

ԿՐՕՆԱԿԱՆ

**THE SEE OF HOLY ETCHMIADZIN AND THE VATICAN:
A CHRONICLE OF THE CONTACTS BETWEEN ARMENIAN CATHOLICOS
AND POPES**

Introduction

The prospect of Union between churches hinged on two factors which Pope Clement IV, formulated in the clearest terms when he wrote to Michael VIII Palaeologus in 1267:

*‘The Crusade is being prepared, and the whole of Europe is raising at our bidding. If you will attack the Moslems on one side while the Crusaders attack them on the other, we shall see an end of their damnable religion for ever. And if you say you are afraid the Latins will attack you while your troops are engaged on your other frontier, the answer is simple: return to the unity of the Roman church and all fears of this kind can be put aside for ever’.*¹

The frantic preachers of the Catholic Church instead of converting the followers of the ‘damnable religion’ put their fangs around the necks of Armenians, one of the oldest Christians in Christendom.² The Catholics regarded the Armenian church an ‘*Eastern errant Christians*’. The Vatican also extended hand of friendship to the Armenians ‘should Armenians recognise the primacy and dignity of the apostolic see. ... For how can questions be discussed between dissenting and antagonistic bodies when one refuses to obey or agree with the other’.³ The Latins lumped together in western minds *nationes christianorum orientalium* as consisting of wayward and dissident sects including the Greeks, Armenians, Jacobites, Copts, Ethiopians. Pierre Dubois proposed in 1306 that their salvation might be affected through the marriage of their rulers, Muslim as well as Christian, to carefully selected and trained convert girls from western Europe⁴.

The *Codex Iuris canonici* revised under the supervision of the curia and promulgated in 1983 by John Paul II, contains forgeries from the ninth century. The three forgeries ‘Donation of Constantine’, ‘Pseudo-Isidore’ and ‘Symmachus’ formed the legal basis for the total Romanization of the Western church and the simultaneous excommunication of the Eastern church, which was no longer reckoned to be part of Europe. These contain 115 completely forged documents by Roman bishops from the first centuries and 125 authentic documents falsified by later interpolations and changes.⁵

¹ Southern R. W., *Western Society and the church in the Middle Ages*, Penguin Books, 1970, p. 75 (The Pelican History of the Church 2).

² Step'aneants Step'an, «Սուրբ Էջմիածինը, Հայերը և Վատիկանը» (Holy Etchmiadzin, the Armenians and the Vatican), Etchmiadzin 8 (1994), p.89.

³ Southern R. W., *Western Society*, *ibid.*, p.77; Cf. Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation*, Penguin Books, 1964 (The Pelican History of the Church:3) ‘Orthodox Roman Catholics believed that outside the visible church there was no salvation and that to be a member of the visible church it was necessary to be subject to the Pope of Rome. A man cannot be saved without the true and complete faith unless he believes the word of the infallible church’, p. 367.

⁴ Nicol Donald M., *Church and society in the last centuries of Byzantium. The Birkbeck Lectures 1977*, CUP, 1979, pp. 91-92.

⁵ Kung Hans, *The Catholic Church. A short history*. Translated by John Bowden, New York, 2003, pp. 74-76.

‘Donation of Constantine’ purporting to be an act of Constantine I originating in the chancery of Pope Stephen II (752-57) or Paul I (757-67) is reliant on the 5th century *Legenda S. Silvestri*. In the document Constantine I professes his faith (*confessio*) and grants to Pope Silvester I (314-35) several imperial insignia and privileges (*donatio*). Some scholars speculate that the Donation was fashioned to bolster Pope Stephen’s negotiating position with the Frankish ruler Pepin (741-68).⁶ Among these forgeries can also be classed a forgery called *Lettera dell’Amicitia e dell’unione di Constantino gran Cesare e di san Silvestro Sommo Pontifice, e di Tridate re dell’Armenia, e di S. Gregorio Illuminatore della Nazione Armena scritta nell’anno del signore 316* (Venice, 1695) known in Armenian as *Dashants T’ught’* («Դաշանց Թուղթ») composed broadly between the years 1141 and 1238 coinciding with the 3rd and 4th Crusades. M. Shirinian suggests a connection in contents between ‘*The Letter of Love and Concord*’ and ‘*Donatio Constantini*’ despite the fact that there is no mention of the former in the latter.⁷ This document became an instrument of Roman diplomacy and was consistently quoted during the Cilician period when the Armenian Kingdom needed Papal support to halt the Muslim incursions, while the price required for intervention was to bring the Armenian Orthodox Church into the fold of Rome a process described as a *reductio*, a bringing back. This forgery as a baseless document has been rejected by both European and Armenian scholars. In the view of this writer at the time when the document was forged the doctrine of the primacy of the Pope had not been formulated and its late conception is proven beyond doubt by the use of French terms.⁸ J. Dardel in his *Chronique d’Arménie* expresses the view that in the period after the conception of the ‘Letter of Concord’ Armenian clergy were not only defending their independence from the Greeks but more so the jurisdiction of the Pope over the Armenian Church and concludes ‘And from this point began the hostility of the Greeks against the Armenians’.⁹

Chronicle of events

440 – Pope Leo I (440- 61) ‘the Great’ was the pope claiming supreme and universal authority at the Council of Chalcedon, whose ‘Doctrinal definition’ coupled with the document called the ‘*Tome of Leo*’ the unity in faith and doctrine, which had been the distinctive feature of Christendom in the first five centuries, came to a sad end. The first Armenian Ecclesiastical Synod called by Catholicos Babgen I Ut’msetsi (490-516) held in the city of Dvin reviewed the Chalcedonian creed and condemned it and has done so consistently up to this day.

625 – Pope Honarius I (625-38). In 626 Emperor Heraclius issued an edict forbidding mention of “two energies” (*Monothelism*) in Christ. An agreement was reached in 632 which Pope Honorius supported. In 632-33 Emperor Heraclius convoked the Catholicos Ezzar I P’arazhnakertsi (639-41) to Karin (Theodosiopolis) to a council at which he was coerced into accepting union with the church of Constantinople. Yovhan Mayravanetsi a strident critic of the

⁶ Hollingsworth Paul A., ‘Donation of Constantine (*Constitutum Constantini*)’, **ODB**, Oxford, 1991, vol. I, 649; P.Alexander, ‘The Donation of Constantine at Byzantium and its Earliest Use against the Western Empire’, *Zbornik radova Vizantoloskog Instituta* 8 (1963), pp.11-26.

⁷ Shirinian M. E., “The Letter of Love and Concord “Between Rome and Armenia. A case of forgery from the Crusaders Period *in East and West in the Crusader States, Context-Contacts- Confrontations* (eds.), K. Ciggaar and H. Teule, Leuven, 2003, pp.79-99 (*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analects*,125).

⁸ Հայ-Բիզանդական հետազոտություններ = Studia Armeno – Byzantina, Erevan, 2006, vol. III, pp.179- 230; Donald M. Nicol, *Church and Society in the last centuries of Byzantium*, CUP, 1979, p.92; Bartikyan H, «Դաշանց Թուղթ»: Կազմը, ստեղծման ժամանակը, հեղինակն ու նպատակը» (The Letter of Love and concord. It’s composition, time of creation, author and purpose’)..

⁹ K. Ezeants in his introduction to the Armenian translation of «Ժամանակագրություն Հայոց of J. Dardel’s *Chronique d’Arménie*, St. Petersburg, 1891, «Եւ ի բանէ աստի եղև սկիզբն ատելութեան Հայոց ընդդէմ յունաց» chapter VI, pp.6-7.

move undertaken by Catholicos Eyr announced that he cannot respect someone who has ‘abolished the boundary of orthodoxy set in the canons of our fathers [«որ քակեաց իսկ զսահման կանոնի հարցն մերոց ուղղափառաց»]. Yovhan is convinced that Eyr became a Chalcedonian because of his ignorance and with a pun around the catholicos’s name declared ‘Your name Eyr truly fits you, for you have taken the Armenian Church to the brink of dishonour’ [«Յիրաւի կոչեցաւ անունդ եզր, վասն զի յեզր տարեալ հաներ զՀայաստանեայս»]. A council in Dvin held in 645 annulled without qualification all interpretations of Christian dogmas that had come after the Council of Ephesus.¹⁰ Even more significantly in the *List of Armenian Councils* attributed to the early eight-century Catholicos Yovhannes Odznetsi stresses twice that the council convened by the pro-Chalcedonian Catholicos Eyr ‘was not acceptable to the holy church because he had received the patriarchate at the order of Heraclius of the Romans’.¹¹

645 – Pope Martin I (649-53), at the Lateran Council held in 649 defined, the doctrine of the two wills and condemned the Monothelite formula. A synod assembled by Pope Agatho (678-81) upheld the decisions of the Lateran synod and offered this solution ‘The will’, he said, ‘is the property of the nature, so that, as there are two natures, so there are two wills; but the human will ever determine itself in harmony with the divine will’.

795 – Pope Leo III (795-816), resisted the efforts of Emperor Charlemagne to the use of the *Filioque* (Lat. ‘and the son’ to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381). Pope Leo’s rejection in 810 of the amended creed stood in the West until the eleventh century (1014), when Pope Benedict VIII (d.1024) gave his approval. The Armenian Creed excludes this clause.¹²

858 – Pope Nicholas I (858-867) Catholicos Zak’aria Dzaketsi (855-876). The Pope viewed himself as God’s representative on earth with authority over the whole Church including the East generally. He and Photius, the patriarch of Constantinople (858-67, 877-86) excommunicated each other. At the Council of Constantinople held in 879-80, Photius was rehabilitated and reconciled with the pope. The confessional problem with the Armenian Church was ‘one of the essential and hereditary questions of church policy’, which became a matter of anxiety for Pope Nicholas I, too, as attested in a collection of documents edited by Jean Mansi. An epistle by Pope Nicholas I to the fourth synod of Constantinople states “*It should become a common business for all of us to return our brothers, I mean the Armenians, to the right path and to assist for their better understanding of God*”. The importance of this question is underscored as well by the lively correspondence between Patriarch Photius, Catholicos Zakaria, and Prince of Princes Ashot Bagratuni of Armenia (died 890). Photius was an Armenian by birth. In an attempt to convince Ashot to accept the Chalcedonian creed and to contribute to the union of Byzantine and Armenian churches, he regards Ashot *hamasars* [համասերս = congener-suggenis-relative-kinsman] and encouraged the Armenian Catholicos Zakaria to correspond with Photius, although the Council of Shirakavan held in c.862 failed to achieve the reunion with the Byzantine Church.¹³

¹⁰ *The Armenian History attributed to Sebeos*. Translated with notes, by R. W. Thomson, Liverpool University Press, 1995 vol. I, 91; M. Ormanian, *Azgapatum*, Beyrouth, 1960, vol. I, Bk. 2, pp. 698; John Meyendorff, *Imperial unity and Christian divisions*, SVSPress, 1989, pp.342-343.

¹¹ «Սակս ժողովոցն որ եղեն ի հայս» (List of the Councils convened by Armenians’) in The Book of Letters, Tiflis, 1901, pp. 221-223.; Grigorian Bps. Mesrop, «Երկու Աստուածաբան թագաւորներ ի Հայաստան: Գագիկ Արծրունի Վասպուրականի եւ Գագիկ Բագրատունի Անիի: Անտեստած էջեր հայկական երկախօսութեան ընդ Բիւզանդիոնի» ‘Two theologian kings of Armenia. Gagik Ardruni of Vaspurakan and Gagik Bagratuni of Ani. Neglected sources on unity negotiations with Byzantium’) *Etchmiadzin* 11-12 (1986), pp.77-83.

¹² Gatercian Yovsep’, Հիմնական տարբերութիւն Կաթողիկէ եւ էջմիածնական դասանութեանց [The principle doctrinal differences between Rome and Etchmiadzin], Constantinople, 1861, pp.43-58.

¹³ Mansi Jean D., *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collection*, Paris, 53 vols, vol.16, p.303; Ter- Movsisian

1073 – Pope Gregory VII (1073-85) - Catholicos Grigor II called *Vkayaser* (1066-1105) appealed to the Pope for military aid to impede the Seljuk Turk's occupation of the holy sites of Christianity. In 1073-74 Emperor Michael Doukas (1071-780) negotiations with Pope Gregory VII for union came to nothing even though the emperor had promised 'union between the two Churches in exchange for military assistance'. For the military assistance to free Byzantium 'the shield of Christianity in the East, the Pope demanded that in exchange the unification of the Church and the return into the bosom of the Catholic Church all the 'schismatic' churches' which included the non-Chalcedonian churches. Pope Gregory VII in his *Dictatus Papae* which recorded the papacy's principles candidly declares 'he would prefer to leave Spain under Islamic occupation than to tolerate churches that refuse to place themselves under Rome's protection'.¹⁴

1088 – Pope Urban II (1088-99) in 1095 to achieve Pope Gregory's vision of unified European expedition against the infidels promised aid and by so doing indirectly appease the Greek and Armenian Churches back into the fold of the Roman ecclesiastical sphere of influence. To Armenians and the Greeks this was nothing less than a complete denial of the Apostolic origin of the Church. This extension would lead to the abolition of the autonomy of their churches.

1099 – Pope Paschal II (1099-1118). In 1114 Catholicos Grigor III Pahlavouni (1113-66) was invited to Antioch and participated in the discussions on doctrinal matters in which he seems to have excelled. In recognition of his erudite personality he received from Pope Paschal a pontifical sceptre and gown and letters of commendation.

1124 – Pope Honorius II (1124-30) wrote to Catholicos Grigor III Pahlavouni urging him to celebrate Christmas and Epiphany with the Catholic Church and to mix water in the Eucharistic wine.

1130 – Pope Innocent III (1130-43). During his papacy the former title for the popes 'Vicar of Christ' was replaced with the title 'Vicar of St. Peter'. This new title put aside the limitations implied by the old title, introduced a new concept of authority for the popes '*We are the successor of the Prince of the Apostles, but we are not his vicar, nor the vicar of any man or Apostles, but the vicar of Jesus Christ himself*'.¹⁵ This suggested a higher authority and more extensive field of activity. He convened a council in Jerusalem in 1140 that became instrumental in bringing the Armenian Catholicos Grigor III Pahlavouni in direct contact for the first time with the Latin hierarchy.

1141 & 1143: Delegates on behalf of Catholicos Grigor Pahlavouni and his successor Nerses IV Klayetsi, called *Shnorhali* participated in the Council of Antioch and Jerusalem, seeking the support of Rome in defence of the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia. The Papal authorities demanded the total conversion of Armenia to Catholicism. The legalistic, authoritarian attitude of Rome towards one of the oldest Churches was considered to be alien for the concessions

Yusik, Abps. «Փոսի ջանքերը Հայ եկեղեցին միացնելու Կ. Պոլսոյ կամ Յունական եկեղեցուն» ('The attempts of Patriarch Photius to reunite the Armenian Church with Constantinople or the Greek Church'), *Ararat* April-July (1917) and 1918 (pp. 49. 63) Jean Darrouzes, 'Deux lettres inédites de Photius aux Arméniens', *REB* 29 (1971), pp. 137-83; N. G. Garsoian, 'As[h]ot I the Great', *ODB* Vol. I, p. 210; Karine Melikyan, "*Narratio De Rebus Armeniae*" Հայ-Քաղկեդոնական երկը վաղ միջնադարեան հայոց եկեղեցու պատմութեան կարեւոր սկզբնաղբիւր» ('*Narratio De Rebus Armeniae* Armenian-Chalcedonian tract an important source for the history of the Armenian church of the early medieval period'), Erevan, 2007.

¹⁴ «Պապէն բերած օգնութիւնը պիտի վնասուէր եկեղեցիներու միութեամբը եւ Արեւելեան «հերձուածող» եկեղեցու կաթոլիկ եկեղեցիի ծոցը վերադարձովը» Artavazd Archbishop [Surmelian], «Հայ-Լատին յարաբերութիւնները Յոյն-Լատին յարաբերութեանց լոյսով» (Armenian-Latin church relations from the perspective of Greek-Latin relations), Etchmiadzin 3-4 (1945), p.20-21.

¹⁵ Southern, R. W, *Western Society*, *ibid.*, p.105.

demanded went against their traditions and convictions while they redefined every article of faith. The Catholicos declined the offer declaring that “*the two Churches were not separated by any essentials*”.¹⁶

1145 – Pope Eugenius III (1145-53), received the Catholicos’ envoys to arbitrate in the conflicts between the Armenian and the Greek Churches over the celebration of the Eucharist and the date for observing Christmas. The Armenian bishops pleaded for help in countering the tide of Muslim threat by offering the union of the Armenian Orthodox Church with Rome. This became an established pattern of Armenian tactics for enlisting the help of Rome for political survival, devoid of any real unionist intentions, a practice repeated well into the 14th century.

1181 – Pope Lucius III (1181-85). The fear of Saladin’s aggressive policies forced the Maronites of Lebanon to acknowledge papal primacy as a precondition of pope’s help in fighting the threat of the infidels. The Maronites became the first to form a “Uniate Church”. Catholicos Grigor IV Tghay (1173-93) sought help from the Pope who in exchange required Catholicos’ profession of faith. This offer was taken by the Pope, unfortunately, as an act of submission by the Armenian Church to the primacy of the Roman See.

1187 – Pope Clement III (1187-91) sent a magnificent crown to King Levon II to whom he set three obligations: (1) to celebrate the principal festivals on the day they happen to fall, as done throughout Christendom [Annunciation, Birth, Epiphany, Presentation to the Temple]. (2) The Divine service should be performed publicly in the church during the celebration of the Mass. (3) Not to break the fast on Easter Eve. Conrad, Archbishop of Moquntia required at least twelve bishops should promise on oath to do so. The signing of the Act of Union took place on 1198.

Levon’s pre-eminence in the political arena during this period of Cilician history also spread over the Armenian Church. To achieve his political objectives and to accept the three conditions set by the pope he needed the support of the Catholicos. To achieve his objective he elected the young Catholicos Grigor V known as *K’aravezh* (1193-1194) hoping he could force his plans through with the young catholicos’ consent. However, things turned out totally different. With the support of the Eastern Fathers the catholicos declined to sign the *Act of Union* of 1198, to which Archbishop Nerses Lambronats’i and Hovhannes were signatories¹⁷. On the command of the primate of the Diocese of Sis the catholicos was abducted and incarcerated in the fortress of Kopitar. Soon after his opponents poisoned him and throw his body down the walls of the fortress. Hence his nickname *K’aravezh* or *Gahavezh* [from «*fur*» (stone) or Gah «*գահ*» throne «*վեժ*» “thrown down”. He was replaced by the elderly Grigor VI a usurper, nicknamed Apirat (1194-1203). King Levon saw in him an elderly, weak, easily persuaded personality who would accept all the compromises and concessions offered by the Latinising front paving the path for him to ascend to the throne of Cilician Armenia heralding an era of ecclesiastical co-operation with the West and bringing an end to the Cilicia’s shadowy umbilical connection to Byzantium. The Eastern fathers aware of the tragic death of Grigor V refused to acknowledge the authority of the catholicos and nicknamed him Apirat (Ապիրատ = wicked, iniquitous).¹⁸

¹⁶ «Երկու եկեղեցիները իրարմէ բաժնող էական կէտ մը չտեսներ ինքն» see Maghak’ia Ormanian, «Հայոց եկեղեցին» (The Armenian Church), Constantinople, 1911, p. 84; the formulae the Armenian church has upheld is defined by Ormanian in these terms ‘The expression *Unitas in necessariis* (Unity in essentials)... *Libertas in dubiis* (Liberty in doubtful matters)... *Charitas in omnibus* (Charity in all things). The most intractable symptoms of misunderstanding for the church fathers were the dogmas of Filoque, Purgatory, Transubstantiation, and Indulgences, See *The Church of Armenia*, translated from the French edition by G. Marcar Gregory, London, 1912, p 109.

¹⁷ Katvalyan Mak’sim, ‘Grigor V K’aravezh (1193-1194), *Amenayn Hayots Kat’olikosner*, Holy Etchmiadzin, 2008, p.59.

¹⁸ Anapatakan, *Hamarot patmut’iwn*, op. cit., pp 106-108; Azat Bozoyan, ‘Grigor V K’aravezh’ and Grigor VI

1191 – Pope Celestine III (1191-98) was also prepared to support the Armenian king if the Armenian Church would accept the ecclesiastical authority of Rome. Pope Innocent III sent a banner of St. Peter to king Levon in recognition of his co-operation in the war against the enemies of the cross, noting Rome was the model for all other churches and the popes enjoyed the “fulness of authority” (*plenitudo potestatis*).¹⁹

1198 – Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) – was favourably inclined to support King Levon’s coronation provided the Armenians accepted the ecclesiastical authority of Rome, repeating the myth that “the Church of Armenia from the beginning had received faith from the Romans”. Catholicos Grigor VI Apirat (1194-1203) in a letter to the Pope in 1201 tactfully and discreetly explains that the Armenian faith remains what it had always been “*without additions and deletions*”.²⁰ The union with the church of Rome is not a conversion, but a union within the universal church which they all belong, since the regeneration through baptism has caused all men to become the sheep of the same fold, namely the church of God.²¹ The ecclesiology of Grigor VI Apirat echoes the ecclesiology of Ignatius who distinguishes the local and universal dimensions of “catholicity”. Local Christian community, gathered in the name of Christ, presided over by a bishop, and celebrating the eucharistic meal, is indeed the “catholic church” and the Body of Christ-not a “fragment” of the Church, or only a part of the Body. This is because the Church is “catholic” through Christ, not through its human membership. “Where Christ is, there is the catholic Church”.²² Catholicos Yovhannes VI Ssetsi (1203-1221) who had received the pallium from Pope Innocent III complained to Pope Innocent III that despite all the pledges not to intervene in ecclesiastical affairs in Armenia, King Levon was excommunicated and an interdict was placed upon his lands “*We sought to drink sweet and wholesome milk from the breasts of our mother Roman Church, but we have only given gall and vinegar*”.²³ In the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, by a decree called *Omnis utriusque sexus* promulgated the system of private penance²⁴ an echo of which we find in one of the treatises [«*Խրատք*»] ‘Advice on Confession’ «*Մովսէս վարդապետի վասն խոստովանութեան*» by Movses Erznkats’i.²⁵

1216 – Pope Honorius (1216-1227) wrote conciliatory letters to King Levon and restored cordial relations.

1227 – Pope Gregory IX (1227-41) restrained the Knight of the Templars as well as Bohe-mond V from taking any hostile action against Armenia. Two members of the Templars had been

Apirat’ in **KHH**, *op. cit.*, p. 232- 233.

¹⁹ Frazee Charles A., ‘Church and State in the Kingdom of Cilician Armenia, 1198-1375’ *Byzantine Studies = Byz-antines Etudes*, vol. 3, Part 3 (1976), p. 33.

²⁰ The Armenian Catholicos Hovhannes VI in 1205 writes to Pope Innocent III «*Քանզի հեռի են ի մեզ եպիս-կոսոսունք մեր և օգնականք և սփռեալք ընդ աշխարհ և անհնարին իսկ է յարդինս ածել զայն առանց խոր-հրդականաց, վասն այնորիկ ի ժողովել համօրէն առաջնորդաց եկեղեցեաց կամ բազմագոյն մասին ի սահմանեալ ժամանակի, նոցա հաւանութեամբ, յորժամ միաբան գտանիցին խոստացաք ընդունել զի մի գայթակղութիւն ինչ ծնանիցի յեկեղեցոյք*» [Since our bishops are far apart and all our advisors are scattered throughout the world it is impossible to draw a conclusion without consultation for this reason it would be difficult to assemble them in the time appointed to receive their consent, that all may give their agreement not wishing to create discord in the church], See Յովհաննու Դարդեղի Ժամանակագրութիւն Հայոց [Dardel J, *Chronique d’Armenie, RHCD Arm*] Armenian translation, with introduction by K. Ezeants, St. Petersburg, 1891, p. 53, n. 2. The Catholicos in question is not Grigor VII as stated in the note but Hovhannes VI Ssetsi.

²¹ *Patrologia Latina* (ed.) J. P. Migne, CCXIV, col, 1008.

²² Ignatius of Antioch, St., Letters [«*Թղթեր*»], translated into Armenian by S. S., Erevan, 2003. Letter to the church in Smyrna, 8:2,. Cf. Meyendorff John, ‘The Catholicity of the Church’, *SVTQ* vo. 17:1/2 (1973), pp.5-

²³ *Annales, anno 1199*, no. 39

²⁴ ‘Penance’ in *ODCC (ed.)*, F. L. Cross, 3rd ed. revised by E. A. Livingstone, OUP, 2005, pp. 1258-59.

²⁵ Dowsett Charles, ‘Movses Erznkats’i’s “Advice on Confession”’, *Le Museon*, LXXIII (1960), pp. 135-149.

brutally tortured to death by King Het'um. King Het'um and Queen Zabel exchanged letters with the Pope refuting accusations levelled against the Armenian church by the Latin bishop of Antioch.

The papacy valued Armenian contribution to the war against the Muslims and towards this end, it encouraged marriage alliances between the royal houses of Armenia and Cyprus and the nobility in both kingdoms. From the time of Pope Gregory IX onwards to Pope John XXII (1321) granted marriage dispensations to ten Armenian nobles, who had difficulty in finding consorts in the regions under the primacy of Rome.

1245 – Pope Innocent IV (1243-1254) during the Catholicate of Kostandin I Bardzrberdts'i (1221-1267), at the council of Lyons in 1245, Pope Innocent IV produced his famous tract *Redemium contra Tartaros* which was a follow-up to his predecessor Pope Gregory IX's call for a Crusade against the Mongols. The failure of King Louis IX's crusade of 1248 demonstrated to King Het'um I that any Western alliance in itself was not sufficient to safeguard the security of his kingdom. He thus set a course to seek and acquire alliance with the Mongols. This action alarmed Rome and papal legate summoned Catholicos Kostandin I in 1261 to Acre demanding an explanation of Hetum's ongoing activities with the Mongols.²⁶ On 19 March 1307 a national council was held in Sis to discuss those theological issues in which the Armenian church was still at odds with the Latins.²⁷ The Eastern Fathers led by Bishop Step'annos Siwnetsi opposed to any changes to the national traditions maintaining to remain loyal coining the famous outburst "*they would rather descend into hell with their ancestors than go up to heaven with the Greco-Romans*".²⁸

1265 – Pope Clement IV (1265- 1268) - Catholicoi Kostandin I Bardjerberdtsi (1221-1267) and Hakob I Klayetsi (1268-1289). Papal support against Islam meant obedience to the pope. The vision of the Crusade was to bring peace and unity. Pope Clement IV put his idealist and practical plan in its clearest terms in his letter to Michael VIII Palaeologus in 1267:

*The Crusade is being prepared, and the whole of Europe is rising at our bidding. If you will attack the Moslems on one side while the Crusaders attack them on the other, we shall see an end of the damnable religion for ever. And if you say you are afraid the Latins will attack you while your troops are engaged on your other frontier, the answer is simple: return to the unity of the Roman church and all fears of this kind can be put aside for ever.*²⁹

While the Greeks favoured discussion, the Latins were against discussion in principle since to discuss on matters already decided by the popes was to admit the failure of the doctrine of papal infallibility which was the core of the whole case against the Greeks and Armenians. The papal formula for Church unity is illustrated in Pope Clement IV letter to Emperor Michael VII Palaiologos:

²⁶ **Waterfield Robin E.**, *Christians in Persia, Assyrians, Armenians, Roman Catholics and Protestants*, London, 1973, p. 48.

²⁷ The list of those in attendance is given in K. J. Hefele, *Histoire des conciles d'après les documents originaux*, 12 vols., Paris, 1907-1952, VI, 601 ff.

²⁸ «Հաւան եւք մեք ընդ մեր հարսն ի դրժովսն իշանել, և ոչ ընդ Հոռոմոց յերկինս ելանել» quotation from Stap'annos bishop of Siwnik 'Letter concerning the faith and order of the eastern fathers to Catholicos Ter Grigor (VII Anawarzetsi, 1293-1307) attached to it tract on the orthodox doctrine and faith of the holy saints Gregory the Miracle-worker and Athanasius of Alexandria' chapter 69 in Archbishop Step'annos Orbelian, «Պատմութիւն նահանգին Սիսական» (History of the Province of Syunik), Tiflis, 1910, pp. 449-467 in particular p. 459; Modern Eastern Armenian translation, Erevan, 1958, p. 361; The same feeling inspired the outburst by the Grand Duke Loukas Notaras one of the Byzantine statesman just before the fall of Constantinople '-Better the sultan's turban in our midst than the Latin mitre' See Halina Evert-Kappesowa, 'Le Tiare ou le Turban', **BS**, xiv (1953), pp. 245-57.

²⁹ **Southern R. W.**, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages*, *ibid.*, p. 75.

*The first step towards unity is that our brother the patriarch of Constantinople should recognize the primacy and dignity of apostolic see... and correct his former obstinacy. The causes of diversity of faith and custom between Greeks and Latins cannot be removed unless the members are first united to the head. For how can questions be discussed between dissenting and antagonistic bodies when one refuses to obey or agree with the other.*³⁰

1307 – The Franciscan and Dominican brotherhood sent their latin preachers to Cilicia and Eastern Armenia. The missionaries found substantial support among the population and find large centre was established in Sultania. Catholicos Grigor Anavarzetsi (1293-1307) and Kostandin III Kesaratsi (1307-1322) anticipate that if the Armenian church adopts Catholic doctrine, the Pope will assist in freeing Armenia from Muhammadan. The councils summoned in Sis (1307) and Adana (1306) accepted the doctrines, rituals and Papacy's jurisdiction. However, in 1361, the council summoned in Sis annulled decisions of the 1316's meeting.³¹ The increased dependence of the Kingdom in Cilician Armenia on Western powers damaged the social and ecclesiastical cohesion of the nation. The powers from whom Het'um II (1294-1307 3rd reign), Grigor VII and Oshin I (1307-1320) coveted aid in exchange for conformity were powerless to intervene on Armenia's behalf and were not even seriously interested to do so.

1311 – Pope Clement V (1305-14). In June 1311 Pope Clement V wrote to the Catholicos Kostandin III Kesaratsi (1307-22), confirming upon him power to grant a series of marriage dispensations to damsels and widows to enable them to marry noblemen from Cyprus.

1316 – Pope John XXII (1316-34) as a token of his appreciation of Oshin's pro-Roman sentiments sent him a meagre sum of money. He urged king and Catholicos to convene a synod to ratify the decisions of the Council of 1307. In the light of the fact that decisions of the *concilliabula* of Sis and Adana were rejected and validated to bring the Armenian church under the jurisdiction of Rome it is incomprehensible on what grounds does Alishan confirm that 'during the reign of Levon II in the twelfth century the Armenian church was visibly and in no doubt in alliance with the great church of Rome'³² Nerses Lambronatsi having failed in his negotiations to achieve his goals of subjecting the Armenian church to Roman primacy in his letter to King Levon II explains the reason for his failure on the Armenian side in particular the Eastern fathers in terms unworthy of a church leader: "Ignorant ,unruly, with senseless quackery ...who like dogs insolently bark".³³ Lambronatsi's objectives and ideas not only coincide with those of the people and the clergy but also of King Levon and even to Grigor Tgha. He was extremely self-interested in his own image and seeking popularise and for that reason he was always pre-

³⁰ Potthast A., *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, 1874-5, no. 20012, Papadakis Aristeides & John Meyendorff, *The Christian East and the Rise of the Papacy*, SVSPress, 1994, pp. 220-222; This passage is quoted by R. W. Southern, *op. cit.*, p. 77. 'The popes had made themselves believe that Byzantium had betrayed the cause of the Crusade against the infidel and that the Holy war would never be successful until the schismatic Greeks had been bought into the fold of the Roman church' see Donald M. Nicol, *The last centuries of Byzantium 1261-1453*, London, 1972, p. 10

³¹ Bundy, David D., 'The Council of Sis, 1307', in *After Chalcedon. Studies in theology and church history*, (eds.) C. Laga and others, Leuven, 1985, pp. 47-56; Some members of the school in Dsordzor translated into Armenian large number of works: St. Thomas Aquinas, *Liber Sacramentorum*, Albertus Magnus, *Summa Theologica*, Gilbert of Poitiers, *De Sex principis*, for a fuller numeration see L. Khatchikyan, *ibid.*, pp. 31-35; S. P. Hayrapetian, «Հայոց հին և նոր միջնադարեան գրականութեան պատմութիւն» [A history of ancient and medieval Armenian literature], Erevan, 1994, pp.433-439.

³² Alishan Ghewond, Sisuan, Venice, 1885, p. 215 «Յատուր Լեւոնի յէլն ԺԲ դարուն եղև հաստատ և յայտնի դաշն միաբանութեան Հայոց ընդ մեծի եկեղեցոյն Հռոմայ»: Ghewond Alishan in his *Sisuan* honours him with an eulogy called «Դրուագ ի սուրբն և ի սիրելի Ներսէս Լամբրոնացի», pp.86-95.

³³ «Տիմարի և անկարգի և յիմար բանից շաղակրատող, ... արք, որոց բերանն անիծիւք և դառնութեամբ լի են, որ զթոյնս իժից ունին ի ներոյ շրթան ... որք իբրև գշունս լիբքս հաջեն» see Nerses Lambronatsi «Թուղթ առ Լեւոն» [Letter to king Levon], Venice, 1838, pp.209, 219 and 228.

pared to reconcile with all the doctrines of the other churches. D. C. Neumann who translated Lambronats's *Synodical Letter* was in agreement that 'the panegyric praises lavished upon him were done for party political reasons'.³⁴ While Emin blindly following the views of the Mkhitarists, he even repeats that the Armenian church has declared Nerses Lambronatsi among its saints, although it is well known that each time the question of the latinising faction demanded the union of the two churches among the demands was also the raising of Lambronatsi to sainthood, a demand which was always rejected.³⁵ When King Levon decided to halt all negotiations with Greek and it was more advantageous to seek the cooperation from the Emperor of Germany prompted Levon to write a very harsh letter to Nerses Lambronatsi instructing him to 'to abandon his erroneous ways, otherwise he will deprive him of all his honours'.³⁶

1318 – Pope John XXII (1316-34). In 1311 Prince Oshin had appealed for military assistance from Pope Clement V (1305-1314). The pope responded by sending him a delegation of six Franciscan friars as religious advisors. In 1316 Oshin appealed again to Pope John XII, who proposed that Oshin hold another meeting for the purpose of legitimising the decisions of the 1307 council. Through a decree the Pope created Eastern Archbishoprics under the guidance of the newly founded Catholic Armenian order called 'Brothers of Unity' (*Fratres Unitores*), which took under its jurisdiction the Armenian provinces of Sultaniya, Maraghan and Tavriz. By this Encyclical the Franciscan Missionaries were replaced by Preachers of the Dominican Order.³⁷

1334 – Pope Benedict XII (1334-42). Nerses Palianents who had converted to Catholicism sought audience with the Pope and presented to him a bill of charges containing 117 errors levied against the Armenian Church. King Levon V (1320-1342) send messengers seeking aid against the infidels and received the following response. "*We can do nothing for you at all, as you seem steeped in too many errors*". The catholicos of the day Hakob II Tarsonts'i (1327-1341) refused to adhere to the pope's demands and threatened to excommunicate the king who dethroned the Catholicos and replaced him with Mkhitar I Grnerts'i (1341-55). Catholicos Mkhitar I Grnerts'i reviewed all the accusations and completely exonerated the Armenian Church.

1342 – Pope Clement VI (1342-52) and King Constantine III (1344-1362) embarked upon a concerted appeal for material support from the Pope and the West to stem the tide of Mamluk insurgencies but for that help the Pope urged the king to settle the doctrinal differences between Rome and Armenian Churches, hinting that this would be the prerequisite for Latin assistance. Catholicos Yakob II Anavarzetsi (1327-41) was sent to Avignon to persuade the pope that the Armenian Church had been unjustly accused of doctrinal falsehood and the help requested must not be delayed.³⁸

³⁴ Neumann, D.C.F., *Synodalride des Nerses von Lambron*, Leipzig, 1834, p.10.

³⁵ Ezeants K., Dardel, *op.cit.* p.45.

³⁶ Ezeants K., J. Dardel, *op. cit.*, p.44, «դառնալ իմպոռմանէ, ապա թէ ոչ զըրկելոց է ի պատուոյն»:

³⁷ Cowe S. Peter, 'The role of correspondence in elucidating the intensification of Latin-Armenian ecclesiastical interchange in the first quarter of the 14th century', *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies* 13 (2003, 2004), pp. 47-68. The work focuses on the Armenian correspondence of Pope John XXII and Esayi Nchetsi, abbot of the monastery of Gladzor; Charles A. Frazee, 'Catholic Missions to Nakhichevan and Azerbaijan', *Diakonia*, 9, 3 (1974), pp. 251-60; Khatchikyan Levon «Արտազի հայկական իշխանութիւնը և Մործորի դպրոցը» ['The Armenian principedome of Artaz and the school of Dsordor'], BM 11 (1973), pp. 125-210; Hovhannes K'metsi «Յաղագս Քերականին» [On Grammar, text prepared for publication by L. Khatchikyan and introduction by L. Khatchikyan and S. A. Avagyan], Erevan, 1977, pp.5-51.

³⁸ Jones W. R., 'The Armenian Church and the Papacy in the 14th Century: Richard Fitzralph's critique of Armenian Christianity', *The Armenian Review*, vol. 25, 1-2 (1972), pp. 3-9. Fitzralph a resident at Avignon during the Papacy of Benedict II and Clement VI in his critique of Armenian Christianity titled *De erroris Armenorum, Summa de erroribus*, or, in the sole printed edition of 1512, *Summa in questionibus Armenorum* is an apology for Latin Christianity inspired by his conversations with the *uniate* clergy at Avignon. Inspired by the events of 1341 and 1342, the

1356 – Pope Innocent VI (1352-62) by an Encyclical created Brotherhoods of ‘Uniatism’ under the jurisdiction of the Dominican Order. Those Armenians who had converted to Catholicism were called ‘Frank’ («ֆրանկ») or ‘aght’arma’ («աղթարմա»). In the 16th century the Dominican’s were replaced by the Order of the Jesuits.³⁹

1361 – A meeting was convened and the decisions of the 1316 council of Sis were annulled.

1431 – Pope Eugenius IV (1431-47) convened the Council of Florence in 1439 to which an Armenian delegation was sent by Catholicos Kostandin VI Vahkatsi (1430-39). The Armenian delegation from Crimea was led by Joachim, Bishop of Aleppo. The Document of Florence proclaimed that the ‘Armenian Church after 900 years in the wilderness, was now re-united with the Holy Mother Church of Rome’. This was not entirely true as several attempts had been made to unite the Latin and Armenian Churches, as for example the Synods of Sis (1307) and Adana (1317). The *Decretum pro Armenis* and the Bull *Exaltate Deo* is a Latin document prepared by the Dominican John of Montenero and has nothing to do with Armenian Church or the Armenian people. The decree of ‘union’ of the Council of Florence was ratified neither by the Armenians nor the Greeks. The Armenian delegates left Florence but did not return to Sis and Catholicos Kostandin VI died without seeing the papal documentation. All the other participants unanimously renounced the decree of Florence null and void.⁴⁰

REV. DR. NERSESS NERSESSIAN

(Part 1)



book was completed in 1347, and presented to Pope Clement VI in 1349.

³⁹ Taft R. F., ‘The Problem of “Uniatism” and the “Healing of Memories”: Anamnesis, not Amnesia’. *Logos: A Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 41-42 (2000-2001), pp. 155-96; V. Peri, ‘Uniatism and its Origins’, *JECS*, 49/1-2 (1997), pp. 23-46.

⁴⁰ Messerlian Zaven, ‘The historical relations of the Church of Armenia and the Roman Catholic Church’ *HHT* 4-5 (1983-84) pp. 279-286.