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Cover

Mašhad, Kitābhāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḡawī 300, f. 1v
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, *grec* 1853, f. 186v

Menander in Syriac: From Euthalian Apparatus to Scholia on Gregory of Nazianzus

Yury N. Arzhanov*

Abstract

The collection of moral maxims known as the “Syriac Menander” has much in common with the new Christian educational models of the fourth-fifth centuries, which established the Bible, especially the books of Proverbs and Jesus Sirach, as alternatives to the gnomic collections attributed to Menander. The Syriac reception of the “Euthalian apparatus” adopted for the study of the orations of Gregory of Nazianzus gave birth to new collections of sentences, which were closely connected with the name of Menander. The evidence presented in the article helps us to better understanding the reception of the figure of Menander in Syriac literature.

1. Educational background of the “Syriac Menander”

“Syriac Menander” refers to three collections of moral sentences that differ in volume and in some minor details but in general contain the same version of the text:¹

(A) The florilegium in BL *Add.* 14658 (ff. 163vb-167vb)² dated to the seventh century is the earliest and largest collection of sentences bearing the title “Menander the Sage said ...”.³

(B) A selection from A is found on the fly-leaves of BL *Add.* 14598 (ff. 1v-3r) under the name “the Greek philosopher Homer”.⁴ The codex was copied in the seventh-ninth centuries, but the script of the flyleaves is later and may be dated to the tenth-thirteenth centuries.⁵

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¹ The sigla are taken from: Y. Arzhanov, “Amrus Philosophus Graecus: A New Witness to the Syriac Sentences of Menander”, *Le Muséon* 130.1-2 (2017), pp. 71-121.

² Cf. W. Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac manuscripts in the British Museum, acquired since the year 1838*, vol. 3, Longmans & Co. - Asher & Co., London 1872, pp. 1154-60.

³ The text of the anthology was published for the first time in J.P.N. Land, *Anecdota Syriaca*, t. 1, Brill, Leiden 1862, pp. 64-73. Cf. A. Baumstark, “Lucubrationes Syro-Graecae”, *Jahrbücher für classische Philologie* 21, *Supplementband* (1894), (353-524) pp. 473-90. English translation: T. Baarda, “The Sentences of the Syriac Menander”, in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, Hendrickson Publishers, New York 1985, pp. 583-606. A new edition with an English translation: D.G. Monaco, *The Sentences of the Syriac Menander: Introduction, Text and Translation, and Commentary*, Gorgias Press, Piscataway 2013. Cf. W. Frankenberg, “Die Schrift des Menander (Land *anecd. syr.* I, S. 64ff.), ein Produkt der jüdischen Spruchweisheit”, *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 15 (1895), pp. 226-77; J.-P. Audet, “La sagesse de Ménandre l'Égyptien”, *Revue biblique* 59 (1952), pp. 55-81.

⁴ Published in: Arzhanov, “Amrus Philosophus Graecus” (above, n. 1).

⁵ Cf. Wright, *Catalogue* (above, n. 2), vol. 2, pp. 731-2; Arzhanov, “Amrus Philosophus Graecus” (above, n. 1), pp. 76-8.

(E) An epitome of A is found in BL *Add.* 14614 (ff. 116r-117r) dated to the eighth century.⁶ It was included in a composite anthology of excerpts that comprises ff. 114r-121v of the codex and bears the general title “Select Sayings of the Philosophers on Upright Conduct”. The full versions of the fragments inserted in the collection are to a large extent found in BL *Add.* 14658, i.e. in the codex containing A.

The collection of B ascribed to Homer is a remarkable witness to the combination of the two names in Syriac. Homer is the only figure besides Menander that appears in A in the *chreia* included in the florilegium, and that could have served as an impulse for the scribe of B to attribute the whole anthology to Homer instead of Menander. The association of both authors is characteristic of the Egyptian papyri that have preserved school exercises used in literary education.⁷ A visual expression of this association may be found in double herms from the Roman period.⁸

The scholastic background⁹ becomes evident in the following passage of the Syriac florilegium ascribed to “Menander the Sage” (collection A):¹⁰

If your son goes forth from his childhood humble and wise, teach him writing and wisdom.
For writing is something that is good to learn.
It means enlightened eyes and excellent tongue.

The motive to learn writing (τὰ γράμματα) is predominant in two Greek-Coptic collections of *Menandrou gnomai*, which probably derive from a Coptic monastery and include not only the *monostichoi*, but also quotations from the Book of Proverbs.¹¹ The combination of these two sources is characteristic of the Syriac florilegium which bears the name of Menander.¹² It reflects the educational program established by the writings of the Cappadocian Fathers in the late fourth-early fifth centuries¹³ and adopted in Syriac monasteries. The “Syriac Menander” as product of this cultural development may probably be dated to the fifth-sixth centuries, although this gnomic

⁶ Cf. Wright, *Catalogue* (above, n. 2), vol. 2, pp. 745-6. The text was published in: E. Sachau, *Inedita Syriaca: Eine Sammlung syrischer Übersetzungen von Schriften griechischer Profanliteratur*, Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Halle 1870, pp. 80 [ⲁ] - 81 [Ⲃ].

⁷ Cf. T. Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 1998, p. 69.

⁸ One of the double herms combining the heads of Homer and Menander may be seen in Rome in the Palazzo Massimo alle Terme that belongs to the Museo Nazionale Romano: cf. S. Nervegna, *Menander in Antiquity: The Contexts of Reception*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2013, pp. 201-2.

⁹ On rhetorical structures in the sentences of the Syriac Menander see especially A.K. Kirk, *The Composition of the Sayings Source: Genre, Synchrony, and Wisdom Redaction in Q*, Brill, Leiden 1998 (Novum Testamentum, Supplements, 91), pp. 137-40.

¹⁰ Syriac text: BL *Add.* 14658, f. 164ra, lines 6-12 (Monaco, *Sentences* [above, n. 1], p. 60). The English translation is mine.

¹¹ D. Hagedorn - M. Weber, “Die griechisch-koptische Rezension der Menandersentenzen”, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 3 (1968), pp. 15-50; cf. W.E. Crum - H.G. Evelyn -White, *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes*, Part 2, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York 1926, pp. 320-1.

¹² Cf. Y.N. Arzhanov, “Archäologie eines Textes: Die Menander-Sentenzen in syrischen Spruchsammlungen”, *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 19.1 (2015), pp. 69-88.

¹³ The Christian pedagogical program designed for the monasteries is found in the “Long Rules” of Basil of Caesarea, which are dated to the late fourth century. Cf. L.I. Larsen, “On Learning a New Alphabet: The Sayings of the Desert Fathers and the Monostichs of Menander”, in S. Rubenson (ed.), *Early Monasticism and Classical Paideia*, Peeters, Leuven 2013 (*Studia Patristica*, 55.3), pp. 59-78.

anthology certainly relied on a number of earlier sources.¹⁴ It expresses the idea of the “fear of God”, which became central for the educational program expressed in various monastic sources, including the collection of discourses (*memre*) of Philoxenos of Mabbug (d. 523).¹⁵

The B version of the Syriac Menander (ascribed to Homer) has come down to us on the flyleaves of the codex containing the discourses of Philoxenos.¹⁶ The bishop of Mabbug addressed his writings to the West Syriac monasteries suggesting a pedagogical system for gradual progress in spiritual life, which involved stages of faith, simplicity, and fear of God. The *memre* included a large number of biblical quotations, intended to serve as short exemplary texts and illustrations to the main ideas of the discourses.

The collection of sentences of the Syriac Menander on the flyleaves is not the only additional element to supplement the main text of the BL *Add.* 14598. Most of the biblical passages coming up in the discourses of Philoxenos are marked in the margins with special signs of angular brackets and dots (• >).¹⁷ Near some of these “quotation marks” we find short notes referring to the origins of the passages cited by Philoxenos.

The word ܡܘܨܝܘܢ points to one of the Gospels as the source of the quotation, the note ܕܡܘܨܝܘܢ to the Book of Acts, ܡܘܨܝܘܢ to the epistles of Paul, etc. We encounter the names of the biblical figures that also serve as references to the books associated with them: “David” serves as a synonym to the Psalms, “Jacob” and “Rebecca” remind us about the stories of the book of Genesis, and “Elia” and “Elisha” bring us to the stories of the two prophets in the historical books of the Old Testament.¹⁸ A number of didactic remarks (e.g., ܡܘܨܝܘܢ “look”, ܡܘܨܝܘܢ “pay attention”, ܡܘܨܝܘܢ “listen”, and ܡܘܨܝܘܢ “write”) bring the attention of the readers to particular topics, quotations, and short exemplary stories appearing in the *memre* of Philoxenos.

What is significant in the marginal notes of this codex is the fact that they are written in the same negligent cursive script as the sentences of the Syriac Menander on the flyleaves and obviously belong to the same hand. Apparently, the scribe was interested in those elements of the discourses of Philoxenos that derived from other sources and could be identified and treated separately from the main text. In several cases the marginal notes in the codex have the form of short sentences which could easily be remembered.¹⁹

¹⁴ The dating of the “Syriac Menander” remains a debated issue; cf. the useful summary in Baarda, “Syriac Menander” (above, n. 3), pp. 584-5.

¹⁵ Cf. A. de Halleux, *Philoxène de Mabbog: sa vie, ses écrits, sa théologie*, Impr. Orientaliste, Leuven 1963. Cf. D.A. Michelson, “A Bibliographic Clavis to the Works of Philoxenos of Mabbug”, *Hugoye* 13.2 (2010), pp. 273-338.

¹⁶ E.A.W. Budge, *The Discourses of Philoxenos Bishop of Mabbogh, A.D. 485-519*, 2 vols., Asher & Co., London 1894. A new English translation: R. Kitchen, *The Discourses of Philoxenos of Mabbug*, Cistercian Publications, Collegeville 2014 (Cistercian Studies, 235).

¹⁷ According to Aristonicus Alexandrinus’ *De Signis Iliadis*, critical signs have been used in the mss. with the text of the *Iliad*, cf. Aristonici *Περὶ σημείων Ἰλιάδος reliquiae emendatiores*, edidit L. Friedlaender, Dieterich, Göttingen 1853. The signs included the διπλή probably looking like >, i.e. similarly to the “quotation marks” in Syriac manuscripts. The practice of marking particular passages in the works of Plato is described by Diogenes Laertius in the *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* III.65-66 (cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of eminent philosophers*, ed. T. Dorandi, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2013, pp. 276-7). He writes about using the διπλή for marking τὰ δόγματα καὶ τὰ ἀρέσκοντα Πλάτωνι, “doctrines and opinions characteristic of Plato”.

¹⁸ The references to the folios of the manuscript, where these marginal notes are found, are given in: Arzhanov, “Amrus Philosophus Graecus” (above, n. 1), pp. 78-80.

¹⁹ Cf. Arzhanov, “Amrus Philosophus Graecus” (above, n. 1), pp. 80-1.

The scribe's interest in the gnomic material resulted in adding a collection of moral sentences on the flyleaves, probably intended to serve for pedagogical purpose. Toward that end, the sentences of the Syriac Menander focus on the idea of the fear of God. The concept of the fear of God played a central role in the pedagogical system of Philoxenos, and the sentences of the Syriac Menander must have served as a useful supplement to the discourses.

The codex containing the B version provides us with an insight into the function of the gnomic sayings in the educational context. Several strategies may be identified based on the examples listed above:

- 1) Marking of "exemplary texts" (from the Bible) with signs of quotations inside the treatises used for educational purposes;
- 2) identifying of the sources of the "exemplary texts" cited anonymously;
- 3) writing down short sentences in the margins of the authoritative texts, deriving either from the texts directly or from other sources;
- 4) adding collections of gnomic sayings attributed to non-Christian authors (Homer/Menander) on the flyleaves.

This practice of transmission of moral maxims in the context of study of the authoritative texts goes back to the tradition that is associated with the name of Philoxenos whose treatises became the object of the scholarly interest in the codex containing selections from the Syriac Menander.

2. *Gnomic Sayings in the Euthalian Apparatus*

In 508/509 Philoxenos commissioned a new translation of the New Testament which was prepared by Chorepiscopus Polycarp but became associated with the name of the commissioner and is known now as the "Philoxenian" version. The Greek manuscripts that were used for that purpose included the so-called Euthalian material, a scholarly apparatus attached to the Acts of the Apostles, the Pauline Epistles, and the Catholic Epistles.²⁰ Nothing is known for certain about the supposed author of the work or his life. Since he made use of the texts of Eusebius of Caesarea, he probably lived in the fourth century and was familiar with the rhetorical tradition of dividing books into fragments for the sake of reading and scholarly work.²¹ Euthalius himself referred explicitly to an earlier tradition on which his work was based, and his own material was probably also an object of transformation.

The Euthalian apparatus was usually transmitted as an addition to the biblical text. It enjoyed a huge popularity in the Middle Ages and has been preserved in hundreds of Greek mss.²² Translations

²⁰ On the work of Euthalius, see J.A. Robinson, *Euthaliana: Studies of Euthalius, Codex H of the Pauline Epistles and the Armenian Version*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 1895 (Texts and Studies III.3); H. von Soden, *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments I.1*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1911, pp. 637-82; L.C. Willard, *A Critical Study of the Euthalian Apparatus*, W. de Gruyter, Berlin-New York 2009 (Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Textforschung, 41).

²¹ Cf. G. Zuntz, "Euthalius = Euzoius?", *Vigiliae Christianae* 7 (1953), pp. 16-22.

²² The "Euthalian material" was published on the basis of nine Vatican mss. by L.A. Zacagni, *Collectanea monumentorum veterum Ecclesiae graecae ac latinae quae hactenus in Vaticana bibliotheca delituerunt...*, vol. 1, Typis Sacrae congreg. de propag. fide, Romae 1698, pp. 401-708. The text of Zacagni was reprinted in *PG* 85, pp. 627-790. Ernst von Dobschütz used nine additional mss. in his most valuable study: "Euthaliusstudien", *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 19 (1898), pp. 107-54. Louis Willard (cf. n. 20) reportedly based his study on ca. 400 mss. that were available to him in the microfilm collection at Münster. For an English translation of some sections of the Euthalian apparatus see V. Blomkvist, *Euthalian Traditions: Text, Translation and Commentary*, W. De Gruyter, Berlin-New York 2012 (Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der alchristlichen Literatur), p. 170.

have been made into Armenian, Syriac, Gothic, and Church Slavonic. The Euthalian apparatus included three prologues (to Pauline Epistles, Acts, and Catholic Epistles), lists of chapters (κεφάλαια), and summaries (ὑποθέσεις) of individual books. Additionally, the apparatus included six collections of testimonies (μαρτυρίαι), referring primarily to Old Testament quotations used in the Acts and the Apostolic Epistles with references to their origin in the biblical text. In five cases these lists were preceded by short summaries explaining the system of references in the longer sections.²³

The six collections of testimonies by Euthalius provide us with an early example of transmission of sentences of Greek philosophers in context of the study of Christian authoritative texts. Besides the OT quotations, which clearly dominated in the lists of μαρτυρίαι, these lists included some references to the “non-canonical” writings, including the “Apocrypha” of Elia, Moses and Jeremiah, and several classical Greek authors, who are well-known to us from gnomic anthologies: Menander, Homer, and Demades.

A scholion to Acts 17:28 in the apparatus was based on the two proverbs introduced by the Apostle Paul with the words: “As some of your own poets have said ...” The Greek scholiast (known as Euthalius) found it necessary to identify the sources of these quotations and stated that their possible authors were “Aratus the Astronomer and Homer the Poet”.²⁴

A sentence attributed to Menander appears in the part dealing with the Pauline Epistles. The admonition of the Apostle in 1 Cor. 15:33 implemented a hidden quotation from the *gnomai monostichoi* of Menander:

μη̄ πλανᾶσθε· φθείρουσιν ἥθη χρηστὰ ὀμιλίαι κακαί

Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals”.²⁵

It was probably the rhetorical education of the scholiast that helped him to correctly identify the source of the words of the Apostle, which is combined with another identification connected with the preceding verse of 1 Cor. and presented as a “Laconian proverb”:²⁶

ΔΙΙΙ. ξβ´. Λακωνικὴ παροιμία α´, Φάγωμεν, καὶ πίωμεν, αὔριον γὰρ ἀποθνήσκομεν.

ΔΠ. ζγ´. Μενάνδρου κωμωδιογράφου γνώμη α´, Φθείρουσιν ἥθη χρηστὰ ὀμιλίαι κακαί.

XIV (62) First Laconian proverb: “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die”.

XV (63) First maxim of the comic writer Menander: “Bad company ruins good morals”.

²³ On the system of references in the Euthalian lists of quotations cf. Robinson, *Euthaliana* (above, n. 20), pp. 18-20; Willard, *Critical Study* (above, n. 20), p. 30.

²⁴ Zacagni, *Collectanea* (above, n. 22), p. 420. The first proverb quoted by Paulus is found by Stobaeus in a fragment attributed to Aratus (Stob. I.1.3: Joannis Stobaei *Anthologii libri duo priores*, vol. 1, rec. C. Wachsmuth, Weidmann, Berlin 1884, p. 23.16).

²⁵ The text of the Bible is quoted according to the *Revised Standard Version*. The Greek text: B. Aland *et al.* (eds.), *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28th Revised Ed., Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart 2012, p. 550. Menander, *Gnomai monostichoi*, No. 808: S. Jaekel, *Menandri Sententiae. Comparatio Menandri et Philistionis*, Teubner, Leipzig 1964 (Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana), p. 79.

²⁶ Zacagni, *Collectanea* (above, n. 22), p. 558. Cf. the preceding short summary: Μενάνδρου γνώμη I ιε. Δημάδου λακωνικὴ παροιμία I. ιδ. — “One sentence of Menander (testimony No. 15); one proverb of Demades the Laconian (testimony No. 14)” (Zacagni, *ibid.*, p. 543). Another summary: Μενάνδρου γνώμη α´. Λακωνικὴ, καὶ ἀρχαῖα παροιμία α´. — “One sentence of Menander; one old Laconian proverb” (Zacagni, *ibid.*, p. 546).

Translation of the two Syriac collections:

BL *Add.* 17193*SMMJ* 124

Of the holy Philoxenos: The sayings that Paul quoted from pagan sages and apocryphal books.

Sayings of the pagans that were included by the teachers in their works (...)

[1] From an apocryphal book: “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him” [1 Cor. 2:9].

[1] From the Revelation of the prophet Elijah: “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived ...” and the rest.

[2] An old Laconian proverb: “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” [1 Cor. 15:32]. It is also used by Isaiah [cf. Is. 22:13].

[2] An old Laconian proverb: “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die”.

[3] Proverb of Menander the diviner in *Thais*:³⁸ “Bad company ruins good morals” [1 Cor. 15:33].

[3] Proverb of the comic writer Menander: “Bad company ruins good morals”.

These are in the Epistle to Corinthians. And a little further: In the Epistle to Galatians.

[4] Words from an apocryphal book: “For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation” [Gal. 6:15].

[4] From the Revelation of Moses: “For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation”.

Further in the Epistle to Ephesians:

[5] From an apocryphal book: “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light” [Eph. 5:14].

[5] From the Revelation of the prophet Jeremiah: “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light”.

In the Epistles to Philippians and Colossians, and in the First and Second Epistle to Thessalonians, Paul did not mention any saying from another source.

A quotation from the Epistle to Titus:

[6] Oracle of Epimenides, a diviner from Crete: “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons” [Tit. 1:12].

[6] Oracle of Epimenides, the Cretan diviner: “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons”.

The Syriac translation of the Euthalian apparatus transmitted to the Syriac readers the only sentence of the “comic writer Menander” (who in the BL codex is called surprisingly a “diviner”) that we may directly associate with the Greek corpus of his sentences. The version of the BL codex (first column; cf. the note in Ms. Oxford 331) even gives the title of the comedy (*Thais*) where it could be found.

³⁸ The form ܡܢܪܝܢ is most likely a corruption of ܡܢܪܝܢ.

Elements in the BL codex attest to their provenance from the Euthalian apparatus. This version includes accurate references to the NT books, increasing the likelihood that the collection of the BL ms. derives from a larger corpus of Euthalian material.

The Jerusalem codex version stands closer in many respects to the Euthalian text known to us from the edition of Zacagni, although it lacks those elements which clearly associate it with the Euthalian tradition. The Jerusalem codex integrated the “pagan witnesses” taken from the Euthalian apparatus in the larger collection of “pagan witnesses” found by the Christian authors. The anthology includes the “Prophecies of Greek Philosophers about Christ”, mythological scholia on the writings of Gregory of Nazianzus, and selected sayings of Greek authors found in the orations of Gregory (cf. below). The Jerusalem anthology points thus at the afterlife of the Euthalian method that was applied by the Syriac scholars to the writings of the Church authorities, first of all to those of Gregory of Nazianzus.

3. Gnostic sentences among scholia on the orations of Gregory of Nazianzus

Gregory of Nazianzus (330-390) played a decisive role not only in the development of the Christian theology of the fourth century (the role which brought him the epithet “Theologian”) but also in the Christian reception of the Late Antique system of education. Having received the full scope of the *enkyklios paideia*, Gregory provided the Church with the Christian works shaped after classical rhetorical models and including plenty of explicit quotations from and anonymous references to the ancient authors.³⁹ The works of Gregory, especially his poems and orations, became for Christian readers vehicles of transmission of the Late Antique gnostic materials.⁴⁰

The monostichs of Menander turned out to be an important source of quotations for Gregory.⁴¹ One of the Menandrian sentences is found in *Carmen* I.2.39, and the poem “On virtue” (I.2.10) contains large blocks of quotations taken from *gnomai monostichoi* and other gnostic anthologies, known to Gregory through his rhetorical education.⁴² The short *Carmen morale* 30 was composed as a stylization of the *gnomai monostichoi* and in the Arabic tradition was transmitted as an anthology of sentences of Menander.⁴³

A large corpus of writings of Gregory of Nazianzus was translated into Syriac, some of them several times.⁴⁴ His orations were translated twice,⁴⁵ and the Syriac mss. containing them⁴⁶ reveal a close interest of Syriac scholars in the quotations from “pagan” authors included in the works of “the

³⁹ Cf. K. Demoen, *Pagan and Biblical Exempla in Gregory Nazianzen: A Study in Rhetoric and Hermeneutics*, Brepols, Turnhout 1996 (Corpus Christianorum, Lingua Patrum 2).

⁴⁰ Cf. H.L. Davids, *De gnomologieën van sint Gregorius van Nazianze*, Dekker en Van de Vegt, Nijmegen-Utrecht 1940.

⁴¹ Cf. S. Azzarà, “Fonti e rielaborazione poetica nei *Carmina moralia* di Gregorio di Nazianzo”, in M.S. Funghi (ed.), *Aspetti di letteratura gnomica nel mondo antico* I, L.S. Olschki, Firenze 2003, pp. 53-69.

⁴² Azzarà, “Fonti e rielaborazione poetica” (above, n. 41), pp. 56-9.

⁴³ Cf. M. Ullmann, *Die arabische Überlieferung der sogenannten Menandersentenzen*, Steiner, Wiesbaden 1961 (Abhandlung für die Kunde des Morgenlandes 34.1), pp. 74-80.

⁴⁴ On the Syriac reception of Gregory of Nazianzus cf. C. Detienne, “Grégoire de Nazianze dans la tradition syriaque”, in B. Coulie (ed.), *Studia Nazianzenica I*, Brepols, Turnhout 2000 (Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca [CCSG] 41, Corpus Nazianzenum 8), pp. 175-83; A.B. Schmidt, “The Literary Tradition of Gregory of Nazianzus in Syriac Literature and its Historical Context”, *The Harp* 11-12 (1998-1999), pp. 127-34.

⁴⁵ Cf. W. Lüdtke, “Zur Überlieferung der Reden Gregors von Nazianz”, *Oriens Christianus* 3 (1913), pp. 263-5; A. de Halleux, “La version syriaque des Discours de Grégoire de Nazianze”, in J. Mossay (ed.), *II. Symposium Nazianzenum*, Schönningh, Paderborn et al, 1983, pp. 75-111.

⁴⁶ Cf. A. Van Roey - H. Moors, “Les discours de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze dans la littérature syriaque” I-II, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 4 (1973), pp. 121-33; 5 (1974), pp. 79-125.

Theologian". A Greek series of scholia on Gregory's references to Greek mythology in *Orations* 4, 5, 39, and 43 ascribed to a certain Nonnus were translated into Syriac twice and usually attached to the orations.⁴⁷ The early versions of both orations and scholia have been preserved only in fragmentary form; the second translation was made in 623/624 by the prolific scholar Paul of Edessa.⁴⁸

The gnomic elements found in the writings of Gregory became objects of special attention of Syriac readers, resulting in marginal notes referring to the origins of the quotations, in scholarly notes, and finally in excerpting them with the purpose of building new gnomic collections.⁴⁹ Commentaries and scholia on the orations of Gregory turn out to have much in common with the method of treatment of the "pagan testimonies" in the Euthalian apparatus and they were probably based on the same scholarly tradition.

Ms. BL *Add.* 14549 dated to the eighth/ninth centuries contains a collection of the discourses of Gregory of Nazianzus in a translation by Paul of Edessa.⁵⁰ In the margins of this codex we find notes referring to the Greek mythological figures, philosophers, and scholars (which appear also in the scholia of Ps.-Nonnus): Euclid, Palamedes, Daedalus, etc.⁵¹ These figures are found in *Oration* 28, where the "Theologian" attacks with harsh words the Greek non-Christian philosophy.⁵² The series of critical remarks is interrupted several times by few positive examples of Greek philosophers who remained anonymous in the oration. Similar to the "pagan *exempla*" in the Euthalian apparatus, these anonymous references were identified in the marginal notes attached to the text of the oration in BL *Add.* 14549:

In the opening section Gregory refers to "one of the theologians of the Greeks" (τις τῶν παρ' Ἑλληνισι θεολόγων) who stated the impossibility of defining God in words.⁵³ The same passage quoted anonymously in *Oration* 28, is ascribed to Hermes Trismegistos by Cyril of Alexandria and Stobaeus.⁵⁴ A marginal note suggests the same authorship in the Syriac codex: ~~ⲉⲙⲓⲛⲉⲣⲉⲧⲓⲥⲏⲥ~~ (sic).⁵⁵

⁴⁷ J. Nimmo Smith (ed.), *Pseudo-Nonniani in IV Orationes Gregorii Nazianzeni Commentarii*, Brepols, Turnhout 1993 (CCSG 27, Corpus Nazianzenum 2). English translation: J. Nimmo Smith, *The Christian's Guide to Greek Culture: The Pseudo-Nonnus Commentaries on Sermons 4, 5, 39 and 43 by Gregory of Nazianzus*, Liverpool U.P., Liverpool 2001 (Translated Texts for Historians 37).

⁴⁸ Cf. S.P. Brock, *The Syriac Version of the Pseudo-Nonnos Mythological Scholia*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 1971.

⁴⁹ Cf. A.de Halleux, "Les commentaires syriaques des Discours de Grégoire de Nazianze: Un premier sondage", *Le Muséon* 98.1-2 (1985), pp. 103-47.

⁵⁰ Cf. Wright, *Catalogue* (above, n. 2), vol. 2, pp. 428-31; Van Roey-Moors, "Les discours de Saint Grégoire II" (above, n. 46), pp. 108-13.

⁵¹ BL *Add.* 14549, f. 24r-v.

⁵² PG 36, 25-74; J. Barbel (ed.), *Gregor von Nazianz, Die fünf theologischen Reden*, Patmos Verlag, Düsseldorf 1963, pp. 62-126; P. Gallay (ed.), *Grégoire de Nazianze, Discours 27-31 (discours théologiques)*, Éditions du Cerf, Paris 1978 (Sources chrétiennes 250), pp. 100-74. English translation: Ch.G. Browne - J.E. Swallow, "Select Orations of Saint Gregory Nazianzen", in Ph. Schaff - H. Wace (eds.), *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second series, vol. 7, The Christian Literature Company, New York 1894, pp. 288b-301a. Two Syriac versions of the oration were published in *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni Opera. Versio Syriaca IV: Orationes XXVIII, XXIX, XXX, XXXI*, ed. J.-Cl. Haelewyck, Brepols, Turnhout 2007 (CCSG 65; Corpus Nazianzenum 23).

⁵³ Θεὸν νοῆσαι μὲν χαλεπὸν· φράσαι δὲ ἀδύνατον, ὡς τις τῶν παρ' Ἑλληνισι θεολόγων ἐφιλοσόφησεν (PG 36, 29C = 106-108 Gallay = 70 Barbel). English translation: Browne-Swallow, *Orations* (above, n. 52), p. 289b. The Syriac version: Haelewyck, *Sancti Gregorii Nazianzeni Opera. Versio Syriaca IV* (above, n. 52), p. 17.

⁵⁴ Cyril Alexandrinus, *Contra Julianum* I.43 [P. Burguière - P. Évieux (eds.), *Cyrille d'Alexandrie. Contre Julien, tome 1: livres 1 et 2*, Éditions du Cerf, Paris 1985 (SC 322), p. 190]; Stob., *Antol.*, II.1.26 (Wachsmuth, vol. 2, p. 9).

⁵⁵ BL *Add.* 14549, f. 17r.

4. Conclusion

The evidence listed above adds new details to the image of Menander in Syriac literature. It closely associates the name of the Greek poet with the scholastic environment. The Syriac reception of Menander and the gnomic materials associated with his name reflect the change of educational models that took place in Syria and Palestine in the Late Antique and early medieval periods.

This development may be roughly summarized as follows:

1) The comedies of Menander were known in the Syriac urban centers that were influenced by the Greek education and culture, e.g. in the Antioch on Orontes, before the fourth century¹⁰⁷ and could have been present even in Syriac monastic libraries.¹⁰⁸

2) The collection of moral maxims which became known as the “Syriac Menander” was the product of the introduction of educational models in the late fourth-early fifth centuries expressed in the monastic rules of Basil of Caesarea, which established the Bible, especially the books of Proverbs and Sirach, as alternatives to the gnomic collections attributed to Menander.

3) The Syriac translation of the Euthalian apparatus in the early sixth century gave Syriac scholars examples of non-Christian gnomic sayings (including a sentence of Menander) in the context of the Bible. The separate transmission of the few “pagan *exempla*” from the Euthalian apparatus in Syriac mss. bears witness to the importance of this channel.

4) The Euthalian method of identification of non-Christian “testimonies” inside the New Testament books was applied to other authoritative texts, e.g., to the biblical quotations in the treatises of Philoxenos, which in BL *Add.* 14598 were supplemented by the sentences of the Syriac Menander.

5) The application of the Euthalian method to the orations of Gregory of Nazianzus in the context of the Syriac schools in the seventh-ninth centuries produced a corpus of gnomic materials identified in the writings of Gregory and transmitted in the form of gnomic collections. The collection of sentences in *SMMJ* 124 taken from the orations of Gregory included five sayings attributed to Menander. In one of these sayings, the name of the Greek playwright is associated with the biblical wisdom literature, revealing the channels of transmission of Menander’s image in Syriac literature.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. K. Gutzwiller - Ö. Çelik, “New Menander Mosaics from Antioch”, *American Journal of Archaeology* 116.4 (2012), pp. 573-623.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. F. D’Aiuto, “*Graeca* in codici orientali della Biblioteca Vaticana (con i resti di un manoscritto tardoantico delle commedie di Menandro)”, in L. Perria (ed.), *Tra Oriente e Occidente: scritture e libri greci fra le regioni orientali di Bisanzio e l’Italia*, Dipartimento di filologia greca e latina Sezione bizantino-neoellenica Università di Roma “La Sapienza”, Roma 2003 (Testi e studi bizantino-neoellenici, 14), pp. 227-96.