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EUTHYMIUS THE ATHONITE AND COMMENTARIES ON GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS’ WRITINGS

The writings of Cappadocian father Gregory of Nazianzus, one of the most significant representatives of early Byzantine ecclesiastic literature, have always attracted particular interest of Byzantine scholars and have been discussed by them. During the Middle Ages no other Byzantine author’s writings were commented on as frequently as Gregory of Nazianzus’ homilies, poetry and letters. The commentaries on his writings were composed by well-known scholars of Byzantium: Dorotheus of Gaza, Maximus the Confessor, Michael Psellos, Nicetas Heracliensis, etc. The commentaries on Gregory of Nazianzus’ writings were popular not only in Byzantium, but in the Christian East as well. Over the period of several centuries these works were translated into different languages of the Christian East including Georgian.

In Georgian literary tradition the translation of commentaries on Gregory of Nazianzus’ writings is closely connected with the translation of these writings themselves. Almost every translator who worked on the writings by the Cappadocian father, rendered into Georgian the commentaries on his writings as well. These translators are: Grigol Oshkeli, David Tbeli, Euthymius the Athonite, Ephrem Mtsire and the anonymous representative of Gelati translation school. Among the Georgian translations of the commentaries on the works by Gregory of Nazianzus, the translations of the tenth-eleventh century scholar Euthymius the Athonite deserve special interest.

The period of transition between the tenth and the eleventh centuries is supposed to be the beginning of the so-called Golden Age – a new era in old
Georgian literature. This was the starting point of a determined orientation of Georgian intellectuals towards Byzantine culture. The process of the growth of Byzantine influence on Georgian literature began in the monastic centre of Mt. Athos and the initiator of this cultural process was Euthymius the Athonite. The aim of Euthymius' literary activity was to bring Georgian literature into line with the Byzantine norm. As is well known, earlier Georgian translated literature, being under the influence of Jerusalem liturgical practice in the fifth-tenth centuries, was quite diverse, but in a certain sense limited. The main task of Euthymius was to enrich Georgian literature with Byzantine writings of a different character. There hardly exists a single genre of ecclesiastical literature which has not benefited from the translations of Euthymius: he translated the works of well-known Byzantine authors like Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, Maximus the Confessor and others; he rendered into Georgian more than one of the patristic commentaries on Biblical books, etc.

The commentaries on the writings of Gregory of Nazianzus translated by Euthymius the Athonite are: *Pseudo-Nonnos Mythological Commentary on Oratio 39 (In sancta Lumina)*, which survived as a fragment, compiled theological-philosophical *Commentary on Oratio 38* and *Commentary on Oratio 44*.3

**Commentary on Oratio 38 (In Nativitatem)**

The *Commentary on Oratio 38* by Gregory of Nazianzus – "**"Targmane baÁ Zniad gulisÃmissayofelTa sityuaTa qristes So bisakiTxavisaTa. Tqmuli wmidisa mamisa Cuenisa maqsaRmsaareblisaÁ**" (The Explanation of Difficult Passages from Oratio in Nativitatem by our Father St. Maximus the Confessor) is attested in the most

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1 Kekelidze K., History of Old Georgian Literature, I, 5th ed., Tbilisi 1980, 60 (in Georgian); Tarknishvili M., Geschichte der Kirchlichen Georgischen Literatur (Studi e testi, 185), Citta del Vaticano, 1955, 35.
important collections of Gregory of Nazianzus’ homilies translated by Euthymius the Athonite. The manuscripts are: \textit{Ath.} 68 (a. 1002-1005), \textit{Tbilisi A-1} (a. 1030), \textit{P-3} (a. 1040), \textit{Tbilisi S-383} (s. XI), \textit{Tbilisi S-413} (s. XI), \textit{Tbilisi A-87} (s. XI), \textit{Tbilisi A-80} (s. XIII), \textit{Tbilisi A-518} (a. 1708). \footnote{Bregvadze T., Rédertoire des manuscrits de la version géorgienne, dans Versiones orientales, repertorium ibericum et studia ad editiones curandas, ed. B. Coule (Corpus Christianorum. Series Graeca, 20. Corpus Nazianzenum, 1, Brepols-Turnhout 1988, 67-74.}

The Structure and Nature of the Commentary. The \textit{Commentary} has the following structure: before the passages taken from Gregory’s \textit{Oratio 38} for explanation there is a note \textit{γρωτιοτικην} (\textit{From the Theologian}), referring them in this way to Gregory of Nazianzus. The passages are followed by explanations with the note \textit{εξηγησιον} (\textit{Explanation}). In total, 101 explanations are attested in \textit{Commentary on Oratio 38}.

The title of the \textit{Commentary} ascribes the writing to the famous Byzantine scholar of the seventh century, Maximus the Confessor. In the history of Byzantine literature the name of Maximus is closely connected with the thoughts of Cappadocian fathers, especially Gregory of Nazianzus. \footnote{Berthold G. C., The Cappadocian Roots of Maximus the Confessor, in Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur, ed. E. Heinzer et Ch. Schonborn, Fribourg 1982, 51-59.} One of his most famous writings \textit{Ambiguarum Liber} consists of commentaries on the writings of Gregory of Nazianzus and Dionysius Areopagita. \footnote{Jeauneaue E., Maximi Confessoris Ambigua ad Iohannem (Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca, 18), 1988, IX.} The \textit{Commentary} on \textit{Oratio 38} translated by Euthymius is connected with the above-mentioned work of Maximus the Confessor, namely, with one of the parts of this writing – \textit{Ambigua ad Iohannem}. The writing consists of commentaries on seventeen homilies, one epistle and one poem by Gregory: \textit{Orationes} – 7, 14, 21, 23, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 34, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 44, 45; \textit{Epist.} 101; \textit{Carm.} II, 2. In \textit{Ambigua ad Iohannem} Maximus the Confessor comments on eight passages from \textit{Oratio 38} by Gregory of Nazianzus. These eight explanations by Maximus have equivalents among 101 explanations in Euthymius’ translation. So \textit{Ambigua ad Iohannem} serves as one of the sources for the Georgian translation of \textit{Oratio 38}. These explanations are: \textit{expl.} 20 – \textit{PG} 91, col. 1273 D 5; \textit{expl.} 21 – \textit{PG} 91, col. 1281 B 7; \textit{expl.} 23 – \textit{PG} 91, col. 1285 B 14; \textit{expl.} 43 – \textit{PG} 91, col. 1288 A 10; \textit{expl.} 52 – \textit{PG} 91, col. 1288 D 1; \textit{expl.} 91 – \textit{PG} 91, col. 1289 B 5; \textit{expl.} 95 – \textit{PG} 91, col. 1289 D 6; \textit{expl.} 101 – \textit{PG} 91, col. 1297 C 1.

The explanations make up the most important part of the writing according to their volume (Maximus’ eight explanations constitute half of the whole text of the \textit{Commentary}) as well as their content (with their
philosophical depth and meaning). This probably explains why Maximus the Confessor is named as the author of the Commentary in its title.

The remaining explanations included in the translation of the Commentary on Oratio 38 are connected with the Commentary on Oratio 38 composed by the tenth-century Byzantine scholar Basilius Minimus, namely, a particular version of the Commentary attested in Sylloge (a collection of the second half of the tenth century consisting of commentaries by Basilius Minimus and George Mokenos). Phraseological coincidences are revealed in Basilius’ commentaries and in several explanations of the Commentary: expl. 1, l. 3 = Bas. Minim. 1a, l. 1; expl. 19, l. 2-6 = Bas. Minim. 12, l. 6-11; expl. 2, l. 5-6 = Bas. Minim. 2, l. 3-4; expl. 36, l. 3-5 = Bas. Minim. 36, l. 1-3. This clearly demonstrates the influence of Basilius Minimus’ writing on the Commentary.

Two explanations in Euthymius’ translation are identical with the text of Basilius Minimus:

"Ἐπερ ἢ εἰκὼν τὸ προκόπτουν οὕτως μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ πλέον ὁ λόγον καὶ ὤρος εἶπ’ οὐν ὁ ὀρθομός, δηλοὶ τὸ οὐ ἐστὶ λόγος καὶ ὀρθομός." Ὅρος δέ του Πατρός ὁ Ὕλος ὡς Λόγος δι’ οὐ δεικνυται ο Πατήρ’ ὁ ἑωρακός, φησὶ ἐμὲ, ἑώρακε τὸν Πατέρα. Σὺν ἀλλήλως γὰρ τὰ τοιαῦτα νοεῖται. Ὡς γὰρ ἀτέρ Υἱοῦ ὀρθομός δι’ οὐ γινώσκεται τὰ πράγματα οὐκ ἀν ἁποδοθεῖ Πατρός, οὕτως οὐδὲ γινώσκει ἰδιαδὴ Πάτηρ ἀνευ Υἱοῦ. Τικότως οὖν ὅρον Πατρός καὶ λόγον τοῦ Υἱοῦ εἰπεν οὐ μονὸν ὡς ἑωρακός ος Λόγον ἐκ Νοῦ προελθοῦντα τοῦ Πατρός, ἀλλὰ καὶ ως συμπληρωτικὸν υὐσίας καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ τί ἐστὶ δηλοῦνται τοῦ Πατρός. Οὐ δὲ γὰρ ἀν νοεῖθεῖ ἢ λεχθεῖ Υἱοῦ ἀνευ Πατήρ ἢ ὅρον καὶ λόγον χωρὶς δι’ οὐ καὶ πάν ὅλος ὑψίθη καὶ γέγονε γενητὸν καὶ τάξει καὶ λόγῳ τετήρηται (Bas. Minim. 128).

The traces of Basilius’ work found in the *Commentary on Oratio* 38 enables to determine the date of its origin. As far as one of the sources (the *Sylloge* version) of the compiled theological-philosophical *Commentary on Oratio* 38 had already been composed by the second half of the tenth century, the *Commentary* must have been created no later than the end of the tenth century.

In general, the compilation style is a distinctive feature of Byzantine commentarial genre. The tradition of using earlier commentaries to compose new writings has been present throughout the whole history of exegetical and commentarial genre in Byzantium. This process is evident in the studies of commentaries on Gregory’s writings.

It should be noted that Georgian scholars were well familiar with this characteristic feature of commentarial genre. The epistles of Byzantine scholars Basilius Minimus and Cyril of Alexandria with description of this method were translated into Georgian by Georgian scholars. It can be said that Georgian scholars creatively applied the compilation method. They often made efforts to introduce Byzantine techniques into Georgian translation practice. This is particularly relevant in relation to the tenth-eleventh century Georgian translators, who introduced into Georgian scholarly tradition not only new genres and conceptions, but Byzantine scholarly techniques as well: e.g. complementing the writings of one author with excerpts from the writings of another author on the same topic, the method of compositional

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9 The texts of these epistles are published, see Otkhmezuri Th., Towards the History of Commentaries on Gregory of Nazianzus’ Writings, in Mravaltavi, Philological and Historical Researches, 15, 1989, 18-31; Tvaltvadze D., The Georgian Translations of the Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul, in Philological Researches II, Tbilisi 1995, 345-362.
restructuring and rearrangement of texts, copying the expression techniques from Greek editors and scribes, etc. The compilation method belongs to the same category. It is noteworthy that this method was often used by Euthymius the Athonite: e. g. he used it in his translation of Maximus the Confessor’s writing Ad Thalassium as well as the Nomocanon and the Guide.¹⁰

Today it is very difficult to say who compiled the Commentary on Or. 38 – an anonymous Greek scholar or Euthymius the Athonite. Even Ephrem Mtsire was unable to provide exact answers to the like questions. Regarding the Georgian version of De Fide Orthodoxa by John of Damascus rendered into Georgian by Euthymius the Athonite, Ephrem admits: I do not know whether it was compiled by Father Euthymius himself, or he used the already compiled Greek source (ჰორცელ წინ ამ ფუჯო, თუ სინმ შექმნა ოცნების გაკარგულობა, ან სთხოვობთ ბეჭდი შებრძანება ჭირდო ჭირდო¹¹). Ephrem is also very careful in his remarks regarding Euthymius’ translation of Oratio 2 and Oratio 3 by Gregory of Nazianzus: We do not know whether our Father St. Euthymius had a Greek original of this kind, or whether he did it by himself (ამ იდუმა ამ თურ ქართულმა შექმნა უმუშებს ეკლესიის გამჭვრივი განუიშვებლო შიქრობა, თუ მან შორი ამა განშენდება შექმნა სათამაშო ჭირდო¹²). Therefore, it is very difficult to say whether Euthymius himself compiled Commentary on Oratio 38, or whether he simply chose a compiled text for translation.

Character of Translation. Those parts of the Commentary on Oratio 38 which have Greek equivalents in Maximus’ and Basilius Minimus’ commentaries are translated through the reduction / expansion method. This method used by Euthymius the Athonite in translating Greek texts was described as early as in the eleventh century by Ephrem Mtsire: By the grace of the Holy Spirit Euthymius could both, expand and reduce.¹³ The results of scientific study of Euthymius’ works fully support the observation of the Middle-Age scholar.

Scholars have noticed two types of the reduction / expansion method in Euthymius’ translations. One is introducing minor changes into the text without altering the meaning of the Greek original. The aim of this method is to convey the idea of the original text more clearly, to facilitate its comprehension for Georgian readers and in some cases to refine the text

¹³ John of Damascus, Dialectica, 67.
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stylistically. Euthymius also used another kind of reduction / expansion method, which allowed making major changes to the text, i.e. dropping rather long extracts from the original and inserting vast interpolations into it. Besides, he also used other techniques such as compiling, excerpting, combining texts and paraphrasing. In the translation of the *Commentary on Oratio* 38 both kinds of the reduction / expansion method are used. In general, due to their nature and function, the texts of commentarial genre are open to such kind of changes – additions or alterations by translators, scribes or scholars who work on the commentaries.\(^{14}\)

Maximus the Confessor, the author of the main part of *Commentary on Or. 38*, is considered to be one of the writers with the most difficult and complicated language and style in the history of Byzantine literature.\(^{15}\) This, of course, encourages a translator to make some changes while translating Maximus’ text, for stylistic refinement and clarity.

The *Commentary on Oratio* 38 is translated by Euthymius mainly in natural, plain Georgian. The translation follows the principle of dynamic equivalence. A sentence is taken as a unit of translation, as it is usual for the translations of this type. Euthymius reorders the structure of the sentences of the original text placing the constituent parts of the sentence according to the norms of the Georgian language. Euthymius also simplifies Maximus’ long and complicated sentences through omitting those words that are not essential for understanding the meaning of the sentence. In some cases he renders Greek words with alternative meaning and inserts verbs into nominal sentences, which are rather characteristic of Greek language. In the translation, several examples of inserting Biblical quotations and references are also observed.

In the translation of Maximus’ *Commentary* Euthymius has also omitted and inserted large passages, e.g. in Euthymius’ translation of explanations 91 and 95 large parts of Maximus’ text are omitted, while at the beginning of explanation 21 a long interpolation is inserted. The comparison of this interpolation with Greek texts of *Commentary on Oratio* 38 has revealed that one passage of Basilius Minimus’ *Commentary on Oratio* 38 is used as a source for the interpolation:

\(^{14}\) West M. L., Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique, Stuttgart 1973, 16.

There are two possibilities: the Greek compiler of the Commentary, while combining the Commentaries of Maximus the Confessor and Basilius Minimus, inserted a fragment from Basilius’ commentaries into the explanation of Commentary on Oratio 38 by Maximus. The second possibility is that while translating the Commentary, Euthymius the Athonite inserted into Maximus’ text part of Basilius’ commentaries in which Basilius explains a phrase from Oratio 38, not commented on in Maximus’ text. In general, the practice of inserting an excerpt from one author’s work into another author’s writing is very characteristic of Euthymius. The study of commentaries on the writings of Gregory of Nazianzus has also revealed the practice of inserting previous commentaries into new editions. This specific feature of

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16 Vast interpolations have been attested in Euthymius' translation of Basil the Great's Teachings – the excerpts from Gregory of Nazianzus' sermons are interpolated into his writings, see Euthymius the Athonite's Translation of Basil of Caesarea's Teachings, Ts. Kurtiskidze ed., Tbilisi 1983, 70; Interpolations are found in Gregory of Nazianzus' Or. 43, into which the description of the miracles ascribed to Basil the Great are added, see Kurtiskidze Ts., The Peculiarities of Euthymius the Athonite's Translation of Gregory the Theologian's Or. 43, in Philological Researches, II, 43; Extracts from the epistles of Gregory of Nazianzus are attested in Euthymius' translation of Gregory of Nazianzus' Or. 42, see Bezazarshvili K., Interpretation of One Peculiarity of Euthymius the Athonite's Translation Method: Interpolations of Oratio 42, in Matsne, Proceedings in Language and Literature, 1-4, 1999, 133-148.
commentaries on Gregory’s writings was apparently well familiar to Georgian translators and they often creatively applied this method themselves.

It is noteworthy, that together with the above-observed practice, Euthymius also used literal translation method in rendering the Commentary on Oratio 38 into Georgian. This is particularly obvious in the translation of certain Greek terms. While translating the adjectives and abstract nouns with common stem Euthymius carefully follows word-for-word translation method, e.g. the Greek text contains substantivised adjectives denoting abstract notion. Euthymius renders them into Georgian as abstract nouns with suffixes -eba/-oba, while the adjectives with the same stem are rendered without changing their part of speech affiliation: 

\[ \text{εὐθυμίους - ιοθομηδόω / ιοθομήδοω; \ άναρχον - ἀναρχοδομηδόω / ἀναρχός - ἀναρχόδοω; \ άπερου - ἀπερόσομηδόω / ἀπερόω - ἀπερολόω; \ το ἄσωματων - ἄσωματων / ἄσωματος - ἄσωματος.} \]

The so-called qualitative nouns (nomine qualitatis) with suffix -της (-της) are often used by Maximus. These nouns are formed from adjective stems and denote abstract notions. In the translation Euthymius substituted these Greek nouns with Georgian abstract nouns; while rendering Greek adjectives with the same stem he used Georgian adjectives:

\[ \text{εὐθυμίους - ἔμβλεπω / ἔμβλεπε / ἐμπελετίς - ἐμπελετίς / ἐμπελετικός - ἐμπελετικός.} \]

An interesting example of word-for-word translation is presented in the explanation 20, which contains about ten different lexical units formed from the verb πληρόω. In most cases Euthymius tries to render the lexical units without changing their part of speech affiliation: πληρώθεις (Aor. pass. particip.) – ἀποθηκεύω; πληρωθεύομενος (Fut. pass. particip.) – ἀποθηκεύω; πληροθεύομαι (Aor. Pass. Inf.) – ἀποθηκεύομαι; πληρούμενος (Pr. med.-pass. particip.) – ἀποθηκεύομαι; πληρούμενος (nomina actionis) – ἀποθηκεύομαι.

Therefore, Euthymius’ translation of the Commentary is a free translation with some passages and terms rendered into Georgian with literal translation method. The word-for-word translation of certain passages and some terms in particular must have been conditioned by the specific nature of term-formation by Maximus.

**The Place and Function of the Commentary on Oratio 38 in Georgian Manuscripts.**

Gregory of Nazianzus appends the Commentary on Oratio 38 to Oratio 38 in Georgian manuscripts. It is inserted into the collection of Gregory’s liturgical sermons. It is noteworthy that the Greek collections of Gregory’s sermons do not include the Commentary. Neither Maximus the Confessor’s
Commentary on Or. 38 is attested in any Greek manuscript of Gregory’s writings. The Commentary by Maximus is usually presented in a separate manuscript together with other writings by Maximus. This makes us believe that Euthymius the Athonite himself inserted the Commentary into the collection of Gregory of Nazianzus’ liturgical sermons. Euthymius must have translated the Commentary at the beginning of his work on the collection of Gregory’s sermons. This suggestion is supported by the fact that the above mentioned Commentary is attested in the manuscript Ath. 68 (a. 1002-1005), which was created at the initial stage of Euthymius’ work on the translation of Gregory’s collection. It is obvious that from the very beginning Euthymius intended to append commentaries to Gregory’s work in order to make them clearer and easier for Georgian readers. Euthymius’ intention is well illustrated by a colophon attached to the Commentary: "Saints of God, pray for Father Euthymius, as he has translated Oratio In Nativitatem and the Commentary to enlighten soul and body, to be celebrated by parish and to teach them and to glorify the Holy Trinity). The reason for translating Commentary on Gregory’s work (to teach believers) is perfectly in line with the major direction of Euthymius the Athonite’s activities, namely, his educational and enlightenment intentions.

Commentary on Oratio 44 (In novam Dominicam).

In the collections of Euthymius’ translations of Gregory of Nazianzus’ homilies (Tbilisi A-1 (a.1030-1031), P-3 (a. 1040), Tbilisi S-383 (s. XI), Tbilisi S-413 (s. XI), Tbilisi A-87 (s. XI), Tbilisi A-87 (s. X-XI) the sermon Ṝeγγαλικის ṭარგმანი (In Novam Dominicum) is followed by a short text – წარწერა ორთხლაში ობიექტები (Explanations of Difficult Passages). The text consists of explanations of five passages of Oratio 44 (PG 36, col. 613 D 5-6; col. 617 A 7-8; col. 617 A 8-9; col. 617 A 9-10; col. 617 A 10-11). The Commentary is translated in plain Georgian language. It provides explanations to those passages of Oratio 44, in which the author talks about human envy, the necessity to overcome it and the vanity of luxury.


19 Cods. Tbilisi A-80, 56v; Tbilisi A-518, 52v; Tbilisi A-87, 40r.
The *Commentary on Oratio* 44 containing five explanations is not attested in Greek manuscripts of Gregory of Nazianzus’ works. Therefore, it can be suggested that this text could be a fragment from unknown *Commentary on Or. 44* inserted into Georgian collection of Gregory’s sermons by Euthymius the Athonite. The distinct didactic character of the explanations probably makes clear Euthymius’ motivation for inserting this text, rather than another, into the collection. For him, a discourse on moral issues supported with examples and quotations from the Bible would be the best way to establish strong moral principles among his parish.

The fact of translating the commentaries on the writings of Gregory of Nazianzus illustrates one more aspect of Euthymius the Athonite’s dedication as a translator: he was determined to acquaint Georgian reader with the latest developments of Byzantine culture and literature as quickly, consistently and accurately as possible. Basilius Minimus’ commentaries on Gregory of Nazianzus’ homilies written in the middle of the tenth century as well as the collection *Sylloge* dating back to the end of the tenth century were very popular in Byzantium. The fact that Euthymius translated the *Commentary on Or. 38* created on the basis of the above-mentioned works attests Euthymius’ profound interest in the latest developments in Byzantine literature and his commitment to introducing these processes to Georgian readers. This also proves that the Georgian monastic center on Mt. Athos was actively involved in the contemporary cultural-literary life of Byzantium.