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SAINT NERSES SHNORHALI AS A UNIQUE FIGURE IN OVERALL CHRISTIAN THOUGHT AND PRAXIS: SHNORHALI'S PIONEERING VISION OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

This study aims to clarify the main reasons, why Saint Nerses Shnorhali is a unique figure in the overall Christian tradition. His extraordinary achievements in the most different fields of intellectual creativity and human behaviour as a monk and a Church leader, as a highly talented poet and musician, as an original, profound interpreter and commentator of the Holy Scriptures, a great promoter of reforms or, rather, innovations in the liturgical celebration; and a charismatic mentor capable of making high culture both in its religious and profane dimensions accessible to the simplest classes of population, are certainly serious arguments to rank Shnorhali as a first-class religious leader and an exceptional figure in the overall Christian tradition.

Keywords: Armenia, Christian Ecumenism, conventionality

The main object of this study is an attempt to clarify the main reasons, why Saint Nerses Shnorhali is one of the most eminent figures of the Armenian Church, as well as a unique figure in the overall Christian tradition.

The 850th anniversary of his passing away from the earthly travail to heavenly light offers us a most favourable opportunity to revisit our current, stereotyped, and hence – somewhat prosaic understanding of his extraordinary achievements in the most

different fields of intellectual creativity and human behaviour both as a monk and as a Church leader: a highly talented poet and musician; an original and deep interpreter and commentator of the Holy Scriptures; a great promoter of reforms or, rather, innovations in the liturgical celebration; and a charismatic mentor, capable of making high-level culture accessible to the simplest classes of the population, both in its religious and profane dimensions. These and similar outstanding achievements, which we might continue to enumerate, are certainly most valuable arguments to rank Shnorhali amongst the first-class religious leaders and exceptional figures in the overall Christian tradition.

It is my conviction, however, that, besides and beyond all these exceptional achievements, Shnorhali is indeed a *unique* figure on the scene of overall Christian tradition due to something very special: this very special, and, more precisely, *unique* quality, defining Shnorhali's privileged position on the scene of Christian tradition at all, becomes perceivable with deeper insight. This insight opens a new horizon in our approach to Shnorhali, shedding a special light on his multifaceted figure: Shnorhali remains a ground-breaking personality, centuries before, precisely *ante litteram*, of that enormous and in its genuine roots divinely inspired movement, which is known in our days, in our contemporary theological culture, as the "ecumenical" movement, which blossomed and advanced in great strides in the course of the 20th century. A movement, which aims to achieve Christian unity, not according to worn-out stereotypes of Chair priorities, of autocentric orthodoxies and respective heterodoxies, of "returning" to the one and only valuable sheepfold, but, in the sense of seeking together the most suitable ways to understand one another better, to come nearer to Christ in search of a common path, to care for what is really essential to be truly Christ's disciples instead of endless debates on the sides of the Gospel. We can even say that in all similar issues Shnorhali's thought and practical behaviour, the model of life and doctrine he offered, have not yet been matched even by the most advanced achievements up to day in the field of inter-ecclesial relations.

We can firmly assert that in rightful Middle Ages, Shnorhali put forth the basis of the most advanced ecumenical theology and formulated the fundamental principles for whichever ecumenical thought and action; this means establishing foundations for a possible and concrete dialogue, for a new meeting of a strictly spiritual nature and on a profoundly religious ground, between diverse and distant confessional groups.

Shnorhali's main and most brilliant intuition as a genius, which leads him on this path, is his deep perception, we can say, his "discovery" of the conventionality, hence, the "relativity" of human language, intending "language" in the Italian sense of *linguaggio*, and the French *langage*. Thus, Shnorhali by centuries anticipated a trend that would be the moving force of contemporary philosophy and thought, even if these contemporary trends did not always produce shareable implications and sequences at all. However, these sequences may be evaluated and interpreted, the applications

that Shnorhali did of his intuition to the field of theological discussion, with a special regard to Christology, clearly remain amongst the milestones in the overall theological thought and culture, surpassing time contingencies. Unfortunately, Shnorhali's figure and achievements, including his ground-breaking insight that we are speaking of, to date are less known or even almost unknown to the widest circles of Christian intellectuals.

Before proceeding further, I would like to express my deep appreciation to Vardan Srbazan Navasardyan and his staff for having organized this conference and giving us the opportunity to reflect on Shnorhali's virtues and achievements, and for their kind invitation extended to me to take part in it.

My current presentation supposes a rather close knowledge of St. Nerses Shnorhali's inter-ecclesial relations, both with the Greeks, the Latins and the Syriacs; above all, however, with the Greeks, that means of his long-lasting dialogue, conducted in three phases, with Theorianos, the prominent and open-minded Byzantine theologian, envoyed by the Emperor Manuel Comnenos (1143–1180, born 1123) to Cilicia. On the present occasion, we cannot extensively consider these meetings, which I have widely discussed, both from a historical and theological viewpoint in earlier studies,¹ to which I permit

1 Համամիութենական տրամախօսութիւն մը ժԲ. դարուն: Բանակցութիւններ Ս. Ներսէս Շնորհալիի ու կայսերական Նուիրակ Թերրիանոսի միջեւ Հայ եւ Բիւզանդական Եկեղեցիներու միութեան շուրջ, (Հայագիտական Մատենադարան «Բազմավէպ», 13), Ս. Ղազար, Վենետիկ, 1978: “Un dialogue œcuménique au XII^e siècle: les pourparlers entre le catholico St Nersès Šnorhali et le légat impérial Théorianos en vue de l’union des Eglises arménienne et byzantine”, *Actes du XV^e Congrès International d’Études byzantines – Athènes, Sept.1976*, IV, *Histoire, Communications* (Athènes 1980), pp. 420–441 – the same with slight variants: “St Nersès Šnorhali en dialogue avec les Grecs: Un Prophète de l’œcuménisme au XII^e siècle”, in *Armenian Studies, Études Arméniennes in memoriam Haig Berbérian*, Dickran Kouymjian Editor (Lisboa: C. Gulbenkian Foundation, 1986), pp. 861–883. I touched upon various aspects of the question also in the following writings: “Les relations arméno-byzantines après la mort de St Nersès Šnorhali”, in *XVI. Internationaler Byzantinistenkongress. Akten*, II/4: *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 32/4 (1981), pp. 331–337; “The Armenian Community of Philippopolis and the Bishop Ioannes Atmanos Imperial Legate to Cilicia” in *Between the Danube and the Caucasus. Oriental Sources on the History of the Peoples of Central and South-Eastern Europe*, ed. György Kara (Budapest 1987), 363–373; “Nersès de Lambron” and “Nersès Shnorhali”, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, XI (Paris, 1981), col. 122–134, 134–150; “Les disputes religieuses du XIV^e siècle, prélude des divisions et du statut ecclésiologiques postérieurs de l’Église Arménienne”, *Actes du Colloque «Les Lusignan et l’Outre Mer». Poitiers-Lusignan, 20–24 Octobre 1993* (Programme com’science, Conseil Régional Poitou-Charentes) [w.d.], pp. 314–315, n. 21; the same in English with slight variants: “The religious Quarrels of the 14th Century Preluding to the Subsequent Divisions and Ecclesiological Status of the Armenian Church”, in *Studi sull’Oriente Cristiano*, I (1997), pp. 175–76, n. 22; “Introduzione” to Nerses di Lambron, *Il primato della carità. Discorso Sinodale, Atenabanut’iwn*, Introduzione e note a cura di B. L. Zekiyan, traduzione a cura di B. L. Zekiyan e V. Lazzarini, ed. ni (Qiqajon, Bose, 1996), pp. 5–23; “Un singolare itinerario di spiritualità dalla frontiera all’oikumene. Riflessioni sulla spiritualità armena”, in “Chiese cristiane d’Oriente”, *Religioni e Sette del Mondo*, Rivista trimestrale di cultura religiosa, I (1996), N°4, dic. 1995,

myself to refer in this present context, as well as to specialized work of other scholars, for a better understanding of the theological, and generally conceptual, analyses which I will be proposing at present.

An “absolute genius”

i. A historic definition

Now we can face the question: what do we mean by “absolute genius”?

First of all. I will attempt to give a rather descriptive, historic definition. The reply to the question is not too difficult, if we consider a few examples among the most outstanding figures of history: Homer, Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Kant, and many others. Accessing the religious area, we can recall Origen, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Mevlana Jalal al-din Rumi, Teresa of Avila, and others.

St. Nerses Shnorhali is at the summit of the entire Christian tradition, a “unique figure”, as we defined him from the outset, in the search of ethical, conceptual, and linguistic principles and ways to reach unity among divided Christian Churches; in other words – to rebuild, restore, re-establish the original unity which existed among them. In this endeavour, Shnorhali is truly unique in his approach to the subject and to the persons, his interlocutors; in his concept and conception of the Church unity, in his methodology

pp. 54–69 (37–69); “Agli apici della teologia cristiana: la sintesi ecumenica nella Cilicia armena”, in *Roma-Armenia*, [Catalogo della Mostra omonima], Salone Sistino, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 25 marzo–16 luglio 1999, a cura di Claude Mutafian, pp. 122–125 – the same in French in the French version of the Catalogue, *ibid.*, pp. 125–125. See also: P. Ananian, “Narsete IV Klayetzi”, in *Biblioteca Sanctorum*, IX (Rome, 1967), col. 750–753; E. Suttner, “Eine «Ökumenische Bewegung» im 12. Jahrhundert und ihr bedeutendster Theologe, der armenische Katholikos Nerses Schnorhali”, in *Kleronomia*, t. 7, fasc. 1 (1975), p. 87–97; H. Khatchadourian, “The Christology of St. Nerses Shnorhali in Dialogue with Byzantium”, in *Miscellanea Francescana*, 78 (1978), pp. 413–434; Archbishop Mesrob Ashjian, *St. Nerses of Lambron Champion of the Church Universal. His Synodal Discourse with English Translation and Annotations* (New York: The Armenian Prelacy, 1993), pp. 12–35; Isabelle Augé, Gérard Dedeyan, *L’Eglise Arménienne entre Grecs et Latins: Fin XIe-milieu XVe siècle* (Librarie Orientaliste Paul, 2009); I. Augé, *Eglises En Dialogue: Arméniens et Byzantins dans la Seconde Moitié du XII^e Siècle*, (Lovanii, in aedibus Peeters, 2011); I. Augé, Vladimir Barkhoudaryan & alii, *L’Arménie et la Géorgie en dialogue avec l’Europe: Du Moyen Age à nos jours* (Paul Guethner, 2016); Ead., *Epistolary Exchanges*, “Treatises and Opuscles: Armenian Sources on Religious Polemics Between the Armenians and the Greeks in the 12th Century”, *Studies in Oriental Sources*, Vol. 3, 2022 (ANAS, Oriental Institute, Digital Library, oai:arar.sci.am:324381); I. Augé, Marie-Anna Chevalier, ed., *L’Arménie et les Arméniens entre Byzance et le Levant: Mélanges offerts à Gérard Dédéyan* (Montpellier: Presses Universitaires de la Méditerranée, 2023); Aram I, *St. Nersēs the Gracious and Church Unity* (Antelias – Lebanon: Printing House of the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia, 2023); Matthew J. Sarkisian and Jesse S. Arlen, *Odes of Saint Nerses the Graceful: Annotated Translation. Sources from the Armenian Christian Tradition*, 2 volumes, (New York, NY: Tarkmanean Press, 2024).

to redesign it, and especially in his very particular understanding of the conventionality and relativity pertaining to human language. This understanding opens to him an access to his personal and utmost original conception of the relationship between the substance of Christian dogma and its theological expression on the one hand, and the underlying philosophical concepts which sustain that expression on the other.

ii. A conceptual definition

I think we can proceed, as follows.

The “absolute genius” is the man or woman who imprints his/her own, unmistakable seal upon a ground-breaking innovation; who inaugurates a new path, a new way of approaching and developing a subject: a way that remains unique, unpredictable and unrepeatable. This normally happens, besides the striking examples mentioned above, and the epoch-making scientific discoveries as those by Galileo, or Newton, or Einstein, in the formation process of the great literary languages in individuals gifted with an outstanding poetical, artistic, or musical vein. Such is, for example, the case among the above-mentioned geniuses of Homer, for the Greek language with his *Iliad*, of Dante for Italian with his *Commedia*, and of the others, respectively, for their own languages and cultures.

iii. Why pose such a question regarding Shnorhali?

It is a matter of fact that appreciating Shnorhali as he really deserves, – as a profound, top-level theologian, besides the common places of his great poetical and musical talent, his exceptional qualities as a religious pastor, as an ecclesiastical senior executive, as a man of an extraordinary mildness and moderation, was not an easy task until the recent times. To realize this, let us consider the following judgment by one of the greatest specialists and admirers of Shnorhali in modern times, the outstanding scholar Fr. Ghevont (Leonce) Alishan of the Mekhtharist Order of Monks of Venice. In his masterpiece of its kind, trying to express an appreciation of Shnorhali’s heritage as a theologian, he writes:

As a theologian, Shnorhali has no eagle-like flights, rather, he flies gently like a dove in low heights...².

This is not surprising, since Alishan, writing in the second half of the 19th century, lacked the necessary philosophical and theological instruments to duly evaluate the width of Shnorhali’s wingspan without precedents, the depths and heights of his

² Շնորհալի եւ պարագայ իւր [Shnorhali and His Time] (Venice, 1873), 433–434.

vision on the conventionality and relativity of human language, on the conditioning of the dogmatic formulae by the philosophical and cultural environment of the epoch in which they were formulated. This vision leads us to Shnorhali's most ingenious intuition, – to his “discovery”, pathbreaking indeed, which is, as already said – I emphasize it – the conventionality, hence, the “relativity” of human language itself: “language” – let it be clear enough – in the sense of the Italian *linguaggio*, of the French *langage*. At this point, it is useful to highlight that such an important and lexically rich language³ as English, or, philosophically, one of the most refined among modern languages, German, do not distinguish as lexemes between *lingua* and *linguaggio*, *langue* and *langage*.

By his “discovery”, Shnorhali by centuries anticipated a trend that would be the moving force driving some of the most recent developments in philosophy and thought, even if these developments did not always produce, as already noted here, shareable implications and sequences. To reiterate, as a guiding idea: however, these sequences may be evaluated and interpreted, the application which Shnorhali makes of his intuition in the context of theological discussions, with a special regard to their Christological dimension, remains, without any doubt, one of the milestones of Christian theology and culture.

Some recent developments in philosophy and generally in human thought, shedding light on our inquiry

Some developments in the philosophical research and, generally speaking, in human thought, in the 19th and 20th centuries, enable us to perceive, under Shnorhali's disarming simplicity of language and style, the dizzying depths of his theology, hence of the philosophical concepts underlying it.

Among these premises, let us mention, in particular, the following:

- a. The developments of the philosophy of language** and their rapid evolution throughout the 20th century. Let us cast an extremely short summary glance at this evolution.
 - i. Edward Sapir's and Benjamin Lee Whorf's pioneering work on the relativity of human language.⁴

³ Mainly for its vocabulary deriving both from Anglo-Saxon and Latin roots. The nuanced distinction between “feeling” and “sentiment” can serve as a significant example for other innumerable cases.

⁴ For bibliography concerning the overall developments in philosophy, philosophy of language, of human mind, history of ideas, history and interpretation of dogmas, hermeneutics, Biblical exegesis, and several related areas of human understanding from the 19th through the 20th centuries, we would like to refer the reader to specialized literature.

- ii. Ludwig Wittgenstein's foundational work in the philosophy of language. Of this, we can choose the following sentence as an emblematic expression: *Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen* (Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent).

Such an approach and related statements apparently go against the main trends which dominated in the patristic and post-patristic eras in the life and thought of the Church in expressing, formulating and interpreting Christian faith. Notwithstanding all the strong *caveat* regarding the radical ineffability of the Divine mystery, discussions about its human expression recognized no limits, no margins, no possibilities for any attempt to redefine it in different terms. No tolerance was applied, except by very rare figures as, for instance, Flavius of Antioch, to those who were considered as deviating from the "orthodox" expression of the creed.

- iii. The achievements of the greatest figures in the philosophy and structural analysis of the language and of its interpretation as variously proposed by Ferdinand Saussure, Noam Chomsky, Walter Benjamin, and Hans-Georg Gadamer, the father of modern hermeneutics, and by the deconstructionists Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas, Paul Ricœur, and others.

b. The acquisition of consciousness in the wake of Hegel's dialectics on the unavoidably historical dimension of the great human adventure. This led to the progressive distancing of thought and culture from strictly dogmatic attitudes. In the Church's history, Shnorhali is, no doubt, perhaps the first and certainly one the most important figures to distance himself from old style dogmatism. Within this general frame, as for as the evolution of Christian dogma at issue, we have to recognize a very special, perhaps unique role and function of the great and exceptionally deserving school of Louvain, of which let us mention here three of the most important figures:

- i. Louis-Joseph Tixeront,
 - *Mélanges de patrologie et d'histoire des dogmes*, Paris, Gabalda, 1921;
 - *Histoire du dogme dans l'antiquité chrétienne*, vol. I: *La Théologie Anténicéenne*, Paris, Gabalda, 1905;
 - *Histoire du dogme dans l'antiquité chrétienne*, vol. II: *De saint Athanase à saint Augustin (318–430)*, Paris, Gabalda, 1909.
- ii. Joseph Lebon,
 - *Le Monophysisme Sévérien: Étude Historique, Littéraire et Théologique sur la Résistance Monophysite au Concile de Chalcédoine jusqu'à la constitution de l'Église Jacobite*, 1909.
- iii. René Draguet,
 - *Julien d'Halicarnasse et sa controverse avec Sévère d'Antioche*, 1924.

Let us here draw particular attention to the point that Draguet's unique contribution on Julian and the question of the "incorruptibility" of Christ's humanity must be considered in studying the doctrine of the Armenian Church in general (concerning the same question), and of Shnorhali in particular.

Three names, three pillars, three milestones in the historiography and theoretical evaluation of the developments of Christian dogma, and of its hermeneutics in relation to all later developments of expression and interpretation. It would not be an exaggeration to say that without their outstanding contribution the various inter-ecclesial agreements among Churches of traditionally different confessions, starting from 1973 onwards, would not have been possible, either theoretically or practically.

Unfortunately, what has been done in the field of Christology thanks to the pioneering work of the school of Louvain, has not yet been applied with the same lucidity and acumen to the other fields of Christian dogma in the last half century. Regarding this question, lesser studied, I would like to mention the two recent studies of Benedetta Contin, with special relation to the position of Khosrovik T'argmanich' and, in general, on Julianism in Armenia: an important step, as a premise, to further study Shnorhali's position on the same question.⁵

E. The main question After having considered all this as the general framework in which to analyse the unique qualities in Shnorhali, we can now go deeper and further develop our initial reflexions. I will concisely enumerate the main components of the basic features that define Shnorhali's unicity, his absolute genius of ecclesial, theological, spiritual nature.

- a. Shnorhali's perception, indeed, for the first time in Christian history, of the conventional nature of human language. This means: of its basic and unavoidable relativity. Let it be clear: this has nothing to do with relativism, since relativism denies truth and the access to truth, while the consciousness that words and concepts expressed by the words, are in function of a given historical context and of a historically definite culture, only opens the possible path to access truth with a more balanced and a much more nuanced capacity.
- b. Shnorhali's vision and attitude stand out as a single and multifaceted framework in the overall Christian reality of the Middle Ages in the search process of Christian

⁵ See: "The Contribution of Eighth-Century Armenian Theology: Xosrovik the Translator on Nature, Person and Distinctness", in *Cristianesimo nella Storia* (2/2021), 397–449; "Julianism in Armenian Christianity: A Preliminary Assessment of the Question". In: Peter Knauer, Andrea Riedl, Dietmar W. Winkler (Hg.), *Patrologie und Ökumene. Theresia Hainthaler zum 75 (Geburtstag)*. Herder: Freiburg – Basel – Wien 2022), pp. 164–175.

unity: due to his full awareness of what he is seeking and trying to do, for his keen ecclesiology and his exceptionally balanced theology of Christian union and unity, for his deep knowledge and understanding of the historic past, for his incomparable sensitiveness to heal aged and heavy wounds caused by history itself because of the misdeeds of both sides, for his unique comprehension of the nature and the requirements of dialogue, of whatever dialogue, between human beings, and not least for his full empathy for the cause to which he devoted himself and for which he declares himself ready to come out from his tomb in listening the Lord's call as Lazarus did.

Shnorhali's main concern is that no human concept suffices to adequately express divine mystery. Hence, the main task of the theologian is to accurately define the meaning and the concrete reference of the terms since the first moment of his inquiry, in order to avoid confusion and look for an unambiguous clarity⁶.

If we take into consideration that two Patriarchs were killed in the context of Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian diatribes, or that the tongue of a holy and peaceful man Maximus the Confessor was cut out, we can understand and better appreciate the enormity of the step taken by Shnorhali, as we find it expressed and explained in his doctrinal letters to the Emperor Emmanuel.

- c. Shnorhali's profound insight into the very nature and requirements of a true dialogue, which implies, in particular:
 - i. The equality of the interlocutors, even if they are different and not equal in virtue of their real power, wealth, prestige, etc. All these differences must be put aside, if the partners really desire a mutual dialogue.
 - ii. Shnorhali is also the first to realize the relativity of the rites and traditions in the Church, both in their canonical and liturgical dimensions when not related to the substance of Christian faith. Thus, his enlightened attitude concerning

6 For a deepening analysis of Shnorhali's understanding of the relationship between concepts and the theological formulation of dogmas, due to limited format of the current paper, I would refer the reader to to my study in Armenian: Հ. ԼԵՆՈՆ ՉԷՔԻԵԱՆ, Համամիութենական Տրամախօսութիւն մը ԺԲ. դարուն. Բանակցութիւններ Ս. Ներսէս Շնորհալիի եւ Կայսերական Նուիրակ Թերորիանոսի միջեւ Հայ եւ Բիւղանդական Եկեղեցիներու Միութեան շուրջ [An Ecumenical Dialogue in the 12th Century. The Negotiations Between St. Nerses Shnorhali and the Imperial Legate Theorianos on the Union of the Armenian and Byzantine Churches], (Հայագիտական Մատենաշար «Բագմավէպ» Թիւ 13), (Կենտօիկ, Ս. Ղազար, 1978).

For a comparative evaluation of the different theological positions in the non-Chalcedonian, particularly in the Syriac area, in an inter-ecclesial perspective, a lot of positive inputs can be found by the collective authorship of *Syriac Renaissance*, ed. by H. Teule, C. Fotescu Tauwinkl with Bas ter Haar Romeny, Jan Van Ginkel, (Eastern Christian Studies 9, Peeters, Leuven, Paris, Walpole, MA, 2010), and especially by H. Teule, "The Syriac Renaissance" (pp. 1–30); Baas Ter Haar Romeny, "The Contribution of Biblical Interpretation to the Syriac Renaissance", (pp. 205–221).

the long-debated question on the matter of Eucharist, whether leavened or unleavened bread, but especially on diluting the Eucharistic wine with water or not doing so. On this point, Shnorhali's theological reasoning is all the more outstanding, since, in contrast to the question regarding the bread, the Armenian Church offered the only case of having a tradition of "uncorrupted", that is, undiluted wine, in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

If we consider that even a giant of Medieval Christian thought, St. Thomas Aquinas, takes as a basis the Latin tradition in defining the "matter" of the Sacrament of priestly ordination, we can all the more appreciate Shnorhali's exceptional approach to the inter-ritual differences among the Christian Churches.⁷

- iii. Finally, the entire Shnorhali's approach to the question of Christian unity as expressed in his thought and praxis, whose formulation I have defined in my above-mentioned studies as Shnorhali's "Decalogue" for Christian unity, is the living codification of his ground-breaking conception of the nature itself of this unity and of the ways to reach it. Shnorhali's conception, understanding and practice anticipate centuries, and make him an absolute genius in the history of Christian Church, concerning the efforts and ways to re-compound her unity, the contemporary ecumenical movement in its best achievements, and the theological-ecclesiological vision inspiring and ruling it.

KOPSAVILKUMS

Svētais Nersess Šnorhali kā unikāla personība kristīgajā domā un praksē: Šnorhali novatoriskais redzējums par kristiešu vienotību

Šī pētījuma mērķis ir skaidrāk izprast galvenos iemeslus, kuru dēļ svētais Nersess Šnorhali ir unikāla personība kopējā kristiešu tradīcijā. Viņa sasniegumi izpaušies visdažādākās intelektuālās jaunrades jomās – gan kā mūkam un baznīcas vadītājam, gan kā ļoti talantīgam dzejniekam un mūziķim, gan kā oriģinālam un dziļam Svēto Rakstu komentētājam, gan kā baznīcas reformu virzītājam.

Raksta autors uzskata, ka papildus visiem šiem izcilajiem sasniegumiem Šnorhali ir unikāla personība uz kristīgās tradīcijas skatuves, jo viņš viduslaikos lika ekumeniskās teoloģijas pamatus un formulēja pamatprincipus ekumeniskajai sadarbībai vēl ilgi pirms mūsdienu ekumeniskās kustības sākumiem.

Šnorhali intuīcija, kas viņu veda uz šī ceļa, ir viņa dziļā uztvere, mēs varam teikt, viņa atklājums par konvencionalitāti, kas saistīta ar cilvēka valodas relativitāti (valoda itāļu

⁷ For further details, see: Zekiyan, «Quelques réflexions préliminaires sur l'identité chrétienne de l'Arménie: l'universalité de la parole et son incarnation dans la vie de l'ethnos», in *Connaissance des Pères de l'Église*, 81 (mars 2001), pp. 36–37 (pp. 21–37).

linguaggio izpratnē). Šnorhali gadsimtus uz priekšu ilgi paredzēja tendenci, kas ir mūsdienų filozofiskās domas virzītājspēks. Šnorhali pamatintuīcijas lietojums teoloģiskajai diskusijai, īpaši ņemot vērā tās kristoloģisko dimensiju, bez šaubām, joprojām ir viens no teoloģiskās domas un kultūras pagrieziena punktiem.



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