

კვლევები: წყაროთმცოდნეობა  
STUDIES: SOURCES

## Notes on the Council of Ferrara-Florence Preserved in Georgian Manuscripts

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**Abstract:** It is a fact that the Council of Florence was the most important event not only for the Christian world but also for Georgia. It changed the world order and influenced Georgian reality and literary life. Manuscripts reflecting the above-mentioned Council of Ferrara-Florence are preserved in Georgian National Center for Manuscripts. These manuscripts are of anti-Catholic polemical character and are dated by the XVIII century. First of all, we should mention the literary work “The Council of Florence” two copies of which are preserved: 1. A-1443 and 2. Q-1391. As maintained by Besarion Orbelishvili, his work is a response to the decisions made by the Council. Thus Besarion does not describe the details of the Council, but the content. B.Orbelishvili’s “Grdemli” is an anti-Catholic polemical literary work and treaty. It is the political and social literary product of the XVIII century. “*Mzametkveleba*” by Anton, Catholicos of Georgia is the continuation of “Grdemli”. Here, chapter 3, passage 17 is about the response of Latins. Anton Catholics also starts and finishes anti-Catholic polemical part of “*Mzametkveleba*” with the overview of the Council of Florence.

**Key Words:** *Council of Ferrara-Florence, “The Council of Florence,” “Grdemli”.*

B. Orbelishvili's "Grdemli" is an anti-Catholic polemic literary work and treaty. It is a political and social literary product of the XVIII century. Creative processes of literal, cultural and scientific character, to some extent, depend on epochal processes; on political, social and economic content that often establishes various thematic directions. Thus, literary genres were created at different time and conditions.

In the XV century, in 1453, the Byzantine Empire fell. Correspondingly, its cultural and ideological influence on the Orthodox world ended. The decrease of the Byzantine influence had started long before when the power of the Empire declined. The fall of Constantinople was a tragedy for the whole Orthodox world and it became the reason for political disputes. Political loss does not happen in a day; it has pre-conditions, development stages and reasons. The fall of Constantinople was feasible if we take into consideration the fast-growing development of Turkish Empire of that time. In 1430, shortly before the Council of Ferrara-Florence, the country was invaded by Turkey. The Byzantine Empire lost an important city – Thessaloniki. Turkey had already invaded the neighbouring countries-Serbia and Bulgaria (the end of the XIV century-beginning of the XVc.) and defeated Crusaders near Nicopolis in 1396. At this time, one important fact happened. Tamerlane's (Timur) army defeated the Ottoman army near Ankara. This gave time to Constantinople and to the Byzantine Empire; also, it gave the last chance of consolidation to the whole Orthodox world. One fact was obvious- The Byzantine Empire would not be able to protect Constantinople from Turkish aggression without the coalition. Although it is debatable how east-west Orthodox world could reach political unity. We should take into consideration that before Florence, Councils were held in Basel and Constantinople. These were internal ecclesiastical discussions of problems.

As it is known, this Council was held in several meetings. Specifically, they were held in 1438-1439 in Ferrara, in 1439-1442 in Florence and finally, in 1442-1445 in Rome. As mentioned by many scholars (I. Ushikishvili, E. Mamistvalishvili, A. Pogodini etc): [10, p.

18; 4, p. 251; 7, p. 20] “There isn’t much information on the Council of Florence. Notes on the Council of Ferrara-Florence held in Latin and Greek languages, are lost.” [7, p. 20]. The Council was attended by the representatives of the clergy and seculars. The lost or hidden information gives us a reason to suppose different things. The fact is that the main points of discussion at the ecclesiastical meeting were theological and dogmatic issues.

The manuscripts reflecting the work of the above-mentioned Council of Ferrara-Florence are preserved in Georgian National Center for Manuscripts. These manuscripts are of anti-Catholic polemic character, and all of them are dated by the XVIII century. Before that only one anti-Pope literary work was recorded in Georgian literature by Evstrat from Nicaea „A short account of all-wise Eustratius, the metropolitan of Nicaea, on when and why the Romans and their Church separated themselves from the God’s Church of the East“. This literary work is preserved in Dogmatikon of Arsen Son of Vache, dated by XII-XIII centuries. K. Kekelidze considered that the above-mentioned work was added to the manuscript later. The reason for K. Kekelidze’s opinion is unknown. The fact is that the anti-Pope attitude is frequent in Georgian literature in the late Middle Ages.

In 1490, after the Council of Ferrara, the Georgian state was officially divided into four kingdoms-Kartli, Kakheti, Imereti and Samtskhe-Javakheti. During a serious political crisis, Georgia was left without a political and strategic partner among Muslim countries. The road to survival was either in the North or the West.

It’s worth mentioning that the issue does not lie only in the political crisis of the state, but also in specific problems. When the Byzantine Empire, Georgia’s first political and ideological partner no longer existed, the world got closer to the new socio-economic formation, Capitalism; Europe started to dictate politics to the world, Geostrategic meaning of the states appeared in different areas and the achieved results and goals needed to be looked through. The influence grew, political-economic, cultural and

educational relations were moved to different standards. New methods, strategies and activities were established.

Since the XIII century, the interest of the West in Georgia and Transcaucasia grew and more and more missionaries arrived in Georgia. Georgia saw strategic partners in them against the unbeliever enemy. For western missionaries and travelers accompanying them, Georgia was a short and safer route to trade markets. Their attitude towards different social groups was diverse. They were more charitable with lower social classes, assisted with modern medical methods, engineering directions that were unfamiliar for Georgians, etc. As for the royal and upper social classes, missionaries promised them political, military and financial support against unbelievers. European missionaries and travelers either studied the Georgian language in our country or arrived with some knowledge of it. One of the essential functions was to educate local people and turn them into their successors. This would grow confidence towards new ideology and political direction. That is why "Propaganda Collegium" was established in Rome. It was an institution where young people were sent to study and afterwards returned home and led Catholicism propaganda (Anton Tumanishvili, Davit Tulukashvili, etc.). As a result of their performance, the number of Catholics increased in Georgia. They baptized about 300 children only in Gori.

Literary works of Catholic character, printed and handwritten books were created. For this purpose, in 1629, Georgian-Italian alphabet, a grammar book and a dictionary were printed in Rome with the support of Nikipore Cholokashvili. The Papist literature in the Georgian language was also created. Activities of missionaries didn't influence Georgian literature; Besides "Gates of Paradise" ("Samotkhis Kari") by Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani, no more literary works of Catholic character were created in the Georgian language, although the XVII century was the era of Catholicism in Georgia and the political crisis created the basis for its development. Moreover, European capital entered the country to strengthen missionary

activities, this is also emphasized by Mikheil Tamarashvili [3, p. 297].

In addition to this, one more detail is worth mentioning. The manuscript was one of the methods of communication with society as there were no media at that time. The society consisted of different social classes, local residents and travelers, representatives of diplomatic corps, missionaries, and representatives of trade-economic and cultural circles. In this specific episode, Ioane Sabanisdze describes psycho-characters of the society in the period of violence and severe social crisis. In this context, the words of Anton, Catholicos of Georgia are especially significant. In "Tskobilsitkvaoba" he wrote: „ Georgians, I will not get bored talking to you! It is my duty to speak to you, write to you, work for you..." [2, p. 287]

There is a factor that always accompanies the war; one should explain to the victims the reasons for the imminent death of their family member, brother, husband, child, relative, friend, neighbour, etc. Although Georgians, as T. Krusinski wrote, were brave and courageous, they unified and fought together against the enemy, only when the country's independence was threatened. [5, p. 13]. That is why it is difficult to explain to society the danger that slowly comes into the Georgian political and social space with liberal ideas, humanity and without violence. It is worth mentioning that perhaps western values are the issue of discussion, but such things that put Georgian cultural values under question, could not be neglected. We should also underline the fact that as K. Kekelidze said, B. Orbelishvili wrote "Grdemli" with the support of Latin confessor Francisco Cappuccini from Bologna. P. Karbelashvili maintained a similar idea which means that the opponents who had different attitudes could respect the cultural values of each other and admit the problem.

This situation became the reason for the increasing number of anti-Catholic polemical literary works in Georgian literature. Polemical writing is one of the significant branches of ecclesiastic literature. Its function was to annul teachings of heretics and the

religious dogmas against Orthodoxy, by ecumenical council and spiritual doctrines.

The polemicist addressed not only his literary opponent but society according to various, differentiated parameters. Thus, the writer took into consideration the diverse style and pretensions of the people while writing the work. The writer tried to refine every word, phrase, idea, and argument in the story. The manuscripts about the Council of Florence are distinguished by such academic style.

First of all, we should mention a literary work "The Council of Florence". This story is not polemical. It describes the Council of Florence in detail, and the period of Sultan Murad, the Byzantine emperor John Palaiologos and Pope of Rome Eugene IV. Despite the content of the manuscript, it is close to anti-Catholic literature according to the theme and idea, It is mentioned: "The Churches did not unite; they didn't want to unite and thus parted" [13: 10r]. Two copies of the manuscript are preserved: 1. A-1443 and 2. Q-1391. The work has not yet been published. However, it has been prepared for the publication by me and is in print now. The manuscripts include two different stories, they aren't part of any collection. Both manuscripts are written with Mkhedruli Alphabet. The author of the manuscripts is a person called Evgenios: "Eugenio, the slave of God, I am writing to be firm and truly thank the Almighty God". [13: 10v; 14: 6v]. It's unknown whether Evgenios attended the Council or not and based on which sources he wrote the manuscript. It seems the text was lately translated from Greek, as Constantinople is referred to as Istanbul: "until you come to Istanbul" [13: 8v; 14: 51v]. This was impossible until 1453. The city was not renamed immediately after its fall. Therefore, the story was translated later.

A-1443 manuscript is perfect. According to the postscript, the manuscript was written by Ieronime Aleksiev [13: 1r]. There is a postscript on the cover of the manuscript "This book, written by my grandfather, belongs to me, Taras" [13, Manuscript cover].

According to the postscript, the manuscript was owned by the grandfather of Archimandrite Taras.

The manuscript has a postscript of prophetic character. The text includes a reminder of the results or the warning, followed by presumable Turkish expansion. [13: 10v].

There is the schedule of 7 Ecumenical Councils on 1 r of the manuscript, indicating the place and time the Council was held; the identities of the King, Pope, Patriarchs, the reason and against whom the Council was held; the number of priests attending it and the laws adopted. There are some mistakes in the schedule connected to the dates of world ecumenical councils.

The beginning and the last chapter of the manuscript Q-1391 are missing. The part of the manuscript that tells us about the beginning and end of the council is lost. Nothing is said about the translator, the copyist and the place of copying. As we have already mentioned, manuscripts describe the Council in detail but nothing is said about the decision made on the Council. The only thing mentioned is that Greeks returned to Constantinople confused.

As Besarion Orbelishvili says, his work is a response to the decisions made at the Council. Thus Besarion describes not the details of the council, but the content: "I have answered all of these in detail below, which will reveal everything". [12, 14v]. To date, the text preserved in one manuscript S-3269 has been published; this is not an academic publication, the critical text. There are 12 lists of works. We used A-119 in the article, which was copied by Timothy Gabashvili and which M. Kavtaria considered being an extensive autograph list. It is known that only small part of acts survived from the Council of Florence, so it's not obvious based on which source he answered the papists, what he meant while writing. Whether Padre (Father) Franchisco from Bologna was his only source or had somebody else given him information. He writes: "We didn't write it by our will" [12, 14v]; who had asked him to create the treaty or was this "will" the obligation towards the parish, as Besarion had authority in the Church. The fact is that

literary work “Grdemli” written about the Council of Florence is of a high literary value.

“Grdemli” consists of 38 chapters. The first chapter or the introduction is the explanation of reasons why the author decided to write. He remembers 7 Ecumenical Councils and the reasons for holding them and says that the Council of Florence was an Ecumenical Council. For him, the threat of western church is equal to the threat of heretics that became the reason for inviting 7 Ecumenical Councils. He blames papists for neglecting dogmas adopted on these Ecumenical Councils.

Besarion Orbelishvili’s answer consists of 13 paragraphs: papal primacy, anointing of the Holy Spirit, baptism, receiving the Eucharist, liturgical difference of prayer, purification, the difference of the location of the altar, different rules of the fast, rights of women during menstruation, the difference between confession and forgiveness of sins [12, 14v-15r]. These reasons are explained in 38 chapters. The chapters about the papal primacy and anointing of the Holy Spirit are the longest. The main arguments of Besarion are taken from the Bible. Participants of the Council of Florence strengthen their attitudes with the quotations from the Bible. During the discussion, B. Orbelishvili says that Latins can take dogs to church. He uses the words “I have heard this” while talking about this issue [12, 183r]. This passage couldn’t have been discussed on the Council of Florence as nobody would start joking there and Besarion was also a clever and serious man. As we have already mentioned, the polemicist also addressed his literary opponent and society, who liked “populist” stories.

It is a fact that there was a theological dispute despite the political subtext at the meeting and Besarion might have made mistakes concerning the list, although he mentions that western church and all the four patriarchates, Russia and Georgia have a religion that was proved by 7 Ecumenical Councils [12, 14v]. Besarion Orbelishvili’s literary work was copied successfully and 12 copies are preserved until now.

“Mzametkveleba” by Anton, Catholicos of Georgia is the continuation of “Grdemli”. Here, chapter 3, passage 17 is about the response of Latins. Anton uses the same passages from the Bible as Besarion Orbelishvili. Mainly this includes the secret of saint sacrament: „While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body. Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26, 26-28) [1, p. 524; 12, 144v; 12, 148r; 12, 154r]; „Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.” ( Proverbs 9, 1) [1, p. 524; 12, 144v]; "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." (John 6, 53-56) [1, p. 524; 12, 148v]; "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." (1 Corinthians 11, 28) [1, p. 524; 12, 154r]. Anton Catholicos also starts and finishes the anti-Catholic polemic part of “Mzametkveleba” with the overview of the Council of Florence.

It is a fact that the Council of Florence was the most important event not only for the Christian world as it changed the political order including in Georgia. This influenced the Georgian reality and literary life.

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