

Two Mediaeval Armenian Poems by Frik and Aṙak‘el Baṭišec‘i Translations and Comments

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Abstract The article presents the annotated English translations of two Armenian medieval poems: *On Adam* by Frik and *The Rose and the Nightingale* by Aṙak‘el of Baṭēš. Both translations are prefaced by a short bio-bibliographical note on their authors and a brief discussion of the poetic devices used in the poems, as well as of their content, themes, and literary references to other Armenian works.

Keywords Aṙak‘el of Baṭēš. Frik. Armenian Medieval poetry.

Summary 1 Introductory Remarks on Frik by Abp. Norayr Pōtanean. – 3 Aṙak‘el of Baṭēš (Fourteenth-Fifteenth Centuries), *The Rose and the Nightingale*.



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1 **Introductory Remarks on Frik by Abp. Norayr Pōtarean**

Frik is the first Armenian poet who wrote almost completely in Middle Armenian. The dates of his birth and death are unknown. In some of his lyrics, Frik gives us hints of historical and biographical information, that enable us to set his lifetime approximately between the years 1234 and 1315. In light of the titles of two of his poems, we may assume that Frik was a layman. His name may be derived from the name Frederik; his father's name was Takvoršah.

Frik's birthplace is unknown, but it is thought that he came from Western Armenia. It seems he received some education, but it is not known where and under what conditions. His writings show that he was literate, and he was familiar with biblical and other religious, ecclesiastical texts. In his works we can discern the influence of Nersēs the Graceful (Շնրփայլհ, 1102-1173), the renowned Armenian religious poet.

Thanks to his natural gifts, Frik became one of the boldest writers of his time. He did not write in the learned Ancient Armenian of his age (*grabar*), but in the people's common spoken language, so that his writing was comprehensible to all. Frik, the poet, seems to have compiled his works in one volume, which was known as *The Book of Frik*.

In his writings, Frik appears as humane, democratic, and patriotic poet. He rails strongly against the abuse by the ruling feudal classes. He shows a profound hatred of the wealthy who ruthlessly exploit the hard labour of the poor, whom he considers deserving of Hell. From his sensitive heart, cries frequently burst forth against the violence of the Tatar Khans who had conquered Armenia.

Frik composed a series of social, philosophical poems, but those poems infused with a religious and moral sensibility are much more numerous, as if he were a medieval spiritual leader, delivering spiritually beneficial sermons to his flock. This may be explained by the general mentality of that age, which in large measure corresponded to the poet's own world-view.

Frik's writings have great artistic value, with their originality, burning and colourful images, and strong, regular rhythm and musicality. Frik was also a singer. His poetry sprang from a pure heart, infused with hope, and for this reason, they speak directly to the reader's heart. In his poems, Frik mostly used the 'Armenian meter', that is to say, 2+3+2, 3+2+3, (7+3+5). This has regular rhythm and musicality and is very apt both for religious-philosophical and for love

"Introductory Remarks" are translated by permission from Pōtarean 1971, 338-40. These "Introductory Remarks" were first published in English two decades ago, together with translations of several of Frik's other poems for which see Stone, Bourjekian 2001, 47-56. They are given again here for the convenience of the reader.

poems. He also uses poetic lines of syllables in the following measures: 4+4, 3+3+2+3, 4+4+4+4, 3+4+4+4, 5+5+5.

Frik not only wrote his poems, but was a singer as well, and the title of one of his poems is *By the singer Frik*. The superscriptions of eight of his poems specify the tune according to which they should be sung. It is very natural that Frik composed his poems as songs and medieval bards sang his poems throughout the Middle Ages. In this fashion, Frik had a deep influence on subsequent Armenian poets, such as Yovhannēs T'lkuranc'i, Mkrtič' Nalaš, Grigoris Ałt'amarc'i, and others. Justly, Archbishop Tirayr called him "the guide and pioneer of our medieval poets".¹

2 Frik (c. 1234-1315), *Poem on Adam*

Poem on Adam falls into three parts. Stanzas 1-13 deal with the fall of Satan/Sadayel, and the fall of "his brother" Adam (stanza 13:3). Lines 14-17 change the focus and describe the creation and the writer's unease and uncertainty at his position in it. These form the second part of the poem. The third part, from 18-25 is a sapiential piece taking its origin from the book of *Proverbs*. It evokes *Prov. 1:2*, the supposedly first verse of the Bible translated into Armenian. In this part, the poet trembles in his consciousness of his sinful nature. Two clear lines of the poem (23.2) tie this section back to the earlier Adam story. So, too, does the repetition of the image of the world as a sea, which stanza 16 reprises.

In this poem, redemption is not a major theme. In fact, the poem can be understood in terms of the Garden of Eden. Attitudes to it, three in number, characterize the three parts of the poem:

1. In section I, §1, Adam is in the Garden and God comes to seek him there, and he has sinned. Next, in §8 Adam is standing outside the Garden, weeping over the sin implied in §1. Finally Adam's fallen status is re-confirmed by his expulsion.
2. In section II, §15, the writer moves back in the timeline and proclaims that Adam's proper place in creation is in the Garden. His sin and expulsion are not mentioned.
3. Section III deals with how humans, Adam's offspring, should live in this world. The Garden is to be internalized (§21) as humans live righteously and close to God. Notable in this poem is that it has no eschatological or salvific turn of 'Adam-New Adam', though it uses the flowers that grow in the Garden as a

¹ A compilation of Frik's works was published in Erevan, in 1941, by Mkrtič' Mkryan and Ervand T'orosyan. The poem here is translated from the text given in the fuller collection prepared by Archbishop Tirayr (Melik Muschkambarian) 1952, 522.

symbol of resurrection and renewal (§25). The Garden as an image is pervasive in all Abrahamic discourse. Here it moves from being a real place to being the due position of humans in world order, and then to being an internal state of proximity to God.

The rhythm is discussed in the remarks above. In addition, the poem is in monorhyme, a poetic device from oriental poetry introduced by Grigor Magistros into the Armenian poetic tradition. Thus, the second and fourth lines of the stanzas 1-8 rhyme in -ես, of stanzas 9-11 in -ած/-աց, and so forth. The poem is presented as twenty-five four-line stanzas, following the edition of the text. In fact, however, each line is a hemistich, and the monorhyme was applied to the second hemistich of each line. Thus, each stanza is actually of two stychs.

Մեր Տէրն ի դրրախտն երեկ, 1
Աղամայ ձայնեց՝ թէ ո՛ր ես:
Աղամ դրրախտէն ի դուրս
Չայս ասաց, թէ «Մերկիկ եմ ես»:

«Իմ Տէր, ի Քեզնէ կուզեմ, 2
Որ գեւա ու գաւձն անիծես.
Նոքա խաբեցին ըզիս՝
Քո լուսոյդ, որ մերկացայ ես:

«Պըտողոյն ինձ ուտել տըւին 3
Լի Քենէ արին սեւերես.
Ողորմած ես, մարդասէր,
Մի՛ առնէր ըզմեզ, Տէր, անտես:

«Իմ Տէ՛ր, յայն հողու եմ ես, 4
Քո ձեռաւքդ զիս ըստեղծեալ ես:
Սատանան ցաւեցոյց զիս
Կու խնդրեմ ցաւըս փարատես:

«Քան զջուր ճապաղեցայ 5
Կաղաչեմ, որ զիս ժողովես.
Ժողովես ու շիշան լընուս,
Քո աջովդ մատահարես:

«Իմ Տէր, կորուսեալ եմ ես, 6
Ակն ունիմ որ զիս զըտանես,
Անմեղ յաշխարհս եկի.
Ու մեղաւք կերթամ սեւերես:

Անգեղծ վըտանգի դիպա 7
յւ՛ ի Քէն հայցեմ զիս խալըսես.

Աստէնս ի մեղաց փրկես,
Լ' անդէնին՝ հրոյ ազատես:

Սատանան ետես զԱդամ՝ 8
Դըրախտին դուռն էր նա կանգնած.
Չերկու ձեռքն յիրար էզարկ
Ու բարկ բարկ ինքըն ծիծաղաց:

Ադամ զայս պատասխանեաց՝ 9
Չ'ինչ տեսար, թո փառքդ անիծած.
Թեպէտ դրախտէն հանեցիր
Չի թողու մեր Տէրն ի ձեռաց:

Սատանան տեսաւ զՄովսէս, 10
Արգիլեց ու շատ մի իլաց.
«Իմ աստուածախօս Մովսէս
Մեր Տէրն է՞ր մեզնէ խռոված:

«Երբ մեք աշակերտ էաք 11
Աստուծոյ՝ Ադամ չէր ստեղծուած.
զԱդամ ի հողուն ստեղծեաց.
Մեքն ի մեր փառացն եմք զըրկած.»

Ի յերկնաւոր դասուց 12
Սատայել գերեսն է շըրջել.
Ի յերկնից՝ յանդունդս իջել
Լ' ի լուսոյն խաւար մնացել:

ՉԱդամ ի դրախտէն հանել, 13
Անասնոց երկիրն է ձըզել.
Ամէնքս ենք աւտար, եղբայր,
Լ' Անասնոց յերկիր բընակել:

Աւրինեալ Աստուծոյ անուն, 14
Որ փակած դըռւին է բացել.
ՉԱշխարհս գեղեցիկ ստեղծեր
Ու չորեք դիմաց բաժանել:

Չիրեշտակս այլ յերկինս դասեր 15
Լ' Ադամայ դըրախտն է տըւել.
Չերկիր անիծեց եւ տեղ
Գազանաց եւ անասնուց շինել:

Աշխարհս է ի ծով նըման, 16
Ով որ կայ՝ անթաց չի մնայ,

Այս ծովս ես ի նաւ մըտայ,
Նաւս գընաց, որ ես չիմացայ:

Եզեր մաւտեցել եմ ես, 17
Կու վախենմ քարի դիպենայ.
Քակտէ գիմ աղուոր շինուածն
Ու տախտակս մէկմէկանայ:

Դաւիթ արքայի որդին՝ 18
Սողոմոն գայս մեզ կու հրամէ.
Ըզխրատն իմաստնիցըն տուր
Առաւել քեզ կու սիրէ:

Թէ անգէտ, յիմար մարդոյն 19
Խըրատ տաս՝ գքեզ կու ատէ.
Նա թուր ու դանակ կամնէ,
Թէ կարէ ըզքեզ կու սպանէ:

Չորս բան առ իըրատ յիսնէ, 20
Որ ամէն աշխարհի հաւանէ.
Չայլոց մեղք դու մի՛ բններ,
Չքոյդ երակ մըտաւքդ անդիճէ:

ՉԱստուած մաւտ ի քեզ դու բեր, 21
Ու մահուդ աւրըն դու յիչէ.
Ըզըրախտս ի սըրտից տընկէ,
Որ Աստուած գքեզ չի դատէ:

Յիմ շատ գունահին յահէս՝ 22
Չիս երեր ու լացն է ամեր.
Ոչ ով չէ պատճառ եղեր,
Չեմ այլոց ձեռաւք ես խաբեր:

Իմ սըրտիս յաւժար կամաւքն 23
Ի յամէն մեղք եմ հանդիպեր.
Միոյ հակառակ կաց եր՝
Չաւրինաց ցանկն եմ պատամեր:

Աշխարհս է ծով նըման 24
Ու մարդիք ի ներս կու լողան.
Մարմինքս են նաւի նըման,
Յոգին՝ գանձ է անապական:

Չարթին՝ զինչ գարնան ծաղիկ 25
Փըթըթին ւ՛ այլուի չորանան.

Երանի հագար բերան
Արդարոցն առուր զալըստեան:

Our Lord in the Garden at eventide, 1
Called out to Adam "Where are you?"
Adam, outside the Garden,
said this, "I am naked".

"My Lord, I want you 2
To curse Eve and the serpent.
They deceived me,
who am stripped of your light.²

"They gave me of the fruit to eat, 3
and received dark faces³ from you.
You are merciful, lover of humans,
O Lord, do not abandon us.

"My Lord, I am of that dust, 4
You created me with your hands.⁴
Satan caused me pain,
I ask: Remove my pain.

"I am more scattered than water, 5
I beg you to gather me together.
Gather and fill the bottle (with me),
With your right hand imprint me.⁵

"My Lord, I am lost, 6
I hope that you will find me.
I came sinless into this world,
And in sin I go, dark of face.⁶

2 Line 2:4: this is a usual idea, contrasting with the luminous face which Adam had in the Garden, according to tradition. Adam's pre-transgression garment was of light. He lost his luminosity when he sinned.

3 Line 3:2: dark faces result from sinful loss of glory. It is a common figure of speech.

4 Line 5:4: see *Gen. 2:7*, "then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground". This is a commonplace in mediaeval Armenian literature. See, for example, Arak'el Siwnec'i, *Adamgirk'* 3.4.15 ff., "You who created Adam with Your hands".

5 Line 5:1: see *Ps. 58:7 (57:8)* for the image; line 5:3: the bottle is presumably the physical outer form of humans. For creation with God's right hand, see note 5. Here God's insufflation of Adam with the spirit of life in *Gen. 2:7* is understood in terms of sealing.

6 Line 6:4: "go" here means 'leave', that is, 'this world'; for 'dark-faced', see stanza 3.

"I encountered danger unavoidable And I beg you to release me. You save from this world's sin, And you free from that world's fire."	7
Satan saw Adam, Standing at the Garden's gate, He smote his two hands together, ⁷ And bitterly he mocked himself.	8
Adam answered him thus, "What did you see, cursed of your glory? Although you were expelled (us) from the Garden, The Lord does not let us fall from his hands." ⁸	9
Satan saw Moses, He opposed him and greatly wept. ⁹ "My Moses, speaker with God, ¹⁰ Why is our Lord alarmed by us?" ¹¹	10
"When we were pupils of God, Adam had not been created. He created Adam from dust. We were deprived of our glory." ¹²	11
From the heavenly ranks, Sadayel turned his face around, ¹³	12

7 Line 8:3: "smote hands": here this action is a sign of distress. In the Bible, e.g. *Num.* 24:10, it is a mark of anger or distress and it functions similarly in other Near-Eastern cultures. See Fox 1995.

8 Line 9:4: "fall from his hands": a striking parallel may be observed in a poem by D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930): "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. / But it is a much more fearful thing to fall out of them. / Did Lucifer fall through knowledge? / Oh, then, pity him, pity him that plunge!".

9 I did not find this word in dictionaries. I suggest that it is variant spelling of *tuḡug* 'he wept', an aorist tense of *lam* so I translate.

10 Line 10:3 "speaker with God": a rather common epithet of Moses in Armenian.

11 Stanza 10: This draws on *Jude* 9, which reads: "But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you".

12 Stanza 11: here the poet uses four short staccato sentences to evoke the narrative of the fall of Satan before creation.

13 Line 12:2: The name Sadayel < Satan-a-el is an alternate name of the devil, derived from 'Satan', often used in connection with Satan's fall before Creation. The fall of Satan is a common theme. Its Armenian form is discussed in Stone 2021, 486-96.

he descended from heavens to the abyss,
And he dwelt away from light, in the darkness.

He brought Adam out of the Garden, 13
He cast him to the animals' earth.
"We are all strangers, my brother,
And live on the animals' earth."¹⁴

Blessed is the name of God, 14
who opened the closed gate.
You created this beautiful world,¹⁵
And divided [it] into four directions.

But the angels you ranked in heaven 15
And he gave Adam the Garden.
He cursed the earth and constructed
a place for beasts and animals.

This world is like a sea,¹⁶ 16
Whoever enters does not stay dry.¹⁷
I entered this sea in a boat,
My boat went I knew not where.

I have drawn near to the shores, 17
I fear lest I happen upon a rock,
[and] it destroys my pleasing structure,
And breaks my boards apart.

Solomon, King David's son, 18
commands us this:
Give the instruction to the wise,¹⁸
He will love you the more (for it).

14 Line 13:4: for the expression "earth of animals", see *Penitence of Adam* 4:2-3. Observe Sadayel's use of the expression "my brother" which reflects the idea that angels and men were both created by God.

15 Line 14:3: "closed gate": this apparently refers to *Gen.* 3:24 but 'gate' is not mentioned there, so opening the closed gate refers to Adam's being placed in the Garden.

16 Line 16:1: "this world is like a sea": this is also the opening line of a poem by Xaç'atur Keč'arec'i, a translation of which was published in *Sion*, 93, 2021, 327.

17 Line 16:2: "enters": literally, 'comes (into it)'.

18 Line 18:3: *Prov.* 9:9; according to tradition this passage was the first translated into Armenian.

If to an ignorant, stupid man, You give instruction, he (will) hate you. ¹⁹ He will take a sabre and a knife, If he can, and he will kill you.	19
Take four pieces of advice from me, Which please the whole world: Do not investigate others' sins, With your mind, quickly understand your own.	20
Carry God close to you, And remember the day of your death. Plant this Garden in your heart, ²⁰ Lest God judge you.	21
The fear from my many sins, Made me shiver and weep. Nobody was any excuse, I was not deceived by others. ²¹	22
In my heart, with eager will, I encountered all sins, I stood against one; I rent the code of laws. ²²	23
This world is like a sea, And men swim in it, These bodies are like a boat, The soul, an incorruptible treasure.	24
They wake up like spring flowers, They blossom and wither again. Blessed a thousandfold, Are the righteous on the day of the Parousia.	25

19 Line 19:2: this is based on *Prov.* 9:7-8.

20 Line 21:3: "garden" means 'Garden of Eden'. Here the poet relates back to stanza 1, and Eden recurs in the first part of this poem.

21 Line 22:4: note here the exegesis of *Gen.* 3:12-13.

22 The poet transgressed one commandment, and by that, he transgressed the whole Law. This translation is based on a suggestion by Theo M. van Lint, whose gracious help is acknowledged warmly here. He takes *kac'er* as a participle, following *em* in the preceding line. In addition, Abraham Terian made most perceptive remarks and suggestions regarding these two poems.

3 **Arak'el of Bateš (Fourteenth-Fifteenth Centuries), The Rose and the Nightingale**

Arak'el of Bateš was a student of Grigor *vardapet* Cerenc' of Xlat' (1350-1425), who himself was a pupil of the well-known savant and theologian Yovhannēs Orotneč'i. Arak'el was born in the village of Poř in Vaspurakan, in the region of Bałēš, around 1390 and he died in 1454.²³ His father's name was Nersēs and his mother's Xut'lumelik'. His writings are often confused with those of his older contemporary of the same first name, Arak'el of Siwnik', but he is regarded as a poet of lesser stature than him. Arak'el of Bateš (Bitlis) was a fecund writer and left a legacy of poetry, hymns, laments, encomia, narrative historical poems, and hagiographic vitae.²⁴ His strong love of his native land was one of his notable features.

This poem²⁵ takes up the metaphor, widespread in Persian and Ottoman poetry, of the rose and the nightingale. The two conduct a poetic dialogue, almost a pursuit, with nightingale representing the eager lover and the rose the somewhat reluctant beloved. The nightingale sings sweetly; the rose, having thorns, is both lovely and to some extent cruel, but yields in the end. The two are inhabitants of a luscious garden, a favourite image in Persian poetry. That image was taken over into Armenian poetry and in the piece being presented here, Arak'el sustains it through 26 of the 29 quatrains. The nightingale is the Angel Gabriel imploring the Rose (the Virgin) to become the vessel of Christ's Incarnation while the King, the owner of the garden, is the "heavenly Jesus Christ": see stanzas 26 and 27. We propose that Arak'el specifically is applying the metaphor to the Annunciation to the Virgin. Although this incident is not singled out by name, the reference to it is hinted at by the role of Archangel Gabriel and by some of his language.²⁶ Thus this poem is to be read as a rewriting of that incident.

The stanzas are of four lines, each having two stychs, the first of six syllables and the second of five. Each stanza has a monorhyme, which extends for the four lines of the stanza. The Armenian text is drawn from Łazinean 1971.

23 See Pōłarean 1971, 429-33; Hayrapetean 1988, 465.

24 Ayvazyan et al. 2002, 75-6 on Arak'el, and 76 on his writings.

25 See for some discussion of it, Hayrapetean 1988, 466. She observes that it may be read as a poem of love to which a religious coda was added. My feeling is that this oversimplifies a quite complex work that can be read simultaneously of human and divine love.

26 Observe the word *awetis* in stanza 20. This word means 'good news' in general, with the specific meaning of 'Gospel'. The event of the Annunciation is related in *Luke* 1:26-38. It was a popular theme in Gospel illumination.

Տաղ Բլբուլի եւ Վարդի

Ակա՛նջ դրէք բանիս, որ պատուական է,
Հոգոյ, այլեւ մարմնոյ ուրախութիւն է.
Գովեմ ըզգոյն Վարդին, որ աննըման է,
Բլբուլն ի հետ նորայ, որ քաղցրածայն է:

Բլբուլն ի Վարդն ասաց, Ի սեր քո եկի,
Չի սեր քեզ աւետեմ, սիրոյ դու տեղի.
Եւ սերն սրբութեան ի քեզ բընակի,
Սիրով քո զարդարինն ծաղկունքն ի յերկրի:

Վարդն ի Բլբուլն ասաց՝ Թըռչուն գովելի
Ո՞րպէս միտք իմ բանից քոց հաւան լինի.
Դու ես թըռչուն երկնից, եւ ես՝ բոյս երկրի,
Չի՛արդ իմ սերս ի քոյդ միաբանեցի:

Բլբուլն ի Վարդն ասաց՝ Իմ բանիս լսէ,
Որ քո սիրտդ իմ սիրոյս այսպէս վըկայէ,
Ես ցօղ բերեմ յերկնից, որ զքեզ զարդարէ
Յայնժամ իմ սերս ի քոյդ միաբանեալ է:

Վարդ ի Բլբուլըն զայս պատասխանէ.
— Վախեմ թէ հետ ցօղոյն կայծակ իջանէ
Եւ զիմ պայծառ տերեւս հըրով այրեսցէ,
Ծաղկանցն ամենայնի նախատինք ամնէ:

Բլբուլն ի Վարդն ասաց՝ Խօսից իմ դու լուր,
Որ ես քեզ ցուցանեմ սիրոյ մեծ աղբիւր,
Որ զքեզ յերակ պահէ կանաչ եւ մաքուր,
Եւ ամենայն ծաղկանց արբուցանես ջուր:

Վարդն ի Բլբուլն յայնժամ զայս ճուղապ ետուր,
Եթէ՛ Բանից քոյին ոչ հաւանիմ սուր.
Վախեմ թէ յորդ խաղայ այն աղբիւէն ջուր,
Չտերեւս իմ ողողէ Լ՛ամնէ զիս թափուր:

Բլբուլն ի Վարդն ասաց՝ Քեզ ամպ լինիմ ես,
Որ ի յարեգական օտթոյն պահեմ զքեզ.
Վերայ քո հովանի սիրով լինիմ ես
Եւ քաղցրագոյն ցօղով սընուցանեմ զքեզ:

Վարդն ի Բլբուլն ասաց՝ Ի քէն վախեմ ես,
Չի մի որոտայով ինձ ահ արկանես.
Ի գեղեցիկ զոյնուս թառամիցիմ ես
Եւ ամենայն ծաղկանց զըրուց լինիմ ես:

- Բըլբուլն ի Վարդն ասաց՝ Ես առաւօտ եմ,
Որ զլոյս արեգական վերայ քո ծագեմ。
Ազգի-ազգի գունով ըզբեզ գարդարեմ,
Ճաղկանցըն ամենի պարծանք ցուցանեմ:
- Վարդն ի Բըլբուլն ասաց՝ Ես դիմակաց չեմ,
Ի ծագմանէ լուսնոյն դողալով սարսեմ。
Վախեմ թէ արեգակն առ իս տեսանեմ,
Չտերեւս իմ գեղեցիկ յիսնէ թօթափեմ:
- Բըլբուլն ի Վարդ ասաց, թէ՛ Գովելի ես,
Չի ամենայն ծաղկանց դու ցանկալի ես。
Տեսով քո արբեցայ գերդ ըզգինով ես,
Արարիչն Աստուած կանաչ պահէ գբեզ:
- Վարդն ի Բըլբուլն ասաց՝ Գեղեցկաձայն ես,
Որ ամենայն մարդիկ դու ուրախ առնես。
Ազգի-ազգի գունով դու եղանակ ես,
Թըռչնոցն ամենայնի տեղ պարծանաց ես:
- Բըլբուլն ի Վարդ ասաց՝ դու դեռ ցաւոց ես,
Որ զամենայն հիւանդ սիրով բըժըշկես。
Ով ոք ցաւ ունիցի եւ ոչ յիշէ գբեզ,
Յետոյ փոշիմանի եւ ոչ զըտանէ գբեզ:
- Վարդն ի Բըլբուլն ասաց՝ Թըռչո՛ւն դու աղւոր,
Ուստի՛ ունիս զայդ ծայնըդ քաջ եւ զօրաւոր。
Որ զիս զարմացուցեր խօսիւքդ ահաւոր,
Կարծեմ թէ այլ չկայ քեզ նըմանաւոր:
- Բըլբուլն ի Վարդ ասաց՝ Մեծ թագաւոր կայ,
Որ ամենայն թըռչնոց նա պարզեւք կու տայ
Եթէ հաւան լինիս զալըստեան նորա,
Նա՛ երկինք եւ երկիր քեզ երանի տայ:
- Վարդն ի Բըլբուլն ասաց՝ Քեզ երանեմ ես,
Որ այն թագաւորին դու սպասաւոր ես。
Որ ի նմանէ հանցեղ շնորհի առեալ ես,
Որ ի քո տեսութիւնդ զիս մոռացեալ ես:
- Բըլբուլն ի Վարդն ասաց պատասխանելով,
— Թէ դու լսող լինիս բանիս իմ սիրով,
Նա ամենայն երկիր հոգով եւ մարմնով,
Ճառայ քեզ լինիցին՝ երանի տալով:
-

- Վարդն ի Բըլբուլն ասաց՝ Խօսիր զինչ կամիս, 19
Քանզի խոսից քոյին փափագէ հոգիս.
Յինէն մի՛ թագուցեր զինչ բան որ ունիս,
Եթէ կամիս սիրով հաւան ամնել զիս:
- Բըլբուլն ի վարդն ասաց՝ Տամ քեզ աւետիս, 20
Չի մեծ թագաւորին դարպաս դու լինիս.
Եւ ի ձայնէ իմմէ հանապազ գովիս
Եւ ամենայն թռչնոց միշտ փառաւորիս:
- Վարդն ի Բըլբուլն ասաց՝ Յոգիս իմ ցանկայ, 21
Որ այն թագաւորին լինիցիմ ծառայ.
Այլ երկընչիմ յահէ փաջացըն նորա,
Չոր դու ինձ ասացիր, նա ով դիմանայ:
- Բըլբուլն ի Վարդն ասաց՝ Դու մի վախենար, 22
Քանզի նա կամենայ գբեզ իրեն դադար.
Այլ դու ուրախացիր սիրով ծածկաբար
Նորա կամիս լինել տեղի եւ տաճար:
- Վարդն ի Բըլբուլն ասաց՝ Քեզ հաւան եղէ, 23
Այլ գործ թագաւորին քո դու ինձ պատմէ,
Թէ ինչ արուեստ ունի կամ որ ձեւով է,
Քան գբեզ քաղցրաձայն, թ'այլ փառաւոր է:
- Բըլբուլըն զայս ասաց պատասխան Վարդին, 24
Թէ՛ Չըկայ այլ նամակ իմ թագաւորին.
Ոչ ոք կարէ գիտել ըզգործըս նորին.
Ո՛չ ի յերկնաւորաց եւ ոչ երկրային:
- Վարդն ի Բըլբուլն ասաց՝ Դու զայս ինձ ասա, 25
Երբ կայ այն թագաւորն, ինձ իմաց արա,
Որ ես զիս պատրաստեմ արժանի նորա,
Որ սիրով իմ սըրտիս մէջն հանգչի նա:
- Բըլբուլն ի Վարդն ասաց՝ Քե՛զ ասեմ, լսէ, 26
Քան գբո ծառկիլն յառաջ նա գբեզ ընտրեալ է
Եւ իւր բընակութեան տեղ պատրաստեալ է,
Որ այժմ ի քեզ իջեալ մեծ գործ կատարէ:
- Բըլբուլըն Գաբրիէլ հրեշտակապետն է, 27
Եւ Վարդըն տիրամայր Աստուածածինն է,
Թագաւորն երկնաւոր Յիսուս Քրիստոսն է,
Որ անթառամ վարդէն մարմին ամեալ է:

Ես, Առաքել, մեղօք լըցեալ յաշխարհի,
Որ գԲըլբուլն ընդ Վարդին սակաւ գովեցի.
Ի Գաբրիէլ հրեշտակն օրինակեցի
Եւ ի Կոյսն Մարիամ՝ ծընողն Յիսուսի:

Չձեզ աղաչեմ՝ ով որ հանդիպի,
Եղանակէք սիրով, ձայնիւ բերկրալի.
Յիշեցէ՛ք եւ ասէ՛ք՝ աստուած ողորմի,
Եւ դուք արժան լինիք տեսոյն Քրիստոսի:

Song of the Nightingale and the Rose

Give ear to my discourse, which is precious, 1
It is joy to soul and body too,
I praise the colour of the Rose, 'tis one-of-a-kind,
And the sweet-voiced Nightingale with it.

The Nightingale said to the Rose: I came for your love, 2
For to you, love I do declare, you, the site of love,
And in you the love of sanctity does dwell,
Your love adorns the flowers of the earth.

The Rose said to the Nightingale: Admirable bird, 3
How will my mind agree with your words?
You are a bird of the heavens, and I an earthly plant.
How will my love accord with yours?

The Nightingale said to the Rose: hear my words, 4
So your heart thus witnesses my love
I will bring heavenly dew to adorn you,
Then my love will accord with yours.

The Rose gave the Nightingale this reply: 5
— I fear lest with the dew, lightning descend
And burn my sparkling leaves with fire,
Completely putting these flowers to shame.

The Nightingale said to the Rose: Hark to my speech, 6
That I may show you a mighty fountain of love,
That always keeps you green and clean,
And you may give all flowers water to drink.

Then the Rose gave this reply to the Nightingale: 7
I am not persuaded by your keen words.

I fear lest copious water flow from that spring,
Flood my leaves, and devastate me.

The Nightingale said to the Rose: I will be a cloud for you, 8
To shield you from the sun's heat.
I will gladly be a shelter for you,
I will nurture you with sweetest dew.

The Rose said to the Nightingale: I fear you, 9
Lest you frighten me by thundering.
My beautiful colours will fade away,
And I will become the talk of all flowers.

The Nightingale said to the Rose: I am morning, 10
That shines the sun's light on you.
With various colours I adorn you,
I show (your) splendour to all the flowers.

The Rose said to the Nightingale: I am not opposed, 11
(But) I tremble in fear of the moon's light.
I am afraid if I see the sun near me,
I will shake off my beautiful leaves.

The Nightingale said to the Rose: You are admirable, 12
For you are the most desirable of all flowers.
I am drunk from your face as from wine,
God the Creator keeps you green.

The Rose said to the Nightingale: You are sweet-voiced, 13
You who make all people happy.
You sing harmoniously in all sorts of tunes,
You hold the place of pride of all birds.

The Nightingale said to the Rose: You are a physic for pain, 14
Who heal all the sick through love.
Whoever has pain and does not call on you,
Afterwards rues (it) and does not find you.

The Rose said to the Nightingale: You lovely bird, 15
Whence do you have your bold and mighty voice?
That you astounded me with your awesome discourse.
I think there is no other like you.

The Nightingale said to the Rose: There is a great King, 16
Who bestows gifts on all the birds.

If you will agree to his coming,
Behold, heaven and earth will bless you.

The Rose said to the Nightingale: I bless you, 17
Who are servant to that King,
Who have received such grace from him,
That in your seeing it, you have forgotten me.

In reply the Nightingale said to the Rose, 18
— If you will listen to my words lovingly,
Behold, all the earth in spirit and body,
Will be your servant, offering blessing.

The Rose said to the Nightingale, Speak as you wish, 19
For my soul yearns for your speech.
Hide not from me any discourse you have,
If you wish lovingly to persuade me.

The Nightingale said to the Rose, I give you good news, 20
For you will be the palace of the great King.
And you will always be praised by my tongue
And be glorified by all winged creatures.

The Rose said to the Nightingale, My soul desires, 21
That I be a servant of that King.
But I am afraid of his awesome glory,
Of which you said to me. Lo, who can resist it?

The Nightingale said to the Rose, Fear not. 22
For he wants you as his dwelling.
But you, rejoice gladly in secret,
You will become his place and his temple.

The Rose said to the Nightingale, I am persuaded by you. 23
But you, tell me the deed of your king.
What skill has he or in which form is he?
Is he more sweet-voiced than you, or else glorious?

The Nightingale answered the Rose thus: 24
Ask no more²⁷ about my King,
No-one can know his works,
None of the heavenly nor the earthly.

27 Prof. Abraham Terian suggests that this may mean 'there is no communication'. He made several felicitous proposals that are incorporated into our translation.

The Rose said to the Nightingale: Tell me this, 25
Let me know when that King will come,
So that I can ready myself fittingly for him,
So that he rests gladly in my heart.

The Nightingale said to the Rose: I will tell you, listen! 26
He chose you before you flowered,
And he has prepared his dwelling place,²⁸
And now descending to you, he perfects a great deed.

The Nightingale is the Archangel Gabriel, 27
And the Rose is the Divine-bearing Mother of God,
The King is the heavenly Jesus Christ,
Who took on body through the unfading Rose.

I am Arak'el, full of sins in the world, 28
Who praised (but) little the Nightingale and the Rose.
I sketched Gabriel the angel,
And the Virgin Mary, bearer of Christ.

I beseech you, whoever comes across my discourse, 29
Sing it lovingly with a joyous voice.
Recall me and say, "God have mercy,"
And you will be worthy of the vision of Christ.

November 2022

²⁸ That is: you as a dwelling place.

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