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Rebekka S. Schirner, *Inspice diligenter codices: philologische Studien zu Augustins Umgang mit Bibelhandschriften und -übersetzungen. Millennium-Studien / Millennium studies, 49.* Berlin; München; Boston: De Gruyter, 2015. Pp. xii, 672. ISBN 9783110349634. €129.95.

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[The reviewer apologizes for the delay of the submission of this review.]

Inspice diligenter codices antiquos et maxime Graecos (*Cresc.* 2,33): the title of the impressive work of R. Schirner was inspired by this Augustinian exhortation directed at the grammarian Cresconius. The book appears as a slight revision of her doctoral thesis, presented at the Johannes Gutenberg-University in Mainz in December 2012. The author aims at investigating Augustine's methodological principles adopted by working on the biblical text: scholars generally neglect this aspect in favour of a prevailing interest in the theological-hermeneutic implications of Augustine's method of reading the Bible (9). The latter has been so far investigated only on the basis of a small and incomplete cluster of texts, and it was sometimes criticised as being inconsistent, as an expression of the 'intellectual decline' of Augustine's time (356f.; 605f.). Schirner's research, in contrast, is based on a wide text sample, in which Augustine *expressis verbis* deals with textual variants derived from manuscripts and translations of the Holy Scripture (although the possibility of the mediation through another source cannot always be excluded). Passages in which variants have another origin (e.g. mnemonic quotations) are excluded from Schirner's analysis (10).

The textual material is organised according to a thematic scheme: in the first section, Schirner analyses passages conveying Augustine's theoretical statements concerning his analysis of variants; in the second section, she investigates Augustine's "practical" textual-critical work on the Bible. Most of the passages are taken from homiletic and exegetical works (*en Ps.*, *qu. Hept.* [hereafter simply *qu.*], *loc.*): cf. 336f.; 598-600. The discussed variants especially refer to the Old Testament. In my opinion, this should be explained by considering Augustine's own method: only for the Old Testament does he have a "type version" (the Septuagint) for collating the Latin translations, while for the New Testament he claims one should resort to (not further specified)

Greek manuscripts, which are to be found in the most cultured Churches (*doctr. chr.* 2,22).

In an introductory chapter, Schirner provides an overview of the most significant translations of the Bible at Augustine's time (13-19). Chapter two deals with *De doctrina christiana*, since most principles of Augustine's critical-textual method are taken from *doctr. chr.* 2,16-22 (24-44), and they are individually studied in a large number of the chapters forming the book's first section.

In chapter three, Schirner shows that, with exception of the correspondence with Jerome (where criticism of excessive variety of Latin versions serves Augustine's purpose of obtaining Jerome's translation of the Septuagint: 55-59), Augustine maintains an attitude to be defined as "positive" or "neutral" in dealing with variants of biblical text (59-79). By "positive" attitude, Schirner means Augustine's explicitly arguing in favour of the existence of variant translations (59-62), while his attitude is described as "neutral" in cases of absence of an explicit opinion concerning the existence of translation variants. The author shows how Augustine juxtaposes and includes also non-synonymous variants, namely by establishing semantic connections, which he only rarely bases on the Greek. She demonstrates that Augustine's comparison of variants does not culminate in their rejection, but provides an exhaustive text interpretation: hence his effort to include all possible lections in the commentary, even if they are wrong, as long as they adhere to the *regula fidei* (cf. 605-610). Nevertheless, the so-called "neutral" attitude does not exclude Augustine's preference for one lection. In my opinion, "neutral" attitude also implies a "positive" view of the translations' plurality. The difference might thus rather concern the function of the variant, depending on the context (and therefore on the work's typology) in which it is inserted: in *c. adv. leg.* 1,38, e.g., an apparently "neutral" comparison between variants is not provided for reasons of exegesis but to reveal the opponent's mistake.

Chapter four shows that emendation is the exegesis' premise: the manuscript's reliability is obtained by an emendatory activity for which the exegete was appointed in advance. The precise analysis of *ep.* 261,5 is very convincing: it concludes that Augustine continuously emended his manuscripts of the Book of Psalms, based on doubts concerning lections which were not clarified by the previous collation (108-112). From *ep.* 261,5 — as Schirner points out — one cannot gather a systematic or complete review of the Book of Psalms, as the studies on *Vetus Latina* confirm (113f.).

Chapter five concerns Augustine's methodical way of dealing with variants. Some concepts were already anticipated by chapter three. Nevertheless, special attention is given to *qu.* and *retr.* Chapter six deals with variants in polemic contexts, since variants can imply a deliberate misreading of the text.

Chapter seven collects Augustine's remarks on mistakes concerning both text transmission and translation (195-227), as well as on manuscript and translation quality (227-235), and on the so-called 'external criteria' for evaluating textual variants (235-259). Schirner demonstrates that even if Augustine has some critical-textual and philological "tools", he is not a philologist in modern sense:

from the second section of the book it becomes clear that Augustine applies these only in rare cases (249f.), since text criticism is subordinate to faith (351). The reliability of a manuscript can be evaluated depending on its quality, the possibility of establishing a comparison with the source language version (*doctr. chr.* 2,17; 19; 22), and on its provenance, quantity and age: the latter criteria are formulated in *Contra Faustum* (11,2). *Retr.* 1,21,3, where the reference to *codices Afri* is in an anti-Donatist (thus specifically African) context, clarifies how close the connection between the criterion of manuscripts' geographic origin and the polemic context is: therefore, it does not seem that these principles can be abstracted from the context in which they are formulated.

In chapter eight, the relationship between the Hebrew text, which Augustine read in translation, and the Septuagint (or the Latin translations modelled on it) is investigated especially through the analysis of *civ.* 15,11-14 and 18,42f. Augustine prefers the Septuagint and believes in its divine inspiration, so that differences between the Greek (or Latin) and Hebrew text are explained as an additional prophetic value. Augustine's preference for the Septuagint is parallel to his strong scepticism regarding Jerome's translation from Hebrew. However, Augustine's judgment about the latter gradually becomes more positive (chapter nine), although he has never acknowledged Jerome's translation as the Church's official version, even if he uses it in his late works for its clarity and comprehensibility (312-318).

Chapter ten provides a collection and analysis of some of Augustine's constant phrases related to the main topic (320-325; 330-339; 342-347); Schirner also tries to reconstruct Augustine's library. References to translation variants are more visible in Augustine's dictated works than in those firstly recorded in shorthand. Thus, especially for the composition of the first ones, Augustine must have consulted the volumes of several libraries (339-341): from *retr.* 1,7,3, Schirner infers that in different moments of his literary activity, Augustine must have used several resources. Less prominence is given to the fact that the gradual increase of Augustine's library probably took place parallel to the progressive refining of his method for analysing the Holy Scripture. His library must have included several versions (both in Greek and Latin) of the whole Bible and/or of single books, the translation from Hebrew, Hexapla versions of Septuagint (certainly of Genesis, the Book of Psalms and Job), as well as the versions of Aquila and Symmachus (probably translated): 324-328.

The second section deals with the ways in which the comparison of variants is conducted. They might rest on Greek (362-524) or be only within Latin (525-544; 557-587). Issues in part already advanced (for 418-492 cf. 20-92; 120-151; 195-259; for 525-544 cf. 260-287) were here investigated more closely, enriched by both evidences and Augustinian passages. Moreover, from the second section, the significance of Augustine's own translating activity emerges, which is an essential element of both his study on the Bible and its exegesis (606): we are within the comparison of Latin variants and Greek versions (362-417; 493-524). Hence, the issue poses the age-old question of Augustine's knowledge of Greek (357-361). When no Latin translation seems to express exactly the content of the Greek version, Augustine provides his own translation, either in order to correct the text (362-385) or to explain its content

(386-417). Augustine's own translation was either inserted in a gloss (even if marginal, like a vocabulary entry: 407f.) or included in the exegesis. Some phrases and the comparison with the *Vetus Latina* database suggest a genuine Augustinian translation.

Augustine's translating technique is, in my view, "surgical", in so far as his interventions on single words or brief phrases, which are translated verbatim after Septuagint Greek's model, are incisive. This eventuated in semantic (even neologisms analogue to Greek), morphologic and syntactic calques, sometimes aberrant in the target language. Augustine aims at rendering the entire semantic nuances of Septuagint's language, indeed focusing his attention on small, but significant unities: his effort to translate prefixes (367- 369) and suffixes (373f.) is a sign of his great linguistic sensitivity, which suggests that Augustine's knowledge of Greek was not superficial at all (600-605). Greek semantic nuances are rendered into Latin by etymologic translations, Graecisms, neologisms and resematisations of Latin lexemes (used with a different meaning, adapted to the significance of the corresponding Greek lexeme); at other times, the symmetry between Greek and Latin is emphasized by reverse translation.

In some cases, Latin translations function as a substitute for the Greek, namely when phrases like *Graecus habet* (rarer in plural) introduce a Greek version although being quoted in Latin (493-524; cf. 130-132). Especially in *Locutiones in Heptateuchum*, Latin translations introduced by this kind of phrases closely follow the Greek's structure: following Zycha and Billen (494f.), Schirner assumes that most of these cases in *loc.* and *qu.* are Augustine's own translations. Latin variants introduced by phrases like *Graecus habet* (with failed code-switching) are considered genuinely Augustinian translations, both when they occur in a comparison or an opposition with other Latin variants and when the corresponding Greek word is added to the Latin one. Elsewhere, the introductory phrase reveals a synoptic reading in both languages, although only the Latin translation follows: in Schirner's view, these cases are Augustine's "mental translations" (or, better, "impromptu" translations). In other passages, the context does not offer any information about the origin of the variant introduced by *Graecus habet*. Nevertheless, the close (morphologic, syntactic, etymologic-semantic) connection of these versions with the corresponding Septuagint's Greek term (cf. 362- 417) suggest that they might be Augustine's own translations. The argument is quite convincing for *loc.*, where the comparison between Greek and Latin is programmatic, and the literal translation does not at all contradict the principle of comprehensibility formulated in *doctr. chr.* 3,7f. (120-125). On the contrary, it completely implements the latter, as far as the verbatim translation is useful for clarifying peculiarities of the source language's structure (413-415). Yet, in other cases (like *c. ep Man.* 39,45, quoted among the probably Augustinian translations: 517f.) more caution is needed: textual evidence should at least be linked with further data, concerning both statistics (the variant occurs also in other authors: Augustine could have derived it from another source) and content (the work dates back to 396: it is prior to all passages quoted as examples of probably Augustinian translations).

The goal of comprehensiveness is unquestionably achieved through a meritorious study of a great number of Augustine's texts and secondary literature, as one can see from the diverse references. Yet the chosen approach runs the risk of dispersing cohesion, which might be due to both the analytic statement of the book, which does not always clarify the structure of the first section, and the division between "theory" and "praxis", which sounds a little artificial insofar as theoretical principles are mostly formulated concerning the concrete comparison of variants. The thematic approach risks neglecting the context from which a concept is derived: the result could be the deviation from its peculiar function. The editorial care is considerable (there are only insignificant misprints, although a univocal quotation criterion would simplify reference to bibliography). It seems to me that the book unfortunately suffers from its former structure as a doctoral thesis. Indeed, I have noticed some deficiencies concerning the selection and beneficial reduction of textual material, which would avoid the frequent repetitions both within and between chapters (take, e.g., p. 110, where *ep.* 261,5 is quoted both in the text's body and in note 84) and in the footnotes, where sometimes very broad quotations are strung together.

This overview can only to a certain extent show how wide-ranging the treated issue is. The book is stimulating for various scientific branches: not just for Augustinian and Patristic studies (in *Ausblicke* at end of some chapters, it becomes clear that Augustine is essentially a "son of his times"), but also for biblical studies (there is a close link to research on *Vetus Latina*), as well as for historic-linguistic studies (especially the second section) and, in general, for the historic-cultural realm (the book provides an interesting contribution on the issue of "knowledge transmission", meaning both the history of *media* and ways of translation and quotation).