

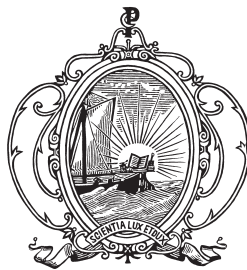
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Rome as the Basis of Argument in the So-called Pelagian Controversy (415-418)

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ABSTRACT

This paper considers the rhetoric of the so called Pelagian controversy. Its interest lies in a specific category of arguments drawn from a place (*argumenta a loco*). A brief outline of the theoretical concept of *argumentum a loco* and its popularity in the early Christian literature is presented. The main outcome of this study is to give a detailed analysis of the arguments used by Augustine and Zosimus.

During his controversy with Pelagius between 415 and 418, Augustine on many occasions portrays this heretic as a long-term inhabitant of Rome. I suggest that one should be skeptical about drawing exact chronology from his vague statements. The bishop of Hippo builds also a detailed topography of the Pelagian controversy mainly to persuade the Christian world of the immense danger of this new heresy. He alarms Innocent, bishop of Rome, Cyril, bishop of Alexandria, and Paulinus, bishop of Nola, that the followers of Pelagius have hideouts in their vicinities. Innocent, on his part, refrains from supporting Augustine's prejudices about Pelagius's popularity in Rome but excommunicates him as a heretic. Zosimus, Innocent's follower as a bishop of Rome, reverses this verdict. He argues that that all the Roman clergy and brethren found in the alleged heretic a sound Christian. He makes reference to the exceptional authority of the Roman See in the Christian world: Pelagius is not a heretic, precisely because such is the verdict of the Roman Christians.

Augustine presents Pelagius as a mendacious and cunning heretic. This is yet another context for the occurrence of an *argumentum a loco*. The bishop of Hippo tries to convince his addressees that Pelagius is a bad heretic, and all the more so because he lied to the bishops in Holy Land and in Rome. He succeeded in deceiving the former but felt short of harming the latter. According to Augustine's interpretation, it was because the Roman Church had known this heretic and his error for a long time, and was not prone to his lies. On that occasion, Augustine reverses Zosimus' arguments based on the authority of Rome and presents a flawed account of the Pope's proceedings.

Pelagius, born in Britain, lived in Rome a decent life of an exegete and ascete. In any case, so he was still perceived around 411 AD even by Augustine, his later persecutor. However, after a short time Augustine alarmed Paul Orosius, and Orosius alarmed Jerome that this agreeable figure is, in fact, a hypocrite and a heretic. As a result, all three authors wrote their polemics against the heretic Pelagius around 415. Orosius and Jerome chose to portray him as doctrinally

dependent on previous heresies and philosophical ideas,¹ whereas Augustine insisted on the profound originality of his error.² Jerome kept the heretic's name in silence; Orosius and Augustine pronounced it. Orosius wrote one apology, Jerome one dialogue, one letter plus a few sentences in his commentaries and then stopped. Augustine kept on preaching, writing letters and treatises against Pelagius till he reached his goal. In the course of events, Pelagius was judged a heretic by an African bishops' councils, by emperor Honorius and, ultimately, by Zosimus, bishop of Rome in 418. And Jerome summed it up as a great success of Augustine.³

This short history has been put under scrutiny by more than a few skillful scholars. However, the rhetorical dimension of the Pelagian controversy has rarely been studied in detail.⁴ Clearly, and to a large extent justly, theological and historical perspectives still prevail.⁵ In this article, I focus on just one example of rhetorical device, used and developed by those involved in the controversy about Pelagius' teaching between 415 and 418 AD. It is the use of the *argumentum a loco*, important for historians, as it sheds light on the questions of Pelagius' stay in Rome and his popularity there. It may also enable to draw further conclusions on Augustine's reliability as a historical source.

***Argumentum a loco* in theory and practice**

It emerges that there was an ingenious development of the *argumentum a loco* in Christian literature. It is no surprise, since this new religion put stress on the importance of holy places like the Holy Land, Rome, martyr shrines *etc.* This kind of argument, already present in the classical times, was one of the important parts of an *argumentatio*. It was often used to prove the probability of some

¹ Hieronymus, *ep.* 133,1-2,9; *comm. in Hier.* 4,1,2; Oros., *lib. apol.* 1,5-6. See Benoit Jean-jean, *Saint Jérôme et l'hérésie*, Collection des Études Augustiniennes 161 (Paris, 1999), 390-403; Giovanni Caruso, 'Girolamo antipelagiano', *Augustinianum* 49 (2009), 65-74.

² Aug., *sermo* 348A,5.

³ Hier., *ep.* 141,1 (= Aug., *ep.* 195,1).

⁴ Yves-Marie Duval, 'Pélagé est-il le censeur inconnu de l'Adversus Jovinianum à Rome en 393? ou: du portrait-robot de l'hérétique chez S. Jérôme', *RHE* 75 (1980), 525-57; Nello Cipriani, 'La morale pelagiana e la retorica', *Augustinianum* 31 (1991), 309-27; Éric Rebillard, 'A New Style of Argument in Christian Polemic: Augustine and the Use of Patristic Citations', *J ECS* 8 (2000), 559-78; Gaetano Lettieri, *L'altro Agostino: ermeneutica e retorica della grazia dalla crisi alla metamorfosi del 'De doctrina christiana'* (Brescia, 2001).

⁵ The most up-to-date summary of literature, see: Mathijs Lamberigts, 'Pelagius and Pelagians', in Susan A. Harvey, David G. Hunter (eds), *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies* (Oxford, 2008), 258-79. The following recent studies have been especially insightful: Sebastian Thier, *Kirche bei Pelagius*, PTS 50 (Berlin, 1999); Jean-Marie Salamito, *Les virtuoses et la multitude: aspects sociaux de la controverse entre Augustin et les pélagiens* (Grenoble, 2005); Walter Dunphy, 'Rufinus the Syrian: Myth and Reality', *Augustiniana* 59 (2009), 79-157.

deed and/or to refer to its quality as Quintilian informs us best.⁶ We must not overlook the fact that this renowned teacher refers to *genus iudiciale* and *deliberativum* only. But clearly, there was also a prominent role for an *argumentum a loco* in the pattern of an epideictic speech. We can sense its importance in one of the preserved handbooks of this genre, namely the *Peri epideiktikōn* of Menander the Rhetor (3rd century AD). There one finds the standard outline of a laudatory speech. After the *prooimion*, the first part of a narrative about the praised or criticized character should be dedicated to the description of his *patris*.⁷ Hagiographies, just as pagan biographies have exploited this argument, as we can see already in the first models of the genre, but on most occasions the description of the *patris* gives way to that of family, birth and other elements of panegyric pattern.⁸

One is inclined to observe that Church Fathers used the *argumentum a loco* most often in their treatises against heretics. These were filled with the arguments based on the person (*argumenta a persona*), becoming at times invectives in miniature.⁹ In the anti-Pelagian writings we find for instance Jerome's observations that reveal his contempt towards Pelagius, a monk from Britain, puffy from some Scottish porridge.¹⁰ However, Augustine, contrary to Jerome, seems not to be interested in the argument from the homeland of a heretic; instead, he introduces a different *argumentum a loco*.

⁶ Quintilianus, *Institutio oratoria* 5,10,37-41, ed. L. Radermacher et V. Buchheit (Lipsiae, 1971): 'Ducuntur argumenta et ex loco. Spectatur enim ad fidem probationis, montanus an planus, maritimus an mediterraneus, consitus an incultus, frequens an desertus, propincus an remotus, opportunus consiliis an adversus: quam partem videmus vehementissime pro Milone tractasse Ciceronem. Et haec quidem ac similia ad coniecturam frequentius pertinent, sed interim ad ius quoque: privatus an publicus, sacer an profanus, noster an alienus, ut in persona magistratus, pater, peregrinus. Hinc enim quaestiones oriuntur: "privatam pecuniam sustulisti, verum quia de templo, non furtum, sed sacrilegium est". "Occidisti adulteros, quod lex permittit, sed quia in lupanari, caedes est". "Iniuriam fecisti, sed quia magistratui, maiestatis actio est". Vel contra: "licuit, quia pater eram, quia magistratus". Sed circa facti controversiam argumenta praestant, circa iuris lites materiam quaestionum. Ad qualitatem quoque frequenter pertinet locus; neque enim ubique idem aut licet aut decorum est: quin etiam in qua quidque civitate quaeratur interest, moribus enim et legibus distant. Ad commendationem quoque et invidiam valet; nam et Aiax apud Ovidium "ante rates" inquit, "agimus causam, et me cum confertur Ulixes!" et Miloni inter cetera obiectum est, quod Clodius in monumentis ab eo maiorum suorum esset occisus.'

⁷ The pattern goes as follows: homeland, nation, family, birth, appearance, childhood, education, traits of personality, deeds during war and peace, fortune, synkrisis, ending. *Rhetores Graeci III*, ed. O. Spengler, 368-77.

⁸ E.g. Hier., *Vita Pauli* 4,3-5; *Vita Hilarioni* 2,1; Possidius, *Vita Augustini* 1,1.

⁹ Of course Jerome's works are the best examples here, but not the only ones. See Benoit Jeanjean, *Saint Jérôme et l'hérésie*, Collection des Études Augustiniennes 161 (Paris, 1999); Ilona Opelt, *Die Polemik in der christlichen lateinischen Literatur von Tertullian bis Augustin*, Bibliothek der klassischen Altertumswissenschaften 44 (Heidelberg, 1973).

¹⁰ Hier., *Comm. in Hier.*, Prol. 1.

Augustine, Pelagius and Rome

The first context in which Augustine mentions Pelagius and Rome is the rhetoric of the heretic's popularity. To be more specific, the anti-Pelagian writings called into being something that we can call the rhetorical topography of a heresy. Writing to Cyril of Alexandria, to Pope Innocent and to Paulinus of Nola, Augustine used a standard rhetorical device to make his addressees alarmed by the issues touched upon in his letters.¹¹ According to the ancient theory there were three goals that every author should accomplish, namely, to make any listener *docilem, benevolentem et attentum*. To overemphasize any danger of a cause (be it popularity of a heretic that one attacks) was one of the most commonly used methods of gaining the attention of the public opinion. Clearly, one should not exaggerate too much, or the addressees might have thought that the followers of Pelagius are more numerous than Christians! Augustine was aware of this danger.¹²

The scrutiny proves that Augustine associated arguments from such places as Rome or the Holy Land with the problem of the heretic's veracity. In the writings against Pelagius, composed between 415 and 418, Augustine constantly presented him as a deceiver and a trickster. It was only logical; African bishops recognized a perfect heretic in him directly after a council of Palestinian bishops gathered in Diospolis (December 415) had established his innocence. For Augustine, no such discrepancy could exist in the bosom of the universal Church; it was metaphysically impossible for him. Thus, the only possible way to explain differing judgments on Pelagius was providing proofs that he had been cunning and mendacious.¹³ That fourteen bishops gathered in Diospolis needed a translator to communicate with Pelagius, and that the accusers, Hero and Lazarus, were absent during the proceedings, was understandably providing a firm ground for such explanation. But clearly, in the first place one had to call attention to the heretic's deceitfulness.

¹¹ Aug., *ep.* 177,3: '*Non agitur de uno Pelagio, qui iam forte correctus est, quod utinam ita sit; sed de tam multis, quibus loquaciter contententibus, et infirmas atque ineruditas animas uelut uinctas trahentibus, firmas autem et in fide stabiles ipsa contentione fatigantibus, usquequaque iam plena sunt omnia*'; *ep.* 177,15: '*si ea esse sua negat aut scriptis suis ab inimicis suis dicit inmissa, quae sua esse negat, anathemet ea tamen et damnet paterna exhortatione et auctoritate sanctimoniae tuae, si uult, onerosum sibi et perniciosum discat ecclesiae scandalum auferre, quod scandalum auditores et in peruersum dilectores eius usque quaque spargere non quiescunt*'; *ep.* 186,8,29; 188,2-3, *ep.* 4*,4-5. I quote all the letters of Augustine from Augustinus, *Epistulae*, ed. A. Goldbacher, CSEL 34/1-2, 44 (Vienna, 1895-98). To these letters Augustine attached his *De natura et gratia* (To John of Jerusalem, to Paulinus) or *De gestis Pelagii* (to Cyril). He clearly aimed at convincing his addressees that Pelagius had lied at Diospolis, see Winrich Löhr, 'Pelagius' Schrift *De natura*: Rekonstruktion und Analyse', *RecAug* 31 (1999), 235-94, esp. 238-9. For the correspondence with Cyril of Alexandria, see Geoffrey D. Dunn, 'Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria, and the Pelagian Controversy', *Augustinian Studies* 37 (2006), 63-88.

¹² Aug., *ep.* 177,2.

¹³ Aug., *ep.* 19*,2; *gest. Pel.* 6,16-10,22.

This charge of mendacity was repeated in various modes. For instance, writing to Juliana, mother of Demetrias and later to Pinianus and Melania, the monk's patrons,¹⁴ Augustine observed that Pelagius is such a great deceiver, that he almost succeeded in persuading bishops himself of his innocence.¹⁵ Sometimes, the underlying goal of such an argument seemed to be to ridicule the ascetic teacher. On this occasion, Augustine demonstrated to his audience a liar so big, that he got lost in the web of his own mendacity to such an extent that even his disciples were not certain, which of his sentences was true.¹⁶ But on most occasions, Pelagius was portrayed as fraudulent during the proceedings of ecclesiastical judges. This charge of craftiness and mendacity, as will be proved, prepares one of the contexts for the *argumentum a loco*.

The first mention of Rome is the famous letter of Augustine, Aurelius, Alypius, Evodius and Possidius to pope Innocent (fall, 416):

*Audiuimus enim esse in urbe Roma, ubi ille diu uixit, nonnullos qui diuersis causis ei faueant, quidam scilicet, quia talia persuasisse perhibetur, plures uero, qui eum talia sentire non credunt.*¹⁷

In the same year, Augustine wrote to Cyril of Alexandria where he claimed that Egypt is one of the hideouts of people sympathizing with the heretics. In 417, together with Alypius he sent a long letter to Paulinus of Nola, because they had heard rumors about Pelagians in Nola. Unfortunately, we do not possess answers from Paulinus or Cyril, but this is how Pope Innocent commented on this suggestion:

*Nam si Pelagius, quocumque restitit loco, eorum animos, qui facile uel simpliciter crederent disputanti, hac adfirmatione decepit, seu hic illi in urbe sunt, quod nescientes nec manifestare possumus nec negare, cum, etsi sunt, lateant nec aliquando audeant uel illum praedicantem ista defendere uel talia aliquo nostrorum praesente iactare et in tanta populi multitudine nec deprehendi aliquis facile nec alicubi possit agnosci...*¹⁸

This answer had to sound rather disappointing in Africa. Innocent refrains from admitting that there are swarms of Pelagians in Rome; instead, he shows

¹⁴ Peter Brown, 'The Patrons of Pelagius: The Roman Aristocracy Between East and West', *JTS* 21 (1970), 56-72. See also very persuasive presentation of Pelagius connection with Pinianus and Melania's friend Rufinus of Aquileia: Walter Dunphy, 'Rufinus the Syrian: Myth and Reality', *Augustiniana* 59 (2009), 118-50.

¹⁵ Aug., ep. 188,3,11: '*Si autem diligentius intendatis etiam illa, quae ibi uidetur uelut pro gratia siue adiutorio Dei dicere, sic inuenietis ambigua, ut possint referri uel ad naturam uel ad doctrinam uel ad remissionem peccatorum.*'

¹⁶ Aug., ep. 186,8,29.

¹⁷ Aug., ep. 177,2. 'For we have heard that in the city of Rome, where Pelagius lived for a long time, there are some people who side with him for various reasons. He is said to have convinced some of them of such ideas, but a larger number do not believe that he holds these ideas.' Quoted after Augustine, *Letters 156-210, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* II 1, trans. R.J. Teske, 142.

¹⁸ Aug., ep. 183,2.

complete ignorance on the subject. What is even worse, the bishop of Rome seemed to be unaware of the dangers of Pelagian teaching, as he confesses in the letter 182,5: *Illud uero quod eos uestra fraternitas asserit praedicare, paruulos aeternae uitae praemiis etiam sine baptismatis gratia posse donari, perfatum est.* It follows clearly that the writings of the African bishops (and mainly of Augustine) are the source of Innocent's knowledge of Pelagian teaching.

The question is who are we to believe? Is Innocent's ignorance only superficial and destined to serve him to avoid further inquiry? Or were there numerous Pelagians in Rome, as Augustine suggested? Scholars in general believe the latter, because, as we know, Pelagius had dwelled in Rome for some time. Augustine says that it was a long time, but we have to be skeptical about drawing some exact chronological conclusions out of such descriptions as this:

417 (*gest. Pel.* 22.46):

*nam, ut de me ipso potissimum dicam, prius absentis et Romae constituti Pelagii nomen cum magna eius laude cognoui; postea coepit ad nos fama perferre, quod aduersus Dei gratiam disputaret. quod licet dolerem et ab eis mihi diceretur quibus crederem, ab ipso tamen tale aliquid uel in eius aliquo libro nosse cupiebam, ut, si inciperem redarguere, negare non posset. postea uero quam in Africam uenit, me absente nostro, id est hipponensi litore exceptus est, ubi omnino, sicut comperi a nostris, nihil ab illo huius modi auditum est, quia et citius, quam putabatur, inde profectus est.*¹⁹

We are presented here with a vague chronology, and as will be proved Augustine should not be treated as a completely reliable source for reconstruction of the historical background of the Pelagian controversy.²⁰

As has already been mentioned above, in *De gestis Pelagii* and *ep.* 177 one can find the idea that Pelagius, though once a newcomer to Rome, has dwelled in this city for quite a long time and found quite a number of followers, with Caelestius as the most fervent one. But it was not until 418 that Augustine started to underline the fact that Pelagius is not only a liar, which is already bad but that he was deceiving the brethren in the apostolic city of Rome, which is far worse. And we cannot leave the fact unnoticed that he developed this argument as one that contradicted one used by pope Zosimus in 417.

¹⁹ 'For, to speak of my own case, I first heard people mention the name of Pelagius with great praise, when he was far off and residing in Rome. Later, I began to hear by rumor that he was arguing against the grace of God. Though I was saddened by this and heard it from people I believed, I wanted to know something of the sort from the man himself or from a book of his so that he could not deny it, if I undertook to refute it. After he came to Africa, that is, to the shores of Hippo, he was welcomed in my absence, and nothing of the sort was heard from him, as I learned from our friends, since he departed from there more quickly than one might have expected.' Quoted after Augustine, *Answer to Pelagians: The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* I, 23, trans. R.J. Teske, 354.

²⁰ Apart from Augustine's account of Zosimus, in *De gestis Pelagii* he gave at least one piece of false information, accusing followers of Pelagius of the riots in Bethlehem. See Josef Lössl, 'Who attacked the Monasteries of Jerome and Paula in 416 A.D.', *Augustinianum* 44 (1994), 91-112.

The rhetoric of Zosimus

Zosimus in September 417 had to face the task that was left for him because of the death of Innocent. In the previous year, Innocent had reached a somewhat unsettling decision. Pelagius and Caelestius were found guilty of heresy, but they might have cleared themselves of all accusations and come back to the communion with Church if they presented to him sound statements of faith. Unfortunately, on March 12, 417 Innocent died and, as Mathijs Lamberigts has observed, his successor gave some hope to the Pelagians.²¹ Zosimus' letters prove that Caelestius came in person to defend himself and speak out his *credo*, whereas Pelagius sent his *libellus fidei*.²² Zosimus listened to Caelestius on one day and ordered to read Pelagius' *credo* on the other. He found their faith sound, then, informed Augustine and African bishops about his proceedings and decisions in two separate letters. There we find arguments which are interesting for us.

Zosimus claims that Catholics gathered in the Basilica of Saint Clement just could not believe that someone might have had suspected such honorable men of heresy. The Roman brethren and clergy accepted the presented statements by acclamation. He mentions not only his decision but shows that it was in absolute agreement with the will of the Roman Church.²³ It serves both as a detailed description of circumstances that increases the probability of the story and as a premise or substantiation of the reached verdict. We should be aware that this is just another rhetorical device commonly used by ancient authors known as a reference to *opinio, mos vulgi*.²⁴

²¹ Mathijs Lamberigts, 'Co-operation of Church and State in the Condemnation of the Pelagians: The Case of Zosimus', in Theo L. Hettema, Arie van der Kooij (eds), *Religious polemics in context. Papers presented to the Second International Conference of the Leiden Institute for the Study of Religions (LISOR) held at Leiden, 27-28 April 2000* (Assen, 2004), 363-75, esp. 363-4. I agree with M. Lamberigts that Zosimus was aware of the stake and the matter of the controversy.

²² Zos., *Magnum pondus...*, Coll. Avellana 45,2-3, ed. O. Guenther, CSEL 35 (Vienna, 1895): 'Caelestius presbyter nostro se ingressit examini expetens ea, quae de se apostolicae sedi aliter quam oportuit essent inculcata, purgari ... die cognitionis resedimus in sancti Clementis basilica ... omnia igitur, quae prius fuerant acta, discussimus, sicut gestorum huic epistolae cohaerentium instructione discetis et intromisso Caelestio libellum eius, quem dederat, fecimus recitari. Nec hoc contenti, utrum haec, quae scripsisset corde loqueretur an labiis, saepenumero explorauimus, cum de occultis animarum solius Dei nostri possit esse iudicium.' Zos., *Posteaquam...*, Coll. Avellana 46,2, CSEL 35: 'Litteras quoque suas idem Pelagius purgationem tenentes abundantissimas misit, quibus et professionis suae fidem, quid sequeretur quidue damnaret, sine aliquo fuco, ut cessarent totius interpretationis insidiae, cumulauit. Harum recitatio publica fuit: omnia quidem paria et eodem sensu sententiisque formata, quae Caelestius ante protulerat, continebant.'

²³ Zos., *Posteaquam...*, Coll. Avellana 46,3, CSEL 35: 'Utinam ullus vestrum recitationi litterarum interesse potuisset! Quod sanctorum uirorum, qui aderant, gaudium fuit? Quae admiratio singulorum? Uix fletu quidam et lacrimis temperabant tales enim absolutae fidei infamari potuisse.'

²⁴ Victorinus, *In Ciceronis rhetorica*, in *Rhetores latini minores*, I,21, ed. Carolus Halm (Lipsiae, 1863), 207,1-10.

As Heinrich Lausberg observes, during the classical period the audience's opinion of the speaker and the general opinion on the case had a direct influence on the perception of truth; the use of this device was designed to fulfill the 'docere part' of rhetorician's duty.²⁵ During Christian times, one needs to assume, there occurred also another factor that added even more authority to this argument. It may be seen in cases where an author presents the brethren's unanimity on some cases.²⁶ Alcuin summed it up in the famous phrase *vox populi, vox Dei*. Already in late antique literature the acclamation of brethren is always conceived as inspired by God. Clearly, everyone should notice, that it was not ordinary brethren but the Roman clergy and laity, gathered around the most reverent apostolic see. This circumstance only strengthens the persuasiveness of that argument.

Making this remark, Zosimus underlines the unique authority that the Roman Church has achieved as a corollary of St Peter's deeds and martyrdom. It was the same reference to authority that his predecessors Innocent and Siricius had used. In fact, it was the kind of influence on the general opinion that Augustine and the African bishops hoped for when they wrote their letters to Innocent in 416, and where satisfied with after his decisions. However, after Zosimus had issued a decision contrary to the African's expectations, and *de facto* cancelled Innocent's verdicts, Augustine did not repeat his words from *Sermo* 131 about *causa finita*. Doubtless, he did not think that Zosimus was justified in referring to the authority of Peter, and using an *argumentum a loco* to acquit Pelagius. In the letters of Zosimus, clearly an emerging opponent, this argument was a serious threat, and so something had to be done about it.

Augustine's reversal of Zosimus' argumentation

It seems to me that having read such argumentation Augustine instantly knew he had to retaliate this well-aimed arrow. But the course of events rendered it obsolete. In 418, when he was writing to the patrons of Pelagius, Pinianus and Melania, he said nothing of the decisions of Zosimus from the previous year. It was possible, because, by then, Zosimus had been forced to change his mind and thus he wrote in early summer of 418 the *Epistola tractoria*. It is quite obvious that Zosimus could not have acted any different after the condemnations of Pelagius and Caelestius issued by the African bishops (Carthage, May 1, 418) and the emperor Honorius (April 30, 418). Julian of Aeclanum accuses the Africans of influencing by bribes (he mentions first-class stallions offered

²⁵ Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik. Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft* (Wiesbaden, 1990), 181-3.

²⁶ Good examples of this technique are narratives of unanimous Episcopal elections, as in Paulinus, *Vita Ambrosii* 6.

by Alypius) the decisions of the imperial court and many scholars believe him.²⁷ Be it as it may, in mid-418 Zosimus changed his verdict on Pelagius and Caelestius from the fall of 417. Augustine in *De gratia Christi et peccato originali* run a risk to use the analyzed argument of Zosimus to support the opposite judgment.

Augustine claimed, not being entirely accurate with the facts, that the final decision of Zosimus, who in the *Epistula tractoria* condemned Pelagians was the only one that this bishop of Rome ever made. Augustine presents Pelagius once again as a deceiver:

*Quomodo autem Pelagius temptarit obrepere ad fallendum etiam apostolicae sedis episcopale iudicium in hac ipsa quaestione de baptisate paruulorum diligenter attendite.*²⁸

The word *etiam* puts a stress on the quality of Pelagius' deed and makes reference to the general opinion, according to the rules of rhetorical theory mentioned above. Augustine connects it with the context of Pelagius' dwelling in Rome, to prove that there are limits to the successes of such impious mendacity. He shows evidently that Pelagius was a successful liar only on those occasions, when he searched to deceive people unaware of his teachings, as bishops of Palestine in 415. But it was impossible even for such a sly heretic to mislead the clergy of Rome. They knew him too well, because he used to live there. Of course, Augustine continues, Pelagius made an attempt to lie to the very bishop of Rome as he did in Jerusalem and Diospolis, because such is the nature of this heretic. But it was not so easy to deceive the judges on that occasion, because the Roman Church knew his heresy well. This argument goes as follows:

Unde etiam Pelagius, si se ipsum et sua scripta sine dolo cogitat, non recte dicit eadem sententia se non debuisse retineri. Fefellit enim iudicium palaestinum, propterea ibi uidetur esse purgatus; romanam uero ecclesiam, ubi eum esse notissimum scitis, fallere usquequaque non potuit, quamuis et hoc fuerit utcumque conatus; sed, ut dixi, minime ualuit. Recoluit enim beatissimus papa Zosimus, quid imitandus praecessor eius de ipsis senserit gestis. Attendit etiam quid de illo sentiret praedicanda in Domino Romanorum fides, quorum aduersus eius errorem pro ueritate catholica studia consonantia concorditer flagrare cernebat, inter quos ille diu uixerat et quos eius dogmata

²⁷ Aug., *Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum* 1,42; 3,35. M. Lamberigts, 'Co-operation of Church and State' (2004), 367-70; James P. Burns, 'Augustine's Role in the Imperial Action against Pelagius', *JTS* 30/1 (1979), 67-83; Otto Wermelinger, *Rom und Pelagius. Die theologische Position der römischen Bischöfe im Pelagianischen Streit in den Jahren 411-432* (Stuttgart, 1975), 196-210.

²⁸ Aug., *De gratia Christi et peccato originali* 2,17,19, ed. Carolus F. Urba et Jos Zycha, CSEL 42 (Vienna, 1902). 'Take careful note of how Pelagius tried a maneuver to deceive even the episcopal court of the Apostolic See on this very question of the baptism of little ones.' Quoted after Augustine, *Answer to Pelagians: The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* I, 23, trans. R.J. Teske, 428.

*latere non poterant, qui Caelestium eius esse discipulum sic nouerant, ut fidelissimum et firmissimum possent de hac re testimonium perhibere.*²⁹

Zosimus stressed Pelagius' compliance with the demands and views of the Roman Church. Augustine presents the whole affair quite differently. He presents Zosimus as a faithful follower of Innocent that he was not. He also portrays the heretic as a recidivist, mentioning his lies at the ecclesiastical court in Palestine in 415.

In this connection, I have to mention briefly that a quite similar *argumentum a loco* is developed by both parties in case of Pelagius' behavior in the Holy Land. In Augustine's eyes, he is all the more heretic because he dares to lie before the bishops of Palestine.³⁰ Augustine makes this case already in his first work against Pelagius, where he mentioned his name, namely in *Sermo* 348A,6-7. But we find its more brief and evident expression in the quotation above, *ep.* 176 and *De gestis Pelagii*:

*Pelagius uero, sicut a quibusdam fratribus nostris missae loquuntur epistolae, Ierosolymis constitutus nonnullos fallere asseritur.*³¹

*Restare uidebatur, ut Pelagium potius in episcopali iudicio crederemus fuisse mentitum, nisi fieri potuisse cogitarem etiam ante annos tam multos aliquid sub eius nomine, non tamen ab illo fuisse conscriptum.*³²

Zosimus had to be aware of these accusations. He was in possession of at least one of the texts mentioned above, *i.e.* *ep.* 176, addressed to his predecessor,

²⁹ *Ibid.* 2,8,9. 'For this reason, if Pelagius considers himself and his writings honestly, he is wrong to say that he should not have been included under that same sentence. After all, he deceived the Palestinian court, and for that reason he was thought to have been found innocent by it. But he could not deceive the Church of Rome where, as you know, he is well known, although he tried to do so in every way he could. However, as I said, he was utterly unable to do so. After all, the blessed Pope Zosimus recalled the view that his predecessor, a man worthy of imitation, took of those proceedings. He also paid attention to what the faith of the people of Rome, which is praiseworthy in the Lord, held regarding that man. He saw their concerted efforts blaze forth in defense of the catholic faith, united against his error. Pelagius had lived in their midst for a long time, and they could not fail to be aware of his teachings. They knew quite well that Caelestius was his disciple, and they were able to bear utterly reliable and solid witness on that point.' Quoted after from Augustine, *Answer to Pelagians* I 23, trans. R.J. Teske, 423.

³⁰ Aug., *ep.* 176,4: '*Pelagius uero, sicut a quibusdam fratribus nostris missae loquuntur epistolae, Ierosolymis constitutus nonnullos fallere asseritur; ueruntamen multo plures, qui eius sensus diligentius indagare potuerunt, aduersus eum pro gratia Christi et catholicae fidei ueritate confligunt.*'

³¹ Aug., *ep.* 176,4: 'But, as letters sent by certain of our brothers report, Pelagius is said to have taken up residence in Jerusalem and to be leading some people astray.' Quoted after Augustine, *Letters 156-210, The Works of Saint Augustine*, trans. R.J. Teske, 139.

³² Aug., *De gestis Pelagii* 6,19, ed. Carolus F. Urba et Jos Zycha, CSEL 42 (Vienna, 1902). 'We seem to be left with believing that it was rather Pelagius who lied in the Episcopal court, unless we suppose that something could have been produced under his name so many years ago, but was not written by him.' Quoted after Augustine, *Answer to Pelagians* I 23, trans. R.J. Teske, 339.

Innocent. That is in all probability why he commenced his letter to the African bishops, consisting of a description of his legal proceedings on Pelagius, with a mention of the letter from Praylus, bishop of Jerusalem, who defended Pelagius:

*Ecce epistolam Hierosolymitani episcopi Prayli, qui in locum quondam sancti Iohannis episcopus est ordinatus, accepimus. Qui causae Pelagi enixius adstipulator interuenit.*³³

The Holy Land was obviously a place of great authority for a Christian audience. The fact was that Pelagius had been acquitted by the bishops of Palestine. However, Augustine tried to prove that it happened only because this heretic concealed his real views; thus, although Pelagius had achieved in Palestine an opinion of being a good Christian, this opinion was not true because he did not reveal his true thoughts. Therefore, by making reference to Praylus, the successor of John of Jerusalem, Zosimus searched to assure Christians that Pelagius was still recognized as an orthodox there.

Conclusion

We have been able to observe that the same places, the city of Rome and the Holy Land, were used by Zosimus and Augustine in arguments that served to support opposite conclusions. It is particularly evident in the case of Rome. Every historian had to be puzzled when he becomes aware of the following facts. In 416, Innocent says that before the Africans councils sent their letters to Rome the Roman Church had no idea about Pelagius and his views. After scrutiny he decided that the Roman Church does not think of Pelagius as totally catholic. In 417, Zosimus says that the Roman Church recognized in Pelagius a true Christian, although he was forced to change his view on the subject quite soon. In 418, Augustine claims that the Roman Church knew the British monks' heretical views for a long time and, therefore, condemned it. Who was truthful? Before we answer this question accurately, if we ever do, one has to observe that what we face in the analyzed texts is not a simple historical narrative but a nexus of argumentation that was supposed to persuade, to make one's account *verisimile* and not *verum*. *Argumentum a loco* was helpful in fulfilling this goal.

³³ Zos. *Posteaquam*..., Coll. Avellana 46,1-2, CSEL 35.

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