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

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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 as 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 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-

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Abstract

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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.

პროფესორ დავით თინიკაშვილის სამეცნიერო ნაშრომი ამერიკურ ჟურნალში „The Catholic Historical Review“-ში გამოქვეყნდა

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სტატიაში გაანალიზებულია მოცემული ეპოქის ისტორიული კონტექსტი, რომელშიც წარმოიქმნა უჩვეულო ანტიკათოლიკური ქართულენოვანი ტრაქტატი ბესარიონ ორბელიშვილის ავტორობით. მასში გაკრიტიკებულია რომის კათოლიკური ეკლესია. ეს ნაშრომი ერთდერითი გამონაკლისია ქართული ორიგინალური ლიტერატურის ისტორიაში. ბესარიონის წიგნს არ ჰქონია ხანგრძლივი და მდგრადი გავლენა ქართულ საეკლესიო და პოლიტიკურ ელიტაზე, რადგან როგორც მის დაწერამდე, ისე მის შემდგომ საქართველოში ევროპული ქრისტიანობისადმი და ზოგადად ქვეყნის პროდასავლური ორიენტაციისადმი დადებითი დამოკიდებულება ნათლად შეინიშნებოდა.

აღსანიშნავია, რომ ჟურნალის გარე ყდაზე დატანილია ქართული მინიატურა, რომელსაც ავტორი სტატიაში ერთ-ერთ ილუსტრაციად იყენებს.

სტატიის ელექტრონული მისამართია: <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/841838>



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

DAVIT TINIASHVILI*

For centuries Catholic Georgia has been a central topic in the history of the Caucasus. This was due to its unique position as well as its religious, political, and cultural significance. The article examines the anti-Catholic Georgian theological treatise written by the Georgian Orthodox monk Barsanubius (Besarion) Orbeliashvili in the eighteenth century. The treatise is the only one written in the Georgian language criticizing the Roman Catholic Church and its doctrine. The author of the work is a native of the village of [illegible] and was a member of the Georgian Orthodox Church. The article discusses the historical context of the treatise and its significance in the history of Georgian-European relations.

Keywords: Georgian Anti-Catholicism, History of Georgia, European Georgia, Orthodoxy, and Catholicism in East

Received: The article towards the Catholic West among the Orthodox Georgian and Christian Church shows deep and significant differences. The author examines the Georgian anti-Catholic treatise in the Georgian and Georgian theological literature from its roots with European Catholicism.

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