

The Armenian Translation and the Greek Text of Philo's *De Abrahamo* 1–16


▼ **ABSTRACT** The aim of this article is to demonstrate the importance of the old Armenian translation of Philo's *De Abrahamo* in establishing its correct Greek original. The work on a forthcoming critical edition of the Armenian text provides us with new information on the Greek text as well. It is argued that the Greek manuscript from which the treatise was translated into Armenian was independent of the archetype of the extant Greek manuscripts and free from certain errors contained in the archetype. Furthermore, the relations of the Armenian text with the two main recensions of the Greek manuscripts are described. It is also argued that the Greek manuscript from which the work was translated did not have its own specific errors.

▼ **KEYWORDS** Philo of Alexandria, translation, Armenian literature, textual criticism, Hellenising school.

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1. Introduction

Philo's treatise *De Abrahamo* is one of his works that have survived not only in the original Greek version but also in an Armenian translation. The importance of the latter for restoring correct readings in the Greek text is out of doubt. The Armenian translation is very close to the original, it literally transmits the sequence of words, often preserving syntactic constructions, even if they are alien to the Armenian language. This peculiarity allows us to make assumptions about the readings of the Greek manuscript from which the translation was made. The treatise was translated into Armenian no later than the second half of the sixth century, and perhaps even earlier, in the second half of the fifth century, while the earliest Greek manuscripts date from the eleventh century. So even if the Armenian text merely confirms readings of some of the Greek manuscripts, the dating of this version is immediately carried back five centuries, as James Royse rightly remarked (Royse 2008, 154).

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Besides its early date, the Greek source of the Armenian text is also of good quality. Leopold Cohn, in his preface to the critical edition of *De Abrahamo*, drew attention to its proximity to the BEK group of manuscripts, which he regarded as the best one (Cohn and Wendland 1902, XXI). Later I will present my own thoughts on the relation of the Armenian text to this group of manuscripts.

Nevertheless, at the moment it is almost impossible to use the Armenian translation for a new edition of the Greek text and for working with it. Cohn, when preparing his edition and apparatus criticus, had recourse to Frederick Conybeare, who communicated to him readings of the Armenian text. However, we do not know exactly what form that cooperation took (Royse 2008, 153). As I will demonstrate, in many cases Armenian readings are either omitted or indicated incorrectly. Besides that, Conybeare used a text of poor quality, the 1892 edition based on one Venetian manuscript, V1040, with occasional notes presenting readings from another Venetian manuscript, V1334. This edition was prepared inattentively, contains many errors, and certainly the evidence of only one or two manuscripts is insufficient to restore correct readings of the Armenian translation.

In collaboration with Gohar Muradyan, I am currently preparing a new critical edition of the Armenian translation of *De Abrahamo*. Nine manuscripts are now known, and we have photographs of seven of them at our disposal. We have collated and prepared a critical text of the first 16 paragraphs of Philo's work. In the article on the Armenian text of *De Abrahamo*, I offered a preliminary description of the relationship between the seven manuscripts and showed the importance of taking into account all the variant readings in order to establish the correct Armenian text (Nikolsky 2024).¹ In this article I'll present new information provided by the Armenian text, in order to either clarify variant readings in the Greek manuscript tradition or even to reconstruct the original Greek text. Part of this information is derived from the new results of the study of the Armenian manuscripts, while other facts may have been known to previous editors, who simply did not pay attention to them. I'll examine those cases where the Armenian text offers correct readings or where it is necessary to correct errors in Cohn's apparatus. In addition, I'll cite several passages where Armenian readings are correctly mentioned by Cohn and where they are important for describing the Greek manuscript tradition. Finally, I'll try to give a preliminary definition of the place, which the Greek exemplar of the Armenian translation occupies in the Greek manuscript tradition.

2. Correct Readings in the Armenian Translation

In many cases, only the Armenian text has preserved correct readings. There are three such examples in the first 16 paragraphs. None of them was mentioned by Cohn. In

¹ In that article, I also gave the list of all known Armenian manuscripts of *De Abrahamo*. The list of all the 28 Armenian manuscripts containing Philo's works was compiled by Abraham Terian in the preface to his edition of *De animalibus* (Terian 1981, 14–21)

one case the Armenian text confirms Cohn's conjecture, and in the other two it shows the correct reading, which was not known and had not occurred to anyone.

In the first paragraphs of the treatise, Philo discusses the structure of the Pentateuch and the sequence of his own exposition of it. The writing of Moses is devoted to the laws, but the legislation is preceded by a historical part: an account of the life of the patriarchs. According to Philo, in this part, when describing the life of the patriarchs, Moses depicts the same laws, but in their most general form: the acts of the patriarchs show the same virtue as the laws laid down by Moses and serve as a model for the latter. It is therefore necessary to begin with the more general laws, with the pattern—the life of the patriarchs, and then to proceed to the particular laws.

In the third paragraph, the explanation of this order of exposition is prefaced by a phrase, which in most manuscripts is written thus: τοὺς νόμους κατὰ τὸ ἐξῆς ἀκόλουθον ἀναγκαῖον διερευνᾶσθαι. This variant cannot be correct, since the adjective ἀκόλουθον is detached from the preposition κατὰ and left without construction. Two manuscripts, B and E, contain the reading κατὰ τὸ ἐξῆς κατακόλουθον. Cohn considered this reading to be the closest to the archetype and suggested the reading κατὰ τὸ ἐξῆς καὶ ἀκόλουθον: καί, he thought, might have been erroneously replaced by κατ-, which is read in all other manuscripts. However, Cohn's conjecture is not good enough. Although the expression κατὰ τὸ ἐξῆς occurs quite frequently, including in Philo (*Opif.* 105, *Abr.* 27, *Ios.* 1, *Decal.* 82), the conjunction of an adverb and an adjective by means of καί does not look quite smooth. And here the correct reading is shown by the Armenian text, which has the reading ըստ Լւարգաւորի զիւր = κατὰ τὸ ἀκόλουθον ἐξῆς. This variant is perfect, and it has an excellent parallel in Philo, *Decal.* 1, where the same idea of a successive transition from the more general, unwritten laws, expressed in the characters of the patriarchs, to the more particular written laws, is repeated: Τοὺς βίους τῶν κατὰ Μωυσέα σοφῶν ἀνδρῶν, οὓς ἀρχηγέτας τοῦ ἡμετέρου ἔθνους καὶ νόμους ἀγράφους αἱ ἱερὰ βίβλοι δηλοῦσιν, ἐν ταῖς προτέραις συντάξεσι μεμνηκῶς **κατὰ τὰ ἀκόλουθα ἐξῆς** τῶν ἀναγραφέντων νόμων τὰς ιδέας ἀκριβῶσω – “Having related in the preceding treatises the lives of those whom Moses judged to be men of wisdom, who are set before us in the Sacred Books as founders of our nation and in themselves unwritten laws, I shall now proceed **in due course** to give full descriptions of the written laws”.² The transposition of words that had occurred in the archetype of extant Greek manuscripts is one of the most frequent errors in the Greek manuscript tradition.

This example shows that the source of the Armenian translation might have retained the correct readings lost in the archetype of the other Greek manuscripts. We find further confirmation of this in paragraph 5. Having divided the laws into general and particular, or model and copy in §3 and then in §4, Philo says what he understands by general and model laws (τοὺς καθολικωτέρους καὶ ὡς ἂν ἀρχετύπους): such laws are virtuous men (οὗτοι δὲ εἰσιν ἀνδρῶν οἱ ἀνεπιλήπτως καὶ καλῶς βίωσαντες). Now, at the beginning of §5, Philo specifies in what sense these virtuous men may

² The English translations from Philo are cited from the Loeb edition by F. H. Colson (Philo, vol. VI, 1935 and vol. VII, 1937).

be called laws. In all the Greek manuscripts we find the phrase: οἱ γὰρ ἔμψυχοι καὶ λογικοὶ νόμοι ἄνδρες ἐκεῖνοι γεγόνασιν, οὓς δυοῖν χάριν ἐσέμνυνεν... In this way the text is also printed in all the editions—a variant, which cannot be correct.

First, in this reading οἱ γὰρ ἔμψυχοι καὶ λογικοὶ νόμοι appears as the subject and ἄνδρες as the predicate (“For the laws endowed with life and reason were those men”), contrary to logic: ἔμψυχοι καὶ λογικοὶ νόμοι is a new concept introduced only in this phrase, whereas “those men”, that is, the patriarchs, were the main topic of the whole previous sentence. Secondly, this reading breaks a grammatical rule: when the pronoun ἐκεῖνος refers to a noun, the noun requires the article. It is noteworthy that modern translators understand this phrase as if the article were used with ἄνδρες rather than with νόμοι. Cf. Colson 1935: “for in these men we have laws endowed with life and reason”, Birnbaum and Dillon 2021: “for those men are in fact living and rational laws”.

The Armenian translation (սարբն այն հոգևորք և բանական սարբն տէրն) shows the correct reading contained in the Greek manuscript from which it was made: οἱ γὰρ ἄνδρες ἐκεῖνοι ἔμψυχοι καὶ λογικοὶ νόμοι γεγόνασιν. This variant could not have been introduced by the translator, for the translator strictly observes the word order of the Greek original.

Erroneous transpositions of words, such as we find here in the Greek manuscripts, are one of the most common errors in the Greek manuscript tradition of this treatise. But in this case, there is a special reason for such a transposition. The scribe understood the pronouns ἐκεῖνοι and οὓς as correlated, “those (men), whom...”, and so placed them side by side. In fact, ἐκεῖνοι does not refer to the next phrase, but to the previous one. The relative pronoun οὓς here begins a new thought, being used instead of the combination of a conjunction with the demonstrative pronoun (“and they”); this use is very characteristic of Philo (cf. *De opif.* 9, 21, 29, 44, 48, 77, 78 etc.), and in these cases the name to which the pronoun refers does not necessarily precede it.

In these two examples, the Armenian text gives us the correct solution, which was unknown before. In another passage, the Armenian translation confirms a conjecture proposed by Cohn. In §10 it is pointed out that in some cases the designation of a class of objects may be transferred without further specification to a single, especially indicative, member of that class, and the word “ink” is an example of such a transfer. The Greek word τὸ μέλαν (literally “black”) can denote ink even though there are other black objects. The phrase defining ink is written as καὶ μέλαν τὸ δὲ γράφομεν in the BEK group of manuscripts, καὶ μέλαν τὸ ὧ δὲ γράφομεν in manuscript P, and καὶ μέλαν τὸ ᾧ γράφομεν in the remaining manuscripts. Cohn corrected this phrase to καὶ τὸ μέλαν ᾧ γράφομεν, and this reading is confirmed by the Armenian text և սևանի որով գրեմք.

These three cases show that the Greek manuscript from which the treatise was translated into Armenian was free from those errors that were in the archetype of all extant Greek manuscripts. The relationship of the Armenian text to different groups of Greek manuscripts is well seen from the last example. The first error, the transposition of the words τὸ and μέλαν, had occurred in the archetype. The resulting variant, καὶ μέλαν τὸ ᾧ γράφομεν, underwent further distortions in BEK and in P.

3. The Relationship between the Armenian Translation and the Greek Manuscript Tradition

We can assume that all the extant Greek manuscripts go back to a common archetype; BEK represent a separate recension within the Greek manuscript tradition, and the Armenian text does not depend on this archetype in any way. The analysis of other variant readings in the first 16 paragraphs shows that all other Greek manuscripts besides BEK form a separate group. We find many cases where the Armenian text together with BEK retains the correct reading, while all other manuscripts contain one common error. In §1 Philo enumerates the events recounted in Genesis: ὄσα κατ' εἰρήνην ἢ πόλεμον ἢ φορὰς καὶ ἀφορίας ἢ λιμὸν καὶ εὐθηνίαν... “(it tells of) peace and war, of fruitfulness and barrenness, of dearth and plenty”. This is the reading of BEK, which differs from that of the other manuscripts, in which instead of φορὰς καὶ ἀφορίας we find φορὰς ἢ ἀφορίας. The Armenian translation coincides with the BEK reading (բերոց և անբերութիւնց), and this reading is correct, since Philo's usual form of enumeration of opposites is with ἢ between members of the enumeration, and καὶ between opposites (cf. *Post.* 109 οἰκείους καὶ ἄλλοτριούς, ἢ πολίταις καὶ ξένοις, *ibid.* 110 μεγάλα γὰρ καὶ μικρὰ ἢ πολλὰ καὶ ὀλίγα ἢ ἰδιωτικὰ καὶ δημόσια ἢ ἐερά καὶ βέβηλα ἢ ἀρχαῖα καὶ νέα, *Plant.* 133 ἢ μαλακότητος εὐενδότους καὶ σκληρότητας ἀντιτύπους ἢ λειότητος καὶ τραχύτητας, *Abr.* 239 ἃ μαλακὰ καὶ σκληρὰ ἢ τραχέα καὶ λεία ἢ θερμὰ καὶ ψυχρά).

At the end of the same sentence, Philo tells us that Genesis speaks of the destruction and birth of plants, animals, and humans, “some of whom lived a life of virtue, others of vice” (ζώων καὶ φυτῶν... καὶ ἀνδρῶν τῶν μὲν ἀρετῇ τῶν δὲ κακίᾳ συμβιωσάντων). The word ἀνδρῶν is used without the article in BEK and in the Armenian translation (արաւնց ուսանց յանարհնութիւն և ուսանց ի շարութիւն վարեցեցոց), while in the other Greek manuscripts it is preceded by the article τῶν. The reading of BEK and the Armenian text is preferable in this case as well, since the previous members of the same series (ζώων καὶ φυτῶν) have no article; the appearance of the article in the other manuscripts should be explained by the influence of the subsequent τῶν.

In §14 Philo contrasts the man who possesses good hope with the one who lacks it, and calls the former “holy and praiseworthy” (ἅγιος καὶ ἐπαινετός), and the latter “unholy and blameworthy” (ἄναγνος καὶ ψεκτός). This is the reading of BEK and the Armenian text (սիηθ = ἄναγνος), whereas the other Greek manuscripts characterise the one who is without hope with the word ἐναγής instead of ἄναγνος.

In many cases, as we see, Armenian readings coincide with the correct BEK readings, differing from the erroneous variants in the other Greek manuscripts. The proximity of the Armenian text to the BEK group has been pointed out by Cohn, but we have no reason to postulate a common hyparchetype for them. As we have demonstrated, in three examples BEK contain the same errors as all the other Greek manuscripts, while the Armenian text is free from them. In one of these cases, we have seen how BEK further distorted an error contained in the archetype of the Greek manuscripts and absent from the Armenian text. However, we also have errors

specific to BEK that are absent from both the Armenian text and the other Greek manuscripts. For example, in §9 Philo argues that Moses connects the very essence of man with hope: Moses first speaks of hope in God and immediately following that of the birth of men (ὄθεν καὶ παγκάλως ὑμνήσαι βουλόμενος τὸν εὐελπιν προειπών, ὅτι οὗτος ἤλπισεν ἐπὶ τὸν τῶν ὄλων πατέρα καὶ ποιητήν, ἐπιλέγει· “αὕτη ἡ βίβλος γενέσεως ἀνθρώπων” – “after first stating that he set his hope on the Father and Maker of all, he adds, ‘this is the book of the coming into being of men’”). The word προειπών is also found in all manuscripts except BEK, and it is the one rendered by the Armenian translator as յարարադրելի ասաց. At the same time, the BEK group offers the reading προσειπών which is certainly erroneous.

So, in cases of variant readings, the Armenian text almost always offers the correct variants, which we find only in it, or which coincide with one of the groups of Greek manuscripts. There is just one example of a common error in the Armenian text and in the BEK group, and it is worthy of careful examination.

In §3 Philo speaks of the order in which the Mosaic laws are to be dealt with, and in which he intends to deal with them: first the model laws, represented by the lives of the patriarchs, and then the copy laws, that is, the Mosaic legislation proper: ἐπεὶ δὲ τοὺς νόμους κατὰ τὸ ἀκόλουθον ἐξῆς ἀναγκαῖον διερευνᾶσθαι, τῶν ἐπὶ μέρους καὶ ὡς ἂν εἰκόνων ὑπέρθεσιν ποιησάμενοι τοὺς καθολικωτέρους καὶ ὡς ἂν ἀρχετύπους προτέρους διερευνήσωμεν – “Since it is necessary to carry out our examination of the law in regular sequence, let us postpone consideration of particular laws, which are, so to speak, copies, and examine first those which are more general and may be called the originals of those copies”. In manuscript K we find the variant ἀναγκαῖον ἦν in the past tense (“it was necessary...”), and in BE the error is developed further (only ἦν without ἀναγκαῖον), which allows us to assign the variant ἀναγκαῖον ἦν to the BEK group hyparchetype. This reading is erroneous; it may have appeared under the influence of the past tense in the preceding phrase ὃν μὲν οὖν τρόπον ἡ κοσμοποιία διατέτακται, διὰ τῆς προτέρας συντάξεως, ὡς οἶόν τε ἦν, ἡκριβώσαμεν – “The story of the order in which the world was made was set forth in detail by us as well as was possible in the preceding treatise”: the scribe might have thought that a new phrase continued to refer to Philo’s previous work. The Armenian translation also contains the past tense form: Վասն զի գարեցան ըստ կարգաւորելի զկնի հարկաւոր էր քննիլ և խնդիլ... Cohn cites in his apparatus the reading of the Armenian text as a parallel to the variant in BEK. However, it is worth noting that the Armenian translator often adds a copula, and in such impersonal constructions it may be in the imperfect tense, cf. §22: (κακίαν) ἦν ὁ πολὺς ὄχλος ἀσπάζεται, χαίρων μὲν ἐφ’ οἷς στένειν **ἄξιον**, λυπούμενος δὲ ἐφ’ οἷς γεγηθέναι **καλόν** – “(vice) which is welcomed by the multitude who rejoice at what calls for mourning and grieve where it is well to be glad” – (շարութեանն) զոր բարում հասնիճաղանն սիրէ և բուռն հարկանէ խնդարով, ընդ որ հառաչելի և յոգւոց հանել **արժան էր**, և տրտնելով, ընդ որ խնդարի և զուարճանալ **բարի էր**.

Thus, we can describe the relations between the different manuscripts in this way:

Archetype

↓

↓

Arm. Greek hyparchetype

↓

↓

BEK (α) ceteri (β)

This relationship calls for a reconsideration of many of Cohn's textual judgements. He assumed that the exemplar of BEK was the *codex optimus*, whose readings are preferable whenever they do not contain a clear error. However, in cases when the readings of β match the Armenian text against BEK, it is clear that BEK have less authority. Here is one such example.

In §10 Philo says that Homer is spoken of simply as “poet”, though there are many other poets, since he is a poet *par excellence*. Cohn chooses the reading BEK (α): ποιητής Ὅμηρος, μυρίων ποιητῶν ὄντων, κατ' ἐξοχὴν λέγεται. However, the reading of the other Greek manuscripts (β) μυρίων ὄντων ποιητῶν is confirmed by the Armenian translation: բազմազ էից քիռնիւց. This variant, besides being better represented in the manuscript tradition, seems preferable also in meaning. The word order μυρίων ποιητῶν ὄντων rather suggests that μυρίων is the subject and ποιητῶν the predicate (“many are poets”, cf. later in the same sentence: παντὸς ὁ μὴ λευκὸν ἔστι μέλανος ὄντος). However, the word μύριοι is usually used in the attributive sense, and we would expect the meaning “there are many poets” (cf. Colson's translation “though there are multitudes of poets besides him”; Birnbaum and Dillon 2021: “despite there being a vast multitude of poets”; Gorez 1966: “et pourtant il y a des milliers de poètes”), which should be expressed by the word order μυρίων ὄντων ποιητῶν, cf. in *Abr.* 1 καίτοι μυρίων ἄλλων ἐμφερομένων πραγμάτων.

In addition to the fact that the Armenian text is free from certain errors contained in Greek manuscripts, in the first 16 paragraphs it does not contain any special errors found only in it. All the erroneous variants attributed by Cohn to the Armenian text appeared in the translation, they were not in the Greek manuscript used by the translator.

Often we find omissions in the Armenian text. In the first sentence, we find two such omissions at once: Τῶν ἱερῶν νόμων ἐν πέντε βίβλοις ἀναγραφέντων ἢ πρώτη καλεῖται καὶ ἐπιγράφεται Γένεσις ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου γενέσεως, **ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ περιέχει**, λαβοῦσα τὴν πρόσρησιν, καίτοι μυρίων ἄλλων ἐμφερομένων πραγμάτων, ὅσα κατ' εἰρήνην ἢ πόλεμον ἢ φορὰς καὶ ἀφορίας **ἢ λιμὸν καὶ εὐθηνίαν** – “The first of the five books in which the holy laws are written bears the name and inscription of Genesis, from the genesis or creation of the world, an account of which it contains at its beginning. It has received this title in spite of its embracing numberless other

matters; for it tells of peace and war, of fruitfulness and barrenness, of dearth and plenty". In this passage, the Armenian text omits two expressions, ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ περιέχει and ἡ λιμὸν καὶ εὐθηνίαν, and these are the first of many examples of omissions in the Armenian translation. This remarkable peculiarity of the Armenian text has been pointed out by Roysse (Roysse 2008, 156). As he rightly notes, it is unlikely that the translator could have accidentally omitted fragments of the text. Roysse gives two possible reasons for the omissions: either they could have been caused by Armenian scribes or the translator could have done them deliberately. The first reason is much less likely, since it is difficult to explain such a regular phenomenon by pure chance. Besides, we meet an undoubtedly deliberate omission in §10. When translating the sentence in which Philo gives examples of designating one, the most important representative of a class by the name of that class (as, for example, Homer is called simply by the word "poet"), the Armenian translator has omitted an example that said little to Armenian readers: the simple designation "archon" of one of the nine archons in Athens, the most important of them, the archon eponym: καὶ ἀρχῶν Ἀθήνησιν ὁ ἐπώνυμος καὶ τῶν ἐννέα ἀρχόντων ἄριστος, ἀφ' οὗ οἱ χρόνοι καταριθμοῦνται. This case, besides indicating the consciousness of the translator's decision, also definitely proves that the omissions appeared only in the Armenian text, but not in the Greek manuscript from which the Armenian translation was made, and therefore it is not worthwhile to include them in the apparatus criticus of the Greek text.

It could be a linguistic reason for the translator to omit some fragments of the text, which, in his opinion, were not obligatory for his readers (either they pointed to unknown and unnecessary realities, or simply did not add anything to the meaning). The Armenian language differs from Greek by a much greater homonymy of case endings, and therefore, when long Greek sentences are literally transmitted word for word, the syntactic connections between far apart words are obscured. Any abbreviation makes it much easier for the reader to understand the text.

The information that the story about the creation of the world is contained in the beginning of Genesis was unnecessary for Armenian readers who knew the Bible well. As for the omission of the pair of antonyms λιμὸν καὶ εὐθηνίαν, it can be explained by the fact that these two concepts are in many ways similar to the two preceding them (φορὰς καὶ ἀφορίας). Cf. *Mos.* 1.265, where they are used almost synonymously with φορὰ and ἀφορία (with εὐετηρία replacing εὐθηνία): προεῖπε γὰρ τοῖς μὲν ἐπομβρίας θέρους ἀκμάζοντος, τοῖς δ' αὐχμὸν τε καὶ φλογμὸν ἐν μέσῳ χειμῶνι, τοῖς δ' ἐξ εὐετηρίας ἀφορίαν καὶ ἔμπαλιν ἐκ λιμοῦ φορὰν – "To some he had foretold rainstorms in summer, to others drought and great heat in mid-winter, to some barrenness to follow fertility, or again plenty to follow dearth". Nevertheless, the distinction between the two is clearly seen in *Ios.* 250: πάντα διὰ πάντων ἔγεμε χαρᾶς οὐκ ἔλαττον ἢ εἴπερ εὐφόρησεν ἡ πεδιάς καὶ ὁ λιμὸς εἰς εὐθηνίαν μετέβαλε – "universal joy reigned everywhere, no less than if the fields had borne fruit and the famine had been changed into abundance": εὐθηνία or λιμὸς appears here as a consequence of φορὰ or ἀφορία.

We find another omission in §7, in the passage which speaks of the soul "cutting through" hope as if it were a road leading to virtue. In the Greek original, this image is

rendered by the two verbs ἀνατέμνει καὶ ἀνοίγει – “cuts through and opens”, but in the Armenian text only the verb հասաւիտ (“cuts through”) is used. Cohn, relying on the incorrect variant հասաւիտ (“reaches”) in Armenian manuscripts,³ noted the omission of ἀνατέμνει καὶ in his apparatus. In fact, the omission here is καὶ ἀνοίγει, and it is most reasonable to assume that the omission appeared not in the Greek source of the translation, but in the translation itself. The fact is that the verbs ἀνατέμνει and ἀνοίγει are synonymous and denote the same action, but ἀνατέμνει is part of the image (“cuts through” as if a road), while ἀνοίγει is used in a more general sense and may refer both to the road built and to the hope opened. The translator, who simplified the text by getting rid of words which seemed to him superfluous and unnecessary, evidently omitted ἀνοίγει, which only repeats the main idea of ἀνατέμνει.

Another error, attributed by Cohn to the Greek source of the Armenian translation, is actually an example of how the translator, having misunderstood the meaning of the Greek text, decided to correct it and restore to logic. At the end of §6, Philo speaks of the endeavour of the patriarchs to earn a life right in every respect, both in intentional acts (τῶν ἐκ προνοίας) and in unintentional ones (τῶν ἄνευ ἐκουσίου γνώμης). The words τῶν τε ἐκ προνοίας καὶ τῶν ἄνευ ἐκουσίου γνώμης are translated into Armenian as follows: պիսց որ ի նախախնամութիւնէ ակնածութեան և պիսց որ ի կամաւոր բարուց – “in those from the providence of care, and in those [done] of free will”.

Cohn in the critical apparatus notes here a special reading of the Armenian text, which should have reversed the meaning of the phrase: τῶν ἐξ ἐκουσίου γνώμης instead of τῶν ἄνευ ἐκουσίου γνώμης. In mentioning this variant ἐξ instead of ἄνευ, Cohn evidently assigns it to the Greek source of the Armenian translation. A closer acquaintance with the Armenian text, however, convinces us that this error must have appeared only in the translation. If we take a look at the Armenian phrase պիսց որ ի նախախնամութիւնէ ակնածութեան և պիսց որ ի կամաւոր բարուց, we will see that the translator tried to preserve the antithesis here, but it turned out differently from what it was in the original. In Philo, in the expression τῶν ἐκ προνοίας, the word πρόνοια is used in the sense of “conscious intention”, a meaning which it always has in conjunction with the preposition ἐκ (Aeschin. 3.2.12; Din. 1.6, cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1300b26, where τὰ ἐκ προνοίας is contrasted with ἀκούσια, see LSJ s.v. πρόνοια II). But the Armenian translator saw a very different meaning in this word. He translated it with the doublet նախախնամութիւն ակնածութեան (“providence of care”), which signifies Divine Providence and Divine care and is also used to translate προμήθεια θεοῦ (cf. in §18 προμηθεια γίνεται θεοῦ = նախախնամութեամբ ակնածութեան ինի ստորոծոյ). Thus, here the translator has understood πρόνοια as Divine Providence, that is, in the meaning this word received in the Stoic school. Sometimes πρόνοια has the same meaning in Philo himself, and it passed from ancient philosophers to Christian authors, becoming primary in early Christian texts (see Lampe s.v. πρόνοια). So we may assume that the translator’s interpretation of Philo’s text here was influenced by

³ On this passage in the Armenian manuscripts see Nikolsky 2024.

his knowledge of later Greek (or perhaps by the orientation to the later language of the dictionary he used).

Having interpreted τὰ ἐκ προνοίας as acts derived from Divine Providence, the translator saw in them not the opposite but, on the contrary, a repetition of τὰ ἐκ τύχης mentioned above: in both cases, in his opinion, these are acts sent by fate itself and not derived from the personal will of man. According to his interpretation of the Greek phrase, the patriarchs sought Divine favour in order that Providence might be favourable to them, and that they might be delivered from accidental and involuntary transgressions. But this interpretation of the acts τὰ ἐκ προνοίας made it meaningless to contrast them with the acts τὰ ἄνευ ἐκουσίου γνώμης. In order to restore the antithesis to its meaning, the translator had to consider that these latter acts are thus named erroneously, and correct this error by describing them, on the contrary, as acts “from the conscious will” (որ ի կուսույն րարուց).

Another variant reading noted by Cohn is actually a particular interpretation of a Greek word by the translator. In §11 Philo says that the worthy deeds of the patriarchs are recorded in the immortal book of nature (ἐν ἀθανάτῳ τῇ φύσει, παρ’ ἧ τὰς σπουδαίας πράξεις ἀναγράφτους εἶναι συμβέβηκεν). Cohn reports that the Armenian text does not render ἀναγράφτους, but a very different word, ἀνεξαλείπτους. Indeed, in the place of ἀναγράφτους we find the word *ւնջիւն* in the Armenian translation. *ւնջիւն*, formed with the negative prefix from *ջիւն*, the root of the verb *ջիւնիլ* (“to clean, to efface, to erase”), literally means “uncleanable, indelible”. However, ἀνάγραπτος is translated in the same way (with the word *ւնջիւն*) in two other places of *Abr.*, in paragraphs 177 and 262. It is difficult to suppose that a Greek scribe changed ἀνάγραπτος into ἀνεξάλειπτος every time. Rather, we must think that this is the meaning the Armenian translator saw in the word ἀνάγραπτος itself. Indeed, this meaning of the word regarding a record which is eternal and indelible is often present in Philo as a connotation; cf. the passage about Abraham’s binding of Isaac, where it is used in conjunction with the verb ἐστηλίτευται: ἡ πράξις, εἰ καὶ μὴ τὸ τέλος ἐπηκολούθησεν, ὀλόκληρος καὶ παντελής οὐ μόνον ἐν ταῖς ἱεραῖς βίβλοις ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν ταῖς τῶν ἀναγινωσκόντων διανοίαις ἀνάγραπτος ἐστηλίτευται – “the action, though not followed by the intended ending, was complete and perfect, and the record of it as such stands graven not only in the sacred books but in the minds of the readers” (*Abr.* 177); cf. also Philo’s statement on the generosity of the soul of one who has devoted himself to God: ἡς τὸ εὐχάριστον ἀθανατίζεται καὶ ἀνάγραπτον στηλιτεύεται παρὰ θεῶ – “The thank-offering of such a soul receives immortality, and is inscribed in the records of God” (*Mos.* 2.108). In our case, where the immortal nature bearing records of the virtuous deeds of the early patriarchs is contrasted with the ordinary books destroyed by moths, this connotation is important as well. The Armenian translator, however, turned the connotation into the main meaning of the word.

There are other instances in Cohn’s apparatus of incorrect attribution of variant readings to the Greek source of the Armenian text. In §1, in the passage on destruction of things on the earth by fire and water (τὰς μεγίστας τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς φθορὰς διὰ πυρὸς καὶ ὕδατος), Cohn notes a different word order in the Armenian text, ascribing it to the Greek source manuscript (“δι’ ὕδατος καὶ πυρὸς transp. Arm”), but the

transposition had occurred only in M1500's exemplar, and as a variant or correction this reading is added in V1040. All other Armenian manuscripts retain the same order as the Greek manuscripts. Another variant reading, the form διαφθαρσομένης instead of διαφθαρσομένοις noted by Conybeare in §11, is also imaginary: in this case Conybeare, who did not know the reading of most Armenian manuscripts, misinterpreted the Armenian text (for details, see Nikolsky 2024, 114).

4. Conclusion

Thus, from the analysis of the text in the first 16 paragraphs of *Abr.*, we have the impression that the Greek manuscript from which the work was translated into Armenian was independent of the archetype of the extant Greek manuscripts and free from the errors contained in that archetype. Nor do we find in its first paragraphs specific errors of its own. However, the studied fragment of the text is too small to make a final judgement about the closeness of the source of the Armenian translation to the initial text of Philo himself.

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