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ՊԱՇՏՕՆԱԹԵՐԹ ԵՐՈՒՍԱՂԷՄԻ ՀԱՅՈՑ ՊԱՏՐԻԱՐԲՈՒԹԵԱՆ

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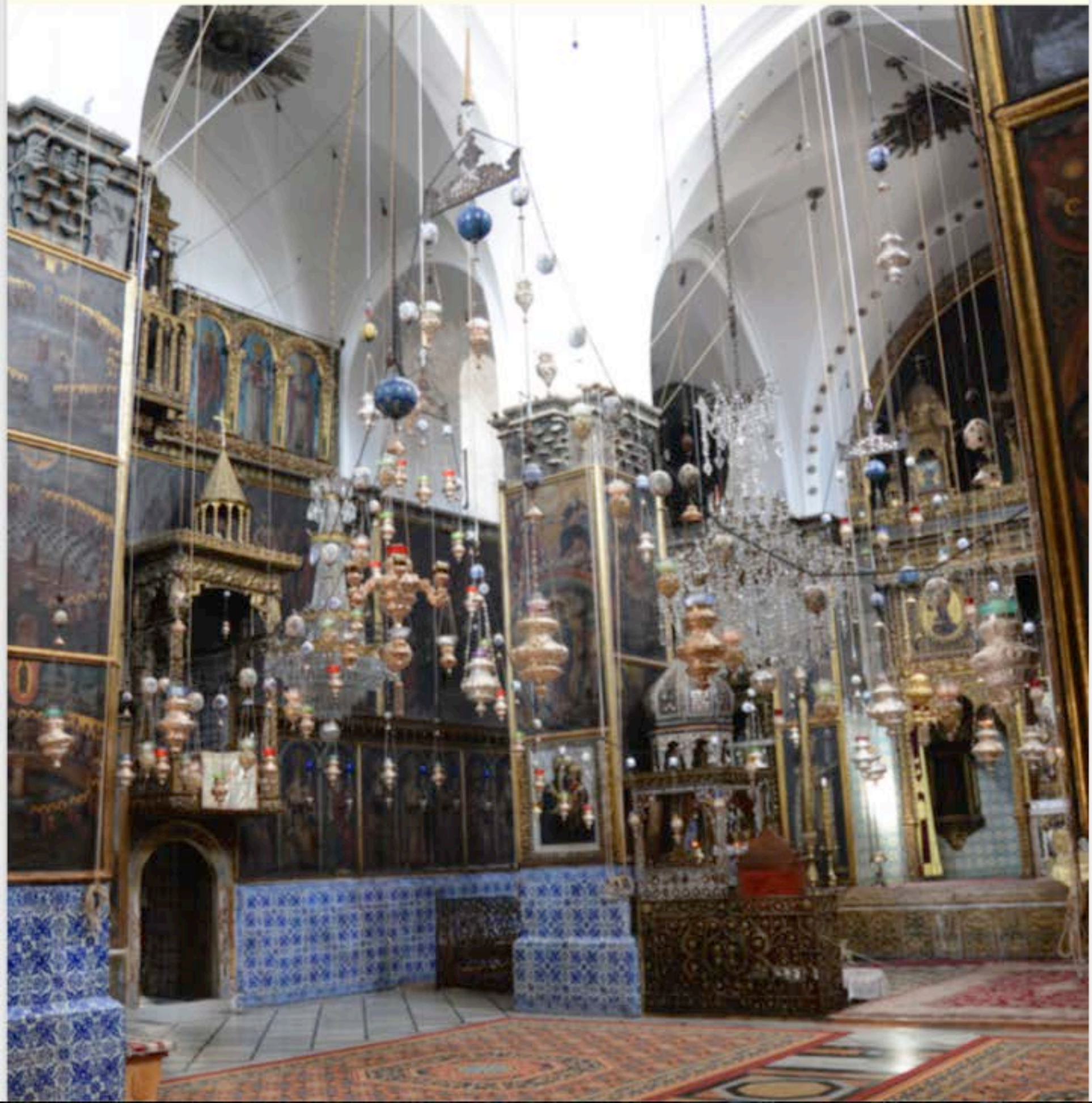
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ԳՐԱԿԱՆ**KHACHATUR KECHARETZI
FOUR POEMS**

Khachatur Vartabed Kecharetzi was a poet, scribe, miniaturist, and educator, who lived at the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth centuries, during the period of Mongol rule in Armenia (b. ca. 1260, d. 1331).¹ He was a scion of the prominent Khalbagian family and had friendly ties with Stepanos Orbelian, thus being related to the highest social classes of the time and place.² His students included Bartal, a master copyist and Stepanos *qahana*, who lavished praises on his teacher and spiritual father.³

He was a monk and served as Abbot of the Monastery of Kecharis in the Marz (region) of Kotayk. Bogharian notes that his tomb is located in the monastery of Carskar, in the area of Arsharunik.⁴ As a poet, he composed both ecclesiastical hymns (*ganjs*) and also poems of a more personal type, called *tals* (poems). He is best known for his labours dedicated to the *Alexander Romance* in its Armenian version.⁵ He edited this work adding preface, epilogue and *kafas*. The latter are 8-line stanzas attached to prose texts, such as the *History of Alexander* and were a popular genre in the eleventh-sixteenth centuries.⁶

Some of Khachatur's works have been published from time to time, and Mayis T. Avdalbegyan published a study and an edition of his writings.⁷

**Four Poems
1. Counsel for Souls⁸**

¹ On Khachatur, see the discussion in Manuk Abelyan (1955), *Հայ Հին Մատենագրության Պատմություն* [History of Ancient Armenian Literature] 2 Vols. (Beirut: Sevan), 2.228-244; Archbishop Norayr Bogharian (1971), *Հայ Գրողներ* [Armenian Writers]. (Jerusalem: Sts. James Press), 356; A. Doluxanyan (2002), "Khachatur Kecharetzi" in *Քրիստոնյա Հայաստան Հանրագիտարան* [Encyclopedia of Christian Armenia]. (Erevan: Armenian Encyclopedia Editions), 425-26.

² See Doluxanyan (2002), 425. In general, on this period and these families in southern Armenia, see: Garegin Catholicos Hovsepian (1969), *Խաղբակեանք կամ Պոռչեանք Հայոց պատմութեան մէջ* [The Khalbakians or Proshians in Armenian History]. (Antelias: Catholicosate).

³ Bogharian (1971), 356.

⁴ Bogharian (1971), 356.

⁵ The most recent edition of the Armenian version of the Alexander Romance is Hasmik Simonyan (1989), *Պատմություն Ալեքսանդրի Մակեդոնացոյ*. [History of Alexander of Macedon] (Erevan: Academy of Sciences).

⁶ See Kevork B. Bardakjian (2000), *A Reference Guide to Modern Armenian Literature 1500-1920*. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press), 31.

⁷ M. T. Avdalbegyan (1958), *Խաչատուր Կեչարեցի XIII-XIV դդ.* [Khachatur Kecharetzi XIII-XIV Cents]. (Yerevan: Academy of Sciences). For the fairly meagre bibliography dedicated to Khachatur and his works, see Robert W. Thomson (1995), *A Bibliography of Classical Armenian Literature to 1500 AD*. Corpus Christianorum. (Turnhout: Brepols), 214-215.

⁸ Avdalbekyan (1958), 145-146. Prof. Th. M. van Lint pointed out to me in a private communication that this poem shares lines with Frik and indeed the whole poem turns out to have also been attributed to Frik and is printed among his works. See Frik (1952), ed. Archbishop Tirayr (Melik Muschkambarian), *Ֆրիկ Տիվան*. [Poetry of Frik]. (New York: AGBU), 489-490. At this juncture, the question of actual authorship cannot yet be resolved. The situation bespeaks some confusion in the transmission of the poem.

This poem takes up a well-known literary form; it is a didactic call for repentance. Khachatur presents this call as if he were addressing an audience, most likely of monks (see “Brothers” in line 1). Its message is the fleeting nature of this world and its sensory delights. In an image which is sustained from Stanza 1 to Stanza 4, he likens the world to a dream. In many religious contexts, the simile of sleep preceding the revelation or realization of some revealed or redemptive truth is to be observed. The turn, the repentance, or the revelation is presented as an awakening.⁹ Here the poet tells his brothers that this world is like a sleep and those who will awaken will “escape Hell’s lot.” He does not deal at any length with the eschatological state, but focuses on arousing his listeners to “do what you ought / Abandon evil, go after good.”

In the poem lines B and D are in monorhyme throughout and lines A C do not rhyme. The lines are of seven syllables each.

ԽՏՏՍ ՈԳՈՑ

1. Եղբրա՛րք, ձեզ խորրատ մի տամ՝
Մի՛ կենաք դուք շատ խոր ի քուն.
Զարթիք եւ արթուն կացէք,
Խիստ ի մօտ եմք յօրն ի մահուն:

2. Աշխարհս է յերազ նրման,
Զինչ լինի մէկ մանուշ ի քուն.
Եւ ի քուն լինելն ի ներս,
Գանձ գրտնու անթիւ եւ անհուն:

3. Խրնդալուն ցրնծայր ի սիրտըն
Եւ ուրախ էր գանձին սիրուն
Եւ հանց համարէր յիւր միտքն,
Թէ՛ լինիմ իշխան մեծատուն:

4. Երբ որ ի քրնոյն զարթեալ
Եւ տեսաւ՝ որ էր սուտ ի քուն,
Յայնժամ փոշիման դարձաւ
Ի վերայ իւր շատ խրնդալուն:

COUNSEL FOR SOULS

1. Brothers,¹⁰ I give you one counsel:
Do not sleep too deeply!
Awaken and stay alert,¹¹
We are very near the day of death.

2. This world is like a dream,¹²
As if one was in a sweet sleep.
And while being deeply asleep,
Finds a countless and vast treasure.¹³

3. He rejoiced happily in his heart,
And was glad of the delightful treasure,
And thus he thought in his mind,
“I will become a wealthy prince.”

4. When he awoke from sleep,
And saw that it was false, in sleep,
Then he started to regret
His great rejoicing.

⁹ Compare 1 Thess 5:6: “So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.” This verse might have contributed to the sleep image.

¹⁰ Here the poet addressed “Brothers,” which may be compared with the biblical Wisdom Literature, where the didactic address to “my son” is common: see, e.g., Prov 1:1. Both terms imply some sort of homiletic or pedagogic context for the ensuing address.

¹¹ Here, as often, “sleep” refers to a sleep of the spirit, and not ordinary physical sleep. The soul, if not aroused to repentance, is said to be asleep. Compare Ephes 5:14.

¹² Cf. Ps 90 (89):5 but there the image is used to heighten the idea of the transience of humans.

¹³ This image may have been constructed on the foundation of Matt 11:34 which has both the elements of finding a treasure, which is for Matthew, the kingdom of heaven and rejoicing. Or it may simply be a simile drawn from poetic tradition and based, of course, on real life.

5. Յորժամ հրամայէ Աստուած,
 Ու խընդիր գան մարդոյն հոգոյն
 Պահիկ մի դադար չի տան,
 Որ տեսնու զորդիքն իւր սիրուն:

5. When God commands,
 And they come to seek man's soul,¹⁴
 They do not give (him) a moment's respite,
 So as to see his beloved children.

6. Զաշերն ողորմուկ ածէ
 Ու նայի ի դէմ սիրելուն,
 Ի ճարկէ ճարակ ընկնի
 Զի գըտնու հընար գերծանելուն:

6. He directs wretched eyes
 And regards his loved one's faces,
 He tumbles from ploy to ploy,¹⁵
 He finds no means to escape.¹⁶

7. Հառաշէ սըրտէն ի վեր
 Ու կոչէ զմայր տղաքներուն,
 Ու հանց պատասխան տայ իւրն,
 որ նուազի ի խեղճ յասելուն:

7. From his heart he sighs towards Heaven,
 And he calls to the children's mother,
 And speaks¹⁷ to her thus;
 and¹⁸ saying, "Miserable (me)!" she fainted.

8. «Քո կէս մարմընոյդ եմ ես,
 որ կանցնիմ ի ներքեւ հողուն.
 Զագե՛ր ձեր ծընօղն եմ ես,
 Որ կերթամ այլ ոչ գամ ի տուն»:

8. "I am that part of your¹⁹ body
 that will pass to beneath the earth.
 Nestlings, I am your parent,
 Who will depart and not return home.

9. Հիմիկ դուք ձեզ պէտ արէք,
 Թողէք զշարն, գնացէք հետ բարուն.
 Զարին ատեցող լերուք,
 Որ չլինիք բաժին գեհենուն:

9. "Now, you do what you ought,
 Abandon evil, go after the good,²⁰
 Become haters of evil,²¹
 And you will escape Hell's lot.

10. Բարեացըն սիրող լերուք,
 Գործեցէք 'ւ արէք ձեզ անուն,
 գէմ քան ըզթարթել ականն,
 Մահն ի մօտ է ադամորդուն:

10. "Be lovers of good,
 Work and make a (good) name for yourself.
 Faster than the blink of the eye,
 Death approaches Adam's children."

¹⁴ The verb "come" has an unspoken subject, "the angels". On the idea that angels come and take the soul at the time of death, see *QGreg* §9, where we read: "St. Gregory said to the archangel, "How do you take the soul of the sinner?" The idea of an angelic psychopomp is already present in *QEzra* A 19-21, *QEzra* B 6, *TAbr* B 13:3 and compare *TAbr* A 17:7, *TAbr* B 6; 2 *Bar* 51:1-6, and *Apoc Paul* 11, 15.

¹⁵ Apparently meaning: from one possible penitential act to another.

¹⁶ Escape the angel and equally, his fate

¹⁷ Or: responds.

¹⁸ Literally: so that.

¹⁹ His wife's body

²⁰ The same sentiment is expressed differently in Ps. 34 (33):15 and 37 (36):27 where we read *հոտորեա ի շարէ եւ արա գարի*. This idea also recurs repeatedly in Proverbs: 3:7, 13:19, 16:6, and 16:17. Since the biblical verbiage is not used by Khachatur, this obvious idea here may not owe anything to biblical allusion and its use in Psalms and Proverbs might be coincidental.

²¹ Or: the Evil One.

2. MY SOUL THE ACCUSER²²

This interesting poem presents a dialogue-dispute between body and soul, with judicial overtones. Literary dialogues were well known in the early Christian centuries and before, a famous example being Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*. Dispute dialogue poems also appear in literature early, some of the most striking surviving in Syriac.²³ Khachatur presents a dispute dialogue between the body and the soul in this world,²⁴ and it is implied that these are their speeches in the heavenly court of justice

Such dialogues occur in various contexts and our poem here is comparable with the dialogue of soul and body in *Questions of St. Gregory*.²⁵ While there the stress is on the solidarity of body and soul in virtuous acts, in Khachatur's poem the soul accuses the body of leading it astray. Beneath this lies an attitude clearly weighted towards the soul as opposed to the body, which, of course, depends upon a particular attitude to anthropology. A similar underlying pattern is also present in Pseudo-Ezekiel's "Parable of the Lame and the Blind", again about the relative merits of soul and body.²⁶

The poem is monorhyme in three lines of each two stanzas and one line not rhyming. The non-rhyming line is line 3 except for stanza 1, where it is line 1. The unique rhyme on line 1 of stanza 1 is nju which is taken up as the dominant rhyme in stanzas 3-4, thus contributing to the unification of the poem.

<i>Stanza 1</i>	<i>Stanza 2</i>	<i>Stanza 3</i>	<i>Stanza 4</i>
<i>nju</i>	<i>ju</i>	<i>uju</i>	<i>nju</i>
<i>ju</i>	<i>ju</i>	<i>nju</i>	<i>nju</i>
<i>ju</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>lu</i>	<i>hliã</i>
<i>ju</i>	<i>ju</i>	<i>nju</i>	<i>nju</i>

*The syllable count is uneven and the poem is clearly not formally structured on that basis.*²⁷

²² Avdalbekyan (1958), 152, Poem no. 7.

²³ See one reference among many devoted to Justin's text: J. C. M. van Winden (1971), *An Early Christian Philosopher. Justin Martyr's Dialogue With Trypho Chapters One to Nine*. (Philosophia Patrum, 1; Leiden: Brill). Concerning Syriac dispute poems, see S. P. Brock (2001), "The Dispute Poem: From Sumer to Syriac," *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies*, 1: 3-10. S. P. Brock (1983), "Dialogue Hymns of the Syriac Churches," *Sobornost*, 5: 35-45.

²⁴ A quite similar dialogue between body and soul is to be found, as I have already observed, in the Armenian text *Questions of St. Gregory*. See Recension I §§13-24 published in M. E. Stone (2018), "The Armenian Questions of St. Gregory: A Text Descended from 4 Ezra. Recension I," *LM*, 131: 142-72, especially pp. 149-155, and Recension II §§13-17 (forthcoming). There the dispute is about which of the two is responsible for the person's fate on the Day of Judgement.

²⁵ See the preceding note.

²⁶ See Michael E. Stone, Benjamin G. Wright, and David Satran (2000), *The Apocryphal Ezekiel*. (Early Judaism and its Literature 18; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature), 9-18 (Esther Chazon), 61-69 (Marc Bregman).

²⁷ Stanza 1 has: 9, 6; 7, 8 syllables; stanza 2 has 7, 5(7); 7, 8; stanza 3 has 7, 7(8); 7, 7; stanza 4 has 8, 8; 8, 7.

ՀՈԳԻՍ ԴԱՏԱԽԱԶ

1. Հոգիս դատախազ լինի մարմնոյս
՚Ի եղուկ տայ սրտիս,
Թէ՛ է՞ր կուտեցեր զշարիս
Յանցաւոր այս սուտ աշխարհիս:
2. Կամ է՞ր կորուսեր դու զիս,
՚Ի անշէջ կրակ դրիր յիս.
Այն օրն, որ հաշիւ լինի,
Դու այրիս, ՚ի անգերծ տանջեն զիս:
3. Մարմնոյս պատասխանն է այս,
որ ի տալ մտացս եւ հոգոյս՝
«Զիս պարտաւոր է՞ր առնես,
Այդ սուտ է դուր իմ խոցերոյս:
4. Ես ձի, եւ դու տէ՛ր ես ձիոյս,
Ես ծառայ, ՚ի իշխան դու գերոյս,
Կամիլըդ քո՞ գործ լինէր ինձ.
Մեզ է՞ր զընես հողածնոյս»:

MY SOUL THE ACCUSER

1. My soul accuses my body,
and causes my heart's dismay,
Saying, "Why did you heap up evils
in this false, transient world?"
2. "Why did you destroy me?
and put me into unquenchable fire?
On that day when there is a reckoning,
you bum and they surely punish me."²⁸
3. This is my body's answer,
which it gives to my mind and soul,
"Why do you make me guilty?
My hurts are false and unjust."²⁹
4. "I am a horse — and you are this horse's
owner,
I am a servant — and you are lord of me,
the captive,
Yours is the will — mine the act.
Why do you accuse me of sin, who am
born of dust?"

3. THIS WORLD WAS LIKE A SEA³⁰

In this poem, Khachatur expresses his sense of the transience of human life and of the senses. Jewelled words and love pass away with death. The body dies and is buried in the grave; death's pallor replaces vivacity. This theme greatly occupied the poet's thought and feelings, for it is to be observed in all four poems translated here.

ԱՆԽԱՐՀՍ ԷՐ Ի ԾՈՎ ՆՐՄԱՆ

1. Աշխարհս էր ի ծով նրման,
Զիս ի վայր տարաւ յանդիման.
Կենցաղս էր յալեաց նրման,
Զիս ի մէջ էառ քան զընդան
2. Սէրն էր անդընդոց նրման,
Զիս ի վայր քաշեց փոշիման.
Աւուրքս էր ծաղկի նրման,
Որ անցաւ երազի նրման.

THIS WORLD WAS LIKE A SEA

1. This world was like a sea,
It led me downwards opposite.³¹
This life was like waves,
It held me in tighter than a prison.
2. Love was like an abyss,
Regret dragged me downwards.³²
My days were³³ like a flower,
Which passes as a dream.

²⁸ The body will burn and the soul will be punished.

²⁹ You fail to do justice to my hurts/wounds: suggestion of Th. M. van Lint.

³⁰ Avdalbekyan (1958), 153, poem no. 7.

³¹ I.e. the abyss, or "for all to see" (Th.M.v.L.).

³² I.e., into the depths.

³³ Observe the singular verb with a plural subject. The similes here may be derived from Psa. 90(89):5 "Thou dost sweep men away; they are like a dream, like grass which is renewed in the morning." Compare Ps 102(103):11, 16. The poet replaces Psalms' "grass" with "flower".

3. Մարմին, մեռանիլ կայ քեզ
Եւ մըտնուլ ի նեղ գերեզման,
Աչերըդ խըփուի, գերի՛:
Ի երեսիդ գոյնըն հողանան:

4. Ճօհար բան եւ բառ լեզուիդ
Այդ ամէնն ի քէն վերանան,
Մնտաի սիրելիքըդ քո
Զքեզ թողուն, եւ ի քէն հեռանան:

3. O body, dying is for you,
And entering a narrow grave.
Your eyes are closed, O captive,
And your face's colour is earthen.³⁴

4. Your jewelled word and tongue's speech,
All these are taken from you
Your loved ones are nothing,
They leave you, draw far from you.

4. POEM³⁵

In this short poem composed of two gnomic quatrains of sapiential character, Khachatur apostrophizes himself. The advice he gives himself is proverbial in character and is, formulated as a series of binary oppositions.

The monorhyme pattern is Է in lines A C of each stanza and Է₁ in lines B D.

ԽԱՉԱՏՈՒՐ, ԱՌՆԵԼ ԼԱՅԻ Է

KHACHATUR, IT IS BETTER TO ACT

1. Խաչատու՛ր, առնել լաւ է,
Քան ասել եւ ոչ կատարել,
Աղքատ եւ արդար լաւ է,
Քան գիտուն եւ յոյժ մոլորել:

2. Սակաւ գիտութիւն լաւ է,
Քան գիտել եւ ոչ կատարել
Մին ձեռք յերկինս լաւ է
Քան երկու ձեռք դեգերել:

1. Khachatur, it is better to act
than to speak and not to do.
Poor and righteous is better
than learned and greatly erring.

2. A little knowledge is better
than to know and not to do.
In heaven with one hand is better
than to wander about³⁶ with two.

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³⁴ For color of face as a sign of strong emotion, compare Dan 5:6, 9, 10, 7:28; Armenian version of 4 Ezra 5:16 ms A. Here, however, it is used to indicate the pallor of death.

³⁵ Avdalbekyan (1958), 160, Poem No. 12.

³⁶ Implying: err, sin.