PHILO'S DE PROVIDENTIA:
A WORK BETWEEN TWO TRADITIONS

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The tradition for Philo's De Providentia is a case of an exclusively indirect textual tradition. The Greek text of the work is currently attested by four long fragments drawn from the second book only, which is mentioned in books VII and VIII of Eusebius of Caesarea's Praeparatio Evangelica (henceforth P.E.). A translation into Armenian, dating to the end of the sixth century at the latest, retains two of its books, which are apparently complete. The existence of two parallel traditions is a very favourable circumstance for an ancient literary work especially if, as in our case, the Greek tradition is indirect and incomplete. This situation implies at least three evident advantages for a scholar:

1. the general outline of the work's structure, understood as comprising the whole of its contents, line of argumentation and arrangement, is known;
2. the variant readings of the Greek tradition can be evaluated by means of a comparison with an 'external' and parallel tradition, which makes it easy to select the errors from the correct readings, and, consequently, to date them (at least approximately and

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1 P'iloni Ebrayec'woy bank' erek' čew i loys encayealk': A.B. Yalags naxaxnamut'ean. G. Yalags kendaneac' i hin t'argmanut'enê eleloy i yoyn bnagre' i jern srboc' t'argmanč'ac' meroc', yeleal i latin barbar, așxatasiru'tezamb H. Mkrtič' vardapeti Mxit'arean Awgeraneac', i Venetik, i vans Srboyn Łazaru 1822 / Philonis Judaei sermones tres hactenus inediti. I et II De Providentia, et III De Animalibus, ex Armena versione antiquissima ab ipso originali textu Graeco ad verbum stricte exequuta, nunc primum in latium (sic) fideliter translati per P. Jo. Baptistam Aucher Ancyram (…), Venetiis, Typis Coenobii PP. Armenorum in insula S. Lazari 1822.
2 I omit Gregory of Trebizond's Latin translation of P.E. dated 1470.
3 If it is true that the Textkritik is based mainly on the concept of error, it is equally true that it is not always easy, except in the most banal, hence least significant cases, to distinguish ape ingenii the error between two or more textual variant readings which are apparently indifferent. On the other hand, an 'external' tradition, particularly if separate from the Greek at an early stage and subject to different corruptions from the ones of the Greek, usually allows us to establish whether a reading is good or not or, at least, to detect variant readings prior to separation, and therefore much more ancient than the medieval ones.
relatively) and to detect with a higher degree of precision the useful witnesses for the constitutio textus;

3. it is equally obvious that the same advantages, mentioned in the previous point, are shared by the Armenian tradition, which can be compared with the Greek tradition, ‘external’ to it and, therefore, capable of correcting it with the aim of choosing the best witnesses for the Armenian constitutio textus.

In this paper I will deal with these three aspects in order to:

– evaluate the work both as to the state of preservation of the transmitted text and as to its structure and inner sections, detecting a criterion for a correct subdivision and numbering of the Greek fragments that is consistent with the whole extent of the work;

– evaluate, by means of the Armenian tradition, the Greek witnesses of the P.E. and represent their correlations in a stemma codicum (the conclusions, although based only on the parts containing the excerpta of Prov. are certainly valid for the whole text);

– evaluate, by means of the Greek tradition, the Armenian witnesses of De Providentia, represent their correlations in a stemma codicum and detect the useful witnesses for a correct constitutio textus;

– summarize and compare the two traditions in a single stemma codicum.4

A. STRUCTURE AND SUBDIVISION OF THE TEXT:
ONE OR TWO BOOKS?

The Greek text by Eusebius, contained in manuscripts later than the Middle Ages, can be traced back with certainty to a codex containing Philo’s text, presumably from the 3rd century,5 from which Eusebius drew the four excerpta, of various lengths, then included in his P.E. Almost


5 Or at the latest at the very beginning of the 4th century, as P.E. was edited between the first and the second decade of the 4th century, cf. Eusebius Werke VIII, Die Praeparatio Evangelica, ed. K. Mras, Akademie Verlag, Berlin 1982, LVIIff. It is likely that the manuscript was in the bishop’s rich library at Caesarea in Palestine, founded by Pamphilus with the books that Origen took there in his flight.