

INTRODUCTION

'A COUNTRY SWEEP BY CHILLY GUSTS OF FROSTY SNOWSTORMS'

It is true that we dwell within the boundaries of this northern country, which is swept by chilly gusts of frosty snowstorms and which had been frozen especially through the darkness of our spirits' former ignorance – a country where even after the dawn of the Evangelical light we had lingered for ages unreached by its rays. Yet, when the Sun of justice deigned to visit us from the heights through the valiant fortitude and the sufferings of the most blessed Gregory, the holy Enlightener and Christ's Confessor, it was with strokes of godly admonition and with miracles of divine wonderworking that he brought this people, and this kingdom of Armenia, from ignorance to the knowledge of the true God.

Catholicos Xaç'ik Aršaruni
to a Byzantine Metropolitan of Sebastia, *c.* 987.¹

It is not customary to place Armenia in the north.² For scholars of Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman civilisations Armenia lies in a remote East; however, since the Russian conquests of the Caucasus between 1783 and 1829, it has firmly occupied a place in the south of our mental map, beyond the Cauca-

¹ 'Պատասխանի թղթոյն մետրոպոլիտին Սեբաստիոյ, գրեալ հրամանաւ տեառն իյաչկայ Հայոց կարողիկոսի' (Answer to the Letter of the Metropolitan of Sebastia, Written at the Instruction of Lord Xaç'ik, Catholicos of Armenia), in *Book of Letters* (Jerusalem, 1994), pp. 580–616, here on pp. 581–582). This letter was composed by a secretary of Xaç'ik I Aršaruni (972/3–991/2) in response to the appeal to join the Church of the Empire. Stephen of Tarōn [Step'anos Asohik], a writer of the early eleventh century, who also reproduces this letter in his *History* (Step'anos Tarawneç'i Asohik, *Պատմութիւն տիեզերական* [*Universal History*], ed. G. Manukean, in *Մատենագիրք Հայոց* 15/2 [tenth century], [Antelias, 2012], chapter 21, pp. 770–800, here on p. 771), recounts the persecutions of the Armenians of Sebastia at the hands of this Metropolitan, which had preceded this epistolary exchange, as well as the Metropolitan's later unfortunate career in Bulgaria, *ibid.*, chapter 20, pp. 769–770; chapter 22, pp. 800–801.

² Cf. L. De Anna, *Il mito del Nord. Tradizioni classiche e medievali* (Naples, 1994); P. Kochanek, *Die Vorstellung vom Norden und der Eurozentrismus. Eine Auswertung der patristischen und mittelalterlichen Literatur* (Mainz, 2004).

sus, in ‘Transcaucasia’ (Закавказье). So it remains until today for Western observers. The closed frontier with Turkey makes Armenia the ultimate southern destination for a traveller crossing the Greater Caucasus. Yet ancient geographers, following Eratosthenes (end of the third – beginning of the second century BC), regarded the Taurus chain as a natural frontier between Northern and Southern Asia.³ Strabo (died *c.* 24 AD) comprised the Sasun and the Gordyaeon mountains (i.e. the Korduk’ chain which divides Armenia from Mesopotamia) within the Taurus and reckoned Armenians amongst the ‘Northern peoples’ (τὰ προσάρκτια ἔθνη) also on account of the ‘boreal’ climate of their mountainous homeland, elevated many hundred metres above the level of all surrounding regions.⁴ However, by setting the light of the divine revelation in contrast to the darkness of ‘this Northern country’ (Հիւսիսկան աշխարհ) Xaç’ik Aršaruni shares also in a *topos* regarding the North, which was spread not only amongst classical authors, but also in Christendom and in the Islamic world:⁵ tellingly, Sebastia (Turkish: Sivas), where Xaç’ik’s correspondent resided, lies at the latitude of Mount Ararat, the symbolic centre of Armenian civilisation, whereas Constantinople is situated even farther north than the residence of the Catholicos at Argina (Turkish: Ergine) or the Armenian capital of Ani. More than half a millennium before Xaç’ik, Agat’angelos narrated the deeds of the Armenian proto-martyrs, Hřip’simē and her companions, in 301: God, who revealed himself to Moses on Mount Horeb under the name of ‘I am’ (Ex. 3. 13–14), brings

³ A reconstruction of Eratosthenes’s Taurus may be found in E. H. Bunbury, *A History of Ancient Geography among the Greeks and Romans from the Earliest Ages till the Fall of the Roman Empire* I (second edition), (New York, 1959), p. 661, map 10; that of Strabo’s: *ibid.* II, p. 238, map 3.

⁴ Strabo, *Geography* 11.12.4-5; 11.1.4; J. Thornton, ‘Al di qua e al di là del Tauro: una nozione geografica da Alessandro Magno alla tarda antichità’, *Rivista di cultura classica e medioevale* 37/1 (1995), pp. 97–126, here on pp. 107–108; R. Syme, *Anatolica. Studies in Strabo* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 28–30, 48–49; see also M. E. Stone, ‘Biblical and Apocryphal Themes in Armenian Culture’, in *La littérature apocryphe chrétienne et les Écritures juives*, eds. R. Gounelle et al. (Lausanne, 2015), pp. 393–408, here on p. 401. On the role of the ‘northern’ climate in Armenia’s history, cf also in this volume: Study II, footnote 29, Study III, footnote 19, plates 1 and 3 (map).

⁵ A. Giardina, ‘Roma e il Caucaso’, in *Il Caucaso: Cerniera fra culture dal Mediterraneo alla Persia (secoli IV–VII)*, (Spoleto, 1996), pp. 85–141, here on pp. 87–88; see also: De Anna, *Il mito del Nord* (see footnote 2), pp. 36–37, 52–57, 112–113, 121; P. Davidson, *The Idea of North* (London, 2005), pp. 23, 27, 33.

the holy virgins to Armenia, so that 'My Name may be glorified before the heathens of the Northern regions' (Հիւսիսական կողմանք); by their witness, according to Agat'angelos, the virgins 'have made a road to these Northern regions'. Since God had first revealed his name in the land of Midian, Armenia is designed as a 'Northern land', even though both the writer and his protagonists reached Armenia from Rome which is farther north than the Armenian capital Vałaršapat where the virgins suffered martyrdom.⁶

The Journal of Eastern Christian Studies is a most appropriate site from which to appreciate Armenia's northern location, as claimed by Xaç'ik: looking down from the Armenian high plateau, Mesopotamia, Syria, the Holy Land and Arabia, Egypt, Nubia and Ethiopia are all situated in the south. When Xaç'ik's letter was dispatched from Argina to Sebastia, none knew yet that in about two years, in 988/9, Prince Volodimer (Vladimir) and his subjects would be baptised in Kiev. This would introduce a radical change into the representation of the North on the map of the Christian East.⁷

Long before the Armenians settled on the plateau in the course of the sixth century BC, the culture of that land had been durably influenced by Mesopotamia.⁸ This memory lingered in the minds of the Armenians: Moses of Khoren (eighth century or earlier), who would later be regarded as the 'Father of Armenian Historiography', links the origins of his people to the Biblical Togarmah (Torgom in Armenian), a grandson of Japheth, whose country was situated 'at the extremities of the North' (ծաղք Հիւսիսոյ) with

⁶ See R.W. Thomson, *Agathangelos. History of the Armenians* (Albany, 1976), pp. 180 (§§ 174–175), 282 (§§ 741–742), 471–472 (§§ 175, n. 1).

⁷ The Sermon 'On the Law and Grace', written in 1049–1050 by the future metropolitan of Kiev, Hilarion, describes the cathedral church of the Holy Wisdom, built in Kiev by Prince Jaroslav the Wise between c.1038–1048, in these terms: 'This church is marvellous and glorious amidst all the lands that surround [it], for no other [such church] is to be found anywhere in the entire North of the earth, from the East to the West' (Яже церкви дивна и славна всѣмъ окружннимъ странамъ, яко же ина не обрящется въ всемъ полунощии земнѣмъ ото вѣстока до запада); see 'Sermon on the Law and Grace', ed. A. M. Moldovan, in *Библиотека литературы древней Руси [Library of the Ancient Rus']* I, ed. D. S. Lixačev et al. (Peterburg, 1997), p. 50; on the river Dnieper (Borysthenes), on whose left bank Kiev would later be built, conceived in Greek antiquity as the border with the ultimate North, see Bunbury, *A History of Ancient Geography* I, p. 182–184; *Ibid.* II, p. 231–232, 262.

⁸ M. Salvini, *Geschichte und Kultur der Urartäer* (Darmstadt, 1995), pp. 19–20, 25–27, 36–37, 137, *passim*.

respect to the land of Israel (Gen. 10. 3; Ez. 38. 6). According to Moses, Torgom's son Hayk, the ancestor of the Armenians, refused to submit to the giant Bel (cf. Is. 46. 1; Jer. 50. 2; 51. 44), leaving Babylon with all his household for the land of Ararat, 'which is in the northern regions' (*որ է ի կողմանս Հիւսիսոյ*), then proceeding further 'to the northwest' (*ընդ արեւմուտս Հիւսիսոյ*), settling eventually on the plateau of Hark' (centred at Kop'; modern Turkish: Bulanik)⁹ northwest of Lake Van, 'in the cold of its freezing seasons' (*ի մէջ ցրտութեան սառնամանեաց*). Because Hayk had preferred independence in a harsh country to subservience to Bel in a mild climate, he was reproached by Bel's emissaries in wintry terms for 'the frozen coldness of his haughty character' (*ցրտութիւն սառուցեալ Հպարտացեալ բարուց*).¹⁰ In responding to the Byzantine appeal that the Armenians should adhere to the faith of the Empire, Xaç'ik was certainly emboldened by the example of Hayk who had sent back Bel's emissaries empty-handed. A mental map thus could impinge on a theological debate.

In Moses of Khoren's account, the birth of the Armenian nation commences, therefore, with an exodus which takes place in a northerly direction. Both the isolated position of the Armenian language and Armenia's remoteness from the main centres of ancient civilisation, as well as from the holy shrines of Christianity, impelled its writers to search for associations between their people's past and Biblical genealogy and geography. This approach influenced all the successive historiography of the Armenians, and in part also that of the Georgians. The book of Genesis enabled the Caucasian nations to situate themselves on the map of the ancient world and to graft their past onto the Biblical history of salvation.

As we have indicated above, the affiliation to the South was not only conceptual. The Aramaic/Syriac speaking lowland and the Armenian highland enjoyed continuous cultural contacts until the tragic events at the time of the First World War, which would put an end to the presence of Armenian

⁹ See plates 2 and 3 (map).

¹⁰ Movsēs Xorenac'i, *Պատմութիւն Հայոց (History of Armenia)* eds. M. Abelean et al. (Tbilisi, 1913), ch. 10–11, pp. 32–34; Thomson, *Moses Khorenats'i* (see footnote 6), p. 82 (n. 93); see also J.-P. Mahé, 'À la conquête du centre. Géographie et révélation dans le Caucase chrétien', in *Centre et périphérie: approches nouvelles des orientalistes*, eds. J.-M. Durand et al. (Paris, 2009), pp. 179–180.

and Syriac Christians to the south of Mount Ararat.¹¹ In the course of the second and third centuries, Christianity was introduced into the southern Armenian provinces, situated between the Upper Tigris and the Arsaniās (Turkish: Murat-çay), by Aramaic-speaking missionaries coming from Mesopotamia and Syria. The influence of the Syriac tradition of Edessa left a lasting stamp on the Armenian language and in its liturgy, theology and Church discipline; many terms of Syriac origin are still amongst the current words for everyday activities in Armenian.

At the beginning of the fourth century, Gregory the Illuminator's ministry opened the Araxes Valley and the Lesser Caucasus to the influence of the Christian tradition of Asia Minor. Gregory, who had reached Armenia from Cappadocia beyond the Anti-Taurus chain, had been regarded as the Illuminator of the North in the footsteps of Hrip'simē and her companions. In a letter dispatched to Armenia from the Armenian-Georgian borderland of Gugark' in the context of the doctrinal debate that set the Churches of both nations against each other at the beginning of the seventh century, the Armenian community of Gugark' claimed to abide by the same faith in which Gregory had instructed 'all the northern lands' (*ամենայն Հիւսիսային կողմանքն*). This designation was meant to stress that Gregory's apostolate had not been restricted only to the kingdom of Armenia but had extended beyond its frontiers, encompassing parts of Eastern Georgia and Aluania,¹² i. e. the lands adjoining the Greater Caucasus; ever since the end of the second millennium BC, this mountain chain had been universally recognised as the limit of the civilised world.¹³

¹¹ Cf. 'Les provinces transtigritaines (Persarménie)', in J.-M. Fiey, *Nisibe. Métropole syriaque orientale et ses suffragants des origines à nos jours* (Leuven, 1977), pp. 160–265, esp. pp. 160–161, 185–192.

¹² 'Պատասխանի թղթոյն տեանն Վրբանիսի հայալեզու աշխարհին Յուրտուայ' (Response from the Armenian-Speaking [population of the] Country of C'urtaw to Lord Vrt'anēs's Letter), sent from the Armenian-Georgian bilingual marchland (whose chief town, C'urtaw / Gač'iani, was situated half-way between the modern towns of Bolnisi and Marneuli) to Vrt'anēs the Scholar (604–607), the *locum tenens* of the Armenian Catholicos, admittedly at the beginning of 606, in *Book of Letters* (see footnote 1), p. 272; C. Toumanoff, *Studies in Christian Caucasian History* (Washington, 1963), p. 191; J.-P. Mahé, 'La rupture arméno-géorgienne au début du VII^e siècle et les réécritures historiographiques des IX^e – XI^e siècles', in *Il Caucaso: Cerniera fra culture* (see footnote 5), p. 946; see plate 3 (map).

¹³ D. Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity. A History of Colchis and Transcaucasian Iberia 550 B.C.–AD 562* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 9–13; A. Giardina, 'Roma e il Caucaso' (see footnote 5), pp. 85–86; Mahé, 'À la conquête du centre' (see footnote 10), pp. 180–183.

The attribute ‘northern’ was especially used with the hindsight of the ‘faith of Jerusalem’ (*Երուսաղեմի Հաւատն*) of which all three Caucasian nations claimed to be heirs.¹⁴ According to the letter that reached Armenia from Gugark’, the Armenians upheld the ‘Orthodox faith sown by the great St Gregory in these Caucasian lands’ (*զուղիղ Հաւատն, զոր մեծին սրբոյն Գրիգորի սերմանեալ էր յայս Կաւկասային կողմանս*).¹⁵ The Georgians also acknowledged their indebtedness to Gregory, as we learn from the Georgian Catholicos K’iron’s Response to the Armenian governor Smbat, written in the context of the same debate. In his letter, K’iron declared that ‘our fathers and yours have abided in accord since saint Gregory had defined the Orthodox faith; the same [faith] of Jerusalem, which he had learnt, he [also] affirmed, and that is the infallible faith of ours and of yours’.¹⁶

Gregory was also acknowledged as the Illuminator of the North because Syriac Mesopotamia remained an important cultural and religious reference for Armenia.¹⁷ A century after Gregory, Mesrop Maštoc’ (c.363–439) travelled in search of models for an Armenian alphabet to Amida (Diyarbakır), Edessa (Urfa) and Samosata (Samsat), ancient exegetical centres with linguistically mixed populations, where translation was a habit, an everyday activity. The city of Edessa in particular, where Armenians had their own school side by side with a school for Persians,¹⁸ as well as the adjacent Harran (Carrhae), a town where the events of Abraham’s life (cf. Gen. 11. 31; 12. 4) had been memorialised

¹⁴ B. Martin-Hisard, ‘Le christianisme et l’Église dans le monde géorgien’, in *Histoire du christianisme des origines à nos jours* 3, eds. J.-M. Mayeur et al. (Paris, 1998), pp. 1175, 1185–1186; On the importance of Jerusalem in the sacred topography of Armenia, see N. Garibian de Vartavan, *La Jérusalem nouvelle et les premiers sanctuaires chrétiens de l’Arménie: méthode pour l’étude de l’église comme Temple de Dieu* (Yerevan, 2009); on the associations between this topography and Bethlehem, see I. Dorfmann-Lazarev, ‘The Cave of the Nativity Revisited: Memory of the Primæval Beings in the Armenian *Lord’s Infancy* and Cognate Sources’, in *Mélanges Jean-Pierre Mahé*, Travaux et Mémoires 18, eds. A. Mardirossian et al. (Paris, 2014), pp. 285–334, here on pp. 293–295.

¹⁵ ‘Response from the Armenian-Speaking Country of C’urtaw’ (see footnote 12), p. 272.

¹⁶ ‘Պատասխանի ի Կիրովինէ առ տէր Սմբատ’ (K’iron’s Response to Lord Smbat) in *Ep’ist’oleta c’igni* [*Book of Letters*], Armenian text edited by Z. Aleksize (Tbilisi, 1968), pp. 77–78; Mahé, ‘La rupture arméno-géorgienne’ (see footnote 12), pp. 946–947 (n. 81).

¹⁷ P. Peeters, ‘Pour l’histoire des origines de l’alphabet arménien’, *REArm* 1^e série, 9 (1929), pp. 203–237.

¹⁸ N. Garsoïan, *L’Église arménienne et le grand schisme d’Orient* (Leuven, 1999), p. 69 (n. 97).

in a number of sanctuaries,¹⁹ represented a gateway to Biblical geography. It is under the influence of West-Syriac missionaries reaching Armenia from beyond the Sasun Mountains (the South-Eastern Taurus)²⁰ – from the regions of Nəp'ərkerē (Martyropolis; modern Turkish: Silvan) and of Tur-'Abdin²¹ – that in the middle of the sixth century the Armenian Church definitively adopted the non-Chalcedonian faith and came to be durably influenced by Julian of Halikarnassos's teaching about the incorruptibility of Christ's body. The reception of this faith in Armenia is one of the threads of the present volume.

Further south, our first direct witnesses to the presence of Armenians in the Holy City date from the middle of the fourth century, whereas in the course of the next century a fully organised Armenian community took root in Jerusalem, founding numerous monasteries and a school of translation.²² The existence of this colony was for Armenians a permanent reminder of their country's northern location.

After the Church of Georgia had embraced the faith of the Empire, occasioning in 608/609 a schism with the Church of Armenia, the Armenians regarded themselves as the only remaining heirs of Gregory's faith south of the rampart of the Greater Caucasus. This isolated position of Armenia on the northern periphery of the ancient Near East was acutely perceived by Osip Mandelštam (1891–1938) who travelled to Armenia in 1930 from

¹⁹ A. Mez, *Geschichte der Stadt Harrân in Mesopotamien bis zum Einfall der Araber* (Strassburg, 1892), pp. 12, 15; D. S. Rice, 'Medieval Harrân: Study on its Topography and Monuments. 1', *Anatolian Studies* 2 (1952), pp. 36–84, here on pp. 38, 42; P. Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d'Orient: histoire et géographie des origines à la conquête arabe* (Paris, 1985), pp. 352–353.

²⁰ See plate 3 (map).

²¹ E. Tēr-Minaseanc', *Հայոց եկեղեցու յարաբերութիւնները ասորւոց եկեղեցիների հետ Հայկական և ասորական աղբիւրների Համաձայն* [*Relationships Between the Armenian Church and the Syriac Churches according to Armenian and Syriac Sources*], second edition (Vagharshapat, 1908), pp. 93–95 (n. 1).

²² See: A. K. Sanjian, 'Anastas Vardapet's List of Armenian Monasteries in Seventh-Century Jerusalem', in *Le Muséon* 82 (1969), pp. 265–292; M. E. Stone, 'The New Armenian Inscriptions from Jerusalem', in *Armenian Perspectives. 10th Anniversary Conference of the Association Internationale des Études Arméniennes*, ed. N. Awde (Richmond, 1997), pp. 263–268; Id., 'The Oldest Armenian Pilgrim Inscription From Jerusalem', in *Sion* 71 (1997), pp. 340–350; M. E. Stone and D. Amit, 'A Reassessment of the Bird and Eustathius Mosaics', in *The Armenians in Jerusalem and the Holy Land*, eds. M. E. Stone et al. (Leuven, 2002), pp. 203–219.

Leningrad: ‘... Holding in your hands octagonal honeycombs, / you withstood, on the edge of the world, / all the morning of its days, swallowing tears. / And you turned away with shame and grief / From the bearded cities of the East ...’.²³

This volume consists of five studies that explore different facets of the enduring derivation of Armenian theology from the South. The Armenian Church adhered only to the first three Œcumenical Councils, accepting also the Formulary of Reunion of 433 which had represented a fragile reconciliation between the exegetical schools of Alexandria and Antioch.²⁴ At the Council convened at the patriarchal see of Duin in 553, the Church of Armenia confirmed its rejection of the Definition of Faith adopted by the Council of Chalcedon (451), thus detaching itself from succeeding developments in Byzantine theology. At the same time, it opened the door to new Christological queries characteristic of the non-Chalcedonian Churches and to independent liturgical developments. It also allowed local customs to take root within its ecclesiastical discipline. The official position of the Armenian Church regarding Christology was settled at a Council convened in 726 at Manazkert (Mantzikert; Tk. Malazgirt), a joint initiative of the Armenian Catholicos John of Ōjun (717–728) and the West Syrian Patriarch Athanasius III (724–740). The Council of Mantzikert should be regarded as an outstanding event in the history of theological ideas: not only because it repaired a schism that had lasted two centuries, but also because it was promoted by two Churches, and not by an overarching secular authority seeking political cohesion. Those two Churches needed theological unity in the face of subjection to the Caliphs.

The first study, ‘Christ’s “Being” and “Activity”’: Some Aspects of the Development of Armenian Christological Vocabulary from its Origins to the

²³ Держа в руках осьмигранные соты / Все утро дней на окраине мира / Ты простояла, глотая слезы. / И отвернулась со стыдом и скорбью / От городов бородатых Востока. The poem is dated 25 October 1930; see ‘Армения’ V, in O. Mandelštam, *Собрание сочинений в четырех томах (Collected Works in Four Volumes)*, eds. G. Struve et al. (Moscow, 1991), p. 152.

²⁴ See A. Ch. Renoux, *Hésychius de Jérusalem, Homélie sur Job* (Turnhout, 1983), pp. 11, 41, 109–10 as well as I. Dorfmann-Lazarev, *Arméniens et Byzantins à l’époque de Photius: deux débats théologiques après le Triomphe de l’orthodoxie* (Leuven, 2004), pp. 96–109.

Tenth Century', discusses the ways in which the evolution of Armenian theological terminology and phraseology reflected Mesopotamian, Syrian and Byzantine cultural influences, each implying a distinct theological orientation. In spite of the adoption by the Armenian Church of miaphysite Christology and the ensuing domination of the Alexandrine exegetical tradition in Armenia, Armenia never abandoned the Antiochene theological vocabulary, which had been introduced into the country by East-Syriac Christians during the first stage of its Christianisation. After the Islamic conquest, a composite theological language enabled Armenian authors to elaborate an autonomous theological synthesis and to stabilise the doctrinal positions of their Church.

There follow three studies (II–IV) that are concerned with the history of those regions of ancient Armenia located in, respectively, the northeast (Siwnik'), the northwest (Širak) and the south (Řštunik', later incorporated within the Vaspurakan). These chapters analyse how Armenian authors articulated their theology in the course of their exchanges with Byzantines, with particular reference to three crucial moments in Armenian history during the second half of the first millennium: the instauration of direct Islamic rule in the country at the turn of the seventh century (Study II); the recovery by Armenians of their political autonomy in the valley of the river Axurean (Turkish: Arpa-çay, which delineates the current Armenian-Turkish frontier) in the second half of the ninth century (Study III); and the establishment of an Armenian kingdom centred on Lake Van at the beginning of the tenth century (Study IV). The doctrinal divergences between Armenians and Byzantines show that the former remained indebted to the language, images and ideas received from the Syriac world. In their descriptions of the Incarnation and the Redemption, Armenian theologians were especially influenced by the poetical language of Ephrem of Nisibis (c.306–373) and by other early sources written or transmitted in Syriac.

One of the distinct concepts of Armenian theology was the 'incorruptibility' of Christ's Body. Divergent teachings regarding 'incorruptibility' had divided the miaphysite²⁵ Churches of Egypt, Syria and the Caucasus since

²⁵ I prefer to avoid the pejorative term 'monophysite' and, following a recently introduced scholarly style, speak of 'Miaphysites' with the reference to the formula *mia physis tou Theou Logou sesarkômenê*, 'One incarnate nature of God the Word', adopted by Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444). This formula has been used by the non-Chalcedonian Churches as the cornerstone of Christological orthodoxy. On the key concepts of Miaphysite

the beginning of the sixth century. The understanding of ‘incorruptibility’ that we encounter in the documents examined may not, however, be reduced to Julian of Halikarnassos’s doctrine. Indeed, nowhere in these sources do we find Julian’s idea about the transmission of Adam’s guilt through concupiscence and procreation, whereas Study IV shows that the Armenian Church held a more cheerful understanding of anthropology.²⁶ The terminology of ‘incorruptibility’ derived in fact from much more ancient patristic and Biblical sources, reflecting the soteriological thought developed during the earliest centuries of Christianity.

Study II, ‘Travels and Studies of Stephen of Siwnik’ (c.685–735): Redefining Armenian Orthodoxy under Islamic Rule’, analyses the activity and thought of a writer contemporary with the Council of Mantzikert (726). Stephen’s absence from this Council had often been taken as grounds for suspecting a conflict between him and the Council’s conveners, or that he was in disagreement with its doctrinal programme. Study III focuses on ‘The Armenian-Syrian-Byzantine Council of Širakawan, 862’, at which we find a West-Syriac writer, Nonnus of Nisibis (c.795–c.865). Nonnus had previously travelled several times to Armenia where he had enjoyed great prestige as a preacher, an apologist, an exegete and a confessor of faith. He may well have been one of the authors of the Canons promulgated by the Council of Širakawan. Nonnus’s protracted connections with Armenia indicate that the doctrinal accord between the Armenian and the West-Syriac Churches, achieved at the Council of Mantzikert, had remained in force.

Study IV, ‘Gagik Arcruni (908 – 943/44), un roi théologien. Le Christ selon sa « Lettre concernant la foi » et Adam dans le programme iconographique de l’église de la Sainte-Croix à Aht’amar’, analyses the letter that the first king of Vaspurakan addressed to the Patriarch of Constantinople; here he discusses the Christology of the Armenian Church. The ideas expressed in

Christology, see I. Dorfmann-Lazarev, ‘The Churches of the Near East and Their Missions From the Persian to the Turkish Conquest, 604–1071’, in *The Cambridge History of Christianity* III, eds. J. M. H. Smith et al. (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 69–70.

²⁶ Cf. R. Draguet, *Julien d’Halicarnasse et sa controverse avec Sévère d’Antioche sur l’incorruptibilité du corps du Christ* (Louvain, 1924), pp. 102–103, 119–124, 127–129, 134–135, 155–156, 222 ; see also Study II, footnote 120, and Study IV, footnote 38 sqq., in this volume.

Gagik's letter and its patristic references help us to contextualise the iconographic programme of the palatine church built by the King on the island of Ałt'amar in Lake Van and, especially, to elucidate the enigmatic representation of Adam found on its eastern façade. It has already been observed that the iconography of this monument, built in proximity to the boundary with the Syriac world, bears traces of early Syro-Palestinian art. The bond between the history of the first human being and the advent of the eschatological Saviour, as expressed in the programme of this church, can be interpreted, in particular, with recourse to the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch and the *Cave of Treasures*. As for the dedication of this church to the Holy Cross, through its reference to Golgotha and Jerusalem a thread was stretched between the island of Ałt'amar, remote from the ancient hearths of Christendom, and the navel of the earth.²⁷

The first four studies thus analyse the official Christology of the Armenian Church as expressed in technical language, doctrinal treatises, ecclesiastical correspondence, canons of Councils and the iconographic programme of a palatine church. The last one (Study V), 'Changing Colours and Forms: Theophanies in the Armenian *Script of the Lord's Infancy*', focuses, by contrast, on an apocryphal text whose status within the religious culture of Armenia cannot be easily assessed. Its nucleus, a text about the birth and the infancy of Jesus, was introduced into Armenia in 588 by missionaries of the Syriac Church of the East, whose proselytising activity in the country during the sixth century is corroborated by several sources.²⁸ Although after the Œcumenical Council of Ephesus (431) the Armenian Church had officially condemned the strict dyophysite doctrine of the Church of the East (pejoratively called 'Nestorian') and later even embraced strict Cyrilline Christology, this new theological orientation could not be implemented overnight across the entire territory of Armenia. The Church of the East was the best established and the most influential Christian community of the Persian

²⁷ Cf. Th. Gaster, *Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament* II (Gloucester, 1981), p. 428, § 113; Kochanek, *Die Vorstellung* (see footnote 2), pp. 27–33; see Study V, footnote 9, in this volume.

²⁸ 'Ուխտ միաբանութեան Հայոց աշխարհիս' (Covenant of Unity of the Country of Armenians), in *Գիրք թղթոց [Book of Letters]*, ed. N. Polarean (Jerusalem, 1994), pp. 200–201.

Empire, where it was also endowed with official status by the ‘King of Kings’ and was encouraged by him to detach Armenia from Byzantium. The relentless pressure of Persia and its main Church on Armenian affairs up until the fall of the Sasanian dynasty has been, according to N. Garsoïan, ‘most deliberately concealed by the sources and has until today been neglected in most of the studies’ dedicated to the history of Armenia.²⁹ At the end of the sixth century the Church of the East – which had chiefly been established in Upper and Middle Mesopotamia – was experiencing a phase of rapid expansion and was incorporating large numbers of converts from Zoroastrianism and from various polytheistic religions of Arabia, Central Asia and India. On the eve of the Muslim conquest its missions were by far the most widespread amongst all Christian Churches. ‘Monophysite’ Armenia was not outside the range of its ambitions.

Echoes of various religious traditions that had coexisted in Mesopotamia and elsewhere in the Near East during the first centuries of Christianity reached Armenia through the *Script of the Lord’s Infancy*. Thus, the starkly polemical undertone of some of the episodes found in this apocryphon reflects the tensions between Jews and Christians in Western Syria and in Antioch during the fourth century, the original setting in which the first collection of the deeds of the child Jesus had been composed. Other accounts of this text echo the apocryphal literature of Adam and Eve or have parallels in the eighth-century Syriac Chronicle edited in the monastery of Zuqnîn (situated north of Amida) and in the Arabic Gospel of Infancy, which also derives from Syriac originals. The fact that the ancient nucleus of the *Script of the Lord’s Infancy* was received and translated in Armenia witnesses to the enduring influence that the East-Syriac tradition could still exercise there a century and a half after the schism occasioned by the Council of Ephesus. The complex history of the transmission of this text and its rich manuscript tradition reflect the great popularity enjoyed in Armenia by those early Syriac apocryphal stories of the birth and the childhood of Christ. They also represent a trace of original theological reflection outside a formal ecclesiastical framework; no details survive of the circumstances or the process of the composition, revision and expansion of the *Script of the Lord’s Infancy*. It was never

²⁹ Garsoïan, *L’Église arménienne* (see footnote 18), pp. 401–409.

officially accepted by the Armenian Church, yet its esoteric motifs may be found in hymnography, book illumination and hagiography. This text, which contains carefully elaborated narratives with numerous learned references, represents a junction between ancient Christological ideas – rejected, abandoned or overlooked by official Churches – and the actual forms of Christian devotion in the Syriac world and, subsequently, in Armenia, first under Zoroastrian and, later, Islamic rule.

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Abstract

For scholars of Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman civilisations Armenia lies in a remote East, whereas since the Russian conquests of the Caucasus between 1783 and 1829, it has firmly occupied a place in the south of our mental map, beyond the Caucasus, in 'Transcaucasia' (Закавказье). Yet ancient geographers regarded the Taurus chain as a natural frontier between Northern and Southern Asia, reckoning the Armenians amongst the 'Northern peoples' also on account of the 'boreal' climate of their mountainous homeland. Also a number of Armenian writers placed Armenia in the north. So did Catholicos Xaç'ik Aršaruni in his letter to a Byzantine Metropolitan, dispatched c.987, in response to the Metropolitan's appeal to join the Church of the Empire, even though his correspondent resided farther north than Xaç'ik.

This geographical conception predates the classical authors and reflects ancient routes of cultural transmission across the Near East, which informed the culture of the Armenian high plateau for millennia. This memory lingered in the minds of Armenians: Moses of Khoren links the origins of his people to the Biblical Togarmah, a grandson of Japheth, whose country was situated 'at the extremities of the North' with respect to the land of Israel. According to Moses, Togarmah's son Hayk refused to submit to the giant Bel, leaving Babylon with all his household for the land of Ararat, 'which is in the northern regions', settling 'in the cold of the freezing seasons' of a plateau northwest of Lake Van. In responding to the Byzantine appeal that the Armenians should adhere to the faith of the Empire, Xaç'ik was certainly emboldened by the example of Hayk who had preferred independence in a harsh country to subservience to Bel in a mild climate and had sent back Bel's emissaries empty-handed. A mental map thus could impinge on theological debates.