

**Gregory of Nyssa's Work in
St. Euthymius the Athonite's Translation
(Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginit*y.
Edited by Protopresbyter Giorgi Zviadadze,
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Abstract: In 2011 protopresbyter Giorgi Zviadadze published St. Gregory of Nyssa's ascetic treatise *On Virginit*y. The edition answers the latest standards of modern philological scholarship. The researcher editor has brought to light highly significant details of the translation method of the Georgian translator St. Euthymius the Athonite.

Key Words: *Holy Gregory of Nyssa, On Virginit*y

The eminent Cappadocian Holy Father Gregory of Nyssa, major teacher of divine philosophy and Christian mysticism, along with his elder brother Basil the Great and senior friend Gregory the Theologian, is an outstanding authority of the Holy Church and a highly popular theologian of old Georgia. In his work "Virginity", St. Gregory shows virginity as a ladder that, through steps of ascetic life, raises a believer to eternal bliss. This immortal work of Gregory of Nyssa is an interpretation of the path of this mystic ascent; the present edition of its Georgian recension is done with high scholarly precision.

I wish to draw special attention to several aspects of this book.

1. In juxtaposing the Georgian translation of the work of St. Gregory of Nyssa, the scholarly editor uses the critical edition of the Greek text, the latter being based on a study of all Greek manuscripts and earlier editions and is complemented with versions of these MSS. This is a correct methodological position to be

adopted in carrying on Byzantine-Georgian researches, which has gained ground in Georgian philology in recent decades. If a researcher compares a work translated by Euthymius the Athonite with a non-critical edition of the Greek original and fails to take into consideration other Greek recensions of the work, his conclusions on the relationship of the Georgian translation to the original will not be convincing.

2. Protopresbyter Giorgi Zviadadze's philological observations through juxtaposition of the Georgian translation with the Greek original brings to light the essence of free liberal translation in the process of translating a concrete work, used as a method of translation by the Georgian translator, the outstanding Georgian Holy Father Euthymius the Athonite. Primarily his method lies in expanding the text of the great Holy Father Gregory of Nyssa, but so as not to deviate from the propositions and subject matter of the original. The researcher substantiates this observation by citing numerous highly interesting and convincing examples revealed as a result of comparing the Greek and Georgian texts.

The researcher devotes a special subchapter to the omission of separate passages or phrases of the original in Euthymius' translation. By quoting many Greek and Georgian textual parallels, the author draws the conclusion that in an overwhelming majority of cases the abbreviation of the text is done for the same purpose: to simplify the text for the Georgian reader and be stylistically laconic. Highly interesting is the researcher's observation that in some cases the existence of defective passages in the translation vis-à-vis the original may be due to the possession by Euthymius of a Greek recension differing from the Greek recension known to us today (p.51). This conclusion accords fully with the view current among students of Georgian-Byzantine relations to the effect that in some cases the difference of Euthymius' translation from the Greek original should be accounted for by the Georgian translator working with a differing Greek recension. Special mention should be made also of the fact that Giorgi Zviadadze in some cases not only conjectures the possession of a differing recension by Euthymius but from the multiplicity of the manuscripts of the work in question he points to the Greek manuscript followed by Euthymius' translation.

The researcher makes an especially full study of the cases of Euthymius' taking over the quotations from the Scripture cited in Gregory's work. The conclusion is also highly interesting: Euthymius never deviates from his method of translation: in quoting from the Bible he treats the original freely. However, his freedom remains within the sphere of the biblical text(p.87). Also significant are the researcher's observations on which Georgian recension is used by the Georgian translation. Here too Euthymius' attitude is free and non-uniform: At times he borrows Gregory's biblical quotation, without using the available Georgian translation; at other times he replaces Gregory's periphrasis of the biblical text on the basis of the Georgian recensions of the Scripture. Sometimes the Georgian translator expands the biblical text quoted by the Cappadocian Holy Father in the form of periphrasis, but in all cases the expansion is based on the Scripture. And which is especially interesting, St. Euthymius occasionally – proceeding from the context - replaces the words quoted by Gregory with another quotation from the Bible.

It can be said with conviction that St. Euthymius' method of translation has not been presented in any other philological work in such detail as it is described in Protopresbyter Giorgi Zviadadze's work. I wish to convey the authors view: Euthymius applies free translation, thereby "Georgianizing" the Greek text and conveying the subject matter with naturalness characteristic of the Georgian language. He simplifies the text, alters the sequence of words in the original and gives concrete expression to the author's discourse, which is only implied in the original. He replaces the metaphorical syntagmas, difficult to perceive for the Georgian reader, with phraseology easier to comprehend, makes commentaries, asks a question to intensify the idea, alters the style of the original, conveys the various teachings of the author in different form, without changing the content. He alters the text with respect to nuance, broadly using the synonymic meaning of a given word.

The work carried out by the researcher and his conclusion corroborates once again the translation method of Euthymius the Athonite, commented on by Eprem Mtsire in the 10th century: the Holy Father with the grace of the Holy Ghost, could add and remove. Here Eprem's words *khel-etsipeboda* means not only "could" but had the right/power. Euthymius freely intervenes in

Gregory's text. This is significant, for he seems to have felt the divine calling to act in this way.

3. The comparison of the extant MSS of the Georgian translation of Gregory's "On Virginity" (P3-1040; Ath39-11th c; A-108-12th c.) with one another led protopresbyter Giorgi Zviadadze to a highly interesting conclusion: in the MS of 1040 we have a text come out of Euthymius' hand, while in the 11th century Athos MS this text is corrected by somebody on the basis of its comparison with the Greek original, then this corrected version was copied. The researcher conjectures that Giorgi the Athonite might have been the person who edited and amended the text.

4. I wish to revert to the question of the text proper of the work of Gregory of Nyssa. This profoundly important monument of Georgian literature has been published by Giorgi Zviadadze at the highest level of modern textual criticism: the edition is based on the earliest MS, the versions of the other two MSS are given in the footnotes. Indications are given in the text on references to biblical books – both in cases of direct quoting and in cases of periphrastic reference. The main point which I want to note specially is the exhaustive commentaries with which the edition of the text is furnished – both of theological content and philological character. It may be said convincingly that from this standpoint, this edition is unique among the publications of monuments of Old Georgian church writings.

Finally, special mention should be made of the vocabulary appended to the edition. It gives an explanation of the words of the text that are more or less difficult to understand. The relevant context is quoted and the direct or approximate equivalent of this word is given from the corresponding Greek original. This vocabulary should turn into a handbook of researchers into Byzantine-Georgian literary and linguistic contacts.

It remains for me to congratulate Georgian philological scholarship with such unique acquisition.