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Edited by Philippe Luisier (Editor), e-mail: [pluisier@orientale.it](mailto:pluisier@orientale.it); Jarosław Dziewicki (Managing Editor), e-mail: [edizioni@orientaliachristiana.it](mailto:edizioni@orientaliachristiana.it), with the Professors of the Pontifical Oriental Institute.

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David Tinikashvili

## An Anti-Catholic Georgian Treatise by Patriarch Bessarion: Polemical Pathos and Theological Arguments<sup>1</sup>

### *Introduction*

Georgians almost always had a sympathy toward Latin Catholics in Georgia as well as abroad. The clearest example of this was the speech of the well-known Georgian theologian, St. George the Hagiorite, delivered before the Byzantine emperor in 1065 — just eleven years after the schism — in Constantinople, the epicenter of the Byzantine campaign against the Latin Catholics. The speech was an explicit defense of the Latins and elicited an enthusiastic response from Latins in attendance joyfully offering to present him before the Roman Pope.<sup>2</sup> It is to be noted here that St George had translated the so-called Athanasian creed containing the filioque clause (without mentioning in the translation that the clause was unacceptable for him or the Eastern Orthodox Church).<sup>3</sup>

Sympathy displayed by some distinguished Georgian figures towards

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<sup>1</sup> I am very grateful to Rev. Dr. Christiaan Kappes and Rev. Dr. Leonide Ebrallidze for helpful comments on the draft. The article was written at the University of Oxford in 2020. The research fellowship funded by generous grant of The Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia (SRNSFG), grant number OUGSP-2019-014. David Tinikashvili is full professor at Caucasus University.

<sup>2</sup> George the Minor, *The Life and Citizenship of our Holy and Blessed Father George the Hagiorite*, in *Monuments of Old Georgian Hagiographical Literature*, Book II (XI-XV cc.), edited by I. Abuladze, Tbilisi: Metsniereba 1967, pp. 178-179 [გიორგი მცირე, “ცხოვრება და მოქალაქეობა დიდისა და ნეტარის მამის ზეუნის გიორგი მთაწმინდელისაი”, ძველი ქართული აგიოგრაფიული ლიტერატურის ძეგლები, წიგნი II. რედ.: ილია აბულაძე. თბილისი: მეცნიერება 1967, გვ. 178-179]. On the hagiographical text of the Life of St George in English see *Georgian Monks on Mount Athos: Two Eleventh-Century Lives of the Hegoumenoi of Iveron*, translation, notes and introduction by T. Grdzelidze. London: Bennet & Bloom 2009, pp. 97-162. See also an essay about Georgian community on Mount Athos: T. Grdzelidze, *The Georgians on Mount Athos*, in *Mount Athos: Microcosm of the Christian East*, edited by Graham Speake and Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, Oxford-Bern: Peter Lang 2012, p. 29-44. On the loyal attitude of St George's towards the Roman Catholic Church, see: D. Tinikashvili, *Saint George the Hagiorite and the Roman Church*, *Kadmos: A Journal of the Humanities* 5 (2013), pp. 28-43.

<sup>3</sup> E. Kochlamazashvili – A. Ghambashidze, “An Old Georgian Translation of the Athanasian ‘Creed’”, *Mravaltavi: Philological-Historical Researches* 18 (1999), pp. 153-162 [ეკვთიმე

the Roman Church is even reflected in the period after St. George the Hagiorite. For example, some obvious instances with this viewpoint are manifested in the works of St. Arsenios of Ikalto. There is a known occasion when he had consciously erased an anti-Latin segment from one of the Greek treatises when translating it into Georgian.<sup>4</sup> He also did not concur with the Greeks' anti-Latin stance when translating another treatise, which implied the removal of the Roman Pope's name from the diptych. In particular, St. Arsenios deliberately translates from the sort of originals in which the five Patriarchs of the Pentarchy are commemorated with the inclusion of the Roman Pope.<sup>5</sup>

In a few words, original Georgian theological literature has no known work opposing Catholicism until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. *The Anvil* (გრდემლი, *Grdemli*)<sup>6</sup> of Patriarch Bessarion<sup>7</sup> is the only anti-Latin work done in the Georgian language, the likes of which had never been written until then or afterwards in Georgia's history. I will examine several theological issues from *The Anvil*. The selected issues will be dogmatic ones, as well as those from the realm of church customs.

#### *The characteristics and impact of the treatise*

In the introduction of his book, Bessarion notes that he benefited from the assistance of Francesco of Bologna, a Capuchin friar, when writing this extensive Anti-Catholic tract.<sup>8</sup> *The Anvil* is written without any reference to

კოჭლამაზაშვილი და ანა ღამბაშიძე, "ათანასე ალექსანდრიელის 'სიმბოლოს' ძველი ქართული თარგმანი", *მრავალთავი: ფილოლოგიურ-ისტორიული ძიებანი* 18 (1999), გვ. 153-162].

<sup>4</sup> M. Rapava, "Ancient Georgian Dogmatical and Polemical Writings", in *Byzantine Studies in Georgia*, edited by Neli Makharadze and Tina Dolidze, Tbilisi: Logosi 2007, pp. 412-413 [რაფავა, მაია. „ძველი-ქართული დოგმატიკურ-პოლემიკური მწერლობა“, *ბიზანტიზმის საქართველოში*, რედ., წელი მახარაძე; თინა დოლიძე. თბ., ლოგოსი 2007, გვ. 412-413].

<sup>5</sup> M. Rapava, "Polemical Writings Against Armenian Monophysitism in Old Georgian Script", *St. Tikhon's University Review* 1:3/23 (2008), p. 19 [M. Рапава, "Полемические сочинения против армянского монофизитства в древнегрузинской письменности", *Вестник ПСТГУ* (Православный свято-тихоновский гуманитарный университет) 1:3/23 (2008), с. 19].

<sup>6</sup> *The Anvil: Polemics against Latins by us, Orthodox about why we are separated*. The text according to manuscript S-3269 is published with an introduction by Z. Mamulashvili, Tbilisi 2013 [ბესარიონ კათალიკოსი (ბარათაშვილ-ორბელიშვილი, 1724-1737). გრდემლი: სიტყვისგებაი ლათინთა მიმართ ჩვენ მართლმადიდებელთა მიერ თუ რაი არს ჩუენგან მათი განყოფილება. ტექსტი ხელნაწერ S-3269-ის მიხედვით გამოსაცემად მოამზადა და შესავალი დაურთო ზაზა მამულაშვილმა. თბ., 2013].

<sup>7</sup> Bessarion Baratashvil-Orbelishvili was Catholicos-Patriarch from 1724 to his death in 1737. For the historical and ecclesiastical context of the *Anvil*, see D. Tinikashvili, "An Anti-Catholic Georgian Theological Treatise (18<sup>th</sup> c.) in the Context of Georgian-European Relations", *Catholic Historical Review* 107, No. 4 (2021), pp. 561-584.

<sup>8</sup> K. Kekelidze, *The History of Old Georgian Literature*, vol. I, Tbilisi: Metsniereba 1980, p. 350 [კორნელი კეკელიძე, *ძველი ქართული ლიტერატურის ისტორია*, ტომი პირველი, თბ.,

sources. The author sometimes notes that he has “heard of” the existence of a given custom or idea in the Roman Church. For instance, Bessarion connects such overheard news to the custom of taking animals into Catholic church buildings<sup>9</sup>.

Writing in such a way causes astonishment, although the surprise must be of moderate character in an attentive reader, because it is not at all difficult to understand that the author has a specific objective when composing this text. In general, Bessarion was not some uneducated, eccentric, fanatic monk who delightedly juggled with completely baseless and made-up accusations. He is known by his contemporaries as well as heirs as an industrious, conscientious monk who created hymnographic and liturgical collections. An inexperienced and uneducated individual would really have had a challenge doing such tasks. Thus, it is probably logical for him to have had the skill to write this tract with more persuasiveness, sobriety, and objectiveness citing the appropriate sources. But it is clearly sensed that his aim is more propagandistic than doing an honest and balanced “academic study” of this theme. As it seems, he deemed it necessary to write an appropriate work for a general and naïve public, because the objective was to slow down the growing popularity of the Latin missionaries’ work in the country. Supposedly, the book’s audience was to have been simple people and not, for example, erudite Georgian clergy members or the kings and rulers who frequently patronized European missionaries.

Despite not knowing what sources were used by the author, we also do not know if Bessarion knew the Latin language or not, which was necessary for an adequate understanding of Catholic church doctrine. There is generally no information that Georgians knew Latin during this epoch like in the Middle Ages. The exceptions were the following Georgians: Nikeforo Irbachi (lately Catholicos of Western Georgia) converted to Catholicism in 1628 who studied in Rome, as Latin missionary Castelli points out,<sup>10</sup> and Catholicos-Patriarch (of Eastern Georgia) Anton I (1720-1788), converted to Catholicism in 1755.<sup>11</sup>

Bessarion was able to obtain the appropriate Latin texts from mission-

მეცნიერება 1980, გვ. 350]. See M. Tarchnišvili, *Geschichte der kirchlichen georgischen Literatur auf Grund des ersten Bandes der georgischen Literaturgeschichte von K. Kekelidze* (ST 185), Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana 1955, p. 259.

<sup>9</sup> For a general overview of the historical period, see my article mentioned at note 7.

<sup>10</sup> C. Castelli, *Notes and Album about Georgia*, translation, introduction and commentary by B. Giorgadze, Tbilisi: Metsniereba 1976, p. 199 [კასტელი, ქრისტოფორო დე. ცნობები და ალბომი საქართველოს შესახებ. თარგმნა, გამოკვლევა და კომენტარები დაურთო ბეჟან გიორგაძემ. თბ., მეცნიერება 1976, გვ. 199]; see the Latin text at p. 417.

<sup>11</sup> A. Khakhanashvili, “*Life and Works of Catholicos Anton I*”, in *Theological Anthology*, edited by N. Papuashvili, Tbilisi: The Georgian Patriarchate 1, 1991, p. 111 [ალექსანდრე

aries, but we do not know how much he would have been able to get to know the originals. Unfortunately, no Latin language documents of this era have survived which Bessarion might have used. Bessarion supposedly might have had a verbal relationship with Francesco through an interpreter or the Latin monk might have known the Georgian language, which was not rare among the Latin missionaries in Georgia. But whatever sort of information Bessarion might have gotten about the doctrines and ecclesiastical practices of the Church of Rome, nothing would have been able to impede the Georgian author in using this information as he himself saw fit.

A second possible variant of the scene development is like this: Bessarion had not altered anything in the information provided to him by the Latin friar. But it is slightly difficult to believe this, because there are sometimes such erroneous ideas mentioned in *The Anvil* that it is impossible for the Latin friar to have had this kind of knowledge about his own church. Clearly, it cannot be excluded for certain lacunas to have been in Francesco's knowledge concerning Catholic doctrine and Church customs.

The treatise enjoyed a wide circulation in a short term period. Now we have 12 surviving manuscripts with 10 of them dating to the eighteenth century. They were copied by scribes in the following decades from the time of writing the treatise. There are no semantic discrepancies between the manuscripts. Some slight orthographic differences are present. As M. Kavtaria points out, "Only the extended version of *The Anvil* had been distributed, attested even by the fact that several copies of the extensive version had survived, whereas the short version is only known through a single manuscript".<sup>12</sup> The text published in 2013 based on this extensive or primary manuscript is used in my study.<sup>13</sup>

It seems that this tract was met with ardor by like-minded individuals in Bessarion's circle. Evidence of this may be the anti-Catholic rejoinders written in support of the author by scribes on the margins of the manuscripts, regarding the imprudence of the cardinals. But from a prolonged perspective, *The Anvil* was unable to have any firm impact on the masses, nor on Church and state representatives creating the country's domestic and foreign politics, in increasing resistance against Catholicism.

There is also no sort of response, answer, or counter critique. We do not

ხახანაშვილი, "კათალიკოს ანტონ I-ის ცხოვრება და მოღვაწეობა", *საღვთისმეტყველო კრებული*. რედ. ნუგზარ პაპუაშვილი. თბ., საქართველოს საპატრიარქო 1, 1991, გვ. 111].

<sup>12</sup> M. Kavtaria, "Life and Works of Bessarion Orbelishvili", *Bulletin of Institute Manuscript* 1 (1959), p. 109 [ქავთარია, მიხეილ, "ბესარიონ ორბელიშვილის ცხოვრება და მოღვაწეობა", *ხელნაწერთა ინსტიტუტის მოამბე*, ტომი 1 (1959), გვ. 109].

<sup>13</sup> I am grateful to the historian Vladimer (Bacho) Kekelia, scholar of Korneli Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts, for assistance by checking the quotations used in my research from the manuscript of Bessarion's treatise.



have any information in which some sort of assessment of this treatise is reflected from Latin missionaries as well as Georgian Catholics.

Bessarion's camp (if we can say so) especially weakened after the reign of Anton I Bagrationi, a Georgian Catholicos-Patriarch who himself converted to Catholicism. Anton is attacked by a wing of Georgian Orthodox fundamentalists led by Priest Zakaria Gabashvili and he has to abdicate the patriarchal throne in 1755. So, an anti-Catholic reaction among Georgians in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is really seen, but in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, figures like Zakaria Gabashvili no longer appear.

After the circulation of *The Anvil*, the interest in European culture does not diminish, but grows even more. Collections containing the ideas of the French Enlighteners are translated by the Georgians. The most interesting fact in this context is as follows: through King Vakhtang's commission in 1730, Nikoloz Orbeliani copied Peter Moghila's *Expositio Fidei* in the Georgian translation by King Archil.<sup>14</sup> This main work by the Metropolitan of Kiev is known as *The Orthodox Confession of Faith* (1640).<sup>15</sup> Not only is just a Catholic influence on this symbolic book sensed, it had also been compiled according to Latin catechisms written by St. Peter Canisius and others.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Moghila's catechism was not only created in a Latin style and methodology, it also contained Catholic doctrinal ideas. Namely, the author had included the teachings about Purgatory and the Eucharistic transubstantiation.

It is true that this work was approved at a church council in Kiev, but an agreement on these two issues could not be reached among council

<sup>14</sup> M. Kikodze, *Vakhtang VI as a Statesman (Political, Economic and Social-Cultural Activities)*, Tbilisi: Metsniereba 1988, p. 190 [მანანა კიკოძე, ვახტანგ VI-ის სახელმწიფოებრივი მოღვაწეობა (პოლიტიკურ-ეკონომიკური და სოციალურ-კულტურული საქმიანობა). თბ., მეცნიერება 1988, გვ. 190].

<sup>15</sup> A. Malvy – M. Viller, *La Confession Orthodoxe de Pierre Moghila, métropolitain de Kiev (1633-1646) approuvée par les patriarches grecs du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Texte latin inédit*, OCh 10, no. 39, 1927.

<sup>16</sup> K. Ware, "Petr Moghila", in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by Lindsay Jones, 2nd ed., vol. 12, Macmillan Reference USA, 2005, p. 7072; K. Gavrilkin, "Peter Moghila", in *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, edited by John A. McGuckin, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell 2011, p. 390; I. Ševčenko, "The Many Worlds of Peter Mohyla", *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 8:1-2 (1984), pp. 9-44; R. Popivchak, *Peter Mohyla, Metropolitan of Kiev (1633-47): Translation and Evolution of his "Orthodox Confession of Faith" (1640)*, Washington, DC: Catholic University of America 1975; W. Medlin – Ch. Patrinelis, *Renaissance Influences and Religious Reforms in Russia: Western and Post-Byzantine Impacts on Culture and Education, Sixteenth-Seventeenth Centuries*, Geneva: Librairie Droz 1971, pp. 124-149; G. Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, Moscow: Institute of Russian Civilization 2009, p. 65ff. [Георгий Флоровский, *Пути Русского Богословия*, М., Институт Русской Цивилизации, 2009, с. 65ff.]; L. Charipova, *Latin Books and the Eastern Orthodox Clerical Elite in Kiev, 1632-1780*, Manchester: University Press 2006.

participants, which were later corrected by the Church Council of Jassy in 1642.<sup>17</sup> After these rectifications, the Latin version of Moghila's catechism was translated into Greek. This work was approved at the councils of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem in 1643. In 1696, the Patriarch of Moscow called this book something "inspired by God".<sup>18</sup> As the prominent Orthodox scholar Kallistos Ware notes, "Even in its revised form, the Confession of Moghila is still the most Latin document ever to be adopted by an official Council of the Orthodox Church."<sup>19</sup>

Thus, the translation of this work written in a Catholic spirit and style by Moghila into Georgian in 1730 is yet more evidence that *The Anvil* published in 1724 had not had any kind of stable influence on the Georgian consciousness in terms of spreading and preserving an anti-Catholic spirit.

Now I will examine a few issues from the text itself to show quite incorrect and biased views the author has had regarding the Roman Catholic Church. This will be fully sufficient to demonstrate the propagandistic and crude nature of the treatise.

### *Theological Issues*

In his book *The Anvil*, Catholicos-Patriarch Bessarion attempts to criticize the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church regarding the soul's state in the afterlife.<sup>20</sup> In his view the doctrine of Purgatory is the heresy similar to Origen's view implying an eventual end to torment in the afterlife. However, Origen had never taught about Purgatory being a third place or state. This is why the Alexandrian theologian's ideas would be unable to be a basis for Catholic eschatology. Origen had the assumption that hell would be temporary and he has no sort of indication about an intermediate place or state between hell and the Kingdom of Heaven. The doctrine about Purgatory is called a teaching similar to Origen's heresy by Bessarion, but he no longer expounds upon his discourse as to how the second century

<sup>17</sup> D. Sandu, "Iasi (Jassy), Synod of (1642)", in *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, edited by John A. McGuckin, Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell 2011, p. 325.

<sup>18</sup> Sandu, *Iasi*, p. 325.

<sup>19</sup> K. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin 1963, p. 107.

<sup>20</sup> Until the whole book of *The Anvil* came out in 2013, fourteenth chapter of this treatise regarding the Purgatory had been published by Zaza Mamulashvili in 2006 "because of its greatest importance" (quote from the foreword in the brochure): Catholicos-Patriarch Bessarion Baratashvili-Orbelishvili. *Thoughts about Purgatory expressed by the Papists*, publication prepared according to the Old Georgian manuscript and foreword added by Zaza Mamulashvili, Tbilisi 2006. It must be said here that Bessarion criticizes the purgatory not only in the fourteenth, but also in the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth chapters of *The Anvil*. Thus, it is not clear why the publisher of the brochure decided to print separately only the text of the fourteenth chapter.

theologian's views are similar to the Latins' teaching regarding Purgatory. Bessarion does not even name a single ecumenical or local council where the Latin Purgatory was declared to be a heresy, although for him, this fact does not represent some obstacle in declaring this teaching heretical. It is well known that qualifying any doctrine as heresy is the prerogative only of a Church council and not that of some individual clergy member, even a Patriarch.

Bessarion unequivocally declares that the Latin teaching about Purgatory has no kind of basis in the Holy Scripture, nor in the works of the holy Fathers, but that it had been taken from the views of Origen the heretic and the "idolatrous Plato", which subsequently was confirmed by the Roman Pope. The author writes: "This heresy has been borrowed from Origen the heretic and the book of the idolatrous Plato and was adopted per the Pope's decree" ("ორიგენე მწვალეზელისაგან და პლატონ კერპთმსახურის წიგნისაგან მოიღეს წვალეზა ესე და ბრძანებითა პაპისათა დამტკიცეს").<sup>21</sup>

In order to begin from the end and briefly note it, the author does not specify which pope had adopted this pagan teaching. In reality, the Christian Church had really *not* concurred with the pagan (as Bessarion says, "Platonic") ideas related to a universal resurrection including the idea of the pre-existence of souls. It can be freely stated that such views were equally foreign to both Western and Eastern Christendom.

The ideas actively disseminated by the Origenist monks in the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries regarding the purification of souls in the afterlife were condemned by the Church precisely because of their close connection to pagan ideas. These ideas are: a) the existence of soul before the creation of a body, i.e., the pre-existence of souls; b) the resurrection of the soul only without a body; c) the existence of multiple universes implying many endless cycles of falling and rising once again. The fifteen-point condemnation of the theory of apokatastasis by documents appended to the acta of the 5<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Council (553) was directed towards a teaching infected with such pagan ideas as these and this is clearly seen in the first anathema against Origen, which loudly declares: "If anyone asserts the fabulous pre-existence of souls, and shall assert the monstrous restoration which follows from it: let him be anathema."<sup>22</sup>

In regard to the biblical foundation about the possibility of a soul being supplied with a diversity of temporary punishments (from delay of the beatific vision to other non-disclosed possible punishments) to satisfy the lack of penance done for forgiven sins in life, this is flatly denied by Bessa-

<sup>21</sup> *The Anvil*, chapter 14, p. 145.

<sup>22</sup> H. R. Percival, *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church*. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Serie, vol. 14, p. 318. Greek text in ACO IV.1, p. 248.

rion. The following three excerpts from the Holy Scriptures are referenced most frequently when discussing this topic:

Now if any man builds upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire (I Cor. 3:12-15).

The next quote is cited from the Gospel of Matthew: "And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the *world* to come" (Mt 12:32). The third citation is from the Old Testament, specifically the Book of Maccabees: "Hence, he had this expiatory sacrifice offered for the dead, so that they might be released from their sin" (2 Macc 12:45).

Throughout the centuries-long history of the Church, ideas regarding the purification of a soul in the afterlife were expressed primarily on the basis of these three biblical passages during the ongoing theological discussions on this topic.

The Word of God also indicates the possibility of a soul being changed, of its transfiguration in the spiritual world. In other words, the operation of free will beyond physical death has its own outcome, which does not imply an insignificant change, but a radical transformation: a soul in hell taking up a place in the Kingdom of God. For example, the Apostle Peter clearly writes that Christ had descended into the underworld after His resurrection, where He preached to the sinful, disobedient souls that had lived before Noah (1 Pet 3:19-20). The vast majority of the Church fathers contend that all souls in the underworld received the Christ and were saved.<sup>23</sup> As it turns out, the possibility of a soul's transformation, a metanoia, after physical death was completely realistic for the Church Fathers.

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<sup>23</sup> H. Alfeyev, *Christ the Conqueror of Hell: The Descent into Hades from an Orthodox Perspective*, New York: SVS Press 2009, pp. 178, 205. Andrei Desnitsky concludes that almost all church fathers agree that the aim of the Christ's descent into the hell was to convert, attract the souls of sinners there and not to merely inform them about His resurrection or punish them, see A. Desnitsky, "What and to Whom Was Proclaimed by Christ in the Underworld? (Interpretations of Peter 3:19)", *Alpha and Omega* 3/50 (2007), pp. 72-78 [А. Десницкий. "Что и Кому Христос Возвещал в Темнице? (интерпретации 1 Петра 3:19)", *Альфа и Омега* № 3/50 (2007), pp. 72-78]. For the Early Christian exegesis of the words of St Peter also see the following works: W. J. Dalton. *Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits: A Study of 1 Peter 3:18-4:6*. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965; B. Reicke, *The Disobedient Spirits and Christian Baptism: A Study of 1 Pet. 3:19 and its context*, Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers 2005.

The idea concerning human satisfaction for the punishments due to sin after one's earthly sojourn by a separated soul in the afterlife is not only reflected by the Church of Rome's doctrine connected to Purgatory, but also by the so-called Orthodox apokatastasis of the Eastern Church, which shall again be noted, is free from pagan ideas. There are also other passages in the New Testament referring to the purification of the soul in the afterlife (Mt 17:11, Mk 9:12, Acts 3:21) where the word ἀποκατάστασις itself is used in the Greek original. Not only a physical resurrection (ἀνάστασις) is implied by this term but there is also the idea of a soul being freed from evil and sin (ἀποκατάστασις).<sup>24</sup> Gregory of Nyssa considered a bodily resurrection (ἀνάστασις) the first stage of apokatastasis.<sup>25</sup>

When examining this specific anti-Purgatory section of Patriarch Bessarion's book, his quite derogatory mentioning of Plato is no less interesting. The author examines the Greek philosopher through a narrow religious prism, calling him "idolatrous" (კერპომსახური). It seems that Plato's formal, non-Christian identity is enough of a basis for Bessarion to immediately strike out the person and his entire line of thinking and to level such an insulting epithet at him. This might be the kind of rhetorical method for someone used in such a profound ideological and polemical work, but I think it is readily apparent that Bessarion's sharply negative attitude towards ancient philosophy and secular knowledge outside the Church in general is still shown quite well from such an evaluation extant in a work having an aim as this. This assigns him to the group of marginal ecclesiastical authors who opposed the Church mainstream (Justin Martyr, the Cappadocian Fathers, and others) in connection with the reception of pagan culture.<sup>26</sup> Extensive deliberations by citing the theological discourses of the Fathers in order to show that an unequivocally irreconcilable stance towards ancient philosophical heritage was foreign for a majority of the Fathers of the Christian Church seems completely excessive here. It would

<sup>24</sup> I. Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis. A critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena*, Leiden: Brill 2013, p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> Ramelli, *Apokatastasis*, p. 21.

<sup>26</sup> H. Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1966, pp. 1-30; V. de Beer, "The Patristic Reception of Hellenic Philosophy", *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 55:4 (2012), pp. 373-398; A. H. Armstrong – M. R. Austin, *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1960; Ch. Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity*, Cambridge: CUP 1994, pp. 79-94; I. P. Sheldon-Williams, "The Greek Christian Platonist tradition from the Cappadocians to Maximus and Eriugena", in *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, edited by A. H. Armstrong, London: Cambridge University Press 1967, pp. 425-457; E. A. De Mendieta, "The Official Attitude of Basil of Caesarea as a Christian bishop towards Greek Philosophy and Science", *Studies in Church History* 13 (1976), pp. 25-49; A. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell 2016, p. 152ff.

be sufficient to indicate only one well known fact for instance from the sphere of ecclesiastical art: Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were deemed by the Christians to be such honored thinkers that they were considered as a sort of Christians before Christianity. This is exactly why they were frequently shown on the main doors of churches<sup>27</sup> as precursors and those bringing people into the domain (the church) of true knowledge.

In Bessarion's opinion, praying for souls stuck in Purgatory and doing philanthropic works in the name of these souls in accordance with the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church have no effect whatsoever. Here, the author speaks about Purgatory itself and not hell: "So from henceforth, nothing is of avail to them, neither through a liturgy, praying, nor through other good deeds, until the time allotted for them there comes to pass and until they will be liberated with purified souls" („ხოლო აქეთგან არარაი იქმნების მათთვის სარგებელი, არცა წირვითა, არცა ლოცვითა, არცაღა სხვითა ქველის საქმითა, ვიდრემდის მათთვის განწინებული ჟამი მუნ არა აღასრულონ და მერმე განწმენდილნი გამოვლენო“).<sup>28</sup>

The author's ignorance and prejudiced attitude against the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church is manifested once again through such categorical and onesided declaration. The practices of intercessory prayer and almsgiving for the soul of the deceased were equally widespread in Eastern and Western Christendom. Such intercession, first of all, was carried out to help the soul of the deceased person. In any other way, it was an inessential act.<sup>29</sup> Ideas indicating the spiritual benefit of such intercessory prayer by eastern (Epiphanius of Cyprus, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Theodoret of Cyrus, Ps. Dionysius the Areopagite) as well as western (Ambrose of Milan, Augustine, Gregory the Great) Fathers are cited in regard to this issue.<sup>30</sup>

It is difficult to find any historical source implying a rejection or condemnation of such a practice in the Roman Church. There is definitely some information showing the contrary. In this respect, one of the most important things is connected with the Ferrara-Florence Council. In the beginning of his first homily, Mark Eugenikos, the main eastern speaker at the council, cites the Latins' ideas according to which prayers, liturgies, almsgiving, and other pious deeds help lessen the torments or entirely free

<sup>27</sup> H. Alfeyev, *The Mystery of Faith: An Introduction to the Teaching and the Spirituality of the Orthodox Church*. London: Darton Longman & Todd 2002, p. 12.

<sup>28</sup> *The Anvil*, chapter 14, p. 144

<sup>29</sup> J. Jorgenson, "The Debate over the patristic texts on Purgatory at the Council of Ferrara-Florence, 1438", *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 30/4 (1986), p. 311.

<sup>30</sup> Jorgenson, *Debate over Purgatory*, pp. 313-325.



someone from Purgatory.<sup>31</sup> This idea is also reinforced in the final decree of the Ferrara-Florence Council *Laetentur Caeli*, where it is noted that such means are of benefit to souls that have ended up in Purgatory.<sup>32</sup> Thus, we have a direct proof in the form of this council's decree that the Latins recognize the correctness of this practice in the presence of the Greeks.<sup>33</sup>

This practice was not rejected by the Roman Church in the period to follow. The thought that the souls in Purgatory are aided by the intercessory prayer of those in this world, by suffrages, and especially by the sacrifice of the altar is additionally confirmed by the Council of Trent (1563).<sup>34</sup>

Bessarion chastises the Latins and declares that if it is impossible to save a sinful soul from hell, since hell is deemed to be eternal by them ("If there is no deliverance from hell which you call an *eternal* hell"; "უკეთეს არა იქმნებოდა ჯოჯობეთით გამოხსნა, რომელ თქვენ საუკუნოდ ჯოჯობეთად უბმობთ"<sup>35</sup>), how should be explained the examples of those freed from the torment of the afterlife through the intercessory prayer? One of the examples cited by Bessarion<sup>36</sup> is the legendary deliverance of the soul of Emperor Trajan, a pagan who persecuted Christians, through the prayers of Pope Gregory the Great.<sup>37</sup>

It seems that Bessarion does not experience any kind of discomfort when citing this relevant example from the cases having occurred in Western Christendom and known in the Catholic Church.<sup>38</sup> If this example does not make his anti-Latin accusation illogical, it at least weakens it. Nowhere is it indicated by the Georgian Patriarch that examples similar to Trajan's case are considered to be exceptions not corresponding to the Roman Church's

<sup>31</sup> A. Pogodin, *St. Mark of Ephesus and the Union at Florence*, New York, Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery 1963, p. 59. [A. Погдин, *Святой Марк Ефесский и Флоренцийская Уния*, New York, Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery 1963, p. 59].

<sup>32</sup> H. Denzinger, *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, 43<sup>rd</sup> edition, edited by Peter Hünermann. San Francisco: Ignatius Press 2012, no. 1304.

<sup>33</sup> The mentioned passage of *Laetentur Caeli* is quoted in the document of the International Theological Commission "Some Current Questions in Eschatology", *Irish Theological Quarterly* 58:3 (1992), pp. 209-243.

<sup>34</sup> Council of Trent, session XXV, Decree concerning Purgatory, Denzinger, *Compendium*, no. 1820.

<sup>35</sup> *The Anvil*, chapter 14, p. 146.

<sup>36</sup> *The Anvil*, chapter 14, p. 147.

<sup>37</sup> In Greek, the legend is known through the homily of Ps. John of Damascus, *De iis qui in fide dormierunt* (CPG 8112), PG 95, 261D-263D; on the problem of authorship, see J. M. Hoeck, "Stand und Aufgaben der Damaskenos-Forschung", *OCP* 17 (1951), pp. 5-60, at p. 39, n° 94 with note 3. The sermon is famous, because it is read at the Saturday of the Souls; the homily was translated in Georgian.

<sup>38</sup> For the Latin legend, see G. Whatley, "The Uses of Hagiography: The Legend of Pope Gregory and the Emperor Trajan in the Middle Ages", *Viator* 15 (1984), pp. 25-63.

magisterium. But Bessarion does not cite any official Latin document or source either concerning the impossibility of souls being delivered from hell.

As for the adjective “eternal”, hell was and still is deemed to be eternal by the Eastern Church as well, yet this fact does not represent any kind of problem for the Eastern teaching about the apokatastasis. This viewpoint has never been condemned by a formal canon on the nature and duration of the hell fire, which states that hell has an end.

It’s true that Bessarion recognizes the deliverance of souls from hell through intercessions from this world, but as he asserts, this will be impossible after the Last Judgment or when the body and soul are reunited. The author writes: “When the dead who have committed sin are resurrected and receive a body... then will they be bitterly and terribly punished spiritually and physically forever” („ოდეს იქმნეს აღდგომა მკუდართა და შეემოსნენ ხორცნი ესე, რომლითაცა ქმნეს ცოდვა... მაშინ იქმნების მწარედ და უსასტიკესად დასჯა სულით და ხორციით საუკუნოდ”).<sup>39</sup> Clearly Bessarion is not implying here the uselessness of prayers and good deeds by those left in this world, because the known physical universe will not exist after the Last Judgment. He is indicating the inability of souls to be freed from hell after the Last Judgment.

In this manner, Bessarion flatly rejects the tradition of his own Church, the teaching about the apokatastasis, which as was noted, had never been condemned by the Eastern Orthodox Church (namely, the apokatastasis of St Gregory of Nyssa). This opinion is condemned by St. Mark of Ephesus in an official discussion in Florence on Purgatory but it has not been specifically condemned by an Ecumenical Council in a canon or degree. The idea regarding the non-eternal nature of hell was not only supported by the Bishop of Nyssa, but by other holy Fathers of the East as well.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *The Anvil*, ch. 14, p. 150.

<sup>40</sup> On the question of apokatastasis, see Ramelli, *Apokatastasis*; M. Ludlow, *Universal Salvation: Eschatology in the Thought of Gregory of Nyssa and Karl Rahner*, Oxford, N. Y.: Oxford University Press 2000; M. McClymond, *The Devil’s Redemption: A New History and Interpretation of Christian Universalism*, Ada: Baker Academic 2018; K. Ware, “Dare We Hope for the Salvation of All? Origen, St Gregory of Nyssa and St Isaac the Syrian”, in *Collected Works*, vol. I. *The Inner Kingdom*. Crestwood, New York: SVS Press 2001, pp. 193-215; Alfeyev, *Christ the Conqueror of Hell*; Id., *The Mystery of Faith*; D. Tinikashvili, “Apokatastasis: Eastern Fathers Regarding the Return to God of All Who Have Fallen”, in G. Sanikidze (ed.), *Near East and Georgia*, vol. XI, Tbilisi: Ilia State University Press 2018, pp. 125-173 (extensive summary in English: pp. 174-184); Jorgenson, *Debate over Purgatory*, pp. 309-334; J. Sachs, “Apokatastasis in Patristic Theology”, *Theological Studies* 54:4 (1993), pp. 617-640; A. Andreopoulos, “Eschatology and final restoration (apokatastasis) in Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and Maximos the Confessor”, *Theandros: An Online Journal of Orthodox Christian Theology and Philosophy* 1/3 (Spring 2004), pp. 1-7.



*Non-Dogmatic issues*

After dealing with the Purgatory issue in *The Anvil*, let us turn to other (non-dogmatic) issues in the treatise. Bessarion declares that the Latins baptize not with immersion but with affusion.<sup>41</sup> He affirms that only valid baptism must be accomplished only in a baptismal font or in a river with full immersion without any part of the body to be left dry (“ეგრეთ ჯერ არს ჩუენდა მეორედ შობაი წყლისაგან ემზახსა შინა, გინა თუ მდინარეთა შინა და არა ერთ კერძოისა ასოისა დაღტობაი და სხვისა განხმობაი”).<sup>42</sup> In his view, this is a violation of the Apostolic canons and the Fathers of First Council of Nicaea through which triple immersion in the sanctified water is established. In his view, whoever does not do so let them be anathema (“დაამტკიცებს კრებაიცა იგი პირველი ნიკეისა...: ‘უკუეთუ ვინმე არა სამგზის შთაყოფითა ნათელ სცესო სახელითა მამისა და ძისა და სულისა წმიდისათა, იყავნ შეჩუენებულ’”).<sup>43</sup>

Bessarion wrongly ascribes the canon to the First Council of Nicaea. No decree of this council contains such words. This kind of inaccuracy clearly manifests Bessarion’s chaotic manner in the polemics. It is evident that an author of such an extensive polemical treatise shows lack of knowledge of the canons of ecumenical councils.

The baptism with a single immersion is rejected by the fiftieth Apostolic canon. But it is apparent from the canon that focus is on the number of immersions (triple vs single immersion). It does not mean a prohibition of the affusion as such. It is true that the word βάπτισμα used in the canon is frequently presented (for instance, by the famous Serbian canonist, bishop Nikodim Milash<sup>44</sup>) as having the “immersion” meaning, but as it is known, this is not an only meaning of the word. It also signifies just washing (Lk 11:38; Mk 7:3-4). What is more, the New Testament contains no explicit instructions on how physically to administer the water of baptism.

Since the apostolic age baptism was performed by immersion as well as affusion. The ancient Syrian liturgical manual *The Didache*, already composed in the 1st century A.D., lists the ways of using water for the accomplishment of the baptism and one of those ways is to “...pour water in the head three times...” (*Did.* 7, 3).<sup>45</sup> *The Didache* circulated widely among

<sup>41</sup> Bessarion, *The Anvil*, chapter XX, p. 213.

<sup>42</sup> Bessarion, *The Anvil*, chapter XX, p. 215.

<sup>43</sup> Bessarion, *The Anvil*, chapter XX, p. 212.

<sup>44</sup> N. Milash, *The Canons of Orthodox Church with Commentaries*, vol. I, Sergiev Posad: The Holy Trinity St. Sergius Lavra Press 1996, p. 123 [Н. Милаш, *Правила Православной Церкви с толкованиями*, том I, Сергиев Посад: Издательство Свято-Троицкой Сергиевой Лавры, 1996, с. 123].

<sup>45</sup> C. Jefford (ed.), *Didache: The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, Salem, Oregon: Polebridge

the churches in the first few centuries and so it is an important document regarding the administering of baptism. It is true that *The Didache* itself would not have been known by Bessarion for the reason that it was rediscovered in nineteenth century. But Bessarion must have known its relevant sections on baptismal water (immersion and affusion) which are both affirmed and subsumed into the *Apostolic Constitutions* by quoting the *Didache* that is hidden in the composite text.

As for the ecumenical councils: *single* immersion is condemned by the seventh Greek canon of the second ecumenical council and 95<sup>th</sup> canon of the Quinisext (more usually in Trullo) council which is considered as a continuation of Constantinople III. Both canons mention that Eunomeans used to baptize with a *single* immersion and exactly against them is emphasized the need of triple immersion. Like the apostolic canon cited above, here also the question at issue is the *number* of immersions. This particular detail was not discussed and settled on any other ecumenical or local church council of the East. Thus to make a brief conclusion here, the sacramental practice of Christians does not exclude baptism with affusion.

Only after the death of Bessarion (1737) a local council in Constantinople established in 1755 the necessity of immersion for Roman Catholics. Bessarion might be familiar with a similar decree accepted at the council in Moscow in 1620 about the rebaptism of Catholics who were not baptized with triple immersion.<sup>46</sup>

In the decree of the council of 1755, we read that the Holy Apostles founded the rule of triple immersion (ἐν τρισὶ καταδύσεσι καὶ ἀναδύσεσι) and that the Church is faithful to this rule. Certainly, the participants of the council have in mind the fiftieth Apostolic canon presented above. But it is not a very relevant canon for doubting a validity of baptism administered in the Roman Catholic Church. The decree also says that on the basis of the seventh canon of the second ecumenical council and 95<sup>th</sup> canon of the Quinisext or Trullan council, all must be regarded as unbaptized (ὡς ἀβάπτιστους) who were not baptized with triple immersion.<sup>47</sup>

It should be said here that this decision cannot be regarded as an intrinsic and proper manifestation of Eastern Orthodox Church's attitude towards Latin Christians, because the decree<sup>48</sup> accepted by the Greek pa-

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Press 2013, p. 33.

<sup>46</sup> Milash, *Canons*, vol. I, pp. 119-120, 591, note I. [Милаш, *Правила*, Том I, с. 119-120, 591 (прим. I)].

<sup>47</sup> Milash, *Canons*, vol. I, p. 590.

<sup>48</sup> E. Suttner, *Die Christenheit aus Ost und West auf der Suche nach dem sichtbaren Ausdruck für ihre Einheit*, Würzburg 1999, pp. 200-201. [Эрнст Суттнер, *Христианство Востока и Запада: В Поисках Зримого Проявления Единства*, пер. с нем. М., ББИ, 2004, сс. 200-201].

triarchs in 1755 denouncing the Latin sacraments was a reaction to the harsh decision taken by Rome in 1729, when the Roman Curia was forced to declare the sacraments of the Eastern Churches as invalid because the Pope was unable to quell the dispute that had sprung up among Catholic missionaries.<sup>49</sup> It is also interesting that in the previous century religious relations with Latins were very friendly among Greeks in Ottoman Empire and there was even a *communicatio in sacris* between them.<sup>50</sup>

In the Latin West a baptism with immersion was never prohibited. The standard practice of the Christian initiation at Rome was a baptism by triple immersion.<sup>51</sup> This is also corroborated by official letters of Latin prelates and various canons. For instance, in the letter to Archbishop Boniface of Mainz (in the eight century) we read: "...anyone *immersed* in the fountain of baptism without the invocation of the Trinity is not perfected unless he has been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit".<sup>52</sup> Also in another letter we read: "certainly if someone *immerses* a child in water three times in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen and does not say: 'I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen', the child is not baptized".<sup>53</sup> Until the second half of the thirteenth century baptism by immersion was still widely spread in Roman Catholic Church. For instance, St. Thomas Aquinas justifies other forms of baptism, "although it is safer to baptize by immersion, because this is the more common practice" (*STh* III q.66 a.7).<sup>54</sup>

In the fourteenth century, the custom of pouring or sprinkling the water in the Roman Church "had tended to replace immersion and submersion as the common and regular practice. Such a change in practice will contribute even further in the following centuries to the building of smaller fonts with minimal amounts of water".<sup>55</sup> So it had ceased to be the norm by the time that Bessarion was writing. The *Roman Ritual* (1614) presumed that

<sup>49</sup> Suttner, *Die Christenheit*, pp. 194-200.

<sup>50</sup> K. Ware, *Eustratios Argenti: A Study of the Greek Church under Turkish Rule*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1964 (reprint with a new introduction: Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock 2013), pp. 1-42.

<sup>51</sup> M. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation*. Revised and expanded (2nd) edition, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 2007, p. 168.

<sup>52</sup> Letter *Sacris Liminibus* to Archbishop Boniface of Mainz, May 1, 748, in Denzinger, *Compendium*, no. 589.

<sup>53</sup> Letter (Fragments) to Bishop Pontius of Clermont, date uncertain, Denzinger, *Compendium*, no. 757.

<sup>54</sup> A.-G. Martimort (ed.). *The Church at Prayer*, vol. III. *The Sacraments*, translated by Matthew J. O'Connell, Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press 1988, p. 72, note 37.

<sup>55</sup> Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation*, pp. 261-262.

ordinary baptism took place by affusion, but explicitly allowed baptism by immersion. In effect, the main issue is that affusion became normative and immersion the exception.

The problem with the criticism by Bessarion is that he oversimplifies the picture of the practice of Christian initiation in Western Christendom and rigidly declares in general, that Latins baptize with affusion and not with immersion. His deliberation is not nuanced and balanced. What is more he selectively quotes only one canon and then wrongly ascribes it with First Council of Nicaea. But in order to perceive correctly the ritual of baptism, one needs to consider it through the light of other canons, recommendations and religious practice of the church.

I think it is also important to acknowledge that throughout the history of the Church, rules, laws, and rituals have often changed due to “local need”, which has not been considered any kind of violation. For example, in the East, the use of leavened bread in the Eucharist was introduced against the heresy of Apollinarius, thus changing the Apostolic tradition of the use of unleavened bread. Yet no one in Eastern Christianity considered this to be a rejection or refusing of the apostolic tradition. That is why the great Georgian Saint George the Hagiorite, a pro-Latin in the eleventh century, considered the celebration of the Eucharist with leavened bread in the Greek East and unleavened one in Latin West as completely legitimate practices.<sup>56</sup>

Because of “local need” — that is to say, against Eunomeans — was introduced a *triple* immersion in the East. Also because of the same “local need”, a *single* immersion was considered to be directed against the descendants of Arians in Spain: in 633 the Fourth Council of Toledo endorsed this practice which was distinct from that of Rome and the Pope had no problem with that at all. As Ildefonsus of Toledo indicates that single rather than three-fold sprinkling or immersion was an effective way to oppose the heretics, because “by this number of immersions [they] are accustomed to rend the unity of the Godhead, it is by God’s guidance that the Church of God observes the practice of one sprinkling only”.<sup>57</sup>

Bessarion makes such an impression for his readers as if the rite of baptism everywhere and always in the Catholic West was accomplished with affusion. With such an arbitrary and erroneous reconstruction of the

<sup>56</sup> George the Minor, “The Life and Citizenship of our Holy and Blessed Father George the Hagiorite”, in *Monuments of Old Georgian Hagiographical Literature*, Book II (XI-XV cc.), edited by I. Abuladze, Tbilisi: Metsniereba 1967, pp. 178-179 [გიორგი მცირე, “ცხოვრება და მოქალაქეობა დიდისა და ნეტარისა მამისა ჭუენისა გიორგი მთაწმინდელისაი”, *ძველი ქართული აგიოგრაფიული ლიტერატურის ძეგლები*, წიგნი II. რედ.: ილია აბულაძე. თბილისი: მეცნიერება 1967, გვ. 178-179].

<sup>57</sup> Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation*, p. 235.

Western practice of initiation, he is trying to cultivate and strengthen the anti-Catholic spirit among Georgians.

It is interesting, that Bessarion says nothing about the improper performance of baptismal rite by Georgian priests in the seventeenth century. It is described by Catholic missionaries in their accounts. As it turned out, there were more important wrongdoings in the process of baptism other than the issue of immersion or affusion. Georgian Orthodox priests did not pronounce the baptismal formula in full: the third person of the Holy Trinity was not mentioned by them at all. The existence of this important defect was also confirmed by one of the most educated Georgian archbishop from Alaverdi (Eastern Georgia) to the Catholic missionaries.<sup>58</sup> Missionaries in Mingrelia (Western Georgia) also point out that the baptismal rite is performed incorrectly, indicating the same flaw by saying that Mingrelian priests “do not utter the true formula of baptism”.<sup>59</sup>

Another Catholic missionary, who also has discovered the same and also another mistake in baptism ritual, writes that it was the missionaries who taught the Georgian clergy the “correct rules of baptism”.<sup>60</sup> Thus, it is not surprising when European missionaries noted that “no Georgian is baptized, or their baptism is imperfect”.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>58</sup> P. Avitabile, *Notes about Georgia (XVII c.)*, translation, introduction and comments by Bezhan Giorgadze, Tbilisi: Metsniereba 1977, p. 73 [ავიტაბილე, დონ პიეტრო. ცნობები საქართველოზე (XVII საუკუნე). შესავალი, თარგმანი და კომენტარები ბეჟან გიორგაძისა. თბ., მეცნიერება 1977, გვ. 73].

<sup>59</sup> G. Giudice, *Report about Georgia (XVII century)*, translated from Italian into Georgian, introduction and notes by Murman Papashvili and Zurab Gamezardashvili, Tbilisi: Universal 2014, p. 37 [ჯუჯიუპე ჯუდიჯე, რელაცია საქართველოზე (XVII საუკუნე). იტალიურიდან ტექსტი თარგმნეს შესავალი და შენიშვნები დაურთეს მურმან პაპაშვილმა და ზურაბ გამეზარდაშვილმა. თბ., უნივერსალი 2014, გვ. 37]. See P. A. Licini, “Breve relazione della Megrellia redatta nel 1644 dal teatino Giuseppe Giudice”, OCP 50 (1984), pp. 157 and 420.

<sup>60</sup> G. Zampi, “A Short note about defects of Christian life in Mingrelia (19 of September, 1662)”, in *European Sources about Georgia (Last Quarter of the XVII Century)*. Italian and Latin texts have been translated, preface, and comments have been added by Murman Papashvili, Eldar Mamistvalishvili, and Zurab Gamezardashvili. Tbilisi: Georgian Technical University 2018, pp. 24-25 [მამპი, ჯუჯიუპე. “მოკლე ცნობა სამეგრელოში ქრისტიანული სარწმუნოების არასრულყოფილი მდგომარეობის შესახებ (1662 წლის 19 სექტემბერი)”, ევროპული წყაროები საქართველოს შესახებ (მეჩვიდმეტე საუკუნის უკანასკნელი მეოთხედი). იტალიური და ლათინური ტექსტები თარგმნეს, შესავალი და შენიშვნები დაურთეს მურმან პაპაშვილმა, ელდარ მამისტვალიშვილმა და ზურაბ გამეზარდაშვილმა. თბ., საქართველოს ტექნიკური უნივერსიტეტი 2018, გვ. 24-25]; P. A. Licini, *Cristoforo Castelli and his Mission in Georgia*. Translation, introduction and notes by Murman Papashvili. Tbilisi: Inovation 2009, p. 94, note 98 [პატრიცია ანა ლიჩინი. კრისტოფორო კასტელი და მისი მისია საქართველოში. თარგმანი, შესავალი და შენიშვნები მურმან პაპაშვილისა. თბ., ინოვაცია 2009, გვ. 94, შენიშვ. 98]. See P. A. Licini, “Cristoforo Castelli e la sua missione in Georgia”, *Regnum Dei* 41 (1985), no. 111, p. 87, n. 108.

<sup>61</sup> Avitabile, *Notes about Georgia*, p. 35 [ავიტაბილე, ცნობები საქართველოზე, გვ. 35].

In the end it must be noted that, sometimes (if not always<sup>62</sup>) Georgian clergymen did not baptize by immersion as well. As the missionaries write, they sometimes baptize a child just standing in water and sometimes they “dip” the child in the water during baptism.<sup>63</sup> Also we have accounts of avoiding an immersion in Georgian church. For instance, missionary Arcangelo Lamberti writes that when a Georgian priest was saying the baptismal prayer, “attendees laid their hands upon the catechumen’s head and dip it in the water”.<sup>64</sup> The rite accomplished in this way was also incorrect in Catholic missionaries view.

Bessarion blames Latins for teaching that Jesus never descended into hell and if He did so He would have been unable to come out (“კუალად ამასცა იტყვიან [ლათინნი] სხვათა თანა გმობათა, ვითარმედ: ქრისტე მეუფე საუკუნოსა ჯოჯოხეთსა არა შთასრულ არსო. და უკეთუ მუნ შთასრულ იყო ვერცადა იგი გამოვიდოდაო”).<sup>65</sup> As it seems, Bessarion knew nothing about the Old Roman Creed called in the West the Apostles’ Creed and in continuous use since the fifth century, e.g., at Baptism. The Latins included the Apostles’ Creed among their liturgical formulae. It clearly includes the phrase ‘He descended into hell’. The phrase is also in the so-called Athanasian Creed, also used liturgically by the Latins. Bessarion does not blame the Latins of not following their own Creeds, but generally says that they teach in this way. As for the view that Latins considered Christ as impotent for not having been able to escape from the Hell this is complete nonsense.

According to Bessarion, women also baptize in West and this is the rule (not an exception) in Roman Catholic Church. He writes that if somewhere some women have done so, this is not the foundation to make this practice normative (“დალათუ წმიდათა დედათაგანსა ვისმე ექმნას ესე, არაცა ესე სადამე სმენილ არს, და თუმცადა სადამე ქმნილ არს, არცა ესე დაიდგობს სჯულად”).<sup>66</sup> It is evident Bessarion misrepresents the reality of Catholic religious life when he accentuates only women. It is known that in exceptional circumstances women also were allowed to baptize in the Eastern Christendom.<sup>67</sup> The same rule was valid for the Roman Catholic Church as

<sup>62</sup> We do not have sufficient evidence to freely say that yet.

<sup>63</sup> Avitabile, *Notes about Georgia*, p. 37.

<sup>64</sup> A. Lamberti, *The Holy Colchis*. Prepared for publication, introduction, commentaries and index by D. Merkviladze. Translated from Italian into Georgian by G. Tskitishvili. Tbilisi: Artanuji 2020, p. 316 [ლამბერტი, არკანჯელო. წმინდა კოლხეთი. იტალიურიდან თარგმნა გიორგი ცქიტიშვილმა. ტექსტი გამოსაცემად მოამზადა, გამოკვლევა, განმარტებები და საძიებლები დაურთო დავით მერკვილაძემ. თბ., არტანუჯი 2020, გვ. 316]. See A. Lamberti, *Relazione della Colchide*, Napoli: Camillo Cavalli 1654, p. 141.

<sup>65</sup> Bessarion, *The Anvil*, chapter XIX, p. 192.

<sup>66</sup> Bessarion, *The Anvil*, chapter XXII, p. 221.

<sup>67</sup> Milash, *Canons*, vol. I, p. 123, note V. [Милаш, *Правила*, Том I, с. 123, прим. V]. (See the



well, i.e., baptism by women has never been a standard practice. It is possible to cite here many canons on the matter. For instance in the fifteenth century, the Council of Florence declared: “The minister of this sacrament is a priest, to whom by reason of his office it belongs to baptize. But in case of necessity not only priests or deacons, but also laymen or laywomen or even pagans and heretics may baptize...”.<sup>68</sup>

According to Bessarion Latin priests celebrate Mass several times a day (“ჟამისწირვისა საიდუმლოსა მღვდელნი მათნი დღესა შინა ერთსა, ერთსა ტრაპეზსა ზედა, მრავალგზის შესწირავს”).<sup>69</sup> He cites Basil the Great who says that it is forbidden to celebrate the liturgy more than once in a day (“ისმინე დიდისა ბასილისი, თუ ვითარ ერთხმა არს მოციქულთა თანა ...: ‘ვითარმედ არა ჯერ არს დღესა შინა ერთსა ერთისა მღვდელისა მიერ ორგზის ჟამისწირვა...’”<sup>70</sup>). St. Basil indeed taught so and Bessarion correctly cites him.

In the post-Tridentine epoch Catholic priest had no right to celebrate mass several times a day. They were allowed to do so three times only twice in a year: on Christmas and for the commemoration of the dead the 2 November. In other cases, special permission from the bishop was required to celebrate two masses on the same day.<sup>71</sup>

As for the celebrating of liturgy in private houses (“სახლსა შინა მათთა ჟამსა უწირავს”<sup>72</sup>) and in an open air or outside church buildings (“უეკლესიოსა ადგილსა”<sup>73</sup>): Bessarion cites the fiftieth canon of the council of Laodicea (“არა ჯერ არს სახლთა შინა საეროთა ქმნა ჟამისწირვისა არცა ეპისკოპოზისა მიერ, არცა ხუცესთა” (ლავდიკიის კრება, თავი 50)).<sup>74</sup> Bessarion confuses the canons again because “the oblation” in private houses is forbidden by the 58<sup>th</sup> canon of the Council of Laodicea and not the 50<sup>th</sup> canon of the same council.<sup>75</sup>

As it is very well known for the first three centuries, the Eucharist was

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commentary on Apostolic canon no. 49).

<sup>68</sup> Council of Florence, Bull *Exultate Deo*, November 22, 1439, in Denzinger, *Compendium*, no. 1315.

<sup>69</sup> Bessarion, *The Anvil*, chapter XXV, p. 259.

<sup>70</sup> Bessarion, *The Anvil*, chapter XXV, p. 261.

<sup>71</sup> This is in existence technically from Gratian's Decretum (published 1140s AD), first formalized in the Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon Law 1917. However, the restriction of priest to celebrate once every 24 hours is likely found in a papal decretal. See canon 806 (Code of 1917), and canon 905 (Code of 1983) in *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, edited by J. Beal, J. Coriden, Th. Green, Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press 2000, p. 345.

<sup>72</sup> Bessarion, *The Anvil*, chapter XXV, p. 259.

<sup>73</sup> Bessarion, *The Anvil*, chapter XXV, p. 260.

<sup>74</sup> Bessarion, *The Anvil*, chapter XXVI, p. 263.

<sup>75</sup> Milash, *Canons*, vol. II, p. 114 [Милаш, *Правила*, Том II, с. 114].

regularly celebrated in private houses everywhere, as well as in the open, for instance in cemeteries, but this is not a great counter-argument against Bessarion. After the local council of Laodicea (circa 363), the Quinisext (Trullan) council in 692 established that it was possible to celebrate the liturgy and baptism in private houses with consent of the local bishop (31st canon).<sup>76</sup> Bessarion does not mention that canon at all, although it was received into Latin collections. The Council of Trent actually forbade house/private/non-church masses.<sup>77</sup>

Bessarion asserts that Latin priests give another communion (i.e., different bread and wine) to lay people, but this differentiation between the clergy and lay people in terms of eucharist is inadmissible for the Christian church (“მღვდელნი [ლათინნი], რომელნიცა სწირავენ მით ეზიარებიან და ერისკაცთა სხვითა სეფითა აზიარებენ და არა მით, რომლითა თვით ეზიარებიან: ხოლო სისხლსა მას არა მისცემენ, არამედ სხვასა ლიტონსა ღვინოსა, რომელი არა მიახლებულ არს ტრაპეზსა, არცა წართქმულ არს მას ზედა ლოცვა”).<sup>78</sup> Bessarion points out that lay people are given not the same unleavened bread and blood of Christ, but an ordinary, unconsecrated wine and bread: “რამეთუ მისცემენ არა ხორცსა და მასაცა უცმობსა, და სისხლსა ყოვლადვე არა, არამედ ლიტონსა ღვინოსა”.<sup>79</sup>

Every liturgical historian knows that it is not true that the Latin West gave communion to lay people with different bread and wine: both received the same unleavened bread and the same wine. What is true is that in both East and West, beginning first — as it seems — in the East, lay people gradually ceased receiving communion at all. When they very occasionally did, in the West the laity received only the host. They were not offered the chalice lest any of the consecrated wine should be spilt. The East gave communion in a different way to clergy and laity — the former separately, the latter by means of a spoon. What was really ‘inadmissible’ is the almost total absence of lay communion for many centuries.

The withholding of the Chalice from the laity begins approximately in the eleventh century in the West for practical reasons. In northern Europe wine could be difficult or expensive to obtain, and as the Real Presence in the Eucharistic species became ever more accentuated, there was the ever-present possibility of spillage. Mediaeval theologians taught that Christ was received ‘whole and entire’ under either sign and this became the official Church teaching in the sixteenth century when the issue was raised by the

<sup>76</sup> Milash, *Canons*, vol. I, p. 513.

<sup>77</sup> W. François – V. Soen (eds.), *The Council of Trent: Reform and Controversy in Europe and Beyond (1545-1700)*, vol. I. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2016, p. 234.

<sup>78</sup> Bessarion, *The Anvil*, chapter XXIX, p. 278.

<sup>79</sup> Bessarion, *The Anvil*, chapter XXIX, p. 279.



Reformers. It was emphasised that there was no doctrinal objection to giving the Chalice to the laity, but the practice became associated with Protestantism and the theoretical possibility was not pursued after that date until the Second Vatican Council changed the practice (at first, only for lay Communion on special occasions).<sup>80</sup>

According to Bessarion, Roman Catholics refuse to give communion to infants and he is aware why they do so: because of not reaching the age of reason. (“უსრულთა და უჰასაკოთა ყრმათა არა აზიარებენ და ვჰკითხოთ რაი ამის მიზეზისათვის, გუეტყვიან ვითარმედ: უსრულობისათვის ჰასაკისა ვერ გულისხმაჰყოფენ საიდუმლოსა ამის ძალსაო”).<sup>81</sup>

Bessarion is correct in saying that in his time the Latins did not give communion to infants. The prohibition existed since the thirteenth century in the West (Lateran Council of 1215). In the Roman Catholic view, infants and children should not have Holy communion until they were old enough to distinguish communion from ordinary food and drink. The Council of Trent was categorical: ‘If anyone says that Eucharistic Communion is necessary for children before they reach the age of discernment; let him be anathema’ (Canon 4, Session 21, 1562).<sup>82</sup> But it acknowledged in the chapter four which immediately precedes that canon that if in times past this did sometimes and in some places happen, this was not to be condemned. For there was good reason for this practice in the situation of their times. But they did not do this for any necessity of salvation.<sup>83</sup> This is the case in Roman Catholic church nowadays too.<sup>84</sup>

Bessarion has an interesting counter-argument here: then why do you baptize an infant when he is not “reached the age of discernment”? (“... ვინაითგან უმეცარ არიან ყოვლისავე საღმრთოისა განგებულებისა, ვითარ შეერაცხის ნათლისღებად?”<sup>85</sup>). Infants used to be baptized not only in Western, but also in Eastern Christendom: the Council of the Carthage in 253 made it as a recommended practice.

Another accusation made by Bessarion concerns the Latin practice of allowing women during their menstrual cycle near the altar of the church. Among various canons forbidding this Bessarion cites that of the council of Laodicea “Women may not go to the altar” (Canon 44). (“არა ჯერ არს

<sup>80</sup> Concerning the eucharistic cult briefly see: A. G. Martimort (ed.), *The Church at prayer*, vol. II, Collegeville 1986, pp. 246-249.

<sup>81</sup> Bessarion, *The Anvil*, chapter XXX, p. 286.

<sup>82</sup> Denzinger, *Compendium*, no. 1734.

<sup>83</sup> Denzinger, *Compendium*, no. 1730.

<sup>84</sup> Martimort, *The Church at Prayer*, vol. III, pp. 74-75.

<sup>85</sup> Bessarion, *The Anvil*, chapter XXX, p. 286.

დედაკაცისა შესლვად საკურობეველად” (კანონი 44).<sup>86</sup> There were prohibitions in the Latin church too on women entering the sanctuaries of churches but there were many exceptions, e.g., for nuns in their own monasteries, for those in parishes cleaning the sanctuaries or placing flowers on the altars, etc.<sup>87</sup>

### Conclusion

Sadly, it is not easy to ascertain what kind of knowledge the Georgian monk and afterwards Patriarch Bessarion had concerning the situation in the Christian East at that time, but it is possible to see his close ties with Russia in various ways. If he did know about the strong Catholic influences in various parts of the Ottoman Empire (especially Constantinople and the Eastern Mediterranean) and Russia in 17<sup>th</sup> century, this might have been something for him to ponder. Perhaps he had perceived the situation as dangerous for Georgian Orthodox identity and wrote a vehemently anti-Catholic treatise as a counterweight to Roman Catholicism. Even if *The Anvil* might be a typical expression of anti-Catholic reactions in the East, in the history of the Georgian Church it remains the sole exception: no other text with similar substance and spirit was written before or after.

Having discussed some of the issues (dogmatic as well as non-dogmatic) of *The Anvil*, we can note that Bessarion's complaints possibly resemble familiar instances where both Churches found any reason or excuse to criticise one another. Even *before* the 'Great Schism', Western Christianity developed different customs from Eastern Christianity and such differences were not regarded as matters for criticism until after East and West had grown apart due to political and cultural factors.

Bessarion's consideration of the subject appear to have been highly superficial. This indicates that he was not even aware of the reasons why there was an inimical relationship between Orthodoxy and Catholicism. So it is not surprising that the treatise had no long-term and firm anti-Catholic impact on the masses, nor on Church and State authorities responsible for Georgia's domestic and foreign policies.<sup>88</sup> More important in Georgian his-

<sup>86</sup> Bessarion, *The Anvil*, chapter XXXVI, p. 343. As for the medieval discipline on this question in the Latin west, see the texts in H. J. Schmitz, *Die Bussbücher und die Bussdisciplin der Kirche nach Handschriftlichenquellen dargestellt*, I, Mainz: Franz Kirchheim 1883, p. 283, no. 31; II, Düsseldorf: L. Schwann 1898, p. 229, no. 5 and xxxviii; p. 365, no. 89; p. 536, no. 125; p. 555, no. 17; p. 614, no. 14.

<sup>87</sup> The ban of women in sanctuaries was in force in the Catholic West from 1150s to 1917, see: J. H. Martin – I. Raming, *A History of Women and Ordination: The Ordination of Women in Medieval Context*, vols I-II, Lanham, Md; Oxford: Scarecrow Press 2002-2004, p. 134.

<sup>88</sup> For more details, see our paper mentioned at the note 7, pp. 577-583.

tory was an energetic aspiration towards the Catholic West, demonstrated through political activity and the literary pursuits of Georgian intellectual circles.

Caucasus University  
School of Humanities and Social Sciences  
1 Paata Saakadze Street  
Tbilisi, Georgia

David Tinikashvili

#### SUMMARY

In the entire history of Georgian theological literature there is one exception: a theological treatise written in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by a Georgian author, Catholicos-Patriarch Bessarion Orbelishvili. The treatise is the only text written in the Georgian language vehemently criticizing the Roman Catholic Church and its doctrine. For centuries Orthodox Georgians had a cordial disposition towards Roman Catholics. This was evident in everyday secular life, as well as in the religious sphere: prayerful union, joint missionary activities in other countries, theological openness. This is corroborated by written sources, such as official epistles of Georgian monarchs and Church leaders, in which a readiness to recognize the supremacy of the Pope was expressed, and theological texts. For example, after the Great Schism (1054), the prominent Georgian theologian, St. George the Hagiorite bravely translated the so-called Athanasian Creed containing the Filioque. Another later distinguished Georgian theologian, St. Arsenios of Ikalto, clearly was not pleased by the anti-Latin stances of the Orthodox Greeks and this is markedly manifested in his literary activity as well.

The research paper examines the several major issues (dogmatic as well as non-dogmatic), showing the author's incorrect notions and perceptions concerning controversial doctrinal issues and church customs of the Roman Catholic Church and propagandistic nature of his treatise.

Keywords: Georgian Anti-Catholic literature, History of Georgia, Roman Catholic Church, European Catholicism, Catholic Missions in East, Anti-Catholicism in Eastern Christendom.

