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THE CONFESSION OF ANTON VARTABED

In a precious and unique manuscript dating back to 1656 (1657) (Ms. No. 6 of the former Oriental Centre of the Polish Academy of Sciences), written in Armeno-Kipchak and containing the sermons of an Armenian *vartabed*, Anton of Poland,¹ we find a remarkable passage which can be nothing else than a confession of the author of the manuscript himself. This fragment, contained in folios 41r^o - 41v^o, has been written with the same hand and the same way as the whole manuscript. It immediately follows a sermon on the dead, which ends with the remark in Armenian: *mełabart antawn v[ar]d [a]p[e]ts višec'ēk' grec'aw t'[a]v[agan] řēz yunvari iie* "Remember me, a sinful Anton Vartabed. This was written (the date) on January 25th, 1106 [= 1656 A.D.]".² This being the case, the remark in question may also be regarded as an introduction to the next passage, i.e., the confession itself. Thus it seems clear that the author of the remark and the author of the confession were one and the same person.

Only a very few Turkic religious texts of this kind have been put at the disposal of Turkologists. Apart from some unpublished Karaim penitential prayers, we could mention but the celebrated Khuastuanift, a confession prayer of the Manichaeen auditores, dating back as far as the 5th century and written in Uyğur and Manichaeen scripts.³ Thus, for the first time we gain insight into a Christian text written in a Turkic language and of a penitential content. Apart from all chronological, cultural, religious and linguistic divergences, there are at least two main differences between the Khuastuanift and the confession of Anton Vartabed, viz., the first is a translation and the second seems to be the original text; the first is a collective prayer, recited by the members of the community on many occasions and aiming at propagating the Manichaeen teaching, the other gives the impression of being a personal, concrete and rather detailed confession of an individual earnestly and honestly revealing his sins. If we accept this point of view, we must assume that we are con-

fronted by the most personal text ever written not only in Armeno-Kipchak or any other Kipchak language of that time, but, most probably, in any mediaeval Turkic language.

The confession of Anton Vartabed consists of six passages, marked by numbers, in which sins committed by the eyes, ears, mouth and tongue, heart, arms (hands) and legs are specified. We find here both active deeds along with deficiencies of human nature, and neglected duties (e.g. omission of some prayers) or evangelical counsels (e.g., not feeding the hungry and not giving drink to the thirsty). Each group of sins ends with the Armenian formula *m̄ēra(y) āy* 'I sinned against God!' ('through my fault, oh God!'). At the very end of the confession, we find a prayer of contrition, inspired by the hope of benefitting from God's mercy.

There is no serious ground for questioning either the authenticity or the sincerity of the text under discussion. This singular document seems to enable us to reconstruct the moral profile of the erudite Armenian clergyman and eminent preacher, whose life-history has been unknown to us. While endowing him with profoundly human dimensions, it brings us closer to this interesting personage.

The chief point is why Anton Vartabed should have written down, in a lucid and pointed manner, his confession, an act which always involves humiliation and which, in written form, is rarely found even in purely intimate diaries. Although the real motive of his move will ever remain obscure, it would be reasonable to suppose that it was neither the intention of entrusting his confession to his audience as an edifying addition to his sermon, nor the wish to prepare an extemporaneous note which might be helpful in some future examination of his conscience (the text being quite carefully written, possibly copied, and showing no difference from other passages of the manuscript), but a genuine striving to manifest contrition and humility, probably, however, not without the well-known desire of many authors and scribes of mediaeval manuscripts to immortalize themselves in their pages. But do we actually have to do with a private confession of Anton Vartabed?

In spite of all, a certain margin of doubt remains. The confession is in fact, contrary to all indications, rather general and does not specify the circumstances or the number of the sins committed, which seems to have been, also at that time, a general obligation. True enough, some

typical duties of a monk are listed here, e.g., night prayers, but the text could also be destined for use by other clergymen. Also the repeated mentions of "beating, wounding, killing" seem to be exaggerated, being inconsistent with the character of the monk Anton was. Thus, it cannot be ruled out that we have to do with a model text serving a so-called "confessio generica publica", which the Armenian church countenanced, especially when one's life was in danger.⁴ The question should be examined by experts in the religious problems of the mediaeval Armenians.

This short text which, on the whole, does not differ from other parts of the manuscript offers rather little material for new linguistic observation. Some new words and expressions, like *èrik^cla-*, *sučlu bèrin-*, *t^cum haybat^ci*, *zindangi*, etc., should, however, be noted. The text is rich in special terms which often are equivalents of Armenian words, e.g., *sèzik^clik^c*, *tèpraniš*.

The fact that Anton Vartabed chose Armeno-Kipchak as the language of his confession seems to indicate that he was closely connected with it, maybe from his very birth.

T e x t

[F^o 41r^o]

*mèn iazıxlı da arzanisiz çınıel bolıyrmèn barça iazıklarımni mènım
awal biy t^cèngrining alnına da barça arılarnıg iazıklarımni mènım
çaysi k^ci*

*çiliniç mèn fik^cirim bila çaman sayış bila soz bila çaysi barça iazı-
sıçlarımndan mènım suçlu bèriniyrmèn biy t^cèngriga awal bèş sèzik^clik^c-
ım bila*

5 6 turlu tèpraniši bila on ek^ci gövdam bila 365 boçunlarm bila miçya
a[sduçzò]y

*1 iazıxlı mèn k^cozlarım bila tamaşa baçip ozgalarnıg suratına suçlanı-
niç mèn çatunga çiz oçlanga ozganıg tirlik^cına kozum bila k^corup èsim
bila suçlanıç mèn da nè k^ci k^coz iazıçı barçanı çiliniç mèn miçya
a[sduçzò]y*

2 iazıxlı mèn çulaçlarm bila t^cèngrinin buyruçun işitma èrinip mèn içoç
10 èsa çula[ç] çoyup mèn tiyişsiz sozlarga çaman ogutk^ca pambas ètmaçni
çičara bèrmaçni iergasis galadçılarnı çaman sozlarnı ç[u]la[ç] ç[o]lyup
mèn

da nè k'i xulax iazxi bar barçani xilinip mèn mïeya a[sduzdò]y
 3 iazxli mèn ayzim u tilim bila boš sozlarni sozlap mèn ialyanni
 aytip mèn
 pambas etip mèn sok'unç bërıp mèn xarçap mèn erik'lap mèn kufur u
 iaman

15 aytip mèn artixsi k'ulup mèn ozgalarni k'uldurup mèn akahiep mèn
 akah içip mèn boš galadžilar bila ozgalarni say fik'irindan iaman sa-
 yişk'a k'ieltirip mèn da nè k'i ayiz u til iazxi bar barçani xilinip
 mèn mïeya a[sduzdò]y

4 iazxli mèn iurak'im bila iaman sayið etip mèn itlik'k'a bõrniglxk'a
 damahlik'k'a zrgiel etmaxk'a iurak'im bila kæk saxlap mèn urmagay

20 xanatmagay oldurmagay da t'engrining xorxulu iayrusun esima
 kieltirmiyrmèn mènım ulu [i]azxlarimni xoypuz ozganin kiçi iazxlarimni
 sayiðlap mèn mïeyay a[sduzdò]y

5 iazxli mèn xollarim bila artx alip ek'sik' bërıp mèn alip iaşirip mèn
 kişinink'ina xiyp mèn alip iaşirip mèn sadayay bõrmiyrmèn aldap mèn

25 zrgiel etip mèn urup mèn xanatip mèn iazx da uyat ierga xol uza-

[F° 41v°]

tıp mèn nè xadar bolup mèn dinsizlik' džanszlx etma etip mèn ol xadar
 džanima xiyp mèn k'i bir bõyumu say da iazxsz t'engriga saxlamiyrmèn
 mïeya a[sduzdò]y

6 iazxli mèn ayaxlarim bila iaydovuma tugal bolmiyrmèn
 saymõsuma ertagi [alyi]şk'a tuş alyiðina t'um haybat'ina da k'ieça-

5 gi alyşk'a xastalarni sovma da zindangilarga barmiyrmèn xa-
 riblarni ovuma tindirmiyrmèn ialanaçlarni kiydirmiyrmèn açlarni su-
 samışlarni iedirip içirmiyrmèn da barça t'engrining iollarından iıraç-
 lanip mèn mïeya a[sduzdò]y xaysin aytiyim da xaysin biliniyim nè uçı bar
 da nè xiriyi k'ristanlik' iergasına tugal bolmiyrmèn džanimni da t'en-
 imni ia-

10 zx bila xaramyulatip mèn da t'engrinin xorxulu iayrusun esima
 k'ieltirmiyrmèn vay mèn k'op iazxliga k'i nè džwap bõrsarmèn t'engri-
 ning xor-
 xulu iayrusuna da hali umsaniپ t'engriga k'i ol mènım iazxlarima
 boşatr da iaryulamasn mènım iazxlarima k'ora mïeya sana biyim mènım
 mïeya sana xolarmèn seni ari at'a k'i çesk'aysen mènı iaman iazxlarimda
 mènım

T r a n s l a t i o n

[F^o 41r^o] Sinful and unworthy, I confess all my sins, first of all before God and all the Saints: my sins which I have committed by (my) thought, by bad intention, by word, all my sins on account of which I surrender as guilty to God. First of all by my five senses, by my six different movements,⁵ by my twelve bodies,⁶ by my three hundred and sixty-five limbs.⁷ Through my fault, oh God! First, I have sinned by my eyes, watching and staring in the faces of other people, lusting after a woman, a maiden, after the life of the other people. Having seen with my eyes, I lusted with my mind, and thus I have committed everything that is a sin of the eyes. Through my fault, oh God! Second, I have sinned by my ears, being lazy about obeying the orders of God, on the other hand lending ear to wrong words, a bad piece of advice; I put into my ears a slander, a betrayal, indiscriminate idle talk, wrong words, and thus I have committed everything that is a sin of the ears. Through my fault, oh God! Third, I have sinned by my mouth and my tongue, saying empty words, telling lies, speaking ill of others and vituperating, scoffing, teasing, swearing and cursing, laughing too much and making other people laugh, being gluttonous, drinking greedily, leading other people by empty words from sound ideas to wrong intentions, and I have committed everything that is a sin of the mouth and tongue. Through my fault, oh God! Fourth, I have sinned by my heart, having wrong thoughts of [lit. to] adultery, debauchery, greed, wrong-doing, — and having hidden an animosity in my heart — of beating, wounding, killing. And I have become insensible to the terrible judgement of God. Indulging in my great sins, I would examine the little sins of other people. Through my fault, oh God! Fifth, I have sinned by my hands, having taken more and given less, having taken and hidden away, not sparing things [?] that belonged to other persons, taking (them) and hiding. I do not give alms. I was cheating, doing wrong, beating, wounding, holding out my hand to reach a sinful and shameful spot, [F^o 41v^o] becoming so (vile), having shown such a great impiety and being so spiritless I have tortured my soul to such a degree that I have left none of my limbs sound and sinless for God. Through my fault, oh God! Sixth, I have sinned by my legs: I am not perfect towards my church, I do not go to [recite] my psalm, to morning prayers, to noon prayers, to the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and to night prayers (as well). I go neither to nurse sick people nor to

visit prisoners, I do not shelter strangers in my house, I do not clothe the naked, I neither feed the hungry nor give drink to the thirsty, and I have strayed far away from all the paths of God. Through my fault, oh God! I am not perfect towards the Christian order [rite?] which has neither end nor limit. I have obscured (dimmed) my soul and my body with sins and I am insensible to the terrible judgement (tribunal) of God. Woe to me, the most sinful man, what answer shall I give and what shall I confess before the terrible tribunal (judgement) of God? And now, I hope in God that He will forgive my sins and will not judge me according to my sins. Have mercy on me, oh my Lord, I implore Thy mercy, oh Holy Father, that Thou might deliver me from my grievous sins.

Glossary of less common words

- akahĭep* (Arm.) 'gluttonous' 41r⁰,15
alyĭš, *alyš* 'benediction, prayer'. See *ĕrtagi*, *k'ĭečagi*, *tuš*.
arzanisiz (Arm. + Tur.) 'unworthy, shameful, discreditable' 41r⁰,1
berin- 'surrender; to confess (one's guilt)' 41r⁰,4. See also *sučlu*.
boĭun, *böĭum* 'limb' 41r⁰,5, 41v⁰,2. See note 7.
böĭniglx (Arm. + Tur.) 'debauchery, sensual pleasure, dissipation' 41r⁰,18
bošat- 'forgive (sins)' 41v⁰,13
čĕs- 'deliver' 41v⁰,14
čĭxara bĕrmaç 'betrayal, denunciation, disloyalty' 41r⁰,11
damahlik 'greed, craving' 41r⁰,19
džanszlx 'spiritlessness, lifelessness' 41v⁰,1
ĕrik^cla- 'to tease, to deride, to sneer' 41r⁰,14
ĕrtagi [*alyĭ*]š 'morning prayer' 41v⁰,4
göĭda 'body' 41r⁰,5. See note 6.
itlik 'bestiality, inhuman behaviour; adultery' 41r⁰,18
ĭalanač 'naked; poor' 41v⁰,6
k'ĭečagi alyš 'night prayer' 41v⁰,4-5
k'uldur- 'to make (sb.) laugh' 41r⁰,15
çanat- 'to bleed, to set bleeding, to wound' 41r⁰,20,25
çaramyulat- 'to obscure, to dim' 41v⁰,10
xĭy- 'not to spare, to torture' 41r⁰,24; 41v⁰,2
çmiel bol- (Arm. + Tur.) 'to confess' 41r⁰,1
xula[ç] çoy-, *ç[u]la[ç]* *ç[o]y-* 'to lend ear, to put into one's ear' 41r⁰,

- m̄ieyay a[sduǰò]y* (Arm.) 'I sinned before God; through my fault, oh God!'
passim
- pambas èt-* (Arm. + Tur.) 'to vituperate, to abuse' 41r⁰,14
- sadaṣay* 'alms' 41r⁰,24
- sučlu b̄erin-* 'to surrender as guilty; to confess (one's guilt)' 41r⁰,4
- tépraniš(i)* 'movement' 41r⁰,5. See note 5.
- tiyišsiz* 'wrong; improper' 41r⁰,10
- tindr-* 'to shelter, to offer a rest' 41v⁰,6
- t^cum haybat^ci* 'exposition of the Blessed Sacrament' (?) 41v⁰,4
- tuš alṽiš(i)* 'noon prayer' 41v⁰,4
- uyat ier* 'shameful spot' 41r⁰,25
- vay* 'woe!' 41v⁰,11
- zindangi* 'prisoner' 41v⁰,5
- zrgiel ètmax* (Arm. + Tur.) 'doing wrong, oppressing' 41r⁰,19

N o t e s

- ¹ Cf. E. Tryjarski, An Armeno-Kipchak Sermon by Anton Vartabed from the 17th Century, [in:] *Tractata Altaica* (Denis Sinor sexagenario optime de rebus Altaicis merito dedicata redigerunt Walther Heissig, John R. Krueger & al.), Wiesbaden 1976, pp. 647-674; The same, A Fragment of an Unknown Armeno-Kipchak Text from Polish Collections, RO, XXXVIII - J. Reychman Mémorial (1910-1975), pp. 291-302.
- ² According to Toumanian's tables (B. E. T^cumanyan, *Aṛjeṛn tomarac^cuyc^c*, Erevan 1965, p. 25) this abbreviation corresponds to "08.10.1656 18.10". The front page of the manuscript bears, however, the date "1657".
- ³ Cf. the editions by W. Radloff, A. v. Le Coq, S. E. Malov and L. V. Dmitreva.
- ⁴ I am greatly indebted for this information, as well as for that contained in notes 5, 6, 7, to Rev. Prof. Dr. Gregorio Petrowicz.
- ⁵ According to Philon, there are six kinds of movement (motions): up, down, to the right, to the left, forwards and backwards. Each movement has a meaning of its own. Thus, we rise as a result of our pride; we sink by seeking worldly pleasure; we move to the right by following good impulses, otherwise we move to the left; we step forwards - into eternal life - if we bear in mind the Day of Judgement, paradise and hell; we draw back when neglecting instructions laid down by Holy councils, M. Arcrunian, *Bakatrut^c iwn hražarman ew zḷjman banik Srbok Harg*, Yerusałēm 1854. See note 4.
- ⁶ I give here the basic sense of *gòvda* 'body', but in this text the word has a special meaning. According to information given by M. Arcrunian in the booklet cited, *on ik^ci gòvda* means here 'twelve sins concerning the upper part of the body, i.e., head, or mind (senses), which a man follows in his doing'. The first series: conceit or pride, jealousy, anger, laziness, avarice, gluttony, lust, while the second: transgres-

sion of God's commandments, disrespect of human rights, internal negligence, a voluntary surrender to damnation, and renunciation of good deeds. See note 4.

⁷ According to the mediaeval science of anatomy, the human body is composed of 360 limbs. This was already mentioned by Saint Gregory of Narek (945-1003), who added the five senses to the 360 limbs, by analogy with the year of 365 days, I. Kéchichian, Grégoire de Narek, Le livre de prières, Paris 1961, pp. 254, note 4, 255. See note 4.

5 Ամէ եւ պիւլը սու արշաճի սից ինչն պիւլը մէ պարզս' եւ պիւլընն մէն,
 աւել զիս թէ կրկնէն պիւլըն սու պարզս' արիւրնն. եւ պիւլընն մէն ի նոյնի
 եւ լինէ մէ. զի յիս պիւլը. եւ մանն սուղը պիւլը. Լայ պիւլը. ի նոյնի պարզս եւ..
 զի յարարն մէն սուղը պիւլըն մէ պիւլընն կիսն. Եւ սու զի յիս պիւլընն
 Է զարարն զիսն ի զի պիւլը. ճնէնի կոյտան պիւլը. Գնէն, պարզն լարն պիւլը. Եւ Ծ.
 10 Եւ պիւլը մէն չապարարն պիւլըն զարմաշս' պար ի զի սիկալարնն սուրարնն, սուրարն
 նից մէ ի սարանն, ի զի սրն կա. սիկալարն զի լինն. Բայ զարն պիւլը չարս. Կարն
 պիւլը սուրարնն մէ. տանէնի չապարարն պարզսն ի զի լինն մէ. Եւ Ծ.
 15 Եւ պիւլը մէն ի սուրարնն պիւլըն. թէ կրկնէն պարզսն ի զի լինն կրկնէ մէ. եւ ի
 կան ի սուրարն ի զի մէ. զի լինն սպարարն եւ մանն ժ ի սարս. Բայ պար կրկնէն.
 20 Զ ի սարս պիւլընն, եւ կա սիկալարնն ի զի մէ. եւ մանն սպարարն ի սուրարնն.
 տանէնի ի սուրարնն եւ պար. պար չարն ի զի լինն մէ. Եւ Ծ.
 25 Եւ պիւլը մէն սուրարնն պիւլըն. պար սպարարն սպարարն մէ. եւ պարնն պարնն մէ.
 Բայ պար կրկնէ մէ. սաքանն պարնն մէ. ի սարարն մէ, կրկնէն մէ. Բայ պար կանն
 պարնն մէ. սարարնն չարարն մէ. սիկալարնն չարարարն մէ. սուրարն կրկնէ,
 սուրարն ի զի մէ. պար կալարնն պիւլըն սիկալարնն սուրարնն տանն սու
 30 զի սարսն չապարարն մէ, տաննի սարարնն եւ պարնն պար. պարարն ի զի լինն մէ. Եւ Ծ.
 Եւ պիւլը մէն եւ սարարնն պիւլըն. եւ մանն սուրարն կրկնէ մէ. ի զի լինն, պարարնն ի սու.
 տանն ի զի սու, զի լինն կրկնէն, եւ սարարնն պիւլընն զի սուրարնն մէ. սարարնն
 ի սուրարնն. Զ սարարնն. սու թէ կրկնէն ի սարարնն եւ սարարնն կրկնէ
 35 զի լինն մէ. մէնն սարարնն պիւլընն ի սարարն. սիկալարնն զի լինն եւ պարարնն
 սարարնն մէ. Եւ Ծ.
 Եւ պիւլը մէն ի սարարնն պիւլըն. սարարնն ի սարարնն պարնն մէ. սարարնն
 զի լինն զի սու ի զի մէ. սարարնն ի սարարնն մէ, սարարնն պարնն մէ, սարարնն
 40 զի լինն մէ, սարարնն մէ. ի սարարնն մէ. եւ պարնն սու սարարնն կրկնէն,

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որք մէ. Նիխարսոր պարտ մէ, տիւ փոքի. ճանաչել երևա երիւ մէ, օր ինչոր
 ճանրնա երլլու մէ. յի դիւ պողոտանա սոյլ տա եւսիւղ թէ իրիկն ստիւլա յո
 Ե Լ Երկու մէն աշտարար սիւն, երեսուսն դաւիւղ պոփիւր մէ. (մէ. Երկու Կ.
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 լանր մէ, Երկու Կ. Խոյսի ստիւր, տա խոյսի ստիւր, Երկուսոր
 տան իրրու. Կիւրաւր իրաւուն դաւիւղ պոփիւր մէ, ճանրն տա թէ իրիկն ե
 10 վի փլա խարանդարար մէ. տա թէ իրիկն խարանդար եւսաւան իրմա
 յի փիւր մէ. վիւ մէ յաբ եւլլուին յի մէ ճաւար փարս մէ թէ իրիկն խար
 խար եւսաւան. տա հոյսի ստիւր թէ իրիկն. Կիւրաւր եւսաւան իրմա
 պարսի. տա եւսաւան ման թէ իրիկն եւսաւան յարա. մեղա տան ստիւր մէ իրիկն.
 մեղա տան խար մէ թիւ ստիւր յի մէ յաւ յի մէ յաւ յի մէ. եւսուն եւլլարն տա թէ իրիկն.

Vartabed, Confession, F^o 41v^o

