



# The Fables Of Mkhitar Gosh

Translated with  
An Introduction by  
Robert Bedrosian

Edited by  
Elise Antreassian

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1

When God created living things, He was apprehensive about possible rebellion. He thus took the precaution of mingling the strong with the weak. Then, in the event of any turmoil, their enmity would be directed at each other and not at Him.

*A king should pit the nobles against the people, and have them contend against each other, rather than against him.*

2

The earth wanted to humble itself in order to be more endearing to all. But it was afraid of appearing foolish. In the end, it glowed only because of the stars.

*Humbling yourself among the exalted is recommended; their honor will make you shine.*

3

When it rose, the sun thought itself to be God. But when it went down, its real nature became immediately apparent.

*Kings who ascend in sudden triumph should not take on special airs. They too will go to their graves like all ordinary people.*

4

When the moon was full, it felt itself to be the sun, and spread its light throughout the heavens, making it seem like day. But as it diminished, it could barely be seen in the sky.

*In thinking yourself to be more than you are, you can grow obsessed with what you cannot be.*

5

Once when the stars got together, the eldest among them exclaimed: "We are many! Why not shine day and night like the sun and moon?" One replied: "Because we are not united." So they united in their determination to outshine the sun. But first the moon came up, and they were promptly excelled; and they lamented: "Even the moon prevailed over us. What could we do with the sun?" And regretting their presumptuousness, they gave up.

*Though the weak are numerous, they cannot vie with the mighty. Also, if the weak attempt it and repent, they deserve understanding and pardon.*

When people heard about the tree they wanted to enjoy it. A grotesque woman, however, seated herself at a pass on the road and gave all travellers a drink from a cup filled with the drug of stupidity. Those who took it fell down and were unable to continue. Some vomited and then went on. Now those who passed her by from a distance reached the tree with no difficulty and enjoyed it.

*The woman is Satan with many faces of evil; the cup symbolizes chimerical illusions; expurgation is confession through which people are saved. And those who, having renounced the world, pass by at a distance, are given to enjoy life unhindered in the care of the Trinity and become immortal.*

Someone once planted some seeds in his field. When they grew, they were transformed into barley, millet, weeds and wheat.

*The planter is Christ; the seed, the Gospel; and the field is the world. The seeds are transformed into greater and lesser sects while few remain wheat. For few are chosen, even though many are orthodox.*

A certain man came down from a very high mountain. In his right hand was the sun, in his left, the moon, and twelve stars were on his breast. A river flowed from his mouth. This he divided into four branches and filled the country. Holy and unholy animals bathed therein. But when the man turned back, few went up with him. On the mountain there were many birds and those that did go, mingled with them. Those who stayed behind retained their previous form.

*The meaning of this fable is clear.*

WITH THESE, THE SECTION OF ORIGINAL FABLES IS CONCLUDED TO THE GLORY OF CHRIST AND GOD.

Now let no one think badly of us, for we considered it more appropriate to set down these fables in the form of anecdotes and proverbs rather than to write them in the usual way. If the fables are agreeable to some, thank the Lord. Otherwise, out of love for Him, forgive us.

Robert Bedrosian is a graduate of Tufts College. He received his PhD from Columbia University as a major in Armenian history. While in graduate school he translated from classical Armenian into English many historical and literary works of the 5th through the 15th centuries, including Gosh's *Fables*. He studied in Armenia twice, first as a junior in college and again in 1977 when he returned to study classical Georgian and do research on the medieval history of the Caucasus. He currently resides in New York City and works as a computer programmer.

Elise Antreassian Bayizian is director of religious education at the Diocese of the Armenian Church in New York City where she lives with her husband and two children. She is co-translator of Andranik Zaroukian's *Men Without Childhood*, and is currently completing work on a PhD in Armenian literature.

Anahid Janjigian attended the Art Students League on a scholarship, studying with George Grosz, Yashou Kuniyoshi and John Groth. She first made a reputation at age 22 with a one-person show at the Bonestell Gallery under the auspices of Dikran Khan Kelekian. She has had numerous other shows over the years. Her paintings have been selected for inclusion in group exhibitions at a number of prestigious museums. Her biography is included in the Marquis edition of "Who's Who in the East." She currently teaches painting and drawing at her studio in Flushing, New York.

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