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## Eznik of Kolb as a Translator of Methodius of Olympus

**Abstract:** As is well known, the *de Autexusio* by Methodius is one of the most relevant sources used by Eznik of Kolb in composing his treatise, conventionally known as *Elc Atandoc' (Refutation of the Sects)*. The latter included an almost integral translation or reworking of the former, divided into two parts. This was highlighted for the first time by Father Grigoris Galēm̄k'earean, who devoted to the subject the greater part of his study on Eznik's sources, published as a monograph in 1919. In 1924–1925, Louis Mariès addressed the same topic in his work on Eznik's text. However, in later years, the subject seems to have ceased to draw the attention of Armenologists.

In this contribution, after a short summary of the contents of the works both of Methodius and Eznik, we address Eznik's manner of selecting the sects that are the object of his criticism. We then highlight how Eznik more or less freely translates Methodius' Greek text, providing some relevant examples.

Eznik of Kolb, bishop of Bagrewand, is one of the most prominent Armenian writers of the fifth century. His treatise – which reached us without a title, but is conventionally known as *Elc Atandoc' (Refutation of the Sects)* – is among the first original works ever written in Armenian, contending for absolute primacy with Koriwn's *Vark' Maštoc'i (Life of Maštoc')*. Although it is impossible to establish which is older, they were both composed in the fifth decade of the fifth century, that is, just a few decades after the invention of the Armenian script, when Armenia – no longer an independent country since 428 – ran the risk of being culturally assimilated by Sassanid Persia. Such an assimilation would have chiefly involved a forced conversion of the Armenian people to Mazdeism (in the Zurvanite variety prevailing in Persia at that time).

Since the newly-invented script acted as a bulwark for the preservation of Armenian identity, it is easy to understand the import of Koriwn's enterprise which focused on commemorating the men who invented it and the means through which they achieved their goal.

The reasons behind Eznik's literary activity are also easy to comprehend, since he aimed at refuting certain religious or philosophical beliefs spread in the territories inhabited by Armenian-speaking people. In order to realise his project, Eznik does not hesitate to use Greek and Syriac texts: chief among them is the *De*

*Autexusio* by Methodius, an almost integral translation or reworking of which is included (in two parts) in his treatise.

This was highlighted for the first time by Viennese Mechitarist Father Grigoris Galēm̄k'earean, who – following up on a suggestion by another member of the same congregation, Father K'erovbē Spenean – devoted the largest part of his study on Eznik's sources to the subject. This piece of research was published initially in the journal *Handēs Amsōreay* (years 1893–1894 and 1896), and later as a monograph (Galēm̄k'earean 1919).

## 1 Methodius

As for Methodius, not much is presently known about him, save that he was a Christian teacher living in Lycia toward the end of the third or the beginning of the fourth century AD. According to an old tradition, related by Jerome (*De vir. ill.* 83) and Socrates Scholasticus (*Hist. eccl.* 6.13) but challenged by modern scholarship, he was bishop of Olympia, in Lycia, and later on of Tyrus. He was possibly martyred in Chalcis (Euboea), around 311 AD<sup>1</sup>. Among his works, the one that is relevant for the present article, the *De Autexusio* (Περὶ τοῦ αὐτεξουσίου), has reached us in a nearly complete Old Slavonic translation, titled *On God, Matter and Free Will*. However, in this translation, a few pages are missing, and there are other minimal omissions as well. In addition, the Greek text of the initial section of the treatise is preserved in a manuscript of the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence (Plut. IX, 23), and large excerpts are quoted in the *Praeparatio evangelica* by Eusebius of Caesarea, in the *Philocalia* by Origen, as well as in other texts. Finally, large excerpts are also preserved in a dialogue ascribed to one Adamantius<sup>2</sup> – probably written in the first half of the fourth century AD – which was also translated into Latin by Rufinus of Aquileia.

The fragments of the Greek text of the *De Autexusio*, alongside a German translation of the Old Slavonic version, were published twice, in 1891 and 1917, by Gottlieb Nathanael Bonwetsch (Bonwetsch 1891; Bonwetsch 1917). In the second edition, the editor also took into account Eznik's treatise. A critical edition of the

<sup>1</sup> On Methodius' biography as documented in ancient literature and evaluated by modern scholarship, see Moreschini/Norelli 1995, 445.

<sup>2</sup> A section of his *De recta fide ad Deum*, or Περὶ τῆς εἰς θεὸν ὀρθῆς πίστεως, is based on excerpts from Methodius' *De Autexusio*. On the so-called Adamantius and his work, see Moreschini/Norelli 1995, 449.

Slavonic and Greek texts, with reference to Ezrik's work, was prepared by André Vaillant and published in the *Patrologia Orientalis* (Vaillant 1930).

As for the *De Autexusio's* contents, three characters take part in the dialogue: two heterodox ones and an orthodox one, to be identified with the Author himself. The heterodox speakers postulate that beside God, Matter (ὕλη) also exists, as eternal as the former, and the origin of all evil; the orthodox refutes such opinions and counters them with his own (i.e. the opinions of a Christian).

After a short introduction, the real dialogue begins: the first heterodox points out that the universe's workings testify to the existence of a divine economy, so that it can either come from something as eternal as God, or from God himself. On the other hand (and here Ezrik's first excerpt begins), evil exists in the world as well, and men commit it. Consequently, it is necessary to accept that some Matter must have existed, co-eternal to God, from which the latter created the universe, and which is also the origin of evil. However, the last statement is refuted by the orthodox, according to whom it is impossible to assume the existence of two uncreated beings. Besides, even if such Matter should exist, that would not exonerate God from responsibility for the existence of evil: indeed, evil would still be created by Him, albeit indirectly, because He would necessarily be the one to give quality to Matter, which is devoid of it. Therefore, in such a case, postulating the existence of Matter is absolutely useless.

Now it is the second heterodox's turn to speak, starting from a different assumption. In his opinion, Matter is endowed with quality from the beginning: consequently, it can be the origin of evil. This statement is refuted by the orthodox, who argues that, if that were true, God would be useless.

After silencing his second opponent this way, the orthodox continues his discussion with the first. They speak again of evil: the orthodox distinguishes between real evil and divine punishments, which are not actually evil, but merely acts of justice. As for true evil, this is an accident, not a substance; furthermore, no act can be considered evil by nature, because the same act can be both good and bad, according to the purpose of the performer. To sum up, it is men who perform evil. The heterodox asks whether evil can be considered a human invention, or rather whether men have been created by God already inclined to perform it, or, finally, whether they act this way on someone else's instigation. In his answer, the orthodox completely refutes the second hypothesis: man has been created as a free being, and consequently, he can obey whomever he wants. Evil began when man, endowed with free will, refused to obey God. At this point, the orthodox's speech becomes fully Christian in tone, as he explicitly refers to Adam's sin, although it is clear that his opponents do not share his beliefs.

The orthodox continues his argument, stating that God did not ignore what the snake, that is the devil, would do, but nonetheless cannot be considered

responsible for the evil that ensued: the devil acted freely, testing man's free will, and he continues to exist as an instrument for verifying man's ability to resist temptation.

At this point Eznik's first excerpt from Methodius ends. The second one, containing what remains of the Greek treatise, is quite distant from the first in the Armenian text. It concerns the reason why God created the world: according to the orthodox, the reason is that God wished to implement his creative faculty, in order to demonstrate his goodness and divine essence. Consequently, He cannot be considered as a mere craftsman, compelled to work on pre-existing Matter, but rather as the real creator that He is.

These are, in short, the dialogue's contents: later on, we will try to determine to which school of thought the two heterodox characters adhere.

## 2 Eznik

We will now address Eznik's text, beginning with a short résumé of it.

After detailing the features of the divinity and those of rational beings, the Author faces his first opponents, the pagan Greek dualists, according to whom evil exists because, at the moment of creation, there was another being beside God, the *Hylē* (*hiwl*), that is, Matter. At this point the first and larger excerpt from Methodius is inserted, which occupies paragraphs 4–56 in Mariès and Mercier's edition (Mariès/Mercier 1959)<sup>3</sup>. After this section, the discussion continues, dealing with the relativity of evil among animals and plants, the causes of sickness and death, diabolic possessions, and, finally, the nonexistence of some alleged divinities of the pagan Armenian pantheon. The treatise then continues with sections respectively devoted to Persian dualism of the Zurvanite variety, to astrology, and to the theories conceived by Greek philosophers. This last part ends with the second and shorter excerpt from Methodius, occupying paragraphs 353–354 in the aforementioned edition of Eznik<sup>4</sup>. In the Greek text, this excerpt contains the opinion of the orthodox, with whom Eznik agrees, so much so that he inserted the passage in a different part of his treatise than the longer one.

After confuting various sects external to the Christian faith, the Author deals with one internal heresy, namely, Marcionism, and with this the treatise comes to a close.

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<sup>3</sup> The first excerpt occupies sections 1.4.2 to 1.14.12 in the edition by Martiros Minasean as reprinted in Minasean 2003.

<sup>4</sup> The second excerpt occupies sections 3.17.3 to 3.17.18 in Minasean 2003.

Beside the Bible, the *De Autexusio* is the most important source of the *Etc Atandoc*<sup>5</sup>: it has been translated almost in its entirety and inserted in the Armenian text. The translation, partly literal, partly very free<sup>5</sup>, occupies more than one seventh of the Armenian text.

Methodius might have appeared to Eznik as a very peculiar writer, partly because, as mentioned above, he was supposed to have died a martyr's death. This particular aura surrounding the Greek writer could explain why, beside translating and inserting Methodius' treatise on Free Will into his own work, Eznik also briefly quoted two other books of his, namely, *De Resurrectione* and *De Sanguisuga*<sup>6</sup>.

In any case, there is another possible explanation for the origin of the excerpts from the *De Autexusio* in Eznik's treatise: he could have drawn them, at least in part, from the aforementioned dialogue by the so-called Adamantius. In some cases, Methodius and Adamantius have different readings, and Eznik seems to follow sometimes the former, sometimes the latter<sup>7</sup>: therefore, it is possible that the Armenian Author knew Adamantius. Alternatively, it could be argued that Eznik read the *De Autexusio* in a text slightly different from the one that has reached us and more similar to Adamantius'; however, we are not going to discuss the matter any further in the present contribution.

### 3 The Valentinians

Resuming our discussion on the *De Autexusio*, we are now going to address specifically the matter of the doctrine to which Methodius' two heterodox opponents might have adhered. They have often been identified as Valentinians, both on the basis of the Laurenziana codex, in which the first of them is indicated as  $\text{O}\acute{\upsilon}(\alpha)$ <sup>8</sup>, and, more importantly, of Adamantius' dialogue, where the two heterodox speakers are explicitly presented as followers of Valentine. In ancient times, other writers, while mentioning Methodius' dialogue, suggested that the Author's

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<sup>5</sup> This imperfect parallelism between Methodius' text and its Armenian translation can be explained as a consequence of Eznik's reworking of his model, but it made Paul Peeters suppose that Eznik could have translated his text not directly from Greek, but rather from a Syriac version of it (about which, however, we have no information). See Peeters 1926, 173–174.

<sup>6</sup> For these texts as a source of Eznik, see Mariès 1924, 38–39 of the offprint.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Mariès 1924, 64–67 of the offprint and Mariès 1925, 100–104 of the offprint.

<sup>8</sup> Also in Dunderberg 2008, 67–74 (and, more generally, in chapter 4) this first heterodox character at least is considered a Valentinian.

target were the Gnostics in general, or even Origen. André Vaillant<sup>9</sup>, following an opinion already expressed by others, noted that the whole discussion about the origin of evil from Matter has to do with Platonic or Neoplatonic theories, whereas the discussion about the devil as an uncreated being, or as a being created as the Evil One, could originate from Valentinian or, more generally, Gnostic theories.

Identifying the philosophical school or sect to which the two heterodox characters in Methodius' work adhere is obviously relevant for Eznik as well. Although it is theoretically possible that the Armenian author used a work refuting a certain school of thought in order to contend against another – more or less similar – one, it is nonetheless also possible that his target was the same as Methodius'.

In the introduction to our Italian translation of Eznik's text, published back in 1996, we argued that, while reworking Methodius' text, Eznik was more likely set on refuting Platonic or Neoplatonic theories<sup>10</sup>. At present, we are no longer so convinced of that explanation. It is true that the Armenian author does not mention the Valentinians, but the latter are possibly the target of Methodius' criticism, as mentioned above. Furthermore, Valentinian theories are certainly expressed by the two characters in the aforementioned dialogue by Adamantius, whose work Eznik possibly knew, and which was probably written in the first half of the fourth century AD (cf. *supra*). Consequently, roughly a century before Eznik wrote his own treatise, such theories were clearly labeled as Valentinian. Last but not least, it is worth noting that both Emperor Julian and Ambrose of Milan<sup>11</sup> speak of the presence of Valentinians, in the second half of the fourth century, in Osrhoene, and more precisely in Edessa and the area of Callinicum<sup>12</sup> (the latter being at that time a relevant fortress and trade center, as stated by Ammianus Marcellinus, 23.3.7). On the basis of this evidence, dating back to just a few decades before the *Elc Alandoc*' was written, it might be assumed that Valentinians were also present in territories inhabited by Armenian-speaking people at the time of the treatise's composition.

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**9** Vaillant 1930, XI-XIX.

**10** Orengo 1996, 17–18.

**11** Julian, *Ep.* 115 (ed. J. Bidez) to the Edessene, written at the end of 362 AD or at the beginning of the following year; Ambrose, *Ep.* 74 (ed. M. Zelzer = Maur. 40) to Emperor Theodosius, written in 388 AD (also reproduced, with a slightly different text, as *extra collectionem* 1a, Zelzer). On the same topic see also another letter by Ambrose, *extra collectionem* 1 (Zelzer = Maur. 41), to his sister Marcellina.

**12** Καλλίνικος in Greek, also known as Nicephorium.

## 4 Eznik's *modus operandi*

If indeed the Valentinians – which would then be considered as a non-Christian sect – were the target of the first part of his treatise, we could find here a confirmation of Eznik's method as a polemicist. As is well known, his work was composed in a peculiar moment in Armenian history, when Armenians felt threatened in their cultural independence, and the opponents with whom the writer contends represented a real menace in the territories inhabited by his people. Unsurprisingly, among these opponents are the “historical” adversaries, the Zurvanite Mazdeists, to whose refutation, however, not much room is devoted (although the section is not so reduced as to suggest that an opportunistic censorship might have intervened). The Marcionists are also addressed: as detailed in the eighth chapter of von Harnack's monograph on Marcion<sup>13</sup>, their presence was widespread in this area of the East – particularly in the countryside – during the fifth century AD. On the other hand, no specific section is devoted to Manichaeism, and this deserves some attention. As recently pointed out by Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst (Durkin-Meisterernst 2012), all references to Mani contained in the *Elc Atandoc*<sup>14</sup> just aim to prove the similarity between the latter's doctrines and those of the Mazdeans or the Marcionites. Therefore, it might be assumed that, when Eznik composed his work, Manichaeism was no real threat for the Armenians, or at least it was no longer perceived as such<sup>14</sup>.

We could also take a step forward, and wonder whether the treatise's concern with contemporary sects and heresies could also be considered as its greatest limit, and have caused the progressive disappearance of any reference to it in the Armenian literature of the immediately following centuries. Actually, we believe that it is important to distinguish between the solid reputation enjoyed by Eznik as a protagonist of religious and cultural Armenian life in the fifth century AD, and the renown of his treatise. We can assume that his work was read immediately after its composition, both because its Author was a well-known and celebrated ecclesiastic, and because works written in Armenian were relatively few at that time. However, later on such a work probably drew less attention, possibly because it was considered obsolete, since some of the sects refuted by the Author were no longer perceived as a threat by the Armenians, or had disappeared alto-

<sup>13</sup> Harnack 1924<sup>2</sup>, particularly 153–160. See also Fiey 1970, and Jullien/Jullien 2001, 38–40.

<sup>14</sup> The situation was likely different in the third century AD, when, partially as a consequence of Mani's travels to Armenia, a Manichaean church did exist in the country. On the topic, see Yevadian, 2007, 169–190, 235–238, 249–250, Yevadian 2011, and also Russell 1998.

gether<sup>15</sup>. Be it as it may, it appears that no sure reference to the *Elc Atandoc* can be detected in Armenian literature immediately after the fifth century. Another piece of evidence – admittedly not very strong – that may suggest a lack of interest in Eznik’s treatise could also be seen in its being extant in just one manuscript (M 1097, copied in 1280)<sup>16</sup>. Actually, it has been suggested that a second manuscript might have been the basis of the *editio princeps* (Smyrna, 1762–1763), but there is no consensus on the matter. In any case, we are well aware that this is an argument to be considered with the greatest caution, because in ancient Armenian literature there are other instances of undoubtedly relevant works that have nonetheless survived in a single manuscript.

## 5 Eznik as a translator

We are now going to discuss how Eznik translates or reworks Methodius’ text. As an example, we have chosen the short section at the beginning of the first excerpt from the *De Autexusio* in the Armenian text. While quoting from Eznik’s text, we refer both to Mariès/Mercier 1959 and Minasean 2003, with some minimal orthographical alterations. While quoting from the Greek text, we took into account both Bonwetch’s and Vaillant’s editions (Bonwetsch 1917 and Vaillant 1930), giving preference to the variant readings that are closer to Eznik’s text. Readings that have no relevance for our comparison are not quoted.

Here are the original texts<sup>17</sup>:

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**15** For references to Eznik’s text in the most ancient Armenian literature, see Orengo 2014. On the topic, see also the brief remarks by Blanchard/Young 1998, 11–12, 30–31, and Thomson 1992, 307.

**16** In this manuscript, the text of the *Elc Atandoc* is present together with other works. A recent description of the manuscript can be found in MC’HJ 2008, 295–298.

**17** For the Greek text: Bonwetsch 1917, 150–152 (3.1.5); Vaillant 1930, 12–17. For the Armenian text: par. 4 in Mariès/Mercier 1959; 1.4.2–8 in Minasean 2003. See also Galëm’k’earean 1919, 22–24.

METHODIUS	EZNIK
Ἐώρων δύο τινὰς ὁμογενεῖς, ἀνθρώπους δὲ λέγω, διαπληκτιζομένους καὶ διαλοιδουρούμενους ἀλλήλοισ, ἕτερον δ' αὖ πάλιν ἀμφαιματώσαι πειρώμενον τὸν πλησίον.	<i>Tesanemk' erkows ars miazgis and mimeans grgīeal, mimeanc' mahow ew areamb carawi en.</i>
Ἦδη δὲ τινες καὶ δεινότερα τολμᾶν ἤρχοντο. Ὅς μὲν γὰρ ἐσκόλευε νεκρὸν καὶ τὸ κρυφθὲν ἤδη σῶμα τῆ γῆ πάλιν ἐδείκνυεν ἠλίω, καὶ τῆν ὁμοίαν αὐτῷ ὕβριζεν εἰκόνα, βορὰν κυσὶ καταλιπὼν τὸν νεκρὸν.	<i>Ew aylk' zgerezmans krkten ew zt'ateal marmins and hoḥov merkac'eal, xaytaīakeal, arewow c'owc'anen, ew zmecareal din aī p'owt'i č'cackeloy t'erews ew šanc' ews kowr arkanen.</i>
Ὁ δὲ Ξίφος ἐγύμνου καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν ὅμοιον ἀνθρωπῶν [...] ἐχώρει· καὶ ὁ μὲν φυγῆ τὴν σωτηρίαν πορίζεσθαι ἤθελεν, ὁ δὲ διώκειν οὐκ ἐπαύετο οὐδὲ τοῦ θυμοῦ κρατεῖν ἤθελε. Καὶ τί δεῖ πλείονα λέγειν, ἀλλ' ὅτι χωρήσας ἐπ' αὐτὸν εὐθέως ἐπάϊσσε τῷ Ξίφει· ὁ δ' ἰκέτης τῷ πλησίον ἐγένετο καὶ χειρὰς ἰκεσίας ὤρεγεν, καὶ τὴν μὲν ἐσθῆτα διδόναι ἤθελεν, μόνον δὲ τὸ ζῆν ἔχειν ἤξιου· ὁ δ' οὐκ ἔθραυέ τι τὸν θυμὸν οὐδ' ἠλέει τὸν ὁμογενῆ, οὐδὲ ἑαυτὸν διὰ τῆς εἰκόνας ἐν ἐκείνῳ βλέπειν ἤθελεν, ἀλλ' ὡς ἄγριος θῆρ τῷ Ξίφει τῆς βορᾶς ἤρχετο, ἤδη δὲ καὶ τὸ στόμα τῷ ὁμοίῳ προσέφερε σώματι, τοσοῦτος γὰρ ἦν τῷ θυμῷ· καὶ ἦν ἰδεῖν τὸν μὲν ἤδη κείμενον, τὸν δὲ λοιπὸν σκυλεύοντα καὶ μηδὲ γῆ σκεπάζοντα τὸ σῶμα οὗ τῆς ἐσθῆτος ἐγύμνωσεν.	<i>Ew ē erbek', zi min p'axowc'eal ert'ayc'ē anjnapowr owrek', zkeans anjinn šahel, ew miwsn c'asmamb borbok'eal, srov zknī ant'ac'eal, oč' dadarē, minč'ew yagēc'owc'anē zc'asowmnn: owstī ē ayn anyag c'asowmnn?</i>
Πρὸς δὲ τούτοις ἕτερος προσῆει, ὃς τοῦ πλησίον γυναῖκα παιζειν [alternative reading: βιάζειν] <sup>18</sup> ἤθελε, ληστεύων γάμον ἀλλότριον καὶ ἐπὶ παράνομον κοίτην τραπήναι παρορμῶν, τὸν γεγαμηκότα γνήσιον πατέρα γίνεσθαι μὴ θέλων.	<i>Ew owrowmnn i mti edeal goḥanal zayloy amowsnowt'iwn ew eleal anawrēnowt'eamb yawtar mahičš, č'tay linel hayr ordwoc' aynm, or awrinawk'n amowsnac'eal ic'ē.</i>
//In this situation one is allowed to believe the myths about Thiestes and Oenomaus//.	
... καὶ τῆ τῶν ἀδελφῶν διὰ Ξίφους φιλονεικίᾳ οὐκ ἀπιστῶ.	<i>Ew erbek' erbek' paterazmownk' šaržin, owr meławor ew ardar aī hasarak kotorin.</i>
	<i>Ew mahk' taražamk', ew axtk' č'aračark'!</i>

18 The reading βιάζειν, not attested in Greek, is suggested on the basis of the Old Slavonic translation.

Here are their translations:

METHODIUS	EZNIK
I saw two persons of the same race, I mean men, who were fighting and insulting each other, one trying to spill his neighbor's blood.	We saw two men of the same race disputing between themselves, eager for each other's death and blood.
And others have already begun to dare to do more terrifying acts as well. One was unclathing a dead man, and showing once again to the sun his corpse already concealed in the earth, making violence to the image that was similar to his own, leaving the dead as food for dogs.	Others are digging in the graves and showing to the sun, naked and insulted, the corpses buried into the earth, and, acting in a hurry, they don't conceal the honored body, but possibly they also leave it to the dogs as food.
Another one was unsheathing his sword and advancing [...] toward a man, a similar being to himself. The latter wanted to escape and save himself, but the former continued to chase him and did not want to suppress his anger. What can we add, if not that the former was urging the latter, immediately dashing against him with the sword. The latter was begging his neighbor, extending his suppliant hands and saying that he agreed to give him his garments, provided that the adversary would let him live. But his enemy did not suppress his anger, nor had compassion for a member of his own race, nor wanted to see himself in his neighbor's image, but, like a wild beast, began to chop his prey with the sword, already thrusting the latter's tip (στόμα) <sup>19</sup> toward a body similar to his own: so great was indeed his anger. And you could see one of them lying on the ground and the other unclathing him and then not covering with earth his corpse, which he himself had stripped of the dress.	And sometimes it happens that someone escapes and seeks refuge somewhere, in order to save his own life, and his adversary, burning with anger, chases him with the sword in his hand, and doesn't stop until he has given vent to his fury: whence comes such an insatiable rage?  And someone steals his neighbor's garment and if the latter remonstrates, he kills him too
Then another one came forward, wishing to seduce [ <i>alternative reading</i> : to rape] his neighbor's wife, stealing the other's marriage and forcing the woman to enter an illegitimate bed, thus preventing the bridegroom to be the real father of his sons.	And another one, resolving to steal the marriage of another person, entered, without any right, into a bed which is not his own, preventing the one who legally married the woman to be the father of his sons.

<sup>19</sup> There is a pun in the text, because στόμα means both “tip (of the sword)” and, more usually, “mouth”, “jaws”.

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//In this situation one is allowed to believe the myths  
about Thiestes and Oenomaus.//

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... and I thought not unworthy of belief the rivalry  
between the brothers, settled with the sword.

And sometimes wars break out,  
during which both the sinner and the  
righteous are killed together.

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And what about premature deaths?  
And awful sufferings?

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Eznik's working method, as can be seen in the excerpt quoted above, is clear enough. Methodius seems to focus on the following four situations:

1. two men fighting to death;
2. graves being desecrated;
3. most probably, a brigand assaulting his victim; alternatively, an enemy being killed;
4. an adulterer.

These are followed by a reference to the credibility of the atrocities described in old myths.

As far as Eznik is concerned, we obviously do not know whether he was reading Methodius' text as we know it. Moreover, here and elsewhere, the Armenian text might contain *lacunae* due to the process of manuscript transmission. Nonetheless, if we accept this passage as it has reached us, we can see that the Author follows his model – albeit without providing a truly literal translation – in the first, the second and the fourth section. On the other hand, the third section has been heavily shortened and divided into two parts, respectively describing the killing of an enemy and the assault of a brigand. As for the mythological references that were present in the source text, Eznik did not deem it appropriate to transfer them into Armenian, but the reference to the rivalry between brothers, to be identified with Eteocles and Polynices, might have given him the opportunity to speak about wars, to which he also adds the mention of premature deaths and sufferings.

Before moving on to another topic, it is worth mentioning that the Armenian word *miazgis*, “of the same race”, used by Eznik in the first section, is certainly a calque of the Greek word ὁμογενεῖς, even if the whole sentence is modified. The Armenian term might even have been created by Eznik himself, if we consider that this is the only occurrence to be quoted in the *Nor Baṙgirk' Haykazean Lezow*<sup>20</sup> (admittedly not a very complete *thesaurus*). In any case, it should be

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<sup>20</sup> NBHL 1837, 264, s.v. *miazgi*.

pointed out that this calque is actually an interpretation rather than a mechanical rendering of its model, because, otherwise, Greek ὄμο- would have been rendered with Armenian *ham-*. As a matter of fact, Armenian *hamazgi* is indeed attested, but only in later Authors<sup>21</sup>.

Although, in the passage analyzed above, Eznik significantly alters the text of Methodius, in other instances he renders his source quite faithfully. In the *De Autexusio*, at one point, the orthodox says that man has received a marvelous gift by God, being endowed with free will whereas all the other beings are compelled to obey divine orders, like slaves. We find the same argumentation in Eznik: as in Greek, the statement is followed by an example, which is partially reproduced below<sup>22</sup>.

METHODIUS	EZNIK
Ἐάν τε γὰρ οὐρανὸν εἴπῃς, ἔστηκε φέρων τὸν δεσπότην, οὐ μετακινούμενος τοῦ ὠρισμένου τόπου·	<i>Et'e zerknic' asic'es, kay hastateal ew oc' šarži i sahmaneloy nma telwoyn.</i>
καὶ ἐάν τε περὶ ἡλίου τὸν λόγον ποιῆσθαι θέλης, ἐκτελεῖ οὗτος τὴν ὠρισμένην κίνησιν, οὐ παραιτούμενος τὸν δρόμον, ἀλλὰ ἀνάγκη τινὶ δουλεύων τῷ δεσπότηι.	<i>Ew et'e zaregakanē kamic'is asel, sakayn ew na katarē zzatowc'eal nma zšaržowmnn ew č'išxē xowsap'el yant'ac'ic'n, ayl i harkē cařayē terowanakan hramanin.</i>
If you want to speak about the sky, it stands still carrying its Lord, and doesn't move from the place assigned to it;	If you want to speak about the sky, it stands still, and it doesn't move from the place assigned to it;
if, on the contrary, you prefer to speak about the sun, it fulfills the movement assigned to it, not refusing to follow its way, but serving its Lord, driven by some necessity.	if, on the contrary, you prefer to speak about the sun, it too fulfills the movement assigned to it, and does not dare to escape from its way, but by necessity fulfills its Lord's orders.

In this passage, as can be easily seen, Eznik translates his model quite faithfully, and just omits the reference to the sky carrying its Lord, a statement that, if indeed present in the Greek source he was using, would probably have sounded weird to him. Alternatively, we can assume that Eznik actually translated that sentence,

<sup>21</sup> NBHL 1837, 14, s.v. *hamazgi*.

<sup>22</sup> For the Greek text: Bonwetsch 1917, 186–187 (16.3); Vaillant 1930, 70–71. For the Armenian text: par. 43 in Mariès/Mercier 1959; 1.11.4–5 in Minasean 2003. See also Galēm̄k'earean 1919, 60.

which would have later been lost in the manuscript tradition of the *Elc Ałandoc'*. Be it as it may, we believe that, even considering similar opposite explanations (either a dependence on a Greek text different from the one that has reached us, or the presence of a *lacuna* in the Armenian text), studying possible omissions operated by Ezrik, particularly in passages otherwise literally translated, would be of some interest.

As mentioned above, Ezrik's translation is faithful, but not slavishly so. This can be showcased, for instance, by considering the different ways in which Greek participles are rendered<sup>23</sup>. They can be translated either with a coordinate clause (οὐ μετακινούμενος = *ew oč' šarži*, "and it does not move"; οὐ παραιτούμενος = *ew č'išxē xowsap'el*, "and it does not dare to escape"; δουλεύων = *cařayē*, "it slavishly fulfills") or with another participle (τοῦ ὠρισμένου = *i sahmaneloy*, "from the assigned [place]"; τὴν ὠρισμένην = *zzatowc'eal*, "assigned"), followed by an indirect object which was not present in the Greek text (namely, *nma*, "to it"). It is true that, while translating τὸν λόγον ποιῆσθαι, Ezrik prefers a trivial *asel*, "to say", which he had already used before, but we will not blame him for it: it is not always true that *variatio delectat*.

This approach is likely based on the methods adopted while translating the Holy Books, and possibly, on the previous training derived from the practice of translating the Scriptures orally in front of a congregation, before the invention of the Armenian alphabet made a written and more fixed translation possible, as is documented in Armenian sources.

The passage at hand prompts a further remark. Ezrik uses here a second person singular ("if you want ... if you prefer") in order to render the same person in the original text. It might be assumed that, in this case, "you" (singular) has an impersonal value in Armenian; nevertheless, it is significant that the same feature is present in Methodius' text, where "you" is used as part of a dialogue. According to Louis Mariès, Ezrik might have failed to adapt the dialogic structure of the source text to his own narrative one: this could be explained by assuming that Ezrik himself would translate the text orally, while his assistants put it into writing<sup>24</sup>. As the French scholar points out, a similar process is documented for Jerome's Latin version of the book of Tobias, according to the information provided in the preface by the translator himself. We might add the case of Dawit' *hiwpatos* and Step'anos Siwnec'i, who, during the eighth century AD, translated into Armenian some works by the Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, as well as

<sup>23</sup> For the rendering of Greek participles into Armenian in fifth-century texts, see Bănățeanu 1937.

<sup>24</sup> Mariès 1924, 89 of the offprint.

the *De Natura Hominis* by Nemesius of Emesa. For these enterprises, Moreno Morani<sup>25</sup> suggested a partly similar translation process: one of the authors would read the Greek text aloud, while the other translated it into Armenian.

Once more, comparing Methodius' text with Eznik's Armenian translation seems to offer, albeit indirectly, some indication on the methods followed by the *vardapet* of Kołb in composing his work. In so doing, it clarifies a process that would find parallels among Armenian authors of his time.

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<sup>25</sup> Morani 2003, 44–45.

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