The Vulgate and Jerome's Biblical Exegesis

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ABSTRACT • In the recent annotated German translation of the Vulgate produced by the *Vulgata Verein*, (Hieronymus. *Biblia Sacra vulgata: Lateinisch-deutsch*, vols. I-V, Andreas Beriger, Widu-Wolfgang Ehlers and Michael Fieger, edd., Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), Manfred Niehoff's and Michael Margoni-Kögler's versions of Isaiah 1-11 and 12-22 respectively incorporate references to Jerome's *Commentary on Isaiah*. The rarity of such intertextual reading of the Vulgate and Jerome's biblical commentaries in this German translation correlates with sporadic attention to the topic in monographs on the commentaries and the Latin translation. Close comparison of the Vulgate and Jerome's biblical exegesis rarely happens. The lacuna is surprising because Jerome composed his commentaries and exegetical letters before, during and after his work on the biblical translation. Moreover, *Hebrew Questions on Genesis, Book of Places*, and *Book of the Interpretation of Hebrew Names* represent preliminary tools for the version according to the Hebrews and broadly outline his translation techniques. Likewise, numerous references to Latin grammatical technical terms in his writings strongly suggest that grammatical categories informed his translation. Through a consideration of select examples, this paper recommends intertextual reading of the biblical translation by demonstrating the value of comparing specific renderings of the Vulgate to Jerome's exegetical comments. Namely, such comparisons clarify noteworthy features of the translation and offer evidence of how readers may have interpreted his renderings.

KEYWORDS • Jerome, Vulgate, commentary, exegesis, translation technique, letters, intertextuality

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG • In der kürzlich vom *Vulgata Verein* verfassten kommentierten deutschen Übersetzung der Vulgata (Hieronymus. *Biblia Sacra vulgata: Lateinisch-deutsch*, Bd. I-V, Andreas Beriger, Widu-Wolfgang Ehlers und Michael Fieger, Hg., Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), Manfred Niehoffs und Michael Margoni-Köglers Übersetzung von Jesaja 1-11 bzw. 12-22 enthält Verweise auf Hieronymus' *Kommentar zu Jesaja*. Die Seltenheit einer solchen intertextuellen Lektüre der Vulgata und der Bibelkommentare Hieronymus in dieser deutschen Übersetzung ist mit sporadischer Aufmerksamkeit für das Thema in Monographien zu den Kommentaren und der lateinischen Übersetzung korelliert. Ein enger Vergleich der Vulgata und der biblischen Exegese des Hieronymus findet selten statt. Die Lücke ist überraschend, weil Hieronymus seine Kommentare und exegetischen Briefe vor, während und nach seiner Arbeit an der Bibelübersetzung verfasste. Darüber hinaus stellen *Hebräische Fragen zur Genesis*, das *Buch der Orte* und das *Buch der Interpretation hebräischer Namen* vorläufige Werkzeuge für die Übersetzung nach den Hebräern dar und skizzieren seine Übersetzungstechniken. Ebenso deuten zahlreiche Verweise auf lateinische grammatikalische Fachbegriffe in seinen Schriften stark darauf hin, dass grammatikalische Kategorien seine Übersetzung beeinflussten. Durch eine Betrachtung ausgewählter Beispiele empfiehlt dieser Aufsatz die intertextuelle Lektüre der biblischen Übersetzung, indem er den Wert des Vergleichs spezifischer Darstellungen der Vulgata mit den exegetischen Kommentaren des Hieronymus aufzeigt. Solche Vergleiche verdeutlichen nämlich bemerkenswerte Merkmale der Übersetzung und liefern Hinweise darauf, wie die Leser seine Wiedergaben interpretiert haben könnten.

SCHLAGWORTE • Hieronymus, Vulgata, Kommentar, Exegese, Übersetzungstechnik, Briefe, Intertextualität

While we have known for a long time that a relationship exists between the Vulgate and Jerome's biblical exegesis found in his vast corpora, an analysis dedicated to this relationship remains a desideratum.[1] Research devoted to his biblical commentaries, treatises, and letters might refer to a relevant verse in the Vulgate as an *obiter dictum* or as an aid or amplification of a particular passage. For example, Kamesar's study on *Hebrew Questions on Genesis* argues that the work presents and defends Jerome's translation technique of *recentiores*-rabbinic philology, but he does not analyze the extent to which Jerome applies this technique to the final translation.[2] Earlier studies on the Vulgate tended to focus on its text critical value and/or its Hebrew and Greek and Latin *Vorlagen*. Catherine Tkacz-Brown's studies many years ago marked a shift in orientation when she argued that Jerome's biblical translation should be read as a work of Late Antique Latin Literature in its own right.[3] Subsequent studies of the Vulgate such as those of Weigert and Cameron, focusing on the Book of Deuteronomy and Psalms directly, seek to explain and interpret the Vulgate itself.[4] Michael Graves's work on the *Commentary on Jeremiah* deserves mention because it highlights Jerome's use of Late Antique grammatical traditions in his approach to the Latin text of the Book of Jeremiah within his Commentary on the prophet.[5] Even more to the point, Graves published recently a translation of Epistle 106 to Sunnia and Fretela, which he describes as "best understood as a scholarly treatise on the Gallican Psalter" and reads the letter as Jerome's textual commentary on the Book of Psalms.[6] Nevertheless, with

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1 There are exceptions. C.T.R. Hayward, *Saint Jerome's Hebrew Questions on Genesis, translated with Introduction and Commentary*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995, 11 estimates how many times the Vulgate follows and does not follow the commentary in the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis* (99 cases of agreement and 80 cases of disagreement). More recently, Michael Graves, *Jerome, Epistle 106 (On the Psalms): Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, SBL Press, United States, 2022, carefully compares textual witnesses of the Vulgate and versions with the lemmata and discussions in Epistle 106 (pp.38-40 and throughout the commentary *ad locum*). More recent studies on the Vulgate can pay more attention to Jerome's commentaries, letters, and treatises. See, e.g., Lucas Brum Teixeira, „Accipite Iudith viduam (*Hier. Prol. Iud.* 11), Jerome's Ideas of Christian Widowhood in the Book of Judith of the Vulgate", *Vulgata in Dialogue* 6 (2022) 35-40; Tarciziu Hristofor Şerban, „De l'expérience religieuse du psalmiste et ses rapports avec divers gens des alentours dans le Ps 15/16, 1-4, selon les traductions/révisions de Jérôme", *Vulgata in Dialogue* 6 (2022) 57-70; Michael Fieger and Wilhelm Tauwinkl, „Remarks on the Hebraica Veritas in the Old Testament Quotations of The Gospel of Matthew According to Jerome", *Vulgata in Dialogue* 6 (2022) 71-75.

2 Adam Kamesar, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship and the Hebrew Bible*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993, 194. More precisely, Kamesar argues that the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis* applies a recentiores-rabbinic philology in his commentary, which defends the translation directly from the Hebrew. Pierre Jay, *L'exégèse de Saint Jérôme d'apres son 'Commentaire sur Isaie,'* Études augustiniennes, Paris, 1985, Matthew A. Kraus, *Jewish, Christian, and Classical Exegetical Traditions in Jerome's Translation of the Book of Exodus : Translation Technique and the Vulgate*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, Brill, Leiden, 2017 and Sebastian Weigert, *Hebraica Veritas Übersetzungsprinzipien und Quellen der Deuteronomiumübersetzung des Hieronymus*, Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament, Verlag W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 2016 do occasionally address the relationship of specific renditions to Jerome's exegesis.

3 Catherine Brown Tkacz, „Labor tam utilis: The Creation of the Vulgate", VC 50 (1996) 42-72. Her work represents a broader shift in Hieronymian scholarship that view Jerome and his works as products and representations of Late Antiquity.

4 Weigert, *Hebraica Veritas* and John S. Cameron, „The Vir Tricultus. An Investigation of Classical, Jewish and Christian Influences on Jerome's Translation of the Psalter iuxta Hebraeos", PhD diss., Oxford, 2006.

5 Michael Graves, *Jerome's Hebrew Philology: A Study Based on his Commentary on Jeremiah*, Brill, Leiden, 2007.

6 Michael Graves, *Jerome, Epistle 106,* 13.

the exceptions of Hayward and Graves, publications, more often than not, bury any analysis of how a Vulgate rendition relates to Jerome's biblical exegesis within broader frameworks and discussions. This makes it difficult to answer a basic question of how Jerome's understanding of a particular biblical verse impacts his translation. For example, the recent magisterial translation of the Vulgate into German, according to its introduction, admirably seeks to provide a German translation that captures the style of the Vulgate and give readers a sense of the Vulgate as a Late Antique work. In reality, however, except for the first half of the Isaiah translation, there are almost no annotations that refer to Jerome's exegesis.[7]

What do we know about Jerome's exegesis and translation?

In addition to analytical comparisons between a Vulgate rendition and hieronymian exegesis one can find scattered throughout various studies, C.T.R. Hayward's translation and commentary on the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis* does include an extensive examination of the Vulgate and the Hebrew Questions.[8] According to Hayward, the Vulgate and the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis* agree 99 times and disagree approximately 80 times including 24 occasions where the Vulgate follows the Septuagint, even when Jerome shares concerns about the Septuagint in the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*.[9] In the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*, Jerome cites the textual versions of the Hebrew, Septuagint, Symmachus, Aquila, and Theodotion. Since he almost always provides a Latin translation of these versions (with or without the Hebrew and Greek), we can securely identify which option appears in the Vulgate. Jerome also refers to Hebrew traditions, which apply more to the interpretation than the precise wording of the text.[10] Analysis of the evidence indicates that the Vulgate can follow what Jerome lists as the Hebrew (Gen. 2:2 LXX *dies sexta*, Vg *dies septima*),[11] or Symmachus as a representative of the Hebrew (Gen. 2:23 LXX *mulier* Vg/Sym *virago*), or Aquila and Symmachus as representatives of the Hebrew (Gen. 2:21 LXX *extasis* Vg *sopor*),[12] or Aquila and Theodotion as representative of the Hebrew (Gen. 3:1 LXX *sapientior* Vg/Aq/Th *callidior*), or other Latin manuscripts in combination with Aquila, Symmachus, and primarily Theodotion (LXX *ad vesperam*, other Latin codices *post meridiem*, Vg *ad auram post merediem*),[13] or Symmachus and Aquila (Gen. 2:8 LXX *oriens*, Vg *principium*), or the

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[7] Andreas Beriger, Widu-Wolfgang Ehlers and Michael Fieger (edd.), *Hieronymus. Biblia Sacra vulgata: Lateinisch-deutsch Band 1-5,* De Gruyter, Berlin; Boston, 2018 ("Einleitung," 9-10; Translation of Isaiah in Volume 4).

[8] Hayward, *Saint Jerome's Hebrew Questions*.

[9] Hayward, *Saint Jerome's Hebrew Questions*, 11.

[10] For example, on Gen. 11:28, although he positively mentions the legend of Abraham being thrown into the fire by the Babylonians and the rendering of *Ur Chasdim* in Gen. 15:7 as *ignis Chaldeorum*, the Vulgate has *Ur Chaldeorum* in both 11:28 and 15:7. See Hayward, *Saint Jerome's Hebrew Questions*, 146. However, see discussion below where traditions are incorporated into the text.

[11] See also on Gen. 3:14, 3:15, 3:24, 17:3, 21:9.

[12] The Vulgate is less detailed than Jerome's translation of Aquila and Symmachus, *gravem et profundum soporem*.

[13] Hayward, *Saint Jerome's Hebrew Questions*, 115, claims that Jerome approves of Theodotion's translation, but it is more complicated. According to Jerome, Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion offer similar renditions of the Hebrew,

Septuagint against Symmachus (Gen. 2:15 LXX/Vg *paradisum voluptatis* Sym *paradisum amoeni-tatis et deliciae*).[14] Despite such parallels between the Vulgate and the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*, Hayward ultimately claims that the numerous differences between the Vulgate and the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*, the omission of well-known textual cruxes, and the philological irrelevance of some Jewish traditions cited in the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis* all problematize Kamesar's contention that Jerome wrote the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis* to defend his new philological system for translating the Bible from Hebrew to Latin.[15] I do not agree with Hayward because he assumes that Jerome must consistently apply his approach to translation. In fact, the evidence gather by Graves from Epistle 106 demonstrates Jerome's inconsistency.[16] Of the 177 passages discussed in Epistle 106, there are nine cases of the Hebrew translation of the letter not aligning with the *Iuxta Hebraeos* (IH) edition, at least fifteen cases of the *Iuxta Hebraeos* edition not correlating with the discussion in the letter, and at least five cases of agreement with the *Iuxta Hebraeos*.[17] Thus, similar to what we learn from the analysis of Hayward, a commentary sheds light on the translation, but does not dictate the final rendition. If we know anything about translations in general, it is that they often have an ad hoc character which is even more to be expected regarding a translation that took almost fifteen years to complete.[18]

Regardless of whether Jerome consistently adhered to fixed principles of translation, these exegetical moments provide a rich thesaurus for reading the Vulgate through Jerome. Tools exist that enable a reader to track down these exegetical moments. The critical editions of commentaries, treatises, and letters have indices to biblical passages and the forthcoming work of Bernhard Lang will enable scholars to locate more easily discussions of biblical passages in secondary

but Theodotion's is clearer (*manifestius*). Moreover, Jerome does not render Theodotion (ἐν τῷ πνεύματι πρὸς κατάψυξιν τῆς ἡμέρας) but adapts his explanation of what Theodotion means (*ut meridiano calore transacto refrigerium aurae spirantis ostenderet*).

14 Jerome applies the Septuagint rendition to Gen. 2:8 where the Vulgate also has *paradisum voluptatis* but the Septuagint has *paradisum in eden*). Hayward, *Saint Jerome's Hebrew Questions*, 107 correctly notes that the Vulgate, however, follows Symmachus's reading *eden* as a description of paradise, not its location.

15 Hayward, *Saint Jerome's Hebrew Questions*, 8-14. Rather, Jerome had a theological and philological rationale for writing the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*, namely to defend his use of Jewish sources. I do not find Hayward's claims convincing. In addition to disagreeing with his comparisons of the Vulgate and the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis* discussed below, one should distinguish the theological rationale for translating the Bible from Hebrew to Latin from the purpose of the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*. Jerome makes clear in his prefaces to the translation the theological significance of his work, so it would be no surprise that the theological elements of his philological approach appear in the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*. Hayward is correct in identifying the lacunae in the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis* that point to Jerome's inconsistency, which also applies to the Vulgate. Nevertheless, the numerous passages addressed by the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis* do amply demonstrate the contours of what Kamesar has called a "recentiores-rabbinic" philology.

16 Graves even sees a shift of purpose while writing the letter: originally intending to defend the Gallican (hexaplaric) Psalter, Jerome abandoned "his Latin rendering based on the hexaplaric Septuagint" and decided "to translate directly from the Hebrew" as the best way "to deliver the Hebrew truth to Latin ears...." (Graves, *Jerome, Epistle 106*, 55).

17 Graves, *Jerome, Epistle 106*, 13-16, 38-40.

18 Benjamin Kedar-Kopfstein, „The Latin Translations," in *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, M. J. Mulder and H. Sysling (edd.), CRINT 2.1 Fortress, Philadelphia, 1988, 320-321.

literature.[19] Moreover, editions of the Vulgate itself include cross-references to other biblical passages in the Latin Bible.[20] Resources that gather and/or analyze exegesis of the Hebrew or even the Greek Bible, is not new and are enormously useful for the history of interpretation.[21] One underexplored yet unique fact about Jerome is that he is the first biblical translator who is not only known to us by name but has also left us a vast historical record of his life and work. It is perplexing that this connection between his life, work, and translation has received acknowledgement, but minimal attention. However, it is less surprising when one considers that the Vulgate has been marginalized in hieronymian studies even as Late Antiquity began to emerge as a significant field in its own right. Furthermore, while it used to be crucial to the textual history of the Bible, the biblical texts discovered around the Dead Sea in the last century have rendered the Vulgate less significant to the history of the Hebrew text. Starting from the framework that the Vulgate is a work of Late Antique literature and the insight of translation studies that a translation represents the dialogue between the source text and language and the target text and its language and culture, the rest of Jerome's corpus becomes crucial to interpreting and understanding the Vulgate.[22] What follows are some examples that illustrate what a commentary on the Vulgate according to Jerome might look like.

General Observations

1. Deuteronomy 14:13, 16

MT 13 וְהָרָאָה, וְאֶת-הָאַיָּה, וְהַדַּיָּה, לְמִינָהּ
16 אֶת-הַכּוֹס וְאֶת-הַיַּנְשׁוּף, וְהַתִּנְשָׁמֶת

Vg 13 ixon et vulturem ac milvum iuxta genus suum
16 herodium et cycnum et ibin

LXX 13 καὶ τὸν γύπα καὶ τὸν ἴκτινον καὶ τὰ ὅμοια αὐτῷ
16 καὶ ἐρωδιὸν καὶ κύκνον καὶ ἶβιν

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[19] Bernhard Lang, *The Vulgate Latin Bible Handbook: A Comprehensive Research Bibliography* (forthcoming).

[20] On the valuable lexical insights gained by comparing biblical passages, see Manuela Gächter, „Vulgate in Use: Intertextual References. Cellar or Bedroom? Observations on Song 1,3vulg (1,4)", *Vulgata in Dialogue* 3 (2019) 47-58.

[21] Frederick Field, ed., *Origenes Hexaplorum Quae Supersunt*, Oxford, 1875 and the Göttingen editions of the Septuagint are still the best way to compare the Hebrew, Septuagint, Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion and other versions. James Kugel, *The Bible as It Was*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1997, which discusses selected ancient interpretations of individual verses of the Pentateuch, often includes ancient translations that are easily accessible through the index of "Ancient Biblical Texts and Versions (pp.667-670). In fact, history of biblical interpretation has become standard in biblical commentaries such as the widely read Anchor Bible. Nonetheless, finding an exegetically significant rendering in the Vulgate still requires fishing.

[22] Kraus, *Jewish, Christian, and Classical*, 19-28.

Psalm 103(104):17

MT אֲשֶׁר-שָׁם, צִפֳּרִים יְקַנֵּנוּ; חֲסִידָה, בְּרוֹשִׁים בֵּיתָהּ.

LXX ἐκεῖ στρουθία ἐννοσσεύσουσιν, τοῦ ἐρωδιοῦ ἡ οἰκία ἡγεῖται αὐτῶν

PsLXX illic passeres nidificabunt erodii domus dux est eorum

PsIH: ibi aves nidificabunt milvo abies domus eius

Epistula 106.65 ad Sunniam et Fretelam (c.387-392) *Herodii domus dux est eorum.* pro herodio, quod in Hebraeo dicitur ASIDA, Symmachus ικτινα, id est milvum, interpretatus est. denique et nos ita vertimus in latinum: „Ibi aves nidificabunt; milvi abies domus est." quod scilicet semper in excelsis et arduis arboribus nidos facere consueverit. Unde et sexta editio manifestius interpretata est: Milvo cupressi ad nidificandum pro abietibus autem et cupressis in Hebraeo ponitur BARUSIM, quod magis abietes quam κυπαρισσους significat.

The house of the heron is their leader. In place of "heron," which in Hebrew reads *asida*, Symmachus translated ἰκτῖνα, that is, 'kite'. In fact, we also translate into Latin, thus: "there the birds will build their nests; the house of the kite is the silver fir," evidently because it is their custom to always build its nests in high and lofty trees. On this basis, the sixth edition (*sexta editio*) translated more clearly: "for the kite, cypress trees are for building nests." However, in place of "silver firs" or "cypress trees," in Hebrew it has *barusim*, which means "silver firs," rather than κυπαρίσσους.[23]

To illustrate what I mean by a different orientation, a text-critical framework would note that in the list of animals forbidden for consumption in Deuteronomy 14:13ff., the Vulgate follows the Septuagint not the Hebrew since, e.g., הַחֲסִידָה appears in Deuteronomy 14:18, where it is rendered as *onocratalum*. Sebastian Weigert, however, uses the explanation of the Vulgate Psalm 103 (104):17 in Epistle 106 to prove Jerome's Hebrew erudition as well as his familiarity with flora and fauna in his rendition of Deuteronomy 14:13ff.[24] What Weigert importantly does is bring the translation of chapter fourteen of Deuteronomy on unclean animals in dialogue with his letter/commentary on Psalms. A reader of Vulgate Deuteronomy and Psalms by themselves would easily miss the erudition behind his renditions and also not understand why Jerome uses the terms *miluum* and *abies* rather than *passeres*, *erodii*, *dux*, and *cupressus* in the translation of the Psalms passage.[25] On similar lines and even more deeply, Graves delves into the relationship between the *Iuxta Septuaginta* and *Iuxta Hebraeos* translations and the comments in the letter. The letter suggests why Sunnia and Fretela questioned the *Iuxta Septuaginta* rendition of the Psalms verse, how Jerome combines Symmachus and Aquila in the *Iuxta Hebraeos* Psalter, and why he may have started to prefer a new translation directly from the Hebrew.[26]

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23 Graves, *Jerome, Epistle 106*, 133.

24 Weigert, *Hebraica Veritas*, 226-227, who also notes that there might be a different consonantal text or misreading of the Hebrew behind the Septuagint reading of (בראשים) ברושים.

25 Weigert, *Hebraica Veritas*, 223, while correctly noting that Vulgate Deuteronomy 14:13ff follows the Septuagint, not the Hebrew, does not mention the text critical implications of the letter for the Deuteronomy passage. Since Jerome clearly states that the Hebrew meaning of חסידה for Psalm 103, it is possible that he follows the same Hebrew Vorlage as the Septuagint for Deuteronomy 14:16.

26 Graves, *Jerome, Epistle 106*, 271-273.

2. Isaiah 2:22

חִדְלוּ לָכֶם מִן-הָאָדָם, אֲשֶׁר נְשָׁמָה בְּאַפּוֹ: כִּי-בַמֶּה נֶחְשָׁב, הוּא

IH quiescite ergo ab homine cuius spiritus in naribus eius quia excelsus reputatus est ipse

Comm. In Is. 2:22: Hoc praetermisere LXX et in graecis exemplaribus ab Origene sub asteriscis de editione Aquilae additum est, quod in hebraeo ita legitur: HEDALU LACHEM MEN AADAM ASER NASAMA BAAPHPHO CHI BAMA NESAB HU. Ubi nos diximus: excelsus reputatus est ipse, Aquila interpretatus est: in quo reputatus est iste. Verbum hebraicum BAMA vel ὕψωμα dicitur, id est excelsum, quod et in regnorum libris et in Hiezechiele legimus. Vel certe in quo et eisdem litteris scribitur beth, mem, he ac pro locorum qualitate, si voluerimus legere: in quo dicimus BAMMA; sin autem: excelsum vel excelsus, legimus BAMA. Intellegentes ergo Iudaei prophetiam esse de Christo, verbum ambiguum in deteriorem partem interpretati sunt, ut viderentur non laudare Christum, sed nihili pendere.

The Septuagint omitted this and in the Greek from Origen it was marked by asterisks having been added from the edition of Aquila. It reads as follows in Hebrew: HEDALU LACHEM MEN AADAM ASER NASAMA BAAPHPHO CHI BAMA NESAB HU 'Oh, cease to exalt man, who has only a breath in his nostrils! for by what does he merit esteem?' (JPS Translation). Where we have said: *he himself is reputed high*, Aquila translated, "In what is he himself reputed?" The Hebrew word is expressed as BAMA, or ὕψωμα, that is, "high thing" which we read in the books of Kingdoms and in Ezekiel [cf. 1 Sam 9:12; Ezek 6:6; 20:29]. Or at least, 'in what' is written even in the same letters, *beth*, *mem*, *he* and in view of the nature of the passages, if we want to read "in what," we say BAMMA; but if we want to read "high thing" or "high one," we read BAMA. The Jews, therefore, understanding that it is a prophecy about Christ, translated the ambiguous word in a detrimental sense, so that they would not seem to be praising Christ, but valuing him as nothing.[27]

The commentary on Isaiah 2:22 similarly illustrates Jerome's Hebrew erudition as well as justify the authority of his translation by correcting a Jewish anti-christian reading. At the same time, the passage tells the reader how to interpret this verse as a messianic reference.[28] For a scholar like myself, I am intrigued by the various pronunciations, the various renditions, and the exegetical trajectory of this verse in Jewish and Christian tradition, but this is not necessarily relevant to the question of how a Late Antique reader might encounter the text or how Jerome anticipates how the text ought to be read. By reading the Vulgate in light of the commentary, we learn that a Late antique reader would appreciate this verse as a reference to the Messiah as well as a rejection of Jewish exploitation of a term's ambiguity to suppress the messianic reference. The commentary's clarification of the Vulgate rendition not only benefits the reader: focusing on a Hebrew word's ambiguity powerfully justifies Jerome as the authoritative translator of the Bible. Only someone with his qualifications can perform this kind of work.

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[27] Adapted from *Commentary on Isaiah: Including St. Jerome's Translation of Origen's Homilies 1-9 on Isaiah*, Thomas Scheck, tran., Newman Press, United States, 2015.

[28] See Weigert, *Hebraica Veritas,* 95.

Explanation of Latin word choice

3. Isaiah 15:5

> לִבִּי, לְמוֹאָב יִזְעָק, בְּרִיחֶהָ, עַד-צֹעַר עֶגְלַת שְׁלִשִׁיָּה: כִּי מַעֲלֵה הַלּוּחִית,
> בִּבְכִי יַעֲלֶה-בּוֹ--כִּי דֶּרֶךְ חוֹרֹנַיִם, זַעֲקַת-שֶׁבֶר יְעֹעֵרוּ.

IH cor meum ad Moab clamabit vectes eius usque ad Segor vitulam conternantem per ascensum enim Luith flens ascendet et in via Oronaim <u>clamorem contritionis</u> levabunt

Comm in Isa. ad 15:5 Propheta loquitur dolentis affectu, vel quod hostes quoque creatura Dei sint, in quos tot mala supervenient, vel quod tantis calamitatibus opprimendi ut etiam inimicis miserabiles fiant.

The prophet speaks with the emotions of one who is grieving either because enemies upon whom so many evils are coming are God's creatures too, or because they are about to be crushed by such great calamities that they become pitiful even to their enemies.[29]

Without the benefit of the exegetical commentary, the Latin word choices of Jerome could easily pass unnoticed. Many of Jerome's commentary on prophets were written after his translation and therefore can be sources for how a Late Antique person should read the Bible.[30] We have an example in his *Commentary on Isaiah* of how Jerome intended the Latin of Isaiah 15:5 to be read. *Cor meum… clamabit* should be understood as having a sorrowful tone while the rendition of *shever* as *clamorem contritionis* represents "the cry of shared grief". The commentary explains why Jerome calls attention to sympathy and empathy: either because even enemies are God's creatures or because the disasters even of enemies can evoke sympathy. The suffering of those who deserve still arouses a shared sense of pain.

4. Deut. 14:28

> מִקְצֵה שָׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים, תּוֹצִיא אֶת-כָּל-מַעְשַׂר תְּבוּאָתְךָ, בַּשָּׁנָה, הַהִוא; וְהִנַּחְתָּ, בִּשְׁעָרֶיךָ.

IH anno tertio separabis aliam decimam ex omnibus quae nascuntur
tibi eo tempore et repones intra ianuas tuas

LXX μετὰ τρία ἔτη ἐξοίσεις πᾶν τὸ ἐπιδέκατον τῶν γενημάτων σου, ἐν τῷ ἐνιαυτῷ ἐκείνῳ θήσεις αὐτὸ ἐν ταῖς πόλεσίν σου

Comm. In Ezech 45:13 *et haec sunt primitiae quas tolletis sextam partem oephi de choro frumenti et sextam partem oephi de choro hordei*. Dicamus igitur primum iuxta litteram Δεκάτας – hoc est decimam partem – omnium frugum leviticae tribui populus ex lege debebat; rursum ex ipsis decimis levitae, hoc est inferiorum ministrorum gradus decimas dabat sacerdotibus. Et haec est quae appellatur δευτεροδεκάτη – erant quoque et aliae decimae, quas unusquisque de populo israel in suis horreis separabat, ut comederet eas cum iret ad templum in urbe hierusalem et in vestibulo templi et sacerdotes ac levitas invitarent ad convivia. Erant autem et aliae decimae, quas pauperibus recondebant, quae graeco sermone appellantur πτωχοδεκάται.

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[29] Scheck, tran, *Commentary on Isaiah*.

[30] On the dates of the commentaries, see Scheck, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 19-21.

"And these are the first fruits which you will take, a sixth of an Ephah from a core of grain and a sixth of an ephah from a core of barley. Let us first then explain according to the letter: the people legally owed a Δεκάτας, that is, a tenth of all their harvest to the Levite tribe. And again, from these tithes of the Levite tribe, that is the rank of the lower officials, they gave to the priests. And this is what is called the δευτεροδεκάτη—There were also other tithes which each Israelite separated out in their granaries, so that they might eat them when they go to the temple in the city of Jerusalem and in the vestibule of the temple and the priests and Levites invite them to the communal meals. There were also other tithes which they set aside for the poor, which are called in Greek πτωχοδεκάται.[31]

By itself, the reference to "another tithe" (*alia decima*) in Deuteronomy 14:28 may seem peculiar because it does not follow the Hebrew which also does not make a special point to distinguish between the tithe mentioned in verses 14:22-23. The *Commentary on Ezechiel* 45:13 indicates that Jerome was quite conscious of different types of tithes and therefore highlights that the third-year tithe mentioned in Deuteronomy is specifically dedicated to priests. The fact that he emphasizes this in the translation indicates that not only was he aware of different types of tithes, but he also chose to bring this detail to the attention of the reader.[32] The passage from the *Commentary on Ezechiel* also suggests the motivation behind the rendering in Deuteronomy. The commentary, which considers the differentiation of tithes as representing the Hebrew Truth (*Haec interim juxta litteram, et juxta Hebraicam veritatem*), connects the differentiation to a rabbinic tradition. According to this Jewish tradition (*traditionemque accepimus Hebraeorum*), since Scriptures leaves the exact amount of the tithe to the priests undefined, the rabbis determined that the amount must be between 1/40 and 1/60 of the first fruits.[33] The Jewish tradition is attested in the Babylonian Talmud Chullin 137b:

The Gemara asks: Is the amount one is required to separate as *teruma* one part of sixty? But didn't we learn in a mishna (*Terumot* 4:3): With regard to the measure, one should separate as *teruma*, if one is of generous disposition, he gives one-fortieth. The Gemara answers: By Torah law, it is sufficient to give one part of sixty; by rabbinic law the requisite amount is one part of forty.[34]

Jerome, however, does not follow the rationale behind the rabbinic ruling. He considers the ruling to be a check on the greediness of the priests (*hic specialiter definitur propter sacerdotum avaritiam*) whereas the Talmud imagines the generosity of the giver who might donate too

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[31] Translation mine.

[32] Weigert, *Hebraica Veritas*,174-177. Weigert recognizes the rabbinic background for this systematization of various kinds of tithing.

[33] *Comm. In Ezech.* 45:13,14. *Traditionemque accepimus Hebraeorum non lege praeceptam, sed magistrorum arbitrio inolitam: qui plurimum, quadragesimam partem dabat sacerdotibus: qui minimum, sexagesimam: inter quadragesimam et sexagesimam licebat offerre quodcumque voluissent. Quod igitur in Pentateucho dubium derelictum est, hic specialiter definitur propter sacerdotum avaritiam, ne amplius a populo exigant in primitiis deferendis, id est, ut sexagesimam partem offerant eorum, quae gignuntur e terra.*

[34] Translation from Sefaria.org. The Jerusalem Talmud, *yTerumot 4:3*, remarkably begins its discussion Mishnah *Terumot* 4:3 by citing Ezekiel 45:13 (following Tosefta, *Terumot*, 5:8). It is more likely that the tradition came from a Jewish informant rather than a rabbinic text.

much.[35] Such a reading of the rabbinic tradition applies to the spiritual interpretation of the passage from Ezekiel. At first, he explains that the people should offer the fruits of their justice and virtue. Then, returning to a literal reading, he notes that the priests use the contributions from the people to make the sacrifices required to atone for the people. Thus, the priests are in debt to the people as much the people owe the priests (*Ex quo animadvertendum, quod quomodo populus debitor est primitiarum offerendarum principi: sic princeps debitor est populi offerre pro eo victimas*). Then, he returns to the more spiritual sense that, Christ, the *princeps* par excellence, offers himself as a sacrifice to reciprocate the moral and spiritual offerings of the people (*quem juxta tropologiam non alium intelligere possumus, nisi Dominum Salvatorem*). Introducing the rabbinic tradition enables Jerome to contrast the generosity of Christ with the greediness of priests, the same priests who rejected Jesus. His thick reading of Ezekiel 45:13-14 depends on the distinction between types of tithes. The rendering in Deuteronomy offers another door to the Christological interpretation that the *Commentary on Ezekiel* unlocks.

Transliteration:

5. Psalm 101 (102) 7

> דָּמִיתִי, לִקְאַת מִדְבָּר; הָיִיתִי, כְּכוֹס חֳרָבוֹת.

> ὡμοιώθην πελεκᾶνι ἐρημικῷ, ἐγενήθην ὡσεὶ νυκτικόραξ ἐν οἰκοπέδῳ,

> **ILXX** adsimilatus sum pelicano deserti factus sum quasi bubo solitudinum

> **IH** similis factus sum pelicano solitudinis factus sum sicut nycticorax in domicilio

> **Epistula 106.63 ad Sunniam et Fretelam (c.387-392)** In eodem: „factus sum sicut νυκτικόραξ in domicilio." Quod similiter habetur in graeco; et quaeritis, quid significet νυκτικόραξ apud latinos. In hebraeo pro nycticorace verbum BOS scriptum est, quod Aquila et Septuaginta et Theodotio et quinta editio nycticoracem interpretati sunt, Symmachus upupam, sexta editio noctuam, quod et nos magis sequimur. denique, ubi apud nostros et graecos legitur: „factus sum sicut νυκτικόραξ in domicilio", apud hebraeos dicitur: „factus sum sicut noctua in ruinosis". plerique bubonem contentiose significari putant.

> In the same (psalm): "I became like a νυκτικόραξ in a house." This is precisely what it has in Greek, and you ask what νυκτικόραξ means among the Latins. In Hebrew the word for *nycticorax* is written *bos*, which Aquila, the Seventy, Theodotion, and the fifth (*quinta*) edition rendered as *nycticorax*, whereas Symmachus translated it as "hoopoe," and the sixth (*sexta*) edition used "night owl," which we are more inclined to follow. So, where the Greeks and I put: "I became like a νυκτικόραξ in a house," among the Hebrews it says: "I became like a night owl among ruins." Most who interpret this stringently think that "horned owl" is meant.[36]

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[35] Although Mishnah Terumot 4:3 characterizes 1/60th as a stingy offering, the Talmud ignores this observation.

[36] Graves, tran., *Jerome, Epistle 106.*

Deuteronomy 14:17

אֶת-הַכּוֹס וְאֶת-הַיַּנְשׁוּף, וְהַתִּנְשָׁמֶת.

LXX καὶ καταράκτην καὶ ἱέρακα καὶ τὰ ὅμοια αὐτῷ καὶ ἔποπα καὶ νυκτικόρακα

IH ac mergulum porphirionem et nycticoracem

Exodus 25:7

וְאַבְנֵי מִלֻּאִים, לָאֵפֹד, וְלַחֹשֶׁן.

IH ad ornandum ephod ac rationale

Leviticus 8:8

וַיָּשֶׂם עָלָיו, אֶת-הַחֹשֶׁן; וַיִּתֵּן, אֶל-הַחֹשֶׁן, אֶת-הָאוּרִים, וְאֶת-הַתֻּמִּים.

IH quod adstringens cingulo aptavit rationali in quo erat doctrina et veritas

Epistula 64: 64:15 Et Exodo, sive in Levitico superhumerale legitur, sciamus apud Hebraeos Ephod.

64:16 Hebraico vocatur HOSEN, Graece autem λόγιον nos *Rationale* possumus appellare, ut ex ipso statim nomine scias mysticum esse quod dicitur. 64:19 Pulchre autem hoc ipsum quod in medio est, appellatur Rationale; ratione enim cuncta sunt plena, et terrena haerent. 64:21 Ratio enim operibus et opera ratione indigent... In humeris opera sunt, in pectore ratio... Non prius Rationale, et sic Superhumerale, sed ante Superhumerale, et deinceps Rationale (Leviticus 8)... prius faciamus, et sic doceamus; ne doctrinae auctoritas cassis operibus destruatur... Nec statim absoluta perfectio est si quis Superhumerale et Rationale habeat, nisi haec ipsa inter se forti compagine solidentur, et sibi invicem connexa sint ut et operatio rationi et ratio operibus haereat et his praecedentibus, doctrina sequitur et veritas.

64:15 And if in the books of Exodus or in Leviticus, it is read as *superhumerale* (over the shoulder thing), let us recognize that it is *Ephod* among the Hebrews... 64:16 in Hebrew it is called HOSEN, but we can call it *Rationale* according to the Greek λόγιον, so that from its very name you know that what is said has a hidden meaning... 4:19 this very thing which is in the middle, is, however, nicely called *Rationale*: for all things, including earthly ones, are full of reason (*ratio*). 64:21 For reason needs works and works need reason... Works are on the shoulders and reason is in the breast... *Rationale* is not first and then *Superhumerale*, but *Superhumerale* is before and then *Rationale* (Leviticus 8)... let us act first and then thus let us learn; lest the authority of the teaching be subverted by empty deeds... The completion is not immediately finished even if someone has the *Superhumerale* and the *Rationale*, unless these are made firm by a strong fastening to each other and they are alternately connected so that both work clings to reason and reason clings to work, and with these leading the way, learning and truth follow.[37]

The Vulgate includes a number of transliterations of Hebrew and Greek which begs the question why Jerome translates some terms and transliterates other ones. Exegetical explanations in the hieronymian corpus can account for this use of transliteration. For example, we learn from Epistle 106 why he changed *bubo* to *nycticorax* in Psalm 101:7. Namely, he rejects the controversial rendering of *bubo* with the better attested *nycticorax* even though he prefers *noctua*. This also

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[37] Translation mine.

explains the use of the transliteration of the Greek translation of the same word οἶζin Deuteron-omy 14:17.[38] Bringing Epistle 64 in conversation with Exodus 25:7 and Leviticus 8:8 explains the unusual case where Jerome transliterates the Hebrew Ephod in Exodus, but renders the breast-plate as *rationale* and the *urim* and *thumim* as teaching and truth in Leviticus. Why does he mix the Hebrew and Latin together? While the fact that he follows the Septuagint offers an explana-tion, the Septuagint does not transliterate Ephod and the letter indicates that there is more to it. He specifically tells us that he knows what Ephod means but prefers to leave it untranslated. The rendering of *Hoshen* as rationale, however, alerts the reader to its mystical meaning, namely that all things are filled with reason. Moreover, the attachment of the breastplate to the Ephod indi-cates that reason and works are mutually necessary and dependent on each other. Nevertheless, learning precedes doing. Since Hebrew represents the literal, the corporeal, and the Jewish her-itage for Jerome,[39] the use of transliteration and translation of technical Hebrew terms together models the joining of the literal to the mystical, the corporeal to the spiritual, the Jewish to the Christian. The Christian connection of works and reason generates teaching and truth.

Rejects Hebrew

7. Gen 1:2

וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים, מְרַחֶפֶת עַל-פְּנֵי הַמָּיִם.

IH spiritus Dei ferebatur super aquas

QHG in hebraeo habet marahaefeth, quod nos appellare possumus incubabat sive confovebat, in similitudinem volucris ova calore animantis.

… the Hebrew has *merefeth,* which we can render as 'was brooding over' or 'was keeping warm', in the likeness of a bird giving life to its eggs with warmth.[40]

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[38] Weigert, *Hebraica Veritas,* 224-226. *Noctua* appears in Deuteronomy 14:15 apparently for תַּחְמָס while *nycticorax* seems to correspond to תִּנְשֶׁמֶת in Deuteronomy 14:17. Either Jerome does not apply his analysis from Epistle 106 or his Hebrew Vorlage differs from the Masoretic text. Regardless, the letter impacts interpretation of the Latin rendition of Deuteronomy here.

[39] On the equation of literal with Jewish interpretation see Jay, *L'exégèse*, 142-147. On Jerome and Jewish carnality see Megan Williams, „Lessons from Jerome's Jewish Teachers: Exegesis and Cultural Interaction in Late Antique Palestine," in *Jewish Biblical Interpretation and Cultural Exchange: Comparative Exegesis in Context,* Natalie B. Dohrmann and David Stern (edd.), University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2008, 66-86 and David Nirnberg, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition*, W.W. Norton and Co., New York, 2013, 121-123.

[40] Hayward, tran. Jerome's Hebrew Questions.

8. Gen 4:8

IH dixitque Cain ad Abel fratrem suum egrediamur foras

QHG a.l. Subauditur ea quae locutus est dominus. Superfluum ergo est quod in Samaritanorum et nostro volumine reperitur *transeamus in campum*... super quo capitulo (Gen. 4:15) extat epistula nostra ad episcopum Damasum.

And Cain said to Abel his brother. What the Lord spoke is understood. So what is found in our scroll, and in that of the Samaritans, namely, *Let us go out into the field*, is unnecessary.[41]

Epistula 36.6 ad Damasum: Alii de septem vindictis Cain varia suspicantur'... Tertium quod dolose egerit, dicens "Transeamus in campum"

Some suppose that Cain was punished sevenfold for seven different crimes... Third, because he acted treacherously when saying "Let us go out into the field."

Commentaries not only provide insight into the Late Antique reader of the Vulgate, they also shed light on the Late Antique perspective of the translator. Just as Jerome has a purpose for utilizing Hebrew transliteration, there can also be an explanation for not following or rendering the Hebrew. In the case of Genesis 1:2, according to C.T.R. Hayward, Jerome seems to reject the Hebrew.[42] He tell us in the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis* that *marahaefeth* could mean *incubare* 'to rest upon' or *confovere* 'to warm'[43] as if comparing the creation of the world to God hatching a cosmic egg. He rejects these possibilities for the more generic *ferebatur* 'was carried'. However, the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis* could be read as simply offering possible meanings of the image not a prescription for how to translate. Since *ferebatur* does not necessarily preclude the metaphorical reading, the exegetical comment provides more context for his apparent rejection of the Hebrew *Vorlage*. In the famous verse on Genesis 4:8, he tells us in the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis* that supplying Cain's words, "let us go out", which the Hebrew lacks, is superfluous as it is understood that Cain repeated what God had just told him. Yet in the next lemmata that he discusses on Genesis 4:15, he alludes to a letter to Pope Damasus, where he refers to a discussion of how the seven crimes committed by Cain correspond to the sevenfold punishments inflicted on anyone who kills Cain. One of these crimes include the treacherous statement, "let us go out into the field." By comparing the letter with the commentary on Genesis, we can conclude that Jerome decided to include the deceiving words of Cain and overruled his own rejection on the grounds of their superfluity.[44]

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[41] Hayward, tran., *Jerome's Hebrew Questions*.

[42] Hayward, *Jerome's Hebrew Questions*, 11, 103.

[43] Cf. Jerome. *adv. Rufin*. 3.28: *gremio suo [terra] semina confovere* 'to warm seeds in one's lap'.

[44] The use of *egrediamus foras* in the Vulgate rather than *transeamus in campum* strongly suggests that he is following the exegetical tradition from memory rather than a text in front of him.

How to read Latin

9. Gen 33:1-2

> וַיַּחַץ אֶת-הַיְלָדִים, עַל-לֵאָה וְעַל-רָחֵל, וְעַל, שְׁתֵּי הַשְּׁפָחוֹת.
> וַיָּשֶׂם אֶת-הַשְּׁפָחוֹת וְאֶת-יַלְדֵיהֶן, רִאשֹׁנָה; וְאֶת-לֵאָה וִילָדֶיהָ אַחֲרֹנִים,
> וְאֶת-רָחֵל וְאֶת-יוֹסֵף אַחֲרֹנִים .

IH divisitque filios Liae et Rahel ambarumque famularum 2: et posuit utramque ancillam et liberos earum in principio Liam vero et filios eius in secundo loco Rahel autem et Ioseph novissimos

QHG Non ut plerique aestimant tres turmas fecit, sed duas.

And he divided his children between Lia and Rachel and the two handmaids, and he put the handmaids and their children first, then Lia and her children last, and Rachel and Joseph last.

He did not make three groups, as most people reckon, but two.[45]

A comment can explain how the Latin reader should understand the phrasing of the text. At first glance, according to Genesis 33:2, Jacob divides his children into 3 groups—the children of the handmaids, the children of Leah, and the children of Rachel. However, he specifically indicates in *Hebrew Question on Genesis* that there are two groups, relying on the Hebrew of 33:1 and Aquila where it says that he divided them in half. There is one group of children from the handmaids and the second group consists of the children from Leah and Rachel. Therefore, 33:2 should be understood as the group of handmaids' children coming first and the Leah and Rachel group coming second with Rachel's children behind Leah's children.

Messianic references

10. Isaiah 7:14

> לָכֵן יִתֵּן אֲדֹנָי הוּא, לָכֶם--אוֹת: הִנֵּה הָעַלְמָה, הָרָה וְיֹלֶדֶת בֵּן, וְקָרָאת שְׁמוֹ, עִמָּנוּ אֵל .

IH propter hoc dabit Dominus ipse vobis signum ecce <u>virgo</u> concipiet et pariet filium et vocabitis nomen eius Emmanuhel

Comm in Isa. nostro quoque sermone alma sancta dicitur

in our speech [Latin] too *alma* means "holy"[46]

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45 Hayward, tran., *Jerome's Hebrew Questions*.

46 Scheck, tran., *Commentary on Isaiah*.

Jerome justifies his translation of the Bible according to the Hebrews on the grounds that he, as a Christian, can understand the Christian meanings of the Hebrew that might have been obscure to the Septuagint translators or deliberately suppressed by them.[47] This includes messianic references. The rendition of Isaiah 7:14 is a case in point. Since this passage has been much discussed including Jerome's defense of the rendition *virgo* as based on the Hebrew *almah* which means hidden,[48] I would only call attention here to a brief part of his discussion in the commentary on Isaiah. Here Jerome draws on the similarity of sound between the Latin *alma* meaning 'nurturing' and the Hebrew *almah*. We get a glimpse of the Late Antique linguistic context, namely the Latin connotation of *alma* as sacred which parallels the messianic connotation of the word. Jerome suggests then that there is a mystical connection between the Latin and Hebrew languages.

11. Exodus 4:13

וַיֹּאמֶר, בִּי אֲדֹנָי; שְׁלַח-נָא, בְּיַד-תִּשְׁלָח.

IH at ille obsecro inquit Domine mitte quem missurus es

Exodus 6:12

וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה, לִפְנֵי יְהוָה לֵאמֹר: הֵן בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל,
לֹא-שָׁמְעוּ אֵלַי, וְאֵיךְ יִשְׁמָעֵנִי פַרְעֹה, וַאֲנִי עֲרַל שְׂפָתָיִם.

LXX ἐγὼ δὲ ἄλογός εἰμι.

IH respondit Moses coram Domino ecce filii Israhel non me audiunt et quomodo audiet me Pharao praesertim cum sim incircumcisus labiis

Epistula 18.15 Audivi ego in hoc loco non parvam Hebraei mei disputationem, cujus pauca ponam, ut sensum hominis advertas. Aiebat, de Moyse et Isaia, quis melius fecerit, requiramus. Utrum ne Moyses qui cum a Deo mitteretur ad populum, ait: *Precor Domine, non sum dignus* (Exod. 6:12), et rursum, *provide alium quem mittas* (Exod.4.13). An Isaias qui cum non fuisset electus, ultro se obtulit dicens, *Ecce ego,mitte me* (Isa. 6:8). ….manifeste possit intellegi Isaiam recte post circumcisa labia, in Dei obtulisse ministerium, et Moysen adhuc incircumcisis labiis tam grande ministerium recusasse.

I heard that on this passage a not minor argument from my Hebrew. I will offer a brief summary so that you get his point. He said, "let us consider whether Moses or Isaiah acted better: whether or not Moses, who, when he was sent by God to the people, said: "I pray Lord, I am not worthy" (Exod. 6:12), and again "find someone else to send" (Exod. 4:13). Or Isaiah, who, although he had not been chosen, further offered himself by saying, "here I am, send me!" (Isa. 6:8)….clearly it could be understood that Isaiah, acting correctly, offered service to God after his lips were circumcised and Moses, with his lips as of yet uncircumcised, refused such an important service.[49]

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[47] E.g., Jerome, *Prol. in Pent.* And *Commentary on Zechariah* to 6:9–15.

[48] Adam Kamesar, „The Virgin of Isaiah 7:14: The Philological Argument from the Second to the Fifth Century" , *JTS* 41, no. 1 (1990) 51–75 and, more recently, Michael Fieger, „Vulgate in Use: A Lexical Approach. Why talk about the virgin in Isaiah 7:14?", Vulgata in Dialogue 3 (2019) 29-36.

[49] Translation mine.

It is striking that Jerome renders 4:13 with the indicative rather than subjunctive. This could be a clear messianic reference of Moses asking why God does not send Jesus.[50] Epistula 18.15 offers another angle be bringing Exodus 6:12 and Isaiah 6:8 into the conversation. Based on the argument of his Hebrew informant, he ponders the question of whether Moses or Isaiah acted better—Moses, though chosen, refuses to be sent to the people because he lacks eloquence or Isaiah who volunteers without being asked because his lips had already been "circumcised". The lemma for Exod. 4:13 cited in the commentary does indeed have the subjunctive. This strengthens the claim that the indicative in the Vulgate refers to Moses asking God to send the messiah. As a result, the subjunctive points to the comparison with Isaiah while the indicative points to the comparison with Jesus. The preference for comparing Jesus and Moses rather than Isaiah and Moses derives more than from an inclination to include a messianic reference. The letter acknowledges that arguing over the merits of holy ones is dangerous (*periculosum esse de Sanctorum meritis disputare*) and then still claims that Moses's humility and gentleness make him superior to Isaiah. The Vulgate avoids the problem of comparing Isaiah and Moses by using the indicative to evoke a comparison between Moses and Jesus. At the same time, there would be nothing problematic in claiming that Jesus is superior to Moses especially in humility and kindness.

12. Habakkuk 3:13

יָצָאתָ לְיֵשַׁע עַמֶּךָ, לְיֵשַׁע אֶת-מְשִׁיחֶךָ; מָחַצְתָּ רֹּאשׁ מִבֵּית רָשָׁע, עָרוֹת יְסוֹד עַד-צַוָּאר סֶלָה

IH egressus es in salutem populi tui in salutem cum christo tuo

LXX ἐξῆλθες εἰς σωτηρίαν λαοῦ σου τοῦ σῶσαι τὸν χριστόν σου·

Comm. In Hab. II ad 3,13: Sciendum autem ut supra diximus, quod ubi posuerunt LXX plurali numero: ut salvares christos tuos, ibi esse in hebraico LAIESUA ETH MESSIACH, quod Aquila transtulit: in salutem cum christo tuo. Non quod deus egressus sit, ut salvaret populum, et salvaret christum suum, sed quod in salutem populi venerit cum christo suo (...). Theodotio autem vere quasi pauper et Ebionita, sed et Symmachus eiusdem dogmatis, pauperem sensum secuti, iudaice transtulerunt: egressus es in salutem populi tui, ut salvares christum tuum, et: egressus es salvare populum tuum, salvare christum tuum. Rem incredibilem dicturus sum, sed tamen veram. Isti semichristiani iudaice transtulerunt, et Iudaeus Aquila interpretatus est, ut Christianus.

It must be recognized, however, as we said above, that where the Septuagint has the plural: *so that you save your anointed ones,* there in the Hebrew is LAIESUA ETH MESSIACH, which Aquila renders: *into salvation with your anointed one*. Not that God goes out to save the people and His anointed one, but that God, together with the anointed one, has come to save the people (...). Theodotion, however, truly as if poor and Ebionite, but also Symmachus of the same belief, follows the poor meaning and translate it Jewishly: *You went out for the salvation of your people in order to save your anointed*, and *you went out to save you people, to save your anointed.* I am about to say something unbelievable but true. These half-Christians translate Jewishly and the Jew Aquila translates like a Christian.[51]

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[50] See Kraus, *Jewish, Christian, and Classical*, 151-153.

[51] Translation mine.

Leaving aside that contrary to Jerome's statement, the Septuagint has the singular *christus*, not plural *christos*, what is relevant is the rendition of the Hebrew particle את as *cum* 'with' rather than the direct object marker. More than having a Christological reference, Habbakuk 3:13 requires a correct understanding of this messianic reference, that God brings salvation with the messiah, not to the messiah. Without the commentary, we would not know that he considers his rendition a Christian translation, albeit defended by the most Jewish of the Septuagint versions.[52]

Theological Issues

13. Deut 34:6

וַיִּקְבֹּר אֹתוֹ בַגַּי בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב, מוּל בֵּית פְּעוֹר

IH et sepelivit eum in valle terrae Moab contra Phogor

LXX καὶ ἔθαψαν αὐτὸν ἐν γαι ἐν γῇ μωαβ ἐγγὺς οἴκου φογωρ

Epistula 109.1 Ergo Moysi corpusculum immundum erit? quod iuxta hebraicam veritatem a ipso sepultum est Domino.

Therefore, is the corpse of Moses impure? Because according to the Hebrew truth, he is buried by God Himself.

Messianism is not the only theological issue in the Vulgate that is illuminated by exegetical remarks. In the case of Deuteronomy 34:6, Weigert discusses this passage where the singular of the verb "bury" in the version according to the Hebrews contrasts with the plural in the Septuagint.[53] The singular indicates that God, not the Israelites, buried Moses, while the comment in Epistula 109 indicates that Jerome was aware of the issue and legitimates the divine burial with his translation.

14. Psalm 2:12

נַשְּׁקוּ-בַר, פֶּן-יֶאֱנַף וְתֹאבְדוּ דֶרֶךְ

ILXX adprehendite disciplinam nequando irascatur Dominus et pereatis de via iusta

IH adorate pure ne forte irascatur et pereatis de via

Adv. Ruf. I.19 illud quoque carpere dicitur quod, secundum psalmum interpretans pro eo quod legimus in latino: apprehendite disciplinam, et in hebraico volumine scriptum est: NESCU BAR, dixerim in commentariolis: adorate filium. et rursum omne psalterium in romanum vertens sonum, quasi immemor expositionis antiquae, posuerim: adorate pure, quod utique sibi esse contrarium omnibus pateat. (...). NESCU, ut verbum de verbo interpreter,

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[52] Weigert, *Hebraica Veritas*, 104.

[53] Weigert, *Hebraica Veritas*, 211-212.

καταφιλήσατε, id est deosculamini dicitur; quod ego, nolens transferre putide, sensum magis secutus sum, ut dicerem: adorate. quia enim qui adorant solent deosculari manum et capita submittere (...); et hebraei, iuxta linguae suae proprietatem, deosculationem pro veneratione ponunt, id transtuli quod ipsi intellegunt, quorum verbum est. BAR autem apud illos diversa significat. dicitur enim et filius, (...) triticum quoque, et spicarum fasciculus, et electus ac purus. quid igitur peccavi, si verbum ambiguum diversa interpretatione converti, et qui in commentariolis, ubi libertas est disserendi, dixeram: adorate filium, in ipso corpore, ne violentus viderer interpres et iudaicae calumniae locum dare, dixerim: adorate pure, sive electe...

I am told that he also carps at me for the translation of a phrase in the Second Psalm. In the Latin it states: "Grasp learning" and in the Hebrew it is written NESCU BAR; and I have rendered it in my commentary, Worship the Son; and then again when translating the whole psalter into the Latin language, as if unmindful of the former explanation, I put "Worship purely" which, to be sure, are obviously to everyone contrary to each other....NESCU, translated literally means καταφιλήσατε, that is, kiss. I did not wish to give a distasteful rendering and preferred to follow the sense so as to render 'Worship'. For those who worship are apt to kiss the hand and bare their heads (...); The Hebrews, according to the character of their language, use this word 'Kiss' for veneration; and therefore I translated according to those whose language it is. The word BAR, however, has several meanings among them. It means 'son'... and also 'wheat,' and 'a sheaf of corn' and 'chosen' and 'pure'. What sin have I committed, then, when a word is thus uncertain in its meaning, if I have rendered differently in different places? And if, after I had said in my Commentary, where there is more freedom of discussion, "worship the Son", in my version of the Bible itself so that I should not be thought to translate unreasonable or give grounds for a Jewish malicious accusation, I said "worship purely" or "choicely"?[54]

As in the last example, because it is conventional to present both the version of Psalms according to the Septuagint and the version according to the Hebrews together, comparison between the two versions is natural. The discussion in *Adversus Rufinum* explains why the version according to the Hebrews has *adorate pure* in contrast to the version according to the Septuagint's *adprehendite disciplinam*. Jerome's explanation of his rendering includes a defense of not using the translation *adorate filium* which appears in his *Commentarioli in Psalmos*. According to Jerome, it would be inappropriate to translate *Nesku* as kiss and he prefers to capture the sense with *adorate*. For worship can be expressed by kissing someone's hand. As for *bar*, it has a variety of meanings (*diversa*): son, wheat, bundle of ears, chosen or pure. We step here into Jerome's Late Antique world where he allows himself freedom to translate an ambiguous word and chooses the response that does not offend his readers sensibilities and avoids Jewish criticism.[55]

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[54] Adapted from Fremantle translation, *LCL*.

[55] See Weigert, *Hebraica Veritas*, 258 and Cameron, „The Vir Tricultus", 251-252. Cameron suggests that Jerome does not use a potential Christological reference here even though it is available because he is distinguishing between translation and interpretation.

Conclusion

15. Isaiah 6:2

שְׂרָפִים עֹמְדִים מִמַּעַל לוֹ, שֵׁשׁ כְּנָפַיִם שֵׁשׁ כְּנָפַיִם לְאֶחָד: בִּשְׁתַּיִם יְכַסֶּה פָנָיו, וּבִשְׁתַּיִם יְכַסֶּה רַגְלָיו--וּבִשְׁתַּיִם יְעוֹפֵף.

IH seraphin stabant super illud sex alae uni et sex alae alteri duabus velabant faciem eius et duabus velabant pedes eius et duabus volabant

Comm. In Isa. Hoc quod nos, sequentes alios Interpretes et Hebraicam veritatem, in qua scriptum est *mimmallo*, id est, ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ, quod latine dicitur *super illud*, vertimus. LXX trantulerunt *in circuitu ejus*, ut non super Templum stare Seraphim, sed in circuitu Domini describantur. Rursum ubi nos diximus, quod unus de Seraphim velaret faciem et pedes ejus, per quod intelligitur, Dei. In Hebraeo scriptum habetur *phanau* et *reglau* quod potest interpretari et *ejus*, et *suam*. Ut Seraphim juxta Hebraei sermonis ambiguitatem, et faciem pedesque Dei, et suam faciem ac pedes operire dicantur. In septuagesimo nono psalmo legimus: *Qui sedes super Cherubin manifestare* (Psalms 79.2) qui in nostra lingua interpretantur *scientiae multitudine*. Unde ei Dominus in aurigae modum super Cherubim aperte sedere ostenditur. Seraphim autem praeter hunc locum, in Scripturis Canonicis alibi legisse me nescio, qui stare dicuntur super Templum, vel in circuitu Domini (Numbers 7:89). Ergo errant qui solent in precibus dicere *Qui sedes super Cherubim et Seraphim*, quod Scriptura non docuit....In Cherubim ergo ostenditur Dominus; in Seraphim ex parte ostenditur ex parte celatur. Faciem ejus et pedes ejus operiunt, quia et praterita ante mundum et futura post mundum scire non possumus. Sed media tantum quae in sex diebus facta contemplamur. Nec mirum hoc de Seraphim credere, cum, et apostoli Salvatorem credentibus aperient, infidelibus abscondant: et velum ante Arcam fuerit Testamenti (Exod. 40).

What we have translated by following the other translators and the Hebrew truth, in which is written *memmaal lo*, that is, ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ, which is said in Latin as *upon it*, the Septuagint translated, "Round about him," so that seraphim are described as standing not over the temple but around the Lord in a circle. And again, where we have said that one of the seraphim covered *his* face and feet, by which *God's* are understood, in the Hebrew it is written *phanau* and *reglau*, which can be translated both "His" and "their own." Consequently, according to the ambiguity of the Hebrew language, the seraphim are said to cover both *God's* face and feet and *their own* face and feet. In the seventy-ninth psalm we read, "You who sit on the cherubim, shine forth!" [Ps 80:1]. In our language, cherubim is translated "multitude of knowledge." This is also why the Lord is shown to sit upon cherubim [cf. 1 Sam 4:4] in the manner of a charioteer. But I do not know that I have read of seraphim which are said to *stand upon the temple*, or "round about the Lord" elsewhere in canonical Scripture except in this passage. They are in error, therefore who are accustomed to say in their prayers: "You who sit upon cherubim and seraphim," which Scripture has not taught....The Lord is shown in the cherubim; therefore, in the *seraphim*, he is partially shown, partially covered. For they cover his face and feet because we are not able to know both the things that have come to pass before the world, and the things that will come to be after the world; but we contemplate only the things in the middle, which were made in six days [cf. Gen 1]. It is not surprising to believe this about seraphim, since even the apostles disclose the Savior to those who believe, [but] conceal him from those who do not believe; and there was a veil in front of the ark of the covenant [cf. Exod 40:3].[56]

This final passage contains multiple instances of how the Vulgate might be read in a larger context that highlights its grammatical choices, theological implications, and relevance to contemporary practice. The discussion focuses on the phrase *mimmallo*. The commentary in Isaiah highlights the significance of the rendition of the phrase as *super illud* by pointing out how it differs from the Septuagint's "around it". The Septuagint describes Seraphim standing around God, not

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56 Scheck, tran., *Commentary on Isaiah*.

the Temple. This has implications for the rest of the verse. The seraphim are covering the legs and face of God according to the Septuagint reading. This is problematic because the Septuagint fails to grasp the difference between the Seraphim and Cherubim. The Cherubim stand around God, but the picture of the Seraphim is more ambiguous—they are above the Temple or perhaps around God, a point with exegetical opportunities.[57] Since the Seraphim in Isaiah 6:2 could either be covering their legs and face or God's legs and face, Jerome concludes that God is partially revealed and concealed by the Seraphim. In contrast, God is completely revealed in the case of the Cherubim, a distinction that is crucial to understanding the anagogical meaning. The Seraphim refer to our ability to contemplate the created world, not the past before the world was created or the future after the end of the world. Similarly, the apostle reveals partially, only to the believers and conceals partially, namely from the unfaithful. Thus, the rendition is key to coordinating with the symbolic. Such a reading also has a practical liturgical implication. Jerome criticizes those who wrongly pray to God who sits above the Cherubim and Seraphim when God sits above only the Cherubim.

Final Observations

Because most ancient biblical translations and recensions are anonymous with little to no evidence of their production, studies of these translations must rely on close comparative textual analysis. Translation theorists such as Gideon Toury, however, advocate for a more comprehensive approach that includes detailed analysis of the production of a translation as well as its reception.[58] Focus should be directed to the interdependence between sociocultural contexts, translation processes and translators' strategies, and the produced translation.[59] Such an approach is especially challenging in the case of the Septuagint where we know very little about its production beyond an apocryphal legend, and we know a great deal about the textual reception and general views of the Septuagint in antiquity.[60] Normally and in the case of ancient translations in particular, "once over, the act of translation will have completely vanished, often leaving no trace other than a linguistic product, which is thus the only real clue to the act."[61] Remarkably,

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[57] See Jay, *L'exégèse*, 100, on the interpretive possibilities of ambiguity.

[58] Albert Pietersma, „LXX and DTS: A New Archimedian Point for Septuagint Studies?", *BIOSCS* 39 (2006) 11. Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*, BTL 4, John Benjamins, Amsterdam, 1995.

[59] Gideon Toury, „A Handful of Methodological Issues in DTS: Are They Applicable to the Study of the Septuagint as an Assumed Translation?", *BIOSCS* 39 (2006) 13–25.

[60] Pietersma, „LXX and DTS," 6 mentions the Letter of Aristeas as a case in point because it provides more information about the cultural position of the Greek Bible not its translation technique.

[61]Toury, „Handful", 15, 22-23. Even so, scholars produce comprehensive descriptions of Septuagint translations in their sociocultural contexts such as Theo A. W. van der Louw, *Transformations in the Septuagint: Towards an Interaction of Septuagint Studies and Translation Studies*, CBET 47, Peeters, Leuven, 2007. With abundant resources and scholars, Septuagint studies has far outpaced Vulgate studies in past decades, but the establishment of the Vulgata Verein in 2012 is already changing the landscape. The Vulgata Verein has produced a German translation of the Vulgate, publishes the new periodical *Vulgata in Dialogue*, and coordinated the first meeting of the International Organization of Vulgate Studies.

the situation is completely different in the case of the Vulgate.[62] In addition to the translation itself, we have preparatory treatises, prior translation efforts, theoretical reflections on principles and purpose, external readers and reactions, as well as commentaries and letters filled with philological analyses from before, during, and after the translation was completed. Despite the acknowledgement and the occasional application of these available resources to the analysis of the Vulgate as a translation, we lack a systematic explanation of the Vulgate as a whole in relation to the abundance of references and evidence informing renditions of individual words and phrases. This article demonstrates what an intertextual commentary on the Vulgate might include, and more importantly, how it reveals the sociocultural context of the Vulgate's author and readers.

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[62] See Kraus, *Jewish, Christian and Classical*, 1-14.