

ARTICLE

# The Minor Variant of Hebrews 2.9, with Mark 15.34 and Psalm 22.2

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## Abstract

This article explores the relationship of a minor variant in Hebrews 2.9 – Jesus dead ‘apart from God’ (χωρίς Θεοῦ) – with the minor variant of Mark 15.34 and more broadly with Psalm 22.2, as suggested by Harnack, Michel, Zuntz, Elliott, Ehrman and Rodgers. First, it highlights new elements in the file of the evidence of Heb 2.9 and compares it with the case of Mark 15.34. Secondly, it demonstrates that paying attention to the minor variants of Heb 2.9 and Mark 15.34 allows one to grasp better the diversity of Jewish and early Christian readings of Ps 22.2 or Ps 21.2 LXX: these readings provide a plausible context to explain the emergence of these two minor variants.

**Keywords:** Heb 2.9; Mark 15.34; Ps 22.2; Passion narrative; death of Jesus; early interpretations; textual criticism; multilingualism

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This article considers together two minor variants, quite rarely commented on in New Testament general scholarship or in textual criticism. The first one is found in Hebrews 2.9: Jesus ‘tasted death for all’, ‘by the grace of God’ (χάριτι Θεοῦ) or ‘apart from God’ (χωρίς Θεοῦ), while the second is found in Mark 15.34, in the last words of Jesus on the cross, rarely translated as ὁ Θεός μου ὁ Θεός μου, εἰς τί ὠνειδισάς με (‘why have you reviled/taunted me?’), instead of ὁ Θεός μου ὁ Θεός μου, εἰς τί ἐγκατέλιπές με (‘why have you abandoned me?’). In 1993, Bart Ehrman argued that these two minor variants are due to a ‘comparable motivation of change’: they would have been replaced by more orthodox versions to oppose to their separationist Christology.<sup>2</sup> In 2011, Peter Rodgers also suggested that both minor variants could have been related, affirming the relationship between Heb 2.9 minor evidence and Psalm 22.2.<sup>3</sup> Before them, Adolf von Harnack made a strong case for considering them together, convinced that both were representing the original text; he claimed more broadly that χωρίς Θεοῦ had ‘zwei sichere

<sup>1</sup> The writing of this article has been supported by the SNSF project MARK16, Grant No. 175799. It is based on an invited seminar paper presented at the Society of New Testament Studies 2023 Conference. I warmly thank Harold Attridge for his response and permission to quote it (H. Attridge, ‘In Praise of Minor Variants, Heb 2.9’, 2023, unpublished), as well as Teunis van Lopik for his helpful comments and bibliographical references.

<sup>2</sup> B. D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of the Scriptures. The Effect of Early Christological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament* (New York/Oxford: University Press, 2011<sup>2</sup>) 171–4; see also B. D. Ehrman, ‘Text and Interpretation: The Exegetical Significance of the “Original” Text’, *Studies in the Textual Criticism of the New Testament* (NTTSD 33; ed. B. D. Ehrman; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2006) 307–24.

<sup>3</sup> P. Rodgers, *Text and Story. Narrative Studies in New Testament Textual Criticism* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2011) 44.

Parallelen' representing the death of Jesus as a separation from God: Matt 27.4 /Mark 15.34 and Luke 22.43–4, also proposing links with Heb 5.7.<sup>4</sup> He was followed by several scholars like Otto Michel, Günther Zuntz<sup>5</sup> and J. Keith Elliott:

Christ in his death was separated from God. This agrees fully with the theological stance of Hebrews, [...e.g.] 4.15; 5.7–9; 12.2; 13.12. [...] The cry of desolation from the cross (= Ps 22.2 cited at Mt 27.46 and Mk 15.34) may also represent a similar theological position. [...] The close connection of the cry of desolation in Matthew's and Mark's Passion narrative with Hebrews 2 may be more than coincidence and be based on a common Jewish background.<sup>6</sup>

To the contrary, Harold Attridge considers that Heb 5.7 is incompatible with the idea that Jesus died forsaken by God (χωρίς Θεοῦ), expressed in Mark 15.34 and Matt 27.46.<sup>7</sup> Attridge presents, in a quite extended way, the minor variant in his commentary about Hebrews, and did not forget it later, even if he remained unconvinced by the meaning of a death separated from God in Hebrews.<sup>8</sup> However, the vast majority of NT exegetes working on Hebrews usually simply ignore this minor variant. For example, it is not mentioned in six recent monographs or collected essays on Hebrews<sup>9</sup> and can be ignored even in articles devoted to this verse.<sup>10</sup>

This article would like to demonstrate that this minor variant matters and to test its suggested relationship with the minor variant of Mark 15.34 (by Harnack and Ehrman), and more broadly, with Ps 22.2 (by Harnack, Elliott and Rodgers). It demonstrates that early plural readings of Ps 22.2 could provide a plausible context of emergence for these two minor variants. The second section will discuss the Patristic and internal evidence of Heb 2.9; the third will inquire about the manuscript evidence and compare it with previous research results<sup>11</sup> regarding the minor variant of Mark 15.34; and the

<sup>4</sup> A. von Harnack, 'Zwei alte dogmatische Korrekturen im Hebräerbrief', *Studien zur Geschichte des Neuen Testaments und der alten Kirche* (ed. A. von Harnack; Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1931) 235–52, at 244.

<sup>5</sup> O. Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975<sup>13</sup>) 141–2; G. Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles. A Disquisition upon the Corpus Paulinum. The Schweich Lectures of the British Academy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1953<sup>2</sup>) 34–5, 44, and 74.

<sup>6</sup> J. K. Elliott, 'When Jesus was Apart from God. An Examination of Hebrews 2.9', *Expository Times* 83.11 (1972) 339–41, at 340.

<sup>7</sup> H. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews. A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989) 77, note 77.

<sup>8</sup> H. Attridge, 'La christologie kénotique et l'Épître aux Hébreux', *ETR* 89 (2014/3) 293–308, at 303–4.

<sup>9</sup> N. Brennan, *Divine Christology in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Son as God* (London: Bloomsbury/T & T Clark, 2021); J. Lee, *A Jewish Apocalyptic Framework of Eschatology in the Epistle to the Hebrews: Protology and Eschatology as Background* (LNTS 662; New York: T&T Clark, 2021); M. Sigismund and S. Kreuzer, eds., *Die Schriftzitate im Hebräerbrief als Zeugen für die Überlieferung der Septuaginta* (WUNT.II 580; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022); D. Young, *The Concept of Canon in the Reception of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York: T&T Clark, 2023); J. Bloor, *Purifying the Consciousness in Hebrews: Cult, Defilement and the Perpetual Heavenly, Blood of Jesus* (LNTS 675; New York: T&T Clark, 2023); A. G. Urga, *Intercession of Jesus in Hebrews* (WUNT.II 585; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023). See also earlier G. Gäbel, who discusses Heb 2.9 without mentioning the minor variant in *Der Kulttheologie des Hebräerbriefes. Eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Studie* (WUNT.II 212; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006) 147.

<sup>10</sup> For example: J. Swetnam, 'The Crux at Hebrews 2.9 in its Context', *Biblica* 91 (2010) 103–11; P. A. Hartog, 'The Text of Hebrews 2.9 in Its Patristic Reception', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 171 (2014) 52–71; R. B. Evans III, 'Hebrews 2.5–9: An Exegetical Paper', *The American Journal of Biblical Theology* 18.45 (2017) 1–25.

<sup>11</sup> See C. Clivaz, 'Marc 15,34 dans le codex de Bèze et le codex Bobbiensis', *Traditions et traductions des textes bibliques. Études de critique textuelle et d'exégèse en l'hommage de Christian-Bernard Amphoux à l'occasion de son 80<sup>e</sup> anniversaire* (LCA35) (eds. L. Pinchard and J.-C. Haelewyck; Brussels: Safran, 2023) 55–70.

fourth will discuss the interpretations of the two minor variants in the background of the diverse early readings of Ps 22.2.

## 2. The Patristic Attestations and Internal Evidence

The manuscript evidence of the minor variant of Heb 2.9 has still not been scrutinised in detail, since it is considered as poor, with three Greek manuscript attestations counted so far (GA 0243, GA 424<sup>mg</sup>, GA 1739), one Latin (Vulgate G),<sup>12</sup> and fifteen Syriac attestations in Peshitta manuscripts.<sup>13</sup> As Section 3 demonstrates, it is still possible to highlight new elements in this manuscript evidence file, but the scholarly interest in this minor variant is mainly based on its various Patristic attestations. Their amount and geographical spreading have led Zuntz to affirm that ‘this reading [χωρίς θεοῦ] was predominant in the third century and that it lived on the periphery of the Christian world’,<sup>14</sup> whereas Amy Donaldson concludes more prudently that ‘at the very least, it is clear that the two readings were in circulation by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century CE, or even the 2<sup>nd</sup>’.<sup>15</sup>

Since this variant has seldom been studied, the list of Patristic references can vary from one scholar to another.<sup>16</sup> Following verification,<sup>17</sup> some names must be withdrawn from the list of the Patristic attestations: neither Irenaeus, nor John Chrysostom, nor Eusebius, nor Athanasius,<sup>18</sup> nor Cyril of Alexandria<sup>19</sup> comment on or quote χωρίς θεοῦ. Patristic attestations<sup>20</sup> are found in Origen, Ambrose, Jerome, Ambrosiaster, Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret, Severus of Antioch,<sup>21</sup> Philoxenus, Fulgentius, Vigilius, Babai the Great, Shahdost,<sup>22</sup> Pseudo-Athanasius, Theophylact, and Pseudo-Oecumenius. Regarding this rich file, running from the third to the tenth century CE, one must first observe that the suspicion against χωρίς θεοῦ started only with the

<sup>12</sup> Zuntz, *The Text*, 34.

<sup>13</sup> S. P. Brock, ‘Hebrews 2:9B in Syriac Tradition’, *NovT* 27.3 (1985) 236–44, at 241.

<sup>14</sup> Zuntz, *The Text*, 34.

<sup>15</sup> A. M. Donaldson, *Explicit References to New Testament Variant Readings among Greek and Latin Church Fathers* (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 2009) vol.1, 226, note 30.

<sup>16</sup> For example, Elliott lists Eusebius among the attestations of the minor variant (Elliott, ‘When Jesus’, 339); Attridge lists Chrysostom and Eusebius (Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 69, note 5).

<sup>17</sup> In the next lines, I comment on only the attestations with lesser-known or new information.

<sup>18</sup> See for Chrysostom, Eusebius and Athanasius, N. B. de Carvalho, ‘By God’s Grace or Without God in the First Place?’ (Athens: University of Georgia, 2020, unpublished) 2.

<sup>19</sup> No mention of χωρίς θεοῦ stands in either the Greek or the Armenian version of Cyril’s commentary on Hebrews. See P. E. Pusey, ed., *Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli ... In D. Joannis Evangelium. Accedunt fragmenta varia necnon tractatus ad Tiberium diaconum duo*, vol. III (Oxford: Clarendon, 1872) 386–91; Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Letter to Hebrews* (Classical Armenian with English translation; Yerevan: Ankyunacar Publishing, 2021) 206–11. Thank you to Sara Scarpellini for her help in checking this reference.

<sup>20</sup> This article presents the most exhaustive list of Patristic evidence; for other quite complete lists, see Hartog, ‘The Text of Hebrews 2:9’, 53; de Carvalho, ‘By God’s Grace’, 1–3.

<sup>21</sup> Severus, C.imp.gr. 3.1/67.14, an attestation rarely mentioned, but pointed out in B. Aland and A. Juckel, eds., *Das Neue Testament in Syrischer Überlieferung - II Die Paulinischen Briefe*, 3: 1./2. *Thessalonischerbrief*, 1./2. *Timotheusbrief*, *Titusbrief*, *Philemonbrief* und *Hebräerbrief* (ANTF 32; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2002) 263. This reference has been cited recently by J. Valentin, ‘He 1,1–4 dans le Vatican Ar. 13 et les manuscrits arabes du Sinaï, avec un complément sur He 2,9’, in a forthcoming *BETHL* volume; I thank Jean Valentin for having provided it to me. However, it should be noted that the exact reference is not Severus, C.imp.gr. 3.1/67.14, but Severus, C.imp.gr. 3.1/67.16. Moreover, Aland and Juckel twice edit ܐܠܗܐ (*alāhā*, God) in their version of Severus’ quotation, whereas one reads only one mention of ܐܠܗܐ in Joseph Lebon’s edition (Severus of Antioch, *Liber contra impium Grammaticum* III.A (SS IV/5, *Textus*; ed. J. Lebon; Paris: *E typographeo Reipublicae*, 1929) 67 (Syriac) and 48 (Latin)).

<sup>22</sup> For Babai the Great and Shahdost, see Brock, ‘Hebrews’, 239, note 10. Shadhost or Eusthatus of Tarihan was an eighth century CE writer.

opposition to Nestorianism, as Philoxenus expresses it in his commentary about the Prologue of John: “They [the Nestorians] wrote “apart from God” taking care to transmit that this Jesus, who accepted death on behalf of us, is not God.”<sup>23</sup> Before this Nestorian point of view, the minor variant does not seem to have provoked opposition and has even known some success in the Syriac tradition. There are thirty-one Peshitta Syriac manuscripts in total with four different versions in Heb 2.9 listed by Sebastian Brock; fifteen of them include  $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ , dated from the fifth to the thirteenth century CE, and come mainly from East Syria.<sup>24</sup> As Valentin summarises, “sans dieu” est un classique des études syriaques’.<sup>25</sup> Brock concludes: ‘Syriac writers from the mid fifth-century onwards were sharply divided in the positions they took on Christology, and it will come as no surprise that writers belonging to the Church of the East regularly quote Heb 2.9 with the reading “apart from God”’.<sup>26</sup>

The diverse data coming from the Patristic attestations<sup>27</sup> allow one to draw a quite clear chronological painting of the uses of the minor variant, assumed as the major one by Origen<sup>28</sup> and Diodore of Tarsus,<sup>29</sup> who both say that a major part of the manuscripts had  $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ , a situation which is inverted in Jerome’s attestation.<sup>30</sup> All three, however, are comfortable with both readings; as summarised by Donaldson: ‘[Jerome] cites “by the grace of God” (*gratia Dei*) first, then notes only in passing that some manuscripts have “apart from God” (*ut in quibusdam exemplaribus legitur, absque Deo*). Like Origen, though, Jerome appears to find the same meaning in the text regardless of the reading.’<sup>31</sup> It should even be noted that some Latin voices mention only  $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ , as it was the usual version of the text, without signalling the variant  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\tau\iota\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ , for example, Ambrose<sup>32</sup> or Fulgentius (488–533 CE).<sup>33</sup> The two Latin attestations of Origen also only mention  $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ ,<sup>34</sup> as well as Severus of Antioch (5th–6th century CE) who uses only  $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  in the *Liber contra impium Grammaticum* III.A 48/24 (Latin translation) or 67/16 (Syriac original): ‘Eum autem qui paulo minus ab angelis minoratus est, videmus esse Iesum propter passionem mortis gloria et honore coronatum, ut absque Deo [ܟܘܪܝܫ ܘܬܗܘܘܘܢܐ] pro nobis omnibus gustaret mortem.’<sup>35</sup>

We can note first that Lebon has translated [ܟܘܪܝܫ ܘܬܗܘܘܘܢܐ] by ‘ut absque Deo’, using the same Latin words as Jerome in *Comm. Gal.* 3.10. Secondly, exactly like Origen or Diodore, Severus also knows the version with  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\tau\iota\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ ,<sup>36</sup> but can quote  $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  as the

<sup>23</sup> Quoted from the *Liber Heraclidis* by Brock, ‘Hebrews’, 237.

<sup>24</sup> Brock, ‘Hebrews’, 241. Six Peshitta manuscripts present alternative variants: ‘for he, God, in his grace’, or ‘for he in grace God’ (Brock, ‘Hebrews’, 240).

<sup>25</sup> Valentin, ‘He 1,1–4’, *forthcoming*.

<sup>26</sup> Brock, ‘Hebrews’, 240.

<sup>27</sup> For an overview of the main points in the Greek and Latin Patristic attestations of  $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ , see Donaldson, *Explicit References*, vol. 1, 226–30.

<sup>28</sup> Origen, *Commentary on John* 1.40; 28.41; *Dialogue with Heraclides* 27.6; *Commentary on Romans* 3.8; 5.7.

<sup>29</sup> Diodore, *Comm. in Ps.* 8.6b–7 (Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca 6; ed. J. M. Olivier; Turnhout: Brepols, 1980) 49.

<sup>30</sup> Jerome, *Comm. Gal.* 3.10 (CCSL 77A) 85.

<sup>31</sup> Donaldson, *Explicit References*, vol. 1; 227; Jerome, *Comm. Gal.* 3.10 (CCSL 77A) 85.

<sup>32</sup> Ambrose, *De Fide* II.8.63 and V.13.160, quoted by R. W. Muncey, *The New Testament Text of St Ambrose* (Texts and Studies; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959) 102.

<sup>33</sup> Fulgentius, *Ad trasimundum regem vandalarum* III.III.XX (MPL 65.0284B–C). Amy Donaldson quotes the attestations of Origen, Diodore, Jerome, Pseudo-Oecumenius, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Theophylact (Donaldson, *Explicit References*, vol. 2, 526–36).

<sup>34</sup> Origen, *Commentary on Romans* 3.8; 5.7.

<sup>35</sup> Severus of Antioch, *Liber contra impium Grammaticum* III.A (SS IV/5 *Textus*; ed. J. Lebon; Paris: E typographeo Reipublicae, 1929) 67 (Syriac) and 48 (Latin).

<sup>36</sup> See Severus *Pol. ant.* 1.108.14, *Pol. ant.* 3.17.9 and *Phil.* 12.16 (Aland and Juckel, *Das Neue Testament*, 263).

unique one. Consequently, one cannot assume that Ambrose, Fulgentius and Vigilius would have known Heb 2.9 *only* with χωρίς θεοῦ, simply based on the fact that they do not refer to χάριτι θεοῦ. What kind of Greek text were the early Latin Fathers reading? Muncey suggested that Ambrose read and translated the Greek variant χωρίς θεοῦ, followed then by Fulgentius and Vigilius.<sup>37</sup> The suggestion of a Latin translation finds support, first in the divergences of the Latin versions: if Ambrose's *sine Deo* seems to have indeed been the most popular one, then one also finds *absque Deo* by Jerome and in Lebon's translation of Severus.<sup>38</sup> Secondly, the evidence of VL 7<sup>mg</sup> still adds weight to Muncey's explanation (see 3.3).

We cannot leave the rich file of the Patristic attestations of χωρίς θεοῦ without pointing to the fact that the minor variant even has a place in the *Actio IV* of the fifth Ecumenical Council (13 May 553 CE),<sup>39</sup> under the pen of Theodore of Mopsuestia: 'whereas Diodore is still happy to accept either reading, Theodore regards χάριτι θεοῦ as a deliberate alteration which he ridicules'.<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, Theodore reproaches the Nestorians with not being attentive to the stylistic evidence of χωρίς θεοῦ: they are οὐ προσέχοντες τῇ ἀκολουθίᾳ τῆς γραφῆς, 'not paying attention to the accoluthia of the scripture'.<sup>41</sup> Centuries later, the internal evidence – style and coherence – remains the milestone of scholars who give preference to χωρίς θεοῦ, coined by Elliott in 1972<sup>42</sup> and summarised by de Carvalho in 2020:

J. K. Elliott has been successful in demonstrating the importance of stylistic considerations. Χωρίς occurs thirty-nine times in the New Testament – twelve of these in Hebrews alone. Χωρίς is usually followed by an anarthrous noun in the New Testament – the only exceptions being 2 Corinthians 11.28 and Philemon 14 – but in Hebrews this is always the case. The exceptions are not a possibility to see χωρίς being used with an article, since they differ radically in its usage, given that the former passage has its article functioning pronominally, and the latter has its usage being affected by the presence of the possessive adjective in the attributive position. Χάρις is a fairly common word, occurring over one hundred and fifty-five times in the New Testament, but only seven times in Hebrews (4.16; 10.29; 12.15, 28; 13.9, 25). Whereas χωρίς is followed by an anarthrous noun in Hebrews, χάρις is generally arthrous, especially for *nomina sacra* as dependent genitives [...]. Stylistically, then, χωρίς is to be preferred.<sup>43</sup>

This stylistic analysis helps to understand why ancient readers were comfortable with χωρίς θεοῦ, often considered as not so different from χάριτι θεοῦ, until the start of the Nestorian confrontation or 'Nestorian emendation', according to Elliott.<sup>44</sup> The wide circulation of χωρίς θεοῦ is demonstrated by the Patristic evidence. The largest point of

<sup>37</sup> Muncey, *The New Testament*, 102: 'Ambrose evidently had a Greek MS. which contained this reading, and he is followed by Theodoret, Fulgentius and Vigilius.'

<sup>38</sup> I do not count *extra Deum* as alternative here because one finds it only as explanation in a marginal note of VL 7 (see 3.3 below); *contra* White and Wordsworth in their edition of the Vulgate: J. Wordsworth and H. J. White, eds., *Nouum Testamentum Domini Nostri Jesu Christi Latine. Secundum editionem sancti Hieronymi* (Oxonii: Clarendon Press, 1941) pars. 2, fasc. 7, 698.

<sup>39</sup> Brock, 'Hebrews', 238, note 7.

<sup>40</sup> Brock, 'Hebrews', 238.

<sup>41</sup> J. A. Cramer, ed., *Catena Graecorum Patrum in N. T.*, vol. 7 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1844) 147; quoted by Brock, 'Hebrews', 238, note 7.

<sup>42</sup> Elliott, 'When Jesus', 339–40.

<sup>43</sup> de Carvalho, 'By God's Grace', 5–6.

<sup>44</sup> Elliott, 'When Jesus', 341.



interrogation remains its seldom Greek and Latin manuscript attestations, which can nevertheless still be harvested.

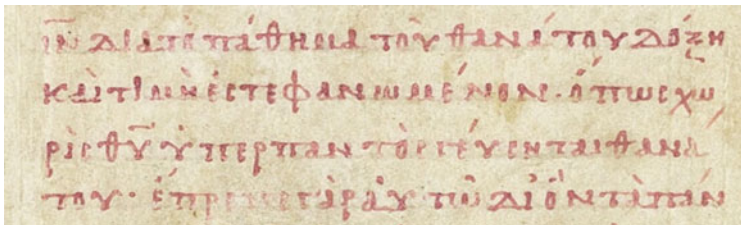
### 3. The Manuscript Evidence

This section highlights new elements for Heb 2.9 evidence in the following manuscripts: GA 1739, GA 1998<sup>mg</sup> (Vat. Pal. gr. 204) in the transcription by Caroline P. Hammond Bammel,<sup>45</sup> and St-P ANS 327 and S 161 that offer two new Arabic attestations noted by Jean Valentin.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the case of the unique Latin manuscript evidence will, for the first time, be transcribed entirely from VL 7<sup>mg</sup> (BNF Lat. 11553), or Vg G or Codex Sangermanensis (ninth century CE),<sup>47</sup> indicated as ‘vg<sup>ms</sup>’ in the Nestle-Aland<sup>28</sup>. Here is the updated list of the manuscript evidence for χωρίς θεοῦ in Heb 2.9:

- Greek manuscripts: GA 0243, GA 424<sup>mg</sup>, GA 1198<sup>mg</sup> and GA 1739
- Latin manuscript: VL 7<sup>mg</sup>
- Syriac manuscripts: Add. 14479, ?Add. 14480, E Add. 14448, E Add. 7157, W Add. 17123, E Mingana syr. 103, E Add. 7158, E Vat. Syr. 510, E Oxford Dep. Or. D. 2, E Harvard syr. 4, E Or. 2289, E Add. 7159, E Or. 2695, E British and Foreign Bible Society ms 446, and E. Or. 4051<sup>48</sup>
- Arabic manuscripts: St-P ANS 327 and S 161<sup>49</sup>

#### 3.1 GA 0243 and GA 424

GA 0243 or Codex Ruber (tenth century CE) is the only Greek uncial with χωρίς θεοῦ, written in the main text as a usual reading, without notes or editorial marks:



**Figure 1.** GA 0243

In Scrin. 50 (GA 0243), f. 1r; Library of the University of Hamburg © Public Domain

As for GA 424<sup>mg</sup> (eleventh century CE), Nestle-Aland<sup>28</sup> does not mention it but it should. Looking at the image below, one can discern a marginal annotation next to χόριτι, which is not a correction.<sup>50</sup> Scholars who mention GA 424<sup>\*\*</sup>, like Eduard von der

<sup>45</sup> C. P. Hammond Bammel, ‘A New Witness to the Scholia from Origen in the Codex von der Goltz’, *Origeniana et Rufiniana*, vol. 2 (AGLB 29; Freiburg: Herder, 1996) 137–41; C. P. Hammond Bammel, ‘Extracts from Origen in Vat. Pal. 204’, *JTS* 49.1 (1998) 129–35.

<sup>46</sup> Valentin, ‘He 1,1–4’, forthcoming.

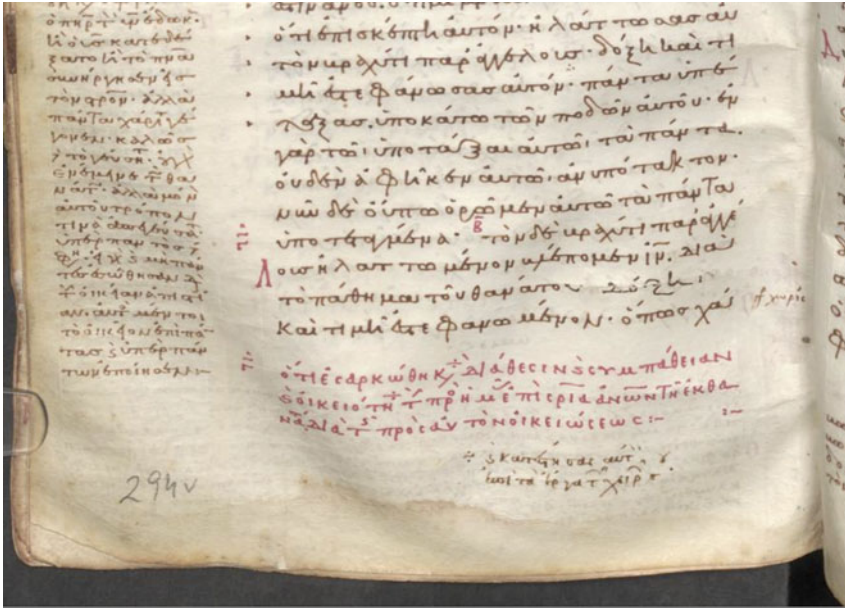
<sup>47</sup> H. A. G. Houghton, *The Latin New Testament. A Guide to its Early History, Texts, and Manuscripts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016) 87.

<sup>48</sup> See Brock, ‘Hebrews’, 241.

<sup>49</sup> Valentin, ‘He 1,1–4’, forthcoming.

<sup>50</sup> Contra de Carvalho, ‘By God’s Grace’, 4–5, who evokes a ‘change’ in GA 424, based on M. H. Tagami, *A Textual Analysis of the Manuscripts Comprising Family 1739 in Hebrews* (Ph.D. diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007) 33.

Goltz,<sup>51</sup> consider that it is another firsthand reading, but the image below shows that the marginal note is from another hand. One reads in the margin: γρ(άφεται) χωρίς, ‘it is written “without”’. It remains impossible to know from which source χωρίς was copied and added in the margin by a second hand. It is clarified, at least, that the evidence should be noted as GA 424<sup>mg</sup>.



**Figure 2.** GA 424  
 © Austrian National Library, Vienna, Cod. Theol. Gr. 302 (GA 424), f. 294v

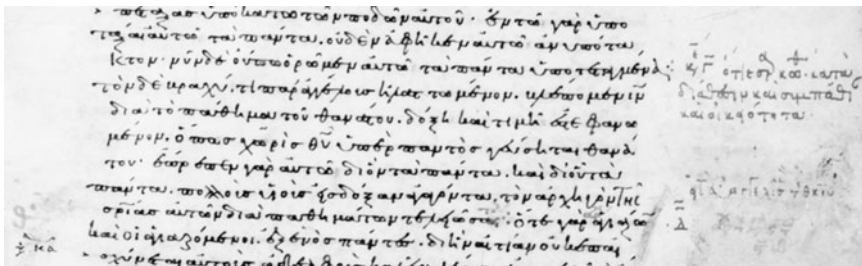
### 3.2 GA 1739 and GA 1998

Among the Greek attestations, the minuscule GA 1739 (tenth century CE) is a manuscript of particular importance.<sup>52</sup> As summarised by Hammond Bammel, ‘the so-called Codex von der Goltz, Athos Laura 184 B 64, is a tenth-century copy of Acts and the Epistles

<sup>51</sup> E. A. von der Goltz, *Eine textkritische Arbeit des zehnten bzw. sechsten Jahrhunderts, herausgegeben nach einem Kodex des Athosklosters Lawra* (TU 17.4; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1899) 87; quoted below.

<sup>52</sup> See in the chronological order: Goltz, *Eine textkritische Arbeit*; K. Lake, J. de Zwaan and M. S. Enslin, ‘Codex 1739’, *Six Collations of New Testament Manuscripts* (eds. K. and S. Lake; HTS 17; Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press/Oxford University Press, 1932) 141–219; G. Zuntz, *A Piece of Early Christian Rhetoric in the New Testament Manuscript 1739* (1946) (*Opuscula Selecta*; Manchester: Classica, Hellenistica Christiana, 1972) 184–290; Zuntz, *The Text*, 68–84; J. N. Birdsall, *A Study of Ms. 1739 of the Pauline Epistles and its Relationship to Mss. 6, 424, 1908 and M* (Ph.D. diss., University of Nottingham, 1959); T. C. Geer, *Family 1739 in Acts* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994); Hammond Bammel, ‘A New Witness’; Hammond Bammel, ‘Extracts’; A. S. Anderson, *The Textual Tradition of the Gospels. Family 1 in Matthew* (NTTS 32; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004) 35–9; D. C. Parker, *An Introduction to the New Testament Manuscripts and their Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 261–3; G. Gäbel, ‘The Text of Hebrews in GA 1739 in Selected Other Greek Manuscripts, and in Works of Origen: Preliminary Quantitative Assessments’, *The New Testament in Antiquity and Byzantium: Traditional and Digital Approaches to its Texts and Editing*. FS K. Wachtel (ANTF 52; eds. H. A. G. Houghton, D. C. Parker, and H. Strutwolf; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019) 147–63; J. W. Peterson, *GA 1739: A Monk, his Manuscript and the Text of Paul’s Letters* (Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 2020).

containing marginal notes taken from works of Origen and other early writings, which were most likely originally compiled in the library of Caesarea in Palestine'.<sup>53</sup> For Georg Gäbel, it is even 'one of the most important Greek New Testament manuscripts'.<sup>54</sup> In his 1946 and 1953 studies, Zuntz obtained quite a large consensus by demonstrating that 'in Hebrews the readings of this manuscript were derived from a second century *παλαιόν*, which is a "brother" of P<sup>46</sup>'.<sup>55</sup> After a detailed study, however, Gäbel concluded, that 'as to Zuntz' theory concerning the relationship of P<sup>46</sup> and 03 to 1739, we may say that (for Hebrews) it does not gain in plausibility in the light of [our] results'.<sup>56</sup> Our purpose in the framework of this article is not to reconsider the debate Gäbel vs Zuntz but to focus on the case of Heb 2.9 in GA 1739, which will, nevertheless, bring new elements in favour of Zuntz's hypothesis of a *παλαιόν* exemplar. A first monograph about this manuscript – with an edition of variants and of some commentaries – was published by von der Goltz in 1899, who described the variant of Heb 2.9 as such: '187 fol. 88r zu 2.9 χάριτι θεοῦ = ABCDEKLP eine kleine Rasur am Rande; hier stand vermutlich die andere Lesart von M 67\*\* χωρίς θεοῦ. Orig. IV.41 besagt [es]'.<sup>57</sup> In fact, it is quite puzzling to read this description, since GA 1739 shows – without hesitation – *χωρίς θεοῦ* in the main text:



**Figure 3.** GA 1739

Monastery of the Lavra B.64. (GA 1739), f. 88r. Library of Congress Collection of Manuscripts from the Monasteries of Mt. Athos, © Public Domain.

This opinion of von der Goltz was probably at the start of the well-quoted '1739\*' for this manuscript, including in the Nestle-Aland<sup>128</sup>. However, as rightly pointed out by Gäbel, it should be indicated simply as 1739 – or 1739<sup>txt</sup> – for *χωρίς θεοῦ*.<sup>58</sup> Von der Goltz was, nevertheless, correct in underlining the presence of a 'kleine Rasur am Rande', that could have presented a reading with *χωρίς θεοῦ*. One century later, Caroline P. Hammond Bammel provided the answer to this remark by von der Goltz. Neither Gäbel nor other NTTC scholars have apparently noticed that she published a posthumous article in 1998 entitled 'Extracts from Origen in Vat. Pal. 204', that is GA 1998, tenth century CE. She explains: 'It is likely that the notes which interest us were copied into an ancestor of Vat. Pal. 204. [GA 1998] from an ancestor (or "cousin") of the Codex von der Goltz [GA 1739]. Vat. Pal. 204 occasionally has a superior text, so its notes are not derived directly from the Codex von der Goltz itself'.<sup>59</sup> Here, one has a concrete trace of the *παλαιόν*

<sup>53</sup> Hammond Bammel, 'Extracts', 129.

<sup>54</sup> Gäbel, 'The Text of Hebrews', 147.

<sup>55</sup> P. Garnet, 'Hebrews 2.9: CHARITI or CHWRIS', *Papers of the 1983 Oxford Patristics Conference*, vol. 1 (ed. E. A. Livingstone; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) 321–5, at 321; see Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles*, 83.

<sup>56</sup> Gäbel, 'The Text of Hebrews', 161.

<sup>57</sup> Goltz, *Eine textkritische Arbeit*, 87. M 67\*\* is GA 424 (67<sup>p</sup>).

<sup>58</sup> Gäbel, 'The Text of Hebrews', 155.

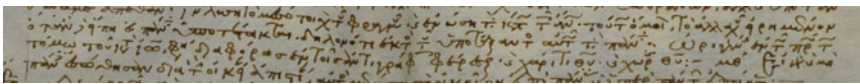
<sup>59</sup> Hammond Bammel, 'Extracts', 129.



exemplar supposed by Zuntz. Hammond Bammel transcribed the note that comments on Heb 2.9 in GA 1998, f. 159ar,<sup>60</sup> which is, in fact, the remark of Origen in *In Ev. Io I.35.255*, as suggested a century earlier by Goltz for the margin of GA 1739, f.88r. We can read it in the manuscript:



**Figure 4.** GA 1998  
 Pal. gr. 204 (GA 1998), f. 159ar © 2023 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana



**Figure 5.** Detail of GA 1998  
 Pal. gr. 204 (GA 1998), f. 159ar, detail © 2023 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

The passage is commented and transcribed by Hammond Bammel in this way: ‘f.159bis (this is on an unnumbered page between f.159 and f.160) = Codex 187 f.88 (entirely erased on Heb 2.9): ὠριγένης ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ τόμῳ τοῦ κατὰ ἰω(άννη) φη(σί) διαφόρως ἐν τοῖς ἀντιγράφοις φέρεσθαι καὶ χάριτι θεοῦ καὶ χωρὶς θεοῦ (*In Ev. Io I.35.255*)’.<sup>61</sup> Hammond Bammel allows the elucidation of what should have been in the margin of GA 1739, f.88r next to Heb 2.9. Moreover, one can now add the Greek attestation of GA 1998<sup>mg</sup> for χωρὶς θεοῦ. Regarding the potential relationship of GA 1739 and GA 1998 (common ancestor), it is interesting to note that the two manuscripts choose a different reading in the main text, with the other one in a marginal note. This corresponds to the flexible attitude regarding this variant we have observed from Origen, Diodore, Jerome and Severus, comfortable with the two versions of the text. GA 424<sup>mg</sup> does the same, with no correction, but reporting an alternative reading in the margin. In the end, only GA

<sup>60</sup> Hammond Bammel, ‘Extracts’, 132.

<sup>61</sup> Hammond Bammel, ‘Extracts’, 132.

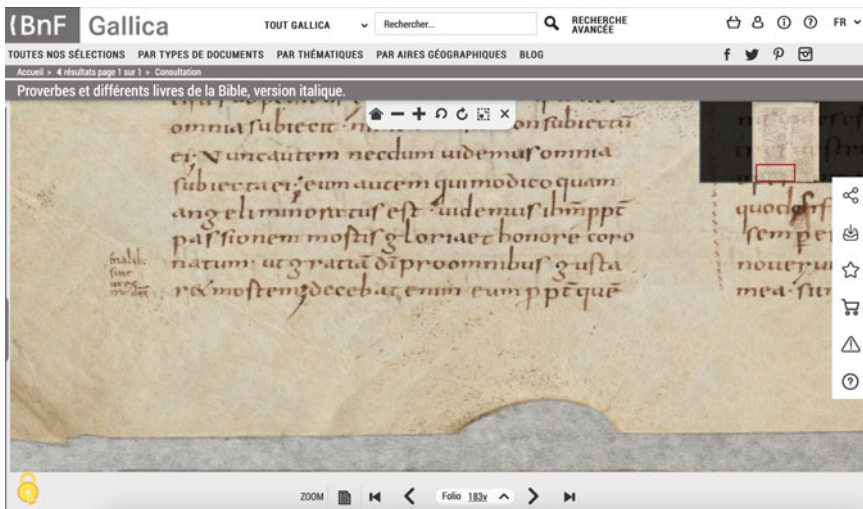
0243 gives *χωρίς θεοῦ* without *χάριτι θεοῦ*; however, the conjecture of Bruce,<sup>62</sup> adopted by Metzger,<sup>63</sup> is duly rejected by Elliott:

Bruce says that *χωρίς θεοῦ* was originally a marginal gloss incorporated into the text, then altered to *χάριτι θεοῦ* ‘in time for P<sup>46</sup> to know this reading’. The subtlety behind this suggestion tells against it, especially as we have no MSS reading the text without the alleged gloss. Bruce is right in saying *χωρίς* would be more likely to have been altered to *χάριτι* than the reverse but is wrong in saying *χωρίς* came from a scribe. Westcott<sup>64</sup> on the other hand suggests *χάριτι θεοῦ* is original and that *χωρίς θεοῦ* was a marginal gloss by a scribe, which was later substituted for the original reading. This as we have seen is unlikely to be so.<sup>65</sup>

Elliott’s remarks can still be strengthened by the fact that Origen and Diodore witness reading *χωρίς θεοῦ* in most of the manuscripts; such a situation could hardly have happened if the variant had started as a marginal gloss. In summary, a part of GA 0243, all Greek manuscripts show to have known both readings in Heb 2.9, with no need to choose between them. The unique Latin manuscript attestation of *sine Deo* also demonstrates a similar flexible reading.

### 3.3 VL 7 (Vg G, Codex Sangermanensis or Lat. 11553)

As noticed by H.A.G. Houghton, ‘VL 7 (Codex Sangermanensis; also, Vg G) is the latter half of a two-volume Bible produced at St-Germain-des-Prés around 810.’<sup>66</sup> In other words, it is our most ancient manuscript attestation of *χωρίς θεοῦ* but only in a marginal note:



**Figure 6.** Folio 183v.

Source: [gallica.bnf.fr](https://gallica.bnf.fr) Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des manuscrits Lat. 11553 (VL 7), f.183v.

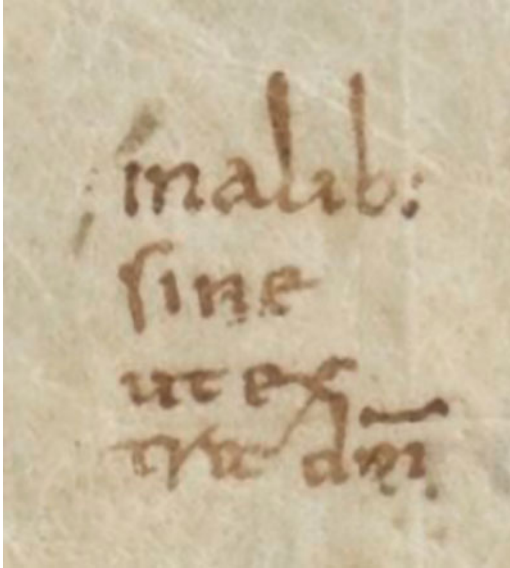
<sup>62</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990<sup>2</sup>) 32.

<sup>63</sup> B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994<sup>2</sup>) 594.

<sup>64</sup> B. F. Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (London: Macmillan, 1892) 62.

<sup>65</sup> Elliott, ‘When Jesus’, 340.

<sup>66</sup> Houghton, *The Latin New Testament*, 87.



**Figure 7.** Detail of the marginal note on the left of Folio 183v.

Source [gallica.bnf.fr/](https://gallica.bnf.fr/) Bibliothèque nationale de France. Département des manuscrits Lat. 11553 (VL 7), f.183v.

It has never been completely transcribed: in their Vulgate critical edition, Wordsworth and White simply transcribe *extra Deum* for it.<sup>67</sup> However, the marginal note provides more: ‘in alibi “sine” ut extra Deum’.

<i>Diplomatic Transcription</i>	<i>Translation</i>
<i>in alibi</i>	elsewhere
<i>sine</i>	‘without’
<i>ut ex</i>	like out-
<i>tra dñi</i>	side of God

**Figure 8.** The Latin New Testament.

In fact, we do not have a Latin manuscript assuming *sine Deo* in the main text, whereas GA 0243 and GA 1739 presents χωρις θεου in the main text. VL 7 has a simple marginal note, that explains *sine* - probably for χωρις - and rephrases it as *extra Deum*. Since we have no other attestation of *extra Deum* in a manuscript or in an external indirect attestation, there is no reason to assume it as an alternative to *sine Deo*. *Extra Deum* serves the VL 7’s scribe for rephrasing and explaining *sine*, found ‘in alibi’, elsewhere. These

<sup>67</sup> Wordsworth and H. J. White, *Nouum Testamentum*, pars. 2, fasc. 7, 698.

observations reinforce the hypothesis of Muncey regarding Latin translation(s) from the Greek for the *sine Deo* or *absque Deo*'s minor variant. The numerous Syriac attestations demonstrate that this variant was alive at least in the Eastern regions, whereas one has no Coptic attestation of  $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ , absent from the Egyptian landscape, even if it remains an *a silentio* argument. Important remarks of Houghton allow confirmation of the relationship of VL 7 with the region of Palestine as well. In VL 7:

There are a few Old Latin readings in the other Synoptic Gospels, but in the rest of the New Testament the manuscript is the best witness of the Vulgate. [...] In addition, there are exegetical glosses in Acts, Revelation, and the Catholic Epistles from Bede and other Insular sources, some written in shorthand, and alternative marginal readings in some of the Pauline Epistles (including Greek words). [...] It appears that its model was a fifth-century pandect, the earliest known example of this type of Bible in Latin, assembled by an anonymous editor. [...] At the end of Esther, the editor states that they collected all of Jerome's translations into a single volume (*fecique pandectem*, fol. 69<sup>r</sup>), and added non-canonical works including the *Shepherd of Hermas*. The second, found after Hebrews and before *Hermas*, reads: *bibliotheca Hieronimi presbyter Bethleem secundum grecum ex emendatis exemplaribus conlatus* (fol. 187r). 'The library of Jerome, the priest of Bethlehem, compared according to the Greek, from corrected copies.'<sup>68</sup>

For Houghton, this Codex demonstrates how Jerome's revision started to be associated with the entire New Testament, including special features from the Old Latin or the Vulgate texts.<sup>69</sup> These remarks solve the case of our marginal note in VL 7 next to Heb 2.9, but not entirely, since Jerome quotes *absque Deo* and VL 7, like Ambrose, *sine Deo*. The minor variant was circulating not only under the pen of Jerome, and Palestine was a 'success region' for  $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  with fifteen Syriac Peshitta attestations. Moreover, as we have seen, until the Nestorian polemics, ancient authors were comfortable with the two versions and even able to comment only on  $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ . Let us now observe how it goes with the second minor variant which sheds special light on the relation between Jesus and his Father on the cross, Mark 15.34:  $\acute{\omicron}\ \theta\epsilon\acute{\omicron}\varsigma\ \mu\omicron\upsilon\ \acute{\omicron}\ \theta\epsilon\acute{\omicron}\varsigma\ \mu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma,\ \epsilon\iota\varsigma\ \tau\acute{\iota}\ \acute{\omicron}\nu\epsilon\iota\delta\iota\sigma\acute{\alpha}\varsigma\ \mu\epsilon$ , 'why did you taunt/revile me'?

### 3.4 Comparing the formal criteria of the two minor variants Heb 2.9 and Mark 15.34

As explained in the introduction, the minor variant in Mark 15.34 has been studied in detail in a forthcoming article<sup>70</sup> that serves as a basis for the following comparison, first suggested by Harnack, as presented in the introduction. These two variants have an obvious common point: they are largely ignored in the current NT studies as we have seen for  $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  in Heb 2.9. In a similar way,  $\acute{\omicron}\nu\epsilon\iota\delta\iota\sigma\acute{\alpha}\varsigma\ \mu\epsilon$  in Mark 15.34 is regularly forgotten, even in works focused on the topic of the reproach and the vocabulary of  $\acute{\omicron}\nu\epsilon\iota\delta\iota\zeta\epsilon\iota\nu$ . For example, in her 2009 monograph about Ps 22 and the Gospel of Mark, Holly Carey discusses this topic in three passages, illustrated by the verb  $\acute{\omicron}\nu\epsilon\iota\delta\iota\zeta\epsilon\iota\nu$  in Mark 15.32; she relates it to Wis 2.12 and 5.14, and Ps 22.7, as well as to the *Hodayot* literature found in Qumran: 'several allusions to the lament portion of Ps 22 are included in the *Hodayot*. In 1 QH X.33–5 there is the same combination of "reproach" (תָּרַף) and

<sup>68</sup> Houghton, *The Latin New Testament*, 87–8.

<sup>69</sup> Houghton, *The Latin New Testament*, 88.

<sup>70</sup> Clivaz, 'Marc 15,34'.

“scorn” (בִּזְיוֹן) that is found in Ps 22.7.<sup>71</sup> However, she does not integrate the minor variant of Mark 15.34 in this discussion, commenting on it merely in passing.<sup>72</sup> Thus, it would be fruitful to relate ὠνειδισῶς με in Mark 15.34 to the ancient Jewish literature concerning the topic of the reproach, highlighted in a 2011 article by Stanley Jones. He stated that he was convinced that ‘elements of an old story in Aramaic are still visible in Mark’s account’.<sup>73</sup> Whatever one thinks about this affirmation, Jones’ article highlights the importance of the topic of reproach in the Markan Passion, mentioned in Mark 15.32, in Ps 22.7, and the Targum of Ps 22.7 and of Ps 22.18. However, he never mentions the minor variant of Mark 15.34, whose signification would, thus, fit perfectly with these highlighted elements.

Sharing the same discretion in scholarship, our two minor variants are dissimilar from the point of view of the formal criteria: χωρὶς θεοῦ in Heb 2.9 is largely attested in Patristic references, whereas one has only one external indirect reference to τί ὠνειδίσας με in Mark 15.34 by Macarius Magne.<sup>74</sup> Additionally, there is only one 810 CE marginal Latin note and no Greek manuscript attestation before the tenth century CE for χωρὶς θεοῦ, ὠνειδισῶς με is used in the early witnesses GA 05 (around 400 CE)<sup>75</sup> and VL 1 (380–420 CE),<sup>76</sup> translated by *me maledixisti*<sup>77</sup> and later by *exprobrasti me* in VL 6 and by *me in opprobrium dedisti* in VL 17. As for *sine Deo* or *absque Deo*, the different Latin translations of ὠνειδισῶς με show that they were based on non-Latin exemplar(s).

From the stylistic or internal evidence point of view, χωρὶς θεοῦ seems to be harmonious in the Epistle of the Hebrews, as we have seen in Section 2. Often not commented, τί ὠνειδισῶς με could be consonant with the topic of reproach mentioned in Mark 15.32 and Ps 22.7, Targum included, as well as in 1 QH X.33–5. In summary, both minor variants are strong enough to have not been forgotten in scribal memories. The large geographical and temporal spreading of Heb 2.9 χωρὶς θεοῦ gives some echo to the frequency of this variant noted by Origen and Diodore, but today so rarely attested in the manuscripts. The earliness of the manuscript attestations of τί ὠνειδισῶς με turns the attention to the old age of this alternative reading. These two minor variants demonstrate the *early and continuous* diversity of the interpretations of the death of Jesus, as we will see in Section 4.

<sup>71</sup> H. J. Carey, *Jesus’ Cry from the Cross: Towards a First Century Understanding of the Intertextual Relationship between Psalm 22 and the Narrative of Mark’s Gospel* (LNTS 398; London/New York: Bloomsbury/ T&T Clark, 2009) 143; see also 137 and 173.

<sup>72</sup> This short comment is even more surprising in that Carey affirms that χωρὶς θεοῦ is the ‘only textual variant that could alter the significance and meaning of the passage’ (Carey, *Jesus’ Cry*, 183).

<sup>73</sup> F. S. Jones, ‘An Early Aramaic Account of Jesus’ Crucifixion’, *Frühes Christentum und Religionsgeschichtliche Schule, Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Gerd Lüdemann* (M. Janssen, F. S. Jones and J. Wehnert eds.; NTOA 95; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011) 62.

<sup>74</sup> Macarius Mage, *Apocriticus* 2.23.1–6, first published in C. Blondel, ed., *Makariou Magnētos apokritikos ē monogénēs = Macarii Magnetis quae supersunt ex inedito codice (Apocriticus)* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1876) 20–1.

<sup>75</sup> Recently, C. A. Evans, *Jesus and the Manuscripts: What We Can Learn from the Oldest Texts* (Peabody: Eerdmans, 2020) 101, 106, 177, and 1031; previously, see D. C. Parker, *Codex Bezae: An Early Christian Manuscript and Its Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 281.

<sup>76</sup> E. A. Lowe, ed., *Codices Latini Antiquiores: a Palaeographical Guide to Latin Manuscripts Prior to the Ninth Century. Part IV, Italy: Perugia-Verona*, no 465 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947) 18.

<sup>77</sup> One can clearly read today the two last letters of the *prima manu maledixisti*, highlighted first by Burkitt in 1900, followed by Turner and Harnack. See F. C. Burkitt, ‘On St. Mark XV 34 in “Codex Bobiensis”’, *JTS* 1.2 (1900) 278–9. In 1904, however, a fire damaged the library of Turin, and the Codex Bobiensis was covered in water, as recorded by C. Cipolla et al., eds., *Il codice evangelico k della Biblioteca universitaria nazionale di Torino, riprodotto in fac-simile per cura della Regia accademia delle scienze di Torino* (Turin: G. Malfese, 1913) 11. This event explains why Burkitt and Turner have been able to read more than we can. See C. Clivaz, ‘Mk 16 im Codex Bobiensis. Neue Materialien zur conclusio brevior des Markusevangeliums’, *ZNT* 47.24 (2021) 59–85



## 4. Meanings of the Two Minor Variants in Heb 2.9 and Mark 15.34, with Ps 22.2

### 4.1 *ὀνειδισμός* and Hebrews

As we have seen in the introduction, Harnack opened up the possibility of trying to find a broader context for understanding the death of Jesus ‘apart from God (Heb 2.9)’, by gathering other passages showing similar interpretations for him: Ps 22.2, τί ὀνειδισάς in Mark 15.34, Luke 22.43–4, and Heb 5.7. One of his key arguments was to consider χωρίς θεοῦ in relationship with the topic of the ὀνειδισμός τοῦ Χριστοῦ mentioned in Heb 11.26 and 13.13.<sup>78</sup> In favour of Harnack, Carey and Stones highlighted the presence of the topic of the ὀνειδισμός in ancient Jewish literature, related to Ps 22.7 and echoed in Mark 15.34 (see 3.4). According to Harold Attridge, however, this background cannot be applied to Heb 11.26 and 13.13; in both passages, ‘the ὀνειδισμός of Christ does not come from divine rebuke or consist in being abandoned, marginalized, or disciplined by God. That ὀνειδισμός comes from those who persecute the community’,<sup>79</sup> as in Mark 15.32. The American scholar wishes to preserve the relation of the Father and the Son safe from all negative action of the Father against the Son; if he does not exclude ‘the possibility of another version of a reading of Hebrews that makes sense of the χωρίς variant’, he considers that ‘the description of the Father-Son relationship in Hebrews creates an obstacle to such a reading’,<sup>80</sup> reaffirming in 2023 what he was saying in his 2007 commentary: Heb 5.7 is incompatible with the idea that Jesus died forsaken by God (χωρίς θεοῦ).<sup>81</sup>

Attridge here provides a *caveat* to a reading which would assimilate χωρίς θεοῦ to a perception of the Son isolated from the Father in Hebrews, a reading potentially maximised in an early separationist Christology (Ehrman’s hypothesis) or effectively in the later Nestorian readings. To focus on the Patristic attestations of χωρίς θεοῦ allows one to validate this *caveat* on the one side, and invites looking for ‘the possibility of another version of a reading of Hebrews that makes sense of the χωρίς, variant’, on the other, as Section 4.2 demonstrates.

### 4.2 Reading χωρίς θεοῦ and χάριτι θεοῦ together in Hebrews

The research results of this article present surprising information. To the ears of modern scholars, χωρίς θεοῦ sounds undoubtedly opposed to χάριτι θεοῦ in Heb 2.9, but the Greek and Latin manuscript evidence always presents both versions together – except GA 0243 – and never has χωρίς θεοῦ without χάριτι θεοῦ. Nor does one find a correction of one reading by the other. This flexible readers’ point of view is confirmed by Origen, Diodore, Jerome and Severus of Antioch, who give all meanings to both versions without considering them as opposed, whether they knew χωρίς θεοῦ as the majority reading (Origen, Diodore) or the minority reading (Jerome, Severus). Only Nestorian ideas would lead scholars to fight for χωρίς θεοῦ (Theodore of Mopsuestia) or against (Philoxenus).

Such a switch in the perception of a variant can also happen in contemporaneous exegesis, according to the example of the quotation of the Ps 22.2 in the *Gospel of Peter* 5.19: ἡ δύναμις μου ἡ δύναμις κατέλειψάς με· καὶ εἰπὼν ἀνελήφθη.<sup>82</sup> First read as a docetic story by Swete in 1893,<sup>83</sup> it was, by contrast, considered as close to Mark 15.34 and Matt 27.46 by

<sup>78</sup> Harnack, ‘Zwei alte dogmatische Korrekturen im Hebräerbrief’, 100.

<sup>79</sup> Attridge, ‘In Praise of Minor Variants, Heb 2.9’, unpublished.

<sup>80</sup> Attridge, ‘In Praise of Minor Variants, Heb 2.9’, unpublished.

<sup>81</sup> Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 77, note 77.

<sup>82</sup> P. Foster, ed., *The Gospel of Peter* (TNTS 4; Leiden: Brill, 2010) 308.

<sup>83</sup> H. B. Swete, ed., *The Apocryphal Gospel of St. Peter, the Greek Text of the Newly Discovered Fragment* (London: Macmillan, 1893) 9.

Raymond Brown in 1994, notably because of Aquila's version of Ps 21.2 LXX, 'My strong one, my strong one'.<sup>84</sup> This proximity has also been recognised in 2019 by Paul Foster: contrasting *Gos. Pet.* 5.19 with the *Apocalypse of Peter* 81, he reads *Gos. Pet.* 5.19 as simply 'modif[ying] the problematic sense of God forsakenness communicated by Jesus'.<sup>85</sup> Brown and Foster diverge regarding the chronology of *Gos. Pet.* 5.19 (rooted in a pre-Christian version of Ps 22.2 for Brown, or considered as a post-Synoptic modification by Foster), but both read it as close to the Synoptic story.

This modern example of evolving interpretation helps us to understand how Origen, Diodore, Jerome and Severus of Antioch could have been able to read two expressions together that we spontaneously read as opposed. They adopted an interpretation of  $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  aligned with the preceding affirmation in v.9 that Jesus 'was made lower than the angels for a little while', and fitting with the singular of  $\upsilon\pi\epsilon\rho \pi\alpha\nu\tau\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ , Jesus tasted the death for 'everything'. Attridge himself agreed in 2014 with such a 'soft reading' of  $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  in Hebrews:

La variante 'sans dieu' est utile [à l'auteur], non pas en lien avec une quelconque christologie kénotique, pas même celle, limitée, envisagée peut-être par l'Évangile de Marc; elle lui permet plutôt de définir l'horizon des effets du sacrifice du Christ. Tout ce qui se trouve en dehors de dieu, pas seulement les êtres humains, est sujet aux effets de la mort du Christ, qui effectue la réconciliation et la rémission du péché.<sup>86</sup>

The question left is consequently the reason for the presence of  $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  in the framework of this 'soft reading' fitting well within Chapter 2 of Hebrews. A simple and logical answer is provided by the general background of Psalm 22 since it is quoted right after in Heb 2.12: Jesus is 'saying, "I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters; in the midst of the congregation, I will praise you"'. For the author of Hebrews, Jesus himself pronounced/sang Psalm 22. With this explicit quotation, early readers of Hebrews 2 may have had Psalm 22.2 in mind while thinking of the crucifixion scene evoked in Heb 2.9, a scene which can even include angels in the *Gospel of Bartholomew* 1.6–9.

With the background of Ps 22.2, Heb 2.9's description could have been read as a  $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  death at an early stage, considering its numerous Patristic attestations. This background is supported by Heb 2.12 and explains why several ancient readers have interpreted  $\chi\acute{\omicron}\rho\iota\tau\iota \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  and  $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$  as two possible and not opposed versions of Heb 2.9. Developing this perspective, the last section of this article argues that Heb 2.9, Mark 15.34, and their minor variants draw attention to early reformulations or reinterpretations of Ps 22.2.

### 4.3 Ancient receptions and readings of Ps 22.2

As we have seen, the Syriac tradition presents thirty-one Peshitta manuscripts with Heb 2.9, including fifteen with  $\chi\omega\rho\iota\varsigma \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$ . Interestingly, the Old Syriac version also shows

<sup>84</sup> R. E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah. From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, vol. 2 (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York: Doubleday, 1998) 1058: 'The *eli* of Ps 22:2, could have been read to mean something like "My strong one" or "My strength". In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century A.D., contemporary with *GPet.*, a part of a Jewish attempt to produce a Greek translation more faithful to the Hebrew, Aquila rendered Ps 22.2 as "My strong one [*ischure*], my strong one", a translation which Eusebius thought could be more eloquently rendered, "My strength" (*Demonstratio Evangelica* 10.8.30; GCS 23:476).'

<sup>85</sup> Foster, *The Gospel of Peter*, 163.

<sup>86</sup> Attridge, 'La christologie kénotique', 303–4.

variants in the quotations of Ps 22.2 in Matt 27.46 and Mark 15.34, which deserve further investigation: first, Samir S. Yohanna, in his edition of the Syriac Gospel of Mark, based on Chaldean 25 (syH6), mentions a scribal marginal note in 15.34: ‘Lema Sabaqtani’: I found [it] in the manuscript of Edessa, and the same also in Matthew’.<sup>87</sup> The Vat. Syr. 268 (syH4), f. 79v, also shows a marginal note with the transliteration of the Hebrew text.<sup>88</sup> Secondly, a Syriac Hymn of Ephrem, seldomly quoted, reports still another wording of Ps 22.2, attributed to the Bardaisan community;<sup>89</sup> and finally, as Randall Buth notes, in Matt 27.46 and Mark 15.34, ‘the Syriac Peshitto [...] might indicate that *il/il* was being considered a divine name. However, one might also speculate that the Syriac ܠܐ ܠܐ is reflecting an abstract Hebraism ܠܘܘܘ “force, power” from a parallel interpretation that shows up in the *Gospel of Peter* 19’.<sup>90</sup> Buth does not mention Aquilas’ Greek version of Ps 22.2, referenced above with Brown,<sup>91</sup> but his remarks make the existence of early diverse versions of this verse still more plausible.

It is rewarding to pay attention to the diversity of the quotations of Ps 22.2 in early multilingual Christian sources because it mirrors the diversity we also find in the Greek evidence, often forgotten today. One must come back to a clever 1931 article by David Sidersky for reading the most comprehensive list of variants in Ps 22.2 and its translations in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. This list is based on Goguel’s notes and contains more than twelve variants.<sup>92</sup> It remains, of course, open-ended<sup>93</sup> and should be definitively established on a multilingual basis, as notably demonstrated by the rich Syriac tradition.

To conclude this inquiry, the rich heritage of various readings of Ps 22.2 in Jewish and early Christian traditions provides the most convincing background to explain the emergence and the repetition of the minor variants of Heb 2.9 and Mark 15.34, never forgotten.

**Competing interests.** The author declares none.

<sup>87</sup> S. S. Yohanna, ed., *The Gospel of Mark in the Syriac Harklean Version. An Edition Based upon the Earliest Witnesses* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute Gregorian/Biblical Press, 2015) 93.

<sup>88</sup> Thank you to Damien Labadie for his help in checking this Syriac point.

<sup>89</sup> Swete, *The Apocryphal Gospel*, 10, note 5: ‘Ephraim tell us (*serm. Adv. Haer.* 56) that at the assemblies of a Gnostic sect which he connects with the name of Bardaisan, a hymn was sung in which a female voice recited the words [...] “My God and my Head, thou hast left me alone.”’ See also Ephrem, *Hymne LV.6* (eds. E. Beck and D. Cerbelaud; *Ephrem de Nisibe. Hymnes contre les hérésies*, vol. 2 (SC 590; Paris: Cerf, 2017) 346–7).

<sup>90</sup> B. Randall, ‘The Riddle of Jesus’ Cry from the Cross: The Meaning of  $\eta\lambda\iota\ \eta\lambda\iota\ \lambda\alpha\mu\alpha\ \sigma\alpha\beta\alpha\chi\theta\alpha\nu\iota$  (Matthew 27:46) and the Literary Function of  $\epsilon\lambda\omega\iota\ \epsilon\lambda\omega\iota\ \lambda\epsilon\iota\mu\alpha\ \sigma\alpha\beta\alpha\chi\theta\alpha\nu\iota$  (Mark 15:34)’, *The Language Environment of First Century Judaea* (R. Buth and R. S. Notley, eds.; JCPs 26; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2014) 402–3.

<sup>91</sup> See note 84 above.

<sup>92</sup> D. Sidersky, ‘La parole suprême de Jésus’, *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 103 (1931) 151–4.

<sup>93</sup> Peter J. Williams pointed out in 2004  $\sigma\alpha\beta\alpha\chi\theta\alpha\chi\theta\alpha\nu\iota$  in GA 09 and  $\lambda\iota\mu\alpha\zeta\ \alpha\beta\alpha\chi\theta\alpha\nu\eta$  in GA 118 (P. J. Williams, ‘The Linguistic Background to Jesus’ Dereliction Cry (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34)’, *The New Testament in Its First Century Setting, Essays on Context and Background in Honour of B.W. Winter on His 65th Birthday* (P. J. Williams, A. D. Clarke, P. M. Head and D. Instone-Brewer, eds.; Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2004) 1–12, at 2–3).

**Cite this article:** Clivaz C (2024). The Minor Variant of Hebrews 2.9, with Mark 15.34 and Psalm 22.2. *New Testament Studies* 70, 291–306. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0028688523000334>