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Linguistic variation in patristic commentaries of Biblical texts

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Abstract

The article discusses the evidence of Church Fathers concerning linguistic variation in Latin and, to some extent, Greek, especially with regard to their Biblical exegesis. Biblical Latin has long been tapped as a source for 'Vulgar Latin', especially in vocabulary and grammar: the article endeavours to investigate the metalanguage used by Patristic writers to describe social, regional and pragmatic variation in Biblical Latin, and their awareness of the existence of a 'popular' register of Latin.

Keywords: biblical exegesis, vulgar Latin, regional differentiation, pragmatic variation, address forms.

1. *Introduction*

The writings of the Church Fathers are by far the largest corpus in extant Latin and Greek literature. A great deal of what the Fathers wrote has to do with exegesis of the Bible, a text even church scholars avowed was written in a language very distant from the formal high style of Greek and Latin literary texts[1]. Christian apologetes gave this explanation of the lack of elaboration of the Greek and Latin versions of the Bible: the Bible chose to speak in a language which could be understood by all and therefore adopted a simple style which would not exclude the poor. Suffice it here to cite Isidorus of Pelusium, in *Epist*. 1412, who expressed this idea in the following terms:

1. ἡ Γραφὴ τὴν ἀλήθειαν πεζῷ λόγῳ ἡρμήνευσεν ἵνα καὶ ἰδιῶται, καὶ σοφοί, καὶ παῖδες, καὶ γυναῖκες μάθοιεν. (Isidor. Pelus. *Epist*. 1412)

   "The scriptures interpreted the Truth in a plain style, so that simple folks and the learned, and children and women, all could understand."

[1] Norden (1918: 155); Meershoek (1966); Burton (2007: 112-116); Bartelink (1964; 1979; 1982).

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In fact the truth was more complicated: the Hebrew text is a congeries of stories of different provenance, some originally transmitted only orally, and maintaining, when written down, an oral linguistic style. In addition, the Greek and Latin versions were intentionally overliteral and thus, often, unidiomatic in the target languages; finally the Latin versions preceding the Vulgate, which will be the focus – though not exclusively so – of the present contribution, were probably near-extemporaneous versions performed (using the Greek Septuagint as the source text) during Christian services, as a help for participants who knew little or no Greek[2]. These versions may have been local, and their differences may even conceal small but significant regional differences, particularly because some biblical prescriptive passages contain minute descriptions of everyday objects and rituals, for which the written language did not provide a standard, so that sometimes even finding an exact equivalent in the realia of the Graecolatin civilization was a problem[3].

Patristic exegesis is of course mainly theological, doctrinal, pastoral, but even so it often discusses matters of language in a way which is of interest to the modern linguist. Some scholarship on these issues has been produced, mostly concentrating on the evidence writers such as Jerome or Augustine, in Latin, have brought to bear on 'vulgar' and spoken Latin, namely, those features of Biblical Latin that were unprecedented in written Latin and sometimes prefigured Romance grammar or vocabulary. In this paper, however, I will attempt to dwell not so much on the anecdotal phonetic, lexical, syntactic, idiomatic information transmitted by Church Fathers, as, rather, on their perception of register and variation, in sociolinguistic and pragmatic terms, such as emerges in their discussions of Biblical Latin[4]. The

[2] Schulz-Flügel (1996: 646), with reference to previous discussions of the still inadequately known origins of the Latin translations known under the name of *Vetus*.

[3] We need to draw a distinction here between the language of the Biblical translations and 'the special language' of the Christians (restricted to several metaphorical fields, often connected to points of ritual), areas of semantic shifts and some Greek calques, that is the language that became current among the Christian faithful to distinguish themselves from the Pagan persecutors, and was often motivated by rich world of ritual gestures in which early Christians lived (Palmer, 1954). A telling example is Aug. *Enarrat. Psalm*. 93.3 where Augustine instructs the Christian faithful to restrain from using the pagan names for the days of the week, since Christians have their own language and should use it ([...] *quarta feria* [...] *mercurii dies dicitur a paganis, et a multis christianis; sed nollemus; atque utinam corrigant, et non dicant sic. habent enim linguam suam qua utantur*).

[4] The metalanguage used by Christian exegetical writers to discuss variation in language is indebted to the Greek and Roman grammatical tradition, which has received somewhat greater attention in this regard, especially in recent years. Inventories of expressions used by Latin grammatical and rhetorical writers for colloquial Latin are to be found in Müller (2001), Ferri and Probert (2010), and Ricchieri (2013).

present contribution is also meant as a tentative first foray into the field. The literature potentially usable in a variationist perspective with reference to the Bible is very large, because many writings of early Church fathers on biblical interpretation have been preserved by the medieval tradition. The Fathers' first and foremost concern was of course not language in itself, but they could not avoid discussing language while seeking to sort out doctrine. Relevant in this perspective are most of Jerome's works, and a great deal of Augustine's huge output, but also the works of Hilarius Pictaviensis, Marius Victorinus, Ambrosiaster, Ambrosius, to cite just a few on the Latin side of the evidence.

2. *The simple style of Scripture*

General characterizations of the simple style of scripture, as opposed to specific annotations on individual problematic passages, do not often go into details of linguistic analysis: most famously, Augustine's reference to his initial aversion to Biblical reading in *Confessiones* 3.5.9 is cast in vague circumlocutions (*incessu humilem, successu excelsam et velatam mysteriis*), and Jerome, who tried to limit the 'popular' element in the Bible, states in one of his letters that the Scripture's *uilitas uerborum*[5], an expression which refers to lexical choice, "words of little worth", was part intentional, to make Scripture clear to all, part simply a flaw of its translators, which must be put right.

The language of the Bible was intended to be understood by the learned as well as widows, children, sailors, fishermen. But what was so conspicuously fitted to the needs and abilities of these classes of readers, for example in terms of lexical choice, sentence and sense construction? One of the rare general descriptions of the *sacrae Scripturae sermo humilis* was this extract from Isidore of Pelusium:

2. Ἐξευτελίζουσι γὰρ τὴν θείαν Γραφήν, ὡς βαρβαρόφωνον καὶ ὀνοματοποιΐαις ξέναις συντεταγμένην, συνδέσμων τε ἀναγκαίων ἐλλείψει καὶ περιττῶν παρενθήκῃ τὸν νοῦν τῶν λεγομένων ἐκταράττουσαν. (Isidor. Pelus. *Epist*. 1555)

"They criticize scripture claiming it is written in bad Greek and replete with

[5] *Ep.* 53.10: *nolo offendaris in Scripturis sanctis simplicitate et quasi uilitate uerborum, quae uel uitio interpretum uel de industria sic prolatae sunt, ut rusticam contionem facilius instruerent et in una eademque sententia aliter doctus, aliter audiret indoctus.*

> foreign sound-names and that it often lacks important connectives while it is replete with superfluous ones and that these characteristics obscure the meaning."

Isidore singles out the Bible's "barbaric Greek" (presumably a reference to the numerous syntactic calques of Hebrew constructions and phrases), its "onomatopoeiae"[6] and its idiosyncratic deployment of connectives, criticised as sometimes too few and sometimes too many[7], though such a rebuke would better have been subsumed under βαρβαροφωνία. Another passage in Augustine's *De doctrina Christiana* seems to imply that the writers of the Bible took no heed of the advice to avoid hiatus and paid no great attention to other euphonic rhetorical devices normally deployed by secular writers[8]. The passage perhaps coming closest to exemplifying, in the Latin evidence, some alleged substandard features of the Bible in Latin is Arnobius, *Adu. Nationes* 1.59.3-11:

3. *Quid enim officit, o quaeso, aut quam praestat intellectui tarditatem, utrumne quid grave an hirsuta cum asperitate promatur, inflectatur quod acui an acuatur quod oportebat inflecti?* [...] *Et tamen o isti, qui pollutas res nostras vitiorum criminamini foeditate, stribiligines et vos istas libris illis in maximis atque admirabilibus non habetis? Nonne aliud* haec utria *aliud dicitis* hos utres*,* caelus *et* caelum*, non item* pileus *et* pileum*, non item* crocus *et* crocum*, non item* fretus *et* fretum*? Non item apud vos est positum* hoc pane *et* hic panis*,* hic sanguis *et* hoc sanguen*,* candelabrum *et* iugulum *ratione eadem* iugulus *et* candelaber*?* (Arnob. *nat*. 1.59.3-11)

[6] Ὀνοματοποιΐαις ξέναις does not correspond literally to onomatopoeia, which in ancient Greek included also the "creation of new names"; the reference is probably to the plethora of Palaestinian and other Middle Eastern place names sounding foreign to a Greek reader, and possibly also the great number of untranslated Hebrew expressions, mostly interjections such as *amen, racha, osanna,* but also words for institutions not felt to have an exact equivalent in Greek or Latin (cf. for example the discussion in Kamesar (1993: 16) on Origen *Comm. in Ioh.* 10.282-3). This was a feature which often attracted the attention of Greek and Roman ecclesiastical commentators, evidently because it was a great breach of etiquette deviating from the traditions of both Greek and Roman writers, who were very wary of insertions in languages other than their own, especially in genres regarded as high style. The ancient relevant evidence is discussed in Meershoek (1966: 38-44).

[7] The passage is carefully analysed in Bartelink (1964: 169-170); περιττῶν παρενθήκη must be a reference to the irregular use of *et/kai* reproducing the Hebrew *waw*: cf. e.g. Aug. *Loc. Ex*. 2.32 where Augustine objects to the use of a coordinating conjunction between subordinate and main clause: '*si loquetur uobis Pharao dicens: date nobis signum aut portentum, et dices Aaron fratri tuo: sume uirgam': nonne locutionis nostrae consuetudo poscebat et quaedam eius integritas, ut ita diceretur: 'si loquetur uobis Pharao dicens: date nobis signum aut portentum, dices Aaron fratri tuo: sume uirgam'? quid ergo ibi additum est* et*, nisi aliqua proprietate locutionis hebraicae?*

[8] Cf. the passages collected in Norden (1918: 158).

> "For how, I pray you, does it interfere with or retard the comprehension [of a statement], whether anything be pronounced smoothly or with uncouth roughness? Whether that have the grave accent which ought to have the acute, or that have the acute which ought to have the grave? [...] And yet, O you who charge our writings with disgraceful blemishes, have you not these solecisms in those most perfect and wonderful books of yours! Does not one of you make the plural of *uter*, *utria*, another *utres*? [and do you not write] *caelus* and *caelum*, *pileus* and *pileum*, *crocus* and *crocum*, *fretus* and *fretum*? Do you not also say *hoc pane* and *hic panis*, *hic sanguis* and *hoc sanguen*? Are not *candelabrum* and *iugulum* in like manner written *iugulus* and *candelaber*?"

Part of the passage must refer to flawed oral performances of Christian preachers, since in a written text accents and spirits are not marked. Then Arnobius moves on to errors of agreement, number, case and verbal syntax, all present in large numbers in Biblical versions of the Old and New Testament. Unfortunately the Christian apologist does not illustrate this list of solecisms from Biblical quotes, and he chooses to counter the charge that Christian writers (and the context implies that the New Testament is being referred to throughout) commit the most atrocious solecisms by pointing out similar mistakes in the Classical authors (*non item apud uos* [...]), while in fact only limiting himself to metaplasms of grammatical gender and declension. Although metaplasms of grammatical genus are very frequent in *Vetus Latina*[9], none of the examples adduced by Arnobius can be paralleled exactly in the Scriptures, whereas all are taken from Roman satirical literature, certainly Varro's Menippean satires, possibly even Petronius[10].

3. *Social and regional variation in the Fathers' annotations of Biblical texts*

To start with, Christian writers show very keen attention to ingroup language and variation on both the diastratic and diaphasic planes. The main reason why their attention is so alert to variation is effectiveness in communication. Augustine, as a bishop, often remarked on his willingness to use non Latin words (which always means non standard words or con-

[9] Rönsch (1869: 258-272).

[10] More explicit on his acceptance of the substandard metaplasm *cubitus/cubitum* is Jerome, *Comm. Ez.* 47.1: cf. Meershoek (1966: 62).

structions) to cater for the needs of the Christian assembly he is instructing during a sermon. In (4) he draws an analogy between the good preacher who responds to the varied needs of an audience, and the use of language in a family context, thus sketching an interesting picture of diaphasic variation:

4. *Videmus enim et nutrices et matres descendere ad paruulos; et si norunt latina uerba dicere, decurtant illa, et quassant quodammodo linguam suam, ut possint de lingua diserta fieri blandimenta puerilia; quia si sic dicant, non audit infans, sed nec proficit infans. et disertus aliquis pater, si sit tantus orator ut lingua illius fora concrepent, et tribunalia concutiantur, si habeat paruulum filium, cum ad domum redierit, seponit forensem eloquentiam quo adscenderat, et lingua puerili descendit ad paruulum*. (Aug. *In Iohannis Euangelium tractatus* 7.23)

   "For we see both nurses and mothers descend to babes, and even if they can speak Latin, they shorten the words, shake their tongues in a certain manner, in order to frame childish endearments from a methodical language; because if they speak according to rule, the infant does not understand or profit. And if there be a father well skilled in speaking, and such an orator that the forum resounds with his eloquence, and the judgment-seats shake, if he have a little son, on his return home he puts aside the forensic eloquence to which he had ascended, and in a child's language he descends to his little one."

Here Augustine sets up an opposition between the *lingua diserta*[11] spoken by the father, a lawyer or a high-ranking placed official, at work, and the *lingua puerilis* "a child's language", used not only by children but by all other members of the household in contact with them. Such language would include both the eloquent lawyer-father, and also (indeed much more so) all female members of the household (whose use of *lingua diserta* at other times is of course open to question, and in fact he adds the qualifying statement "if they know Latin")[12].

But what stands at the opposite end of *bona dictio*, *lingua diserta*, *integritas litterata* in diastratic terms? As we have seen, Ecclesiastical commenta-

[11] Also called *bona dictio* in *De cathechizandis rudibus* 9.

[12] Women of course speak a special variety of Latin in various sources, and one close to baby-talk in much satirical literature. Jerome paints a similar picture of female language in *Epist*. 22.29: *non delumbem matronarum saliuam delicata secteris, quae nunc strictis dentibus, nunc labiis dissolutis balbutientem linguam in dimidiata uerba moderantur rusticum putantes omne, quod nascitur* "And do not, out of affectation, follow the sickly taste of married ladies who, now pressing their teeth together, now keeping their lips wide apart, speak with a lisp, and purposely clip their words, because they fancy that to pronounce them naturally is a mark of country breeding". The passage, together with evidence for baby talk and a clipped, slurred pronunciation in the talk of women in some Latin evidence is discussed in Kruschwitz (2012: 209-210).

tors of the Bible dodge the issue of 'vulgarisms' in Biblical Latin, preferring to adopt the label of *simplex*: many lexical items which are evidently, to the modern scholar, forerunners of Romance, with no other occurrence in written Latin outside the Bible, are passed over without comment. However, the notion of substandard and low register in the language of the Bible does emerge, as can be seen from the following passage of Augustine, in a letter addressed to Paulinus Nolanus, where Augustine states that a passage in a Latin translation of St. Paul *To the Colossians* can be understood better if one rewrites a passage using "the language of the people" (*consuetudo popularis*)[13]:

5. Nemo uos conuincat uolens in humilitate cordis [= *Coloss.* 2.18: μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς καταβραβευέτω θέλων ἐν ταπεινοφροσύνῃ]. *hoc si per uerbum graecum diceretur, etiam in latina consuetudine populari sonaret usitatius. sic enim et uulgo dicitur, qui diuitem affectat,* thelodiues *et, qui sapientem,* thelosapiens *et cetera huius modi; ergo et hic* thelohumilis*, quod plenius dicitur* thelon humilis*. id est uolens humilis, affectans humilitatem, quod intellegitur uolens uideri humilis, affectans humilitatem*. (Aug. *Epist.* 149)

   "If this verse were expressed by a Greek word, it would sound familiar even in the popular Latin usage. Thus, we generally say of one who apes the rich that he is *thelodives,* and whoever apes wisdom is called *thelosapiens*, and other words of the same sort; therefore *thelohumilis,* which is more fully written *thelon humilis*[14], that is wanting to be humble, putting on humility."

The Pauline passage is highly tortuous even for its modern exegetes: the Colossians are being warned not to be waylaid by the teaching of false doctrinaires (perhaps Manicheans?). Augustine is aware the passage is difficult if taken in the literal form in which it is expressed; less so, however, if we think of how the 'common people' would express this idea. Augustine seems to be contending that *uolens in humilitate,* the offending phrase, is an attempt to reproduce a word-form existing in the spoken language, but pre-

[13] The word *consuetudo* has a fairly wide range in Latin, but it is clearly used here in its specialized meaning, common in grammatical literature, for "current language", originally as a calque from Greek συνήθεια, which has the same meaning, "current" as opposed to "literary" language. Here lower register connotations are enhanced by the adjective *popularis*, not found elsewhere as a qualifier for *consuetudo*. Augustine uses *consueudo uulgaris* in a well-known passage of *De doctrina Christiana* where he upholds the evolved form *ossum* for the Classical *os* opposing, famously, grammatical correctness to evangelical effectiveness.

[14] I am in fact uncertain as to the exact translation of *quod plenius dicitur thelon humilis*, but I assume Augustine is analyzing *thelohumilis* into its parts, rather than suggesting a "fuller pronunciation", and he suggests that *thelo-* stands for a participial form, θέλων, which is closer to *uolens in humilitate*.

sumably not licensed in the written language, *thelohumilis*, "wanting to pass as humble", "with an air of pretended humility": ancient Latin translators of Paul's works, therefore, were attempting to reproduce a phrase current in spoken Latin.

An interesting feature of this passage is also the information about hybrid composita in popular Latin. There are no other sources for the existence of the three nominal composita listed here, *thelohumilis*, *thelodives*, *thelosapiens*. In Greek, however, nominal composita whose first element is a radical from the verb *thelo-* are common, and in fact the prefix appears to have been productive in the koine[15]. Hybrid nominal composition receives little attention in studies of Latin nominal composition, because it is rare in Classical Latin, except in comedy, where such composita are ad hoc formations created for a specific passage and certainly an artificial feature. In Late Latin more examples are found, especially in technical areas of the lexicon[16]. Augustine's observation concerning the presence of hybrid compounds in popular Latin is consistent with the contemporaneous Greek evidence illustrated by Filos (cf. n. 16) and with the greater relevance of merging and interference phenomena between the two languages at the end of antiquity[17].

[15] The commoner form of the prefix in Greek is the more literary ἐθελο-, so for example we find ἐθελόσοφος, ἐθελοδικαιοσύνη, ἐθελοευλάβεια. Basil of Caesarea has ἐθελοταπεινοφροσύνη, closely corresponding to *thelohumilis*, and meaning the same thing, "hypocritical humility" (*Sermo de contubernalibus* 30: μηδὲ πάλιν γυναῖκα ἡμεῖς αὐτοὶ δελεάζωμεν διὰ τῆς κενοδοξίας, καὶ ἐθελοταπεινοφροσύνης). It is of course possible that Augustine took the term from his Greek theological and antihaeretical sources, although it is difficult to see why he should have made up a sociolinguistic label *popularis consuetudo*.

[16] I have been able to identify about fifty such hybrids in Late Latin, mostly using Greek prefixation or suffixation already naturalized in Latin such as *archi-* (*archistator*), *-graphus*, *pseudo-* (*pseudoforum*). In other cases, mostly from technical areas of the lexicon, the process of formation is less rigid, and implies current use of Greek loanwords. Words in this category include *tractogalatus*, *scenofactorius*, *limitrophus*, *melloproximus*, *chamaetortus*, *cryptoporticus*, *holouerus*, *epitogium*, *dextrocherium*, *contheroleta*, *terrifagus*. I single out *melloproximus* which is, like *thelohumilis*, verb-governing. The word occurs in *Codex Iustinianus* and designates the deputy secretary of the emperor. The only list of hybrid compounds I have found for Latin is in Cooper (1895: 326-329). For Greek of the Roman period, and the evidence of papyri especially, there is the study of P. Filos (2009), with diagrams showing chronological distribution (higher tokens in the period between the fourth and sixth cent.) and consideration on the social distribution of such compounds (both popular and official) and on the mechanisms of word-formation. On the whole, Augustine's suggestion that *thelohumilis* was an existing word in popular Latin seems to gain credibility. Hybrid compounds were seen with censure by the Roman grammatical tradition: cf. Quintilian on *epiraedium* (*Inst.* 1.5.68).

[17] Augustine mentions Greek words now current in Latin, such as *martyres*, *idola*, *parabola*, *perizomata*, *diaconus*: these are now written in Latin characters because they are current: cf. Aug. *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum* 1.16.32: *ideo debuit ambiguitas euitari, ut quemadmodum graecus* περιζώματα *posuit, quibus non teguntur nisi pudendae corporis partes, sic et latinus aut ipsum graecum*

The same letter, discussing diverging Latin translations of Paul. *Tim* 2.1: Παρακαλῶ οὖν πρῶτον πάντων ποιεῖσθαι δεήσεις, προσευχάς, ἐντεύξεις, εὐχαριστίας, returns to the topic of linguistic variation, when Augustine dwells on the difference between *precatio* ("prayer") and *deprecatio*.

6. Precationem *et* deprecationem *multi nostri hoc idem putant et hoc cotidiano usu iam omnino praeualuit. qui autem distinctius latine locuti sunt,* precationibus *utebantur in optandis bonis,* deprecationibus *uero in deuitandis malis* [...]. (Aug. *Epist.* 149)

"Many of our people think that there is no difference between *precatio* and *deprecatio*, and in daily use that has generally held good, but those who speak Latin with greater precision use *precatio* to ask for good things, *deprecatio* to ward off evils [...]."[18]

Augustine goes on to say that in the old days a distinction used to be made between the two (*precari enim dicebant esse precando bona optare, inprecari mala, quod uulgo iam dicitur maledicere, deprecari autem mala precando depellere*) but there is no reason to set ourselves apart from the common language and, whatever is the Latin translating the Greek δεήσεις, there is no ground for wishing to alter the text (*sed usitatum iam loquendi modum potius sequamur et, siue precationes siue deprecationes inuenerimus, quas Graeci* δεήσεις *uocant, non putemus esse emendandum*). The crucial word here in a sociolinguistic perspective is *distinctius*, "those who speak Latin with greater precision": Augustine draws, albeit with an emphasis on acceptance and inclusiveness rather than selection, on the grammatical and puristic tradition represented by Aulus Gellius, an author he knew and quoted, and other works on *differentiae uerborum,* where more recent, current lexical usage is opposed to the greater sophistication and precision of past (or educated) speakers of Latin (*qui electius/rectius locuti sunt* [...] *dicebant*)[19]. In the

poneret, quia et ipso iam consuetudo utitur pro latino, uel sicut quidam succinctoria uel sicut alii melius campestria nominarunt. [...]*; sed iam consueuimus nominibus graecis uti pro latinis*.

[18] Cf. Aul. Gell. 20.11.2: *In eo scripsit* sculnam *vulgo dici quasi* seculnam*; quem, qui elegantius inquit loquuntur,* sequestrem *appellant*; 10.24.19: *qui elegantius locuti sint* [...]; 5.20.3; 18.7.2: *qui electius locuti sunt*; 20.3.1: *Quos* sicinistas *vulgus dicit, qui rectius locuti sunt,* sicinnistas *littera* <*n*> *gemina dixerunt*.

[19] A similar case but less explicit in terms of linguistic censure is Hier. *Comm. Ez.* 12.40.5: *calamum tenebat in manu, cuius supra mensura tacita est et nunc ponitur: cubitorum sex et palmo – qui rectius graece dicitur* palaestes*, et est sexta pars cubiti; alioquin* palmus σπιθαμὴν *sonat quam nonnulli, pro distinctione* palma*, porro* palaesten palmum *appellare consuerunt* "a man held a reed in his hand; its size is not mentioned earlier and now it is added: six cubits and a span (for this latter word it is more

passage from Augustine, the word *distinctius* indicates speakers who avoid malapropisms and use words with their proper meaning, i.e. the meaning sanctioned by good written authority[20].

A common way of identifying lower register expressions is to query their Latinity (i.e. correctness), even if, in contrast to practices common among earlier pagan sources using the same metalanguage, Church Fathers emphasize the advantage of deploying a 'less Latin' expression, if it is helpful and effective for the purpose of clarifying a Biblical passage. An interesting case is (7), where Augustine is illustrating a verse from the Psalterium that portrays the Jews' passing of the Red Sea, which he reads in an allegorical vein, as an expression of the gratitude of the Christian soul for its escape from sin through God's intercession.

correct to use the Greek word, and that is the sixth part of the cubit. However *palm* corresponds to *spithame* and some people are used to distinguishing the measure *palma*, whereas they call the *palaestes palmum*)". Jerome, like Augustine, draws on grammatical tradition: cf [Caper] *De uerbis dubiis, GL* 7. 110. 18: palmus *in mensura,* palma *in manu*.

[20] We have knowledge of a treatise by Ps.-Caper, and another by Isidorus, *De differentiis uerborum*. For an important and usually neglected discussion of lexical choice as a sociolinguistic variant in the ancient world see Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* 1.233-35, a passage in which the philosopher shows that in ordinary conversation with servants and other lower class individuals a different set of words for objects is used from that used in conversation with educated people: ἔστι δὲ καὶ βιωτική τις ἀφελὴς συνήθεια τῶν ἰδιωτῶν, κατὰ πόλεις καὶ ἔθνη διαφέρουσα. ὅθεν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ μὲν τῇ τῶν φιλοσόφων στοιχήσομεν, ἐν ἰατρικῇ δὲ τῇ ἰατρικωτέρᾳ, ἐν δὲ τῷ βίῳ τῇ συνηθεστέρᾳ καὶ ἀπερίττῳ καὶ ἐπιχωριαζούσῃ. παρὸ καὶ διχῶς τοῦ αὐτοῦ πράγματος λεγομένου πειρασόμεθα πρὸς τὰ παρόντα ἁρμοζόμενοι πρόσωπα τὸ μὴ γελώμενον προφέρεσθαι, ὁποῖόν ποτ' ἂν ᾖ κατὰ τὴν φύσιν. οἷον τὸ αὐτὸ *ἀρτοφόριον* καὶ *πανάριον* λέγεται, καὶ πάλιν τὸ αὐτὸ *σταμνίον* καὶ *ἀμίδιον* καὶ *ἴγδις* καὶ *θυΐα*. ἀλλὰ στοχαζόμενοι τοῦ καλῶς ἔχοντος καὶ σαφῶς καὶ τοῦ μὴ γελᾶσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν διακονούντων ἡμῖν παιδαρίων καὶ ἰδιωτῶν *πανάριον* ἐροῦμεν, καὶ εἰ βάρβαρόν ἐστιν, ἀλλ' οὐκ *ἀρτοφορίδα*, καὶ *σταμνίον*, ἀλλ' οὐκ *ἀμίδα*, καὶ *θυΐαν* μᾶλλον ἢ *ἴγδιν*. καὶ πάλιν ἐν διαλέξει ἀποβλέποντες πρὸς τοὺς παρόντας <τὰς> μὲν ἰδιωτικὰς λέξεις παραπέμψομεν, τὴν δὲ ἀστειοτέραν καὶ φιλολόγον συνήθειαν μεταδιώξομεν. "There is also a simple usage suited to the life of the average people, which differs among cities and peoples. Hence in philosophy we shall line up with the usage of the philosophers, in medicine with medical usage, and in life with the customary, unaffected, local usage. That way, even when the same thing is said in two ways, we shall attempt to fit in with the people around us and say what is not going to be laughed at, no matter what it is in nature. For example, the same thing is called *breadbasket* and *hamper*, and again *bedpan* and *chamberpot* are the same thing, as are *grinder* and *mortar*. But aiming at what is right and clear, and at not being laughed at by our servants and by ordinary people, we shall say *hamper*, even if it is foreign, not *breadbasket*, and *bedpan*, not *chamber pot*, and *mortar* rather than *grinder*. Again in discussion we shall consider those present and avoid common words, seeking out a more urbane and literary usage" (transl. D. Blank, 1997). Sextus may of course be exaggerating the situation for the sake of argument, but what he says may reflect some sort of regional variation: as in Arabic, there may have been words, especially for everyday vocabulary, known only locally, whereas the possibility of mutual comprehension was offered by resorting, at least when conversing with educated people from other areas, by drawing from the literary, largely obsolete, language, in this case Aristophanic Attic. Of course educated people from the same city will have used the same words for "breadbasket", and the formal occasions for mentioning "bedpans" will have been very scant.

7. *Primo quid est:* forsitan pertransiit anima nostra? [= *Ps.* 123.5: ἄρα διῆλθεν ἡ ψυχὴ ἡμῶν τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ἀνυπόστατον] *possumus illud uerbo dicere minus quidem latine coniuncto, sed apto ad intellegentias uestras.* [...] *hoc latini possunt uel solent dicere:* putas*, cum ita loquuntur:* putas, euasi hoc? *si ergo dicatur:* forsitan euasi*, uidetis quia non hoc sonat; sed quod dixi:* putas*, usitate dicitur; latine non ita dicitur. et potui illud dicere, cum tracto uobis; saepe enim et uerba non latina dico, ut uos intellegatis. in scriptura autem non potuit hoc poni, quod latinum non esset; et deficiente latinitate, positum est pro eo, quod non hoc sonaret. sic tamen intellegite dici:* putas, pertransiit anima nostra aquam sine substantia? *et quare dicunt,* putas*? quia magnitudo periculi uix facit credibile quod euasit*. (Aug. *Enarrationes* 123.8)

   "In the first place, what's the meaning of: *perhaps our soul had passed*? We could use a construction not entirely correct in Latin, but easier to understand for you [...]. We can express the same concept in Latin saying *you think,* for example when they say *you think I scrambled out of that?* If someone said: *perhaps I have escaped* you see the meaning is not identical. Instead *you think* though not good Latin is current. I allowed myself to use it because I am talking to you: often I use words that are not good Latin, to make you understand. But in the Scripture they could not use it, since it was not good Latin; therefore, since there was no equivalent Latin expression [for Greek ἄρα], they wrote the word *forsitan* which is not equivalent in meaning. So the passage means *you think our soul passed a water without substance?* And the reason why they say *you think* is that the greatness of the danger makes them wonder at reality of their escape."

In fact, the meaning difference between *putas euasi* and *forsitan euasi* does not seem great, except that the former implies a livelier, more intrinsically dialogic form of expression and it is more explicitly interrogative. The reason for the lexical substitution seems to have been one of register: *forsitan* was a higher register word, not within easy reach for Augustine's congregation, for whom, at least in Augustine's view, *putas* was more transparent.

The topic of lexical choice and lexical *differentiae* leads to that of regional variation. The Latin Bible circulated in locally different forms, as had been the case for the Greek versions. It is inevitable to assume that some local colouring was visible to educated readers, but it is only rarely that we catch a glimpse of what it may have been. Older editions of the so-called *vetus* identified the different and sometimes competing threads using geographical tags, such as *Afra*, *Itala*, and so on[21].

[21] This is a very complicated topic which used to be hotly debated among Biblical scholars, even if hardly ever outside that circle. I discuss some of the relevant evidence in Ferri (forthcoming, b).

There are several passages where Jerome hints at the regional variety of Hebrew or Aramaic[22], as well as of the Greek translations current in his time, or at the variety of Greek spoken by native speakers of Hebrew. Significant in this regard are a series of passages devoted by Jerome to Paul's abilities as a Greek writer, and speaker:

8. *Multa* [...] *sunt uerba, quibus iuxta morem urbis et prouinciae suae familiarius apostolus utitur. e quibus exempli gratia pauca ponenda sunt:* mihi autem parum est iudicari ab humana die*, hoc est* ἀπὸ ἀνθρωπίνης ἡμέρας*, et:* humanum dico, ἄνθρώπινον λέγω*, et:* οὐ κατενάρκησα ὑμᾶς*, hoc est* non grauaui uos*, et, quod nunc dicitur:* μηδεὶς ὑμᾶς καταβραβευέτω*, id est* nullus aduersum uos brauium accipiat. *quibus et aliis multis uerbis usque hodie utuntur Cilices. nec hoc miremur in apostolo, si utatur eius linguae consuetudine, in qua natus est et nutritus, cum Vergilius, alter Homerus apud nos, patriae suae sequens consuetudinem* sceleratum *frigus appellet*[23]. (Hier. *Epist*. 121)

   "There are several words used by Paul in which he follows the habit of his town and his region; I will exemplify my assertion with a few instances: *to me it is a very small thing to be judged by man's day*¸ that is ; and *I speak a human thing*, and *I myself was not burdensome to you,* and, which is what he says now, *Let no man seduce you, willing in humility*, and there are many such words even nowadays in use by the Cilicians, and let's not find it surprising if the apostle used the common language of the region where he was born and grew up, just as Vergil, who is a second Homer for us, adhering to the language of his native region called the cold weather *rascal*."

Even if Jerome was a proficient Greek speaker and reader, this information about the dialectal nature of the Greek written by Paul is unlikely to be a finding of his own, except for the comparison with Vergil's 'provincial' Latin, which occurs also in Vergil's commentators and must be a reminiscence from Jerome's school days[24].

A possible parallel, hitherto unmentioned in this connection, for Paul's

[22] Hier. *Epist*. 73.6: *nec refert, utrum salem an salim nominetur, cum uocalibus in medio litteris perraro utantur hebraei et pro uoluntate lectorum ac uarietate regionum eadem uerba diuersis sonis atque accentibus proferantur*.

[23] Hier. *Comm. Matth*. 4.26: (explaining why Peter was recognized as a follower of Jesus by his accent) *non quod alterius sermonis esset Petrus aut gentis externae, omnes quippe Hebraei erant et qui arguebant et qui arguebatur, sed quod unaquaeque prouincia et regio habebat proprietates suas et uernaculum loquendi sonum uitare non possit*. On the Cilician dialect in Paul cf. Förster (1997: 316-321) but the question is somewhat moot and had been discussed before in the past.

[24] Vergil's 'regionalisms' according to his commentators have been lately discussed in Adams (2007: 181).

regional Greek comes from Basil's *Regula*, also extant in a Latin version composed by Jerome's contemporary Rufinus:

9. [Discussing *Nov. Test. Gal.* 6.2.1: Ἀλλήλων τὰ βάρη βαστάζετε, *Bear ye one another's burdens*] Τὸ δὲ βαστάσαι ἀντὶ τοῦ ἆραι σύνηθες καὶ τοῖς ἐπιχωρίοις κεχρῆσθαι, ὡς πολλάκις παρὰ πολλῶν αὐτὸς ἤκουσα [= Bas. *Regula secundum translationem Rufini* 178] Portare *autem pro* auferre *et* exportare *consuetudo est etiam ritu provincialium dici, sicut et ego saepe audisse me memini*. (Basil. *Asceticon magnum* 31.1201)

   "But in the vernacular use *to bear* is said instead for *to take away* and *carry away*, and I remember hearing it personally several times."

Of interest here is the brief note on *prouinciales*/ἐπιχώριοι in which Basil refers to personal experience of the manner of speaking of locals, and must refer either to Paul's own manner of speaking or, less likely, to that of this interlocutors, the Galatians. Basil, who was a Cappadocian, may plausibly affirm to have heard Galatians speak Greek with local inflections, but since the text is Paul's it would be a case of extreme accommodation[25].

An interesting discussion of socially and regionally determined variants occurs in (10). In this passage Jerome is endeavouring to explain Paul's injunctions to the Christian faithful of Ephesus to abstain from indecency in deed and in word ("let not any kind of fornication, or impurity, or rapacity so much as be named among you, just as is worthy of the saints, nor any indecent, or foolish, or abusive talk, for this is without purpose; but instead, give thanks"). Jerome dwells on the last words of the verse, *sed magis gratiarum actio*, starting from the Latin text, but keeping in mind the original Greek (πορνεία δὲ καὶ ἀκαθαρσία [...] μηδὲ ὀνομαζέσθω ἐν ὑμῖν [...] καὶ αἰσχρότης καὶ μωρολογία ἢ εὐτραπελία, ἃ οὐκ ἀνῆκεν, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον εὐχαριστία).

10. *Et quia non est consuetudinis, nisi inter doctos quosque apud graecos* εὐχαριστίαν, *ad distinctionem* eucharistiae *dicere, hoc est,* gratiosum esse*, et* agere gratias*: propterea puto apostolum quasi hebraeum ex hebraeis, uerbo usum esse uulgato, et sensum suum alterius significatione uerbi explicare uoluisse: maxime cum apud hebraeos* gratiosus *et* gratias agens*, uno, ut aiunt, sermone, dicatur*. (Hier. *Comm. Eph.* 5.4)

   "And since it is not current, unless among the very learned and those living among Greeks, to use the [Greek] word εὐχαριστία with a distinct meaning

[25] I incline to the former explanation since Basil's use of ἐπιχώριος/*prouincialis* elsewhere refers to Aramaic usage (see *infra*).

> from *eucharistia,* that is *being gracious* and *thanksgiving*, for this reason I think the Apostle, a Hebrew speaker in a Hebrew community, elected to use the commoner expression [i.e. εὐχαριστία] and hinted at his own meaning in the signification of the other words, especially since in Hebrew the same word is used to say both *being gracious* and *giving thanks*."[26]

On a first reading, the passage, which starts with a discussion of the Latin words, seems to present a very attractive picture of Latin speakers, highly educated, possibly living in close contact with Greeks, and switching at ease between a Greek word, εὐχαριστία, and a Greek loan-word with assimilated morphology, *eucharistia*. In fact, the intended referent of these linguistic observations can be understood only thanks to a fragment of Origen on the same text. J. A. Robinson[27] in 1914 was the first to offer a different explanation by referring to a then newly published fragment of Origen, in which the same explanation is offered, by making up a non existent Greek word

11. οὐκ ἀνῆκε δὲ τοῖς ἁγίοις οὐδὲ αὖτη, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἡ ἐν πᾶσι πρὸς Θεὸν εὐχαριστία, ἤγουν εὐχαριστία καθ' ἣν εὐχαρίτους καὶ χαρίεντάς τινάς φαμεν. μωρόλογον μὲν οὖν καὶ εὐτράπελον οὐ δεῖ εἶναι, εὐχάριτον δὲ καὶ χαρίεντα· καὶ ἐπεὶ ἀσύνηθές ἐστι τὸ εἰπεῖν *ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον εὐχαριτία*, τάχα ἀντὶ τούτου ἐχρήσατο τῇ ἐπ' ἄλλου κειμένῃ λέξει καὶ εἶπεν, *ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον εὐχαριστία*. καὶ μήποτε ἔθος ἐστὶ τῷ ὀνόματι τῆς *εὐχαριστίας* καὶ τοῦ *εὐχαρίστου* τοὺς ἀπὸ Ἑβραίων χρῆσθαι ἀντὶ τῆς *εὐχαριτίας* καὶ *εὐχαρίτου*. (Origenes, *Fragmenta ex commentariis in epistulam ad Ephesios*)

> "Paul does not allow foul language for the saint, but only giving of thanks for all things to God, or rather the kind of eucharistia whereby we call someone gracious and ingratiating. Therefore we must not be foulspoken and use bad language, but gracious and ingratiating. And since it's not idiomatic to say *but rather grace-giving*, perhaps he used instead of this non-existing term another word which has normally a different meaning and said *but rather a giving of thanks*. And perhaps it's customary for the Hebrews to use the words *eucharistia* and *eucharistos* for *eucharitia* and *eucharitos*."

Origen's explanation is neat, if linguistically untenable: Paul had wanted to use an abstract noun based on the adjective εὔχαριτος, but since the abstract εὐχαριτία does not exist in Greek he used εὐχαριστία instead: perhaps he was misled by Hebrew usage – a confused note, because it is not clear if

[26] I have found no confirmation for this final assertion about the identity of the two expressions in Hebrew or Aramaic, where חֵן means "gracious, beautiful", but cannot be used in expressions indicating gratitude.

[27] Robinson (1914: 198).

Origen meant to say that Hebrews speaking Greek confuse the two, or that only one word is used in Hebrew to express the two different concepts.

Had we not known Origen's fragment, Jerome's explanation would appear considerably muddled. When he mentions "the very learned and those living *apud Graecos*", is he thinking of Latin speakers or Hebrews with a non native competence in Greek, as perhaps was the case of Paul? An additional difficulty is that we have to make do, for this work, with only an older edition, that of the *Patrologia Latina*. Even a perfunctory check of some of the oldest MSS transmitting the commentary[28] shows that the paradosis is ϵγχαριτιαν and suggests that Jerome wrote εὐχαριτίαν and possibly even *ad distinctionem* ϵγχαριστιαc (instead of εὐχαριστίαν *ad distinctionem eucharistiae*), with the lunate uncial sigma facilitating confusion to *eucharistiae*. Comparison with Origen suggests now that Jerome is looking at the text from the perspective of a Greek speaker. Jerome therefore did not have in mind Romans living among Greeks, but Christians of whatever linguistic background, mostly Hebrew. Even on this newer interpretation, Jerome shows himself sensitive to diatopic variation, non-native competence, and linguistic interference.

Another possible hint of regional differences in the Latin biblical translations comes from a comparison between two near contemporary writers, Augustine and Eucherius. The first of the two extracts is from Augustine's book of *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum*, in the passage where he relates God's instructions to Moses on how to build the ark of the covenant and the tabernacle:

12. *Facies duos anconiscos columnae uni consistentes ex aduerso, hoc est: unum hinc et unum inde de lateribus columnae.* anconiscos *autem dicit, quod uulgo uocamus* ancones*, sicut sunt in columnis cellarum vinariarum, quibus incumbunt ligna quae cupas ferunt*. (Aug. *Quaest. Hept.* 2.109)

    "Make two tenons in each board for dovetailing and fitting together, that is one on each side of the board. (The scripture) calls *anconiscos* 'tenons' what we commonly call *ancones* 'pegs', such as we can see in pillars placed in cellars, used to support boards on which we place wine vats."

[28] E.g. *Köln, Erzbischöfliche Diözesan- und Dombibliothek*, Cod. 58, f. 75r [online: *http://bibliotheca-laureshamensis-digital.de/view/dbk_cod58/0153?sid=3a1fbd72deb92f93cd4dfe12636bde22*]; *Paris, BNF, Lat*. 1762, f. 250r. [online: *http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84683148/f507.item.r=HIERONYMUS.langEN*].

Eucherius of Lyon, a younger contemporary of Augustine, in his work *Instructiones*, devoted to the explanation of difficult passages in the Bible, includes a list of words that are obscure in the older translation – clearly the *Vetus Latina* –, and more transparent in the new one, Jerome's *Vulgata*, which had just started to circulate. It is striking here to find the same word for "peg", *ancon*, labelled by Augustine as one that *uulgo uocamus* – which is a universal label for a current and fully understood word of the spoken language – as the one in need of a gloss in Eucherius, *incastratura*. I take this individual difference between the two copies of the Bible to be one of many hidden cases of regional variations in the transition from versions of the *Vetus* to the *Vulgate*. For the African Augustine the Greek loanword *ancones* presented no difficulties; for the Gallic Eucherius the word was not comprehensible: the word current in Gallic Latin was *incastratura*[29]. In fact, of the two, in extant written evidence it is *ancon* which has the more numerous occurrences, whereas *incastratura* occurs only here and in glossaries: it is of course a precursor of a current Romance derivative, and there is no doubt that Eucherius, and Jerome, chose it because it was a more current word.

13. *Vocabula haec quae obscuriora sunt in translatione ueteri habentur: haec uero quae lucidiora apparent nouae translationis textu continentur. uetus ergo translatio habet* speroteres*, noua* sphaerulas*;* [...] anconiscos *incastraturas*. (Eucherius *Instr.* 2.197)

4. *Attention to Language Pragmatics*

Many comments made by Bible commentators touch on pragmatic topics: Bible translations were often unidiomatic, and the exact pragmatic content of many phrases appeared confused. Therefore pragmatic observations hinging on forms of address, politeness, inclusiveness, distancing, and other expressions used in a nonliteral meaning are fairly common throughout, at times drawing parallels with Latin (or Greek) which are of some interest in a pragmalinguisic perspective.

A particularly elusive passage is (14), from Augustine's *Locutiones in Exodum*, discussing a phrase said by the Pharao to Moyses and Aaron, ask-

[29] The Spanish rhetor Fortunatianus says that (*rhet*. 3, 4): *Hispani non* cubitum *vocant, sed Graeco nomine* ancona; the jurist Paulus (Paul. *dig*. 33, 7, 13) lists *inter instrumentum tabernae cauponiae* [...] *dolia vasa ancones calices trollae*, so *ancon* was current for them at least.

ing how many Jews will be leaving Egypt. In fact the form of the question is "who and who [of the Jews] will be leaving". The Latin translation on which Augustine dwells (*qui autem et qui sunt qui ibunt*) is, like the Septuagint Greek phrase from which this is a direct rendering, a calque from a Hebrew construction (*Ex.* 10.8 מִי וָמִי), an intensifying phrase[30]. Augustine, however, does not seem to find it so striking, considering it in fact parallel to a "rather familiar" Latin phrase, *qui et qui*[31].

14. Qui autem et qui sunt qui ibunt? *cotidie dicimus consuetudine familiariore* qui et qui ibunt?[32] (*Loc. Heptateuchum libri septem. ex. 52*)

"We say every day in the current language of familiar conversation: *who and who will go?*"

Vaccari (1935), in his review of Süss (1932), put forward the suggestion that Augustine was in fact describing the split relative phrase *qui sunt qui ibunt*, which is a sensible proposal, but leaves the difficult *qui et qui* without an explanation[33]. I believe the distributive interpretation is more likely to be appropriate, as if the Pharaoh was addressing distinct groups of people in succession ("you, and you"). Of course this was not the meaning of the original Hebrew expression.

Familiaris appears in other contexts with a more explicit link to proximal *vs* distancing address forms, such as (15), where Jerome compares contrastively the proximal address form used by God to call Elijah and the more distant way in which God addresses Adam just after the Fall.

15. *Elias quadraginta dierum ieiunio praeparatus deum uidit in monte Oreb, et audit ab eo:* quid tu hic, Elia? *multo familiarior ista uox, quam illa in gene-*

[30] Cf. Gesenius, Kautsch and Cowley (1910: §137a), translating "who exactly, who in particular".

[31] For an analysis of the Roman commentator Donatus's use of *familiaris* in a pragmatic perspective cf. Ferri (forthcoming, a), where however the semantic spectrum of the word ranges from "typical" to "inclusive", "affectionate", or, if negated (*non familiariter*), "distant", as the modern word *familiar*.

[32] Modern editions of this text print is in the form *consuetudine familiariore quam qui et qui ibunt,* but the most authoritative MS of this work, Paris, BNF Lat. 12168 f 158v, of the VIII century, as well as the oldest representatives of the other branch of tradition I was able to check (Pont. Bibl. Antoniana 182, f. 85r; Oxford. Bodl. *Laud*. 130 misc. 15r) omit *quam,* which, if corrupt, was presumably attracted by the comparative.

[33] Löfstedt (2007: 90) discussing *lente et lente* in *Per. Aeth.* 3 compares *Acta Thomae*, p. 134, 21 Bonnet [= *Pass. Thom*. 4 Zelzer] *quid et quid scire de artibus potes, quia praetulit te mini dominus tuus?*

si, Adam, ubi es? *illa enim pastum terrebat et perditum: haec ieiunanti famulo blandiebatur.* (Hier. *Adu. Iou. 2.15*)

"Elijah after the preparation of a forty days fast saw God on Mount Horeb, and heard from Him the words, *What doest thou here, Elijah?* There is much more familiarity in this than in the *Where are you, Adam?* of Genesis. The latter was intended to excite the fears of one who had fed and was lost; the former was affectionately addressed to a fasting servant."

Address is of course a crucial area of pragmatics, and Biblical commentators are trying to bridge a gap between Aramaic/Hebrew customs and those more familiar to them.

16. Τί ἐστι *Ῥακά*. Ἐπιχώριον ῥῆμα ἠπιωτέρας ὕβρεως, πρὸς τοὺς οἰκειοτέρους λαμβανόμενον. *Quid est* racha? *Provincialis id est gentis illius sermo est velut lenioris convicii, qui domesticis et his quorum fiduciam quis gerit dici solet.*[34] (Bas. *Asceticon magnum* 31.1117)

Of interest in (16) is the description of *racha* as a word of mild abuse, used in addressing people with whom one is on close terms (πρὸς τοὺς οἰκειοτέρους), but in Rufinus's version *domesticis*, which is too restrictive, is enlarged by *his quorum fiduciam quis gerit* "and those one trusts".

Abuse and respect/deference are also noted several times. For example in (17), discussing *Matthew* 15.26, Augustine comments on the words addressed by Jesus to the Chananaean woman who came to ask him to exorcize her daughter. She was called "dog" by Jesus, at least by implication; however, she took no offence, and rightly so, not only because Jesus was testing her determination and her faith, but also because there was a difference in social status between the two: if a servant called his master *dog*, that would be an offence; if the reverse happens, it may even be a *dignatio*, a respectful form of address (presumably because dogs are faithful, and a valued company for upper classes):

17. *Gentes, quid?* Non est bonum, panem filiorum mittere canibus. *Gentes ergo canes appellavit, propter immunditiam. Quid autem illa mulier esuriens? Hoc magis non repulit: suscepit humiliter convicium, et meruit beneficium. Neque enim et convicium illud dicendum erat, quod a Domino dictum erat. Servus si*

[34] On *racha* as an abusive expression in Hier. *Comm. In Matth.* 1.5: racha *enim dicitur* κενός, *id est inanis aut uacuus, quem nos possumus uulgata iniuria* absque cerebro *nuncupare*, cf. Ricchieri (2013: 153).

aliquid tale domino dicat, convicium est: dominus etiam cum tale aliquid servo dicit, dignatio potius dici. (Aug. *Enarrationes Ps.* 58.15)

"What did he call the gentiles? *It is not good to throw the children's bread to the dogs*. So he called the gentiles dogs, for their impurity. And what about that woman seeking nourishment? She did not let herself be deterred, she accepted in humbleness his abuse and proved herself deserving of her boon. In fact it was not a real abuse, the way in which he called her, since it came from the Lord. If a servant used a similar expression in reference to his master, that could be called abuse, but when a master says something of the kind to his servant, that could rather be called a form of respect."

Also interesting is (18) illustrating the scene in John 20.15 where Mary Magdalene addresses Jesus after the resurrection, but she does not recognize him and she assumes he is the warden of the gardens where Jesus was buried[35]. Here Augustine dwells on Mary's use of the respectful term of address *domine*, not the default address title when talking to a gardener, at least from Augustine's perspective. Instead, Mary uses a polite form because she is in need of help from the stranger, so a greater investment in politeness is appropriate. In fact Augustine may be overstating his case: Dickey (2003, without discussing this particular case) argues that *domine* was in the Imperial period a default address form with strangers:

18. *Putauit eum hortulanum; et ait illi,* domine*, honorificentiae causa: quia beneficium poscebat, ideo* dominum *dixit*. (Aug. *Sermones* 246.3)

"She thought he was the warden and told him *Sir*, with an expression of respect. She called him *Sir* because she was asking him a favour."

In (19) Augustine is at some pains to explain God's language: God knows everything, so the statement that he will descend to ascertain if the men of Sodom and Gomorrah are truly as evil as suggested by the clamour reaching up to the heavens would seem to belittle God's omniscience.

19. Descendens ergo videbo si secundum clamorem ipsorum venientem ad me consummantur, si autem non, ut sciam. *Verba haec si non dubitantis quid duorum potius eventurum sit, sed irascentis et minantis accipiamus, nulla quaestio*

[35] Ioh. 20.15: *Dicit ei Iesus: 'Mulier, quid ploras? Quem quaeris?' Illa, existimans quia hortulanus esset, dicit ei: 'Domine, si tu sustulisti eum, dicito mihi, ubi posuisti eum, et ego eum tollam'* "He asked her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?' Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away' ".

> *est. More quippe humano Deus in Scripturis ad homines loquitur, et eius iram noverunt sine perturbatione eius intellegere qui noverunt. Solemus autem etiam sic minaciter loqui:* Videamus si non tibi facio*, aut:* Videamus si non illi fecero. (Aug. *Quaest. Hept. Gen.* 1.38)
>
> "*I will go down and see whether they have done according to the cry that is come to me: or whether it be not so, that I may know.* If we read these words not as words of someone who is truly uncertain about which of two things will happen, but as an expression of anger and threat, there is no reason to query them. Indeed, God in Scripture speaks to men in human fashion, and those who have understanding realize that his expressions of anger are without perturbation. And such is the manner of speaking of those who utter threats: *let'see if I won't do it to you,* or: *let's see if I won't be able to do it to him*."

Augustine takes the line that the words must be interpreted as a threat, as a challenge, as if God were saying 'will they dare do the same in my face'. Augustine is therefore drawing on an idiomatic formula of the spoken language, which he exemplifies himself, and for which we can compare some effective turns of phrase from the *Hermeneumata,* the bilingual handbooks re-edited recently by Dickey (2013-2015), whose numbering I follow, even if I disagree with her textual choice. Indeed Augustine's linguistic example *Videamus si non tibi facio* seems to me a close match for the repartee scene at *Colloquium Harleianum* 17b: ἄφες ἴδω τί μοι ποιεῖς/*Sine video quid mihi facis* (answered by *non curo minationes*) "let me see what you can do to me"; *ibid.* 24b θεωρῶ τί μοι ποιεῖς/*uideo quid mihi facies* "I want to see what you will do to me"[36].

A Greek contemporary of Jerome, whose work is preserved largely only in papyri, Didymus of Alexandria, has another set of interesting comments concerning social deixis in a vocative address form, *neaniske,* which includes a contrastive comparison of Hebrew morphosyntax and Greek, on the inclusion of gender information in the Hebrew imperative, as opposed to Greek. Of some interest is also Didymus's observation on the use of masculine agreement when addressing a group of mixed gender, and the pleasure felt by a group of women being addressed jointly with men, regardless of the masculine agreement (the opposite, ie using feminine endings for address to a mixed audience, would of course be unthinkable):

[36] Both Augustine and Jerome often illustrate particular Biblical idioms with reference to colloquial Latin usage, often because a similar metaphorical language is used (*Locut. Gen.* 143: *et misit uxor domini eius oculos suos in ioseph: solet et apud nos uulgo esse usitata locutio pro eo, quod est* amauit eum. *et ait:* dormi mecum. *et ista usitata est locutio pro eo, quod est* concumbe mecum).

20. *εὐφραίνου οὖν, νεανίσκε, ἐν νεότητί σου*. λοιπὸν πρὸς τὸν *νεανίσκον* ἀποτείνεται. ἐὰν δὲ ἐπὶ *νεανίσκον*, μὴ χαρακτῆρας περιβλεπώμεθα σώματος· αἱ ἐντολαὶ γὰρ καὶ αἱ ἀπαγορεύσεις καὶ αἱ προτροπαὶ ἀπαρεμφάτως γίνονται· *οὐ φονεύσεις*. καὶ λέγουσιν εἰς ἄλλας διαλέξεις τὰς προστάξεις ἑτέρως γίνεσθαι πρὸς θηλείας, ἑτέρως πρὸς ἄρρενας, παρ᾽ Ἑβραίοις καὶ παρ᾽ Αἰγυπτίοις· παρ᾽ ἡμῖν δὲ οὐ παρενφαίνει τὸ πρόσωπον. ἐὰν λέγω ὅτι *εὐφραίνου*, οὐκ ἄλλως τῇ θηλείᾳ λέγεται καὶ ἄλλως τῷ ἀνδρί. οὕτω καὶ τὸ *νεανίσκε* λέγω ϰ᾽αὶ συνήθειαν λέγω τῆς χρήσεως τῶν τοιούτων. ἐάν τις ἅμα ἀνδρῶ(ν) καὶ γυναικῶν μνημονεύῃ, εἰς τὸ ἀρρενικὸν συνπεραίνει τὸν λόγον· λέγομεν ὅτι πάρεισιν ἄνδρες καὶ γυναῖκες ἀκροασόμενοι, οὐκ ἀκροασ<ό>μεναι· ὕβριν γὰρ φέρει τὸ συναπενεχθῆναι τὸν ἄνδρα τῇ γυναικί, τὴν δὲ γυναῖκα τῷ ἀνδρὶ ἀποδοθῆναι μᾶλλον ἔπαινον φέρει. (Didymus Caecus, Commentarii in Ecclesiasten 11,9a)

"*You who are young, be happy while you are young*. The rest refers to the expression *you who are young*. When we read *young person*, we must not think of physical characteristics, because directives, exhortations and prohibitions do not contain an indication of grammatical gender. *You shall not kill* and they say that commands in other languages are different when addressed to male or female, for example in Hebrew or Egyptian. In our language, an imperative does not contain an indication of gender: when I say *rejoice*, the same form is used for both man and woman. Therefore the same is true for *young person* and for linguistic usage in such cases. When someone mentions man and woman in the same group, the phrase is in the masculine: for example we say that men and women will be in the audience using a masculine participle, because it is offensive for a man to be postponed to a woman, whereas for a woman it is a reason for pride to be addressed jointly with men."

There is in fact much more to do because the texts to be examined in this research are numerous, long, and generally little heeded outside the special areas of Christian studies, and I hope to have succeeded in conveying in these pages the interest of this avenue of research in a variationist perspective.

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