

THE CHRISTOLOGY OF THE PRE-CONTROVERSIAL PELAGIUS (1) A STUDY OF "DE NATURA" AND "DE FIDE TRINITATIS," COMPLEMENTED BY A COMPARISON WITH "LIBELLUS FIDEI"

This article represents the second part of an investigation into the Christology of the early Pelagius. A previous contribution (*Augustiniana* 56/3-4) studied the Christology of Pelagius in his *Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Romans*, and came to the joint conclusion (1) that Pelagius is not merely an *ethicus* but also a *theologicus* and (2) that he is an orthodox *christologian*.¹ It is very interesting to compare these results with what the other writings of Pelagius teach us regarding his Christology. This study adopts the same research methodology: it will be investigated how Pelagius presents Christ in his pre-controversial writings in an attempt to reconstruct his early theology and Christology (i.e. before he became entangled in polemics and controversy).

1. De natura

To complement Pelagius's pre-controversial Christology, one should not omit to study his *De natura*. The exact composition date of *De natura* is not clear. Recent studies place it among Pelagius's early writings. It was probably written around 405/406 in Rome.² The text has been only fragmentarily preserved in Augustine's *De natura et gratia*.³ W. A. Löhr reconstructed and structuralized what remains of

¹ DUPONT, A., *Die Christusfigur des Pelagius. Rekonstruktion der Christologie im Kommentar von Pelagius zum Römerbrief des Paulus*, *Augustiniana* 56/3-4 (2006) 321-372.

² Y.-M. Duval and W. A. LÖHR, supported by M. Lamberigts and S. Lancel, argue that Pelagius wrote it around 405/406 at Rome. Others situate it near 408-411 in Sicily or between 413-414 in Palestine. DUVAL, Y.-M., *La date du 'De natura' de Pélage: Les premières étapes de la controverse sur la nature de la grâce*, in *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* 36 (1990) 257-283. LÖHR, W. A., *Pelagius's Schrift De natura: Rekonstruktion und Analyse*, in *Recherches Augustiniennes* 31 (1999) 235-294. Cf. LAMBERIGTS, M., *Recent Research into Pelagianism with Particular Emphasis on the Role of Julian of Aeclanum*, in *Augustiniana* 52/2-4 (2002) 175-198, p. 181: n. 28. LANCEL, S., *Saint Augustin*, Paris 1999, p. 459; p. 718: n. 8.

³ CSEL 60, 233-299.

Pelagius's text based on Augustine's quotations, and he analysed its content according to themes and motives.⁴

De natura, being a tractate and not a comment on a book from the Bible, is not bound to a biblical text. This allows a more 'abstract' form of reasoning in comparison with the Romans Commentary. The content of the fragments preserved by Augustine do not have a Christological content. The focus of these fragments is the *possibilitas non peccandi*. Pelagius claims in *De natura* that *posse non peccare* is a feature of the human free will.⁵ It is possible to be without sin. More specifically, according to *De natura* the topic of sinlessness is a matter of *posse et non posse* and not of *esse et non esse*.⁶ Sinning and avoiding to sin have to do with human possibilities and capacities, but does not involve the human essence, the *natura*. Pelagius explains the theme of sinlessness harmatologically and anthropologically. He analyses cause and meaning of sin and the relationship between sin and human nature. Just as in the Romans Commentary, the core of this reasoning is the assertion that sin does not belong to man essentially: it is not an essential part of human nature. Sin is merely an act that does not affect human nature.⁷ The root of this position is the Pauline conflict between the 'works of the flesh' and the 'deeds according to the spirit', as elaborated in the Romans Commentary. Pelagius's description of the essence of sin in *De natura* chimes in with his definitions of sin in the Romans Commentary. Pelagius writes that God created the spirit as well as the body to be good. Sin is not a (carnal) substance, but the consequence of choosing for the *opera carnis*.⁸ Sin results from the wrong action and does not belong intrinsically to man.⁹ Sin does not weaken or change human nature. When Pelagius declares that sin is a matter of opting for the carnal, and is not transmitted by procreation, he clearly rejects the idea of the *tradux peccati*. Regarding the origin of the human soul, this could suggest that Pelagius is in favour of creationism (whereby every newborn soul is created separately), and not of traducianism (whereby every soul is drawn from the one soul created by God).¹⁰

⁴ The edition and the numbering of Löhr are used here. LÖHR, *Pelagius's Schrift De natura*.

⁵ *De nat.* 11, 3-4, p. 253.

⁶ *De nat.* 1-2, 8, p. 251.

⁷ *De nat.* 13, 21, p. 256.

⁸ *De nat.* 43, 63, p. 268; 45, 66, p. 269.

⁹ *De nat.* 13, 21, p. 256.

¹⁰ *De nat.* 43, 63, p. 268.

Besides this anti-Manichean oriented anthropology, three other small parallels with the Romans Commentary can be detected in the reconstructed *De natura*, namely the three references it contains to the *Letter to the Romans*.¹¹ These references have no Christological subject matter, but they illustrate the possibility of sinlessness, providing a similar list of biblical examples of sinless persons.¹² Abraham and Isaac (and Jacob) are labelled as exceptions to sinful humanity in the Romans Commentary (*Rom.* 5,12). These three men are listed in *De natura* too, alongside other biblical persons from the Old and New Testament as people who have lived sinless lives, as *iusti*.

This notion of sinlessness is not without Christological importance, for Pelagius perceives Christ as the foundation of the human capacity to be *iustus*. The human possibility of sinlessness, though, has to be ascribed to the grace of God, of the Creator.¹³ G. Greshake rightly argues that Pelagius does not deny the necessity of the grace of God in the preserved fragments of *De natura*.¹⁴ For instance, Pelagius writes in *De natura* that forgiveness of sin is a grace given by God. One even has to pray to receive that sin-forgiving grace.¹⁵ Greshake remarks that in *De natura* grace frequently has the meaning of true human freedom, of *posse non peccare*. This is not possible without God's help.¹⁶ Because the human capacity to be sinless cannot be taken away from man and is not a matter of personal decision, but part of human nature, C. Garcia-Sanchez thinks it is understandable that according to Pelagius the natural capacity of man and the grace of God coincide. God is author and source of both of them. Garcia-Sanchez points out that Pelagius's elaboration of the capacities of human nature are especially meant as a support of his concern for authentic Christian life.¹⁷

¹¹ *De nat.* 31, 48, p. 265. According to Pelagius, the *omnes* of *Rom.* 3,23 and *Rom.* 5,18 does not mean the whole of humanity: cf. *Rom.* 3,4; 3,23; 5,12 in DUPONT, A., *Die Christusfigur*, pp. 344-345: n. 179.

Two references to the Letter of the Romans regarding the being 'in carne': *Rom.* 8,9 and 7,24 in *De nat.* 42, 60, pp. 267-268; 44, 64, p. 269.

¹² *De nat.* 28, 42, p. 263.

¹³ Man cannot be sinless without God's grace: *De nat.* 3-4, 11, p. 253; 34, 52, p. 266; 35, 53, p. 266. That Pelagius would be making faith redundant by focusing on human freedom, is denied by Pelagius himself: *Credamus igitur quod legimus et quod non legimus nefas credamus astruere. De nat.* 30, 44, p. 264.

¹⁴ GRESHAKE, G., *Gnade als konkrete Freiheit: Eine Untersuchung zur Gnadenlehre des Pelagius*, Mainz 1972, p. 66; p. 77; p. 101; pp. 143-144.

¹⁵ *De nat.* 12, 20, p. 256.

¹⁶ *De nat.* 35, 53, p. 266.

¹⁷ GARCIA-SANCHEZ, C., *Pelagius and Christian Initiation: A Study in Historical Theology*, Washington 1978, pp. 239-242.

In the context of the notion of sinlessness, also the subject matter of Christ crops up, namely as an example of someone who died sinless.¹⁸ Christ dying without sins demonstrates according to Pelagius that sin and death are not causally related.¹⁹ "Unter der Formel Sündenlosigkeit wird konkret das Problem der wahren Freiheit verhandelt. Das sündenlose Leben Jesu ist also Leitbild der Freiheit."²⁰ The fragments from *De natura* show that Pelagius does not reduce Christ to one of the examples given in the list of sinless people. That Pelagius conceives of Christ as grace, as in the Romans Commentary, can be read in a small number of passages from *De natura*. Pelagius writes that people who obey and are cleansed by baptism are sanctified by Christ.²¹ Christ, by the price of his death, bought humanity back from death.²² For this reason, Pelagius refers to Christ as *Salvator*.²³ That is why he compares sin with an illness, with a wound, and Christ with the *medicus* who came to heal the sick.²⁴ In conclusion, Christology in general and the idea of a redemptive *gratia Christi* in particular are far from absent in *De natura*. Pelagius probably speaks on Christ in other parts of the text as well, but these passages are very difficult to reconstruct, bearing in mind Augustine's polemical intention in his *De natura et gratia* to show that Pelagius denies that the reason for the coming of Christ is original sin.²⁵

2. De fide trinitatis

P. C. Martini discovered in 1938 four text fragments with a Trinitarian and Christological content, which he attributed to Pelagius.²⁶ The first three fragments, with a clear Trinitarian interest, come

¹⁸ *De nat.* 16, 26, p. 258: Quod vero Dominum dicit sine peccato mori potuisse, illi etiam nasci potestas misericordiae, non condicio naturae fuit; sic etiam mortuus est potestate et hoc est pretium nostrum, quo nos a morte redimeret.

¹⁹ *De nat.* 14, 23, pp. 256-257.

²⁰ GRESHAKE, *Gnade*, p. 117: n. 138.

²¹ *De nat.* 31, 48, p. 265.

²² *De nat.* 16, 26, p. 258. See here n. 18.

²³ *De nat.* 28, 42, p. 263.

²⁴ *De nat.* 14, 23, pp. 256-257; 19, 29, p. 259; 20, 30-31, p. 260. Christ as the *medicus* and humanity as a sick patient in need for a physician is a theme frequently appearing in patristic literature, esp. in Augustine's *sermões*, to indicate the grace of Christ and to stress that humanity needs the help of that grace.

²⁵ LÖHR, *Pelagius's Schrift De natura*, pp. 256-257.

²⁶ MARTINI, P. C., *Quattuor Fragmenta Pelagio Restituenda*, in *Antonianum*, 13 (1938) 293-334 and *IBID.* (ed.), *Ambrosiaster, de auctore, operibus, theologica* (Spicilegium Pontificii Athenaei Antoniani 4), Roma 1944, pp. 189-210: *De fide*

from Pelagius's *De fide trinitatis*.²⁷ The fourth fragment, which has the Trinitarian theology not explicitly as subject, is probably from another work. Some researchers have suspected that it is part of an unknown work of Pelagius on Christology. It is not implausible that Pelagius wrote such a study to complement his study on the Trinity.²⁸

Gennadius of Marseille mentions in his *De viris inlustribus* XCII, that Pelagius had written his *De fide trinitatis* before he became known as *haereticus*.²⁹ It should thus belong to the early works of Pelagius and it was probably written during Pelagius's stay in Rome between 385 and 410.³⁰ These text fragments have not yet been thoroughly studied. They are dealt with only briefly in a small number of studies on Pelagius's thinking.³¹ The content of these text fragments is important for reconstructing Pelagius's Christology.

Style and approach of *De fide trinitatis* are very different from those found in the Commentary on the Romans. *De fide trinitatis* approaches the Scriptures from a different angle. While his explanation in the Paul Commentary was aimed at commenting the biblical text, Pelagius is using here the Scriptures – mainly Paul's letters – as an instrument to support his case. No longer bound to the biblical text, he develops a philosophical-theological discourse on the essence of

trinitatis/Libri tres de trinitate frgm. 6. (Cf. CCL, *Clavis Patrum Latinorum* (3^e ed.), nr. 748, pp. 255-256.) MIGNE, *PL Supplementum*, 1, 1544-1560.

²⁷ R. F. Evans is not sure of Pelagius's authorship of the second fragment (from PL 39). That fragment will not be used in my analysis, but only mentioned with all due reserve in the footnotes when relevant. EVANS, R. F., *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals*, London 1968, pp. 158-159: n. 6-7.

²⁸ EVANS, *Pelagius*, pp. 158-159: n. 6-7. MARTINI, *Quattuor*, p. 318: n. 6.

²⁹ CZAPLA, B., *Gennadius als Litterarhistoriker: eine quellenkritische Untersuchung der Schrift des Gennadius von Marseille De viris illustribus* (Kirchengeschichtliche Studien 4/1), Münster 1898, cap. XLII: p. 97. Cf. RICHARDSON, E. C., *Hieronymus liber de viris inlustribus – Gennadius liber de viris inlustribus* (Texte und Untersuchungen 14/1), Leipzig 1896, p. 77: vv. 16-21. THIER, S., *Kirche bei Pelagius* (Patristische Texte und Studien 50), Berlin/New York 1999, p. 19. We depend upon Gennadius for the hypothesis that Pelagius wrote a treatise on the Trinity and that this would be an early writing. The historical reliability of Gennadius is however not undebated.

³⁰ Based on a comparative study of the number of particles used by Pelagius in his writings, Evans connects *De fide trinitatis* with the early writings of Pelagius. Garcia-Sanchez argues for this dating from the observation that the anti-Arian character of *De fide trinitatis* is similar with the concern for orthodoxy that is a central feature in the commentary on Paul. EVANS, R. F., *Four Letters of Pelagius: Studies in Pelagius*, London 1968, pp. 118-119. GARCIA-SANCHEZ, *Pelagius*, p. 208.

³¹ DEWART, J. Mc W., *The Christology of the Pelagian Controversy*, in *Studia Patristica* 17 (1982) 1221-1244, pp. 1221-1227. EVANS, *Pelagius*, *passim*. GRESHAKE, *Gnade*, *passim*.

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in which his reasoning at times can be very abstract. Also the direct tone of *De fide trinitatis* is remarkable. Pelagius is addressing his reader directly.³²

Pelagius's concern for Christological orthodoxy has a prominent place in *De fide trinitatis* just as in his Romans Commentary.³³ In fragment 6, he mentions two 'Christological *haeretici*' by name: Apollinaris³⁴ and Photinus³⁵. Their modalistic denial of Christ's true and fully human nature and person is considered an *error* by Pelagius.³⁶ The elaboration of the notion of the equality of the Father and the Son in fragments 1 and 4 can be regarded as a reaction against the subordinatianism of Arius, who is, however, not explicitly named.³⁷ Views which deny that the Father and the Son are the same divine substance and neglect that Christ unifies the divine and human substance in Himself, are an *error*³⁸, an *impietas*³⁹. In fragment 4 Pelagius reacts against the Trinitarian heterodoxy of Sabellius, namely his modalistic interpretation of the Trinity. Modalism, in the interpretation of Sabellius among others, has a Christological aspect. Sabellius considered Christ to be only another name of the same person of the Father. As such he denied Christ being a (divine) person on his own.⁴⁰ Reacting against Christological heterodox tendencies, Pelagius emphasized the two natures of Christ, truly divine and human.

Pelagius stressed that Christ became fully man – a first *crux* of Pelagius's Christology. Christ became man 'pro remedio generis

³² *De fid. trin.* frag. 4 and frag. 5: Diligenter, quaeso te, lector attende [...]. (PLS1, 1553; 1556).

³³ Pelagius rebukes following Christological heterodoxies of the fifth century: Arius, Sabellius, Apollinaris, Photinus and Paulus Samosatenus. He however does not mention Nestorius and Eutyches. This is the reason for Martini to conclude that the content of the fragments is not so much Trinitarian, but rather Christological. MARTINI, *Ambrosiaster*, p. 170.

³⁴ *De fid. trin.* frag. 6 (PLS1, 1557; 1558; 1560).

³⁵ *De fid. trin.* frag. 6 (PLS1, 1560).

³⁶ *De fid. trin.* frag. 6 (PLS1, 1560). Pelagius refers to the ideas of Apollinaris and Photinus as 'calumniae' (frag. 6, 1558) 'deum erroris' (frag. 6, 1560), 'caecos' (frag. 6, 1560).

³⁷ Fragment 2 (PL 39, 2198-2200) reacts explicitly against Arius (*as haereticorum malitiae*) (2198-2199) and Eunomius (2199) by stating that in Christ two substances are brought to unity. Photinus (2200) and Paulus Samosatenus (2200) wrongly deny the complete divinity of Christ.

³⁸ *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 (PLS1, 1544); frag. 6 (PLS1, 1557); frag. 6 (PLS1, 1560).

³⁹ *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 (PLS1, 1545); frag. 1 (PLS1, 1546); frag. 5 (PLS1, 1555); frag. 5 (PLS1, 1557). The faith in one God as the faith in Father and Son as one equal substance, is primordial according to Pelagius. Not accepting this faith is called *abusiue* (frag. 1, 1544), *stultitia* (frag. 1, 1545), an *impietas* that one has to *amputare* (frag. 5, 1555).

⁴⁰ *De fid. trin.* frag. 4 (PLS1, 1553).

humani'.⁴¹ God assumed humanity in the incarnation⁴² and invested himself with it.⁴³ Pelagius explains this by means of a comparison. God took the nature of humanity as a royal general who, in a dangerous battle, hides his purple garment by putting on the uniform of an ordinary soldier. As such, one can say that the general became a soldier without losing his powers, but was elevated even higher in his attempt to save his people.⁴⁴ Christ became fully man, however not in the same way as humans, since He is not only human. Christ took something He previously did not have: "[...] non tamen filii persona geminata est, sed hoc a filio suceptum quod ante non habuit."⁴⁵ A perfect human substance was added (*accesserit*) to the divinity of the Word. Christ-God and Christ-man form a unity, but they remain to be two different substances that do not unite into one (new different) substance. God took humanity, as something He previously did not have⁴⁶, and remained at the same time God *in interiore natura*⁴⁷. This did not duplicate the person of the Son. In Christ humanity is united with God (*homo deitatis iunctus*), which however does not imply that there are two sons.⁴⁸ Pelagius clarifies this with an anthropological comparison. The soul and the body of man are clearly two substances, and from

⁴¹ *De fid. trin.* frag. 3 (PLS1, 1548). This reference to *remedium* could again be considered as belonging to the *medicus* theme. Cf. n. 24.

⁴² Christ assumes humanity: *adsumptio* (frag. 1, 1544), *adsumere* (frag. 1, 1544; frag. 4, 1551). Cf. Evans, *Four Letters*, p. 64; p. 126: n. 1. Dewart remarks that Augustine in the same way as Pelagius emphasizes Christ's complete and perfect humanity, especially in the terminology of *homo assumptus*. According to Dewart, this shows Augustine's appreciation of the man Jesus Christ. DEWART, *The Christology*, p. 1223. Cf. DIEPEN, H.-M., L' "Assumptus Homo" patristique, in *Revue Thomiste* 63 (1963) 225-245; 363-388; 64 (1964) 32-52; 364-386.

⁴³ *De fid. trin.* frag. 3 (PLS1, 1548). Dewart comments this fragment: "In the surviving works of Pelagius, we find only one passage devoted to an attempt to describe the christological union." DEWART, *The Christology*, p. 1226.

⁴⁴ *De fid. trin.* frag. 3 (PLS1, 1548). This idea could suggest the Nestorian concept of the divine inhabitation in man. However, in the case of Pelagius, this suggestion is not valid. Cf. GRESHAKE, *Gnade*, pp. 132-134. (See also frag. 2 (PL 39, 2200) where (pseudo-)Pelagius, in a reaction against Photinus and Paulus Samosatenus, compares the undeniable divinity of Christ with the *purpura* and *diadema regale* of a king.)

⁴⁵ *De fid. trin.* frag. 3 (PLS1, 1548).

⁴⁶ *De fid. trin.* frag. 3 (PLS1, 1548).

⁴⁷ *De fid. trin.* frag. 3 (PLS1, 1548).

⁴⁸ For the Two-Sons-doctrine and the comparison with the imperial purple, see Grillmeier's treatment of the pseudo-Athanasian *Disputatio contra Arium* 20. This anti-Arian writing explains that just as the emperor and the purple do not represent two lords, there are no two sons, but only one Son. GRILLMEIER, A., HAINTHALER, Th. (Hrsg.), *Fragmente zur Christologie. Studien zum altkirchlichen Christusbild*, Freiburg im Breisgau 1997, pp. 185-186.

both of them one human person is made. This is also the case with Christ. Despite the fact that there are two substances, there is only one person, one Son.⁴⁹ To summarize Pelagius's elaboration of Christ's *natura*: Christ is truly and fully human.⁵⁰

Apollinaris asserts that Christ became man, resembling us but not (made) of the same substance as we are. To defend this claim, Apollinaris tries to collect biblical testimonies.⁵¹ Pelagius does not deny that some biblical passages seem to suggest that Christ resembles man. This however does not mean that Christ *only* resembles man and did not become man Himself. No, Christ truly became man. Christ is said to be man in the Scriptures in an absolute and not only in a resembling way.⁵² Paul affirms this repeatedly.⁵³ Above all, Christ clearly calls Himself a man.⁵⁴ And Christ knows Himself the best. Christ became man and is at the same time the most perfect image of God, while man does not have that divine image in himself within the last reality, perfection and totality (as Christ does). Pelagius actually uses the name of Apollinaris to indicate a Christological tendency that denies the human aspect of the Son. In this way, the apollinaric tenet is the opposite of the denial of the divine in Christ, indicated by

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⁴⁹ *De fid. trin.* frag. 3: Ita ergo et dei filius dum pro remedio generis humani carne hominis induitur caro factus asseritur et, quamuis ad deitatem uerbi perfecta substantia humanitatis accesserit, non tamen filii perona geminata est, sed hoc a filio susceptum quod ante non habuit. Ne cui autem uideatur obscurum, quod homo deitati iunctus est, et per hoc duos uelit filios estimare, intellectum sibi de comparatione suscipiat. Arte animae et corpus duae sunt diuersaeque substantiae et unum tamen ex utroque hominem faciunt adque interdum solius animae interdum tantum corporis appellatione homo integer nominatur. Quamuis enim gemina substantia sit, tamen una persona est. Ita et dei uerbum, licet se integro, homine uestierit aliamque probetur suscepisse substantiam, unus tamen filius esse non desinit. (PLS1, 1548-1549). Cf. DROBNER, H. R., *Person-Exegese und Christologie bei Augustinus. Zur Herkunft der Formel Una Persona*, Leiden 1986. GAHBAUER, F. R., *Das anthropologische Modell. Ein Beitrag zur Christologie der frühen Kirche bis Chalkedon* (Das östliche Christentum, Neue Folge 35), Würzburg 1984, pp. 225-347.

⁵⁰ With careful reservation, the second fragment (PL 39, 2198-2200) can be mentioned in this context. Divine and human substance are in Christ *unitae, conjunctae* (frag. 2, 2198). Christ is in a perfect way human (frag. 2, 2200) and 'pro salute nostra suscipiens et sibi coadunans natus est Deus et homo' (frag. 2, 2199).

⁵¹ *De fid. trin.* frag. 6 (PLS1, 1557).

⁵² *De fid. trin.* frag. 6 (PLS1, 1559). *De fid. trin.* frag. 6: The word *similitudo* is used in the Scriptures in three ways (PLS1, 1559):

- *Ex comparatione*: as the Kingdom of Heavens resembles a mustard seed.
- *Ex parte*: as man is created resembling God.
- *Ex toto*: as Christ resembles man, is man.

⁵³ Fil. 2,7; Rom. 8,3; 1Tim. 2,5; 1Kor. 15,21 in *De fid. trin.* frag. 6 (PLS1, 1558). Cf. *Rom.* 8,3.

⁵⁴ John 7,19 in *De fid. trin.* frag. 6 (PLS1, 1558).

Pelagius as 'Arius and his followers'. Apollinaris and Arius are for Pelagius references to the two extremes of heterodox thinking on Christ.⁵⁵

A second Christological crux from *De fide trinitatis* is the essential equality of the Father and the Son.⁵⁶ The Father is not greater (*maior*) than the Son, the Son is not smaller (*minor*) than the Father.⁵⁷ Pelagius repeats several times that Father and Son are the same substance (*substantia*)⁵⁸, but two different persons (*persona*) with their own features.⁵⁹ Father and Son are thus one substance and two persons.⁶⁰ Since the Trinity consists of three persons (*tres personae*), they also have three names (*tria nomina*).⁶¹ The single faith and the single baptism indicate that the three divine persons are one.⁶² As a consequence of this equality of essence of the Father and the Son, one must not question who of the divine persons was before/after the other one.⁶³ This equality of essence of Father and Son is also expressed in an equality and unity of action, an *una operatio*.⁶⁴ For this reason Christ

⁵⁵ For the source material regarding Apollinaris available in the time of Pelagius, see STUDER, B., *Apollinaristae*, in MAYER, C., *Augustinus-Lexikon*, Vol. 1, Basel 1986-1994, 392-395.

⁵⁶ Pelagius elaborates this especially in *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 (PLS1, 1544-1546). *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 (PLS1, 1545) is a reaction against the thesis that the essence identity between Father and Son is a matter of *non pares, sed dispares*.

⁵⁷ *De fid. trin.* frag. 5 (PLS1, 1555).

⁵⁸ *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 (PLS1, 1544); frag. 4 (PLS1, 1552); frag. 4 (PLS1, 1553). Thinking that Father and Son are another substance is an *impietas* (frag. 1, 1546).

⁵⁹ *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 (PLS1, 1544); frag. 1 (PLS1, 1546); frag. 4 (PLS1, 1552); frag. 4 (PLS1, 1553). (Cf. frag. 2 PL 39, 2199.) See *De fid. trin.* frag. 5 (PLS1, 1557): Father and Son are *consubstantius*. The Holy Spirit, of which Pelagius argued four times that it is no creature, is called two times *consustantialis* to God (frag. 4, 1550-1551).

⁶⁰ Quoting John 14,9: 'qui me vidit, vidit et patrem' Pelagius writes in *De fid. trin.* frag. 1: Videt enim quodammodo in una persona duas, qui eam uidere, id est intellegere substantiam potest, quae una est in duabus. (PLS1, 1548). (In frag. 2 this is explained with a comparison: As *splendor* comes from the sun *substantialiter*, the Son comes from the Father *substantialiter*, namely 'cum sint unius essentiae, non tamen sunt unius personae' (PL 39, frag. 2, 2199). Augustine, in reaction against Arius, illustrates the equality of Father and Son with the following comparison: as there is no *splendor* without *ignis*, there is no Father without Son (*De Trinitate* VI,1,1). This comparison can also be found in Hilarius of Poitiers (*De Trinitate* VI,12; VII,29) and Gregorius of Nazianze (*Oratio* 29,3).

⁶¹ *De fid. trin.* frag. 4 (PLS1, 1552-1554).

⁶² *De fid. trin.* frag. 4 (PLS1, 1553).

⁶³ *De fid. trin.* frag. 5 (PLS1, 1557). Cf. *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 (PLS1, 1547).

⁶⁴ *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 (PLS1, 1546-1547); frag. 4 (PLS1, 1549); frag. 5 (PLS1, 1555). Father and Son do the same things, they act equally. In fragment 1 it is shown that they create together. Fragment 5 teaches that they redeem together. For the equality of Creator and Redeemer, see BOHLIN, T., *Die Theologie des Pelagius und ihre*

has to be worshipped and glorified in the same way as the Father is.⁶⁵ Christus 'deus uerus est.'⁶⁶ Pelagius asserts that everybody who denies this, is diverting from the Christian creed.⁶⁷

Fragment 4 is devoted to a description of the Holy Spirit. Pelagius explains in a first part that what is said about the Father and the Son, is also valid for the Holy Spirit.⁶⁸ Pelagius proves this by quoting the Scriptures. To illustrate the equality of the Spirit on the one side with the Father and the Son on the other, Pelagius lists seven features that the Holy Spirit has in common with the Father and the Son. In doing this, Pelagius describes seven features of Christ: Christ sanctifies man and inhabits man (*habitare in*). The Son came out of the Father (*prodisse de*). The Father testifies of the Son. Christ is our *aduocatus*⁶⁹, is the truth and is good. In fragment 5 Pelagius states that everything that is said about the Father, can also be said about the Son: *dominus et deus, omnipotens, altissimus, omnia in omnibus, dominus maiestatis*. Just as one has to believe in the Father and worship Him, one has to believe in the Son and worship Him. Both of them resuscitate the dead and bring them to life.⁷⁰

Christ is the Creator.⁷¹ The substance of the creature has nothing in common with the substance of the Creator.⁷² Man however is made in such a way that he refers to his Creator, Christ.⁷³ Man is, as

Genesis, BUCH, H. (trans.), (Uppsala universitetsarsskrift 9), Wiesbaden/Uppsala 1957, *passim*. Cf. THIER, *Kirche*, pp. 106-107. EVANS, *Pelagius*, p. 120: "Here, undoubtedly, is Pelagius's own deepest motive for his insistence upon the full deity of the Son. It is none but the Creator who has come to man in redemption, the Father and Son share *una operatio* – he makes these points a number of times. And for him this would mean that the Redeemer cannot conceivably violate the structure of that human nature which he has created. Here the Trinitarian motif converges with the anti-Manichaeic motif. Created human will is free from any necessity external to itself. Such will is implanted in man at creation, goes underground but is not destroyed in the course of human history, and emerges again in its own effectual working through the restoring activity of Christ."

⁶⁵ *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 (PLS1, 1545-1546).

⁶⁶ *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 (PLS1, 1544-1545).

⁶⁷ *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 (PLS 1, 1545).

⁶⁸ *De fid. trin.* frag. 4 (PLS1, 1549-1550). Cf. VALERO, J. B., *Las bases antropológicas de Pelagio and su tratado de las Expositiones*, Madrid 1980, pp. 120-181.

⁶⁹ *De fid. trin.* frag. 4: Christ helps the sinners (1John 2,1), the Holy Spirit assists Christians in their prayer (cf. *Rom.* 8,26 in DUPONT, *Die Christusfigur*, pp. 369-370). With Ps. 142,10 Pelagius points out that the Holy Spirit leads Christians on the right path (PLS1, 1550).

⁷⁰ *De fid. trin.* frag. 5 (PLS1, 1555-1556).

⁷¹ *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 (PLS1, 1546-1547).

⁷² *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 (PLS1, 1546).

⁷³ *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 (PLS1, 1546).

Gn. 1,26 describes, the image and likeness of the Creator. Christ however is the image and likeness of the Father, not because He refers to the Father, but because He is *co-aequalis* to the Father.⁷⁴

Compared with the Romans Commentary it is striking that, besides the possible connection with the theme of *imago et similitudo*, Pelagius's concept of *exemplum* does not appear in *De fide trinitatis*. However, a parallel idea is that of the working of Christ as grace. Pelagius introduces this by formulating incarnation as a *remedium*, Christ as an *advocatus*. That *gratia Christi* has in *De fide trinitatis* three interconnected aspects: Christ creates people, sanctifies them and resuscitates them. Creation, sanctification and redemption come together in Christ: Christological grace.

Remarkable is the rather careful way in which Pelagius wrote *De fide trinitatis*. He states for example that one is not allowed to think about the origin of the Father and the Son. One should just believe what is written in Scriptures. Outside the faith in the Scriptures, there is only a harmful curiosity.⁷⁵ This differs from the Romans Commentary in which Pelagius thinks that a natural knowledge of God is plausible for man. Incidentally, knowledge of God had a more moral and existential character in the Commentary, while that knowledge in *De fide trinitatis* is rather merely methodical-theological. Pelagius does not exhort to an authentic Christian life in the remaining fragments of *De fide trinitatis*, although this was a central topic in the Romans Commentary.

The reconstruction of the Christology in the fragments of *De fide trinitatis* revealed some elements that were not present in the Romans Commentary, nor in *De natura*. On the one hand, this is an interesting addition to the survey of the Christology of the early Pelagius. On the other hand, the differences between *De fide trinitatis* and the other two early writings make me to hesitate to ascribe *De fide trinitatis* to Pelagius without further research. Indeed, *De fide trinitatis* has a completely different topic and aim than a Scriptures commentary, and this could explain the difference in style and approach. That difference is for the most part also present when comparing a tractate on human nature and a text about Trinitarian theology. A file solely based on the Romans Commentary and *De natura* is by consequence a too narrow a basis to deny or affirm Pelagius's authorship of *De fide*

⁷⁴ *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 (PLS1, 1546).

⁷⁵ *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 (PLS1, 1548); frag. 4 (PLS1, 1554). See the clear parallel with *De natura* (Nr. 30) c. 44 (n. 13) regarding the carefulness of investigating that what cannot be read.

trinitatis. For this reason, one has to consider additional material undeniably from Pelagius's hand that can help to decide whether the fragments from *De fide trinitatis* could be of Pelagius: his *Libellus fidei*.

3. Digression: *Libellus fidei*

Because of the doubts risen about Pelagius's authorship of *De fide trinitatis*, we will leave for a moment our chosen strategy of restricting ourselves to the early writings. To investigate whether the Christology developed in *De fide trinitatis* fits Pelagius's thinking in general and more specifically his ideas about Christ, we will study Pelagius's *Libellus fidei*.⁷⁶ He addressed his *Libellus fidei* to Pope Innocent I in defence of his orthodoxy that was being questioned by the African episcopate.⁷⁷ At first sight, we are dropped into the middle of the controversy. However, reading Pelagius's *Libellus fidei* somewhat more carefully shows that it actually does not deal with the topics of the controversy.⁷⁸ The central theme is Trinitarian-Christological. Evidence to establish orthodoxy is apparently to be found within this area according to Pelagius.⁷⁹ Incidentally, the only real difference with

⁷⁶ *Libellus fidei* in PL: PL 39, 2181-2183, PL 45, 1716-1718, PL 48, 488-491, PL 48, 498-505. This article follows the text and numbering of PL 48, 488-491.

⁷⁷ Written by Pelagius around March 417 to prove his orthodoxy after the condemnation of Pelagius and Caelestius in the three letters of 27 January 417 of Innocent I (*Epistula* 181-183, CSEL 44, 701-730). These three answer three letters of the African bishops to Innocent I with the request to condemn Pelagius and Caelestius (*Epistula* 175-177, CSEL 44, 652-688).

Lamberigts reports that there is only certainty of Pelagius's authorship of the Romans Commentary, the letter to Demetrias and his *Libellus fidei*. Lamberigts however has doubts about the origin of *Libellus fidei*, because of the clear parallels with the *Libellus* of Caelestius. LAMBERIGTS, *Recent Research*, p. 179: n. 18.

⁷⁸ Augustine reproached Pelagius's *Libellus fidei* of dealing with precisely those topics that were not relevant for the discussion of the controversy. *De gratia Christi et de peccato originali* I, XXXII/35 (CSEL 42, 152-153). DEWART, *The Christology*, p. 1229: "It may have been a diversionary tactic on the part of the pelagians, or (as I think more likely) an attempt to show themselves unimpeachably orthodox in areas where heresies had traditionally lurked."

⁷⁹ Does Pelagius think that the matter of orthodoxy is restricted to Christology and Trinitarian doctrine, and that orthodoxy has nothing to do with the controversial topics? Or does Pelagius remain silent about these subjects of discussion out of tactical concerns? Although the second motivation does not exclude the first one, these questions cannot be answered textually on the basis of *Libellus fidei*. The fact that the fragments of *De fide trinitatis* do not deal with these topics is obvious, since this text is devoted solely to Trinitarian and Christological themes. *De natura* however deals with controversial topics. Here however remains the question where *De natura* has to

the otherwise equivalent *Libellus fidei* of Caelestius is that it the latter deals, very briefly, with the controversial topic of original sin.⁸⁰

The more controversial topics only come up in the last paragraphs of *Libellus fidei*. Pelagius writes in *Lib. fid.* 17 that there is only one baptism and that this has to be celebrated in the same sacramental words for children as for adults.⁸¹ *Lib. fid.* 17, on the baptism of children, has to be confronted with the fragment from *De natura* in which Pelagius declares that infants are born *sani*, not made sick by the sin of Adam and as such do not have the need for a *medicus*.⁸² *Lib. fid.* 17 however is not completely clear over Pelagius's precise conviction regarding infant baptism and the (sinless) nature of the newborn. Pelagius defends himself against those who accuse him of rejecting infant baptism in the letter that accompanied his *Libellus fidei*. Only two (not-Christological) themes are dealt with in this (reconstructed) letter: Pelagius states that he does not refute infant baptism and that he does not claim (nor has ever written) that God's grace is not necessary as assistance in human life.⁸³

As in *De natura* Pelagius here also presents himself as being in favour of creationism. He positions himself against traducianism by stating that the human soul is an immediate creation by God.⁸⁴ Pelagius condemns in the same paragraph the Origenistic and Manichean

be situated (temporally) in the controversy and what Augustine's role is in the preservation of the fragments of *De natura*.

⁸⁰ Caelestius offers a *libellus fidei* to Pope Zosimus (PL 48, 499-505) to prove his orthodoxy. The difference between the two confessions of faith lies in the content of two assertions of Caelestius. Caelestius firstly claims that baptism of children is necessary. He does not accept along with this position an inherited sinfulness of children. Infants are born without sin. Sin is not a natural *delictum*, but it is the result of a sinful choice of the will. Baptism of children is necessary to obtain entry to the Heavenly Kingdom (*regnum coelorum*). Caelestius secondly rejects the African position of *tradux peccati*, since this is not grounded on the Scriptures. Such a position would also imply doing injustice to the Creator. (CAELESTIUS, *Lib. fid.* 18-20, PL 48, 502-503). The difference between Pelagius's and Caelestius's *libelli* is not as much Christological, as pertaining to the polemics with the African episcopate. Caelestius dealt, albeit very concisely, with these two controversial points, while Pelagius remained silent about them, perhaps because he did not think it necessary to prove them orthodox. Cf. WERMELINGER, O., *Rom und Pelagius: Die theologische Position der römischen Bischöfe im pelagianischen Streit in den Jahren 411-432* (Päpste und Papsttum 7), Stuttgart 1975, p. 138.

⁸¹ *Lib. fid.* 17 (PL 48, 490).

⁸² *De nat.* 14, 23, pp. 256-257.

⁸³ *Epistula purgationis ad Innocentium papam*. Reconstruction by GARNIER in PL 48, (609/610-613/615).

⁸⁴ *Lib. fid.* 20.

ideas on the human soul.⁸⁵ He rejects every thesis that alleges that God commends to man something impossible and that God's commandments cannot be fulfilled by individuals separately but only by all in community.⁸⁶ Notice that Pelagius states that it is possible for the individual to observe God's commandments. This opens the possibility of a righteous, sinless life. Pelagius condemns those who with Mani reject marriage or those who like the Cataphrygi are against remarriage.⁸⁷ Pelagius finally emphasizes human freedom (*liberum arbitrium*), without denying the human need for God's help. As well those who, like the Manicheans, claim that man cannot avoid sin ("peccatum vitare non posse") and those who with Jovinianus claim that man cannot sin ("non posse peccare"), are mistaken according to Pelagius.⁸⁸ *Lib. fid.* 25 rebukes Jovinianus's contention that those who have received the baptism in full faith, cannot lose the received grace and that those who are reborn in baptism, cannot be brought to fall by the devil. No, Pelagius answers, sinning is always possible (*posse*).⁸⁹ This rejection of the thesis that people are by definition sinful or completely without sin, is similar to fragments from *De natura* in which Pelagius carefully notes that the concept of sinlessness is not a matter of *esse sine peccato*, but is about a *posse (non) peccare*.⁹⁰ Put otherwise, this distinction between the possibility (*posse*) and the factual reality (*esse*) of sinlessness presents a denial that man is essential sinful or essentially unable to sin.

⁸⁵ *Lib. fid.* 20: [...] anathematizantes eos qui animam quasi partem divinae dicunt esse substantiae: eorum quoque condemnamus errorem, qui eas ante peccasse, vel in coelis conversatas fuisse, dicunt, quam in corpora mitterentur. (PL 48, 491).

⁸⁶ *Lib. fid.* 21 (PL 48, 491).

⁸⁷ *Lib. fid.* 22 (PL 48, 491). *Cataphrygi* is a name for the adherents of montanism. Pelagius's reference to montanism is about their strict (rigorist) ethics that e.g. forbade a second marriage (cf. TERTULLIANUS, *De monogamia* 15, 1). Pelagius probably rejects Jerome's marriage doctrine in this way. Jerome refused in his *Adversus Iovinianum* the possibility of a second marriage. See BOHLIN, *Die Theologie*, *passim*. EVANS, *Pelagius*, pp. 26-42: *The Critic of Jerome's Teaching on Marriage*, pp. 41-42: regarding Pelagius's *Libellus fidei*.

⁸⁸ *Lib. fid.* 25 (PL 48, 491). Pelagius did not react against Jovinianus in the commentary on the Romans, but he did this in his commentary on the other letters of Paul. Cf. EVANS, *Four Letters*, p. 132: n. 34. EVANS, *Pelagius*, p. 41.

⁸⁹ This could also be read in *Lib. fid.* 18: Hominem, si post baptismum lapsus fuerit, per poenitentiam credimus posse salvari. (PL 48, 490). (Cf. *Rom.* 6,9 where Pelagius suggests penance instead of a second baptism as a way to obtain forgiveness for sins.) *Lib. fid.* 16, about 'rewards according to work' and 'punishment according to sin', can be considered as a reaction against Jovinianus's radical distinction between the just and sinners and his denial of grades of merit and sin.

⁹⁰ See n. 5.

The content of the *Libellus fidei* reacts particularly against the same heterodox tendencies Pelagius calls by name in his Romans Commentary and *De fide trinitatis*. *Libellus fidei*, in the matter of human freedom, rejects the opinions of Manicheism⁹¹ and Jovinianus. Probably also in reaction against Manicheism, Pelagius declares, as in the Romans Commentary, that both the Old and the New Testament have to be accepted.⁹² When Pelagius explains that the Father and the Son are substantially equal and at the same time two distinct persons, he explicitly rejects the positions of Arius and Sabellius regarding these topics. By clarifying that Christ is truly divine and truly human, Pelagius condemns the heterodoxies of Apollinaris and Photinus.

“Das eigentliche Verständnis des *Libellus fidei* ist von Pelagius her zu gewinnen. Er verteidigt in einem langen trinitarisch-christologischen Teil, der keineswegs überflüssig ist, seine Positionen gegenüber den Irrlehren des vierten Jahrhunderts, wie er schon in seinen Pauluskommentaren und seinen Büchern über die Trinität verfochten hatte.”⁹³ The *Libellus fidei* contains christologically the same two cruxes as *De fide trinitatis*, obviously written in reaction against the afore mentioned Christological *haeretici*. Father and Son are of the same *substantia*, ‘ὁμοούσιον’ as the Greek say. Father and Son are equal in everything. Father is not lesser than Son, Son is not lesser than Father.⁹⁴ They refer in everything to each other. That is why

⁹¹ I suspect that *Lib. fid.* 15 (PL 48, 490), affirming that resurrection is a restoration of the condition in which we now (earthly and bodily) live, can be considered as an anti-Manichean positive appreciation of the earthly, the bodily.

⁹² *Lib. fid.* 19 (PL 48, 491).

⁹³ WERMELINGER, *Rom*, p. 139.

⁹⁴ *Lib. fid.* 2 (PL 48, 489). The anti-Arian theme ‘non factum sed genitum’ is also present in *De fide trinitatis* frag. 2 together with other anti-Arian theme’s, as ‘Christus Filius Dei, Deus et homo, secundum divinitatem ante tempora, sine initio, inenarrabiliter a Patre genitus est’ and ‘Filius ex substantia Patris genitus’. (frag. 2, PL 39, 2199). A hypothesis for further research is the question whether Pelagius had knowledge of Athanasius. It is a fact that Athanasius reacted against the Arians (in *Orationes iii contra Arianos*) and Apollinaris (in *Epistula ad Epictetum episcopum Corinthi*). This is also Pelagius’s project in *Libellus fidei* and in the fragments from *De fide trinitatis*. There are also Christological similarities. Athanasius stressed the complete divine nature of the Son and the identical essence of the Father and the Son. In doing so, Athanasius reacts against the ‘Arian’ claim that the Son is not equal to the Father in essence. Kannengieser shows that incarnation, which he considers to be the focus of Athanasius’ theology, means that God Himself became man. Widdicombe explains that Athanasius states against the ‘Arians’ that the Son is not merely an attribute or a name of God. These are also the pillars of Pelagius’s thinking on Christ and Trinity. Other parallels can also be observed: the importance of ascetical and moral lifestyle, the Pauline theme of Christ as second Adam, and the condemnation of pagan offerings. ALTANER, B., *Augustinus und Athanasius*, in *IBID.*, *Kleine Patristische Schriften*, Berlin

Christ is also Creator.⁹⁵ Christ is not only Creator, He also is the eschatological Judge. Christ received from the Father all powers in heaven and earth to judge the living and the death, to punish sinners and to reward the just.⁹⁶

This is also the case for the Holy Spirit.⁹⁷ All three divine persons are perfectly equal, apart from personal properties (*proprietas personarum*), not forgetting that what is said about one divine person can also be said about the other two.⁹⁸ This does not undo the difference between the three persons, each with their own name.⁹⁹ Pelagius's thinking on the Trinity as 'one divine substance and three different persons expressed in three names' is an explicit reaction against Arius and Sabellius.¹⁰⁰ Pelagius here uses the term *hypostasis* (ὁπόστασις) in the meaning of the concept of *persona* in the context of the three distinct persons in the Trinity.¹⁰¹

Christ assumed human nature.¹⁰² Since Christ is both human and divine, He is at the same time *passibilis* and *impassibilis*.¹⁰³ Because

1967, 260-268. BRAKKE, D., *Athanasius*, in FITZGERALD, A. D. (ed.), *Augustine through the Ages. An Encyclopedia*, Grand Rapids/Cambridge 1999, 77-79. GENTZ, G., *Athanasius*, in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 1 (1950) 860-866. KANNENGIESSER, C., *Le verbe de Dieu selon Athanase d'Alexandrie* (Collection Jésus et Jésus Christ 45), Tournai 1990. LEEMANS, J., *Thirteen Years of Athanasius Research (1985-1998): A Survey and Bibliography*, in *Sacris Erudiri* 39 (2000) 105-217, esp. pp. 171-186. PETTERSEN, A., *Athanasius* (Outstanding Christian Thinkers), London 1995. WIDDICOMBE, P., *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius* (Oxford Theological Monographs), Oxford 1994, pp. 145-249.

⁹⁵ *Lib. fid.* 3 (PL 48, 489).

⁹⁶ *Lib. fid.* 14 (PL 48, 490).

⁹⁷ *Lib. fid.* 4 (PL 48, 489).

⁹⁸ *Lib. fid.* 5. (PL 48, 489).

⁹⁹ *Lib. fid.* 7. (PL 48, 489).

¹⁰⁰ *Lib. fid.* 6 (PL 48, 489).

¹⁰¹ Since the Council of Chalcedon (451) *hypostasis* (ὁπόστασις) distinct from φύσις and πρόσωπον (*persona*) are considered as equal, describing Christ as one person and two natures. The concept *hypostasis* (*substantia*, *subsistentia*, *essentia*, *persona*) previously could refer as well to the three persons of the Trinity as to the two natures of Christ. DENZINGER, H., SCHÖNMETZER, A., *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, §§300-303: pp. 106-109: *Symbolum Chalcedonense*. GRILLMEIER, *Fragmente zur Christologie*, pp. 142-151. MEINHARDT, H., *Hypostase*, in *Lexikon des Mittelalters* 5 (1991) 250.

¹⁰² *Lib. fid.* 8 (PL 48, 489).

¹⁰³ *Lib. fid.* 11-12: Nos autem dicimus susceptum ita a Dei Filio passibile nostrum, ut Deitas impassibilis permaneret: passus est enim Dei Filius non putative, sed vere omnia quae Scripturae testatur, id est, esuriem, sitim, lassitudinem, dolorem, mortem, et caetera huiusmodi. Secundum illud passus est quod pati poterat, id est secundum illam substantiam quae assumpta est; ipse enim Dei Filius secundum suam Deitatem impassibilis est ut Pater, incomprehensibilis ut Pater, invisibilis ut Pater, inconvertibilis ut Pater; et quamvis propria persona Filii, id est, Dei Verbum suscepit

Christ is human, He really died. Christ's humanity was not undone by the resurrection, but was actually glorified.¹⁰⁴ Christ unified in Himself two substances, the divine and the human, without the one changing into the other.¹⁰⁵ This is a reaction against Photinus who neglected the divinity of Christ. By stating that Christ is "verum Dei filium, non factum aut adoptivum", Pelagius reacts against Photinus, who claimed that Christ actually was a human who earned adoption by God because of his virtues.¹⁰⁶ Apollinaris denied that Christ became truly human. Pelagius on the contrary explains that Christ completely took human nature on Him, except for sin since sin is not natural.¹⁰⁷ By clarifying that the thesis that Christ became fully man is not denied by the fact He did not sin (since sinning is not human from nature) Pelagius implicitly argues against the concept of a *peccatum naturae* (a *peccatum originale* since Adam's fall intrinsically and unavoidably part of the human existence and essence). Pelagius rebukes the assertion that Christ by necessity of the flesh lied and that He, by assuming humanity, was no longer able to do what He wanted to do.¹⁰⁸

Pelagius ends his confession of faith by stating that he learned this faith in the Church, that he holds on to it and is open to possible corrections from the bishop of Rome.¹⁰⁹

Regarding the content, the parallels between *De fide trinitatis* and *Libellus fidei* are significant: the same Christology is developed, the same heterodox interpretations are tackled.¹¹⁰ In both writings,

passibilem hominem, ita tamen ejus habitatione secundum suam substantiam Deitas Verbi nihil passa est, ut tota Trinitas, quam impassibilem confiteri necesse est. (PL 48, 490).

¹⁰⁴ *Lib. fid.* 13: Mortuus est ergo Dei Filius, secundum Scripturas, juxta illud quod mori poterat. Resurrexit tertia die, ascendit in coelum, sedet ad dexteram Dei Patris, manente eadem natura carnis in qua natus et passus est, in qua etiam resurrexit. Non enim exinanita est humanitatis substantia, sed glorificata, et in aeternum cum Deitate mansura. (PL 48, 490).

¹⁰⁵ *Lib. fid.* 10 (PL 48, 490).

¹⁰⁶ *Lib. fid.* 2 (PL 48, 489).

¹⁰⁷ *Lib. fid.* 9 (PL 48, 489-490).

¹⁰⁸ *Lib. fid.* 23 (PL 48, 491). DEWART, *The Christology*, pp. 1229-1230: "The reference was to Jerome who, in his anti-pelagian dialogues, had written that Christ said 'to his brethren and relatives that he was not going up to Scenopagia ... then he went up ... not publicly, but ... secretly'. Porphyry had found this scandalous and Jerome faulted him for not realizing that 'all scandals must be imputed to the flesh'. Earlier in the same dialogue Jerome had mocked the pelagians for saying they could do whatever they wanted when Christ could not even keep his entry into a house secret, as he wished, because of 'the reality of his assumed humanity'."

¹⁰⁹ *Lib. fid.* 26 (PL 48, 491).

¹¹⁰ See MARTINI, *Ambrosiaster*, pp. 174-177.

Christological definitions are constructed around concepts as *substantia*, *natura*, *deitas* and *humanitas*. These similarities in the content between the *Libellus fidei* and the fragments from *De fide trinitatis* took away my previous doubts about Pelagius's authorship of those fragments. To be more precise, I am convinced that *De fide trinitatis* is written at least by an author with the same Christological and Trinitarian opinions. There are however also differences between *De fide trinitatis* and *Libellus fidei*. These are probably caused by a difference in the context of composition and motivation. A remarkable difference lies within the language regarding *haeretici*. As in *De fide trinitatis*, they are labelled as an *error*¹¹¹ and as an *impietas*¹¹². *Libellus fidei* uses a much more condemning language: it is now about *blasphemia*¹¹³ and *haeresis*¹¹⁴ that one has to *damnare*¹¹⁵, *condemnare*¹¹⁶, *anathematizare*¹¹⁷. This condemning language reveals the 'strategy' followed by Pelagius. Forced to defend himself, Pelagius attacks those theses that threaten orthodoxy, in an attempt to defend his own orthodoxy. Another difference with *De fide trinitatis* is that Pelagius's ethical (-harimatological) thinking, be it in the background, is present in the *Libellus fidei*: Pelagius stresses that God's commandments are observable, that sin is not intrinsically human. He defines the liberty of will as a *posse peccare et non peccare posse* and even suggests that earthly existence is not bad. *Libellus fidei* also gives a more systematic and structuralized impression than *De fide trinitatis*. This impression is probably due to the fact that only a few fragments of *De fide trinitatis* survived, making it impossible to evaluate the whole.

It should be observed that Pelagius in *De fide trinitatis* and *Libellus fidei* corresponds with the by H. Denzinger collected dogmatical declarations of the period of time between the Council of Nicea and the Council of Carthage (418). The two writings of Pelagius, regarding Christological and Trinitarian themes, correspond, as much in content as in formulation, with the promulgated creeds and condemnations of subordinationism and modalism of that period. The Council of Carthage moved the attention to the discussion on *gratia* and *peccatum originale*. Precisely on these topics Pelagius's orthodoxy

¹¹¹ *error*: *Lib. fid.* 20 (PL 48, 491); *errare*: *Lib. fid.* 25 (PL 48, 491).

¹¹² *Lib. fid.* 6 (PL 48, 489).

¹¹³ *Lib. fid.* 10, 21 (PL 48, 490; 491).

¹¹⁴ *Lib. fid.* 10, 24 (PL 48, 490; 491).

¹¹⁵ *Lib. fid.* 22, 24 (PL 48, 491; 491).

¹¹⁶ *Lib. fid.* 9, 20 (PL 48, 489; 491).

¹¹⁷ *Lib. fid.* 9, 20; 23 (PL 48, 489; 491).

is questioned.¹¹⁸ As a final remark, it has to be pointed out that pope Zosimus in September 417, based on the *libelli fidei* of Caelestius and Pelagius, acquitted them both of the charges of heresy, and declared them to be orthodox.¹¹⁹

4. General comparison of the writings of the (early) Pelagius

The concern for Christological heterodoxy, a key subject in the Romans Commentary, is in that Commentary interwoven with other themes and actually depends on the topics Paul deals with in his letter. In *De fide trinitatis* and *Libellus fidei* that concern becomes the only main topic, not connected with other theological (and moral) themes. This is the reason why Pelagius did not think in these two writings about the topics that seemed to be important in his Romans Commentary: specific moral and anthropological themes, the relation between Jews and gentiles, between law, works and grace. This also causes a different approach to the Scriptures. Clarifications in the Romans Commentary are done because of the biblical text, while in *De natura* and *De fide trinitatis* the Bible is quoted to support Pelagius's arguments. The *Libellus fidei* does not refer to Scriptures (unless in the additional letter). In *De fide trinitatis* and *Libellus fidei* Pelagius's apologetics get a more systematic form. The right doctrine is explained there in a conceptual way by pointing out possible wrong interpretations in a structuralised way. This difference with the Commentary on the Romans is obvious. It is caused by a difference in the point of departure and the aims of this writing.

There are also differences regarding the content that cannot be solely explained by the difference in the nature of the writings. While Pelagius in his Romans Commentary targets the Manichean heterodoxy in particular, the Trinitarian and Christological heterodoxies receive his full attention in *De fide trinitatis* and *Libellus fidei*. While the Christology in the Romans Commentary issues an (ethical) invitation to imitate Christ, we notice in *De fide trinitatis* and *Libellus fidei* a systematic theologian at work who clarifies in a theological-technical way the dogmas about Christ and rebukes possible diverting interpretations in an argued way. The list of names of *haeretici* in the area of

¹¹⁸ DENZINGER, H., SCHÖNMETZER, A., *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, §§125-219: pp. 52-81.

¹¹⁹ ZOSIMUS, *Epistula* 2-3 (CSEL 35/1, 99-108).

Christology that are corrected by Pelagius, becomes significantly longer in *De fide trinitatis* and *Libellus fidei*. The core of Pelagius's reasoning is that Christ is fully God and became truly man. That position is not absent in the Romans Commentary, although Pelagius does not elaborate this point in a systematic way. The Romans Commentary stresses, on the one hand, that Christ is divine (and fully equal to the Father) against Photinus and Arius, and on the other hand the incarnation (not involving not-intrinsic-human sin) of God in Christ against some pagans. It is remarkable that Pelagius's approach of heterodox tendencies is rather neutral in the Romans Commentary and *De fide trinitatis*, while he is stricter and more condemning in *Libellus fidei*. *Exemplum* is a central concept in the Romans Commentary. Neither in the fragments of *De fide trinitatis*, nor in *Libellus fidei* does the term *exemplum* appear, or does it play a role, generally or christologically, as an exhortation to imitate Christ. Concerns for genuine ethical Christian life, the matters of sin and free will are not forgotten, but only have background importance in *De fide trinitatis* and *Libellus fidei*.¹²⁰ In *De natura* on the contrary, Pelagius deals almost exclusively with the meaning of the possibility of a sinless life. The relationship between the carnal and the spiritual, a crucial point in the Romans Commentary, is not present in the other writings, except in *De natura*. The implication of this relation/distinction between flesh and spirit however, just as in the Romans Commentary and in *De natura*, can also be found in *Libellus fidei*: Christ became man, except in sin, since sin actually is not naturally human. The relationship between Adam and Christ, a central concept of the Romans Commentary, is hardly to be found in the other two early writings and in *Libellus fidei*. The sin of Adam is dealt with in *De natura*, but not in *De fide trinitatis* and *Libellus fidei*. In these last three mentioned writings, the thought of the need of grace (as help from God) is present, however not on the foreground. As in the Romans Commentary, Christ, especially his death, is considered as grace in *De natura* and *De fide trinitatis*.

¹²⁰ J. Rivière argues that Pelagius looks at the Christian faith from a practical point of view, i.e. from the perspective of the active life of Christians. This can be seen especially in his Commentary on Paul. Pelagius does not approach belief and faith speculatively or mystically. He presents rather a moral and rational approach. It however remains an approach – as legitimate as others – of the Christian faith. As such, Pelagius is not in contradiction with his other writings that are speculative-theological, dealing with redemption by Christ aimed at remission of sin. That ostensible contradiction disappears when one focuses on the historical and doctrinal context of those writings. RIVIÈRE, J., *Hétérodoxie des pélagiens en fait de rédemption?*, in *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 41 (1946) 5-43, pp. 41-43.

Again, it becomes clear that Pelagius is not a mere moralist, nor a pure rationalist. Moral topics do not play a leading part in the writings studied in this article. One can hardly call Pelagius only a 'moralist' and not a theologian based on these writings. As in the Commentary on the Romans, prayer is not absent. In *De natura*, Pelagius states that one has to pray for grace.¹²¹ Regarding prayer, Pelagius declares in *De fide trinitatis*, as in the Romans Commentary, that the Holy Spirit helps Christians to pray.¹²² In *De natura* and *De fide trinitatis*, he asks for intellectual caution in approaching faith.¹²³ Without falling into fideism – *De natura*, *De fide trinitatis* and *Libellus fidei* are writings based on the rational capacities of man – Pelagius resists a strict and pure rationalism. Some truths of the faith apparently cannot be rationally scrutinized. The Scriptures is always the norm. The substantiated condemnation of different Christological and Trinitarian misconceptions, and especially the conceptual developing of a Christology and a Trinity theology in *De fide trinitatis* and *Libellus fidei* clearly show us Pelagius as a theologian, more precisely as a Christologist. Christology, just as in the Romans Commentary, even has a cosmological dimension, especially in *De fide trinitatis* and *Libellus fidei*, where Christ and the Creator are equated. This cosmological dimension is also implicitly present in *De natura*, where Pelagius ascribes the human capacity of sinlessness to the grace of the creating God.

The Romans Commentary was free from interferences from the pelagian controversy. Pelagius however already thought, freely, about the meaning and nature of Christ, of God's grace and Adam's sin. Later on, in the controversy, Pelagius will be forced to formulate these thoughts more precisely. The writings read in these articles show a gradual influence of the controversy. Pelagius affirms creationism and asks, in *De natura*, what the meaning is of Adam's sin, while he brings up the topic of infant baptism in his *Libellus fidei*. The controversy however does not play a leading part. Put more precisely, Pelagius is convinced that orthodoxy does not involve those questions, but only has to do with the right faith in the essence of Christ and Trinity. In this area of Christology and Trinitarian theology, Pelagius cannot be accused of heterodoxy. That is why Zosimus will acquit him. Whether

¹²¹ *De nat.* 12, 20, p. 256, here in n. 13.

¹²² *De fid. trin.* frag. 4 in n. 69. The *Libellus fidei* remains silent about prayer. The question whether Pelagius does this out of 'tactical' reasoning or because of the consideration that the opinion one has on the topic of prayer does not constitute one's orthodoxy, requires a study of the theme of prayer in the pelagian controversy.

¹²³ *De nat.* 30, 44, p. 264, here in n. 13. *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 and 4 in n. 75.

Pelagius also kept silent on those topics out of more tactical considerations, cannot be decided based upon the texts alone.

5. Conclusion

A final conclusion of the investigation of the Christology of the early Pelagius starts with an evaluation of the secondary literature about Pelagius. It is clear that Pelagius balances ethics and theology, just as human reason, human freedom and divine grace. Regarding the same secondary literature, the two articles show that not enough attention has been paid to Pelagius's Christology. On the one hand, especially in the Romans Commentary and *De natura*, Christology is revealed to be of essential significance for the, later, controversial themes of freedom and grace, original sin and baptism. Reconstructing Pelagius's Christology and investigating its relation to Pelagius's theological thinking in general, is thus necessary to place the typical 'pelagian' themes in their broader theological framework. On the other hand, *De fide trinitatis* and *Libellus fidei* revealed that Christology is an essential study subject for Pelagius. All the writings studied here showed that Pelagius developed his Christology in an autonomous way, largely independent of the controversy. Christology seems above all to be the keystone for orthodoxy according to Pelagius. Only the study of Pelagius's Christology makes it possible to form an objective and nuanced portrait of Pelagius as theologian. One of the few Christological points that emerges in the secondary literature, is the accusation that Pelagius reduces the meaning of Christ to one (of many) example(s) that have to be followed. This investigation showed that Pelagius neither denies the necessity of Christ's death, nor reduces Christ to an outwards and non-committing *exemplum*. According to Pelagius, Christ is grace.

The commentary of Pelagius on Paul's *Letter to the Romans* and *De natura* show the broader framework and the embedding of Pelagius's Christology in his anthropological, ethical and theological thinking in general. The emphasis of these two writings, also within his Christology, is embedded in the genuine Christian life. That is the reason for his Christology in the Romans Commentary and *De natura* being rather existential and appealing from nature. It is an exhortation to imitate the example of Christ. This clarifies why the notion *exemplum*, that occupies a central place in the Romans Commentary, is not to be found in the other writings. *Exemplum Christi* is a part of Pelagius's existential and ethical Christology. To stimulate real Christian

commitment, Pelagius declares in the Romans Commentary and *De natura* that sin is not rooted in human nature, but that man is free – free to obey, free to sin, free to choose. That freedom does not exclude the human need for Christ's grace in fulfilling his life-time project as a Christian. *De fide trinitatis* and *Libellus fidei* rather present Pelagius's 'pure' Christology, in which he systematically and conceptually explains the divine and human nature of Christ. Put otherwise, Pelagius studies in the Romans commentary and *De natura* the relationship between man and Christ, while Christ Himself is the study subject of *De fide trinitatis* and *Libellus fidei*. The Romans Commentary and *De natura* on one side, and *De fide trinitatis* and *Libellus fidei* on the other, are two different approaches of Christology, approaches which do not exclude each other but complement each other. In both approaches, the Christological core remains the same: Christ is truly man and fully God. This can hardly be called heterodox.

Reading Pelagius's Commentary on the letter of Paul to the Romans, *De natura*, *De fide trinitatis* and *Libellus fidei* is not without relevance for the Christology of today. Pelagius shows us some essential dimensions of Christology. As such, he can give an important contribution to our perception of the figure of Christ. Furthermore, the scholar who studies the Christology of the early Pelagius has to admit that Pelagius is not the heretic that he is later alleged to be. The emerging picture is rather one of a committed believer with a fascinating view on Christ and a profound concern for the right belief.

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