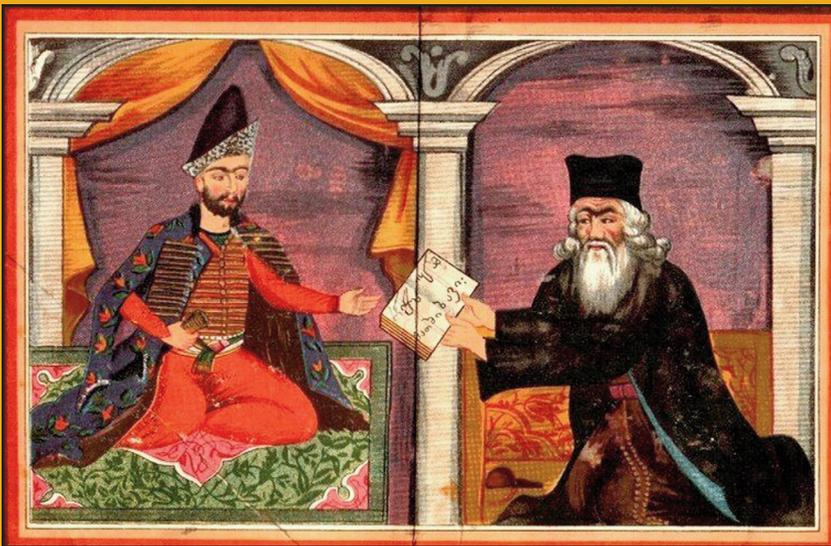


THE CATHOLIC HISTORICAL REVIEW

Volume 107

Number 4

Autumn 2021



THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA PRESS



PROJECT MUSE®

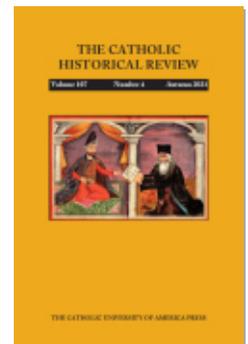
An Anti-Catholic Georgian Theological Treatise (Eighteenth Century) in the Context of Georgian-European Relations

David Tinikashvili

The Catholic Historical Review, Volume 107, Number 4, Autumn 2021, pp. 561-584 (Article)

Published by The Catholic University of America Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/cat.2021.0035>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/841838>

An Anti-Catholic Georgian Theological Treatise (Eighteenth Century) in the Context of Georgian-European Relations

DAVID TINIKASHVILI*

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, marked by prayerful union, joint missionary activities in other countries, and 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. In the entire history of Georgian theological literature there is one exception: a theological treatise written in the eighteenth century by a Georgian author, Catholicos-Patriarch Bessarion Orbelishvili. The treatise is the only text written in the Georgian language criticizing the Roman Catholic Church and its doctrine. The content of the work is quite biased, crude, and full of mistakes and inaccuracies; despite the vitriol, however, its status as the sole extant written text in Georgian critical of the Latins, as well surrounding historical circumstances, confirm that it was not indicative of Georgian feelings about Catholics overall.

Keywords: Georgian Anti-Catholic literature, History of Georgia, European-Georgian interrelations, and Catholic Missions in the East.

Foreword

The attitudes towards the Catholic West among the Orthodox Georgians and Orthodox Greeks almost always had significant differences. The anti-Latin stance of the Greeks was not normal for the Georgians. Original Georgian theological literature has no known work opposing Catholi-

* David Tinikashvili is a full professor at the Caucasus University in Tbilisi, Georgia; his email is dtinikashvili@cu.edu.ge. The author acknowledges his deep gratitude to Professor Edmund Herzig of Oxford University for sharing his ideas on the draft. The research fellowship at the University of Oxford (2020–2021), which assisted in the creation of this paper, was funded by a generous grant from the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia (SRNSFG).

cism until the eighteenth century. *The Anvil* (in Georgian: *გრდემლი*, *Grdemli*) is the only extant anti-Latin work (primary text) done in the Georgian language, the likes of which had never been written until then or afterwards in Georgia's history.

What developments in Georgia's domestic affairs or foreign relationships can explain the composition of this unique anti-Latin tract? It must be said that there has never been any intentional anti-Western policy in Georgia. Throughout the country's history, one can find only a few anti-Catholic incidents, originating from the basis of a narrow, local misunderstandings and, as a rule, generally having no connection to any kind of an intrinsic or traditional anti-Western Georgian mindset. It is evident from the sources that the persecutors of the Catholic missionaries in Georgia were as a rule Greek monks sent from Constantinople to Eastern and Western Georgia¹ and Armenian clergymen.² In general Armenians existed in large numbers in Eastern and Southern Georgia. For instance, renowned traveller John Chardin writes that Armenians even outnumbered Georgians in the eighteenth century in Eastern Georgia.³

As will be seen below, Latin missionaries enjoyed tremendous respect among the ordinary Georgian populace, which led to a growing trend of

1. Document 15, in the Archivio della Sacra Congregazione per l'Evangelizzazione dei Popoli o "de Propaganda Fide" (hereafter referred to as APF), fondo "Georgia," 1708-1760, II, fols. 487r-491r, as cited in: Murman Papashvili et al., *European Sources about Georgia (18th c)*, Italian and Latin texts translated into Georgian by Murman Papashvili, Eldar Mamistvalishvili, and Zurab Gamezardashvili, (Tbilisi, 2020), 78. [დოკუმენტი 15, Archivio della Sacra Congregazione per l'Evangelizzazione dei Popoli o "de Propaganda Fide," (აქ და ქვემოთ შემოკლებით APF) fondo "Georgia," 1708-1760, II, fols. 487r-491r, ციტირ.: პაპაშვილი, მურმან და სხვები. ევროპული წყაროები საქართველოს შესახებ (მე-18 საუკუნე). იტალიური და ლათინური ტექსტები თარგმნეს, შესავალი და შენიშვნები დაურთეს მურმან პაპაშვილმა, ელდარ მამისთვალისძვილმა და ზურაბ გამეზარდაშვილმა. თბ., საჩინო 2020, გვ. 78].

2. Ibid., 75. [Archivio della Sacra Congregazione per l'Evangelizzazione dei Popoli o "de Propaganda Fide," fondo "Georgia," 1708-1760, vol. II, fols. 487r-491r, დოკუმენტი 15, ციტირ.: პაპაშვილი, მურმან და სხვები. ევროპული წყაროები საქართველოს შესახებ (მე-18 საუკუნე). იტალიური და ლათინური ტექსტები თარგმნეს, შესავალი და შენიშვნები დაურთეს მურმან პაპაშვილმა, ელდარ მამისთვალისძვილმა და ზურაბ გამეზარდაშვილმა. თბ., საჩინო 2020, გვ. 75].

3. John Chardin, *The Travels into Persia and the East-Indies (Notes about Georgia)*, 2nd revised ed., trans., introduction and comments by George Sanikidze and Mzia Mgaloblishvili (Tbilisi, 2018), 295. [ქან შარდენი. მოგზაურობა სპარსეთსა და აღმოსავლეთის სხვა ქვეყნებში (ცნობები საქართველოს შესახებ). მე-2 შევსებული და გადამუშავებული გამოცემა. ფრანგულიდან თარგმნა, შესავალი წერილი და კომენტარები დაურთეს მზია მაგალობლიშვილმა და გიორგი სანიკიძემ. თბ., ილიას სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი 2018, 295].

cases of conversions to Catholicism, especially in the seventeenth century. It is also universally recognized⁴ that Georgian kings and rulers aspired for a close relationship with the Catholic West.⁵

The Political Situation of Eastern Georgia

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Georgians' trade relations with neighboring eastern countries—and sometimes, through them, with Western European cities—increased noticeably. Beginning in the eighteenth century, however, Georgia was also connected to Europe via Russia, as the Georgians managed to do so under the Russian Anti-Western religious policy. By virtue of Georgians' efforts in Russia, it was possible to take Western cultural achievements and incorporate them into their homeland. For instance, the Catholic-influenced treatise of Peter Moghila was translated by Georgians in Moscow (see more below). The intensification of such contacts was brought about by a change in the global situation, starting from the beginning of the seventeenth century when economic relations and regular movement between Safavid Iran and France became active. In 1708, a trade agreement was even written up between these two

4. See for example the following articles on that matter by noted Georgian scholars, emeritus professor Zurab Kiknadze and professor Nugzar Papuashvili: Zurab Kiknadze, "Georgian Kings and Patriarchs in Relationship with Rome," *Journal of Eastern and Western Christianity*, 1, (2005), 36–45. [კიკნაძე, ზურაბ. „ქართველი მეფეები და პატრიარქები რომთან ურთიერთობაში“, დიალოგი: აღმოსავლურ-დასავლური ქრისტიანული ჟურნალი 1, 2005, 36–45]; Nugzar Papuashvili, "Religious Relationships between Rome and Georgia: Mythos and Reality," in: *Christianity of East and West: Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. David Tinikashvili (Tbilisi, 2009), 198–248. [პაპუაშვილი, ნუგზარ. „საქართველოსა და რომის სარწმუნოებრივი ურთიერთობანი: მითოსი და რეალობა“, აღმოსავლურ-დასავლური ქრისტიანობა. მთავარი რედაქტორი: დავით თინიკაშვილი. თბ., სულხან-საბა ორბელიანის ჰუმანიტარულ მეცნიერებათა უნივერსიტეტი 2009, 198–248].

5. Georgians aspired to connect not only with the Catholic West but also with the Western Protestant world. According to German as well as Georgian sources, two Georgian governors of Samtskhe Atabegate (a principality in southwestern Georgia) visited Constantinople in 1579. One of them, Qyarqvar IV Jaqeli, expressed great interest in the German Reformation there and established friendly contacts with Lutherans. As a result of these relationships, *The Augsburg Confession* was translated into Georgian by a member of his retinue and the document was sent to the mentioned principality to facilitate dissemination of Reformation ideas among Georgians. Sadly, Muslim officials in Constantinople began to persecute him, and he barely managed to return safely to Georgia. See in detail: Nugzar Papuashvili, *From the History of Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Georgia* (Tbilisi, 2018), 66–78. [პაპუაშვილი, ნუგზარ. ევანგელურ-ლუთერანული ეკლესიის ისტორიიდან საქართველოში. თბ., უნივერსალი 2018, 66–78].

countries.⁶ The first decades of the seventeenth century also marked a “turning point” in the way in which the Catholic missionary network “[had] already been considerably strengthened on the territory of the Ottoman Empire.”⁷ As a result of these relationships, some new directives were issued by Iran to the benefit of French missionaries. Latin missionaries present in eastern Georgia were subordinate to the Catholic mission in Isfahan, the capital of Iran at that time.⁸

The Catholic missions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the eastern Muslim empires were primarily “tied up,” so to speak, with French commercial and diplomatic missions.⁹ It was through the help of the French consuls that Catholics were able to move freely and pilgrimage between Christian holy places.¹⁰ The consuls managed to obtain the right for Catholic friars to pursue missionary activities, provided they followed this main stipulation: the friars were able to preach to and convert Eastern Christians only “if the Eastern Christians voluntarily came to them.”¹¹

6. Ilia Tabaghua, ed., *Documents from the History of Interrelations Between Georgia and France (March of 1707–December of 1714)*, trans., introduction and notes by Ilia Tabaghua (Tbilisi, 1975), 59–75. [ტაბაღუა, ილია (რედ.). საბუთები საქართველო-საფრანგეთის ურთიერთობის ისტორიიდან (1707 წლის მარტი–1714 წლის დეკემბერი). ნაწილი 1. შესავალი, თარგმანი და განმარტებები დაურთო ილია ტაბაღუამ. თბ., მეცნიერება 1975, 59-75].

7. Adina Ruiu, “Missionaries and French Subjects: The Jesuits in the Ottoman Empire,” in: *A Companion to Early Modern Catholic Global Missions*, ed. Ronnie Po-chia Hsia (Leiden, 2018), 181.

8. Valerian Gabashvili, “From the History of Georgian Diplomacy (Georgia and Anti-Ottoman Coalition in XVI–XVII centuries),” *Materials for the History of Georgia and Caucasia*, (Tbilisi, 1954), part XXXI, 126. [გაბაშვილი, ვალერიან. „ქართული დიპლომატიის ისტორიიდან (საქართველო და ანტიოსმალური კოალიციები XVI–XVII საუკუნეებში)“, მასალები საქართველოსა და კავკასიის ისტორიისათვის. ნაკვ. 31. თბ., მეცნიერება 1954, 126].

9. Aurélien Girard, “Entre croisade et politique culturelle au Levant: Rome et l’union des chrétiens syriens (première moitié du XVIIe siècle),” in: *Papato e politica internazionale nella prima età moderna*, ed. Maria Antonietta Visceglia (Rome, 2013), 419–37; Bernard Heyberger, *Les Chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la Réforme catholique (Syrie, Liban, Palestine, XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles)* (Rome, 1994), 267–71, as cited in: Cesare Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie: Communicatio in sacris, coesistenza e conflitti tra le comunità cristiane orientali (Levante e Impero ottomano, XVII–XVIII secolo)* (Rome, 2019), 135.

10. Maurits H. van den Boogert, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System: Consuls, Qadis, and Beratlis in the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden, 2005), 102.

11. Cesare Santus, “Conflicting Views: Catholic missionaries in Ottoman cities between accommodation and Latinization,” in *Catholic Missionaries in Early Modern Asia: Patterns of Localization*, ed. Nadine Amsler et al. (Abingdon, 2020), 97.

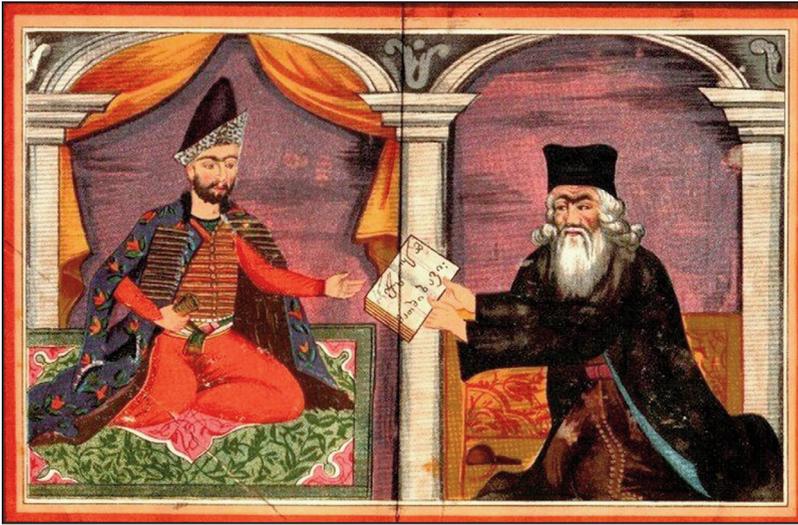


FIGURE 1. Prince Sulokhan-Saba Orbeliani (1658–1725) presenting his book to King Vakhtang VI; “*Kilila and Damana*” (ქილილა და დამანა). 1724–1737. (first half of XVIII century). 333 ფ.; 40×26,5sm. Courtesy of the Department of Manuscripts and Documents, The Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences. St. Petersburg, Russia.

Georgian kings also revealed a desire towards a strengthening of such a Western influence, especially Vakhtang VI¹² and his brother, Catholicos-Patriarch Domenti, who even expressed a readiness to recognize the supremacy of the Roman Pope.¹³ They were connecting the future of the country to Europe, because the Christian European countries were deemed

12. It is true that Vakhtang VI is known as a king of Kartli (which included Georgia’s capital city Tbilisi), but we should not underestimate the importance of this statesman. Putting aside the immense amount of work he had done in various domains of life in the Kingdom of Kartli (Eastern Georgia), he tried to strengthen his power in Western Georgia as well. King Vakhtang VI had taken control of Osetia in Northern Georgia, and also used the method of dynastic marriages to consolidate the various kingdoms of Georgia (in detail, see: Manana Kikodze, *Vakhtang VI as a Statesman: His Political, Economical and Socio-Cultural Activities* (Tbilisi, 1988), 18. [მანანა ქიქოძე. ვახტანგ VI-ის სახელმწიფოებრივი მოღვაწეობა (პოლიტიკურ-ეკონომიკური და სოციალურ-კულტურული საქმიანობა). თბ., მეცნიერება 1988, 18].

13. Mikheil Tamarashvili, *The History of Catholicism among Georgians, XIII–XX Centuries* (Tbilisi, 2011), 306–07. [თამარაშვილი, ისტორია კათოლიკობისა ქართველთა შორის, მე-13–20 სს. თბ., სიესტა 2011, 306–07].

the best allies in opposition to the surrounding Muslim superpowers—Iran and the Ottoman Empire.

In 1713, a Georgian Catholic monk by the name of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani—an outstanding writer, scholar, spiritual elder (having converted to Catholicism in 1701), public intellectual, and politician—was sent by King Vakhtang VI to Europe on a political mission. The Georgian king was sending him to procure political, military, and cultural support in Europe, where, as Vakhtang thought, “honorable people”¹⁴ lived. Unfortunately, Saba’s ambassadorial mission to France and Rome did not yield any corresponding results.

Georgian king Vakhtang VI once again attempted to connect with Christian Europe. In particular, he sent letters to Pope Innocent XIII and the Emperor Charles VI of Austria on November 29, 1722, in which he asked for help against the Islamic invaders. Unfortunately, these letters turned out to be ineffective.¹⁵ Any secular and ecclesiastical authority having a pro-Western Catholic orientation in Georgia was neutralized by the Ottomans (who invaded Georgia in 1723). Having sought refuge in Russia, King Vakhtang’s throne was taken over by the convert to Islam, Iese, also known as Iese-Mustafa, a “nominal ruler”¹⁶ who was hostile towards his brother, King Vakhtang.

Following the exile of Catholicos-Patriarch Domenti to Istanbul, the monk Bessarion Orbelishvili was appointed in his place through Iese’s help in 1724. The anti-Catholic tract *The Anvil* was already finished by Bessarion in this same year. He had been writing it for twelve years.

The Selection of Bessarion

Bessarion’s surname “Orbelishvili” was the name of one of the branches of the Baratashvili clan. Bessarion writes the following about himself: “I, Bessarion, a hieromonk related to Baratashvili from the clan of Orbelishvili at Gareja Monastery.”¹⁷ Catholicos Anton I wrote about Bessarion in his

14. Tabaghua, ed., *Documents from the History of Interrelations*, 163. [ტაბაღუა (რედ.). საბუთები საქართველო-საფრანგეთის, 163].

15. Ilia Tabaghua, *Interrelations Between Georgia and France (First Quarter of XVIII Century)*, 315. [ტაბაღუა, ილია. საქართველო-საფრანგეთის ურთიერთობა (XVIII საუკუნის პირველი მეოთხედი). თბ., მეცნიერება 1972, 315].

16. Niko Berdzenishvili, *Issues in the History of Georgia*, 9 vols. (Tbilisi, 1964–90), II, 156. [ბერძენიშვილი, საქართველოს ისტორიის საკითხები, II, 156].

17. Zhordania, *Chronicles*, II, 516. [ჯორდანია, ქრონიკები, II, 516].

“*Elegantly Composed Verses*” (in Georgian: წყობილსიტყვაობა, *Tsqobil-sitqvaoba*), saying that he was “a man with a lofty mind,” that “he properly shepherded the Church,” and that “he thundered upon the Latins.”¹⁸ Bessarion was quite an influential spiritual leader. He had an entire group of disciples and scribes at the monastery working primarily on hagiographic collections and other liturgical texts under his direction.

Bessarion Orbelishvili was appointed by the Ottomans as Patriarch in 1724. As Tedo Zhordania wrote, “The Tatars [i.e. Ottomans] gave the title of Patriarch to Bessarion Orbeliani (1724).”¹⁹ It cannot be said that Bessarion did not desire to be Patriarch, because we have some information from Polievktos Karbelashvili, a public figure in the nineteenth century, according to whom Bessarion took action to possess the patriarchal throne and not perhaps through the holiest of means. Through the help of his friend the Muslim King Iese, “he gradually won the support of Isak-Pasha, slipped him a bribe, and thus got to be Patriarch.”²⁰

No doubt, it was favorable for the Ottomans to have an anti-Western and anti-Catholic candidate on the patriarchal throne, who simultaneously was a friend of the Muslim King Iese, who himself was faithful to the Ottomans, and through this even Bessarion’s loyalty towards the Ottomans would be secured. Upon ascending the patriarchal throne, Bessarion had already finished *The Anvil*, an extensive, systematic, anti-Catholic treatise, which he had written in the years 1712–24.²¹ The Davit Gareja Monastery complex (namely, in St. John the Baptist Monastery), the place where Bessarion worked on this document, was an important center for the country’s intellectual life during that period. Naturally, as he was working on such an extensive treatise which took a great number of years to complete, he would not have been able to escape the scrutiny of

18. Mikheil Kavtaria, “Life and Works of Bessarion Orbelishvili,” *Bulletin of Institute Manuscript*, 1 (1959), 75. [ქავთარია, მიხეილ. “ბესარიონ ორბელიშვილის ცხოვრება და მოღვაწეობა”, ხელნაწერთა ინსტიტუტის მოამბე, 1, 1959, 75].

19. Tedo Zhordania, *Archbishop Ioseb Samebeli*, 87n6. [ჯორდანია, მთავარეპისკოპოსი იოსებ სამებელი, 87, სქოლიო 6].

20. Polievktos Karbelashvili, “Bessarion, 1728–1735,” *Polievktos Karbelashvili. Hierarchy of the Church of Georgia: Catholicos and Archbishops*, 2nd ed., edition, introduction, comments and notes by Bondo Arveladze (Tbilisi, 2011), 112. [კარბელაშვილი, პოლიევქტოს. “ბესარიონი, 1728–1735,” პოლიევქტოს კარბელაშვილი. იერარქია საქართველოს ეკლესიისა: კათალიკოსნი და მღვდელმთავარნი. მეორე გამოცემა. გამოსაცემად მოამზადა, შესავალი, კომენტარები და შენიშვნები დაურთო ზონდო არველაძემ. თბ., კაბადონი+ 2011, 112].

21. Mikheil Kavtaria, *Davit Gareja School of Literature* (Tbilisi, 1965), 111. [ქავთარია, მიხეილ. დავით გარეჯის ლიტერატურული სკოლა. თბ., მეცნიერება 1965, 111].

those around him. Thus, information regarding Bessarion's extremely negative attitude towards the Roman Catholic Church must have been widespread. It seems such a person as this was desirable for the Ottomans, because it was in their interests not only to discourage the favorable relationship between Georgian and European Christians, but also to stoke animosity between them.

The conduct of such religious politics as this was indeed the Ottomans' signature. There are many examples in the history of Ottoman dominion over the Christian communities in the East confirming their anti-Western agenda. One of the most well-known facts in this regard is the case of George Scholarius, a Greek Orthodox theologian, who was a great supporter of union with the Church of Rome at the Council of Ferrara-Florence. But after returning to Constantinople when Sultan Mahmed II had appointed him as Patriarch, Gennadius (formerly Georgios) Scholarius turned into an energetic anti-Catholic figure. Scholars of George Scholarius' life conclude that such a radical change of his position was determined by "a political factor"²² and not by any of the religious issues examined at the Council of Florence. Obviously, sultans were in opposition to a close, benevolent relationship between Eastern Orthodoxy and the Catholic West.

The School of Davit Gareja

Previously mentioned was the great thinker and state figure Sulkhan Orbeliani, a Catholic by faith who was tonsured with the name of Saba in the same monastery where monk Bessarion Orbelishvili worked. This was the Monastery of St. John the Baptist at the Davit Gareja Monastery Complex, located in a desert area in Eastern Georgia. A vigorous process of creating religious literature was ongoing in this particular monastery.

For a certain length of time Sulkhan-Saba and Bessarion lived together at the monastery. Thus, it is natural to surmise that they at least knew each other, although there is no information to be found regarding any interaction and collaboration between them. Nor can any kindred connection between Bessarion and Sulkhan-Saba be confirmed.²³ Bessarion had labored at this monastery from the 1680s onwards. Approximately two

22. This is the thesis of the following dissertation: Victor Henri Antoine Penel, *An Investigation of the Change in Position of George Scholarios from Pro-Union of the Western and Eastern Churches to Anti-Union* (master's thesis, Anglia Ruskin University in Candidacy, 2014). Accessed September 21, 2018, at <https://arro.anglia.ac.uk/581964/1/Penel%20thesis.pdf>.

23. Kavtaria, *Life and Works of Bessarion Orbelishvili*, 77 n. 9. [ქავთარია, ბესარიონ ორბელიშვილის ცხოვრება, 77, სქოლიო 9].



FIGURE 2. Davit Gareja lavra: the main monastery of the desert, ourtesy of The National Parliamentary Library of Georgia.

decades later, Saba was tonsured a monk there in 1698, living there until 1710.²⁴ Nowhere is Bessarion mentioned by Saba either.

There is some information making one think that interconfessional openness, or an ecumenical spirit as it is called today, was not foreign to Gareja Monastery Complex. The prayer of Hovhannes, a priest of the Armenian Apostolic Church (i.e. a “miaphysite” church as it was referred at the time), well-known scribe and calligrapher, was confirmed by scholars to have been written in the fifteenth century at the Monastery of St. John the Baptist in the Davit Gareja desert, a fact which is corroborated by some wall inscriptions.²⁵ Hovhannes labored tirelessly to get closer to the Roman

24. Kavtaria, *Davit Gareja School*, 122. [ქავთარია, დავით გარეჯის, 122].

25. Temo Jojua, “Identifying the Author of the 1467 Georgian and Armenian Inscriptions at Gareja Monastery,” *Analecta Iberica: Studies in History, Religion and Culture*, 1 (2001), 154-55. [ჯოჯუა, თემო. „გარეჯის უდაბნოს მონასტრის 1467 წლის ქართული და სომხური წარწერების ავტორის იდენტიფიკაციისათვის,“ *Analecta Iberica*, ისტორიის, რელიგიისა და კულტურის საკითხები 1, 2001, 154-55]. The same thought was expressed by Leon Melikset-Begi as well regarding Hovhannes’ affiliation with the miaphysite confession: Leon Melikset-Begi, “Armenian Epigraphy and a Polyglot Inscription of Mravalmta at Gareja—Georgian-Armenian-Persian-Uighur,” *Niko Marr Insti-*

Catholic Church.²⁶ Apparently, such facts do not seem to be incongruous to being a Georgian Orthodox monk at Gareja. In an opposing case, probably no one would have given the non-Orthodox Hovhannes the right to pray at an Orthodox monastery. If such a thing had happened due to some unconsidered reason, later all traces of the heretic's prayer would certainly have been erased.

The fact of such an intimate and daring interdenominational relationship among monks of the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Orthodox Church of Georgia evokes amazement. For one thing, the old church canons categorically forbade common prayer with heretics, and for another, there had been an especially strained relationship between the Georgian and Armenian churches since the beginning of seventh century, when a sharp schism had occurred.²⁷ In 1105 the Ruis-Urbnisi Council declared the Armenian Church as anathema. It is stated in the council's fifteenth canon, "Thus we have established for them, so that they may be completely baptized as pagans."²⁸

The ecumenical openness of the Monastery of John the Baptist is also attested to by the tonsure of Sulkhan in 1698. As indicated by his biographers, Sulkhan revealed his sympathies towards Catholicism before then, starting in 1687, which were also manifested in his works.²⁹ Starting in

tute of Language, History, and Material Culture Bulletin, 5–6 (1940), 168 and 172–74. [ლეონ მელიქსეთ-ბეგი. "გარეჯის შრავალმთის" სომხური ეპიგრაფიკა და პოლიგლოტური წარწერა — ქართულ-სომხურ-სპარსულ-უიღურული", აკად. ნ. მარის სახელობის ენის, ისტორიისა და მატერიალური კულტურის ინსტიტუტის მოამბე, ტ. V–VI, თბ., 1940, 168 და 172–74].

26. Nuzgar Papuashvili, "Religious Relations between Armenians and Georgians," *Solidarity*, 1 (2009), 14. [პაპუაშვილი, ნუგზარ. „სომეხთა და ქართველთა სარწმუნოებრივი ურთიერთობანი“, სოლიდარობა 1, 2009, გვ. 14].

27. On the Georgian-Armenian schism, see the following publications (Georgian materials are not cited here): Nikoloz Aleksidze, "Caucasia: Albania, Armenia and Georgia," in: *A Companion to Religion in Late Antiquity*, eds. Josef Lössl and Nicholas Baker-Brian (Hoboken, 2018), 135–57; Zaza Aleksidze and Pierre Mahe, "Arsen Sapareli: Sur la séparation des Géorgiens et des Arméniens," *Revue des Études Arméniennes*, 32 (2010), 59–132; Stephen H. Rapp Jr., "Christian Caucasian Dialogues: Glimpses of Armeno-K'art'velian Relations in Medieval Georgian Historiography," in: *Peace and Negotiation: Strategies for Coexistence in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. Diane Wolfthal (Turnhout, 2000) 163–78; etc.

28. Enriko Gabidzashvili, *Code of Ruis-Urbnisi: Philological-Textological Study* (Tbilisi, 1978), 189. [გაბიძაშვილი, ენრიკო. რუის-ურბნისის კრების ძეგლისწერა: ფილოლოგიურ-ტექსტოლოგიური გამოკვლევა. თბ., მეცნიერება 1978, 189].

29. Regarding the Catholic views in Sulkhan-Saba's works, see the following publications for an in-depth analysis: Merab Ghaghanidze, "Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani and the Teach-

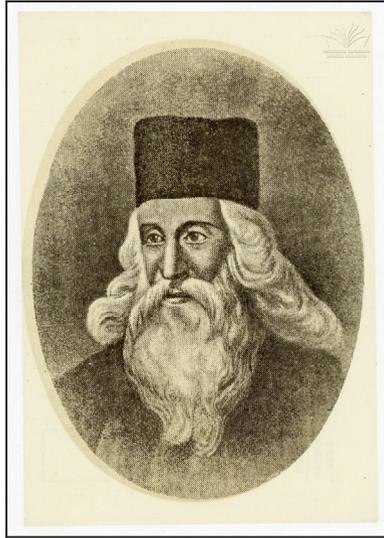


FIGURE 3. Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani, courtesy of The National Parliamentary Library of Georgia.

1701 Sulkhan-Saba became a member of the Catholic Church, formerly having been tonsured as an Orthodox monk.³⁰ This was the public act of a public figure, because Sulkhan was an influential intellectual and a well-known writer in Georgia. Thus, it is impossible for Sulkhan's conversion to have remained unnoticed by a large segment of society. At a minimum, the brotherhood at the monastery would have known about the Catholic lean-

ings of the Catholic Church," *Kadmos* 5 (2013), 226–47; [მერაბ ღაღანიძე. „სულხან-საბა ორბელიანი და კათოლიკე ეკლესიის მოძღვრება“, *კადმოსი* 5, 2013, 226–47]; Merab Ghaghanidze, “Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani on the Supremacy of St. Peter,” *Catholic Heritage in Georgia—1. The First International Symposium: Proceedings, 6–8 June, 2017* (Tbilisi, 2018), 107–13; [მერაბ ღაღანიძე. „სულხან-საბა ორბელიანი წმინდა პეტრეს უპირატესობის შესახებ“, *კათოლიკური მემკვიდრეობა საქართველოში—1. პირველი საერთაშორისო სიმპოზიუმი*, 6–8 ივნისი 2017. რედაქტორი მერაბ ღაღანიძე. თბ., ს.-საბა ორბელიანის უნივერსიტეტის გამომცემლობა 2018, 107–13]; Lili Kutateladze, “Sulkhan-Saba Orberliani’s Confessional Views According to his Lexicon,” *Mravaltavi: Philological-Historical Researches*, 3 (1973), 104–18. [ლილი ქუთათელაძე. „ს.-ს. ორბელიანის კონფესიური შეხედულებანი მისი ლექსიკონის მიხედვით“, *მრავალთავი: ფილოლოგიურ-ისტორიული ძიებანი* 3, 1973, 104–18].

30. Murman Papashvili, “Once Again: Why Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani has Embraced Catholicism?” *Historical Verticals*, 18 (2009), 31. [ჰაპაშვილი, კიდევ ერთხელ, თუ რატომ, 31].

ings of Sulkhan-Saba's theological thought. Nevertheless, this apparently posed no hindrance for Sulkhan-Saba not only to being accepted as an ordinary monk, but even to being established as a preacher at this monastery! What is even more intriguing is that Sulkhan-Saba did not hide his sympathies for Catholicism during his active years at the John the Baptist monastery in the Davit Gareja desert (1698–1710): On August 15, 1709, he sent a letter to Pope Clement XI in which he glorified the pope, as was appropriate for a confessing Catholic.³¹

The Situation Beyond the School of Davit Gareja

This section will attempt to examine the situation created in Eastern Georgia in general terms, in order to bring to light what might have been the reasons determining the writing of such an intensely polemical, extensive and anti-Catholic tract by Bessarion.

Apart from the, so to say, pro-Catholic (the monk Sulkhan-Saba and the attitude towards him in the monastery) and pro-Armenian (Hovhannes' prayer) trends which had directly developed at Davit Gareja, the growing sympathy for Latin monks extant among the Georgians must have been no less important of a factor. The popularity of Catholic missionaries in Georgia would be decided by their beneficial work in various spheres. The Georgians well remembered past Muslim invasions and persecutions in Georgia and cases of capital punishment for changing one's faith in connection to the Islamic domination. Similar violence was not to be found throughout the centuries-long history of the Latin missionaries' work in Georgia. Furthermore, not only was such aggression foreign to the Latins, they also labored for the needs of the Georgians. There were some doctors among the missionaries who were high in demand, engineers constructed various types of structures and bridges, painters and writers showed and described the Georgian way of life, which is invaluable material nowadays for the reconstruction of the Georgian past, and philologists and lexicographers published a Georgian dictionary and a grammar textbook for the first time. The Catholic monks were also acclaimed tutors in Georgian families.

Apart from the use of their own knowledge and qualifications in the ordinary people's everyday life, the Catholic missionaries tried to make their contributions in the country's foreign affairs arena. They served as advisers to Georgian kings and rulers. In contrast to the Muslim invaders,

31. Tamarashvili, *The History of Catholicism*, 311–12. [თამარაშვილი, ისტორია კათოლიციზმისა, 311–12].

the missionaries not only supported the European orientation of the country, but also the mutual accord of authorities within Georgia and further consolidation of its various regions.³²

A noticeable growth in the numbers of those interested in Catholicism in seventeenth-century Georgia as well as those converted to this faith is corroborated by the statistics regarding the Catholic schools in Georgia. For instance, although only twenty-five students were enrolled in Tbilisi's Catholic school in 1668, approximately seven to eight years later, the number of students there had doubled.³³ Thus, it is not at all surprising that Mikheil Tamarashvili (aka "Michel Tamarati"), a well-known historian of Catholic history in Georgia, considered the seventeenth century to be the best era of Latin missionary activity because it was during this period that missionary activity turned out to be remarkably successful.

The fact that Latin monks deemed the study of the Georgian language as necessary is no less significant, as it would have been a cause of respect among the Georgians as well. Moreover, Latin missionaries not only studied Georgian but also Mingrelian (one of the Georgian languages spoken in one part of Western Georgia).

Thus, during a time of peace in Georgia, the openness of the local Georgians towards Roman Catholics in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was growing.³⁴ The receptiveness to Latin missionaries during this period turned out to be so great that instances of conversions not only among the Georgian laity but also among the clergy became more frequent, which, as prominent Georgian scholar Korneli Kekelidze noted, "really made supporters of ancestral Orthodoxy think."³⁵

It is also notable that collections of aphorisms and sayings by representatives of classical philosophy—by Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Aristophanes, Epicurus, and others—were being translated at the start of the

32. Berdzenishvili, *Issues in the History of Georgia*, IX: *Materials for the History*, 176. [ბერძენიშვილი, მასალები საქართველოს, 176]; Berdzenishvili, *Issues in the History of Georgia*, II, 152. [ბერძენიშვილი, საქარ. ისტ. საკითხები, 152].

33. Mamia Dumbadze, ed. *Essays in the History of Georgia*, 8 vols. (Tbilisi, 1970-80), IV (1973), 359. [დუმბაძე, მამია. (რედ.). საქართველოს ისტორიის ნარკვევები რვა ტომად. ტომი IV. თბ., საბჭოთა საქართველო 1973, 359].

34. Kavtaria, *David Gareja School*, 110. [ქავთარია, დავით გარეჯის, 110].

35. Korneli Kekelidze, "Catholicism," in: *The History of Old Georgian Literature*, 2 vols. (Tbilisi, 1980-81), I (1980), 487. [კეკელიძე, კორნელი. „კათოლიციზმი“, კორნელი კეკელიძე. ძველი ქართული ლიტერატურის ისტორია. ტომი პირველი. თბ., მეცნიერება 1980, 487].

eighteenth century.³⁶ The monk Bessarion did not belong to the mainstream extant in the Church from the very first centuries, for whom the great thinkers of the classical world were “Christians before Christianity.” In *The Anvil*, Bessarion mentions Plato as an “idolater,”³⁷ which clearly demonstrates his well-defined hatred for “pagan” philosophers in general.

The Process and Purpose for Creating *The Anvil*

In the introduction of his book, Bessarion notes that he benefited³⁸ from the assistance of Francesco of Bologna, a Capuchin friar, when writing this extensive Anti-Catholic tract. Neither from *The Anvil* nor from any other source is it apparent that Bessarion had made use of Sulkhan-Saba for consultation, who, among the Georgians of that era, would have best known the doctrines and church customs of Roman Catholicism. It is not hard to understand why Bessarion did not consider the benefit of Sulkhan-Saba’s assistance as expedient. Aside from anything purely theological, this decision of his had to have had a political component as well: first, Sulkhan-Saba, an outstanding intellectual and Catholic thinker, would have not supported the creation of such a crude and intensely polemical treatise like *The Anvil*; second, Sulkhan-Saba belonged to King Vakhtang’s pro-Western camp. It is no coincidence that it was he who was sent on a diplomatic mission to Europe by this king in 1713.³⁹

Saba would certainly have been interested in what kind of treatise Bessarion was writing, and it is logical to suppose that, after finding out

36. Dumbadze, *Essays in the History of Georgia*, IV, 507. [დუმბაძე, საქ. ისტ. ნარკვევები, IV, 507].

37. Bessarion Baratashvil-Orbelishvili (Catholicos-Patriarch, 1724–1737), *The Anvil: Polemics against the Latins by us, the Orthodox about why we are separated*. The text according to manuscript S-3269 is published with an introduction by Zaza Mamulashvili (Tbilisi, 2013), 145. [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, 145].

38. Kekelidze, “Bessarion Baratashvil-Orbelishvili,” in *The History of Old Georgian Literature*, I, 350. [კეკელიძე, კორნელი. „ბესარიონ ბარათაშვილი-ორბელიშვილი“, კორნელი კეკელიძე. ძველი ქართული ლიტერატურის ისტორია. ტომი I. თბ., მეცნიერება 1980, 350].

39. Valerian Gabashvili, “Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani as a Diplomat,” in: *Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani, 1658–1958: Anniversary Collection*, ed. Ilia Abuladze et al. (Tbilisi, 1959), 61–76. [ვალერიან გაბაშვილი. „სულხან-საბა ორბელიანი როგორც დიპლომატი“, აბულაძე, ილ. და სხვები (რედ.). სულხან-საბა ორბელიანი, 1658–1958: საიუბილეო კრებული. თბ., მეცნიერებათა აკადემიის გამომცემლობა 1959, 61–76].

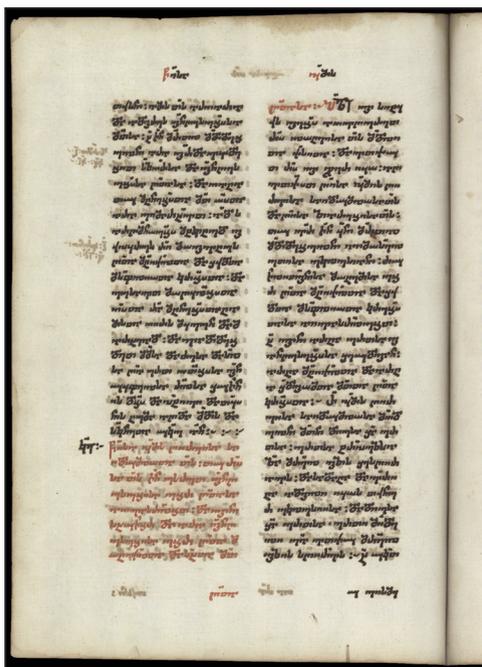


FIGURE 4. Bessarion Orbelishvili, *The Anvil*, Georgian National Center of Manuscripts, S 3269, fol. 124v. With permission of The Georgian National Center of Manuscripts.

what was going on, he would not have supported the implementation of such an anti-Catholic objective. As Sulkhani-Saba had probably experienced some oppression merely being around Bessarion, Bessarion would likely have assumed that going to another source for Roman Catholic doctrine, such as the Latin friar Francesco, would be easier. Additionally it would have been preferable to use a guest from a foreign country as his source, who would have been less able to reproach Bessarion or hinder his work. Sulkhani-Saba, on the other hand, would clearly have been an awkward assistant to him to say the least. Thus, this may be why Bessarion had not appealed to Sulkhani-Saba, or it is possible he might have done so, but for the aforesaid reasons was rebuffed.

The Anvil is written without any reference to 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 based his criticism of the “custom” of taking animals into Catholic church buildings on just such rumors.

Writing in such an intellectually irresponsible way causes astonishment, although the surprise may be more moderate in an attentive reader, because it is not at all difficult to understand that the author had 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 was known by his contemporaries as well as his heirs as an industrious, conscientious monk who created hymnographic and liturgical collections. An inexperienced and uneducated individual would 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. Yet it is clearly sensed that his aim is more propagandistic than in doing an honest and balanced academic study of this theme. As it seems, he deemed it necessary to write an appropriate work for the 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 or the kings and rulers who almost always patronized Catholic missionaries.

In addition to not knowing what sources were used by the author, one also does not know if Bessarion knew the Latin language or not, which was necessary for an adequate understanding of Catholic church doctrine. It is possible to assume that he would borrow his arguments (at least partially) from Greek sources or Georgian translations of these Greek theological treatises.

Bessarion was able to obtain the appropriate Latin texts from missionaries, but one does not know how much information he would have been able to get out of the documents, as there is no source that indicates if Bessarion knew Latin. 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. Nevertheless, 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.

Bessarion selected a series of so-called Roman Catholic teachings and practices to criticize. He attacked the teaching on purgatory as lacking

scriptural support but based on Origenist and pagan ideas. He also attacked the Latin practice of administering Baptism by aspersion or single immersion in water as it was considered contrary to canons specifying triple immersion. That the Latins allowed women to administer the sacrament in emergency situations and denied infants the Eucharist at the time of Baptism were both practices that he condemned. He faulted Latins for allowing Mass to be celebrated in private homes and more than once a day, for giving laity unconsecrated bread and wine at the liturgy, and for allowing women experiencing menstruation to enter a church. He claimed Latins denied that Christ descended into Hell after his death. Each of these criticisms were based on inaccurate, fragmentary, or distorted information.⁴⁰

The Issue of the Influence of *The Anvil*

The treatise enjoyed a wide circulation, but only for a short period of time. Today we have twelve surviving manuscripts, with ten of them dating to the eighteenth century, all twelve of which are conserved in The Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts. They were copied by scribes in the following decades from the time of the writing of the treatise. There are no semantic discrepancies among the manuscripts. Some slight orthographic differences are present. As Mikheil 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.”⁴¹ A text published in 2013 on the basis of this extensive or primary manuscript is used in this article.

It seems that this tract was met with ardor by like-minded individuals in Bessarion’s circle. But from a prolonged perspective, *The Anvil* was unable to have any firm impact on the masses, nor on the Church and state representatives creating the country’s domestic and foreign politics, nor in increasing resistance against Catholicism.

There is also no sort of response, answer, or counter critique. There does not exist any information in which some sort of assessment of this

40. A close analysis of the contents of *The Anvil* will be published in another journal as a separate article titled “An Anti-Catholic Georgian Treatise by Patriarch Bessarion: Polemical Pathos and Theological Arguments.” The examination of the theological issues of *The Anvil* initially was part of this research article, but, because of the word-count limitations of the *Catholic Historical Review*, the decision was made to publish it separately.

41. Kavtaria, *Life and Works of Bessarion Orbelishvili*, 109. [ქავთარია, ბესარიონ ორბელიშვილის ცხოვრება, 109].

treatise is reflected from Latin missionaries as well as Georgian Catholics. For this reason, it is difficult to concur with Kavtaria's generalized opinion, according to which "*The Anvil* enjoyed great popularity in Old Georgia."⁴²

Unfortunately, this scholar, who most extensively investigated the life and work of Bessarion, is unable to offer any convincing and trustworthy evidence corroborating these ideas. Neither is any interval of time marked out in which period specifically *The Anvil* was supposedly popular. The publication of the treatise was indeed followed by immediate enthusiasm and clearly, Bessarion would have had followers and like-minded thinkers, but regarding that which is actually seen in his epoch and the following period, this tract did not enjoy any significant and prolonged recognition or impact.

Half a century after the publication of *The Anvil*, King Erekle II of Eastern Georgia still turned to European leaders for help and not Orthodox Russia. Until the treaty of Georgievsk (1783) signed with Russia, he had an active correspondence with Emperor Joseph II of Austria⁴³ from 1779 to 1782 and with the sovereigns of Venice, Sardinia, and Corsica.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, Erekle II's letters only made it to the European leaders after 1783, when Georgia's fate had already been decided by the Russian project—the mentioned provisional agreement. It must be mentioned here that "the two ambassadors sent one after the other by King Erekle in 1781 and 1782, died in suspicious circumstances, first in Constantinople, then in Berditskovo."⁴⁵

It is also notable that after Erekle, King Giorgi XII (1746–1800) tasked his own son Davit Batonishvili, having gained erudition with

42. Kavtaria, *Davit Gareja School*, 113. [ქავთარია, დავით გარეჯის, 113].

43. Nino Daborjginidze, "On the Reconstruction of the Historic Memory (*Unknown plans and allies of 18th century Georgia*," in *Zurab Kiknadze—80: Anniversary Collection*, ed. Shukia Apridonidze and Nino Daborjginidze (Tbilisi, 2013), 246. [დობორჯგინიძე, ნინო. „საისტორიო მესხიერების რეკონსტრუქციისათვის (XVIII საუკუნის საქართველოს უცნობი გეგმები და მოკავშირეები)“, ზურაბ კიკნაძე - 80: საიუბილეო კრებული. თბ., ილიას სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი 2013, 246].

44. Nino Daborjginidze, "European Projection of Georgian King Erekle the II (Prince Heraclius) and his Reign," in: *Georgian Cultural Traces in Germany*, ed. Nino Daborjginidze et al. (Tbilisi, 2019), 182, 187. [დობორჯგინიძე, ნინო. "ერეკლე მეორისა და მისი სამეფოს ევროპული პროექცია", ნინო დობორჯგინიძე, ლევან ცაგარელი, ოლივერ რაისნერი, გიორგი ქავთარაძე. ქართველთა კულტურული კვალი გერმანიაში. თბ., ილიას სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი 2019, 182, 187].

45. Daborjginidze, *European Projection*, 196. [დობორჯგინიძე, ერეკლე მეორის, 196].

German and Austrian teachers,⁴⁶ to create a judicial plan resembling a European one for the modernization of Georgia, which was to have been implemented by the subsequent royal government. But in 1801, Russia violated one of the articles of the treaty of Georgievsk and annulled the Georgian monarchy, thereby putting a final stop to the realization of any modernization plan in Georgia.

Bessarion's camp (if one can call it so) especially weakened after the reign of Anton I Bagrationi (1720–88), a Georgian Catholicos-Patriarch who himself converted to Catholicism. Anton was attacked by a wing of Georgian Orthodox fundamentalists led by Priest Zakaria Gabashvili, who brought about certain problems for this church leader. Because of this, Anton had to abdicate the patriarchal throne in 1755. So, an anti-Catholic reaction among Georgians in the second half of the eighteenth century is indeed seen, but in the nineteenth century, figures like Zakaria Gabashvili no longer appear.

Tedo Zhordania suggests that those clergymen who opposed Anton I were trained by Bessarion.⁴⁷ The king Teimuraz II's spiritual father, the priest Zakaria Gabashvili, was among them. The interesting thing in this clash is that, as Tedo Zhordania himself points out, in Zakaria's satirical work "The War of the Cat" (კატის ომი), written to poke fun at Anton, Zakaria Gabashvili "expresses the opinion that the clergy resented Anton I because he restricted the entitlement of eparchial leaders and abbots to church property. Archbishop Timote [Gabashvili, D.T.] too testifies that, on the pretext of his faith, Anton intervened in kings' religious affairs and reproved these."⁴⁸

46. Tengiz Iremadze and Udo Reinhold Jeck, "David Bagrationi (1767–1819). Natural Philosophy, Logic and Metaphysics," in: *Early Modern Georgian Philosophy and Its Major Representatives*, ed. Tengiz Iremadze (Tbilisi, 2014), 74. [ირემადე, თენგიზ, უდო რაინჰოლდ იეკი. "დავით ბაგრატიონი (1767–1819), ბუნების ფილოსოფია, ლოგიკა და მეტაფიზიკა", ახალი დროის ქართული ფილოსოფია და მისი მთავარი წარმომადგენლები. რედ.: თენგიზ ირემადე, თბ., კავკასიური ფილოსოფიისა და ღვთისმეტყველების სამეცნიერო-კვლევითი არქივი, 2014, 74].

47. Tedo Zhordania, "Anton I, Catholicos of Georgia and Archbishop of Vladimir and Yeropol," in *Theological Anthology*, vol. 1, ed. Nugzar Papuashvili (Tbilisi, 1991), 83. [ჯორდანია, თედო. "ანტონ I, საქართველოს კათოლიკოსი და ვლადიმირისა და იეროპოლის არქიეპისკოპოსი", საღვთისმეტყველო კრებული. რედ.: ნუგზარ პაპუაშვილი. თბ., საქართველოს საპატრიარქო 1, 1991, 83].

48. Zhordania, "Anton I," 91. [ჯორდანია, ანტონ I, 91]. Although Zhordania takes the view that Timote's account of a conflict of this kind between Anton I and King Teimuraz II is unreliable, he writes elsewhere in the same publication that Archbishop of Kartli, Timote Gabashvili (†1764), was a close friend of Anton I's, and that it was for this reason that King Teimuraz began to persecute him, as a result of which Timote was obliged to leave his see (49).

It is impossible to state with certainty whether the true, decisive, or even principal reason for the struggle excited against Anton I concerned property, power, or simply faith. It should also be pointed out that, even if the categorical unacceptability of the Catholic faith alone was the sole and decisive factor, the followers of Father Zakaria Gabashvili, close as he was to King Teimuraz, represented a minority in the church, who had retained a reputation as “fanatically inclined Georgian clergy.”⁴⁹ When Anton returned to his homeland from Russia and was reinstated to the patriarchal throne once again, “a council of the Church of Kartli-Kakheti was convened in Tbilisi, which denounced Zakaria Gabashvili and his adherents ‘as instruments of the devil’ and excommunicated them.”⁵⁰

Due to this, the same above-mentioned Georgian King Teimuraz II (1744–62), infuriated by Anton’s conversion to Catholicism, seized churches from Roman Catholics in his kingdom. Here a couple of things must certainly be added concerning Teimuraz II, king of Eastern Georgia: at the end of the 1720s, a persecution of Catholics was associated with King Teimuraz II, who was attempting to find favor with the Russian Emperor. This persecution continued for a few decades, with some Armenians making a significant contribution to the start of it (confirmed by the Latins themselves). It was really the Armenians who, beginning in 1718, terribly ravaged the Catholic missionaries in Eastern Georgia. Unfortunately, “at that time [the] Georgian king was unable to protect the Catholics, and to stop Minas Vardapiet, the initiator of the pogrom having specially come from Etchmiadzin.”⁵¹ The anti-Catholic activities of Armenians in Georgia are also seen at the end of the same century, this time directly at the level of the Armenian Patriarch and the Georgian king. It is apparent from Latin sources that on January 10, 1782, Etchmiadzin’s “heretic Patriarch promised King Erekle that he will supply the king with

49. Geronti Kikodze, *Erekle II* (Tbilisi, 2020), 82. [ქიქოძე, გერონტი. ერეკლე II. თბ., ალონი 2020, 82].

50. Ibid., 83. [იქვე, 83]; See also: Polievktos Karbelashvili, “Anton I,” in the collection: Polievktos Karbelashvili, *Hierarchy of the Church of Georgia: Catholicos and Archbishops*, 2nd ed., edition, introduction, comments and notes by Bondo Arveladze (Tbilisi, 2011), 139. [პოლიევქტოს კარბელაშვილი. „ანტონ I“, კრებულში: პოლიევქტოს კარბელაშვილი. იერარქია საქართველოს ეკლესიისა: კათალიკოსნი და მღვდელმთავარნი. მეორე გამოცემა. გამოსაცემად მოამზადა, შესავალი, კომენტარები და შენიშვნები დაურთო ზონდო არველაძემ. თბ., კაბადონი+ 2011, 139].

51. “Don Minas Vardapiet Dottor di theologia Misso Applico” is how the missionaries mention him. See Georgian Material of the APF, II, 288, as cited in: Doborjginidze, *On the Reconstruction*, 242. [დობორჯგინიძე, საისტორიო მესხიერების, 242].

medicine and good doctors, if he [Erekle] dismisses the Capuchin friars from his country.”⁵² Unfortunately, there was a period when Erekle II “followed the Armenians’ malicious advice”⁵³ and oppressed the Catholics (the Armenians offered him a large sum of money as a bribe). But it is well known that king Erekle II mostly strongly protected Catholic missionaries from Armenian ill-treatments.⁵⁴

It is not surprising that King Teimuraz II’s mission to obtain help in Russia ended without any result. “Having traveled to Russia in 1760, Teimuraz’s hopes were dashed. He was first stopped in Kizlar for eight months with a quarantine being the excuse. Then he was taken to Astrakhan, Petersburg, and Moscow without any results and in the end he died. Not only was he unable to achieve his desired goal, but he also failed to meet and speak with the Russian Emperor concerning his plan.”⁵⁵ Here it must be noted that it seems Teimuraz II’s anti-Catholic actions did not stem from his own worldview and inner mindset. There is some information related to the moment of Teimuraz II’s passing (in 1762) to indicate this. Before dying he asked his heirs to protect the Catholics and even declared himself to be “an Eastern Catholic” (his words in Georgian: “მეცხომ აღმოსავლეთის კათოლიკე ვარ”).⁵⁶ It is significant that in the 1760s, King Erekle II attempted to bring back the Catholics expelled by Teimuraz II in the 1720s.⁵⁷

52. For a full version of the letter by Padre Fortunato de Trento, see Georgian Material of the APF, III, 84, as cited in: Doborjginidze, *On the Reconstruction*, 249. [დობორჯგინიძე, საისტორიო მეხსიერების, 249].

53. Raymond Janin, “Géorgie,” *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, translated from French into Georgian by Mzia Mgaloblishvili, 15 vols. (Tbilisi, 1996), VI, part 1, p. 85. [ჯანენი, რემონ. “საქართველო” (სტატია ამოღებული კათოლიკური ღვთისმეტყველების ფრანგულენოვანი ენციკლოპედიიდან, ტომი VI, ნაწ. I. პარიზი, 1924). ფრანგულიდან თარგმნა მზია მგალობლიშვილმა. თბ.: ნეკერი, 1996, 85].

54. Document 24, APF, fondo “Georgia,” 1779–1790, IV, fols. 99r–102v., as cited in: Papashvili et al, *European Sources about Georgia (18th c)*, 105. [დოკუმენტი 24, APF, Fondo “Georgia,” 1779–1790, IV, fols. 99r–102v., ციტირ.: პაპაშვილი, მურმან და სხვები. ევროპული წყაროები საქართველოს შესახებ (მე-18 საუკუნე), 2020, 105].

55. Doborjginidze, *On the Reconstruction*, 245. [დობორჯგინიძე, საისტორიო მეხსიერების, 245].

56. Nino Makhatadze, “Arrival of Teimuraz II in Saint Petersburg,” in: *The Centre of Georgian Culture in Saint Petersburg, XVIII–XIX centuries* (Tbilisi, 1967), 158–63. [მახათაძე, ნინო. “თეიმურაზ მეორის ჩასვლა პეტერბურგში”, წიგნში: ნინო მახათაძე. ქართული კულტურის კერა პეტერბურგში, XVIII–XIX სს. თბ., საბჭოთა საქართველო, 1967, 158–63].

57. Dumbadze, *Essays in the History of Georgia*, IV, 780. [დუმბაძე, საქ. ისტ. ნარკვევები, 780].

After the circulation of *The Anvil*, the interest in European culture did not diminish, but rather grew even stronger. Collections containing the ideas of the French Enlightenment thinkers were 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 "*Confession of Faith*" (originally written in Latin, "*Expositio Fidei*")⁵⁸ translated into Georgian by King Archil. This main work by Metropolitan Peter Moghila of Kiev (1596–1646) is also known as *The Orthodox Confession of Faith* (1640).⁵⁹ Not only is it possible to sense a Catholic influence on this symbolic book, it had also been compiled according to Latin catechisms written by St. Peter Canisius and others.⁶⁰ Thus, Moghila's catechism was not only created in a Latin style and methodology, but also contained Catholic doctrinal ideas—namely, the author had included teachings about Purgatory and 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 participants, which were later corrected by the Council of Jassy in 1642.⁶¹ As 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."⁶² 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

58. Kikodze, *Vakhtang VI as a Statesman*, 190. [ქიქოძე, ვახტანგ VI-ის სახელმწიფოებრივი მოღვაწეობა, 190].

59. Petr Moghila, *The Orthodox Confession of the Catholic and Apostolic Eastern Church*, (English translation), ed. and preface by Julian Joseph Overbeck, introduction by James Robertson (London 1898).

60. Kallistos Ware, "Petr Moghila," in: *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed., ed. Lindsay Jones, 15 vols. (New York, 2005), XII, 7072; Konstantin Gavrilkin, "Peter Moghila," in: *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, ed. John A. McGuckin (Chichester, 2011), 390; Ihor Ševčenko, "The Many Worlds of Peter Mohyla," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 8, nos. 1–2 (1984), 9–44; Ronald Popivchak, *Peter Mohyla, Metropolitan of Kiev (1633–47): Translation and Evolution of his "Orthodox Confession of Faith" (1640)* (Washington, DC, 1975); William Medlin and Christos Patrinelis, *Renaissance Influences and Religious Reforms in Russia: Western and Post-Byzantine Impacts on Culture and Education, Sixteenth–Seventeenth Centuries* (Geneva, 1971), 124–49; Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology* (Moscow, 2009), 65ff. [Георгий Флоровский. *Пути Русского Богословия*. М., Институт Русской Цивилизации, 2009, 65ff]; Liudmila Charipova, *Latin Books and the Eastern Orthodox Clerical Elite in Kiev, 1632–1780* (Manchester, 2006).

61. Dan Sandu, "Iasi (Jassy), Synod of (1642)," in: *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, 2 vols. (Malden, MA, 2011), I, 325.

62. Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1963), 107.

1724 had not had any kind of stable influence on the Georgian consciousness in terms of spreading and preserving an anti-Catholic spirit.

In the mid-nineteenth century, it was Russia that opposed Catholics living in Georgia, with some preferred harsh methods of enforcing this.⁶³ After the occupation of Georgia in 1801, the Russian government forbade Georgians to receive the Catholic faith,⁶⁴ and starting on January 2, 1845, an intensive expulsion of Catholic missionaries began in Georgia.⁶⁵ Thus, the diminishing numbers of Catholics in Georgia was the result of the Russian Empire's anti-Catholic religious repressions, and not the merit of Bessarion's tract.

Conclusion

If based only on an examination of the history of this period in Georgia and of Bessarion's biography, *The Anvil* could be seen as a typical expression of analogous anti-Catholic reactions in the East during the eighteenth century. Yet when placed in the broader history of the Georgian Church, it becomes clear that *The Anvil* is not the norm but rather the sole exception: no other text with similar substance and spirit was written before or after it.

It is possible that Bessarion's complaints resembled familiar instances where both Churches found some reason or excuse to criticize one another. Even *before* the "Great Schism," Western Christianity developed different customs from Eastern Christianity; nevertheless, such differences were not regarded as matters for criticism until after the Christian East and West had grown apart due to political and cultural factors. Bessarion's consideration of the subject appears to have been highly superficial. This indicates

63. David Tinikashvili, "Anti-Western Religious Policy of Russian Empire and its Consequences in Nineteenth-century Georgia," in: *Visible and Invisible Religion: Socio-Political and Cultural Dimension of Religious Issues*, ed. Sophie Zviadadze (Tbilisi, 2020), 129–79. [თინიკაშვილი, დავით. "რუსეთის იმპერიის ანტიდასავლური რელიგიური პოლიტიკა და მისი ასახვა მეცხრამეტე საუკუნის საქართველოში", ხილული და უხილავი რელიგია: რელიგიის საკითხების სოციო-პოლიტიკური და კულტურული განზომილება საქართველოში. რედ.: სოფო ზვიადაძე. თბ., ილიას სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტის გამომცემლობა 2020, 129–79].

64. Tamarashvili, *The History of Catholicism*, 516. [თამარაშვილი, ისტორია კათოლიკობისა, 516].

65. Murman Papashvili. *Interrelations between Rome and Georgia, VI–XX Centuries* (Tbilisi: 1995), 312, 314. [პაპაშვილი, მურმან. საქართველო-რომის ურთიერთობა, VI–XX სს. თბ., აღმამეცნებელი 1995, 312, 314].

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. More important in Georgian history there was an energetic aspiration towards the Christian West, demonstrated through political activity and the literary pursuits of Georgian intellectual circles. All of these developments suggest that the tide continued to turn towards Latin intellectual trends and scientific ideas.