

“If Man Had Received Such a Nature...” Textual Form, Transmission, and Interpretation of a Passage in Eznik’s *Refutation of the Sects* (Book I, 11 [§ 45])

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Abstract After providing some background on Eznik’s views on the origin of evil and free will as they are argued for in his treatise *Refutation of the Sects*, the article reviews the history of the interpretation of a passage in this work (Eznik, I, 11 [§ 45]), giving a critical assessment of the suggested emendations so far, and proposing two hypothetical readings, based on a comparison of the Armenian text with its supposed Greek Vorlage, the text’s transmission history, and internal contextual analysis.

Keywords Eznik of Kolb. Methodius of Olympus. Textual Criticism. Armenian Literature.

Summary 1 Eznik’s Views on the Origin of Evil and Free Will. – 2 “If Man Had Received Such a Nature...”: Eznik I, 11 (§ 45) and the History of Its Textual-critical Interpretation. – 3 Two Hypothetical Readings.



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Der Teufel ist ein Optimist, wenn er glaubt, daß er
die Menschen schlechter machen kann.
(Kraus 1912, 131)

1 Eznik's Views on the Origin of Evil and Free Will

Written around 441-448 by Eznik of Kolb, the text commonly known under the title of *Refutation of the Sects* is one of the earliest original Armenian works. It has been preserved in one manuscript only, and was first published in Smyrna in 1763, possibly from another now lost manuscript.¹ After the *editio princeps*, other editions followed, the most important of them being the two critical editions published in the 20th century by Mariès and Mercier (1959a, together with a French translation: 1959b), and by Minasean (1992) respectively. The text, being anepigraphic in the manuscript tradition, has since 1763 been given a number of titles: *Book of Refutations*, *Refutation of the Sects*, *Speeches of Refutation*, *Speeches against the Sects*, and *On God (De Deo)*. The latter, suggested by Mariès, emphasises its character of theological treatise on the nature and oneness of God, where positive theses are followed by arguments against the chosen opponents – the Zurvanites, the Greek philosophers, and Marcion –, who, conversely, all maintain the dualistic principle of evil (the *վնի* for the Greek philosophers and Marcion, Ahriman for the Zurvanites) and good (God or Ohrmazd).²

Eznik addresses the question of the nature and origin of evil and its relation to human freedom of the will in §§ 33-62. In this section, relying mostly on Methodius of Olympus' *De Autexusio*,³ he discards the idea that evil is uncreated or created by God: evil entered the world through the devil's jealousy/envy and disobedience,⁴ and through man's ensuing disobedience and sin:

¹ *Girk' ənddimut'eanc' arareal i srboy Eznakay Kolbacwoy* 1762 [but 1763]; on the manuscript and printed tradition of Eznik's work, see Minassian 1984 and 1987; Minasean 1992, 1: 50-76; Orenco 1996, 24-6.

² Mariès, Mercier 1959b, 543-4; see also Mariès 1924, 30-1; for a brief presentation of the context, content, and character of Eznik's work, see Bruns 2007; Orenco 2014, 804-8.

³ Paragraphs 4-56 and 353-4 of Eznik's text are essentially an occasionally reworked translation of Methodius' *De Autexusio*, as first noted by Galēmk'earean at the end of the 19th century (Galēmk'earean 1919). On Eznik's dependence on Methodius and his translating choices and style, see Orenco 2016; on the question of free will in Eznik and his dependence on the thought and text of Methodius, see also Zeilfelder 2017.

⁴ Zeilfelder rightly notes that Eznik does not deal with the existence of an 'evil' emotion (jealousy/envy) before evil came into existence, commenting that "man kann nicht behaupten, dass Eznik das Problem sonderlich elegant gelöst hätte" (Zeilfelder 2017, 277).

Ասեմք, եթե Սատանայի՝ չար գտունգանել մարդոյն՝ Աստուածոյ իմացաւ, վասն որոյն զմարդն յայն յաւժարեցոյց. [...] Եւ արդ, սկիզբն չարեաց գնախանձն ասեմք, եւ գնախանձն՝ յառաւել զմարդն պատուելոյ եւ գչարիսն՝ յանհնազանդութենէն, զի Աստուած այնպէս առաւել զմարդն պատ[ո]ւեաց, եւ նորա անաստեալ՝ զքն[կ]էց գպատ[ո]ւիրանն : Ուստի զամենայն ինչ որ լինի չար, ոչ բնութեամբ չար գիտեմք, այլ զի առանց կամացն Աստուածոյ գործին իրք ինչ լինին չար : (Eznik, I, 12 [§§ 47.48]; Minasean 1992, 1: 162.163, ll. 503-4.547-51; cf. Meth., *Aut.*, XVIII; Vaillant 1930, 809, ll. 9-13)

We say that Satan realized it was evil for man to disobey God, and for that reason he *made* the man *want* to do it. [...] Thus we say that that jealousy is the beginning of evils, and that jealousy comes from the superabundance of honor given to man, and those evils come from his disobedience. Because God has so honored man the more, and *he disobeyed and* rejected His command. From this we *know that* everything that becomes evil *is not naturally evil*, but it *becomes* evil because *it is* accomplished outside the will of God. (Blanchard, Young 1998, 58.60)⁵

Following Methodius’ argument, Eznik is adamant in supporting the existence of free will: Satan and man knew the difference between good and evil, and the rightness or wrongness of an action depend on how that action is willed.⁶

Նա՛, եւ ընդ լինելն իսկ Սատանայի յԱստուածոյ՝ գիտաց, եթե անաստեալ ումեք Աստուածոյ չար է եւ ոչ բարի [...] : Եւ վասն այնորիկ յիրաւի տանջէ գնա Աստուած, զի գիտէ զբարին եւ ոչ առնէ եւ հնուս է չարին եւ ոչ խորշի : [...] Նա՛ եւ զմարդոյն յիրաւի ասեմք կրել պատուհաս ընդ որոց, գործիցէ, քանզի կամաւ երթալոյ յուսումն այնպիսի իրաց, յորոց, յորժամ եւ կամիցի, եւ մեկնել կարող է, քանզի ե՛ւ կամելոյն, ե՛ւ չկամելոյն ունի իշխանութիւն, զորոյն զհետ երթալոյ, ե՛ւ՛ կարելն, զոր ինչ կամիցի առնել : (Eznik, I, 12 [§ 48.49]; Minasean 1992, 1: 163, ll. 552-3.555-7.564-7; cf. Meth., *Aut.*, XVIII; Vaillant 1930, 811, ll. 6-7.9-11.14-15; 813, ll. 1-3)

So too, when Satan came into being from God, he knew that is evil and not good for someone to disobey God. [...] And for this reason God rightly makes him suffer: *for he* knows the good and does not

⁵ Here and hereafter, my changes to Blanchard and Young’s translation are in italics. Unless otherwise noted, all other translations are mine.

⁶ Eznik, I, 10 (§§ 35-41); Minasean 1992, 1: 160-1, ll. 375-423.

do it, *and* he is well-versed in evil, yet does not avoid it. [...] And concerning man also, we say that he rightly endures punishment for the things that he does. Because willingly he undertakes the study of such things, which he could avoid if he so willed. Because he has the sovereignty over willing and not willing, after which comes the ability to do whatever he wills. (Blanchard, Young 1998, 60-1)

Free will is not the power to choose a pre-existent evil (which would leave the way open to cosmological dualism), but it makes man the one and only cause of his own obedience or disobedience to God:

Եւ արդ, յայտ է, թէ անձնիշխան եղև մարդն՝ առնել զբարի եւ ժտել ի չար. իբր ոչ եթէ չար ինչ առաջի կայր, յոր ժտիցի, այլ այն եւեթ առաջի կայր՝ կա՛մ անսալ Աստուածոյ, կա՛մ չանսալ, եւ զնոյն եւեթ պատճառ չարին իմանալ. (Eznik, I, 11 (§ 45); Minasean 1992, 1: 161, ll. 471-4; cf. Meth., *Aut.*, XVII; Vaillant 1930, 801, ll. 3-5)

And so it is clear that man *was* free to do good and to dare evil. It is not as if some evil thing existed first, which he might dare; but only this existed first – either to obey God or not to obey, and only this can be considered the cause of evil. (Blanchard, Young 1998, 56)

As a consequence, evil is the result of a free and deliberate intellectual choice. Nevertheless, both in Methodius and Eznik, this stance is tempered by the *topos* of Satan’s deception:

Որպէս յորժամ իցէ որ ուրուք թշնամի եւ թարուցեալ զթշնամութիւնն՝ գաղտ կամիցի վնասել [...] եւ նորա լուեալ՝ վաղվաղակի ի կեղծիս բարեկամութեան կեղծաւորեալ [...] զաւգտակարսն նմա վնասակարս թելադրեալ կարծեցուցանիցէ. (Eznik, I, 12 (§ 47)); Minasean 1992, 1: 162, ll. 504-5.509-11; cf. Meth., *Aut.*, XVIII; Vaillant 1930, 805, ll. 1-2.7-10)

Because when someone is an enemy to others, he conceals the enmity and wishes to injure stealthily. [...] *And when he* [i.e. Satan] heard, dissembling at once in counterfeit friendship [...], *giving him* [i.e. the man] *advice*, caused *him* to consider harmful the things useful to him. (Blanchard, Young 1998, 58)

That Adam sinned out of ignorance and because of Satan’s deception is a view shared also by other Church fathers, such as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa: evil was not originally chosen *qua* evil, but because it was mistaken for good (see Ramelli 2013, 178). Indeed, Methodius seems here to embrace ethical intellectualism: the Ser-

pent “instigated” (παρώρησε)⁷ and “persuaded” (πέισας; ἔπεισε)⁸ man to disobey God’s order, leading him astray⁹ and talking him into doing something that he subsequently did thinking it was good. The *topos* of Satan’s plot to harm man and of his jealousy and envy towards him is well attested in 5th-century Armenian literature, too (Stone 2013, 26-7). Yet, in this respect, Eznik’s translation of Methodius appears occasionally to emphasise man’s disobedience as an act of free will over the devil’s instigation: Satan “made (the man) want (or ‘choose’)” (յաւժարեցոյ)¹⁰ to transgress God’s commandment, “gave (him) advice” (թելադրեալ),¹¹ and “emboldened” him (or “gave [him] the arrogance”) (ժտեցոյ) to do so.¹²

2 “If Man Had Received Such a Nature...”: Eznik I, 11 (§ 45) and the History of Its Textual-critical Interpretation

Eznik stresses man’s freedom of the will over Satan’s instigation also in § 45, where he argues that man learned evil and disobedience through the teaching of someone else (i.e. the devil), yet he was not forced to do it. Accordingly, when Methodius speaks of Satan as “the one who teaches evil [...] to man”, Eznik reworks his *Vorlage*, calling the devil “an instigator but not a constrainer”, and replacing Methodius’ original quotation of Jer 13:3 with another scriptural allusion to Gen 8:21, which he glosses “whoever is inclined (towards evil), is inclined willingly and not under someone else’s constraint”. If these amplifications are justified by the above-said attitude, the textual form of this passage in the Armenian version shows some peculiar readings com-

7 Ὅθεν καὶ εἰς τοῦτο παρώρησε τὸν ἄνθρωπον (reconstructed Greek text from the Slavice version; *Aut.*, XVIII; Vaillant 1930, 803, l. 17).

8 Καὶ οὕτω πείσας βλάβην ποιήσεται τῷ ἄνθρωπῳ (reconstructed Greek text from the Slavice version; *Aut.*, XVIII; Vaillant 1930, 805, l. 9); ἔπεισε τὸν ἄνθρωπον υπερῆναι τὴν ἐντολὴν τοῦ θεοῦ (reconstructed Greek text from the Slavice version, Vaillant 1930, 807, l. 2).

9 Methodius speaks of the man as τέχνας ὁ ποικίλας δράκοντος ἐκπεσών, “[the one] who has fallen *because of* the variform trickeries of the Serpent”, also in the final hymn in *Symp.*, XI (see Ramelli 2013, 272 [italics added]); see also *Meth. Res.* II, 1, where the devil is said to have “deceived [man] into disobeying”. However, one should not forget that a common view was that God does not allow man to be tempted beyond his strength; as a consequence, the responsibility for sin lays with the individual, not with Satan, and definitely not with God (see, for example, Origen, *Princ.*, III, 5-7).

10 Վասն որո[ն] զմարդն յայն յաւժարեցոյ (Eznik, I, 12 [§ 47]; Minasean 1992, 1: 162, l. 504). Significantly, the only Greek equivalent given in the NHB for յաւժարեցոյնքանքն is προαίρεσμαι, which is connected with the idea of ‘free choice’ (προαίρεσις) (Awetikean et al. 1836, 2: 380).

11 Ենա վնասակարսն թելադրեալ կարծեցուցանիցէ (Eznik, I, 12 [§ 47]; Minasean 1992, 1: 162, ll. 510-1).

12 Ժտեցոյ թշնամի զմարդն անցանել զհրամանաւն Աստուածոյ (Eznik, I, 12 [§ 47]; Minasean 1992, 1: 162, l. 523).

pared to its supposed Greek original. The text has a long history of attempted emendations and interpretations, the problem being particularly the meaning of the unreal conditional clause that (for the moment) could be translated “if man had received such a nature, then a teaching would not have been given to him by the nature of (a) creature and by the divine books [i.e. Scripture]”. Some scholars postulate an omission in the transmitted text and argue for emending it,¹³ while others, notwithstanding some apparent lack of perspicuity, leave it as it is.¹⁴

The whole passage reads as follows:

Οὐδὲ < γὰρ > ἀγένητον ταύτην τις εἰπεῖν ἔχει, τοῦ ποιήσαντος αὐτὴν ὄντος γεννητοῦ. Πάντως δὲ πόθεν τοῦτο τὸ παρακοῦσαι ζητήσεις. Ἀλλὰ κείται σαφῶς ἐν τινι θείᾳ γραφῇ, ὅθεν οὐδὲ τοιοῦτον τὸν ἄνθρωπον πρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ γεγόνεαι φημί, κατὰ δὲ τὴν τινοῦ διδασκαλίαν τοῦτο πεπονθῆναι λέγω· οὐδὲ γὰρ τοιαύτην < ἦν > φύσιν εἰληφώς ὁ ἄνθρωπος· εἰ γὰρ οὕτως εἶχεν, οὐκ ἂν αὐτῷ κατὰ διδασκαλίαν τοῦτο προσεγένετο, τῆς φύσεως αὐτῆς οὕτως ἐχούσης. Λέγει δὲ τις θεία φωνὴ μεμαθηκέναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον τὰ πονηρὰ· διδάσκεσθαι δ’ αὐτὸν φημί τὸ παρακοῦειν θεοῦ· τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ μόνον ἐστὶ τὸ κακόν, ὃ παρὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ προαίρεσιν γίνεται. Οὐ γὰρ οὖν καθ’ ἑαυτὸν τὸ πονηρὸν ἄνθρωπος διδάσκεται. Ὁ διδάσκων τὸινυν [τὸ κακόν] ἐστὶν ὁ δράκων, [Ἰπρὸς αὐτοῦ θεοῦ γεγόνως· διδάσκει δὲ τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐπισχεῖν βουλόμενος ἀπὸ τοῦ ὑψίστου (κρείττονος)]. (Meth., Aut., XVII; Vaillant 1930, 801, ll. 8-16; 803, ll. 1-4; reconstructed Greek text from the Slavic version in italics)

For no one can say that it [i.e. man’s disobedience] is without an origin, when its author had an origin. However, you will certainly ask whence this disobedience did arise; but this is clearly stated in the divine scripture, which is why I say that man has not been made by God as such, but I say that he has known it [i.e. disobedience] through the teaching of someone. Indeed, man had not received such a nature; for if this were the case, it would not have befallen him by teaching, because that very nature would have had control. A divine word says that man “has learned evil” [Jer 13:23]; I say that he has been taught to disobey God. For this alone is evil: what occurs in opposition to the wish of God. For man would not learn evil by itself. Therefore, he who teaches [evil] is the Serpent, created by that same God; it is he who teaches (evil) to man because he wants to prevent him from attaining the higher good.

Ուստի ոչ որ կարէ անարար ի[ն]չ եւ անձնաւոր գշարն ցուցանել եւ, դարձեալ, ոչ յարարչէն, այլ յանաստութենէ ղիպեալ ստունգանողին եւ յուրուր վարդապետութենէ ղրդեալ, զի ոչ եթէ այնպիսի ինչ հաստատեալ բնութեամբ գմարդն ցուցանել : Եթէ այնպիսի ինչ բնութիւն մարդոյն առեալ էր, ապա ոչ ի բնութենէ արարածոյ] եւ յաստուածեղէն Գրոց նմա վարդապետութիւն ղնծա[յ]անայր, որպէս սաւ ուրեր սաստուածական բարբառն, եթէ «Ի ման[կ]ութենէ մարդիկ ի ինամն չարի միտեալ են», զի ցուցցէ, թէ որ միտիւն, կամաւք միտի եւ ոչ ուրուր բռնութեամբ : Արդ, անաստութիւնն եւեթ, որ արտաքրոյ] մատուածոյ կամացն գործիցի, պատճառ չարեաց ինամայի է, եւ նմին՝ զայլ որ վարդապետ ծածուկ հաշ[ո]ւել, ղրդիչ եւ ոչ բռնադատիչ, որ գմարդն ի յաւութեանցն մերկանալ կամեցաւ : (Eznik, I, 11 (§ 45); Minasean 1992, 1: 162, ll. 477-88)

From this no one can show that evil is an uncreated and self-existent being, nor that (it came) from its author [i.e. man], but it befell the transgressor out of disobedience, and it was instigated by the teaching of someone, for (it cannot be) shown that man has been established as such by nature. If man had received such a nature, then a teaching would not have been given to him by the nature of (a) creature and by the divine books, as the divine word says somewhere: “Mankind is inclined from childhood towards the solicitude of evil” [see Gen 8:21], which shows that whoever is inclined, is inclined willingly and not under someone else’s constraint. Now, only disobedience done outside the will of God should be taken as the cause of evils. And for this some other hidden teacher has been reckoned to be an instigator but not a constrictor, who willed to strip man of the good things.

13 Galēmkearean 1919, 63-5; Mariès 1924, 104-12; Mariès, Mercier 1959a, 432-3; Mariès, Mercier 1959b, 708, endnotes 154-63; Abrahamyan 1970.

14 Adonc’ 1926, 111-2; Minasean 1971, 175-9; Minasean 1992, 2: 69-71, endnotes on ll. 480-3.

A quick remark on my translation of the passage, before reviewing the history of its interpretation in modern scholarship. According to both Minasean's and Mariès' punctuation of the Armenian text,¹⁵ one should consider յարարչէն and յանաստութենէ as two members of an adversative coordination: “From this no one can show that evil is an uncreated and self-existent being; moreover, it befell the transgressor not from the Creator but out of disobedience”. In that case, յարարչէն would be certainly referring to God, and this is how the clause is understood by Weber (1927) and Mariès (Mariès, Mercier 1959b). However, one could change the punctuation and consider յարարչէն as governed by ոչ որ կարէ [...] գշարն ցուցանել, which is what I do in my translation above.¹⁶ In this case, too, յարարչէն could be evidently understood as referring to God.¹⁷ Obviously, such a translation would fit perfectly both Eznik's views on the origin of evil (which does not originate from God) and his regular use of the term (as one might expect, there are several occurrences of արարիչ as referring to God in his work). However, τοῦ ποιήσαντος αὐτῆν ὄντος γενητοῦ is unmistakably referring to man, as the whole point of this passage is to present disobedience/evil as something not innate in man but learned. It is therefore more practical to suppose that Eznik understood Methodius' text correctly. And, since Eznik has presented the disobedience of man as the cause of evil just few lines above, it makes better sense to assume that he is saying that evil and disobedience did not exist *ab origine* in their ‘doer’ or ‘author’ (i.e. man). For that matter, Eznik employs արարիչ as referring to man as ‘author’ of evil deeds elsewhere in his work.¹⁸ If, as I think, this is the case also in this passage, punctuation should be changed as follows:

Ուստի ոչ որ կարէ անարար ինչ եւ անձնաւոր գշարն ցուցանել եւ, դարձեալ, ոչ յարարչէն. այլ յանաստութենէ դիպեալ ստունգանողին եւ յուրուք վարդապետութենէ դրդեալ.

15 Mariès and Mercier's critical text reads as follows: Ուստի ոչ որ կարէ անարար ինչ եւ անձնաւոր գշարն ցուցանել. եւ դարձեալ ոչ յարարչէն, այլ յանաստութենէ դիպեալ ստունգանողին, եւ յուրուք վարդապետութենէ դրդեալ (Mariès, Mercier 1959a, 432 [§ 45]).

16 See also Schmid 1900; Č'alyan 1968; Abrahamyan 1994; Orengo 1996; Zeilfelder 2004 (Blanchard and Young's translation of this clause is rather idiosyncratic, but it seems to me that they also understand it in this way).

17 Which is what all other translations do; see Schmid 1900 and Zeilfelder 2004 [“Schöpfer”]; Č'alyan 1968 [“ճոր”]; Abrahamyan 1994 [“ստուուց”]; Orengo 1996 [“Creator”]; Blanchard, Young 1998 (“creator”; with a small “c”, but clearly referred to God in the translation); Arevšatjan 2008 [“Создатель”].

18 Ապա ուրեմն յիրաւի սահն մարդիկ արարիչք չարեաց (Eznik, I, 7 [§ 17]; Minasean 1992, 1: 158, l. 292; cf. Meth., *Aut.*, VIII); քանզի մասանց չարեաց գտանի մարդն արարիչ (Eznik, I, 9 [§ 34]; Minasean 1992, 1: 160, ll. 369-70; cf. Meth., *Aut.*, XIII).

Galēmḳ'earean was the first to conjecture an omission in the transmitted text, which he restored “according to the original” (i.e. the Greek text) as follows:

Չի ոչ եթէ այնպիսի ինչ հաստատեալ բնութեամբ զմարդն ցուցանել *կարէ որ* : Եթէ այնպիսի ինչ բնութիւն մարդոյն առեալ էր, ապա ոչ *յուրը վարդապետտութենէ նմա դիպէր անաստութիւնն, այլ* ի բնութենէ արարածոյ : Եւ յաստուածեղէն գրոց նմա վարդապետութիւն ընծայանայր. որպէս ասէ ուրեք աստուածական բարբառն, եթէ «Ի մանկութենէ մարդիկ ի խնամս չարի միտեալ են». (Galēmḳ'earean 1919, 64 [Galēmḳ'earean's emendations in italics])

For no *one can* show that man has been established as such by nature. If man had received such a nature, then *disobedience would have befallen him not because of the teaching of someone, but because of (his) nature of creature. And* a teaching was given to him by the divine books, as the divine word says somewhere that “man-kind is inclined from childhood towards the solicitude of evil”.

The addition of *կարէ որ* seems necessary, as it supplies ցուցանել with a governing clause.¹⁹ Galēmḳ'earean's emendation has the virtue of smoothing out some logical difficulties by considering ի բնութենէ արարածոյ as a complement governed by (ոչ) դիպէր and not by ընծայանայր; yet it creates an odd discontinuity with the sentence about the teaching given by the Bible, by interpreting it as a main independent clause and not as coordinated to the preceding unreal conditional clause.²⁰

For this reason, Abrahamyan, while accepting Galēmḳ'earean's integration, disregards the changes he introduces as regards the punctuation, and suggests adding the negative ոչ before the verb ընծայանայր:

19 In my translation above I read ցուցանելի է, which Minasean lists among the possible emendations to the text (Minasean 1992, 2: 69-70, endnote on l. 580).

20 The emendation is accepted both by Schmid and Weber in their German translations, though the latter significantly changes the punctuation given by Galēmḳ'earean and interprets both ի բնութենէ արարածոյ and յաստուածեղէն գրոց as complements governed by ընծայանայր: “Wenn der Mensch eine solche Natur empfangen hätte, (so würde er nicht durch die Belehrung eines andern dem Ungehorsam verfallen sein), dann würde ihm auch nicht aus der Natur des Geschöpfes und aus der Heiligen Schrift die Belehrung zukommen. So sagt die Heilige Schrift an einem Orte, daß die Menschen von Jugend auf zu den Gedanken des Bösen geneigt sind” (Weber 1927, 46). Schmid follows Galēmḳ'earean's text more closely: “Wenn der Mensch eine solche Natur erhalten hätte, dann würde ihm nicht durch Jemandes Lehre der Ungehorsam zugestossen sein, sondern von der Natur des Geschöpfes, und es würde aus dem göttlichen Schriften die Lehre einfallen, wie an einer Stelle das göttliche Wort sagt: „Die Menschen sind von Kindheit an zur Ausübung des Bösen geneigt” (Schmid 1900, 46).

Եթէ այնպիսի ինչ բնութիւն մարդոյն առեալ էր, ապա ոչ յորևոր վարդապետութենէ նմա դիպէր անսաստութիւնն, այլ ի բնութենէ արարածոյ, եւ յաստոյածեղէն գրոց նմա վարդապետութիւն ոչ ընծայանայր. (Abrahamyan 1970, 95 [Abrahamyan’s emendation in italics])²¹

If man had received such a nature, then disobedience would have befallen him not because of the teaching of someone, but because of (his own) nature of creature, and a teaching would *not* have been given to him by the divine books.

However, in both cases the emendation lacks its *raison d’être*, as the Armenian emended text does not really follow the original Greek: it does not translate what is supposedly missing in Armenian (which, as I will show below, is ὅθεν οὐδὲ τοιοῦτον τὸν ἄνθρωπον πρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ γεγενῆσθαι φημί; the rest of the Greek text is wholly represented – albeit sometimes idiosyncratically reworked – in the Armenian),²² and basically rephrases the previous clause (յանսաստութենէ դիպեալ ստուսգանդին եւ յորևոր վարդապետութենէ դրդեալ), eventually creating a doublet: οὐκ ἂν αὐτῷ κατὰ διδασκαλίαν τοῦτο προσεγένετο already has its Armenian correspondence in ոչ [...] նմա վարդապետութիւն ընծայանայր.

In his remarks on the passage, noting that Eznik gives a different biblical quotation from Methodius, Galémk’earean assumes that the Armenian author did not recognize the scriptural verse quoted in his *Vorlage* (Jer 13:23); therefore, he chose another one that he deemed fit for his argument (Gen 8:21), quoting it by heart according both to the Greek and the Syriac versions of the Bible, as ի խնամս չարի is found in the Greek (and Armenian) text, while the idea of ‘inclining towards evil’ (միտեալ են) is found in the Hebrew and Syriac versions (Galémk’earean 1919, 64 fn. 2). Galémk’earean probably thinks at (ἡ διάνοια [...]) ἐπιμελῶς ἐπὶ τὰ πονηρά as the Greek referent for ի խնամս չարի, and at ܢܘܘܢ [...] ܐܝܢܘܢ (“the ‘inclination’ [of man’s heart is] evil”) of the Peshitta as the Syriac source of միտեալ են. Whereas it is possible that Eznik knew this passage

21 In his Eastern Armenian translation, Abrahamyan paraphrases as follows: Եթէ մարդն այդպիսի (չար) էություն ստացած լինէր, ապա նրա մէջ անհնազանդություն երևան կգար ոչ թէ մեկի հրահրումից, այլ (իր իսկ) արարածային էությունից, եւ Աստվածաշունչ գրքում էլ նրա վերաբերյալ այնպիսի ձեւակերպում չէր տրվի (Abrahamyan 1994, 37; see also 295-6).

22 Διδάσκεισθαι δ’ αὐτόν φημι τὸ παρακοῦειν θεοῦ and οὐ γὰρ οὖν καθ’ ἑαυτὸν τὸ πονηρὸν ἄνθρωπος διδάσκειται are also missing in Armenian, but they come *after* the biblical quotation. For a criticism of Galémk’earean’s and Abrahamyan’s emendations as inconsistent with the views and language of Eznik (particularly as to the use of դիպեմ and the insertion of the negative ոչ), cf. Minasean 1971, 177-8.

both in Greek and in Syriac (and, obviously, in Armenian, while it seems unlikely that he knew it in Hebrew), it should be noted that ինսամ(ք) չարի could be regarded as a legitimate translation also of ܢܢܐܘܢ [...] ܠܚܝܢܐ.²³ I think that the textual form of Eznik’s quotation might depend more on some exegetical source than on a supposed mixed influence of the Greek Bible and the Peshitta. As a matter of fact, we find the same verse quoted as follows in the Armenian *Commentary on Genesis* attributed to Ephrem:

Կնճինն ամենայն մարդկան ի ինսամ չարի հաստատեալ է ի մանկութիւն իւրմէ. (Mathews 1998a, 66)

The knot of every man is fixed from his youth for the solicitude of evil. (Mathews 1998b, 62)

As noted by Mathews, the ‘knot’ in the Armenian text finds its explanation in a misreading of the original ܠܚܝܢܐ (‘inclination’) as ܠܚܝܢܐ, a participial form coming from ܚܝܢܐ, ‘to tie, to bind’ (Mathews 1998b, XXVI-XXVII). Therefore, there is actual evidence of the existence of a Syriac exegetical tradition known in Armenian that combined the ideas of ‘inclining towards evil’ and the ‘solicitude of evil’. However, the Ps.-Ephremean Armenian *Commentary on Genesis* does not pre-date the year 861 (Mathews 1998b, XLVI). Thus, if Eznik was familiar with this tradition, he must have known it from a different source. As it happens, a similar formulation – where a verb meaning ‘to be inclined towards’ is associated with the phrase ‘evil inclination’ (or simply ‘inclination’) – is found in Theodore of Mopsuestia’s second catechetical homily on Eucharist.²⁴

It is common to (human) nature that it is [...] inclined (*netstle*) towards evil, as God said: “For the *yatsra* of the human being is busily set upon evil from his youth”. (Becker 2016, 198)

Significantly, such a disposition is said to have come about *after* the transgression of Adam (therefore, not from mankind’s birth) in another homily on Baptism by Theodore:²⁵

And from the above sin death entered, and this death weakened [human] nature and generated in it a great inclination

²³ See Ciakciak 1837, 1: 677, where ինսամ is explained also as յաւժարութիւն, քերումն, մխտումն, and translated as “inclinazione, propensione”.

²⁴ *HC*, XVI, 8; Syriac text in Mingana 1933, 241.

²⁵ *HC*, XII, 8; Syriac text in Mingana 1933, 149.

(*metšalyanutha*) toward sin. (Becker 2016, 198)²⁶

Moreover, Theodore links the inclination towards sin with man's "changeable nature" (McLeod 2005, 63),²⁷ an argument that Eznik uses to prove that Satan (and therefore evil) is not uncreated (Eznik, I, 13 [§ 51]). Some interesting considerations on the '(evil) inclination' as not being innate in man's nature are also found in Narsai's homilies for Lent, where parallels can be found also with the idea expressed by Eznik of man controlling such a disposition by means of his will:

Your *yatsra* is not bound in nature, like silent [entities] (i.e. beings without *meltha*, "word," "reason"). (Becker 2016, 190; Syriac text in Mingana 1905, 205)

My mind caused me to repent when I remembered | that your evil is not in [your] nature [...]

Nor also does our *yatsra* exist | substantially (*qnoma'it*) apart from the soul.

It is the discernment in the soul | that takes effect in its various forms.

The soul is the mistress of the human being, | which rules over the faculties and the senses,

And it guides nature | according to how its own will wants. (Becker 2016, 193; Syriac text in Mingana 1905, 236)

These similarities should not come as a surprise, since, as Gignoux has shown, Narsai and Eznik share some common views and exegetical traditions (1968, 502-9). In this case, too, as Narsai's dependence upon Theodore's ideas could be assumed also for his use of *ܡܝܬܐ* (Becker 2016, 193), these parallels could offer further evidence of the presence of the Antiochene exegetical tradition in Eznik's work, while at the same time shedding some light on the textual form of the scriptural quotation in the passage in question.

Commenting upon Galēm̄k'earean's conjecture, Mariès argues that the difficulty of the Armenian text originates from Eznik misreading *τοῦτο πεπονθῆναι λέγω* as an objection risen by the Heterodox in Methodius' dialogue, and not as the words of the Orthodox: "I say that he [i.e. the man] took it [i.e. evil/disobedience] passively", meaning that man was somewhat forced to do evil and disobey.

²⁶ Mortality is said to have made mankind inclined to sin also in Theodore's *Commentary to Romans*, where he argues that lust and greed would not have place in an immortal nature (Theod. Mops., in *Rom.*, V, 18-9.21).

²⁷ *HC*, I, 6; English translation in Mingana 1932, 21; Syriac text, 121.

Ce contresens et cette méprise une fois faits, il [Eznik] n’a plus saisi le sens exact des lignes suivantes, jusqu’à ... τὸν ἄνθρωπον τὰ ποιηρά, qu’il attribuait aussi à l’adversaire, ni la portée du texte de Jérémie allégué là. Il s’est alors cru obligé de réfuter pour son compte cette objection et il a forgé une réponse en recourant à un autre texte de l’Écriture : *Genèse*, VIII, 21. (Mariès 1924, 111-2)

In his tentative solution, Mariès emends the text to read $\rho\eta\nu\iota\rho\epsilon\tau\omega\delta\iota\rho$ (‘by constraint’) and $\rho\eta\nu\iota\rho\eta\iota\acute{\nu}$ (‘constraint’) instead of $\rho\eta\nu\iota\rho\epsilon\tau\omega\delta\iota\rho$ (‘by nature’) and $\rho\eta\nu\iota\rho\eta\iota\acute{\nu}$ (‘nature’), giving the following translation:

Car personne ne peut montrer que l’homme ait été constitué chose telle [*i.e.* : mauvais] ‘*par violence*’. Si l’homme avait subi quelque ‘*violence*’ de cette sorte [qui l’eût rendu mauvais] ce ne serait donc pas en vertu de (sa) nature créée [qu’il serait devenu mauvais], et un enseignement lui aurait été fourni (à ce sujet) par les divines Écritures, comme (de fait) la Parole divine dit quelque part [mais en donnant là un enseignement tout différent] que : « les hommes sont inclinés à faire le mal dès leur enfance ». (Mariès 1924, 109)

This emendation, though it is palaeographically tenable, has two fundamental shortcomings in terms of textual criticism and logic respectively: 1) it disregards the Greek text, which reads $\phi\acute{\upsilon}\sigma\iota\varsigma$, to which $\rho\eta\nu\iota\rho\eta\iota\acute{\nu}$ corresponds, and not $\rho\eta\nu\iota\rho\eta\iota\acute{\nu}$; 2) Mariès correctly constructs the sentence as an unreal conditional clause (“if man had been forced”, meaning that he actually *had not* been forced, following Eznik’s argument), but this does not explain why, in the case man had actually been forced by some external ‘violence’, he would have needed a teaching from the Bible.²⁸

I think that the mention of the “teaching from the divine books” as useless or unnecessary if man had innately known evil and disobedience must be understood here as a theological use of the Carneadean moral argument against astrological fatalism. According to this argument, “astrology denies freedom of the will, overthrows all systems of morality and justice, nullifies religious worship and renders prayer useless” (Hegedus 2007, 113).²⁹ As one would expect, Eznik resorts to the ‘classic’ Carneadean argument in his refutation of Chaldean astrology (Eznik, II, 15 [§ 229]); but it is significant that he employs it for the first time in his work precisely when he argues that evils depend on man’s will, a few paragraphs below the passage under scrutiny, when he ceases to follow the text of Methodius’ *De Autexusio* as his source (Eznik, I, 15 [§§ 58-9]). Replacing the original Carneadean

²⁸ For a criticism of Mariès’ conjecture, see also Adonc’ 1926, 111-2.

²⁹ Of the rather vast literature on the subject, still fundamental is Amand [1945] 1973.

'fate' with 'natural evil', Eznik uses the aforementioned argument both in its traditional formulation and in a reverse one, first maintaining the uselessness of laws and judgments if evil was innate in man's nature, then concluding that, since kings and judges *do* command the punishment of those who break the law, all evils are intentional and result from a free choice:

If they [i.e. evils] are such by nature, why were laws laid down by kings, and commandments by princes, and punishments by judges? Is it not for cutting short evils? If evils are such by nature, it would not be necessary for the lawgiver to give laws, nor for the prince to impose punishments upon the evildoer. [...] Indeed, if we see that the king exacts vengeance for his laws, and deters injuries by requirement for vengeance, and the judge binds and tortures the thief and the highwayman [...] then it is clear that evils which are committed are spontaneous and not innate. ((Eznik, I, 15 [§§ 58-59]; Blanchard, Young 1998, 66-7)

The same argument is already made *in nuce* right before the passage analysed here:

Because if he had come into existence among the other beings who serve God by necessity, then he would have been unworthy to receive any reward for freedom; but if like an instrument of the Creator [...], then neither blame nor praise would be due him. [...] Because this is fair, when the worthy man receives in accordance with the deeds he has done. (Eznik, I, 11 [§ 44]; Blanchard, Young 1998, 55-6; cf. Meth., *Aut.*, XVI; Vaillant 1930, 797.799.801)

Therefore, by saying that man would not have needed the teaching of the Bible if evil and disobedience had been innate in him, Eznik joins in a long tradition of Christian writers that engage in the anti-fatalistic polemic, drawing the theological conclusions of the philosophical Carneadean argument.³⁰

Eventually, Mariès partially rejected his own conjecture, leaving բնութեամբ and բնութիւն unemended, and surmising an omis-

30 See, for example, *Phil.* XXIII, 1, where Origen argues that astrological fatalism entails "la suppression radicale de notre liberté, donc également de la louange et du blâme, ainsi que des activités louables ou répréhensibles. S'il en est ainsi, c'en est fait du jugement divin qui a été annoncé, des menaces adressées aux pécheurs pour leur apprendre leur châtement [...]. Rien de tout cela n'aura encore raison d'être. [...] La foi deviendra vaine [...] comme toute l'économie de la loi et des prophètes" (Junod 1976, 133-5). On the major role played by Origen in giving a theological meaning to the traditional Carneadean moral argument, see Amand [1945] 1973, 318-25 (but cf. Hegedus 2007, 116, for a brief reassessment of Amand's view).

sion resulting from a *saut de même à même* (ցուցանել \cap ցուցանել), which he reintegrated in the text a few words before the insertion of Galémk‘earean:³¹

Չի ոչ եթե այնպիսի ինչ հաստատեալ բնութեամբ զմարդն ցուցանել < այլ զի մարդն՝ ըստ ուրուք վարդապետութեան, եւ ոչ բոնութեամբ, ստունգաւող եղև՝ կարև որ ցուցանել >: Եթե այնպիսի ինչ բնութիւն մարդոյն առեալ էր, ապա ոչ ի բնութենէ արարածոյ եւ յաստուածեղէն գրոց նմա վարդապետութիւն ընծայանայր. որպէս սսէ ուրեք աստուածական բարբառն, եթե ի մանկութենէ մարդիկ ի խնամս չարի միտեալ են. (Mariès, Mercier 1959a, 432 [§ 45])

Car, point ne peut-on montrer que tel en quelque sorte l’homme ait été créé par nature; < mais, que c’est en suivant, de quelqu’un, endoctrinement, et point par contrainte, qu’indocile est devenu l’homme, on peut le montrer >. Si, quelque nature de cette sorte, l’homme avait reçue, conséquemment, point ne lui eût été, de par nature de créature et de par divines écritures, doctrine offerte ; comme dit quelque part la divine parole : « Dès l’enfance les hommes à s’occuper du mal sont enclins ». (Mariès, Mercier 1959b, 566-7 [§ 45])

However, again, the Greek text does not support the emendation, which, like Galémk‘earean’s integration, creates a doublet in the Armenian version compared to its supposed Greek *Vorlage*. Furthermore, the addition of եւ ոչ բոնութեամբ is totally uncalled for. The fact that few lines below Eznik describes man’s inclination towards evil as ‘willing’ (կամաւք) and unforced (stressing twice that man is not constrained to do evil – ոչ ուրուք բոնութեամբ; ոչ բոնադասիչ – whereas this specification is lacking in Methodius), does not legitimate speculating that “dans la partie omise, on aurait eu une première fois mention de cette contrainte” (Mariès, Mercier 1959b, 708, endnote 160). Moreover, the unreal conditional clause does not gain in perspicuity as far as ի բնութենէ արարածոյ is concerned.

In his edition, Minasean does not accept Mariès’ conjecture, yet he suggests in a note two possible emendations to the unreal conditional clause, both more economical in terms of textual criticism than those proposed by Galémk‘earean and Mariès. The first one assumes an omission in the transmitted text after արարածոյ:

Եթե այնպիսի ինչ բնութիւն մարդոյն առեալ էր, ապա ոչ ի բնութենէ արարածոյ [վիղխէր], եւ յաստուածեղէն գրոց նմա

31 Mariès, Mercier 1959b, 708, endnotes 154-63.

վարդապետութիւն (նշ) ընծայանայր. (Minasean 1992, 2: 70, endnote on ll. 481-2)

If man had received such a nature of creature, then [he would not have changed] (his own) nature of creature, and a teaching would (not) have been given to him by the divine books.

In proposing this emendation, Minasean might have in mind another passage in Eznik’s work where the same argument is employed (though he does not quote it). In arguing that Satan is not uncreated, Eznik maintains that, since he is called a ‘rebel’ in the Bible, this means that he changed his own nature; this would show that he is a created being, for

Երթև անարար էր, ապա ոչ յիւրմէ բնութենէն փոխէր. (Eznik, I, 13 [§ 51]; Minasean 1992, 1: 164, ll. 593-4; cf. Meth., *Aut.*, XIX; Vailant 1930, 815, ll. 15-6)

if he were uncreated, then he would not change his own nature. (Blanchard, Young 1998, 63)³²

So, man too would not have changed his own nature, if God had made him prone to evil. But since the Bible *does* include a ‘teaching’ which says that “mankind is inclined from childhood [not from birth!] towards the solicitude of evil”, it would follow that man was not created as such and can change (or ‘rebel against’) his own nature (Minasean 1992, 2: 70, endnote on ll. 481-2).

It is tempting here to quote a passage from Methodius’ *Symposium*, where a similar argument is made on the impossibility of changing one’s nature: while arguing against astrological fatalism, Methodius says that if wicked persons were wicked by fate, they were not to be held responsible of their actions before the law,

ζῶντες κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν φύσιν, ἐπεὶ μὴ δεδύνηται μεταβληθῆναι. (Meth., *Symp.*, VIII, 16; Musurillo, Debidour 1963, 256 [§ 228])

since they live according to their own nature, for they could not be changed.

However, there is no evidence that Eznik knew Methodius’ *Symposium*, even if they both resort to the moral argument in refuting as-

32 Note that here փոխէր translates ἀφίστημι, which, in this case, means ‘to rebel (against)’.

trological fatalism.³³ Moreover, even though Minasean’s emendation gives a sense to the passage that fits Eznik’s reasoning, it too disregards the Greek text of the *De Autexusio*, where no mention is made of a ‘change’ in man’s nature.

In his second conjecture, Minasean surmises a transposition of some words in the text, and emends the passage as follows:

Եթէ այնպիսի ինչ բնութիւն մարդոյն առեալ էր [] ի բնութենէ արարածոյ, [սպա եւ ոչ] յաստուածեղէն գրոց նմա վարդապետութիւն ընծայանայր. (Minasean 1992, 2: 70, end-note on ll. 481-2)

If man had received such a nature by (his own) nature of creature, [then] a teaching would [not] have been given to him by the divine books.

Moving the conclusive conjunction սպա and the negative ոչ further in the text before the second agent complement յաստուածեղէն գրոց, helps clarifying the sense of the passage: if man had known evil and disobedience by nature because he had been created as such, then no teaching would have been given to him by the Bible about him being prone to evil from his childhood (and therefore not from his birth). Moreover, this is the only conjecture among those reviewed up to this point that does not require assuming a radical reworking of the original Greek: ի բնութենէ արարածոյ could well be an idiosyncratic translation of the genitive absolute τῆς φύσεως αὐτῆς οὕτως ἐχούσης, which Eznik does not translate *verbatim* either because he does not understand correctly the Greek clause or because the underlying text is corrupted (note that no mention of any ‘creature’ is made in the Greek text).

However, in my opinion, the supposed transposition has no easy mechanical explanation, and I find it difficult to posit that such a change – which actually made the transmitted text more difficult to understand rather than facilitating its comprehension – could have been intentional. Therefore, I think that սպա ոչ should be left where it is and that սպա ոչ ի բնութենէ is the original reading. If something has dropped from the text, it has to be reintegrated elsewhere.

33 The moral argument was a traditional one in Christian anti-astrological polemic and can be found in many other authors such as Origen, Eusebius of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Caesarea, Didymus the Blind, Diodore of Tarsus, Nemesius of Emesa, all of whom could have been used as sources by Eznik; on this and, more in general, on Eznik’s refutation of astrological fatalism, see Lucca (forthcoming).

3 Two Hypothetical Readings

We all are *nani gigantum humeris insidentes*. As Mariès first surmised, my hypothesis – provided that the Armenian text has not been permanently corrupted – is that Eznik could indeed have misread part of the Greek text not as the words of the Orthodox but rather as an objection of the Heterodox. However, whereas Mariès conjectures that this happens from κατὰ δὲ τὴν τινοῦ διδασκαλίαν τοῦτο πεπορθέναι λέγω το μεμαθηκέναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον τὰ πονηρά, I think that the misread passage is shorter, and is found previously in the text. As I have said above, the only part of the Greek text that is completely missing from the Armenian is ὅθεν οὐδὲ τοιοῦτον τὸν ἄνθρωπον πρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ γεγονέναι φημί. In adapting the dialogic form of his Greek *Vorlage*, Eznik reworks the rhetorical line addressed to the Heterodox by the Orthodox (πάντως δὲ πόθεν τοῦτο τὸ παρακοῦσαι ζητήσεις), answering to it by concocting the following clause: ալլ յանսաստուրեմէ զհպտալ ստունգաւննիհն. Note that, where in the beginning of the given passage Methodius speaks of παρεκοή, ‘disobedience’, Eznik has չար, ‘evil’. Which is why, in reworking the rhetorical comment of the Orthodox, he can say that “it [i.e. evil] befell the transgressor out of disobedience (τοῦτο τὸ παρακοῦσαι)”, thus linking the earlier remark to the previous assertion that evil is not an uncreated, self-existent being. Eznik might have regarded the words that in the Greek text follow the comment of the Orthodox (ἀλλὰ κείται σαφῶς ἐν τινι θείᾳ γραφῇ, ὅθεν οὐδὲ τοιοῦτον τὸν ἄνθρωπον πρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ γεγονέναι φημί) as the reply of the Heterodox, perhaps misreading οὐδέ in the second clause as οὖν δέ (or, he could have been working on a manuscript that already carried that reading), thus interpreting it as an affirmative instead of a negative clause. The Heterodox would have replied: “But this is clearly stated in the divine scripture, which, therefore (οὖν δέ), is why I say that man *had been made* by God as such!”. Significantly, Eznik does not translate the clause governed by ὅθεν.³⁴ At that point,

34 Or is it this clause that Eznik reworks and translates with դարձեալ, ոչ յարարչիւ a few lines before in the text? If this would be the case, then τοῦ ποιήσαντος αὐτὴν ὄντος γενητοῦ would be missing in the Armenian text (and յարարչիւ would be obviously referring to God and not to man, contrary to what I have previously said). However, I found this unlikely, and less economical: it implies that Eznik omitted to translate τοῦ ποιήσαντος αὐτὴν ὄντος γενητοῦ, went on translating πάντως δὲ πόθεν τοῦτο τὸ παρακοῦσαι ζητήσεις (ալլ յանսաստուրեմէ զհպտալ ստունգաւննիհն), and then reworked ἀλλὰ κείται σαφῶς ἐν τινι θείᾳ γραφῇ, ὅθεν οὐδὲ τοιοῦτον τὸν ἄνθρωπον πρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ γεγονέναι φημί by transposing the first clause *further on* in the text (յաստուածեղիւ գրոց), and the second clause *further back* (դարձեալ, ոչ յարարչիւ). My hypothesis would spare this double (reverse) transposition in comparison with the Greek text: it surmises an omission (ὅθεν οὐδὲ τοιοῦτον τὸν ἄνθρωπον πρὸς τοῦ θεοῦ γεγονέναι φημί) and *one* transposition *further on* in the text (ἀλλὰ κείται σαφῶς ἐν τινι θείᾳ γραφῇ / յաստուածեղիւ գրոց).

the Orthodox would have answered: “But (δέ) I say that he knew it [i.e. disobedience] through the teaching of someone”,³⁵ which Eznik translates as ոչ [...] յուրուք վարդապետութենէ դրդեալ, relating it directly to what he may have read as the last words of the Orthodox before the assumed reply of the Heterodox: πάντως δὲ πόθεν τοῦτο τὸ παρακοῦσαι ζητήσεις, so that in Armenian we have:

Այլ յանաստութենէ դիպեալ ստունգանողին եւ ուրուք վարդապետութենէ դրդեալ.

But it [i.e. evil] befell the transgressor out of disobedience, and it was instigated by the teaching of someone.

Then, after translating – albeit not *verbatim* – the two clauses that follow in the Greek text (οὐδὲ γὰρ τοιαύτην ἦν φύσις εἰληφῶς ὁ ἄνθρωπος and εἰ γὰρ οὕτως εἶχεν) with զի ոչ եթէ այնպիսի ինչ հաստատեալ բնութեամբ գմարդն ցուցանելի and եթէ այնպիսի ինչ բնութիւն մարդոյն առեալ էր, Eznik formulates a counter-objection to the untranslated objection of the Heterodox, conflating the mention of the “divine scripture” that he attributed to him (ἀλλὰ κεῖται σαφῶς ἔν τινι θεία γραφή) with the apodosis governed by εἰ γὰρ οὕτως εἶχεν, and changing the genitive absolute of the Greek (perhaps because he misunderstood it or could not grasp its meaning) into an agent complement:

Ապա ոչ ի բնութենէ արարածոյ եւ յաստուածեղէն գրոց նմա վարդապետութիւն ընծայանայր

Then a teaching would not have been given to him by the nature of (a) creature and by the divine books.

As for the mention of the divine books, what has been said above holds here too: had man known evil and disobedience by nature, then the Bible would have been useless (the theological consequence of the Carneadean moral argument); in particular, the biblical quotation that follows in the text would have been false (which, in Eznik’s line of reasoning, is obviously impossible). This brings us to ոչ ի բնութենէ արարածոյ [...] նմա վարդապետութիւն ընծայանայր (“a teaching would not have been given to him by the nature of [a] creature”), and to what it could mean here, considering that its protasis

35 The misunderstanding could have been facilitated by the fact that in the Greek text both clauses contain a *verbum dicendi* – φημί and λέγω respectively –, which Eznik could have read as coordinated in an adversative fashion by the particle δέ, thus interpreting the sentence as an exchange between the Orthodox and the Heterodox: “I [i.e. the Heterodox] say that...”, “But I [i.e. the Orthodox] say that...”.

reads եթե այնպիսի ինչ բնութիւն մարդոյն առեալ էր (“if man had received such a nature”).

I think that two solutions can be proposed: one that reads *արարածոյ* (in the genitive singular form, as all the editions of Eznik’s text have), and one that reads *արարածոց* (in the plural genitive form). The reading carried by the one extant manuscript is *արարածո*, which finds its explanation in the fact that final -յ is usually silent in both (post-)classical and modern Armenian (Godel 1975, 24; Vaux 1998, 20). Since յ and ց are often confounded in uncial Armenian script (*erkat’agir*), and mechanical corruptions of ց to յ are also commonly found in Armenian manuscripts, the reading *արարածո* can result from an original *արարածոյ* (*արարածոյ* > *արարածո*) or *արարածոց* read as *արարածոյ*, without necessarily being first copied as such (*արարածոց* [> *արարածոյ*] > *արարածո*). Therefore, both conjectures are equally palaeographically tenable, and both readings can be explained as mechanical errors. Moreover, as here Eznik expands and reworks his *Vorlage*, where no mention of any ‘creature’ is made, the interpretation of the Armenian text (whether one chooses to read *արարածոյ* or *արարածոց*) can also rest on internal, contextual analysis: provided that Eznik added the mention of the ‘creature/creatures’, *what* did he mean to say by that, and how does what *he* is saying relate to his Greek original?

I start by expounding the hypothesis that assumes *արարածոց* as the original reading, which I deem less probable (but still tenable). In this case, the Armenian text would read:

Եթե այնպիսի ինչ բնութիւն մարդոյն առեալ էր, սպա
նչ ի բնութենէ արարածոց եւ յաստուածեղէն գրոց նմա
վարդապետութիւն ընծայանայր.

Such a reading has been already conjectured – yet not (as far as I know) argued for – by Norayr Biwzandac’i in his notes on the text of Eznik (*non vidi*, but see Minasean 1992, 2: 70, endnote on ll. 481-2).³⁶

Moreover, Eznik connects the nature of ‘creatures’ (*արարածոց*, in the plural genitive form) with the ‘divine books’ in two other passages of his work, where he says that both the Bible and the nature of creatures witness to the resurrection of the dead and to the existence of only three kinds of rational creatures – angels, demons, and man:

Եւ այսու յայտ առնեն, թե գյարութիւնն իսմ մարմն[յ] իսպիանել
կամին, ուր աստուածական Գիրք եւ արարածոց բնութիւնք

³⁶ A reading *արարածոց* is supposed also by Č’aloyan in his Russian translation: Но если бы человек возымел такую природу, то это было бы не от природы сотворенных <существе> (1968, 53 [italics added]).

անդադար վկա[յ]են գյարութեն մեռելոց: (Eznik, I, 18 [§ 79]; (Minasean 1992, 1: 168, ll. 828-30)

And they show by this that they want to obstruct the resurrection of the body, whereas the *divine books* and the *nature* of creatures bear unceasing witness to the resurrection of the dead. (Blanchard, Young 1998, 75)

Զի չիք ինչ արարած բանաւոր արտաքս քան զայս երիս ջոկս՝ զհրէշտակաց, զդիւաց եւ զմարդկան, յամենայն աստուածատուր Գրոց եւ ի բնութենէ արարածոց յայտնի է: (Eznik, I, 24 [§ 122]; (Minasean 1992, 1: 174, ll. 1129-31)

That no rational creature exists outside of these three, distinct ones: angels, demons, and man, is evident from all of *the divine books* and from the nature of creatures. (Blanchard, Young 1998, 91)

Therefore, one could understand in the same way also the passage analysed here: both the whole Creation and the Bible witness that man was not created innately evil and disobedient. And, turning this argument in an unreal conditional clause that rests on the opposite condition:

If man had received such a nature, a teaching would not have been given to him by the nature of creatures and by the divine books.

But, following Eznik’s reasoning, the Scripture *does* say the opposite (“mankind is inclined from childhood [not from birth] towards the solicitude of evil”), and the same does the nature of creatures, for no animal or vegetable or atmospheric condition is innately evil or harmful to man, as Eznik himself argues further on in his text (Eznik, I, 15-16 [§§ 63-71]). True is that, if this is the case, Eznik would be anticipating here an argument that he would illustrate only later; nevertheless, the fact that twice elsewhere in his work he calls upon Scripture *and* Creation as witnesses against his adversaries, could be a point in favour of this reading.

If such an emendation is consistent with Eznik’s reasoning, the second hypothesis (արարածն < արարածոյ), which I regard as more likely, has the benefit of being more faithful to the general sense of the Greek. But first, supposing that արարածոյ is the original reading, one should ask *whose* nature Eznik had in mind, and *which* creature he was thinking of. Consistently with his emendation, Abra-

hamyan assumes that ի բնութենէ արարածոյ is referring to man.³⁷ Although he does not accept Galēm k’earean’s (and, consequently, Abrahamyan’s) emendation, Minasean thinks the same, even if he acknowledges the inherent imperspicuity of the text.³⁸ Mariès too shares this view, at least in his article of 1924,³⁹ whereas his French translation of 1959 is too literal to draw such a conclusion, and he does not comment upon the possible referent of the word in the end-notes.⁴⁰ Still, I think that Eznik is speaking here of someone else’s nature. As one of the arguments found in the passage is that man has come to know evil and disobedience through the teaching of someone else (κατὰ δὲ τὴν τινοῦ διδασκαλίαν / յորորոյ վարդապետութենէ), the creature whose nature actually gave a ‘teaching’ to man could be the one who, both in Methodius and Eznik, is referred to as ‘the teacher of evil’, i.e. Satan. Therefore, the meaning of the unreal conditional clause would be: had man known evil and disobedience by nature (i.e. in an innate way), he would not have needed to learn them from Satan, and the teaching of the Bible would have been useless/unnecessary. However, for the conditional clause to have such a meaning,

37 Abrahamyan gives a translation of the passage in question where it is clear that he considers ի բնութենէ արարածոյ as referring to man’s own nature: Եթէ մարդն այդպիսի չար էութիւն ստացած լինէր [...], ապա անհնազանդութիւնը նրա մեջ երևան կգար ոչ թէ մեկի հրահրումից, այլ (*իր իսկ*) արարածային էութիւնից (Abrahamyan 1970, 96 [italics added]; see also Abrahamyan 1994, 37); the same translation (от его природной сущности) is found in Arevšatjan 2008.

38 Եթէ մարդն ստացած լինէր այնպիսի [...] բնութիւն, ապա նրա արարածային բնութիւնից եւ աստուծային Գրքից բխող վարդապետութիւն կամ ուսուցում չէր ընծայուի կամ արուի նրան (Minasean 1971, 177 [italics added]); nevertheless, in his edition of the text, Minasean admits: “Անհասկանալի է, թէ ինչպէ՛ս մարդուն վարդապետութիւն է ընծայուում *իր արարածային բնութիւնից*” (Minasean 1992, 2: 70, endnote on ll. 481-2 [italics added]). Orenego, who follows Minasean’s critical edition, translates արարածոյ by preceding it with the indefinite article: “Se l’uomo avesse avuto una tal natura, non gli sarebbe stato offerto alcun insegnamento *dalla natura di una creatura* o dai libri divini” (Orenego 1996, 47 [italics added]); whereas he does not comment upon his translation choice, I would say that he does not regard ի բնութենէ արարածոյ as referring to man’s own nature.

39 “Ce ne serait donc pas *en vertu de (sa) nature créé* [qu’il serait devenu mauvais], et un enseignement lui aurait été fourni (à ce sujet) par les divines Écriture” (Mariès 1924, 109 [italics added]).

40 “Si, quelque nature de cette sorte, l’homme avait reçue, conséquemment, point ne lui eût été, *de par nature de créature* et de par divines écritures, doctrine offerte” (Mariès, Mercier 1959b, 566-7 [§ 45] [italics added]). Zeifelder, who translates Eznik in German according to Mariès’ edition, precedes her translation of արարածոյ with the definite article: “Wenn der Mensch eine solche Natur erhalten hätte, dann wäre ihm nicht durch die Natur *der Kreatur* und aus den göttlichen Schriften die Unterweisung gegeben” (Zeifelder 2004, 61 [italics added]); she too does not comment upon her translation choice, and it is unclear whether she understands “die Natur der Kreatur” as referring to man. Blanchard and Young, though they too follow Mariès’ critical text, elude the difficulty by *not translating* ի բնութենէ արարածոյ: “If man had received such a nature, then that teaching of the divine Scripture would not have been given to him” (Blanchard, Young 1998, 57); significantly, they do not signal the omission.

an omission should be conjectured. As already noted, the ‘teacher’ in question has already been referred to as ‘someone (else)’ in both the Greek and the Armenian text. Now, the genitive form of the Armenian indefinite pronoun/adjective for ‘someone, some other’ is *ուրուք*, which, in the sequence *ուրուք արարածոյ*, could have been unintentionally omitted by haplography due to *homoeogrammaton*, as *ու* and *ա* can be very similar in minuscule Armenian script (*bolorgir*).⁴¹ A scribe would have skipped from *ուրուք* (visually perceived as *արար*, or maybe *արար*) directly to *արարածոյ*. Therefore, one can conjecture an original text that read as follows:

Եթէ այնպիսի ինչ բնութիւն մարդոյն առեալ էր, ապա ոչ ի բնութենէ ուրուք արարածոյ եւ յաստուածեղէն գրոց նմա վարդապետութիւն ընծայանայր.⁴²

If man had received such a nature, a teaching would not have been given to him by the nature of some other creature [i.e. the devil] and by the divine books.⁴³

This second hypothesis has the strong advantage of being mechanically explainable in terms of textual criticism as well as conveying the same (general) meaning of its Greek original, which is why I consider it as the most likely of the two. Even if Eznik did not understand the genitive absolute clause of his *Vorlage*, he nevertheless made sense of it by fashioning a clause that fitted the subject matter of the whole passage: evil and disobedience are not innate in man but (willingly) learned through the teaching of ‘someone else’ – a cunning վարդապետ ծածուկ, as Eznik would put it, who, ironically, if

⁴¹ When used as an adjective, *ոք* is usually postponed to the noun, yet sometimes it can be found placed *before* its referent (Minassian 1996, 370-1), as it would be this way here if my emendation is correct. As it happens, Eznik uses *ոք* precisely in this way in another passage of his work: եւ եթէ գազանք վասն վնասակարութեան ի չարէ *ուսէքէ արարչէ կարծիցին* (Eznik, II, 11 [§ 201]; (Minasean 1992, 1: 183, 1702-3 [italics added]).

⁴² Alternatively, an omission of *այոյ* (instead of *ուրուք*) or *այոյ ուրուք* could be surmised. But, while the meaning of the clause would remain roughly the same, I think that both cases are less palaeographically tenable.

⁴³ According to Adonc’, though this is the meaning to be given to the Greek original (այն ժամանակ սաստանայի վարդապետութեան պէտք չէր լինի, քանի որ մարդու բնութիւնը չար է կամ չար է ստեղծուած), Eznik has ի բնութենէ արարածոյ because he fails to understand the genitive absolute clause (τῆς φύσεως αὐτῆς οὕτως ἐχούσης), as he cannot make sense of διδασκαλία / վարդապետութիւն as referring both to the devil *and* the Bible (Adonc’ 1926, 111). Abrahamyan argues that վարդապետութիւն as referring to the devil should be given the meaning of ‘incitation, instigation’ (Abrahamyan 1970, 95). Accordingly, he translates it as *հրահրում* (see also Abrahamyan 1994, 37); however, even if վարդապետութիւն had been ‘polysemic’ in classical Armenian, as Abrahamyan claims (but cf. Minasean 1971, 177, for criticism), here it simply translates διδασκαλία of the Greek.

my conjecture is true, would have found a shrewd way to make himself ‘hidden’ also in the transmitted text.

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