

The Armenian Text of Philo's *De Abrahamo* 1-16

▼ **ABSTRACT** This article discusses textual problems of the Armenian translation of Philo's *De Abrahamo* (§1–6). The prevailing opinion that ms. V1040 is the *codex optimus* is questioned. A preliminary study of errors in the Armenian manuscript tradition allows to determine the place of V1040 among other witnesses and show that the correct Armenian text can be reconstructed only through a careful examination of all manuscript readings. The studied material also confirms Hans Lewy's view that all known manuscripts of the Armenian translation of *De Abrahamo* go back to one archetype, which had already suffered considerable textual corruption.


▼ **KEYWORDS** Philo of Alexandria, translation, Armenian literature, manuscript tradition, textual criticism, reconstruction of the original, Hellenising School.

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1. Introduction

The old Armenian translations of the works of the Jewish writer Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BCE – c. 50 CE), who wrote in Greek and explained the Pentateuch in the terms of Greek thought, date from the early period of Armenian writing, the beginning of the so-called “Hellenising School” of translation, which sought to translate Greek texts as literally as possible, even preserving many grammatical features.¹ Some

¹ Abraham Terian assumes that the *terminus ad quem* for the Armenian translation of Philo is determined by its use in the *History* of Eghishē (Elisaeus), whom Terian places at the end of the 6th century (see Terian 1981, 6–7). However, Eghishē is traditionally considered (and himself says) to be a 5th-century author. Many scholars do not question this dating, which means that the Armenian translations of Philo can be much earlier. Additionally, some neologisms from Philo's translations are found in the *History* of Łazar P'arpec'i, who lived at the turn of the 6th century. Accordingly, these translations have been dated to the second half of the 5th century (see Muradyan 1990 and 2012, 2–3, n. 9).

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of the translated works have survived only in the Armenian versions,² which arouses more interest towards them. They have been published several times, although no critical editions exist to this day. The first edition of Philo's works extant only in Armenian was undertaken by John Baptist Aucher (= Awgerean) in the 19th century (Aucher 1822 and 1826), from a manuscript kept in the Mekhitarist library of the Monastery of St. Lazarus in Venice (V1040); Aucher also occasionally consulted another Venetian manuscript (V1334), as well as one from the library of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem (J333). Abraham Terian reproduced the text of Philo's *De Animalibus* from this edition, supplementing it with a preface, translation, and commentary (Terian 1981). He is now preparing a critical edition of *De Providentia*. Furthermore, some manuscripts disregarded by Aucher were used in the works of Charles Mercier (Mercier 1979: French translation of the Armenian *Questions and Answers on Genesis*) and Joseph Paramelle (Paramelle 1984).³

The only edition of the Armenian text of the other group of works – those that have survived not only in Armenian translation but also in the Greek original – is the Venetian edition of 1892 (Philo 1892). It was based on V1040, and readings of another Venetian manuscript, V1334, were occasionally given in the footnotes. No editor's name is mentioned in this book, which includes the Armenian texts of *De Vita Contemplativa*, *De Abrahamo*, *Legum Allegoria* 1–2, *De Decalogo*, and the fragments from *De Specialibus Legibus*. From the afterword we may infer that it was sponsored by F. C. Conybeare. The publication of a text from one manuscript would hardly be sufficient in itself, but even this work is error-ridden and done inattentively, as Paola Pontani has pointed out in her dissertation (Pontani 1998, *passim*). One of these works, *De Vita Contemplativa*, was republished a few years later by Frederick Conybeare (Conybeare 1895). Although Conybeare used two additional manuscripts now in the Matenadaran collection, M2100 and M2057, he left the text of the Venetian edition almost unchanged, limiting himself to adding a critical apparatus (see Sirinian 2011, 21, n. 55). Moreover, in the 130 years since this edition, much progress has been made in the study of Philo's Greek text, so that Conybeare's work is largely out of date (Terian 2019b, 1–12).

The Armenian translations of Philo need careful study and above all, new editions. The examination of translation technique, the grammatical scrutiny of the translations in comparison with the Greek original, the analysis of the lexicon employed in the translations, and the compilation of dictionaries – these important tasks can only be accomplished when we have critical texts.

Often the readings of the Armenian translation prove to be important for the establishment of the Greek text. This was already pointed out by Leopold Cohn (Cohn and Wendland 1902, XXI). He was informed about the Armenian text by Conybeare, who was using the Venetian edition. However, without authentic and

2 *De providentia*, *De animalibus*, *De deo*, *Quaestiones in Genesin*, and *Quaestiones in Exodum*. For a complete list, see Vardazaryan 2006, 30; Terian 2019a, 317.

3 See also English translations of Philo and Ps.-Philo: Marcus 1953; Muradyan and Topchyan 2013, 750–803, 807–881.

reliable information about the Armenian text, it is impossible to take it seriously into account when publishing the Greek original.

Together with Gohar Muradyan, I have started preparing a critical edition of *De Abrahamo*. The work is still in its initial stage, but we can already draw several conclusions that are important for the accurate reconstruction of the original Armenian text. Scholars have different opinions about the quality of V1040 that served as the basis of the Venetian edition. Mercier doubted its merits and insisted on the necessity of re-editing the texts of the Venetian edition (Mercier 1969, 9–15). On the other hand, Folker Siegert (Siegert 1989, 355–356) and Abraham Terian believe that manuscript V1040 is a reliable witness. Terian calls this manuscript *codex optimus* and is convinced that it is superior to all other Armenian manuscripts of Philo. He believes that the proposed emendations have for the most part only complicated the passages that appeared to be corrupt (Terian 2015, 145–146). In this paper, I shall endeavour to show by examples from the first chapters of *De Abrahamo* that there are plenty of examples of correct readings preserved not in V1040, but in one of the other manuscripts. Also, there are many examples of erroneous readings in all the extant manuscripts together. In these cases, conjectures are necessary, and they are often quite obvious.

2. The Manuscripts

The Armenian text of *De Abrahamo* has come down to us in 9 of the 28 Armenian manuscripts containing Philo's works listed by Terian in the preface to his edition of *De animalibus* (Terian 1981, 14–21). Here they are in chronological order:

- Yerevan, Matenadaran 1500, 1282 (M1500)
- Venice, Mekhitarist Library 1040, 1296 (V1040), which served as the basis of the 1892 Venetian edition.
- Jerusalem, Armenian Patriarchate 333, 1298 (J333)
- Bzommar, Armenian Monastery 121, 13th–14th centuries (BZ121)
- Yerevan, Matenadaran 2100, 1325 (M2100)
- Yerevan, Matenadaran 2057, 1328 (M2057)
- Yerevan, Matenadaran 4275, 14th century (M4275)
- Venice, Mekhitarist Library 1334, 14th century (V1334); readings of this manuscript are sometimes given in the notes of the 1892 edition.
- Jerusalem, Armenian Patriarchate 1331, 14th century (J1331)

We have in our possession photographs of eight manuscripts, all but J1331. We have collated them and prepared a preliminary version of the critical text of the first 16 paragraphs of Philo's work, and our text differs in many respects from that of the 1892 Venetian edition. In some cases, we have corrected the editor's misreading of V1040, sometimes we have adopted readings from other manuscripts disregarded by him, and finally, in some instances we have considered the readings of all the manuscripts to be erroneous and offered a conjecture.

3. Corrupt Passages in V1040 and the Venetian Edition

I will not discuss all the differences between our text and the 1892 edition (hereafter Ven.). Some of them are not so important; they relate to phonetic or graphical variants, or to the use of articles. I will focus on the most significant issues concerning grammar, phrase structure, word usage, and syntax.

§2.

Ven. p. 33, 12–13:

Այլ վասն զի unցա են ինչ որ աշխարհիս են մասունք, և են ինչ որ երկինք –

Gr. ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ τούτων τὰ μὲν ἐστὶ τοῦ κόσμου μέρη, τὰ δὲ παθήματα.

One of the most obscure passages in the Armenian translation. In the first and second paragraphs, Philo explains why the Book of Genesis is entitled Γένεσις (lit. “emergence, appearance, birth”), although only the beginning of the book is devoted to the emergence of the world (which is how Philo interprets the meaning of the title of this book). Philo’s reply is that all the rest of what is spoken about in this book are the parts of the world (μέρη) and the processes that take place in it (παθήματα), and these subjects are secondary to the world as a whole, so the book was named after its most important part. In all manuscripts of the Armenian translation, we find the unexpected word երկինք – “heaven” instead of παθήματα. The Venetian editor left երկինք in the text but wrote in a note that παθήματα was usually translated as կիրք, կարիք etc. However, he did not notice that the solution is in the margin of the same manuscript V1040. Either as a variant reading or correction, the word կիրք that the editor wanted to see is written here. It could be the scribe’s own conjecture or the reading of a manuscript with which the scribe of V1040 checked his text. Thus, we can easily restore the correct reading: երկինք appeared as a result of an erroneous transposition of consonants of են կիրք. The phrase originally was: unցա են ինչ որ աշխարհիս են մասունք, և են ինչ որ են կիրք. Before the error occurred, the verb են was repeated in both dependent clauses.

Ven. p. 33, 14–15:

նմա գրողոր զիրսն վերագրեալ նուիրեաց –

Gr. αὐτῷ τὴν δὴν βίβλον ἀνέθηκεν.

By this phrase Philo explains that when giving his book the title “Genesis”, Moses devoted it to the world as a whole, the origin of which he describes at the beginning, and not to its individual parts and processes that are further discussed in it. The verb ἀνέθηκεν is rendered here by two Armenian verbs; such rendering by doublets is one of the characteristic features of the Armenian translations of Philo, and of the translations of the Hellenising School in general (see Terian 1981, 10; Muradyan 2012, 201–215; Olivieri 2000, 235–247, and Kölligan 2014, 117–130). The second verb, նուիրեաց, conveys the sense “brought as a gift, dedicated” of ἀνέθηκεν. The first verb, in a participle form dependent on the second verb, contains the prefix վերա-

usually rendering the Greek ἀνα-. We would expect to see here a literal rendering of ἀνατίθημι and be faced with a common type of doublet, in which one member “is a more formal rendering, while the other reflects the sense” (Muradyan 2012, 207–208). Instead, all manuscripts contain the word վերագրեալ – a translation of the Greek ἀναγράφω (in §1 վերագրեցելը rendered the Greek ἀναγραφέντων – of “written down” divine laws). Here վերագրեալ is not appropriate. This error is easily corrected by replacing just one letter: the expected literal translation of ἀνέθηκεν would be վերադրեալ (cf. *NBHL* s.v. վերադրեմ).⁴ The error could be caused by the similar forms of the letters գ and դ.

Another error in the same phrase, գիրսն, which should correspond to the Greek τὴν βίβλον, has been pointed out by the Venetian editor: գիրսն, the accusative plural of ցիր(ք), makes sense in this context (գիրսն վերագրեալ – “having written down these things”), and that was perhaps the reason of its persistence in the manuscript tradition. The correct version, however, is found in one of the manuscripts, M4275, which gives the form գգիրսն.

§4.

Ven. p. 34, 3–4:

յաղագրս ալմոցիկ որք պատահեմ յորորելի և ի նմանանախանսն ածել –

Gr. ὑπὲρ τοῦ τοῦς ἐντυγχάνοντας προτρέψασθαι καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν ὅμοιον ζῆλον ἀγαγεῖν.

Philo discusses the purpose of the accounts of the patriarchs’ virtuous life in Genesis. In his opinion, Moses endeavoured not only to glorify the patriarchs themselves but also to instruct the readers by their virtues. This aim is expressed in Greek by the preposition ὑπὲρ with infinitive clauses.

The text in V1040 and all the other manuscripts as well as in Ven. is unclear. First, the syntax is questionable. In the Greek original, the preposition ὑπὲρ governs the substantival infinitives τοῦ προτρέψασθαι and ἀγαγεῖν, while τοῦς ἐντυγχάνοντας depends on these infinitives: “for the sake of directing the readers and leading them to such zeal”. However, in the Armenian text, the preposition յաղագրս – “for the sake of” is not associated with the infinitives, but with the closest expression ալմոցիկ որք պատահեմ, rendering the Greek τοῦς ἐντυγχάνοντας, and the meaning is changed: “for the sake of those who happen to instruct and lead them to such zeal”.

It is hardly possible that the translator himself could have allowed this inconsistency. The Armenian text can easily be corrected by replacing just one letter and changing the erroneous genitive ալմոցիկ to the correct accusative ալմոցիկ. The scribe’s error is primarily due to the fact that he did not understand the complex syntax of this sentence and assigned the pronoun ալմ to the nearest word – a common scribal mistake. The phonetic proximity of the sibilants u and g could be an additional reason for this error.

⁴ This emendation has been proposed by Gohar Muradyan.

The second error concerns the word recorded in V1040 as նմանանախանձ, which should have rendered the Greek phrase τὸν ὅμοιον ζῆλον. The adjective նմանանախանձ cannot be the correct equivalent of this expression; it corresponds to (and serves as) the usual translation of the Greek ὁμόζηλον. Obviously, we must restore the variant նման նախանձ. The error can be corrected with the help of manuscripts M2057, M1500, and M4275, which contain a reading with the article ն (նմանանախանձն) that corresponds more accurately to the Greek τὸν ὅμοιον ζῆλον. Thus, the correct reading is նման նախանձն.

§6.

Ven. p. 34, 29–31:

առ սմբողջութիւն բողոքակ վիճակութեան կցորդութիւն կենաց բարեաց –

Gr. πρὸς ὀλοκλήρου μετουσίαν ζωῆς.

Philo continues speaking of the virtuous life of the patriarchs: they committed no sins of their own free will, and if they happened to make any mistake, they addressed their prayers to God. So they attained to the full perfection of their life (πρὸς ὀλοκλήρου μετουσίαν ζωῆς – “for partaking of the perfect life”). The syntax of the Armenian translation of this expression, as recorded in V1040 and published in Ven., is obscure and obviously broken. The preposition առ (= Greek πρὸς) governs the word սմբողջութիւն, but for this reason կցորդութիւն is left out of the construction. This inconsistency can easily be corrected if we assume that in the archetype of all manuscripts known to us there was a typical error: the scribe could not cope with complex syntactic constructions and preferred to coordinate the neighbouring words (cf. the first of the two errors noted in §4). Instead of սմբողջութիւն we should read the genitive form սմբողջութեան, dependent on կցորդութիւն, which should be governed by the preposition առ: առ սմբողջութեան կցորդութիւն – “for partaking of the perfection”.

So this error already was in the archetype of all extant manuscripts. However, there are also other errors in this phrase, which can be corrected by other manuscripts unknown to the Venetian editor.

First, it is worth paying attention to the inexact correspondence of սմբողջութեան բողոքակ վիճակութեան կենաց to the Greek original. Before us is one of the many cases of doublet translation: սմբողջութեան and բողոքակ վիճակութեան stand together and are not connected by a conjunction, as it often happens. Such a paired translation should not in itself raise questions. However, we see that the Greek adjective ὀλοκλήρου, dependent on ζωῆς, is translated here by a noun pair governing կենաց. This cannot be a scribe’s error: apparently, the translator misunderstood the form ὀλοκλήρου as the substantival adjective τὸ ὀλόκληρον governing ζωῆς: “perfection of life” (perhaps because of the difference between its ending and that of ζωῆς).

If we now turn to the paired translation of ὀλόκληρου, we see that of its two parts, one conveys the meaning and the other serves as an exact formal rendering of the word, such as the translation of ἀνέθηκεν as վերադրեալ նուիրեաց in §2 discussed above. Nevertheless, in place of the expected word-formation calque ὀλόκληρον, we

find an expression with the adjective բորբալ վիճակութեան, which would correspond to the Greek ὄλου κλήρου. On the other hand, manuscript M4275 shows us another reading that is probably correct: it is the hapax բորբալվիճակութեան, an abstract noun formed from the adjective բորբալիճակ and an exact calque of the adjective ὀλόκληρος.

Comparison with other manuscripts draws our attention to another error in V1040 and Ven. The word կենաց is followed by բարեաց, which has no correspondence in the Greek original: while the Greek text speaks of a “perfect life”, the Armenian translation for some reason adds “good”. In other manuscripts, we see that բարեաց is written in different places. M2057 offers the same reading կենաց բարեաց as V1040, in M4275, these two words are in the opposite order (բարեաց կենաց), and finally, in M1500 բարեաց is inserted above the line, between բորբալ and վիճակութեան. This strange treatment of բարեաց by the scribes is explained very simply. In the next sentence, at the beginning of §7, we find the expression կցորդութեան բարեաց rendering the Greek μετουσίαις ἀγαθῶν – “partaking of the good”, where բարեաց is used substantively and depends on the same noun կցորդութիւն – “involvement, participation” in something (as ամբողջութեան բորբալվիճակութեան կենաց in our case). It would be natural to assume that one of the scribes correlated these two neighbouring passages and added բարեաց here as a variant or parallel, and then it got into the main text of the later manuscripts, appearing in various places.

Thus, the correct reading should be: առ ամբողջութեան բորբալվիճակութեան կցորդութիւն կենաց.

§7.

Ven. p. 35, 2–3:

յայս իբրև ի կուռ ճանապարհ առաքինատէրն հասանէ հոգի –

Gr. ταύτην οἶα λεωφόρον ὁδὸν ἢ φιλάρετος ἀνατέμνει καὶ ἀνοίγει ψυχῇ.

The reference here is to hope, which serves as the first step towards the possession of the true good, that is, virtue. In the Greek text we see a comparison of hope with the road leading to virtue: the soul striving for virtue builds hope as if it were a road to it. The Armenian text in V1040 and Ven. does not correspond to the Greek original. The prepositional construction with ի (յայս իբրև ի կուռ ճանապարհ) presupposes that the road itself is the goal: “the soul comes to it as to a well-trodden path”. The reading of the Armenian text has been further distorted by Conybeare, informing Cohn that of the two verbs ἀνατέμνει and ἀνοίγει only the second one has remained here (“ἀνατέμνει καὶ om. Arm”, writes Cohn in his critical apparatus).

In the other manuscripts (in all but V1040 and M2057), the direct object յայս, corresponding to the Greek ταύτην, is written instead of յայս. Furthermore, manuscripts M2100, M4275, and M1500 do not have the preposition ի before կուռ ճանապարհ. Their reading յայս իբրև կուռ ճանապարհ accurately renders the Gr. ταύτην οἶα λεωφόρον ὁδόν. However, the phrase յայս իբրև կուռ ճանապարհ առաքինատէրն հասանէ հոգի is impossible, both because of its meaning (the soul does not “reach hope like a road”, since both hope and the road are means to a

different end) and syntax (հասանիտ requires the dative or prepositional objects, not the accusative). These problems are easily solved by correcting հասանիտ to հասանի, a verb that usually renders the Greek τέμνειν and therefore corresponds here to the Greek ἀνατέμνει.⁵

The correct phrase should be: զայս իբրև կուռ ճանապարհ առաքինասէրն հասանի հոգի. The erroneous reading հասանիտ instead of հասանի had appeared already in the archetype of all manuscripts known to us. The scribes then decided to correct the syntactic inconsistency and changed զայս and կուռ ճանապարհ to յայս and ի կուռ ճանապարհ.

§ 11

Ven. p. 35, 31–36, 2:

զոյս և յիշատակի արժանի է քաջայոյսն, ոչ այնր որ ի քարտէսս ի ցեցոյ ապականեցելոյ, այլ այնր որ յանձահու՛մ բնութեանն –

Gr. γραφῆς καὶ μνήμης ἄξιός ὁ εὐελπίς, οὐ τῆς ἐν χαρτιδίοις ὑπὸ σητῶν διαφθαρησομένοις, ἀλλὰ τῆς ἐν ἀθανάτῳ τῇ φύσει.

Ven. repeats the meaningless ի ցեցոյ ապականեցելոյ (“by the moth that is destroyed”) of V1040; we find the same in J333 and M2057. This participle form was reported to Cohn by Conybeare, who understood it as a genitive singular, and Cohn added this Armenian reading to his critical apparatus. In his view, the Armenian form ապականեցելոյ may correspond to διαφθαρησομένης found in two Greek manuscripts (C and K, where it is written above the line as a variant), an error resulting from assimilation of the case of the participle to that of γραφῆς and μνήμης rather than of χαρτιδίοις. Another manuscript, M2100, however, helps us restore the correct reading by suggesting իցէ ցոյց ապականեցելոց. Behind this seemingly absurd variant (իցէ is a subjunctive of the verb “to be”, ցոյց means “show, sign”) lies ի ցեցոց ապականեցելոց (ի ցե was interpreted by the copyist as իցէ, and then he corrected the incomprehensible combination of letters ցոց to the word ցոյց⁶). The participle ապականեցելոց should not be understood as the genitive-dative-ablative of the aorist participle ապականեցելայ, but as the invariant form of the future participle with which the translator tried to convey διαφθαρησομένοις and which should refer to the locative քարտէս. In the archetype of the other manuscripts, the final g in both words was mistakenly turned into j because of the similarity of the majuscules the mss. were written in: Յ and Յ. Thus, the correct reading should be: ի քարտէսս ի ցեցոց ապականեցելոց – “in the books that will be destroyed by moths”.

⁵ This emendation has been proposed by Gohar Muradyan.

⁶ This explanation of the error has been suggested to me by Petr Kocharov.

§16

p. 36, 29–33:

Իսկ որ առանց միխթարութեան խրատտուութեան և առանց հրաման առնոյ եղեալ է քաջայոյս, նա է գրով, բայց դարձեալ ինքնուսումն ւարինաւք առաքինութեամբս այսորիկ խրատեալ է գոր բնութիւնս եղ –

ὁ δ' ἄνευ παραινέσεως δίχα τοῦ κελευσθῆναι γενόμενος εὐελπις ἀγράφῳ μὲν νόμῳ δὲ πάλιν αὐτομαθεῖ τὴν ἀρετὴν ταύτην πεπαιδευται, ὃν ἡ φύσις ἐθήκε.

The first, minor error in V1040 and Ven., the superfluous և connecting առանց միխթարութեան խրատտուութեան and առանց հրաման առնոյ, should be corrected according to M2100 and J333, where it is missing. But the Armenian text also poses two major problems to us.

First, the phrase նա է գրով (“he is in writing”), which we find in V1040 and J333, cannot be correct; the same is written in M2100, but with the transposition է նա գրով. In manuscript M2057, an attempt is made to give the phrase some meaning: its scribe changed նա է գրով to նա է գովելի – “he is laudable”. But here we need a very different word: անգրով, mentioned in a note by the Venetian editor as the usual translation of ἀγραφος. Obviously, we must assume that in the exemplar of the entire group, M2100, M2057, V1040, and J333, անգրով was erroneously changed to նա է գրով. The error was due to the obscurity and complexity of the syntax, which literally reproduced the Greek original. The Armenian որ renders here the Greek article introducing a long clause (ὁ δ' ἄνευ παραινέσεως δίχα τοῦ κελευσθῆναι γενόμενος εὐελπις). The scribe treated որ as a relative pronoun introducing a dependent clause and tried to create the main clause by adding the verb “to be” (t): անգրով in a sentence with complex conjunctions, referring to ւարինաւք (meaning “by unwritten laws”) and separated from it by several words, was unclear to him, and he took the initial ան as a corruption of նա, a deictic pronoun in the main clause, correlated with որ in the dependent clause. Thus, the correct variant would be անգրով, բայց դարձեալ ինքնուսումն ւարինաւք.

The second problem seems not to be completely solvable: առաքինութեամբս (in the instrumental case) այսորիկ (in the genitive case) should correspond to the Greek τὴν ἀρετὴν ταύτην. Either the instrumental (առաքինութեամբս այսորիկ) or the genitive (առաքինութեանս այսորիկ) case should be restored for both words. Perhaps the second option is more likely: it is easier to explain the transformation of առաքինութեանս այսորիկ into առաքինութեամբս այսորիկ under the influence of the neighbouring ւարինաւք, after which առաքինութեամբս could be understood as an apposition to it.

Nevertheless, neither առաքինութեամբս այսորիկ nor առաքինութեանս այսորիկ correspond to the Greek accusative τὴν ἀρετὴν ταύτην – “retained” accusative of the internal object of πεπαιδευται – “brought up in that virtue”. The instrumental case must be understood in the same way as ւարինաւք: “brought up by the law, by that virtue”, and the genitive must depend on ւարինաւք: “brought up by the law of that virtue”.

We can only speculate about the reasons for this error. Maybe the genitive was already in the Greek manuscript, or the translator did not understand the meaning of the accusative and therefore changed it to genitive. However, given the translator's desire to translate the Greek syntax as accurately as possible and, on the contrary, the tendency of scribes to correct the syntax whenever it was unclear to them, we can rather assume that he had used the nominative-accusative form, and without the Greek text it was completely incomprehensible to Armenian readers. Therefore, the scribe resorted to the most obvious correction, making it dependent on the neighbouring word.

4. Conclusions

Thus, V1040 has many errors. Some of them can be corrected with the help of other manuscripts. It is hardly right to say that V1040 is comparable in quality only to manuscripts copied from the same exemplar, and that even these are surpassed by the care and accuracy of the Venetian text.

In order to compare V1040 with other manuscripts, we should get some idea of the manuscript tradition of the Armenian *De Abrahamo* as a whole. It is interesting to compare the first 16 paragraphs with the conclusions of Hans Lewy, who prepared an edition of *De Jona*, a work attributed to Philo, extant only in Armenian, and included it in his collection (Lewy 1936). Working on a text surviving in both Greek and Armenian allows us to draw more reliable conclusions, since with the help of the Greek original we can more accurately distinguish between correct and incorrect readings, which makes it easier to analyse the recension and to group the manuscripts.

Lewy compared six manuscripts, five of which match ours (*De Jona* is found in M1500, M2057, V1040, J333, and M2102, which is a continuation of our M2100). He divided the manuscripts into two groups: two recensions going back to two exemplars. To the first recension (α), Lewy assigned M1500 and M2057 (as well as M2104, which does not include *De Abrahamo*). In the second group (β), he included V1040, J333, and M2100/2102. According to Terian, this second group shows almost no traces of later revision of the text, and it is even doubtful whether this group can be called recension in the full sense, since, as he believes, it may reflect a very ancient state of the text (Terian 1981, 24).

The study of the first 16 paragraphs of *De Abrahamo* has led me to a conclusion that partly differs from that of Lewy. The manuscripts of this work can indeed be divided into two groups. The most obvious proof of the discrepancy between the two recensions is the absence of a large part, §§9–27, from several manuscripts, namely M1500, M4275, and V1334, while it is present in M2057, V1040, J333, and M2100. The difference between the two groups can be seen in many other cases as well, and both recensions may offer erroneous readings. For example, in §1 τὴν πρόσρησιν is rendered correctly as զանաւորթիւնն with the article in M2100, M2057, J333, and V1040, and erroneously, without the article, in M1500 and M4275 (in M4275, someone has then inserted the article, having checked this passage against a

manuscript of the other group). A few lines below, in the same first paragraph, the Greek *κατ' εἰρήνην ἢ πόλεμον* is translated as ըստ խաղաղութեան կամ պատերազմի, but in M2100, M2057, J333, and V1040, a second ըստ (կամ ըստ պատերազմի) is erroneously added. In §2, again we find a common error in M2100, M2057, J333, and V1040: *τὴν βίβλον* is rendered զիրսն. Only M4275 has the correct reading (զգիրսն); M1500 also contains an error, but it is different from that in the above-mentioned four manuscripts (իրսն).

We can thus distinguish two recensions: α (M1500, M4275, and V1334) and β (M2057, V1040, J333, and M2100). This division generally corresponds to that of Lewy, but I have assigned M2057 to the β group rather than α . Neither of these recensions has a testable advantage over the other: both go back to exemplars that contained errors, and the readings of both can equally be correct or incorrect.

As we see, the group to which V1040 belongs is in no way superior to group α . Moreover, even within group β , the readings of V1040 are often inferior to those of other manuscripts. In many cases, only M2100 has retained the correct reading. As examples of significant errors shared by all other manuscripts in this group, we can cite զանմարմնական գոյացութիւնս և զանմարմինս in V1040, J333, and M2057 instead of the correct զանմարմնական գոյացութիւնս և զիմանալիսն (= *τὰς ἀσωμάτους οὐσίας καὶ νοητάς*) in M2100 (§13), and further (§17), փոխեաց in V1040, J333, and M2057 instead of փոխադրեաց in M2100 (= *μετέθηκεν*). Thus, in group β we can distinguish two subgroups: β^1 – M2100 and β^2 – V1040, J333, and M2057.

There is no sufficient material to determine the exact relationship between V1040, J333, and M2057, but we can already conclude that V1040 cannot be considered the *codex optimus*.

Working with the Armenian manuscripts of *De Jona*, Lewy suggested that their common archetype contained already a sufficient number of errors: “All the manuscripts are proved by their common omissions and mistakes to be derived from a single archetype which had already suffered considerable textual corruption” (Lewy 1936, 7). Terian, extremely trustful of the text of the extant manuscripts, strongly disagreed with Lewy, assuming that this negative assessment of the archetype results from Lewy’s (incorrect) reconstructions of the Greek text of *De Jona* (Terian 1981, 22–23). For a true test of the supposed quality of the archetype, a detailed study of the manuscript tradition of the texts surviving in both Greek and Armenian is necessary. Only in this way we can distinguish reliably enough a correct reading from an erroneous one and judge the reliability of a hypothetical archetype reading. However, the first 16 paragraphs of *De Abrahamo* suggest that Lewy was apparently right: the text of the archetype contained many errors that need to be corrected.

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