

Biblical Figures in the Armenian Tradition

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1. The Role of the Bible in Armenian Culture

The Bible was the first book written in the Armenian alphabet after its invention, an event traditionally placed in 404 C.E. This is a highly meaningful expression of a basic fact of Armenian culture. St. Gregory the Illuminator officially converted Armenia to Christianity in 301 C.E. but the Armenians had inhabited the southern Caucasus for somewhat less than a millennium by then. Moreover, there had been Christians in Armenia for a considerable time prior to 301. Indeed, the Armenian Apostolic Church claims that the country was first evangelised by St. Thaddeus, who came from Edessa. A rival, later tradition connects the initial introduction of Christianity into Armenia with St. Bartholemew, from the West. These two traditions reflect the two major influences on Armenian Christianity, the Syriac influence from Mesopotamia to the south and east and the Greek influence from the Byzantine realm, from Cappadocia, and indeed partly from Constantinople itself, in the west.

For a century after King Tiridates II's conversion, the Armenians used Syriac and Greek as their liturgical and ecclesiastical languages. It is most likely that in the course of religious services the Bible was translated orally into the native, Indo-European vernacular, at the same time as it was read in Greek and Syriac. Just as these two influences, the Syriac and the Greek, both played a role in the spread of Armenian Christianity, Armenia's geographical position made it a bone of contention between the power centres of the Byzantine Empire on the West and the Persian Empire on the south, and Armenia was divided politically between these empires at various times, with the major part of the country being in the Persian sphere. Christianity in Persia, it should be recalled, was dominantly Syriac-speaking.

The Bible was first translated into Armenian from Syriac in the early 5th century, but within decades that translation was revised and reworked according to a Greek manuscript (Origenic for the Old Testament) sent by the Patriarch of Constantinople. Later, in the 7th

century, Persia was conquered in the course of the powerful initial wave of Moslem expansion and Armenia was under Arab rule for some centuries, before regaining a short-lived independence after the 10th century. The geo-political position of Armenia between the empires and between rival cultures has been a determining factor in its political, social and religious history. The anti-Chalcedonian position taken by the Armenian Church after 451 led to conflict with the Byzantines, while the Zoroastrian missionary policy of the zealous contemporary Sasanian rulers of Persia begat religious persecution and war. Paradoxically, these factors, together with the loss of political independence, make understandable the extraordinary literary efflorescence of the first decades of Armenian writing.

One need that was filled by the creation of the alphabet, the translation of the Bible and the creation of a literary corpus in Armenian, was the need for an Armenian identity and culture that could exist distinct from, and often in tension with, the major cultural and religious powers that were its neighbours and rulers. So, in telling the story of their famous battle in 451 against the Persian Yazdegerd II (reigned 438–457) who would have imposed Zoroastrianism on Armenia, the Armenians drew a pattern of resistance to religious oppression from the Books of Maccabees which inspired them.¹

Similarly, the author of the great, traditional narrative of Armenian origins, as told in the *History of the Armenians* attributed to Movsēs of Xorēn, combined biblical and older, native traditions, making the Armenians descendants of Noah through Japheth. With this biblical genealogy Movsēs combined another story about the Armenians having originated from Mesopotamia, whence they were chased by the giant Bel. Partisans of rival Armenian aristocratic families also claimed such biblicalizing genealogies.² Thus, the Old and New Testaments provided the Armenians with numerous paradigms of faithfulness and conduct, as well as the basis for their “Christianizing” or “biblicizing” of native traditions.

1 THOMSON, Maccabees, and see also STONE, Transmission.

2 TOUMANOFF, *Studies* 197–198, 201–202, 328–330, 333–334, 336, 359–360, 412, 414–415, 423, 425–427. Most famous are the Bagratunis, who claimed Davidic descent and the Amatunis who maintained their Jewish origin.

2. Development of Biblical Figures

It is impossible to speak exhaustively of biblical figures in the Armenian tradition in the course of a single paper, yet something should be said since our generation is coming to recognize reception-history as a legitimate part of the study of the Pseudepigrapha. After all, pseudepigraphical figures and traditions became part of the cultures of the diverse peoples who received them as an inheritance together with their legacy of biblical texts. Indeed, as was also the case in Europe, among Oriental Christians the biblical stories were often most widely known in forms that included pseudepigraphical traditions and materials.³ Among the Armenians such apocryphal traditions or embellishments were not strictly distinguished from the forms of the traditions found in the canonical biblical text, just as the line between Canon and “apocrypha” was not always clear.⁴

I will attempt to provide some insight into such pseudepigraphic texts and traditions, speaking only of select Old Testament personalities. At the outset, however, I should stress that there are works and traditions relating to many more Old Testament (I use this term advisedly) and New Testament figures than we can discuss here. Biblical figures play varied roles in Armenian religious thought: they figure in hagiography and in the liturgy, in homiletics and in theology, in religious painting and literature. In medieval poetry, for example, we can find not only narrative materials, which may incorporate elements drawn from pseudepigraphical embroidery of the biblical text, but also typological applications in which the mystery of Christ’s redemptive action is inferred from the Old Testament prototype.

I recently had the privilege of translating into English a group of epic poems on Adam and Eve several hundred pages long. This corpus is called *Adamgirk’* (Book of Adam) and was composed by Arak’el of Siwnik’, at the very start of the 15th century.⁵ In the preface to the longest recension of *Adamgirk’* the author explains his purpose as follows:

3 For example, in art, apocryphal elements were regularly included in canonical scenes: see N. STONE, *Elements*.

4 See the discussion in STONE, *Étude*.

5 M. E. STONE, *Adamgirk’*; see more generally M. E. STONE, *Adam Epic*.

The suitable words and appropriate tales concerning the first ones, Adam and Eve, compared by various analogies (drawn)

from Adam to Christ and

from Eve to the Mother of God and

from the serpent to Judas;

And concerning the rib by various analogies (drawn)

from Paradise to the Cross,

from that first creation to this second renewal

and other divers, needful, and necessary matters spoken poetically by Lord Arak'el of Siwnik' at the order of the great, universe-illuminating *vardapet* and rhetor Grigor (i. e., *Tat'ewac'i*), (being) 1,200 stanzas divided into 26 chapters.⁶

And indeed, in this recension Arak'el does employ an almost tiresome accumulation of ingenious analogical and typological interpretations. Yet, in other parts of his poems he retells the plain and lively narrative of the Genesis story, embroidering it with details and reading and interpreting it through a pseudepigraphical lens. In general, it cannot be overstressed how true it was that people knew what we might call the "embroidered Bible" and not the biblical text as such.

3. Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in Armenian

The point of departure for understanding this spectrum of perceptions of the Bible is perhaps to be found in those Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha that survived in Armenian, translated from other languages. They most likely established patterns that carried through as Armenian literature and thought developed.⁷ Let us examine some instances.

3.1 The Literature of Adam and Eve

I happen to have spent a fair amount of time on Adam and Eve in Armenian. The Primary Adam Book as it is called occurs in two different forms in Armenian. The first, little studied, is the Armenian trans-

⁶ M.E. STONE, *Adamgirk'* 85.

⁷ M.E. STONE, *Armenian Apocryphal Literature*, is a discussion of categories of translated and created apocrypha in Armenian.

lation of a manuscript of the *Greek Life of Adam and Eve (Apocalypse of Moses)*.⁸ It occurs in many copies and differs at quite numerous points from the known Greek manuscripts. It would be worth studying in its own right. The second form of the Primary Adam Book occurs in Armenian under the title *Penitence of Adam*. The three lacunose, late manuscripts known so far together supply us with a full text of the work, which closely resembles the Georgian version, and both the Armenian and Georgian versions are cognate with the Latin.⁹ This similarity is the more striking since PETTORELLI discovered the alternative forms of the Latin version that also seem to have underlain the Irish *Saltair na Rann* and other insular retellings of the Adam stories.¹⁰

In addition to the Primary Adam literature, in Armenian there is a great literature of retellings and elaborations of the story of Adam and Eve, numbering tens of works. Most of these were composed in Armenian, though some of them, such as the Death of Adam, (perhaps with some plausibility) claim to originate in Greek. So the title of that document says it comes from “The Paralipomena of the Greeks”, presumably some kind of Greek Palaea or other retelling of sacred history.¹¹ Many of the Armenian Adam texts tell the story of redemption, from Creation to Christ’s resurrection. Such are Adam, Eve and the Incarnation and the complex material organized along the axis of redemption that has guided the compiler of British Library Harl. 5459.¹² I have discussed other Adam texts in a number of publications, and many texts are listed in my History of the Literature of Adam and Eve.¹³ Here I would like to address one particular corpus of textual material relating to Adam’s contract with Satan, that penetrated the Armenian apocryphal Adam literature. This material originates before the early part of the 6th century, as is shown by its specific use of the term χειρόγραφον, and is widespread through the Caucasus (Armenia and Georgia), the Balkans (Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria), Russia

8 The Greek text has been most recently edited by TROMP, *Life*. On this Armenian translation see M. E. STONE, *History* 12–13.

9 M. E. STONE, *Penitence of Adam* 13–14; M. E. STONE, *History* 36–37; PETTORELLI, *Vie*; PETTORELLI, *Témoins*; PETTORELLI, *Essai*.

10 A summary of this material, before PETTORELLI’s discoveries, may be found in M. E. STONE, *Tradition*, especially 48–51. PETTORELLI’s newly discovered texts confirm the observations made there, providing them with a sound manuscript base: see note 9.

11 On this text see M. E. STONE, *Apocrypha Relating to Adam* 19: “But in the history of the Paralipomena of the Greeks it is to be found to be written thus concerning the protoplasts.”

12 M. E. STONE, *Manuscripts*.

13 M. E. STONE, *History* 101–110 and elsewhere.

and Greece as far south as Crete. It occurs in vulgar texts, folk-tales, popular songs and in frescos, but has penetrated neither patristic theological nor liturgical discourse. According to this legend, after Adam and Eve had been expelled from the Garden, Satan deceived them a second time and, as a result, they and their offspring are enslaved to Satan “until the unbegotten is born and the undying dies”. Adam and Eve play a major role in events, as does Satan, and God does through the angel Michael. The cheirograph, distinct from the one mentioned in Col 2:14, was a contract that Satan tricked Adam into signing and by the language of which, Satan was himself deceived. We do not have time here to explore this tale in detail, but it tells of a second fall taking place within the fallen state. It relates day-to-day tribulations of the human condition to this Satanic deception and not to the forefathers’ disobedience. Its import and spread are fine examples of the creativity evident in the reception history of the Pseudepigrapha.

Other elements of Adam tradition also developed in Armenian. Just as Adam’s bones were buried on Golgotha, a text called “Bones of Adam and Eve” relates the burial of Eve’s bones in the grotto in Bethlehem. Christ is Adam’s descendant and the New Adam, while Eve’s daughter is the Virgin Theotokos. Indeed, in some illuminations, Eve is shown present in the Nativity scene, often without a halo. The dual typology of Christ and the Theotokos is worked out from Adam and Eve.¹⁴ A further developed legend relates that God gave Adam and Eve a letter promising future redemption and that this was transmitted in the East until it reached the Magi, who brought it with them to Bethlehem.

A final point to be made here about the Armenian Adam and Eve material is the major role that these tales came to play in medieval Armenian literature. They were the subjects of many poems and even of a major epic composition (*Adamgirk’*). This feature of the *Nachleben* of the Primary Adam books cannot be analysed in full detail here, but it is worth remarking that the Adam and Eve Pseudepigrapha that developed in Armenian inspired medieval Armenian poetic creations, which incorporate such details.

14 M. E. STONE, *Bones*.

3.2 Enoch

One of the most prominent pseudepigraphic visionary authors in Judaism of the Second Temple period is Enoch. The figure of Enoch is ancient, probably going back to early Mesopotamian roots. He became widely revered and was regarded as the author of a number of pseudepigraphic apocalypses including the five documents that constitute the “Ethiopic” *Book of Enoch* as well as of the *Book of the Secrets of Enoch* or Slavonic Enoch. He also played a role in Jewish mystical literature of the 1st millennium C.E. Enoch, the pseudepigraphic visionary author, is generally viewed as a sapiential, scribal figure, connected with astronomy (so the number of years of his life according to Gen 5:24 was 365). He is often associated with the invention of writing.¹⁵ In Armenian, a work called *Vision of Enoch the Righteous* occurs. It shows little connection with the characteristics of Enoch in Second Temple Period Judaism.¹⁶ In this connection, the possible Iranian origin of some elements of *Questions of Ezra* should also be mentioned. A number of studies have shown Iranian influences in Armenian Christianity, such as in the poem, *Tat Yarut‘ean*, by Grigor Narekac‘i where a tradition about the pre-Christian deity Vahagn is merged with the tradition of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem. An Enoch work of unknown character is mentioned in the *List of Secret Books of the Jews* transmitted by the 13th-century savant, Mxit‘ar of Ayrivank’. Mxit‘ar’s list seems to be related to the so called “Synopsis” of Pseudo-Athanasius, but it too was composed after the Greek *Enoch* was no longer current.

There are, however, some indications that Enoch traditions similar in broad lines to those found in the Ethiopic and Slavonic Enoch apocalypses were known to the Armenians. One of the oldest works of Armenian literature is the *History of the Conversion of Armenia* written by Agathangelos, dated to the mid-5th century C.E. Within this history is embedded a large, 5th-century theological treatise entitled *The Teaching of St. Gregory* and it is here that we shall commence our pursuit of Armenian Enoch.¹⁷ The *The Teaching of St. Gregory* was purportedly pronounced by St. Gregory the Illuminator before King Tiridates II (3rd century). All Agathangelos says about Enoch is the following:

15 For a general overview of the Enoch figure, see VANDERKAM, Enoch. See also REEVES, Enoch.

16 YOVSĒP‘IANC‘, Books 378–386; ISSAVERDENS, Writings 235–247; SARGHISSIAN, Studies 133–134; unstudied copies occur in M0680 and in M1500 230v–231v.

17 THOMSON, Teaching.

§ 76 Thereafter, as after the sacrament of marriage and Enoch's begetting a son, you raised him to the ranks of the angels, to the lot of immortal joy.¹⁸

In this text, then, none of the distinctive Enoch traditions of *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* occurs. There is a very unusual tradition in Armenian that Enoch planted a garden, abstained from fruit and did not look at the heavens, because Adam and Eve had eaten fruit and sinned in these other respects. Various stories are woven about this theme which occurs in a group of medieval texts and is not related to any other presently known source.¹⁹

In Armenian texts, Enoch is sometimes confused with Enos.²⁰ Thus *Abel and other Pieces*, in M10200 says:

4.3 Enos, son of Seth, made the letter(s) and called the planets by name. 4.4 And he prophesied that this world would pass away twice, by water and by fire. And he made two stelae, of bronze and of clay, and he wrote upon them the name of the parts of creation which Adam had called. He said, "If it passes away by water, then the bronze (will) remain, and if by fire, then the fired clay." 4.5 And they were called true sons of God because God loved them, before they fornicated. 4.6 By this writing the vision of Enoch was preserved, he who was transferred to immortality.

Here four traditions are combined. The first is that Enos son of Seth, who, as happens here, is often confused with Enoch, invented writing and astronomy. This is in accordance with the tradition about Enoch known in the various Enoch texts, such as those in Ethiopic and Slavonic.²¹ The material written by Enos / Enoch was related to the prophecy of the two stelae, one of bronze and one of clay already found in Josephus. This writing, moreover, preserved the true names of the animals discovered by Adam²² and in it the "Vision of Enoch" (not the extant Armenian work) was preserved. This material in M10200 has a greater familiarity with the Enoch traditions of the type known to *Jubilees* and the older Enoch apocalypses than do early Armenian writings, and one wonders how this material could have come into Armenian. M10200 is a Miscellany copied in Erznka in 1624, 1634 and 1666.

18 Cf. Gen 5:22, 24.

19 See LIPSCOMB, Adam Literature 62–86; compare *Descendants of Enoch*, in: M. E. STONE, Apocrypha Relating to the Patriarchs 84–85.

20 See M. E. STONE, Apocrypha Relating to the Patriarchs 13, 23, 85; *History of the Forefathers* 34–45, in: M. E. STONE, Apocrypha Relating to the Patriarchs 13, etc. Compare *Latin Life of Adam and Eve* 49:1–50:3.

21 Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.68–71; *History of the Forefathers* 34–45, in: M. E. STONE, Apocrypha Relating to the Patriarchs 13, etc.

22 M. E. STONE, Adam's Naming.

It contains a rich collection of texts – stories, tales, and apocrypha and doubtless the fragments of which the above text is one were drawn from earlier, probably high medieval, sources. Certainly, the extant Armenian Enoch vision is not connected with this text. This subject is worthy of further investigation for it seems possible that such materials were introduced from a chronographic tradition and/or a biblical retelling of some sort, ultimately of Greek or Syriac origin.

4. Overview of Some Armenian Pseudepigrapha Dealing with Biblical Figures

We have dealt in some detail with Adam and Eve, and with Enoch. In the remainder of this presentation, I would like to do two things. First, I would like to give a brief overview of some Armenian apocrypha that are focused around biblical figures, both translated works and those created in Armenian, with some special thoughts about Joseph and King Solomon. Then, in the concluding section I would like to share with you some ideas about the potential significance of the *Nachleben* of the Pseudepigrapha as they developed in this tradition, which may provide some points for further consideration.

4.1 Joseph

Joseph and Asenath occurs in Armenian Bibles following Genesis. It is, itself followed often by the apparently Christian work often entitled *Life of Joseph*, which was composed in Syriac, and of which I confess to knowing little.²³ Together with *TPatr*, which also occurs in this position, these works form a triple pseudepigraphical expansion of Genesis. Sometimes *TPatr* also occurs in other contexts, particularly at the end of Deuteronomy, perhaps attracted by the Blessing of Moses. Joseph also occurs in the retellings of biblical stories, which I called “Biblical Paraphrases” in the 1970’s – long before the term became current in Qumran studies. These retellings occur in a number of different forms and contexts and cover biblical history from Genesis down to Christ. It is notable that works centring on Joseph form the heart of this group of

²³ SERJUNI, Vahangs; BURCHARD, *Asenethroman*, especially 560; ASSEMANUS, *Opera* 21–41 (non vidi); GEERARD, *Clavis* 389–390.

texts, for Joseph became a proto-type of Christ in Christian exegesis, as is made explicit by some of the remarks in *Testament of Joseph*.

Like the BM Harl. ms 5459, the Biblical Paraphrases form an expanded retelling of the *historia sacra*. The same scope, from Creation to Resurrection, occurs in a quite different form in a long work, extant in late manuscripts though its date of origin is uncertain, called *Adam, Eve and the Incarnation*.²⁴ This work, however, focuses intensely on Adam and Eve, passes through the body of the history of Israel in a few brief sections, and then takes up the detailed story again with the Incarnation of Christ. It ties the Old and New Testament parts of its narrative together, as does the Harleian manuscript, through the story of translation of the LXX, hinting at the death of Simeon, the old man of Luke 2:25–35, who is identified as one of the translators. Thus we find in Harl. 5459, fol. 37v–38r a Story of Isaiah, the last part of which reads, after introducing the verse “A virgin will conceive, etc.” (Isa 7:14) and the story of the seventy-two translators, as follows (V. 5.17–18):

One of them was Simeon, the old man. He reached that saying which Isaiah had written, “Behold a virgin will conceive, will bear a son and his name will be called Emmanuel” which is translated, “God is with us”. And he and his companions wrote it. And turning around they regretted it. And he said, “The saying is incredible: we have believed and regretted it.” (V. 5.18) But they do not believe and do not write the words. Thus they deleted them. From the great sadness they fell asleep, and they awoke from sleep and saw written in shining gold that which they had erased with black ink.

Simeon was told that he would not die until he saw Christ, and he was 364 years in the temple.

This exemplifies one of the motivations active in the treatment of Old Testament themes by the Armenian apocrypha. The revelation of scripture was regarded as a seamless whole, and the thread of the history of redemption was followed from Adam to Christ. Yet, in the course of pursuing this central thread, the Armenian tradition wove in many apocryphal details and numerous traditions, either received from Greek or Syriac sources, or embroidered by the Armenians themselves using the weave and pattern of the biblical and pseudepigraphical traditions. Another example is the Armenian developments of the theme, well known from the Primary Adam Books, of the Quest of Seth. Seth and Eve receive three branches from Michael and these

²⁴ See M. E. STONE, *Apocrypha Relating to Adam* 8–79.

are planted on Adam's grave, have a history in the Ark, in Moses' rod and in Solomon's temple and, eventually form the wood of the Cross. Another form of this tale serves as the foundation story of the famous Georgian (now Greek) Monastery of the Cross near the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. Other variants of it are known in the *Cave of Treasures* and the European legend of the Rood Tree that is appended to certain of the recensions of the Latin *Vitae Adae et Evae*.²⁵ One Armenian version does not include the element of the wood of the Cross.²⁶ Yet it is an open question whether this legend, reminiscent of many folklore themes, ever existed in a Jewish form.

Thus, I think I have made my point, that the history of redemption is one main motivation of the Armenian tellings and retellings of Old Testament themes, but in the course of this process, many pseudepigraphical and apocryphal narrative and descriptive elements are introduced.

4.2 King Solomon

There are other themes connected with Old Testament figures and incidents. Another example is the little studied Armenian apocrypha connected with King Solomon. In general, Solomon as a wise and magnificent king, magician, and lord of secret lore had a great history in Jewish, Christian and Moslem circles.²⁷ We cannot even start to trace this tradition here, but we would like to do three things. First, to provide a listing of Solomonic works extant in Armenian and some other languages; second, to give a brief list of works relating to Solomon that exist only in Armenian; third, to give some brief examples of the penetration of magical and theurgic Solomon traditions into Armenian literature, without any claim at inclusiveness.

Wisdom of Solomon is included in the Armenian Bible as part of the Canon. Other well-known Second Temple Solomonic works, notably *Psalms of Solomon*, are unknown in Armenian. Nor, for that matter,

²⁵ See NAGEL, Vie; PETTORELLI, Vie.

²⁶ M.E. STONE, Apocrypha Relating to the Patriarchs 2–13. On the pericope in the Primary Adam Books, there are many further remarks in M.E. STONE, Prediction. In general, see QUINN, Quest; QUINN, Solomon's Ship. See also NAPIER, History and note BAERT, Seth (non vidi).

²⁷ See for a conspectus: TORIJANO, Solomon. The subject is enormous and so is the bibliography. Much is listed in DiTOMMASO, Bibliography 851–899.

does *Testament of Solomon* exist.²⁸ In Armenian Bible manuscripts, on a couple of occasions, a work entitled *Concerning King Solomon* occurs.²⁹ In fact, a number of different forms of small Solomonic works go by this and related names, and also occur in non-Biblical manuscripts. They seem likely mostly to have been composed in Armenian but there is some evidence that one of them at least was translated. The published texts have been re-examined, but a goodly amount of unexamined manuscript material still exists.³⁰ The chief works are *From the Commentary on the Paralipomena*, *Concerning King Solomon* and *Concerning the Books of Solomon I–II*. Among the unpublished texts we note *Solomon and the Building of the Temple* though the possible relationship of this work to *Testament of Solomon* remains unclear.³¹

The chief immediate purpose of these small Solomonic works seems to have been to resolve two difficulties in the biblical stories relating to King Solomon. The first is that during his last years his conduct was unfitting to his status as wise King of Israel. Thus the apocryphal texts relate Solomon's repentance – his fall from proper conduct was merely temporary thus they resolve questions that may arise from his actions.³² The second difficulty is that the sacred text attributes more books to him than are in the Hebrew Bible. As part of his penitence, *Concerning King Solomon* 13 relates, he ordered "his grand chamberlain (. . .) to burn the multitude of his writings, which he had pronounced be the grace of the spirit." The chamberlain who did so saw an immeasurable light with a flame ascending to heaven. This

28 On this work, see ALEXANDER, *Incantations*; DULING, *Testament*. The most convenient edition of the Greek text remains McCOWN, *Testament*. See further the works by TORJIANO, *Solomon*, and by DITOMMASO, *Bibliography*. The number of studies of Solomonic works is enormous, as consultation of library catalogues will readily reveal, though nothing is devoted to the Armenian Solomon traditions.

29 This work was published by YOVSEP'IANC', *Books* 228–234, and translated by ISSAVERDENS, *Writings* 158–168; a new edition, translation and study were prepared by M. E. STONE, *Penitence of Solomon*. Since there are a number of small compositions associated with King Solomon, it is sometimes impossible to know from the title given by Ajamian exactly which one it is. See ADJÉMIAN (AJAMIAN), *Catalogue, Index, sub voce* (in Armenian).

30 See M. E. STONE, *Penitence of Solomon* 60–61. Further Solomonic texts and unpublished copies of known works also occur in M0043, 42v–43r; M1500 359v–361v; P128; OXLArm e 30 216–221, et alii (The system of sigla is that of the Association International des Études Arméniennes: see COULIE, *Répertoire*).

31 For bibliography concerning published Armenian Solomonic works, see notes 28 and 29, above. The Greek text of *Testament of Solomon* is most readily available in the edition of McCOWN, *Testament*.

32 On Rabbinic views of the same problem, see GINZBERG, *Legends* IV, 165–172 and VI, 281; LANGE, *Solomon*.

subject is dealt with in further detail in *Concerning the Books of Solomon II*.³³

A substantial wisdom work entitled *Questions of the Queen and the Answers of King Solomon* – a translation from Syriac – was long known only in Armenian and its surmised Syriac original has recently been discovered.³⁴ This is an elenctic work, rooted in the tradition of riddles associated with King Solomon. The developed literature of riddles connected with King Solomon is ancient, known already to Josephus Flavius, and it was widespread in the Middle Ages.³⁵ The Armenian text of *Questions of the Queen* was published by YOVSEP'IANC' and translated by ISSAVERDENS, and more copies exist than those known to the Venice Mekhitarist father at the end of the 19th century.

This document picks up another tradition about Solomon. In the texts discussed above, exegetical issues in the biblical story of Solomon are addressed, his many wives, their worship of idols and the mystery of his “lost” books. Questions of his righteousness or not, of his worthiness or unworthiness lie behind this material. It is not paralleled in other Solomon apocrypha. In *Questions of the Queen*, again a biblical tradition is taken up, but this time of his wisdom, exemplified by his ability to solve riddles, see 1 Kgs 10.

Little of the Armenian magical tradition has been published, but it seems certain that Solomon will figure there. In rabbinic sources, as also in 11QApotropaic Psalms, in Josephus and in the *Testament of Solomon*, not only is his power over the demons emphasized,³⁶ but often its connection with the building of the Temple. Works on King Solomon and the building of the Temple exist in Armenian as we have noted, but their character is still unknown.

The complex of Solomon traditions is just one instance of many clusters of texts and traditions around biblical figures that may be observed in Armenian literature and thought. Some of these are created in Armenian, others translated directly from Greek and Syriac and yet others drawn from Armenian adaptations of biblical themes and figures. The volume of apocryphal tradition tied to the Bible and the gushing fountain of pseudepigraphic writing make the Armenian

33 See M. E. STONE, *Penitence of Solomon* 70, for a translation of the passage.

34 YOVSEP'IANC', *Books* 229–232; ISSAVERDENS, *Writings* 163–166. The Syriac text was published by BROCK, *Queen*.

35 M. E. STONE, *Jewish Apocryphal Literature* 294 n. 36 (= M. E. STONE, *Selected Studies* 12 n. 36); JAMES, *Apocrypha* 52–53. See, for example, FAERBER, *Salomon*.

36 Compare already *Wisdom of Solomon* 7:20 (πνευμάτων βίας).

tradition a rich mine for ancient Jewish materials. In addition, one can observe in Armenian how these ancient traditions had a continued life, serving needs and functions of the Armenian people, their culture and religious sensibility.

In terms of function, of course, the connection of apocryphal traditions with the Bible, the central work of emerging Armenian literacy, provides an initial key. Some aspects of the tradition become very tightly bound together with the history of redemption from Adam to Christ. Thus, the tale of Adam's Contract with Satan, which was nullified at the Baptism or the Harrowing of Hell, and also, e.g., the tradition of the translation of the LXX tied to the old man Simeon (Luke 2), are subordinated to the overarching concern with the economy of salvation. Yet, other motives are also at work. The Armenian tradition knows retold and embroidered biblical tales, resembling in general character the Greek *Palaea* and Petrus Comestor's *Sacra Historia*. In these embroideries the Armenian tie to the biblical text is expressed and they often are the form in which the biblical narrative is known among the Armenians. This retold and remoulded narrative is also expressed in Armenian art and iconography.

A further dimension of this great interest in the biblical tales is the substantial learned literature associated with the Bible. Although it does not strictly fall within the category of "Pseudepigrapha", the learned literature enfolds many pseudepigraphic traditions and fragments. This learned tradition is often formulated in lists of differing contents: of the names of the matriarchs, of the kings of Israel, of the punishments of the Egyptians, of the *tabula gentium* and the 72 nations and languages, and so forth.³⁷ Equally, the Armenians preserved extensive material belonging to the category of the *Onomastica Sacra*, including some etymologies that are based on Hebrew but are, in fact, found in none of the extant onomastic lists published by WUTZ and others.³⁸

In summary, basically we may take two approaches towards the very rich corpus of biblically-associated literature and traditions in Armenian. On the one hand it may be seen as a potential mine for ancient traditions, works and compositions. On the other, it can (and, may I add should) be taken as a dimension of Armenian spiritual and artistic creativity, shedding light on the development of Armenian re-

³⁷ See for example, the material published by M.E. STONE, *Apocrypha Relating to Adam* 158–166, and this is a small sample of a very extensive literature.

³⁸ M.E. STONE, *Signs*, presents some of this material.

ligious sensibility and culture. These approaches are not exclusive of one another; indeed, truly to appreciate the biblical dimension of Armenian culture, we must see it both as a repository of ancient material and as a realm of creativity in its own right.

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The biblical Magi (/ˈmeɪdʒɪz/ or /ˈmɑːdʒɪz/; singular: magus), also referred to as the (Three) Wise Men or (Three) Kings, were mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew and Christian tradition as distinguished foreigners who visited Jesus after his birth, bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. They are regular figures in traditional accounts of the nativity celebrations of Christmas and are an important part of Christian tradition. Armenia is a land rich with cultural heritage and traditions. While some traditions date back thousands of years, like its people, they have evolved to befit the modern age and are still celebrated today. The culture of Armenia encompasses many elements that are based on the geography, language, faith, literature, architecture, dance, and music of the people. Christianity in Armenia. The Armenian dance heritage has been one of the oldest, richest and most varied in the Near East. From the fifth to the third millennia B.C., in the higher regions of Armenia there are rock paintings of scenes of country dancing. These dances were probably accompanied by certain kinds of songs or musical instruments.