PREREQUISITES FOR THE EMERGENCE AND FORMATION OF INDEPENDENT THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT IN THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

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Abstract

The Christian faith stands as one of the cornerstones in the formation of Armenian identity, uniquely manifested through Armenian theological thought. Rooted in pivotal ecclesiastical-historical events, this thought has evolved, deepened, and been refined over centuries, creating a rich heritage that reflects both universal Christian traditions and the unique spiritual and cultural character of the Armenian people. This article addresses the early periods of the Armenian Church's history (from its foundation to the beginning of the 6th century). Its focus of study includes historical events such as the introduction of Christianity to Armenia and its adoption as a state religion, as well as the invention of the Armenian alphabet and its impact on Armenian Christian thought. The article also touches upon the universal and local ecclesiastical challenges of the time, aiming to reveal how the ecclesiastical authors and events of that era shaped and crystallized Armenian Christian theological thought. This thought responded to both internal religious needs and the developments in global Christianity, thereby defining the unique character of Armenian theological thought.

The Armenian Church from its Foundation to St. Gregory the Illuminator

According to the history of the Universal Church, the disciples of Jesus Christ, departing from Judea, spread their apostolic activities throughout the world, preaching Christian doctrine and theology. Among the apostles, St. Thaddeus (43-66 AD) and St. Bartholomew (60-68 AD) came to Armenia, where through tireless preaching and the baptism of pagan Armenians, they laid the foundation for the Church of Christ. After their martyrdom, the Church continued its mission, becoming an important center for the spread of Christianity.

To ensure the continuity of the apostles' preaching and to meet the spiritual needs of new converts, bishops were successively ordained. These bishops operated

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clandestinely[1] until Christianity was declared the state religion, which elevated the issue of Christianity's development to an entirely new level. The first Catholicos of Armenia, St. Gregory the Illuminator (302-325 AD), upon ascending the patriarchal throne, spurred the development of ritual and spiritual educational life. However, given that Armenians did not have their own script, both during the preceding period of the apostles and their successor bishops, and during this era, the dissemination of Christian doctrine among the people occurred orally.[2]

It must be acknowledged that it is difficult to speak definitively about Armenian theological conceptions characteristic of this period, as the preserved works claiming to date from the 4th century[3] were either directly created in Armenian or, at best, were translated into Armenian only after the invention of the alphabet, thus, in any case, bearing the imprint of the 5th century.

Nevertheless, there are some important points that are impossible to deny:

- From the preaching of the apostles until the adoption of Christianity as the state religion, Christian communities always existed in Armenia; consequently, the Christian faith and doctrine were preserved and passed down from generation to generation.

- After the adoption of Christianity as the state religion, the spread of faith and Christian doctrine not only became unhindered (at least at the official level) but also gained new momentum, as both Christians and preachers of Christianity increased in number.

Since it is characteristic of human thought to develop and progress in accordance with the times, alongside the preservation of faith and its subsequent spread, it is certain that the unique Armenian theological thought also underwent corresponding development.

Testimony to these views is the fact that among the 318 bishops who participated in the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea in 325 AD, was also the Armenian Patriarch Aristakes I (325-333 AD). According to Movses Khorenatsi's testimony, Aristakes I took with him to Nicaea a confession of faith (written) affirmed by King Trdat and his father, Gregory the Illuminator. Upon his return, he brought to Armenia the Nicene Creed, established during the Council, as a "credible foundation" for the Christian faith and a definition of Orthodox doctrine.[4]

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[1] See Ormanian 2001: 27-68.

[2] See Ormanian 2001: 104-105.

[3] This refers to works attributed to St. Gregory the Illuminator, two of which can be subjected to scrutiny from the perspective of theological study: "Frequent Discourses" and "The Teaching of Saint Gregory." Both, however, even if theoretically containing ideas specific to the Illuminator, cannot in themselves belong to the Illuminator's pen, as they are works composed as complete entities in the 5th-6th centuries (see Sahakyan 2022: 165-185, The Teaching of Saint Gregory, trans. from Grabar, preface and notes by Arevshatyan 2007: 10–12, Thomson 2001: 52-53).

[4] See Movses Khorenatsi 2003: 1991-1992.

Armenia and the Armenian Church After St. Gregory the Illuminator Until the Mid-5th Century

With the declaration of Christianity as the state religion, the dissemination and development of Christian theological thought were initiated. However, it is necessary to briefly address the historical realities of the period to understand the direction of its development.

Even on the eve of the adoption of Christianity, two powerful empires of the time, Persia and the Roman Empire, were in constant struggle to extend their military-political influence over Great Armenia. From the mid-3rd century, Persian princes ruling in Armenia, within the same logic, attempted to forcibly spread Zoroastrianism in the country, opposing paganism, to which both the Romans and Armenians adhered. However, with the state adoption of Christianity, Armenia opposed both Persia and Rome, strengthening its religious and political independence.

Naturally, the two superpowers, engaged in mutual struggle, and Armenia, located on their path of conflict and capable of providing great assistance to them, could not reconcile themselves with the latter's religious independence and political autonomy. With the aim of subjugating Armenia and thereby succeeding in their struggle against each other, these powers constantly attempted to interfere in the internal affairs of Great Armenia, sometimes by creating discord, sometimes by attempts at appeasement, and sometimes by religious coercion.

After St. Gregory the Illuminator and St. Trdat III, up until the fall of the Arshakuni dynasty in the 5th century (428 AD), largely due to endless provocations by Rome and Persia between the royal court and the Nakharar (feudal lord) houses, and the struggle emerging from the royal approach against feudalism, Armenia and the life of the Armenian Church faced a struggle against internal fragmentation.[5] Added to this was the presence of pagan elements and proponents of paganism, including members the aristocracy. As an example of their struggle against Christianity, it suffices to recall the hatred incited against the Illuminator's sons, when Patriarch Aristakes I was murdered by a Nakharar of Sophene, and Patriarch Vrtanes I (333-341 AD) was subjected to an assassination attempt by about two thousand pagans enjoying the patronage of the queen and some Nakharars.[6]

Thus, the Church, without neglecting other aspects of its mission, remained engaged in the struggle against direct paganism and pagan practices within Christian-professing aristocratic circles from the second quarter of the 4th century to the first quarter of the 5th century. Meanwhile, the kingdom, largely due to internal discord and external influence, was ultimately condemned to the division of Great Armenia between the Roman and Persian Empires (387 AD), leading to the passing of the majority of Great Armenia under Persian rule and the fall of the Arshakuni kingdom (428 AD).

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[5] See History of Armenia 2018: 45-166.

[6] See History of Armenia 2018: 44, 46; Ormanian 2001: 129-130, 137-138.

After the fall of the Arshakuni kingdom of Great Armenia, Armenia, which was viewed as one of Persia's provinces, while preserving its internal autonomy and Christian religion, experienced economic, political, and spiritual-cultural development. This, naturally, would contradict Persia's state, political programs, and religious aspirations. Pursuing the goal of eliminating possible future rebellions of Armenians and weakening the Armenian Church, which was strengthening after the invention of the alphabet (404 AD) and embodying the country's statehood, Persian King Yazdegerd II, following many of his predecessors, decided to convert Armenians to Zoroastrianism and establish it in Armenia. This met with fierce opposition from the Armenians and eventually led to the Battle of Avarayr in 451 AD (May 26). This battle deterred the Persians from their intention to convert Armenians, but as a result, many Armenian Nakharars were captured or killed, dealing a severe blow to Armenia's stability and strength. High-ranking clergymen, including Catholicos Hovsep I Hoghotsmetsi, were also taken to Ctesiphon with the captured Nakharars and executed.

Nevertheless, the first half of the 5th century is considered a favorable period for the spiritual, scientific, and cultural development of the Armenian Church and people. This is because it determined the "Golden Age" of Armenian history: the invention of the Armenian alphabet, the translation of the Bible, liturgical, theological, and philosophical works, the emergence and flourishing of original Armenian literature, and the strengthening of Christianity and national unity based on these developments.

It is noteworthy that the division of Armenia between the Roman-Byzantine and Persian empires compelled Armenia, and in some sense, provided it with the opportunity to benefit from two cultural sources. A vivid proof of this is that during the invention of the alphabet and in the subsequent period, St. Mesrop Mashtots and his disciples traveled to both Edessa and Caesarea. This, in turn, deepened the inherent dual Greek-Syriac character of Armenian theological thought.[7]

Syriac-type Christianity was widespread in Armenia even before the enthronement of St. Gregory the Illuminator, and thus was more influential. However, particularly during the period of St. Sahak I Partev (387-439 AD), he and his supporters began to show a clear and particular inclination towards the Greek tradition. This, in turn, became a contributing factor for Persia to temporarily deprive St. Sahak of the Catholicosal throne and entrust the Catholicosate to the Syriac-born bishop Surmak.[8]

Thus, by the 5th century, these two Christian currents, already firmly established in Armenia, never merged, retaining their distinct characteristics. Yet, from the 5th century onwards, they could no longer remain separate, as the religious-scholarly culture that emerged after the invention of the alphabet utilized both, creating its own unique synthesis based on them.

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[7] See Sargsyan 2012: 93-98, 109-133.

[8] See Sargsyan 2012: 130, History of Armenia 2018: 161-166, Winkler 2000: 112-113.

The Nicene Creed and Its Application in the Armenian Church in the 5th Century

Ecumenical Councils, convened to resolve theological issues that challenged Church unity and to stabilize the general unity and concord of the Church, became milestones in the definition of Orthodox doctrine. The Armenian Church has accepted and continues to accept three Ecumenical Councils:

- The Council convened in Nicaea in 325 AD, attended by 318 bishops. By anathematizing Arius, the presbyter of Alexandria, and his doctrine that Christ was a created being, they defined the divinity of Jesus Christ as a matter of faith.

- The Council of Constantinople in 381 AD, attended by 150 bishops. By condemning the Pneumatomachian doctrine (πνευματομαχία) of Macedonius and his followers, they reaffirmed the Nicene Creed, adding to it the tenet of the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

- The Council of Ephesus in 431 AD, during which Patriarch Nestorius of Constantinople was condemned on the charge of dividing Christ into two. The Council was attended by 200 bishops who, as a definition of Orthodox doctrine, approved the teaching presented by St. Cyril of Alexandria, Nestorius's opponent, and in particular, his 12 anathemas.

As a result of the first two Ecumenical Councils, two well-known formulations of faith have reached us as definitions of the Church's faith: the Creeds of the 318 and 150 Fathers. The second, the Creed formulated during the Council of Constantinople, is a modified version of the Creed adopted at the Nicene Council. It gained wider acceptance over time, being codified in ecclesiastical ritual books as the "Nicene Creed." Later, as a manifestation of the common theology of the two Ecumenical Councils, it also received the name "Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed".[9]

Below is a comparison of the Nicene Creed texts. The first column presents the Armenian (Grabar) text, the second column the Greek text from the Council of Nicaea (318 Fathers), the third column the Greek text from the Council of Constantinople (150 Fathers), and the fourth column the Armenian (Grabar) text from the Council of Constantinople.

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[9] The issues of the origin and authorship of the two creeds are not yet closed, thus providing an opportunity for new studies (see Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta 1973: 2, 21-22).

Յոյցք [հաւատոյ] ՅՃԸ հարց Ἔκθεσις τῶν τιη´ πατέρων[10]		Յոյցք [հաւատոյ] ՃԾ հարց Ἔκθεσις τῶν ρν´ πατέρων[11]
Հաւատամք	Πιστεύομεν	Πιστεύομεν
ի մի Աստուած,	εἰς ἕνα Θεὸν	εἰς ἕνα θεὸν
հայր	πατέρα	πατέρα
ամենակալ,	παντοκράτορα,	παντοκράτορα,
ամենեցուն	πάντων	ποιητὴν
		οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς
երեւելեաց եւ	ὁρατῶν τε καὶ	ὁρατῶν τε πάντων
աներեւութից	ἀοράτων ποιητήν·	καὶ ἀοράτων·
արարիչն		
եւ ի մի տէր	καὶ εἰς ἕνα κύριον	καὶ εἰς ἕνα κύριον
Յիսուս Քրիստոս`	Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν	Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν
յորդին աստուծոյ,	τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ	τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ
ծնեալ	γεννηθέντα	τὸν μονογενῆ,
ի հօրէ	ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς	τὸν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς γεννηθέντα
միածին,	μονογενῆ,	*πρὸ πάντων*
այսինքն	*τουτέστιν ἐκ τῆς*	*τῶν αἰώνων,*
ի գոյութենէ հօր,	*οὐσίας τοῦ*	
	πατρός,	

[10] Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta 1973: 5, cf. Aznavoryan 2016: 11; Ajemian 2001: 4-6: Modern Armenian: Statement of Faith of the 318 Fathers: We believe in one God, the Almighty Father, Creator of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, born of the Father, the Only-begotten, that is, of the Father's existence; God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not created, consubstantial with the Father, by whom all things were made, both in heaven and on earth. Who for us humans and for our salvation came down and was incarnate, became man, suffered and rose on the third day, ascended into heaven, and is coming to judge the living and the dead. [We believe] also in the Holy Spirit. But as for those who say that there was a time when he was not, and that he was not before he was begotten, or that he was created from nothing, or who say, as they claim, that the Son of God is of a different essence or existence, mutable or alterable, the universal and apostolic Church anathematizes them.

[11] Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta 1973: 24, cf. Aznavoryan 2016: 12, Ajemian 2001: 7-9: Modern Armenian: Statement of Faith of the 150 Fathers: We believe in one God, the Almighty Father, Creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only-begotten, begotten of the Father before all ages, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not created, consubstantial with the Father, by whom all things were made. Who for us humans and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate and suffered and was buried, and rose on the third day according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He is coming again with glory to judge the living and the dead, whose kingdom shall have no end. [We believe] also in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father, who is worshipped and glorified with the Father and the Son, who spoke through the prophets. [We believe] in one holy, universal, and apostolic Church. We confess one Baptism for the remission of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come. Amen.

աստուած յաստուծոյ,	***θεὸν ἐκ θεοῦ,***	
լոյս ի լուսոյ,	φῶς ἐκ φωτός,	φῶς ἐκ φωτός,
աստուած ճշմարիտ	θεὸν ἀληθινὸν	θεόν ἀληθινὸν
յաստուծոյ ճշմարտէ,	ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ,	ἐκ θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ,
ծնեալ,	γεννηθέντα	γεννηθέντα
ոչ արարեալ,	οὐ ποιηθέντα,	οὐ ποιηθέντα,
համագոյ իւր,	ὁμοούσιον τῷ	ὁμοούσιον τῷ πατρί,
որով ամենայն ինչ	πατρί,	δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα
եղեւ,	δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα	ἐγένετο,
	ἐγένετο,	
որ ինչ յերկինս	***τὰ τε ἐν τῷ***	
և որ ինչ յերկրի,	***οὐρανῷ***	
	καὶ τὰ ἐν τῇ γῇ,	
որ վասն մեր	τὸν δι' ἡμᾶς	τὸν δι' ἡμᾶς
մարդկան	τοὺς ἀνθρώπους	τοὺς ἀνθρώπους
եւ վասն	καὶ διὰ τὴν	καὶ διὰ τὴν
մերոյ	ἡμετέραν	ἡμετέραν
փրկութեան	σωτηρίαν	σωτηρίαν κατελθόντα
էջ	κατελθόντα	***ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν***
		καὶ σαρκωθέντα
եւ մարմնացաւ	καὶ σαρκωθέντα,	***ἐκ πνεύματος***
		ἀγίου
		και Μαρίας
		τῆς παρθένου
		καὶ
մարդացաւ,	ἐνανθρωπήσαντα,	ἐνανθρωπήσαντα
		σταυρωθέντα
		τε υπέρ ημῶν ἐπὶ
		Ποντίου Πιλάτου
չարչարեցաւ	παθόντα	***καὶ*** παθόντα
		καὶ ταφέντα
եւ յարեաւ	καὶ ἀναστάντα	καὶ ἀναστάντα
յերրորդ աւուր,	τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ,	τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ
		κατὰ τὰς γραφὰς
ել	ἀνελθόντα	***καὶ*** ἀνελθόντα
յերկինս,	εἰς τοὺς οὐρανούς,	εἰς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς
		καὶ καθεζόμενον
		ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ
		πατρὸς
		καὶ πάλιν
գալոց է	ἐρχόμενον	ἐρχόμενον
		μετά δόξης
ի դատել զկենդանիս	κρῖναι ζῶντας	κρῖναι ζώντας
և զմեռեալս	καὶ νεκρούς	καὶ νεκρούς,
		οὗ τῆς βασιλείας
		οὐκ ἔσται τέλος·
եւ ի սուրբ	καὶ εἰς τὸ ἅγιον	καὶ εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα
հոգին:	πνεύμα.	τὸ ἅγιον,

| | τὸ κύριον καὶ ζωοποιόν, τὸ ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον, τὸ σὺν πατρὶ καὶ υἱῷ συμπροσκυνούμενον καὶ συνδοξαζόμενον, τὸ λαλῆσαν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν· εἰς μίαν ἁγίαν καθολικὴν καὶ ἀποστολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν· ὁμολογοῦμεν ἓν βάπτισμα εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν· προσδοκῶμεν ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν καὶ ζωὴν τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος. ἀμήν. |

Իսկ որք ասեն՝	Τοὺς δὲ λέγοντας
էր երբեմն յորժամ	ἦν ποτε ὅτε
զի չէր,	οὐκ ἦν
եւ մինչչեւ	καὶ πρὶν
ծնեալ էր՝	γεννηθῆναι
չէ՛ր,	οὐκ ἦν
եւ զի	καὶ ὅτι
յոչէից	ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων
եղեւ,	ἐγένετο,
կամ յայլմէ	ἢ ἐξ ἑτέρας
էութենէ կամ	ὑποστάσεως ἢ
գոյութենէ	οὐσίας,
ասեն	φάσκοντας
որդին աստուծոյ է,	τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ
փոփոխելի կամ	εἶναι
այլայլելի,	τρεπτὸν ἢ
զայնպիսին	ἀλλοιωτόν,
նզովէ	τούτους
կաթուղիկէ եւ	ἀναθεματίζει ἡ
առաքելական	καθολικὴ καὶ
եկեղեցի:	ἀποστολικὴ ἐκκλησία.

As noted, after the First Ecumenical Council, Catholicos Aristakes I brought the Creed defined during the council to Armenia. This Creed was presumably kept in Greek in the Armenian Church, considering that before the invention of the alphabet in the 5th century, church rites and the reading of the Holy Scriptures were also performed in Greek. It was only with the invention of the Armenian alphabet in 404 AD that indigenous Armenian literature began. After this, under the leadership and direct involvement of St. Sahak I Partev and St. Mesrop Mashtots, the Holy Scriptures were translated, the most important ecclesiastical texts were rendered into Armenian, and the theology of the Armenian Church gained written form. It was also at this time that the Creed used in the Armenian Church must have been translated.

At the beginning of the 6th century, Catholicos Babken I Otmtsi (490-516 AD) presented a creed in his first letter to the Christians of Persia, about which he testifies: "This is how we believed, as we were baptized, and the holy fathers canonized it; and there is no other rule outside of this, and we have not accepted it, and we do not accept it".[12]

The presented creed is the Nicene Creed, with very small differences.

Յոյցք [հաւատոյ] ՅԺԸ հարց	Թուղթ ի Պարսս[13]
Հաւատամք ի մի Աստուած, հայր ամենակալ, ամենեցուն երեւելեաց եւ աներեւութից արարիչն եւ ի մի տէր Յիսուս Քրիստոս՝ յորդին աստուծոյ, ծնեալ ի հօրէ միածին, այսինքն ի գոյութենէ (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας) հօր, Աստուած յաստուծոյ, լոյս ի լուսոյ, աստուած ճշմարիտ յաստուծոյ ճշմարտէ, ծնեալ, ոչ արարեալ, համագոյ (ὁμοούσιον) հօր, որով ամենայն ինչ եղեւ, որ ինչ յերկինս ա	Հաւատամք ի մի Աստուած, Հայր ամենակալ, ամենեցուն երեւելեաց եւ աներեւութից արարիչ, եւ մի Տէր Յիսուս Քրիստոս, յՈրդին Աստուծոյ, ծնեալ ի Հաւրէ, Միածին այսինքն է ի գոյութենէ Հաւր։ Աստուած յԱստուծոյ, լոյս ի լուսոյ, Աստուած ճշմարիտ յԱստուծոյ ճշմարտէ, ծնեալ եւ ոչ արարեալ, Նոյն Էութիւն Հաւր, որով ամենայն ինչ եղեւ յերկինս եւ յերկրի։

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[12] [A] Letter of the Armenians 2004: 119: Modern Armenian: This is how we believed, just as we were baptized and the Holy Fathers established. There is no rule outside of this, and we have not accepted and do not accept any other.

[13] Modern Armenian: Letter to the Persians. We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of all things visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, Only-Begotten, that is, from the existence of the Father. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten and not made, the same essence as the Father, through Whom all things came into being, whatever is in heaven and whatever is on earth. Who for us humans and for our salvation came down and was incarnated from the Holy Virgin Mary, suffered for our sins, died and rose on the third day, ascended into heaven, sat at the right hand of the Father, is coming to judge the living and the dead. As for those who say that there was a time when He was not, and that He was not before He was begotten, or that He came into being from nothing, or, as they believe, is from another essence and being, or that the Son of God is changeable or perishable, the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes them.

որ ինչ յերկրի, որ վասն մեր մարդկան եւ վասն մերոյ փրկութեան էջ եւ մարմնացաւ, մարդացաւ, չարչարեցաւ եւ յարեաւ յերրորդ աւուր, եւ յերկինս, զալոց է ի դատել զկենդանիս և զմեռեալս եւ ի սուրբ հոգին: Իսկ որք ասեն՝ էր երբեմն յորժամ զի չէր, եւ մինչչեւ ծնեալ էր՝ չէ՛ր, եւ զի յոչից եղեւ, կամ յայլմէ էութենէ (ὑποστάσεως) կամ զոյութենէ (οὐσίας) ասեն որդին աստուծոյ է, փոփոխելի կամ այլայլելի, զայնպիսին նզովէ կաթուղիկէ եւ առաքելական եկեղեցի:	Որ վասն մեր մարդկան, եւ վասն մերոյ փրկութեան, էջ եւ մարմնացաւ *ի սրբոյ* *Կուսէն Մարիամայ*. չարչարեցաւ *վասն* *մեղաց մերոց. մեռաւ* եւ յերրորդ աւուր յարեաւ. եւ յերկինս, *նստաւ ընդ աջմէ* *Հաւր*. գայ դատել զկենդանիս եւ զմեռեալս: Եւ վասն այնոցիկ ոյք ասեն, էր երբեմն զի չէր, եւ մինչչեւ ծնեալ էր՝ չէ՛ր, եւ զի յոչնչէ եղեւ, կամ իբրեւ յայլմէ էութենէ կամ ի գոյութենէ համարին թէ իցէ, կամ փոփոխելի, կամ անցանելի զՈրդին Աստուծոյ, զնոսա նզովէ՛ կաթուղիկէ եւ առաքելական եկեղեցի:

This Creed, drafted by Catholicos Babken, testifies that in the Armenian Church, at the beginning of the 6th century (and therefore also before that, in the 5th century), the Creed established at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD was used[14]. However, this does not mean that the ecclesiastical fathers of the 5th century were unfamiliar with the Constantinopolitan recension, as evidenced by phrases found in Catholicos Babken's text such as "from the Holy Virgin Mary," "for our sins; died," and "sat at the right hand of the Father."

A similar Creed is also found in the letter addressed by St. Sahak Partev and St. Mesrop Mashtots to Patriarch Proclus of Constantinople, which must have been drafted immediately after the Council of Ephesus, i.e., in the 430s.

It begins as follows: «*Այլ մեք հաւատամք ի մի Աստուած, Հայր ամենակալ,*
արարիչ երկնից եւ երկրի, երեւելի եւ աներեւելի արարածոց: Եւ ի մի տէր Յիսուս
Քրիստոս, ի միածին Որդին Աստուծոյ, այսինքն է **էութիւն յէութենէ, էութիւն**
ծնեալ՝ *որով ամենայն եղեւ, Աստուած յԱստուծոյ, լոյս ի լուսոյ, ծնեալ եւ ոչ*
արարեալ, իսկակից Հաւր, որ վասն մեր մարդկութեան էջ եւ մարմնացաւ, յանձն
առ չարչարանս, յարեաւ յերիր աւուր, եւ ել յերկինս, եւ գայ դատել զկենդանիս եւ
զմեռեալս: Եւ ի Սուրբ Հոգին հաւատամք: Իսկ որք ասենն՝ էր երբեմն զի չէր, եւ
մինչչեւ ծնեալ էր չէր, եւ ասեն ի **չէութենէ** *եղեւ, եւ* **յայլմէ իմնմէ եւ զաւրութենէ,**
եւ կամ եղծանելով եւ փոփոխելով, զայնպիսին նզովեմք»[15]:

[14] Mekhitarist monastic H. Hovsep Gatrchyan, in his work dedicated to the Creed, objectively demonstrates that the Creed currently used by the Armenian Church is a later recension that differs from both the Nicene and Constantinopolitan Creeds (see Gatrchyan 1891: 2-4, 10). While acknowledging that the Creed used by the Armenian Church has undergone revisions over time, not all of the author's observations correspond to reality, which in turn speaks to the need for new research on the topic.

[15]Reply from Sahak and Mashtots 2003: 219-220. Modern Armenian: But we believe in one God, the Almighty Father, Creator of heaven and earth, of visible and invisible creatures. And in one Lord Jesus

Compared to the Nicene Creed and the Creeds presented by Catholicos Babken, the differences are very small, but significant. Unlike Catholicos Babken's Creed, that of Sahak Partev does not have the additions more characteristic of the Constantinopolitan Creed, such as "from the Holy Virgin Mary," "for our sins; died," "sat at the right hand of the Father," which makes it closer to the Nicene Creed than Catholicos Babken's. At the same time, Sahak Partev's Creed uses terms that differ significantly from those found in the Nicene and Catholicos Babken's Creeds, as shown in the table below:

Յոյցք [հաւատոյ] ՅԺԸ հարց	Թուղթ ի Պարսս	Պատասխանի թղթոյն Պրոկղի
…	…	…
այսինքն ի գոյութենէ հօր	այսինքն է ի գոյութենէ Հայր	այսինքն է *Էութիւն յԷութենէ, Էութիւն ծնեալ*
…	…	…
Համագոյ հօր	*նոյն Էութիւն* Հայր,	*իսկակից* Հայր,
…	…	…
եւ զի յոչէից եղեւ, կամ յայլմէ Էութենէ կամ գոյութենէ	եւ զի յոչնչէ եղեւ, կամ իբրեւ յայլմէ Էութենէ կամ ի գոյութենէ	եւ ասեն ի չԷութենէ եղեւ, եւ յայլմէ իմեմնէ եւ զաւրութենէ

Given the above, we can confidently state that throughout the 5th century, the Nicene Creed was used by the Armenian Church, most likely brought to Armenia by Aristakes I Partev. However, this does not mean that the Armenian Church's doctrine, particularly its Christology, was limited to the teachings of the Council of Nicaea (in which it participated). During this period, the doctrinal positions of the Councils of Constantinople and Ephesus were also widespread among Armenians, which is clearly evident from the aforementioned letter by St. Sahak Partev and St. Mesrop Mashtots to Patriarch Proclus of Constantinople. In this letter, in continuation of the Nicene Creed, the author states: *«Եւ վասն մարմնաւորութեան Որդոյ այսպէս հաւատամք. զի առ յանձն լինել մարդ կատարեալ յաստուածածինն Մարիամայ Սրբով Հոգւով, առեալ չուլչ եւ մարմին ճշմարիտ եւ ոչ կեղծեաւք, այսպէս եւ կատարեաց փրկել զմեր մարդկութիւնս, եւ ճշմարտիւ չարչարեցաւ: Ոչ եթէ ինքն պարտէր չարչարանաց, զի ազատ է աստուածութեանն ի չարչարանաց, այլ վասն մեր էառ յանձն զչարչարանս, խաչեցաւ եւ թաղեցաւ եւ յերիր աւուր յարեաւ, եւ յերկինս համբարձաւ, եւ ընդ աջմէ Հաւր նստաւ, եւ գալոց է ի դատել զկենդանիս եւ զմեռեալս»*[16]:

Christ, the Only-begotten Son of God, that is, He who is Essence from Essence, begotten Essence, by whom all things were made, God of God, Light of Light, begotten and not created, consubstantial (= of the same nature, of the same essence, - M.S.) with the Father, who for our humanity came down and was incarnate, took upon himself sufferings, rose on the third day, and ascended into heaven and is coming to judge the living and the dead. And we believe in the Holy Spirit. But as for those who say that there was a time when he was not, and that he was not before he was begotten, and they say that he did not come from Essence, or came from something else and power, or by destruction and change, such ones we anathematize.

[16] Reply from Sahak and Mashtots 2003: 220. Modern Armenian: And concerning the Son's taking on flesh, we believe thus: that when He undertook to become a perfect man from Mary the Theotokos through

This second part of the Creed[17] presented in the letter to Proclus testifies that the author was familiar with both the Creed of Constantinople and the events and established doctrine of the Council of Ephesus.

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the Holy Spirit, He truly and not fictitiously took breath and body, and thus accomplished the redemption of our humanity, and truly suffered. Not because He was subject to sufferings, for the Divinity is free from sufferings, but for our sake He undertook the sufferings, was crucified and buried, and rose on the third day, and ascended into heaven and sat at the right hand of the Father, and is coming to judge the living and the dead.

[17] H. Hovsep Gatrchyan, a Mkhitarist monk, asserts that St. Sahak Partev and St. Mesrop Mashtots, in their letter to Patriarch Proclus, copied the Creed they presented from Evagrius Ponticus, whose Greek original, unfortunately, has not been preserved (see Gatrchyan 1891: 21-23). Following Gatrchyan, H. Barsegh V. Sargsyan also writes in his book dedicated to Evagrius: "The phraseology of Evagrius' Creed and Sahak's letter is generally the same; to doubt this is superfluous. Therefore, it can be concluded, with all probability, that St. Sahak or his Secretary was familiar with at least the Armenian translation of Evagrius' Creed, for such a general similarity in phraseology could not have occurred by chance" (Sargsyan 1907: CXA). St. Sahak and his secretary, St. Mesrop Mashtots, were the first translators, and if they were familiar with the Armenian version of Evagrius' Creed, then they themselves must have translated it, or at least supervised that translation. However, when comparing the two versions of the Creed – St. Sahak's and Evagrius' Armenian translation – serious terminological differences become noticeable, such as, for example, "from the power of the Father" - "essence from essence, begotten essence," or "consubstantial with the Father" - "co-essential with the Father," "from some other power or essence" - "from some other thing and power," etc. (see Sargsyan 1907: CKT-CXA). Such terminological differences cannot be the result of chance, and it is evident that the Armenian translation of Evagrius' Creed is more refined in this regard than St. Sahak's Creed. For example, in the Nicene Creed, the term οὐσία is translated by Evagrius as "power" - "from the power of the Father," "consubstantial with the Father," whereas in St. Sahak's text, it is sometimes translated as "essence," and at other times as "reality." This means that although the texts of St. Sahak's Creed and Evagrius' Armenian translation of the Creed have the same structure and syntax, they cannot belong to the same scribe; therefore, they cannot be translations from the same period or copies of that translation. The more refined text, logically, should be dated later. We can speak more thoroughly about this issue thanks to the philologist Albert Musheghyan, who, unlike his predecessors, found and cited the Greek original of Evagrius' Creed, which was considered lost (see Musheghyan 1987: 71-78). Here, too, interesting facts emerge. In certain places, St. Sahak's Creed and Evagrius' Armenian translation both have differences from the Greek original but are consistent with each other. For example, the Greek original says "ἀνέλαβεν ἄνθρωπον τέλειον ἐκ τῆς ἁγίας Θεοτόκου Μαρίας, διά Πνεύματος ἁγίου, οὐκ ἀπὸ σπέρματος ἀνδρός· σῶμα δὲ καὶ ψυχὴν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ" (= he took upon himself to be a perfect man from the holy Theotokos Mary through the Holy Spirit, not from human seed; truly body and spirit; see Patrologiae 1857: 1638). In St. Sahak's text, the same passage is presented as: "undertook to become a perfect man from Mary the Theotokos through the Holy Spirit, truly taking breath and body," and in Evagrius' Armenian translation, it is: "He clothed himself in perfect humanity from Mary the Theotokos, through the Holy Spirit, true body and breath" (Sargsyan 1907: CKT-CH). Both in St. Sahak's text and Evagrius' Armenian translation, the phrase "not from human seed" is absent, which means that these two are related to each other. The only question is: Which of the two influenced the other (for more on this issue, see also Winkler 2000: 109-111, 114-116). In St. Sahak's letter, we encounter terms and

The Council of Ephesus and the Sahak-Mesrop period

In 431 AD, the Council of Ephesus condemned Nestorius and his doctrine. Saint Yeznik Koghbatsi, one of St. Mesrop Mashtots' disciples who was abroad at the time, reported this in writing to St. Mesrop Mashtots. In a preserved fragment of the letter attributed to him, we read that at the Council of Ephesus, based on the definitions of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea ("having firmly the faith of the first three hundred"), every newly-born and foreign faith was anathematized, and the already accepted Nicene faith was redefined as follows: *«… խոստովանել զՔրիստոս՝ Աստուած ճշմարիտ եւ Որդի Աստուծոյ եւ Միածին, ծնեալ ի Հաւրէ յառաջ քան զյաւիտեանս, եւ Տէր արարիչ ամենայն արարածոց, եւ զնոյն Բանն Աստուած ի վախճան ժամանակաց զգեցեալ մարմին եւ եղեալ վասն մեր մարդ, առանց շրջելոյ եւ անկանելոյ յիւր աստուածական բնութենէն, եւ ծնեալ ի սուրբ Կուսէն, Աստուած՝ ըստ մարմնաւոր ծննդեան մարդ կատարեալ. եւ կոչի եւ է Կոյսն Տիրածին եւ Աստուածածին, եւ ծնեալն Աստուած եւ մարդ կատարեալ»*[18]:

By identifying this formulation with the faith accepted at the Council of Nicaea and re-affirmed at the Council of Ephesus, the author of the letter demonstrates a principle that runs like a red thread through the works of authors of that period. That is, the understanding of the aforementioned doctrinal provisions must correspond to the theology established at the ecumenical councils: "to build upon the same and to teach the same".[19]

We find this same logic in the letters authored by St. Sahak and St. Mesrop addressed to Bishop Acacius of Melitene and Patriarch Proclus of Constantinople.

The motivation for writing these letters was the Council of Ephesus itself and the anathema of Nestorianism.

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expressions that are not present in either the Greek original or the Armenian translation. For example, the aforementioned phrases "from the power of the Father" - "essence from essence, begotten essence," or "consubstantial with the Father" - "co-essential with the Father." Here, Evagrius' Armenian translation is consistent with the Greek, but St. Sahak's presentation is more liberal in its wording. He translates the term οὐσία in one place as "essence," and in another as "reality," whereas in Evagrius' Armenian translation, οὐσία is clearly translated as "power." In addition, St. Sahak is very liberal in his abbreviations, to such an extent that one might say he was not influenced by Evagrius at all, were it not for those sporadic passages that are characteristic of Evagrius himself and are repeated verbatim in St. Sahak's text. Bearing all this in mind, we believe that Evagrius' Armenian translation followed the letter of St. Sahak and St. Mashtots to Patriarch Proclus. Furthermore, it is also possible that the translator had before him not only the Greek original but also the very letter addressed to Proclus and partly followed it, making certain refinements.

[18] Yeznik Koghbatsi 2003: 513. Modern Armenian: to confess Christ as true God and Son of God and Only-begotten, born of the Father even before eternity, and Lord, Creator of all creatures; the same Word, God, at the consummation of times, took on flesh and became man for us, without altering and losing His divine nature, and was born of the Holy Virgin, Himself God, who according to His bodily birth became perfect man; and the Virgin is called and is God-bearer and Mother of God, and the one born is God and perfect man.

[19] Yeznik Koghbatsi 2003: 513. Modern Armenian: to build upon the same and to teach the same.

When different communities of the Universal Church began to burn the writings of Nestorius, many Nestorians fled, taking with them the writings they could "save." Fearing, or more accurately, having information that some of these Nestorians might establish themselves on Armenian soil, the two aforementioned bishops, Proclus and Acacius, wrote letters to Catholicos Sahak I of Armenia (the first letter was also addressed to St. Mesrop Mashtots).[20]

Their concern was justified because a large part of Armenia, by the Treaty of Erznka of 387 AD between Sasanian Persia and the Roman Empire, had come under Persian rule and influence. This meant that the connection with Syriac-speaking Christians and the Antiochene theological school, and thus with Theodore of Mopsuestia and his followers, was not only unavoidable but, in some sense, forced.[21] Nevertheless, in their replies ("Reply to the Blessed Proclus' Letter from Sahak and Mashtots, Holy Doctors of Armenia" and "Reply of Lord Sahak to Acacius' Letter"), the Armenian Catholicos first shows the aforementioned bishops that for Armenians, accepting two sons or two lords in Christ is unacceptable, a new kind of Judaism[22], because Christ is not "two lords" or "two temples" and "two sons," but "one Lord Jesus Christ"[23], the very Son of God and man, and then assures them that there are no Nestorians (disciples of Theodore of Mopsuestia) among Armenians, adding that even if such people should appear, they will not only not be accepted but will also be persecuted and punished.[24]

The Council of Chalcedon and the Armenian Church in the Second Half of the 5th Century

After the Council of Ephesus and the condemnation of Nestorius, theological disputes did not cease, just as they did not have after previous ecumenical councils. Numerous Nestorians continued to adhere to their views, leading to new clashes and problems. To resolve the existing theological and, by then, ecclesiastical-political schism and at least pacify passions within his empire, Emperor Marcian (450-457 AD) convened the Council of Chalcedon on October 8, 451 AD, expressing his full support for Pope Leo I of Rome. Due to this latter circumstance, Roman legates played a prominent role in the council, exerting every effort to ensure that Leo's theological Tome, which summarized his Christological views, was unconditionally and entirely accepted. However, the exact opposite occurred. Although Leo's Tome was affirmed, the internal stability of the empire was nonetheless undermined. The schism deepened

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[20] See Pogharian 1994: 30-40, 49-51.

[21] For details, see Sargsyan 2012: 109-133, 157-171.

[22] See Reply of Lord Sahak 2003: 223.

[23] See Reply of Lord Sahak 2003: 219-221; cf. 223-224.

[24] See Reply of Lord Sahak 2003: 219, 221, 222, 223, 224. In both letters, the reference to Nestorianism is indirect, without even mentioning Nestorius' name. The reason, most likely, was the Persian authorities' favorable attitude towards Nestorianism.

further, and passions intensified, which is why, for over a century, all of Emperor Marcian's successors, without exception, remained involved in resolving the issue.

The problem was that the Christology adopted at the Council of Chalcedon was not in harmony with the prevailing Christological tradition in the East, as it had close ties to Nestorianism. Consequently, it faced strong opposition among monastics and the faithful, causing concern for the emperors as well. The formula of the Council of Chalcedon, "two natures coming together into one person"[25] (ἐν δύο φύσεσιν... εἰς ἕν πρόσωπον καί μίαν ὑπόστασιν συντρεχούσης), was viewed as a contradiction to St. Cyril of Alexandria's formula of "one nature of God the Word Incarnate"[26] (μία φύσις τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου σεσαρκωμένη), which was entirely excluded from the council's adopted theology. The main figures at the Council of Chalcedon were opponents of St. Cyril and sympathizers of Nestorius: Theodoret of Cyrrhus and Ibas of Edessa, which was already sufficient reason to view Chalcedonianism as disguised Nestorianism.[27]

The schism caused by the Council of Chalcedon reached such an extent that Emperor Basiliscus (475-476 AD), in his edict of 476, anathematized it along with Leo's Tome. His successor, Emperor Zeno (474-475, 476-491 AD), in his famous Henotikon of 482, condemned them to silence. The same anti-Chalcedonian position was adopted by Emperor Anastasius (491-518 AD), and it was only at the end of the first quarter of the 6th century, during the reign of Emperor Justin I (518-527 AD), that Chalcedonianism regained state patronage and gradually began to dominate the Church of Byzantium.[28]

After the Battle of Avarayr in 451 AD, Persia sought to prevent potential new revolts at all costs by keeping Armenia subservient. To this end, it pursued a policy of isolating patriotic forces in the country and removing them as much as possible from the political arena. It gave high positions to submissive, pliable, and characterless individuals who, in turn, persecuted those who had received Greek education, had a national mindset, and were loyal to spiritual values, including ecclesiastics. The Church itself suffered great persecutions. Its leader, Hovsep I Hoghotsmetsi (440-452 AD), had been taken captive after the battle, where he died a martyr's death in 454 AD. His throne, starting from 452 AD, was successively occupied by the pro-Syriac Melite I (452-456 AD) and Moses I of Manazkert (456-461 AD).

Such an attitude towards Armenia led to another revolt, which lasted for 4 years (481-484 AD) and is known as the "War of Vahanants," named after its leader, Vahan Mamikonian. After the war, Vahan Mamikonian was recognized as the Marzpan of Armenia (485-505 AD), restored the country's internal autonomy, and granted the Church complete freedom of worship.[29] During this same period, Emperor Zeno's

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[25] Modern Armenian: The two natures united with each other into one Person.

[26] Modern Armenian: The nature of the Incarnate Word of God is one.

[27] See Petrosyan 2016: 11, 14-15.

[28] For details on the Council of Chalcedon, its adopted theology, and the problems it caused, see Sargsyan 1907: 47-58, 68-83; Petrosyan 2016: 13-16, 21-28, 150-153.

[29] See History of Armenia 2018: 189-192, 204-208.

promulgation of the Henotikon and the closure of the School of Edessa (489 AD) caused Nestorian theologians to migrate to Persia and Nisibis, which was very close to Armenia, and establish their renowned school, posing a serious threat to the Armenian Church. The latter, now free in its operations, began to fight against Nestorianism without any obstacles and, at the First Council of Dvin in 505/6 AD, anathematized both Nestorianism and Chalcedonianism, viewing the latter as a continuation of Nestorianism.[30]

The Theological (Christological) Thought of the Armenian Church in the 5th Century: A Generalized Overview

Before summarizing the first period of the origin and development of theological thought in the Armenian Church, following the examination of its ecclesiastical-political context, it is also necessary to address the theological aspect itself.

Studying the independent Armenian literature created in the 5th century—from the invention of the alphabet to the end of the century—we see that the Armenian Church characterized God as an inaccessible, unknowable essence. Driven by His love for humanity, whom He created, God humbles Himself towards man and becomes knowable to him only through His voluntary revelation: "The Nameless becomes named... The Creator of creatures is named".[31]

God thus reveals Himself as the Most Holy Trinity: three perfect persons, one Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with one will, one nature, one hypostasis, one essence, and one power[32]. However, while being one God, the three persons distinctly differ from each other due to the Father, who is an unbegotten hypostasis and unoriginated essence, being the cause of the Son's generation and the Spirit's procession[33], the cause of their same unoriginated hypostases from the same nature.[34]

The Son "is born of the nature of God the Father," by which He is both distinct from Him, and yet both remain one God, because there is no difference between their natures; it is the same: "to understand the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as of one nature and Godhead".[35]

Generation by nature does not imply interruption, separation, or temporal succession, but rather an unchanging continuity and unity, similar to the sun, light, and warmth, or a spring, water, and a river. Here, generation by nature is understood as continuity: Life is born of Life, Light of Light, Goodness of Goodness. However, no

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[30] See [A] Letter of the Armenians 2004: 122, 119-120; Sargsyan 1907: 175-177, 184-188; Petrosyan 2016: 29-30.

[31] Sermons 2003: 13, cf. 9, 119, 126. Modern Armenian: The Nameless receives a name... The Creator of creatures is named.

[32] See Agathangełos 2003: 1469-1470, 1479, 1496, 1597, 1621, 1639, 1641, 1662, 1734.

[33] See Sermons 2003: 7.

[34] See Sermons 2003: 25.

[35] Sermons 2003: 8, cf. Sermons 2003: 7, 33.

change occurs, because the divine eternality is unchangeable: Life remains Life, Light remains Light.[36]

Nevertheless, the fact that the Son is born of the Father already speaks of the difference between them, in that one is the Begetter, the other the Begotten[37], who (the Begotten, and never the Begetter) is presented to us as "God-mixed with flesh"[38], that is, "having taken on human nature and mixed it with His divinity"[39], Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Man, who perfectly unites the divine and the human.

Addressing Jesus Christ, the authors of this period speak of two natures characterizing the one and same incarnate God—divine and human—without ever separating "two natures" in Christ. By doing so, they perfectly accept His human and divine attributes and indirectly show that one nature does not imply confusion or fusion of the two natures, nor does it ever imply any division of the two in Christ.

As an example, let us quote from the works of St. Yeghishe: ա. *«Անած բնութիւն է ըստ Հաւր Որդին եւ անյաւելյուած, այլ ողորմութեամբն, որ առ մեզ, որդի մարդոյ եղեւ, զաւրէնս բնութեան մերոյ լնոյր ծննդեամբ ի կնոջէ, թէ եւ ի Կուսէ եւ ի վեր քան զբնութիւնս, այլ սննդեամբ եւ աճմամբ մերաւրէն, որպէս եւ գրեցաւ իսկ զնմանէ. «Մանուկն աճեր, ասէ, եւ զարգանայր» (Ղուկ. Ա 80, Բ 40)»[40]:*

բ. *««Առ իս, ասէ, դարձիր» (Ծնն. ԽԹ 22բ) ոչ սոսկ բան, որպէս եւ էջն, այլ մարդ ճշմարիտ եղեալ, սակայն զիւրն ոչ կորուսեալ, այլ մնացեալ մի որդի եւ մի անձնաւորութիւն եւ բնութիւն, անշփոթ միաւորութեամբ եւ անբաժանելի Աստուածութեամբ»[41]:*

գ. *«Հայր յայտնեաց նմա զբոլոր աստուածութիւնն Որդւոյ, զի աստուածութեամբ եւ մարդկութեամբ զչարչարանսն ընդունիցի, եւ որ չարչարիցի՝ նոյն եւ յառնիցէ»[42]:*

դ. *«Տեառն մերոյ եւ Աստուծոյ, որ ասաց. «Տուաւ ինձ ամենայն իշխանութիւն յերկինս եւ յերկրի» (Մատթ. ԻԸ 18). յայտ է մարդկութեամբն ասէր տուեալ, զոր*

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[36] See Sermons 2003: 14, 19, 25, 37, 57, 90.

[37] See Sermons 2003: 33, Commentary Vardapet 2003: 829, Agathangełos 2003: 1733.

[38] Sermons 2003: 55.

[39] See Sermons 2003: 16, 118; David the Priest of Mamikonian 2003: 621, 694, Commentary Vardapet 2003: 842, Agathangełos 2003: 1343-1345, 1353, 1476, 1478, 1490, 1581, 1619-1620.

[40] Commentary Vardapet 2003: 899. Modern Armenian: "The Son is an ungrowing and unadded nature like the Father, but through mercy towards us, He became the Son of Man, fulfilling the law of our nature by being born of a woman, and though He was born of a Virgin and was supernatural, He was nourished and grew like us, as it was written about Him: 'The child grew,' it says, 'and developed' (Luke 1:80, 2:40)."

[41] Commentary Vardapet 2003: 900. Modern Armenian: "'He says, turn to me' (Gen. 49:22b), which is not merely a word, just as His descent was not merely a word, but He became true man, yet did not lose His characteristics, but remained as one Son and one Person and nature with unconfused unity and indivisible Godhead."

[42] Commentary Vardapet 2003: 964. Modern Armenian: "The Father revealed to Him the entire Divinity of the Son, so that by both Divinity and Humanity He might accept the suffering, and He who suffers, the same also rises."

ուներ Աստուածութեամբն սեփական, որ եւ ասէր. «Ես եմ հացն յերկնից իջեալ» (Յովհ. Բ 41)» [43]:

ե. *«Ոչ անարգանս ինչ համարեցաւ զգենուլ զիւր ստեղծուած մարմինս, այլ մեծարեաց իբրեւ զաստուածաստեղծ զիւր գործ: Ոչ առ սակաւ սակաւ շնորհեաց ինչ սմա զանմահութեան պատիւն՝ իբրեւ զանմարմին հրեշտակաց, այլ միանգամայն զբոլոր բնութիւնն մարմնով, շնչով եւ հոգւով զգեցաւ, եւ միաբանեաց ընդ աստուածութեանն. միութիւն, եւ ոչ երկուութիւն. եւ այսուհետեւ մի գիտեմք զաստուածութիւնն, որ յառաջ էր քան զաշխարհս, նոյն եւ այսաւր»* [44]:

Thus, St. Yeghishe, for example, shows that the divine and human manifestation of Christ cannot imply that God and man are separate in Christ. On the contrary, Christ Himself is God who also became man, preserving both divine and human perfection.

We find the same idea in other authors as well, among whom it is important to mention St. Yeznik Koghbatsi. In accordance with the aforementioned Christological logic, he calls Christ God and man, and the Holy Virgin not only Theotokos (God-bearer) but also Tiratsin (Lord-bearer): *Աստուած՝ ըստ մարմնաւոր ծննդեան մարդ կատարեալ. եւ կոչի եւ է Կոյսն Տիրածին եւ Աստուածածին, եւ ծնեալն Աստուած եւ մարդ կատարեալ»:*" [45]

Jesus Christ, therefore, according to 5th-century Armenian literature, is the Son of God the Father who became incarnate, took what was not His own and made it His own, becoming also the Son of Man: God who also became man, or in other words, the incarnate God.

Conclusion

The study of independent Armenian literature from the 5th century testifies that these works were written during a period when Christological disputes were ongoing within the Universal Church. Many people simply could not accept the doctrines of

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[43] Commentary Vardapet 2003: 894. Modern Armenian: "Of our Lord and God, who said: 'All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth' (Matthew 28:18). It is clear that being incarnate, He received that (authority - M.S.) which He possessed as His own by His Divinity, and therefore He said: 'I am the bread that came down from heaven' (John 6:41)."

[44] See Commentary Vardapet 2003: 563. A special place for the unique union of Christ's perfect divinity and perfect humanity is also found in the admonition "Who Says Our Father," where Yeghishe speaks of Christ being "brother" to humans in His humanity and simultaneously "father" in His divinity (see Commentary Vardapet 2003: 955-958). Modern Armenian: "He did not consider it a disgrace to put on His created body, but honored it as God-created, His handiwork. He did not sparingly bestow the honor of immortality upon that body, like upon bodiless angels, but at once took on the whole nature—with body, breath, and spirit—and united it with the Godhead: a unity, and not a duality, and henceforth we know one Godhead, which was even before the world, and which is the same today."

[45] Yeznik Koghbatsi 2003: 513. Modern Armenian: He Himself, God, who according to His bodily birth became perfect man; and the Virgin is called and is Lord-bearer and God-bearer, and the one born is God and perfect man.

God's incarnation or Christ being simultaneously God and man, thus dividing Christ into two.

During that time, for both the Universal Church and the Armenian Church, preserving the orthodox faith concerning Christ became a fundamental necessity. However, given its political situation, the Armenian Church long exercised caution in its statements, often addressing the issue indirectly.

Therefore, in the works of this period, direct references to heresies arising on Christological grounds are found in only a few places, and those only to Arianism and Nestorianism.

Only Faustus of Byzantium and Movses Khorenatsi directly address Arius[46], while only Mambre Vercanogh and Movses Khorenatsi address Nestorius.[47] Sahak Partev and Mesrop Mashtots refer to Theodore of Mopsuestia and his disciples (= Nestorius and the Nestorians).[48] Yeznik Koghbatsi, without speaking of them directly, refers only to the Council of Ephesus, during which "newborn and foreign faith" was anathematized and the Nicene Creed was reaffirmed.[49]

Nevertheless, all 5th-century authors, regardless of the nature of their works, include numerous relevant Christological passages. The majority of these aim to explain the divine and human unity of Christ, which in turn attests to the importance of Christology and the preservation of its purity in the life of the Armenian Church.

Such a presentation of theology, and specifically Christology, in historical, dogmatic, and moral-didactic works, became the foundation for the formation of a new theological thought within general theology: Armenian thought. Having the opportunity to utilize both the rich Syriac and Greek theological heritage, it developed a theological vocabulary and corresponding mindset unique to itself. This made it entirely independent and distinctive, interpreting orthodox ecclesiastical theology in its own native language.

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[46] See Buzandaran 2003: 330; Movses Khorenatsi 2003: 1990.

[47] See Mambre Vercanogh 2003: 1104, 1116-1117; Movses Khorenatsi 2003: 2097.

[48] See Reply from Sahak and Mashtots 2003: 219, 221, 222; Reply of Lord Sahak 2003: 223, 224.

[49] Yeznik Koghbatsi 2003: 513.

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