

THE PRESENCE OF 1 COR. 4,7 IN THE ANTI-PELAGIAN WORKS OF AUGUSTINE

1. Introduction

In his in-depth and penetrating study entitled *Gloria gratiae*¹, Pierre-Marie Hombert has undertaken an exemplary endeavour to chart Augustine's theology of grace, taking two verses of scripture as his point of departure, 1 Cor. 1,31 and 4,7, which he nevertheless locates within a broader framework. It is evident from his study that two thirds of the instances in which Augustine quotes 1 Cor. 4,7: "Quis enim te discernit? Quid autem habes quod non accepisti. Quod si accepisti, quid gloriaris, quasi non accepisti?" occur in the period after 411. Hombert is convinced, moreover, that the Pelagian controversy itself is responsible for the abundant presence of the verse², although I sometimes have the impression that he is inclined to exaggerate this presence within the controversy³. Furthermore, closer inspection reveals that 1 Cor. 4,7 did not have an important role to play in Augustine's genuine anti-Pelagian works – i.e. works addressed directly against Pelagius or Julian. The bishop of Hippo considered the monks of Hadrumetum and Marseille as brothers in the faith and he at least did not associate them with what he understood to be Pelagian heresy. Of Hombert's list of 154 references to 1 Cor. 4,7, the present author is only able to support 23 instances, and only then with a degree of generosity: 9 references are found in *De spiritu et littera*, a work that was written with the precise purpose of offering clarifications to a friend and ally in the faith and occasioned by *De peccatorum meritis et remissione*. One might even be at liberty to suggest, therefore, that 1 Cor. 4,7 only occurs 14 times in the genuine anti-Pelagian works. If that were

¹ P.-M. HOMBERT, *Gloria gratiae. Se glorifier en Dieu, principe et fin de la théologie augustinienne de la grâce* (Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 148), Paris, 1996.

² HOMBERT, *Gloria gratiae*, p. 24: "C'est bien sûr cette controverse qui explique leur présence accrue entre 411 et 430. Les deux-tiers des citations appartiennent à cette période."

³ It would appear from his list – pp. 22-23 – that there are 17 references to 1 Cor. 4,7 in *De peccatorum meritis et remissione*, *Epistula* 140 and *De spiritu et littera* (note, however, that none of the said works contains a reference to 1 Cor. 4,7a), although one can read on p. 25: "Mais on est frappé de voir nos versets <<surgir>> avec force dès les tout-débuts de la controverse (33 occurrences dans les trois oeuvres de l'hiver 411-412, le *De peccatorum meritis*, la *Lettre* 140 à Honoré, le *De spiritu et littera*)."

the case, the references in question would be 8x 1 Cor. 4,7b, 4x 1 Cor. 4,7bc, and one example each of the entire verse and of 1 Cor. 4,7ab. Although the present author would be inclined to include *De spiritu et littera*, which aims at explaining any lack of clarity encountered by the reader in his reading of *De peccatorum meritis et remissione*, in the list of genuine anti-Pelagian works, it is apparent nevertheless that the verse in question plays a relatively marginal role in the document, especially when compared with Ex. 5,20, Dtr. 5,9, Ps. 48,5, 50,7, 143,4, Prov. 8,35 Sept., Eccl. 7,30, Wisd. 9,15, Sir. 40,1, Jer. 32,18, Mt. 6,12-13, Rom. 5,12, Rom. 7,15.18-19.24-25, Gal. 5,17, Phil. 2,13 or indeed 1 Jn. 2,16, to mention but a few. By way of illustration, reference can be made, for example, to the far from insubstantial oeuvre of Augustine against Julian of Aeclanum (*De nuptiis et concupiscentia*, *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum*, *Contra Iulianum* and *Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum*). 1 Cor. 4,7 is only found in 8 places in the works in question and only once quoted in full. One would search in vain for a reference to 1 Cor. 4,7 in explicitly anti-Pelagian writings such as *De perfectione iustitiae hominis*, *De gratia Christi et de peccato originali*, or even *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*. Evidence of the verse is clear, nevertheless, in works that relate important moments in Augustine's personal life, such as *Ad Simplicianum* or *Confessiones*, and in homilies or letters intended to warn his friends and fellow believers against the dangers of Pelagianism or to infirm them about it in one way or another.

The surprising absence of 1 Cor. 4,7 in the works of Augustine against the "real" Pelagians serves as the point of departure for the present study. Our goal is to explore the context in which Augustine used the verse and the manner with which he did so. At the same time, we will endeavour to determine the extent to which the verse made a genuine contribution to the argumentation.

2. 1 Cor 4,7 in *De peccatorum meritis et remissione*

The first instance in which we can speak of a reference to 1 Cor. 4,7b in an anti-Pelagian work relates to *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* II,6,⁷⁴ written in 411/412 and intended to address the

⁷⁴ CSEL 60, p. 77. I find it difficult to avoid the impression that the idea of gratitude in response to the fact that we have received everything from God is already evident in II,5,6, CSEL 60, p. 76: "Nihil sibi addi ad iustitiam iam petebat, sed tamen ex his quae habebat gratias Deo agendo ab illo se accepisse omnia fatebatur." The con-

following question: Is it possible for men and women to live this life without sin?⁵ Augustine begins his argument by insisting that one should not be too eager to answer in the negative, in particular on account of human free will and God's power and compassion. He nevertheless makes a distinction between the theoretical possibility of a sinless life and the real situation in which men and women find themselves. Augustine has no difficulty in recognising, at least in theory, that a person might be able to live without sin by the grace of God and personal free will. He underlines the fact, however, that free will is also a gift of God and that its presence is a gift of God. If our free will is good, if it strives to fulfil God's commandments, then it is also a gift of God. From the very beginning of the controversy, Augustine insists on the fact that God's grace is present at both the level of knowing what we ought to do and the level of actually doing what we ought to do. At this juncture, he makes reference to 1 Cor. 4,7b as part of his general argument without paying particular attention to it. Paul's radical recognition of having received everything from God is then reinforced with quotations from Jer. 10,23; Ps. 119,4-6.133. The texts in question give expression to the awareness that our lives are not in our own hands and to the fact that we need God's guidance in maintaining his commands. Via an unambiguous reference to Cyprian (Ep. 64,2), Augustine then arrives at Jn. 8,36: "If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed", a text he repeatedly employs in his anti-Pelagian works precisely in order to demonstrate that when he refers to genuine freedom he has in mind the freedom that liberates people from sinfulness to make room for obedience and loving service of God⁶.

text is that of the Pharisee in the temple who is presented in order to demonstrate that even those who consider themselves righteous still find it necessary to thank God and in so doing bear witness to the fact that they have received everything from God.

⁵ In this period, Augustine was open to the possibility that the sinless life was possible in theory although he considered it improbable in practice.

⁶ As far as I can see, HOMBERT has paid little attention to this verse in *Gloria gratiae*, not only with respect to *De peccatorum meritis et remissione*, but also elsewhere, for example, in relation to *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* I,2,5, CSEL 60, p. 426. The present author is nevertheless of the opinion that verses with such content are equally viable bearers of what Augustine desires to say, namely that salvation is a gift to us as sinful people. With respect to the "African" roots of Augustine's theology, see: G. BONNER, *Les origines africaines de la doctrine augustinienne sur la chute et le péché originel*, in *Strenas augustinianas P. Victorino Capanaga oblatas. Augustinus 12* (1967) 97-116. It remains a fascinating observation that to the end of his life Augustine continued to think of Cyprian when he made reference to 1 Cor. 4,7. See in this regard, for example, A. CASAMASSA, *Il pensiero di Sant'Agostino nel 396-397, i "Tractatores divinatorum eloquiorum" di Retract. I,23,1 e l'Ambrosiastro*, in *Scritti Patristici I*, Rome, 1955, 41-66, esp. pp. 61ff.

It is thus possible for a person to live without sin if he or she desires to do so, but only if – and here he introduces the crucial precondition – he or she is granted God's assistance⁷. It is perhaps unnecessary to remind the reader that when Augustine speaks of freedom he substantiates the term in theological-spiritual terms⁸. It is a freedom for the sake of the good that is granted by a compassionate and merciful God to a fallen humanity through the mediation of the one mediator, Jesus Christ.

Augustine poses a further question in *De peccatorum meritis et remissione*: Why is it that people *de facto* do not live sinless lives? His response to the question clearly places the blame for sinfulness with human persons themselves. The cause of every form of human *vitia* is pride⁹. The only cure for pride is Christ, the humble God. Our salvation is to be found in him. God's grace heals our vanity. It gives us insight and ensures that we are happy to do what we have to do (he quotes Ps. 84,13 as evidence hereof). The more we love God, who fashions all good things, the more pleasant good deeds become¹⁰. For Augustine, the love of God is the power that sustains good ethical behaviour, but the same love is poured out in our hearts by the Spirit who is given to us (Rom. 5,5)¹¹. In this sense, Augustine would consider every attempt to determine precisely the extent to which human will is responsible for a good deed to be a futile activity, as 1 Cor. 4,7b-c makes evident. 1 Cor. 4,7b-c clearly functions at this juncture as evidence against the potential pretensions of the human person. At the same time, Augustine underlines the fact that grace does not suspend free will, but that free will is made good by grace¹². Free will (*liberum arbitrium*) is

⁷ *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* II,6,7, CSEL 60, p. 78: "Ac per hoc potest homo, si uelit, esse sine peccato adiutus a Deo."

⁸ Cf. M. LAMBERIGTS, *Augustine's View on Liberty and Grace Revisited. Annual Lecture of Saint Augustine's College*, in *Saint Augustine's Annual Lectures*, Johannesburg, 2002, 5-13.

⁹ *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* II,17,27, CSEL 60, p. 99: "Vitiorum namque omnium humanorum causa superbia est."

¹⁰ *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* II,17,27, CSEL 60, p. 100: "Tanto autem magis delectat opus bonum, quanto magis diligitur Deus, summum atque incommutabile bonum et auctor qualiumcumque bonorum omnium."

¹¹ Rom. 5,5 is clearly quoted by Augustine more frequently than 1 Cor. 4,7, for example, in his anti-Pelagian works. This can hardly be coincidental if one bears in mind that Augustine was keenly aware that the Pelagian reflection on the gift of love through the mediation of the Holy Spirit had been poorly developed. For the importance of this verse in the works of Augustine, see A.-M. LA BONNADIÈRE, *Le verset paulinien Rom. 5,5 dans l'oeuvre de saint Augustin*, in *Augustinus Magister* II, Paris, 1954, pp. 657-665.

¹² *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* II,18,28, CSEL 60, p. 100.

granted to human persons according to their nature and belongs to the *bona naturalia*¹³, but the will, in so far as it deserves to be qualified as good, can only be a gift of God, a proposition made clear by Augustine in his use of 1 Cor. 4,7b. Augustine nevertheless introduces a *caveat* in this context. He cannot accept that free will – with its potential to be good or bad – should be seen as a gift of God, while a good will as such has its place among our human capacities. In other words, Augustine finds it difficult to accept that the lesser (freedom of choice) comes from God while the greater (good will) comes from the human person. For Augustine it is clear that the good will – understood here as the will that loves justice – is a gift of God. To support his argument at this juncture he makes reference to Prov. 8,35 Sept. (*praeparatur voluntas a Domino*); Ps. 36,23 (*a Domino gressus hominis diriguntur et viam eius vult*) and Phil. 2,13 (*Deus est enim qui operatur in vobis et velle et operari pro bona voluntate*)¹⁴, texts that make it apparent to Augustine that, at the level of the theological-spiritual good, human persons are made ready by God in advance¹⁵. If the human person turns away from God then the fault lies with the human person. If the human person turns towards God, which is only possible if God inspires it and offers his assistance, only then can we speak of a *bona voluntas*. The radical statement found in 1 Cor. 4,7 is then closely associated with 1 Cor. 1,31par., in order to demonstrate with clarity that the genuinely good person should not take pride in him or herself but rather in God, in whom there is compassion and truth and the love of both (quotes from Ps. 83,12; 84,11; Ps. 24,10; Jn. 1,14; Ps. 100,1 follow)¹⁶. It should be noted in the present context that when

¹³ Every Pelagian would be able to subscribe to such a position, but I am aware that where Pelagians would attach value to the fact that the human person as *imago Dei* is more oriented towards the good than towards evil, the radicality of the sin of Adam has led Augustine to a different conclusion.

¹⁴ Within Augustine's anti-Pelagian corpus as a whole, the first and the third verse occur with greater frequency than, for example, 1 Cor. 4,7. With respect to Prov. 8,35, see A. SAGE, *Praeparatur voluntas a Domino*, in *REA* 10 (1964) 1-20. This verse appears with regularity in the context of Augustine's anti-Pelagian works, but it also has a function in his writings addressed to the monks of Hadrumetum and Marseille. Phil. 2,13 is similarly present in his other writings from this period and would appear to be a text "for all seasons". It is quoted in a broad selection of contexts from as early as *De diversis quaestionibus* 68,5, *CCSL* 44, p. 181: "Et quoniam nec uelle quisquam potest nisi admonitus et uocatus, siue intrinsecus ubi nullus hominum uidet, siue extrinsecus per sermonem sonantem aut aliqua signa uisibilia, efficitur ut etiam ipsum uelle Deus operetur in nobis." With respect to the evolution of Augustine's understanding of this verse, see also HOMBERT, *Gloria gratiae*, p. 93 (with additional literature).

¹⁵ *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* II,18,30, *CSEL* 60, pp. 101-102.

¹⁶ *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* II,18,31, *CSEL* 60, pp. 102-103. Cf. also HOMBERT, *Gloria gratiae*, pp. 169ff.

Augustine speaks of good will he employs affective language: loving justice, being stimulated to do good, recognising God's compassion etc.

3. 1 Cor. 4,7 in *De spiritu et littera*

As we already pointed out, 1 Cor. 4,7b-c (never a) is to be found with some frequency in *De spiritu et littera* (412), written in response to the questions raised by his friend Marcellinus upon reading *De peccatorum meritis et remissione*. The first instance is to be found in a context in which Augustine wants to demonstrate that God grants justification and not the law. Augustine makes a detailed analysis of Rom. 3,20-24, precisely in order to show that the righteousness with which human persons are clothed is a gift from God that justifies the *impius*¹⁷. This justification is granted through faith in Jesus Christ. It is a gift of the Spirit granted to sinners, for all people have sinned (cf. Rom. 3,23)¹⁸. For this reason, everything we have received at the level of grace has been granted to us and it makes no sense for us to boast about our own resources (cf. 1 Cor. 4,7b-c)¹⁹. It is clear, therefore, that reference is made to 1 Cor. 4,7 in order to support Rom. 3. Indeed, the justification process relates to the justification of *impii*, i.e. of people taken to be sinners who can thus look forward to salvation.

Reference is made to 1 Cor. 4,7c in *De spiritu et littera* 29,50 by way of conclusion on the occasion of a detailed reflection on Rom. 2,14-15, which deals with the idea that gentiles have the Law written in their heart²⁰. This segment of the verse serves to illustrate that the gentiles should not boast about what they have as if they did not receive it from outside. It deserves to be noted, however, the 1 Cor. 4,7 quotation only plays a subsidiary role at this juncture, the central role being set aside for the conviction that God directs the will and behaviour of human persons²¹. A great deal is at stake here for Augustine.

¹⁷ *De spiritu et littera* 9,15, CSEL 60, p. 161: "iustitia Dei, non qua Deus iustus est, sed qua induit hominem, cum iustificat impium."

¹⁸ Globally speaking, Paul's text – which gives voice to the radicality of our sinfulness – plays a relatively minor role in the anti-Pelagian controversy as such. This might perhaps be explained by the fact that the Pelagians also recognised that human persons are sinners and in need of (at least) the grace of forgiveness.

¹⁹ The theme is discussed in more detail in what follows, whereby the reference to 1 Cor. 4,7c in *De spiritu et littera* 10,15, for example, serves to underline the fact that it is forbidden to boast in ourselves.

²⁰ Cf. *De spiritu et littera* 26,43-28,49, CSEL 60, pp. 196-205.

²¹ The reference to Phil. 2,13 in this context is not coincidental; cf. *De spiritu et littera* 29,50, CSEL 60, p. 206: "Quae ut possit homo facere, Deus operatur in homine

He refers in this context to Gal. 2,21 in which one can read the proposition "if justification came through the Law, then Christ's death was for nothing", an idea he rejects in line with Paul²². With a few minor exceptions, *De spiritu et littera* 29,50 can in fact be read in its entirety as a collection of quotations from Paul, although it concludes with a quotation from Jn. 15,5: "Apart from me you can do nothing"²³.

In *De spiritu et littera* 30,52, Augustine examines the question whether the activity of grace undermines freedom of the will in greater detail. Augustine rejects such a proposition. Just as the Law is not undermined by faith but made real thereby, freedom of the will is reinforced by grace. Where the Law makes us aware of sin (Rom. 3,20), faith grants us the grace to fight against it and resist it. Grace heals our soul of the evil of sin. This same healing makes genuine freedom of choice possible, whereby we are made ready to love righteousness and fulfil the Law. Faith reinforces the Law because it receives the grace with which we are made capable of fulfilling the Law²⁴. Augustine insists at this juncture that one can only speak of genuine freedom of choice if human persons are made capable once again of distinguishing what is good and doing what is good by the gift of grace. In other words, grace removes the concealment of the good at the level of the will. It is for this very reason, therefore, that one can say that the same will, which freely loves righteousness, is reinforced by grace. Augustine employs a whole series of Scripture quotations in order to illustrate that his argument has points of connection with the Scriptures. He also finds it difficult to understand how people can boast about their own free will before they are set free by grace, since true freedom is only possible where the Spirit of the Lord is (2 Cor. 3,17). Given the fact that one has been liberated by grace, there can be no reason to boast in oneself as if the freedom in question had not been received

per fidem Iesu Christi, qui finis est ad iustitiam omni credenti, id est cui per Spiritum incorporatus factusque membrum eius potest quisque illo incrementum intrinsecus dante operari iustitiam."

²² Cf. in this regard G. RÉMY, *Le Christ médiateur dans l'oeuvre de saint Augustin*, Lille-Paris, 1979, *passim*.

²³ This verse is likewise quoted with greater frequency than 1 Cor. 4,7 (at least 30 times), precisely because the text in question – in line with Phil. 2,13 with respect to the will – offers evidence of the fact that nothing is possible at the level of the theologically good with respect to our actions without an activity of God or his Son.

²⁴ *De spiritu et littera* 30,52, CSEL 60, p. 208: "Sicut enim lex per fidem, sic liberum arbitrium per gratiam non euacuatur, sed statuitur. (...) Ac per hoc, sicut lex non euacuatur, sed statuitur per fidem, quia fides inpetrat gratiam, qua lex inpleatur, ita liberum arbitrium non euacuatur per gratiam, sed statuitur, quia gratia sanat uoluntatem, qua iustitia libere diligitur."

(a reference to 1 Cor. 4,7c follows). Augustine refers once again to Jn. 15,5 ("apart from me you can do nothing") and – as is often the case in the Pelagian controversy – to Jn. 8,36: "So if the Son makes you free you will be free indeed"²⁵. The passage in question is thus clearly dealing with the status of free will within the entire process of grace. 1 Cor. 4,7c might play a supportive role in this segment of the text but it certainly does not play a determinative role.

Augustine then goes on to speak about the question of faith itself, faith that has its place at the origins of our salvation and ultimately lies within our power. He takes the distinction between desire and ability as his point of departure. A person can desire to achieve something, for example, but be unable to do so. At the same time, a person might be able to do something but have no desire to do so. Our ability to do something can only become reality, however, where there is a will to do so. If one applies this distinction to the question whether faith in God lies within our power then the said question might be posed as follows: is it possible for a person to believe without desiring to do so or for a person not to believe although he or she desires to do so? Augustine considers the question absurd, precisely because faith means giving one's assent to the truth²⁶. Giving one's assent is an act of an individual who desires to do so. The conclusion is thus obvious: faith lies within our own power. Augustine adds, nevertheless, with reference to Rom. 13,1, that this is only possible because of God's gift since there is nothing that we have not received (1 Cor. 4,7b). 1 Cor. 4,7b is quoted to support Rom. 13,1 in making it clear that the very fact that we believe is a gift of God²⁷. It becomes evident from what follows that Augustine does not understand the human will to be completely independent when he speaks of the relationship between the will and God. The will is certainly a gift of God, but it receives its own necessary autonomy. If the will could not exist and be active with-

²⁵ *De spiritu et littera* 30,52, *CSEL* 60, p. 209. The reader will not be surprised by the fact that repeated reference is made to Jn. 8,36 and 15,5 in the anti-Pelagian works precisely because they represent powerful Christological arguments in relation to human capacity and genuine freedom. HOMBERT, *Gloria gratiae*, pp. 188ff. devotes considerable attention to this paragraph, although he does not involve either Johannine text in his argumentation. It should also be noted that little attention is paid to these Christocentric texts elsewhere. The present author is of the opinion, however, that they are of significant importance as arguments in support of a theological-spiritual explanation of freedom, precisely within the context of the Pelagian controversy.

²⁶ *De spiritu et littera* 31,54, *CSEL* 60, p. 211: "Vide nunc utrum quisque credat, si noluerit, aut non credat, si uoluerit. Quod si absurdum est – quid est enim credere nisi consentire uerum esse quod dicitur?"

²⁷ *De spiritu et littera* 31,54, *CSEL* 60, p. 211: "Nam et ut credamus, Deus dedit."

out God, then God would be responsible for evil – a hypothesis Augustine considers deplorable. God grants human persons the power to act but does not force them to do so²⁸. For Augustine the question deserves an unequivocal answer: faith lies within our power since we believe because we want to believe and do so on the basis of our free will²⁹.

The faith to which Augustine refers at this juncture is the faith whereby we believe in God³⁰. Does this mean that the will whereby we believe is a gift of God or does it belong to our free will, owned according to our human nature (in its createdness)? If we argue that the will is not a gift of God then 1 Cor. 4,7b-c would contradict us. The quotation functions here as an objection against potential human pretensions with respect to their own capacities. One might also argue that human persons possess the will to believe according to their nature and that they did not thus receive it from God. At first sight, such a point of view seems reasonable. Nevertheless, if one were to argue that the will to believe comes from God, for example, one would provide an excuse for unbelievers and sinners for the fact that they do not believe – God has not granted them the gift³¹. Augustine then quotes Phil. 2,13: “Deus est enim qui operatur in nobis et velle et operari pro bona voluntate”. This verse alludes to the grace acquired by faith, so that the works of human persons who have received faith through love (Gal. 5,6), which has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5,5), can be good works. By using both verses in combination, Augustine clearly demonstrates that faith, love, the gift of the Spirit and good works belong together in essence.

It should be noted that Augustine is particularly focused in his argumentation at this juncture. If believers possess the will to believe by their very nature, why does this not apply to all human persons? Is God not the creator of all humanity? If one argues that the will to believe comes from God, however, then how can we square such an idea with 1 Tim. 2,4 in which it is explicitly stated “God (...) desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”?³²

²⁸ *De spiritu et littera* 31,54, CSEL 60, p. 211: “Sed cum potestas datur, non necessitas utique inponitur.”

²⁹ *De spiritu et littera* 32,55, CSEL 60, p. 212: “Cum ergo fides in potestate sit, quoniam cum vult quisque credit et, cum credit, vult credit.”

³⁰ *De spiritu et littera* 32,55, CSEL 60, p. 212.

³¹ *De spiritu et littera* 33,57, CSEL 60, pp. 215-216: “Si autem dixerimus etiam huiusmodi voluntatem non esse nisi donum Dei, rursus metuendum est, ne infideles atque impii non inmerito se ueluti iuste excusare uideantur ideo non credidisse, quod dare illis Deus istam noluit voluntatem.”

³² Modern literature on Augustine's vision of this verse is boundless; cf., for example, J. CHÉNÉ, *Saint Augustin enseigne-t-il dans le De spiritu et littera l'universalité*

In other words, Augustine is completely aware of the complexity of the matter. If one locates the will to believe in the human person, then one will likely encounter problems with 1 Cor. 4,7. If one ascribes the will to believe to God, then one likewise grants non-believers or sinners some degree of explanation for their lack of faith or sinfulness. It should be noted for the sake of clarity that Augustine explicitly argues that in its createdness free will as *liberum arbitrium* (freedom of judgement) has two options: it can move in the direction of belief or in the direction of unbelief. The will in question, however, is not to be identified with the will – in this instance Augustine speaks of *voluntas* – to believe, since the latter has been received from God. While he insists that the will to believe has its roots in free will as a consequence of God's call, he also insists that the two do not coincide with one another³³. It is important to bear in mind, therefore, that Augustine makes an explicit distinction between freedom of judgement as granted by nature and freedom to believe. This distinction is crucial for our understanding of Augustine's vision of the relationship between faith and free will. God will never rob human persons of their freedom of judgement. Furthermore, God will not punish unbelievers because they did not believe in the gospel, but rather because they refuse God's compassion. The person who believes, on the other hand, will receive forgiveness of sins and healing of *the vitia*. The believer will be

de la volonté salvifique de Dieu?, in *Recherches de science religieuse* 47 (1959) 215-224; A. SAGE, *La volonté salvifique universelle de Dieu dans la pensée de saint Augustin*, in *Recherches augustiniennes* 3, Paris, 1965, 107-131; F. CAYRÉ, *La prédestination dans saint Augustin*, in *L'année Théologique* 2 (1941) 42-63, p. 56; D. MARAFIOTI, *De spiritu et littera: L'uomo tra legge et grazia. Analisi teologica del De spiritu et littera di S. Agostino*, Brescia, 1983, pp. 179ff.; G. RÉMY, *Le Christ médiateur*, pp. 668-682. Augustine offers three possible explanations of 1 Tim. 2,4: a) all those God wants to be saved shall be saved (cf., for example, *De correptione et gratia* 44, PL 44, 943); b) God wants to save people from every class, rank and status (cf., for example, *Enchiridion* 103, CCSL 46, pp. 104-105); God sees to it that we desire all people to be saved (cf., for example, *De correptione et gratia* 47, PL 44, 945). As Sage (p. 130) rightly remarks, Augustine's reading of 1 Tim. 2,4 is dominated by the Pelagian controversy, whereby he places emphasis on the absolute gratuity and necessity of grace rather than looking at the content of the verse in its entirety. Within the parameters of the observation, the fact remains that Augustine was well aware of the tension between universal salvation and actual particular salvation, as is the case here in *De spiritu et littera*.

³³ *De spiritu et littera* 33,58, CSEL 60, p. 216: "Prius igitur illud dicamus et uideamus utrum huic satisfaciatur quaestioni, quod liberum arbitrium naturaliter adtributum a creatore animae rationali illa media uis est, quae uel intendi ad fidem uel inclinari ad infidelitatem potest et ideo nec istam uoluntatem, qua credit deo, dici potest homo habere quam non acceperit, quando quidem uocante deo surgit de libero arbitrio, quod naturaliter cum crearetur accepit." Cf. HOMBERT, *Gloria gratiae*, pp. 190ff.

warmed and enlightened by God's warmth and light and will do good on the basis of God's grace and thereby receive an eternal reward³⁴. All of this is supported in 33,59 with a reference to Ps. 102,2-5, in which forgiveness, healing, redemption, crowning with love and mercy, fulfilment of our desires and renewal of our youth are ascribed to the Lord. Augustine examines each of these points in detail and then concludes that the will – in his vision – will not be destroyed. At the same time, however, he insists that we should not forget God's reward, should not try constitute our own righteousness but believe rather in the one who justifies the sinner. Our soul lives on the basis of the faith that is brought about by love (Rom. 5,5) until the day we actually see. It is clear for Augustine that the said love is not poured out in our hearts by the sufficiency of our will nor by the letter of the Law but by the Holy Spirit³⁵.

In 34,60, Augustine addresses a possible objection, namely that it might be argued that the sin we freely commit can be ascribed to God, bearing in mind that such sins can likewise be considered to fall under the heading "what do you have that you did not receive" (1 Cor. 4,7b). 1 Cor. 4,7 functions at this juncture, therefore, as a verse of Scripture that serves to illustrate a potential problem. Augustine makes it clear once again that the will (*voluntas*) whereby we believe "de libero existit arbitrio"³⁶. In other words, the will to believe exists in and has its roots in the domain of the free will, free will that is granted to all according to their nature. At the same time, however, he insists that our desire to believe is the result of God's activity, coming to us from the outside in the form of evangelical exhortations, for example, that reveal our weakness and encourage us to seek justifying grace in faith, or from the inside where no one has the power to determine what emerges in his or her spirit, but where consent or rejection belong to the will³⁷. As a matter of fact, belief is always related

³⁴ *De spiritu et littera* 33,58, CSEL 60, p. 217.

³⁵ *De spiritu et littera* 33,59, CSEL 60, p. 219: "Quae dilectio diffunditur in cordibus nostris nec per sufficientiam propriae uoluntatis nec per litteram legis, sed per Spiritum Sanctum qui datus est nobis."

³⁶ Cf. *De spiritu et littera* 34,60, CSEL 60, p. 220.

³⁷ *De spiritu et littera* 34,60, CSEL 60, p. 220: "Propterea etiam uoluntas, qua credimus, dono Dei tribuitur, quia de libero existit arbitrio, quod cum crearemur accepimus, adtendat et uideat non ideo tantum istam uoluntatem diuino muneri tribuendam, quia ex libero arbitrio est, quod nobis naturaliter concreatum est, uerum etiam quod uisorum suasionibus agit Deus, ut uelimus et ut credamus, siue extrinsecus per euangelicas exhortationes, ubi et mandata legis aliquid agunt, si ad hoc admonent hominem infirmitatis suae, ut ad gratiam iustificantem credendo confugiat, siue intrinsecus, ubi nemo habet in potestate quid ei ueniat in mentem, sed consentire uel dissentire propriae uoluntatis est."

to something and can ultimately be described as a response to an offer. Belief presupposes vocation or counsel. In this sense, Augustine is at liberty to argue that God brings about the will to believe in us and that in so doing his compassion precedes every human activity, but he is also able to insist at the same time that our consent to or rejection of the said vocation belongs to the human will (*voluntas*). Augustine does not see this as undermining the effect of 1 Cor. 4,7b, but rather as confirming it. *What* we have and *what* we receive we have received from God, but *the act of* receiving and possessing must be ascribed to the person who receives or possesses. The fact that some believe and others do not remains a mystery that Augustine can only confirm – with reference to Rom. 11,33 (against pride) and 9,14 (against those who seek excuses for their sinfulness)³⁸ – while insisting that in God there is no unrighteousness. Augustine is well aware of the fact that his answer might not satisfy everyone. He invites those who consider his response insufficient to consult more learned individuals, but warns them at the same time of the potential danger of seeking advice from the pretentious³⁹, a remark that fits perfectly within the context of his enormous esteem for the virtue of *humilitas*⁴⁰. It will be clear from what we have said so far that the activity of grace cannot be separated from the human person as the object thereof: it is an experience that overcomes us, perhaps, but one that cannot take place without us. The human capacity to receive and possess is a natural given, but what we receive and possess is granted us. Such an idea is not only supported by 1 Cor. 4,7, it is a constant that resounds in fact throughout the Bible. It will also be clear that when Augustine speaks of our will to believe, he distinguishes – does not separate! – the latter from free will granted by nature. He can rightly claim, therefore, that he has defended free will by promoting it to a will to believe, a fruit of the gift of grace.

³⁸ It is worth bearing in mind that this verse was to become much more important in the controversy with Julian of Aelclanum than 1 Cor. 4,7. This should come as no surprise, however, since Julian had difficulty reconciling the existence of original sin with the idea of God's righteousness.

³⁹ *De spiritu et littera* 34,60, CSEL 60, pp. 220-221.

⁴⁰ O. SCHAFFNER, *Christliche Demut. Des Hl. Augustins Lehre von der Humilitas*, Würzburg, 1959 continues to be valuable reading in this regard.

4. The marginal presence of 1 Cor. 4,7 in *De natura et gratia* and *De gestis Pelagii*

As a matter of fact, 1 Cor. 4,7 as a whole does not have a role to play in *De natura et gratia*⁴¹. An important work when considered from the perspective of the Pelagian controversy⁴², the latter only contains a single reference to 1 Cor. 4,7b. In reaction to a statement of Pelagius, namely that it is impossible for an evil to give rise to a good⁴³, Augustine notes that punishment can be understood as an evil that leads people to improve themselves. He is also of the opinion that evils exist that – thanks to God's compassion – can be salvific. The reference to 1 Cor. 4,7b is related to a number of quotations from Ps. 29,7-8. The psalm verses, however, are central. According to the psalm, Augustine argues, every time a human person ascribes something to him or herself that comes from God, God turns away from the person and confuses him or her. Indeed, what do human persons have that they have not received? The segment of 1 Cor. 4,7 is quoted but without further commentary in terms of its content. Ps. 29,7-8 is thus the mainstay of the passage, and this becomes all the more evident in what follows when Augustine returns to the same psalm verses⁴⁴.

1 Cor. 4,7 likewise has no significant role to play in *De gestis Pelagii*. The segment 1 Cor. 4,7b is only referred to on one occasion in 14,34, a context in which Augustine argues that beginning to believe is also a gift⁴⁵. The quote from 1 Corinthians constitutes part of a larger series of Scripture quotations. Augustine notes that the beginning of a good deed is also received and he quotes 1 Cor. 4,7 in this context only⁴⁶. The remainder of his argumentation is based on other Scripture

⁴¹ The work in question likewise contains no single reference to 1 Cor. 1,31.

⁴² Cf. *Retractationes* II,42, CCL 57, pp. 123-124: "Librum ergo quo huic respondi, defendens gratiam non contra naturam sed per quam natura liberatur et regitur, de natura et gratia nuncupavi."

⁴³ One might inquire at this juncture whether Augustine correctly presented Pelagius' intentions. If one is willing to enter into Pelagius' world of ideas, then one will likely conclude that ethical evil as such can never lead to something good. One must also enter fully into Augustine's logic, however, in which God governs all things and can make use of evil – on account of original sin and its dramatic consequences – in order to conclude that God can make use of evil to bring about the good. HOMBERT, *Gloria gratiae*, pp. 311-312, appears to pay too little attention to the particularity of the Pelagian perspective with respect to this passage.

⁴⁴ *De natura et gratia* 24,27, CSEL 60, p. 253.

⁴⁵ *De gestis Pelagii* 14,34, CSEL 42, p. 90.

⁴⁶ Cf. HOMBERT, *Gloria gratiae*, p. 615: it would appear from his index that the author pays no particular attention to this passage. 1 Cor. 4,7 is a quotation, no more no less.

quotations. In short, it is difficult to conclude that the verse in question had an important role to play in two of Augustine's most important anti-Pelagian works.

5. *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum*

More attention is paid to 1 Cor. 4,7 in *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum*, the first instance in the context of the following question: how does grace move free will (*Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* I,19,37-38)? Augustine has problems with Julian's insistence that human persons desire to do what is good of their own accord, without the help of grace, and only in the realisation of their deeds are they given God's help⁴⁷. Augustine argues that if grace is given in order to help good human will, then the latter must in fact have deserved the grace it receives. If such were the case, Augustine maintains, one can no longer speak of genuine grace⁴⁸. In order to illustrate that God's grace is already present in our will to do good, Augustine refers in the first instance to the conversion of Paul and to the fact that we are saved on account of God's compassion. He then makes reference to Jn. 6,65: "No one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father". Reference is made in addition to Mt. 5,44 in which it is said that we have to pray for those who persecute us. The case of Mt. 5,44 is clearly an example of a situation in which people earn supportive grace but not on the basis of their good deeds. One ought to pray for the conversion of such individuals⁴⁹. The very fact

⁴⁷ *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* I,19,37, CSEL 60, p. 453. One would be justified in inquiring at this juncture whether Augustine provides a correct rendition of Julian's position. Indeed, free will for Julian is a gift of God. Given the fact that he maintains the responsibility of the free will and that the latter is not affected by the fall of Adam, free will thus remains good and its goodness is thanks to God. Strictly speaking, and within Julian's conceptualisation in terms of relationship and human responsibility, God does not need to manipulate our will anew since it is still "undamaged". Cf. M. LAMBERIGTS, *Julian of Aeclanum: A Plea for a Good Creator*, in *Augustiniana* 38 (1988) 5-24.

⁴⁸ Cf. in this regard *Premières polémiques contre Julien. De nuptiis et concupiscentia. Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum. Introduction, traduction et notes* par F.-J. THONNARD, E. BLEUZEN et A. DE VEER (*Oeuvres de saint Augustin*, 23), Paris, 1974, Note complémentaire 30: *Mérite et démérite chez Saint Augustin*, pp. 783-783. References to this work will be abbreviated henceforth to BA 23.

⁴⁹ With respect to the use of the liturgy in general and prayer in particular as arguments against Pelagian hypotheses see J.-A. VINEL, *L'argument liturgique opposé par Saint Augustin aux Pélagiens*, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1988 (unpublished doctoral dissertation).

that such a command is given implies that their bad will is open to change. Augustine also makes use of a text which plays an important role in the immediate controversy with the Pelagians, namely Jn. 6,44: "No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me". It goes without saying that Augustine does not intend to suggest hereby that people will come to believe without wanting to do so. He is of the opinion, nevertheless, that God is able to draw men and women in such a way that they abandon their initial lack of faith and want to believe⁵⁰. Quotations from 2 Chron. 30,12; Ezek. 36,26-27 and Esther 14,13 are employed to demonstrate that God has an influence on the desires of the human heart. Esther's visit to the king is treated in particular detail and is associated with the idea that God is at work in our desires (Phil. 2,13). Why one person is saved and the other not is a mystery⁵¹, but the fact remains that we belong to the "*vasa misericordiae*" (cf. Rom. 9,22-23) and that we should not boast about what we have since we possess nothing that we have not received (1 Cor. 4,7b). The verse segment from Corinthians is quoted as the conclusion to an argumentation replete with biblical foundations. The segment itself is granted no particular attention.

Augustine returns to the intriguing question why some are saved and others not in *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* II,7,15. He observes by way of introduction that Paul solves this question by not solving it: the creature cannot resist the creator (Rom. 9,19ff). What we are dealing with here is a great mystery (Rom. 9,22ff.). For Augustine, however, grace does not only function as a help for the *vasa misericordiae*, it also functions as a help for the *vasa irae*, precisely because God reveals his anger and might therein. Indeed, God's goodness is so powerful that he uses the *vasa irae* in order to demonstrate the wealth of his glory in them on behalf of the *vasa misericordiae*. In the first instance, God punishes justly and in the second instance, he forgives gracefully⁵². Augustine then quotes 1 Cor. 4,7a. Who is it

⁵⁰ *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* I,19,37, CSEL 60, p. 454: "Trahitur ergo miris modis, ut uelit, ab illo, qui nouit intus in ipsis hominum cordibus operari, non ut homines, quod fieri non potest, nolentes credant, sed ut uolentes ex nolentibus fiant."

⁵¹ The fact that God saves some and not others continues to be problematic, in spite of the fact that Augustine sees it as a mystery. Cf. in this regard *Note complémentaire 17: Le sens du mystère chez Saint Augustin*, BA 23, pp. 722-725.

⁵² *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* II,7,15, CSEL 60, p. 476: "quia tam potens est bonitas eius, ut bene utatur etiam malis, et in eis notas facit diuitias gloriae suae in uasa misericordiae, quoniam quod ab irae uasis exigit iustitia punientis, hoc uasis misericordiae dimittit gratia liberantis."

that distinguishes us from these vessels of wrath, from this *massa perditionis*, consequence of Adam's sin, whereby all were doomed to perdition? Did Paul answer: my faith, my good intentions, my merits? 1 Cor. 4,7b-c follows immediately at this juncture. God himself distinguishes us by removing us from the punishment we deserve and granting us the grace we do not deserve⁵³. Whoever wishes to boast, therefore, should boast in the Lord (1 Cor. 1,31par). The fate of infant children illustrates in this context that salvation or rejection does not depend on us but rather on God. Augustine goes on to make reference to Rom. 9,12; Mal. 1,2-3, among others, precisely in order to demonstrate that our redemption is not to be based on our own activities but rather on God, otherwise grace would no longer be grace (Rom. 11,6). We do not earn salvation on account of our works, but by *gratuita gratia*, whereby the good is ultimately realised⁵⁴. 1 Cor. 4,7 plays a distinct role in this passage: the words "quis te discernit" refer to God as answer, while the radicality of 4,7b-c illustrates that we have received everything from him. We thus have no reason to boast in ourselves.

Pelagian praise of freedom of the will and erroneous understanding of the grace of Christ is also treated in the fourth book of *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum*, namely in IV,6,13-14. Augustine is unable to agree with the Pelagian hypothesis that grace helps our good intentions, precisely because he believes that such good intentions are thereby counted among our personal merits, while it is clear to him that good intentions can only exist if they are preceded by grace. Augustine argues that good intentions can only arise in a good will, i.e. in a will prepared for good intentions by the compassionate God (Prov. 8,35). After the fall, he maintains, one can no longer speak of a *bona voluntas* apart from God's grace. As a matter of fact, the fallen human person is imbued with a fundamental attitude of refusal. It is only by grace that this fundamental attitude can be disrupted and the human person can arrive at the good. God, for Augustine, owes nothing nor is He obliged to grant reward. Those who doubt this are guilty of pride and those with such pretensions do not listen to the Scriptures. A whole series of quotations from the Bible follows at this juncture beginning with 1 Cor. 4,7b, and followed by Jn. 15,5; 1 Jn. 4,7; Rom. 12,3; Jn. 3,8; Rom. 8,14; Jn. 6,66; 1 Ezra 8,28; Jer. 32,40-41

⁵³ *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* II,7,15, CSEL 60, p. 476-477.

⁵⁴ *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* II,7,15, CSEL 60, p. 478: "Praecedit namque non debita, sed gratuita gratia, ut per illam fiant bona opera, ne, si praecesserint bona opera, tamquam operibus reddatur gratia ac sic gratia iam non sit gratia."

and Ez. 36,22-27. 32-38, all of which are intended to illustrate that the primary initiative comes from God. In other words, 1 Cor. 4,7b is part of a long series of Scripture references without any particular verse related commentary. Taken together, the texts as a whole (and not only 1 Cor. 4,7b) lead to one conclusion: if we want to boast then we should boast in God (1 Cor. 1,31)⁵⁵.

Augustine considers himself to be supported in his position not only by the Scriptures but also by the tradition. Cyprian had already pointed out that we have nothing to boast about because nothing belongs to us and had referred to 1 Cor. 4,7b-c in the context⁵⁶. For Augustine there is no argument: one is not obliged to follow Cyprian and abolish free will if one is prepared, as he is, to ascribe everything that is good in this life to God. The conclusion, once again, is unambiguous: 1 Cor. 4,7b does not constitute the object of an independent commentary but functions rather together with several other verses as a sort of barrier against potential personal pretensions.

6. *Contra Iulianum Opus Imperfectum*

In the two most comprehensive works against Pelagianism, namely *Contra Iulianum* and *Contra Iulianum Opus imperfectum*, 1 Cor. 4,7 plays a somewhat marginal role, disappearing into insignificance in terms of frequency when compared, for example, with Ps. 51,7, Sir. 40,1, Mt. 6,12, Rom. 5,12, Rom. 7,18,23-25, Gal. 5,17. *Contra Iulianum* in fact makes no reference to 1 Cor. 4,7, while three references are made to part of the verse in *Contra Iulianum Opus imperfectum*.

The first reference can be found in book II of *Contra Iulianum Opus imperfectum*, which provides a report of the manner with which Julian and Augustine endeavour to explain Romans 5. It should be noted in passing at this juncture that it is thanks to Augustine that we have a reliable picture of Julian's *Ad Florum*⁵⁷. 1 Cor. 4,7 emerges for the first time in *Opus imperfectum* II,166. In the context of his exegesis of Rom. 4,24-25 ("Qui Iesum Christum ex mortuis excitavit, qui traditus est propter delicta nostra et resurrexit propter iustificationem nostram") Julian notes that Paul makes it clear that the righteous God

⁵⁵ *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* IV,6,14-15, CSEL 60, pp. 534-536.

⁵⁶ *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* IV,9,25-26, CSEL 60, pp. 552-553.

⁵⁷ It would appear from this approach that Augustine genuinely accounted for Julian's critique, expressed in response to the way in which Augustine's *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* refuted Julian's *Ad Turbantium* based on the absence of a chartula.

does not charge the sins of one person to the account of others. Paul is speaking in fact about *our* sins. Christ's death has to do with our numerous sins and not the sin of a man who died so long ago⁵⁸. Such an idea is only to be found among the Manicheans⁵⁹. It is evident from Julian's commentary on Rom. 5,1-2 that the Christ event was also of great importance for him. We receive justification through the forgiveness of sins. We ought to praise the intermediary for his gift, since through him we have been granted access to grace. Christ restored the freedom we had lost. Christ saved us from ruin. We, who had nothing more to look forward to than eternal punishment, can now boast in the hope of God's glory⁶⁰. It should also be noted here that the Christ event also had an important place in the thoughts of Julian: Christ not only forgave our sins, he also restored our freedom. It is for this reason that human persons are at liberty to boast in the hope of God's glory.

Redemption for both Julian and Paul is already a source of joy in this life. We do not only avoid sin in this life with a view to future rewards but we consider the very fact of our not giving in to sin as a reward in itself⁶¹. Of course, one might ask if the avoidance of sin is possible – and Augustine does not fail to insist on this point –, but the fact remains that Julian considered the avoidance of sin to be a source of joy. As a matter of fact, faith in God's promise based on the magnificence of his love for us stands as guarantor of our future happiness. God has revealed his love for humankind through his gift of the Spirit⁶². Julian's paraphrasing commentary stays close to the text. His

⁵⁸ *Ad Florum* II,163, CSEL 85,1, p. 284: "Quam uehementer inculcat apud iustum iudicem Deum aliena peccata aliis non nocere, qui commendans mortem Christi uigilanter enuntiat propter nostra illum delicta, quae et plura erant et nostra erant, non propter unum et alienum et olim defuncti hominis mortem oppetisse?" With respect to the major differences between Julian and Augustine in relation to the fall of Adam and its consequences, see M. LAMBERIGTS, *Julien d'Éclane et Augustin d'Hippone: deux conceptions d'Adam*, in B. BRUNING, M. LAMBERIGTS, J. VAN HOUTEM (éd.), *Collectanea Augustiniana. Mélanges T.J. van Bavel* (Augustiniana 40-41), Leuven, 1990, 373-410.

⁵⁹ *Ad Florum* II,164, CSEL 85,1, p. 285. With respect to Julian's knowledge of Manichaeism, see M. LAMBERIGTS, *Was Augustine a Manichaean? The Assessment of Julian of Aeclanum*, in J. VAN OORT, O. WERMELINGER & G. WURST, *Augustine and Manichaeism in the Latin West. Proceedings of the Fribourg-Utrecht Symposium of the International Association of Manichaean Studies (IAMS)* (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies, 49), Leiden, Boston & Cologne, 2001, 113-136.

⁶⁰ *Ad Florum* II,165, CSEL 85,1, p. 286.

⁶¹ *Ad Florum* II,166, CSEL 85,1, p. 287.

⁶² *Ad Florum* II,167, CSEL 85,1, p. 288: "Neque confutabit spem nostram aeternorum frustratio commodorum, quandoquidem uadem beatitudinis futurae Dei caritatem tenemus, quae effusa est in cordibus nostris per Spiritum Sanctum, qui datus est nobis, id est per dona Sancti Spiritus amorem suum Deus circa genus probauit humanum."

observation bears witness to an immense confidence in God's loving fidelity towards humankind⁶³.

Augustine's response draws attention to the earnestness of the sin of Adam and the fact that we were all part of him when he sinned. Our human nature is wounded. Adam's sin has become our sin through an injurious *successio*. Augustine considers himself to be supported in his position by Ambrose, who argues that we are all born under sin because our origin is to be found *in vitio*⁶⁴. Augustine would appear to be particularly concerned in this context with the fate of infant children. He argues that there would be no point for Christ to have died for little children if they were not born with guilt. To deny this would be to exclude infants from the salvation brought about by Christ⁶⁵. Augustine clearly has strong feelings with respect to the suggestion that original sin has its roots in Manichaeism. In order to prove that the same idea is maintained within the *catholica*, he turns to Ambrose, Cyprian and Ambrosiaster (whose work he incorrectly ascribes to Hilarius)⁶⁶. Although the claim that the three authors had precisely the same idea on the matter as Augustine is open to discussion, the fact remains that a link is established by all three between Adam and his descendents. Augustine is of the opinion, moreover, that Julian and his followers limited grace to forgiving grace while they ignored the sort of grace whereby we are enabled to do good on the basis of the gift of love granted by the mediation of the Holy Spirit. It is in this precise context that Augustine appeals to Phil. 1,19: "Oramus autem ad Deum, ne quid faciatis mali."⁶⁷

Augustine also thoroughly examines Julian's statement concerning the idea that not sinning is a reward in itself, asking him to identify the source of the reward in question. The suggestion that human persons grant this reward to themselves would in fact be a confirmation of the Pelagian error. If it comes from God, on the other hand, then it would be better to speak of the gift of the reward, since in the latter instance there would have to be prior merits on the part

⁶³ The present author has the impression that HOMBERT, *Gloria gratiae*, pp. 527-528 is fairly negative concerning Julian's positions.

⁶⁴ Cf. *Opus imperfectum* II,163, CSEL 85,1, p. 284, in which Augustine makes reference to Ambrose's *De paenitentia* I,3,13.

⁶⁵ *Opus imperfectum* II,163, CSEL 85,1, pp. 284-285.

⁶⁶ Augustine appeals to Ambrose's commentary on Luke, 7,234, Cyprian's letter 64,5 and Ambrosiaster's commentary on the Letter to the Romans, 5,12; cf. *Opus imperfectum* II,164, CSEL 85,1, p. 285.

⁶⁷ Cf. *Opus imperfectum* II,165, CSEL 85,1, p. 286. It is striking that a literal rendering of this quotation is to be found in *Opus imperfectum* in five of the nine instances, i.e. in more than half.

of humankind. The very idea that grace is granted according to our merits was condemned by Pelagius at Diospolis (cf. *De gestis Pelagii* 30). With reference to Julian's own commentary on Rom. 5,3-5, Augustine points out that the latter also recognises that the gift of not sinning comes from God. By way of proof that our boasting is also a gift, Augustine then goes on to quote 1 Cor. 4,7b-c and 1 Cor. 1,31par.⁶⁸ The quotations fit particularly well in his argumentation at this juncture. If everything is a gift, then boasting in God is the only boasting that makes sense. The suggestion that the human persons can find the power within themselves not to sin is evidence of pride and leads to damnation (a quotation from Jer. 17,5 follows). It is clear for Augustine, moreover, that the very fact that a person believes is itself a gift⁶⁹.

Julian presents his own vision of Rom. 6 towards the end of *Ad Florum* II⁷⁰. He reveals in his commentary that the reception of forgiveness of sins is a serious matter. We confess our sins in order to receive forgiveness. With gratitude for the gift, we strive to be invulnerable to sin and deviation⁷¹. Julian places considerable emphasis on the importance of living as Christ did. Consistent with his earlier positions, he continues to place the emphasis on the appeal that comes from the apostle: death in Rom. 6,5 stands for the refusal to give in to sin. Just as Christ once died on account of sin, i.e. for our sins, and is no longer dead but lives in God's glory, so must we, dead to sin, live only for virtue and in the service of virtue⁷². Read in this way, it becomes evident that Julian is able to ventilate all his grievances against Augustine's vision of grace and the fall. As an expert orator, he asks his opponent where it is that Paul offers critique of nature, of the coming into being of human substance, of procreation etc. It is clear for him that Paul asks the human will to say no to sin and to

⁶⁸ *Opus imperfectum* II,166, CSEL 85,1, p. 287.

⁶⁹ *Opus imperfectum* II,168, CSEL 85,1, p. 288.

⁷⁰ Cf. *Ad Florum* II,222ff., CSEL 85,1, pp. 334ff.

⁷¹ Julian associates all of this with the Christ event; cf. *Ad Florum* II,223, CSEL 85,1, p. 336: "Dicit nos mortuos esse peccato eo iam tempore, quo, ut acciperemus indulgentiae donum, renuntiare nos mundo omnibusque peccatis professi sumus, atque ideo muneris memores debere sic uiuere, ut Christo consepulti esse doceamur atque resurrectionem eius conspicua sanctitate gestemus et, quomodo ille, postquam resurrexit a mortuis, nullas infirmitates corporis, nulla flagella perpetitur, ita etiam nos esse inuulnerabiles peccatis omnibus et uitiiis annitatur."

⁷² *Ad Florum* II,225, CSEL 85,1, pp. 338-339: "Quomodo Christus, inquit, qui peccato mortuus est semel, id est propter peccata nostra mortuus est semel, ultra non moritur, sed uiuit in gloria Dei, ita et uos, deputate uos peccato mortuos solis uiuere et seruire uirtutibus." (Commentary on Rom. 6,8-11).

begin a new life by improving our deeds. When Paul speaks of sin, he thinks of sin as the result of an act of the free will⁷³. At the same time, Julian emphasises the idea that forgiveness of sins is something magnificent: liberation from sin obliges us to be faithful to God and to serve God. Julian does not deny that sin dominates our lives, but now that we have received the blessings of God's grace and the burden of our guilt has been removed, we ought to give thanks to God who has healed us⁷⁴. Julian attaches considerable importance to the gift of grace⁷⁵, but with the best will in the world he is unable to determine where the apostle is said to have spoken of a sin that injures the *semina* before the will existed and before human beings had achieved knowledge and awareness⁷⁶. Julian notes in his commentary on Rom. 6,17-18 – it is evident from the relatively short commentaries that Julian wanted to bring book II of *Ad Florum* to an end – that a change of obedience in the heart has taken place whereby we are liberated from sin and intent on holiness⁷⁷. When Paul states in Rom. 6,19 that he is expressing himself in human terms because he is addressing himself to weak human persons, then this is evidence for Julian of the humanity of his exhortation⁷⁸. Faithful to his argument that God does not ask human persons to do the impossible, Julian insists on the fact that the apostle's use of the term 'human' is clearly intended to show that what he asks is easy and achievable⁷⁹. According to Julian, therefore, the core of Paul's argument is that the improvement of the will should result in the removal of the insufficiencies of the will. Julian is

⁷³ *Ad Florum* II,226, CSEL 85,1, p. 340: "nos nempe dicimus de peccato apostolum uoluntatis humanae, quae in unoquoque peccante est, locutum fuisse (...). Apostolus autem nihil sanxit, quod possit iure reprehendi; peccatum itaque uoluntatis ostendit, quod inculcat debere uitari."

⁷⁴ *Ad Florum* II,227, CSEL 85,1, p. 342.

⁷⁵ See in this regard M. LAMBERIGTS, *Julian of Aeclanum on Grace: Some Considerations*, in E.A. LIVINGSTONE (ed.), *Studia Patristica. Papers Presented at the Eleventh International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 1991*. Vol. XXVII: *Cappadocian Fathers, Greek Authors after Nicaea, Augustine, Donatism, and Pelagianism*, Leuven, Peeters, 1993, 342-349.

⁷⁶ *Ad Florum* II,229, CSEL 85,1, p. 344 illustrates that for Julian, Paul's idea of being a 'slave to sin' lies at the level of the individual will. At the same time, as his commentary on Rom. 6,19 bears witness, Julian considers the demands proposed by Paul as human demands, i.e. as demands within our capacity as human persons. We are not called to do things beyond our reach. I have the impression that insufficient attention has been paid to this point in the literature dealing with the Pelagian controversy. The "concrete demands" of someone such as Julian, for example, seem quite reasonable. In a certain sense, one does not have to do a great deal in order to do what one is obliged to do.

⁷⁷ *Ad Florum* II,231, CSEL 85,1, p. 345.

⁷⁸ *Ad Florum* II,232, CSEL 85,1, p. 345.

of the opinion thereby that Paul is asking the faithful nothing more than to strive after virtue with the same earnestness and enthusiasm as they once strove after sin⁸⁰. Julian believes that Paul's words in this regard clearly indicate that he is not thinking of an inborn sin. Indeed, how would it be possible for Paul to say that what he asks is human, if he were to ask it of people in whom sin was inborn, prior to the arrival of the soul in their body and their body in the world⁸¹? One of Julian's central convictions is that the idea of original sin, which for him is a sin that is present in human nature in its createdness, puts an end to human freedom and human responsibility. It is evident for him that our slavery to sin must be ascribed radically to the will, just as our efforts to be righteous also have their roots in the will, at least if it has undergone improvement⁸².

As one might expect, Augustine radically disagrees and as he so often does, he points out that Julian is not listening to precisely what Paul wants to say. Where Julian's commentary sticks to the text at hand, Augustine regularly introduces other texts into his argument. It is clear for Augustine that Rom. 6,2b-3 intended to say that those who are born in Christ are dead to sin. This is immediately associated with the idea that newborn infants are likewise dead to sin if they are baptised. Given the fact that they are not yet old enough to sin, then the sin in question must be original sin. Julian is then offered a choice: clearly state that such infants do not need to be baptised or if they are to be baptised that they do not have to be baptised in Christ or baptised in his death⁸³. Of course, Augustine knows well enough that Julian never denied the necessity of infant baptism. He remains of the opinion, however, that his understanding thereof is insufficient: Christ came to save all, including newborn infants, and that only makes sense

⁷⁹ *Ad Florum* II,233, CSEL 85,1, p. 346: "Ne quid enim arduum et inaccessum homini praecipere uideretur, uerbum de consuetudine usurpauit, ut humanum diceret, id est facile tractabile, et quod causarum comparatione mitescat."

⁸⁰ *Ad Florum* II,233-234, CSEL 85,1, pp. 346-347.

⁸¹ *Ad Florum* II,235, CSEL 85,1, p. 347.

⁸² *Ad Florum* II,236, CSEL 85,1, p. 348: "Ac per hoc constat apostolum, reuerendum ecclesiarum informatorem, rationem magisterii sui consilio aequitate humanitate reddentem nihil de naturali sensisse peccato, sed inculcasse, ut res erat, et uitiorum nos seruos non nisi per uoluntatem fuisse et iustitiae nos eadem posse, si corrigatur, uoluntate seruire."

⁸³ *Opus imperfectum* II,222, CSEL 85,1, p. 335: "Confitere ergo peccato mortuos paruulos baptizatos, confitere tandem originale peccatum; non enim aliud, cui morerentur, habuerunt; aut dic aperte baptizari eos non oportere aut, cum baptizantur, non eos in Christo Iesu baptizari aut non in mortem ipsius baptizari et dele, si potes, apostoli uerba dicentis: quicumque baptizati sumus in Christo Iesu, in mortem ipsius baptizati sumus."

if sin is present in the latter. Augustine quotes Rom. 5,12 and adds: "This is the sin to which newborn infants die when they are baptised in the death of Christ"⁸⁴. The expression "all of us who" in Rom. 6,3 refers, therefore, to all people, young and old, great and small⁸⁵. While Julian is thinking of personal sin, Augustine concludes on the basis of his radical analysis of Christ's coming as a coming for sinners that the recognition of the existence of original sin is the only solution. In a sort of *ad hominem* argument, he also refers to the fact that when Julian himself was baptised into the Church, he himself abandoned sin through the words of those who brought him to the Church. And what other sin could that have been than original sin?⁸⁶

In response to Julian's objection that natural sin cannot exist and that Paul is alluding to adults when he speaks of sin, Augustine argues that while Paul does indeed address himself to adults he also addresses himself to children. Indeed, adults have a duty to ensure that their children grow up to realise the fruits of obedience, otherwise they would have received the grace of God in vain (2 Cor. 6,1). This remark reveals Augustine's conviction that the religious education of children is a matter for the community.

With respect to Julian's rejection of natural sin, Augustine points out that every human person is born with the *concupiscentia carnis* which they ought to resist. This sinful desire is part of our *corpus mortale* (Rom. 6,12) and is evidence of the existence of sin. *Concupiscentia carnis* is the result of sin and it leads to sin. He adds, moreover, that Rom. 6,12 states: "*Non regnet peccatum in vestro mortali corpore*", and not "*non sit*". The fact that sin is in us is evident, but if we are to avoid sin gaining the upper hand in our lives, we need grace⁸⁷.

Forgiveness of sin, for Julian, was something magnificent. For Augustine, however, he and his followers did not go far enough. Their pretension that they had justified themselves ran counter to the Church which asked not to be brought into temptation (Mt. 6,13), to the apostle who prayed to God so that the Corinthians would not act wickedly (2 Cor. 13,7) and to Christ who said that he had prayed for Peter so that he would not abandon his faith. It is also evident for Augustine that human persons not only need forgiving grace but they also need

⁸⁴ *Opus imperfectum* II,223, CSEL 85,1, p. 337: "Ecce cui peccato moriuntur, cum in mortem Christi Iesu paruuli baptizantur."

⁸⁵ Cf. also *Opus imperfectum* II,225, CSEL 85,1, pp. 339-340.

⁸⁶ *Opus imperfectum* II,224, CSEL 85,1, p. 338.

⁸⁷ *Opus imperfectum* II,226, CSEL 85,1, pp. 341-342. Cf. also II,235, CSEL 85,1, pp. 347-348.

supportive grace so that they might turn away from evil and do good⁸⁸. It goes without saying that Augustine spared nothing in making it clear that for all of this to be possible our will had to be prepared in advance (Prov. 8,35 Sept.)⁸⁹.

Julian's admiration for the humanity of Paul's commands did not engender a great deal of sympathy where Augustine was concerned. He considers Julian to be a deceiver who places all his eggs in one and the same basket, namely free will, and does so counter to 1 Cor. 4,7b, 1 Cor. 3,7 (plants, water and growth stem from God) and 2 Cor. 13,7 (in which Paul prays so that the Corinthians might do no evil)⁹⁰. Augustine establishes a single line of argument with these three quotations: 1 Cor. 4,7b makes it clear that all things come from God, 1 Cor. 3,7 reveals that wisdom comes from God and 2 Cor. 13,7 demonstrates that one is obliged to pray to God in order to prevent people from doing evil. Augustine continues his evaluation of Julian by pointing out that the latter is not aware that what Paul asks is only possible through the power of love, which works counter to our sinful desires. In order to do what Paul says, people are in need of the gifts of the Spirit (cf. Rom. 8,14). The recognition of that which one has received is precisely what Augustine sorely misses in Julian⁹¹. He is of the opinion that Julian does not recognise the value of prayer for conversion (Ps. 79,8), does not pay due attention to the faith of the psalmist who believes that God will convert us (Ps. 84,7) and that he guides our steps (Ps. 36,23)⁹². It is clear for Augustine that if the steps of men and women are not guided by God, men and women will not walk in God's ways⁹³.

⁸⁸ *Opus imperfectum* II,227, CSEL 85,1, p. 343: "Isto enim modo gratia, ut non peccemus, facit, non quae peccauimus diluit; utroque enim modo adiuuat gratia, et dimittendo, quae male fecimus, et opitulando, ut declinemus a malis et bona faciamus."

⁸⁹ *Opus imperfectum* II,230-231, CSEL 85,1, p. 345. This verse is quoted by Augustine in his anti-Pelagian works in *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum*, *Contra Iulianum* and *Opus imperfectum*. This is not accidental: Augustine considered the text in question to offer decisive proof that in the relationship between grace and free will, the latter can only acquire the qualification 'good' *sub gratia*. It is interesting to note that Julian, who had certainly read *Contra duas epistulas pelagianorum* I, makes no reference to this line of argumentation!

⁹⁰ *Opus imperfectum* II,232, CSEL 85,1, pp. 345-346.

⁹¹ *Opus imperfectum* II,233, CSEL 85,1, pp. 346-347.

⁹² *Opus imperfectum* II,234, CSEL 85,1, p. 347.

⁹³ *Opus imperfectum* II,234, CSEL 85,1, p. 347: "Si autem non ab illo dirigan-tur, homo uiam Dei non uolet, etsi iubeat lex, ut uelit." Augustine concludes book II by explaining his vision once again: the sin of Adam brought suffering and death to humanity (Rom. 5,12; Sir. 40,1). Neither can be considered evidence in support of a

Finally, the “quid habes quod non accepisti” quotation also appears in *Opus imperfectum* IV,129, in a context in which Augustine clearly demonstrates that God who commands us also assists us so that the evil we commit ourselves and that with which we are born can be conquered. What is impossible for human persons is easy for God. Those who do not accept God’s grace – and here follows the quotation from 1 Cor. 4,7a-b – are considered traitors to the Law. Such people live to the benefit of the *fili misericordiae* so that the latter might recognise that grace is a gift and avoid pride by refraining from boasting in themselves, “sed qui gloriatur, in domino gloriatur” (1 Cor. 1,31par.). 1 Cor. 4,7a-b is referred to in this context in order to show that those who refuse to accept grace should not complain, since everything we have has been received. If there is something that we do not have, therefore, it is because we did not receive it from God⁹⁴.

7. Conclusion

Our survey has demonstrated in the first instance that 1 Cor. 4,7b is regularly quoted by Augustine without being given further attention or being ascribed a significant function in his argument. When he does draw attention to it and ascribe it significance, 1 Cor. 4,7 turns out to be multifunctional. It can be used to warn against human pretensions or as an argument in support of the idea that the theological good comes from God. It is also quoted in order to make clear that, at the level of redemption, everything we have must have been received on account of the radicality of our sinfulness. It is also striking that Augustine sees no contradiction between 1 Cor. 4,7 and the defence of free will. It is employed, finally, in the controversy with Julian to make it clear to the latter that he attaches insufficient value to that fact that all that we possess is received from God.

It will be evident from our discussion of the various relevant passages that Augustine argues in favour of humility on account of the sinfulness of fallen humanity. It is clear to the bishop of Hippo that genuine freedom – i.e. freedom within the faith – comes from God. One can only speak of a *bona voluntas* under grace. It is also

Manichaean notion of evil substance. They belong rather to the nature of fallen humanity (children included) from which it must be liberated by Christ. Those who deny this are unable to explain suffering. Worse still, they locate all this at the divine level, making God responsible for suffering whereby one is obliged to consider Him as unjust.

⁹⁴ *Ad Florum* IV,129, CSEL 85,2, p. 157.

apparent that in certain passages Rom. 5,5 is of more crucial importance than 1 Cor. 4,7, particularly in the context of the relationship between the Spirit and the gift of love.

It goes without saying, of course, that our study does not intend to imply that 1 Cor. 4,7 was not important for Augustine. It is apparent from his vision of the text in question as found in *Ad Simplicianum* and *Confessiones* that his reading of 1 Cor. 4,7 (especially 7b) had touched him profoundly. In our opinion, however, reference to the verse in the period 411-430 needs not always be considered part of his anti-Pelagian reaction. It is precisely for this reason that the present author is not surprised that the verse appears to have played no significant role in Augustine's anti-Pelagian works in the strict sense of the term. I have the impression that Augustine is better able to employ the radicality of a verse such as 1 Cor. 4,7b in communication with his fellow believers rather than in reaction to his opponents.

This latter observation leads to the inevitable conclusion that 1 Cor. 4,7 is perhaps not the best verse to employ in tracing Augustine's vision of grace throughout his anti-Pelagian works. Globally considered, the verse plays too marginal a role to be understood as the correct key to Augustine's line of thought in this regard. Moreover, the use of 1 Cor. 4,7 as a point of departure does not provide sufficient access to the specific accents associated with Pelagius and Julian. Indeed, the verse appears to have had no significance whatsoever where Julian was concerned! The difficulty thus arises that Hombert's otherwise excellent study would appear to have an a-contextual character, at least with respect to the Pelagian controversy.

The fact that Augustine does not quote 1 Cor. 4,7 with any frequency in his reaction to the Pelagians appears to the present author to be due in part to the fact that it is also possible to argue from the Pelagian perspective that human beings have received everything from God. Everything we are according to our human nature is a gift of God. From the Pelagian perspective, however, emphasis came to be placed on goodness as it is received from nature: the fall of Adam thus plays no significant role in the (often theoretical⁹⁵) discourse.

To conclude, and I think that our exercise offers sufficient support in this regard, I am inclined to argue that when it comes to Augustine's interaction with the Scriptures it would be better not to pin

⁹⁵ The concrete human person in all his or her sinfulness and finality is given less attention in Pelagius and Julian than is the case in Augustine's writings. I have the impression that Augustine had a keener awareness of the givenness of the human person than the said authors.

everything on a small number of verses. I believe I have demonstrated on the basis of the use of 1 Cor. 4,7 in Augustine's anti-Pelagian works that one is obliged to account for the Scriptures as a whole and not limit oneself to a single specific text⁹⁶. It will have become clear at least that a study of the use of 1 Cor. 4,7 provides an insufficient basis for an exhaustive treatment of the breadth and depth of Augustine's vision of grace⁹⁷.

Mathijs LAMBERIGTS

⁹⁶ For the richness of Augustine's approach to the Scriptures see, for example, I. BOCHET, *"Le firmament de l'Écriture". L'herméneutique augustinienne* (Collection des Études Augustiniennes. Série Antiquité, 172) Paris, 2004.

⁹⁷ Note complémentaire 34: *Valeur de l'exégèse augustinienne*, BA 23, pp. 795-797 correctly points out that it is better not to judge Augustine as a "modern" exegete, but to see him rather as an author who nourished himself on the Scriptures as such. Augustine bases himself on the Scriptures' broad intuitions rather than entering into the detailed exegesis of a specific verse, especially in the context of a controversy such as ours.