TERTULLIAN’S *DE IDOLOLATRIA* AND JEROME AGAIN

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Though Harnack could find no trace of the *De idololatria* in Jerome’s œuvre¹), over the past two decades this Tertullianic treatise has been shown to have exercised a not inconsiderable influence on his early work. Duval and Petitmengin each identified one borrowing in epistles 14 and 22 respectively²). One further debt in the first of these letters and two in the second were then registered by the present writer³). Waszink and van Winden had also pointed to an echo in epistle 38⁴). All three letters are early: while 14 was written in 374, both 22 and 38 belong to 384⁵). Petitmengin asserted that Jerome subsequently ceased to draw on the *De idololatria*: “Plus tard … les traités qui l’inspiraient (sc. *Epist.* 14), comme l’Idolâtrie … disparaissent totalement ou presque de son registre” (ib. 55). In the case of the *De idololatria* this statement requires modification.

Attention has already been briefly drawn by the present writer (ib. 30) to a passage of Jerome’s *Tractate* on Psalm 15: *similiter Iacobo*

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et Iohanni, qui et patrem et naviculam et rete dimittunt. Matthaeus de teloneo consurgit, et statim apostolus est (Tract. in psalm. II p. 370 ll. 181-3)⁶. This work is evidently one of the seven Tractates on Psalms 10-16 mentioned at Vir. ill. 135 and belongs to 392⁷. At 12,3 of the De idololatria Tertullian had written:...cum Iacob et Iohannes vocati a domino et patrem navemque derelinqunt, cum Matthaeus de teloneo suscitatur... Jerome’s Tractate is not however a direct imitation of these words; instead he is reproducing his own earlier reworkings of this passage, in which each of Tertullian’s formulations had undergone a stylistic enhancement. The striking tricolon of the Tractate (et patrem et naviculam et rete) has come from Epist. 22,21,8; similarly Jerome’s impressive antithesis between teloneum and apostolus has been taken from Epist. 14,6,1. It is nevertheless possible to rebut Petitmengin’s assertion that the De idololatria “disappeared” from Jerome’s “register”. The two texts that will be adduced below are not mere Selbstzitate like the passage just discussed; moreover they both belong to a significantly later period.

In arguing that loss of livelihood was no excuse for not giving up a job entailing contact with idols Tertullian had observed: fides famem non timet (Idol. 12,4). Tertullian’s thesis was no longer relevant in the second half of the fourth century; however his striking formulation is appropriated by Jerome in the very different context of an evocation of the eremitical life at Epist. 14,10,3: fides famem non sentit⁸). Here Jerome has replaced Tertullian’s rather colourless timet with the more graphic and arresting sentit. Such stylistic improvement of his own is typical of Jerome’s compositional method; two further instances from Tertullian were noted above⁹).

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⁶ Works are cited according to Thesaurus Linguae Latinae: Index Librorum Scriptorum Inscriptum (Leipzig 1990); the editions used are those in H.J. Frede, op. cit. (supra n. 5) and its Aktualisierungshefte (1984 and 1988).
⁸ The borrowing is merely registered without further comment by Y.-M. Duval, loc. cit. (supra n. 2). Epist. 14,10,3 is also the only parallel adduced in their commentary on this passage of the De idololatria by J.H. Waszink and J.C.M. van Winden, op. cit. (supra n. 4), 219. They too refrain from discussion and inadvertently substitute timet for sentit in Jerome’s text.
⁹ Cf. also the present writer, Tertullian’s De ieiunio and Jerome’s Libellus de virginitate servanda (Epist. 22), WS 104 (1991), 149-60; id., Some Features of Jerome’s Compositional Technique in the Libellus de virginitate servanda (Epist. 22), Philologus 136.