

# Uncovering Theological Inconsistencies in the *History* of Agathangelos

▼ **ABSTRACT** This paper analyses the theological inconsistencies in two prayer-texts from the 5<sup>th</sup>-century *History [of Armenia]* by Agathangelos (*Agat'angeghay Patmut'iwn [Hayots']*). Were these inconsistencies manifest in the original composition or arose during later editing and transcription? Through an examination of all the editions of the work, the author argues that the controversial passages in the two prayer-texts may not be original, despite their longstanding presence. They create tension and challenge the coherence between theological tenets within the prayers and throughout the *History*.

To restore coherence in Agathangelos' *History* and gain a better understanding of the theological context in which it was produced, this paper proposes a new, more accurate critical edition with a particular focus on doctrinal issues.

Similar inconsistencies, though with varying impact, identified in another significant Armenian literary source of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, *The Epic Histories* by P'awstos Buzand (*Buzandaran Patmut'iwk'*), are also discussed in this study.

▼ **KEYWORDS** Agathangelos, history, theology, manuscripts, recensions, inconsistencies, critical edition, P'awstos Buzand.


▼ **ISSUE** Volume 1.1 (2204)

## 1. Introduction

The *History* of Agathangelos,<sup>1</sup> also known as *The Book of St. Gregory*, is a canonical work in the genre of classical Armenian historical writing. It narrates the life and

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<sup>1</sup> This book was once thought to have been written by a person named Agathangelos, but now some scholars believe that the word "Agathangelos" in the title symbolizes St. Gregory the Illuminator. The name is derived

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**Cite this article:** Fr. Movses (Davit) Sahakyan, 'Uncovering Theological Inconsistencies in the *History* of Agathangelos', *Matenadaran: Medieval and Early Modern Armenian Studies (MEMAS)*, 1.1 (2204), 121–136

<<https://dx.doi.org/10.1484/J.MEMAS.5.142266>>

DOI: 10.1484/J.MEMAS.5.142266

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deeds of St. Gregory the Illuminator, the man credited with converting the Armenian people to Christianity and establishing it as the state religion. The *History* combines diverse thematic elements such as accounts of historical events, the royal lineage, internal affairs, and relations with neighbouring countries, as well as insights into social-political structures. It also has a wealth of information about ancient Armenian culture, pagan religion, folk beliefs, geography, and the economy. The work includes Christian liturgical and theological content as well, an aspect that remains undervalued despite its depth. Notably, the following episodes are of significant theological import:

- 1 St. Gregory's response to Trdat's demands to worship Anahit (ch. V, §§52–67)
- 2 St. Gregory's response after the first torture (ch. VI, §§71–73)
- 3 St. Gregory's prayer during the second torture (ch. VII, §§75–98)
- 4 The nuns' prayer before fleeing Rome (ch. XIII, §§144–148)
- 5 St. Hrip'simē's prayer at the sight of evil men (ch. XV, §§169–172)
- 6 The nuns' pleas and the divine answer (ch. XVI, §§174–175)
- 7 St. Hrip'simē's prayer when forcibly taken to the palace (ch. XVI, §§178–179)
- 8 St. Gayianē's exhortation to St. Hrip'simē (ch. XVII, §§185–188)
- 9 St. Hrip'simē's last prayer before martyrdom (ch. XVII, §§193–196)
- 10 St. Gregory's first exhortation after rescue from the pit (ch. XXI, §§226–242)
- 11 St. Gregory's second exhortation (ch. XXII, §§247–258)
- 12 St. Gregory's final exhortation (ch. XCIX, §§716–721)
- 13 St. Gregory's vision and its interpretation (ch. CII, §§731–755)
- 14 Bishop Leontius' letter to Trdat (ch. CXVI, §§820–826)
- 15 Baptism of the royal family (ch. CXVIII, §§832–834)
- 16 Brief creed at the end of the *History* (§§1–20).

Upon closer examination of these episodes, it becomes apparent that two of the prayers, namely those of St. Gregory during the second torture and St. Hrip'simē at the sight of evil men contain theological inconsistencies. Below, I'll try to determine whether they were originally present in *Agat'angeghay Patmut'iwn* or arose later as a result of scribal error or revision.

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from the Greek words ἀγαθός (“good”) and ἄγγελος (“angel” or “messenger”) and should be translated as “messenger of good news” or “evangelist” (i.e., the Illuminator). Thus, *Agat'angeghay patmut'iwn* might be understood as *The Story of the Evangelist*. As for the identity of the author (or perhaps editor), it is supposed that he was an Armenian clergyman who lived in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. For more information, see Sargisean 1890, 1–9, 232–264, 313–323; Tashean 1891, 80–81; Malkhasyants' 1944, 11–13; Agathangelos 1976, xvi, xxiv–xxvi; Agat'angeghos 1977, 8–14; Agatangelos 2004, 13–14; Thomson 2010, 103–108, and Musheghyan 2012, 200–201.

## 2. Inconsistencies in St. Gregory's Prayer during the Second Torture

In 1909, a critical edition entitled *Agat'angeghay Patmut'iwn Hayots'* was published in Tiflis. It was prepared by Galust Tēr-Mkrtch'ean and Step'anos Kanayeants' on the basis of 55 manuscripts.<sup>2</sup> Shortly after its publication, the work – unparalleled in both its scope and thoroughness – was widely acknowledged by scholars. As the only critical edition of Agathangelos' *History*, it has been heavily relied upon for subsequent studies and translations (see Agathangelos 1976; Agat'angeghos 1977, and Agatangelos 2004). In 2003, it was reprinted in the multiple-volume series *Medieval Armenian Authors* (*Մանկնագիրք Հայոց*). Despite having been published over a century ago, the critical edition has garnered praise from modern scholars.<sup>3</sup> Yet, neither Tēr-Mkrtch'ean and Kanayeants', nor the translators or researchers who worked with the text noticed theological inconsistencies in it.

In both the critical edition and subsequent translations, the extensive prayer attributed to St. Gregory at the time of the second torture (ch. VII, §§75–98) exhibits trinitarian inconsistencies in three passages, where it depicts God the Father as being crucified,<sup>4</sup> sometimes even referring to both the Father and the Son as having

2. The critical edition of Agathangelos' *History* was based on a variety of manuscripts, some of which were available to the editors, while others were known to them indirectly. The latter (10 manuscripts) were cited in previous editions of the work. Also, Tēr-Mkrtch'ean and Kanayeants' queried the Fathers of the Mekhitarist Congregation of Venice about manuscripts and studied their publications, as in the case of the significant Vienna palimpsest no. 56. After collecting the information, they identified three groups of manuscripts. The first group comprises 20 manuscripts from the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, all of which differ from each other but share a common non-extant exemplar. The second group consists of 10 manuscripts from the 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The lost exemplar of the first group should also be included in this group. The main difference between these two groups is the preface. In the first group it is shorter than in the second. Probably, some folios of the exemplar were lost at some point, which caused the formation of the first group from the second. The third group consists of six manuscripts from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, including M1912, M1479, and M1859, which form the basis of the current analysis. This is a branch of the second group, but unlike the first group, its formation was not accidental. Rather, it was a result of intentional editing, primarily of the style. The changes are most noticeable in the last section of the work, which describes the conversion of the Armenians to Christianity. In addition to these manuscripts, Tēr-Mkrtch'ean and Kanayeants' also studied manuscripts of homilies (Ճառընտիր) containing Agathangelos' *History*, as well as eight other manuscripts from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, their knowledge of these eight manuscripts was incomplete, and it was impossible to assign them to one of the three aforementioned groups. For a detailed description of the manuscripts, see Agat'angeghos 1909, v–liv.

3. For instance, Gabriele Winkler writes: “The most important publication is, of course, the critical edition by two learned scholars from Armenia, Tēr-Mkrtč'ean and Kanayeanc', which appeared in Tiflis in 1909. This editorial masterpiece with its abundant variant readings and notes, also lends itself to the study of the development of the Armenian language in the mediaeval period. However very little use has been made of it so far” (Winkler 1980, 128).

4. This ideology shares similarities with the heretical doctrine of patripassianism, which emerged as a theological deviation from the Universal Church in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. During this period, proponents of patripassianism rejected the concept of the Holy Trinity, specifically denying any personal distinction between the Father and the Son. They perceived two Persons, the Father and the Son, as one. This led to the notion that the Son is the Father and that the Father was incarnate and died on the cross (Tēr-Minaseants' 2013, 223–225, 227–229). In contrast, according to the doctrine of the Universal Church, the Father and the Son, while remaining one God, possess distinct personal properties. The Father is the Father, and the Son is the Son. Therefore, it was the Son who was crucified, not the Father. The Armenian Church had no affiliation with patripassianism, therefore, the presence of such ideas, particularly when juxtaposed to other prayers within the work, suggests an issue with the text itself.

been crucified simultaneously. Such an understanding of the crucifixion is not only considered spurious by the Armenian Church, which has no historical association with this idea, but also deviates from theological concepts presented elsewhere in the work.

In chapter VII of the critical edition, we find an account of St. Gregory's second torture. During this torture, a punishment for his refusal to worship idols, he is hung upside-down by a single foot and forced to inhale the fumes of burning dung for seven days. Despite enduring unbearable pain, he continues to pray. The three problematic passages are within this lengthy prayer, which covers various theological topics. The first passage reads:

“85. ... But we must honor them as is commanded by you, yet not exchange you for fear of mortal men. For they are only able to torture the body, whereas *your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ*,<sup>5</sup> can cast everyone into eternal torments, with soul and body into the inextinguishable fire and the undying worm.

86. But, *Lord*, give me power to endure the affliction and pain of my torment, and have mercy on me as on the *thief who shared with you the sufferings of your cross*...

87. Give me, *Lord*, grace to endure these bitter torments... May those who hoped in you not be ashamed, those who once boasted in *your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who was sent by you; whom you sent to death for our sins* ...” (Agathangelos 1976, 96–99).

§85 and §87 indicate that St. Gregory is directing his prayer to God the Father, as he mentions in both paragraphs that the addressee of his prayer has a Son, who is Jesus Christ: “... your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ” (§85) / “... boasted in your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who was sent by you; whom you sent to death for our sins” (§87).

Yet, in §86 it is said: “But, Lord, ... have mercy on me as on the thief who shared with you the sufferings of your cross”. Who is this “Lord” that suffered on the cross?

Throughout the pericope (§§85–87), St. Gregory consistently addresses God the Father in the second person and refers to the Son in the third person. Nowhere in this entire episode does the author change the addressee of his prayer, which indicates that the addressee of the whole passage, who is referred to as “Lord” at the beginning of §86 and §87, is the same person – the Father of the only-begotten Son.

Also, in §86 it is said of this “suffering Lord”: “You make your sun rise over the evil and the good, and you bring rain on the just and on sinners”. This quote comes from the Gospel of Matthew where Christ speaks of the “Heavenly Father” and not of the “Incarnate God” (cf. Matthew 5:43–48).

Moreover, a careful analysis of §§85–87 reveals that the author not only claims that the Father of the only-begotten Son (God the Father) suffered on the cross, as seen in §86, but also that God the Father has sent his Son to be crucified, as stated

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<sup>5</sup> The italics are mine.

in §87. This contradiction not only challenges the theological coherence of the entire prayer attributed to St. Gregory, but also of this specific episode.

Upon further examination, the general composition of *Agat'angeghay Patmut'iwn* shows that the original text was compiled by a knowledgeable theologian who would likely not have formulated orthodox ideas only to contradict them later with heretical ones. To see the orthodoxy of the entire work and the level of the compiler's theological knowledge, one only needs to read the entire prayer (ch. VII, §§75–98), where it is clearly noted that, while being the same God, the Crucified One and His Father are distinct persons. One such passage is:

“80. You sent *your only-begotten Son* into the world, light from light, life from life, *who came to put on the likeness of our flesh from the virgin*, in order by his own likeness to raise us to the divinity, *who became like us*. He was born from the virgin in the flesh and became man and was incorporate like us, yet he is and remains in the glory of his divinity. He is the same, who was and is and remains forever with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. But because he loved mankind, therefore he became like us, that he might bring us to abundance by the grace of his divinity, which is the will of his begetter. And he fulfilled his will. He glorified the saints by his own endurance...” (Agathangelos 1976, 88–91).

In this fragment from the same prayer, the orthodoxy of the utterance is clear and unquestionable. Therefore, a question arises: how could successive passages of the same prayer-text be theologically so contradictory?

Comparison of the readings preferred in the critical edition with those in three other manuscripts, namely M1912, M1479, and M1859, is key to answering this question.

As stated above, the problematic passage (§§85–87) depicts God the Father as both the Crucified One and the one who sends God the Son to crucifixion. This inconsistency arises in §86, when St. Gregory says: “But, Lord, ... have mercy on me as on the thief who shared with you the sufferings of your cross”. M1912, M1479, and M1859 have a different reading:

CRITICAL TEXT	M1912, M1479, M1859		
... on the thief who shared with you the sufferings of your cross	... աւագակին, որ ընդ քեզ էր կցորդ չարչարանաց խաչի քոյ	... աւագակին, որ ընդ միաձնիդ քո էր եւ կցորդ էր չարչարանաց խաչին	... on the thief who was with your only-begotten [Son] and shared the sufferings of the cross
(Agathangelos 1976, 97)	(Agat'angeghos 2003, 1347)	(Agat'angeghos 2003, 1347, n. 39–40)	(The translation of this and other passages of M1912, M1479, and M1859 is mine)

The critical text states that the thief was a partaker in the sufferings of the Father, thus suggesting that He suffered on the cross. In contradiction to this, M1912, M1479,

and M1859 suggest that though the prayer is addressed to the Father, the one who suffered was the Son, which is the orthodox stance consistent with the theological bent of the rest of the composition.

It must be emphasized that these three manuscripts are not only among the oldest of the 55 studied by Tēr-Mkrtch‘ean and Kanayeants‘, but also considered to be among the most important ones (see Agat‘angeghos 1909, xli and xliv–xlv). In all three problematic passages of St. Gregory’s prayer, they present divergent readings.

The second passage containing trinitarian inconsistencies is found in §§93–94 of the critical edition:

“93. ...Grant me, Lord, to receive the crown with those ... whose deaths are glorious before you, that I too may become worthy to be raised to the presence of *your beloved Son* when he will carry off those who long for him to the rays of his light...

94. But now, Lord, strengthen your servants for your name’s sake... *You who laid down your life for your sheep*, do not abandon your flock but lead them to the true path”. (Agathangelos 1976, 105–107).

This second part of the prayer, too, is addressed to God the Father, because in §93 the prayer emphasizes the existence of his Son, saying “your beloved Son”. The problem is that, according to §94, the addressee of the prayer (the Father) has sacrificed himself for his subjects: “You who laid down your life for your sheep”. Such a doctrinal position contradicts both the rest of the prayer and the doctrines of the Armenian Church presented in Agathangelos’ *History*. In the above-mentioned three manuscripts, however, the subject of the passage is not the Father, but the Son.

CRITICAL TEXT		M1912, M1479, M1859	
You who laid down your life for your sheep	... որ եղեր զանձն քո ի վերայ խաշանց քոց	... ի ձեռն սիրելոյ (սիրելի) որդոյ քո, որ եղ զանձն իւր ի վերայ խաշանց իւրոց	... through your beloved Son, who laid down his life for his sheep
(Agathangelos 1976, 107)	(Agat‘angeghos 2003, 1352)	(Agat‘angeghos 2003, 1352, n. 33, 36)	

Once again, we observe that the variant reading aligns with the general theology of the prayer.

The third problematic passage of St. Gregory’s prayer is found in §§96–97:

“96. You who are bountiful to all, grant us to become martyrs for your divinity... For *you came and died on behalf of your creatures and joined our mortal nature to your immortality*. Therefore, let us be martyrs unto death for your life, that we may be joined to the number of your martyrs. For what other return indeed can we make for the blessings (that come) from you, unless we give up our lives for your

commandments to the good-will of your desire ... that we may lose our lives and again find them on the day of resurrection, when we sit on your right hand clothed in innocence among the lambs of the group on the right-hand side, your servants, in the joy of your saints, who have loved your divinity and *your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ?* He was the true lamb and *offered himself to you as a sacrifice* for the sins of the whole world, that he might be a reconciler and intercessor between you the creator and the creatures...

97. So, benevolent *Lord, who came and was humbled and took the form of mankind and gave yourself to every endurance ...* sweeten the heart of all men for your service” (Agathangelos 1976, 108–113).

In §96 the Lord sacrifices himself for his subjects and unites human mortality with his divine immortality. However, as the passage progresses, it becomes apparent that this sacrificial Lord is actually God the Father, who has a Son: “your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ”. Additionally, this passage refers to the Lord’s Son, the true lamb, being sacrificed as well, which, once again, results in a contradiction and disrupts the theological coherence of the whole prayer.

The three manuscripts differ from the critical text in more ways than one. The beginning of §96 focuses specifically on the Son, rather than the ambiguous Lord. Furthermore, the most problematic phrase “your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ” is absent entirely<sup>6</sup>, and the pericope reads in a completely different way:

CRITICAL TEXT		M1912, M1479, M1859	
<p>You who are bountiful to all, grant us to become martyrs for your divinity ... in the joy of your saints, who have loved your divinity and your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ? He was the true lamb and offered himself to you as a sacrifice</p> <p>(Agathangelos 1976, 109, 111)</p>	<p>Այլ որ առատանասդ ամենեցուն՝ տո՛ւր մեզ, զի լիցուք վկայք Աստուածութեանդ քոյ ... յուրախութիւն սրբոց քոց, որ սիրեցին զԱստուածութիւն քո եւ զմիածին Որդիդ, զՏէր մեր Յիսուս Քրիստոս. որ եղև զառն ճշմարիտ եւ մատոյց զանձն իւր քեզ պատարագ</p> <p>(Agat’angeghos 2003, 1354–1355)</p>	<p>Որ առատանասդ ամենեցուն (առ ամենեսեան)՝ տուր մեզ, Տէր, Միածին Որդի՛դ Աստուծոյ, շնորհս ի Հոգւոյդ (ի Հոգւոյն) Սրբոյ ... յուրախութիւն սրբոց քոց, որ սիրեցին զԱստուածութիւն քո, զի եղեր զառն ճշմարիտ եւ մատուցեր զանձն պատարագ հաւր</p> <p>(Agat’angeghos 2003, 1354,</p>	<p>You who are bountiful to all, Lord, only-begotten Son of God, grant us the graces of (your) Holy Spirit ... in the joy of your saints, who have loved your divinity, since you became the true lamb and offered yourself as a sacrifice to the Father</p>

6 In the very important Vienna palimpsest no. 56, the problematic line is missing as well (see Galèmk’earan 1911, 105–107). Tèr-Mkrtch’ean and Kanayeaunts’ speak of their indirect familiarity with this witness (see Agat’angeghos 1909, xii, xxxv). While they have certainly used the palimpsest in some other passages, it has clearly been disregarded in this section. The line is also absent from M1481 (= ‘b’), on the importance of which see Agat’angeghos 1909, xxix.

<b>CRITICAL TEXT</b>	<b>M1912, M1479, M1859</b>
	n. 17–19; 1355, n. 8, 10–15)

Additionally, in these three manuscripts all of the verbs of this section referring to the Son are in the second person, directly addressing him, which aligns more consistently with §97. Conversely, in §96 of the critical text, the verbs are in the third person, and it remains puzzling why St. Gregory addresses the Father in §96, while from §97 to the end of the entire prayer, the addressee is clearly the Crucified One (i.e., the Son). The version found in the three manuscripts not only makes more sense but also follows a more coherent linguistic pattern by explicitly signaling the shift in addressee during the prayer.

### 3. Inconsistencies in St. Hrip'simē's Prayer before the Evil Men

Another instance of trinitarian inconsistency arises in the first paragraph of St. Hrip'simē's prayer uttered before “many evil men” (ch. XV, §§169–172). When encountering the men who are going to take her by force to the palace, St. Hrip'simē cries out in a loud voice, assumes the form of a cross by stretching out her arms and prays as follows:

“169. Lord God almighty, who fashioned your creatures through *your only-begotten and beloved Son*, and formed the order of the visible and invisible creatures through your holy Spirit ... You who then worked salvation through the symbol of the cross, now work (the same) *through the true cross, on which you hung and shed your blood* for the healing of our woes” (Agathangelos 1976, 174–177).

The initial lines of the excerpt make it clear that the prayer is addressed to God the Father (“through your only-begotten and beloved Son”), who then is described in the final sentence as being crucified: “through the true cross, on which you hung and shed your blood”. However, in M1479 and M1859 the final sentence differs from the critical text. These manuscripts identify the Son as the crucified one.

<b>CRITICAL TEXT</b>	<b>M1479, M1859</b>		
... through the true cross, on which you hung and shed your blood	... նշմարտութեամբ խաչիդ քոյ, յոր էլեր եւ հեղեր զարիւն քո	... նշմարտութեամբ սուրբ խաչին, յոր էլ միաձինդ քո եւ եհեղ զարիւն իւր	... through the true holy cross, on which your only-begotten Son hung and shed his blood
(Agathangelos 1976, 177)	(Agat'angeghos 2003, 1387)	(Agat'angeghos 2003, 1387, n. 27–28)	



#### 4. The Problematic Passages in other Versions of Agathangelos

The issue of theological inconsistency discussed above extends beyond the Armenian manuscripts that were studied and included in the critical edition. The contradictions, heretofore unnoticed by scholars, are also evident in the old translations of the Armenian Agathangelos.

In particular, the four problematic passages of St. Gregory's prayer display identical inconsistencies in the critical edition of the Greek translation,<sup>7</sup> as well as in the Arabic translation.<sup>8</sup> The same is also true for the prayer attributed to St. Hrip'simē in the critical edition of the Georgian translation of the *Martyrology of Hrip'simē and her Companions*<sup>9</sup> (see Lafontaine 1973, 204–205, 208–209, 210–211, 237–238; Ter-Ghevondyan 1968, ԳՅ–ԳԶ, ԳԷ, ԳՎ–ԳԱ, Ծ․–ԾՂ, and Muradyan 1982, 46–49).

At the same time, in the critical apparatus of the Greek translation, certain manuscripts offer consistent readings for the second problematic passage (§§ 93–94) of St. Gregory's prayer, which clearly suggest that it was the Son, not the Father, who was crucified.<sup>10</sup>

Additionally, the two prayer-texts in question can also be found in manuscripts of another Greek recension of Agathangelos' *History*, known as the *Vita Gregorii*<sup>11</sup>. Unlike most manuscripts of the Armenian original, the prayers in the *Vita* recension exhibit orthodox theology and do not contain any controversy (Garitte 1946, 25–26, 38–39; Ter-Ghevondyan 1973, 225–226, 235; Marr 1906, 78).

Furthermore, the Syriac version and its Karshūnī translation, which are based on both the *Vita* and the Armenian text, feature the prayer attributed to St. Hrip'simē without any trinitarian inconsistency (van Esbroeck 1977, 312–313 and 1971, 43–44).

There is evidence that the four controversial passages may not have been original despite their longstanding presence in the Armenian *History*. First, there are no trinitarian inconsistencies in several Armenian manuscripts. Second, we have Greek manuscripts in which the inconsistencies occur in only three out of the four excerpts. Finally, these same prayers do not exhibit inconsistencies in other recensions of Agathangelos' *History*.

7 The Greek version was translated from Armenian between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is preserved in twelve manuscripts dating from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, which were used in the critical edition prepared by Lafontaine (1973).

8 The Arabic version is believed to have been translated from Greek in the 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is preserved in a manuscript known as ms. Sinai ar. 395 (dated to 1328/1329). Further information can be found in Ter-Ghevondyan 1968.

9 The *Martyrology of Hrip'simē and her Companions* was translated from Armenian into Georgian before the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The critical edition of the Georgian text is based on eight manuscripts dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (see Muradyan 1982).

10 In the readings of ὁ θεὸς τὴν ψυχὴν σου ὑπὲρ τῶν σῶν προβάτων, we see ὁ ἀποστειλας τὸν υἱὸν σου θείναι (QZ) instead of ὁ θεὸς (CLOVα); ψυχὴν (QW) instead of ψυχὴν σου (CLOVα), and τῶν προβάτων (QZ) instead of τῶν σῶν προβάτων (CLOVα) (Lafontaine 1973, 208, § 41, n. 18).

11 For a comparison of the two recensions, see Thomson 2010, 8–24.

Clearly, if any of the manuscripts not containing the contradictions (i.e., M1912, M1479, or M1859) had served as the basis for the critical edition, the inconsistencies in the four excerpts could have been entirely avoided. Tēr-Mkrtch'ean and Kanayeants' themselves state that those three manuscripts are considered to be among the best. Yet, their text was primarily based on the fifth of the extant editions<sup>12</sup> simply because it was accessible to them and widely used (see Agat'angeghos 1909, x, xi, xliii). They certainly knew that their work, despite its importance, was incomplete. There remained a great trove of manuscripts that Tēr-Mkrtch'ean and Kanayeants' did not have the opportunity to examine. Thus, for them this edition aimed not to be the culmination of restoring the original text of Agathangelos' *History*, but the inaugural attempt (Agat'angeghos 1909, liv). Therefore, it is imperative to compile a new critical edition of Agathangelos' *History* with a broader manuscript base.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4. Similar Inconsistencies in the *Epic Histories*

Another classical work from the same period (5<sup>th</sup> century), the *Buzandaran patmut'iwnk'* (*The Epic Histories*) attributed to P'awstos Buzand/Biwzand (Faustus Buzand or Faustus of Byzantium), also contains two passages with trinitarian inconsistencies. The first can be found in the prayer uttered by the priest Zvit' before his martyrdom (Book IV, ch. LVII), and the second is in the prayer of the hermit Mambre during the Eucharist (Book V, ch. XXVIII).

According to the narrative, when during the reign of Shapur the Persians devastated the Armenian realm, queen P'arandzem and many others were taken captive. Among them was the presbyter of the city of Artashat, Zvit'. After the queen's cruel death, the priest was offered conversion to Zoroastrianism to save his life, but he opted instead for martyrdom. Just before his death, the priest begins to pray to God the Creator. In his prayer, he states that the Creator became human, appeared on earth, and walked among people, which implies that the Creator became incarnate:

“Our Creator who didst create the heavens and earth and sea out of nothing, and didst create us from dust ... Then *Thou didst come down Thyself, become man, manifest Thyself on earth, and walk among men.* And Thou didst bestow upon Thy creatures Thy perfect wisdom... To Thee be glory and power and dominion, *and to Thy Only-begotten beloved Son Jesus Christ,* and to Thy vivifying Holy Spirit, before all eternity, and now, and ever and unto eternity of eternities, Amen” (P'awstos Buzand 1989, 177).

<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that this fifth edition (Tiflis, 1882) is merely a reprint of the fourth (Venice, 1862), which in turn is a reprint of the third edition (Venice, 1835), cf. Agat'angeghos 1909, xi.

<sup>13</sup> Antoine Meillet, Grigoris Galëmk'earan, Norayr Biwandats'i, and more recently, Aram Topchyan have all criticized this edition of *Agat'angeghay patmut'iwn Hayots'*. They have suggested that it should be revised, or a new critical edition should be prepared (see Meillet 1910, 457–481; Galëmk'earan 1911, 68; Biwandats'i 1911, 161, and Topchyan 2005, 144–153).

The person of the Holy Trinity who became incarnate is God the Son. Therefore, it can be said that God the Creator became man or was crucified if the Son is regarded as both God and Creator. This seems to be the case, for instance, in chapter V of Book IV, where the author describes the Son of God as “the Begotten and the form [Էրբարանք] of the invisible God, the Only-begotten of the Father, the Creator of all creatures [Միածին ճնունդ չաւր, արարիչ ամենայն արարածոց]” (P’awstos Buzand 1989, 119). Similarly, in chapter XIII of Book IV, the author describes the Son as one, “who created all things out of nothing, who is the father of orphans and the arbiter of widows, who came down for our sake into poverty, who does not abandon the poor but feeds them through his compassion” (P’awstos Buzand 1989, 137).

In the prayer of Zvit’, the addressee is described as God the Creator who was incarnate, but then, in the concluding doxology it appears that the Creator is not the Son but the Father of the “Only-begotten beloved Son Jesus Christ”. This results in the same theological inconsistency found in Agathangelos and contradicts the theology of the *Buzandaran patmut’iwnk’* writ large, where the Father and the Son, being One God and One Creator, are presented as distinct persons, and the Incarnate One is the Son, not the Father. For instance, in chapter XIV of Book III, it is explicitly stated that the Son is the Creator, distinct from his Father:

“You have forsaken God your benefactor who created you out of nothing and strengthened you, and have not acknowledged Him in your folly. He came to seek you when you were betaking yourselves beyond recall to perdition. For, *although He was the Only Begotten Son of God, He came down to make His Father known to His creatures.* And so, although they did not listen to Him and *tortured Him to death,* He endured, even though He hid His might from no one so that He might be the cause of life for all. (P’awstos Buzand 1989, 88).

The second inconsistency is in the prayer uttered by Mambre during the Eucharist (Book V, ch. XXVIII). In this chapter, the author speaks about a sodality in a hermitage. One of the brothers refuses the holy communion because he does not believe it to be the blood of Jesus Christ, but merely wine. However, one day during the liturgy, a miracle occurs: the doubtful brother sees Christ standing on the altar with blood spurting forth from His stigmata into the communion cup. Immediately prior to this vision, the priest performing the liturgy raises his hands above the altar and begins to pray as follows:

“Lord God of Hosts, who hast created all out of nothing and created man living and incorruptible from the dust of the ground. And they transgressed Thy Commandments and fell into death because of their transgression ... but through the providence and *grace of Thy Only-begotten Son, Thou didst renew Thy creatures by a second birth...* Thou didst speak to us *through Thy Only-begotten Son through whom Thou didst create this world.* He who is the image of Thy glory and the form of Thy essence, who bears all things through the word of His power... *O valiant shepherd, who hast gone forth to seek the lost sheep and gavest Thy life for Thy sheep...*” (P’awstos Buzand 1989, 208–209).

Once again, an orison is addressed to God the Father, who has an “Only-begotten Son”. Clearly, the author speaks of the Father in the second person (as the addressee), and of the Son in the third. The inconsistency arises in the last line, which reads: “O valiant Shepherd, who has gone out to search for the lost sheep and gave Thy life for Thy sheep”. This refers to the Gospel of John, where Jesus proclaims himself to be “the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11), but in the context of the whole prayer, God the Father becomes the one who laid down his life as Shepherd.

Nina Garsoïan writes on this prayer:

“It was noted by Fr. Gat’rĉhean that the text underlying much of this prayer was drawn from the Armenian version of the *Liturgy of St. Basil*... Only phrases from the underlying text are cited at the beginning of the prayer, but they are followed by two more extensive quotations separated by an interpolation not found in the liturgical text. These references to the liturgy end with the second quotation, which is followed in turn by a series of Scriptural citations... More recently, Fr. Renoux has gone still further to show that the underlying text corresponds to an early version of the Basilian Anaphora, known as the *Anaphora of St. Gregory the Illuminator*, preserved in a few Armenian manuscripts, and of which this passage of BP is an important early attestation – all the more so, in that the scene described at the point at which it is cited in BP is precisely the one at which the recitation of the Anaphora would occur in the canon of the Mass... None of the translations of BP has noted the origin of this prayer, although Malkasyanc’ observed that it contained “some” Scriptural passages” (P’awstos Buzand 1989, 321).<sup>14</sup>

Upon comparing the Armenian *Liturgy of St. Basil* and the *Anaphora* attributed to St. Gregory the Illuminator with the prayer of Mambřē, it becomes apparent that these liturgical sources do not contain the trinitarian inconsistency, as they lack the concluding doxology: “O valiant Shepherd...” (Gat’rĉhean 1897, 132–134 and Renoux 1970, 92–100), which means that this must have been added to the prayer later due to careless editing. The same can be said about the prayer of Zvit’, the content of which, because of its concluding line (“To Thee be glory and power...”), does not align with the theology of the rest of the prayer. Thus, it can be concluded

14 The prayers of Zvit’ and Mambřē are identical in all editions of the *Buzandaran patmut’iwnk’*, including the original edition of 1730 (*Buzandaran patmut’iwn* 1730, 265–267, 330–331) and subsequent Venetian editions (P’awstos Buzandats’i 1832, 175, 223–224; P’awstos Buzandats’i 1933, 181–182, 227–228), as well as K’erovbe Patkanyan’s edition with the Eastern Armenian translation by Step’anos Malkhasyants’ (P’avstos Buzand 1987, 270–272, 340–342), and the most recent Armenian edition in the *Medieval Armenian Authors* (P’awstos Buzand 2003, 373, 397). The content of the prayers is also the same in the translations of the work: the English translation by Nina Garsoïan (P’awstos Buzand 1989, cited in this paper), the Russian translation by M. Gevorgian (Favstos Buzand 1953, 135–136, 171–172), the German translation by Max Lauer (Faustus von Byzanz 1879, 140, 178–179), and the Italian translation by Marco Bais and Loris D. Nocetti (P’awstos Buzand 1997, 149–150, 179–180). All of these versions contain the same trinitarian inconsistencies. Though Malkhasyants’ and Garsoïan have discussed the prayer-texts from a philological point of view, they have not addressed the problem. In the French translation by Jean-Baptiste Emin, the prayer of Mambřē is even omitted due to its “lack of historical significance”, while the first prayer has the same content (Faustus de Byzance 1869, 293).

that the inconsistencies present in these prayer-texts are likely due to later editing or scribal error.

## 5. Conclusion

The *Agat'angeghay Patmut'iwñ* is a significant work that offers valuable historical information on the 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>-century Armenia. As such, it offers a unique opportunity to deepen our understanding of the Christian culture and theology of the Armenian Church during this period. However, despite containing profound doctrinal insights, the *History* of Agathangelos, just as another important literary source of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the *Buzandaran patmut'iwñk'*, exhibits trinitarian inconsistencies. The presence of such contradictions within a work containing deep orthodox theological insights is not only surprising but also calls for investigation into whether these problematic passages were originally part of the text or are interpolations from a later period.

An examination of the manuscripts of Agathangelos' *History* suggests that the aforementioned inconsistencies were likely a result of scribal error or later revision. This raises further questions as to why later scribes and academics have not noticed and adequately addressed them.

As already stated above, there is a need for a new critical edition that will consider the logical continuity of the text, particularly from the theological perspective. This is crucial to restore the coherence of this important literary source, ensure a more accurate representation of the theological knowledge contained in it, and contribute to a better understanding of the context in which it was produced.

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