The question of Jerome’s sources in his celebrated letter to Heliodorus on the anchoritic life continues to excite controversy. In particular the problem of this epistle’s debt to Tertullian’s *De idololatria* has lately been the object of much scholarly attention. Most recently Petitmengin has addressed the specific topic of the reading to be adopted at 10,3 of this letter, where Jerome is imitating the *fides famem non timet* of *De idololatria* 12,4. The Tertullianic *timet* is reproduced by all Hilberg’s MSS of Jerome except the oldest, which offers the *sentit* preferred in his edition. The suggestion has been made elsewhere that this *timet* was imported into the epistle to Heliodorus from two later texts in which Jerome again imitates the formulation of the *De idololatria* while on these occasions retaining Tertullian’s verb. However Petitmengin has now proposed instead that the *sentit* of Hilberg’s earliest MS should be relegated to the status of a mere *lectio facilior*; in corroboration he cites TLL VI, 1, 230, 35-6 to show that the expression *famem sentire* is in fact “assez banale”.

Two arguments can be adduced which would seem to call Petitmengin’s view into question. In the first place every one of the seven instances of *famem sentire* to which he refers has a personal subject. Jerome on the other hand attaches to this predicate the strikingly impersonal *fides*: the very ‘banality’ of *famem sentire* makes its application to such an exalted abstraction all the more arresting. This typically Hieronymian temerity is conveniently highlighted by the text’s latest translator, who feels obliged to tone down its language with a personalizing paraphrase: ‘Chi ha fede non sente la fame’. Such an audacious locution is unlikely to be a *lectio facilior*. The second argument involves the broader context of Jerome’s phrase: *paupertatem times? sed beatos pauperes Christus appellat. labore terreris? sed nemo athletas sine sudoribus coronatur. de cibo cogitas? sed fides famem non sentit. super nudam metuis humum exesa ieiunis membra conlidere? sed dominus tecum iacet*. This impressive *subiectio* has been inspired by Tertullian (*Idol. 12,2*); at the same time Jerome is also indebted to Cyprian (*Epist. 76,2,4*). While however both his sources had avoided words signifying ‘fear’, Jerome has ensured that the verb in the first half of each of his antitheses bears just such a meaning: *times? terreris? cogitas? metuis?* Two points may be made in this connection. Firstly employment of the Tertullianic *timet* would have imported a verb of ‘fearing’ into the second half of one of Jerome’s antitheses; since every other response in this *subiectio* scrupulously eschews any reference to ‘fear’, such an intrusion would spoil its careful symmetry. In the second place the presence of virtual synonyms in each half of the same antithesis (*cogitas/timet*) would seriously weaken the *subiectio* by introducing a damaging element of tautology. The conclusion may accordingly be drawn
that in this *subiectio* of his epistle to Heliodorus Jerome had very good reasons to replace Tertullian’s *timet* with *sentit*: Petitmengin’s recent view should therefore be rejected.

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1) Works are cited according to *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae: Index Librorum Scriptorum Inscriptionum* (Leipzig 21990).


3) Cf. the present writer, Tertullian’s *De idololatria and Jerome*, Augustinianum 33 (1993), 11-30, on 12-3; id., Tertullian’s *De idololatria and Jerome Again*, Mnemosyne n.s. 49 (1996), 46-52. For the influence of this Tertullianic treatise elsewhere in Jerome cf. id., Tertullian and Jerome Again, SO 72 (1997), 155-63, on 158-62; id., *An Alleged Echo of Tertullian’s De idololatria in Jerome’s Commentary on Jeremiah*, Mnemosyne n.s. 53 (2000), 597-9.

4) P. Petitmengin, REAug 45 (1999), 417-8, which is a review of the present writer, *cit.* (supra n. 3 [1996]); for Petitmengin’s “45” read “46”).

5) I. Hilberg, *S. Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, I (Vienna 21996), 60.

6) Cf. the present writer, *cit.* (supra n. 3 [1996]), 51-2.


10) L. Schade and J.B. Bauer, *op. cit.* (supra n. 7), 168 point out that here Jerome is referring to Mt 6,25 and Lk 12,22, where *solicitus esse* is a common alternative to *cogitare* in the Old Latin versions; cf. P. Sabatier, *Bibliorum Sacrorum Latinarum Versiones Antiquae*, III (Reims 1743; repr. 1976), 36-7 and 321; A. Jilicher et al., *Itala: Das Neue Testament in altlateinischer Überlieferung*, I (Berlin 21972), 34; id., ibid., III (Berlin 21976), 148. In this letter *cogitare* will accordingly betoken ‘anxiety’; cf. also TLL III, 1475, 6-7 (s.v.; “syn.”: *solicitari*<>, *solicitum esse*, *pavere*, *paventem esse*). The translation of this passage in J. Labourt, S. Jérôme: *Lettres*, I (Paris 1949; repr. 1982), 44 (“tu songes à . . . ?”) is therefore wrong; for a more accurate rendering cf. W.H. Fremanle et al., *The Principal Works of St. Jerome* (Oxford 1893; repr. 1983), 17 (“are you anxious . . . ?”).

11) The occurrence of *timet* following the use of exactly the same verb (*times*) after only a single line of Hilberg’s text would constitute a further inconcinnity. It is true that *tertere* at the beginning of l. 5 (Hilberg) recurs in l. 9; however these two words are separated by a vastly greater interval, while they also evince variation of voice (*terreris/terrel*).