directions, and those running towards the heavenly city, to whom Christ has shown the narrow road. That narrow road is humility and the denial of worldly glory. Just as one cannot read a book without applying all the powers of sight of one’s eyes, so we cannot keep to the path of God’s law if we do not put aside all thoughts of the outside world: “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” [v. 34]²⁶

Nersēs explains the meaning of “heart” in v. 10: “With my whole heart have I sought you.” This is the will of the mind. Here Nersēs introduces another parallel, that of separation across the breadth of the sea. One desires to see one’s friend, but has no boat or knowledge of navigation. This life is the sea, and the only way to cross it and reach harbor is on the ship of God’s commandments; for there is no other way of coming to God save by fulfilling his commandments.

Other verses in Psalm 118 elaborate on the main themes introduced by Nersēs at the beginning. Let us next look at some earlier commentators whose works would have been available to him, to see whether he is close to their interpretations. The number of patristic commentaries on the Psalms is rather large, though many are no longer extant in toto but are known from quotations in catenae.²⁷ Nor were all these commentaries available in Armenian—though of course Nersēs was well acquainted with Greek and could have read them in the original. Here I return to the authors mentioned at the beginning.

ATHANASIUS

The text of his Expositions on the Psalms in the Patrologia Graeca edition has been expanded with non-Athanasian

²⁶ Cf. Mt 6.21 and parallels.
²⁷ Full details in Rondeau, as n. 21 above.
material, but the original text is found in catenae. In the section on Psalm 118, not every verse is treated. But where Athanasius discusses the same text as Nersês, he approaches it differently. And even in the extracts from Athanasius included in the Palestinian Catena on Psalm 118, where the text is longer than in the Migne edition, there is no close parallel at all.

**BASIL**

Basil of Caesarea wrote homilies on selected psalms only, and these do not include Psalm 118. Whether Nersês was indebted to Basil for certain general ideas is a different matter. As for Psalm 118, it is clear that any direct dependence on Basil’s homilies can also be ruled out.

**GREGORY OF NYSSA**

Gregory wrote a *Commentary on the Titles of the Psalms*. This deals with the Psalter and its characteristics, but it is not a running commentary on the text of the psalms. This was not a direct source for Nersês.

**JOHN CHRYSTOSOTOM**

What survives of John’s *Expositions*, which is an authentic work as opposed to the *Spuria in Psalmos* printed in Migne

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directly after it, does not include Psalm 118.29 A close comparison is therefore not possible. But even the later, inauthentic text has no comparable material. The fragments surviving in Armenian, discussed by Akinean, are not adequate for any comparison with the interpretation of Psalm 118.30

CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

The published commentary is a later mixture of original material plus excerpts from many other authors.31 Cyril’s treatment of the psalms is selective, not every verse of each psalm being expounded. After Psalm 50 the commentary becomes progressively more sketchy, and for Psalm 118 only six verses [11, 40, 67, 96, 109, 120] are mentioned. However, no direct parallel with Nersês emerges.

THEODORET

A very popular commentary was that by Theodoret.32 His fortunes in Armenia, however, were overshadowed by his later reputation in anti-Antiochene circles. Although some of his works circulated in the early years of Armenian literary activity, even by the time Koriwn wrote his biography of Maštoč

29 PG 55.
31 See PG 69.
32 I have used the text in PG 80.
Theodoret was under a cloud. His *Commentary on the Psalms* was known, at least in extracts, but it passed under the name of Epiphanius of Cyprus. These extracts have been studied by Bernard Outtier. I do not know whether there exist in Armenian extracts from his text on Psalm 118. But a comparison with the surviving Greek text does reveal at least one interesting parallel.

Theodoret, like Nersès, begins by explaining that this psalm urges us on to virtue. The “way” of v. 1 is the course of this life; we must not stray to right or left in our passage from womb to tomb. Even if a commonplace, this phrase, applied by Nersès to v. 9, is not echoed by the other commentators. In v. 9 itself Theodoret refers to the instability of youth that needs a bridle and tamer, while Nersès merely emphasizes the dangers of the narrow path. However, no other such clear parallel between the two authors is found in the succeeding verses. Theodoret may emphasize the brevity of life, but he does not take up the theme of the “stranger” [*panduxt*] elaborated by Nersès in v. 19.

**Daniel of Salah**

My last author is the Syrian Daniel of Salah, whose enormous commentary, written in the 540’s, was rendered into Armenian in the time of Grigor Vkayasër. The Armenian text, alas, has not been published. It was studied by Keropë Ėrakean, who indicates that Nersès did use it. But unlike the approach of

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33 For these events see N.G. Garsoian, *L’église arménienne et le Grand Schisme d’Orient* (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 574, Subsidia 100), Leuven: Peeters, 1999, ch. II: “Les crises et la transformation du Ve siècle.”

Nersēs, Ėrakean notes that Daniel often diverges from the text of the Psalter to introduce a wide range of extraneous material, historical and allegorical. The original Syriac is now being edited by Dr. David Taylor of Oxford University, so it should be possible in the near future to compare more precisely the interpretations of Daniel and Nersēs. In response to my personal queries, Dr. Taylor informs me that the exegesis of Nersēs for the first verses of Psalm 118, at least, does not reflect the approach of Daniel. Ėrakean, on the other hand, does suggest that Nersēs knew Daniel's commentary. The subject needs further investigation.

Although some parallels may be discerned between Nersēs, the Greek author Theodoret, and perhaps the Syrian Daniel, it seems to me reasonably clear that Nersēs did not copy these closely, or compose his own commentary by drawing solely from previous authors. He was certainly familiar with a wide range of patristic exegesis. It would therefore not be surprising to find themes from early writers echoed in his twelfth century works. But they are likely to have been themes in Nersēs' memory from his extensive reading—for example, the image of being a "stranger" [panduxt] in this earthly life—rather than ideas copied directly from a written source as he composed his own commentary.

When composing this commentary Nersēs was concerned with the spiritual value of the Psalter. As Prince Max noted of the later Commentary on Proverbs, Nersēs is often seriously concerned to find the literal meaning of the text. He concentrates on moral issues and the role of the Spirit. An investigation of the text thus confirms what Samuēl of Skewrā said about its original composition: Nersēs was asked by his spiritual father Yovhannēs to elucidate the meaning of the psalms, and he began an investigation [kinnitus] which took

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35 See Bazmavēp 1968, 18.
three years to complete. This was an accompaniment to prayer and meditation, not a work of dogmatic theology or of polemical purpose. If Nersēs had a model, it seems to me that the extended reflection on the Psalter in Grigor of Narek’s *Matean Olbergutean*, especially the elegies 60 and 61, evinces a similar spiritual quest. Typological exegesis, namely the interpretation of the psalms in terms of allegorical parallels referring to Christ and the Church, was not his aim.
LETTER FROM JERUSALEM
TO THE ARMENIANS
by Grigor Bishop of the Arcrunis
(6th Century)\(^1\)

Translated and Annotated by
Abraham Terian

Regarding the Feast of the Presentation
of the Lord\(^2\)

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\(^1\) A critical text of the document, based on Jerusalem MSS 3152 (A), 71 (B), 1a (C), 154a (D), 764 (E=A), has been edited by N. Polarian [Bogharian]. [Letter from Jerusalem to the Armenians Regarding the Presentation of the Lord], Sion 38 (1964) 33-36. For a French translation, see Michel van Esbroeck, Barsabée de Jérusalem, sur le Christ et les Églises, (Patrologia Orientalis 41.2/187), Turnhout: Brepols, 1982, 164-167.

\(^2\) Arm. Tearnêndaraj is the feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple [Lk 2:22-39] and the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in keeping with the law of purification forty days after childbirth [Lk 12:1-8]. The feast is called Karasnordk [The Fortieth Day] in the Armenian version of the old Jerusalem Lectionary, which is the earliest of the extant lectionaries that preserve the local tradition with references to the various sacred sites where the respective services were held. See Athanase Renoux, “Un manuscrit du vieux lectionnaire arménien de Jérusalem (Cod. Jerus. arm. 121),” Le Muséeon 74 (1961) 361-385; 75 (1962) 385-398; idem, Le Codex arménien Jérusalem 121 (Patrologia Orientalis 35.1/162, 36.2 /168), Turnhout: Brepols, 1969, 1971; cf. idem (Charles Renoux), Le lectionnaire de Jérusalem en Arménie: Le Çaçoc. 1. Introduction et liste des manuscrits (Patrologia Orientalis 49.5/221), Turnhout: Brepols, 2004, 609. Renoux invites attention to the equivalent Latin designation of the feast as Quadragesimae, as in Egeria’s Peregrinatio (26), the journal of her pilgrimage to the sacred sites in ca. 381-384 (Le Codex arménien Jérusalem 121, 229 n. 1). See also John Wilkinson, Egeria’s Travels, 3rd ed. with corrections, Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 2002, 80-81, 147-148, and 175-194 on “The Old Armenian Lectionary”.

The authenticity of the Letter is attested in another letter possibly from the seventh or eighth century (traditionally attributed to Stepanos Bishop of Siwnik, d. 735). The author paraphrases the Letter of Grigor when arguing
In the days of Emperor Justinian [527-565], in the thirtieth year of his reign [556], there was peace in the city of Jerusalem and in all the churches of God; for bishops and priests for the received date of the feast as found in the old Jerusalem Lectionary, February 14, in his response to an anonymous bishop of Antioch, where the feast was celebrated on February 2, following a decree issued by Justinian in 542 solemnizing its observance in Constantinople on that day (Theophanes, Chronographia; [Patrologia Graeca 108], 487-488; for the text of the second letter, see Norayr Polarian [Bogharian], ed., Ṣḥf ṣf Ṣḥf [Book of Letters], Jerusalem: St. James Press, 1994, 494-514, esp. 499-501. Karapet Tēr-Mkertčian, ed., Ṣḥf ṣf Ṣḥf [Seal of Faith], Ejmiaçin: Mother See Press, 1914, cit-cit, questions the attribution of the letter to Stepanos.


Following MSS A and D; the chronology of the letter favors this reading. B has “thirty-second” and C, “thirty-second”. A reliable chronology is maintained throughout the letter, from 556-560: par. 1=556; par. 3=557; par. 4=558; par. 5=559; pars. 6-10=560. Curiously, the later paraphrase of the Letter (see the preceding note) has “For in the year 334, during the reign of Emperor Justinian...” The latter seems to date the document by the Sasanian era, beginning in A.D. 224, thus narrowing the discrepancy between the reading of MSS A/D and B. See also below, n. 15.
and orders of the holy Church were as though on fire, occupied in the administration of the Orthodox faith, both pilgrims and residents of Jerusalem. But Satan, the hater of goodness, contriving with his own, purposed to disrupt the luminous ordinances of the Church, which were ordained by the holy fathers and affirmed by the blessed Cyril [of Jerusalem].

[2] There was a malicious Jew of the same intent as the devil. He convinced the Emperor that it is necessary to observe [the feast of] the Presentation of the Lord on the fortieth day from the Nativity and not from the Epiphany. Persuaded by him, he wrote a letter to Jerusalem, to the Patriarch Eusto[chio]s and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that they

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4 Bishop of Jerusalem from ca. 349-386/7; author of the 19 (or 24) Catecheses delivered ca. 350/1 as Lenten instructions to the catechumens who were baptized on Holy Saturday. The sweeping allusion to the tradition of the Church fathers lacks canonical specificity. The name of Cyril is invoked simply to validate the antiquity of the established tradition as found in the old Jerusalem Lectionary (see below, nn. 6 and 19). On its attribution to Cyril in the Armenian tradition (cf. the attribution to James the Brother of the Lord, further below), see E. Bihain, "Une vie arménienne de saint Cyrille de Jérusalem," *Le Muséon* 76 (1963), 333-338.


6 That is, to observe the feast on February 2, forty days after the Occidental observance of the Nativity on December 25, instead of on February 14, forty days after the Epiphany (the day when the Nativity was observed in the Orient) on January 6. The local reckoning of the feast as of the Epiphany is stated repeatedly: in pars. 4 (twice), 5, 10, 11 and 13. In the last two paragraphs, the traditional day of observance is emphasized with apostolic authority, especially that of James, claimed for the old Jerusalem Lectionary (see below, n. 19).

7 The name appears twice in the document, as "Eustos" (here and in par. 4), apparently short for Eustochios. His turbulent and problematic years in office are variously given: usually 552-563 (first term) and 575-594 (second term). On the death of Patriarch Peter, Makarios II was elected as successor in October 552. Because of the latter's presumed Origenist views, Justinian
should change the holy day of the Presentation of the Lord to that [reckoned from] the Nativity, as of the twenty-fifth of the month of December, as they observe it incorrectly in other cities.  

would not confirm his first election, favoring Eustochios at the Synod of Constantinople (553), at which Origenism was condemned. Following some uneasy years, Eustochios was removed from office and Makarios restored (563-575; some place his death in 567/8). According to the chronology of the letter of Grigor, this may have happened earlier, in 559 (see further below, par. 5). Most general studies are unreliable in determining the duration of the patriarchal years in this period. See, e.g., Louis Bréhier, “[Jerusalem] from A.D. 71 to A.D. 1099,” in Charles G. Herbermann et al., eds., The Catholic Encyclopedia, 16 vols., New York: Encyclopedia Press, 1913-1914, 8:355-364, esp. 359. For a fairly reliable list of the Jerusalem Patriarchs with their years in office, see Giorgio Fedalio, “Lista vescovili del patriarcato di Gerusalemme I. Gerusalemme e Palestina prima,” Orientalia Christiana Periodica 49 (1983), 5-41, esp. 14-15. On the christological controversies of the time, see Lorenzo Perrone, La chiesa di Palestina e le controversie cristologiche: dal concilio di Efeso (431) al secondo concilio di Constantinopoli (553), Brescia: Paideia, 1980.


As for the Occidental celebration of the Nativity on December 25, in the Orient it was introduced into the churches of Constantinople and
[3] And when the Patriarch heard the Emperor’s decree he became very upset and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the whole city—one and all—went to the holy church, men and women, young men and virgins, the elderly and the youth. And they raised petitions to the Lord of All with sighs and sobbing, and they prayed to the most holy Theotokos and to all the saints for intercession and help on their behalf. And with one accord they made an oath to die for this cause rather than to violate the mandates and the tradition of the holy fathers. And they were thus armed by the Holy Spirit and became of one mind in their love to the Godhead. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem opposed the Emperor’s decree. And when the Emperor heard that they disobeyed the decree, he sent a certain duke to Jerusalem to compel them to observe the Presentation of the Lord with the Nativity.

[4] Even when the troops arrived in the city of Jerusalem, those [in the city] did not yield to the Emperor’s decree; rather, they lighted torches and candles and went before the Lord to the [the Church of] Saint Prokopios, to celebrate the feast

Antioch by the end of the 4th century; into the churches of Alexandria by the middle of the 5th century; while Jerusalem held to the date of January 6 until the death of Makarios in 567/8 (or 575). See Thomas J. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991, 137-141. The period of turmoil described in the letter is in keeping with the aftermath of this development, for the feast day of the Presentation is to be reckoned from the Nativity.

None other than the Great Church, the Basilica or the Martyrium to the east of the Anastasis within the Constantinian edifice known today as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The site is mentioned further below in the letter (par. 5). So also in the old Jerusalem Lectionary, where the site for the celebration of the feast is specified as “the Holy Martyrium”; see Renoux, *Le Codex arménien Jérusalem 121* (PO 36.2), 229 and n. 2; Wilkinson, *Egeria’s Travels*, 182. On the edifice, see Charles Coisnon, *The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem*, trans. by J.-P.B. and Claude Ross (Schweich Lectures 1972), New York: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1974. For more on the archaeological remains, see Virgilio C. Corbo, *Il Santo Sepolcro di Gerusalemme: aspetti archeologici dalle origini al periodo crociato*, 3 vols., Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1981-1982.

There is a corruption in the manuscripts, which have Prokops (D), Prokopisn (C), Prakops (A), and one remote variant episkoposn (B). The Church of St.
according to the Epiphany, even though they were prevented by the troops. But they preferred death over life. And while they were embroiled in this conflict, suddenly a sign was shown by the Lord; for in Hagia Sion, from the Christ-adorned column\(^{11}\) gushed forth water, from top to bottom. And when the ministers noticed, they announced [it] to all who were rushing there together to see the wonder which the Lord revealed to empower the Christ-loving assembly and to shame the opponents. And all were being anointed with the water and were glorifying God. When the duke and the troops witnessed this, they fell prostrate in Hagia Sion and kneeling before the sacred column asked for forgiveness from the Lord. And the people celebrated the holy

Prokopios was built probably early in the sixth century. Remains of it are still visible at Abu Tor (Jabal Deir Abu Tor), south of the Valley of Hinnom (see Revue Biblique 33 [1924], 616, n. 26).

Egeria makes no mention of the procession with lighted torches and candles, but says only that “On this day they assemble in the Anastasis...and things are done with the same solemnity as at the feast of Easter” (Peregrinatio 26; Wilkinson, Egeria's Travels, 147). However, the Roman matron Ikalia speaks of this custom at the time of Emperor Marcian (450-457); see Marinone, “Presentation in the Temple,” 709. Neither of the two women pilgrims specifies the site for the subsequent celebration of the feast. Renoux seems to be correct in surmising that “une procession à l’Anastasis”, about which the old Jerusalem Lectionary is silent, was held before the divine liturgy which, as on all dominical feast days, was celebrated at the Martyrium—as indicated in the old Jerusalem Lectionary (Le Codex arménien Jérusalem 121 [PO 36.2], 229 and n. 2).

\(^{11}\) This was the column believed to have been that of the flagellation of Jesus, brought from the nearby ruins of the house of Caiaphas and inserted into the portico of the Church of Hagia Sion, built by Theodosius I (379-395) and dedicated by the bishop of Jerusalem, John II (in office 387-419), around 394—a decade after Egeria's pilgrimage. She describes the veneration of this column at Sion by worshipers on the morning of Good Friday (37.1); cf. the earlier account by the anonymous pilgrim of Bordeaux: “One goes up Sion, and sees where the house of Caiaphas the priest was, and there still stands a column against which Christ was beaten with rods”; tr. Aubrey Stewart, Itinerary from Bordeaux to Jerusalem: The Bordeaux Pilgrim (333 A.D.) (Palestine Pilgrims’ Text Society 1, pt. 2), London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1887, §592. Jerome, writing in 404, describes the column as “holding up the porch of the church; it is stained with the Lord’s blood” (Ep. 108.9; cited by Wilkinson, Egeria's Travels, 231). For more on the Theodosian church, see Bargil Pixner, “Church of the Apostles Found on Mt. Zion,” Biblical Archaeology Review 16/3 (1990), 16-35, 60 (esp. 31, 34).
feast of the Presentation of the Lord in accordance with the Epiphany, to the glory of Christ. This miracle and mighty act occurred in the time of the Patriarch Eusto[chio]s.

[5] In the following year Makarios succeeded to the See, and again there was a brewing turmoil as the holy feast drew near. For again moved by the devil, the Emperor sent troops, twice as many, to have them celebrate the holy Presentation of the Lord in accordance with the Nativity and not in accordance with the Epiphany. When the troops along with the duke and other princes sent by the Emperor came to the Patriarch, wanting to impose the observance of the Presentation of the Lord in accordance with the Nativity as the Emperor had decreed, the inhabitants of Jerusalem fortified themselves with that same faith and one and all went together to the holy church and fell prostrate before the sacred and God-receiving altar. And lifting up their hands, outstretched, their tears streaming down to the floor, they wept and cried out, and again asked for help from the Lord, as when he had revealed his power before. And the crying and the restlessness of all the inhabitants of Jerusalem was immense, for they chose death, both men and women, even children, rather than celebrate the feast with [troubled] conscience. And no sound of worship was heard in the holy churches, but of weeping and crying. And the troops were armed at the entrance of the church, instilling fear. As for the people, they cared not for life but opted for death.

[6] When the Patriarch and the duke noticed the fervent and firm faith of Jerusalem and the utter disdain for death, they cried out and said: “Let restlessness and crying cease from among you; for we shall do as the Lord shall command.” And while they were puzzled, and Satan was rejoicing, elated with his own, the Lord showed his wondrous act. It happened when the bishop was offering the Eucharist. He saw, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, something indescribable radiating visibly, in the likeness of an angel, in the direction of holy

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12 According to the chronology of the letter, this was in 559. The second term of Makarios II in office is usually given as 563-575 (see above, n. 7).
13 The Great Church, the Basilica or the Martyrium (see above, n. 9).
Golgotha, in the direction of the entrance to the Lord’s [sepulchre], and he (i.e., the angel) reached as far as the second pillar of the sacred chapel and threw his right arm around it, and [behold] there was the right arm of the Lord nailed upon the pillar; and he disappeared. And he (i.e., the celebrant bishop) fell upon his face, and because of the great astonishment that followed, he arose and recounted the vision. And upon hearing it, they all glorified God for this indescribable wonder; how he strengthened the threatened people and blinded the hostile people.

[7] And while all were in this great amazement, another wonder appeared: the most holy Theotokos, the Virgin Mary, was depicted on that same pillar with the child Jesus in her lap and holding a crimson cross in his right hand; and a cross appeared on each of the other pillars. Everyone saw this wonder, the righteous and the sinners alike, on the twenty-ninth of the month of Mehekan (i.e., February), on Sunday, during the hour of the Divine Liturgy. And many pilgrims and those ailing were healed on that day; and this salutary miracle of healing happened to the Armenians first.

[8] For a woman from Mokk, named Solomē, who had been crippled for twenty-three years, drew near to the pillar, crawling; and the crowd stood by to see what would happen. As

14 No doubt the Anastasis is meant. On its architecture, see the summary in Wilkinson, *Egeria’s Travels*, 242-252.

15 The seventh month of the ancient Armenian calendar, beginning on February 7. Thus, the 29th of Mehekan falls on March 7, a Sunday as it was in 560. It is equally possible that the author is using a corresponding Armenian month-name while following the local Julian calendar. If so, it was February 29, a leap year, and it was a Sunday. Indeed, February 29 fell on a Sunday in 560, a cycle repeated every 28 years. In either case, and invariably, our document has 560 as the *terminus post quem*, and the context does not require the miracle to have taken place on the feast day, during the celebration of the feast of the Presentation. For a differing tabulation, resulting in 564 as the *terminus post quem*, and hence 565 as the year of Grigor’s writing, see van Esbroeck, *Barsabée de Jérusalem*, 167. Van Esbroeck’s retrograde calculation from the patriarchal years of Eustochios and Makarios II depends on admitting the base as granted.

16 A region in the district of Korduk (see above, n. 2).
she drew near to the pillar on which were the divine right hand and the holy Virgin with the child Jesus, with deep faith she embraced the pillar. Thereupon she stood upon her feet, [made] whole, and greeted everyone; and she went on to give thanks to God and to glorify God. And everyone saw the woman healed and in unison glorified Christ.

[9] And they brought the demon-possessed near to the pillar on which the image was, and they cried loudly and said: “Your lordship, Mary, why have you come to chase us?”[17] And being stricken right there, they quivered; and those within left them quickly with loathing. Then they stood up and saw the divine, holy right hand and the holy Virgin and Jesus. And they began to seal themselves with the sign of the holy cross; and others around no longer turned away from them but glorified God for these things. And all were blessing God for the mighty, wondrous acts that were revealed.

[10] And with fear and trembling they arose early to pray and to make petitions, from dawn through the day, giving thanks for the indescribable, wondrous acts and the gifts of Christ. For those who were demon-possessed were healed, the blind were illumined, the lame were made to walk, the deaf to hear, the paralyzed were made whole[18] and were glorifying God who revealed so much grace, as at his Epiphany and coming, and brought peace. And Jerusalem’s disquieting turmoil was lifted.

[11] Thus they observe the holy feast of the Presentation of the Lord in accordance with the Epiphany, in accordance with the writing of the Apostle James.[19] And those [once] in

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[17] Echoing Mk 1:24; Lk 4:34.
[19] MSS A and E (a duplicate of A) have a significant variant here: “in accordance with the preference of the Apostles.” James is presumably the Brother of the Lord, author of the canonical Epistle. However, the allusion, repeated further below (par. 13), is to the tradition behind the old Jerusalem Lectionary, believed to have been transmitted on the authority of the Apostles, and of James in particular (according to Cyril of Jerusalem). See also the letter wrongly attributed to Stȩfanos, in Bogharian, ed., Ῥηματα προς Στεφανον, 497-499.
opposition turned around to peace, and Jerusalem was in joy and in thankfulness to the glory of God.20

[12] For it is foreseen in prophecy that “Out of Sion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” [Is 2:3; cf. Mi 4:2]. And again, “For a spring shall gush forth from the house of the Lord and shall inundate the valley of lots,”21 [J 3:18], for from Jerusalem he shall distribute gifts to all nations.22

[13] I wrote this to caution those in Armenia, for I personally witnessed the mighty, wondrous acts which the Lord revealed. Especially that you may be cautious of those with evil intentions, who through deceptive words continue to stray from the Lectionary arranged by Saint James,23 who alter the dates24 and the feasts. As for you, abide in the very [faith] as you were taught till the coming of the Lord.25

[14] Now, those who observe the feast in sanctity of faith and righteousness, whatever they may ask from above shall be given them by the One who gives from above,26 through the intercession of the holy Theotokos and Always Virgin Mary and through the prayers of Simeon the Elder and Anna the Prophetess,27 that you may now come before him in purity and righteousness as on the day of his appearance,28 to inherit the

20 Evoking the peace indicated in the opening paragraph.
21 The Arm. [vičakac] favors neither the Gk. of the LXX, which has “sxoinōn” (lit., “of reeds”), nor the Hebrew of the MT, which has “the valley of Shittim”.
22 With these quotations the author is validating not only the apostolic tradition of Jerusalem but also his own writing from there.
23 See above, par. 11 and n. 19. Cf. Renoux, Le Codex arménien Jérusalem 121 (PO 36:2), 229 for the date, location of the services, and the readings (Pss 92 and 95 [LXX], Ga 3:24-29, and Lk 2:22-40).
24 Lit., “the letters”, i.e., the numeric letters indicating feast days of the month; cf. par. 2 and n. 8, above.
25 Echoing 2 Thes 2:15; Jas 5:7.
27 Echoing the Gospel reading for the feast, Lk 2:22-40.
28 Echoing Col 1:22; Jude 1:24.
promised blessings in Christ Jesus our Lord,\textsuperscript{29} to whom be glory always.\textsuperscript{30}

\begin{flushleft}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{29} Cf. Eph 5:3-5, etc.
\textsuperscript{30} The last two paragraphs suggest that the document is more of a homily than a letter; a literary form not uncommon in Early Christian literature since the Epistle to the Hebrews, a homily sent as a letter.
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JOHN OF TLKURAN
ON THE CREATION OF THE WORLD
(Stanzas 1-150)*

Translated by Michael E. Stone

John (Yovhannēs) came from the village of Tlkuran in the region of Aljnik in Armenia. He was Catholicos of Sis (1495-1535) and wrote a substantial corpus of lyric, religious and narrative poetry. The poem of which the first 150 stanzas are translated here, is a narrative of the six days of creation and of the lives of Adam and Eve and their descendants. It has been translated twice before, once by James Russell on the basis of a different text and once by the present writer.¹

We base our work on Bogharian’s edition, and our interpretation differs at many points from Russell’s. Our previous translation stressed the history of the traditions embedded in the poem and was provided with an extensive commentary studying those sources. The present translation, however, aspires rather to transmit in English a feeling of the literary quality and religious sentiment of the original.

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In the prologue the poem is characterized as a commentary on Genesis; the chief references to the biblical text are given in the notes.

**COMMENTARY ON GENESIS**

1. I am John, a humble soul, my name is Tulkuranči. I freely undertook to gather things memorable for me.

5. Here in brief form, I collected them, from Moses’ Genesis, Explained by Vardan vardapet, culled from the inspired Fathers.

**[THE BEGINNING]**

1

The Creator is beginning’s beginning; the Maker is eternal God. This he revealed to Moses too on Horeb—Sinaitic mount.

2

Assuredly, the gods are ridiculous, of which the idle tales chattered; Misled by many gods, they spoke foolish and improper things.

3

And they lie saying that created things—heaven and earth—are self-created. Because of that, in the cloud he revealed all this to the prophet.

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2 Thanks are expressed to Abraham Terian, who made a number of helpful suggestions.

3 Distinguished medieval Armenian scholar (ca. 1200-1271).

4 We have supplied this subtitle to bring this section into accord with the other sections of the work.
In the beginning God created$^6$ things not without time or date; God alone is without beginning, without quality and incomprehensible.

Earth was invisible;$^7$ there was no light yet; it was still not to be seen, And the water covered this earth; visible man not yet formed.

And that Scripture says it was unprepared$^8$—no ornament yet, and no plants, No trees, no mountains, no fields; no crawling and no swimming beings.

"Darkness" upon the deep$^9$ [means] the shadowy shade of elements. "The deep" is the waters' name, and the unfathomable depths.

The spirit of God was moving about,$^{10}$ bestowing grace on the efficacious waters;$^{11}$ It is unfitting that the Hebrews and Greeks say "wind".$^{12}$

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$^5$ I.e., to Moses on Sinai: that is, in Genesis.
$^6$ Gn 1:1
$^7$ Gn 1:2
$^8$ Gn 1:2
$^9$ Gn 1:2
$^{10}$ Gn 1:2
$^{11}$ Reference to the waters of baptism.
$^{12}$ In the Hebrew and Greek biblical texts, the word for "spirit" can also signify "wind".
"In the beginning God made"\textsuperscript{13} is a revelation of the increate Father,
And the distinct person of the Holy Spirit; Creator and of the same will as the Father.

\textbf{SUNDAY}

10
The "in the beginning" of creation is not known to us, the race of humans,
But the One who made [them] knows when they came into being or were made.

11
And it says,\textsuperscript{14} "God said, 'Let there be light,'\textsuperscript{15} and it was scattered";
And, moreover, the supremely good One testified that it is truly good.

12
By it, wonders became visible, ways and all works.
From the good it separates the evil and it shows forth the beautiful.\textsuperscript{16}

13
It would be improper and unfitting were there no light at all;
Glory to him who bestows good things, perpetually and inexhaustibly!

14
The Creator and increate Light made the beginning from light;
Evening and morning,\textsuperscript{17} and then the day is completed.

\textsuperscript{13} Gn 1:1
\textsuperscript{14} Variant reading. The edition has "here".
\textsuperscript{15} Gn 1:3
\textsuperscript{16} Variant reading is "the bad".
MONDAY

15 He told the waters to separate and the command was carried out;
The seas withdrew to the depths, and the springs flowed forth from there.

16 Higher than the firmament he built a further arch,
Not slender and not thick—even and singularly smooth.

17 He made the firmament and he set it as a division
Of the upper and lower waters; a point not close nor distant.

18 He made it flying, perpetually moving and not stopping.
He placed it as a vault for the luminaries, innumerable and countless.

19 And the second fiery heaven, dwelling of the incorporeal companies;
Threesome high priests, nine-fold companies and perpetual glorifiers.

20 Angels and archangels, dominions are our guardians,
Rulers, powers, lordships—an invincible host.

21 Seraphs and Cherubs and Thrones always royal,
Watchers, happy natures, servants of the Holy Trinity.

17 Gn 1:5
The third heaven’s inaccessible, where the divine Lord resides, Which Paul says that he saw, unutterable and ineffable.\textsuperscript{18}

Angels and heavens and light are creations of two natures, The ethereal and the fiery, unending and inexhaustible.

\textbf{TUESDAY}

And the dry land appeared,\textsuperscript{19} aridity—dampness’s seal; He said, “Let the earth bring forth\textsuperscript{20} trees and plants, vegetation.”

Fruit trees came into being, and flowers for adornment of men, For eating and satiety, as pleasure for the eyes.

\textbf{WEDNESDAY}

And on the fourth day, [for] the scattered and dilated light He made ethereal pitchers; he collected the light into vessels.

The clear one he gave to the sun and the middling damp to the moon; The other, thick one to the host of stars, both fixed and moving.

\textsuperscript{18} 2 Cor 12:2
\textsuperscript{19} Gn 1:9
\textsuperscript{20} Gn 1:11-12
28
By day and by night the sun is dominant,
When it sets, night falls; when it shines, there is daylight.

29
Darkness is not a reality, light is existent and very necessary;
When the light wanes, the shadows of the elements grow strong.

30
The sun goes in a circular motion, and the moon in a sliding
crawl;
The stars, both fixed and moving, run in jumps.

31
The sun is the source of light and the moon has two entries;
It receives light from the sun, or it’s a veil that opens and closes.

32
They are guides and measures, of both years and months,
Of hours and ages, of the orbits’ points of repose.

33
When the sun descends in Capricorn, we have winter and the
nadir’s point;
[When it descends into] the south, it is summer, the time of
ripeness of fruit.

THURSDAY

34
On the fifth day the Creator, the uncreated Maker,
Told the waters to give birth to great whales and swimming
things.\(^{21}\)

\(^{21}\) Gn 1:20-21
The marine dragon Leviathan came into being first of all; A type of Satan, he will be killed on the day of the Coming.\textsuperscript{22}

Unnumbered, countless whales and swimming things multiply in the waters; They have no care for their offspring; they always forget at birth.

Similarly also the birds of the air, those that live in the waters, Leave their eggs in the sea; the nestlings are hatched without care.

The earth produces cattle, beasts and winged birds,\textsuperscript{23} Amazing forms, that men wonder to see.

Flowers and medicinal roots relieve those in pain; But if eaten too much, become a cause of death.

Likewise the packs of wild beasts were not made to eat men; At the start they were obedient, under human dominion.

Before Adam sinned, they bore no hostile grudge; The leopard, the lion, wolf and bear, were at one with the sheep.

They ate the fruit of the trees, all the cattle and the deer; Beasts, reptiles and birds were friendly, loving after their kind.

\textsuperscript{22} Compare Rv 12 and 20:2.
\textsuperscript{23} Gn 1:24
43
The deer are the mountains' adornment and all the swarming things in the waters.
They are a comfort and encouragement for sailors and for travellers.

44
The yaralez24 and the centaur, the foul-mouthed chimera,
Some assert—some deny—their existence; men know not if they exist.25

45
In the depths of this world are devilish beasts with deadly breath;
When the Lord chastises us, their smell is fatal poison.

46
There is a sea around this world and its name is Andlandik;
The clouds draw water thence, and no person or ships cross it.

47
Everything which God made was created for men’s honor,
So that when man was created, he would find everything ready.

48
Just like a king, who lovingly treats with respect,
First adorns his house with all sorts of suitable goods.

24 A creature of Armenian legend.
25 Literally: “exist or not”.
FRIDAY^{26}

49
On the sixth day, the Father, compassionate lover of men,
Spoke with the Son, for nature, "Let us make Adam, like us!"^{27}

50
We are called the image of God,^{28} threefold [yet] single in
number,
For we are mind, word and spirit; threefold person and unitary
human.

51
And [we are] similar to him through intelligence's skill,
Knowledgeable and wise through grace, and immortal in spirit,
rational.

52
If the Father's person were alone, "Let us make" would be
inappropriate,
But his mere will would suffice for all beings to be created.

53
The Son was not uninformed of his [co]-essential^{29} Father's
intent;
He descends among us for our sake^{30} so we might become
knowers of all.

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^{26} It should be observed that in his recital of Friday, Տիկուրանի has re-ordered
the events of Genesis 1-2 conflating the two biblical accounts of the creation
of human beings. The order in his account is: the creation of humans, the
planting of Eden, the creation of Eve, the naming of the animals, the tree of
knowledge and, finally, the four rivers.
^{27} Gn 1:26
^{28} Gn 1:26
^{29} The Armenian literally means "essential", but in the context of Armenian
trinitarian thought, "co-essential" [եռակի] seems appropriate.
^{30} Note misprint.
54
To man were added seven blessings more than to all created beings,
For He made them through speech, but him with lordly honor.

55
"Let us make one like our image", 31 ruler of sensible beings,
For He took dust from the earth, and breath, 32 a spiritual gift.

56
Rational and intelligent, and an immortal, eternal spirit,
Builder, merchant, planter, and discoursor on everlasting Divinity.

57
God made the man Adam in His holy, lordly image,
Which, in the sixth eon, the Father's Son and Word put on through the Virgin.

58
And according to the image of the Spirit, 33 man is immortal spirit;
The Holy Spirit is unfathomable, and likewise the spirits of men.

59
He made the body first, and then the rational spirit,
Lest the created be eye-witness to their own creation.

60
He planted the Garden to the east, 34 and called it earthly Eden;
Adam is the name of earth, and Eden is translated the same.

31 Gn 1:26
32 Gn 2:7
33 Gn 1:26
34 Gn 2:8
On the third day he planted [Eden], together with the other growing trees. The former, [Scripture] calls God-planted; the latter, created only by speech.

In flavor and in diverse color, it [Eden] exceeded the trees of this world; Glory now and forever to the Bestower of boundless good things.

And he cast slumber upon the man, heaviness and deep sleep;\textsuperscript{35} He took one of his ribs, and fashioned the cause of birth.\textsuperscript{36}

He knew the man's transgression and did not wish to deliver [him] to death. God made the good; the serpent and Satan taught evil.

With the blessing they received a command to grow, to increase; Likewise also all crawling things—the ruler like that which rules not.

With priestly honor he called the names of the animals. But they\textsuperscript{37} were called "earthly creatures" by the Creator.

\textsuperscript{35} Gn 2:22  
\textsuperscript{36} Gn 2:21  
\textsuperscript{37} i.e., human beings.
“Earth” means “fear” and “world”—“of repentance”.
If you are [God-]fearing in this world, you remain without fear for ever.

The Garden is a place of trees, an orchard with fruitful flowers.
It is high above this earth: it is a six months’ journey.

The one called tree of knowledge, a tree of death and immortality,
Was planted because of the man and as a test of his love of God.

The gushing forth of the four rivers, provided to water the garden;
They were named Pison and Gihon, Tigris and Euphrates.

They water the Garden, for it is even, level;
The fruit is perfect, luminous, always green and does not drop.

The waters run down from the mountain and pass through valleys and openings;
They enter the cavities of the earth and run under mountains.

The Pison from mount Emawon, in the north east;
It comes to Indian Apĕršah, where the fine gold is.
That the lion-ants guard; and that gold grows.
It\textsuperscript{42} surrounds the southern region, and ends up in the Red Sea.

Indeed, the jewel called bdellium, a red spark, is a ruby;
It is found by night, for it burns and is not extinguished.

No-one can hide it, or conceal it in a measure.
The corundum is purple; yellow-black is the sapphire.

The Gihon is from mount Lusin,\textsuperscript{43} which rises from the south.\textsuperscript{44}
It traverses Ethiopia, and Egypt is fattened by it.

The Tigris issues from Hast\textsuperscript{en} canton, from the Olorian\textsuperscript{45} village;
It traverses Mesopotamia, over against Assyria.

Below Babylon it unites with the Euphrates;
With winding progress they enter the Persian Gulf.

The Euphrates rises from Karin,\textsuperscript{46} and from the two springs of Oskeank;
Many rivers run into it, many waters unite together.

\textsuperscript{42} I.e., the river Pison.
\textsuperscript{43} Or: moon mountain.
\textsuperscript{44} Gn 2:13
\textsuperscript{45} I.e., Olor or Ulor in the region of Hasteank, in Armenia.
\textsuperscript{46} Erzerum, in present-day Turkey.
81
God put man in the Garden, for they were created outside the Garden; From the Creator they received a command to work and to guard it.

82
To work is to take care, a guardian against the entry of deer, Or to be God-fearing—they received the commandment from the Creator.

83
God commanded man sweetly, with fatherly concern, "All the fruit of the Garden is enough for you to eat.

84
The fruit of knowledge is unripe, it is a cause of death for you." Adam and Eve were naked, without shame and heedless.

85
After sinning they recognized their nakedness, For sin brings repentance, if one knows how to confess.

86
Satan saw Adam adorned with lordly glory, And being grieved, laid a most heinous ambush.

87
Then he first deceived the serpent, and made [it] his dwelling. He promised it a gift, "I will make you my soldier."

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47 Gn 2:15
48 On deer, see stanza 42. In another manuscript we read "a guardian of the two entrances". Neither text is particularly lucid.
49 Gn 2:16
50 Gn 2:25
51 Gn 3:7
He saw Eve standing, apart and distant from Adam;
The serpent crawled, so they say; it became a suggestion to Eve.

Either with human speech, like wicked Balaam, Beor’s son,
Or like the demons who spoke to their ministrants with idols’
tongues.

It said, “Why do you not eat of all the fruits of this garden?”
For she did not know its plans: God alone knows the heart.

She said, “We eat all except for the tree of knowledge.”
It asked and learned from Eve, that that is the cause of death.

Again the serpent spoke to Eve the word of deceitful
destruction,
“He who brought it here ate [of it], and he became mighty
God.”

And that it (i.e., Scripture) says, “It seemed pleasing”—sin
always pleases the eyes—
So that she might boast to her husband of glory and great honor.

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52 Verse number 89 is lost by a simple error of enumeration in the manuscript.
The text continues with verse 90.
53 i.e., the tree of knowledge and its fruit.
54 A play on the Armenian word for God, which is popularly interpreted as
“He who brought here”; i.e., into being.
55 Gn 3:6
Eve ate in ignorance and Adam in the love for his wife; \textsuperscript{56} They were stripped of the ineffable light and were \textsuperscript{57} extremely miserable.

And they did seven evils, by which they were distanced from God. They destroyed the Lord's plan; they set the Deceiver's against it.

They believed God's word was a lie, and accepted the serpent's word; They remembered not the Good One's goodness, and were persuaded by the serpent.

They ate, \textsuperscript{58} they transgressed the commandment, they wished to become gods by theft; When God enquired they spoke impudently and improperly.

The woman whom he should have despised, cursed and censured, He reckoned better than the Garden and lordly glory.

He sought for one thief; alas, three were brought forth; They made excuses to God, and became destruction's children.

\textsuperscript{56} Does this imply a different motivation?  
\textsuperscript{57} Literally: "remained".  
\textsuperscript{58} Literally: "having eaten".
They were punished with seven punishments, according to the seven sins they did.\textsuperscript{59}
Therefore sweat and labor, work and earth were summoned as curses.\textsuperscript{60}

Sorrow, pangs of child-birth they received as curses from God.\textsuperscript{61}
They were stripped of grace and glory, and were cast outside the Garden.\textsuperscript{62}

They did not achieve divinity; by Death they were seized with death.
They had been heavens, they became clay; they had been light and became darkness.

They were to stay immortal; they were changed from life to death.
They were in glory and honor; they became like the non-rational beasts.

The Garden remained without heir, for no-one remained there.
Alas for what happened! Woe, for the great destruction of man!

If they had eaten without sin, and were blameless as concerns the divinity,
Or while there was contrition, they would not have been very blameworthy.

\textsuperscript{59} Literally: “the seven sins’ transgression”. Gn 3:17-19
\textsuperscript{60} Or: were called curses (Russell).
\textsuperscript{61} Gn 3:16
\textsuperscript{62} This makes a list of seven. Gn 3:23
Regretfully God took on mourning, for he was Lord and compassionate Father;
The fiery hosts took on mourning, all the angelic ranks.

Beasts took on mourning, reptiles and cattle, all birds,
For they saw their king. Woe and alas and great weeping!

If they had remained without sin, they would have multiplied in the Edenic Garden.
The Garden and earth would have been filled, and their assumption [would have been] like Enoch’s.

For though they fell through sin, they multiplied [while] still deteriorating.
As much as in the Garden of Eden, which is eternal and inexhaustible.

He knows the cause of the increase, he who made everything by speech.
Just like the rib from Adam, birth was without labor.

Man became distant from God, and God was still a compassionate Father;
He made a garment of skin and dressed Adam and Eve.

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63 Literally: “for”.
64 Humans would not have died, but have been assumed alive, as was Enoch.
65 Gn 3:21
The saying "to be like one of us" is not spite or envious grudge, 66
But the promise that in the future, the perfect Word will become man. 67

He expelled them, cast them out, and they dwelt opposite the Garden, 68
So that continually they might look at it for the reason of repentance.

The serpent deprived of wings [was] to crawl, eating dust, twisting, 69
For it made man into dust, and in its breast it held Satan.

Thirty years after the expulsion, they received a command to procreate;
They first bore the abominable Cain, the murderous child of destruction, 70

And then righteous Abel. When he was thirty years old,
He appointed him as priest and gave him leadership’s honor.

He said, “If you are 71 good, and always do justice,
Again will you enter the Garden, and remain immortal forever.”

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66 Gn 3:22
67 I.e., a promise of the Incarnation.
68 Gn 3:24
69 Gn 2:14
70 Compare stanza 100. Gn 4:1
71 Plural verbs throughout this stanza.
Adam instructed his sons to be prepared for love of God,
To offer a sacrificial portion to God the Bestower of goodness.

Abel offered a sacrifice, and it was acceptable to God.
Cain too made an offering, not a good one, and it was not pleasing.

Abel, the choicest of the lambs, with eager, willing intent,
But Cain, the most vile of the produce, useless, unfitting.

When God did not accept [it], he [=Cain] drew away from brotherly love;
He said, "He goes into the Garden, and I will remain outside."\(^{72}\)

Cain committed seven sins, and his punishments were of the same number:
The vile gift which he offered; and his envy instead of brotherhood;

The innocent blood that he spilt — a new, ungodly sin;
And he soiled the earth with the blood; he left his parents sad mourning;

The arrogant answer, "Am I a keeper?"\(^{73}\)
For the Lord asked him compassionately, for reason of penitence.

\(^{72}\) Literally, this line is in the present tense.
\(^{73}\) Gn 4:9
God said to Cain, "You remain permanently feeble." You wail, shake and quake, abominable to the race of man.

"You are leprous all over your body, and you will have no place of rest. Horns sprout on your head; 'Cain comes,' they will call out."

"And he who kills Cain, will suffer sevenfold seven punishments."
For all of Cain’s progeny perished in the Flood.

And Cain begat Enoch, and they were called sons of men; Enoch [begat] Gayiridad, and he, the wicked Mahaliel.

Mahaliel [begat] Methusaleh, seventh generation of Cain’s spawn. Lamech had two wives, nurses of evil sins.

Lamech spoke with his wives, "Overthrow the divine covenant. Have sex with the race of Seth, who were named 'Sons of the Lord'.”

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74 Gn 4:12
75 Gn 4:15
76 i.e., they were not killed by other men.
77 Gn 4:17-18
78 Gn 4:19
79 Gn 6:2
From Adda Ubal was born, he was a musician, a singer. And from Sela Tubal was born, who practised the craft of smithery.

They took paint and antimony, the women teachers of wickedness; They fell in with Seth’s race, and what they desired took place.

But Cain, weeping, said, “God, Creator, Master, Tell your beasts to grant me a day of death.”

This Lamech killed Cain—he was not Enoch’s grandson— And he confessed to his wives, so as not to suffer the punishment of Cain.

Let us return to the race of Seth. From Adam, [came] Eve, the first one; He had sixty sons and daughters, whose names are not revealed.

Adam, moreover, begat Seth, who was a comfort to his parents, And from Seth Enos was born, a good man, a root of goodness.

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80 Gn 4:21
81 Gn 4:22
82 There were two persons named Lamech: one in the Cainite line, who is mentioned here; and one in the Sethite line, Enoch’s grandson (Gn 5:26).
83 Gn 4:23
84 Or: she.
85 Gn 5:3