

An Opuscule of Yovhannēs Orotnets‘i on Divine Names*

▼ **ABSTRACT** This article presents a small text by Yovhannēs Orotnets‘i on divine names that is preserved in Matenadaran manuscript 2121. The paper first provides a brief overview of Orotnets‘i’s life and works, then an edition and translation of the text with commentary. The commentary elucidates parallels with the works attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, Aristotle, Dawit‘ Anyaght‘ (David the Invincible), the scholiastic tradition on the corpus Areopagiticum, John of Damascus, and Armenian commentaries on grammar. Many of the points forwarded by Orotnets‘i also appear in the writings of his student, Grigor Tat‘ewats‘i (1344–1409). The text underscores not only Orotnets‘i’s erudition, but also how the ideas found in the works attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite were integrated with the study of grammar, philosophy, theology, and biblical exegesis in the monastic school curricula of Gladzor and Tat‘ew.

▼ **KEYWORDS** Yovhannēs Orotnets‘i, Dionysius the Areopagite, Aristotle, Dawit‘ Anyaght‘, John of Damascus, Grigor Tat‘ewats‘i, names of God, divine energies, apophatic theology.

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1. Introduction

1.1. *The Life of Yovhannēs Orotnets‘i*

Yovhannēs Orotnets‘i (1313–86) was born in the village of Vaghandn in the province of Orotn and belonged to a branch of the noble and ancient House of Siwnik‘.¹

* I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of this article for their useful feedback and insightful comments.

¹ His student, Grigor Tat‘ewats‘i (1344–1409), in a panegyric to Orotnets‘i, refers to his princely lineage praising “his being a freeman, a nobleman, from the race of native Armenians of Sisakan, [replete] with the canton of Orotn, with princely family, with ruling many and wealthy things, filled with genius in many subjects”

Sergio La Porta  0009-0006-3848-5500 • Kremen School of Education and Human Development, California State University, Fresno, USA (Email: slaporta@csufresno.edu)

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Colophons illuminate the members of his family (Khachikyan 1969, 177–79). Yovhannēs was the son of Iwanē, the prince of Orotn,² and *Tiknants’ Tiknay* (“Lady of Ladies”); his paternal uncle was the metropolitan bishop of Siwnik’, Sargis; his grandfather was Hasan Siwni³ who was married to Lady Vakhakh. Orotnets’i also had at least two brothers, Hasan and Zak’arē, and one sister, T’ukht’ani, who was married to Amat, a member of the Shaharuneants’ family, and who had a daughter, Nat’il.

According to Step’anos Ōrbēlean, the province of Orotn had been bequeathed to the Ōrbēlean family by Iwanē Mkhargrdzeli⁴ during the reign of King Giorgi IV Lasha (reigned c. 1213–22) as a reward for their assistance in capturing Siwnik’ from Islamic forces (Step’anos Ōrbēlean 1910, 397; Step’anos Ōrbēlean 1864, 224–25).⁵ The political and ecclesiastical power of the Ōrbēleans increased throughout the thirteenth century (La Porta 2001, 10–11). The family controlled possession of the episcopacy of Siwnik’ uninterrupted for three generations: Step’anos Ōrbēlean (sed. 1286–1303), Yovhannēs Ōrbēlean (Step’anos’ cousin; sed. 1302–23), Step’anos-Tarsayich (Step’anos’ nephew; coadjutor, 1314–23; alone, 1323–31?). Step’anos-Tarsayich was succeeded by Sargis Siwni (sed. 1333?–37), the uncle of Yovhannēs Orotnets’i. Our knowledge of the bishops of Siwnik’ suffers from lacunae after Sargis until the election of Aṛak’el Siwnets’i in 1407, but at least one other Ōrbēlean, Step’anos Sult’an Shah, sat on the episcopal throne during that period (c.1366) (Khachikyan 1969, 28–9; 32).⁶ Although there is no secure evidence that Yovhannēs Orotnets’i was consecrated bishop of Siwnik’, he and Grigor Tat’ewats’i seem to have assumed many episcopal powers (La Porta 2001, 41–42). On account of Ōrbēlean control of the province and the secure line of their succession to the episcopacy, Ōrmanean (1914, 1957–58) conjectured that the Ōrbēlean and Siwni families had intermarried. While such an alliance would be logical, there is no direct evidence of intermarriage between the two families, and nowhere does Orotnets’i, or any of his students, claim that he was related to the Ōrbēlean family.

(գոյով նորա ազատ պայազատ յազնէ սիսական բնիկ հայկազնի: Գաւառաւ որոտնի իշխան ազգաւ. տիրելով բազմաց եւ փարթամ գոյից. բազմահանճար իմաստիւք առցեալ), Grigor Tat’ewats’i 1998, 712 (all translations of literary sources, unless indicated otherwise, are mine). Tat’ewats’i’s student, T’ovma Metsop’ets’i (d.1447), in his *History*, describes Orotnets’i as “also known as *Kakhik*, being suspended (*kakheal*) in the love of Jesus, from the canton of Orotn, from the village of Vaghand, the son of the great prince Iwanē, who was from the race of the first princes of Siwnik’, from which was Vasak” (մականունն Կախիկ կախեալ ի սէրն Յիսուսի գոյով ի գաւառն Որոտնու ի գեօղն Վաղանդու որդի մեծի իշխան Բւանէի, որ էր ի զարմէ առաջին իշխանացն Սիւնեացն, յորմէ Վասակն էր), T’ovma Metsop’ets’i 1999, 11 (this information is repeated in the chronicle of Dawit’ Baghishets’i, see Hakobyan 1956, 351). See also Alishan 1893, 220; Khachikyan 1969, 26; Grigoryan 1980, 5.

2 Khachikyan 1969 definitively demonstrated that this Iwanē should not be identified with Iwanē, the son of Burt’ēgh Ōrbēlean.

3 Khachikyan (1969, 13) identifies Hasan, father of Iwanē and Sargis and Yovhannēs Orotnets’i’s grandfather, with the Hasan Dleneants’ mentioned by Step’anos Ōrbēlean in his *History*, but cf. La Porta 2001, 12–13.

4 The Mkhargrdzeli (“Longimanus”) are also known as the Zak’arean in modern Armenian historical studies.

5 This marks the beginning of the Ōrbēleans’ return to power in Armenia and Georgia. They had been ousted from power and eventually replaced by the Mkhargrdzeli because of a failed revolt by Iwanē Ōrbēlean and his brother Liparit (grandfather of the Liparit mentioned above) in 1177; on the rebellion see La Porta 2008–9.

6 Aṛak’el Siwnets’i was the nephew of Orotnets’i’s pupil Grigor Tat’ewats’i.

Yovhannēs studied under the famous master, Esayi Nch'ets'ī (d. 1338), at the renowned monastic school of Gladzor (Arevshatyan and Mat'evosyan 1984; Mathews-Sanjian 1991, 17–31). The curriculum at Gladzor centered on biblical exegesis, but theology, canon law, polemic, and all of the seven liberal arts—grammar, rhetoric, logic, music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy—were represented to differing degrees (La Porta 2022). Amongst the liberal arts, logic held the most dominant position due to the popularity of the Aristotelian *Categories* and *De interpretatione*, as well as Dawit' Anyaght's (David the Invincible's) *Definitions and Divisions of Philosophy*. Within the field of theology, the school bore a generally Neoplatonic inclination as it favored the works of the Cappadocian fathers as well as those attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite. Philonic texts, which enjoyed a long tradition in Armenian (Lombardi and Pontani 2011), also formed part of the school's curriculum.

In a colophon to a Psalter dated to 1337 (J1033), Orotnets'ī's uncle, Bishop Sargis, suggests that Yovhannēs was consecrated a priest in that year, as he refers to his nephew as “the keen-witted, reverend, newly-consecrated priest, Yovhannēs” (կորովամիտ, սրբազան, նորընծա քահանայի Յովհաննէս) (Khachikyan 1969, 178). The next year, his master Nch'ets'ī died and he continued his studies under Tiratur (1275?–1350?) *vardapet*, most likely at the nearby monastery of Hermon in Eghegis (Thierry 1993, no. 643). By 1349, he achieved the rank of *rabunapet* (րաբունապետ)⁷ and the position of notary (*k'artughar*, քարտուղար), possibly for his family.⁸ After completing his studies, Orotnets'ī led a peripatetic life. In the 1360s he resided at the Georgian court in Tiflis; in the early 1370s, he spent some time at the monastery of St. Grigor Lusavorich' on Mt. Sepuh in the region of Daranagheats'. In 1373, he went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, bringing with him his student, Grigor Tat'ewats'ī, who was consecrated in the holy city (La Porta 2002). Yovhannēs returned to Orotn in Siwnik' in 1376 and directed studies at the monastery of Tat'ew in 1377.

Shortly thereafter, however, he was summoned to the monastery of Aprakunik' in Ernjak⁹ to restore order to the monastery after several members had joined the Unitor movement and many more displayed a keen interest in Latin theology. With the financial backing of one of his former pupils, Maghak'ia Ghrimets'ī, Yovhannēs established an inquisition whose aim was to insure that Armenians remained within or returned to the Apostolic Church (La Porta 2015, 286–88).

In addition to his efforts to combat the missionising efforts of the Unitors, Orotnets'ī was a prolific author and educational reformer. Orotnets'ī's literary corpus reflects his interest in logic as well as in biblical commentary, theology, and polemics. Attributed to him are commentaries on the Gospels of John and Matthew,

7 In contemporary sources different titles are applied to monastic teachers including *rabuni* (from Hebrew, “master”), *rabunapet* (“headmaster”), *varzhapet* (“head instructor”), and *vardapet* (“head teacher”). However, as Mathews and Sanjian have pointed out, “there is considerable overlapping in the use of these terms, and in many instances *rabunapet* and *vardapet* seem interchangeable”, Mathews-Sanjian 1991, 23.

8 This information is provided in his sister's colophon dated to 1349, Khachikyan 1969, 178.

9 The monastery stood in the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhichevan until 2005 when it was destroyed (Maghakyan and Pickman 2019).

a commentary on the Letters of Paul,¹⁰ scholia on the book of Job, and a catena on Isaiah. He also composed scholia on Aristotle's *Categories* (Yovhannēs Orotnets'i 1956), *De interpretatione*,¹¹ on Dawit' Anyaght's *Definitions and Divisions of Philosophy*, on Porphyry's *Isagogē*, and a brief treatise on the *Elements* (Arevshatyan and Lalafaryan 1956, but cf. Grigoryan 1980, 23–24). He further wrote scholia on Gregory of Nazianzus' theological collection of *Orations* known as "To those whom" (*Առ յոյս*) (Lafontaine-Coulie 1983, 103); a commentary on the scholia of Cyril of Alexandria on the Incarnation, a compilation of commentaries on the first chapter of Philo's *De providentia*, several homilies and opuscula, and a declaration of the proper "Confession of Faith" (Baghdasaryan 1973, La Porta 2003). In 1363, while in Tiflis, he also commissioned a copy of the Armenian version of the works of John of Damascus (J1297), parallels with which may be observed in the text below (Akinean 1951, 67–68).

1.2. "Concerning Divine Names"

The present text, "Concerning Divine Names", though brief, is representative of Orotnets'i's erudition as within it he brings his training in grammar, logic, and theology to bear on the question of the exact nature of the names attributed to God. The combination of theological and grammatical terminology present in Orotnets'i's categorisation of divine names (see commentary to VII) witnesses the high degree to which these subjects were thought to coincide in the medieval monastic school curricula of Gladzor and Tat'ew (La Porta 2006 and 2007). Orotnets'i's text most likely served a pedagogical purpose and may represent teaching notes. His student, Grigor Tat'ewats'i, cites section III of the text without attribution in his *Book of Questions* (*Գիրք Հարցմանից*, see commentary to III below), which suggests that Grigor was familiar with this work and may have studied it under Orotnets'i's tutelage.

Orotnets'i's inquiry into the different types of divine names, however, represents more than an exegetical classification of biblical expressions. His theoretical observations served a spiritual purpose as well. As Grigor Tat'ewats'i explains, while God's nature is ineffable, his "names" are communicable (Grigor Tat'ewats'i 1993, 103; La Porta 2001, 126); thereby, it is only through the divine names that one can enter into a spiritual conversation with the divine. The Armenian tradition, however, shared in the notion of a grammaticalised universe in which names bore a direct and inherent relationship to their referents. "Names", claims Dawit' Anyaght' in opposition to the conventionalist position of Aristotle, "are revealers of nature" (see commentary to III). The medieval monastic tradition thus faced a contradiction, acknowledged by Orotnets'i in his treatise, between theological and grammatical approaches to understanding the divine. On the one hand, biblical texts explicitly and implicitly

¹⁰ His commentary on the Third Epistle to the Corinthians is published (Vetter 1894).

¹¹ Orotnets'i's explanations on the *Categories* and *De interpretatione* were compiled by his student, Grigor Tat'ewats'i, possibly from class notes.

refer to God's various "names" and present them as keys to understanding him.¹² On the other hand, as "names" reveal the nature of their referent and God's nature is unknowable, it is impossible for God to have a "name". Orotnets'ī seeks to resolve this contradiction and maintain both the absolute nature of "names"—for therein rests their efficacy¹³—and the ineffability and unknowability of God's nature.

Orotnets'īs solution is found in the doctrine of divine "action" or "energies" (ներգործութիւն). His transposition from grammatical to theological terminology is facilitated by the linguistic connection between "work" or "function" (Arm. գործ) and "action" or "energy" (Arm. ներ-գործ-ութիւն, a calque on Gk. ἐνέργεια). Following the grammatical tradition based on Dionysius Thrax's *Ars Grammatica*, Orotnets'ī classifies three manners of derivation for all names/nouns. They may either derive from the thing itself (i.e., have an inherent connection to the essence of the referent); or from its sound; or from its function. Since it is clear that divine names neither reflect the divine essence nor onomatopoeically reproduce divine sound, they must refer to divine function—here interpreted as the divine actions or energies of Providence. The notion that divine names refer to divine energies is consonant with the principles outlined by Dionysius the Areopagite in his *Divine Names* and the scholiastic tradition upon it.¹⁴ All divine names, then, are reflective of the interaction between God and his creation and do not directly refer to God's essence. The twelve types of names subsequently differentiated by Orotnets'ī in VIII–IX are to be understood within that framework. Although these twelve differentiations appear to be Orotnets'īs own construction, many of the "names" listed there are also discussed by the Areopagite.

For Orotnets'ī, divine names reveal the relationship between the Creator and his creation and they possess that relationship as their referent. Their significance then is in providing a means for their user—the one who meditates upon, comprehends, and proclaims them—to engage in that relationship. Given Orotnets'īs contact with the Dionysian corpus, it comes as no surprise that he considers apophatic attributes as the most appropriate way to refer to God. In addition to apophatic terminology, however, Orotnets'ī considers terms that express "awe" (հիսցալիսան) equally appropriate appellations. This may be a nod to the Areopagite's transcendence of both apophatic and cataphatic approaches to God in the *Mystical Theology*, but neither the term հիսցալիսան nor the concept of awe figures there. Rather, Orotnets'ī may here be echoing sentiments of Ephrem, a popular figure in Armenian Christianity, who similarly emphasised that an attitude of wonderment and awe was required of one who wished to approach scripture properly (Brock 1985, 43–45).¹⁵

¹² E.g., Ex 3:14.

¹³ Cf., e.g., the medieval Armenian traditions about Adam's naming of the animals in Stone 2007.

¹⁴ For the Armenian scholiastic tradition on the Dionysian corpus, see La Porta 2008a.

¹⁵ On Ephrem in Armenian, see Matthews 1996.

1.3. Description of Manuscript

The text is preserved in M2121 on ff. 331r–332r (*Grand Catalogue* 2012, 101–12).¹⁶ The manuscript is a miscellany copied in Kesaria (Caesarea, modern-day Kayseri, Turkey) in 1726 by a certain Yakob *vardapet* and Yovakim and contains minor decorative illumination by Astuacatur *k'ahanay* (priest). It was commissioned by Ghazar *vardapet* Jahkets'i, likely to be identified with the future Catholicos Ghazar Jahkets'i (sed. 1737–51) and author of the theological *apologia*, *Desirable Paradise* (*Գրասխան ցանկալի*). It passed into the possession of a Movsēs *vardapet*, whose seal appears on f. 13v, in 1746.¹⁷ The manuscript measures 20.8x15 cm. and contains 407 folios. The text is written in *bolorgir* in two-columns of approximately 30 lines per page.

The contents of the manuscript are as follows:

1. Grigor Tat'ewats'i's *Sermonary* (*Զարոզգիրք*), fols. 11r–314r; 314v–17v blank.
2. *Encomia* (*Ներբողականք*) on Grigor Lusaworich' by Vardan Arewelts'i and John Chrysostom, fols. 318r–25r.
3. “History of the Death and Burial and Discovery of the Relics of St. Grigor Lusaworich'” («Պատմութիւն մահուան և թաղման և գիւտ նշխարիաց սրբոյն Գրիգորի Լուսաւորչին»), fols. 325v–27r.
4. Ghazar¹⁸ *vardapet*'s “On Tears” («Յաղագս արտասուաց») culled from the book of Anania [Narekats'i],¹⁹ fols. 327r–30r.
5. “Spiritually Useful Counsel on Why It is Necessary to Eschew Terrestrial Things” («Խրատ ոգէշահ թէ որպէս պարտ է յերկրաւորացս խորշի»),²⁰ fols. 330r–31r.
6. Yovhannēs Orotnets'i's “Concerning Divine Names” («Յաղագս աստուածային անուանց»), fols. 331r–32r.
7. Yovhannēs Orotnets'i's “A Certain Discourse concerning Person” («Յաղագս անձին բան ինչ»), fols. 332r–34r.
8. From John Chrysostom's *Commentary* on Hebrews 1:1 («Ի մեկնութենէ Ոսկերբերանին ի վերայ բանի առաքելոյն, որ ասէ. Բազում մասամբ և բազում օրինակօք»), fol. 334.
9. “Counsel for Priests of Anania [Narekats'i], *Vardapet* of the Armenians” («Անանիայի Հայոց վարդապետի ասացեալ Խրատ քահանայից»), fols. 334v–38r.

¹⁶ I would like to thank the Mesrop Mashots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts (Matenadaran) for graciously providing me with a microfilm of these folios. This is the only copy of the work that I have been able to find, but as the more detailed catalogues of the collection of the Matenadaran appear, other copies may come to light.

¹⁷ According to the older catalogue of the Matenadaran, (*Catalogue* 1965, 725), the seal belonged to Mesrovb *vardapet*. I have not been able to confirm either reading.

¹⁸ This Ghazar is likely to be identified with the patron of the manuscript.

¹⁹ Anania Narekats'i (ca. 910–90) was founder of the monastery of Narek and teacher of the famous mystic and poet Grigor Narekats'i (ca. 945–1003). The book referred is Anania's *Book of Counsels* (*Խրատսուզգիրք*). For an extensive discussion of the counsel “On Tears”, see Arlen 2023.

²⁰ I would like to thank the anonymous reviewer of this article for pointing out that this appears to be a selection from Anania Narekats'i's “On this Transitory World” («Վասն անցաւոր աշխարհիս»). For an English translation and study of this text, see Cowe 2020, 242–58 and Arlen 2021, 174–80.

10. “Grigor Tat‘ewats’i on the Tree of Life” («Վասն կենաց ծառոյ») [= *Book of Questions* 10:44], fols. 338r–39v.
11. “Exhortations” («Յորդորականք») on the feasts of the martyrs, fols. 339v–41r.
12. “On the history of the holy and divine oil, which the holy fathers found in the East in Albanian and translated into Armenian, and concerning the body of St. John the Precursor” («Յաղագս պատմութեան սուրբ և աստուածային իւղոյն, զոր գտեալ արքոց հարցն յԱրեւելք յԱղուանի գիրս, և թարգմանեցին ի հայ գիր, և վասն մարմնոյն արքոյն Յովհաննու Կարապետին»), fols. 341v–43v.
13. “Yovhannēs Orotnets’i’s Commentary on the Words that the Prophet Says, ‘He who hath made the hearts of every one of them...’” (Ps. 32:15) («Յովհաննու Որոտնեցոյ արարեալ Մեկնութիւն բանին, որ ասէ մարգարէն. «Ո ստեղծ առանձին զսիրտս նոցա»»), fols. 343v–64v.
14. Colophon, fols. 365r–69v; 370r; 370v–74v blank.
15. Homiletic selections from Jacob of Serugh, Aṙak‘el *vardapet* [Siwnets’i], and anonymous authors, written in an unknown additional hand, fols. 375r–96r.

In his colophon to the manuscript, Ghazar praises Grigor Tat‘ewats’i’s endeavors against dyophysites and Chalcedonians and explains that he had the work produced “for the confirmation of the orthodox faith and for the education of the children of this holy new Sion” (առ ի հաստատութիւն հաւատոյս ուղղափառութեան և ի դաստիարակութիւն մանկանց արքոյ նորոյս Սիովնի, fol. 366r, *Grand Catalogue* 2012, 105).

2. Text²¹ and Translation

[331r]

I. Սրբոյն Յօհաննու Որոտնեցոյ-
«Յաղագս աստուածային անուանց»

IIa. Բայց գիտելի է, զի ըստ երից եղանակաց կոչի անուն ըստ իմաստասիրացն. հոմանուն, փաղանուն, յարանուն:

IIb. Իսկ ըստ քերթողաց՝ դարձեալ ըստ երից ասի անունն. յիրէն, ի ձայնէն, եւ ի գործոյն: Յիրէն՝ որպէս սափոր, ի ձայնէն՝ որպէս ճնճողուկ, եւ ի գործոյն՝ որպէս սղոց:

IIc. Բեր տեսցուք, եթէ այս անուն տիրական ըստ որո՞ւմ եղանակի եղաւ, եւ կամ ո՞վ եղ, եւ այժմ զի՞նչ պատճառաւ առեալ ասեն մարգարէք:

[331r]

I. “Concerning Divine Names”
of Saint Yōhannēs Orotnets’i

IIa. But it is to be known that according to the philosophers a noun²² is called according to three types: homonym, synonym, and denominal.

IIb. While according to the grammarians, the noun is again denoted in three ways: from the thing, from its sound, or from its function. From the thing, like a pitcher; from its sound, like a sparrow; and from its function, like a saw.

IIc. Come, let us see according to which type the name of the Lord was applied, as well as who applied it, and then for what reason do prophets say [it].

²¹ I have resolved all standard abbreviations.

²² As in Greek, the Armenian for “name” and “noun” are the same (անուն).

III. Գիտելի է, զի Աստուած ոչ ունի անուն [33 1v] յայտնիչ բնութեան, զի ոչ որ զիտէ Աստուած՝ ոչ հրեշտակք եւ ոչ մարդիկք, որպէս աստարանիչն վկայէ, թէ՛ «զԱստուած ոչ որ ետես», այսինքն՝ ոչ զիտաց: Իսկ որ յամենայն բան կենաց անհաս է, զիա՛րդ կոչի որ անուն նորա յայտնիչ բնութեան: Յայտ է, թէ ի մարդկանէ եւ ի հրեշտակաց անկար է անուանակոչել զնա:

IV. Իսկ որպէս զիտէ զինքն ի հարցանելն նահապետին Յակոբայ՝ «Չի՞նչ է անուն քո», պատասխանէ. «Չի՞ հարցանես զանուն իմ»: Թէ էր վասն զի սքանչելի է. որպէս ասէ մարգարէն, թէ՛ «Սքանչելի է անուն քո ի վերա ամենայն երկրի»: Եւ ամենայն առաքեալք եւ մարգարէք սքանչմամբ առն նշանակեն զաստուած, որպէս Դավիթ. «Ո՛ր արար զերկինս եւ զերկիր»: Եւ առաքեալ, թէ՛ «Ո՛ր խորք մեծութեան»: Այսպէս եւ Յուդիթ՝ «Ո՛ր արարիչդ ես ջրոյ»: Եւ բագումս գտանես ի զիրս Աստուածաշունչ:

V. Արդ, եթէ որ ասիցէ, եթէ՛ «Աստուած զիա՛րդ ոչ ունի անուն: Իսկ այն զի՞նչ է զոր ինքն Սովսէսի ասաց, թէ՛ «Ես եմ որ էն», զիտացէ, զի այն ոչ է յայտնիչ բնութեան, այլ՝ յայտնիչ ժամանակի, եւ ցուցանէ զմշտնջենաւորութիւն, թէ՛ «Միշտ եմ»: Իսկ զբնութիւնն թէ զի՞նչ է ոչ յայտնէ: Ապա ուրեմն յայսմ ամենայնէ յայտ եղև, թէ Աստուած ոչ ունի անուն յիրէն:

VI. Այլ եւ ոչ ի ձայնէն, զի ոչ ունի մարմին, լեզու, եւ մակալեզու, յորմէ՛ ձայն բացակատարի: Վասն այն ոչ կոչի նմա անուն ի ձայնէն:

III. It is to be known that God does not have a name [33 1v], a revealer of [His] nature, for no one knows God, neither the angels nor men, as the evangelist testifies, “no one has seen God”,²³ that is, [no one] has known [Him]. If [the] Word of life²⁴ is unreachable to anything, how [then] is any name of His called a revealer of nature? It is clear that it is impossible for man or angel to name Him.

IV. And as He knows Himself, when the Patriarch Jacob asks, “What is your name”, He replies, “why do you ask My name?” It was [so], since it is “wondrous”;²⁵ as the prophet says: “Your name is wondrous over the entire earth”,²⁶ and all the apostles and prophets portray God through the wonder of a man, like David: “You who created heaven and earth”,²⁷ and the Apostle, “O depths of greatness”;²⁸ thus also Judith, “O You who are the creator of water”.²⁹ And you find many [of these] in the Divine Scriptures.

V. Now if anyone should say: “How does God not have a name? But what is that which He Himself said to Moses, ‘I am He who Is’³⁰”, he should know that this-[statement] is not a revealer of nature but a revealer of time³¹, and it demonstrates [His] everlastingness, [i.e.,] “I am always”; whereas He does not reveal His nature— [i.e.,] what He is. Therefore, from all this it has become clear that God does not have a name “from the thing”.

VI. Nor [does He have a name] from [His] sound, since He does not have a body, tongue, or epiglottis by which a sound is

²³ Jn 1:18.

²⁴ “Word of life” (բան կենաց), cf. 1 Jn 1:1.

²⁵ Gen 32:29; but cf. Judg 13:18 and commentary below.

²⁶ Ps 8:2, 10[8:1,7].

²⁷ Ps 113:15[115:15]; 120:2[121:2]; 123:8[124:8]; 133:3[134:3]; 145:6[146:6].

²⁸ Rom 11:33.

²⁹ Jdt 9:12.

³⁰ Ex 3:14.

³¹ This violates Aristotle’s definition of a noun which has “no reference whatever to time”, *De interpretatione* II (16a).

Cf. also Dawit’s *Commentary* on Dionysius Thrax’s *Ars Grammatica* where the superiority of the noun over the verb is maintained, following Aristotle, because the noun “is a signifier of existence” (նշանակիչ զոյացութեան); the verb, “of accident” (պատահման), Adontz 1970, 103, 323.

VII. Իսկ ապա ուրեմն անուանք՝ Աստուած, Արարիչ, Տէր, Դատաւոր եւ այլ այնպիսիք ըստ որո՞ւմ եղանակի են կոչեցեալ: Յայտ է, թէ ըստ երրորդ յեղինակին. այսինքն՝ ըստ ներգործութեան բարեխնամ կամաց, զի միշտ ներգործէ առ իւր արարածս. յայսմանէ անուն կոչեալ եղեւ: Որպէս թէ յառնելոյն՝ Արարաւոր, ստեղծանելն յոչնչէ՝ Ստեղծող, ի տիրելոյն՝ Տէր, ի դատելոյն՝ Դատաւոր: Եւ այլ սոյնպիսիք անուանք ի բարերար ներգործութեանց կոչեցեալ եղեն:

VIII. Բայց է իմն զանազանութիւն ի մէջ այսպիսի անուանց աստուածային՝ ըստ երկոտասան յեղանակի: Եւ են այսոքիկ. նախ՝ էական, երկրորդ՝ անձնական, երրորդ՝ առընչական, չորրորդ՝ իբր առընչական, հինգերորդ՝ դրական, վեցերորդ՝ գերադրական, եասթներորդ՝ փոխաբերական, ութերորդ՝ բազմածական, իններորդ՝ արարչական, [332r] տասներորդ՝ արքունական, մետասաներորդ՝ հիացական, երկոտասաներորդ՝ բացբարձական:

IX. Էական՝ ըստ այնմ, որ առ Մովսէսիւ. թէ՛ «Ես եմ, որ էն»:

Անձնական. ծնաւոր, ծնունդ, բղխումն:

Առընչական՝ որպէս Հայր, Որդի, բղխաւոր, բղխեալ:

Իբր առընչական՝ ստեղծաւոր, ապաւէն:

Դրական՝ որպէս արդար, իմաստուն, բարի: Գերադրական՝ որպէս Արդար արդարոց, եւ Մուրք սրբոց, Իմաստուն իմաստնոց, Բարի բարեաց, Թագաւոր թագաւորաց: Փոխաբերական՝ որպէս թէ առիւծ, գառն, եզն, վեճ, եւ այլ սոյնպիսիք:

Բազմածական՝ Երրորդութիւն, երրեակ: Արարչական՝ որպէս Աստուած, Արարիչ: Արքունական. որպէս թագաւոր, իշխան: Հիացական՝ որպէս «Ո՛ հովեատ (*sic* for հովուեսդ) Իսրաէլի, ո՛ որ արարիչդ եւ ջրոյ, ո՛ որ եւ զհայելն ինձ ի կին մարդ ծանր զրեցեր:

produced. On account of which a name is not attributed to Him “from sound”.

VII. So then, these names: God, Creator, Lord, Judge, and others of this ilk, according to which type are they called? It is clear that [it is] according to the third type; that is, according to the action³² of His beneficial will, as He always acts in relation to His creations. Thus He was called a name. As from His making, Creator; from His fashioning from nothing, Fashioner; from His ruling, Lord; from His judging, Judge. And other names of this ilk were called from His beneficent actions.

VIII. But there is some differentiation between these divine names according to twelve types. And these are they: First, existential; second, personal; third, relative; fourth, quasi-relative; fifth, positive; sixth, superlative; seventh, metaphorical; eighth, collective; ninth, creative; tenth, royal; eleventh, expressing awe; twelfth, negative.

IX. Existential: in accordance with what [He said] to Moses: “I am that which is”³³

Personal: Begetter, begotten, emanation.

Relational: such as Father, Son, emanator, emanated.

Quasi-relational: Creator, refuge.

Positive: such as righteous, wise, good.

Superlative: such as Righteous of the righteous, and Holy of holies, Wise of the wise, Good of the good, King of kings.

Metaphorical: such as lion, lamb, ox, rock, and other things of this ilk.

Collective: Trinity, ternary.

Creative: such as God, Creator.

Royal: such as king, prince.

Expressing awe: such as “O You who pastor Israel”,³⁴ “O You who are the creator of

32 “Action” or “energy”: ներգործութիւն, calque on Gk. ἐνέργεια.

33 Ex 3:14.

34 Ps. 79:2.

Բացբարձական՝ որպես թե՛ անհաս,
անորակ, անքանակ, անուր, աներբ:

X. Իսկ բացբարձականքն եւ հիացականքն պատուականք են, քան գորականն, զի ի գիտութիւն Աստուծոյ առաւել մերձեցուցանեն բացբարձականքն, քան գորականն. զի ասելն, թե՛ «Աստուած ոչ է յէիցս» յաւէտ հպեցուցանէ ի խոր աստուածային, քան թե՛ ասելն «գեղեցիկ» կամ «արդար» եւ այլ տոյնայիսի. զի սորա արարածական եւ եղական կարծեցուցանեն: Իսկ հիացականն եւ բացբարձականն հեռացուցանեն յարարածոց. եւ արժանաւոր աստուածային խոկմանցն կացուցանեն զմիտս: Եւ այս յաղագս աստուածային անուանց:

XI. Բե՛ր տեսցուք, եթե՛ անունս այս Տեառն յու՛մնէ եղեպ եղեւ: Գիտելի, զի Աստուած անունն եւ Արարիչ Ադամ կոչեաց: Իսկ Տեառնն եւ Աստուծոյ՝ Ենովս: Դատաւորն եւ Յաւիտենական՝ Աբրահամ:

water”³⁵ “O you who made me reckon it hard to look at a woman”.³⁶

Negative: such as unreachable, without quality, without quantity, without space, without time.

X. And the negative and the expressing awe are more honourable than the positive, since the negative brings one closer to knowledge of God than the positive, so the saying, “God is not from among us beings”, draws one nearer to the divine depths than saying “beautiful” or “righteous”, and something else of this ilk, for these cause one to think [in terms fitting to] creations and created [beings]; whereas [names] expressing awe and negative [names] distance one from the creatures, and render one’s mind worthy of divine meditations. And this concerning the divine names.

XI. Come, let us look at by whom these names of the Lord were employed. It is to be known that Adam called out the name “God” and “Creator”³⁷; whereas Enosh [called on the name] “of the Lord” and “of God”³⁸; Abraham [called out] “Judge”³⁹ and “Eternal”.⁴⁰

3. Commentary

IIa.

The classification of the noun is based on Aristotle, *Cat.* 1(1a): “homonym” (հոմանուն), Gk. ὁμώνυμα; “synonym” (փաղանուն), Gk. συνώνυμα; “denominal” (յարանուն), Gk. παρώνυμα. Orotnets’i’s terms correspond exactly with the Armenian version of Aristotle’s *Categories*, Conybeare 1892, 107–108.

³⁵ Cf. Jdt 9:17.

³⁶ *Dormition of Saint John* (Հանգիստ կրանաւորն Յովհաննու) VII (Catergian 1877, 47), ultimately referring to Matthew 5:28. Nersēs Lambrōnats’i wrote a commentary on the *Dormition*, which was copied by Orotnets’i’s teacher, Esayi Nch’ets’i, in 1284 and preserved in M1422 (Thomson 2017).

³⁷ Cf. *The Teaching of St. Gregory* §273 (Thomson 1970); and Stone 2007, 73–74.

³⁸ Cf. Gen 4:26.

³⁹ Cf. Gen 18:25.

⁴⁰ Cf. Gen 21:33.

IIb.

As Orotnets'ī notes, the Armenian grammatical tradition follows Dawit' Anyaght's *Commentary* on Dionysius Thrax's *Ars Grammatica*: "But there are three forms of derivation: from the thing, from its function, from its sound. And a pitcher demonstrates the first; an axe, the second; and a sparrow, the third" (Բայց ստուգ[արբան]ութեան ձեռք են երեք՝ յիբէն, յարուեստէ, ի ձայնէ. եւ յարացոյց առաջումն՝ սափոր եւ երկրորդին՝ փայտաստ եւ երրորդին ճնճուկ, Adontz 1970, 85; cf. 315); followed by Step'anos Siwnets'ī in his *Commentary* (*ibid.*, 188), as well as Grigor Magistros (*ibid.* 228), and Yovhannēs Erznkats'ī Pluz in his *Compilation of Grammar* (Ervine 1988, 207 [488]). All these texts, however, follow the order of Dionysius and read "axe" (փայտաստ) instead of "saw" (սղոց). The word 'saw' does appear in Step'anos' *Commentary* and is repeated in Yovhannēs Erznkats'ī Pluz, but as an example of etymology according to function through the addition or subtraction of a vowel (Adontz 1970, 189; Ervine 1988, 207 [488]). The discrepancy between Orotnets'ī's text and the grammatical tradition is likely due to Orotnets'ī's reliance on memory here.

III.

The notion of "name" as "a revealer of nature" (յայտնիչ բնութեան) derives from Dawit' Anyaght's *Definitions and Divisions of Philosophy*. In ch.3, Dawit' declares that a "definition is a short statement, a revealer of the nature of a thing which is a subject" (սահման է բան կարճառօտ, յայտնիչ բնութեան ենթակայ իրի) and that "a name is a short definition" (անուն է սահման կարճառօտ) that "defines the nature of a given thing" (սահմանէ զբնութիւն ենթակայ իրին); and that "truly that which a name does, a statement does, for both name and statement reveal the nature of the thing which is the subject" (արդարեւ, զոր ինչ առնէ անուն, առնէ բան, բանզի եւ անուն եւ բան զբնութիւն ենթակայ իրին յայտնեն), Dawit' Anyaght' 1983, 26–28. In the Armenian scholia on the works attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, we find a similar sentiment expressed by scholiast I at *Divine Names* IX.3, where Dionysius exclaims that even the name "goodness" cannot be applied to God: "It is not as if the name 'good', which we are attributing to God, is He, and that this is appropriate for Him, or reveals Him; for the name, as a definition, is a revealer of nature" (զբարի անունն զոր կու սսենք ի վերայ սստուծոյ. ոչ թէ այս է նա, եւ այս է պատշան նմա, կամ այս յայտնէ զնա. զի անունն՝ իբր սահման, յայտնիչ է բնութեանն, M6362, 41r).

Orotnets'ī's student, Grigor Tat'ewats'ī, echoes this passage in the third volume of his *Գիրք հարցմանց* (*Book of Questions*), an exposition on the theology of Dionysius the Areopagite, when he rejects the ability of men or angels to name God as God's nature is inscrutable and therefore cannot be subject to a name (Grigor Tat'ewats'ī 1993, 103; La Porta 2001, 126). This stands in line with the Platonic iconic conception of referent and in opposition to the Aristotelian notion that "a noun is a sound having meaning established by convention alone" (Ὄνομα μὲν οὖν ἐστὶ φωνὴ σημαυτικὴ κατὰ συνθήκην) *De interpretatione*, ch. II (16a). Cf. also John of Damascus's *Philosophical Chapters* 8: "A name also often reveals the nature of the thing which is

the subject” (καὶ τὸ ὄνομα δὲ πολλάκις δηλοῖ τὴν φύσιν τοῦ ὑποκειμένου πράγματος, John of Damascus 1969, 69.11–12).

IV.

This biblical reference to Gen 32:20 is dependent upon a misreading of Dionysius’s *Divine Names* I.6, where the allusion is to Manoah’s request in Judg 13:17–18 (cf. Dionysius the Areopagite 1987b, 94⁴¹):

Seeing this the theologians praise Him as nameless and as from every name. Nameless as when they call the thearchy itself by one of the mysteries of the symbolic theophany to reprimand the one who asks: “What is your name?”; and as leading away from all knowledge of divine nomenclature saying: “Why do you ask my name; it is wondrous”.

Արդ զայս տեսեալ աստուածաբանիցն և որպէս անանուն արհնաբանեն զնա և յամենայն անուանէ: Անանուն՝ որպէս յորժամ ասեն զնոյն աստուածապետութիւնն միով ի խորհրդականացն նշանականին աստուածերևութեանն սաստել հարցողին, եթէ զի՞նչ անուն է քո, և որպէս յամենայն աստուածանունականէ զիտութենէ ի բաց տանելով զասելն, եթէ և ընդէ՞ր հարցանես զանուն իմ, և այս է սքանչելի (Dionysius the Areopagite 1987a 134–35).

Orotnets’i’s evocation of Jacob may be attributed to a similar confusion found in the Armenian scholia on the Dionysian corpus. Scholiast I first glosses this lemma in the *Divine Names* as a reference to the episode of Jacob’s wrestling with an angel and immediately follows it with the citation from Judg 13:

There are many symbolic epiphanies of God to the prophets. And one is this: a man who appeared to Jacob and he wrestled with him.⁴² And the saying: “Why do you ask about my name; it is wondrous;⁴³ with this He reprimanded the one who asks, and demonstrated that He is anonymous, for that is wondrous, which is unknowable to us.

Բազում նշանակաւ երեւմունք են աստուծոյ առ մարգարէսն. եւ մի այս է՝ որ առ Յակոբ երեւեցաւ այր, եւ մարտեաւ ընդ նմա: Արդ ասելն՝ «Չի՞ հարցանես զանուանէ իմմէ, եւ այն է սքանչելի»՝ այսու սաստեաց հարցողին եւ էցոյց թէ անանուն է. զի սքանչելին այն է, որ մեզ անգիտելի է (M6362, 25v).

The biblical citations of Rom 11:33 and Jdt 9:12 that Orotnets’i employs as expressing wonder are also cited by Grigor Tat’ewats’i as examples of God’s “wondrous

⁴¹ My translation differs from Thomson’s.

⁴² Cf. Gen 32.22–32.

⁴³ Cf. Judg 13.17–18: Եւ ասէ Մանովէ ցիրէշտակն տեսան. «Չի՞նչ անուն է քեզ, զի յորժամ եկեացդ բանն քո՝ փառաւորեցոյք զրեզ»: 18. Եւ ասէ ցնա հրէշտակն Տեառն. «Չի՞ հարցանես զանուանէ իմմէ, եւ նա է սքանչելի» (the citation is from Zohrabea 1805); cf. also Gen 32:29 and Ex 3:13 where God is asked for his name. The scholiast’s citation of Judg 13 is closer to the Armenian biblical text than the translation in the *Divine Names*.

name” (հիացական անունն) but in the context of spiritual ecstasy (La Porta 2001, 174, 346).

VI.

Cf. Dawit' Anyaght': “Sound⁴⁴ is the issue of our breath in the larynx, articulated by the windpipe and given form by the tongue and epiglottis” (Չայն է բացակատարումն զանչեցելոյ ի մեզ հագագի եւ երիւրեցելոյ ընդ խոշորութեան շնչափողն եւ տեսակարարեցելոյ լեզուաւ եւ մակալեզուաւ, Dawit' Anyaght' 1983, 98–99).

VII.

As noted above, Orotnets'ī associates the third grammatical category of nominal derivatives, that according to “function” (գործ), with the theological concept of divine energies or actions (ներգործութիւն), on the basis of their linguistic connection. Orotnets'ī seems indebted to Dionysius the Areopagite's *Divine Names* and the scholastic tradition on that text for the notion that providential actions are the referent of divine names. In *Divine Names* I.4, Dionysius asserts that “you will find every holy praise of the theologians—the divine appellations—arranged in a revelatory and hymnodic manner with regard to the beneficent procession of the thearchy” (զամենայն սրբազան արհնարանութիւն սստուածարանիցն զոցեստ առ ի բարերար յառաջածութիւնն սստուածպետութեանն յայտնապէս եւ արհնէրգարար յարիներալ զաստուածայիսն անունակոչութիւնս, Dionysius 1987a, 131.8–10; Dionysius 1987b, 92.11–14⁴⁵).

The beneficent procession of the thearchy is equated with divine Providence in the scholia of John of Scythopolis on *Divine Names* I.5, which mentions providence as the source of goodness: “None of the theologians dared to praise God from Himself because He is unknowable; but from his procession, which is Providence” (Ամենայն սստուածարանքն յինքնէ սստուծոյ ոչ իշխեն արհնարանել. քանզի անգիտելի է, այլ ի յառաջ ճանապարհէն, որ է նախախնամութիւն, M167, 140v; cf. Rorem-Lamoreaux 1998, 191 [205.2 on 117.12]).⁴⁶

We may also compare John Damascene's assertion in *Expositio fidei* 9.9 that divine appellations do not refer to God's essence but reveal either the divine energy or the relationship of theological distinctions through contrast or of things that are proper to the divine nature, not essence: “Therefore, each of the sayings about God should not be thought to signify what He is according to essence, but what He is not; making manifest either the relation of contradistinctions or of those things that pertain to His nature, or energy” (χρή τοίνυν ἕκαστον τῶν ἐπὶ θεοῦ λεγομένων οὐ, τί κατ' οὐσίαν ἐστὶ, σημαίνειν οἴεσθαι, ἀλλ' ἢ, τί οὐκ ἔστι, δηλοῦν ἢ σχέσιν τινὰ πρὸς τι τῶν ἀντιδιαστελλομένων ἢ τι τῶν παρεπομένων τῇ φύσει ἢ ἐνέργειαν, John of Damascus 1973, 31.7–10; cf. John of Damascus 2023, 69. Վասն այսորիկ պարտ է գիրարանչիրն ի վերայ Աստուծոյ սասցելոցն ոչ որպէս ինչ նա է գոյութեամբ, զայն երեւեցուցանող կարծել,

44 In Armenian, “sound” (ձայն) is the same as the word for “voice”.

45 My translation differs from Thomson's.

46 On the Armenian version of the scholia of John of Scythopolis on Dionysian corpus, see La Porta 2013.

այլ գոր ինչ ոչ է գայյ յայտնող լինել, կամ ազգականութեանն ինչ ընդ հակառակ բաժանելոյ ումեմն առ ինչ, որք են հետեւողք գոյութեանն կամ բնութեանն կամ ներգործութեանն).

The equation of providence and action or energy is further present in the Armenian scholia on *Divine Names* IX.5. In that passage, Dionysius elaborates that “other” is attributed to God because He “is near to all providentially, and become all in all for the sake of the salvation of all, remaining in Himself and naturally unchanged from His own identity and in continuous position in accordance with one energy” (Իսկ այլն՝ վասն զի յամենեստեան նախախնամաբար մերձ է Աստուած, և ամենայն յամենայնի վասն ամենեցունց փրկութեան լինի, մնալով յինքեան և յիւրմէ նոյնութենէն անփոխաբնապէս և անդադար կայիւք ըստ միոյ ներգործութեան, Dionysius the Areopagite 1987a, 206; 1987b, 146⁴⁷).

In his scholion on this lemma, the first anonymous scholiast remarks that “although He is multiplied in various things providentially, He is not changed from His own identity, and remains continuous ‘in accordance with one energy’. ‘Energy’ means providence” (թեպէտ բազմանա յայլ և այլսն նախախնամաբար՝ յիւրմէ նոյնութենէն ոչ փոխի. և անդադար կա ըստ միոյ ներգործութեան. ներգործութիւն զնախախնամութիւնն սստ, M6362, 38v). The equivalence of energy/action with providence appears to rest behind Orotnets‘i’s transference of the notion of the derivation of nouns from their action to the derivation of divine attributes from God’s providential actions.

VIII.

The differentiation of divine names according to twelve types appears to be Orotnets‘i’s own construction, although some of the terms he uses may be found elsewhere as categories. Thus:

relative (առնչական): The more common form is առինչունակ (*NBHL*, 1.305), cf. Aristotle, *Cat.* vii (Conybeare 1892, 124); Dionysius Thrax (Adontz 1970, 17,18; = πρὸς τι ἔχον); Dawit‘ Anyaght‘ *Comm.* (Adonz 1970, 109, 326); Anon. *Comm.* (Adontz 1970, 144); Step‘annos Siwnets‘i *Comm.* (Adontz 1970, 208); Hamam Arewelts‘i *Comm.* (Adontz 1970, 259, 260), and Yovhannēs Erznkats‘i *Comm.* (Khacheryan 1983, 215).

quasi-relative (իբր առնչական): Aristotle, *Cat.* vii (Arm. version, however, does not use this phrase, Conybeare 1892, 126); Dionysius Thrax (Adontz 1970, 17,18; = ὡς πρὸς τι ἔχον); Dawit‘ Anyaght‘ *Comm.* (Adonz 1970, 109, 326); Anon. *Comm.* (Adontz 1970, 144); Step‘annos Siwnets‘i *Comm.* (Adontz 1970, 209); Hamam Arewelts‘i *Comm.* (Adontz 1970, 259, 260); Yovhannēs Erznkats‘i *Comm.* (Khacheryan 1983, 215).

positive (դրական): *NBHL*, 1.642; Dionysius Thrax (Adontz 1970, 35; = θετικός); Hamam Arewelts‘i *Comm.* (Adontz 1970, 269, 279); Yovhannēs Erznkats‘i *Comm.* (Khacheryan 1983, 142); Anon. Armenian scholion on *Divine Names* IV.3 (M6362, 29r).

47 My translation differs slightly from Thomson’s.

superlative (գերադասական): *NBHL*, 1.543; Dionysius Thrax (Adontz 1970, 13, 15; = ὑπερθετικόν); Dawit' Anyaght' *Comm.* (Adontz 1970, 106, 324); Anon. *Comm.* (Adontz 1970, 141); Movsēs K'erdogh *Comm.* (Adontz 1970, 171); Yovhannēs Erznkats'ī *Comm.* (Khacheryan 1983, 206); also used by Grigor Tat'ewats'ī, 1993, 106 (La Porta 2001, 131, 236–37).

collective (բազմաձևական): More commonly բազմաձևական or բազմաձևական (*NBHL*, 1.400). Dionysius Thrax (Adontz 1970, 18, 20; = περιληπτικόν); Dawit' Anyaght' *Comm.* (Adontz 1970, 110, 326); Hamam Arewelts'ī *Comm.* (Adontz 1970, 260, 261), and Yovhannēs Erznkats'ī *Comm.* (Khacheryan 1983, 219; cf. also 224–25).

expressing awe (հիսցական): According to the *NBHL* (2.96), Yovhannēs Erznkats'ī employed this term in his commentaries on Matthew and on grammar in connection with Matt 15:28, “O woman, your faith is great” (Ո՛վ կին դու, մեծ են հավատք քո).

negative (բացբարձական): *NBHL*, 1.474–75; anon. scholion on *Divine Names* II.3 (M6362, 27r); ի բաց բարձունք appears in the lemma (Dionysius 1987a, 140).

Orotnets'ī's five other categories—existential (էական); personal (անձնական); creative (արարչական); royal (արքունական); metaphorical (փոխաբերական)⁴⁸—do not appear to have any particular place in the grammatical tradition, although the first four are significant in the theological tradition.

IX.

Although the twelve types of differentiation are not found in the works attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, some of Orotnets'ī's examples do appear in the *Divine Names* (cf. the list of terms in *Divine Names* I.6). On the basis of the examples “King of kings” and “Holy of holies”, Orotnets'ī has apparently created superlatives of his own in the following constructions: “Righteous of the righteous”, “Wise of the wise”, “Good of the good”. Again, these are consonant with the Areopagite's discussion of God as the cause of all things.

Orotnets'ī's metaphorical terms, “lion” and “ox”, are usually ascribed to angelic beings according to the vision of the divine throne in Ezek 1; cf., for example, *Heavenly Hierarchy* 15.

X.

Orotnets'ī defends the supremacy of apophatic theology over cataphatic in terms familiar from the Dionysian corpus and the scholiast tradition on it. For example, we may cite the Areopagite's remarks in *Heavenly Hierarchy* II.3:

But sometimes again it [i.e., the thearchy] is praised in supermundane fashion by the same sayings through figures that are dissimilar revelations, when they call it invisible and uncontainable and infinite; and it is indicated by those things which [describe] not what it is but what it is not. For this indeed, as I think,

⁴⁸ According to the *NBHL*, 2.945, the adjectival form is unattested; only verbal and nominal forms are attested.

is more legitimate for it, because as the hidden and holy tradition told us, we aver its non-being in any way from among the beings, and we are ignorant of its super-essential and inconceivable and ineffable limitlessness (Dionysius the Areopagite 1987b, 4–5).

Եւ երբեմն դարձեալ և աննմանիւք յայտնաբանութեամբք ձևակերպութեամբք ի նոյն ասացելոցն գերազարդապէս աւրինաբանի, աներևոյթ զնա և անտանելի և անբովանդակելի կարդալով, և յորոց ոչ որ ինչ էն, այլ որ ինչ ոչն է նշանակի: Քանզի այս իսկ, որպէս վարկանիմ, է տիրագոյն ի վերայ նորա, վասն զի որպէս թաքուն և սրբազան աւանդութիւնն պատմեաց մեզ, զոչն զոլ նորա ըստ իրիք յէիցս ճշմարտենք և անգիտանամք զգերագոյ և անիմացական և անճատելի անսահմանութիւնն նորա (Dionysius the Areopagite 1987a, 6).

Cf. the Armenian version of John of Scythopolis’s scholion on this verse:

[Ineffabilities are able to be posited] not only of God but also of all the divine beings; that is, of all the intelligent beings after God. And he says ineffables to be “true” and affirmations “unfitting” when we call God or the intelligible powers either “life” or “light”, because such life does not exist as living in exhalation and breathing, nor [is there] visible light which allows one to see, but they are superior to such things. But how much more fitting to the intelligent beings are ineffabilities which are through negations, for we say that they, while being intelligible, are invisible. And the discourse neither investigates nor presents what that very thing is that is not visible, which both “life” and “light” seem to symbolise, and it does not completely reveal these things (La Porta 2008b, 131–32⁴⁹; cf. Rorem-Lamoreaux 1998, 152 [41.1 on 12.20–13.1]).

Ոչ միայն ի վերայ աստուծոյ այլ եւ ի վերայ աստուածայնոցն ամենեցունց, այսինքն՝ յետ աստուածոյ իմացականացն ամենեցունց. եւ զանճառութիւնսն ճշմարիտս զոլ ասէ եւ զճատելն անպատշաճս, յորժամ ասենք զաստուած կամ զիմանալի զաւրութիւնսն կամ կեանս կամ լոյս. քանզի ոչ կեանք այսպիսիք են, որպէս զի ի տուր եւ առ շնչոյս կեալ, եւ ոչ լոյս երեւելի որ առնէ տեսանել այլ վերագոյնիսն քան զայսպիսիս: Իսկ անճառութիւնք որ ի ձեռն ուրացութեանց քանակապէս ի վերայ իմացականացն ընտանէգոյնք են, քանզի ասենք, թէ աներևոյթք են՝ իմանալի զոլով: Եւ զինչ է նոյն ոչ երեւեալն՝ ոչ քննել եւ յանդիման կացուցնել բանի, որ եւ կեանք եւ լոյս թուին նշանակել, եւ զայսոսիկ եւ ոչ բնաւ յայտնէ (M167, 9, M169, 12r).

XI.

The final remark suggests that Orotnets’i’s text or his lecture may have continued, but this part was either not preserved in this manuscript or was not recorded.

⁴⁹ The translation here departs from my earlier one where I omitted “for we say that they, while being intelligible, are invisible”.

4. Conclusion

Yovhannēs Orotnets'ī's treatise "Concerning Divine Names" aims to elucidate the referent for names for God in the Bible. The text may represent a recapitulation of a lesson or classroom notes for students progressing from rudimentary instruction in logic to a higher level of theological inquiry. One may detect in the text references to Aristotle's *Categories* (IIa, VIII) and *De interpretatione* (III); Dawit' Anyaght's *Definitions and Divisions of Philosophy* (III, VI); the Armenian commentarial tradition on Dionysius Thrax's *Ars Grammatica* (IIb, VIII); and, most prominently, Dionysius the Areopagite's *Divine Names* and the scholia by John of Scythopolis and anonymous Armenian scholiasts upon that text and the *Heavenly Hierarchy* (III, IV, VII, VIII, IX, X). Parallels may also be found with John of Damascus's *Philosophical Chapters* (III) and *Expositio fidei* (VII). Orotnets'ī was familiar with the Damascene's work, but the similarities here may be due to a shared reading of Aristotle and the *corpus Areopagiticum*.

With the exception of John of Damascus's *Philosophical Chapters* and *Expositio fidei*, these works were critical texts in the curricula of the monastic schools. Grammar and logic constituted necessary propaedeutics to the further study of Scripture, while the Dionysian corpus along with other patristic works provided intellectual scaffolding upon which to construct scriptural interpretation. One of the cornerstones of instruction in logic in the schools where Orotnets'ī taught was Dawit' Anyaght's *Definitions and Divisions of Philosophy*, and it seems that a conundrum posed by a reading of this work sparked the conversation behind Orotnets'ī's treatise. According to Dawit's *Definitions*, names reveal the nature of its referent. If that is so, God cannot possess a name, as His nature is ultimately unknowable. Nevertheless, the Bible refers to God by many names, and one can see how students would be flummoxed by the tension between these two propositions, that God is simultaneously nameless and of many names. Furthermore, if these names do not refer to God's nature, how did the "theologians" (i.e., the prophets) derive these names, and to what do they refer? In order to resolve this tension and answer these questions, Orotnets'ī primarily availed himself of Dionysius the Areopagite's idea of divine energies articulated in the *Divine Names* and explained in the scholiastic tradition upon that text. Orotnets'ī's opusculum exemplifies well how the different levels of instruction in the school curriculum could be integrated and applied to scriptural exegesis.

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