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Ἄμβιτεύειν

The verb is absent from *Liddell and Scott* proper; the Supplement gives ἀμβιτεύω (Lat. *ambitus*) perh. *to be ostentatious*, *P. Oxy.* 2110.15 (iv A.D.). The *P. Oxy.* passage at issue, clearly the source of the Suppl. definition, is εἰ δὲ βουληθείη τις ἐκ τῶν κδ ἀμβιτεύειν, οἶδεν τὸν ἑαυτοῦ κίνδυνον, translated by Hunt as: "But if any one of the 24 should wish to be ostentatious (?), he knows his own responsibility." Hunt's question-mark shows his unwillingness to firmly commit himself to a meaning for ἀμβιτεύειν.

Yet, the passage (as Hunt notes) corresponds to lines 9-11, εἰ δὲ βούλεταιί [ς] τις [λ]ε[ι]τουρ[γ]εῖν εἰς ἕτερον λειτούργημα, οὐ κινδύνω τοῦ βουλευτηρίου λειτουργεῖ ... In each of the two passages, a speaker is protesting the fact that a member of the Senate, though officially exempt from service, has nevertheless been appointed administrator of military clothing by the prytanis, conceding, however, that the individual in question could, should he wish to do so, assume the task at issue voluntarily and at his own risk. Thus, *to seek or perform public service voluntarily* would seem to be a much more appropriate translation for ἀμβιτεύειν in the *POxy.* fragment.

As reported by Du Cange,¹ the verb ἀμβιτεύειν also occurs in Palladius *Dial. de vita Joannis Chrysostomi* 61.9. In the passage, Chrysostom is addressing Olympias, Pentadia, Procla, and Silvina, deaconesses of his church, urging them to submit themselves to his successor. However, his admonitions come with a *caveat*: καὶ ὅς ἂν ἄκων ἀχθῆ ἐπὶ τὴν χειροτονίαν, μὴ ἀμβιτεύσας τὸ πρᾶγμα, κατὰ συναίνεσιν τῶν πάντων. κλίνετε αὐτῷ τὴν κεφαλὴν ὑμῶν ὡς Ἰωάννη (οὐ δύναται γὰρ ἡ ἐκκλησία ἄνευ ἐπισκόπου εἶναι).²

Here, the connotation of ἀμβιτεύειν must be rather negative. The date, after all, is June 20, 404; within hours, Chrysostom will be driven out of Constantinople into (his second) exile; and he surely would be loath to see one among his bitter adversaries³ succeed him in consequence of political machinations. Yes, the women should obey the new archbishop, whoever he may turn out to be, but only if he comes to the throne both ἄκων and μὴ ἀμ-

¹ Du Cange offers *ambire* as the meaning of ἀμβιτεύειν.

² Coleman-Norton text; there, ἀμφιβατεύσας is given as the Migne alternative and ἀμφιβητήσας as a variant in G. In his *Index to the Greek Text*, Coleman-Norton (unaware of the existence of ἀμβιτεύειν in the papyrus subsequently published as *P. Oxy.* XVII 2110) flags the word as an apparent *hapax legomenon*.

³ E.g., Acacius, Severianus, Antiochus, and Cyrinus of Chalcedon, the four bishops who prevailed upon Emperor Arcadius on June 9, 404 to despoise and exile Chrysostom.

βιτεύσας τὸ πρῶγμα,⁴ and provided that his episcopate is κατὰ συνάινειν τῶν πάντων. To be sure, the church must not be ἄνευ ἐπικκόπου; by the same token, whoever ends up being appointed *episcopus* should not have been given the chair in consequence of selfish ambition or political intrigue.

The Sophocles lexicon defines ἀμβιτεύειν as *to effect some purpose by intrigue*; Lampe, somewhat ambivalently, offers *solicit, intrigue for*. Given the historical context, all of these meanings can fit ἀμβιτεύειν in the Palladius passage. They make no more sense in the *P. Oxy.* papyrus, however, than does the Hunt/Supplement translation *to be ostentatious*. In the final analysis, the Greek verb ἀμβιτεύειν (as the Latin word from which it is derived) is multifaceted in connotation, and can encompass meanings as diverse as *to seek or perform service voluntarily* (*P. Oxy.* XVII 2110.15) and *to effect some purpose by intrigue* (Palladius).

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⁴ Migne *PG* 47.35 translates ἄκων as *reluctans*, and μὴ ἀμβιτεύσας τὸ πρῶγμα as *non [ordinationem] ambiens*.