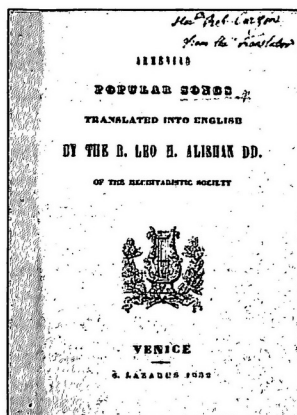


# THE WARM RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FATHER GHEWOND ALISHAN AND SIR ROBERT CURZON HINGED UPON THEIR LOVE OF ARMENIAN MANUSCRIPTS (BL. MSS. OR. 8833 AND OR. 15277)

This article concerns two recently discovered documents concerning the Mechitharist Father and scholar Ghewond Alishan (1820-1901) and Robert Curzon, the 14<sup>th</sup> Baron Zouche of Harringworth (1810-1873).



1. *Armenian Popular Songs*. Translated into English by the R. Leo M. Alishan DD. of the Mechitharistic Society. Venice, S. Lazarus, 1852.<sup>1</sup>

1 This copy was found in the Manouk Parikian Collection donated to Eton College, which I was invited to catalogue between 2016-2017. The title page and the letter tipped inside the front cover is reproduced in Dr. Vrej Nerses Nersessian's *The Parikian Collection of Early Armenian Printing at Eton College Library, Eton College*,

Top right corner of the title page has this inscription in Ghewond Alishan's hand:

*"Hon[oura]ble Rob[ert] Curzon from the Translator"*

Inserted inside the front cover there this ten line letter written on the decorated letter head paper of the Congregation, with the stamped logo of the Island of S. Lazar and beneath it in Armenian the legend «Սուրբ Ղազար»<sup>2</sup>

*The 20<sup>th</sup> Octo[ber] 1853.*

*My dear Friend,*

*I hope you are well, and I wish you must be always so, You and all your family, with which I had the honour to be acquainted at Parham<sup>3</sup>. I beg you to present them my best compliments and believe me.*

*Your servant*

*L. Dr. Alishan*

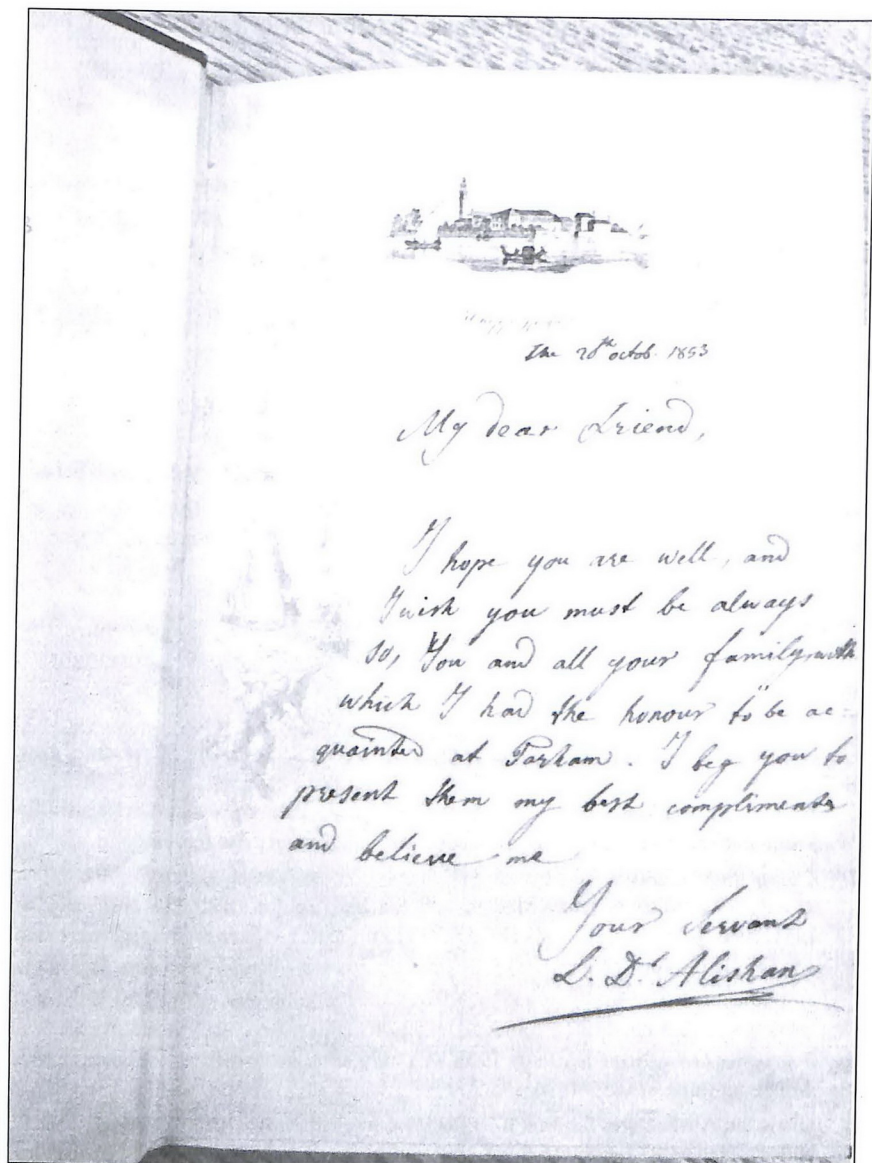
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2018, p. 13 (Parikian Collection Iaa6.4.33). The presentation volume is beautifully bound in expensive green coloured leather with gilt borders and lettering.

2 Հայոց երգի ուսմական = Armenian popular songs, translated into English by the Rev. Leo M. Alishan. D. D. Mechitharist Society, Venice 1852; See Հայ գիրքը: 1851-1900 բուսականներին [The Armenian Book in 1851-1900], N. Oskanyan and others (eds.) Erevan 1999, no. 111, p. 10; Catalogue des Livres Orientaux formant la bibliotheque de Feu M. Edourad Dulaurier, Paris 1885, lot. 629, p. 46 (This is the sale catalogue of the library of E. Dulaurier held in 1885); SALMASLIAN, A. S., *Bibliographie Del L'Armenie*, Paris 1965 lists only 1862 ed. which is not listed in The Armenian Book in 1851-1900.

Ghewond Alishan was the first to collect and publish Armenian folk songs with this slim volume of 85 pages (16,5 x 8 cm) first in the pages of the monthly *Bazmavep* and then in form of a book in 1852. See HAYRAPETIAN, S. P., *Հայոց հին և միջնադարեան գրականութեան պատմութիւն* [History of ancient and medieval Armenian literature], Erevan 1994, p. 612, note. 1.

3 Parham Park in the county of Sussex was the country residence of the Curzon family.



Armenian Popular Songs (inside of the front cover)

Dear Sir,

Venice, 18 May, 1884.

I am very obliged to you for your good and reciprocal remembrance of me: and I am sure to be very much pleased and interested in reading your production on Armenia when it reaches my hands. I also take the liberty to be proud of my friend on his success in circulating so a <sup>great</sup> number of that book in a so short a time as only one week.

Respecting the notices on the History of Armenia which you ask me, I send you the little book of M. Le Vaillant, which is a Description of St. Lazareus, with a Supplement sur l'histoire et la littérature arméniennes.

You may also consult the History of Armenia translated from the armenian and published by John Abdall at Calcutta in 1827, or the Memoir on the Geography and ancient history of Armenia by E. Smith and Dwight. London.

J. Wightman. Regarding the prints of Churches and Ruins, I was not able to satisfy you, because the views which we had prepared for an illustration of our own country, and which you have seen in my album, are not yet published, and when executed, I will send you some of them: but as it is still delayed

2. Double page plain white fine paper (21x17 cm) written on first two sides (total of 32 lines), in thin pen in black ink in tidy cursive hand. The facing front and back of the second page are empty.



I will mention to you that their originals are the  
*Voyages of M. Dubois de Montperieux in Caucasus &*  
*and M. Texier Voyage en Perse, Arménie, &c.*

I shall be happy if I can serve you in any  
 similar occasion: and I beg you to present my  
 compliments to M.<sup>rs</sup> Curzon, your Parents, your Brother  
 and his family, believing me.

Yours  
 humble servant  
 R. L. Alishan

Dear Sir,

I am very obliged to you for your good and reciprocal remembrance of me and I am sure to be very much pleased and interested in reading your production on Armenia<sup>4</sup> when it reaches my hands. I also take the liberty to be proud of my friend on his success in circulating so a great number of that book in a short a time as only one week.

Respecting the notices on the History of Armenia which you ask me, I send you the little book of Le Vaillant which is a description of St. Lazarus with a supplement 'Sur l'histoire et armenienne'<sup>5</sup>.

You may also consult the History of Armenia translated from the Armenian and published by John Avdall at Calcutta in 1827<sup>6</sup> or the Memoir on the Geography and ancient history of Armenia by E. Smith and

4 CURZON ROBERT, *Armenia: A year at Erzroom, and on the frontiers of Russia, Turkey and Persia*. John Murray, London 1854.

5 Le VAILLANT DE FLORIVAL E., *Mechitaristes de St. Lazare. Avec un supplement a histoire d'Armenie et a la literature armenienne*, Venise, St. Lazare, 1856.

6 Avdall Johannes, Esq., *History of Armenia* by Father Michael Chamich [Mik'ayel Tchamtcian] from B. C. 2247 to the year of Christ 1780, or 1229 of the Armenian era, Translated from the original Armenian by Johannes Avdall, in two volumes. Calcutta 1927. This is ՄԻԻԲԱՅԷԼ ԶԱՄԳԵԱՆՑ, Պատմութիւն Հայոց ի սկզբանէ աշխարհի մինչեւ ցաւ Տեառն 1784 [History of Armenia from the creation up to the

Dwight, London S. Wightman<sup>7</sup>. Regarding the prints of churches and Ruins, I was not able to satisfy you, because the views which we had prepared for an illustration of our own country, and which you have seen in my album are not yet published, and when executed<sup>8</sup>, I will send you some of them, but as it is still delayed [under side].

I will mention to you that their original are *The voyages of M. Dubois de Montpereux<sup>9</sup> in Caucasus and M. Texier Voyage in Perse, Armenie<sup>10</sup>*.

I shall be happy if I can serve you in any similar occasion: and I beg you to present my compliments to Mrs. Curzon, your Parents, your Brother and his family, believing me,

Your

Humble servant

P. L. Alishan

The above two newly found documents provide further documentary evidence on the close relationship between the two learned contemporaries.

In an article written in 2003, I have set out the origins of the relations between Fr. Ghewond Alishan and Lord Curzon in the context of

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year of the Lord 1784], Venice 1784, 3 vols. Reprinted, Erevan State University Publications, 1984/85 to mark the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1<sup>st</sup> printing.

- 7 SMITH, E. and DWIGHT, H. G. O., *Missionary researchers in Armenia including a journey through Asia Minor and into Georgia and Persia, with a visit to the Nestorian and Chaldean Christians of Ourmiah and Salmas, to which is fixed a Memoir on the Geography and ancient history of Armenia* by J. Couder. London, Wightman, 1834.
- 8 ALISHAN GHEWOND, «*Գաղափական Աշխարհագրութիւն նկարացոյց պատկերոք*» [*Illustrated Political Geography of Armenia*, Compiled by Father Ghewond Alishan vardapet of the Mkhitharist Congregation in Venice], Venice, 1853, pp. xvii+801+105; Cf. *Geographie politique par le P. Leon Marc Alichan*, Venice 1853 in *Catalogue des Livres Orientaux formant la bibliotheque de Feu M. Edouard Dulaurier*, Paris 1885, no. 738, p. 53.
- 9 DUBIOS DE MONTPEREUX, F., *Voyage autour du Caucase, en Georgie, en Armenie et en Crimée, a vec un atlas géographique, géologique, archéologique...* Paris, Gide, 1839-1843. 6 vols.
- 10 TEXIER Ch., *Renseignements archéologiques et géographiques sur quelques points de l'Asie-Mineure, de l'Arménie et de la Perse*. Paris, BSG, 1841, Vol. XV.

two Armenian manuscripts that formerly belonged to Robert Curzon and are now in the British Library's collection of Armenian manuscripts (formerly the British Museum)<sup>11</sup>. The association of the British Museum with the Mechitarist Congregation in Venice dates back to the period when Sir Anthony Panizzi (1797-1879) in 1837 was appointed chief keeper of the printed books. In his first meeting with the Trustees of the Museum he raised the idea of a national public library and to that end recommended better Parliamentary provision for the Museum. Panizzi instigated the Trustees to secure a 'Parliamentary grant for the purchase of all the publications issued by the press of the Mechitarist monks of the Island of San Lazzaro near Venice, whence had just appeared the great dictionary of the language'<sup>12</sup>. *'The great dictionary of the language'* was «Նոր Բառգիրք Հակազեան Լեզուի» [New Dictionary of the Armenian language], Venice 1836-1837<sup>13</sup>.

The first of these manuscripts is a Bible of the Old and New Testament with complete texts of apocryphal books present in Armenian manuscripts of the Bible entered as number 8 in the collections of Robert Curzon<sup>14</sup>. His entire collection described by him in his *Catalogue of Materials* ...was bequeathed to the British Museum by Darea Baroness

11 NERSESSIAN NERSES (VREJ), *'The co-operation between Father Ghewond Ali-shan and Lord Robert Curzon in the field of Biblical research (The British Library, Ms., Or. 15277)' HHH XXXIII* (2003), pp. 433-440; *A Catalogue of the Armenian manuscripts in the British Library acquired since the year 1913 and of collections in other libraries in the United Kingdom*, The British Library, 2012, vols. II, MS. Or. 8833, pp. 59-71 and, MS. Or. 15277, pp. 99-105. *The Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts* prepared by F. C. Conybeare printed in 1913 contains the descriptions of 149 manuscripts while in the *Catalogue* of 2012 contains an additional 165 manuscripts added to the collections during the of the curatorship of the author between the years 1975-2012.

12 ESDAILE ARUNDELL, *The British Museum Library*, London, 2<sup>nd</sup> impression, 1948, pp. 95-96, 309-310.

13 Authors Gabriel Awetik'ian (1750-1827), Khatchatur Siwrmelian (1751-1827), Mkrtitch Awgerian (1762-1854), 2 vols. 1140 and 1067 pp. Facsimile edition Erevan University Press, 1979.

14 CURZON ROBERT, *Catalogue of Materials for writing, early writings on tablets and stones, rolled and other manuscripts and oriental manuscripts books, in the library of the Honourable Robert Curzon at Parham in the country of Sussex* [compiled by Robert Curzon], William Nicol, London, 1849. Arundell Esdaile, with an Introduction by Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, *The British Museum Library, a short history and survey*, London, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1948, pp. 108, 109 & note 18, p. 362.

Zouche on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1917<sup>15</sup>. On November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1996, ninety seven years later Mr. Mark Frankland a descendent of the Curzon family presented himself to me with a manuscript under his arms expressing desire to donate it to the library. The manuscript is entitled *Translations of the Apocryphal Books of Asenath and Moses, the Epistles of the Corinthians to St. Paul and St. Paul's Third Epistle to the Corinthians from original MSS in the library at Patham, 1853*<sup>16</sup>. Lord Robert Curzon provides a full detailed account of his pursuits of manuscripts in his Preface (fols. 3-9) (see above note 12).

***The Armenian manuscripts collected by Sir Robert Curzon, 14<sup>th</sup> Baron Zouche of Harringworth (1810-1873)***<sup>17</sup>

British involvement in Persian politics was to an over-riding concern for the defence of India and fear of Russian expansion in that direction. The British had played an important part behind the scenes in securing peace for Persia through the humiliating Treaties of Gulestan (1813) and Tukmenchai (1828)<sup>18</sup>. A Mixed Boundary Commission, on

15 NERSESSAIN VREJ, 'Robert Curzon (1810-1873) and the Levant'. An exhibition leaflet held in the British Library (30<sup>th</sup> May – 25<sup>th</sup> October, 1992). The collection donated contained: 16 Arabic, 10 Armenian, 2 Chinese, 42 Coptic/Arabic, 10 Ethiopian, 2 Georgian, 1 Hindi 1 Hindustani, 6 Persian, 1 Sanskrit, 4 Syriac, and 6 Turkish.

16 This MSS is now in the British Library's collection under code Or.15277. See VREJ NERSESSIAN, *A catalogue of Armenian manuscripts in the British library acquired since the year 1913...* Op. cit., No. 6, pp. 99-105 and 'The co-operation between Father Ghewond Alishan and Lord Robert Curzon...' op.cit., pp. 433-440.

17 NERSESSIAN, VREJ, *A catalogue of the Armenian manuscripts in the British Library*, op. cit. vol. I, pp. 10-13; CDNB vol. I, London 1995, p. 718. The author in his collection of books has a copy of «Առիթ Բարեկամի ըստ Մարտիրոսի» printed in Moscow, in 1831, which has an inscription on the front fly-leaf which reads "Viscount Curzon Kedleston from the collection of the Marajah of Patiatas". This is George Nathaniel Curzon, 1st Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, K. G. (1859-1925), Viceroy and Governor-General of India 1898-1905. Author of *Persia and the Persian Question*. Curzon as parliamentary under-secretary for foreign affairs, 1895–8 disapproved of Lord Salisbury's policy of what he regarded as undue passivity in matters of Armenian atrocities; as Foreign Secretary, 1919-1924 dominated abortive Conference of Lausanne and restored British prestige in Tuekey, 1922-1923. See, CDNB, *ibid*, Denis Wright, *The English amongst the Persians. Imperial lives in 19<sup>th</sup> century Iran*, London 2001, p. 11.

18 SYKES PERCY, Sir, *A history of Persia in two volumes*, London 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1936, pp. 311-322.

which all four Powers were represented (Persia, Ottoman Turkey, Russia and Great Britain) with the task of determining on a frontier running from the Persian Gulf to Mount Ararat met in Erzerum in 1843. There were three British Commissioners one of whom was Robert Curzon, a kinsman of George Nathaniel Curzon (1859-1925).<sup>19</sup>

After Curzon's death his son Robin, 15<sup>th</sup> Baron Zouche, deposited his MSS in the British Museum. They were given to the Department in 1917 as part of a larger bequest by Darea Curzon (1860-1917) 16<sup>th</sup> Baroness Zouche of Harringworth, Robert Curzon's daughter. Among the 128 Mss in various oriental languages were ten Armenian manuscripts numbered Or. 8825-8834 which he had collected between 1838-1839, during the second of his visits to Egypt, which he colourfully narrated in a classic of Orientalist travel literature *Visits to the Monasteries in the Levant* (chapters 7-12).<sup>20</sup> On his first Levantine visit (1833-1834) Curzon's interest had, it seems, been primarily Greek. Sir Thomas Phillips' check list of the Curzon collection published a few years later contains Mss acquired from his first visit<sup>21</sup>. His motive was not only sheer love of things ancient, but also the express and possibly original intent of studying and illustrating 'the rise and progress of the art of writing... the alterations of different ages and nations, both in the materials in which they wrote and the manner in which the original drawings and hieroglyphs gradually assumed the form of perfect writing'<sup>22</sup>.

In the second document dated 18<sup>th</sup> May 1854, Ghewond Alishan without giving the title of the book refers to Curzon's '*success in cir-*

19 Wright Denise, *The English amongst the Persians, Imperial lives in 19<sup>th</sup> centuries Iran*, London 2001, p. 140.

20 London 1849; many subsequent editions. A Coptic manuscript No. 201 (AD 1796) of the 'Minor Prophets', on its lower hinge has the impression of the seal of [«Պետրոս պատրիարք Երուսաղեմի 1244»] the Armenian Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem Petros III Ewdokiatsi (AD 1793-1800) acquired by Robert Curzon, between 1833 and c. 1839. This suggests that the manuscript may have been bound in the bindery of the Armenian Patriarchate. An impression of the same size seal has been erased from fl. ir. See Bentley Layton, *Catalogue of Coptic literary manuscripts in the British Library acquired since the year 1906*, The British Library, 1987, pp. 301-304.

21 PHILLIPPS THOMAS, Sir, *Catalogus Manuscriptorum Magnae Britanniae*, Middle Hill, ca. 1838. An enlarged version appeared in 1850.

22 Note in Robert Curzon's copy of, *Catalogue of Materials for Writing, Early Writings on Tablets and Stones, Rolled and other MSS in the County of Sussex*, now Department of Western MSS K. R. 10. d. An edition of 50 copies was printed in London by William Nicol, 1849



culating so a great number of that book in a short a time as only one week'. The book in question is: *Armenia: A year at Erzerum and on the frontiers of Russia, Turkey, and Persia*<sup>23</sup>. The content of Alishan's letter suggests that Curzon had written to him seeking sources for his book *Armenia*. In his response Alishan lists a number of authors (see notes 3-5). From Alishan's letter it is also apparent that Curzon was asking for 'prints of Armenian churches and Ruins' which he was not able to satisfy because the views which he [Alishan] had prepared for the illustration of his own book «Տեղեկագիր Հայոց Մեծաց» and which Curzon had have seen in Alishan's Album<sup>24</sup> had not yet been published. But as the publication is delayed Alishan suggests that most of his most of his illustrations can be found in Ch. Tixier and F. Dubios de Montpereux [notes 7-8].

Among the ten manuscripts that once belonged to Robert Curzon is a manuscript of the Bible copied by the scribe Yovhannes Lehatsi (from Poland) copied in 1646, which was brought from Tiflis, by an English gentleman in 1847 which Curzon acquired and then donated it to the British Museum in 1917<sup>25</sup>. In his evaluation of the content of the manuscript, Curzon draws the attention of his readers to the fact that his copy contains 'apocryphal books generally belonging to the sects of Oriental Christian who falling into confusion and error in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries tried to support their heretical doctrines, by references to passages in books which they called scriptural but which seem frequently to have been forgeries invented purposely to give weight and authenticity to dogmas which were not founded in any text that could be discovered in the New and Old Testament'<sup>26</sup>. The apocryphal texts he has particularly in mind are the *History of Joseph and of his wife Asenath, daughter of Petafie priest of the city of Rum* (Fols. 37b-43a) [«Պատմութիւն Յովսէփայ եւ Կենդան անբաւ Ասւնէթի»] placed between 'The Testament of Benjemian' (fls. 36b-37b) and 'The Book of Sirach' (fls. 45a-52b)<sup>27</sup> and in the New

23 London: John Murray, Albemarle, 1854.

24 The 'Album' to which he is alluding to could be his «Տեղագիր Հայոց Մեծաց» work translated into French as "*Topographie de la Grande Armenie*", by E. Dulaurier and published. Note: The illustrations are all bear the signature 'R. Curzon'. in *Melanges Asiatiques*, St. Petersburg 1854, pp. 385-446.

25 NERSESSIAN VREJ, *A Catalogue of Armenian manuscripts in the British Library*, op. cit., MSS. No. 1, pp. 59- 71.

26 NERSESSIAN VREJ, op. cit., British Library Mss. Or. 15277[6], p. 100.

27 For a full Armenian description of Mss. Or. 8833 see Vrej Nersessian in GCMAB, op. cit., No. 290, pp. 959-964 and for the English *A Catalogue*, op. cit., No. 1, pp. 59-71.

Testament the *Epistle from the Corinthians to St. Paul, and St. Paul's Third Epistle to the Corinthians* (fols. 588b-589a). Curzon seems to imply that these texts were inserted into the canon long after the formation of the canon in 325 and were a consequence of the doctrinal controversies which eventually lead to the schism in 451. Curzon is reflecting on the warning all the church fathers gave to the faithful to be aware of un-canonical writings which can spread false teachings. Etymologically, the word *apocrypha* is of Greek derivation and signifies books that are 'hidden' in Armenian («ծածուկ») meaning 'hidden' or withdrawn from common use because they were regarded as containing mysterious or esoteric lore, too profound to be communicated to any except the initiated. From another point of view, however, it was held that such books deserved to be 'hidden' because they were spurious or heretical. Thus, the term has had an honourable significance as well as a derogatory one, depending upon who made use of the word. Such books make up a nucleus of fourteen or fifteen documents, some of which have been part of the Armenian Canon – such as the *'History of Joseph and his wife Asenath'*, the *'Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs'*, the spurious Letter from presbyters at Corinth to Paul and *'Third Letter of Paul to the Corinthians'* which we find common in Armenian manuscripts. Therefore, there is clear demarcation between books that are not acceptable and those that are tolerated but not included in the Canon.<sup>28</sup> In the Armenian tradition such books were included in the Canon not for reading in church but mostly for instruction<sup>29</sup>.

28 Adjemian, Chahe, Arch., *GCMAB*, Lisbonne, 1992, p. xcv; VREJ NERSESSIAN *'The Canon of the Armenian Bible'* in *The Bible in the Armenian Tradition*, The British Library, 2001, pp. 24-29. The Text of Joseph and Asenath in Armenian manuscript of the Bible is embedded in the Book of Genesis. Twenty six such examples are cited in GCMAB of which these are a few (The no's in bold refer to some of the entries). No. 88, Mat. no. 5781, AD. 1621; 258, Venice, no 10, AD. 1418-1422, ffs. 144b-152b; No. 226, Jerusalem no. 1929, 17<sup>th</sup> c., ffs. 251-255b; No. 220, Jerusalem no. 1927, AD. 1649, ffs. 40b-46b; 218; No. 218, Jerusalem no. 1934, AD. 1642-1646, ffs. 38a-44a; No. 210, Jerusalem no. 2558, AD. 1615, ffs. 86a-91a; No. 209, Jerusalem No. 3043, AD. 1606, ffs. 353a-359a, No. 189, Jerusalem no. 1925 AD. 1269, ffs. 265a-275b, No. 149, Mat. No. 205, 17<sup>th</sup> c., ffs. 36b-43b; British Library Curzon Mss no. Or. 8833, AD. 1646, ffs. 37a- 43a/b. In printed editions of the Bible the *Story of Joseph and Asenath* is in the Book of Genesis chapter 41: vv. 45 «Եւ կոչեաց Փարաւոն զանուն Յովսէփայ՝ Փոստիթոնիանէ եւ ետ նմա Զասանէթա դուստր Պետրափրեա» while the *apocrypha* «Եւ եղև յամին յառաջնումն, որ օր էր եօթներորդ ամսոյն».

29 The word 'apocrypha' is the neuter plural of a Greek adjective meaning 'hidden'. Books might be hidden or withheld from general circulation because they contained

The Bible in his collection which he describes as 'the most splendid that I have met in the East, or in any country' has the texts of Joseph and Asenath and the Epistle from the Corinthians to St Paul and the Third letter of Paul to the Corinthians. In reference to the latter Curzon mentions the translation done by Lord Byron, with the assistant of Father Pasquale Aucher (pseud. Yarutiwn Awgerian v. n.) 'a monk of the monastery of St. Lazarus, at Venice, a man of extraordinary learning, who speaks most of the European languages, as well as Turkish, Armenian, and other oriental tongues. He translated these Epistles into English, with the assistance of Lord Byron'<sup>30</sup>. When Byron learned that the Armenian Bible contained the apocryphal letters of St. Paul, his interest was sufficiently aroused to urge him to prepare an English translation. In a letter to Thomas Moore dated March 31, he describes how he has rendered these epistles "into spiritual prose English". In his biography of the poet, Moore correctly surmises that Byron's version of these spurious letters printed in Lord Byron's *Armenian Exercises and Poetry*<sup>31</sup> was "the first that has ever been attempted in English"<sup>32</sup>. 'In fact, Byron was the first to render any Armenian text into English, since the Whiston Brothers chose a "learned" language, Latin instead' for their translation of the Letters included in their translation of the History of Movses Khorenatsi<sup>33</sup>. Curzon in a short

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esoteric lore, suitable only for the initiated. When the Canon was finally fixed, the whole of this literature was excluded, and therefore such hidden lore was regarded dangerous'. See PETER R. ACKROYD, 'The Old Testament in the making' in *The Cambridge History of the Bible. From the beginning to Jerome* (eds.), P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans, CUP, 1989, vol. I, p. 155.

- 30 Curzon Robert, Sir, *Armenia*, *op. cit.*, p. 226-227; BRUCE M. METZGER, *An introduction to the Apocrypha*, OUP, 1977.
- 31 THOMAS MOORE, *Lord Byron's Life Letters and Journals*, London 1830; *Armenian Exercises and Poetry*, Venice 1870
- 32 THOMAS MOORE, *op. cit.* Vol. II, p. 328.
- 33 Whiston G & W, *Moses Chorenensis Historiae Armeniaca, Libri III*, London, 1736; Charles Dowsett, "The Madman has come again". 'Byron and Armenian', JSAS 4 (1988-89), pp. 28-29. It is reported that when Byron after his initial visit returned the next day to begin his Armenian lessons Father Awgerian commented upon this surprising consistency with the words «Ժենըն մորեն եկաւ» ('The Madman has come back again') was reported by Khatchik Dashtents «Քայրամը եւ հայերը», Erevan 1959, p. 46, explains that this phrase in Armenian has an indication of flattery and affection'; See also BEATRICE HANSS, «Լորտ Պայրըն եւ Միֆթարեան հայերը» = *Byron and the Mekhitarist Fathers* on the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death

passage in *Armenia* in the section on 'The Holy Books' introduces the presence of the Book of Asenath in his copy of the Bible beginning with these words 'I am not aware that the *Book of Asenath* has been printed in any European language. This curious book was translated into Italian, from an ancient Armenian manuscript of the Bible in my possession<sup>34</sup>, by an Armenian friend, and translated from the Italian into English by myself: this I presume to be the only copy of the *Book of Asenath* in English language'. He then gives a brief resume of the content: 'It is a work of considerable length, and is interesting, not only from a place it holds in the estimation of a numerous body of Christians, but also from the picture it presents of the manners and customs of Egypt, at some remote period when it was written. Several passages in it indicate that it must have been composed when what may be called the classic style of life was still in use. Whether it was included among the number of the sacred books collected by Mesrob I do not know'. He concludes that such literature was produced by heresiarchs in many countries of the East, who, being unable to produce texts to support their views from the accepted books of the Sacred Scriptures to prove the truth of their doctrines, invented others more suitable to their purposes, and written more in accordance with their views<sup>35</sup>. This short passage has raised several points most of which have been answered by biblical scholarship since the time of Curzon.

The 'Book of Joseph and Asenath' or, as it is otherwise called the 'Confession and Prayer of Asenath' was made known to the medieval world in the *Speculum Historiale* of Vincent of Beauvais (c. 1260) on the bases of which other versions appeared in quick succession: French (1495), German (1539), Greek (1713-1723), Latin (1889-1890), Armenian (1885-1886, repr. 1896). The presence of the Armenian version in manuscript texts is first mentioned by Yovhannes *sarkawag* (the Deacon) in 1058. The credit of preparing a critical text of the Armenian version based on six manuscripts in the library the Monastery of St. Lazarus belongs to Father Sargis Yovsep'eants<sup>36</sup>. The English version of which

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(1824-1974), and «Լորտ Պայրըն հայ գրականութեան մէջ = *Byron in the Armenian literature*», *Hay Endanik*, Nov-Dec (1974), pp. 6-13.

34 This is his Mss. no. 8 and now BL MSS. Or. 8833.

35 CURZON ROBERT, *Armenia, op. cit.*, pp. 225-226.

36 «Թանգարան Հին և Նոր Նախնեաց: Ա. Ամկանոն Գիրք Հին Կտակարանաց [Treasury of ancient and modern Fathers. I. Un-Canonical books of the Old Testament], Compiled by Father Sargis Yovsep'eants', Venice 1896, pp. xi-xii, 152-198.

can be found in *The Uncanonical Writings of the Old Testament*, translated into English by Rev. Dr. Jacques Issaverdens.<sup>37</sup>

After this brief divergence I will now focus on the principle comment in the above passage ‘This curious book was translated into Italian, from an ancient Armenian manuscript in my possession, by an Armenian friend, and translated from the Italian into English myself’<sup>38</sup>. There is no doubt that Robert Curzon as collector had definite plan of research that gave impetus and shape to his activities as collector. But because of his imperfect education this plan was not informed by deep learning of the collection’s contents or of the various languages represented in it and so his plan could not be achieved. Out of characteristic generosity he shared his treasures with those who could, lending even the most precious items to scholars of several nationalities. Famous scholars like Archdeacon Henry Tattam, Joseph Bardelli, William Wright, Edward Cureton, J. B. Lightfoot. Among Armenians he sought the co-operation of Yartut’iwn Awgerian (Aucher) [1774-1854], Eduard Hiwrmwzian [1799-1876], finally Father Ghewond Alishan (1820-1901).<sup>39</sup>

In the manuscript Or. 15, 277 belonging to Sir Robert Curzon that entered the British Library’s collection of Armenian manuscripts ‘*Translations of the apocryphal books*’<sup>40</sup> has a colophon in Italian and Armenian which is the principal sources of the relationship between Robert Curzon and Father Alishan. I will give the full text in Armenian by Ghewond Alishan and the English translation of the Italian by Curzon.

Fol. 40a-b (p. 28b) «Նժդեհութեամբ սահեալ յանգղիական արհմեսն ի՛ Բարիսի դղեակ ամարանոց Գուրծըն Զուչ տոհմի, ես Հ. Ղեւոնդ վարդապետ Մ. Ալիշանեան, վանական Միխայիլ վանից Ս. Ղազարու որ ի Վենետիկ, Բարսեմանցի գլխամուրթինս Յովսէփայ եւ Ասանթի

37 Venice, 1901(reprints:1907, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1934) pp. 92. See also J. ISSAVERDENS, *The history of Asenath. An apocryphal writing found in Armenian manuscripts of the library of St. Lazarus, Venice*, Translated into English by the commander Rev. Dr. J. Issaverdens, Venice, 1900.

38 CURZON ROBERT, Sir, *Armenia*, op. cit., p. 225.

39 NERSESSIAN, VREJ, *Catalogue*, op. cit., Vol. I, p.101. For a letter of P. J. Dashian to Prof. Dr. C. Fred. Conybeare dated 10/11/1909, See VREJ NERSES NERSESSIAN, «Ֆ. Կ. Կոմիթեի Նիկողայոս Ադոնցի «Հայաստանը Յուստինիանոսը դարաշրջանում» անգլերէն առաջին Բարսեմանութեան մորայայտը բերանագիրը», in *Sion*, vol. 92, nos. 4-7(2020), pp. 144-159.

40 NERSESSIAN VREJ, *Catalogue*, op. cit. Ms[6], pp. 99-105



ի հայկական լեզուէ յիտալական րարբառ եւ ձեռամբ գրեցի ի ժդ-ժգ աւուրս մարգաց ամսեան, ի թուիս հայոց ՌՅԱ:

Ջհանդիպող տառիս վերծանութեան գհայկազն՝ աղաչեմ ամբառնալ զաչս ի վեր միանգամ առ իմ յիշատակի».

Fol. 43. A note in pencil above the text states “This is not to be placed with the text but after it”.

“The Book of Joseph and Asaneth. Translated from the original Armenian, into Italian, by Don Leone Alishan, monk of the Armenian monastery of St. Lazarus in the lagoons of Venice, during his residence at Parham House in the summer of the year 1852, and translated from Italian into English, by Robert Curzon, in the same year, at Parham”<sup>41</sup>.

Fol. 88. Memoria in Italian in the hand of Ghewond Alishan translated into English by Curzon (fols. 40a-b).

*“Father Leon Marcar Alishan; Doctor of Divinity, Monk of the Armenian Mekhitharites, of Saint Lazarus, Venice in the year of the Lord, 1852<sup>42</sup>, being in the capital of England, for the affairs of my society was courteously invited, by the noble gentleman, Robert Curzon, to his ancient villa of Parham Park, in the county of Sussex, where that honourable gentleman, kept, among other precious and most ancient manuscripts in various languages; also 10 Armenian m. s. s which I examined at my ease, for I am a great admirer of the manuscripts of my nation; Among these, there was an Armenian Bible, written probably, at the end of the XV century, or in the XVI century<sup>43</sup>; in which was also the apocryphal book*

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41 Mss. Or. 15, 277.

Fol. 11. Libro Di Giuseppe ed Asenath

Fols. 13-33 (pp. 1-21) Storie di Giuseppe e della sua moglie Asaneth, figlia di Petafre sacerdote della Città del Sole.

Fol. 33 (p. 21), Cantico della confessione d'Asaneth a Dio

Fol. 34-40 (pp. 22-28) Venuta di Giacobbe colla sua famiglia, e dimoro a Gesen.

Fol. 40b-a (28) Memoria

Fol. 40b (28) Ghewond Alishan's colophon in Armenian

42 In 1852 Ghewond Alishan visited a number of European cities, among them London. He also visited Oxford and Cambridge where he did some research on their Armenian manuscripts. See ‘Ghevond Alishan’ (1820-1901), in *The Heritage of Armenian literature. From the XVIII century to modern times*, Agop J. Hacikyan (ed.), Wayne State University Press, 2005, vol. III, p. 229.

43 The Bible to which Alishan is alluding was Mss 8 in Cuzon's collection now Mss. Or. 8833 in the British Library's collection. The MSS was copied by the scribe Yovhannes

*of the History of Joseph and Asenath, and as its possessor wished to have a translation of it, I made one, from the original, into the Italian tongue; which altho[v.n sic] incorrect and unpolished, is faithful in other respects.*

*I therefore, pray that noble gentleman, that he will keep this my little work, as a remembrance[ v.n sic] of my esteem for him; and of my gratitude for the kind hospitality, with which I was entertained, during certain days, by him and the whole noble family of his parents.*

*The abovementioned translation, was undertaken by me during the first three days of the month of July 1852 in a chamber from which I heard continually the rustling sighs of the leaves of trees twice as ancient as the leaves of that manuscript – and I also sighed for my country.*

*O thou who readest these lines of my hand-writing, during the time of the present, of a future generation, remember me a passing Pilgrim and think of thyself also, that thou art no less a Pilgrim, whoever and wherever thou mayest be<sup>44</sup>.*

Curzon in his *Armenia* quite rightly claims that his translation of Joseph and Asenath from the Italian ‘by an Armenian friend’ into English is the only copy of the Book of Asenath in the English language’ but it is quite enigmatic that having translated his ‘Armenian friend’s Memorial from Italian into English he does not name the translator in the Preface of his book.<sup>45</sup>

REV. DR. NERSES (VREJ) NERSESSIAN

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Lehatsi (from Poland) in A. E 1095 (= AD 1646). *History of Joseph and Asenath* is between fols. 37b. col. a and 43a/a following the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. For a full description see VREJ NERSESSIAN, *op. cit.* pp. 59-71.

44 «Որք, որ ընթերցեն իմ ձեռքով գրուած այս տողերը ներկայում կամ ապագայ սերունդներում՝ յիշէ՛ք ինձ անցնող ուխտաւորիս եւ իմէ՛ք ինչ էլ համարի ոչ պակաս մի ուխտաւոր ով էլ որ լինես որսել էլ որ լինես»:

45 CURZON ROBERT, *Armenia*, *op. cit.*, p. 225. It is surprising that Curzon in this account does not give the name of his ‘Armenian friend’ which we know was Ghewond Alishan. The first printed English text based on M. Batiffol’s published complete Greek text belongs to E. W. Brooks, *Joseph and Asenath. The Confession and prayer of Asenath daughter of Pentephres the priest*, London. SPCK, 1918 [*Translations of Early Documents Series II. Hellenistic-Jewish Texts*]. The reference to the Armenian version, pp. viii-ix, note 1 does not mention Curzon’s translation. The English translation by Rev. E. Cureton *The History of the Prophet Moses with Prefaces by Robert Curzon* was published in London by the Philobiblon Society, 1855-1856, 2 vols. This is the text from the Coptic Mss. no. 18 in the collection of Robert Curzon.

### Ամփոփում

**ՀԱՅԿԱԿԱՆ ՁԵՌԱԳԻՐՆԵՐՈՒ ՀԱՆԴԷՊ ՍԷՐԸ՝ ՀԻՄՔ  
Հ. ՂԵՒՈՆԴ ԱԼԻԾԱՆԻ ԵՒ ԼՈՐԴ ՌՈԲԵՐԹ ԿՈՐԶՈՆԻ  
ՍԵՐՏ ՄՏԵՐՄՈՒԹԵԱՆ**

**ՆԵՐՍԵՍԵԱՆ ՏԷՐ ՆԵՐՍԷՍ ՔԶՆ. (ՎՐԷԺ)**

1852 թ. Հայր Ղեւոնդ Ալիշանը՝ Լոնդոն եղած ժամանակ, Լորդ Ռոբերթ Կորզոնի հրաւերով հիւրընկալուում է իր դղեակում եւ նրա խնդրանքով Իտալերէնի է թարգմանում *«Պատմութիւն Յովսէփի եւ Ասանէթի»* պարականոն գիրքը, որն իր ունեցած Աստուածաշնչի մէջ կար: Այս ձեռագիրը, տասը այլ հայերէն ձեռագրերի հետ, 13 Հոկտեմբեր 1917 թ. նուիրաբերում է Բրիտանական Թանգարանին (այժմ Բրիտանական Գրադարան), եւ այժմ կրում է Or. 8833 թուահամարը:

1996 թ., մի այլ ժառանգ Կորզոնի գերդաստանից, Բրիտանական Գրադարանին է նուիրում Ռոբերթ Կորզոնի Թարգմանութիւն պարականոն գրքերի. *«Պատմութիւն Յովսէփայ եւ Ասանէթի եւ Թուղթ Կորնթացւոցն առ սուրբ առաքեալն Պօղոս եւ Թուղթ Նորոտրդ առ Կորնթացիսն սրբոյ առաքելոյն Պօղոսի»*, որը կրում է Or. 15277 թուահամարը, եւ որն իր մէջ պարունակում է Կորզոնի *«Յովսէփ եւ Ասանէթ»* գրքի անգլերէն թարգմանութիւնը՝ կատարուած Ալիշանի Իտալերէն թարգմանութիւնից, ինչպէս նաեւ Ալիշանի Իտալերէն յիշատակարանի անգլերէն թարգմանութիւնը:

Լոնդոնի Իտոն Կոլեջի [Eton College] գրադարանն ունի Ղեւոնդ Ալիշանի *«Հայոց երգք ոամկականք»* գրքի մի օրինակը՝ նուիրուած Լորդ Կորզոնին՝ հեղինակի մակագրութեամբ եւ թուագրուած 20 Հոկտեմբեր 1853 թ., որտեղ Հայր Ղեւոնդը վերջիշում է իր հյուրընկալութիւնը Պարհամ դղեակում: Իսկ 18 Մայիս, 1854 թ. գրուած մի նամակում, Հայր Ալիշանը շնորհաւորում է Կորզոնին՝ իր հրատարակած *A year in*

*Erzeroum* հատորի առիթով եւ նրա խնդրանքով տալիս հայոց պատմութեան վերաբերեալ եվրոպական լեզուով գրքերի մի ցանկ՝ աւելացնելով, որ այն հայ եկեղեցիների եւ աւերակների պատկերները, որ ինքը տեսել էր իր հրատարակած «Ալքում»ում, նախատեսուած է իր հրատարակելիք «Տեղեկագիր Հայոց Մեծաց» աշխատութեան համար, հրատարակութիւնն ուշանալու է: