

Historians

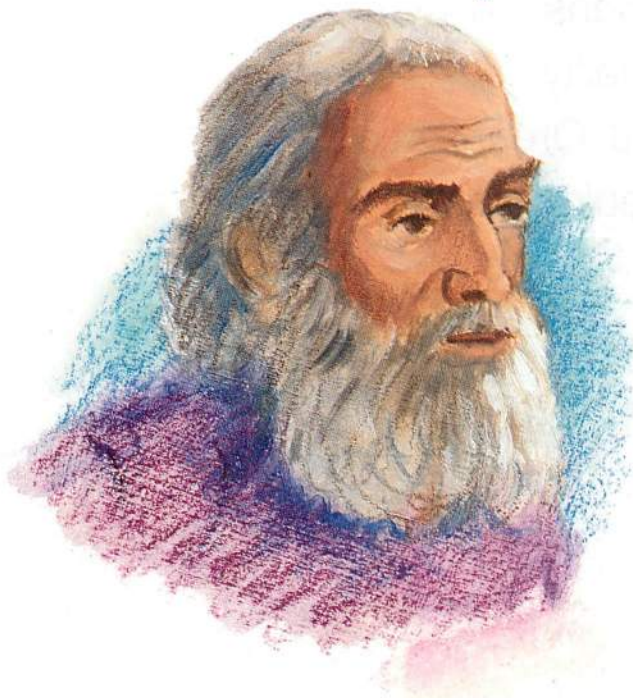
THEY TELL US WHO WE ARE

Part of the job of historians is to tell us from whom and what we came. Church historians also try to help us see the hand of God in

everything they write about historical events.

Two important writers in the Armenian Church are Movses of Khoren and Lazar of Pharbe.

Movses of Khoren (Movses Khorenatzi)



MOVSES KHORENATZI

Մովսէս Խորենացի

Movses grew up and wrote during the “Golden Age” (the fifth century) of Armenian life. He was born between 410 and 415, and educated in a school founded by St. Mesrob. Later he was St. Mesrob’s student and learned Armenian (reading and

writing) as well as Greek and Assyrian.

At age 22, Movses was chosen to go to Alexandria for further studies, and there he had access to the world-famous library in that city. By the time he was ready to come home, Movses had an excellent classical education.

Sad to say, he and his companions were greeted with jealous hostility upon their return to Armenia. Movses went into seclusion, spending his time reading and tutoring rather than doing the great public services for his country that he had hoped to do.

It was not until forty years later that friends persuaded him to be consecrated a bishop, and then to write a genealogy of the Armenian nobility. This genealogy traced Armenian history back to the time of Haig, Ara, Vahakn, and Ardashes, as well as describing the time of chaos which followed these legendary figures. But that is only part of his work. Book II covers 132 B.C. to 318 A.D. — the end of King Drtad’s reign. He uses the leading historians of that time as sources — Hippolytus, Eusebius of Caesarea, Agathangelos. The book covers a glowing period of triumph for Dikran the Great and the conversion of Arme-

nia under Drtad.

Book III takes us up to the death of St. Mesrob in 440 and gives details of the time when learning and enlightenment spread through Armenia along with the cross of Christ. Though the book ends on a sad

note — Movses felt that people were not living up to their great calling — it is the work of a man who loved God and cared deeply for his country. Movses' work inspired and educated many in his own time, and continues to do so till today.

Lazar of Pharbe (Ghazar Parbetzi)

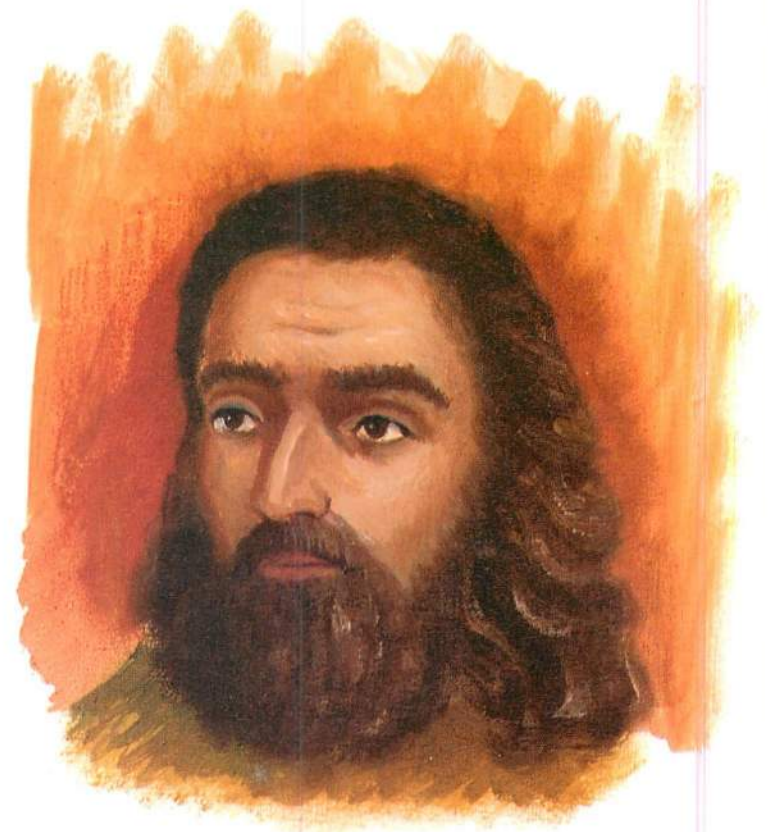
At the time Lazar was being educated, the Holy Scriptures were the basic curriculum in every school. With his remarkable memory, Lazar was able at a young age to sing and recite the church services without ever looking at the service books.

Born in 443, Lazar may have been related to the family of St. Vartan (Mamigonian), and Vahan Mamigonian was certainly his friend and benefactor. Young Lazar was a witness to the heroic efforts of the Mamigonians — and all of Christian Armenia — against the Persian attempt to restore paganism in the land. This effort did not really end in 451; at least for another thirty years there were local skirmishes and guerilla warfare.

During that period, Lazar was studying with a secluded monk, and in 486 he became abbot of the monastery at Vahan's request. Though many were envious of his getting this much-sought position, Lazar won friends with his hard work, excellent scholarly efforts and sermons, and leadership of the monastery.

His enemies' attacks did not cease, and finally Lazar felt moved to write a letter to his patron, Vahan Mamigonian, in his own defense. It was this letter, with its eloquence and fair-mindedness, that showed Lazar's depths of intelligence and dignity, making his attackers look petty and foolish. Vahan was so impressed that he asked his friend to write a history of the Armenians over the past hundred years. Of course, it was Vahan's hope that Lazar would describe the exploits of the Mamigonians in particularly glowing terms.

Lazar's work was divided into three parts — the first covering about 384 to 440, the

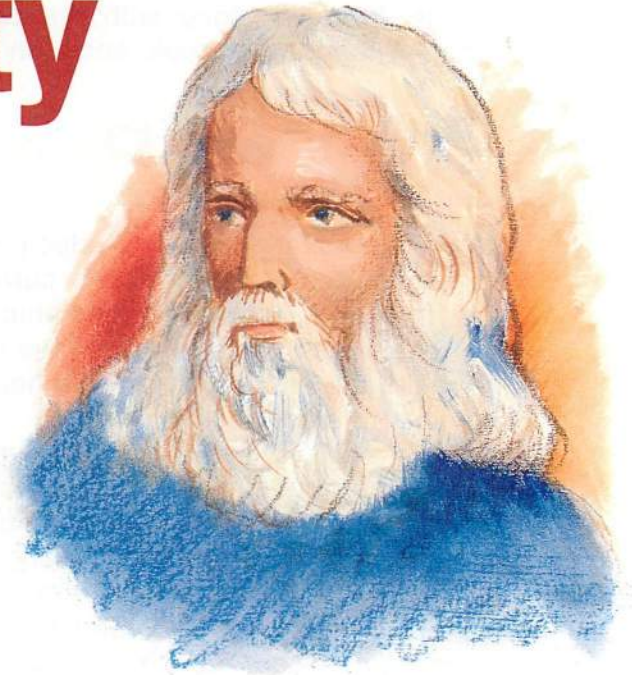


next mainly the war of 451 against the Persians, and the last a stirring description of what the Mamigonians had done. Though he used many other historical works as sources for his own, Lazar's history stands as an important and well-written chronicle of a significant period in the life of the Armenian people.

Spirituality

A Prayer of St. Nersess

Among the many things written by St. Nersess the Grace-filled is a long prayer addressed to our Lord Jesus Christ. In writing this prayer called "Jesus, Son," St. Nersess looked into his own heart and saw the ways he had fallen short of doing what God calls us to do. Reading the prayer also reminds us of the things we are called to do and may neglect, too. Here is part of the prayer. As you read it, list the things in the prayer that St. Nersess says we are called to do.



I took no heed unto Thy words;
I gave no alms unto the poor,
Or, if perchance, I gave my mite,
I looked for glory in return.

Not only did my left hand know
All that my right hand did disperse,
But, as with blare of trumpet loud,
My trifling gifts I did proclaim.
As for Thy teachings as to prayer,
I entered not the inner room,
Nor at street corners did I stand
So that I might be seen of men;

I was too indolent to pray
Either in truth, or in pretense;
My indolence prevented me
From men's reward, or that of God.

Now, to practice using the Bible concordance (which lists passages according to main words), see whether you can find some of the places in the Bible on which St. Nersess bases his words. Try to find these words in the concordance, look up the passages, and write down the words of the prayer that are based on it.

WORD	BIBLE PASSAGE	WORDS OF PRAYER
Widow (mite)		
Return		
Left hand		
Trumper		