

# **Early Arabic Printing in the East**

---

Edited by  
Ioana Feodorov

## **Volume 7**

# The Role of Italian Presses in Early Arabic Printing

---

Third Volume of Collected Works  
of the TYPARABIC Project

Edited by  
Ioana Feodorov and Octavian-Adrian Negoită



DE GRUYTER

Published in connection with the project TYPARABIC at the Institute for South-East European Studies (ISEES) of the Romanian Academy: <http://typarabic.ro/wordpress/en/acasa-english/>

This publication is part of a project that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 883219). It reflects only the authors' views and the Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.



**European Research Council**  
Established by the European Commission

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 International License. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

This book is available as an open access publication via <https://www.degruyterbrill.com>.

Creative Commons license terms for re-use do not apply to any content that is not part of the Open Access publication (such as graphs, figures, photos, excerpts, etc.). These may require obtaining further permission from the rights holder. The obligation to research and clear permission lies solely with the party re-using the material.

ISSN 2751-2797

ISBN 978-3-11-137214-3

ISBN 978-3-11-137333-1 (PDF)

ISBN 978-3-11-137350-8 (E-PUB)

DOI <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111373331>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2026937834

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2026 the author(s)/editor(s), published by Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Genthiner Straße 13, 10785 Berlin, Germany

De Gruyter and Walter de Gruyter GmbH are part of De Gruyter Brill.  
[www.degruyterbrill.com](http://www.degruyterbrill.com)

Questions about General Product Safety Regulation: [productsafety@degruyterbrill.com](mailto:productsafety@degruyterbrill.com)

Cover illustration: Bernhard von Breydenbach, "Venise".

In *Opusculum sanctorum peregrinationum ad sepulcrum Christi venerandum*.

Moguntiae [Mainz]: Per Erhardum Reüwich de Trajecto, 1486

© Bibliothèque nationale de France, Banque d'images, Paris.

Printing: CPI books GmbH, Leck

# Contents

Ioana Feodorov and Octavian-Adrian Negoită

**Preface — IX**

**Abbreviations — XV**

## Part 1. Eastern Book Printing: The Italian Connection

Aleksandar Z. Savić

***Presses de résistance: Serbian Book Printing between Venice, the Romanian Principalities, and the Ottoman Empire (Late 15th–Mid-16th Century) — 3***

Charbel Nassif

**Preliminaries to the Study of the Arabic Melkite Psalter of Padua (1709) Commissioned by Filībbus Ghaylān — 51**

Aurélien Girard

**The Arabic Press of Saint John the Baptist of Shuwayr (Mount Lebanon) and Western Catholic Publishing (18th Century), from Technical Invention to Translations: The Example of Catechisms — 79**

Paolo Lucca

**Printing the Faith: On Four Question-and-Answer Armenian Catechisms Published in Early 18th-Century Venice — 123**

David Neagu

**The Benefits of Mkhit'arist Book Printing in the Age of Confessionalization — 163**

Alessandro Flavio Dumitraşcu

**Italian Authors Translated into Arabic in the 18th Century — 181**

## Part 2. **Printed Books, Theological Debates, and Cross-Cultural Entanglements in Pre-Modern Eastern Christianity**

Archim. Policarp Chițulescu

**Sources of Knowledge and Objects of Art: Arabic Books in the Medieval Libraries of the Romanian Principalities — 201**

Vera Tchentsova

**Oxford Copies of the 1701 Edition of the *Book of the Divine Liturgies* by Athanāsīyūs III Dabbās: A Provenance Study — 231**

Stefano Di Pietrantonio

**“*Qāla Dāmādō*”: Searching for a Graeco-Arabic Readership in 18th–19th Century Greater Syria through the Multiple Recensions of Athanāsīyūs III Dabbās’s *Art of Rhetoric* — 259**

Octavian-Adrian Negoită

**Şufrūniyūs of Kilis (ca. 1700–1780) and the *Ignis Purgatorius*: Preliminary Notes on *Kitāb midrār sayl al-maṭar fī ṭafī nār al-maṭhar* — 297**

Rami Wakim

**Christian Arabic Thought in the Age of Print: Deification in ‘Abdallāh Zākhir’s *Al-burhān al-ṣarīḥ* — 317**

Lidia Cotovanu

**Les dépôts du Patriarcat de Jérusalem à la Zecca de Venise et les intérêts annuels destinés aux chrétiens arabes — 335**

Hasan Çolak

**Translating Knowledge into Privilege: Nikolaos Kritias as Part of the Ottoman World — 363**

## Part 3. **Type and Form in the Eastern-Language Printed Books of the Pre-Modern Era**

J.R. Osborn

**The *Typographia Medicea* and the Four-Form Table of Arabic Script — 385**

Titus Nemeth

**The *Naskh* Type by Albrecht Krafft: An Austrian Contribution  
to 19th-Century Arabic Typography — 417**

Brad Sabin Hill

**Hebrew Printing in Arab and Islamic Lands — 449**

Alina Kondratiuk

**From Venice to Kyiv: Origins of the Iconography of  
Early Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra Printed Books — 481**

**Contributors — 527**

Paolo Lucca

# Printing the Faith: On Four Question-and-Answer Armenian Catechisms Published in Early 18th-Century Venice

## 1 Introduction

Between 1710 and 1737, at least nine different question-and-answer catechisms and a catechism board game for children were originally compiled in Armenian.<sup>1</sup> This volume of publication is remarkable considering that, since the first Armenian book was printed in Venice in 1511/12,<sup>2</sup> only five other question-and-answer Armenian catechisms had been printed elsewhere: the translations of Bellarmine's *Doctrina Christiana* (both the short and large versions, published in 1623 and 1630, respectively, with the latter reprinted in 1634 and re-translated in 1669;<sup>3</sup> a 30-page catechism preceded by a primer printed in Amsterdam in 1666 by Oskan

---

1 To these ten works may be added Mariam K'arak'ashean's *Eye of the Soul*, which I have not been able to examine personally. It was printed in Venice in 1728 at the press of Antonio Bortoli. According to the description provided by Poturean, the text begins with a question-and-answer section on the sign of the Cross and the "four essentials for salvation" – faith, hope, love, and good works. It then proceeds to enumerate the commandments, the sacraments of the Church, and the mortal sins, concluding with a prayer for Holy Communion; see M. Poturean, "Tsaghik (M. K'arak'ash.)", *Bazmavēp*, 64, 1906, 3, p. 143–144. For its description, see N. A. Oskanyan, K. Korkotyan, and A. M. Savalyan, *Hay girk'ē 1512–1800 t'vakannerin*, Yerevan, 1988, p. 277.

2 *Anun grots's ē Surb Urbat'agirk'*; [Venice], [1511/12].

3 Roberto Bellarmino, *Summa Doctrinae Christianae [...] in linguam Armenicam traductam*, Romae [Rome], 1623; [Roberto Bellarmino], *Dichiarazione più copiosa della dottrina christiana tradotta dalla Italiana nella lingua Armena dal P. Pietro Paolo Sacerdote Armeno*, in Roma [Rome], 1630; [Roberto Bellarmino], *Doctrina Christiana a Petro Paulo, sacerdote, Armeno, versa in lingua Armenam*, Lutetiae Parisorum [Paris], 1634; Rupert'os Pëllarminos, *Vardapetut'iwñ k'ristonēakan*, trans. by Barsēgh Kostandinupōlsets'i, ḥAlikōrna [Leghorn], 1669, repr. Roberto Bellarmino, *Dichiarazione più copiosa della dottrina christiana [...] tradotta dalla italiana nella lingua armena*, trans. by Basilio Barsech [Barsēgh Kostandinupōlsets'i], in Roma [Rome], 1680.

---

I wish to express my gratitude to the Mkhitarist Fathers of San Lazzaro degli Armeni (Venice) – Fr. Serop Jamurlian, Fr. Hamazasp Kechichian, and Fr. Vahan Ohanian – for their assistance during my research. I would also like to thank Cesare Santus for kindly making his unpublished research available to me, and both him and Anna Ohanjanyan for reading a preliminary draft of this article and offering their valuable feedback.

Yerewants'ı;<sup>4</sup> the Apostolic *Brief Book on the Real and True Faith* by Hovhannēs Mrk'uz Jughayets'ı, printed in 1688 in New Julfa,<sup>5</sup> which was reprinted in Constantinople in 1713 and 1713–1714,<sup>6</sup> and a compendious 22-page catechism titled *Christian Instruction* published in 1709 by the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*.<sup>7</sup>

Five of these ten works, compiled by Catholic authors, were printed in Venice, and four of them will be discussed below. The remaining five, published in Constantinople, included: a 17-page Apostolic catechism appended to the *Primer* printed by Grigor Marzuanets'ı in 1712;<sup>8</sup> the Catholic *Spiritual Orchard* compiled by an unidentified “doctor of theology” (*astuacaban vardapet*) and printed in 1713 at the Surb Ējmiatsin and Surb Sargis Zōravar printing press;<sup>9</sup> a 1717 Catholic anonymous *Brief Compilation of Most Essential Materials*; an 8-page Apostolic catechism included in a reading primer authored by Paghtasar *dpir*, also printed by Grigor Marzuanets'ı in 1723;<sup>10</sup> and the lengthy 1737 catechism penned by the future Apostolic Patriarch Hākob Nalean and printed at the press of Astuatsatur Kostandnupōlsets'ı.<sup>11</sup>

This flourishing of instructional and doctrinal literature is hardly surprising in the context of early 18<sup>th</sup>-century intra-confessional polemics, nor is it unexpected to see Constantinople as one of the most prolific centers for the production of

---

4 [Oskan Yerewants'ı], *Handerdz Astutsov. Girk' aybubenits' ħaghags norek aghayots'* [sic!] *ew mankants' ankr'tits'*, ħAmsdērtam [Amsterdam], 1666. The text of this catechism was reprinted twice in 1667, featuring a Latin translation on facing pages by Theodorus Petreius. It was later reprinted at least four times in Constantinople: in 1701, at the Surb Ējmiatsin and Surb Sargis Zōravar printing press; in 1712, at the press of Grigor Marzuanets'ı; in 1722, at the press of Astuatsatur Kostandnupōlsets'ı; and in 1740, possibly at an underground Armenian Catholic press. See note 18 below regarding why Oskan's catechism cannot, in my opinion, be strictly defined either as “Catholic” or as “Apostolic.”

5 Hovhannēs Mrk'uz Jughayets'ı, *Girk' hamarōt vasn iskapēs ew chshmarit hawatoy ew dawanut'ean ughghap'ar kat'ughikē ěnt'anur Hayastaneayts' Yekeghets'woy*, i Jugha [New Julfa, Isfahan], 1688.

6 Hovhannēs Mrk'uz Jughayets'ı, *Krt'ut'iwn hawatoy. Girk' hamarōt vasn chshmartut'ean hawatoy k'ristonēakani ew ughghap'ar dawanut'ean ěnt'anur kat'oghikēi Hayastaneayts' Yekeghets'woy*, i mayrak'aghak'in Kostandinupōlsi [Constantinople], 1713; Hovhannēs Mrk'uz Jughayets'ı, *Dawanut'iwn hawatoy*, i Kostandakertn k'aghak'ı [Constantinople], 1713–1714.

7 *Krt'ut'iwn k'ristonēakan arneloy ör ěst örē*, Romae [Rome], 1709.

8 Hovhan yerēs' Aknets'ı, *Girk' aybubeneants'*, i k'aghak'n Kostandinupōlis [Constantinople], 1712.

9 *Mrkanots' hogewor. Karcharōt meknut'iwn k'ristonēakani vardapetut'ean*, [Constantinople], 1713.

10 Paghtasar *dpir*, *Girk' aybubenakan, or ē durn ěnt'erts'akan usman*, [Constantinople], 1723.

11 Hākob Nalean, *Girk' koch'ets'eal K'ristonēakan usaneli ew kam K'ristonēits' varzhits'*, [Constantinople], 1737. Nalean's work is not, strictly speaking, a question-and-answer catechism. Although many chapter and sub-chapter titles are formulated as questions, the chapters and sub-chapters themselves are structured as lengthy, systematic expositions, often spanning many pages, and their content is only occasionally introduced by the label “Answer”.

Armenian catechisms – both Catholic and Apostolic. Between the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, tensions escalated between Catholic and Apostolic Armenians in the Ottoman Empire as the proselytizing efforts of Catholic missionaries and Armenian alumni of the Pontifical Urban College intensified. They occasionally preached in Apostolic churches, disseminating the Tridentine doctrine directly to the people. This triggered a fierce counter-offensive from the Apostolic hierarchy, leading to a period of mutual recrimination, doctrinal disputes, and physical violence.<sup>12</sup> A contemporary Armenian Catholic priest wrote that Catholic and Catholic-leaning books were even burned by the Apostolic hierarchy:

[...] բարոյքեր եւ հրամայէր այրել զգրեանս աղօթից եւ ասէր. «Այրեցէք զկոչեցեալն՝ Պարսկա հոգեւոր. զԱլկն հոգեկանն. զԲուրխաստանն աղօթից. զՅիսուս որդին. զԾաղիկն զօրորթեանն. զԹօմայ Գեմպեցին. զԽոյկումն. նա եւ զայլս նմանս սոցին»:<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> On the intra-confessional tensions and polemical disputes between Catholic and Apostolic Armenians in early 18<sup>th</sup>-century Constantinople, see C. Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie: Communicatio in sacris, coesistenza e conflitti tra le comunità cristiane orientali (Levante e Impero ottomano, XVII–XVIII secolo)*, Rome, 2019, p. 309–365; C. Santus, “Sheikh ū-Islam Feyzullah Efendi and the Armenian Patriarch Awetik’: A Case of Entangled Confessional Disciplining”, in T. Krstić and D. Terzioğlu (eds.), *Entangled Confessionalizations?: Dialogic Perspectives on the Politics of Piety and Community-Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, Piscataway, NJ, 2022, p. 233–254; C. Santus, “Konfessionalismus bei der Arbeit: Die Herstellung einer armenisch-katholischen Identität im Osmanischen Reich (1680–1730)”, in A. Badea, B. Boule, and B. Emich (eds.), *Konfessionen auf dem Prüfstand: Zum Nutzen und Nachteil eines Konzepts für die Vormoderne*, Leiden [in press] (I thank Cesare Santus for allowing me to consult his article before it went to press); A. Ohanjanyan, “Creedal Controversies among Armenians in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire: Eremia Č’ēlēpi K’ēōmiwrčean’s Polemical Writing against Suk’ias Prusac’i”, *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, 27, 2020, p. 7–69; A. Ohanjanyan, “Jumping In and Out of Confessions: The Armenian Catholic Yovhannēs of Mush and His Book *Key of Truth*”, *Banber Matenadaran*, 34, 2022, esp. p. 136–139; A. Ohanjanyan, “Intra-Armenian Polemics and Confession-Building in Ottoman Constantinople: The Case of Gēorg Mxlayim Ōlli (1681/85–1758)”, in Krstić and Terzioğlu (eds.), *Entangled Confessionalizations?*, esp. p. 491–496.

<sup>13</sup> Komitas K’ēōmiwrčean, *Vasn hetin zhamanakis azgis meroy hakarakut’ean or ēnd mimeans vasn kat’ōlikut’ean ew hağhags oroy haytneloy umemn herkrord lusaworich’ koch’ets’eloy homants’ ew noria gortsots’n ew varuts’n ew van hamakhohits’ norin*, Constantinople, 1704, in BnF, Arm. 196, f. 36v–37r (I have adjusted the punctuation and capitalization of the text). See also Santus, “Konfessionalismus”; S. D. Aslanian, *Early Modernity and Mobility: Port Cities and Printers across the Armenian Diaspora, 1512–1800*, New Haven, CT/London, 2023, p. 20–21. The books quoted by Komitas are the following: *Partēz hogewor*, trans. by Hovhannēs Kostandnupōsets’i [Giovanni Agop], i Vēnētik [Venice], 1704 [ed. princeps Leghorn, 1670]; I could not find an edition of this work published in Constantinople before Komitas wrote his memoir in 1704. Consequently, the edition that was committed to the flames must have been the one printed in Venice at the press of Antonio Bortoli in that same year, *pace* Aslanian (see *Early Modernity and Mobility*, p. 386); *Akn hogekan ōzhandak pahoghats’ ew ēnt’erts’oghats’*, ed. by Matt’ēos Vanandets’i, i Marsilia

[The Patriarch's deputy] preached and commanded that the prayer books be burned, saying: "Burn the so-called *Spiritual Garden*, the *Spiritual Spring*, the *Orchard of Prayers*, *Jesus the Son*, the *Flower of Virtues*, [the book of] Thomas à Kempis, the *Meditation*, and others similar to these".

Indeed, the publishing activity provided yet another outlet for the manifesting tensions, as both factions engaged in the strategic publication of religious pamphlets and doctrinal works: the Catholic side through the Surb Ējmiatsin and Surb Sargis Zōravar press, while the Apostolic side countered *via* the presses of Grigor Marzuanets'ī and Astuatsatur Kostandnupolsets'ī.<sup>14</sup>

While the printing of catechisms (or professions of faith) among Apostolic Armenians may be explained, at least in part, as a reaction to the diffusion of equivalent Catholic works within their communities, the production of these Catholic texts found its origins in the Counter-Reformation and Tridentine Catholicism – an era when the universal dissemination of Christian doctrine and the religious instruction of the laity became a critical priority for the Catholic Church. Following the publication of the *Catechismus ex decreto SS. Concilii Tridentini* in 1566, a series of compendious, vernacular versions began to appear, often in the form of questions and answers.<sup>15</sup> The most prominent among them was possibly the catechism

---

[Marseille], 1683; *Girk' burastan aghōt'its'*, ed. by Sargis Yewdokiats'ī Sahētts'ī, trans. by Step'annos Lehats'ī, i mayrak'aghak'n Kostandnupōlis [Constantinople], 1704 [ed. princeps Venice, 1685]; Nersēs Shnorhali, *Īhisus ordi*, [Constantinople], 1702 [ed. princeps Venice, 1643]; *Noragoyn tsaghik zōrut'eants'*, trans. by Ĥovhannēs Kostandnupōlsets'ī, in Venetia [Venice], 1685 [ed. princeps Rome, 1675]; *Girk' T'ōmayi Gembets'woy* [...] *ħaghags hamahetewmann K'ristosi*, trans. by Ĥovhannēs Kostandnupōlsets'ī, i Kostandinupōlis [Constantinople], 1700 [ed. princeps Rome, 1674]; Ĥovhannēs Kostandnupōlsets'ī, *Khokumn k'ristonēakan*, i Vēnētik [Venice], 1687. Although Aslanian classifies these texts as "mostly catechisms" (see *Early Modernity and Mobility*, p. 386), they are, in reality, primarily devotional books.

14 R. H. Kévorkian, "L'imprimerie Surb Ējmiacin et Surb Sargis Zōravar et le conflit entre Arméniens et Catholiques à Constantinople (1695–1718)", *Revue des études arméniennes*, 15, 1981, p. 404. To escape retaliation by the Apostolic authorities, some books from the Surb Ējmiatsin and Surb Sargis Zōravar printing press were issued anonymously, without indication of the place or printing house. Others listed Marseille, Leghorn, or Amsterdam – cities where the Surb Ējmiatsin and Surb Sargis Zōravar press had previously been active – as fictitious places of publication. See Kévorkian, "L'imprimerie Surb Ējmiacin", p. 413–414; M. Pehlivanian, "Mesrop's Heirs: The Early Armenian Book Printers", in E. Hanebutt-Benz, D. Glass, and G. Roper (eds.), *Middle Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution: A Cross-cultural Encounter*, Westhofen, 2002, p. 71, 77–79. As Aslanian notes, the share of Armenian books addressing confessionalism reached an all-time high of 84 % of the total production in the first two decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (see *Early Modernity and Mobility*, p. 355).

15 E. Marazzi, "Catechism Primers in Italy", in B. Juska-Bacher et al. (eds.), *Learning to Read, Learning Religion: Catechism Primers in Europe from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries*, Amsterdam, 2023, p. 278.

by the Jesuit Cardinal Robert Bellarmine, approved by Pope Clement VIII and issued in two versions – one *breve* and one *più copiosa* – in 1597 and 1598, respectively. As *the* instructional and practical Catholic catechism *par excellence*,<sup>16</sup> Bellarmine’s work was soon adopted by the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide*. Over time, the Congregation commissioned its translation (or re-translation) into a series of languages, including Armenian.<sup>17</sup> This helps explain why, to my knowledge, no other Catholic catechisms were printed in Armenian and/or by Armenians during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, with the exception perhaps of Oskan’s question-and-answer text appended to his 1666 *Primer*.<sup>18</sup>

---

16 The longer (1555) and shorter (1556, for secondary students; and 1558, for children) catechisms of Peter Canisius, also structured in a question-and-answer format, undoubtedly occupy a prominent place as well. Although some scholars argue that they were more widely read than Bellarmine’s, their influence was largely concentrated in northwestern Europe. By contrast, Bellarmine’s catechisms were more widespread throughout the rest of the world, boasting translations into more than sixty languages; see A. Flüchter, “Translating Catechisms, Translating Cultures: An Introduction”, in A. Flüchter and R. Wirbser (eds.), *Translating Catechisms, Translating Cultures: The Expansion of Catholicism in the Early Modern World*, Leiden/Boston, MA, 2017, p. 20–21.

17 Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie*, p. 144–145.

18 However, Oskan’s 1666 catechism was likely intended for the general Armenian public, as it avoids addressing or emphasizing sensitive issues such as the nature(s) of Christ, the procession of the Holy Spirit, or the existence of Purgatory and Limbo. For example, while sounding Apostolic in its language, the answer to the question “Why is Christ God?” (զիսորդ է Քրիստոս Աստուած) does not mention the controversial term “nature” (բնութիւն): “Because one of the Trinity, i.e., the person of the Son, became incarnate of the Holy Virgin, Mother of God, and was united (միասորդեցաւ) with humanity without confusion and without change: therefore, he is called God” (see *Girk’ aybubenits’*, p. 34). Since միասորդի can also mean “to be tied together” or “to be coupled”, such a definition would likely have been acceptable to Catholics as well, especially if not particularly learned in such matters. In contrast, later Armenian Apostolic and Catholic catechisms would explicitly stress either the “one nature” of Christ or his “two natures”. See, for instance, Jughayets’i, *Girk’ hamaröt*, p. 6, 142–200, for the Apostolic position, and Hovhannēs Kostandnupölsets’i [Giovanni Agop], *Pataskhanatrut’iunk’ t’gh’t’oy urumn’ ändimanadrakani grets’eloy heghbarts’ omants’ haykazuneats’*, i Vēnētik k’aghak’ [Venice], 1687, for the Catholic one. Hovhannēs also maintains the existence of two wills and two operations in the person of Jesus Christ [p. 10–11], *contra* Grigor Tat’ewats’i, *Girk’ harts’mants’*, i Kostandnupölis k’aghak’i [Constantinople], 1729, 2.7.14, p. 82. A similar ambiguity can be found in the explanation of the Creed. The text of the Creed in Oskan’s catechism follows the Armenian liturgical version, in the first-person plural (հաւստասւնք), complete with the Nicene Anathema and the doxology of Gregory the Illuminator. Accordingly, it mentions neither the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father nor from the Son (see *Girk’ aybubenits’*, p. 38–39; on the *Vorlage* of the Nicene “enlarged” version of the Armenian liturgical Creed, see H. Gat’ērchean, *Hanganak hawatoy orov vari Hayastaneayts’ Yekeghets’i: K’nnut’iwn hanganakin tsagman, heghinakin ew zhamanakin vray*, Vienna, 1891, esp. p. 34–37; on the different versions of the Creed and the diverse professions of faith circulating among both Catholic and Apostolic Armenians in late 17<sup>th</sup>-century Constantinople, see Ohanjanyan, “Creedal Controversies”). In the declaration of the eighth article of the Creed, Oskan’s

Nevertheless, over time, the need to update the Latinizing texts prepared by *Propaganda Fide's* translators and to provide works in a simpler Armenian,<sup>19</sup>

---

catechism gives the following explanation: “I believe in the Holy Spirit, who is of the Holy Trinity, sharing the same existence with the Father and glory with the Son, partaker of the same substance and nature: the third person of the Trinity, eternal God, and Lord of all, just as the Father and the Son” (Ես հաւատամ ի սուրբ Հոգին. որ է ի սրբոյ երրորդութենէ. Էակից Հոր՝ եւ փասակից Որդոյ. գոյակից եւ բնութենակից երրեակ անձն երրորդութեան. Աստուած յաւիտենական եւ Տէր ամենեցուն. որպէս Հայր եւ Որդի); see *Girk' aybubenits'*, p. 43 [here and below, I have retained the original spelling, punctuation, and capitalization of the printed works I quote]; contrast this with the Catholic *Mrkanots' hogewor*, which features an enlarged version of the Apostle's Creed, including the *Filioque*: որ ի հօրէ եւ յորդոյ թղխի (p. 18–19); vs. the 1702 polemical Apostolic *Formula fidei* – whose text is preserved only in Latin translation – which states: “Profiteor Spiritum Sanctum procedere a Patre, et non dicitur a Filio, sed particeps eiusdem substantiae, et gloriae, cuius est Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus ab eorum essentia” (*Formula fidei pro iis qui de errore ad veritatem redeunt instituta a Pseudo-Patriarcha Armenorum Constantinopoli sub [...] augusti 1702* [ARSL, MS Gallia 104, N. 107, f. 285r]; on this Armenian Apostolic profession of faith, see Santus, “Sheikh Ūl-Islam”, p. 243–244; Santus, “Konfessionalismus”. I am grateful to Cesare Santus for providing me with the complete transcription of this document). Saying that the Spirit is “of the Holy Trinity” is a theological definition that no Christian would deny – for Catholics, it is not heretical (the Spirit is indeed of the Trinity); for the Apostolic, it avoids the offensive *Filioque*. Oskan's language emphasizes that the Spirit is equal to the Father and the Son (a point of agreement) rather than defining how the Spirit relates to them (the point of disagreement). This “ecumenical” character of Oskan's catechism might explain why it was subsequently reprinted first as a “catechism according to the Armenians for the Romans” (*Vardapetut' iwn k'ristonēakan ēst Hayots' aradreal aṙ Hromayets'i mijnordut'eamb*, trans. by Karapet Andrianats'i and Theodor Petraeus, hAmsdēlōtami [Amsterdam], 1667) and later – decades afterwards – at the Armenian Catholic printing press of Surb Eǰmiatsin ew Surb Sargis Zōravar in Constantinople (*Handerdz Astutsov: Girk' aybubenits' hağhags norek tghayots' ew mankants' ankr'tits', Kostandnupōlis k'aghak'i* [Constantinople], 1700).

19 Writing in 1829, the Mkhitarist Abbot Suk'ias Somalean accused the two main Armenian translators employed by the *Propaganda Fide* in the 17<sup>th</sup> century – Basilio Barsegh and Hovhannēs Holov Kostandnupolsets'i, both of whom had translated Bellarmine's catechism into Armenian – of “having caused the Armenian language to totally fall and precipitate into the abyss of irregularity, of barbarism, and of the most monstrous solecisms [...], deeming absurd and irregular everything that deviated from the rules of Latin syntax” (see *Quadro della storia letteraria di Armenia*, Venice, 1829, p. 142–143). A more nuanced interpretation is offered by Weitenberg, who argues that such criticism is valid only to a degree. Instead, he characterizes the “Latinizing” movement as an intentional, though failed, project to adapt Armenian linguistic identity to the pressures of the era. He frames the phenomenon as a reflection of the profound cultural friction of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, illustrating both the unpreparedness of the Armenian clergy to face Western intellectual challenges and the domineering attitude of their Roman counterparts; see J. J. S. Weitenberg, “XVII dari latinatip k'erakanut'yunē”, *Patma-banasirakan handes*, 1990–1994, p. 31–38. Contemporary testimony further illustrates the project's failure. For example, the Jesuit missionary Jacques Villotte complained regarding this Latinizing style, arguing in a 1693 letter to the Secretary of the French Assistancy in Rome, Father Jean-Joseph Guibert, that the Armenian

compounded by the intra-confessional tensions at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century that fueled a demand for catechetical and confessional literature, likely convinced Western missionaries and Catholic Armenians – and, to a certain degree, Rome – of the necessity of compiling and printing new instructional works. However, while the *Propaganda Fide* contented itself with publishing a compendious 22-page question-and-answer catechism titled *Christian Instruction* in 1709 and a commentary on the Profession of Faith in 1711, missionaries and Catholic Armenians dedicated themselves to the task with greater zeal. As noted above, they produced no fewer than seven catechisms between 1710 and 1737; five of these were, for different reasons, printed in Venice, and all at the press of Antonio Bortoli: 1) Jacques Villotte's *Christian Doctrine for the Use of Truth-Loving Armenians* (1710);<sup>20</sup> 2) Petros P'ëhluan and Grigor Guliar's *Short and Profitable Christian Doctrine* (1715);<sup>21</sup> 3) Abbot Mkhitar's *Book of Christian Doctrine, including a Primer* (1725);<sup>22</sup> 4) his *Book of Christian Doctrine, including Religious Hymns* (1727);<sup>23</sup> and 5) the *Christian Doctrine, to Be Used to Explain the Images while Playing* (1737).<sup>24</sup>

Venice was by no means new to Armenian typography. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, other Venetian presses had also been active in Armenian printing.<sup>25</sup> Two works remain from the Tipografia Salicata run by the heirs of Altobello Salicato, printed in 1642–1643.<sup>26</sup> Subsequent attempts were less successful: Angelo Benesello, a Greek

---

clergy in Rome habitually used obscure translations that no one could understand. In 1702, he explicitly advised the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* against employing these priests as revisers, warning that their interventions tended to corrupt rather than correct texts. He pointed to the existing *Propaganda Fide* publications as proof, describing them as being filled with an astonishing number of errors and linguistic barbarisms; see C. Santus and P. Lucca, “Un gioco per insegnare la dottrina cristiana dal Nord America all'Armenia: Alle origini del catechismo illustrato di Mechitar (1737)”, in G. Pizzorusso and F. Simon (eds.), *Orientalismo in tipografia (fine XVII–inizio XIX secolo)*, special issue of *Quaderni storici*, 59, 2024, 1, p. 118, 142.

20 *K'ristonëakan vardapetut'iwñ i pëts chshmartasirats' Hayots'*, i Vënëtik [Venice], 1710.

21 *Hamaröt ew shahawët k'ristonëakan vardapetut'iwñ*, i Vënëtik [Venice], 1715.

22 *Girk' k'ristonëakani vardapetut'ean, ënd orum dni ew aybbenaràn, i hùsumn mankants' hawatats'elots', ew amenits' ork' unin zpitoyts*, i Vënëtik [Venice], 1725.

23 *Girk' k'ristonëakani vardapetut'ean [...] ënd orum ew ergk' taghits' aradrin, ork' i vaghnjuts' zhamanakats' shinets'ealk' en [...]*, i Vënëtik [Venice], 1727.

24 [J. Villotte], *K'ristonëakan vardapetut'iwñ or i gorts atsi i mekneln zpatkers i zhamanaki khaghaly*, ed. by Mkhitar Sebastats'i, i Vënëtik [Venice], 1737.

25 On Armenian printers active in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Venice and their editions, see R. H. Kévorkian, *Catalogue des 'incunables' arméniens (1511–1695) ou Chronique de l'imprimerie arménienne*, préface par J.-P. Mahé, Geneva, 1986, p. 23–29.

26 Kévorkian, *Catalogue des "incunables" arméniens*, p. 35–37. On the Tipografia Salicata, see G. Plumidis, “Tre tipografie di libri greci: Salicata, Saro e Bortoli”, *Ateneo Veneto* [N.S.], 9, 1971, 1–2, p. 245–251.

from Athens, obtained a privilege and invested “effort and money” but failed to complete the project,<sup>27</sup> while Giovan Battista Povich, who requested a twenty-year privilege on September 25, 1660, managed to print only two editions.<sup>28</sup> Production stabilized with Michelangelo Barboni, who printed 13 editions from 1680 through 1690.<sup>29</sup> Other active printers between 1686 and 1687 included Gasparo Seriman (Sehrimanean) and Giacomo Moretti (together with Nahapet Gulnazar Agulets’i), with three editions each.<sup>30</sup> This era concluded when Antonio Bortoli obtained the privilege for all Armenian printing in 1695, which he would maintain – punctuated only by minor interruptions or overlaps with quasi-legal competition – until the opening of the San Lazzaro press in 1789.<sup>31</sup>

Between 1710 and 1737, the holder of the printing privileges for Armenian was therefore Antonio Bortoli – succeeded, after his death around 1730, by his son Girolamo –,<sup>32</sup> which explains the publication of all five catechisms at their press. Yet, how their authors came to Venice and chose it for their publications is another matter. To be sure, printing in Venice ensured both high-quality production and wider distribution, reaching Armenian communities across the Ottoman and the Safavid Empires.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, the four authors of these five catechisms came to Venice each with their own specific motives, reasons, and needs.

---

27 M. Zorzi, “La produzione e la circolazione del libro”, in *Storia di Venezia: Dalle origini alla caduta della Serenissima*, vol. 7: *La Venezia Barocca*, Rome, 1997, p. 950.

28 Kévorkian, *Catalogue des “incunables” arméniens*, p. 141–143; Zorzi, “La produzione e la circolazione del libro”, p. 950.

29 Kévorkian, *Catalogue des “incunables” arméniens*, p. 144–149.

30 Kévorkian, *Catalogue des “incunables” arméniens*, p. 102–110.

31 S. Chemchemean, *Mkhit’ar Abbahōr hratarakch’akan arak’elut’iwnē*, Venice, 1980, p. 110–111. Between 1695 and 1796, the Bortoli press produced more than one hundred and twenty Armenian editions; see A. Orengo, “Gli scambi culturali armeno-italiani (XV–XVIII sec.)”, in C. Mutafian (ed.), *Roma-Armenia: Catalogo della mostra, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 25 marzo–16 luglio 1999*, Rome, 1999, p. 259. On Bortoli, see also Plumidis, “Tre tipografie di libri greci: Salicata, Saro e Bortoli”; M. Infelise, *L’editoria veneziana nel ‘700*, Milan, 1989, p. 170–171.

32 M. Infelise, “Athanasios Skiadas e la gazetta in lingua greca del 1737”, *Θησαυρίσματα*, 48, 2018, p. 141.

33 For Venice’s significance as a hub of typography and book distribution in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, see Infelise, *L’editoria veneziana nel ‘700*; Zorzi, “La produzione e la circolazione del libro”. On the preference for port cities as locations for Armenian presses and the reasons behind it, see S. D. Aslanian, “Port Cities and Printers: Reflections on Early Modern Global Armenian Print Culture”, *Book History*, 17, 2014, esp. p. 58–64; see also Aslanian, *Early Modernity and Mobility*.



p. 3 (pagination: i+[1–2]3–72+i). Page [2] is blank. The type area measures approx. 75 × 120 mm, with 25 lines per page, set in 12-point Roman type with the use of capital letters. Armenian punctuation is employed throughout, except for the question mark, which appears as the Latin sign.

The volume consists of five gatherings (four quaternions and one binion), signed in Latin characters (A–D<sup>8</sup> E<sup>4</sup>). Signatures with progressive numbering (A1, A2, etc.) appear on the recto of the first four leaves of gatherings A–D and the first two leaves of gathering E; they are centered in the bottom margin and aligned with the catchwords. Horizontal catchwords appear at the bottom right of every page (outer corner on odd pages, inner corner on even pages), starting from p. 4.

Decorative elements include headpieces featuring interlaced strapwork and stylized foliate motifs on p. 5 and 47, and ornamental initials on p. 3 and 47. A fleuron is used on the title page (centered between the date and place of publication), as well as on pp. 13 and 39 where it serves as a tailpiece.

The examined copy, held at the library of the Mkhitarist Monastery of San Lazzaro in Venice under the shelfmark η. υ. 4 / 447 / I: Q, features a parchment binding over pasteboards.

## 2.2 Content and Analysis

The text opens with an address to the reader (p. 3–4). The catechism follows, properly structured in a question-and-answer format, which concludes on p. 46 and is organized as follows:<sup>41</sup>

Introduction: Who is the Creator; Why did God Create Man; The “Essentials” of Christianity (i.e., Faith, Hope, and Love); The Creed; The Sign of the Cross (p. 5–7).

Part One of the Christian Doctrine: What One Must Believe (p. 8–23): *Chapter I*: Concerning the Holy Trinity (p. 8–11); *Chapter II*: Concerning the Incarnation of the Word of God (p. 11–13); *Chapter III*: Concerning the Birth of Jesus Christ (p. 14–15); *Chapter IV*: Concerning the Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ (p. 15–17); *Chapter V*: Concerning the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ (p. 18–19); Concerning the Ascension into Heaven of Jesus Christ (p. 19–23).

Part Two of the Christian Doctrine: Acting Good (p. 23–39): *Chapter I*: Concerning Prayer (p. 23–25); *Chapter II*: Concerning Mercy (p. 25–26); *Chapter III*: Concerning Fasting (p. 27); *Chapter IV*: Concerning the Commandments of God and of the Church (p. 27–29); *Chapter V*: Concerning the Seven Sacraments of the Church (p. 29–39).

---

<sup>41</sup> The structure is the classic tripartite one of Catholic doctrine: Profession of Faith, Life of Faith, the Nature of Sin and the Last Things.

Part Three of the Christian Doctrine: Turning Away from Evil (p. 40–46): *Chapter I*: Concerning Sin (p. 40–41); *Chapter II*: Concerning Man’s Four Last Things (p. 42); Concerning the Judgment (p. 42–43); Concerning Hell (p. 43–45); [Concerning Paradise] (p. 45–46).

There follows an anthology of what Villotte calls “spiritual spurs” (p. 47–72) – a series of scriptural quotations organized into seven sections according to the object of meditation or the situation experienced by the supplicant.

In the address to the reader, Villotte compares his catechism to the mustard seed in the Gospel parable (Matthew 13:31–32; Mark 4:30–32; Luke 13:18–19), while outlining the main parts into which the work is divided. His work is

[...] հաստ փոքրիկ, փոքր գիրքն, փոքր տետրիկն, փոքրիկ հարցմունք, փոքրիկ պատասխանի. արտ փոքրիկ յորում սերմանի՝ մանկունք ուխտի, [...] դեռարոյս ծնունդ լուսաւորչի. այլ ի փոքրիկ հատոյ անտի, ի փասիուկ իւրեանց արտի, պտուղ լիութեամբ ծնանիցի. ինչ պտուղ? Ծանիցեն զԱստուած եռեակ եւ մի: ծանիցեն զԲրիստոս նորին որդի. ծանիցեն զոր ինչ վերընդունիլ պարտի [...]. ծանիցեն զոր պարտ է առնել զբարի, եւ զչար յորմէ խոտորիլ պարտի [...].<sup>42</sup>

[...] a small seed, a small book, a small notebook, small questions, small answers; a small field in which it is sown – the children of the Covenant, [...] the tender offspring of the Illuminator. But from that small seed, from their tender hearts, fruit shall be born in abundance. What fruit? They shall know God, triune and one. They shall know Christ, his Son. They shall know what must be believed [...]. They shall know the good that must be done, and the evil from which one must turn away [...].

That Villotte used Bellarmine’s catechism in its large version is proven by the example he employs to illustrate the mystery of the Holy Trinity:

h. Ուրեմն երեք Աստուածք են?  
 պ. Ոչ, բայց երեք անձն, մին Աստուած:  
 h. Պետրոս մին մարդ, Պօղոս մին մարդ, Յօհաննէս մին մարդ, երեք մարդ են?  
 պ. Այո՛:  
 h. Նմանապէս հայր Աստուած, որդին Աստուած, հոգի սուրբ Աստուած, երեք Աստուած են?  
 պ. Չէ, բայց մին Աստուած, երեք անձն:  
 h. Ինչ զանազանութիւն կայ?  
 պ. Չանազանութիւն այս է, զի Պետրոս, Պօղոս, եւ Յօհաննէս, այլ եւ այլ բնութիւն ունին. բայց հայր, որդի, հոգի սուրբ, մի եւ զնոյն Աստուածութիւն, մի եւ նոյն բնութիւն ունին:<sup>43</sup>

Q. Therefore, are there three Gods?  
 A. No, but three Persons, one God.  
 Q. Peter is one man, Paul is one man, John is one man. Are they three men?

42 Հակոբ vardapet [Villotte], *K’ristonēakan vardapetut’iwn*, p. 3.  
 43 Հակոբ vardapet [Villotte], *K’ristonēakan vardapetut’iwn*, p. 9–10.

A. Yes.

Q. Similarly, the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. Are they three Gods?

A. No, but one God, three Persons.

Q. What is the difference?

A. The difference is this: that Peter, Paul, and John have different natures; but the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have one and the same Godhead, one and the same nature.<sup>44</sup>

However, Bellarmine's catechism was certainly not Villotte's sole source. For instance, the doctrine regarding Hell does not fully mirror Bellarmine's description. In the latter, Hell was depicted as comprising four "huge caverns" which, arranged from deepest to highest, were: Gehenna (i.e., the Hell of the damned), Purgatory, the Limbo of the unbaptized, and the place of the Patriarchs, prophets, and saints who died before the coming of Christ.<sup>45</sup> In Villotte, conversely, there is no mention of caverns, and Hell – following the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* – is tripartite rather than quadripartite. Yet, a distinction remains. While the Tridentine text posits the existence of the Hell of the damned (described as a *teterrimus et obscurissimus carcer* – a phrasing echoed by Villotte's ἀνῆλθηκα εἰς τὰ κρηναῖα τῆς πύσης), Purgatory, and the Limbo of the Fathers,<sup>46</sup> Villotte defines Limbo solely as the dwelling place for the souls of children who died without Baptism. Indeed, although the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* does not explicitly mention the Limbo of Infants (which, it is worth recalling, has never been a dogma of faith in the Catholic Church), it insists on the necessity of baptizing children as soon as possible.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, in the Bull *Effraenatam perditissimorum* of 1588, Pope Sixtus V condemned abortion as "an abhorrent act, by which are lost not only the bodies but also the souls",<sup>48</sup> implying that if the body dies without

44 See Roberto Bellarmino, *Dichiarazione più copiosa della dottrina cristiana breve*, in Padova [Padua], 1770, p. 6: "Come, per esempio, se tre persone qua giù in terra, che si chiamassero *Pietro, Paolo, e Giovanni*, avessero una medesima anima, ed un medesimo corpo, si direbbono tre persone; perché una sarebbe *Pietro*, l'altra *Paolo*, e l'altra *Giovanni*, e nondimeno sarebbono un uomo solo, e non tre uomini, non avendo tre corpi, né tre Anime, ma un corpo, ed un'Anima. Questo non è possibile fra gli uomini, perché l'esser dell'uomo è piccolo, e finito; e però non può esser in più persone. Ma l'esser di Dio, e la sua Dinività è infinita; e perciò si può trovare, e si trova l'istesso essere, e l'istessa Divinità nel Padre, nel Figliuolo, e nello Spirito Santo. Sono dunque tre persone".

45 Bellarmino, *Dichiarazione più copiosa*, p. 25. The idea of the "four Hells" finds its classic formulation in Thomas Aquinas (see *Summa theologiae*, Supp., q. 69, aa. 1–7).

46 *Catechismus ad parochos*, Romae [Rome], 1576, p. 61 [ed. princeps 1547].

47 "Hortandi autem sunt magnopere fideles, ut liberos suos, cum primum id sine periculo facere liceat, ad ecclesiam deferendos, & sollempnibus ceremonijs baptizandos curent. Nam cum pueris infantibus nulla alia salutis comparandæ ratio, nisi eis baptismus prebeat, relicta fit"; see *Catechismus ad parochos*, p. 178.

48 "Execrandum facinus, per quod nedum corporum, sed quod gravius est, etiam animarum certa jactura sequitur"; see Bull *Effraenatam perditissimorum* [i.e., *Contra abortum quovis modo*

Baptism, the soul is likewise lost to eternal salvation. Evidently, Villotte deemed it more critical for the spiritual instruction of his readers to emphasize the necessity of Baptism for the salvation of the soul. Consequently, while retaining the tripartite structure of Hell found in the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, he most likely chose to substitute the Limbo of the Infants for the Limbo of the Fathers (which had been rendered empty following the descent of Jesus into Hell).

Other sensitive topics are addressed, such as Christ's two natures, the question of communion under two species, fasting, the date of Christmas, and the doctrine of particular judgment (the latter two only in passing). For example, in his explanation of Holy Communion, Villotte invokes the doctrine of concomitance: because Christ's body in the Eucharist is alive, the Host must necessarily contain his blood. He employs this argument to address the polemics surrounding communion under both species, asserting that the 'schismatics' (i.e., the Armenian Apostolics) – who claimed that Orthodox (i.e., Catholic) priests withheld the blood of Christ from the laity – did so out of envy and ignorance.<sup>49</sup>

Villotte is particularly straightforward also in articulating the Dyophysite doctrine:

- h. Բայց, մի բնութիւն ասել, հերձուածօղութիւն չէ?  
 պ. Ի վերայ Քրիստոսի ասել մի բնութիւն, հերձուածօղութիւն է: Ի վերայ սուրբ երրորդութեան ասել մի բնութիւն, ճշմարիտ է:  
 h. Ուրեմն Քրիստոս քանի բնութիւն ունի?  
 պ. Երկու, այսինքն, բնութիւն Աստուածային, եւ բնութիւն մարդկային:  
 h. Մարդկային բնութիւն ինչ է?  
 պ. Է բանական հոգի եւ մարմին ընդ միմեանս միաւորեալը:<sup>50</sup>

---

*procurantem*], in *Collectionis bullarum sacrosanctae Basilicae Vaticanae*, vol. 3: *A Julio III ad Benedictum XIV*, Romae [Rome], 1752, p. 39.

49 Կակոբ վարձապետ [Villotte], *Կրիստոնէական վարձապետութիւն*, p. 35. In the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Eucharist is administered to the laity *sub utraque specie* via intinction, in accordance with Eastern Christian practice. Conversely, the Council of Trent established that communicating under both species was not a divine precept (Session 21, 16 July 1562; see *The Canons and Decree of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, trans. by J. Waterforth, London, 1888, p. 143–144). This distinction often became a point of contention between missionaries and local Christians. For a parallel example in the Ethiopian context, see L. Cohen, “The Jesuits in Ethiopia and the Polemics over the Sacrament of the Eucharist”, in M. Yardeni and I. Zinguer (eds.), *The Two Christian Reforms: Propagation and Diffusion*, Leiden, 2004, p. 138–150.

50 Կակոբ վարձապետ [Villotte], *Կրիստոնէական վարձապետութիւն*, p. 10. Further along in the text, he reinforces this: “Christ was born of God the Father with his divine nature, and was born a second time of the Virgin Mary with his human nature” (p. 14); and again, on p. 16: “Christ died by his human nature; but by his divine nature, he did not die”.

Q: But isn't saying "one nature" heresy?

A: To say "one nature" regarding Christ is heresy; [but] to say "one nature" regarding the Holy Trinity is truth.

Q: Therefore, how many natures does Christ have?

A: Two; that is, a divine nature and a human nature.

Q: What is the human nature?

A: It is a rational soul and a body united with one another.

What is surprising, however, is the absence of any discussion of the *Filioque*, whereas in both Bellarmine's short and large catechisms the subject is addressed more than once.<sup>51</sup> In the Introduction of his work, Villotte gives the Armenian translation of the Apostles' Creed (where no mention of the Holy Spirit's procession is found).<sup>52</sup> This is not unexpected, as the text of the Apostles' Creed also appears in the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* and Bellarmine's catechism, among others.<sup>53</sup> However, Villotte does not provide a detailed commentary on the twelve articles of the Creed – a departure from standard Catholic catechetical practice – meaning that the topic of the procession of the Holy Spirit remains unaddressed. Nor does he address it in the section devoted to the three Persons of the Trinity, another *locus classicus* where the topic was traditionally discussed in instructional literature.<sup>54</sup> This absence is particularly striking considering that Villotte continued to bypass the subject in his 1737 work, *Christian Doctrine, to Be Used to Explain the Images while Playing*. Designed as a pedagogical tool for children, this publication took the form of a board game akin to the Game of the Goose, accompanied by an illustrated booklet providing doctrinal commentary corresponding to specific images on the board squares.<sup>55</sup> The issue of the Holy Spirit's procession is absent throughout the

<sup>51</sup> Roberto Bellarmino, *Dottrina christiana breve*, in Roma [Rome], 1599, p. 8, 13; Bellarmino, *Dichiarazione più copiosa*, p. 35, 36.

<sup>52</sup> Hakoḅ vardapet [Villotte], *K'ristonēakan vardapetut'iwṅ*, p. 6–7.

<sup>53</sup> The Apostles' Creed was by no means unknown to the Armenians of that period. In addition to the traditional Armenian liturgical version, different variants of the text circulated among the communities, not all of which were introduced through contact with Western missionaries. See Ohanjanyan, "Creedal Controversies", esp. p. 28–34.

<sup>54</sup> The question regarding the *Filioque*, and more specifically its absence from the Creed recited by the Armenian Apostolic Church, was a topic that had previously been discussed in Armenian by Catholic authors, such as, among others, Clemens Galanus (*Conciliatio Ecclesiae Armenae cum Romana: Secunda pars controversialis*, vol. 1, Rome, 1658, p. 393–426), Hovhannēs Kostandinupōlsets'i (*Speculum Veritatis. Continens particularem quamdam instructionem fidei Catholicae Apostolicae ac Romanae*, i Vēnētik k'aghak'ī [Venice], 1680, p. 62–68), and Febvre (*Praecipuae obiectiones quae vulgo solent fieri per modum interrogations a Mahumeticæ legis sectatoribus, Iudaeis, & Hereticis Orientalibus adversos Catholicos, earumque solutiones*, Romæ [Rome], 1681, p. 234–237).

<sup>55</sup> [Villotte], *K'ristonēakan vardapetut'iwṅ* [1737]. Concerning this work, which Villotte originally compiled in 1693, but which was later traditionally attributed to Mkhit'ar in Armenian

work, even in the commentary for square 5, which depicts the Trinity accompanied by the inscription “One God, and three equal Persons.”<sup>56</sup> As noted by Windler, Villotte appears to have adopted a conciliatory posture in his missionary activity, functioning as a mediator between Catholic missionaries and the local Armenian population to foster understanding.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, both in his question-and-answer catechism – with the exception of the two cited cases where the terms “heresy” and “schismatics” appear – and in the catechism he designed to accompany his catechetical adaptation of the traditional Game of the Goose, he avoids a polemical tone entirely.<sup>58</sup> His exclusion of this controversial topic from both works was, therefore, likely a deliberate decision. By sidestepping the *Filioque* – one of the primary theological wedges driving the schism between the Latin and Armenian churches – Villotte prioritized pastoral effectiveness over dogmatic completeness, ensuring that his works could be accepted and used by the Armenian faithful without provoking undue suspicion or hostility.<sup>59</sup> While the dual nature of Christ *had* to be

---

scholarship, see, for instance, Chemchemean, *Mkhit'ar Abbahōr hratarakch'akan arak'elut'iwne*, p. 173–174, and, more recently, M. T'op'alean, “Haghordut'ean patkeravor usuts'umē Mkhit'ar Abbahōr ch'orrord K'ristonēakanin mēj”, *Bazmavēp*, 171, 2013, 1–2, p. 13–31; M. Ghewondyan, “Mkhit'ar Sebastats'woy K'ristonēakanner-ē orpes krt'adastiarakch'akan dasagrki' nmush”, *Banber Matenadarani*, 32, 2021, p. 158–170; see now Santus and Lucca, “Un gioco per insegnare la dottrina cristiana”.

56 [Villotte], *K'ristonēakan vardapetut'awn* [1737], p. 16–17.

57 C. Windler, *Missionaries in Persia: Cultural Diversity and Competing Norms in Global Catholicism*, trans. by P. E. Selwyn, London/New York/Oxford, 2024, p. 161, 163–164; see also Mathee, “Jacques Villotte”, p. 590.

58 For example, when discussing fasting in his catechism, Villotte does not detail what one should or should not eat during days of abstinence: “Q: How must one keep the fast?; A: By eating only what, and eating only as much, as our Church permits to be eaten” (see *Hakob vardapet* [Villotte], *K'ristonēakan vardapetut'awn*, p. 27). This omission is significant, as fasting regulations were another heated topic of contention between Catholic and Apostolic Armenians: while the former required abstinence only from meat, the latter forbade meat, dairy, eggs, fish, oil, wine, and alcohol. On fasting as a source of controversy and problems between the Roman Church and Eastern Churches, see B. Heyberger, “Les transformations du jeûne chez les chrétiens d'Orient”, *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, 113–114, 2006, esp. p. 274–283; B. Heyberger, “Fasting: The Limits of Catholic Confessionalization in Eastern Christianity in the Eighteenth Century”, in J. Loop and J. Krayer (eds.), *Scholarship between Europe and the Levant. Essays in Honour of Alastair Hamilton*, Leiden/Boston, MA, 2020, p. 217–235.

59 It should therefore come as no surprise that, among the most important prayers for a Christian – alongside the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary – Villotte includes the “Angel of God” rather than the Creed (see *K'ristonēakan vardapetut'awn*, p. 25). This stands in contrast to Bellarmine, in whose catechism one finds the commented “declarations” of the Creed (see Bellarmine, *Dichiarazione più copiosa*, p. 9–51), the Our Father (p. 51–69), and the Hail Mary (p. 69–75). The original *Catechism of Trent* expounded the texts of the Creed and the Lord's prayer only.

addressed – since, to Tridentine-educated missionaries, the Apostolic Armenians were Monophysite schismatics – and while the issue of Communion under both species likely held more practical than theological weight, the procession of the Holy Spirit was a topic that could be strategically postponed.

### 3 Petros P'ēhluan and Grigor Guliar's *Brief and Profitable Christian Doctrine*

While Villotte's Armenian Catechism is brief, the one composed in 1715 by the two Armenian Dominican friars Petros P'ēhluan and Grigor Guliar is even shorter. These friars came from the Catholic Diocese of Nakhijewan, a region with a long-standing Dominican presence dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Both Petros and Grigor studied in Rome during the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. In 1711, after returning to their native diocese, they began translating the Dominican Breviary into Armenian, and in 1712 they were dispatched back to Rome. Having obtained printing authorization by the *Propaganda Fide* in September 1713 – and after collecting alms from the Pope, cardinals, and other benefactors, to cover the costs – the two friars relocated to Venice. There, on November 23 of that same year, the printing of the Breviary began, once again at the press of Antonio Bortoli.<sup>60</sup> While awaiting the completion of the Breviary, the friars found the opportunity to draft their own concise manual of faith. They dedicated this work “to the spiritual benefit of our truth-loving and simple-minded children of the Church,” providing yet another condensed and practical alternative to the more expansive Armenian translation of Bellarmine's catechism.

#### 3.1 Physical Description of the Book

Petros and Grigor's catechism is a small octavo volume of 32 pages, numbered in Arabic numerals at the top outer corner of each page, starting from p. 3 (pagination:

---

<sup>60</sup> [Ordo Fratrum Praedicatorum], *Prēviar or ē Zhamagirk' srbazani kargin eghbarts' k'arozoghats'*, trans. by Grigor Guliar and Petros P'ēhluan, i Vēnētik [Venice], 1714. For the history of the Armenian translation of the Dominican Breviary and for further biographical information on its authors, see P. Lucca, “La traduzione armena del breviario domenicano (Venezia 1714): Note di storia, codicologia e bibliografia testuale”, in A. Ferrari and E. Ianiro (eds.), *Armenia, Caucaso e Asia Centrale: Ricerche 2016*, Venice, 2016, p. 135–176.

[1–2] 3–32). The type area measures approx. 75 × 125 mm, with 26 lines per page, set in 12-point Roman type with the use of capital letters.

The volume consists of a single octernion, signed in Latin characters (A<sup>16</sup>). Signatures with progressive numbering (A1, A2, etc.) appear on the recto of the first eight leaves, located in the bottom margin, centered relative to the text and aligned with the catchwords. Horizontal catchwords appear at the bottom right of every page (outer corner on odd pages, inner corner on even pages), starting from p. 4. Beginning on p. 5, a running title appears in the top margin, centered relative to the text: *K'ristonēakan* (on even pages) and *Vardapetut'iwn* (on odd pages).

A woodcut vignette appears on the title page, depicting the Madonna and Child seated on clouds, flanked by cherub heads; this image is centered between the publication year and the place of publication. On p. 3, a headpiece features interlaced strapwork adorned with stylized foliate motifs.

The examined copy, held at the library of the Mkhit'arist Monastery of San Lazzaro in Venice under the shelfmark η. υ. 7υ / 245 / Ω. Ϟ 19, is bound in plain paper boards.

### 3.2 Content and Analysis

The text opens with an address to the reader (p. [2]), followed by the catechism proper, which is structured in a question-and-answer format and divided into two main parts:

Part One of the Christian Doctrine: [Principles of Faith] (p. 3–13): This section lacks a specific title and chapter divisions. It addresses core matters of faith, including the Holy Trinity, the Virginity of Mary, and the Christological cycle: the Incarnation, Passion, Death, Harrowing of Hell, Resurrection, and Ascension.

Part Two of the Christian Doctrine: [Christian Practice and Ethics] (p. 14–28): [*Chapter I:* Concerning the Commandments of God (p. 14–22). These are divided into those “according to the Old Testament” (the Ten Commandments, p. 14–15) and those “according to the New Testament” (p. 15–17). This is followed by an exposition of the Seven Sacraments (p. 17–19), the Three Theological Virtues (p. 19–20), the Four Cardinal Virtues (p. 20), the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit (p. 20–21), and the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy (p. 21–22); [*Chapter II:* Concerning Sin (p. 22–28). This chapter discusses the seven capital sins (p. 22–24), the distinction between mortal and venial sins (p. 24–25), the five steps required for a valid confession (p. 25–26), and the Last Things (p. 26–28).

The volume concludes with the full texts of the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and the Apostles' Creed (p. 28–29), which, in contrast with Villotte's catechism (but in line

with Bellarmine's), are defined as the “most acceptable” prayers to God.<sup>61</sup> Finally, the Litany of Loreto follows, titled “Litanies of the Blessed Mary” (p. 30–32).

In the address to the reader, the authors compare their work to the biblical “widow's two mites” (Mark 12:41–44; Luke 21:1–4),<sup>62</sup> asking their readers to receive it with willingness, although it is small:

Ոչ նայելով ի սակաւութիւն բանից, եւ ի շարադրութիւն ոճոյն, զի բազմիցս տպեցեալ է՝ քրիստոնէական վարդապետութիւն, գեղեցիկ ոճիւ, եւ յայնատարած խօսակցութեամբ զարդարեալ: Այլ առաւել նայիջիք ի հոգեւոր օգուտն, որ սովաւ լինելոց է՝ պարզամիտ քրիստոնէից, ըստ առաքելական խրատոյն, լաւագոյն է՝ կարթն ջամբել մանկանց, քան թէ կերակուր, վանս որոց այսպէս պարզ, եւ իմանալի շարադրեցաւ:<sup>63</sup>

Do not look at the scarcity of words or the composition of the style, for the Christian Doctrine has been printed many times, adorned with beautiful style and extensive discourse. Rather, look more to the spiritual benefit that is to come through this for simple-minded Christians; according to the apostolic counsel, it is better to feed milk to children than solid food. For this reason, it was composed so simply and comprehensibly.

Consequently, the teachings are imparted with remarkable concision and accessible language. While the core doctrines remain fundamentally unchanged, this catechism is devoid of any polemical tone, even the mild one that occasionally characterizes Villotte's work – a shift likely attributable to the fact that it addresses the faithful of an established Catholic diocese. In the catechism of Petros and Grigor, terms such as “heretics” or “schismatics” are notably absent.<sup>64</sup> The question of Christ's dual nature, for instance, is addressed as follows:

<sup>61</sup> Petros Chahkets'i and Grigor Chahkets'i, *K'ristonēakan vardapetut'iwon*, p. 9.

<sup>62</sup> This reference is likely also intended as a clever play on words. By invoking the “two mites”, the authors not only allude to the small size of the book but also humbly refer to themselves, who were offering their modest contribution to God, the “Supreme Treasurer” (վերին քանձապետ).

<sup>63</sup> Petros Chahkets'i and Grigor Chahkets'i, *K'ristonēakan vardapetut'iwon*, p. [2].

<sup>64</sup> This does not imply, however, that the Roman hierarchy considered the Catholics of Nakhijewan exempt from the need for constant surveillance, given the fear that they might relapse into the “heresies” of the “schismatic” Apostolic Armenians among whom they lived. On the complex and fraught relations between Western missionaries and the local clergy of the Catholic Diocese of Nakhijewan – characterized by the former's suspicion and the latter's resentment of perceived interference – see P. Lucca, “Cleansing the Christian Vineyard: Dominican Missions to the Armenian Catholic Diocese of Nakhijewan in the 1610s–1630s”, in A. Ferrari, S. Haroutyunian, and P. Lucca (eds.), *Il viaggio in Armenia: Dall'antichità ai nostri giorni*, Venice, 2021, p. 39–62; P. Lucca, “From Doctrinal Persuasion to Economic Threats: Paolo Piromalli's Missionary Work among the Armenians and His Conversion Strategies”, in Krstić and Terzioğlu (eds.), *Entangled Confessionalizations?*, p. 451–487, esp. p. 452–459. The two translators of the catechism were by no means immune to these dynamics. Both had previously opposed the appointment of the Polish

- h. Տէրն մեր Յիսուս Քրիստոս ի՞նչ է:  
 պ. Ճշմարիտ Աստուած, եւ ճշմարիտ մարդ:  
 h. Որպէս է՝ Աստուած:  
 պ. Վասն նորա, որ էր ճշմարիտ որդի իօրն ամենակարողի:  
 h. Որպէս է՝ մարդ:  
 պ. Վասն նորա, որ էր ճշմարիտ ծնեալ որդի մարիամայ սրբուհոյ կուսէն:  
 h. Տէրն մեր Յիսուս Քրիստոս քանի բնութիւն ունի:  
 պ. Երկու:  
 h. Ասա՛ տեսանեմ:  
 պ. Բնութիւն Աստուածային, եւ մարդկային:<sup>65</sup>

- Q: What is our Lord Jesus Christ?  
 A: True God, and true man.  
 Q: How is he God?  
 A: Because he was the true son of God the Father Almighty.  
 Q: How is he man?  
 A: Because he was the truly born son of the Holy Virgin Mary.  
 Q: How many natures does our Lord Jesus Christ have?  
 A: Two.  
 Q: Say [them, so] I [can] see.  
 A: Divine nature, and human nature.

A similarly neutral tone is adopted regarding communion under both species:

- h. Մի՛ թէ հարկէ ամենեցուն քրիստոնէից հաղորդիլ ի սուրբ բաժակէն, եւ սուրբ նշխարքէն:  
 պ. Ոչ, այլ բաւական միայն հաղորդիլ ի սուրբ նշխարքէն, գերայ սուրբ նշխարքի, եւ սուրբ բաժակի մէջն կայ բոլոր Քրիստոս:<sup>66</sup>

- Q: Is it necessary for all Christians to communicate from the Holy Cup and the Holy Host?  
 A: No, it is sufficient to communicate only from the Holy Host, for within the Holy Host and within the Holy Cup is the whole Christ.

Conversely, unconstrained by the sensitivities of a mixed audience, the two authors can be more categorical regarding other Latin distinctives. This is evident in their explicit restriction of fasting rules to abstinence from meat alone<sup>67</sup> and their very

---

friar Anioł Smoliński as provincial in 1712, challenging his authority and criticizing his linguistic incompetence in the Armenian language. Most notably, just the previous year, while accompanying Smoliński as his interpreter in Isfahan, Grigor Guliar had provoked a scandal among the local Augustinian, Capuchin, and Carmelite missionaries by complaining about Smoliński, threatening to have him incarcerated, and circulating libelous letters against the European missionaries in the Armenian province (see Lucca, “La traduzione armena del breviario domenicano”, p. 146–147).

65 Petros Chahkets'i and Grigor Chahkets'i, *K'ristonēakan vardapetut'iwn*, p. 6.

66 Petros Chahkets'i and Grigor Chahkets'i, *K'ristonēakan vardapetut'iwn*, p. 19.

67 Petros Chahkets'i and Grigor Chahkets'i, *K'ristonēakan vardapetut'iwn*, p. 16.

brief discussion of the *Filioque*. Unlike Villotte, Petros and Grigor provide an explanation of the twelve articles of the Creed. And when asking what it means to believe in the Holy Spirit, the catechism explicitly states: “It means that we must believe that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son”.<sup>68</sup>

#### 4 Mkhit‘ar’s *Christian Doctrine* (1725)

Born Manuk in Sebaste (Sivas), Mkhit‘ar (1676–1749) entered the local Monastery of the Holy Sign at the age of fifteen. While traveling to the Armenian Catholicate in Eĵmiatsin during his adolescence, he stopped in Erzurum, where a conversation with a Jesuit missionary kindled a desire to visit Rome and deepen his understanding of Catholic doctrine.<sup>69</sup> After an unsuccessful attempt to reach Rome, Mkhit‘ar’s travels eventually led him to Aleppo. There, he associated with the resident Jesuit missionaries and placed himself under the spiritual direction of Father Antoine de Beauvillier, to whom he made his confession and profession of the Catholic faith. Ordained in 1696, Mkhit‘ar arrived in Constantinople the following year. Driven by the conviction that the authentic Armenian doctrine was fully consonant with Roman Catholic teaching, he began preaching with great success at the Church of Saint Gregory the Illuminator in Galata. He attracted a group of disciples with whom he established communal life in 1700, and in September 1701, this group was formally constituted as a religious congregation.

However, escalating hostility from the Armenian Apostolic hierarchy, fueled by inter-confessional tensions and supported by the Ottoman civil authorities, eventually forced Mkhit‘ar to leave the city. He fled first to Smyrna, before departing the Ottoman Empire entirely, reaching the Venetian Morea in 1702. In Modon, he founded a monastery and, in 1711, secured papal ratification for his community under the Rule of St. Benedict. When the Ottomans reconquered the Morea in 1715, Mkhit‘ar sought refuge in Venice. After a temporary stay in the San Martino parish, the Republic granted him the island of San Lazzaro in 1717, which remains the Congregation’s mother house to this day.<sup>70</sup>

68 “Է սսեւ, պարսեմք հաւատալ թէ հոգին սուրբն բղխէ ի հօրէ, եւ յորդոյ”; see Petros Chahkets‘i and Grigor Chahkets‘i, *K‘ristonēakan vardapetut‘iwn*, p. 12.

69 Regarding the possible identification of Mkhit‘ar’s Jesuit contact as Jacques Villotte, see Santus and Lucca, “Un gioco per insegnare la dottrina cristiana”, p. 125 and 146, note 48.

70 For a general introduction to Mkhit‘ar, his life, and his work, see M. Nurikhan, *The Life and Times of the Servant of God Abbot Mechitar*, trans. by Rev. J. McQuillan, Venice, 1915.

Mkhit'ar had previously overseen the publication of at least four (possibly five) titles in Constantinople;<sup>71</sup> however, Venice provided a decisive and fundamental impetus to his publishing activities. Between 1715 and his death in 1749, he supervised the publication of at least fifty titles, including thirteen of his own authorship.<sup>72</sup> The majority were issued by the press of Antonio Bortoli, including the *Christian Doctrine* of 1725, which Mkhit'ar wrote in literary Armenian (*grabar*).

#### 4.1 Physical Description of the Book

Mkhit'ar's 1725 catechism is a duodecimo volume of 312 pages, numbered in Arabic numerals at the top outer corner of each page, starting from p. 3 (pagination: [1–2] 3–72 [73–74] 75–312). Page [2] is blank, and p. [74–75] remain unnumbered due to the presence of a second title page on p. [74]. The type area measures approx. 60 × 120 mm, with 25 lines per page, set in 8- and 10-point Roman type with the use of capital letters. The volume consists of 14 senions signed in Latin characters (A–N<sup>12</sup>). Signatures with progressive numbering (A1, A2, etc.) appear on the recto of the first six leaves of each gathering, centered in the bottom margin and aligned with the catchwords. Horizontal catchwords are placed at the bottom right of every page (outer corner on odd pages, inner corner on even pages), starting at p. 3.

<sup>71</sup> Chemchemean, *Mkhit'ar Abbahōr hratarakch'akan arak'elut'iwnē*, p. 9–18.

<sup>72</sup> Scholarly estimates of Mkhit'ar's total publishing output between Constantinople and Venice vary slightly. Chemchemean records 55 titles (see *Mkhit'ar Abbahōr hratarakch'akan arak'elut'iwnē*, p. 334), implying 50 were issued in Venice, after accounting for the five published in Constantinople. In contrast, Ter-Vardanian lists 57 titles (“Le opere dell’Abate Mechitar e la cultura letteraria armena del suo tempo”, in B. L. Zekiyan and A. Ferrari [eds.], *Gli Armeni e Venezia: Dagli Sceriman a Mechitar: Il momento culminante di una consuetudine millenaria. Atti del convegno di studio [Venezia, 11–13 ottobre 2001]*, Venice, 2004, p. 212), which raises the Venetian total to 52. Notably, both scholars agree in attributing 14 of these works to Mkhit'ar's own authorship, whereas Contin mentions 16 of them (see *Libri armeni dei secoli XVII–XIX nella Biblioteca Universitaria di Padova*, Padova, 2008, p. 20). While it has not been possible to identify the two missing works unspecified by Contin, one conclusion may be asserted with absolute certainty: if the bibliographic estimates provided by Chemchemean and Ter-Vardanian are accurate, the total count of works authored by Mkhit'ar must be revised downwards from 14 to 13. This adjustment is required by the exclusion of the above-mentioned *Christian Doctrine, to Be Used to Explain the Images while Playing* from his personal oeuvre. As stated above, this work was, in fact, authored by Jacques Villotte, and Mkhit'ar's role was limited to that of editor, his direct intervention being likely confined to the final exhortation appearing on the last page of the work ([Villotte], *K'ristonēakan vardapetut'iwn* [1737], p. [100]; see Santus and Lucca, “Un gioco per insegnare la dottrina cristiana”, p. 137).

Full-page woodcuts framed by typographic bands appear on p. 10, depicting Tobias and the Angel against a landscape background, and on p. 74, depicting the Annunciation. Additionally, a half-page woodcut on p. 15 sits in the lower text block, showing Saint Gregory the Great at his desk with the Holy Spirit. Decorative elements include large rectangular headpieces with geometric floral patterns and lobed arches on p. 11 and 75, and a fleuron headpiece on p. 16. Zoomorphic ornamental initials introduce sections on p. 3, 19, 31, 75, 127, 164, 172 (misnumbered as 72), 212, 224, 260, and 277. The text concludes with woodcut tailpieces on p. 9 (a foliate mask with floral scrolls) and p. 312 (the Jesuit Christogram within a sunburst).

The examined copy, held at the library of the Mkhitarist Monastery of San Lazzaro in Venice (shelfmark  $\text{d}\mu. \text{q. } 41 / \text{P}\text{Q}$ ), lacks the first 72 pages, beginning instead at p. [73] with the second title page. The volume is bound in cardboard covers sheathed in block-printed paper, which features a repeating pattern of stylized floral motifs printed in purple and ochre on a cream background. The edges of the text block are sprinkled with blue and red pigment.

## 4.2 Content and Analysis

The book opens with an address to the reader (p. 3–9). The volume is subsequently divided into two parts: a pedagogical primer and a lengthy question-and-answer catechism:

Part I: Concerning the Alphabet (p. 11–71): *Chapter I*: Concerning How One Should Present the Alphabet to Newly-learning Children (p. 11–19); *Chapter II*: Concerning the Syllable (p. 19–31); *Chapter III*. Concerning Words (p. 31–71); [*Chapter IV*.] The Numbers according to the Armenians (p. 72).

Part II: Concerning the Christian Doctrine (pp. 76–301): *Chapter I*: Concerning the “Christian” name (p. 75–80); *Chapter II*: Concerning the Sign of the Holy Cross (p. 80–87); *Chapter III*: Concerning Those Things Which Are Essential for the Christian to Be Saved (p. 87–89); *Chapter IV*: Concerning Faith, Which Is the First Essential for the Christian (p. 90–127); *Chapter V*: Concerning Hope, Which Is the Second Essential for the Faithful (p. 127–164); *Chapter VI*: Concerning Love, Which Is the Third Essential for the Faithful (p. 164–172); *Chapter VII*: Concerning Good Works, Which Are the Fourth Essential for the Faithful (p. 172–201); *Chapter VIII*: Concerning the Commandments of the Church (p. 202–211); *Chapter IX*: Concerning the Works of Mercy (p. 212–224); *Chapter X*: Concerning the Seven Sacraments of the Church (p. 224–260); *Chapter XI*: Concerning Sins from Which the Christian Must Flee (p. 260–277); *Chapter XII*: Concerning the Grace of God and the Virtues Which the Christian Must Follow (p. 277–301).

Appended to the text is a didactic, monorhymed poem addressed to the student readers (p. 302). It exhorts them to approach the book with love, memorize its

content, and discipline their mind to avoid laziness. The poem's most notable feature is its acrostic structure: the initial letters of the lines, read downwards, spell out the author's name and title: ՄԽԻՌԱՐ ԱԲԲԱՅ ՈՐ ԲՆԱԻԻՑ ԾԱՌԱՅ, i.e., "Abbot Mkhitar, who is the servant of all".<sup>73</sup>

In the address to the reader, interesting considerations are found regarding the language and style Mkhitar chose for the catechism. Defending the text against potential criticism of its stylistic "roughness" (խշորութիւն), Mkhitar states that the choice of an unadorned register is a deliberate pedagogical strategy designed to make the content accessible to children and the common people. While acknowledging that writing entirely in the "secular tongue" (աշխարհորէն լեզուի, i.e., in the vernacular) might have been preferable for clarity, he notes that he did not do so "for certain considerations" (սակսոսմանց նկատմանց), aiming instead for a style that was simply and easy to understand.

Mkhitar then explains the inclusion of an alphabet primer at the beginning of the text, intended to allow children to transition immediately from basic literacy to catechesis. This practice was not a novelty in the Armenian tradition or, for that matter, in the tradition of religious instructional literature at large. Oskan's 1666 catechism already contained an abecedary preceding the doctrinal content,<sup>74</sup> and other "experiments" of this kind had appeared within the Apostolic sphere as well.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, the *Propaganda Fide* had twice published an *Alphabetum*

---

73 On Mkhitar's strategic deployment of poems, illustrations, and other paratextual elements to shape reader reception and influence interpretation, see J. Arlen, "Shaping Readerly Taste: Paratextuality in the Publishing Mission of Mxit'ar of Sebastia", *Armeniaca*, 2, 2023, p. 119–142.

74 [Oksan Yerewants'i], *Girk' aybubenits'*, p. 4–32.

75 Hovhan Aknets'i, *Girk' aybubeneants'*; Paghtasar *dpir*, *Girk' aybbenakan*. Both Oskan's and Mkhitar's catechisms fall under the category of "primers with a catechism attached as an appendix". According to the definition provided by Juska-Bacher *et al.*, these are defined as reading manuals where a catechism, or a portion of doctrine, is appended as a final, clearly demarcated section separate from the primary literacy instruction ("Introduction", in Juska-Bacher *et al.* [eds.], *Learning to Read, Learning Religion*, p. 13–14). Indeed, the doctrinal section of both catechisms could circulate independently; this occurred, for instance, in the reprints of Oskan's 1667 work and is attested for Mkhitar's as well. Although the latter featured continuous pagination, it was provided with a second title page preceding the doctrinal section. Significantly, the copy I consulted at the library of the Mkhitarist Monastery of San Lazzaro in Venice lacks the primer. Conversely, the works of Hovhan Aknets'i and Paghtasar *dpir* might be better classified as "catechism primers". These are defined as textbooks designed for reading instruction where the exercises themselves are drawn entirely or predominantly from religious doctrine. They are characterized by titles that either mention reading skills alone, prioritize reading before faith, or are absent altogether (Juska-Bacher *et al.*, "Introduction", p. 13). It is interesting to note that the typology of "primers with a catechism attached as an appendix" was widespread neither in the Dutch tradition (Oskan printed his catechism in Amsterdam) nor in the Italian one. Apparently, there is only a single recorded

*Armenum* in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, followed by the principal Catholic prayers.<sup>76</sup> Mkhit'ar appropriated this tradition, integrating it into his broader cultural and educational project for the Armenian nation, which included a campaign of re-catechization and religious/spiritual re-education of the people.<sup>77</sup> For him, education becomes a theological imperative, a requirement of Christian identity, drawing a parallel between a craftsman's knowledge of his tools and a Christian's knowledge of divine law. Ignorance is framed not merely as a lack of information, but as an active spiritual danger. Furthermore, Mkhit'ar addresses the widespread issue of adult illiteracy. He dismantles the excuse that one cannot learn doctrine without reading by employing a commercial analogy: just as the illiterate successfully navigate

---

instance in the Netherlands and none in Italy (see J. Exalto, "Catechism Primers in the Netherlands", in Juska-Bacher *et al.* [eds.], *Learning to Read, Learning Religion*, p. 210; Marazzi, "Catechism Primers in Italy", in Juska-Bacher *et al.* [eds.], *Learning to Read, Learning Religion*, p. 276). More broadly, the practice of combining catechisms with alphabets was notably less common in Italy compared to the rest of Europe (see Marazzi, "Catechism Primers in Italy", p. 278). Marazzi notes that one reason for this absence was likely that the first level of instruction typically employed other religious texts, such as the Psalter and other prayers (p. 279). Consequently, it is all the more significant to read in Mkhit'ar's address to the reader that his decision to combine an alphabet primer with the catechism was intended so that "after learning the alphabet, the syllables and words, [children] might begin to learn Christian doctrine in place of the five (?) Psalms" (Mkhit'ar Sebastats'i, *Girk' k'ristonēakani vardapetut'ean*, [1725], p. 6. The Armenian reads ի տեղի հենց սաղմոսի, which could be an allusion to the so-called *Seven Psalms* – that is, a book containing the seven penitential psalms attributed to King David, which was used in Italy to teach the rudiments of reading; see P. Lucchi, "Leggere, scrivere e abbaco: L'istruzione elementare agli inizi dell'età moderna", in *Scienze, credenze occulte, livelli di cultura: Convegno internazionale di studi [Firenze, 26–30 giugno 1980]*, Florence, 1982, p. 101–119. On the medieval origins of the didactic use of the Psalter and its survival in the early modern era, see P. Lucchi, "La Santacroce, il Salterio e il Babuino: Libri per imparare a leggere nel primo secolo della stampa", *Quaderni storici*, 13, 1978, 38.2, esp. p. 600–601.

<sup>76</sup> *Alphabetum Armenum*, Romae [Rome], 1623; *Alphabetum Armenum*, Romae [Rome], 1673. However, in the case of the *Propaganda Fide*, having foreign alphabets printed (and later grammars and dictionaries) mostly served a different purpose. At least in the vision of its first secretary, Ingoli, they were designed primarily to train missionaries in the languages of their preaching, rather than to help the common people learn to read and access texts (see APF SOCG 43, f. 9r–v; W. Henkel, *Die Druckerei der Propaganda Fide: Eine Dokumentation*, München/Paderborn/Vienna, 1977, p. 48–49).

<sup>77</sup> On the cultural component of Mkhit'ar's mission and his "humanistic" and universalistic approach, see B. L. Zekiyian, "La visione di Mechitar del mondo e della Chiesa: Una *Weltanschauung* tra teologia e umanesimo", in B. L. Zekiyian and A. Ferrari (eds.), *Gli Armeni e Venezia: Dagli Sceriman a Mechitar: il momento culminante di una consuetudine millenaria. Atti del convegno di studio (Venezia, 11–13 ottobre 2001)*, Venice, 2004, p. 177–200; see also B. L. Zekiyian, "The Armenian Way to Enlightenment", in R. G. Hovannisian and D. N. Myers (eds.), *Enlightenment and Diaspora: The Armenian and Jewish Cases*, Atlanta, GA, 1999, p. 56–58.

complex market transactions and trade through oral communication, they are equally capable – and obliged – to acquire spiritual profit through listening.

Mkhit'ar concludes with a remarkably practical admonition regarding the economic sustainability of education. He criticizes the traditional, informal “gift economy” (occasional presents on holidays) as insufficient for supporting professional educators. He argues that parents have a moral obligation to pay a fixed, regular wage (suggesting “four *paras* a week”), thereby allowing the teacher to view instruction as a full-time profession rather than a sideline to manual labor. The author warns that underpaying teachers leads to neglect, leaving children unsupervised, to behave “like bear cubs”, tearing at one another in the classroom rather than learning. Thus, the financial support of the teacher is framed as a spiritual duty, ensuring the efficacy of the child’s education and the parents’ own fulfillment of their religious obligations.

The divergence in scope between Mkhit'ar’s catechism and the earlier works of Villotte, Petros, and Grigor is immediately apparent in his address to the reader. Whereas the French Jesuit and the two Armenian Dominican friars adhered to a conventional *captatio benevolentiae* in their dedicatory prefaces, Mkhit'ar utilizes his introduction to delineate a comprehensive pedagogical program. He addresses practical concerns such as parental obligations, the necessity of education, and the provision of a just wage for instructors. Mkhit'ar contends that for Christian instruction to be effective, it must be supported by specific prerequisites: a material commitment of time and resources, alongside an intellectual disposition that necessarily precedes spiritual formation. This dual objective – “educating the children [...] in the study of letters and in the fear of the Lord, in the training of Christian doctrine” – therefore required the printing of a catechism, a necessity Mkhit'ar recognized as pressing as early as 1718. For its compilation, he asked for Latin and Italian doctrinal texts published by the *Propaganda Fide* to be brought from Rome.<sup>78</sup>

The resulting work transcends the scope of a simple compendium or handbook of the Christian faith, distinguishing itself from the two catechisms analyzed previously. Despite its question-and-answer structure, Mkhit'ar’s text provides extensive elucidations of the doctrinal and practical aspects of the life of faith, according significant attention to individual topics. A clear example is his treatment of the Eucharist: Mkhit'ar is not content to merely assert the presence of Christ’s body and blood in the consecrated Host – thereby arguing *e silentio* against the necessity of communion *sub utraque specie*. Rather, he presents a detailed explanation of

---

<sup>78</sup> Chemchemean, *Mkhit'ar Abbahōr hratarakh'akan arak'elut'iwnē*, p. 74–75. Mkhit'ar’s quote comes from a letter he wrote on March 12, 1720, to the Armenians of Gherla (in Transylvania), quoted in Chemchemean on the same page.

transubstantiation, employing the precise Aristotelian-Thomistic terminology used in the thirteenth session of the Council of Trent and within the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* itself:

Հոց. Յեառ սսեղոյ քահանային՝ առէք կերէք, այս է մարմին իմ. արբէք ի սմանէ, այս է արին իմ, ար՛դեօք մնայ ի նշխարոջն գոյացութիւն հացի, եւ ի բաժակոջն գոյացութիւն գինւոյ: Պիս. Ոչ մնայ, զի գոյացութիւն հացի, եւ գինւոյ փոխարկին գօրութեամբ այնց բանից ի մարմին եւ յարին Քրիստոսի. բայց արտաքին պատահմունք հացին, եւ գինւոյն վերամնան. այսինքն համն, հոտն, եւ քանակութիւնն, որպէս զի գնտսին ճաշակելով՝ գՔրիստոս որ պարունակի ի նոսին ճաշակիցեմք. քանզի այլապէս ո՛չ կարէաք ճաշակել գՔրիստոս, նաեւ ո՛չ լինէր արդիւն հաւատոյ մերոյ:<sup>79</sup>

Q. After the priest says: “Take, eat, this is my Body”; “Drink from this, this is my Blood” – does the substance of bread remain in the Host, and the substance of wine in the cup?

A. It does not remain. For the substance of the bread and the wine are transformed by the power of those words into the body and blood of Christ. But the external accidents of the bread and the wine remain – that is, the taste, the smell, and the quantity. So that by tasting them, we might taste Christ who is contained within them. For otherwise, we could not taste Christ, nor would it be a merit of our faith.

Such specific terminology and language are absent in Bellarmine’s two catechisms. While Bellarmine speaks of “substance” and of “figure, and also the color, and taste [...] which was there before,” in his larger catechism,<sup>80</sup> he does not employ the term ‘accident,’ which conversely appears in the lengthy explanation reserved for the Sacrament of the Eucharist in the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*.<sup>81</sup>

Further confirmation that Mkhitar relied on the *Catechism of the Council of Trent* – even more so than on other compendia circulating at the time – is found in his commentary on the Virgin Birth within the explanation of the third article of the Creed:

<sup>79</sup> Mkhitar Sebastats’i, *Girk’ k’ristonēakani vardapetut’ean*, [1725], p. 233–234.

<sup>80</sup> Bellarmino, *Dichiarazione più copiosa*, p. 130.

<sup>81</sup> *Catechismus ad parochos*, esp. p. 240. See also the *Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, p. 78. Nor can it be ruled out that Mkhitar derived this language from his familiarity with Thomistic texts (Thomas Aquinas discusses the transubstantiation in *Summa theologiae*, Pars 3, q. 75, aa. 1–9). It is worth noting, however, that the substance–accident distinction in the treatment of the Sacrament of the Eucharist was already expressed using the terms գոյացութիւն and պատահմունք within the Armenian tradition, particularly by Grigor Tat’ewats’i (see, for example, *Girk’ harts’mants’*, esp. 9.32.31, p. 597; B. Contin, “Whoever Eats My Flesh and Drinks My Blood Remains in Me, and I in Him’ [John 6:56–57]: Theoretical Developments in Understanding the Mystery of the Eucharist in Medieval Armenian Theology”, in G. Klima [ed.], *The Metaphysics and Theology of the Eucharist: A Historical-Analytical Survey of the Problems of the Sacrament*, Cham, 2023, p. 81–82).

Եւ ինքն Տէր մեր Յիսուս Քրիստոս որպէս ի յաւիտենից ծնաւ յԱստուծոյ հօրէ առանց մօր, այսպէս եւ ի ժամանակի ծնաւ ի կոյս մօրէ առանց հօր:<sup>82</sup>

And our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, just as he was born from eternity from God the Father without a mother, so also in time he was born from a Virgin Mother without a father.

This finds a perfect parallel in the language employed by the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, which reads: “*Iesum Christum [...] credere, & confiteri, genitum quidem, ut Deum, ante omnium seculorum aetates, ex patre, ut hominem vero, natum in tempore ex matre Maria virgine*”.<sup>83</sup> Contrast this with Bellarmine’s text. Although it affirms the same doctrine, the specific phrasing suggests it was not Mkhith’ar’s direct source in this instance: “e così è nato *in terra* di Madre senza Padre, sicome *in Cielo* era nato di Padre senza Madre”; and in his longer *Catechism*: “Gesù Cristo, che era solamente Dio, cominciò ad esser Uomo; e siccome, *in quanto Dio*, aveva Padre senza Madre, così *in quanto uomo*, ha Madre senza Padre”.<sup>84</sup> The use of ի յաւիտենից/ի ժամանակի (“from eternity/in time”) in the Armenian text clearly echoes the text of the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, rather than Bellarmine’s “in heaven/on earth”.

In light of the controversies surrounding the various creedal formulas and professions of faith circulating among Armenians at the time, it is noteworthy that after presenting the text of the Apostles’ Creed, Mkhith’ar takes care to dispel any uncertainty among the faithful regarding the existence of two distinct Creeds (i.e., the Apostles’ and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan). He asks:

Հց. Վասն է՛ր այս հաւատամքս՝ կարճատօտ է՛, եւ փոքր, եւ այն՝ որ յամենայնում աւուր յեկեղեցւոջն ասի՝ երկար է, եւ մեծ:

Պիս. Այնորիկ, որք հաւատոյ մատունք են՝ հաւասարապէս գտանին ի փոքր, եւ ի մեծ հաւատամքն. բայց միայն այս է զանագանութիւն, զի ի մեծ հաւատամքն ոմանք շարադրութիւք, եւ իօսք գոն գորս սուրբ եկեղեցին ի զանագան սիւնհոթոսս՝ ոպպէս զմեկնութիւն ոմանց մասանց հաւատոյ յաւելեալ է. եւ այսու մինն կարճատոտ, եւ միւսն երկար երեւի. սակայն երկոքեանքն եւս միայն զերկոտասան մատունս հաւատոյ պարունակեն, եւ ոչ զաւելի, կամ զնուազ:<sup>85</sup>

82 Mkhith’ar Sebastats’i, *Girk’ k’ristonēakani vardapetut’ean*, [1725], p. 98.

83 *Catechismus ad parochos*, p. 36–37; emphasis mine.

84 Bellarmino, *Dottrina christiana breve*, p. 12: “And so he was born on earth of a Mother without a Father, just as in Heaven he was born of a Father without a Mother”; *Dichiarazione più copiosa*, p. 17: “Jesus Christ, who was only God, began to be Man; and just as, as God, he had a Father without a Mother, so as man, he has a Mother without a Father.”

85 Mkhith’ar Sebastats’i, *Girk’ k’ristonēakani vardapetut’ean*, [1725], p. 93–94.

Q. Why is this Creed brief and small, whereas that which is recited every day in the Church is long and large?

A. Those things which are the articles of faith are found equally in the small and in the large Creed. But this is the only difference: that in the large Creed there are certain phrases and words which the Holy Church has added in various Councils as an explanation of some articles of faith. And for this reason, the one appears brief, and the other long. However, both contain only the twelve articles of faith, and neither more nor less.

In his exposition of the eighth article, Mkhith'ar touches upon the *Filioque* concisely, much like Petros and Grigor. He confines his remarks to the assertion that “the third person of the All-Holy Trinity [...] proceeds from the Father and from the Son”,<sup>86</sup> before proceeding almost immediately to the next article. Such brevity stands in contrast to the depth of Mkhith'ar's analysis elsewhere. It suggests a deliberate attempt to avoid lingering on a subject that was sensitive in interconfessional dialogue – the same rationale suggested above for Villotte's total omission of the topic. However, as a Western missionary and a Jesuit, Villotte likely enjoyed enough institutional trust from Rome to exercise this prudential silence without his Orthodoxy being called into question. On the other hand, Mkhith'ar's closeness to the indigenous Armenian tradition made him an object of scrutiny for the Roman Curia. An omission that might be otherwise viewed as prudent pastoral discretion could easily be interpreted as schismatic tendency or theological error in an Armenian monk who had already faced doctrinal accusations for his tolerance of *communicatio in sacris* among the Ottoman Armenians.<sup>87</sup> Mkhith'ar, therefore, could not afford the luxury of silence.

## 5 Mkhith'ar's Christian Doctrine (1727)

Two years later, in 1727, Mkhith'ar published a second catechism, this time, in the vernacular.

### 5.1 Physical Description of the Book

This is a duodecimo volume of 132 pages, numbered in Arabic numerals at the top outer corner of each page, starting from p. 3 (pagination: [1–2] 3–74 [75–76] 77–121 [122–127] 128–130 [131–132]). Page [2] is blank, and p. [75–76] remain unnumbered

<sup>86</sup> Mkhith'ar Sebastats'i, *Girk' k'ristonēakani vardapetut'ean*, [1725], p. 118–119.

<sup>87</sup> On the accusations brought against Mkhith'ar and his missionaries, see Nurikhan, *The Life and Times of the Servant of God Abbot Mechitar*, p. 239–257; on Mkhith'ar and the question of the *communicatio in sacris*, see Santus, *Trasgressioni necessarie*, p. 386–417.

to separate the catechism section from the collection of religious hymns. The type area measures ca. 62 × 115 mm, with 36 lines per page, set in 8-point Roman type with the use of capital letters.

The volume consists of five gatherings of twelve leaves and one ternion, signed in Latin characters (A–E<sup>12</sup> F<sup>6</sup>). Signatures with progressive numbering (A1, A2, etc.) appear on the recto of the first five leaves of gatherings A–E and the first three leaves of gathering F; they are centered in the bottom margin and aligned with the catchwords. Horizontal catchwords are placed at the bottom right of every page (outer corner on odd pages, inner corner on even pages), starting from p. 3.

Full-page woodcuts framed by typographic bands appear on p. 10 and 76: a depiction of the Pentecost, enclosed within a simple double-line frame (p. 10), and a depiction of the Nativity, signed with the initials “G.R.,” at the bottom center (p. 76). This woodcut is surrounded by a wide, heavy border composed of repeating typographic ornaments featuring arabesque floral motifs. A woodcut image of a foliate mask with floral scrolls appears on p. 75. Other decorative elements include one headpiece on p. 3 and two large rectangular headpieces with geometric floral patterns and lobed arches on p. 7 and 77. Fleurons are used as tailpieces on p. 5, 45, 94, and 105. A band of two fleurons appears on the title page (centered between the date and the place of publication), as well as on p. 118, where it serves as a tailpiece. Bands of fleurons are also used throughout the text as decorative dividers between sections, and on p. [122–127] as a full-page typographic border enclosing the text. Ornamental woodcut initials appear on p. 3, 7, and 77. Additionally, zoomorphic and anthropomorphic initials are used to introduce sections.

The examined copy, held at the library of the Mkhitarist Monastery of San Lazzaro in Venice under the shelfmark *ԺԲ. ա. 5 / ԺԲ*, is bound in plain paper boards.

## 5.2 Content and Analysis

The book opens with an address to the reader (p. 3–5). The volume is subsequently divided into two parts: a question-and-answer catechism (p. 7–74) and a collection of religious hymns (77–130). The content of the catechism is structured as follows:

*Chapter I:* Concerning those Things Which Are Very Necessary For a Christian to Know and to Believe (p. 7–14); *Chapter II:* Concerning the Explanation of the Creed, Which Every Christian Must Know Well, and How to Believe According to the Creed (p. 14–28); *Chapter III:* Concerning Prayer. How a Christian Ought to Know Prayers and How to Pray, and How to Place One's Hope in God Through Prayer (p. 28–35); *Chapter IV:* Concerning the Ten Commandments of God. How a Christian Must Know and Keep These Laws so that His Love for God is Manifest (p. 36–45); *Chapter V:* Concerning the Seven Sacraments of the Church. The Things a Christian Ought to Know and Understand so They May Receive them With True Devotion (p. 46–57);

*Chapter VI: Concerning Sin. What Sin Is, How Many Types of Sin Exist, and How a Christian Should Actively Flee From Them* (p. 58–67); *Chapter VII: Concerning Virtues. What Virtues Are, the Various Kinds that Exist, and How a Christian Ought to Practice Them* (p. 67–74).

In the address to the reader, Mkhit'ar offers a revealing “apology” for his choice of language. He confesses that producing a catechism in the vernacular had been a long-standing desire of his, born of the realization that many faithful lacked the proficiency to comprehend literary Armenian. However, he admits to delaying this project due to a fear of intellectual censure:

[...] միշտ կասկածէի, թէ գուցէ եպերիցի յոմանց, մինչ բազումք իցեն յազգի մերում Արքայոսք յիմաստից, եւ բազմապարծք զգիտութեանց:<sup>88</sup>

I always hesitated, fearing that perhaps it would be mocked by some – since there are many in our nation who are poor in wisdom yet boastful of their knowledge.

He goes on saying that this hesitation explains why his previous catechism was released in *grabar*. However, now that he has published his *Gate to the Grammar of Vernacular Armenian*,<sup>89</sup> he finally has the confidence to cast aside these apprehensions. Having scientifically validated the vernacular language, he now feels justified in publishing this compendium for the benefit of the common people. To his critics, he offers a pragmatic compromise: those offended by the vernacular are free to read the 1725 catechism, while this text remains reserved for those who find the literary register inaccessible.<sup>90</sup>

That Mkhit'ar conceived this catechism *in tandem* with his *Grammar* is further corroborated by a letter he sent to patrons in Ankara. In it, he indicated that the catechism would serve as a suitable practice text for those learning the vernacular. This connection was practical as well as theoretical: when 300 copies of the *Grammar* and 150 copies of the catechism were dispatched to these benefactors, 117 of the catechisms were physically bound within the grammars.<sup>91</sup>

One might assume that, given the difference in language, one work is merely a translation of the other. However, this is not the case. While the doctrinal content is fundamentally the same, in the 1725 catechism the question-and-answer section occupies nearly 230 pages, whereas in the second it is only 67 pages long. It could

<sup>88</sup> Mkhit'ar Sebastats'i, *Girk' k'ristonēakani vardapetut'ean*, [1727], p. 3.

<sup>89</sup> Mkhit'ar Sebastats'i, *Duṙn k'erak'anut'ean ashkharhabar lezuin Hayots'*, i Vēnētik [Venice], 1727.

<sup>90</sup> Mkhit'ar Sebastats'i, *Girk' k'ristonēakani vardapetut'ean*, [1727], p. 4.

<sup>91</sup> S. D. Aslanian, “Prepared in the Language of the Hagarites: Abbot Mkhitar's 1727 Armeno-Turkish Grammar of Modern Western Armenian”, *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, 25, 2016, p. 75. In a previous article, I mistakenly gave the numbers 130 and 113 for these copies; see Santus and Lucca, “Un gioco per insegnare la dottrina cristiana”, p. 128.

be said that Mkhit'ar's first catechism stands in relation to the 1727 edition as Bellarmine's *Dichiarazione più copiosa* stands to his *Dottrina cristiana breve*.

However, the distinction extends beyond mere length. The text actually lays out the teachings in a way that is simpler – and more practical – for the reader than the 1725 catechism. For instance, regarding the Sacrament of the Eucharist, the language is much more straightforward. The text abandons the Aristotelian-Thomistic terminology in favor of much plainer language, aiming to elucidate the mystery of transubstantiation in accessible terms:

Հաղորդութիւն մէկ սուրբ խորհուրդ մի է, որ իր մէջն ճշմարիտ մարմին եւ արիւն Քրիստոսի կու պարունակի: Դրսէն կու երեւի հաց, եւ զինի, բայց ոչ է հաց եւ զինի, այլ ճշմարիտ մարմին եւ արիւն Քրիստոսի [...] եւ հրաման տուաւ որ քահանայքն հացին վերայ, այս է մարմին իմ, ասելով, զինուն վերայ, այս է արիւն իմ, ասելով, հացն ի մարմին իւր փոխի, եւ զինին ի յարիւն:<sup>92</sup>

Communion is a Holy Sacrament, which contains within itself the true body and blood of Christ. From the outside, it appears as bread and wine, but it is not bread and wine, but the true body and blood of Christ [...], and when priests say over the bread: “This is my body”, and over the wine: “This is my blood”, the bread changes into his body, and the wine into his blood.

Significantly, the text omits any discussion of communion under both species. This absence may well attest to Mkhit'ar's accommodating stance regarding the issue of *communicatio in sacris*.

Regarding the Creed, Mkhit'ar opts in this instance to cite the Armenian liturgical version rather than the Apostles' Creed. As this catechism is addressed to a broader audience, Mkhit'ar likely wished to avoid causing undue confusion among the common people. Consequently, he presents the text of the Creed as it was familiar to most Armenians, modifying it in accordance with the Latin tradition only in very specific – and theologically loaded – passages. This was not unprecedented. Since the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, the text of the Creed had been printed in Armenian repeatedly in catechisms, professions of faith, and liturgical books. While Apostolic editions usually preserved the traditional liturgical form – invariably accompanied by the Nicene anathema and the Doxology of Gregory the Illuminator –<sup>93</sup> Catholic editions could display variations. They frequently incorporated modifications

<sup>92</sup> Mkhit'ar Sebastats'i, *Girk' k'ristonēakani vardapetut'ean*, [1727], p. 48–49.

<sup>93</sup> See, for instance, *Pataragatetr ē sa Hīsusi K'ristosi Astutsoy*, i Vēnēzh [Venice], 1513, gathering p, f. 3v–5r; [*Khorhrdatetr*], ed. by Khach'atur Kesarats'i, [New Julfa, Isfahan], 1641, p. 16–18; *Khorhrdatetr srbazan pataragi ēst araroghut'ean Yekeghets'eats'n Hayastaneats'*, i Vanatik k'aghak'i [Venice], 1686, p. 13–15; *Khorhrdatetr srbazan pataragi ēst araroghut'ean Yekeghets'eats'n Hayastaneats'*, i mayrak'aghak' Kostandinupōlis [Constantinople], 1706, p. 17–19.

based on the Nicaean-Constantinopolitan version (reaffirmed at the Council of Trent) and oscillated between the forms *հաւատաւք* (first person plural, following the Armenian tradition) and *հաւատաւ* (first person singular, corresponding to the Latin *Credo*).<sup>94</sup>

The most significant modifications in Mkhitar's 1727 catechism, which makes use of the traditional first person plural (*հաւատաւք*, "we believe") in place of the first singular (*հաւատաւ*, "I believe"), concern the substitution of the formula *այսինքն յեությունէ հոր* ("that is, of the substance of the Father") in the second article of the Creed with *նախքսն զանկնայն յաիտեսնսն* (*ante saecula saeculorum*), which is explained as follows:

Այսինքն. Ամէն յաիտենէ յարաջ ծներ է որդին, եւ չէ թէ ժամանակի մի մէջ, եւ կամ մէկ յաիտենէ մի յետք ծներ է:<sup>95</sup>

That is to say: the Son was born before all ages, and was not born within a time, or after an age.

Furthermore, there is the substitution of *նոյն ինքն ի բնությունէ հոր* ("of the very same nature of the Father") with *նոյն ինքն համազոյակից հոր* (*consubstantialem Patri*), commented as follows:

Այսինքն. Նոյն ինքն որդին աստուծոյ, հոր աստուծոյ էակից է, եւ գոյակից է, այսինքն մէկ էություն, եւ գոյացություն ունի հոր աստուծոյ հետ. դարձեալ համազոյ է որդին հոր. այսինքն, գոյն մէկտեղ է ընդ հոր՝ եւ չէ թէ հայր յառաջ է, եւ որդին յետոյ եղեր է:<sup>96</sup>

That is to say: the very Son of God is co-essential and co-substantial with God the Father; that is, he has one essence and substance with God the Father. Furthermore, the Son is co-existent with the Father; that is, his being is together with the Father, and it is not that the Father is before, and the Son came into being later.

94 For instance, the 1677 edition of the *Armenian Liturgy* and the 1690 edition edited by Hovhannēs Kostandnupōlsets'i both use *հաւատաւք* – just as Mkhitar's 1727 catechism would later do. In these texts, the Holy Spirit is described as *անկղն եւ կատարեալ* ("uncreated and perfect") rather than *Domīnum et vivificantem*; nevertheless, in both cases, the clause *որ ի հորէ եւ յորդոյ քիսի* (*qui ex Patre Filioque procedit*) is added (*Lyturgia Armena*, Romae [Rome], 1677, p. 8; here, the text of the Creed is followed by both the Nicene anathema and the doxology of Gregory the Illuminator; *La dichiarazione della liturgia armena [...] ad istanza delli signori Armeni abitanti in questa città di Venezia*, ed. by Giovanni Agop [Hovhannēs Kostandnupōlsets'i], in Venetia [Venice], 1690, p. 18; here, only the doxology of Gregory the Illuminator is given). Even the less controversial Apostles' Creed was not exempt from similar alterations, as demonstrated by the version found in the 1713 anonymous *Spiritual Orchard*, which also includes the *Filioque* clause (*Mrkanots' hogewor*, p. 18–19).

95 Mkhitar Sebastats'i, *Girk' k'ristoneākani vardapetut'ean*, [1727], p. 16–17.

96 Mkhitar Sebastats'i, *Girk' k'ristoneākani vardapetut'ean*, [1727], p. 17.

And predictably, concerning the eighth article of faith, there is the addition of *որ ի հորէ եւ յորդոյն քրիստի* (*qui ex Patre Filioque procedit*), explained as follows:

Այսինքն. Ոգին սուրբ յառաջագայի եւ քրիստի ոչ միան ի հորէ, այլ եւ յորդոյն. զի գոր ինչ առնէ հայր, զնոյնն եւ որդին նմին նման գործէ՝ ասաց Տէրն մեր: Արդ՝ մենք որ կու հաւատամք ի հորէ քրիստի, պարտականենք հաւատալ թէ նաեւ յորդոյն կու քրիստի. զի ինչ որ ունի հայր, բաց ի հայրութենէն զամէնն ունի եւ որդին. ինչպէս որ կասէ Տէրն մեր ի յաւետարանին: Յօհաննու 16. Չամենայն ինչ գոր ունի հայր իմ է:<sup>97</sup>

That is, the Holy Spirit comes forth and proceeds not only from the Father, but also from the Son. For whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise, said our Lord. Now, we who believe that [the Holy Spirit] proceeds from the Father are obliged to believe that he proceeds also from the Son. For whatever the Father has, except for Fatherhood, the Son has it all too; just as our Lord says in the Gospel. John [chapter] 16: “All things that the Father has are mine”.

The issue of the Spirit’s procession from the Father and the Son is also addressed creatively in the collection of religious hymns appended to the catechism. The final three hymns, which elucidate the mystery of the Trinity, are composed of the same 45 verses rearranged in a different order and are designed as complex acrostics and telestichs. The initial letters of each verse of the first hymn, dedicated to the Father, read vertically to reveal the Trinitarian dogma: ՀԱՅՐԴ Է ԾՆՕՂՆ, ՈՐԴԻՆ ԾՆԵԱԼ, ՀՈԳԻՆ ՍՈՒՐԲ Է ՅԵՐԿՈՒՅԴ ԲԽԵԱԼ (“The Father is the begetter, the Son is the begotten, the Holy Spirit is proceeded from both”). Conversely, the final letters form the prayer: ԾՆՕՂ ԱՆԵՂԾ ԲԱՆԻՆԴ ՕՐՀՆԵԼ. ԴՈՒ ԲԵՐԿՐԵՅՈՅ ՀՈԳԻՍ ԽՆԴՐԵԼ (“O blessed begetter of the incorruptible word, you, gladden my beseeching soul”).

This pattern continues intricately: the initial letters of each verse of the second hymn (dedicated to the Son) spell out the same prayer found in the final letters of the first (i.e., ԾՆՕՂ ԱՆԵՂԾ ԲԱՆԻՆԴ ՕՐՀՆԵԼ, etc.), while the final letters of each verse of the third hymn (dedicated to the Holy Spirit) spell out the same Trinitarian dogma found in the initial letters of the first (i.e., ՀԱՅՐԴ Է ԾՆՕՂՆ, etc.)

As Mkhit’ar explains in a note following the text, this structure serves as an analogy for the persons of the Trinity. Just as the hymns share the same words and verses yet differ in arrangement, the three persons are identical in essence, substance, nature, and perfection. The only distinction lies in their relations: the Father is from no one and is the begetter of the Son and emitter of the Holy Spirit; the Son is from the Father and, with the Father, is the emitter of the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit is from them both.<sup>98</sup>

97 Mkhit’ar Sebastats’i, *Girk’ k’ristonēakani vardapetut’ean*, [1727], p. 23–24.

98 Mkhit’ar Sebastats’i, *Girk’ k’ristonēakani vardapetut’ean*, [1727], p. 128–130.

## 6 Conclusion

The early 18<sup>th</sup> century marked a significant and concentrated effort in the production of Armenian-language catechisms, reflecting the profound religious, cultural, and political currents of the era. This surge in publication was fueled by intense intra-confessional rivalry between Catholic and Apostolic Armenians, especially within the Ottoman Empire, as each side sought to solidify doctrinal Orthodoxy and influence the faithful through the printed word. Venice, with its established printing tradition and strategic role in book distribution, emerged as a crucial hub for this endeavor, largely through the press of Antonio Bortoli.

The four catechisms discussed above mirror the distinct intentions and contexts of their respective authors. For the Jesuit missionary Jacques Villotte and the two Dominican friars Petros P'ehlvan and Grigor Guliar, the catechism served primarily as an operational tool – compact, practical, and aimed at immediate pastoral results. Villotte's approach was polemical where he deemed it necessary, such as in affirming Christ's dual nature and communion under one species, but was also characterized by strategic omission, deliberately sidestepping other divisive issues like fasting rules and the *Filioque*. By avoiding these doctrinal wedges, he prioritized pastoral effectiveness over dogmatic completeness. His goal was to ensure the text's reception among the "truth-loving" Armenians who lived among a non-Catholic audience.

The 1715 catechism by Petros and Grigor, written for the established Catholic community of Nakhijewan, shed the polemical tone required in missionary contexts. It was a concise, functional manual designed to instruct the "simple-minded" flock in the bare essentials of the Latin rite – a project of maintenance rather than conversion, focusing on practical doctrinal instruction.

Mkhit'ar's two catechisms, however, mark a qualitative turning point. His vision was expansive, national in scope, and the most ambitious of the group. His works did not merely instruct; they structured religious education as part of a broader cultural strategy, presenting literacy as a prerequisite for spiritual formation and framing child schooling as a theological imperative.

The inclusion of a primer in his 1725 catechism, alongside his defense of accessible language, his pioneering use of the vernacular, his appeal for parental investment in education, and his use of poetry to convey doctrine reveal a project that was simultaneously pastoral and national. For Mkhit'ar, catechesis was inseparable from the linguistic and social renewal, and the long-term intellectual progress of the Armenian people, the very mission that inspired his monastic order. Thus, his catechisms document a move beyond immediate confessional utility toward a long-term strategy of formation – creating readers, believers, and a renewed Armenian public.

# Bibliography

## Archival Materials

- ARSI, MS Gallia 104, N. 107, f. 285r–286v (*Formula fidei pro iis qui de errore ad veritatem redeunt instituta a Pseudo-Patriarcha Armenorum Constantinopoli sub [...] augusti 1702*).
- Paris, BnF, MS Arm. 196, f. 18r–52v (Komitas K'ëömiwrchean. *Vasn hetin zhamanakis azgiz meroy hakaṛakut'ean or ënd mimeans vasn kat'ölikut'ean ew haḡhags oroy haytneloy umemn herkrord lusaworich' koch'ets'eloy ḡomants' ew noria gortsots'n ew varuts'n ew van hamakhohits' norin*. Constantinople, 1704).

## Printed Editions

- Akn hogekan özhandak pahoghats' ew ënt'erts'oghats'*, ed. by Matt'ëos Vanandets'i. I Marsilia [Marseille]: [Surb Èjmiatsin ew Surb Sargis Zöavar], 1683.
- Alphabetum Armenum*. Romae [Rome]: Ex Typographia Sac. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1673.
- Alphabetum Armenum*. Romae [Rome]: Steph. Paulinus, 1623.
- Anun grots'ë Surb Urbat'agirk'*. [Venice]: [Ḥakob meḡhapart], [1511/12].
- Bellarmino, Roberto. *Dichiarazione più copiosa della dottrina cristiana breve*. In Padova [Padua]: Nella Stamperia del Seminario, 1770.
- Bellarmino, Roberto. *Dichiarazione più copiosa della dottrina cristiana [...] tradotta dalla italiana nella lingua armena*, trans. by Basilio Barsech [Barsëḡh Kostandinupölssets'i]. In Roma [Rome]: Nella Stampa della Sac. Congr. de Prop. Fide, 1680.
- [Bellarmino, Roberto]. *Doctrina Christiana a Petro Paulo, sacerdote, Armeno, versa in lingua Armenam*. Lutetiae Parisorum [Paris]: Impensis Societatis Typographicae Librorum Officii Ecclesiastici jussu Regis constituta, 1634.
- [Bellarmino, Roberto]. *Dichiaratione più copiosa della dottrina cristiana tradotta dalla Italiana nella lingua Armena dal P. Pietro Paolo Sacerdote Armeno*. In Roma [Rome]: Nella Stampa della Sagra Congregazione de Propaganda Fide, 1630.
- Bellarmino, Roberto. *Summa Doctrinae Christianae [...] in linguam Armenicam traductam*. Romae [Rome]: Stephanus Paulinus, 1623.
- Bellarmino, Roberto. *Dottrina cristiana breve*. In Roma [Rome]: Appresso Luigi Zannetti, 1599.
- Catechismus ad parochos*. Romae [Rome]: In aedibus populi Romani, 1576.
- Collectionis bullarum sacrosanctae Basilicae Vaticanae*, vol. 3: *A Julio III ad Benedictum XIV*. Romae [Rome]: Jo. Maria Salvioni, 1752.
- Febvre, Michel. *Praecipuae obiectiones quae vulgo solent fieri per modum interrogations a Mahumeticae legis sectatoribus, Iudaeis, & Hereticis Orientalibus adversos Catholicos, earumque solutiones*. Romae [Rome]: Typis Sacrae Congreg. de Propaganda Fide, 1681.
- [Frizon, Nicolas and Jacques Villotte]. *Voyages d'un missionnaire de la Compagnie de Jesus en Turquie, en Perse, en Arménie, en Arabie, & en Barbarie*. Paris: Chez Jacques Vincent, 1730.
- Galanus, Clemens. *Conciliatio Ecclesiae Armenae cum Romana. Secunda pars controversialis*, vol. 1. Romae [Rome]: Typis Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1658.
- Girk' burastan aḡhöt'its'*, ed. by Sargis Yewdokiats'i Sahëtts'i, trans. by Step'annos vardapet Lehats'i. I mayrak'aghak'n Kostandnupölis [Constantinople]: [Surb Èjmiatsin ew Surb Sargis Zöavar], 1704.

- Girk' T'ömayi Gembets'woy* [...] *ħaghags hamahetewmann K'ristosi*, trans. by Ĥovhannēs Kostandnupōlsets'ī. I Kostandinupōlis [Constantinople]: [Surb Ējmiatsin ew Surb Sargis Zōravar], 1700.
- Grigor Tat'ewats'ī. *Girk' harts'mants'*. I Kostandinupōlis k'aghak'ī: [Astuatsatur Kostandinupōlsets'ī], 1729.
- Ĥakob *vardapet* [Jacques Villotte]. *Patmagrut'īwn kat'oghikosats' ew t'agaworats' Hayots'*. I Vēnētik [Venice]: i tparani Antoniosi Pōrt'ōli [Antonio Bortoli], 1713.
- Ĥakob *vardapet* [Jacques Villotte]. *K'ristonēakan vardapetut'īwn i pēs chshmartasirats' Hayots'*. I Vēnētik [Venice]: i tparani Andōnosi Pōrt'ōli [Antonio Bortoli], 1710.
- Ĥovhan yerēts' Aknets'ī. *Girk' aybubeneants'*. I k'aghak'n Kostandinupōlis [Constantinople]: i tpagratan Grigor *dpri* Marzuanets'ī, 1712.
- Ĥovhannēs Mrk'uz Jughayets'ī. *Dawanut'īwn hawatoy*. I Kostandakertn k'aghak'ī [Constantinople]: i tparanum srboyn Minasay zōravarin ew vkayin K'ristosi [Astuatsatur Kostandinupōlsets'ī], 1713–1714.
- Ĥovhannēs Mrk'uz Jughayets'ī. *Krt'ut'īwn hawatoy. Girk' hamarōt vasn chshmartut'ēan hawatoys k'ristonēakani ew ughghap'ar dawanut'ēan ěnt'anur kat'oghikēi Hayastaneayts's Yekeghets'woy. I mayrak'aghak'īn Kostandinupōlsi* [Constantinople]: i tpagratani Grigor *dpri* Marzuanets'woy, 1713.
- Ĥovhannēs Mrk'uz Jughayets'ī. *Girk' hamarōt vasn iskapēs ew chshmarit hawatoy ew dawanut'ēan ughghap'ar kat'ughikē ěnt'anur Hayastaneayts' Yekeghets'woy*. I Jugha [New Julfa, Isfahan]: i vans Surb Amenap'rkch'ī, 1688.
- Ĥovhannēs Kostandinupōlsets'ī [Giovanni Agop]. *Khokumn k'ristonēakan*. I Vēnētik [Venice]: i tparani tann Sahrataan [Gaspar Shehrimanean], 1687.
- Ĥovhannēs Kostandinupōlsets'ī [Giovanni Agop]. *Pataskhanatrut'īunk' t'ght'oy urumn ěndimanadrakani grets'ēloy heghbarts' omants' haykazuneats'*. I Vēnētik k'aghak' [Venice]: ar Yeak'ōmō Mōrēt't'ī [Giacomo Moretti], 1687.
- Ĥovhannēs Kostandinupōlsets'ī [Giovanni Agop]. *Speculum Veritatis. Continens particularem quamdam instructionem fidei Catholicae Apostolicae ac Romanae*. I Vēnētik k'aghak'ī [Venice]: i tparani Mik'ayēli Parpōni [Michiel'Angelo Barboni], 1680.
- Khorhrdatetr srbazan pataragi ěst araroghut'ēan Yekeghets'ēats'n Hayastaneats'*. I mayrak'aghak' Kostandinupōlis [Constantinople]: i norakert tparani Grigor *dpri* Marzwanets'o [Grigor Marzuanets'ī], 1706.
- Khorhrdatetr srbazan pataragi ěst araroghut'ēan Yekeghets'ēats'n Hayastaneats'*. I Vanatik k'aghak'ī [Venice]: i norakert tparani Jughayets'ī khōjay Sahratents' tann Shahrimanean [Gaspar Shehrimanean], 1686.
- [*Khorhrdatetr*]. Edited by Khach'atur Kesarats'ī. [New Julfa, Isfahan]: [Tparan Amenap'rkich' vank'ī], 1641.
- Krt'ut'īwn k'ristonēakan arneloy ōr ěst ōrē*. Romae [Rome]: Typis S. Congreg. de Prop. Fide, 1709.
- La dichiarazione della liturgia armena* [...] *ad istanza delli signori Armeni abitanti in questa città di Venezia*, ed. by Giovanni Agop [Ĥovhannēs Kostandinupōlsets'ī]. In Venetia [Venice]: Appresso Michiel'Angelo Barboni, 1690.
- Lyturgia Armena*. Romae [Rome]: Typis Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 1677.
- Mrkanots' hogewor. Karcharōt meknut'īwn k'ristonēakani vardapetut'ēan*. [Constantinople]: [Surb Ējmiatsin ew Sargis Zōravar], 1713.
- Mkhit'ar Sebastats'ī. *Durn k'erak'anut'ēan ashkharhabar lezuin Hayots'*. I Vēnētik [Venice]: i tparani Andōni Pōrt'ōli [Antonio Bortoli], 1727.

- Mkhit'ar Sebastats'i. *Girk' k'ristonēakani vardapetut'ean* [...] *ënd orum ew ergk' taghits' aradrin, ork' i vaghnjuts' zhamanakats' shinets'ealk' en i noynoy vardapetē*. I Vēnētik [Venice]: i tparani Andōni Pōrt'ōli [Antonio Bortoli], 1727.
- Mkhit'ar Sebastats'i. *Girk' k'ristonēakani vardapetut'ean, ënd orum dni ew aybbenaran, i ħusumn mankants' hawatats'elots', ew amenits' ork' unin zpitoys*. I Vēnētik [Venice]: i tparani Andōni Pōrt'ōli [Antonio Bortoli], 1725.
- Nalean, Ħakob. *Girk' koch'ets'eal K'ristonēakan usaneli ew kam K'ristonēits' varzhits'*. [Constantinople]: [Astuatsatur Kostandnupōlsets'ij], 1737.
- Nersēs Shnorhali. *Ħisus ordi*. [Constantinople]: [Surb Ējmiatsin ew Surb Sargis Zōravar], 1702.
- Noragoyñ tsaghik zōrut'eants'*, trans. by Ħovhannēs Kostandnupōlsets'ij. In Venetia [Venice]: Appresso Michiel'Angelo Barboni, 1685.
- [Ordo Fratrum Praedicatorum]. *Prēviar or ē Zhamagirk' srbazani kargin eghbarts' k'arozoghats'*, trans. by Grigor Guliar and Petros P'ēhluan. I Vēnētik: i tparani Antoniosi Pōrt'ōli, 1714.
- [Oskan Yerewants'ij]. *Handerz Astutsov. Girk' aybubenits' ħaghags norek tghayots' ew mankants' ankr'tits'*. Kostandnupōlis k'aghak'ij [Constantinople]: ner tparanum Sbroy Ējmiatsni ew Srboyn Sargis Zōravari, 1700.
- [Oskan Yerewants'ij]. *Vardapetut'iwn k'ristonēakan ëst Hayots' aradreal aĸ Ħromayets'i mjinordut'eamb*, trans. by Karapet Andrianats'ij and Theodor Petraeus. ħAmsdēlōtami [Amsterdam]: Tsakhiwk' ew tpagrut'eamb t'argmanoghats' [Surb Ējmiatsin ew Surb Sargis Zōravar], 1667.
- [Oskan Yerewants'ij]. *Handerz Astutsov. Girk' aybubenits' ħaghags norek aghayots' [sic] ew mankants' ankr'tits'*. ħAmsdērtam [Amsterdam]: Ner tparanum Sbroy Ējmiatsni ew Srboyn Sargis Zōravari, 1666.
- Paghtasar dpir. *Girk' aybbenakan, or ē duĸñ ënt'erts'akan usman*. [Constantinople]: [Grigor Marzuanets'ij], 1723.
- Partēz hogewor*, trans. by Ħovhannēs Kostandnupōlsets'ij [Giovanni Agop]. I Vēnētik [Venice]: i tparani Andōni Pōrt'ōli [Antonio Bortoli], 1704.
- Patargateĸr ē sa Ħisusi K'ristosi Astutsoy*. I Vēnēzh [Venice]: Dzeramb mēghapart Ħakobin [Ħakob meghapart], 1513.
- Pēllarminos, Rūpert'os [Roberto Bellarmino]. *Vardapetut'iwn k'ristonēakan*, trans. by Barsēgh Kostandinupōlsets'ij. ħAlikōĸna [Leghorn], 1669.
- Petros Chahkets'ij [P'ēhluan] and Grigor Chahkets'ij [Guliar]. *Hamaĸōt ew shahawēt k'ristonēakan vardapetut'iwn*. I Vēnētik [Venice]: i tparani Andoniosi Pōrt'ōli [Antonio Bortoli], 1715.
- [Villotte, Jacques]. *K'ristonēakan vardapetut'iwn or i gorts atsi i mekneln zpatkers i zhamanaki khaghaloy*, ed. by Mkhit'ar Sebastats'ij. I Vēnētik [Venice]: i tparani Andōni Pōrt'ōli [Antonio Bortoli], 1737.
- Villotte, Jacques. *Commentarius in Evangelia*. Romae [Rome]: Typis Sacrae Congreg. de Propag. Fide, 1714.
- Villotte, Jacques. *Dictionarium novum Latino-Armenium ex praecipuis Armeniae linguae scriptoribus concinnatum*. Romae [Rome]: Typis Sac. Congreg. de Propaganda Fide, 1714.
- Villotte, Jacques. *Explanatio Professionis fidei Orthodoxae jussu SS. D.N. Urbani P.P. VIII*. Romae [Rome]: Typis Sacrae Cong. de Propag. Fide, 1711.

## Modern Editions

*The Canons and Decree of the Sacred and Oecumenical Council of Trent*, trans. by J. Waterforth. London: Burns and Oates, 1888.

## Secondary Literature

- Arlen, Jesse. "Shaping Readerly Taste: Paratextuality in the Publishing Mission of Mxit'ar of Sebastia". *Armeniaca*, 2, 2023, p. 119–142.
- Aslanian, Sebouh David. *Early Modernity and Mobility: Port Cities and Printers across the Armenian Diaspora, 1512–1800*. New Haven, CT/London: Yale University Press, 2023.
- Aslanian, Sebouh David. "'Prepared in the Language of the Hagarites': Abbot Mkhitar's 1727 Armeno-Turkish Grammar of Modern Western Armenian". *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, 25, 2016, p. 54–86.
- Aslanian, Sebouh David. "Port Cities and Printers: Reflections on Early Modern Global Armenian Print Culture". *Book History*, 17, 2014, p. 51–93.
- Chemchemean, Sahak. *Mkhit'ar Abbahōr hratarakch'akan arak'elut'iwnē*. Venetik [Venice]: S. Ghazar, 1980.
- Cohen, Leonardo. "The Jesuits in Ethiopia and the Polemics over the Sacrament of the Eucharist". In Myriam Yardeni and Ilana Zinguer (eds.), *The Two Christian Reforms. Propagation and Diffusion*. Leiden/Boston, MA: Brill, 2004, p. 138–150.
- Contin, Benedetta. "'Whoever Eats My Flesh and Drinks My Blood Remains in Me, and I in Him' (John 6:56–57): Theoretical Developments in Understanding the Mystery of the Eucharist in Medieval Armenian Theology". In Gyula Klima (ed.), *The Metaphysics and Theology of the Eucharist: A Historical-Analytical Survey of the Problems of the Sacrament*. Cham: Springer, 2023, p. 67–85.
- Contin, Benedetta. *Libri armeni dei secoli XVII–XIX nella Biblioteca Universitaria di Padova*. Padua: Biblioteca Universitaria di Padova, 2008.
- Exalto, John. "Catechism Primers in the Netherlands". In Britta Juska-Bacher et al. (eds.), *Learning to Read, Learning Religion: Catechism Primers in Europe from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2023, p. 204–217.
- Flüchter, Antje. "Translating Catechisms, Translating Cultures: An Introduction". In Antje Flüchter and Rouven Wirbser (eds.), *Translating Catechisms, Translating Cultures: The Expansion of Catholicism in the Early Modern World*. Leiden/Boston, MA: Brill, 2017, p. 3–49.
- Gat'ërchean, Hovsēp'. *Hanganak hawatoy orov vari Hayastaneayts' Yekeghets'i: K'nnut'iwn hanganakin tsagman, heghinakin ew zhamanakin vray*. Vienna: Mkhit'arean tparan, 1891.
- Ghewondyan, Mane. "Mkhit'ar Sebastats'woy K'ristonēakanner-ē orpes krt'adastiarakch'akan dasagrk'i nmush". *Banber Matenadarani*, 32, 2021, p. 158–170.
- Henkel, Willi. *Die Druckerei der Propaganda Fide: Eine Dokumentation*. München/Paderborn/Vienna: Schöningh, 1977.
- Heyberger, Bernard. "Fasting. The Limits of Catholic Confessionalization in Eastern Christianity in the Eighteenth Century". In Jan Loop and Jill Kraye (eds.), *Scholarship between Europe and the Levant: Essays in Honour of Alastair Hamilton*. Leiden/Boston, MA: Brill, 2020, p. 217–235.
- Heyberger, Bernard. "Les transformations du jeûne chez les chrétiens d'Orient". *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, 113–114, 2006, p. 267–285.
- Infelise, Mario. "Athanasios Skiadas e la gazetta in lingua greca del 1737". *Θησαυρίσματα*, 48, 2018, p. 137–144.
- Infelise, Mario. *L'editoria veneziana nel '700*. Milan: Franco Angeli, 1989.
- Juska-Bacher, Britta et al. "Introduction". In Britta Juska-Bacher et al. (eds.), *Learning to Read, Learning Religion*, p. 1–16.
- Kévorkian, Raymond H. *Catalogue des 'incunables' arméniens (1511–1695) ou Chronique de l'imprimerie arménienne*, préface par Jean-Pierre Mahé. Geneva: Patrick Cramer, 1986.

- Kévorkian, Raymond H. “L'imprimerie Surb Ējmiacin et Surb Sargis Zōravar et le Conflit entre Arméniens et Catholiques à Constantinople (1695–1718)”. *Revue des études arméniennes*, 15, 1981, p. 401–416.
- Lucca, Paolo. “From Doctrinal Persuasion to Economic Threats: Paolo Piomalli’s Missionary Work among the Armenians and His Conversion Strategies”. In Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu (eds.), *Entangled Confessionalizations? Dialogic Perspectives on the Politics of Piety and Community-Building in the Ottoman Empire, 15<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> Centuries*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2022, p. 451–487.
- Lucca, Paolo. “Cleansing the Christian Vineyard: Dominican Missions to the Armenian Catholic Diocese of Naxijewan in the 1610s–1630s”. In Aldo Ferrari, Sona Haroutyunian, and Paolo Lucca (eds.), *Il viaggio in Armenia: Dall'antichità ai nostri giorni*. Venice: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2021, p. 39–62.
- Lucca, Paolo. “La traduzione armena del breviario domenicano (Venezia 1714): Note di storia, codicologia e bibliografia testuale”. In Aldo Ferrari and Erica Ianiro (eds.), *Armenia, Caucaso e Asia Centrale: Ricerche 2016*. Venice: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2016, p. 135–176.
- Lucchi, Piero. “Leggere, scrivere e abbasco: L'istruzione elementare agli inizi dell'età moderna”. In *Scienze, credenze occulte, livelli di cultura: Convegno internazionale di studi (Firenze, 26–30 giugno 1980)*. Florence: Olshki, 1982, p. 101–119.
- Lucchi, Piero. “La *Santacroce*, il *Salterio* e il *Babuino*: Libri per imparare a leggere nel primo secolo della stampa”. *Quaderni storici*, 13, 1978, 38 (2), p. 593–630.
- Marazzi, Elisa. “Catechism Primers in Italy”. In Juska-Bacher *et al.* (eds.), *Learning to Read, Learning Religion*, p. 272–291.
- Matthee, Rudolf. “Jacques Villotte”. In *CMR* 13, p. 589–592.
- Nurikhan, Minas. *The Life and Times of the Servant of God Abbot Mechitar*, trans. by Rev. John Mc Quillan. Venice: St. Lazarus’ Island, 1915.
- Ohanjanyan, Anna. “Jumping In and Out of Confessions: The Armenian Catholic Yovhannēs of Mush and His Book *Key of Truth*”. *Banber Matenadarani*, 34, 2022, p. 131–165.
- Ohanjanyan, Anna. “Intra-Armenian Polemics and Confession-Building in Ottoman Constantinople: The Case of Geōrg Mxlayim Ōhli (1681/85–1758)”. In Krstić and Terzioğlu (eds.), *Entangled Confessionalizations?*, p. 489–519.
- Ohanjanyan, Anna. “Creedal Controversies among Armenians in the Seventeenth-Century Ottoman Empire: Eremia Č’ēlēpi K’ēōmiwrčean’s Polemical Writing against Suk’ias Prusac’i”. *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, 27, 2020, p. 7–69.
- Orongo, Alessandro. “Gli scambi culturali armeno-italiani (XV–XVIII sec.)”. In Claude Mutafian (ed.), *Roma-Armenia: Catalogo della mostra, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 25 marzo–16 luglio 1999*. Rome: De Luca, 1999, p. 256–260.
- Oskanyan, Ninel A., K’ A. Korkotyan, and A. M. Savalyan. *Hay girk’ē 1512–1800 t’vakannerin*. Yerevan: HSS’H Kulturayi Ministrut’yun hratarakch’ut’yun, 1988.
- Pehlivanian, Meliné. “Mesrop’s Heirs: The Early Armenian Book Printers”. In Eva Hanebutt-Benz, Dagmar Glass, and Geoffrey Roper (eds.), *Middle Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution. A Cross-Cultural Encounter*. Westhofen: Skulima, 2002, p. 53–92.
- Plumidis, Giorgio. “Tre tipografie di libri greci: Salicata, Saro e Bortoli”. *Ateneo Veneto* [N.S.], 9, 1971, 1–2, p. 245–251.
- Poturean, M. “*Tsaghik* (M. K’arak’ash.)”. *Bazmavēp*, 64, 1906, 3, p. 142–144.
- Santus, Cesare. “Konfessionalismus bei der Arbeit: Die Herstellung einer armenisch-katholischen Identität im Osmanischen Reich (1680–1730)”. In Andreea Badea, Bruno Boute, and Birgit Emich (eds.), *Konfessionen auf dem Prüfstand: Zum Nutzen und Nachteil eines Konzepts für die Vormoderne*. Leiden/Boston, MA: Brill, in press.

- Santus, Cesare and Paolo Lucca. “Un gioco per insegnare la dottrina cristiana dal Nord America all’Armenia: Alle origini del catechismo illustrato di Mechitar (1737)”. In Giovanni Pizzorusso and Fabien Simon (eds.), *Orientalismo in tipografia (fine XVII–inizio XIX secolo)*. Special Issue of *Quaderni storici*, 59, 2024, 1, p. 113–150.
- Santus, Cesare. “Sheikh ūl-Islam Feyzullah Efendi and the Armenian Patriarch Awetik’. A Case of Entangled Confessional Disciplining”. In Krstić and Terzioğlu (eds.), *Entangled Confessionalizations?*, p. 233–254.
- Santus, Cesare. *Trasgressioni necessarie: Communicatio in sacris, coesistenza e conflitti tra le comunità cristiane orientali (Levante e Impero ottomano, XVII–XVIII secolo)*. Rome: École française de Rome, 2019.
- Somal, Placido Sukias. *Quadro della storia letteraria di Armenia*. Venice: Dalla tipografia armena di S. Lazzaro, 1829.
- Ter-Vardanian, Gevorg. “Le opere dell’Abate Mechitar e la cultura letteraria armena del suo tempo”. In Boghos Levon Zekiyan and Aldo Ferrari (eds.), *Gli Armeni e Venezia. Dagli Sceriman a Mechitar: il momento culminante di una consuetudine millenaria. Atti del convegno di studio (Venezia, 11–13 ottobre 2001)*. Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2004, p. 209–221.
- T’op’alean, Mesrop. “Haghordut’ean patkeravor usuts’umě Mkhit’ar Abbahōr ch’orrord K’ristonēakanin mēj”. *Bazmavēp*, 171, 2013, 1–2, p. 13–31.
- Weitenberg, Jos J.S. “XVII dari latinatip k’erakanut’yuně”. *Patma-banasirakan handes*, 1990–1994, p. 31–38.
- Windler, Christian. *Missionaries in Persia: Cultural Diversity and Competing Norms in Global Catholicism*, trans. by Pamela E. Selwyn. London/New York/Oxford: I. B. Tauris, 2024.
- Zekiyan, Boghos Levon. “La visione di Mechitar del mondo e della Chiesa: Una *Weltanschauung* tra teologia e umanesimo”. In Boghos Levon Zekiyan and Aldo Ferrari (eds.), *Gli Armeni e Venezia: Dagli Sceriman a Mechitar. Il momento culminante di una consuetudine millenaria. Atti del convegno di studio (Venezia, 11–13 ottobre 2001)*. Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2004, p. 177–200.
- Zekiyan, Boghos Levon. “The Armenian Way to Enlightenment”. In Richard G. Hovannisian and David N. Myers (eds.), *Enlightenment and Diaspora: The Armenian and Jewish Cases*. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1999, p. 45–85.
- Zorzi, Marino. “La produzione e la circolazione del libro”. In *Storia di Venezia: Dalle origini alla caduta della Serenissima*, vol. 7: *La Venezia Barocca*. Rome: Istituto dell’Enciclopedia Italiana, 1997, p. 921–985.