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"UT NOS SIMUS CODEX IPSORUM"

THE INTERPRETATION OF *VERBA DUBITATIONIS* IN ST. AUGUSTINE'S HOMILETIC ŒUVRE*

Summary: St. Augustine as a preacher used a language close to his multi-ethnic North-African audience who were often poorly educated in Latin, if not illiterate. So when explaining difficult biblical passages translated from Greek into Latin, he had to search for appropriate expressions which, in many cases, were not conform with standard Latin taught at schools. Therefore, this paper focuses on some aspects of Late Latin present in old Latin translations of Scriptures and explained by Augustine in his exegetical homilies, mainly in his *Commentaries on the Psalms*, paying particular attention to his interpretation of *verba dubitationis* (especially *forsitan*) as reflected in his *Enarratio in Psalmum* 123. 8, *Tractatus in Iohannis Evangelium* 37. 3–5, and other related passages.

Key words: Saint Augustine's preaching, *verba dubitationis*, Punic, Greek, expression of reproach

1. INTRODUCTION

"By repeating it we make sure that it is not forgotten even by those unable or unwilling to read; let us serve as a book for them (*codex ipsorum*)."[1] This citation from Augustine's *Enarratio in Psalmum* 121[2] belonging to the series of his exegetical homilies on the Songs of Ascents (*cantica graduum*) illustrates well the bishop's indefatigable desire to make God's word accessible to all kinds of audience listening to him in the church. That is why he always searched for such ways of interpreting and presenting difficult or obscure biblical passages that even poorly educated or illiterate

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[1] Augustinus, *En. in Ps*. 121. 8. In *CSEL* 95/3, 96. Ed. F. GORI. Wien 2001: *Dicendo nos faciamus ut non excidat etiam eis qui legere non noverunt aut nolunt; ut nos simus codex ipsorum.* Transl. *The Works of Saint Augustine* [*WSA*] III/20. Ed. B. RAMSEY. New York 2004, 22.

[2] In this study, the Psalms are numbered according to the text of LXX.

Christians (*tardiores fratres*) of his diocese could grasp the meaning of the text.[3] Moreover, Augustine realises clearly that his preaching is often for them the only way of Christian instruction. On the other hand, there are so many in his community who read Scriptures on everyday basis and are able to understand them even before Augustine starts his explanation.[4]

But how to satisfy both the groups so that the former were not lost at hearing sophisticated explanations unfamiliar to their understanding and the latter did not feel bored at listening what they already knew? I will try to answer this question against the background of Augustine's explanation of *verba dubitationis*, in particular of the modal adverb *forsitan*, which is used in the Latin Bible to render the Greek particle ἄρα, or eventually ἄν. However, the usage of *forsitan* in the Latin text can obscure the meaning of the biblical passage as illustrated in the examples taken from his *Enarratio in Psalmum* 123. 8 and the *Tractatus in Iohannis Evangelium* 37. 3 which are the focus of the current paper. But before analysing this topic we have to look more closely at the language situation of Augustine's diocese, which considerably influenced his way of presenting his exegetical work.

2. LANGUAGE OF AUGUSTINE'S HOMILIES

There are several factors that affected Augustine's preaching practice. As Doyle notes, it is, first and foremost, everyday language spoken by ordinary people in North Africa.[5] Undoubtedly, Augustine was aware of the fact that one of the ways of approaching his varied audience often with poor or no education (*indocti*, *imperiti*)[6] was the language close to them. In *De doctrina christiana* IV devoted to *modus proferendi* of God's word he states it as follows:

> "…why should the dedicated teacher, speaking to the unlearned, shrink from saying *ossum* rather than *os*, to avoid the single syllable being thought to belong to the plural *ora* rather than to the plural *ossa*, when African ears cannot distinguish between short and long vowels? What is the point, after all, of correctness of speech which the hearers are unable to follow and understand […]? So the person who is teaching will avoid all words that do not in fact teach."[7]

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[3] Cf. Augustinus, *Tract. in ep. Ioh.* 6. 14. In *BA* 76, 284. Paris 2008.

[4] Cf. Augustinus, *Tract. in Ioh. Ev.* 1. 1. In *CCL* 36, 1. Ed. R. WILLEMS. Turnhout 1954.

[5] Cf. DOYLE, G. W.: Augustine's Sermonic Method. *WTJ* 39 (1976/77) 232.

[6] For instance, in *De Genesi adversus Manichaeos* Augustine admits that uneducated people understood his works written against the Manichees only with difficulties, or they do not understand them at all. So he decided to follow the counsel of some real Christians educated in liberal arts to use simple everyday Latin when writing his polemic works because such Latin is understood both by educated and uneducated audience. Cf. *Gen. adv. Man.* I 1. In *BA* 50, 158. Paris 2004.

[7] Augustinus: *De doctr. christ.* IV 10. 24. In *CCL* 32, 133. Ed. J. MARTIN. Turnhout 1962: … *cur pietatis doctorem pigeat imperitis loquentem, ossum potius quam os dicere, ne ista syllaba non ab eo, quod sunt ossa, sed ab eo, quod sunt ora, intellegatur, ubi Afrae aures de correptione vocalium vel productione*

These words attest Augustine's constant effort to choose in preaching such Latin words that were familiar to the ears of his audience. In fact, it is precisely the presence of folk language that constitutes one of the major characteristics of Christian homiletic style of the time. However, we should bear in mind that Augustine's vocabulary was considerably evolving with time and the care for his audience gradually led him to simplifying and adapting his speech to the people without particular culture. Moreover, this language was obviously close to old Latin translations of the Bible (*Veteres Latinae*) and it sounded so natural to Augustine's contemporaries that they would find other ways of speaking (even if it were correct Latin) quite strange as it results from the following passage:

> "Though such, as a matter of fact, is the power of habit even for learning, that people who have been as it were reared and brought up on the scriptures are more surprised at other non-scriptural forms of expression, and think they are less proper Latin than the ones they have learned in the scriptures, which are not found in authors of classical Latin."[8]

In the first half of the 20th century there were many scholarly debates regarding whether Augustine's sermons and exegetical homilies[9] reflected everyday language of the time and whether the country folk could really understand his speech. Some scholars argued that in the 4th and 5th centuries the spoken Latin was so far from the standard language that the ordinary people would have often hardly understood Augustine's homilies, for although they were close to common audience, they were, at the same time, delivered in quite a cultivated style.[10] This hypothesis seems to take into account especially the indigenous population of the province of Numidia who used to communicate in a Berberian language unknown to us, or people speaking Punic.[11] However, this view does not appear to be very convincing since the majority of people living in North Africa had already been Latinised at the time. In addition, it is unlikely that Augustine would run the risk that a large number of his listeners would not understand him. Some of the uneducated North-Africans whose mother tongue was Punic probably did not understand him quite well, but they represented

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non iudicant? Quid enim prodest locutionis integritas, quam non sequitur intellectus audientis [...]? Qui ergo docet, vitabit verba omnia quae non docent. Transl. in *WSA* I/11. Ed. J. E. ROTELLE. New York 1996, 214.

    [8] Augustinus, *De doctr. christ.* II 14. 21. In *CCL* 32, 47: *Quamquam tanta est vis consuetudinis etiam ad discendum, ut, qui in scripturis sanctis quodammodo nutriti educatique sunt, magis alias locutiones mirentur easque minus Latinas putent quam illas, quas in scripturis didicerunt neque in Latinae linguae auctoribus reperiuntur.* Transl. in *WSA* I/11, 139.

    [9] Homilies, such as *Expositions on the Psalms*, were not part of the bishop's regular preaching activity, which is also manifested in their language that was often closer to Latin standards than that used in *Sermones ad populum.*

    [10] Augustine points to a feeble knowledge of Latin among his faithful on several occasions, especially in his homilies. In one place we can read that many brothers know Latin so badly that in everyday conversation they use regularly *dolus* (fraud) instead of *dolor* (pain). Cf. Augustinus, *Tract. in Ioh. Ev.* 7. 18. In *CCL* 36, 77.

    [11] Cf. LÖFSTEDT, E.: *Late Latin.* Oslo 1959, 11.

rather a minority.[12] That is why we cannot reject the view that the Latin of his sermons reflected, at least to a certain degree, everyday language spoken in Africa. On the contrary, from several Augustine's allusions it results that Latin was often closer to his listeners than Punic: "There is a well-known Punic proverb, which I will of course quote to you in Latin, because you do not all know Punic."[13]

Throughout all his life Augustine felt to be African and he never denied this origin. Moreover, he could speak Punic although we do not know to which extent. Since in the house of his father Patricius all family members, including servants and slaves, spoke Latin, we can suppose that his knowledge of Punic was quite limited. In addition, several testimonies have been preserved showing that similarly to the Donatist bishop Macrobius[14] Augustine also sought those who would interpret his words during the catechesis from Latin into Punic[15] to non-Latin speaking persons. The fact that he paid particular attention to the correct interpretation of Punic expressions becomes evident from various places of his works where while explaining the etymology of some for Christianity important terms, he points out that Hebrew and Punic are cognate languages.[16] In interpreting the Scriptures, Augustine emphasizes the fact that the church spread throughout the world speaks all languages in which she announces the gospel:

> "… if he is Greek, you think up some Greek words; if he is a Punic-speaker, you ask yourself whether you know the Punic language. According to the diversity of your hearers, you make use of different languages in order to utter the word you have conceived."[17]

On the other hand, Donatists, living in Africa, spoke exclusively two languages – "Latin and Punic – that is, African".[18] On several occasions in his *Enarrationes*

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[12] Several official Latin documents were translated into Punic in order that uneducated peasants of the Punic-speaking community could understand them (e.g. the imperial decrees which were to be applied against the Donatists in Africa). Cf. LANCEL, S.: *Saint Augustin*. Paris 1999, 391.

[13] Augustinus, *Sermo* 167. 4. In *PL* 38, 910. Ed. J.-P. MIGNE. Paris 1865: *Proverbium notum est Punicum, quod quidem Latine vobis dicam, quia Punice non omnes nostis.* Transl. *WSA* III/5. Ed. J. E. ROTELLE. New York 1992, 212.

[14] Cf. Augustinus, *Ep.* 108. 2 and 5. In *CSEL* 34. 2. 617 and 628. Ed. A. GOLDBACHER. Wien 1898.

[15] Cf. Augustinus, *Ep.* 66. 2; 84. 2. In *CSEL* 34. 2. 236 and 393). On the structure of Punic, see e.g. FRIEDRICH, J. – RÖLLIG, W.: *Phönizisch-Punische Grammatik*. Roma 1999; KRAHMALKOV, CH. R.: *A Phoenician-Punic Grammar*. Leiden 2001; SEGERT, S.: *A Grammar of Phoenician and Punic*. Munich 1976; WENINGER, S. (ed.): *The Semitic Languages*. Berlin 2011.

[16] Cf. Augustinus, *C. litt. Petil.* II 104. 239. In *CSEL* 52, 152. Ed. M. PETSCHENIG. Wien 1909; *Tract. in Ioh. Ev.* 15. 27. In *CCL* 36, 162. On the language affinity of Hebrew and Punic, see for instance BERROUARD, M.-F.: Note Complémentaire 108. In *Homélies sur l'Évangile de saint Jean* 1-16. *BA* 71. Paris 1969, 950 sq.; LECERF, J.: Notule sur saint Augustin et les survivances puniques. In *AugMag* 21–24 sept. 1954, 31–33; SIMON, M.: Punique ou berbère? In *Mélanges I. Lévy*. Bruxelles 1953, 613–629.

[17] Augustinus, *Tract. in Ioh. Ev.* 14. 7. In *CCL* 36, 146: *... si Latinus est, vocem Latinam quaeris; si Graecus est, verba Graeca meditaris; si Punicus est, adtendis si nosti linguam Punicam; pro diversitate auditorum diversas linguas adhibes, ut proferas verbum conceptum*. Transl. in *WSA* I/12. Ed. A. D. FITZGERALD. New York 2009, 267.

[18] Augustinus, *Tract. in ep. Ioh.* 2. 3. In *BA* 76, 118: *...ut dicant illum ad duas linguas remansisse, Latinam et Punicam, id est Afram*. Transl. in *WSA* I/14. Edd. D. E. DOYLE – T. MARTIN. New York 2008, 41.

Augustine explains Punic words and offers their Greek, Latin, or eventually Hebrew equivalent.[19] Some of these instances are very interesting for the purpose of this study since they illustrate well Augustine's pedagogical approach inherent in his exegetical work. At the same time, they show that he was probably more skilful in rendering Hebrew, Punic and Greek words into Latin than many scholars would like to admit even today. In order to follow this objective let us analyse an example from Augustine's *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 119–133 preached in the first decade of his episcopate.[20] These homilies were delivered during his culminating controversy with the Donatists and the influence of folk language is already present in them.

3. THE INTERPRETATION OF *VERBA DUBITATIONIS*

Psalm 123 is a thanksgiving hymn in which the community acknowledges that the Lord delivered them from impending destruction. It may refer to the fundamental salvation celebrated at the festivals during the pilgrimage of the people to Jerusalem.[21] For the purpose of this section the analysis of the first 5 verses is of great importance.

Psalm 123,1b–5:[22]

> 1b. If it had <u>not</u> been that the Lord was among us – do let Israel say –
> 2. if it had <u>not</u> been that the Lord was among us, when people rose up against us,
> 3. <u>then</u> they would have swallowed us up alive, when their anger was kindled against us;
> 4. <u>then</u> the water would have drowned us, through a wadi our soul would have passed;
> 5. <u>then</u> our soul would have passed through the irresistible water.

When interpreting verse 5, Augustine comes across a problematic Latin translation of the Greek text in connection with the modal adverb *forsitan* rendering the Greek particle ἄρα:

> Primo quid est *forsitan* pertransiit anima nostra? Quomodo potuerunt enim, Latini expresserunt quod Graeci dicunt ἄρα. Sic enim habent Graeca exemplaria: ἄρα; quia dubitantis verbum est, expressum quidem dubitationis verbo quod est *fortasse*, sed non omnino hoc est. Possumus illud verbo dicere minus quidem Latine coniuncto, sed apto ad intellegentias vestras. Quod

[19] Cf. e.g. Augustinus, *En. in Ps.* 118, *s.* 32. 8 in *CCL* 40, 1776; 136. 18 in *CSEL* 95/4, 99; also 123. 8 in *CSEL* 95/3, 138.

[20] These homilies were preached probably in 406/407. Cf. LA BONNARDIÈRE, A.-M.: *Recherches de chronologie augustinienne*. Paris 1965, 51–52.

[21] KRAUS, H.-J.: *Psalmen II (60–150). Biblischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament*. Neukirchen 1978, 1023–1027; cf. also DAHOOD, M.: *Psalms III (101–150). The Anchor Bible*. New York 1970, 211–213; ALLEN, L. C.: *Psalms 101–150* [*Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 21]. Waco 1983, 163; HOSSFELD, F.-L. – ZENGER, E.: *Psalmen 101–150*. Vol. 3 (HThKAT). Freiburg im Breisgau 2008, 474–479.

[22] PIETERSMA, A. – WRIGHT, B. G. (eds): *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*. Oxford 2007, 611.

Punici dicunt *iar*, non lignum, sed quando dubitant, hoc Graeci ἄρα, hoc Latini possunt vel solent dicere: '*Putas*', cum ita loquuntur: '*putas, evasi hoc*'.[23]

"We had better examine first the expression, *perhaps* our soul crossed. What does that mean? The Latin translators rendered as best they could the word ἄρα found in the Greek text. The Greek manuscripts wrote ἄρα because this is a way of making a tentative statement; and the Latins likewise used a word conveying doubt: *perhaps*. But in doing so they did not accurately represent the sense. We can suggest it better with a word less at home in Latin but quite accessible to you. When Punic-speakers say *iar* they do not mean "wood" but indicate some hesitation. The Greeks convey the same nuance with ἄρα, and Latin-speakers may sometimes say, *Do you suppose that…?* So, for instance, they might say. *Do you suppose I could have escaped that danger?*"

Here Augustine is concerned with the translation of the Greek inferential particle ἄρα which can express diffidence or uncertainty on the part of a speaker in a politely phrased conditional clause. In itself the particle may possess either an adverbial force, expressing interest or surprise (cf. Luk 22. 23), or a connective sense, implying transition in natural sequence to show correspondence ("accordingly", "then"; Mat 12. 28), or denoting logical inference ("therefore", "consequently"; cf. Rom 7. 25).[24] In order to better understand the context of the examined passage from Augustine's *Enarratio in Psalmum* 123, let us look more closely at the first five verses of Psalm 123 as they are preserved in Augustine's text, the Roman Psalter,[25] and the Vulgate compared to the Greek text of the Septuagint:

En. in Ps. 123 (CSEL 95/3)	*Psalterium Romanum*	Vulgata	Septuaginta
1. *Canticum graduum.* Nisi quia Dominus erat in nobis dicat nunc Israel:	**1.** *Canticum graduum.* Nisi quod Dominus erat in nobis dicat nunc Israhel	**1.** *Canticum graduum huic David.* Nisi quia Dominus erat in nobis dicat nunc Israhel	**1.** ᾠδὴ τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν εἰ μὴ ὅτι κύριος ἦν ἐν ἡμῖν εἰπάτω δὴ Ισραηλ
2. nisi quia Dominus erat in nobis dum insurgerent homines super nos	**2.** nisi quia Dominus erat in nobis dum insurgerent homines in nos	**2.** nisi quia Dominus erat in nobis cum exsurgerent in nos homines	**2.** εἰ μὴ ὅτι κύριος ἦν ἐν ἡμῖν ἐν τῷ ἐπαναστῆναι ἀνθρώπους ἐφ᾽ ἡμᾶς
3. forsitan vivos absorbuissent nos dum irasceretur furor eorum super nos	**3.** forsitan vivos degluttissent nos dum irasceretur animus eorum adversus nos	**3.** forte vivos degluttissent nos cum irasceretur furor eorum in nos	**3.** ἄρα ζῶντας ἂν κατέπιον ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ ὀργισθῆναι τὸν θυμὸν αὐτῶν ἐφ᾽ ἡμᾶς
4. forsitan aqua demersisset nos	**4.** forsitan velut aqua obsorbuisset nos	**4.** forsitan aqua absorbuisset nos	**4.** ἄρα τὸ ὕδωρ κατεπόντισεν ἡμᾶς χείμαρρον διῆλθεν ἡ ψυχὴ ἡμῶν
5. torrentem pertransiit anima nostra; fortasse pertransiit anima nostra aquam sine substantia	**5.** torrentem pertransivit anima nostra forsitan pertransisset anima nostra aquam intolerabilem	**5.** torrentem pertransivit anima nostra forsitan pertransisset anima nostra aquam intolerabilem	**5.** ἄρα διῆλθεν ἡ ψυχὴ ἡμῶν τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ἀνυπόστατον

Table 1. Psalm 123.1–5 (LXX)[26]

[23] Augustinus, *En. in Ps.* 123. 8. In *CSEL* 95/3, 138. Transl. in *WSA* III/20, 49–50.
[24] Cf. THRALL, M. E.: *Greek Particles in the NT. Linguistic and Exegetical Studies*. Grand Rapids 1962, 10–11, 36; MURAOKA, T.: *A Greek–English Lexicon of the Septuagint*. Louvain 2009, 89.
[25] For more information on the ancient versions of the Latin Bible, see GASTALDO-CERESA, A.: *Il latino delle antiche versioni bibliche.* Roma 1975; BOSCHERINI, S.: Sulla lingua delle primitive versioni latine dell'AT. *Atti e memorie dell'Accademia Toscana*, NS 12 (1961–1962) 207–229.
[26] The table is adapted from ANDOKOVÁ, M.: *Rečnícke umenie sv. Augustína v kázňach k stupňovým žalmom* [The art of Rhetoric in Augustine's Homilies on the Psalms of Degrees]. Bratislava 2013, 211. Cf. Augustinus, *En. in Ps.* 123. 1–7. In *CSEL* 95/3, 128–138; *Psalterium Romanum*. Ed. R. WEBER

The Hebrew text of the Psalm is not included in the Table since it is quite improbable that in search of a better translation of the passage Augustine would have checked the Hebrew version in order to see whether the Greek ἄρα could mean something else than hesitation. In fact, the Hebrew terms לוּלֵא (*lûlê*, expressing "if it … not") and אֲזַי (*ʾăzay*, expressing "then") do not convey any meaning of hesitation but express a logical consequence of actions. So they clearly suggest that if God had not been with his people, then all the catastrophes named in vv. 3–5 would have happened to them. On the other hand, in connection with ἄρα Augustine refers to the Punic expression *iar*[27] which does not mean "wood" or "forest" but denotes hesitation. Although the Latin version of the Psalm contains the modal adverb *forsitan* meaning "it may be, perhaps…",[28] Augustine is not satisfied with its translation since it does not correspond to the message of the Psalm which celebrates God's victory over Israel's enemies. Therefore, he attempts to find a better translation of the Greek ἄρα which is for him an expression of doubt. However, modal adverbs *forsitan* or *fortasse*[29] do not fit well in the context because their semantic field is not so extensive as that of the Greek ἄρα. So he prefers a less correct expression *putas* ("do you suppose") that corresponds better to the meaning of the text:

> Si ergo dicatur: '*Forsitan evasi*', videtis quia non hoc sonat, sed quod dixi: '*Putas*', usitate dicitur; Latine non ita dicitur. Et potui illud dicere, cum tracto vobis – saepe enim et verba non Latina dico, ut vos intellegatis –, in scriptura autem non potuit hoc poni, quod Latinum non esset; et deficiente Latinitate, positum est pro eo quod non hoc sonaret. Sic tamen intellegite dici: '*Putas, pertransiit anima nostra aquam sine substantia*'.

[Collectanea Biblica Latina 10]. Roma 1953; *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem*. Ed. R. WEBER. Stuttgart 1994 (4th ed.); *Septuaginta*. Ed. A. RAHLFS. Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 2 Bde. Stuttgart 1935 (9th edition 1971).

[27] This Punic word resembles the Hebrew term יַעַר (*yáʿar*) which conveys the meaning of "wood", "forest" or "thicket" (cf. 2 Sa 18. 8), and corresponds to Phoenician רעי and רי as well as to Aramaic יַעֲרָא (*yaʿroʾ*, meaning "wood" or "thicket"). Cf. MULDER, M. J.: *yaʿar*. In BOTTERWECK, G. J. – RINGGREN, H. (eds): *Theological Dictionary of the OT*. Cambridge 1990, VI 208–217; also BROWN, F. – DRIVER, S. R. – BRIGGS, A. CH.: *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the OT*. Oxford 1906 (1996), 420. On the occurrence of a variant form of *iar* in a Numidian-Punic inscription from Dougg, see COX, M. G.: Augustine, Jerome, Tyconius and the Lingua Punica. *Studia Orientalia Electronica* 64 (2015) 86–87.

[28] On the meaning and grammatical form of the modal lexeme *forsitan*, see FRUYT, M.: The Modal Adverb *forsitan* 'perhaps'. In BALDI, P. – CUZZOLIN, P. (eds): *New Perspectives on Historical Latin Syntax* 4. Boston 2011, 836–837. This publication, however, does not shed much light upon the particular usage of the term *forsitan* in old Latin Bible. On the usage of modal adverbs *forsitan*, *fortasse*, *fortassis* and *forte*, see also GLARE, P. G. W. (ed.): *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Oxford 1968–1982 (2005) 725. The structure of *si forte* has been compared to the Tokharian prototype *k^wäβräyä*; cf. PINAULT, G.-J.: Sur l'assemblage des phrases («Satzgefüge») en tokharien. In CRESPO, E. – RAMON, J. L. G. (eds): *Berthold Delbrück y la syntaxis indoeuropea hoy* [Actas del Coloquio de la Indogerm. Gesellschaft]. Madrid–Wiesbaden 1997, 495. Cf. also the review of the edition of Baldi and Cuzzolin by V. MARTZLOFF in *Kratylos* 58 (2013) 121.

[29] In general, Augustine prefers the adverb *fortasse* followed by the verb in indicative to *forsitan* used with the subjunctive. In rough numbers, we can say that there are some thousand occurrences of *fortasse* in his works whereas *forsitan* represents less than 1/3 of this number.

> Et quare dicunt 'Putas'? Quia magnitudo periculi vix facit credibile quod evasit…[30]

> "You can see now that to render this as '*Perhaps I escaped*' does not capture the meaning of the colloquial '*Do you suppose…?*' But this is not good Latin. I can say it when talking with you; I often use non-Latin words to help you understand. But it could not be used in the translation of the scriptures, not being acceptable Latin; and since there was no good Latin equivalent for the Greek, an expression was used which does not exactly correspond to the original in meaning. Never mind: you must understand the line like this: *Do you suppose our soul could have crossed the insubstantial water?* (Ps 123. 5) And why this question? Because the gravity of the danger made it scarcely believable that they had escaped."

From this example it becomes clear that although the expression *putas* does not correspond with standard Latin, nevertheless it is adequate to the understanding of Augustine's audience. The aforementioned passage thus confirms that in direct communication with ordinary people Augustine did not hesitate to use even less correct forms of Latin in order to be better understood by them. However, it is worth noting that in many cases he felt obliged to apologise for such unlearned or folk expressions, taking into account more educated listeners who might have been shocked by hearing such Latin from the mouth of a bishop and former rhetor.

4. *FORSITAN* AS THE EXPRESSION OF REPROACH

Augustine modifies the meaning of *forsitan* also in another context when explaining Joh 8. 19 in his *Homily 37 on John's Gospel*:

> Si enim me sciretis, et Patrem meum *forsitan* sciretis. Ille qui omnia scit, quando dicit *forsitan*, non dubitat, sed increpat. Adtende enim quomodo increpative dicatur ipsum *forsitan*, quod videtur esse verbum dubitationis. Sed dubitationis verbum est quando dicitur ab homine, ideo dubitante quia nesciente; cum vero dicitur a Deo verbum dubitationis, cum Deum nihil utique lateat, illa dubitatione arguitur infidelitas, non opinatur divinitas.[31]

> "In fact, if you knew me, you would *perhaps* know my Father as well (Joh 8. 19). When the one who knows everything says *perhaps*, he is not expressing doubt but *reproach*. Notice how that *perhaps*, a word implying doubt or uncertainty, is used to express reproach. It is a word of doubt when used by someone who, indeed, is in doubt because he does not know; but when God uses a word of doubt, since nothing is hidden from God, it criticizes a lack of faith; divinity does not doubt."

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[30] Augustinus, *En. in Ps.* 123. 8. In *CSEL* 95/3, 138–139. Transl. in *WSA* III/20, 50.
[31] Augustinus, *Tract. in Ioh. Ev.* 37. 3. In *CCL* 36, 333. Transl. in *WSA* I/12, 566.

Here the modal adverb *forsitan* is used to render the Greek inferential particle ἂν as can be seen in Joh 8. 19: "εἰ ἐμὲ ᾔδειτε, καὶ τὸν πατέρα μου ἂν ᾔδειτε". In the NT the Greek particle ἂν[32] used with the unreal indicative in conditional sentences might express some hesitation, therefore it was rendered into Latin with *forte* or *forsitan*. Since on some occasions the usage of these Latin adverbs can obscure the meaning of the text, in the Neo-Vulgate they were in certain places omitted (e.g., Ps 80. 15; Mat 11. 23) whereas in other instances (e.g., Ps 118. 92) they remained unchanged.[33] Generally speaking, the adverbs *forsitan* and *forte* occur quite rarely in the NT while *fortasse* or *fortassis* do not appear there at all. As demonstrated in the example cited above, Augustine is not satisfied with the usage of *forsitan* because, according to him, it obscures the meaning of the text. Instead, he proposes another interpretation of this adverb claiming that it does not express doubt but conveys the meaning of reproach. Moreover, he insists on the fact that the divinity cannot doubt, that is why it should be understood as a reproach addressed to the Jews who did not recognize Jesus as God's Son.[34] However, he does not satisfy himself with this statement but looks for other instances either in the Bible or in everyday situations where he could find the support for this argument. Later in the same tractate he says:

> Homines enim de his rebus quas certas habent, *aliquando increpative dubitant*, id est, verbum dubitationis ponunt, cum corde non dubitent; velut si indigneris servo tuo et dicas: '*Contemnis me; considera, forsitan Dominus tuus sum*'.[35]

> "Human beings, after all, on matters they are quite sure about, *sometimes express doubt as a reproach*; that is, they express doubt, even when they have no doubts in their own heart – for example, if you are cross with your slave and say, *You give me no respect; but I may just be your master.*"

Furthermore, Augustine refers to two passages from the NT where in the Latin text the verb *puto* expressing reproach is used. In the first case it renders the Greek verb δοκῶ (1 Co 7. 40), as follows:

> Hinc et apostolus ad quosdam contemptores suos loquens ait: '*Puto autem, et ego Spiritum Dei habeo*'. Qui dicit, *puto*, dubitare videtur; sed ille increpabat, non dubitabat.

> "This is also the way in which the apostle talks to some people who gave him no respect when he says, *I rather think that I too have the Spirit of God* (1 Co 7. 40). In saying, *I rather think*, he seems to have his doubts; but in fact he was reproaching them, not expressing doubt."

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[32] The Greek particle ἄν can denote possibility or uncertainty in rhetorical or indirect questions, or indefinite future time. Cf. BLASS, F. – DEBRUNNER, A.: *Greek Grammar of the NT.* Chicago 1961, 182, §360.

[33] Cf. MALLET, J.: La latinité de la Néo-Vulgate. In STRAMARE, T. (ed.): *La Bibbia "Vulgata".* Vatican 1987, 189.

[34] Cf. Augustinus, *Tract. in Ioh. Ev.* 37. 5. In *CCL* 36, 334–335.

[35] Augustinus, *Tract. in Ioh. Ev.* 37. 3. In *CCL* 36, 333. Transl. *WSA* I/12, 566.

The second example, taken from Luk 18. 8, does not contain the adverb *forsitan* to render the Greek particle ἄρα but has the form *putas* as it occurred in Augustine's *Exposition on Psalm* 123:

> Et ipse Dominus Christus alio loco increpans infidelitatem futuram gene-ris humani: *Cum venerit*, inquit, *Filius hominis, putas, inveniet fidem in terra*?[36]

> "And Christ the Lord himself, when reproaching the hunan race for its future lack of faith, says in another place, *When the Son of Man comes, do you think he will find faith on the earth?* (Luk 18. 8)"

This example helps us better understand why Augustine chooses certain terms in his interpretation of the biblical text. If in *Enarratio in Psalmum* 123. 8 he used the colloquial expression *putas* instead of *forsitan*, it could have been motivated not only by his desire to choose a more familiar term for his audience, but it might have also been the question of the imitation of the Latin translation of the Bible. This argument seems quite plausible since we know that Augustine knew by heart a big portion of the Latin Bible, so the expression *putas* from Luk 18. 8 could have been in his mind.

5. CONCLUSION

To conclude, we can say that the Greek particle ἄρα translated into Latin as *forsitan* or eventually *putas*, is often used in the biblical text to indicate a rhetorical or indirect question. In the eyes of Latin speakers who translated the Bible from Greek into Latin, this inferential particle ἄρα (and possibly also ἄν) conveyed the meaning of doubt or uncertainty, so they did not associate it with the sense of consequence or logical inference, as it was the case in the Hebrew text. The fact that the usage of *forsitan* rendering ἄρα (and ἄν) was felt in many instances inadequate is demonstrated by the attempts of Christian exegetes to interpret it in a more suitable way, as we could observe in the examples taken from Augustine's homilies analysed in the current paper. Without having a deeper knowledge of Hebrew or Greek, Augustine understood that in aforementioned texts *forsitan* was not used properly. So he was looking for other less correct Latin expressions that would be more understandable for his diverse and often poorly Latin-speaking audience. However, the usage of such less standard words as *putas* substituting *forsitan* in his *Enarratio in Psalmum* 123 could have also been the result of imitation of the biblical text itself as illustrated on the example of Luk 8. 19. The interpretation of such terms elucidates well Augustine's double effort: firstly, it provides us with an illustration of his exegetical work present also in his spoken homilies and, secondly, it manifests to which extent he paid attention to his audience in order that they all understood the message of God's word. The

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[36] *Ibid*.

fact that the occurrence of the modal adverb *forsitan* in the Latin Bible is problematic can be also traced in the Neo-Vulgate in which *forsitan* rendering Greek particles ἄρα or ἄν was in several places omitted, as it was discussed in the last section of this paper.

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