
NERSES ŠNORHALI IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY RUSSIAN THEOLOGY

K. HAMADA (Japan, Tokyo)

The purpose of the present article is to explore the process of development of the study of the Armenian Church in Russia. This article was motivated by an article written by Orthodox priest Tigrij Xačatryan in the journal of the St. Petersburg Academy of Theology, *Xristianskoe Čtenie (Christian Readings)* No. 29 (2008), entitled, "Analysis of some presuppositions for theological dialogues between Russian Orthodox and Armenian Churches". It is well known that the Russian Orthodox Church and the Armenian Church have been strengthening their friendship and cooperation in recent years. Dialogues on theological themes are also considered inevitable for the development of the relationship between the two churches. Xačatryan indicates some problems that might prohibit mutual understanding in theological dialogues. He points out that in spite of the close relationship between the Russian Orthodox and Armenian Churches, no serious study about Armenian Christology has ever existed thus far in Russian theological study, and problems about the confession have been examined only "superficially"¹. The present article aims to reveal the reason for this "superficiality" in the study of Armenian theology in Russia and to point out problems to be solved in theological themes for the development of mutual understanding between the two churches.

In order to deal with this problem, it is necessary to investigate the basis of the study of Armenian theology in Russia. On this account, this article will focus on Nerses Šnorhali. Nerses Šnorhali is the only Armenian theologian and saint who has a certain degree of recognition in the Russian Orthodox Church. For instance, at the official meeting of three Patriarchs² in the Soviet Union, which was held in Tbilisi and Ejmiačin in 1950, the Patriarch of Moscow and All the Rus', Aleksij I, in his greeting speech at Ejmiačin Cathedral, mentioned Nerses Šnorhali and admired his attempt at reconciliation between the Armenian and Byzantine Orthodox Churches³.

Because of the interruption of theological study during the Soviet era, Russian theology today is based on the heritage of Imperial Russia. The study of Nerses Šnorhali by Russian theologians had reached a certain achievement in the nineteenth century, after the annexation of Eastern Armenia by the Russian Empire. This article reveals the process of introduction of this great Armenian theologian to Russian theological studies and the reaction to his works from

¹ Хачатрян Т. Анализ некоторых предпосылок богословского диалога Русской Православной и Армянской Церквей. *Христианское чтение*, 2009, N 29, с. 215.

² The Patriarch of Moscow and All the Rus' Aleksij I, the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia Kalistrate and the Catholicos of All Armenians Gevorg VI.

³ Журнал Московского Патриархата, 1950, N 9, с. 18.

Russian theologians and clergy, through investigation of their works and letters. In addition, since the development of Armenology in nineteenth-century Russia cannot be separated from the political context of that period, the article is also based on historical resources about the politics of the Russian Empire regarding Armenians and the Ejmiacin Catholicos, examined by such historians as V.G. Tunyan and P. W. Werth.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, Imperial Russia faced problems concerning the newly acquired territory in the Caucasus, inhabited by various peoples and tribes with various confessions. In the Orthodox areas in the Caucasus, Georgia and Ossetia, Orthodoxy was used as a method for stabilizing the authority of the empire and for assimilation. The Russian administration had rapidly proceeded with the “Russification” of the Georgian Orthodox Church. In 1811, the Russian Empire abolished the Georgian Patriarch and established the Georgian Exarch, who belonged to the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church. The sphere of Russification of the Georgian Church was not limited to its structure, language, and education, but also extended to its economy. V. G. Tunyan mentions that the plan of nationalization of the property of the Georgian Church proceeded from 1840 to 1850⁴. In Ossetia, where the Alanian Eparchy had existed under the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople from the tenth to the fifteenth century, the “Committee of Religious Affairs in Ossetia” and its successor, the “Society for the Restoration of Christianity in Ossetia”, built up an energetic campaign of enlightenment and “restoration of Orthodoxy”⁵. Russian missionaries built schools and churches, where Russian was the dominant language, sent Russian bishops to Ossetian villages or young locals to the Academy in Moscow or St. Petersburg, and distributed Russian Bibles or prayer books.

In the examples of Georgia and Ossetia, it is clear that Orthodoxy gave the Russian Empire both the justification and the methods for the assimilation into the empire of newcomers whose languages, culture, and ethnicity were very different from those in Russia. In the case of Armenians, however, the relationship between Orthodoxy and their faith was more complicated for several reasons. First, the Armenian Apostolic Church was not a branch of the Orthodox Church, and it had different dogma, liturgical tradition, and organization; therefore a more complicated process was required to adapt the Armenian Church to the Russian system of religious politics. Second, because of the large Armenian populations in Persia and Turkey, the Armenian Apostolic Church was not just a subject of internal politics but was also a serious diplomatic problem for the Russian autocracy. It should also be mentioned that in the nineteenth century, with the decline of the Ottoman Empire, Western Great Powers stretched out their influence into the Middle East. The Russian Empire

⁴ **Тунян В. Г.** *Церковная политика сомадержавия в Закавказье 1801-1853, Е., 2005.*

⁵ *Regarding the mission in Ossetia, see Беляев И.* *Русские миссии на окраинах, Владикавказ, 2008.*

had already acquired the right to protect the Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire by the treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji in 1774, and after the Catholicos of Ejmiačin came under the rule of the Russian Empire, affairs involving Armenian Patriarchs in the Middle East also became some of the most important diplomatic issues of the Russian Empire.

It is well-known that the constitution regarding the Armenian Apostolic Church-“Položenie”, promulgated in 1836, set a certain limit to the power of the Ejmiačin Catholicos with enforcement of the power of the synod and the control of the Chief Procurator. However, it is also true that “Položenie” promoted the authority and status of the Ejmiačin Catholicos. “Položenie” emphasizes that the Ejmiačin Catholicos is the spiritual leader not only for Russian Armenians, but also for Armenians abroad, allowing foreign participation in the election of the Catholicos⁶. It also declares that the right of preparation and distribution of the Holy Myron for the liturgy belongs only to the Ejmiačin Catholicos. As P. Werth mentions, “Položenie” was carefully constructed to balance the internal and diplomatic interests. The intention of the Russian government to retain the high authority of the Catholicos among Armenians abroad is seen in “Položenie”.

These two different aspects of the politics regarding the Armenian Apostolic Church sometimes brought about a confrontation between the policies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA). The policy of the MFA was to promote the authority of the Catholicos and to strengthen the ties of Ejmiačin with foreign Armenians, especially in the Ottoman Empire, for the purpose of making them potential allies of the Russian Empire through orders of the Catholicos. The MIA, on the other hand, intended to assimilate Armenians, following the example of other Christian areas of the Caucasus. This intention of the MIA is revealed as a secret project of union between the Orthodox and the Armenian Apostolic Churches.

In the autumn of 1843, Catholicos Nerses Aštarakec’i, for the purpose of meeting Czar Nikolaj (Nicolas) I, visited St. Petersburg, where he was forced to stay until the spring of 1844 because of his poor physical condition. Before his departure, the director of the Department of Religious Affairs of Foreign Confessions in the MIA, V. V. Skrypcin, made a proposal to the Catholicos in the name of the Czar about the “union of Armenian Church with Orthodox”⁷. However, the Catholicos denied the proposal with “emphatic words”⁸, being afraid of causing any confusion and schism within the Armenian Church.

After Nerses Aštarakec’i returned to Ejmiačin in the spring of 1846, Minister of Foreign Affairs Nessel’rode sent a diplomat, Aleksandr Nikolaevič Murav’ëv, to Georgia and Armenia in order to investigate problems regarding Christians in

⁶ Werth P. *Imperial Russia and the Armenian Catholicos at home and abroad* (Slavic Eurasian Studies. N 10. Slavic Research Center, University of Hokkaido, 2006, p. 209).

⁷ Тунян В. Г., *Աշխ. աշխ., էջ 92*:

⁸ Նույն տեղում:

the Caucasus. He traveled to Georgia and Armenia from 1846 to 1847, and when he visited Catholicos Nerses at Ejmiaçin, he again brought up the proposal of union between the Orthodox and Armenian Churches. However, Nerses Aštarakec'i, who was very conscious of the problem of the division between Russian Armenians and Turkish Armenians, denied the proposal, which would make that division more serious to an extent that would be impossible to restore⁹. Accepting the denial of union, Murav'ëv returned to St. Petersburg and reported that it would be hard to realize the plan of union under the Catholicos Nerses and that it should be discussed when a new Catholicos was elected in the future. He also presented some conditions for the union: the formal elements—language, liturgies, ceremonies, and calendar should follow Armenian tradition, but regarding the dogmatic problem, the Armenian Church should accept the Chalcedon Creed of “two natures, one hypostasis” and should recognize the seven Ecumenical Councils. Murav'ëv also insisted that the Catholicos of Ejmiaçin should be given the same status of autocephaly as the other Orthodox Patriarchs¹⁰.

However, because of the strain of diplomatic relations in the Middle East in the middle of the nineteenth century, Russian politics regarding the Armenian Church were inclined toward the policy of the MFA, and the plan of union was not undertaken in practice.

The main motivation for the union between the Orthodox and Armenian Churches was the political interest of the Russian Empire, but it should not be ignored that “church union” or the “unity of the Christian Church” was also an actual subject in the field of theology in that period. The ideology of the “unity of all Christians” appeared in the time of Czar Aleksandr I, during the Holy Alliance against Napoleon, and it continued developing in a philosophical context.

The idea of the “ecumenical church” developed in polemics between Westernism and Slavophilism in Russian philosophy, starting with Čaadaev, who insisted that the Russian Orthodox Church should convert to Catholicism to become free from secular authority¹¹. Slavophiles, on the other hand, considered Orthodoxy as the center of unity not only for Russia itself, but also for the whole world. Xomjakov, whose ecclesiology is revealed in the work “One Church”¹², considered the Orthodox Church as the only Christian church that preserved the apostolic tradition in the present day, because of a number of schisms, but he held that in future, the whole world should be united as One Holy, Ecumenical, and Apostolic church.

The concept of the “ecumenical church” or of the “restoration of Christian unity” was also discussed in the context of the relationship between Russia and the

⁹ Նույն տեղում, էջ 96:

¹⁰ Նույն տեղում:

¹¹ Цимбаева Е. Н. А. С. Хомяков в полемике славянофилов и русских католиков по вопросам Вселенской Церкви. А. С. Хомяков: мыслитель, поэт, публицист, т. 1, М., 2007, с. 433.

¹² Хомяков А. С. Церковь одна, М., 2005, с. 3-47.

Christian East. It was pointed out in the previous chapter that the Russian Empire in the nineteenth century actively committed to the expansion of its influence among Christians in the Middle East. The Russian Orthodox Church also played an important role in strengthening the ties between the Russian and Eastern Patriarchs. For example, the Russian Religious Mission in Jerusalem was founded in 1847 for the purpose of the “visible unity of Churches of Jerusalem, Antioch and Russia and mutual contact”¹³, as well as for the protection of Russian pilgrims and Christians.

The intention of creating unity between the Christian West and East was one of the main theological movements in the Russian Orthodox Church in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Metropolitan of Moscow, Filaret, was the person who presented the problem of East and West from the position of the Orthodox Church. As head of the Russian Orthodox Church and as a theologian, he believed in the potential of the Orthodox Church to unite West and East-unite the whole Christian world. Among his theological works, the interpretation of the prayer “For peace in the whole world, for the stability of the holy churches of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord” (“О мире всего мира, и благостоянии святых Божиих Церквей, и соединении всех, Господу помолимся”¹⁴) very clearly shows that unionistic idea. He interprets the prayer as follows:

*In this prayer “stability and unity” is wished not only for “holy churches of God”-Orthodox, true, consisting the Ecumenical Church, for example, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Russia, but also for Churches deviated from Orthodoxy, for example, Catholic and Armenian Churches*¹⁵.

Filaret insists that the reason why this prayer consists in two parts, “for the stability of the holy churches of God” and “for the unity of all”, is that the former is devoted to the Orthodox Churches, in which “stability” is already given, while the latter, on the other hand, is prayed for “all”, who are not included in the former part of the prayer-in other words, for the churches separated from Orthodoxy and for the restoration of their unity with the Orthodox Church¹⁶.

Following his unionistic intention, Filaret actively supported the project of union between the Anglican and Orthodox Churches, proposed by an English priest, William Palmer, who visited Russia in 1840 and 1841¹⁷. Interested in the

¹³ Лисовой Н. Н. Русское духовное и политическое присутствие в Святой Земле и на Ближнем Востоке в XIX - нач. XX вв., М., 2006.

¹⁴ Святитель Филарет. Митрополит Московский. Меч Духовный, М., 2010, с. 448.

¹⁵ Նույն տեղում:

¹⁶ Նույն տեղում, էջ 449:

¹⁷ Regarding the problem of union with Anglican Church, see Смирнова И. Ю. Митрополит Московский Филарет и контакты с представителями западных конфессий в середине XIX в.: по документам российских архивов (Отечественные архивы, М., 2010, N 4, с. 28-33).

issue of union with the Anglican Church, Filaret invited Palmer to visit, and he answered some of Palmer's questions. At this meeting with Palmer, another important person, Andrej Nikolaevič Muravyov, was present.

Muravyov (1806–1874) is famous as the author of *A Travel to the Holy Land*, which was one of the best sellers among Russian intellectuals in his period. He is also known as an initiator of close ecclesiastical and diplomatic connections between Russia and the Near East¹⁸. During his service at the Asian Department of the MFA from 1832 to 1858, Muravyov devoted himself to affairs concerning the protection of Eastern Christians and their property and to support of Eastern Patriarchs. His diplomatic affairs were motivated both by his ideology of the unity of the Christian Church and by his Slavophilic thought. He made a statement that “Orthodoxy is the life of Russia and it unites each part of her immeasurable entity not only from inside but also from outside”¹⁹. He was sure that Russian Orthodoxy united all Russian people and also all Christians, divided by national or political antagonism or by theological schism. He also insisted, “only Russia can and must be charged with the great religious mission to be a mediator of West and East...”²⁰ Muravyov is the theologian who best represents the ideological movement of the “ecumenical church” in the time of Metropolitan Filaret.

In such a unionistic view, union with the Armenian Church, which became one of the largest non-Orthodox Christian communities in Russia, was a theme worth discussing. It is not strange that Nerses Šnorhali, who tried to unite the Armenian and Orthodox Churches, attracted the concern of Russian theologians of that period. The political interest of the Russian Empire in the Christian East and in the “ecumenical” atmosphere of Russian theology in the period of Filaret prepared the foundations for the acceptance of Nerses Šnorhali by Russian theologians.

In Russian medieval literature, the “Armenian heresy” was one of the typical examples of unorthodoxy, as seen in a work of Maksim Grek²¹. Because of the branding of heresy, Armenian theology was not a subject of investigation in Russian theological study for a long time.

Nerses Šnorhali appeared in Russian literature almost at the same time as Armenian typography was founded in Russia by Grigor Xardaryan in St. Petersburg. In 1786, the printing house of Xardaryan published “*Prayer of*

¹⁸ Смирнова И. Ю. Фонд А. Н. Муравьева в отделе рукописей Российской государственной библиотеки и его востоковедческий потенциал (*Отечественные архивы*, N 4, М., 2010).

¹⁹ Муравьев А. Н. Мысль о православии. Из путешествия ко святым местам русским, СПб., 1894, с. 9.

²⁰ Муравьев А. Н. По вопросу о соединении Церкви, СПб., 1866, с. 7.

²¹ Максим Грек. Слова против армянского зловерия. Сочинения преподобного Максима Грека в русском переводе, ч. 2, М., 1910, с. 9.

Armenian Patriarch Nerses, translated into Russian from Armenian”²². But from the theological point of view, it is more important that Nerses Šnorhali appears in “*The Description of the faith of the Armenian Church*”, translated and published by Hovsep Argutyan (Iosiv Argutinsko-Dolgorukij) in 1799. It was published in St. Petersburg and presented to Emperor Pavel I. In the prologue of the book, Argutyan explains the reason for the publication. First, it was published for the purpose of the religious education of Russian Armenians, and second, it was published to demonstrate the apologetics of the teachings of the Armenian Church, exposed to “improper accusation”²³. The content of the book consists of a translation of the creed of the Armenian Church and annotations for the creed, in which Argutyan quotes the words of famous Armenian theologians-apologists such as Grigor Tatebaci, Nerses Lambronaci, and Nerses Šnorhali. However, in spite of Argutyan’s close relationship with Russian administrators and hierarchs, it seems that his book did not attract a great deal of attention among Russian intellectuals.

The Institute of Eastern Languages, founded by Armenian millionaire Ioan Lazarev (Hovannes Lazaryan), played an extremely important role not only in the development of education among Armenian youth but also in the promotion of Armenian culture and history among Russian intellectuals. In 1830, *Prayers of St. Patriarch Nerses in 12 languages; Armenian, Russian, Greek, Georgian, Serbian, French, German, English, Latin, Italian, Hungarian and Turkish* was published by the Lazarev Institute. Some articles about the history of the Armenian Church were also published in the journal of the MIA.

It is also necessary to mention that in the nineteenth century, meeting with the Christian East promoted the development of Byzantinology in the Russian Empire. The rapid development of the philological and historical study of Byzantium also inspired Russian scholars. Russian Armenology was founded by the Russian-Armenian intellectual circle, formed at the Lazarev Institute, but the history of Armenians, because of its involvement in Byzantine history, attracted Russian Byzantinists. From the series, *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio* (ten volumes, 1825–38), edited by Catholic Cardinal Angelo Mai, one text entitled “The second deputation of Theorianos with Nerses, Catholicos of Armenians”²⁴, provided an opportunity to Russian Byzantinists to study Nerses Šnorhali. In 1847, A. K. Sokolov published an article, “Contact of Armenian Church with Eastern Orthodox Church regarding the union in twelfth

²² **Нерсес Шнорали.** Молитва Нерсеса армянского патриарха: переведена с армянского на русский язык, СПб., У Григория Халдарова, 1786.

²³ **Аргутинский-Долгорукий, Иосиф,** Архиепископ. Исповедание христианской веры Армянской Церкви, СПб., 1799 (Переиздание. Ростов-на-Дону, 2001), с. 5-7.

²⁴ *Theoriani disputatio secunda cum Nersete Patriarha Generali Armeniorum* (Θεωριανου διαλεξις δευτερα μετα Νοσερσου Καθολικου των Αρμενιων). Maio, A. *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio è Vaticanis codicibus. Tomus VI. Romae. 1832.*

century”²⁵. It is an abridged translation of Mai’s text of “Deputation”, and the author does not express any personal opinion. A more important article concerning “Deputation” was written by A. N. Murav’ëv who, as mentioned above, was involved in affairs of union between the Orthodox and Armenian Churches. After returning from his trip to the Caucasus, he published a record of the trip under the title of “Georgia and Armenia” (in three volumes, 1848), in which he devotes pages to a chapter, “Disagreement of Armenian Church with Orthodox Church”²⁶. Though Murav’ëv does not mention the names of sources, except for the Mai version of “Deputation”, it can be supposed that he refers to the Greek sources regarding Armenians, “Photius’ letter to Catholicos Zacharias of Armenia” and “Narrative about Armenia”, which are records about affairs of union between the Byzantine and Armenian Churches. He gives his opinion that the political situation of the Armenians in the fifth century as well as ethnic antagonism between Greeks and Armenians caused the schism between the Orthodox and Armenian Churches after the Council of Chalcedon. He also mentions that the “imperfection” of the Armenian language for the correct understanding of Greek theological terms like “nature” or “hypostasis” prohibited Armenians from accepting the dogma, “two natures in one hypostasis of Christ”²⁷. But he does not call the Armenian Church “heretical”, and he expresses his respect for Nerses Šnorhali on account of Šnorhali’s having reached agreement with the Orthodox Church on the dogmatic problem. Nonetheless, for Murav’ëv, Orthodoxy is the only true confession, and he criticizes the Armenian Church because it still adheres to the expression “one nature” and denies the Chalcedon Creed.

Now it is necessary to mention another important person, who discovered Nerses Šnorhali in a different way: Porfirij (Konstantin Aleksandrovic Uspenskij, 1804–1885), a Russian bishop, who played an extremely important role in the religious and political affairs of the Russian Empire in the Christian East as a founder of a Russian religious mission in Jerusalem. From 1842 to 1847, he stayed in Jerusalem and traveled to the ancient centers of the Christian East, Istanbul, Cairo, Athos, and Sinai, collecting ancient icons and manuscripts. At the same time, he actively had contacts with non-Orthodox Christian clergy. His first contact with Armenian clergy was in 1833, meeting with Nerses Aštarakeci, who at that time was in Kishinev²⁸ as the bishop of Eparchy of the Armenian Church of Bessarabia²⁹. During the mission at Jerusalem, Porfirij many times visited

²⁵ **Соколов А. К.** *Сношения Армянской Церкви с Восточною Православною о соединении в XII веке. Прибавления к Творениям св. Отцов, N 5 (67), кн. 1, М., 1847, с. 88-154.*

²⁶ **Муравьев А. Н.** *Грузия и Армения, ч. 2, СПб., 1848, с. 206-256.*

²⁷ Նույն տեղում, էջ 211:

²⁸ *The Armenian Eparchy of Bessarabia was founded in the territory, annexed by the Russian Empire after the Russian-Turkish war (1806-1812). Благотворительный журнал Ново-Нахичеванской и Российской Епархии ААЦ, 2006, N 4 (весна), с. 67.*

²⁹ **Августин (Никити).** *Архимандрит. Армянская Апостольская Церковь в трудах Епископа Порфирия (Успенского). Христианская культура. Пушкинская эпоха (По*

Zakaria, the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem. In 1860, he traveled to Cairo, and there at the cathedral of the Coptic Church, he participated in the liturgy with Armenian and Coptic bishops and clergy. At the meeting with the Armenian and Coptic bishops, he declared that the Armenian and Coptic Churches were not heretical, and he revealed his will to unite these churches with the Orthodox Church³⁰. His ecumenistic intention was quite radical, even in comparison with other unionists. In the Orthodox unionists' view, "Monophysites", though they could not be called "heretical", strayed from the true way by some unfortunate accidents, for which they themselves should not be blamed, and they should be again returned to the true way by union with the Orthodox Church. Metropolitan Filaret, whose unionistic intention was mentioned earlier, criticized Porfirij's attempt at union with non-Chalcedonic Churches because he felt that it might cause suspicion among Eastern Orthodox Christians, "the true brothers" of the Russian Orthodox Church³¹.

Porfirij's view regarding the Armenian Church is shown in his lecture in August 1856 for an aristocratic lady³². He explains that the reason for the schism was not the "declination" of the Armenians but the political antagonism between Greeks and Armenians, and he explains that Armenians should not be blamed for accepting Monophysitism³³.

The most important fact for the present article is that Porfirij "discovered" Nerses Šnorhali in his own way. In his 12 February, 1846 letter to Antonij, the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg, he informs the Metropolitan that he has discovered the Greek manuscripts, which should be considered good examples of the "Armenian religious leader's practical efforts for the unity of Church in New Rome"³⁴. To the letter he attached a copy of following manuscripts³⁵:

1. Greek Czar Manuel's letter to the Armenian Catholicos Nerses
2. Theological dialogues between a theologian, Theorianos, and the Catholicos
3. Nerses' reply to Manuel

He requires the Metropolitan that someone proficient in Greek should translate the manuscripts into Russian. He also expects that the Armenian

материалам традиционных христианских пушкинских чтений., вып. 13, СПб., 1997, с. 110.

³⁰ Նույն տեղում, էջ 316-317:

³¹ **Дмитриевский А. А.** *Русская духовная миссия в Иерусалиме. сост. и автор предисл. Н. Н. Лисовой, М., 2009, с. 143.*

³² **Порфирий (Успенский).** *Записка речи к Фрейлине Эйлер в августе 1856 года. Дневники и автобиографические записки Епископа Порфирия Успенского, т. 7, СПб., 1899.*

³³ Նույն տեղում, էջ 33:

³⁴ Նույն տեղում, էջ 166:

³⁵ Unfortunately, these copies, which should be preserved in one of the Russian archives, are not found yet.

version of these texts should also exist among the Russian Armenians, insisting on the necessity of comparing the Greek and Armenian versions³⁶.

Here it is necessary to note the difference between Murav'ëv and Porfirij, each of whom "discovered" Nerses Šnorhali in his own way. Murav'ëv's view is based on the fact that the difference between the Armenian and Orthodox Churches clearly exists, even though the cause of the schism is political antagonism rather than theological polemics. Consequently, he insists that for the realization of union, "correction" of the difference would be inevitable. Porfirij, on the other hand, has a more "ecumenical" view that since the differences between the two churches are only superficial, they agree with each other in essence, and there is no need of special preparation before union. However, each of the men was on the side of the Orthodox Church, and it is true that they considered union as a "return" of the Armenian Church to the Orthodox. It is noteworthy that Nerses Šnorhali first appeared in Russian theological study during the process of discussion about union, since this fact determined the direction of the study of Armenian theology in Russia in the future.

It has already been mentioned that in the first half of nineteenth century, Lazarev's circle made efforts to found Armenology in Russia, and some Russian scholars became involved in studies about Armenian history and the Armenian Church. One of the reasons for the development of study about the Armenian Church is that the "Položenie" of 1836 guaranteed the equal treatment of the Armenian Church with other "foreign confessions". However, it is also true that the stereotype of "Armenian heresy" was still deeply rooted in Russian theology. This contradiction appears in the famous petition of Catholicos Hovannes Karpeci to Czar Nikolaj I in 1841³⁷. In the beginning of the letter, the Catholicos points out that a book published in 1838 described the Armenian Church as the "heresy of Arius", and he required the tightening of censorship in order that any libelous description of the Armenian Church should not be published. The petition was sent to the synod through the Department of Religious Affairs of Foreign Confessions in the MIA and was discussed by members of the synod. Consequently, the claim of the Catholicos was considered by the synod to be justifiable, and one order was issued in the name of the Ober-Procurator: Since there is no Russian book that describes the true teaching of the Armenian Church and could be the standard for censorship, the Catholicos should designate a proper description of the teachings of the Armenian Church³⁸.

However, because of the death of Catholicos Hovannes in 1842, the order was not fulfilled for a long time, and in 1847, the MIA again ordered Catholicos Nerses Aštarakec'i to present the book about the confession of the Armenian

³⁶ Նույն տեղում:

³⁷ Матенадаран, ф. Архив Католикосата, оп. 126.

³⁸ Նույն տեղում:

Church³⁹. On January 13, 1850, the Catholicos sent a letter to the MIA, explaining that the letters of Nerses Šnorhali were the “perfect and satisfying” description of the faith of the Armenian Church and that they should provide readers with a deep understanding concerning the dogma of the church.⁴⁰ He also sent to the MIA and to the synod a book written by Aleksandr Makarovič Xudobašev with the title, *Historical memories of the teaching of Armenian Church, concerning the twelfth century*⁴¹, consisting of a Russian translation of the Conciliar Epistle (*Թուղթ ընդհանրապահ*⁴²) of Nerses Šnorhali. Since they were presented to the synod through the MIA by the Catholicos, Nerses Šnorhali's epistles attained the status of the “official” reference for the confession of the Armenian Church.

The translator Aleksandr Xudobašev was a Russian-Armenian who worked as a translator and a diplomat in the MIA. He was also known as the linguist who composed the Armenian-Russian dictionary. He devoted his passion to the promotion of Armenian culture and literature in Russia. The important point to emphasize is that he also aimed at union between the Orthodox and Armenian Churches. In a letter addressed to Xudobašev from a professor at the St. Petersburg Academy of Theology, he is described as “the only promoter of union”⁴³. As a unionist, he actively tried to discuss the matter of union with Russian theologians. It is noteworthy that Xudobašev published his opposition to the description of Murav'ev about the Armenian Church in the book, *Georgia and Armenia*⁴⁴. He criticized Murav'ev on account of the fact that his knowledge about Nerses Šnorhali was based only on Greek sources⁴⁵. On the other hand, Xudobašev also had friendly connections with Russian theologians, as discussed in the next chapter.

It is not our present concern to examine the work of Nerses Šnorhali itself in detail, but it is important to indicate one particular problem in Xudobašev's translation. Though he was an experienced translator, he was not a specialist in theology, and inaccuracy in the translation of theological terminology is sometimes found in his works. Above all, his translation of the word *xařnumn* (*խառնումն*) might be an obstacle for the correct understanding of the Christology of Nerses Šnorhali. The word *xařnumn* is used by Nerses Šnorhali to explain the miracle of the Incarnation, the mystical connection of the Divinity of Christ with his body.

³⁹ Матенадаран, ф. Архив Лазаревых, п. 136, ед. хр. 555.

⁴⁰ Նույն տեղում:

⁴¹ Худобашев А. М. Исторические памятники вероучения Армянской Церкви, относящиеся к XII столетию, СПб., 1847.

⁴² The Conciliar Epistle of Nerses Šnorhali was published in St. Petersburg (1788), Istanbul (1825), Ejmiacin (1865) and Jerusalem (1871). Xudobašev's translation is based on the version, published in St. Petersburg (1788).

⁴³ Նույն տեղում:

⁴⁴ See chapter 2-1.

⁴⁵ Худобашев А. М. Правда беспристрастного Армянина о второй части последнего сочинения А. Н. Муравьева, изданного в 1848 году под заглавием: “Грузия и Армения”. Сын отечества, СПб., 1849, с. 8.

As S. Stanbolc'yan mentions, in the Armenian Church, the term *xaġnumn* has a special meaning, as the translation for the word “σύγκρασις”, used by Church Fathers to explain the unity of Divinity with the body⁴⁶. *XAġnumn* is also used in Armenian translations of ancient Greek cosmological texts. In the Armenian version of *Cosmos* by Aristotle de Mund, *xaġnumn* is used as the translation for the term “κρᾶσις”, a mixture of two contrary elements that consists of the whole world, in which opposite elements or principles do not perish but are preserved in a harmonic system of nature⁴⁷.

XAġnumn is one of the key concepts in the Christology of Nerses Šnorhali. He defines the Incarnation of Logos as an unknowable “mixture” (*xaġnumn*) of the Divinity with human nature, which Christ accepted from the Virgin Mary⁴⁸. It should be emphasized that he separates the “mixture” as *xaġnumn* from the “mixture” in the Monophysite's concept of the Incarnation, in which the human nature is overwhelmed by Divinity and perishes, expressed in the Armenian word *šp'ot'umn* (շփոթումն)⁴⁹. However, it seems that the semantic difference between these two words had already been lost in the nineteenth century. In the Armenian-Russian dictionary, edited by Xudobašev himself, both *xaġnumn* and *šp'ot'umn* are translated into the same word, *smešenie* (mixture). Similarly, in the translation of Nerses Šnorhali, Xudobašev applies the word *smešenie* to *xaġnumn* and also to *šp'ot'umn*. This inaccuracy in terminology caused a certain obscurity in the Russian translation of Nerses Šnorhali and led to misunderstanding by Russian theologians.

Xudobašev's achievement in Russian theology is not only the publication of the translation of Nerses Šnorhali. Xudobašev also had active dialogues with Russian theologians concerning the Armenian Church. His effort brought about quite a positive reaction in the circle of theologians in St. Petersburg. First, it is clear that Xudobašev discussed the matter of union with Nikanor, a professor in the St. Petersburg Academy of Theology. In 1852, Nikanor sent two letters to Xudobašev⁵⁰. In one letter, he admired Nerses Šnorhali, saying that “he can be compared with Basil the Great or Gregory of Nazianzus”⁵¹, and in the other, he expressed concerns about the matter of union. In Nikanor's opinion, it would be difficult to realize a union between the Orthodox and Armenian Churches immediately, because it was still the case that few people agreed with the idea. He proposed some solutions: 1) to educate Armenians, who agreed with union, 2) to

⁴⁶ Նամականի, ԺԲ դար, Հայ-բյուզանդական եկեղեցական բանակցություններ, Սբ. Ներսես Շնորհալի, գրաբարից աշխարաբար թարգմանեց Սեդա Ստամբուլյանը (Էջմիածին, 2011, էջ 21):

⁴⁷ Aristotle de Mund. *On the Cosmos*. Furley, D. J. Aristotle, London, Cambridge, 1955, pp. 378-379. Յաղագս աշխարհի. Կորիւն Վարդապետի Մամբրէի վերծանողի եւ Դաւթի Անհաղթի մատենագրութիւնը, Վենետիկ, 1833, էջ 616:

⁴⁸ Ներսես Շնորհալի, Թուղթ ընդհանրական, Երուսաղեմ, 1871, էջ 89:

⁴⁹ Նույն տեղում, էջ 96:

⁵⁰ Российский государственный исторический архив, ф. 880, оп. 5, ед. хр. 394.

⁵¹ Նույն տեղում:

educate the Armenian clergy, who were well acquainted not only with Orthodox theology but also with secular studies, and make them persuade the Russian clergy that the “Armenian Church is not the heresy of Monophysite, but its confession is as pure as that of Orthodox Church”⁵². He even recommended “to choose two talented young students from the Institute of Lazarev and send them to us to St. Petersburg Academy of Theology to finish the course”⁵³.

Among the circle of theologians of the St. Petersburg Academy of Theology, Germogen (or Ermogen, and as a layman-Konstantin Petrovič Dbronravin, 1819–1893) actively dealt with the study of the Armenian Church. He was the author of the articles, “Short abstract of Armenian-Gregorian Church”⁵⁴ and “Teaching of Armenian Church”, published in the journal of the St. Petersburg Academy of Theology, *Religious dialogues* (Духовная беседа). It is noteworthy that Germogen, who had no knowledge of the Armenian language, was provided materials directly by Xudobašev. According to Germogen's recollection, Xudobašev, who was almost blind because of his old age, taught him the Armenian alphabet and pronunciations and made Germogen read the book to him, and just by listening, translated it orally into Russian⁵⁵. Germogen also referred to the following Russian books: *Letters of Nerses Šnorhali*, translated by Xudobašev, *Creed of Armenian Church* by Hovsep Argutyan (Iosif Argutinsko-Dlgorukij)⁵⁶, and *Dogma of Armenian Church as Orthodoxy* by Salantyan⁵⁷. On the basis of these materials, Germogen insisted that it was a misunderstanding to consider the Armenian Church as Monophysite, because its teaching was, in spite of the difference in some expressions, the same as that of the Orthodox Church. However, he also criticized the fact that the Armenian Church used the expression “one nature of Christ”.

In the 1840s, the Russian MIA made a proposal of union between the Armenian and Orthodox Churches, but union was not achieved because the MFA considered that protecting the independence of the Armenian Church would benefit the political interests of the Russian Empire and would strengthen ties with Armenians in the Middle East through the authority of the Eǰmjaçin Catholicos. However, the situation in the Ottoman Empire made the movement toward union the more favored option among Orthodox theologians. It is well-known that in the nineteenth century, Roman Catholic missions rapidly spread that church's own influence all over the Middle East, with the active support of the French government.

⁵² Նույն տեղում:

⁵³ Նույն տեղում:

⁵⁴ Гермоген (Добронравин). Краткий очерк Армяно-Григорианской Церкви. Духовная беседа, N 45, 1858. Его же – Вероучение Армянской Церкви. Духовная беседа, N 48, 1858.

⁵⁵ “Ермоген” Галкин А. К. Православная Энциклопедия, т. 3, М., 2001.

⁵⁶ See Chapter 2-1.

⁵⁷ Unfortunately, the author has not succeeded yet to find this article.

While the Russian MIA made the proposal of union between the Orthodox and Armenian Churches in the 1840s, on the other hand, the Catholic Church also tried to unite with the Armenian Church in the Ottoman Empire. In 1848, the Armenian Patriarch in Istanbul, Mateos Cxazyan, received a proposal of union from the Catholic Church. The activity of the Catholic Church in the Ottoman Empire became even more direct in the second half of the nineteenth century. With the strong interference of the French government, the Armenian-Catholic *millet* was recognized by the Sultan Abdülmecid I in 1860, and in 1867, the Roman Pope Pius IX ordained a bishop of the Armenian-Catholic Church in Cilicia⁵⁸. The Russian government considered this affair as a counter-measure by Western governments against Russia, who tried to influence Turkish Armenians thorough the Eĵmiaĉin Catholicos⁵⁹. In addition, in 1868, Roman Pope Pius IX invited the Armenian Patriarch of Istanbul to the Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, a meeting that did not come to pass because the Eĵmiaĉin Catholicos Geverg IV denied permission to the Patriarch⁶⁰.

Under these conditions, from 1864 to 1866 in “Byzantis”, the newspaper of the Orthodox Church published in Istanbul, the Metropolitan of Cios, Gregorios, published the article entitled, “How can the union between Armenian and Orthodox Churches be realized?”. As V. G. Tunyan mentions, the union was proposed as a countermeasure against the rapid expansion of the influence of Catholicism among Christians in the Ottoman Empire⁶¹. In the article, Gregorios proposes concrete measures for the union:

1) Discuss the difference between Armenian and Orthodox Churches in advance and organize a commission, where various problems should be discussed in advance of union.

2) On the basis of the Ecumenical Church, the Orthodox Church should make a concession to the Armenian Church⁶².

Gregorios insisted that the two churches should achieve agreement on secondary problems through the commission. Regarding the dogmatic problems, based on the fact that the Armenian Church also anathematized heretics who were anathematized in the seven Ecumenical Councils and that the Armenian Church itself was never declared as heretical in any Ecumenical Councils, Gregorios considered baptism in the Armenian Church valid for the Orthodox Church. Gregorios also refers to the example of Nerses Šnorhali, in which the Armenian Church reached agreement with the Byzantine Church, and he insists on the possibility of the realization of union in his days. In addition, he argues

⁵⁸ **Тунян В. Г.** “Положение” Армянской Церкви 1836-1875, Е., 2001, с. 113.

⁵⁹ Նույն տեղում էջ 114:

⁶⁰ Նույն տեղում էջ 117-118:

⁶¹ Նույն տեղում էջ 120:

⁶² Григорий, митрополит Хиосский. Каким образом может осуществиться единение армянской и православно-католической церкви (русский перевод). Христианское чтение, СПб., 1868, с. 811.

that the Orthodox Church should allow the Armenian Church to continue using “one nature” in their creed after the union, if only they declare their acceptance of the seven Ecumenical Councils and recognize that the Chalcedon Creed is also the true confession of Christian faith⁶³.

In 1866, he also published another article, “About measures to achieve the union between Armenian and Orthodox Churches”, in which he refers to the dialogues between Theorianos and Nerses Šnorhali and tries to emphasize the “infallibility”⁶⁴ of the Armenian Church. Based on the description of the Armenian confession in the dialogue between Theorianos and Nerses Šnorhali, Gregorios concludes that the Armenian Church is neither Monophysite nor Theopassionist and that the church rejected the Chalcedon Creed because of the “poverty of their language, which prevent them to understand the dogmatic description of Ecumenical Councils”⁶⁵. This article was translated into Armenian and published in an Armenian newspaper in Istanbul⁶⁶. It is worth mentioning that the Armenian translation of Gregorios’s article was prepared for publication in Russia, but publication was not realized because of its prohibition by the MIA, which was afraid to stimulate a nationalistic movement among Armenians.

Although the project of union by Metropolitan Gregorios was never discussed in political fields, it became an actual issue for Russian theologians after the publication of his works in Russian translation, in the journal of the St. Petersburg Academy of Theology, *Christian Readings*, 1868–1869⁶⁷. I. Y. Troickij (1837–1901), in particular, actively dealt with the problem of union with the Armenian Church, becoming interested in the Armenian Church due to Metropolitan Gregorios’s articles. His concern was to inspect the possibility of union between the Orthodox and Armenian Churches, proposed by Gregorios, and he began to deal with the letters of Nerses Šnorhali, translated by Xudobašev. From 1869 to 1870, he serially published the article, “On the problem regarding the approach of Armenian Church to Orthodox Church”⁶⁸, but he considered the problem of union too heavy to deal with in the article, and he continued his research in his doctoral thesis, published in 1875 under the title, “The confession of Armenian Church, inscribed by Nerses, Armenian Catholicos, on the request from God-loving monarch of Greeks Manuel”⁶⁹.

⁶³ Նույն տեղում, էջ 811:

⁶⁴ Григорий, митрополит Хиосский. О мерах к достижению единения Армянской и Православно-Католической Церкви (русский перевод). Христианское чтение, СПб., 1868, с. 61.

⁶⁵ Նույն տեղում, էջ 81:

⁶⁶ Туян В. Г. “Положение” Армянской Церкви 1836-1875 гг., с. 120.

⁶⁷ See the footnotes 60 and 62.

⁶⁸ Троицкий И. Е. К вопросу о сближении Армянской Церкви с Православной. Христианское чтение, N 1 (1869), N 5 (1869), N 10 (1870).

⁶⁹ Троицкий И. Е. Изложение веры церкви армянской, начертанное Нерсесом, католикосом Армянским, по требованию боголюбивого государя греков Мануила, СПб., 1875.

In this thesis, Troickij tries to compare the confession of the Armenian Church with that of the Orthodox Church and the Monophysites, referring to the text of Nerses Šnorhali in Xudobašev's translation, since he was not acquainted with the Armenian language. Troickij's main purpose is to reveal the dogmatic differences between the Armenian and Orthodox Churches. Though he supported the idea of union, he was skeptical about the statement of Metropolitan Gregorios that the Armenian Church agreed with the Orthodox Church in the dogmatic problem and that union could be achieved without correcting the phrases in the church's creed. Raising the question of whether the teaching of the Armenian Church really is the same as that of the Orthodox Church and whether the Armenian Church has nothing in common with Monophysitism⁷⁰, he compares the doctrines of the Armenian Church, the Orthodox Church, and the Monophysites. His method of analysis is to investigate the "indications" (признаки) in the text of Nerses Šnorhali. He defines some terms, such as "one nature", "mixture (of two natures)", and "change (of nature)" as "Monophysitic" indications and others, like "two natures", "one hypostasis", and "union", as "Orthodox" indications. The "Monophysitic" indication, by Troickij's definition, also includes the word *xařnumn*, which is translated by Xudobašev as "mixture (смешение)", not distinguished from *šp'ot'umn* (see Chapters 2 and 3). This problem in translation led Troickij to criticize Nerses Šnorhali in that although recognizing the Incarnation as the unity of "two natures", he uses the Monophysitic term "mixture" (of two natures)⁷¹. On the basis of that analysis of terms as "indications", Troickij concludes that the Christology of Nerses Šnorhali agrees with Orthodoxy in some aspects, but at the same time has elements of Monophysitism, with which the Armenian Church has a tight connection⁷².

Regarding the problem of union, Troickij takes the position that a certain degree of "correction" of the dogmatic doctrine of the Armenian Church is necessary for the union, because it still has some "Monophysitic" elements. He insists that the union should be achieved as a "dogmatic union" and not as the "utilitarian union" proposed by Metropolitan Gregorios.⁷³ In other words, Troickij opposes Gregorios, who takes the position that there is no difference between the two churches, whereas Troickij insists on the existence of "Monophysic" elements in Armenian Christology. From that point of view, Troickij insists that the union should be realized not by compromise or concession from the side of the Orthodox Church, but by the voluntary intention of the Armenian Church and by a denial of all non-Orthodox elements in its

⁷⁰ Նույն տեղում: Предисловие.

⁷¹ Նույն տեղում, էջ 98-103:

⁷² Նույն տեղում, էջ 175:

⁷³ Նույն տեղում, էջ 337-338:

dogmatic description⁷⁴. At the same time, he reveals the quite optimistic perspective that realization of the dogmatic union is just “a matter of time”⁷⁵.

Troickij’s thesis was defended at a public debate held at the St. Petersburg Academy of Theology in April 1875, in the presence of some hierarchs and professors of the academy. According to the record of the discussion, there were some Armenians in the audience⁷⁶. At the beginning of the debate, Troickij revealed his own stance that the schism of the Armenian Church should be understood in the context of the Christological polemics, not accepting that political problems and interests were the main reasons for the schism and that the dogmatic problems were just secondary⁷⁷. His effort received a certain degree of estimation from the commentators. However, I. V. Čericov, a professor of the St. Petersburg Academy of Theology and known as a distinguished scholar of ecclesiastical history, criticized Troickij’s stance as “tendentious”, saying that he overemphasized the “Monophysic” aspects in terms and expressions used in the description of Nerses Šnorhali⁷⁸. Čericov gave the opinion that Nerses Šnorhali, preserving the doctrines and terms traditionally used in the Armenian Church, tried to give them new Orthodox meanings⁷⁹. The record informs us that Nerses Šnorhali became a subject of discussion among Russian theologians in the last half of the nineteenth century.

From what has been discussed above, it is concluded that in the nineteenth century in Russia, Nerses Šnorhali was examined by theologians, who entertained the idea of union between the Armenian and Orthodox Churches. Whether this idea might have been motivated by political interests, by pure Christian love, or by the ideal of the realization of the “Ecumenical Church”, the issue of union led these theologians to study Nerses Šnorhali, who was a promoter of union with the Orthodox Church in the twelfth century. The unionistic concern improved the status of the Armenian Church in Russian theology, which had considered the church as heretical for a long time. However, since unionists explained the dogmatic differences between the two churches as the consequence of “external” factors-political antagonism or differences in language-they were not interested in questions such as, “Why are they different?” and they did not find any originality in the descriptions of Nerses Šnorhali. On the other hand, other unionists, who believed that dogmatic differences did exist, from the Orthodox viewpoint, defined the “difference” in the dogma of the Armenian Church as an “error”, which should be corrected to realize union in the future, and they did not find it important to investigate erroneous doctrine. Therefore, it can be said that the idea of union raised interest

⁷⁴ Նույն տեղում, էջ 339:

⁷⁵ Նույն տեղում:

⁷⁶ Публичные прения в С.-Петербургской духовной академии об Армянской Церкви (Церковный вестник, N 17, СПб., 1875, с. 2).

⁷⁷ Նույն տեղում, էջ 7-8:

⁷⁸ Նույն տեղում, էջ 56:

⁷⁹ Նույն տեղում:

in Nerses Šnorhali, but at the same time, it prevented these theologians from finding any originality.

It is true that Nerses Šnorhali himself was the promoter of union, and it is impossible to understand his theology beyond that historical context. However, it is also true that preservation of the traditions of the Armenian Church was also the main concern of Nerses Šnorhali, along with the achievement of agreement with the Orthodox Church. It still remains to be discussed what he tried to change and what he tried to protect in the dialogues with the Orthodox Church. From this viewpoint, it is necessary to examine his theology in his original words and to understand it not on the level of terminology, but in essence. In addition, since in Russia Nerses Šnorhali has been the only source for study of the theology of the Armenian Church until the present time, not only he, but various other Armenian theologians, should be the subjects of further investigation, in order to realize the “mutual” understanding of the two churches in dogmatic problems.

ՆԵՐՏԵՍ ՇՆՈՐՀԱԼԻՆ XIX ԴԱՐԻ ՌՈՒՍ ԱՍՏՎԱԾԱԲԱՆՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՄԵՋ

ՀԱՄԱԴԱ Կ. (Ճապոնիա, Տոկիո)

Ամփոփում

Չնայած Ռուս ուղղափառ և Հայ առաքելական եկեղեցիների բազմադարյան սերտ կապին ու համագործակցությանը՝ ռուս աստվածաբանության մեջ ցայսօր տեղ չեն գտել հայ եկեղեցուն նվիրված հիմնարար աշխատություններ, և առկա են որոշակի տարաձայնություններ, որոնք կարող են խոչընդոտել եկեղեցիների միջև աստվածաբանական երկխոսությանը:

Ուստի, այդ տարաձայնությունները բացահայտելու և դրանց հնարավոր լուծումները առաջադրելու անհրաժեշտություն է առաջանում: Այս առնչությամբ տեղին է ուսումնասիրությունը սկսել Ներսես Շնորհալուց, որը հայ միակ հոգևորականն է, որին ճանաչում և ընդունում է Ռուս ուղղափառ եկեղեցին:

НЕРСЕС ШНОРАЛИ В РУССКОЙ ТЕОЛОГИИ XIX ВЕКА

АМАДА К. (Япония, Токио)

Резюме

Несмотря на многовековую связь русской православной и армянской апостольской церкви в русской теологии по сей день нет фундаментальных исследований, посвященных армянской церкви. Помимо этого имеются определенные разногласия, которые в дальнейшем могут воспрепятствовать диалогу двух церквей. В силу сказанного необходимо выявить эти разногласия и предложить их решение. И поскольку Нерсес Шнорали был единственным религиозным деятелем, который был известен и признан русской православной церковью, то исследование отношений двух церквей следует начать с изучения роли Нерсеса Шнорали в становлении этих отношений.