

# “A CHILD IN ZION”: THE SCRIPTURAL FABRIC OF ARMENIAN COLOPHONS\*

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MANUSCRIPT COLOPHONS ENJOY a special status in the Armenian manuscript tradition. Unlike their Greek or Western counterparts, these ‘memorials’ (յիշատակարանք, *yišatakarak’*), as they are known in Armenian, are more often than not strikingly long, informative, and sophisticated.<sup>1</sup> Their singular nature has led scholars to recognize them as a distinct literary genre.<sup>2</sup> Because it developed in the context of a Christian literature profoundly shaped by the biblical corpus, including apocrypha,<sup>3</sup> this genre constitutes a rich mine of biblical quotations, themes, and references. As Robert Thomson writes, “for all Armenian authors the Bible was the literary resource *par excellence*”, and this is also true for the authors of colophons.<sup>4</sup> As such, colophons not only provide precious information about the manuscript tradition of the Armenian Bible,<sup>5</sup> but they also allow us to catch a glimpse of how the Bible was received among copyists, sponsors and handlers of books in medieval and early modern Armenia.

The aim of this essay is to provide a global overview of biblical materials found in Armenian colophons and to emphasize their significance as part of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the Bible in Armenia. Most authors of colophons come from humble backgrounds and possess limited literary skills; even professional copyists with a greater degree of training and competence seldom demonstrate literary talent comparable to that of ‘mainstream’ authors.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, Armenian colophons constitute a fasci-

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<sup>1</sup> The typical contents of an Armenian colophon have been described by (among others) Sanjian 1968, 187–188; Sanjian 1969, 7–9; Stone 1995, 465–466; Sirinian 2014, 75–76.

<sup>2</sup> Van Elverdinghe (forthcoming b).

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. Nersessian 2001, 45–48; Stone 2015, 406–408.

<sup>4</sup> Thomson, Howard-Johnston & Greenwood 1999, xlix. Cf. Sanjian 1969, 8.

<sup>5</sup> See mainly Cowe 1984.

<sup>6</sup> Sanjian 1968, 191–192; Sanjian 1969, xi; Gureghian 2010, 785.

nating and perhaps even unique witness to the reception of the Bible among the less literate or semi-literate ranks of a medieval Eastern Christian society.

Following a brief overview of the sources, this essay proceeds in two parts. In the first part, I propose a typology of biblical references in colophons, based on the literary processes involved. The second half of the paper examines the contexts in which such mentions appear and explores the different strategies and motivations at work when the author of a colophon engages with the Bible. Excerpts of colophons from different periods are translated and analyzed in order to illustrate each point.<sup>7</sup> Although the historical development of the art of writing colophons undoubtedly had an impact on the presence of biblical references, I am leaving it for future research to investigate the diachronic dimension of this phenomenon.

### 1. THE SOURCE MATERIAL AND ITS CHALLENGES

Armenian colophons have long been the subject of scholarly attention because of their wealth of unique information, through which they transcend the traditional notion of the colophon as a simple record of the completion of a book. About 14,500 colophons are available in print in collections arranged in chronological order, which is still far from an exhaustive corpus.<sup>8</sup> Texts not covered in these editions include all sixteenth-century colophons, colophons dated later than 1660 and many undated ones, as well as a fair number of colophons that either had not been recorded at the time of compiling the collections or were not deemed worthy of inclusion.

A major problem in using these editions for a study of biblical materials is their lack of scriptural indexes.<sup>9</sup> They as a rule also fail to indicate the presence of quotations altogether.<sup>10</sup> Even more problematic is the omission of segments of a purely devotional nature; these often appeared redundant and of little to no interest to the eyes of editors looking, above all, for historical data. The complete omission of most of such

<sup>7</sup> All translations are mine. I deliberately refrain from standardizing the ubiquitous spelling variants and grammatical ‘errors’ in these texts (see Atsalos 1991, 732–733 in defence of this approach). I therefore reproduce editions verbatim, and only correct (tacitly) obvious typos, add quotation marks where necessary and propose conjectures (inside parentheses) where the text is unclear.

<sup>8</sup> The most significant editions of Armenian colophons are listed in the first section of the bibliography at the end of this contribution.

<sup>9</sup> The fact that the majority of these editions were produced in Armenia during the Soviet era certainly contributed to this inattention to scriptural material. The book by Sanjian (1969), which presents historical excerpts from colophons in English translation, is a notable exception.

<sup>10</sup> Colophons dated to 1621–1660 are in a better position in this regard, but even for text from this period, the mark-up has been inconsistent.

devotional sections is an unfortunate state of affairs, which tends to present a distorted picture of what message the authors of colophons intended to deliver to future readers of the manuscript. While manuscript catalogues and secondary literature can help fill in some (but far from all) of the gaps in colophon collections, any efforts to produce comprehensive statistical data about biblical quotations remain vain for the moment.<sup>11</sup> For this reason, I adopt a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach and focus my attention on how and why the texts are cited, rather than which texts are cited.

## 2. DIFFERENT LEVELS OF RECEPTION

References to the Bible in colophons can be grouped in the following categories: quotations, allusions, mentions of manuscript contents, and what I call ‘echoes’. It is essential to review each of these intertextual modalities, with the help of concrete examples, in order to understand precisely how the authors of Armenian colophons made use of the Bible in their own texts.

### 2.1 Quotations

Examination of the material reveals that biblical quotations in colophons occur in various situations. The main conceptual differentiations are between literal and composite quotations on the one hand, and between direct and indirect quotations on the other.

Literal quotations are relatively abundant but do not always follow the *textus receptus*. In the absence of an *editio critica maior* of the Armenian Bible, it is generally difficult to say whether such discrepancies correspond to textual variants or are merely caused by imperfect memorization. Besides literal quotations, biblical references also appear as ‘composite citations.’<sup>12</sup> This phenomenon can be illustrated with the following quotation in a colophon of 1469, drawn from Jesus’s explanation of the parable of the fig tree:<sup>13</sup>

Stay watchful and say prayers at all times (Luke 21:36), that your flight be not in the winter neither on a Sabbath day (Matt 24:20).

<sup>11</sup> One hopes that newer editions, such as those in preparation at the Matenadaran – Mesrop Mash-tots Scientific Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts in Yerevan, will correct this deficiency.

<sup>12</sup> On composite citations, see the recent and fundamental work directed by S. Adams and S. Ehorn (2016–2018).

<sup>13</sup> *Armenian Colophons 1401–1500* II.365, ed. Xač’ikyan 1958, 339 (cod. SEB\* 31, ca. p. 531): Արթուն կացէք եւ յամենայն ժամ աղօթս արարէք, զի մի լիցի փախուսան ձեր ի ձմերանի եւ մի յաւոր շաբաթու: (*Art’un kac’ek’ ew yamenayn žam alôt’s ararëk’; zi mi lic’i p’axustn jer i jme’ani ew mi yawur šabat’u.*). Cf. the translation by Sanjian 1969, 296 (*Armenian Colophons 1301–1480* 1469.3). See also pp. 154–155 below on this colophon.

This is not a single quotation, but rather the blend of two partial verses from two different Gospels into one ‘combined citation.’<sup>14</sup> The conjunction զի (*zi*: “that, so that”), found at the end of the Lukan and at the beginning of the Matthaean extract, acts as a transition, as does the phrase “say prayers at all times” (յաւննայն ժամ աղօթս արարիք, *yamenayn žam alōt’s ararēk’*), which has a semantic equivalent in Matt 24:20 in the form of “stand in prayer” (յաղօթս կացէք, *yalōt’s kac’ēk’*). The quotation remains fairly faithful to the received text, only deleting “therefore” (այսուհետև, *aysuhetew*) from the first part and adding “day” (աւուր, *awur*) in the second part.

The authors of colophons also include conflated and condensed citations that are (next to combined citations) the two other types of composite citations according to Adams and Ehorn’s nomenclature.<sup>15</sup> A prime example of a citation resulting from both conflation and condensation is found in the following passage:<sup>16</sup>

[... the] wrath of God came upon the city of Sebastia, according to the word of the Lord, saying “Watch out, lest they [sc. your hearts] be burdened, and it [sc. that day] come upon you like a trap”; thus, like a trap, he [sc. Iazič’i]<sup>17</sup> laid siege to the great city of Sebastia.

The turn of phrase at the beginning of the quotation is drawn from Acts 13:40 (“watch out, lest”: զգոյշ կացէք, զուցէ, *zgoys’ kac’ēk’, guc’ē*), but the main part comes from Luke 21:34–35, where the same idea is expressed in a somewhat different manner: “watch out for yourselves, lest” (զգոյշ լիրուք անձանց, զուցէ, *zgoys’ leruk’ anjanc’, guc’ē*). This central part, however, with which the quotation from Acts is conflated, is itself the result of a radical condensation of the biblical text. The omission of the subjects of both verbs shows that the author takes his audience’s familiarity with the Gospel of Luke as a given and assumes they will have no trouble understanding an otherwise obfuscated text.

There are numerous other cases where a citation, whether marked or unmarked as such, shows a lesser degree of fidelity to the biblical text. Leaving the case of combined citations aside, one can in general explain this apparent freedom by the fact that the Bible was not always the direct source of a given quotation. Other writings that

<sup>14</sup> Adams & Ehorn 2018, 2–3; Adams & Ehorn 2016, 9 (with earlier bibliography); Stanley 2016, 204.

<sup>15</sup> Adams & Ehorn 2018, 3–5 and elsewhere in the same volume.

<sup>16</sup> *Armenian Colophons 1601–1660* I.138a, ed. Hakobyan & Hovhannissyan 1974, 112 (cod. J 420, ca. p. 630): [...] եղև աստուածասատ բարկութիւն ի վերայ քաղաքին Սեբաստիոյ ըստ բանի Տեառն որ ասէ. «Զգոյշ կացէք, զուցէ ծանրանայցեն, եւ յանկարծակի հասանիցէ ի վերայ ձեզ որպէս զորոգայթ»․ այսպէս իբրև զորոգայթ պաշարեաց զևնծ քաղաքն Սեբաստիայ: ([...] *elew astuacasast barkut’iwn i veray k’alak’in Sebastioy ast bani Tearn or ase; «Zgoys’ kac’ēk’, guc’ē canranayc’en, ew yankarcaki hasanic’ē i veray jez orpēs zorogayt’»*; *ayspēs ibrew zorogayt’ pašareac’ zmec k’alak’in Sebastiy.*). See also p. 154 below.

<sup>17</sup> I.e. Karayazıçlı Abdülhalim, a Celâlî rebel who created turmoil in Anatolia around 1600.

were more familiar to the scribe, such as liturgical or homiletic texts, may have acted as intermediaries. In an interesting colophon dated 1413, the owner of a lavish thirteenth-century manuscript, bishop *tēr* Kostəndin Vahkac'i (who would later become catholicos as Constantine VI), explains that he longed to find a truly exceptional Gospel book but was initially unable to locate one, despite travelling extensively to make enquiries about such a manuscript. He describes the decisive moment when God finally granted his desire in the following terms:<sup>18</sup>

But, taking refuge in God, day after day, I was begging God to grant my heart's request. And Christ God, who is generous in giving good things (cf. Matt 7:11) and aware of the secrets of man (cf. Rom 2:16), revealed this holy Gospel to us, according to the word of the Lord, that "He who seeks finds, and he who knocks, it shall be opened to him" (Matt 7:8; Luke 11:10); and also, that "Whatever you ask the Father with faith, in the name of the Son, he will give you" (cf. John 15:16 and 6:23); and also, that "He who comes to me, I will not cast him out" (John 6:37).

In this excerpt, near word-for-word quotations from the New Testament alternate with looser references. The immediate sources of these allusions are not biblical, but liturgical.<sup>19</sup> The phrase "[God who] is aware of the secrets of man" (գիտող է գաղտնեաց մարդկան, *gitol ē galtneac' mardkan*) derives directly from a stanza of a hymn sung on Whit Tuesday: "Thou who art aware of the secrets of man, Holy Spirit, Lord and life-giver, receive our prayers".<sup>20</sup> In the same way, the quotation "Whatever you ask the Father with faith, in the name of the Son, he will give you" (Զոր ինչ խնդրէք հաւատով, յանուն Որդոյ ի Հայրէ, տացի ձեզ, *Zor inc' xndrēk' hawatov, yanun Ordoy i Hawrē, tac'i jez*) is actually taken from the Liturgy of the Hours, where it is

<sup>18</sup> *Armenian Colophons 1401–1500* III.441a, ed. Xač'ikyan 1967, 329 (cod. J 251, f. 328<sup>v</sup>): Այլ ապախնելով յԱստուած ար ըստ արէ խնդրէի ի յԱստուծոյ, զի տացէ գաղտնեաց մարդկան, յայտնեաց գտորք Աւետարանս մեզ, ըստ բանին Տեառն, եթէ «Որ հայցէ՛ գտանէ՛ եւ որ բախէ՛ բաց[ց]ի նմայ»: Եւ այլ թէ «Զոր ինչ խնդրէք հաւատով, յանուն Որդոյ ի Հայրէ, տացի ձեզ»: Եւ այլ թէ «Որ գայ առ իս, ոչ հանից գնա արտարս»: (*Ayl apawinelov yAstuac awr əst awrē xndrēi i yAstucoy, zi tac'ē zxndruacs srti imoy. Ew K'ristos Astuac, or aiatn ē i turs bareac' ew gitol ē galtneac' mardkan, yajytneac' zsurb Awetarans mez, əst banin Teain, et'ē «Or hayc'ē: gtanē ew or baxē: bac'c'i nmay». Ew ayl t'ē «Zor inc' xndrēk' hawatov, yanun Ordoy i Hawrē, tac'i jez»; ew ayl t'ē «Or gay ar is, oč' hanic' zna artak's».*). The rest of the story is not as impressive: Kostəndin apparently found his Gospel book at a Syrian pawnbroker's and only managed to lay claim to it after some hard bargaining.

<sup>19</sup> This is a widespread situation that also applies to other genres and literatures of the medieval Eastern Christian world. An exemplary case is Greek hagiography, in which liturgical texts and praxis also constituted the main medium through which the Bible was cited and alluded to (see e.g. Krueger 2016).

<sup>20</sup> *Hymnal*, ed. T'asšecanc' 1875, 261; ed. Jerusalem 1936, 215: Որ գիտակղ եւ գաղտնեաց մարդկան Հոգիդ տորբբան Տէր եւ կենդանարար, ընկալ գաղաչանըս մեր (*Or gitakd es galtneac' mardkan Hogid surb, Tēr ew kendaranar, onkal zalač'anəs mer*).

part of a prayer said by the celebrant at None.<sup>21</sup> The first sentence of the colophon excerpt may have been influenced by another passage from the same prayer: “[...] and fulfil our request for our good, for we have taken refuge in you.”<sup>22</sup> Liturgical performance evidently plays a fundamental role here, given the fact that the copyist, like the overwhelming majority of his peers, was himself a cleric.

Finally, colophons frequently take on this mediating role themselves, when, for various reasons, a reference has attained a special degree of recognition among copyists. In such cases, the biblical reference evolves into a formula, or a stereotypical pattern, copied repeatedly across a number of texts—a development that biblical references share with other phraseological elements in colophons.<sup>23</sup>

A case in point is the formula “Blessed is he, who has a child in Zion and an acquaintance in Jerusalem!”<sup>24</sup> This phrase, a quotation of Isa 31:9b, is used mainly by copyists describing the sponsor or purchaser’s spiritual intentions for acquiring the book. It is included in a very large number of Armenian colophons, either with or without attribution to Isaiah or ‘the prophet’. When a citation gains currency as a formula, it becomes part and parcel of the mental universe of copyists, who then use it without necessarily having in mind its biblical context.<sup>25</sup> The independent circulation that such a formula can acquire is neatly illustrated when one copyist mistakenly attributes it to Solomon: such an error obviously excludes first-hand knowledge of the verse in its original context.<sup>26</sup>

## 2.2 *Allusions*

Allusions differ from citations in that the biblical source is not textually present in the colophon. Instead, it is merely hinted at or reformulated in such a way that it is not immediately recognizable. Some biblical allusions in colophons exhibit a high degree of referential complexity. Let us consider, for example, this excerpt from a colophon dated to 1201:<sup>27</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Breviary*, ed. Jerusalem 1955, 417. The standard text has խնդրիցեք (*xndric’ek’*, subjunctive) instead of խնդրեք (*xndrēk’*, indicative).

<sup>22</sup> *Breviary*, ed. Jerusalem 1955, 417: [...] եւ կատարեալս ի բարիս զխնդրուածս մեր՛ զի ի քեզ ենք ապաւինեալ: ([...] *ew katarea i baris zxndruacs mer: zi i k’ez enk’ apawineal.*).

<sup>23</sup> Van Elverdinghe (forthcoming a). See also a case study in Van Elverdinghe 2017–2018.

<sup>24</sup> *Bible*, ed. Zōhrapean 1805, III:374: Երանի՛ որ ունիցի [կամ՛ ունի] զաւակ ի Սիոն եւ ընտանեակ [կամ՛ ընտանի] յԵրուսաղէմ (*Erani’ or unic’i [vel uni] zawak i Sion ew antaneak [vel antani] yErusalēm.*).

<sup>25</sup> About this process, see Van Elverdinghe (forthcoming a) as well as Reynhout 2006, I:313–316.

<sup>26</sup> *Armenian Colophons 1601–1660* III.921g, ed. Hakobyan 1984, 602 (cod. M 3647, f. 343<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>27</sup> *Armenian Colophons 1201–1300* 1a, ed. Mat’evosyan 1984, 12–13 (cod. M 10359, f. 306<sup>r-v</sup>): [...] մարմնատր ծննդեանն եւ մկրտութեան եւ ամենայն տնարիմական տնտեսութեան, զոր յերկրի կատարեաց Աստուած բանն [...] յաղագս աստուածագար սբանչելեացն, զոր յերկրի հրաշագործեալ բանն Աստուծոյ իրող միացեալ եւ անորոշ աստուածախառն մարմնովն զկուրաց տեսանէ, կաղաց գնալ,

[...] the incarnate birth, [the] baptism and [the] whole divine economy that God the Word (cf. John 1:1) accomplished on earth [...] for the purpose of the miracles of divine strength, which the Word of God performed prodigiously on earth, becoming one through itself and its flesh (cf. John 1:14), joined with God in an indivisible manner: [he caused] the blind to see, the lame to walk, the lepers to be cleansed (cf. Matt 11:5 and Luke 7:22), [and] the paralytics to gain strength (cf. Matt 4:24), [he] raised the dead (cf. John 5:21), cast out devils (cf. Matt 4:24), walked on the sea (cf. Matt 14:25–26; Mark 6:48–49; John 6:19), and, in addition, [performed all kinds of] works of divine power. By preaching [these] manifestly unto the whole world (cf. Acts 1:8), and by casting out the darkness of idolatry, they [sc. the Apostles] spread the light (cf. Acts 26:18) of the Trinity in the souls of mankind [...].

This passage, taken from a very long and elaborate period, alludes to the New Testament narrative on three different levels. First, it references various miracles by Jesus as related in different passages in the Gospels, part of which is already summed up by Jesus in his reply to the question of John the Baptist (Matt 11:5; Luke 7:22), and unifies them into a single narrative string. Second, it refers to Matt 10:8, where Jesus bids his disciples to perform the same miracles, using the same figure of speech (accumulation). This reference is made even clearer through an anacoluthon that switches the focus back to the Apostles, who had been mentioned earlier in the same periodic sentence. Lastly, the list of miracles calls to mind the Apostles' own ministry, recounted for the most part in the book of Acts (cf. Acts 8:8 e.a.).

### 2.3 *Mentions of the Contents of the Manuscript*

Scribal colophons usually include at least a few words, often more, that describe or summarize the manuscript they conclude.<sup>28</sup> In the case of biblical or liturgical codices, such internal references obviously relate to the Bible, yet they are neither quotations nor allusions to scriptural contents. Most commonly, these mentions are limited to a

բորոտաց սրբիլ, անդամալուծից հաստատիլ, մեռելոց յառնել, դիւաց հալածել, ի վերայ ծովու զգնալն, եւ որ այլեւս աստուածաբան զարարեալն գործք յաշխարհ ամենայն յայտնապէս քարոզելով, եւ հալածելով զխաւար կռապաշտութեանն, զԵրրորդութեանն ծաւալեցին զլոյս յոգիս մարդկան [...]: ([...] *marmnawor cndeann ew mkrtut'ean ew amenayn tnawrinakan tntesut'ean, zor yerikri katareac' Astuac bann [...] yalags astuacazawr sk'an'eleac'n, zor yerikri hrašagorceal bann Astucoy iwrov miac'eal ew anoroš astuacaxa'm marmnovn zkurac' tesanel, kalac' gnal, borotac' srbil, andamalucic' hastatil, me'reloc' ya'mel, diuac' balacel, i veray covu zgaln, ew or aylews astuacain zawrut'eann gorck' yašxarh amenayn yaytnapēs k'arozelov, ew halacelov zxawar krapaštut'eann, zErrordut'eann cawalec'in zloyš yogis mardkan [...]*). Cf. also the practically identical text in this manuscript's 'sisters': *Armenian Colophons 1201–1300* 2a, ed. Mat'evosyan 1984, 15; *Armenian Colophons to 1250* 308, ed. Yovsēp'ean 1951, 682–684 (cod. J 3274, pp. 427–429). See Van Elverdinghe (forthcoming a).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Sanjian 1968, 187; Sanjian 1969, 7; Stone 1995, 465.



title or a similar designation of a book. This colophon of a New Testament written in Rome in 1262 provides a straightforward example:<sup>29</sup>

In the year 711 occurred the beginning and the completion of this [book], in the universally celebrated, illustrious Rome, at the door of Peter the Apostle, the rock of faith (cf. Matt 16:18): the Gospels written by the four Evangelists and the fourteen Epistles of Paul, the Act[s] of the Apostles and the seven Catholic Epistles, in one binding [...].

There are, however, other colophons that present more elaborate accounts, often in verse.<sup>30</sup> A devotee of this kind of texts was Step'anos Jik' Ĵulayec'i, a priest, scribe, painter, and poet active in New Julfa (Isfahan's Armenian quarter) between 1603 and 1637.<sup>31</sup> He wrote several valuable poetical compositions describing the contents of manuscripts he copied or otherwise handled. These unusual colophons soon became famous: they were detached from their original context and transmitted in other manuscripts, being included in miscellanies alongside other poems. One of Step'anos's 'poem-colophons', composed in 1621, describes the contents of the whole Bible; it initially followed the scribal colophon of a Bible that had been copied in Constantinople in 1620, at the request of an individual from Isfahan. The first three quatrains of this composition, out of a total of 100, give a good idea of the typical contents of Step'anos's poems:<sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Armenian Colophons 1201–1300* 259a, ed. Mat'evosyan 1984, 313 (cod. NOJ 483, ca. f. 192<sup>v</sup>): Ի ԶԺԱ թուին եղև սկիզբն ևս աարտ սմին ի տիեզերաց հոչակեալ յականատրս Հռովմ, առ դրան վիսին հաաստոյ Պետրոսի առաքելոյն չորք անետարանչացն գրեալ Անետարանքն և Չորքտասան թուխտքն Պաւղոսի, Գործ առաքելոյն և Եւթն թողթք կաթողիկեայցն ի մի տուփ [...]: (*I 711 t'uin elew skizbn ew awart smin i tiezerac' hič'akeal yakanawors Hrov'm, ar dran vimin hawatoy Petrosi arak'eloy'n č'ork' awetaranč'ac'n greal Awetaran'k'n ew Č'ork'tasan t'uxt'k'n Pawlosi, Gorc arak'eloc'n ew Ewt'n t'ult'k' kat'ukileayc'n i mi tup' [...]*).

<sup>30</sup> An interesting example in prose, concluding a miscellany including, among others, Yovhannēs T'lkuranc'i's versified paraphrase of Genesis, is *Armenian Colophons 1601–1660* II.438, ed. Hakobyan & Hovhannisyan 1978, 289 (cod. M 1171, f. 234<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>31</sup> For more information on this interesting figure, see Akinean 1947.

<sup>32</sup> *Armenian Colophons 1601–1660* II.46, ed. Hakobyan & Hovhannisyan 1978, 28 (cod. J 428, f. 542<sup>r</sup>):

Ի թվականիս մեր Հայկազեան,  
Որ էր անցեալ քսան յոբելեան,  
Այլ և եթ տասն աւելի լման,  
Գրրեցաւ շունչս աստուածական:  
'Ստ առաքելոց սրբոց կոչման  
Որք հաաքեալ ի մի եղան,  
ԸզՀին և Նորրս Կտակարան,  
Ջոր աստ շարեմ յարմարական:  
Յառաջ ըսկիզբն Բրիսէթայն,  
Գործք վեցարեալ արարչութեան,  
Ի կիրակէ որ տէրունեան,  
Մինչ ի շաբաթն ար հանգըստեան:

*I t'vakanis mer Haykazean,  
Or ēr anc'eal k'san yobelean,  
Ayl ew ewt' tasn aweli lman,  
Gārec'aw šunč's astuacakan.  
'St arak'eloc' srboc' koč'man,  
Ork' hawak'eal i mi edan,  
ĖzHin ew Noras Ktakaran,  
Zor ast šarem yarmarakan.  
Yaraj šskizbn Brisēt'ayn,  
Gorck' vec'awreay ararč'ut'ean,  
I kirakē ōr tērunean,  
Minč' i šabat'n aur hangəstean.*



In this Armenian year of ours,  
Which numbered twenty jubilees,  
Then seven decades more,<sup>33</sup>  
This divine breath<sup>34</sup> was written

According to the call of the Holy Apostles,  
Who, gathering [it] into one, laid down  
The Old and the New Testament,  
That I am drawing together here fittingly.

First, the beginning—*Bereshit* (Gen 1:1),  
The six-day acts of Creation,  
From Sunday, the Lord's day,  
Till Saturday, the rest day.

To this group of references we may add references to a biblical character in his capacity as the author of a book. For example, several colophons repeat traditions about the evangelists that are taken from subscriptions or prologues to their respective Gospel.<sup>35</sup> These mainly include information about the time, place and language of the Gospels.<sup>36</sup>

#### 2.4 'Echoes' and the Question of Biblical Imitatio

I suggest using the term 'echoes' to cover all stylistic and phraseological elements unwittingly reminiscent of the Bible. To cite Robert Thomson again, in Armenian literature, "biblical vocabulary is so pervasive that it is often difficult to decide whether a parallel is being hinted at, or whether the historian naturally expressed himself in such a fashion with no further nuance intended."<sup>37</sup> This situation is even more true of copyists: not only were they constantly immersed in biblical texts, but they were also those who copied them. Virtually all scribes belonged to the clergy, either regular or secular, meaning that they had a daily experience of the Bible, particularly the Gospels and the Psalms, through church services. Such a degree of saturation in and familiarity with the stories, characters, words, figures of speech and other stylistical features from the Bible led scribes to express themselves automatically and, as it were, effortlessly in a biblical

Full text in Lalayean 1915, 10–24 (from cod. M 4905).

<sup>33</sup> This is an elaborate way of expressing the year 1070 = 20×50 + 7×10, corresponding, in the Armenian Era, to A.D. 1621.

<sup>34</sup> Word play on the Armenian name of the Bible, Աստուածաշունչ (*Astuacašunč*), lit. "God's breath".

<sup>35</sup> The Armenian versions of these pieces have barely been studied; the standard work on the original Greek texts is Soden 1902, 296–360. I am preparing a new edition of the Greek subscriptions and related pieces in the framework of the *Paratexts of the Bible* project.

<sup>36</sup> See Ajamian 1994, 9; other examples include *Armenian Colophons 1201–1300* 222 (cod. V 1374, ca. f. 216<sup>v</sup>), 531 (cod. M 5736, f. 311<sup>r-v</sup>), 606a (cod. M 6290, f. 333<sup>r-v</sup>), and 690 (cod. NH Hartford Seminary 2, ff. 292<sup>r</sup>–294<sup>v</sup>), ed. Mat'evosyan 1984, 274, 656, 757 and 855–856.

<sup>37</sup> Thomson, Howard-Johnston & Greenwood 1999, xlix.

idiom. In addition to this familiarity, both passive and active, of biblical language, high regard for the authority of the biblical text also prompted copyists to imitate, even if subconsciously, its style in their own writings.

Evidence for the pervasiveness of biblical language can be found in any colophon of reasonable dimensions. We hear echoes of Scripture, for instance, when a copyist describes himself as being “deserted by reasonable plants, a withered tree (cf. Matt 21:19; Mark 11:20) amidst those bearing fruit (cf. Joel 1:12), like a thorn amidst lilies (cf. Cant 2:2), Yovhannēs, minister of the Word only in name”,<sup>38</sup> or when another speaks of “our spiritual father Gēorg *rabuni*, who, having collected our uprooted and banished life (cf. Gen 4:12–14), gave [us] rest (cf. Isa 14:3; Matt 11:28) first according to the fleshly part, and then without envy (Wis 7:13), with grace spiritually pouring forth in abundant streams (cf. Deut 8:7; Ps 77:20), made the arid soil of our nature (cf. Isa 43:19–20) thrive bountifully (cf. Ps 106:33–37) and caused the famished storehouses of our souls to brim to the point of satiety (cf. Deut 28:8; Ps 143:13; Prov 3:10 and 24:4).”<sup>39</sup>

This last point underlines perhaps most clearly the importance of biblical *imitatio* in colophons, a phenomenon common to all genres of Armenian literature, but more complicated in colophons due to the multiplicity of intermediaries. Herbert Hunger and Ingela Nilsson, amongst others, have provided Byzantine studies with a theoretical framework regarding the concept of *imitatio*,<sup>40</sup> but there has been no similar work done yet with regard to Armenian texts. Such a study, for which there is an urgent need, should ideally include an appraisal of colophons.

### 3. CONTEXTS AND PURPOSES

Biblical references in colophons are by no means confined to the religious and (in the case of codices with biblical contents) recapitulative sections mentioned above. As these sections tend to be intricately connected with the text they summarize, as well as

<sup>38</sup> *Armenian Colophons 1601–1660* III:836a, ed. Hakobyan 1984, 539 (cod. M 1742, f. 544<sup>r</sup>): զանապատացեալս ի բուսոց բանականաց [զգո?] յսացեալ ծառս ի մէջ պողպարեաց իբրև փուշ ի մէջ շուշանաց զՅովհաննէս լոկ անուամբ պաշտօնեայ բանի (*zanapatac'eals i busoc' banakanac' zgosac'eal cars i mej ptlberac' ibrew p'us' i mej šušānac' zYovhannēs lok anuamb paštōneay bani*).

<sup>39</sup> *Armenian Colophons 1201–1300* 605, ed. Mat'evosyan 1984, 756 (cod. M 488, f. 129<sup>r</sup>): ըստ հոգւոյ հայրն մեր Գէորգ բաբունի, որ զտարաբերուն եւ զվտարանդի կեանս մեր հաւաքեալ հանգոյց, նախ ըստ մարմնականին մասին, եւ ապա՛ առանց նախանձու առատահոս վտակաբ հոգիածաւալ շնորհին, լրապէս ուռճացոյց զամաի երկիր բնութեանս մերոյ եւ առատացոյց զսովեալ շտեմարանս հոգւոց մերոց առ ի բաականանալ (*əst hogwoy hayrn mer Gēorg rabuni, or ztarabetun ew zotarandi keans mer hawak'eal hangoyc', nax əst marmnakanin masin, ew apa: aranc' naxanju aratahos vtakawk' hogiacawal šnorhiwn, lrəpēs ur'əc'oyc' zamai erkir bnut'eans meroy ew aratac'oyc' zsoveal štemarans hogwoc' meroc' ar i bawakananal*).

<sup>40</sup> Hunger 1968; Nilsson 2010.

theological or devotional in their very nature, they of course form a natural environment for biblical references. But, as the following pages show, the presence of the Bible in these types of texts is so thoroughly pervasive that no subject or space in a colophon remains untouched by references to the Scriptures.

### 3.1 *The Ubiquity of Biblical References in Colophons*

The vast majority of copyists' colophons open with a doxology, which serves both as an appropriate closing statement to the main text of the manuscript and as an introduction to the colophon. These doxologies vary widely in length and contents. In their most basic form, they consist of short formulae, through which the scribe gives praise to God in a few simple words. Usually, even such brief set phrases already contain doctrinal statements, of a Trinitarian or Christological nature. Nevertheless, clearly identifiable biblical references remain largely absent in these types of formulae. Whenever the doxology extends beyond a simple message of thanks and praise, turns into an actual profession of faith, or becomes laden with an exegetical, symbolic, and mystical meaning, this is when biblical references take on an especially significant role.<sup>41</sup>

A description of the book's subject matter is another conventional part of a scribal colophon. In the case of manuscripts with biblical contents (Gospel books, service books, etc.), this section is also likely to include references to the Bible alongside standard information about the title or the author (see above). Biblical references are, however, not limited to the spaces where one might reasonably expect to find them, but appear in all kinds of contexts within the colophon: chronological statements, lists of persons worthy of the reader's remembrance, curses against thieves, and so forth. In the following three sections, I focus on the core part of the scribal colophon, where the copyist gives an account of his work and situates it in its material, social and historical context. I distinguish literary and hermeneutical aspects of scriptural references and finish with some concluding thoughts about the motives behind their presence in colophons.

### 3.2 *Literary Aspects*

One of the main reasons for quoting the Bible, alluding to it or imitating its style was to add embellishment to the colophon. In fact, an abundance of biblical metaphors, quotations, or reminiscences constitutes a major stylistic convention of the genre in Armenian.<sup>42</sup> Owing to the popularity of this convention, the corpus of colophons boasts some very fine poetical compositions incorporating biblical themes.<sup>43</sup> This prac-

<sup>41</sup> An excellent example can be found in Schmidt 1997, 98–100.

<sup>42</sup> Van Elverdinghe (forthcoming b).

<sup>43</sup> Cf. van Lint 2016.

tice, however, went beyond fidelity to an aesthetic canon. The association of a biblical reference with a particular person, thing, or notion allowed the author to evoke with relative ease a whole range of significations and emphases. For this reason, a popular practice among the authors of colophons was to distinguish people connected with the manuscript by comparing them to a biblical figure. The well-known fifteenth-century miniaturist Minas is more than once styled “the good painter, who is equal and alike to Bezalel, the first painter of the Ark (cf. Exod 31:2–6), filled with the Spirit”.<sup>44</sup> Another example is Sargis the priest, who in 1223 acquired the famous Halbat Gospels of 1211. He is said to be “like a wise merchant, who went in search of the precious pearl, and found it (cf. Matt 13:45–46) in the district of Ani”.<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, objects or structures are readily associated with biblical realia. For instance, a newly built cross altar is “more resplendent and beautiful than the Temple of Solomon”.<sup>46</sup> Books and texts are, for obvious reasons, among the objects for which biblical parallels are most frequently adduced. Thus, a copy of the *Tōnapatčār* (called *tawnamak* in the colophon under consideration), a commentary about the feasts of the Armenian Church, is “filled with spiritual treasures and celestial manna, joined together by the holy doctors”.<sup>47</sup> Other colophons are more precise in their comparisons. Presenting a Gospel book to the Armenian convent of Jerusalem, the bishop Łazar states: “I wrote this Holy Gospel [...], which is my first writing, [then], like the first of [the] First Fruits (cf. Ezek 45:16 e.a.) and like the widow’s mite (cf. Mark 12:42; Luke 21:2), I donated [it] to the Lord’s treasury, [so] that, through its place at the door of Christ’s tomb, I will perhaps find God’s compassionate mercy (cf. Deut 3:38)”.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> *Armenian Colophons 1401–1500* III.576, ed. Xaç’ikyan 1967, 427 (cod. P 18, f. 310<sup>v</sup>): քաջ նկարաւորն, որ յար եւ նման է Բերսէլիէի հոգիւրնկալ առաջին նկարողին տապանակին (*k’aj nkarawtn, or yar ew nman ē Bersēliēli hogiānkal arājin nkarolin tapanakin*). See also Vardanyan 2003–2004, 210–212.

<sup>45</sup> *Armenian Colophons 1201–1300* 94, ed. Mat’evosyan 1984, 134 (cod. M 6288, f. 358<sup>v</sup>): իբրեւ զինաստուն վաճառական ի խնդիր եղեալ պատուական մարգարտին, եւ գտեալ զա ի գաւառին Անոյ (*ibrew zimastun vačarakan i xndir eleal patuakan margartin, ew gteal zsa i gawarin Anoy*). About this episode, see most recently Mat’evosyan 2012, 8.

<sup>46</sup> *Armenian Colophons 1601–1660* II.1108, ed. Hakobyan & Hovhannisyān 1978, 757 (cod. VAS\* Van, Tiramayr s.n.): առաւել պայծառ եւ գեղեցիկ քան զտաճարն Սողոմոնի (*arawel paycař ew gelec’ik k’an ztačarn Solomoni*).

<sup>47</sup> *Armenian Colophons 1201–1300* 71, ed. Mat’evosyan 1984, 112 (cod. V 5, f. 420<sup>v</sup>): լցեալ հոգեւոր գանձիք եւ յերկնային մանանային, զոր շարայարեալ սրբոց վարդապետաց (*lc’eal hogewor ganjiwk’ ew yerknayin mananayiwñ, zor šarayareal srboc’ vardapetac*).

<sup>48</sup> *Armenian Colophons 1601–1660* 1:826, ed. Hakobyan & Hovhannisyān 1974, 616–617 (cod. J 2625, f. 209<sup>r-v</sup>): զճագրեցի գտորբ Աւետարանս [...] որ է առաջին գիրս, իր զնախնիս երախայրից եւ իբրեւ զլուսնայս պրոյն ընծայեցի ի գանձս տէրունի, որ կալով սմա որ քան գերեզմանին Քրիստոսի, թերեւս սովաւ գոցի զբազմագորբ ողորմութիւնն Աստուծոյ (*gcagrec’i zsurb Awetarans [...] or ē arājin girs, iwr znaxnis eraxayric’ ew ibrew zlumays ayroyn əncayec’i i ganjs tēruni, or kalov sma ar dran gerezmanin K’ristosi, t’ereus sovaw gtc’i zbazmagut’ olormut’iwñn Astucoy*).

One finds similar albeit generally more sophisticated uses of biblical episodes, characters, and features in hagiographical narratives, where they serve very much the same purpose of highlighting the protagonist's saintly character.<sup>49</sup> The strong connections that existed between these two genres in Armenian culture is shown through the genre of the 'vita-colophon' (*vark'-yišatakaran*), attested since the ninth century.<sup>50</sup> Conversely, the author of a colophon may draw on the Scriptures to criticize the behaviour of contemporary, temporal or spiritual, Armenian authorities, although this aspect is nowhere near as frequent.<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, references to the Bible in the colophon serve to emphasize the sacred nature of the manuscript, as is seen most clearly in comminatory formulae:<sup>52</sup> the evocation of biblical punishments or curses, like those that befell Judas or Cain, acted as powerful deterrents against whoever would dare steal, damage or dilapidate the book. There is thus a performative intent as well, since such evocations were meant to induce the reader to abstain from a particular action, as is clear in the following example:<sup>53</sup>

And if someone with lordly intentions brazenly lays his hands on this book and confiscates [it], [either] by force or by means of a ruse, may he have his portion with Judas and share in Cain's and the crucifiers' lot, and may his name be erased from the Book of Life.

### 3.3 *Hermeneutical Aspects*

As far as interpretation of the Scriptures is concerned, the hermeneutics set forth in the vast majority of colophons does not deviate from the trends set in learned exegesis, by which I mean the biblical commentaries and other exegetical works circulating in Armenia. To cite only one example, colophons regularly associate the four living creatures in Ezekiel's Vision with the four evangelists, in the tradition of Irenaeus and many others.<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless, it happens (admittedly on rare occasions) that colophons penned by scholars of note offer original or, at least, unusual interpretations.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>49</sup> See e.g. Krueger 2010, 201 and 206–210; Krueger 2016, 179–182.

<sup>50</sup> On this genre, see Ter-Dav'tyan 1976. A good example is *Armenian Colophons 1401–1500* I:704, ed. Xač'ikyan 1955, 622–631 (codd. M 2379, ff. 244<sup>r</sup>–262<sup>v</sup>; M 2748, ff. 354<sup>v</sup>–357<sup>v</sup>; M 9004, ff. 1<sup>r</sup>–5<sup>v</sup>) and transl. Sanjian 1969, 209–214 (*Armenian Colophons 1301–1480* 1449.1).

<sup>51</sup> See the study by Sirinian 2016, 22–45, esp. 23–26.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Sanjian 1969, 39.

<sup>53</sup> *Armenian Colophons 1301–1400* 669b, ed. Xač'ikyan 1950, 539 (cod. M 7477, f. 489<sup>v</sup>): Եւ եթէ որ իշխանաբար կամաւք, լրբութեամբ, կամ պատճառանաւք յանդգնութեամբ ձեռնամուխ լինի գրոցս եւ յափշտակեաց՛ մասն զՅոսրայիւն աոցէ եւ բաժին զԿայենին եւ զխաչահանուացն, եւ ջնջեցի անուն նորա ի դպրութեանն կենաց: (*Ew et'ē ok' išxanabar kamawk', lrbut'eamb, kam patčarānawk' jandgnut'eamb jernamux lini groc's ew yap'shtakesc'ē: masn zYudayin arc'ē ew bažin zKayanin ew zxač'ahanuac'n, ew jnjesc'i anun nora i dprut'eann kenac'.*)

<sup>54</sup> Hannick 1993; Ajamian 1994, 7–12; Vardanyan 2014, 589.

<sup>55</sup> See Hannick 1993; Ajamian 1994; Schmidt 1997, 94–97; Chétanian 2014.

The real originality of biblical reception in colophons, however, lies in how authors relate the Bible to their own personal experiences, both in the spiritual and worldly domain. Indeed, biblical episodes are often evoked as parallels for events affecting Armenia both in negative and positive ways. Those may include conquests and plunders, martyrdoms, diseases and natural disasters, as well as the recovery of lands from the enemy, the election of a new bishop or patriarch, etc. When the colophon broaches the subject of various calamities, the frame of reference frequently becomes eschatological, with introductory expressions such as “in these final times” (ի վերջին ժամանակիս, *i verjin žamanakis*), occasionally with a hint of apocalypticism.<sup>56</sup> Gloomy descriptions of the present time, heightened by scriptural references, create a sense of impending doom, as in this colophon of 1473:<sup>57</sup>

This holy Gospel was written in the latter days of our time, according to that [word] that says “From the feet to this head, there is no healthiness (Isa 1:6)” because of the fierce Ismaelian nation, which brought our Christ-loving nation up to the gates of death (Ps 106:18).

Another example of this propensity towards eschatological references was mentioned earlier in this essay: the siege of Sebastia in 1601 was likened by a contemporary scribe to Jesus’s warning about Doomsday in Luke 21:34–35.<sup>58</sup> In such accounts, biblical references are inserted not only to enrich the depiction of the disaster but also to provide an explanation for its occurrence. Thus, hardships wrought by invading and roving armies are the result of God’s retribution for the sins of the Armenian people.<sup>59</sup> The ravages caused by a Kurdish army plundering the district of Թճունիկ, on the southern shore of Lake Van, on Christmas Day in 1469, were, in the eyes of a contemporary scribe, above all a consequence of the Armenians’ not abiding by Jesus’s commandments.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Cowe 2014, 111, who remarks on copyists using imagery from Daniel to describe the Mongol invasion.

<sup>57</sup> *Armenian Colophons 1401–1500* II:437a, ed. Xaç’ikyan 1958, 345 (cod. M 7539, f. 207<sup>v</sup>): Գրեցաւ սուրբ Աւետարանս ի ժամանակիս վերջացեալ դարիս, ըստ այնմ, որ ասէ «Յնոյից մինչև ցրգուխս չիք առողջութիւն» առ Բամայեւեան եւ ժպիրն ազգիս, որ քրիստոսադաւ (sic, intellege քրիստոսադասան) ազգս հասուցին վինչև ի դրունս մահու: (*Grec’aw surb Awetarans i žamanakis verjác’éal daris, ast ayum, or asē «Yotic’ minč’ew c’əgluxs č’ik’ arołjut’iwn» ar Ismayelean ew žpirh azgis, or k’ristosadaw <an> azgs hasuc’in minč’ew i druns mahu.*)

<sup>58</sup> See p. 144 above.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Gureghian 2010, 794.

<sup>60</sup> *Armenian Colophons 1401–1500* II:365, ed. Xaç’ikyan 1958, 282 (cod. SEB\* 31, ca. p. 531): [...] եւ այն անիծեալ Էստինշերն երեկ եւ թալան արար զերկիրս Ռշտունեաց, յաւոր տօնի ծննդեան Քրիստոսի, զոր ասէ Աւետարանն, եթէ՛ «Արթուն կացէք եւ յամենայն ժամ աղօթքս արարէք, զի մի լիցի փախուստն ձեր ի ձմերանի եւ մի յաւոր շարթօու», զոր եղև վասն ծովացեալ մեղաց մերոց: Եւ մեր փախուցեալ դառն արտիք եւ լալոտ աջօք, ձիւնաթաթախ եւ տառապանօք, անկեալ ի յօտար երկիր, ի տեղիս տեղիս: (*[...] ew ay n aniceal Ėstinšern erek ew t’alan arar zerkirs Rštuneac’, yawur tōni cndean K’ristosi, zor asē*

[...] and that accursed Ēstinšēr came and pillaged this country of Ğstunik', on the day of the feast of Christ's Birth; the Gospel says "Stay watchful and say prayers at all times (Luke 21:36), that your flight be not in the winter, neither on a Sabbath day (cf. Matt 24:20)"—which happened, because of our overflowing sins. And we fled with bitter hearts and tearful eyes, covered in snow and in tribulation, falling in a foreign land, in different places.

Old Testament references intermingle freely with New Testament citations. As Aida Gureghian has demonstrated, the authors of Armenian colophons readily compared their plight with that of Israel, particularly in the seventeenth century, when all prospects of an autonomous Armenian nation had long since disappeared.<sup>61</sup> Colophons tend almost universally to paint a dire picture of medieval and early modern Armenia, where moments of good fortune were rare and short-lived. For this reason, using biblical references in celebrating a season of joy made these occasions stand out all the more, as in this colophon of a Book of Canons copied in 1099:<sup>62</sup>

And riding their respective steeds, they went out against the invading opponents; they struck, chased, [and] routed until sunset, there being great joy among [the] Christians, and plenty of wheat (cf. Prov 3:10) and barley, as in the time of Elisha at the gate of Samaria (cf. 4 Kgms 7). And then [they were] rehearsing the prophetic song "I exalt thee, Lord, for thou hast welcomed me, and hast not made my foe to rejoice over me" (Ps 29:1).

Finding biblical parallels to the historical circumstances in which he is writing, the author aims not only to make his account more vivid and elaborate, but also to place contemporary history into the perspective of sacred history. This inscription of Armenian history in sacred history equally takes place through references to local and national traditions. Colophons occasionally mention such traditions, the most famous

*Awetarann, et'ē: «Art'un kac'ēk' ew yamenayn žam alōt's ararēk', zi mi lic'i p'axustn jer i jme'ani ew mi yawur šabat'u», zor elew vasn covac'eal melac' meroc'. Ew mek' p'axuc'eal da'rn srti'w' ew lalot ač'ōk', jiwnat'at'ax ew ta'rapanōk', ankeal i yōtar erkir, i telis telis.* Cf. the translation by Sanjian 1969, 296 (*Armenian Colophons 1301–1480* 1469.3). On this colophon, see also pp. 143–144 above.

<sup>61</sup> Gureghian 2010, 790–795, who goes as far as to give the Armenians the sobriquet of "Early Modern Israelites".

<sup>62</sup> *Armenian Colophons to 1200* 140, ed. Mat'evosyan 1988, 119; *Armenian Colophons to 1250* 118, ed. Yovsēp'ean 1951, 262 (cod. NOJ 131, ca. f. 321<sup>r</sup>): Եւ ընթացեալ յիւրաքանչիւր երիվարս, ելին ընդդէմ բռնացեալ ընդդիմամարտիցն, հարին հալածեցին կոտորեցին մինչև ի մուտս արեւուն՝ եղեալ ուրախութիւն մեծ քրիստոնէից եւ յուսիսն ցորենոյ եւ գարոյ, որպէս առ ի Եղիսէլիւն ի դռնն Սամարիոյ, եւ ապա զմարգարտականն ի վար արկեալ զերգ. «Բարձր աննեմ զքեզ, Տէր, զի ընկալար զիս եւ ոչ ուրախ արարեր զթշնամին իմ յիս»: (*Ew ant'ac'eal yiwrak'anc'iw' erivars, elin anddēm brnac'eal anddimamartic'n, harin halacec'in kotorec'in minč'ew i muts arewun: eal uraxut'iwun mec k'ristonēic' ew liut'iwun c'orenoy ew garwoy, orpēs a' i Ēlisēiwn i du'rn Samarioy, ew apa zmarginēakann i var arkeal zerg; «Barj' a'rnem zk'ez, Tēr, zi ankalār zis ew oc' urax ararer zt'šnamin im yis».*)



among these being Noah's Ark landing on Mount Ararat (also known as Mount Sarad).<sup>63</sup>

Besides historical events, the Armenians' personal experience and their understanding of biblical teachings stand at the very centre of many colophons. Though it is not unreasonable, taking into account the influence of generic conventions and the primacy of rhetoric over self-expression, to question just how personal these accounts may actually be, they indubitably provide us with a reliable picture of general trends in how the biblical message was internalized. This point can be illustrated with a longer excerpt than those presented above, taken from the colophon of a handsomely illuminated tetraevangelion, copied by the priest (*abelay*) Elbayrik in the Inner Fort (*Nerk'in berd*) of Ani in 1298.<sup>64</sup> This codex had been commissioned by another priest, Yakovb, who donated it to the nearby convent of the Bear and Lion (*Arjewardewc uxt*), in memory of his deceased brother. This is how the copyist introduces Yakovb's sponsorship.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>63</sup> See e.g. *Armenian Colophons 1201–1300* 457a, ed. Mat'evosyan 1984, 557 (cod. M 1422, f. 191<sup>r</sup>); *Armenian Colophons 1301–1400* 353a, ed. Xaç'ikyan 1950, 288 (cod. M 6029, f. 139<sup>r</sup>). See Thierry 1995 on this tradition.

<sup>64</sup> See Juzbašjan 1971 on this interesting manuscript and its colophons.

<sup>65</sup> *Armenian Colophons 1201–1300* 654a, ed. Mat'evosyan 1984, 816; ed. Juzbašjan 1971, 79–80 (cod. SABO B 44, f. 166<sup>r</sup>): Բնութեան է բաղձալ բարոյն, եւ ական խնդալ ի ծագեալ լուսո, եւ ամենայն կենդանեաց խնամ տանել կենաց: Իսկ զագաթն բարոյն եւ բազմալոյս արեգակն եւ ճշմարիտ կենսնք եւ կենդանութիւն Աստուած է. զի «Չէ որ բարի, բայց միայն Աստուած», ասաց Տէրն, զի ասաց. «Ես եմ լոյս եւ կենսնք աշխարհի». զի նմա ցանկա ամենայն միտք խասանոց, եւ իմանալի ական կարատի եւ ոչ յագի տեսանելով, եւ ի կենաց աղբերն փափագէ ամենայն կենդանի ծարաւեալ ըստ Դաւթա. «Ծարաւի անձն իմ առ քեզ, Աստուած հզար եւ կենդանի»: Ըստ այսմն փափագանաց Յակովբ կուսակրան քահանայ ծարաւի արդարութեան, այսինքն Քրիստոսի՝ պատկերին Հար, որ ոչ միայն զինքն յայդնելով վասն մեր որում փափագեաք (lege փափագեաք?), այլ հաղորդա գործելով ընթեան զթշուառ եւ զամաչեցեալ բնութիւնս մեր իւր անզուգական եւ աստուածային փառացն մարմին եւ անդամս կազմելով սարսափելի աստուածական զլոյսն, միանգամայն ցուցանելով զանմահական կերակուրն բաղձալի, զոր փայտն կենաց պողբերեալ մեզ, որ է պատմութիւն փրկաւետ փառացն Աստուծոյ կենսաբեր սուրբ Աւետարանին, զոր ունի յինքեանն պարսաձեղեալ զիրքս այս աւետեաց, որ կա ի սա ամբարեալ, եւ է դրախտ իմանալի, եւ միջոցին կառուցեալ ունելով ըզժառն կենաց, քանզի ի տանէ Տեառն ըմբէ զցորն զայն, որ խաղայ ի կեանսն յախտենականս: Արդ, Յակովբս այս յեռեալ ի սէր սրբութեան, ետ գրել զսա [...]: (*Bnut'ean ē baljal barwoyn, ew akan: xndal i cageal luso, ew amenayn kendaneac: xnam tanel kenac. Isk gagar'n baroyn ew bazmaloyis aregakan ew čšmarit keank' ew kendantu'tiwn Astuac ē; zi «Č'ē ok' bari, bayc' miayn Astuac», asac' Tērn, zi asac': «Es em loys ew keank' ašxarhi»; zi nma c'anka amenayn mitk' xawsnoc', ew imanali akn karawti ew oč' yagi tesanelov, ew i kenac' albewrn p'ap'agē amenayn kendani caraweal əst Dawt'a; «Carawi anjn im ar k'ez, Astuac hzawr ew kendani». Əst aysmnn p'ap'aganac' Yakovb kusakrawn k'abanay carawi ardaru't'ean, aysink'n K'ristosi: patkērn Hawr, or oč' miayn zink'n yajdnelov vasn mer orum p'ap'ageawk' [lege p'ap'ageak'?), ayl halords gorcelov ənk'ean: zt'šuar ew zamač'ec'eal bnut'iwns mer iwr anzugakan ew astuacayin p'arac'n marmin ew andams kazmelov sarsap'eli astuacakan glxoy, miangamayn c'uc'anelov zannahakan kerakurn baljali, zor p'aytn kenac' p'tlabereac' mez, or ē patmut'iw'n p'rkawet p'arac'n Astucoy kensaber surb Awetararin, zor uni yink'eann paracackeal girk's ays aweteac', or ka i sa ambareal, ew ē draxt imanali, ew mijoc'in*

It is [a property] of nature to yearn for the good; of the eye, to rejoice in shining light; and of all living beings, to tend after life. But God is the pinnacle of the good, the radiant sun (cf. Matt 17:2; Rev 22:5) and the true life and vitality (cf. John 14:6), for “there is no one good, but only God” (Mark 10:18), says the Lord; as he said, “I am the light and life of the world” (John 8:12 and 14:6); because every rational soul longs for him, and an intelligent eye desires [to see him] and does not grow weary of seeing [him] (cf. Eccl 1:8). And every thirsty living being aspires to the fount of life (cf. Ps 35:10 e.a.), according to David[’s words], “My soul thirsts for you, o mighty and living God” (Ps 41:3). According to this aspiration, Yakovb, a celibate priest, [was] thirsty for justice (cf. Matt 5:6), that is, for Christ (cf. Phil 3:9), the likeness of the Father (cf. 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15), who [is such] not only by manifesting himself for our sake (cf. John 14:22; Rom 5:8–9 e.a.)—which we were longing to (?)—but by making by himself our wretched and ashamed (cf. Jer 9:19) nature a partaker to his unequalled and divine glory (cf. Rom 8:17; 1 Pet 5:1), by uniting our flesh and limbs to his tremendous divine head (cf. 1 Cor 11:3 and 12:12–27), divulging at the same time the desirable, immortal sustenance (cf. John 6:27–35), which the wood of life bore as a fruit to us (cf. Col 1:6)... Such is the story of the life-giving holy Gospel of God’s saving glory (cf. 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Tim 1:11), which this book of good tidings encloses within itself, which is stored in it. And it is an intelligible paradise containing, erected in its midst, the tree of life (cf. Gen 2:9), because it drinks from the house of the Lord (cf. Joel 3:19) the water that flows into eternal life (John 4:14). This Yakovb, thus, attached to the love of sanctity, had this [book] written [...].

Such a proliferation of biblical references must be understood as a manifestation of the divine presence in the manuscript, in line with a belief that was widely held in the Christian East.<sup>66</sup> The sponsor, whose name is embedded in biblical verses and concepts, shares in the universal desire of Creation for knowledge of God. The Gospel book, as a physical object, enshrines God’s design from the Garden of Eden to the promise of eternal life. By associating Christ’s epiphany and his salvific mission with the manuscript of the Gospels, the copyist gives particular value to the act of sponsoring it as an act of piety, contributing to the sponsor’s own sanctification and leading eventually to his salvation.<sup>67</sup> Even though no mention is made of the scribe in this passage, he obviously wrote the colophon down and, no doubt, composed it as well; thus, what is said with regard to the sponsor reflects also upon him, the copyist. He is to gain a spiritual reward from his work,<sup>68</sup> the importance of which he perhaps unconsciously correlates to how spiritually deep and rich in biblical references his colophon is.

We have to bear in mind that the copyist was not merely writing a ‘colophon’ as we understand this term today, but rather the book’s ‘memorial’ (*yiṣatakarān*). In it, he included what he thought worthwhile for future readers to remember about the book, the selection of subjects being guided equally by generic conventions and by the

*karuċ’eal unelov əzcarñ kenac’ k’anzi i tanē Tearñ əmbē zjurn zayn, or xalay i keansn yawitenakans. Ard, Yakovbs ays yereal i sēr srbut’ean, et greł zsa [...].*

<sup>66</sup> Cf. among others Rapp 2007, esp. 196–200.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Nersessian 2001, 49.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Rapp 2007, 208–212.

author's personal sensibilities and experience. The influence the book would have on the next generations is also why Elbayrik put so much effort into restating, through his allegorical interpretation of select verses and references, the essential place of the Gospels in God's plan of salvation and its relevance to the sponsor. Therefore, by extolling the acts of reading, copying, and sponsoring a Gospel book, the scribe is fulfilling his Christian duty to spread the Word of God, doing so with the prospect of ultimate salvation for those who take part in the same.

### 3.4 *The Reasons for Including Biblical References in a Colophon*

References in colophons to the Scriptures serve multiple functions and purposes. First, they have a summarizing function when the colophon provides an overview of the biblical contents of the manuscript. In all other contexts, biblical references have an aesthetic value and are part of the stylistic conventions of the genre. In certain cases, it may even be that the author of the colophon meant to show off his own erudition by delving into less well known books of the Bible in order to illustrate and embellish his message. Scriptural citations are, at any rate, conspicuous evidence of the writer's piety and of his knowledge of the Word. For the reader, such references act as a guarantee of the copyist's orthodoxy and hence trustworthiness, especially in the doxological part, which, as mentioned above, can constitute a genuine profession of faith.<sup>69</sup>

Seldom do biblical references in colophons have a primarily theological intent.<sup>70</sup> Yet scriptural comparisons and metaphors are an expression of both the individual's and the entire Armenian people's relationship with God and Holy Writ. Such references serve as a bridge between contemporary situations and biblical narratives, infusing the former with a new meaning and making the latter once again present and real.

## 4. CONCLUSION

This survey demonstrates how major a role the Bible played in the collective mental universe of the authors of Armenian colophons. It was the ultimate model to be followed—a deep well-spring of inspiration from which any reasonably talented author could draw quotations or allusions to illustrate virtually any matter that might appear in the colophon. Moreover, biblical language was itself the lens through which the meaning of history and of human activity, about which colophons give us precious insights, could be properly understood.

<sup>69</sup> Gureghian 2010, 786; Sirinian 2014, 70 n. 19.

<sup>70</sup> A noteworthy exception can be found in Chétanian 2014.

Not all colophons, however, are equal. There is a clear and predictable tendency for colophons written by clerics of high rank and by other individuals prominent because of their learning or talent, to present, as a rule, biblical references in larger quantity and from more diverse sources (and, conversely, a smaller proportion of formulae) than 'run-of-the-mill' colophons. Notable cases in point among the examples discussed here are the colophons written by the future catholicos Kostəndin Vahkac'i and the poet Step'anos Jik' Julayec'i. Still, the talent even of otherwise undistinguished authors of colophons can be surprising and show a mastery that was recognized by their contemporaries, as I argue elsewhere with regard to Yovanēs of Alēt', a village priest from the north shore of Lake Van in the 1320–1330s.<sup>71</sup>

Uses of the Bible described in this article are not original per se: they can be compared with what we observe in other genres of medieval Christian literature, notably hagiography, poetry, exegesis, and homiletics. Precisely what makes them interesting is, however, their setting in a genre on the fringes of literature, whose authors (with only few exceptions) did not intend to create a full-fledged 'oeuvre'. The richest scriptural materials are, unsurprisingly, those found in scribal colophons of biblical manuscripts, such as the last example discussed. The act of interpreting the Bible in relation to the context in which a copyist wrote was, in a way, the culmination of his mediating role at the intersection of text and book.

The Armenian corpus of colophons therefore constitutes a unique body of source material for studying the collective reception of the Bible in Armenian culture, particularly among lower-rank clerics, monastics, and literate laypeople. Further studies will be needed to ascertain the depth of the biblical knowledge among those authors and to reveal the full richness of their productions.

<sup>71</sup> Van Elverdinghe (forthcoming a).

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