The termination of the Armenian kingdoms of the Arcruni and Bagratuni in the eleventh century by the Byzantine Empire followed by the invasion of the Seljuqs triggered apocalyptic predictions on the part of contemporary Armenian authors and visionaries. During the twelfth century, several anonymous apocalyptic visions were composed or redacted among which we may mention the *Vision of St. Nersēs*, the *Prophecies of Agat'on*, and the *Sermo de Antichristo* attributed to Epiphanius. All of these texts constitute examples of “political” apocalypses—that is, they represent a form of apocalyptic literature that focuses upon the collective destiny of a kingdom or people with very little concern for the fate of the individual soul. Given the tremendous political upheavals to Armenia and its immediate environs throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries, speculation upon the fate of the nation or polity within an apocalyptic framework is perhaps to be expected. However, the reception of this apocalyptic tradition was not confined to political consciousness.

The text presented below is entitled, “Concerning the birth of the Antichrist and the bitter time that will occur; and concerning his destruction” (Վասն ծննդեան նեռինն. և դառն ժամանակին որ լինելոց է Եւ վասն սատակման նորա). It is included in a compilation of Counsels (Խրատք)

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1 Garsoïan 1994, 136–42, Russell 1998–9, and Z. Pogossian's contribution to this volume, “The Last Emperor or the Last Armenian King? Some Considerations on Apocalyptic Literature from the Cilician Period” [henceforth, Pogossian, “Considerations”].

2 I have used the version of the *Vision* found in the *Vita* of St. Nersēs, [henceforth, VN]. All translations from this text are my own.

3 Henceforth, PA. Unfortunately this text has not been published and exists in several recensions. I thank my colleague, Dr. Zaroui Pogossian, for sharing with me information about the contents of the various versions.

4 The text with a Latin translation was published by G. Frasson [henceforth, SA].

5 On the distinction between political and moral apocalypses in a Byzantine context, see Baun 2000, 255–6.

6 For the text of the counsel I have relied upon J936, copied in 1702–3 from the original composed in 1212; it contains Vardan’s original colophon. Abbreviations of manuscript collections adhere to the list appended to Coulie 1992. A revised, updated list may be found at: http://aiea.fltr.ucl.ac.be/aiea_fr/SIGLE_FR.htm. The manuscript measures 21 × 16 × 2.5cm
completed in 1212 by Vardan Aygekc’i (1170–1235) at the behest of Prince Pałtin (i.e., Baldwin), an otherwise unknown junior member of the royal Rubinean (Rubenid) family of Cilicia. Generically, the text does not constitute an apocalypse, rather it conforms to the genre of homiletic counsel. Vardan does not claim to have recorded a vision he himself experienced, but to have compiled information that he gathered from the investigation of scripture and from tradition. The counsel is incorporated within a collection of 21 treatises on virtues and vices as well as a treatise on the Holy Trinity and a portion of Vardan’s correspondence with Prince Pałtin. The list of titles clearly exemplifies the

and comprises 312 pages. The text of the counsel occurs on pages 273–81. For a full description of the manuscript, see Polarean 1968, 472–9. The text is written in double-columns, is rubricated, and contains zoomorphic head letters. The scribe and patron of the manuscript is a certain Suk’ias vardapet. I would like to extend my gratitude to His Beatitude Torgom II Manoogian, the late Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, for his generosity in allowing me to consult this manuscript; I would also like to thank Father Isahak Minassyan who provided me with photographs of this particular text as well as with a preliminary transcription of the homily. In my citations of the text, I have regularized the spelling in accordance with accepted conventions and have resolved all abbreviations.


8 On generic definitions of apocalyptic literature, see Collins 1979, Aune 1986.

9 In the opening preamble Vardan declares: “let us begin and examine the divine scriptures which foresaw by means of the Spirit of God and related the evil of the Antichrist and the bitter affliction of his time” (վիզարած առաքելություն ու մանկացված խաղաղություն գիրք. որք հոգվով աստուծոյ յառաջագոյն տեսին և պատմեցին զչարութիւն նեռին), p. 273. Vardan often introduces material with the phrase, “a narrative is said that…” (բան ասի թէ), which may indicate an oral or written tradition.