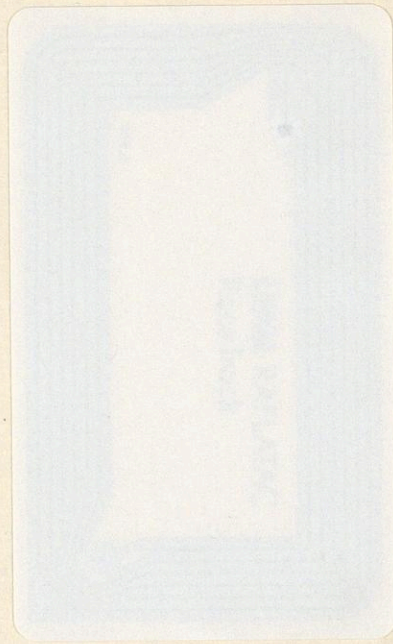




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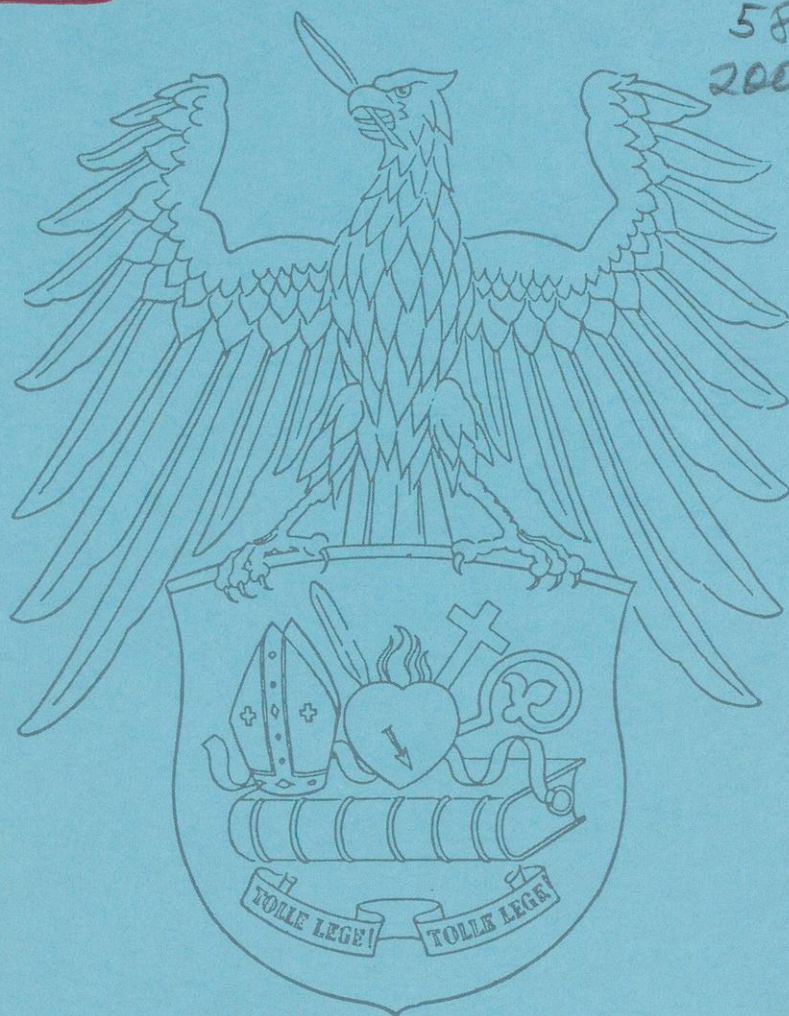






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## INTRODUCTION

During the Fifteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies (Oxford, August 2007), Prof. Dr. Mathijs Lamberigts (Leuven, Belgium) organised a workshop on Rom. 2:14 in the patristic era. Participants in this workshop were Prof. Dr. Josef Lössl (Cardiff University, UK), Prof. Dr. Jonathan Yates (Villanova, USA), Dra. Marleen Verschoren (Nijmegen, The Netherlands), Drs. Anthony Dupont (Leuven, Belgium). The elaborated versions of the papers they delivered during this workshop are gathered here. Prof. Dr. Marianne Djuth (Toronto, Canada) complements this workshop collection with a contribution on a related topic.

Rom. 2:14: "*Gentes quae legem non habent, naturaliter quae legis sunt faciunt; hi legem non habentes, ipsi sibi sunt lex.*"

This pericope touches the core of several much debated topics in the Pelagian controversy. Rom. 2:14 opens the debate on the possibility of the salvation and justification before and without the law of man in general, and more specific of the *gentes*. It is interwoven with soteriological-patristical questions on the state of the pagans and the matter of the natural law, the goodness of creation and the natural capacities of man, the relation between grace and freedom, Adam and Christ, Jews and gentiles. This is only a small selection of theological topics related to Rom. 2:14, that are not only restricted to the Pelagian controversy but extend to the whole range of patristic thinking and writing. This issue of *Augustiniana* on the one hand focuses on the protagonists of the Pelagian controversy and their interpretation of Rom. 2:14. On the other hand it discusses the controversy within the broader context of the *Ideengeschichte* around Rom. 2:14.

Josef Lössl deals with the pre-controversial development of the theology of Rom. 2:14 in *Keeping Closely to Paul. The 'Early' Use and Exegesis of Romans 2:14-16. Some Examples*. In a first move Lössl situates the pericope within the context of Paul's letter to the Romans, especially regarding the themes of the relation between Jews and gentiles, the inscription of the law in the (gentile) hearts. Lössl explains how Rom. 2:14 illustrates that Paul considered the law of nature as a natural equivalent of the Jewish Law, implying that gentiles, just as Jews, will have to undergo judgement day. Lössl also links it with First and early Second century sources (Epistle of Barnabas, Clement, and Philo of Alexandria). Subsequently, Lössl sketches



the development of an early exegesis of Rom. 2:14. In Clement, Tertullian and Origen, there is at first sight a considerable development away from the text of Paul. Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria give a different explanation of the verse. Tertullian tends to read it in a rather negative way: Jews and pagans share the same basis to be judged, or to be condemned. Tertullian generally rejects Greek philosophy. If Greek philosophers succeeded in finding God, this was a matter of pure coincidence and only due to the fact that God placed truth in nature. The knowledge of God that Greek philosophers could reach by nature is, however, not sufficient, as faith remains necessary. Clement has a more positive attitude. Jews and gentiles have an equally valid way to reach God. He is convinced that Greek philosophers could attain knowledge of God by studying nature. These are, however, the Greeks of the past. In the present God cannot be found without faith. Origen continues this appreciating approach of non-Christians. All people can come to know God – by nature, by the law, by faith. In his overview, Lössl shows that – despite the earlier supposition that Clement, Tertullian and Origen would deviate from Paul – the early patristic exegesis of Rom. 2:14 remained surprisingly close to what Paul meant, the equality in judgment for Jews and gentiles.

With his diachronic analytical essay entitled *Romans 2:14-15 in the Latin Tradition Before the Pelagian Controversies*, Jonathan Yates samples the various ways and contexts in which these verses were employed by Latin Christian authors in the half-century prior to 411 AD. Yates' essay begins with a brief summary of questions that continue to puzzle exegetes of this section of Paul's Letter to the Romans. Yates then transitions to a survey of the Patristic data. Except for the first sub-section, which is dedicated to Rufinus of Aquileia's translation of Origen, this survey runs in chronological order and incorporates excerpts from the work of Hilary of Poitiers, Ambrosiaster, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and Pelagius. The ideas of the so-called, but still highly problematic, "Budapest anonymous" are treated in an excursus. This essay demonstrates that, despite substantial variation both among and between the authors surveyed, all of them unquestionably accept that some form of Natural Law must exist – even if several of them are just as sure that mankind has "forgotten" most of its tenets, at least to some degree. These authors are also in general agreement in rejecting the notion that a person may experience justification (solely) by keeping the parts of Natural Law that are (or remain) known to him. Yates also shows that it was quite common for Latin authors of this period to connect Natural Law and a negative



formulation of the Golden Rule. Probably the most obvious point of disagreement among these authors concerns the precise identity of the *gentes*: some of these authors are sure that Paul is referring to pagans – either pre- or post-Christian – while others prefer to read the term as a reference to Christian gentiles over against Christian Jews.

Marleen Verschoren's contribution, *Lex in cordibus scripta and conscientia (Romans 2:15) according to Augustine*, combines the notions of *lex naturalis*, *lex in cordibus scripta* with Augustine's early thinking on *conscientia*. Augustine links his notion of *conscientia* explicitly with *ratio*. The natural law, which resonates in the human conscience, was given to human kind in paradise and does not have a content different from the mosaic law: *caritas*, the golden rule. Verschoren argues that this Augustinian *conscientia* is not a 'secular' self consciousness, but always a consciousness of God.

In his article, *The relation between pagani, gentes and infideles in Augustine's Sermones ad Populum: A case study of Augustine's doctrine of grace*, Anthony Dupont investigates the *gratia*-position of pagans, gentiles and non believers in the *sermones ad populum*, a source much neglected in Augustine research. The anti-pagan sermons reject vehemently what Augustine considers the 'earthly' orientation of pagans, bringing on pride. The underlying discourse of these sermons is the insufficiency of the human *natura* to reach salvation, the need of Christ as *mediator* and as *gratia*. Augustine, however, is also positive about *pagani*, in the sense that he always keeps open the possibility that they would convert. This conversion requires grace. Exactly this grace is conveyed to (converted) gentiles, distinguishing them from (non-converted) Jews, who did not recognize Christ and proudly assumed that the works of the Law are sufficient. Christian Jews and converted gentiles on the other hand form a unity, in and by (the cornerstone) Christ as grace giver, a main theme in the Epiphany sermons. Dupont subsequently enlarges the framework of his study by investigating the position of the *infideles* in the sermons and pointing out the strong link Augustine perceives between *fides* and *iustitia*. All these elements bring Dupont to the conclusion that Augustine remains dogmatically strict in his sermons – virtues and salvation are not available for non-Christians – but that eventually a positive pastoral attitude towards pagans and gentiles emerges in his sermons.

Mathijs Lamberigts directs the exegesis of Rom. 2:14 to the heat of the (second) Pelagian controversy in *Julian of Aeclanum on*



*Natural Law in the Light of Romans 2:14.* Julian of Aeclanum argues in his *Ad Turbantium* (419), sharply reacting against Augustine, in favour of the existence of genuine pagan virtues. According to Julian, creation as such is already grace and humanity *in se* is created good. Human *ratio*, the human soul, is virtuous on itself and is *imago Dei*. Consequently, the Jewish Law actually is not necessary for salvation, since humanity has by its nature the capacities to obey God. This implies that gentiles, not having received the Law, do not have a valid excuse for not listening to God's commands. A second consequence is that Christian faith – at least theoretically – is not a condition to be just, e.g. in case of the pagan and old testamentic *iusti*. Julian however admits that it is almost impossible *de facto* to attain *iustitia* without Christ's help. The case of the pagan *iusti* illustrates, or so Julian contends, that all man are created with a good nature, since they are born with a rational soul. Moreover, God wishes to see the whole of humanity saved, justified. Julian is convinced of the natural goodness of humanity because he refuses to accept the existence of a natural evil – this is how he interprets Augustine's concept of *peccatum originale*.

Marianne Djuth offers an analysis of the significance of a Christian philosophy and its relation to pagan philosophy in Augustine's *Contra Iulianum* in *Augustine versus Julian of Eclanum on the Love of Wisdom*. This topic is interwoven with a lot of key points in the discussion on Rom. 2:14. Djuth takes Goulven Madec's plea for continuity in Augustine's thinking – namely the recurring of the so-called 'early' theme of philosophy in the later writings – as a point of departure to analyse the concept of *philosophia Christiana* as a love of *sapientia*. Countering Julian of Eclanum, Augustine distinguishes an authentic from an inauthentic Christian philosophy, the inauthenticity of which lies in disregarding the necessity of incarnation and redemption. According to Augustine, Julian is guilty of this disregard because he rejects the effects of original sin and asserts that human beings have the ability to resist evil and choose good without needing the irresistible grace. Augustine observes that the dangers of carnal concupiscence are even recognized by some pagan philosophers, despite their ignorance of Christ. In the end, the Christian philosophy, the pursuit of Christian wisdom that Augustine enhances is one that balances faith and reason.

Anthony DUPONT



# KEEPING CLOSELY TO PAUL, THE "EARLY" USE AND EXEGESIS OF ROMANS 2:14-16, v. 20 SOME EXAMPLES

## Introduction

This paper discusses the use and, to the extent that the concept is applicable in the chosen cases, exegesis, of Romans 2:14-16 in early, which in this case means pre-fourth century, Christian literature. The focus will be on a selection of texts by three authors, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and Origen. The treatment will not be exhaustive, but in order to remain within the limits of this paper I will restrict myself to the discussion of a few significant examples from each author, and a brief conclusion.

I will begin with some remarks on the Biblical text and its context, mainly the chapter in which it is embedded.

## Romans 2:14-16: the text, its immediate context, and some observations from some first and early second century sources

The topic of Rom 2 can be termed as 'God's judgment', specifically as applying not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles. Rom 1 introduced the theme of 'God's wrath' against humanity, because men had ignored God's revelation in creation and resorted to worship of creatures and, subsequently, to unnatural behaviour. Later on in Rom 2 Paul will outline the function of the Mosaic law for the Jews, but here, in Rom 2:12-16, he describes the situation of the Gentiles who do not have the Mosaic law.

Two things are striking here: First, the universal, cosmic, scope of Paul's reflection. Jews and Gentiles are tied into a cosmic order established by God, i. e. creation. God's judgment is not about the transgression of a few commandments, though the individual commandments are important and Rom 1 ends with a catalogue of transgressions and a particular focus on sexual transgressions as a metaphor for the corruption of humanity, i. e. its 'un-natural' state, in general. But in a deeper sense God's judgment is concerning the whole cosmos, the universe, as God's creation. There is a very fundamental, basic, 'feel' to the argument in Rom 1 and 2, which is not lost on early Christian writers. It is simple, even 'primitive', 'archaic', and it has a powerful ethical impact.



Two examples from the earlier second century may illustrate this. They do not refer to Rom 2:14-16 specifically, but to other parts of Rom 2. Yet they may be interesting in the present context in several respects. Both hint at themes and phrases from Rom 2, but are also developing them. The first is from the Epistle of Barnabas, Barn 4.12: 'The Lord "judges" the universe (τὸν κόσμον) "without regard for the person" (ἀπροσωπολήμπτως κρινεῖ) [this could hint at Rom 2:6; notice the incongruity between ἀπροσωπολήμπτως and τὸν κόσμον.]. 'Everyone (ἐκάστος),' it continues, 'will receive his due (κομιεῖται) according to his deeds (καθὼς ἐποίησεν). If he was good (ἀγαθός), his righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) will precede him (προηγέσεται), if he was bad (πονηρός), the reward (μισθός) for his badness (πονηρία) will be before him.'

The second example is taken from 2 Clement 11.6: 'For credible is only the one who holds that everyone will receive the exact reward for his or her deeds' (πιστὸς γάρ ἐστιν ὁ ἐπαγγειλάμενος τὰς ἀντιμισθίας ἀποδιδόναι ἐκάστῳ τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ).

My observation here is that the message is forceful and universal, and to some extent even automatic, mechanical. It is not some wrathful person who exacts this mechanism of deed and reward, but rather some kind of natural order, a law of nature, natural law and legal nature, as Tertullian would later call it. Personal circumstances will be excluded. Note the predominance of the passive voice in these passages. Things are being done to men, not by some divine agent, but by a quasi natural process.

The second observation regarding Rom 2 is its rather bleak outlook. It does not focus so much on the reward for those who might fulfil the law, but rather on the fate of those who won't. V. 12 focuses on the condemnation of the sinners, not on the justification of the righteous. The reason for that focus is spelled out in v. 13: Not those who hear, but those who do the law will be justified. The question lurking beneath these phrases, which Paul addresses elsewhere, is: Is there anyone who can 'do' the law without fail? Is there anyone who is or could become righteous in that full sense, without any additional, as it were, divine input?<sup>1</sup>

This is probably what has to be kept in mind when Paul now introduces the Gentiles, in v. 14: 'For whenever Gentiles, who do not

<sup>1</sup> For the text see Rom 2:12-13: ὅσοι γὰρ ἀνόμως ἥμαρτον, ἀνόμως καὶ ἀπολοῦνται, καὶ ὅσοι ἐν νόμῳ ἥμαρτον, διὰ νόμου κριθήσονται· οὐ γὰρ οἱ ἀκροαταὶ νόμου δίκαιοι παρὰ τῷ θεῷ, ἀλλ' οἱ ποιηταὶ νόμου δικαιωθήσονται.



have the law, do quasi by nature what the law requires, they, not having the law, are the law for themselves.<sup>2</sup> The implication here does not seem to be that Gentiles might actually be able to render themselves righteous by fulfilling by nature what the law requires. Rather, what Paul seems to try to establish here is that Gentiles have the same bottom line as Jews when it comes to their ability, or inability, of fulfilling the law, or rather, the justification on God's part to judge them. The mechanism of recognising what is right and wrong and then acting rightly (sometimes) is the same for everyone. The question is: Does it work for anyone by nature or law alone? Rom 2:14 does not indicate that it does. Further on in Romans Paul does quite explicitly say that it does not. However, the fact that he does not do so here in Rom 2, and the way he relates the two complexes, nature/law and grace, in other parts of his work may have contributed to the development of disagreements among later exegetes about the precise understanding of the role of law and nature in the salvation process.

Paul's interest in Rom 2 is God's judgment, and his interest in Rom 2:14 is how God's judgment can also apply to Gentiles, since they have not been given the law. The answer is that they find in themselves rules which are basically the same as those which the Jews find in the law. And thus the Gentiles fulfil certain requirements of the law by following certain rules (equal to the commandments formulated in the law) which they discover in themselves. For this reason they can be judged by the law, whether they have the law or not. But how do they access this law 'in' themselves?

This is what v. 15 is about: The Gentiles, Paul argues, witness (ἐνδείκνυνται) to the fact that the work of the law (τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου), i. e. what the law prescribes and what the Gentiles sometimes happen to fulfil, even though they do not have the law – that this work is 'inscribed in their [i. e. the Gentiles'] hearts' (γραφτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν), quasi as a Gentile version of the law.<sup>3</sup> And how do the Gentiles witness to that? What is the evidence, aside from the fact that they occasionally, and perhaps merely incidentally, fulfil the

<sup>2</sup> Rom 2:14: ὅταν γὰρ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα φύσει τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν, οὗτοι νόμον μὴ ἔχοντες ἑαυτοῖς εἰσιν νόμος. Vulgate: *cum enim gentes quae legem non habent, naturaliter quae legis sunt faciunt, hi legem non habentes ipsi sibi sunt lex...*

<sup>3</sup> For the entire text see Rom 2:15: οἵτινες ἐνδείκνυνται τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν, συμμαρτυρούσης αὐτῶν τῆς συνειδήσεως καὶ μεταξὺ ἀλλήλων τῶν λογισμῶν κατηγορούντων ἢ καὶ ἀπολογουμένων. Vulgate: *qui ostendunt opus legis scriptum in cordibus suis testimonium reddente eis conscientia et inter se inuicem cogitationibus accusantibus aut etiam defendentibus...*



requirements of the law, that Gentiles do indeed respond to such a law? Paul's answer is: They have a conscience, συνείδησις, which accompanies their actions as what can be called its 'co-witness': συμ-μαρτυρούσης; while at the same time in their thoughts they constantly accuse and defend themselves, as if they participated in an inner court of law at which their actions are judged.

Some brief remarks on the background of this verse. There are three significant motifs here, the inscription of the law in the heart of the Gentiles, the concept of συνείδησις, and the court motif, which I interpret as an inner-court motif disregarding for the purpose of this paper the eschatological dimension of the verse, which undoubtedly also exists, but had, to my knowledge, little impact on the earliest exegesis of the verse. It comes in with v. 16.<sup>4</sup> But this verse receives surprisingly little attention in the earliest use and exegesis of the passage.

The idea of the law being inscribed in the heart of men can be found in Jeremiah 31:33 [LXX 38:33].<sup>5</sup> Isaiah 51:7 has only 'being' rather than 'being inscribed' 'in the heart'.<sup>6</sup> But note that these two references do not refer to Gentiles but to the people of Israel. On the other hand, the idea that moral principles are being implanted and then imprinted in the soul, is a Stoic idea. More on this further below. But Paul is not speaking here about imprints or souls, although it is possible to assume a philosophical background for his idea, as it is connected with the ideas of conscience and the inner court. These two ideas can be found combined several times in Philo and Seneca.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For the text see Rom 2:16: ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὅτε κρίνει ὁ θεὸς τὰ κρυπτὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου διὰ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ; Vulgate: *in die cum iudicabit deus occulta hominum secundum euangelium meum per Iesum Christum.*

<sup>5</sup> For the text see Jeremiah 38:33LXX: ὅτι αὕτη ἡ διαθήκη, ἣν διαθήσομαι τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραὴλ μετὰ τὰς ἡμέρας ἐκεῖνας, φησὶν κύριος Διδοὺς δώσω νόμους μου εἰς τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίας αὐτῶν γράψω αὐτοὺς· καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτοῖς εἰς θεόν, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔσονται μοι εἰς λαόν·

<sup>6</sup> Compare Isaiah 51:7aLXX: ἀκούσατέ μου, οἱ εἰδότες κρίσιν, λαός μου, οὗ ὁ νόμος μου ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν·

<sup>7</sup> Compare Philo of Alexandria, *Quod deterius potiori insidiari soleat* 23: 'This man, who lives in the soul of everyone, acts sometimes as a ruler and king, at other times as judge and jury member in the competitions of life; sometimes he also assumes the role of accuser; he convicts us of a crime invisibly, inside ourselves, and does not allow us to open our mouths, but takes us prisoner, ties us up and with the reins of conscience stops the unbridled arrogant run of the tongue.' οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐν ἐκάστῳ τῇ ψυχῇ κατοικῶν τοτὲ μὲν ἄρχων καὶ βασιλεὺς εὐρίσκεται τοτὲ δὲ δικαστὴς καὶ βραβευτὴς τῶν κατὰ τὸν βίον ἀγώνων, ἔστι δ' ὅτε μάρτυρος ἢ κατηγοροῦ λαβὼν τάξιν ἀφανῶς ἡμᾶς ἐνδοθεν ἐλέγχει μηδὲ διαῖραι τὸ στόμα ἔων, ἐλλαμβανόμενος δὲ καὶ ἐπιστομίζων ταῖς τοῦ συνειδότης ἡνίαις τὸν αὐθάδη μετὰ ἀφηνιασμοῦ δρόμον γλώττης ἐπέσχευεν. Philo of Alexandria, *De Decalogo* 87: 'For the convictor who is innate to every soul and lives in it is not used



Yet again, Philo consistently uses the more sophisticated, philosophical, expression τὸ συνειδός rather than ἡ συνείδησις; Paul always uses ἡ συνείδησις, never τὸ συνειδός; and Philo sees conscience more as an accuser or 'convictor' (ἐλεγχος) at that inner court. For him conscience is primarily 'bad conscience'. Paul's interpretation of conscience as 'co-witness' in contrast seems softer. For Paul, at any rate, conscience does not assume God's place. For him Christ is the judge, as stated in v. 16. Tertullian will put it similarly. Philo and Seneca and later scholastic philosophy and theology are more philosophical, as they ascribe to conscience a quasi divine role as accuser and judge. With this I move on to Clement of Alexandria.<sup>8</sup>

### Clement of Alexandria

In Book 1, Chapter 19, of his 'Stromateis', Clement develops the argument that Greek philosophy contains some element of truth (ἀληθῆ τινα δογματίζειν καὶ Ἑλλήνες). This, he says, can be explored in the sources (ἔξεστι κἀντεῦθεν σκοπεῖν). He begins by citing Acts 17:22-28, Paul's speech on the Areopagus, a *locus classicus* of natural theology, but little to do with Paul himself, or Rom 2:14-16. The relationship between the two passages is externally constructed, by Clement. Clement's love of paradox and his comprehensive use and exegesis of paradoxical, parallel and chiasmic motifs from all sorts of scriptures, biblical, classical or apocryphal, emerges

to allow anything unjust. He only knows hate against the bad and love of the good. He is accuser and judge in one. Once he is awake he acts as accuser, he accuses and shames the accused. Then again, as judge he teaches, reproaches, exhorts, and if he is able to persuade, he is happy and reconciled. If not, he fights on, irreconcilably, day and night, inflicts stings and wounds, until he has finished off the miserable and wretched life.' ὁ γὰρ ἐκάστη ψυχῇ συμπεφυκὼς καὶ συνοικῶν ἐλεγχος, οὐδὲν εἰσὼδὸς παραδέχεσθαι τῶν ὑπαιτίων, μισοπονήρῳ καὶ φιλαρέτῳ χρώμενος αἰεὶ τῇ φύσει, κατήγορος ὁμοῦ καὶ δικαστῆς ὁ αὐτὸς ὢν, διακινηθεὶς ὥς μὲν κατήγορος αἰτιᾶται, κατηγορεῖ, δυσωπεῖ, πάλιν δ' ὡς δικαστῆς διδάσκει, νοουθετεῖ, παραινεί μεταβάλλεσθαι· κἂν μὲν ἰσχύσῃ πείσαι, γενηθὼς καταλλάττεται, μὴ δυνηθεὶς δὲ ἀσπονδεῖ πολεμεῖ μήτε μεθ' ἡμέραν μήτε νύκτωρ ἀφιστάμενος, ἀλλὰ κεντῶν καὶ τιτρώσκων ἀνιάτα, μέχρις ἂν τὴν ἀθλίαν καὶ ἐπάρατον ζωὴν ἀπορρήξῃ. Seneca, *Epistula* 105.7: *securitatis magna portio est nihil inique facere. Confusam vitam et perturbatam inpotentes agunt; tantum metuunt, quantum nocent, nec ullo tempore vacant. Trepidant enim, cum fecerunt, haerent; conscientia aliud agere non patitur ac subinde respondere ad se cogit.*

<sup>8</sup> For the text see Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 1.19.91-96 (ed. GCS 15. Clemens Alexandrinus, Werke, Bd. 2, 2. Aufl., Berlin 1939). All citations below are taken from this edition.



also in this passage: The Athenians' dedication of an altar to the unknown God is matched by the Johannine motif of Christ knowing the Father and everyone knowing the Father through Christ. Paul's sermon opened the eyes of the Areopagites, though only of some, for as already Socrates said [the reference is to an apocryphal saying], referring to the mystery cults, 'many are thyrsos bearers, but only a few are bacchanals' (ναρθηκοφόροι μὲν πολλοί, βάκχοι δέ τε παῦροι), which reminds Clement of Mt 20:17: 'Many are called, but only a few are chosen' (πολλοὺς μὲν τοὺς κλητούς, ὀλίγους δὲ τοὺς ἐκλεκτούς).

Clement's source applies the saying about the bacchanals to those who philosophized in the right way, or practiced the right kind of philosophy, οἱ πεφιλοσοφηκότες ὁρθῶς. And by philosophizing in the right way Clement's source seems to mean, among other things, to believe in life after death, which was the final point of the Areopagus speech. Another characteristic of the true philosophy is the contemplation of the one true being and the good; and here Clement introduces one of his famous citations from Heraclitus: 'the knowledge of many things does not satisfy the soul...' Implying that it is only the contemplation of the One that matters (perhaps also alluding to Lk 10:41).<sup>9</sup>

Now the question which Clement asks is, did the Greeks hit on these truths by chance, or did they have some inner, orderly, access to the truth, be it natural or divinely decreed? Clement develops his argument slowly: Even if we assume that there was an element of chance, he argues, chance itself is divinely administered. Good fortune is not unforeseen (οὐκ ἀπρονόητος ἡ συντυχία). One could argue that the Greeks had a natural conception (φυσικὴν ἔννοιαν) of these things, therefore also a notion of the creator (τὸν τῆς φύσεως δημιουργὸν ἔνα), and a common intellect (κοινὸν νοῦν). Just as in the biblical sphere the prophets anticipated the ultimate revelation of God, thus in classical culture it would have been the philosophers. In fact, Clement even seems to believe that those Greeks who have philosophized accurately, 'see' God: καὶ κατ' ἔμφασιν δὲ καὶ διάφασιν οἱ ἀκριβῶς παρ' Ἑλλησι φιλοσοφήσαντες διορῶσι τὸν θεόν.

But not everything would have been clear from the outset, which is where Paul comes in once more: 'Now we see only as if through a mirror,' Clement cites 1 Cor 13:12. It is only gradually, after overcoming the limitations of our fleshly existence, that we, i. e. all men,

<sup>9</sup> For an extensive discussion of the Heraclitus fragment in the context of Clement's argumentation see H. Wiese, *Heraklit bei Klemens von Alexandrien* (Diss. Kiel, 1963) 105-115.



Greek philosophers included, shall proceed to a fuller, deeper, comprehension, and indeed vision, of God. And this is now also the context in which Clement cites Rom 2:14. It is introduced by a verse from Proverbs, Prov 27:23: 'Thou shalt have a deep knowledge of thy flock', γνωστῶς δὲ ἐπιγνώσῃ ψυχὰς ποιμνίου σου. The accumulated use of words invoking γνῶσις seems deliberate here. Gnosis, a full vision of God, is the ultimate goal. Overcoming the flesh by fulfilling God's commandments is an important precondition to achieving this goal. And all human beings, Gentiles included, have the ability to follow that path. This is the point for which Clement uses a literal citation of Rom 2:14; and for some reason he attaches to it a paraphrase of Rom 2:26a. I quote: 'The Gentiles who do not have the law do by nature what the law requires. Therefore, not having the law they are a law for themselves. Thus "un-circumcision" is preserving the precepts of the law, according to the apostle.'<sup>10</sup>

The way Clement constructs this passage deserves some further attention. He closes it as a whole with the phrase κατὰ τὸν ἀπόστολον, 'according to the apostle'. This suggests that he intends it to be treated as a unit. Otherwise he could have separated the two verses with a phrase like 'again', καὶ πάλιν, as he does a little earlier in the case of two Proverb verses.<sup>11</sup> But what he is doing here instead is to convert the conditional clause that is Rom 2:26a (ἐὰν οὖν ἡ ἀκροβυστία τὰ δικαιώματα τοῦ νόμου φυλάσῃ) into an absolute genitive (τῆς ἀκροβυστίας τὰ δικαιώματα τοῦ νόμου φυλασσοῦσης and attaches it to the literal citation of Rom 2:14, as if pretending that he is dealing with one citation from Paul. This may be due to what is also observed elsewhere in his work: that he is citing Biblical verses from memory; or he wants to put a particular spin on Rom 2:14, emphasizing the Gentile role in preserving the law, by which he obviously means the more basic, ascetic, rules of the law rather than any particular cultic, or purificatory, elements, an aspect which we shall see Origen discuss in his commentary. After all, it was the role of the Gentiles, i. e. the Greek philosophers, in achieving the highest degree of human proximity to God, which was the topic of this chapter in the first place.

<sup>10</sup> For the text see Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 1.19.95.3: 'ὅταν γὰρ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα φύσει τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν, οὗτοι νόμον μὴ ἔχοντες ἑαυτοῖς εἰσι νόμος (Rom 2:14) [τῆς ἀκροβυστίας τὰ δικαιώματα τοῦ νόμου φυλασσοῦσης]' (Rom 2:26a) κατὰ τὸν ἀπόστολον.

<sup>11</sup> Compare *Stromateis* 1.19.95.1-2: 'εἰσὶ δὲ οἱ τὰ ἴδια σπεύροντες οἱ πλείονα ποιοῦσιν' (Prov 11:24), καὶ πάλιν 'ἐπιμελοῦ τῶν ἐν τῷ πεδίῳ χλωρῶν καὶ κερεῖς πόαν, καὶ συνάγαγε χόρτον ὄριμον, ἵνα [95.2] ἔχῃς πρόβατα εἰς ἱματισμόν' (Prov 27:25-26).



Thus Clement only *uses* Rom 2:14. And he does so in this particular combination with Rom 2:26a, and for this purpose only. He does not explain the verse in context. It merely serves to illustrate and underline the point he had made since setting out from the passage in Acts, namely how important a role Greek philosophy plays in the attempt to attain true gnosis. This is further underlined by what follows at the end of the chapter. It illustrates just how much Clement values Greek philosophy for this purpose. He considers it to be more or less the Gentile version of the Mosaic law. He writes that Solomon in Proverbs had contrasted philosophers with heretics, when he said, Prov 27:10: 'Better a friend (i. e. Greek philosophy) who is near than a brother (i. e. Christian heresy) who lives far away' (οἶονεῖ δὲ σύγκρισιν ποιούμενος ὁ λόγος τῶν ἀπὸ φιλοσοφίας πρὸς τοὺς αἵρετικούς καλουμένους, ἐμφανῶς πάνυ 'κρείσσων' φησὶ 'φίλος ἐγγὺς ἢ ἀδελφὸς μακρὰν οἰκῶν'. Strom. 1.19.95.4, quoting Prov 27:10).

Clement here seems to argue against the notion (famously put forward by Tertullian) that the heresies are derived from Greek philosophy. For Clement the Greek philosophers are trustworthy and even connected with God (because nature and revelation are linked through creation), just as the biblical prophets; for according to Rom 2:14, underlined by the paraphrase of Rom 2:26a, the law of nature is strictly equivalent to the law of Moses; whereas the heretics have lost that link. They harvest chaff (συνάγων χερσὶν ἀκαρπίαν). They are separated from the primitive church (τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἀπολείπουσαι ἐκκλησίαν). They are like people crossing the desert without water (διέρχεται δι' ἐρημίας ἀνύδρου). They are like lost at sea (κατασύροντα εἰς θάλασσαν). They have abandoned the basis provided by the law, including by the law of nature for which the Greek philosophers stand, who are representing a valid tradition of contemplating the One rather than the tumultuous pagan cult of the many (τὰ ἔθνικὰ καὶ ἄτακτα τοῦ βίου κύματα).<sup>12</sup>

### Tertullian

I come to Tertullian. He uses and alludes to, or cites, Rom 2:14-16 in a few places. Not entirely unexpectedly he differs from Clement in many respects, but there are also some counter-intuitive similarities.

<sup>12</sup> Compare E. Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 223.



Generally<sup>13</sup> Tertullian is known for refuting Greek philosophy: It abuses and perverts the truth, and causes heresies: The Gnostics derive from Plato, Marcion from the Stoics. (Someone calling the kettle black here.) On the other hand Tertullian develops a very similar argument as Clement: Occasionally the philosophers stumble on the truth by accident (*De anima* 2.1);<sup>14</sup> but accident implies providence. God rationally ordered nature (*De paenitentia* 1.2) and provided man with reason to understand it (*De corona* 4.1). This is why philosophy sometimes gets it right (*De anima* 2.1);<sup>15</sup> and what philosophy does get right is identical with the truth revealed in the Gospel (*De paenitentia* 1; *De testimonio animae* 5.7).<sup>16</sup>

There is, of course, a difference in emphasis between Tertullian and Clement. Clement seems to concede to philosophy a quasi independent status, almost as a second source of revelation besides the biblical tradition. Tertullian's embrace of philosophy is much more blatantly driven by his interest as a Christian propagandist. His interest is not so much in philosophy getting it right, as Clement's might have been, but in the fact that in getting it right philosophy concurs with the Christian message. To apply his famous phrase of the human soul being naturally Christian, *naturaliter Christiana*: Clement's emphasis might have been on the word *naturaliter*, Tertullian's would have been firmly on *Christiana*.

Before delving into the evidence for Tertullian's use of Rom 2:14, a few notes on the alleged Stoic outlook of his thought might be in place, especially his 'ethics'. Tertullian strongly links the Stoic triad of nature, law and conscience. But one may wonder whether he did so more strongly than Paul. He certainly did it much less strongly, in philosophical terms, than Philo or Seneca. One might also ask to what extent Tertullian was influenced by Paul or not. Thus he does not cite Rom 2:15 when he had ample opportunity to do so, for example in two passages in *Adversus Marcionem*: 1. Conscience is a primordial gift of God for the soul.<sup>17</sup> 2. Marcion, so Tertullian argues,

<sup>13</sup> For what follows see E. Osborn, *Tertullian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 34.

<sup>14</sup> Tertullian, *De anima* 2.1 (CCL 2:783): *plane non negabimus aliquando philosophos iuxta nostra sensisse... natura pleraque suggeruntur quasi de publico sensu, quo animam deus dotare dignatus est.*

<sup>15</sup> For the text compare the previous note.

<sup>16</sup> Tertullian, *De testimonio animae* 5.7 (CCL 1:182): *...non multum refert an deo formata sit animae conscientia an litteris dei.*

<sup>17</sup> Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 1.10.3 (CCL 1:451): *animae enim a primordio conscientia dei dos est.*



does not want to think of God as judge. Therefore he wants to eliminate from the Gospel Jesus' word that God is letting it rain on the just and the unjust alike (Mt 5:45). Against this position Tertullian argues, as much as Marcion might try to sanitise the biblical concept of the creator God who is also judge, he will not succeed, because the world itself is inscribed with it and the inscription can be read by every human being in their conscience.<sup>18</sup>

Although Rom 2:15 seems to be written all over these passages, the verse is not cited, or even hinted at. Nor do we, as far as I know, find anywhere in Tertullian the idea of an inner court, or conscience as a judge or an accuser at that inner court. Tertullian's concept of conscience is broader, and contextualised differently. As God's primordial gift to man it enables human beings to learn from the law of nature, which is inscribed in creation.<sup>19</sup> The context is usually pedagogical rather than judicial. The emphasis is on learning the law rather than being judged by it in a court room, or by Christ at the last judgment.

It is in this context that Tertullian refers to Rom 2:14 more openly. In *De corona* 6.1 he argues that before enquiring about God's law concerning certain Christian practices one should consider the common law which is engraved on the tables of nature (*legem... communem istam... in naturalibus tabulis*). To this, he continues, also the apostle refers when he says about the veiling of women, 'does not nature herself teach you that' (1 Cor 11:14)? Similarly, when the apostle says in Romans that the Gentiles do by nature what the law requires (Rom 2:14), he suggests that there is a natural law and a legal nature (*lex naturalis... natura legalis*), i. e. a nature that is structured according to that law, so that the requirements of that law can be learned through a careful study of nature. Tertullian then goes on to discuss the end of Rom 1 (he calls it *prior epistulae pars*, an interesting reference to the partition of the letter in antiquity) as an example for how to distinguish between natural and unnatural behaviour.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Compare Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 2.17.1 (CCL 1:494): ...*ipse mundus inscriptus est et omni a conscientia legitur*.

<sup>19</sup> See Tertullian, *De ieiunio* 6.1 (CCL 2:1261): ...*conscientiam communem consulamus. Ipsa natura enuntiabit...*

<sup>20</sup> Compare Tertullian, *De corona* 6.1 (CCL 2:1046): *quaeres igitur dei legem? habes communem istam in publico mundi, in naturalibus tabulis ad quas et apostolus solet prouocare, ut cum in uelamine feminae: 'nec natura,' inquit, 'uos docet'? (1 Cor 11:14), ut cum ad Romanos, natura facere dicens nationes ea quae sunt legis (Rom 2:14), et legem naturalem suggerit et naturam legalem. sed et in priore epistula parte (Rom 1) naturalem usum conditionis in non naturalem masculos et feminas inter se demutasse affirmans ex retributione erroris in uicem poenae, utique naturalibus patrocinator.*



However, coming back to *Adversus Marcionem*, nothing as such is gained according to Tertullian by the natural ability to distinguish good from evil, and Tertullian seems to follow Paul here quite closely. The law of nature only serves to justify God's judgment not only over the Jews but also over the Gentiles, who do not have the law of Moses, but who do have the law of nature. Tertullian emphasizes this in *Adversus Marcionem* 5.13.4 with an explicit reference to and citation of Rom 2:14.<sup>21</sup> And already earlier, in *Adversus Marcionem* 4.16.15,<sup>22</sup> he points out that the law of nature alone is not enough to enable men to live a godly life. Such a life under God's discipline (*dei disciplina*) can only be led under the fear of God, when good will and right action from faith ultimately coincide. The contrast between, or the opposition of, the two concepts of law (both, law of Moses and law of nature) on one side, and discipline of God on the other, is vital, so Tertullian, to form a basis for a Christian life. Marcion's God, revealed as he may be, or precisely because he is thought of as revealed without any reference to a previous legal system (be it of nature or of Moses), cannot provide such a basis, because he simply has no reference point in history.

To conclude Tertullian: It seems that Tertullian follows Paul closely, though he does not frequently cite him. Then there is a difference between Tertullian's and Clement's concepts of natural law. Clement sees it quasi as a second source of revelation. He puts the Greek philosophers alongside the biblical prophets. Tertullian, more like Paul, uses the concept negatively, to have a common basis for the judgment of Jews and Gentiles alike. His position is coloured by his anti-Marcionite stance. Marcion had postulated a second revelation that was to erase the first. Tertullian knew only one revelation which did not erase history, i. e. the law (both Mosaic and natural), but relied on it. To prove this he used Rom 2:14 a few times, not very often, but in some sense more congenially than Clement.

<sup>21</sup> Compare Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 5.13.4 (CCL 1:702-703): *si enim iudicabit deus occulta hominum, tam eorum qui in lege deliquerunt quam eorum qui sine lege, quia et hi legem ignorant et natura faciunt quae sunt legis* (Rom 2:14), *utique is deus iudicabit cuius sunt et lex et ipsa natura, quae legis est instar ignorantibus legem.*

<sup>22</sup> Compare Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 4.16.15 (CCL 1:584): *nam etsi natura bonum et malum notum est, non tamen dei disciplina; qua cognita tunc demum convenientia voluntatis et facti ex fide, ut sub metu dei, agitur. itaque deus Marcionis cum maxime reuelatus, si tamen reuelatus, non potuit huius praecepti de quo agitur tam strictum et obscurum et caecum adhuc et facilius pro meo potius arbitrio interpretandum compendium emittere, cuius nullam praestruxerat distinctionem.*



## Origen

I come to Origen. There are a number of instances when he discussed Rom 2:14-16. The most significant passages are perhaps his commentary on Rom 2:14-16 translated by Rufinus, and *Contra Celsum* 1.4. I shall discuss the latter first.

Celsus had criticised the Christians saying that their ethical teachings were common, or 'vulgar',<sup>23</sup> and, compared to those of the other philosophers, contained nothing new or outstanding (or 'worthy', σεμνόν): κοινὸν εἶναι καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους φιλοσόφους ὡς οὐ σεμνόν τι καὶ καινὸν μάθημα. To this Origen replied that for people who held that God's judgment was just (κρίσιν δικαίαν θεοῦ) it would not be possible to accept the kind of punishment (δίκη) sinners could expect, if they were not assured that all human beings had a sound preconception (πρόληψις ὑγιής) of ethical teaching (περὶ τοῦ ἠθικοῦ τόπου), in accordance with the ideas common to all men (κοινὰ ἔννοιαι), which were implanted by nature in the soul of every human being.<sup>24</sup>

There are traces of later Stoic teaching in this passage.<sup>25</sup> It was Chrysippus who taught that every human being would develop preconceptions (προλήψεις) of the universal ideas (κοινὰ ἔννοιαι) before the rational faculties were developed, i. e. in the first seven years of his or her life. Therefore, 'pre-conceptions'. These preconceptions would be formed by nature, naturally, and then grow, develop,

<sup>23</sup> See for this now H. Lona, *Die 'wahre Lehre' des Kelsos* (Freiburg: Herder, 2005) 76.

<sup>24</sup> Compare Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.4 (ed. GCS 2. Origenes, Werke 1, Berlin 1899): Ἰδωμεν καὶ ὡς τὸν ἠθικὸν τόπον οἶεται διαβαλεῖν τῷ κοινὸν εἶναι καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους φιλοσόφους ὡς οὐ σεμνόν τι καὶ καινὸν μάθημα. Πρὸς τοῦτο δὲ λεκτέον ὅτι τοῖς εἰσάγουσι κρίσιν δικαίαν θεοῦ ἀπεκέκλειστο ἂν ἢ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἁμαρτανομένοις δίκη, μὴ πάντων ἐχόντων κατὰ τὰς κοινὰς ἐννοίας πρόληψιν ὑγιή περὶ τοῦ ἠθικοῦ τόπου. Διόπερ οὐδὲν θαυμαστὸν τὸν αὐτὸν θεὸν ἅπερ ἐδίδαξε διὰ τῶν προφητῶν καὶ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἐγκατεσπαρκέναι ταῖς ἀπάντων ἀνθρώπων ψυχαῖς· ἵν' ἀναπολόγητος ἐν τῇ θείᾳ κρίσει πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ᾗ, ἔχων τὸ βούλημα «τοῦ νόμου γραπτῶν» ἐν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ καρδίᾳ [Rom 2:15]· ὅπερ ἠνίξαστο ἐν ᾧ νομίζουσιν Ἕλληνες μῦθος ὁ λόγος ποιήσας τὸν θεὸν γεγραφέναι τῷ ἰδίῳ «δακτύλῳ» τὰς ἐντολὰς καὶ Μωϋσεῖ δεδωκέναι, ἃς «συνέτριψεν» ἡ κακία τῶν μοσχοποιησάντων, ὥς εἰ ἔλεγεν, ἐπέκλυσεν ἡ χυσις τῆς ἁμαρτίας. Δεύτερον δὲ γράψας πάλιν ἔδωκε λατομήσαντος λίθους Μωϋσέως ὁ θεός, οἷονεὶ τοῦ προφητικοῦ λόγου εὐτρεπίζοντος ψυχὴν μετὰ τὴν πρώτην ἁμαρτίαν δευτέροις γράμμασι τοῦ θεοῦ.

<sup>25</sup> For what follows compare J. Lössl, 'Der Glaubensbegriff des Klemens von Alexandrien im Kontext der hellenistischen Philosophie,' in: *Theologie und Philosophie* 37 (2002) 321-337.



into individual minds. They were therefore also called προλήψεις ἔμφυτοι, 'ingrown preconceptions', not to confuse with 'innate'.<sup>26</sup> The teaching of προλήψεις ἔμφυτοι was therefore Chrysippus's way of explaining the origin and nature of the κοινὰ ἔννοιαι, the universal concepts, also simply known as universals. The concept of κοινὰ ἔννοιαι as such is not Stoic, but Platonist. As we know, Plato and Aristotle had different ways of explaining the universals, or ideas, but they both believed that they were real. In contrast, the early Stoics, in particular Zeno, rejected the idea that they were real and held that we only get the impression that they are real from the way in which nature organises itself in and through us, i. e. through this process of imprinting or implanting themselves in the soul. Although there are differences in the way in which earlier and later Stoics were using the concept, all Stoics agreed on the existence of the κοινὰ ἔννοιαι and on the tendentially physical (in the case of material) understanding of the concept. We get a hint of that way of explaining the universals from Origen's account, his use of the word πρόληψις and his use of the concept of the κοινὰ ἔννοιαι being implanted in the soul, though Origen uses a slightly different term for this, ἐγκατασπείρω, literally 'sowing out in...'. There is also a hint here of Platonist teaching, and indeed Christian Platonism; for Origen argues that the preconceptions are present in the soul 'according to' (κατά) the universal concepts, i. e. Origen seems to imply that the universal concepts are real and pre-existent, which is in line generally with his Platonism. Moreover, in what follows Origen also thinks of God as a personal agent in this process, rather than the whole process being purely natural, in a Stoic sense: 'There is nothing amazing about it, if the same God should have implanted (ἐγκατεσπαρκεῖν) that which he taught (ἐδίδασκε) through the prophets and the saviour into the souls of all human beings (ταῖς ἀπάντων ἀνθρώπων ψυχαῖς). He did this so that every human being would be without excuse (ἀναπολόγητος) at the divine judgment (ἐν τῇ θεῖᾳ κρίσει), having the requirement of the law (τὸ βούλημα τοῦ νόμου) written in his or her heart (γραφτὸν ἐν τῇ ἐαυτοῦ καρδίᾳ).'

So here we have a paraphrase of Rom 2:15a: The plural 'hearts' has become a singular ('everybody's heart') and 'the work' (τὸ ἔργον) of the law is understood as 'requirement' (βούλημα, literally 'will'). This is also how many modern exegetes understand the verse. According to what I said earlier Origen is also in line with Paul when he

<sup>26</sup> See SVF 2, frg. 83. 87. 105. 473; P. Steinmetz, *Die Stoa*, in: Ueberweg / Antike 4/2, 1994, 594-595.



emphasizes that God's purpose in writing the law in the hearts of all men is to make sure that nobody has an excuse at the divine judgment. What about the verb ἐγκατεσπαρκέναι? It means 'to spread out in' in the sense of sprinkling or sowing, e. g. water, or seeds. Origen uses the word again in *c. Cels.* 1.5,<sup>27</sup> when he speaks of ideas having been spread out in all human beings (ἐγκατεσπάρησαν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἔννοιαι) using the passive voice and leaving it open who does the spreading out. According to Stoic teaching, as I indicated, it is nature herself, in a purely rational, scientific, process. But here in *Contra Celsum* 1.4 Origen indicates that God himself is the agent.

What is interesting is that Origen, not entirely dissimilar to Tertullian, combines the motifs of learning and sowing out: God has sown out these seminal ideas in all human beings and taught them also through the prophets and the saviour.

Finally, a brief summary of Origen's exegesis of Rom 2:14 and 15 in his commentary on Romans translated by Rufinus. The lemma also includes v. 16, which announces that the court situation described in v. 15 will take place on the day (*in die*) that God, through Jesus Christ, will judge all that is hidden in men (*occulta hominum*).

Origen begins his commentary of the passage saying that v. 14 does not refer to cultic precepts of the law, but to more fundamental requirements, like the ten commandments; or perhaps also to some basic principles from which everything else can be deduced, e. g. that the one God is the creator of the universe, *quod deus unus creator sit omnium*.<sup>28</sup> This may hint again at Origen's metaphysical understanding of the λόγοι ἔμφυτοι, or κοινὰ ἔννοιαι. But then he continues saying that what is most probable is that the requirements of the law that are inscribed in people's hearts are those of the law of the Gospel, like the Golden Rule. Then he continues: Obviously, the natural law cannot agree with the law of Moses in a literal, but only in a spiritual sense (*legi uero Moysi concordare lex naturalis secundum spiritum, non secundum litteram potest*); for there cannot be any natural reason why one should circumcise boys on the eighth day or avoid weaving flax into wool etc.

<sup>27</sup> See Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1.5: οὐκοῦν καὶ περὶ τούτου λεκτέον ὅτι ὁμοίως τῷ ἄλλῳ ἡθικῷ τόπῳ ἐγκατεσπάρησαν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἔννοιαι...

<sup>28</sup> For a similar thought see Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 1.19.94.2-3: εἴτ' αὖ φυσικὴν ἔννοιαν ἐσχηκέναι τοὺς Ἑλλήνας λέγοι, τὸν τῆς φύσεως δημιουργὸν ἕνα γινώσκωμεν, καθὼ καὶ τὴν δικαιοσύνην φυσικὴν εἰρήκαμεν, εἴτε μὴν κοινὸν ἐσχηκέναι νοῦν, τίς δ' τοῦτου πατὴρ καὶ τῆς κατὰ τὴν τοῦ νοῦ διανομῆς δικαιοσύνης σκοπήσωμεν. ἂν γὰρ προαναφώνησιν τις εἶπη καὶ συνεκφώνησιν αἰτιάσεται, προφητείας εἶδη λέγει. ναὶ μὴν κατ' ἔμφασιν ἀληθείας ἄλλοι θέλουσιν εἰρῆσθαι τίνα τοῖς φιλοσόφοις.



Origen points out that on a few occasions he challenged Jews with this question,<sup>29</sup> but they merely answered that that was how the legislator had decided and there was nothing else to add (*quia ita uisum sit legislatori*). We, however, Origen continues, paraphrasing Paul, know that it is not those who hear the law who are justified, but those who fulfil it. Fulfilling, however, does not mean the literal fulfilment of the law, which is impossible, but fulfilment according to the spirit; and this is, of course, possible for Gentiles, if they do what is required in the law, i. e. the law that is written in their hearts (Rom 2:15), 'not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God' (2 Cor 3:3).

We can see that Origen here moves away from Paul's meaning in Rom 2:15 with the help of another Pauline writing, 2 Corinthians, and argues that the law written in people's hearts is not the law of Moses, but the spiritual law underlying, but not literally agreeing with, the literal law of Moses.

Origen then continues saying that 'hearts', too, are not meant to be the physical hearts, but the soul's rational power (*rationalis animae uirtus*). Thus Origen does here not go as far as to simply identify hearts and souls, but he does draw a very close link between the two. He then proceeds to an analysis of what is meant by conscience. He defines it as the spirit who according to Paul is the soul's companion (...*spiritus qui ab apostolo esse cum anima dicitur*), comparable to a tutor or guide (*paedagogos... et rector*) who praises the person when she is doing the right thing and punishes or chastises her when she is acting wrongly.

Now this is different from both Paul and the philosophical tradition mentioned earlier. Both had kept more closely to the judicial context, whereas Origen interpreted the motif in a pedagogical context. Paul had only spoken of conscience as a co-witness, Philo and Seneca as an accuser and / or judge. But the role of judge for the Christian exegetes is reserved for Jesus Christ; and on the other hand already Tertullian, as we saw, linked the judicial motif with the pedagogical motif and spoke of learning in the context of the law.

In a last section Origen does briefly discuss the conscience's role of witness, but in an eschatological context. Nobody knows a person, only the spirit inside that person (1 Cor 2:11). The spirit himself is witness to our spirit (Rom 8:16). If the spirit distances himself from the person to whom he is attached, i. e. witnesses against her, that person will be left out in the cold. Origen here uses Mt 24:40f.:

<sup>29</sup> For examples see N. R. M. De Lange, *Origen and the Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) 89-102.



Of two persons on a field one will be taken away, the other one left behind etc.

### Conclusion

By way of conclusion let me summarise a few points: Paul's understanding of the law of nature in Rom 2:14 seems to have been that of a natural equivalent to the Mosaic law. The purpose of the construction seems to have been to explain why Gentiles should have no excuse for being judged on judgment day. Although v. 15 has reminiscences of the philosophical model of the inner court with conscience as judge, Paul firmly puts God in the judgment seat, in an eschatological context (v. 16). Although there is a tendency in early Christian literature to express this complex in more philosophical terms, I found it striking how close writers like Tertullian and Origen follow Paul in these crucial points. Clement seems slightly different. He seems to use Rom 2:14 as a proof text that certain types of Greek philosophers could attain true gnosis, i. e. salvation in the full sense. But we have to consider that this is an historical, abstract, construction, as is demonstrated by the references to the heretics. In his own time Clement would consider anyone following Greek philosophy in defiance of Christian teaching a heretic. So even for Clement, Rom 2:14 is less about relativising the Christian claim in the present than about explaining its validity in the pre-Christian past.

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## ROMANS 2:14-15 IN THE LATIN TRADITION BEFORE THE PELAGIAN CONTROVERSIES

### I. Introduction: Romans 2:14-15 after ca. 2000 years

Even the casual student of the history of Christian thought cannot be unaware of the substantial amounts of both energy and ink that have gone into efforts either to prove or to disprove the existence of some system of natural law<sup>1</sup> and to clearly delineate the implications of the various arguments, either *pro* or *contra*, for those who are serious about living the Christian life.<sup>2</sup> More specifically, in deciding to tackle Rom 2:14-15, the studies in this volume have taken up the distinct challenge of reviewing this question insofar as it revolves around the Pauline passage that at least some exegetes regard as the “only” passage in which Paul *might* be making reference to the “*nomos* of nature.”<sup>3</sup> Most students of Christianity – and especially those whose

<sup>1</sup> For the sake of simplicity, throughout this study an effort has been made to only capitalize the word “law” when the context makes it clear that it is the written, and esp. the Mosaic, Law that is being referred to.

<sup>2</sup> While this debate, to say nothing whatsoever of the much larger issue of the history and origins of the concept of natural law in the western intellectual tradition, cannot be allowed to detain us here, a few references do seem to be in order. While dated, the place to begin regarding the western tradition and natural law is still R.M. Grant, *Miracle and Natural Law in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Thought* (Amsterdam: North Holland Pub. Co., 1952), esp. Chapters 1-2. Also helpful are G. Striker, “Origins of the Concept of Natural Law,” and B. Inwood, “Commentary on Striker,” in *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy Volume II*, ed. J. Cleary (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987): 79-94 and 95-101 respectively; G. Watson, “The Early History of ‘Natural Law,’” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 33 (1966): 65-74; and *idem*, “The Natural Law and Stoicism” in *Problems in Stoicism*, ed. A.A. Long (London: The Athlone Press, 1971): 216-238. For the bold claim that “St. Augustine introduced the fundamental concept of a theistic eternal cosmic law (lex aeterna) to Christian philosophy/theology,” see T. Miethe, “Natural Law, the Synderesis Rule, and St. Augustine,” *Augustinian Studies* 11 (1980): 91-97, esp. 95 and 97. For the equally interesting claim that it was primarily Philo of Alexandria who was the crucial contributor to the concept of natural law by serving as the nexus of Greek philosophical thought and the Hebrew eternal law tradition, see H. Koester, “ΝΟΜΟΣ ΦΥΣΕΩΣ: The Concept of Natural Law in Greek Thought” in *Religions in Antiquity Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, ed. J. Neusner (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), 521-541.

<sup>3</sup> John L. McKenzie, “Natural Law in the New Testament,” *Biblical Research* 9 (1964): 6. In fact, this claim comes at the end of a discussion by McKenzie of the various Pauline phrases containing the term “*nomos*” and in support of a still larger claim that “[t]o Paul, a Jew and a Pharisee, there was only one true law, the Law of Moses.” A fuller version of what he actually writes there runs: “... if Paul speaks of a *Nomos*



studies include detailed analyses of the Christian Scriptures – are probably also well-aware that the question of whether or not these verses support some notion of natural law is by no means the only or even the most difficult of the issues that these two verses raise. In fact, contemporary exegetes have noted that Rom 2:14-15 require the reader to ask and answer at least six major exegetical questions if he or she is to obtain anything approaching a meaningful and coherent interpretation of the first three chapters of Paul's letter generally<sup>4</sup> or of these two verses particularly.<sup>5</sup> Briefly stated these six are:<sup>6</sup>

- 1) Does the mention of "ἔθνη" in 2:14 refer to Gentile pagans, whether pre- or post-Christ's first advent, or to Gentile Christians?

of nature, he does it only in Romans 2:14; and the presumption is against this meaning of the word" (italics added).

<sup>4</sup> It goes without saying that this forum precludes even the most superficial reviews of the problems and issues generated by Rom 2. In fact, not a few modern exegetes regard this chapter as one of the most difficult in what all concede to be Paul's single most difficult letter. For an impressive and thorough review of the many positions that have been adopted with respect to this chapter, see K. Snodgrass, "Justification by Grace – to the Doers: An Analysis of the Place of Romans 2 in the Theology of Paul," *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986): 73-75, as well as nn. 9-30.

<sup>5</sup> Two of the most helpful contemporary commentaries for isolating the issues and exegetical questions raised by Rom. 2:12-16 are those of Dunn and Cranfield. Respectively, see James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, The Word Biblical Commentary 38A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), esp. 94-107 and C.E.B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, Vol.1 Romans I-VIII*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), esp. 152-163. Given that the latter is slightly more dated, the discussion of Dunn was given priority for much of what follows. Also thorough and very up-to-date is the work of Robert Jewett, *Romans, Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), esp. 210-218. Other articles or chapters in books that may be consulted with profit include: N.T. Wright, "The Law in Romas 2," in *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, ed. J.D.G. Dunn (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge: Williams B. Eerdmans, 1996), 131-150, but esp. 143-148; H. Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, WUNT 29 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr(Paul Siebeck), 1983), *passim*, but esp. 25-26 and 102-109; D. Greenwood, "Saint Paul and the Natural Law," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 1 (1971): 262-279; W.C. Martin, "The Bible and Natural Law," *Restoration Quarterly* 17 (1974): 193-221, esp. 211-218; for what is certainly one of the most imaginative and challenging readings, see E.P. Sanders, "Appendix 2: Romans 2" in *idem, Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 123-135.

<sup>6</sup> Less crucial to a complete and coherent exegesis of the passage but still of some interest in both Late Antiquity and in our own day is the question of whether or not the passage references Jer 31(LXX 38):33 or not and, if so, whether the reference was overt, conscious and intentional on Paul's part or whether it was merely an echo or, perhaps, even unintentional and simply a function of his having been so deeply steeped for so many years in the language and terminology of the Jewish Scriptures and traditions.



Regardless, how does this usage compare and/or relate to Paul's use of this term elsewhere in Romans and in the other books of his corpus?<sup>7</sup>

- 2) What is the best way to read the "φύσει" of 2:14 syntactically speaking? Does it go with what precedes it or with what follows it? That is, do these Gentiles lack the law "by nature" or is it that they can somehow follow at least some of its precepts "by nature"?
- 3) What is the precise nature of the "νόμος" referred to repeatedly in 2:14-15? That is, is it simply the Mosaic Law, in whole or in part (e.g., the Ten Commandments)? Or, is it in some sense some sort of natural law?
- 4) Whatever its nature, can this law be kept by human beings without any external assistance? That is, is perfect fulfillment of it even possible? And, if it is possible, is it realistic that anyone would perfectly fulfill it?
- 5) To what degree is Paul making use of Stoicism or of Stoic (and/or other ancient philosophical schools') language, principles or teachings here? While few would believe that Paul was a "total" Stoic, the degree to which these verses reflect Stoic views or sensibilities remains debatable.<sup>8</sup>
- 6) What is the source and nature of the "συνείδησις" or "conscience" mentioned in 2:15? That is, is this feature inborn or natural or is it somehow taught or developed by exposure to law and its principles?

Of course, knowledge of the issues that these verses raise for our contemporary context does not guarantee that these same questions will have been as obvious, much less as interesting, to the reader of, say, 1600 years ago. The student who goes to the early Christian tradition expecting the spokespeople for that tradition to answer all of his or her questions about a given issue or passage is bound to be disappointed. For all sorts of reasons, some of which we can discern and many of which we will never be able to uncover, the usually substantial and (almost always) interesting opinions of

<sup>7</sup> For a contemporary article arguing in favor of the view that the Gentiles mentioned in 2:14 are Gentile Christians, see A. König, "Gentiles or Gentile Christians? On the meaning of Romans 2:12-16," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 15 (1976): 53-60. For a similar conclusion from a contemporary commentator, see, e.g., Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 155-156.

<sup>8</sup> For a persuasive and tightly reasoned article addressing this complex issue, see J.W. Martens, "Romans 2.14-16: A Stoic Reading," *New Testament Studies* 40 (1994): 55-67. His conclusion is that, at least here, Paul is writing "*under the influence of Stoic tradition, particularly the idea of a law of nature*" (italics added).



earlier Christian generations regarding the meaning and application of the Bible must be taken on its own terms. One can almost always instructively compare and contrast the thoughts of these earlier generations with our own, but the risks of assuming that they will ask and answer our questions about the text to our satisfaction are only exceeded by the risks of assuming that they have nothing at all to teach us.

## II. The Focus of this Study: Romans 2:14-15 ca. 365 to ca. 411

The aim of this study is to provide an overview of the ways in which these two verses were employed in a crucial period of the (Western) Christian tradition. More specifically, what follows will discuss the exegesis of these admittedly difficult and opaque verses as published by several prominent Latin Christian authors in the half-century prior to 411 C.E., the date to which the outbreak of the so-called Pelagian Controversies is normally assigned.<sup>9</sup> It should also be noted that a significant portion of this study will be dedicated to analyzing the views of both Pelagius and Augustine on the meaning of these two verses, with special attention being paid to their respective pre-411

<sup>9</sup> Of the several attempts to survey and to outline the influence of predecessors upon the thought of both Augustine and Pelagius regarding Paul, particularly helpful are: M. Wiles, *The Divine Apostle: The Interpretation of St Paul's Epistles in the Early Church* (Cambridge: CUP, 1967), *passim*; G.J.M. Bartelink, "Die Beeinflussung Augustins durch die griechischen Patres," in *Augustiniana Traiectina: Communications présentées au Colloque International d'Utrecht 13-14 novembre 1986*, eds. J. den Boeft and J. van Oort (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1987): 9-24; A.A.R. Bastiaansen, "Augustin et ses prédécesseurs latins Chrétiens," in *ibid.*: 25-57; K. Froehlich, "Which Paul? Observations on the Image of the Apostle in the History of Biblical Exegesis," in *New Perspectives on Historical Theology: Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff*, ed. B. Nassif (William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co: Grand Rapids, MI, 1996): 279-299. Helpful for both the "Augustinian" and the "post-Augustine" histories of the exegesis of Paul and/or of our vv. are: W. Affeldt, "Verzeichnis der Römerbriefkommentare der lateinischen Kirche bis zu Nikolaus von Lyra," *Traditio* 13 (1957): 369-406; J. Riedl, "Die Auslegung von R 2,14-16 in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart," *Analecta Biblica* 17-18 (1963): 271-281; S. Lyonnet, "Lex naturalis quid praecipiat secundum S. Paulum et antiquam Patrum traditionem," *Verbum Domini* 45 (1967): 150-161; and, most importantly, K.H. Schelkle, *Paulus Lehrer der Väter: Die altkirchliche Auslegung von Römer 1-11* (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1956): esp. 77-85. M. Lackmann, *Vom Geheimnis der Shopfung: die Geschichte der Exegese von Römer 1,18-23, II,14-16 und Acta XIV,15-17, XVII,22-29 vom 2. Jahrhundert bis zum Beginn der Orthodoxie* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1952), was unavailable to me, though it was known to and incorporated by Schelkle.



*corpora*. It is hoped that this study, when taken together with the other articles in this volume, will, in at least a small way, help either to confirm or to disconfirm the accuracy of the claim published by G. Bornkamm almost fifty years ago that “[d]ie augustinische Exegese schwankt allerdings ... zwischen seiner vor- und nachpelagianischen Zeit.”<sup>10</sup>

### III. The Data of this Study:

#### Romans 2:14-15 in Latin Authors (ca.)365-(ca.) 411

Excluding the excerpts taken from Origen, the works included what follows will usually be dealt with in the order in which they were written – at least in so far as their dates of composition are known. Following a brief elucidation of comments culled from the works of Origen (or actually Origen via Rufinus), the thoughts of Hilary of Poitiers, Ambrosiaster, Ambrose, and Jerome will be summarized, before a close and detailed look at passages drawn from the earlier works of either Augustine or Pelagius will be attempted.<sup>11</sup>

Origen will be discussed first even though, strictly speaking, his Pauline Commentary would not have been available firsthand to monolingual (i.e., “Latin only”) western readers until ca. 406/407. Of course, this should in no way be taken to imply that western churchmen could not or would not have received a healthy dose of “Origenian” thinking on and exegesis of our verses by reading the published works of some of the West’s more prominent (and more comfortably bilingual) ecclesiastical leaders of the previous generation such as Hilary, Ambrose, or Jerome.

#### A. *Romans 2:14-15 in Origen’s/Rufinus’s Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*

##### The Availability of the Latin Version of Origen in the West.

While anyone with a working knowledge of the Christian West of the late 4<sup>th</sup>/early 5<sup>th</sup>-century A.D. and of the substantial debt that it owed

<sup>10</sup> G. Bornkamm, “Gesetz und Natur (Röm 2:14-16),” in *Studium zu Antike und Urchristentum: Gesammelte Aufsätze* Band II, Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie 28 (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1959), 108 and n. 36.

<sup>11</sup> The ideas of the so-called Budapest Anonymous, while certainly interesting for any comprehensive study of these verses, will not be included in the body of this study, but will be relegated to an appendix following the general summary and conclusions.



to the Greek East in most things theological might surmise that both Augustine and Pelagius had at least an acquaintance with the thought of Origen generally and his commentary on Romans specifically, it nevertheless seems useful to offer a bit of scholarly support for that idea in order to set what follows in the proper degree of relief.<sup>12</sup> Such support is easily had via the work of C. Hammond Bammel. Hammond Bammel, easily the last generation's foremost authority on Rufinus's

<sup>12</sup> While his impact cannot be said to have been as profound as that of Origen, it remains at least arguable that the second most important Greek exegete for the group of Latin authors being considered in this study was John Chrysostom (d. 407). Of his impact on the Latin-speaking West – even during his own lifetime – scholars have not doubt. Note, e.g., the following summary from Allen D. Callahan, “John Chrysostom on Philemon: A Response To Margaret M. Mitchell,” *Harvard Theological Review* 88(1) 1995: 152-153: “Chrysostom enjoyed immediate popularity among Christian intellectuals throughout the empire. No other Greek patristic author was so well and swiftly published, and more manuscripts of Chrysostom's works survive than of any other Greek ecclesiastical author. *Greek excerpts of his works found their way to the Italian peninsula even before the end of the fourth century*, and between 415 and 419 the Pelagian deacon Anianus of Celeda had translated into Latin seven of Chrysostom's homilies on Paul and the first twenty-five homilies on Matthew” (italics added). It is also clear that Chrysostom had an impact on the thinking of both Augustine and Pelagius – even if both the extent and the timing of that impact continue to be debated. For example, in his “La date du <<De natura>> de Pélagé” *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 36 (1990): 281, Y-M Duval asserted that “Pélage connaissait Jean depuis au moins 404” before going on to build a case that Pelagius probably knew about Chrysostom's work earlier (as well as in greater quantity and in better detail) than did Augustine. Still more on point for the purposes of this study is the summary found on p. 53 of Wiles, *The Divine Apostle*. Wiles's observation is all the more apropos for making it plain Chrysostom was more than willing to take issue with Origen's interpretation of our vv. He writes: “Thus Chrysostom, whose emphasis lies always on the continuity of the argument in a biblical passage and on the clarity of its revelation, will have nothing to do with [Origen's claim that the senses of the word ‘law’ in Paul change with great frequency and without any explicit indications of the changes.] He is perfectly capable of recognizing the existence of different senses of the word ‘law’ in Paul's writings. Thus in Rom. ii. 14-15 he distinguishes within the two verses the three senses of written law, natural law, and law revealed in action. Elsewhere he points out that Paul sometimes uses the word to mean the whole of the Old Testament.” The text to which Wiles refers is the homily on Rom 2:17-29 that modern editions label as “Homily VI.” For the Greek text, cf. PL 60, cols. 434-437; for this trans., see NPNF (First Series) vol. 11, pp. 368-371, where under Rom 2:25, Chrysostom writes: “... there is a natural law and there is a written law. But there is one also between these, that by works. And see how he points these out and brings them before you. ‘For when the Gentiles,’ he says, ‘which have not the law.’ What law, say? The written one. ‘Do by nature the things of the Law.’ Of what Law? Of that by works. ‘These having not the Law.’ What Law? The written one. ‘Are a law unto themselves.’ How so? By using the natural law. ‘Who show the work of the Law.’ Of what law? Of that by actions. For that which is by writing lies outside; but this is within, the natural one, and the other is in actions. And one the writing proclaims; and another, nature; and another, actions.”



translations of Origen, clearly pronounced on both of these points in a paper she published in 1992.<sup>13</sup> There she noted that “it is not unlikely that copies [of Rufinus’s translation] would have been brought from Sicily to Africa after Rufinus’s death or perhaps even earlier direct from Rome” when Melania the Elder visited Augustine in 407.<sup>14</sup> Later in this same essay, she reminds readers that Pelagius also knew and had read Rufinus’s translation of Origen’s commentary before going to observe that, unlike Augustine, Pelagius knew and had even interacted with Rufinus personally prior to both men fleeing Italy following the disturbing August of 410: “[Rufinus] was in Rome or its environs between about 404 and 408 and in contact with Paulinus of Nola and no doubt also with Pelagius.”<sup>15</sup>

**Origen on Rom 2:14-15 via Rufinus’s Translation.**<sup>16</sup> The ten-book digest of the great Alexandrian’s commentary on Romans as made by Rufinus of Aquileia contains more than a dozen references to all or part of Romans 2:14-15.<sup>17</sup> While, as one might expect, the

<sup>13</sup> Caroline Hammond Bammel, “Rufinus’ Translation of Origen’s Commentary on Romans and the Pelagian Controversy,” in *Storia ed esegesi in Rufino di Concoridia*, Antichità Altoadriatiche XXXIX (Udine: Arti Grafiche Friulane, 1992), 131-142.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 135. Cf. also p. 137: “... I am convinced that Augustine read Rufinus’ translation of Origen’s Commentary on Romans during the period when he was producing his earliest anti-Pelagian works.”

<sup>15</sup> See *ibid.*, 140 for the claim that Pelagius’s commentary was “influenced” by Rufinus’s efforts as well as p. 141 where the fact of Pelagius’s use of Rufinus’s translation of Origen’s *Romans Commentary* is “well known.” On this point, see also T. De Bruyn, *Pelagius’s Commentary on St Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1993), 18 and n. 112 and P. Brown, “The Patrons of Pelagius: The Roman Aristocracy between East and West,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 21 (1970), 65. The quote referencing the personal interaction between Pelagius and Rufinus is also taken from p. 141 of Hammond Bammel’s article.

<sup>16</sup> While its focus is significantly broader than Origen’s use of Rom 2:14-15, Brian Dunkle’s “A Development in Origen’s View of the Natural Law,” *Pro Ecclesia* 13 (2004): 337-351 is very much on point for the discussion that follows *infra*. For Dunkle’s comments on Origen’s *Romans Commentary*, see esp. pp. 342-347.

<sup>17</sup> In addition to the passages that will be discussed *infra*, see I,19 (xvi,3); II,4 (iv,4); II,6 (viii,2); II,7 (x,1), which are central for Origen’s take on Rom 2:15b-16; III,2 (ii,7); and III,2 (ii,9). As this study is primarily concerned with the reception of the latinized version of Origen’s commentary, the additional difficulties introduced by the fact that Rufinus’s translation seems to have exaggerated the prominence of natural law in Origen’s thought will not be addressed here. As noted above, given that whatever Pelagius and Augustine knew of Origen and his thought – at least on this and related issues – was only available to them secondhand, whether via Rufinus or, even less directly, via the writings of bilingual authors who had read Origen’s texts for themselves, it is really only Origen as explained by Rufinus that would seem to be relevant for the question at hand. For Rufinus’s exaggeration of Origen’s thinking on natural law, see Dunkle, “A Development in Origen’s View,” 342-343 and the *nn.* given there.



majority of these are either allusions or more or less certain quotations made in passing, there are several passages that must be given a closer look if one is to have an accurate picture of the ways in which Origen's direct exegesis of Romans – albeit via the interpretive lens provided by Rufinus – could have impacted the teachers and clergy of the early 5<sup>th</sup>-century Latin West. The clearest and most extensive treatment of our verses in the commentary is also the most obvious place to begin: II,7 (ix,1-4), i.e., the section where Rom 2:14-16 provide the *lemmata*.

According to Origen, the “law” referred to in these verses is not the Jewish cultic or ceremonial law, but to the ethical laws that are best exemplified in – if not precisely identical with – the Ten Commandments. Still more generally, he believes this law to “possibly (*fortassis*)” reference the notion that “God is one and the Creator of all things,” but that it all but certainly seems to “agree with the evangelical laws (*cum euangelicis legibus conuenire*) where everything is ascribed to natural justice (*ad naturalem ... aequitatem*).” In other words, this “law written on the hearts of the Gentiles” is most probably a form of the so-called Golden Rule (cf., *inter alia*, Tob 4:15; Mt 7:12) since “what could be nearer to the natural moral senses than that those things men do not want done to themselves, they should not do to others?”<sup>18</sup> A few lines later, he goes on to add that this law is

“according to the Spirit, through which means alone it is possible for the law to be fulfilled. This ... is the work of the law which the Apostle says even the Gentiles are able to fulfill by nature. For when they do the things of the law it seems that God has written the law on their hearts, ‘not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God’ (cf. 2 Cor 3:3).”<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> In what follows, all translations from Origen/Rufinus are those published in *Origen. Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans Books 1-10*, trans. T. Scheck, Fathers of the Church 103 and 104 (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 2001 and 2002 (hereafter cited as “Scheck”). For the quotations given in this paragraph, see p. 131. The best Latin edition is C. P. Hammond Bammel, *Der Römerbriefkommentar des Origenes: Kritische Ausgabe der Übersetzung Rufins. Buch 1-10., Vetust Latina: Die Reste der altlateinischen Bibel. Aus der Geschichte der Lateinischen Bibel*, 16, 33, 34 (Freiburg: Herder, 1990-1998). For these lines, cf. vol. 16, p. 135: “Quid enim ita naturalibus sensibus proximum quam ut quae nolunt sibi fieri homines haec ne faciant aliis?”. For a helpful and “pre-Hammond Bammel” claim regarding the general reliability of Rufinus's trans. as an accurate reflection of Origen's work and thought, see, e.g., M. Wiles, *The Divine Apostle*, 6.

<sup>19</sup> Scheck, p. 132. Cf. Hammond Bammel, vol. 16, p. 136: “... secundum spiritum per quem solummodo impleri lex poterit. Hoc est ... opus legis quod etiam gentes apostolus dicit implere naturaliter posse. Cum enim agunt quae legis sunt scripta uidentur lex in cordibus eorum a Deo ‘non atramento sed spiritu Dei uiui.’”



Also relevant to a understanding of Origen's exegesis of Rom 2:14-15 are a few of his comments regarding the identity of the Gentiles mentioned in the near context. A prime example can be found at II,5 (vii,6,) i.e., a few paragraphs prior to the passage cited above and under the *lemma* for Rom 2:10. Most important to note here is that, for Origen/Rufinus, the Gentiles referred to here are *not* Christian Gentiles; rather, they are pagans or "Greeks" "who are moved by natural reason (*naturale ratione motus*)," even though they have "not believed in Christ" and, consequently, "cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."<sup>20</sup> In other words, it would seem that Origen was convinced that although pagans knew enough and were capable enough to live what would appear to others to be exemplary moral lives, this righteousness born of nature would still let them down on the Day of Judgment and in the life that is to come.

The latter sentiment is reiterated and confirmed in Book 4 when Origen offers what might well be regarded as a summary of his "mature" views on natural law generally and on its efficacy on the Day of Judgment in particular.<sup>21</sup> The basis for the Alexandrian's comments here is Rom 4:13, the verse in which Paul asserts that Abraham's position as "heir of the world" was *not* obtained through law, but, rather, through the "righteousness of faith." Near the end of his comments, i.e., at IV,3 (iii,2), Origen evidences concern that perhaps the reader will either be confused by his position on the law or, what is worse, come to think that he (Origen) has contradicted himself with regard to the degree of salutariness that he sees as inherent in natural law:

Yet even if Paul should be understood to be saying these things about natural law (*de lege naturali*), in accordance with what we have

<sup>20</sup> Scheck, p. 125. Cf. Hammond Bammel, vol. 16, p. 128: "... non credit Christo et intrare non possit in regna caelorum ..." Important to note, however, is the fact that Origen is very aware that Paul sometimes varies his use of the term "Greeks" depending on the context. Under the *lemma* for Rom 3:1-4 (cf. Scheck, p. 165), for example, Origen is explicit in noting that the "Greeks" here are actually "believing Gentiles."

<sup>21</sup> "Mature" here is used to denote the fact that the *Romans Commentary* is from relatively late in Origen's career and probably from ca. 246. For a discussion of this, see Dunkle "A Development in Origen's View," 338 and esp. p. 340 and n. 15. For an interesting comparison between the attitudes of Origen/Rufinus and Augustine with respect to the "prospects of Gentiles who obey the natural law" on the Day of Judgment and esp. regarding their views on the ability of those who lack faith to do good works as well as on their prospects of being rewarded (at least in some sense) for having done them, see T. Scheck, *Origen and the History of Justification. The Legacy of Origen's Commentary on Romans* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 58.



explained above, this will not contradict the arguments given above. For however much the law of nature may offer testimony about good and evil according to the judgment of conscience, nevertheless it cannot be put on the same level (*exaequari*) as the law of faith, by which Abraham believed God and merited (*meruit*) to be justified and to be named a friend of God (cf. Jas 2:23).<sup>22</sup>

#### B. *Romans 2:14-15* in Hilary of Poitiers's Commentary on Psalm 118(119)

What is probably Hilary of Poitiers's most interesting use of our verses can be found in his comments on the "Samech" portion of his *Tractatus on Psalm 118(119)*, i.e., on verses 113-120. This work, which is thought to have been penned toward the end of Hilary's life, and most probably during the span of 364-367,<sup>23</sup> and which, like much of Hilary's corpus, certainly seems to have been substantially influenced by Origen's exegetical efforts,<sup>24</sup> is important both for the history of the West's exegesis of the Psalter and for its take on Rom 2:14-15. The most relevant lines come from Hilary's comments on verse 119, which, in his version, reads: "*Praeuaricantes deputauit omnes peccatores terrae, ideo dilexi iustitias tuas ...*":

The word of the prophet always expands itself far away and beyond the ordinary sense of the words. For we understand "sinners" to be those who are forsaking their received faith and their acquired knowledge of God, those who have promised one thing and now are doing something else. But these "sinners" are understood as all the sinners of the earth; the title "sinner" is ascribed to all people generally, no one is excepted. For the law is, apparently, [a law] of nature: to do

<sup>22</sup> Scheck, p. 253. Cf. Hammond Bammel, vol. 33, p. 292: "Sed etsi secundum ea quae in superioribus disseruimus de lege naturali Paulus haec dicere intellegatur non erit contrarium rationibus superius redditis. Quamuis enim lex naturae de bono et malo testimonium reddat secundum iudicium conscientiae tamen legi fidei non potest exaequari, qua Deo credidit Abraham et iustificari meruit atque amicus Dei appellari."

<sup>23</sup> Following C. Kannengiesser, M. Milhau in his edition and trans. of this work for the *Sources Chrétiennes* series (cf. SC 344, p. 17) places it along with Hilary's other exegetical compositions on the Psalter "sans doute ... entre 364 et 367."

<sup>24</sup> This feature of Hilary's work has been noted so often that it has almost become commonplace. In addition to Milhau's "Chapitre IV" in SC 344 (pp. 58-66), cf., e.g., the summary remark of M. Hale Williams: "The orthodox bishop Hilary of Poitiers ... incorporated about forty thousand lines of Origen's work, loosely translated, in his treatment of the Psalms." For this see her *The Monk and the Book: Jerome and the Making of Christian Scholarship* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 191.



injury to no one, to surreptitiously take nothing belonging to another, to abstain from fraud and perjury, to not plot against the marriage of another. The Apostle also acknowledged (*nouit*) this law of nature by saying [at Rom 2:14-15]: "For when the nations, who do not have the Law, naturally do things according to the Law, such people [while] not having the Law are a law unto themselves, they are showing that the work of the Law has been written on their hearts." Therefore we understand these "sinners" to be those that are forsaking the law they are receiving from nature. The one who is discovered to be a thief or an adulterer or murderer is accused (*arguet*) by the law of nature. But if he is engaging in these things, he is also a "sinner" [against] the law.<sup>25</sup>

Here, Hilary, much like (and probably thanks to) Origen, seems to have assumed both that some system of natural law exists and that Rom 2:14-15 refers to that system. Indeed, despite the presence of the "apparently (*ueluti*)" in this context, the existence of a natural law is never questioned.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, it seems that Hilary has, at least to some degree, conflated – or even intentionally combined – the Law of Moses with the natural law that he has assumed to exist.<sup>27</sup> This is especially apparent when he notes that the thief, the adulterer, and the murderer

<sup>25</sup> This trans. is my own. For the Latin, cf. SC 347, pp. 168-171: "Semper prophetae sermo longe se et ultra communem sensum extendit. Nos enim praevaricatores eos existimamus, qui susceptam fidem et cognitionem Dei adeptam reliquunt, aliud pollicitos et aliud nunc agentes. Sed his praevaricatores existimantur omnes peccatores terrae; nullus excipitur, generaliter ad omnes praevaricationis nomen refertur. Lex enim ueluti naturalis est, iniuriam nemini adferre, nihil alienum praeripere, fraude ac periurio abstinere, alieno coniugio non insidiari. Nouit et hanc naturae apostolus legem dicens: 'cum enim nationes, quae legem non habent, naturaliter secundum legem faciunt, tales homines legem non habentes sibi ipsi sunt lex, qui ostendunt opus legis scriptum in cordibus suis.' Ergo praevaricatores existimantur qui quod a natura legis accipiunt derelinquunt. Furem quis deprehensum aut adulterum aut homicidam arguet lege naturae. Sed si in his ipse uersetur, praevaricator est legis."

<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, despite the fact that Hilary can make such assumptions about the natural law, some scholars have argued that the concept was "of far less importance to him" than were other doctrines such as the nature of the godhead. See Marcia L. Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages. II. Stoicism in Christian Latin Thought through the Sixth Century* (Leiden/New York: E.J. Brill, 1990), 123.

<sup>27</sup> On the degree of conflation that *might* be present here, cf. Colish's statement from *ibid.*, p. 125: "... Hilary [does not] assimilate the law of nature to the law of God overtly ..." Regardless of the degree of conflation that one sees here, it remains noteworthy that there is yet a third type of law under consideration: the "celestial law (*caelesti legi*). Hilary discusses this law in conjunction with Jesus's parable of the Prodigal Son (cf. Lk 15:11-32), who, as Hilary reminds his readers, confessed to his father that he had sinned "against heaven (*in caelo*). For Hilary's comments, see SC 347, pp. 170-173



“is also a ‘sinner’ [against] the law” and, moreover, is “accused” by that same “law of nature.”

It is also clear that, at least here, Hilary has taken the ‘Gentiles’ of 2:14 as a reference to all human beings (cf. ‘to all people generally’) whether Jew, Gentile Christian or Gentile pagan since, in his view, all human beings are included in the group this Psalm refers to as ‘sinners.’

Finally, note that the idea guiding his exegesis seems to be the presupposition that is only explicitly expressed later in Paul’s letter to the Romans (cf. 3:28), viz. that everyone has sinned. In other words, Hilary seems to have assumed that everyone has at least to some degree forsaken whatever knowledge of the natural law that they might have possessed or inherited. Connected to this is the fact that, in addition to knowledge of a generalized form of the ‘Golden Rule’ (cf. ‘do injury to no one ...’), Hilary seems to have taken it for granted that all people everywhere somehow intuitively know that theft, dishonesty, and adultery are wrong and, hence, are activities that always render their practitioners liable to judgment.

#### *C. Romans 2:14-15 in Ambrosiaster*<sup>28</sup>

The still-anonymous, 4<sup>th</sup>-century, Roman churchman and exegete known as “Ambrosiaster” is included here for two primary reasons. First, it seems beyond question that he was active in Rome;<sup>29</sup> and, second, though there seems to have been almost as much confusion about him and his identity in his own era as there is in ours, it is nevertheless clear that his thought and his exegesis profoundly affected

<sup>28</sup> Although critical editions of Ambrosiaster’s major works, i.e., his commentary on Paul and his (largely exegetical) *quaestiones* on both the Old and the New Testaments (cf. CSEL 81/1-3 and CSEL 50, respectively) have been available to scholars for decades, relatively foundational work on him, his texts, and his thought is still very much in progress. In fact, study of this elusive 4<sup>th</sup>-century churchman is currently very much in vogue and will, in all probability, continue for the foreseeable future. For a recent introduction to both the person and current scholarship, see S. Lunn-Rockcliffe, *Ambrosiaster’s Political Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. Chapters 2 and 3: “Ambrosiaster’s Background” and “Ambrosiaster’s Ecclesiastical Context.” For an earlier, briefer summary, see, e.g., D. Hunter, “On the Sin of Adam and Eve: A Little-Known Defense of Marriage and Childbearing by Ambrosiaster,” *Harvard Theological Review* 82/3 (1989): 283-299, esp. 284-287.

<sup>29</sup> Today, this fact is so certain that it is probably fair to label it “common knowledge.” Cf., e.g., Hunter, “On the Sin of Adam and Eve,” 284: “... it is firmly established that Ambrosiaster composed his Pauline commentary at Rome during the pontificate of Damasus, that is, between the years 366 and 384.”



the exegesis of later generations generally and that of both Pelagius and Augustine specifically.<sup>30</sup>

Our review of Ambrosiaster's take on Rom 2:14-15 will be largely limited to his Pauline Commentary,<sup>31</sup> a work which offers one of the longest – if not also the most interesting – disquisitions on the Gentiles and their relationship to the law of all those that were written during this period.

Before moving to Ambrosiaster's formal comments, however, a bit of context will be helpful. First, it seems clear that Ambrosiaster brings a two-fold view of the Gentiles to his exegesis of the Bible. Briefly put, it would seem that he believed that there had always been two types of Gentiles, i.e., believing and unbelieving, and that these two types were not simply differentiated after Christ's first advent: some Gentiles, both before and after Christ, believed and some, both before and after Christ, did not believe.<sup>32</sup> Second, it seems that, for Ambrosiaster, the only way to "eternal" justification and, by extension, to salvific faith, is through faith in God. And this is despite the fact that some may experience a "temporal" justification that will allow them to abstain from things opposed to the law.<sup>33</sup> In short, for Ambrosiaster, both justification and true, salvific faith are multifaceted concepts that cannot be applied haphazardly or without due consideration of the particulars of the case(s) at hand.

<sup>30</sup> Examples in support of this, while something less than "common knowledge," could nevertheless be multiplied. The link between Ambrosiaster and Augustine that is most often referenced is that found in *c. ep. Pel.* IV,4,7, where, under the name of "holy Hilary (*sanctus Hilarius*)," Augustine references Ambrosiaster's text and exegesis of Rom 5:12 (cf. CSEL 60, pp. 527-528). For Pelagius's relationship to Ambrosiaster, see, e.g., T. De Bruyn, *Pelagius's Commentary*, 2, where in what could easily be regarded as an understatement, De Bruyn simply notes that "... Pelagius was indebted to Ambrosiaster." See also, *ibid.*, n. 9, where De Bruyn rightly points out that the closeness of the relationship between the work of these two exegetes has been carefully documented by both Smith and Souter in studies published in 1917 and 1927 respectively, as well as De Bruyn's own index (cf. pp. 218-220) where he provides the reader with more than 180 links and parallels between the text of Pelagius's *Romans* commentary and the work of Ambrosiaster.

<sup>31</sup> But cf. n. 32 *infra*. Ambrosiaster commented on 13 Pauline epistles – so far as we know, the letter to the Hebrews was never formally subjected to close analysis by him.

<sup>32</sup> Cf., e.g., his comments at Rom 2:12 (Cf. CSEL 81/1, p. 73) where he observes that "*non credentes ... gentiles*" are doubly-condemned since they have not "assented (*adsenserunt*)" to the laws of Moses and haven't "received (*recipiunt*)" the grace of Christ, as well as his comments on Rom 2:16 (Cf. *ibid.*, p. 79), where he writes about "*gentes*" who are "*credentes*" and about others who are "*infidos*."

<sup>33</sup> See esp. *ibid.*, p. 73: "Huic sola fides opus est, per quam fiat perfectus, quia nihil illi proderit apud Deum abstinere ab adversis, nisi suscipiat fidem in deum, ut sit iustus per utraque. Illa enim temporalis iustitia est, haec aeternitatis."



Ambrosiaster begins his comments under the *lemma* of Rom 2:14 by making perfectly clear to his readers the identity of the group to which Paul must have been referring as he wrote to the Christians of Rome:

Paul is speaking about Christian Gentiles (*Gentes Christianos*), because he is the Teacher of the Gentiles (cf. 1 Tim 2:7), just as he said in another place: For I say to you Gentiles (cf. Rom 11:13), who are uncircumcised, observing neither new moon celebrations, nor the Sabbath, nor the law regarding ceremonial food (cf. Col 2:16) and who, by nature's leading, believe in God and in Christ, that is in the Father and the Son. For this is to observe the law: to acknowledge the God of the law. For the first part of wisdom is this: to fear God the Father (cf. Ps 111:10; Pr 1:7; 9:10), from whom are all things, and the Lord Jesus his Son, through whom are all things (cf. 1 Cor 8:6). Therefore, nature itself acknowledges its Creator by its own judgment, not through the law, but through the natural reasoning faculty.<sup>34</sup> For the work perceives (its) Creator within itself.<sup>35</sup>

For Ambrosiaster, the 'Gentiles' of Rom 2:14 are not pre-Advent pagans; they are simply non-Jews who have come to believe

<sup>34</sup> While Ambrosiaster's belief in natural law is certainly implicit here, many clear and explicit references to the concept may be located by consulting his so-called *Quaestiones ueteris et noui testamenti cxxvii*. For example, note the following passage from *quaestio IV*, i.e., "*Quare legem non in primordio dedit*" (cf. CSEL 50, p. 24): "Primum lex formata in litteris dari non debuit, quia in natura ipsa inserta quodam modo est et creatoris notitia ex traduce non latebat. Nam quis nesciat, quid bonae uitae conueniat, aut ignoret, quia quod sibi fieri non uult alii minime debeat fieri? Adubi autem naturalis lex euauit pressa consuetudine delinquendi, tunc oportuit manifestari, ..." Also germane, though a bit far afield from the present discussion, is the fact that, for Ambrosiaster, "[t]he Ten Commandments ... are the *lex divina* and the *lex naturalis*, precepts given by God through Moses to guide humankind not only to the next life, but in this one, as well." For this as well as for the claim that Ambrosiaster's "conflation" of Christian, Roman, and Jewish law was actually an intentional "triangulation of Christian identity" meant to help him appropriate the Jewish "valorization of the Law," see A. Jacobs, "Papinian Commands One Thing, Our Paul Another": Roman Christians and Jewish Law in the *Collatio Legum Mosaicarum et Romanarum*," in *Religion and Law in Classical and Christian Rome*, eds. C. Ando and J. Rüpke (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), 95-97.

<sup>35</sup> This trans. is my own. The text translated here is the so-called "gamma" recension of the text, i.e., the third of the three extant versions and the one that is thought to represent Ambrosiaster's "final draft." For the Latin, cf. CSEL 81/1, p. 75: "*Gentes Christianos dicit, quia Magister gentium est, sicut dicit alio loco: vobis enim dico gentibus, qui incircumcisi neque neomenias neque sabbatum neque escaram legem servant et duce natura credunt in Deum et Christum, id est in Patrem et in Filium. Hoc est enim legem servare, Deum legis agnoscere. Prima enim sapientiae pars haec est: timere Deum Patrem, ex quo sunt omnia, et Dominum Iesum Filium eius, per quem sunt omnia. Ipsa ergo natura proprio iudicio creatorem suum agnoscit, non per legem, sed per rationem naturae; opus enim Opificem cernit in sese.*"



in Christ. Equally interesting is the means by which these particular Gentiles have come to faith: it does not seem that they have been converted through the direct agency of the Holy Spirit as they responded to the Gospel; rather, they seem to have come to faith in Christ simply 'by nature's leading (*duce natura*).'<sup>36</sup> Also noteworthy – though less explicit – is that this natural 'leading' is, at least in part, 'through the natural reasoning faculty (*per rationem naturae*)' and not, as one might expect, a result of the convert's ability to downplay or ignore the rational part of their mind in favor of other aspects of their being.

This comment is followed by an especially interesting observation on the nature of true faith as Ambrosiaster transitions to the text of 2:15 and that verse's claim that the Gentiles, despite not having the Law, are a law unto themselves<sup>36</sup> and that they demonstrate this by having the law written on their hearts. After citing the verse, he writes:

The sense [here] is the same in that, so long as they believe by nature's lead, they are manifesting the work of the Law, not through [keeping] the letter of the Law, but through [following] their consciences. For the work of the law is faith, which one exhibits [to be in keeping] with the commands of God, showing oneself to be a law unto oneself by one's natural judgment, because what the Law commands, one does voluntarily, so that one might believe in Christ.<sup>37</sup>

That faith could be so central and, indeed, that Ambrosiaster could equate it with the "work of the Law (*opus ... legis*), while not surprising given that it is an important theme both later in Romans (see esp. Chapters 3 and 4) and elsewhere in Paul (see, e.g., Galatians), could nevertheless be taken as a tendency toward antinomianism in Ambrosiaster's theology and his exegesis – especially when his thought is compared to the writers we have encountered thus far. Equally surprising is the rather positive way he links the "natural judgment (*naturale iudicio*)" of the Gentiles with a well-functioning, if not also relatively pure, will: for Ambrosiaster, one of the byproducts of their (salvific) faith would seem to be a will that naturally or instinctively pursues God's will as expressed in God's Law. Ambrosiaster seems to have been open to the idea that at least some Gentiles

<sup>36</sup> Note that the versification – esp. where the individual verses stop and start – of the biblical text in the CSEL edition of Ambrosiaster is somewhat different than in most modern editions of the New Testament.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *idem*, p. 77: "Idem sensus est, quia dum natura duce credunt, opus legis ostendunt, non per litteram, sed per conscientiam. Opus enim legis fides est, quam cum dictis dei exhibet, naturali iudicio ostendit semetipsum esse sibi legem, quia quod mandat lex, ultro facit, ut credat in Christum."



had and would become "God fearers" naturally, just as they would eventually become "believers [in Christ]" by nature. He also seems to have believed that the will of some of them had and would become pure enough to compel them to pursue the things commanded by the law simply through realizing that such a will is a good thing to have *in se*.

#### *D. Romans 2:14-15 in Ambrose of Milan*<sup>38</sup>

If it is true that, in addition to the all-important and freshly Latinized Origen, there were many influential pens, like that of Ambrosiaster, busily recording exegetical insights gleaned from Paul's *Letter to the Romans* during the years between ca. 365 and ca. 411,<sup>39</sup> it is just as true that few if any were as influential upon the thinking of the West generally (or upon the thinking of Augustine specifically) as was that of Ambrose of Milan.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> The discussion that follows will not attempt to be exhaustive with respect to all of Ambrose's references to Rom 2:14-15. Others interesting locations include: *Exp. eu. Luc.* VII, 152 (1447 C-D) (cf. CSEL 32/4, p. 350); *Explanatio ps. xii* I,31 (cf. CSEL 64, p. 26), where Ambrose *does* apply, albeit through an allusion, Rom 2:14 to the Law of Moses and not to the natural law *per se*; *ibid.*, I,51 (cf. CSEL 64, p. 44), where he applies Rom 2:15-16 to all believers including himself; *Expositio ps. 118*, V,21 (cf. CSEL 62, p. 93); *ep.* 7,18 and 32 (cf. CSEL 82/1, p. 52 and 58); *De paradiso* VIII,39 (cf. CSEL 32/1, p. 296); *De fuga saeculi* III,15 (cf. CSEL 32/2, p. 175), where in affirming the goodness of the natural law Ambrose notes that "*Primum natura ipsa boni operis magistra est*"; and *De Iacob et uita beata* I,6,20 (cf. CSEL 32/2, p. 17).

<sup>39</sup> This development, which could be fairly termed as the West's "(Re-) Discovery of Paul" has been noted and discussed by many historians of the church at least as far back as Harnack. A landmark publication in this sub-field however was certainly A. Souter's still-helpful *The Earliest Latin Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1927), which discusses the work of Marius Victorinus, Ambrosiaster, Jerome, Augustine and Pelagius. Shorter, but much more recent, general analyses of the West's reading of Paul in this period have been offered by M.G. Mara, "Il significato storico-esegetico dei commentari al corpus paolino dal IV al V secolo," *Annali di storia dell'esegesi* 1 (1984): 59-74 and K. Froehlich, "Which Paul? Observations on the Image of the Apostle in the History of Biblical Exegesis," mentioned in n. 9 *supra*.

<sup>40</sup> The thoroughly obvious nature of this claim, esp. if we are allowed to take the evidence found in the *Conf.* (cf. esp. Book VI *passim*) and the *c. Iul.* (cf. esp. Books I, II, and III *passim*) seriously, need not detain us here. For relatively recent reviews of Ambrose's impact on Augustine's thought from the standpoint of contemporary critical scholarship, see, e.g., J. Patout Burns, "Ambrose Preaching to Augustine: The Shaping of Faith," in *Collectanea Augustiniana: Augustine: "Second Founder of the Faith,"* eds. J. Schnaubelt and F. Van Fleteren (New York: Peter Lang, 1990): 373-386 and A.A.R. Bastiaensen, "Augustin et ses prédécesseurs latins Chrétiens," 30-34.



During his twenty-plus years of ministry in Milan, Ambrose was nothing if not productive. His theological and literary output included a large number of letters, theological treatises, scripture commentaries, ethical/ascetic tracts, funeral orations, and various homiletical treatments in the form of both *uitae* of famous (biblical) personages and more traditional *sermones*. Helpful for our purposes is the fact that throughout these various genres, the Bishop of Milan makes fairly frequent reference to the concept of natural law in general and to Rom 2:14-15 in particular. Of these many references, few if any discuss both natural law and our verses in clearer language than does his *epistula* 63,<sup>41</sup> which, at least thus far, remains undated. Lacking much of what one might call the form of a Late-Antique letter, this text is actually Ambrose's attempt to address the concerns of his friend Irenaeus regarding the meaning of Rom 4:15, a text in which Paul claims: "For the Law works wrath; for where there is no law, neither is there transgression."<sup>42</sup> Irenaeus's concern was rooted in his having jumped to the understandable conclusion, on the basis of this verse, that the Mosaic Law must have been neither good nor necessary since it only gave occasion for God's wrath and earned for much of what would otherwise have been acceptable human behavior the label "sinful." On the other hand, this conclusion was rendered paradoxical – if not thoroughly contradicted – by the obvious fact that God, at the same instant that he gave it to the Israelites through Moses, had revealed his Law to be holy, perfect, and worthy of the profoundest respect.

Ambrose's answer to Irenaeus initially addresses the latter's concern by agreeing with his conclusion, though he rather quickly moves on to qualify his agreement by introducing a much broader, *heilsgeschichtliche* perspective on both God's dealings with humanity and his revelation of the law. Especially interesting for our purposes are two closely-related assumptions Ambrose seems to have made. First is his assumption that a system of natural law exists; indeed, at no point in the immediate context of the passages discussed below does Ambrose offer an argument in favor of its existence. Second is his assumption that this system of natural law is both something God communicated to Adam in the Garden of Eden and the very thing Paul

<sup>41</sup> In numbering this as "Letter 63," I am following the CSEL critical edition. The Maurists knew this as "Letter 73"; the English trans. in the FOTC series lists it as "Letter 83."

<sup>42</sup> The trans. followed here is that found in FOTC 26, pp. 464-468, by M.M. Beyenka. The Latin (cf. CSEL 82/2, pp. 142-148) runs: "Lex enim iram operatur; ubi autem non est lex, nec praevaricatio."



was referring to in Rom 2:14-15. At the beginning of the second paragraph of *epistula* 63 Ambrose writes:

... it is certain that the Law given to Moses was not necessary. For if men had been able to keep the natural law which God the Creator planted in the breast of each one, there would have been no need of that Law, which, written on stone tablets, rather (*magis*) enmeshed and entangled the weakness of human nature (*humani generis infirmitatem*)<sup>43</sup> than freed and liberated it. Moreover, that there is a natural law written in our hearts the Apostle also teaches when he writes that for the most part (*plerumque*) "The Gentiles do by nature what the Law prescribes, and since they do not read (*legerint*) the Law, they yet have the work of the Law written in their hearts."<sup>44</sup>

Noteworthy here is Ambrose's reference to the human race's inability "to keep the natural law." While this claim might be fairly easy to support from empirical observation, it is nevertheless remarkable both as a sign of the depth to which Ambrose's assumptions about the existence of natural law run and as evidence – albeit implicit – of his view that Adam's failure – a subject to which we will return *infra* – was a transgression of natural law just as surely as it was a transgression against God's direct injunction to abstain from the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (cf. Gen 2:16-17). Also interesting is the qualification of "for the most part (*plerumque*)" that Ambrose prefixed to the mention of "the Gentiles" that occurs at the beginning of his citation of Rom 2:14. While this could indicate that Ambrose had consulted a Greek text of Romans 2, which contains an anarthrous reference to the "Gentiles," it is even more likely to be indicative of his willingness to believe in the original and still somewhat residual power of natural law. Third is the rather loose and freewheeling way in which Ambrose references Rom 2:14-15. In addition to amplifying the text by the insertion of the reference to the Gentiles (practical) inability to "read the Law," he substantially condenses the original contents of the two verses in question.

<sup>43</sup> It is not clear to me why Beyenka has chosen to translate "*humani generis infirmitatem*" with "infirmity of human nature" rather than with the more literal (and certainly theologically pregnant) "infirmity of the human race."

<sup>44</sup> *FOTC* 26, p. 464; cf. CSEL 82/2, p. 143: "... certum est non fuisse legem necessariam quae per Moysen data est. Nam si naturalem legem, quam Deus Creator infudit singulorum pectoribus, homines servare potuissent, non fuerat opus ea lege, quae in tabulis scripta lapideis implicavit atque innodavit magis humani generis infirmitatem quam elaqueavit atque absolvit. Esse autem legem naturalem in cordibus nostris etiam Apostolus docet, qui scribit quia plerumque et 'Gentes naturaliter ea quae legis sunt faciunt, et cum legem non legerint, opus tamen legis scriptum habent in cordibus suis.'"



Ambrose then goes on to discuss the origin of this natural law. In his view, it is "... not written, but inborn; it is not acquired by reading, but springs up in each one as from the flowing font of nature, and men's minds drink from it."<sup>45</sup> Moreover, this natural law "is in itself holy, guileless, without craftiness, the companion of justice [and] free from wickedness," a description not totally unlike Paul's famous discussion of the Mosaic Law found in Rom 7:7-14. In short, Ambrose seems to regard the natural law as a thoroughly good thing that, despite its inherent goodness, actually produced condemnation.

Perhaps most important for our purposes is Ambrose's next statement about natural law: in his view, Adam, who clearly possessed this law before his sin, made a significant contribution to silencing it and, by extension, to retarding its ability to function as clearly and efficiently within the hearts of his posterity, all of whom would inherit from him his compromised nature. Ambrose writes:

This law Adam broke (*solvit*), seeking to take for himself what he had not received, so that he might be like his own Creator and Maker, so that he might claim divine honor. [...] Had he not broken the command (*imperium*) and had he been obedient to the heavenly precepts (*mandatis caelestibus*), he would have preserved for his heirs the prerogative of nature (*praerogativam naturae*) and of innocence which was his from birth. But because the authority of the natural law was corrupted and blotted out by disobedience, the written Law was determined necessary, ...<sup>46</sup>

Near the letter's end, but still in Paragraph 10, Ambrose paraphrases many of the forgoing sentiments by again claiming that:

The Law of Moses was not needful (*necessaria*); hence it entered secretly (*subintravit*). Its entrance seems not of an ordinary kind, but like something clandestine (*furtivum*) because it entered secretly into the place of the natural law. Thus, if she had but kept her place, this written Law would never have entered in, but, since deception (*praevaricatio*) had banished (*excluserat*) that law and nearly blotted it out

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 464-465; cf. CSEL 82/2, pp. 143-144: "... lex non scribitur sed innascitur nec aliqua percipitur lectione, sed profluo quodam naturae fonte in singulis exprimitur et humanis ingeniis hauritur. [...] sancta, sine versuta, sine fraude, consors iustitiae, expers iniquitatis."

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 465; cf. CSEL 82/2, p. 144: "Solvit hanc legem Adam, qui voluit sibi arrogare quod non acceperat, ut esset sicut Creator et Conditor suus et divinum honorem affectaret. [...] Qui si non rupisset imperium et oboediens fuisset mandatis caelestibus, praerogativam naturae atque ingenitae sibi innocentiae heredibus propriis reservavisset. Ergo quia per inoboedientiam praerogativa naturalis legis corrupta atque interlita est, ideo scriptum legis aestimatum est necessarium, ...."



(*propemodum aboleverat*) of the human breast, pride reigned and disobedience was rampant.<sup>47</sup>

In addition to *epistula* 63, there are two interesting locations within Ambrose's *A Commentary on Twelve Psalms* where he references Rom 2:14-15. They are found amidst his exegesis of Psalm 36 and Psalm 39 respectively.

In Paragraph 69 of his treatment of Psalm 36 (MT = Psalm 37) as he comments on verse 31, i.e., "The Law of God is in [the just person's] heart, and his steps shall not be supplanted," Ambrose is determined to see the reference to the Law of God found here as indicative of the natural law and not the Law of Moses, even though the latter would seem to be a much more obvious choice. Apparently, his primary motivation for this was a desire to highlight the ways in which the Jewish people have disinherited themselves through disobedience. After rhetorically asking "What law?" he answers by noting that:

It is not a written law, but the natural law: for, "the law is not made for the just but for the unjust" (cf. 1 Tim 1:9). The law is in his heart, it is not something recited in a perfunctory manner as by the lips of the Jews. No, for the just "believes with his heart unto justice" (cf. Rom 10:10). One who believes will also speak; but one who speaks, does not necessarily believe. Those people certainly did not believe, those of whom it is written: "This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (cf. Is 29:13). Therefore, if the Gentiles, so long as they are doing the things of the law, are a law unto themselves, understanding which things they ought to follow and which they ought to take care to avoid, how much more has the faithful and just person, the one who is living (*uiuit*) in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26), known the proper things and been able both to discern the virtuous things and to use that legal bequest of natural wisdom for the governing of himself ...<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 467; cf. CSEL 82/2, p. 147: "Non fuit necessaria lex per Moysen; denique subintravit, quod utique non ordinarium sed velut furtivum significare videtur introitum, eo quod in locum naturalis legis intraverit. Itaque si illa suum servasset locum, haec lex scripta nequaquam esset ingressa. Sed quia illam legem excluserat praevaricatio ac propemodum aboleverat pectoribus humanis, regnabat superbia inoboedientia que sese diffuderat; ..."

<sup>48</sup> As far as the end of the quotation of Is 29:13, the trans. is that found in Íde M. Ní Riain, *Commentary of Saint Ambrose on Twelve Psalms* (Dublin: Halcyon Press, 2000): 99. From that point forward, the trans. is my own. Ní Riain has rendered this latter portion as: "Even the Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by natural instinct those things which are of the law, and avoid those things which are forbidden by it. How much more, therefore, ought one who is a true believer and a just person, living in the image and likeness of God, know what is honourable and discern what is proper and becoming. Such a person will rightly use the natural law of wisdom and



In addition to the rather heavy-handed anti-Jewish barbs this passage contains, it is noteworthy as another example of how Ambrose assumes the existence of natural law. At the same time, his exegesis here differs from that in *epistula* 63 in that he seems to vacillate on the Gentiles degree of obedience to this natural law. Although, thanks to his use of a somewhat ambiguous “*cum*” clause, he certainly cannot be said to be asserting that the Gentiles are always or perfectly keeping the law, he does, at least for rhetorical purposes, seem to be praising them for having had a certain degree of success in the quest for knowledge of how to live. Still more important, however, is the contrast (cf. the “*quanto magis*”) that he goes on to set up between the Gentiles and the person who is both “faithful and just (*fidelis et iustus*)” – or, perhaps, the one who is “faithful and has been justified.” In short, though it is only implicit, it seems clear that, for Ambrose, the Gentiles of Rom 2:14 – at least here – are *not* believing Christians: on the contrary, they are pagans who do not seem to know much at all about the true faith or what it means to live life as one who is truly made “in the image and likeness of God.”

Finally is Ambrose’s commentary or *Explanatio* of Psalm 39(40). This composition’s reference to Rom 2:14-15 occurs in the midst of a discussion of verse 8b, which in Ambrose’s preferred version reads “... your law is in the midst of my heart (... *in medio cordis*).” He is aware that some other versions (*alii*) read “... in the midst of my womb (... *in medio uentris*).” In several important ways, the Bishop of Milan’s comments on this partial verse are very similar to what we have seen above. For example, he is just as clearly “anti-Jewish” here as he was in his comments on Psalm 36. He is also just as confident that a legitimate exegesis of this verse can and should include a reminder about the existence of natural law. Newer or, at least, clearer, however, are his ideas about how and where this natural law comes into existence:

... you may understand [the phrase “in the midst of my womb”] as the womb of the inner man, which is interpreted as “in the midst of the heart,” in which we follow the prescripts of the natural law, which not

direct his course according to it.” For the Latin, cf. CSEL 64, pp. 128-129: “Non scripta, sed naturalis; ‘iusto’ enim ‘lex non est posita, sed iniusto.’ In corde eius lex est, non perfunctorie sicut in labiis Iudaeorum; ‘corde’ enim ‘creditur ad iustitiam.’ Qui credit, et loquitur; qui autem loquitur, non continuo credit. Denique non creditur populus, de quo dictum est: ‘Populus hic labiis me honorat, cor autem eorum longe est a me.’ Si igitur gentes, cum ea quae legis sunt faciunt, ipsi sibi sunt lex cognoscentes quae sequi debeant uel cauere, quanto magis fidelis et iustus, qui ad imaginem et similitudinem dei uiuit, decora nouit et honesta decernere et uti legitimo quodam naturalis sapientiae gubernaculo, ...”



only are kept, but also come into existence (*fit*) in our hearts. That is also why it has been written: "it is not only the hearers of the Law that are just before God, but also the doers of the Law who will be justified (cf. Rom 2:13)." For there are people (*qui*) who naturally (*naturaliter*) do the things of the Law, just as the Gentiles who do not hear the Law and are a law unto themselves (cf. Rom 2:14), who are unknowingly (*incognita*) following the precepts of the Law. Therefore in these verses it is as if Christ, the Gatherer (*congregator*; cf. Jn 11:52) of the Gentile people, has taken up our person when he says that he keeps that law itself in the midst of his heart. Inasmuch as the people of the Gentile nations (*populus nationem*) fulfilled the law that they had not heard in order that they came to acknowledge Christ, whom the Law-accepting people of the Jews neither received nor thought as worthy to recognize. This is why it is written: "The ox acknowledges his owner and the ass the stable of his master, but Israel has not recognized me." Therefore, this is the womb of believers in whom the Holy Spirit is working and which he is accustomed to fill with spiritual seed, ...<sup>49</sup>

#### *E. Romans 2:14-15 in Jerome*<sup>50</sup>

Notwithstanding his obvious, though rarely admitted, appreciation of and allegiance to the exegetical methods and productions of

<sup>49</sup> This English trans. is my own. For the Latin, cf. CSEL 64, pp. 227-228: "... ut interioris hominis uentrem intellegas, qui in medio esse cordis accipitur, in quo naturalis legis praescripta seruamus, quae non solum custoditur, sed etiam fit in cordibus nostris. Vnde et scriptum est, quia 'Non solum auditores legis iusti sunt apud Deum, sed etiam factores legis iustificabuntur.' Sunt enim qui naturaliter ea quae legis sunt faciunt, sicut gentes qui legem non audiunt et sibi lex sunt, qui incognita sibi legis praecepta conseruant. Ergo quasi gentilis populi congregator personam nostram suscepit hoc loco Christus, ut diceret facere se legem in medio cordis sui. Siquidem populus nationum legem quam non audiuit impleuit, ut agnosceret Christum, quem populus Iudaeorum qui legem acceperat non recepit nec cognoscendum putauit, quia scriptum est: 'Agnouit bos possessorem suum et asinus praesepe domini sui; Israel autem me non cognouit.' Hic ergo credentium uenter est in quo Spiritus Sanctus operatur et eum semine spiritali implere consueuit, ..."

<sup>50</sup> The assertion that much of Jerome's work was known to Augustine as well as to many of the churches in North Africa and Italy – and known to them from a relatively early date – requires neither explanation nor defense: support for this has been (and continues to be) provided throughout the relevant secondary literature. Note, e.g., the comment by M. Hale Williams, *The Monk and the Book*, p. 242: "... Jerome's works seem already to have been well disseminated in North Africa when Augustine first wrote to him [in 394/395]." Cf. also *ibid.*, n. 11. Augustine's first *epistula* to Jerome is number 28 in his collection and is number 56 in that of Jerome. Also worthy of note is the conclusion reached by some scholars regarding Jerome's apparent ignorance of the Pauline Commentary written by Ambrosiaster. For this, see, e.g., R. Heine, *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St Paul's Epistle to the*



Origen, Jerome was imbued with more authority and was more quickly deferred to in matters exegetical than any other figure of the late 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup>-century Latin church. At the same time, given his thoroughly irascible nature, his hypersensitivity, and his profound penchant for generating – not to mention holding on to – both enemies and grudges, it would be an exaggeration to claim that all those who read, profited, and incorporated his work were his devotees. Indeed, even some of those who were inclined to defer to him did not always refrain from questioning either his interpretive conclusions or his doctrinal and theological positions.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, because he produced so much exegetical material and, as history would have it, because so much of that material was carefully preserved, Jerome remains one of the best and richest sources we have for gaining a clear understanding of the West's views on Rom 2:14-15 during the period ca. 365-411.

**Jerome's *Epistula* 121 (ca. 407).** A landmark for Jerome's understanding of our verses is found in Paragraph 8 of his *ep.* 121, a composition that most probably dates from the year 407.<sup>52</sup> Because it was one of several he composed in response to requests for exegetical assistance, this letter was all but certainly sent to the West soon after its completion. It may also have been put into circulation just as quickly.<sup>53</sup> In the midst of Paragraph 8, we read:

... that same Apostle teaches that the natural law has been written in our hearts. "For when the Gentiles, who do not have the Law, are naturally doing the things which are of the Law, they who do not have

*Ephesians* (Oxford: OUP, 2002): 4 and n. 22, where he references A. Souter's *Earliest Latin Commentaries on the Epistles of St Paul*.

<sup>51</sup> The most obvious and best-known example of this is the complicated – and often tension-filled – debates between Augustine and Jerome on both particular points of exegesis (e.g. Gal 2; esp. 2:11-21) and Jerome's enterprise of re-translating the Jewish Scriptures directly from their Hebrew and Aramaic sources. It goes without saying that the secondary literature on Jerome in general as well as on Jerome as exegete is enormous. For a brief but helpful and up-to-date biographical introduction, see S. Rebenich, *Jerome* (London/New York: Routledge, 2002); for an equally helpful but even more thorough guide to the secondary literature, see A. Fürst, *Hieronymus. Askese und Wissenschaft in der Spätantike* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2003). Note also that in 1999 Fürst published what many regard as the definitive study of the correspondence between Jerome and Augustine; see his *Augustins Briefwechsel mit Hieronymus* (Münster, Westfalen: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1999). For his treatment of the exchanges between them regarding Gal 2, see the "Erster Teil," sections I-V, pp. 1-87.

<sup>52</sup> For a recent publication that supports this dating for *ep.* 121, see H. Newman, "Jerome's Judaizers" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9/4 (2001): 428 and n. 23.

<sup>53</sup> M. Hale Williams, *The Monk and the Book*, p. 248. See *ibid.*, n. 26 for a short list of other letters of this type.



the Law, are a law unto themselves, who show the work of the Law written on *their own* (*suis*) hearts, with the conscience bearing witness to them (*illis*)” (cf. Rom 2:14-15). That law, which is written on the heart, encompasses all nations, and there is no human being who is ignorant of this law.<sup>54</sup> Hence, the whole world is under sin (*sub peccato*; cf. Rom 3:9; 3:22; 7:14), and all who are in the entire community of human beings are transgressors of the law; and for that reason, the judgment of God is just, writing in the heart of the human race: “Whatever you shall not want to be done to you, you shall not do to another” (cf. Tob 4:15). Is there possibly someone who does not know murder, adultery, theft, and every other covetous desire to be evil just from the fact that he does not wish them to be done to him? For if he fails to recognize these things to be evil, he might never lament them being done against himself. Through this natural law Cain recognized his sin, saying (ref. to Gen 4:13 follows) ...”<sup>55</sup>

Following this mention of Cain, Jerome goes on to discuss examples of other individuals who were active before the Law was given to Moses but who knew how to evaluate both themselves and their behavior thanks to their knowledge of natural law – including Adam, Eve, and the Egyptian Pharaoh who held the Children of Israel in bondage during the days leading up to the Exodus.

Of the many exegetical claims and details that may be gleaned from this passage, perhaps the most interesting is that contained in the opening lines: although Jerome is quite explicit in his claim that the natural law is written in “our (*nostris*)” hearts, by which he presumably means the hearts of Christian believers, he immediately (and without comment) quotes Rom 2:15 in an unaltered, i.e., third-person, form

<sup>54</sup> Cf. this sentiment with the following lines from Jerome’s commentary on Malachi (written ca. 406), lines which clearly assert Jerome’s belief in the existence of a system of natural law, his belief that this system is inherent in all human beings, and, at least implicitly, his belief that Rom 2:14-15 offer legitimate support for these views (cf. CCSL 76A, p. 925): “... sic interpretantur, ut uxorem adolescentiae naturalem dicant intellegentiam et legem in corde perscriptam, quae omnibus hominibus insita est. Unde et gentes non habentes legem Dei, ea quae sunt legis, operantur.”

<sup>55</sup> This English trans. is my own; for the Latin, cf. CSEL 56, pp. 32-33: “... naturalem legem scriptam in cordibus nostris idem Apostolus docet: ‘Cum enim gentes, quae non habent legem, naturaliter ea, quae legis sunt, faciunt, isti legem non habentes sibi ipsi sunt lex, qui indicant opus legis scriptum in cordibus suis testimonium praebente illis conscientia.’ Ista lex, quae in corde scribitur, omnes continet nationes et nullus hominum est, qui hanc legem nesciat. Vnde omnis mundus sub peccato et uniuersi homines praeuicinatores legis sunt et ideo iustum iudicium dei est scribentis in corde generis humani: ‘Quod tibi fieri nolueris, alteri ne feceris.’ Quis ignoret homicidium, adulterium, furta et omnem concupiscentiam esse malum ex eo, quod sibi ea nolit fieri? Si enim mala esse nesciret, numquam sibi doleret inlata. Per hanc naturalem legem et cain cognouit peccatum suum dicens ...”



(cf. “their hearts (*cordibus suis*)” and “with the conscience bearing witness to them (*illis*)”). In fact, his only direct comment on our verses comes in the next line, one which reveals his reading of Rom 2:14-15 to be the broadest and the most inclusive of any we have encountered thus far, despite the fact that his reading is so clearly similar to (if not demonstrably dependent upon) the thought of several of his predecessors. Also significant here – and no less reminiscent of his predecessors – is the degree to which Jerome overtly links the natural law with sin and with the condemnation that sin brings with it.<sup>56</sup> It seems that Jerome has assigned to the natural law nearly, if not exactly, the same function and significance that Paul frequently assigned to the Mosaic Law in Romans and Galatians. In the same way that, according to Paul, the Law of Romans 7 (cf. esp. 7:7-14) brought condemnation to himself and, by extension, to all Jews, Jerome seems to have believed that the natural law has brought condemnation to all human beings in every age and in every circumstance. Finally, and in addition to the overt link Jerome makes to a negative formulation of the so-called “Golden Rule,” note the way in which he makes an explicit link between the existence of the natural law and the justice of God: according to Jerome, because God provided “all nationes (*omnes ... nationes*)” and, in fact, every individual human being who has ever lived, with the natural law, we are justified in believing that, when God judges any nation or any individual, he remains perfectly just even as his judgments remain perfectly unimpeachable.

**Jerome's *Aduersus Iovinianum* (393).** Interestingly, although the Jerome of 407 was more than willing to portray himself as eminently knowledgeable about the nature of the natural law, the Jerome of the early 390's, that is, the Jerome who penned a screed against the views of the “heretic” Jovinian, was just as certain that non-Christians were confused about its true nature.<sup>57</sup> In fact, at *adu. Iovin.* II,7,

<sup>56</sup> For a similar understanding of the condemnation that the knowledge imparted by nature is capable of generating, see *Tr. in Ps.* 95 (cf. CCSL 78, p. 154) where under the lemma “Etenim corripit orbem terrae, qui non commouebitur” (cf. MT Ps 96:10) he writes: “Numquam corrigitur, nisi quod ante rectum fuit, et postea deprauatum est. Sic igitur et nos, et omne humanum genus naturaliter intellegit Deum. Nullae enim gentes sunt, quae naturaliter non intellegant Creatorem suum. Licet enim lapides et ligna uenerentur: tamen intellegunt aliquid maius esse quam ipsi sunt, et in errore suo indicant se habere sapientiam, hoc est, nulla gens est quae naturaliter non intellegat Deum. Denique gentes idola colunt, hoc est, lapides et ligna uenerantur; et si forte rixam fecerint, et si iuramentum aliquod inter illos uenerit, non dicunt, lapides isti uident, ligna uident: sed, Deus uidet, et Deus audit.”

<sup>57</sup> To be precise, the *adu. Iovin.* can be dated with confidence to the year 393. For a recent and comprehensive study of both the context and the relevant issues, see



Jerome claims that the nations have lost so much of their original sensitivity to the real contents of natural law that they often end up labeling whatever it is that they have come to accept as normal or customary behavior as “the law of nature”:

You see clearly that not only in eating, but also in burial, in wedlock, and in every department of life, each race follows its own practice and peculiar usages, and takes that for the law of nature which is most familiar to it.<sup>58</sup>

While this reference to natural law was primarily made as part of Jerome’s greater polemical purpose and, hence, may not reflect his most carefully considered opinion on the subject, it is also true that his use of the concept in such a context was not a simple aberration. In fact, a similar reference – complete with an overt reference to Rom 2:14-15 – occurs in Book III of his *comm. eu. Math.*, a work that he penned about five years later, i.e., in 398.<sup>59</sup> The crucial lines occur in the middle of Jerome’s comments on the so-called “Parable of the Wedding Banquet” (cf. Mt 22:1-14), a parable which Jesus is recorded to have employed in order to explain the true nature of the Kingdom of God and of that kingdom’s citizenry. As he comments on vv.8-9, Jerome highlights the breadth and inclusiveness of the king’s final invitation:

“Then he said to his servants: ‘The wedding feast has been prepared, but the ones who had been invited have not been found worthy; therefore, go to the far ends of the roads and call whomever you find there to the wedding feast’” (cf. Mt 22:8-9). The people of the Gentiles were not on the roads, but were at the far ends of the roads. And in this way he searched among them, the ones who were outside among the evil doers, [with the result that] some doers of good were probably discovered. The apostle dealt with this issue more fully [by writing] to the Romans that Gentiles were naturally carrying out the things that are of the Law, making it possible that they would condemn the Jews who had not been keeping the written Law. There is indeed an infinite variety among those Gentile peoples, while we know some

D. Hunter, *Marriage, Celibacy, and Heresy in Ancient Christianity: The Jovinianist Controversy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>58</sup> This English trans. is that of the NPNF, II/6, p. 394. For the Latin, cf. PL 23, col.310: “Peruides igitur, quod non solum in esu, sed et in sepulturis, et in connubiis, et in omni conuersatione unaquaeque gens suo ritu et proprietatibus uictitet: et hoc eam naturae legem putare, quod didicit.”

<sup>59</sup> For this date, see A. Fürst, *Hieronymous. Askese und Wissenschaft in der Spätantike*, 117-119 and 302.



to be inclined to vices and rushing headlong toward evil, we know others to be dedicated to virtuous behaviors thanks to the integrity of their morals.<sup>60</sup>

If Jerome's *ep.* 121 represented a significant evolution from views he was willing to commit to paper in the 390's, it is also true that his thinking about natural law and about the ways to exegete and apply Rom 2:14-15 did not fully crystallize in 407. Indeed, treatments at least as significant as that found in *ep.* 121 occur in his *Commentary on Isaiah*, an eighteen book masterpiece of biblical interpretation that he completed about 408-410.<sup>61</sup>

For example, in VIII, 24, 6, commenting on Is 24:6, a verse which is part of a substantial and detailed prophecy concerning an horrible future judgment that the Lord will bring about, Jerome makes what is simultaneously a present and a future application:

Let the Jews, who boast in the fact that only they have received the Law of the Lord, hear that at first all the Gentile nations as well as the whole world received the natural law, and therefore it was only afterwards that the Law was given through Moses, because the first law had been dissipated (*dissipatus est*). Concerning this issue the Apostle declared: "When the Gentiles, who do not have the Law, naturally do things which are of the Law, these lacking the Law, are a law unto themselves; they are showing that the work of the Law has been written on their hearts" (cf. Rom 2:14-15). Therefore, those who might be observing these laws are obtaining the rewards; but those who are neglecting them are sustaining the things that were just now threatened by the prophetic word.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> This English trans. is my own; for the Latin, cf. CCSL 77, p. 201: "Tunc ait seruis suis: Nuptiae quidem paratae sunt, sed qui inuitati erant non fuerunt digni; ite ergo ad exitus uiarum et quoscumque inueneritis uocate ad nuptias.' Gentilium populus non erat in uiis sed in exitibus uiarum. Quaeritur autem quomodo in his, qui foris erant inter malos, et boni aliqui sint reperti. Hunc locum plenius tractat apostolus ad Romanos quod gentes naturaliter facientes ea quae legis sunt, condemnent iudaeos qui scriptam legem non fecerint. Inter ipsos quoque ethnicos est infinita diuersitas, cum sciamus alios esse procliues ad uitia et ruentes ad mala, alios ob honestatem morum uirtutibus deditos."

<sup>61</sup> Both Fürst and Newman agree that the *Com. Is.* was finished by 410, though Fürst's view is somewhat less precise, i.e., 408-410. For these opinions, see A. Fürst, *Hieronymus. Askese und Wissenschaft in der Spätantike*, 117-119 and 302 and H. Newman, "Jerome's Judaizers," 432.

<sup>62</sup> This trans. is my own; for the Latin, cf. CCSL 73, p. 317: "Audiant Iudaei, qui se solos legem accepisse Domini gloriantur, quod uniuersae primum gentes totus que orbis naturalem acceperit legem, et idcirco postea lex data sit per Moysen, quia prima lex dissipata est. De qua apostolus loquitur: 'cum enim gentes, quae non habent legem, naturaliter ea quae legis sunt faciunt, isti legem non habentes, ipsi sibi sunt lex; qui ostendunt opus legis scriptum in cordibus suis.' Qui igitur has leges obseruauerint,



Although the specific way in which Jerome linked our verses to Isaiah's prophecy is different from anything we have seen thus far, still more remarkable is the claim he makes concerning the "dissipated" nature of the natural law. Not only has Jerome taken steps to downplay the (salvific and eschatological) significance of the Mosaic Law, and, perhaps, to distance himself from certain features of the Hebrew tradition,<sup>63</sup> he also has revealed yet another point of contact between himself and a Christian commentary tradition that has frequently made declarations about mankind's ability to eliminate or otherwise erase the gifts of God from their minds and consciences. Finally, note that Jerome returns to this theme in, if anything, still more specific terms some six books later. Commenting on Is 51:7-8 (and after quoting Jer 31:31-33 *in toto*<sup>64</sup>), he observes:

Inasmuch as they are living in no way according to the letter, but according to the spirit, they are (re-)establishing (*instaurantes*) the natural law in their hearts. The Apostle also wrote about this: "For when the Gentiles, who do not have the Law, naturally do those things which are of the Law, these lacking the Law, are a law unto themselves; they are showing that the work of the Law has been written on their hearts" (cf. Rom 2:14-15). A point concerning that law is also made in the Psalm: "The mouth of the just man mediates wisdom, and his tongue

praemia consequuntur; qui autem neglexerint eas, sustinebunt quae nunc sermo propheticus comminatur."

<sup>63</sup> Scholars have long recognized that Jerome's hypersensitivity and his peculiar scholarly inclinations combined together to provide him with ample reason to maintain an appropriate distance between himself and anything that might be perceived as "too Jewish," regardless of whether those things were inside or outside the church. The difficulty that he faced is aptly summarized by H. Newman, "Jerome's Judaizers," 444: "The irony – and perhaps part of the underlying logic – of Jerome's frequent attacks against alleged Judaizers is that in principle no orthodox Christian of his day was more vulnerable than he to the charge of Judaizing. Here was a Christian who fraternized with Jews, not for commerce or recreation, but for the express purpose of learning Hebrew and studying Jewish biblical interpretation so that he could then pass on this knowledge to other Christians."

<sup>64</sup> The theological import of these vv. for the earliest Christians, who regarded them as having been (at least) proleptically fulfilled through Christ's ministry and his gift of the Holy Spirit, need not be reviewed here; in the NRSV they read: "The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt – a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."



speaks justice. The law of his God is within his heart and his step will not deviate" (Cf. Ps 36:30-31 (=MT 37:30-31)).<sup>65</sup>

#### F. Romans 2:14-15 in Augustine (pre- 411)<sup>66</sup>

The goal of what follows will be the provision of a condensed but balanced picture of the Bishop of Hippo's thinking on Rom 2:14-15 prior to 411 as a means of facilitating a comparison between his early exegesis of these verses and the exegesis of his predecessors,<sup>67</sup> his contemporaries – especially that of Pelagius – and, though it is beyond the parameters of this particular study, the exegesis of Rom 2:14-15 by both himself and the Pelagian writers who were active after 411. As with most of the foregoing sections, what follows will not be exhaustive.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>65</sup> This trans. is my own; for the Latin, cf. CCSL 73A, p. 563: "Vt nequaquam uiuant iuxta litteram, sed iuxta spiritum, instaurantes naturalem legem in cordibus suis, de qua scribit et Apostolus: 'Cum enim gentes, quae non habent legem, naturaliter ea quae legis sunt faciunt; isti legem non habentes, sibi ipsi sunt lex, qui ostendunt opus legis scriptum in cordibus suis.' De qua lege significatur in Psalmo: os iusti meditabitur sapientiam, et lingua eius loquetur iudicium. Lex dei eius in corde illius; et non supplantabuntur gressus eius."

<sup>66</sup> In the following section frequent reference will be made to what is probably the most thorough analysis of Augustine's relationship to our verses published thus far: Simon J. Gathercole, "A Conversion of Augustine: From Natural Law to Restored Nature in Romans 2:13-16," in *Engaging Augustine on Romans: Self, Context, and Theology in Interpretation*, eds. D. Patte and E. TeSelle, Romans through History and Culture Series (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002): 147-172. While this chapter is certainly commendable, it is not above critique – either methodologically or in all of its textual or analytical details. For example, Gathercole says next to nothing about the ways these vv. were handled by others before or during Augustine's ministry (though he does deal substantially with the impact of Augustine's interpretation(s) on pp. 162-165), details which could really have served to set his conclusions clearly in relief. Still more disturbing are the frequent referential errors he (or his editors) allowed to creep into his text: in the space of two pages (pp. 151-152), I noted no less than three problems with respect to the locations of references to our vv. in Augustine, all of which render the work decidedly less "user friendly" than it should have been. Cf. p. 151, where all references to "Sermon 1" should read "Sermon 51"; p. 152, where the reference to "Exposition of Psalm 58" should be to "Exposition of Psalm 57"; and *ibid.*, where all references to "Letter 107" should be to "Letter 157."

<sup>67</sup> For a general overview of the parallels between the "early" Augustine's Pauline exegesis and that of Origen, see C. Bammel, "Augustine, Origen and the Exegesis of St. Paul," *Augustinianum* 32/2 (1992): 341-368. For an equally general overview of Augustine's attitude toward Gentile religious practices, see P. Hacker, "The Religions of the Gentiles as Viewed by the Fathers of the Church," *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 54 (1970): 253-278, esp. 270-275.

<sup>68</sup> Passages from the "pre-411" period in which Augustine makes more or less clear references to Rom 2:14-15 include: *ex. prop. Rm* 10, where he discusses the notion of "*contestante conscientia illorum*" from 2:15, which, incidentally,



**Romans 2:14-15** in Augustine's *De sermone Domini in monte*. Augustine's earliest clear reference to our verses is found in Book II of his commentary on Jesus's "Sermon on the Mount," a work completed after he had been ordained to the priesthood but before he became a bishop, i.e., about 392 or 393, and, as will be obvious from the excerpt below, while he was still very concerned to establish his "anti-Manichaeism" credentials.

At the beginning of Chapter 9, Augustine is addressing the meaning of what he refers to as the sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer, i.e., "Bring us not into temptation" (cf. Mt 6:13). Not surprisingly, Augustine's most pressing concern by the time we reach Paragraph 32 is to carefully distinguish between our being "tried (*temptemur*)," which he thinks is necessary for anyone if they are to become godly, and being "brought into temptation (*inferamur in temptationem*)," something which he does not think God ever does, even if God does sometimes allow it to happen through the agency of others. As Augustine moves on to discuss a few biblical examples involving either being

Gathercole, "A Conversion of Augustine," 159-160, critiques as being mistranslated by Fredriksen Landes in her *Augustine on Romans: Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans Unfinished Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, SBL Texts and Translations 23 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), cf. p. 4 (for the Latin) and p. 5 (for the English); *en. in Ps.* 5,13, and 9,9. *doc. Chr.* III,14,22, which is cited by Lyonnet, "Lex naturalis," 152, is early and is certainly relevant for any discussion of Augustine's views on natural law, but, as far as I can see, contains little that might be said to be anything more than an allusion to our vv. Although both interesting and important for a full discussion of Augustine's exegesis of our vv., the references to them in, e.g., *spir. et litt.* 26,43-28,49; *ep.* 157,3,15; *En. in Ps.* 118, exp. 25,4; *c. Jul.* IV,3,23-25; and *ciu. Dei* XX,26 are all too late given the parameters of this study. Finally, a word seems necessary regarding the reference to Rom 2:14 found at s.51,28 (cf. *Revue Bénédictine* 91, p. 40). Although it is traditionally dated to ca. 417/418, there are some who think it is significantly older. In fact, both E. Hill and J. Rist think there are good reasons for dating it to "before 410" if not earlier (in his comments, Rist goes so far as to say that Hill's position is still "too tentative"). For Hill's observations, see *WSA* III/3, p. 44 and n. 1; those of Rist can be found in n. 29 of his forthcoming essay "'O, ALTITUDO!': Some Problems in Augustine and Julian about Justice and Mercy: Making Philosophical Sense of some Pauline Ideas" that will be included in a volume dedicated to the use and exegesis of the Pauline corpus during the Pelagian Controversies. In addition to its difficult chronology, the reference to our vv. in this sermo is passed over for discussion here given its difficulty and obscurity: there Augustine's main concern is with the practice of infant adoption and he sees the fact that Gentiles and pagans, such as Pharaoh's daughter (cf. Ex 2:1-10), could willingly adopt the children of others as somehow supporting the notion that they had law(s) written on their hearts before they were formally and externally codified. Though highlighted by neither Hill nor Rist, the fact that Augustine applied Rom 2:14 to non-, or, at least, pre-Christian pagans, could perhaps be used to strengthen the argument in favor of an earlier date given the ways he usually exegeted it post-411; for more on this, cf. *infra*.



tried or being brought into temptation, he begins a longish discussion of the story of Job and how, in Augustine's view, it is ridiculous to suppose that Satan spoke literally and physically to God when he is reported as having asked God to tempt Job to curse God by radically reversing his fortunes.<sup>69</sup>

From here, Augustine, in full anti-materialist mode, references Rom 2:14-16 when he explains the means by which God does speak to his creatures – regardless of either the quality or the exact status of their relationship to him:

When will [the Manichaean heretics who impugn the OT] understand that God speaks within the conscience of every man who can reason in any manner, even though he be perverse (*peruersam*)? For who but God has written the natural law in the hearts of men? This is the law of which the Apostle says: "For when the Gentiles who have no Law do by nature what the Law prescribes, these having no law are a Law unto themselves. They show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience being their witness even when conflicting thoughts accuse and defend them, on the day when the Lord will judge the hidden secrets of men" (cf. Rom 2:14-16). Even though some rational souls are blinded by cupidity (*cupiditate caecata*), every rational soul thinks and reasons. Nevertheless, it is not to the rational soul itself that we ought to attribute whatever is true in its reasoning; we must attribute it to the very light of the truth by which it is enlightened, even though feebly in proportion to its capacity, in order that it may be able to perceive some truth in its reasoning.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> The fact that Augustine would dwell upon this detail provides support for the aforementioned statement about the chronology of this work and its relationship to Augustine's anti-Manichaean efforts. In fact, it rather closely resembles the claim he makes in *conf.* that the last significant hurdle to his escape from their influence was his inability to conceive of God or, indeed, of any higher form in non-material categories. Cf. *conf.* V,10,19-V,11,21.

<sup>70</sup> This trans. is that of D. Kavanagh. For it, see FOTC 11, pp. 140-141; for the Latin, cf. CCSL 35, p. 122: "Nam quando illi ualent intellegere nullam esse animam quamuis peruersam, quae tamen ullo modo ratiocinari potest, in cuius conscientia non loquatur Deus? Quis enim scripsit in cordibus hominum naturalem legem nisi Deus? De qua lege apostolus dicit: 'Cum enim gentes, quae legem non habent, naturaliter quae legis sunt faciunt, hi legem non habentes ipsi sibi sunt lex; qui ostendunt opus legis scriptum in cordibus suis, contestante conscientia illorum et inter se inuicem cogitationum accusantium aut etiam excusantium in die qua iudicabit Deus occulta hominum.' Quapropter si omnis anima rationalis etiam cupiditate caecata tamen cum cogitat et ratiocinatur, quidquid in ea ratiocinatione uerum est non ei tribuendum est sed ipsi lumini ueritatis, a quo uel tenuiter pro sui capacitate inlustratur, ut uerum aliquid in ratiocinando sentiat, ..."



Striking about this passage is how, at least here, Augustine is convinced that this natural law is genuinely present to some degree in every human being's heart even if he or she has (consciously or unconsciously) tried to erase it or to enfeeble it through sin and perversity. Apparently, the reason why this capacity cannot be done away with is precisely because it is rooted in humanity's created nature, that is, in those rational faculties that set a human being apart as "God's image." In other words, in Augustine's view, so long as any given human being (or, for that matter, other created creature, e.g., Satan) remains, at least to some degree, a rational creature with a capacity for understanding at least bits and pieces of truth, he or she apparently retains access to God's voice and God's revelatory activity with respect to both God himself and those aforementioned truths.

**Romans 2:14-15 in Augustine's *Confessions*.**<sup>71</sup> Completed between nine and fourteen years before the outbreak of the first phase

<sup>71</sup> The fact that the use of Rom 2:14-15 at c. *Faust.* 19,2, a work which probably dates from the same period as the *conf.*, i.e., between ca. 396/397 and ca. 400/403, occurs within a section that is actually part of *Faustus's* explanation of the "three types of law (*legem genera tria*)," and is not, as some readers have mistakenly assumed, part and parcel of Augustine's views (cf. Gathercole, "A Conversion of Augustine," 149) means that it should not be allowed to impact the conclusions of this section. Nevertheless, if Augustine's representation of Faustus's position is accurate, it is noteworthy that Faustus also never questions the existence of natural law. In other words, this passage provides yet more evidence in support of the conclusion that belief in some system of natural law was prevalent among educated Christians of all stripes in the Latin West of the late 4<sup>th</sup>- and early 5<sup>th</sup>-century. By the time we get to 19,2, Augustine is well into a discussion of the significance of Christ's claim that he "has not come to destroy, but to fulfill the law and the prophets (cf. Mt 5:17)." As noted *supra*, in Paragraphs 1-6 of Chapter 19, Augustine provides his readers with *Faustus's* explanation of the "three types of law (*legem genera tria*)." In Paragraphs 2 and 3, Augustine records Faustus as claiming that "... there are three kinds of law. One is, of course, that of the Hebrews, which Paul calls the law of sin and death (cf. Rom 8:2). Another is the law of the gentiles (*gentium*), which he calls the natural (*naturale*) law. He says, 'For the gentiles by nature do what pertains to the Law, and, not having the Law, they are a law for themselves, for they show that the work of the Law is written in their hearts' (cf. Rom 2:14-15). But the third kind of law is the truth. [...] Since, therefore, there are three laws, and since Jesus told us that he came not to destroy but to fulfill the law (cf. Mt 5:17), there is need of no slight care and diligence to understand which of these laws he was speaking of" (For this trans., see WSA I/20. p. 237; for the Latin, cf. CSEL 25, p. 497). Faustus then goes on to opine that, since the examples of the law that Jesus gives in the rest of Mt 5 are the "older commandments (*antiquiora praecepta*)" against murder, adultery, and false testimony, he must have been referring to his third category of law, i.e., the Law of Truth, when he claimed that he had come to fulfill the Law. His reasoning strikes the modern reader as being as odd as it is extrapolative: "As it is easy to prove, these [laws] were promulgated long ago among the Gentiles by Enoch and Seth and other righteous men like them, who were given [these laws] by resplendent angels in order to restrain ferocity among



of the Pelagian Controversy, Augustine's *Confessions*, a work which he clearly intended for a wide and diverse audience, contains at least two references to Rom 2:14-15. These two occur at I,18,29 and at II,4,9.

Though the first of these is an allusion made almost in passing, it is significant in that it is used in support of an important point about the irony, the vanity, and the moral and ethical corruption that Augustine sees as inherent in the lives of all who have not yet awakened to the fact that they are deeply immersed in a fallen and hopelessly corrupt world system. Augustine begins Paragraph 29 by noting the backwardness of those who dilligently "observe the conventions of letters and syllables received from those who so talked before them," but who also "neglect the eternal contracts of lasting salvation" which God has tried to make with them and who so willingly and glibly "hate a human being, [their] fellow-man" and who "cherish hostile attitudes." The probable allusion to Rom 2:15 is then introduced as Augustine summarizes the relative permanence of these two systems, one that is human and transient and another that is divine and eternal. Particularly germane to this study is that he does this while also linking the allusion to 2:15 to a negative expression of the Golden Rule: "Certainly the knowledge of letters is not as deep-seated in the consciousness as the imprint of the moral conscience (*scripta conscientia*), that [the worldly person] is doing to another what he would not wish done to himself (cf. Tob 4:15; Mt 7:12)."<sup>72</sup> In other words, here, Augustine seems to claim that, while worldly people do willfully choose to sin, they usually retain the knowledge that what they are choosing is wrong both during and after the commission of the act in question.

Still more substantial is the more certain – but still unattributed – reference at II,4,9, where the principle described by our verses is invoked as part of Augustine's famous comments on the phenomena that surround instances of theft generally and of his theft of his neighbor's pears specifically. In fact, the reference comes very near the beginning of the paragraph when Augustine matter-of-factly acknowledges the existence of both a revealed law and a law implanted in the

human beings. Hence, who would not think that he said this about the law of the truth and its prophets?" (See *ibid.* p. 238; for the Latin, cf. *ibid.* p. 498).

<sup>72</sup> All translations from the *conf.* in what follows have been taken from H. Chadwick, *Saint Augustine Confessions* (Oxford/New York: OUP, 1991), which hereafter will be referenced as "Chadwick." For this quotation, see p. 21. For the Latin, see CCSL 27, p. 16: "... certe non est interior litterarum scientia quam scripta conscientia, id se alteri facere quod nolit pati."



human heart: "Theft receives certain punishment by your law (Exod 20:15), Lord, and by the law written in the hearts of men (*et lex scripta in cordibus hominum*), which not even iniquity itself destroys. For what thief can with equanimity endure being robbed by another thief? He cannot tolerate it even if he is rich and the other is destitute."<sup>73</sup> This is then followed immediately by the Bishop's highly introspective and analytical retelling of his gratuitous theft of pears.

Remarkable here are at least two things. First is the claim that transgressions of the law, regardless of the form it actually takes, are "certain (*certe*)" to be punished. In the case of the law written on the heart, the punishment (at least partly) consists of a furthering of the internal disorder, confusion and "disintegration" that Augustine elsewhere says is a direct result of all sinful lifestyles.<sup>74</sup> Second is the traditional (both broadly speaking and within Augustine's own compositions) but consistently provocative claim that this law, which is so certainly punished, is also indelible: it cannot be erased from the heart of a human being regardless of their persistence in or their degree of commitment to a lifestyle of sin and depravity. Recall, for example, the claim above that this heart-written law cannot be destroyed by "iniquity itself (*ipsa ... iniquitas*)."<sup>75</sup> Augustine goes on to illustrate this point by noting that even the most dedicated thieves know that what they do is wrong, yet they react just as quickly as (and sometimes even more harshly than) the most justice-minded, law-abiding citizen if and when it is from them that something is stolen.

**Romans 2:14-15 in Augustine's *Enarratio in Psalmo 57,1*.** Like those from the *conf.*, the references to Rom 2:14-15 from Augustine's commentary on Psalm 57 (MT=Ps 58) are neither direct nor explicit. However, what makes them interesting and important is that they are exegetically consistent with those from the *conf.* and with those from elsewhere in Augustine's pre-411 oeuvre (not to mention with those from the work of several of his predecessors).

The *enarratio* on Ps 57 was probably preached, as opposed to simply dictated, in Carthage during the first decade of the 5<sup>th</sup>-century;

<sup>73</sup> Chadwick, pp. 28-29; for the Latin, see CCSL 27, pp. 21-22: "Furtum certe punit lex Tua, Domine, et lex scripta in cordibus hominum, quam ne ipsa quidem delet iniquitas: Quis enim fur aequo animo furem patitur? Nec copiosus adactum inopia."

<sup>74</sup> Several statements containing claims of this sort can be found in Book I of *conf.* See, e.g., I,3,3 (Chadwick, p. 4; cf. CCSL 27, p. 2) where God is said to be the one who "reassembles us (*conligis nos*)" and, still more clearly, I,12,19 (Chadwick, p. 15; cf. CCSL 27, p. 11) where we read that "the punishment of every disordered mind is its own disorder (*poena sua sibi sit omnis inordinatus animus*)."



several scholars believe there is justification for placing it near the end of 403.<sup>75</sup> That one of this composition's primary concerns is the status of the "natural" human heart is made clear in the very first paragraph as he tackles the difficult issue of recognizing if, and, if so, how, justice might be achieved in interpersonal relationships:

Anyone at all when questioned about what is just can easily give the right answer, as long as he or she is not an interested party! And this is not surprising, for by the hand of our Fashioner (*formatoris nostri*) truth has been written in our very hearts: "What you would not want to be done to you, do not do to another" (cf. Tob 4:15). Even before the ancient law was given no one was allowed (*permissus est*) to be ignorant of it, for even those to whom the law had not been given were held liable to be judged by this standard. But to take away from human beings any ground for complaining that they had not been provided for, that which they were not reading in their hearts was also written on tablets. For it is not that they did not have that which was unwritten, but it was that they were unwilling to read it. Now it was held before their eyes so that they would be forced to see it in their consciences, and, just as the human being had been admonished externally by the voice of God, he or she was forced to confront his or her own innermost self.<sup>76</sup>

Following this harsh indictment of both the human will and the human heart, which, in Augustine's view, had utterly failed to be true to itself and to read (much less to heed) that of which it was so keenly aware, he goes on to explain a bit more about the purpose and the function of the revelation of an external, written Law:

Because men and women were so avid for external things that they had become estranged from themselves, a written Law was given. This was not because it was not already written in human hearts; but you were a deserter from your heart, and so you are arrested by him who

<sup>75</sup> For an helpful summary of published opinions on the date of this *enarratio*, see C. Meyer, ed. *Augustinus-Lexikon*, Vol. 2 *Cor-Fides* (Basel: Schwabe & Co., 1996-2002), s.v. "Enarrationes in Psalmos," by H. Müller, esp. col. 816.

<sup>76</sup> This is a slightly modified version of M. Boulding's English trans. as found at WSA III,17, p. 120. For the Latin, cf. CCL 39, pp. 707-708: "Aut quis de iustitia interrogatus, quando non habet causam, non facile respondeat quid sit iustum? Quandoquidem manu formatoris nostri in ipsis cordibus nostris ueritas scripsit: 'Quod tibi non uis fieri, ne facias alteri.' Hoc et antequam lex daretur nemo ignorare permissus est, ut esset unde iudicarentur et quibus lex non esset data. Sed ne sibi homines aliquid defuisse quaererentur, scriptum est et in tabulis quod in cordibus non legebant. Non enim scriptum non habebant, sed legere nolebant. Oppositum est oculis eorum quod in conscientia uidere cogentur; et quasi forinsecus admota uoce Dei, ad interiora sua homo compulsus est, ..."



is present everywhere, and you are called back to the interior of your very self. What appeal does this written law make to those who have abandoned the law written in their hearts? "Return to your hearts, you transgressors" (cf. Is 46:8).<sup>77</sup>

Both the point and the import of this section is well-captured by Gathercole who observes that, for Augustine:

[the natural] law is universal, given before Torah, although it was not read or heeded. The abandoning of this law in the heart gave rise to an alienation within the human person – a fragmentation of nature – and the restoration of the person involved a return to oneself. [...] the universal human instinct of not wishing to be cuckolded, stolen from, or murdered gives validity to the positive prohibition of these things, which is the *content* of the universal law in the heart expressed in Tob 4:15. (*italics in the original*)<sup>78</sup>

### G. Rom 2:14-15 in Pelagius

If one sets out to describe Pelagius's views on our verses in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the first phase of the controversy to which he would unwittingly give his name, one's task is relatively straightforward. In fact, one need look no further than his *Pauline Commentary* and his so-called *Letter to Demetrias*, two of the small handful of extant compositions or fragments that are certainly attributable to him.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>77</sup> The difference between what Augustine accepted as the text of Is 46:8 and how modern versions read is substantial; cf. the NRSV: "Remember this and consider, recall it to mind, you transgressors, ...". Again, this is a slightly modified version of M. Boulding's English trans. See WSA III,17, p. 120. For the Latin, cf. CCL 39, p. 708: "Sed quia homines appetentes ea quae foris sunt, etiam a seipsis exsules facti sunt, data est etiam conscripta lex; non quia in cordibus scripta non erat, sed quia tu fugitius eras cordis tui, ab illo qui ubique est comprehenderis, et ad teipsum intro reuocaris. Propterea scripta lex quid clamat eis qui deseruerunt legem scriptam in cordibus suis? Redite, praeuaricatores, ad cor."

<sup>78</sup> Gathercole, "A Conversion of Augustine," 152.

<sup>79</sup> As there seems to be very little in the extant portions of Pelagius's *De Natura* that is germane to the questions under consideration here, the issue of whether or not one should accept the (admittedly only probable) date of ca. 406-410 for that composition as argued by Y.-M. Duval need not concern us here. For the arguments, see Y.-M. Duval "La date du 'De Natura' de Pélage. Les premières étapes de la controverse sur la nature de la grâce" *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 36 (1990): 257-283, esp. p. 274 where he concludes that it is probably better seen as stemming from closer to 406 than to 410. What are probably the most germane statements in the near context of the fragments from Pelagius included by Augustine in his own writings can be found near the end of *nat. et gr.* 2,2, a section in which he actually mentions the "law of nature (*lege naturae*)" (cf. CSEL 60, pp. 234-235).



**Rom 2:14-15 in Pelagius's *Expositions of Thirteen Epistles of St. Paul*.** Given that it probably represents his most formal thinking on the overall meaning and import of our verses – though, as we shall see, it certainly does *not* represent his most interesting application of them – we will begin with the comments under the Rom 2:14-15 *lemmata* in the *Romans* commentary.<sup>80</sup>

Even the casual reader of the commentary is immediately struck by the relative extensiveness of Pelagius's comments in this section: as has frequently been observed, his usual style throughout the commentary is nothing if not succinct; occasionally it can even be brusque to the point of obscurity.

On the level of preliminary detail, it is important to note that Pelagius has defined "the Gentiles" for his readers in the preceding context. His comments on Rom 2:13 make it plain that, for him, the Gentiles of Rom 2 are actually non-Christian pagans and not simply believing Christians who are ethnically other-than-Jewish. He writes: "[Paul] explains why Jews are not better than the Gentiles. We too should fear, therefore, lest we, hearing the Law but not doing it (cf. Rom 2:13), perish *along with the Gentiles*, as he himself says elsewhere: 'Lest we be damned along with this world' (cf. 1 Cor 11:32)."<sup>81</sup>

Once Pelagius begins to unpack 2:14, the reader quickly learns that this position will not be problematic for him since he assumes that Christians, despite their being both "born again" and "new creations in Christ," have neither cornered the market on good works nor are able to claim exclusive rights to possessing at least some degree of sanctification. In a move thoroughly typical for his commentary in that it presents the reader with multiple interpretative options without ever explicitly committing to any of those that have been offered, Pelagius remains open to the possibility that this particular reference to the Gentiles might be either "those who by nature were righteous in the period before the Law" even as it might also refer to unbelievers who "even now do some

<sup>80</sup> Noteworthy here is Gathercole's summary statement on this section of Pelagius's *Romans* commentary, viz. that "Pelagius here is not particularly Pelagian." See his "A Conversion of Augustine," 158-159.

<sup>81</sup> For this trans. see T. De Bruyn, *Pelagius's Commentary*, 72. For the Latin, cf. A. Souter, *Pelagius's Expositions of Thirteen Epistles of St Paul*, Texts and Studies 9/2 (Cambridge: CUP, 1926), 23. For a brief but helpful survey of the issues and questions surrounding the sources that Pelagius seems to have incorporated into his commentary, see De Bruyn, 1-10. For an older but very clear statement regarding Pelagius's knowledge and use of Origen's commentary via Rufinus's trans., see M. Wiles, *The Divine Apostle*, 13.



good.”<sup>82</sup> Not willing, however, to let the Gentiles off the hook and, it should be noted, in perfect keeping with what is certainly Paul’s overall point in Rom 1-3, Pelagius goes on to make it plain that the Gentiles’ possession of a law ultimately serves to incriminate them just as thoroughly as the Jews’ possession of the Law of Moses has incriminated them. He observes that in saying this “[Paul] demonstrates that they [i.e., the Gentiles] do not lack a law, so as to leave the Gentiles no excuse and to divest the Jews of the glory owing to the possession of the Law.”<sup>83</sup>

An equally crucial element for a clear understanding of Pelagius’s views on our verses are his comments on the role of “the conscience (*conscientia*),” an element Paul introduced in v.15. According to Pelagius, the reader once again has two options with respect to interpretation and application. Either he can see the conscience as the means by which nature “produces (*agit*)” the aforementioned law or it can be seen as a testament – in the sense that it provides testimony (*testatur*) – to the very real and inescapable existence of the law. According to Pelagius, it would seem that everyone – even those who are loathe to admit it – are subject to their consciences since “even ... the one who fears no one else is apprehensive when one sins and rejoices when sin is overcome.” The assumption that looms large here, namely that all three groups (Jews, Gentile Christians, and Gentile pagans) are equally well equipped to know what is and is not sin due to the relatively trustworthy condition of their conscience, is addressed again, albeit without supporting argument, in his comments on 2:16.<sup>84</sup> There, according to Pelagius, Paul’s line about “their thoughts in turn accus[-ing] or defend[-ing] them” applies to all of humanity – a fact reinforced by Pelagius’s rather subtle shift to the first person plural at the beginning of his comment (not to mention his choice to retain the all-inclusive “we” even as he goes on to discuss a second option).<sup>85</sup>

<sup>82</sup> See De Bruyn, *Pelagius’s Commentary*, 73. Cf. also *ibid.*, n. 22 where De Bruyn provides several helpful references to the exegesis of this passage in the Latin tradition prior to Pelagius as well as to that same tradition’s presuppositions regarding the origin and existence of a natural law.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> For another passage in the *Romans* commentary which clearly expresses this sentiment, see the comments under the *lemma* of Rom 9:2 (cf. *ibid.*, p. 115): “... because [Paul] says that on this point his conscience bears him witness he shows that he tells the truth, *which the conscience corroborates in all people*, and establishes that he is not charged with lying by an accusation from within” (italics added). Cf. Souter, *Pelagius’s Expositions*, p. 72.

<sup>85</sup> This detail is not lost on De Bruyn. In n. 24 on p. 72, he observes that “[Pelagius’s] comment here addressed Christians as well. For Pelagius there is no essential change in the role of conscience throughout human history.”



He notes that "[Paul] asserts that there is a mental debate when we decide by lengthy deliberation what we ought to do and what we ought not to do, and that we should be judged according to this on the day of the Lord, because it proves that we were not ignorant of good and evil."<sup>86</sup>

Before moving beyond the Romans commentary, it is important to note several of the other places in it where Pelagius either hints at or directly claims that the conscience or heart-level capacities of all "natural-born" human beings (and especially those who were living in his own day) have deteriorated to the point that (almost) all of them have "forgotten (*obliti*)" or "almost forgotten" (*paene ... in obliuionem*) what the race once clearly and unequivocally knew to be the natural law of God.<sup>87</sup> At 1:27, where Paul claims that those who have turned from God are "receiving in themselves the due penalty for their errors," Pelagius claims that this is "... the order of nature, that those who had forgotten God did not understand themselves as well (*ut qui Dei obliti erant nec se ipsos agnoscerent*)"; at 5:13, where Paul has claimed that "before the Law sin was in the world," Pelagius concurs by claiming that "[t]here was indeed sin before the Law, but it was not reckoned to be sin (cf. Rom 3:20) because [natural] knowledge had already almost been wiped out (*quia iam paene obliterate fuerat scientia natura[li]*)"; at 7:8, where Paul has written that "without the Law sin was dead," Pelagius comments that this was precisely because "[t]he natural law, which had [first] brought to mind what was sin, had almost been forgotten (*paene lex in obliuionem ierat naturalis, ...*)"; and, finally, at 11:24, as Pelagius tackles Paul's difficult "Olive Tree" metaphor for the post-resurrection relationship of Jews to the believing Gentiles "who were cut from what is by nature a wild olive-tree," he immediately notes that "[long ago] their fathers had fallen away from nature because they had forgotten the law of nature (*qui[a] iam [ollim] patres eorum, naturalem obliti legem, deg[en]erauerant a natura*), and, when habit had become fixed through repeated sinning, they came to be bitter and unproductive as it were by nature (*quasi naturaliter*)."<sup>88</sup>

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Though it is not expanded upon in detail, the fact that Pelagius did teach that the Mosaic Law was revealed, at least in part, in order to renew the forgotten natural law has also been noted by J. Patout Burns, "The Interpretation of Romans in the Pelagian Controversy," *Augustinian Studies* 10 (1979): 49.

<sup>88</sup> In order, see De Bruyn, *Pelagius's Commentary*, p. 67, 93, 102, and 129. For the Latin, cf. Souter, *Pelagius's Expositions*, pp. 16, 46, 57, and 90.



**Rom 2:14-15 in Pelagius's *Epistula ad Demetriadem*.** Pelagius's *Letter to Demetrias* represents the only significant chronological departure from the "pre-411" parameters that this study has adhered to thus far. The reasons for this are rather straightforward, though they do require explanation. Although the *Letter* seems certain to have been composed in 413 (or, at the latest, in 414), by which point Pelagius had already removed himself to the East, and although Pelagius was well aware of the debates that his disciple Caelestius had generated in North Africa, it seems reasonable to assume that, once the letter began to circulate, it was more *provocative* of Augustine's charges against the Pelagians than that it was written to any significant degree *in reaction* to those charges.<sup>89</sup> In other words, the fact that the letter was drafted in response to a request by the rich and powerful noblewoman Juliana makes it clear that even prominent Christians outside North Africa had yet to become seriously concerned with Pelagius's espousal of any "heretical" doctrines regarding humanity's post-lapsarian status or God's prevenient grace. It should also be remembered that, until at least 415, Augustine had not progressed to a point of being willing to regard Pelagius as less than a friend in Christ or even as someone who seriously needed to have his teachings corrected. A brief discussion of this letter is also worthwhile here given its actual contents: as Rees has noted, "... it contains ... our most complete and coherent account of [Pelagius's] views on the ... topics of 'the good of nature' and 'natural sanctity' and on how they relate to man's capacity to make a free choice between good and evil and thereby win merit in the eyes of God."<sup>90</sup>

The accuracy of the foregoing quotation is confirmed almost from the letter's start. Indeed, Pelagius's comments about the capacities of human nature begin just after his brief but eloquent and rhetorically-charged salutation.<sup>91</sup> By the time the reader gets to the second half of

<sup>89</sup> As B.R. Rees and others have made clear, Augustine seems to have gained access to Pelagius's letter to Demetrias at some point in 414, i.e., at about the time he composed his *On the Good of Widowhood*. In any case, he certainly had read it carefully by 417. For Rees's discussion, see *The Letters of Pelagius and His Followers* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, U.K.: The Boydell Press, 1998 (i.e., accessed by me in the combined edition published under the title *Pelagius: Life and Letters*)), 31 and 33 as well as his detailed footnote in *Pelagius: A Reluctant Heretic* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, U.K.: The Boydell Press, 1998), 6 and n. 24 including the bibliography contained therein. In what follows, all English quotations from Pelagius's *Epistula ad Demetriadem* will be taken from *The Letters of Pelagius and His Followers*, pp. 35-70. All Latin references are those found in PL 30, cols. 15-45.

<sup>90</sup> Rees, *The Letters of Pelagius and His Followers*, 32.



Chapter 3, he encounters Pelagius's initial defense of the natural capacity of *all* members of the human race – including Pagans – to perform morally good deeds.

Pelagius begins section 3,3 of the letter by noting that those who critique the human race's inborn and God-given abilities to choose freely either good or evil do so "from lack of faith as much as of knowledge (... *impie, non minus quam imperite*)."<sup>92</sup> He then goes on to explain how the existence of virtuous pagans offers proof that this goodness is universal. He writes that the good of human nature "has been so universally (*generaliter*) established in all that it sometimes reveals itself and brings itself to notice even in pagans who do not worship God,"<sup>93</sup> before going into a disquisition on the subject of the vast number of virtuous and morally upright pagan philosophers. After noting that the source of this goodness must be from "the good of nature (*de naturae bono*)," Pelagius then concludes this chapter by noting that, comparatively speaking, all Christians should thoroughly exceed whatever degree of righteousness these good pagans have obtained since the "nature and life [of Christians] have been instructed for the better by Christ" and since they "are assisted by the aid of divine grace as well."<sup>94</sup>

This discussion of the capacities of pagans then culminates in Pelagius's thinking regarding conscience and natural law in Chapter 4, a section which itself culminates in his most elaborate exegesis of Rom 2 generally and of vv. 14-15 specifically.<sup>95</sup> Pelagius's circular claims regarding the goodness and helpfulness of the human conscience notwithstanding,<sup>96</sup> the discussion in 4,1 serves to set up the claims

<sup>91</sup> Note that a mere 15 lines into Chapter 1 Pelagius has proclaimed that Demetrias's choice for the veil is actually the direct result of her employing the "sword of the faith (*fidei gladio*)"; that she has done so "of her own's free will (*uoluntate*).<sup>92</sup> For this, see Rees, p. 36; cf. PL 30, col.15. Note too that very similar (if not even stronger) sentiments are easily found *passim* in the letter's early chapters, see, e.g., 2,1; 2,2; and 3,1.

<sup>92</sup> Note, however, that a few chapters later, i.e., in 8,1, Pelagius goes to significant lengths to clarify exactly what he means by the "good of nature." Here he is adamant that he is not claiming that we are incapable of doing evil. Rather his chief concern is to refute those who think we are "forced to do evil through a fault in our nature (*ne eius uitio ad malum ... impelli*).<sup>93</sup> For this, see Rees, p. 43; cf. PL 30, col. 22.

<sup>93</sup> See Rees, p. 39; cf. PL 30, col.18: "... generaliter cunctis institutum est, ut in gentilibus quoque hominibus, qui sine ullo cultu Dei sunt, se nonnumquam ostendat, ac proferat."

<sup>94</sup> See Rees, *ibid.*; cf. PL 30, *ibid.*: "... in melius per Christum natura et uita instructa est: et ... diuinae quoque gratiae iuuantur auxilio."

<sup>95</sup> In chapters 5 and 6, Pelagius begins a roll call of virtuous people from within the Judeo-Christian tradition, i.e., those whose story can be found within the Hebrew Bible, including Abel, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, Lot, Joseph and Job.



Pelagius makes in 4,2 regarding “a certain natural sanctity (*naturalis quaedam sanctitas*)” that exists “in our minds (*in animis nostris*)” and that, by working “on the evidence [provided by] our conscience (*ad conscientiae testimonium*),” helps us all to judge between what is good and what is evil. According to Pelagius, this “natural sanctity” works by “a kind of inner law (*domestica quadam lege*),” and, in his view, is exactly what Paul was talking about in Rom 2:14-15:

This is the law which the apostle recalls (*meminit*) when he writes to the Romans, testifying that it is implanted in all men and written as it were on the tables of the heart: ... [Pelagius quotes Rom 2:14-15 *in toto*]. It is this law that all have used whom scripture records as having lived in sanctity and having pleased God between the time of Adam and that of Moses: some of these must be set before you as examples, so that you may not find it difficult to understand *how great is the good of nature (quantum sit naturae bonum)*, when once you have satisfied yourself that *it has replaced the law in the task of teaching righteousness (... eam legis uice docuisse iustitiam; italics added)*.<sup>97</sup>

Interesting here are several points, some grammatical and some theological. First, note that this time, whether from rhetorical zeal or genuine (and new?) conviction, Pelagius has taken “the Gentiles,” which he took as a reference to non-believing non-Christians in his *Romans* commentary – at least under the *lemmata* for 2:14-15 – and which, of course, cannot be anything but anarthrous in his Latin version, as referring to “all men (*omnibus hominibus*),” instead of, as the anarthrous Greek “... γὰρ ἔθνη ...” was probably intended to indicate, a restricted reference to “some Gentiles.” Second, and more overtly theological, is the unsupported assumption that it was this “law” that “all” human beings between the time of Adam and the time of Moses “have used” if they have lived in such a way as to please God. Of course, Genesis does not make overt reference to any form of law in any of the narratives about the pre-Mosaic god-fearers, unless one

<sup>96</sup> Note, e.g., that in 4,1 (Rees, p. 39; cf. PL 30, col.19), Pelagius, via the inclusive language of the hortative subjunctive, calls upon his readers to “... let our conscience itself deliver its judgement on the good of nature, let us be instructed by the inner teaching of the mind, and let us learn about each of the good qualities of the mind from no other source but the mind itself.”

<sup>97</sup> See Rees, p. 40; cf. PL 30, col.19: “Huius legis, scribens ad Romanos, meminit Apostolus: quam omnibus hominibus insitam uelut in quibusdam tabulis cordis scriptum esse, testator: ... Hac lege uti sunt omnes, quos inter Adam atque Moysen sancta uixisse, atque placuisse Deo, Scriptura commemorat. Quorum tibi, exempli causa, aliqui proponendi sunt: ut facile intelligas, quantum sit naturae bonum, cum eam legis uice docuisse iustitiam probaueris.”



counts as an exception the laws made explicit to (or through) Noah after the flood (cf. Gen 9:1-17, esp. 4-6).<sup>98</sup> Third, finally, and probably most significantly, it should be noted that in this passage Pelagius seems to be claiming that, in the post-advent church age, the human race has in a sense returned to the pre-Mosaic stage since all Christians who have been properly instructed can rely once again on a resurgent “natural sanctity” since “it has replaced the law in the task of teaching righteousness (... *eam legis uice docuisse iustitiam* ...).” In other words, it would seem that Pelagius’s conception of the combined ministry of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in the present dispensation includes the idea that they have both come (or been given) in order to restore a sensitivity to the natural law that human beings, over the course of the last few thousand years, have lost as a direct result of their accumulated sins and sinful habits that, in turn, were spawned as a direct result of their ignorant imitation of Adam’s original disobedience.

#### IV. Summary and Conclusion

Given the degree of difficulty that is inherent in these two verses, it should come as no surprise that there is a substantial diversity of opinion regarding both the meaning and the application of them in the Latin patristic tradition between ca. 365-ca. 411. And, while all six of the questions that were listed in this study’s “Introduction” were addressed – at least indirectly – by one or more of the Latin exegetes that were surveyed here, it must be acknowledged that only a handful of the six were answered clearly and few if any were answered with

<sup>98</sup> On the other hand, one could perhaps argue that Cain (cf. Gen 4:1-14) somehow knew that he should not have killed his brother given that he seems to have readily accepted that some form of punishment for his actions was in order, just as one could also argue that Joseph somehow seemed to know instinctively that to sleep with the wife of his boss, Potiphar, even at the wife’s instigation, was “wicked” and “a sin against God” (cf. Gen 39:1-20, esp. v.9). Also potentially germane here are the two separate stories in which Abraham, an Egyptian Pharaoh, and King Abimelech all also seemed to know instinctively that they should be very respectful of the bond of marriage (cf. Gen 12:10-20 and 20:1-18), even if they all initially experience difficulty in doing so. It is essential to note, however, that, except for some comments about Joseph’s rock-solid will power at 5.4, Pelagius never makes reference to any of these stories – at least in this context. On the contrary, the only reason for their being included seems to be that the biblical text literally refers to them as “righteous” or “upright” before God.



perfect consistency and/or uniformity. In fact, beyond the axioms that: (1) a system of natural law exists and was been built into the warp and woof of the universe by God at its creation;<sup>99</sup> and (2) Paul had this inherent system of natural law in mind when he penned Rom 2:14-15, there are relatively few, if any, details regarding the exegesis and application of these verses that can legitimately be said to have been recognized by all the members of this group of exegetes. Equally significant is the way this study has been able to highlight the degree of diversity and/or ambivalence that occasionally existed within the thought of a single author with respect to Rom 2:14-15: several of these exegetes were apparently quite comfortable with adapting – if not outright altering – their opinions on these verses in order to make them more directly applicable to a given context or more closely conformable to the conventions of the genre they were aiming to produce.

The exegetical detail about which there was perhaps the most diversity and/or ambivalence is the question of the identity of the “Gentiles” mentioned at the outset of 2:14.<sup>100</sup> Some, e.g., Ambrosiaster, thought they are better seen as Christians; others, e.g., Origen and Ambrose, seem to have taken it for granted that they are pagans (though still more ambiguity could sometimes be introduced among those who held this second point of view when they took it as referring to pagans who lived *before* Christ’s first advent); and still others, e.g., Hilary and Augustine, often understood the term to refer to

<sup>99</sup> Given that it was assumed to have its origin in God’s creative activity and not in the will or activity of human beings, it should also not be a surprise to see many of these exegetes claiming that the natural law was incapable of being erased or destroyed by human iniquity – regardless of how badly and how frequently even the worst person sins or how corrupt he or she becomes. In short, for many of these authors, natural law can go “un-read” and unheeded, but it cannot be made to go away. An interesting point for further consideration is whether or not it was precisely such a line of thought that allowed some of them, and most notably Pelagius and those sympathetic to him, to argue so persistently for the idea that the human conscience remains trustworthy.

<sup>100</sup> While the chronological parameters of this study prevented it from being demonstrable in the study itself, note should be made of Augustine’s own ambivalence with respect to the identity of the “Gentiles” and, more precisely, of the fact that he clearly altered his views on this issue once he became enmeshed in the first phase of the Pelagian Controversy. (Note too that it is at least arguable that his discussion of our vv. in *en. in Ps.* 57 represent a landmark in what would become a fundamental rethinking (hardening?) of his earlier positions.) In other words, the fact that he could find precedent for the view that the “Gentiles” were Gentile Christians from within the Latin tradition means that he cannot have independently introduced this view into western exegesis. On the contrary, it seems more accurate to say that, in making this change, Augustine merely switched his allegiance from one more-or-less traditional view to another that was also more-or-less traditional.



all people generally. Given this level of ambiguity, it should come as no surprise that two of these authors, i.e., Jerome and Pelagius, can be shown to have offered different explanations for the identity of the Gentiles in different contexts and at different places within their oeuvres.

The exegetical details about which there was the most agreement include the (often implicit) claim that an easily accessible exemplar of the natural law exists in the so-called Golden Rule. Especially conspicuous are references to a negative form of it, e.g., that found in Tob 4:15, in contexts that also contained discussions of natural law and/or references to Rom 2:14-15. In addition to Origen, this link was made more or less explicitly by Hilary, Jerome, and Augustine. In fact, this link is so clear it seems fair to claim that, by ca. 411, it had become a *topos* among exegetes writing in Latin.

Interestingly, Origen would also seem to have been the likely source for an idea that frequently appears in passages where Rom 2:14-15 is discussed by Hilary, Ambrose, Jerome, and Pelagius. All five of these authors make more or less direct statements to the effect that obedience to the natural law cannot fully (i.e., salvifically) justify anyone since obedience to it can in no way be equated with full obedience to "the law of faith," even if some, e.g., Hilary, could come very close to conflating the natural law with the Law of Moses. In other words, all these writers are in general agreement about rejecting the notion that a person may experience justification (solely) by obeying whatever portions of the natural law that are (or remain) known to him or her. Closely connected to foregoing is the way in which Origen, Ambrosiaster, Ambrose, and Jerome all expressed at least degrees of doubt with respect to whether or not the existence of natural law, which they all acknowledged to be good *in se*, has been ultimately or eschatologically beneficial for humanity: all of these exegetes seem to have been convinced that, on the Day of Judgment,<sup>101</sup> the natural law will serve to further the condemnation of Gentiles by leaving them justly exposed to the just judgment of God.

In sum, this study has made it plain that, for many of the most important Latin exegetes who were active during the period ca. 365-ca. 411, Rom 2:14-15 was precisely what it continues to be for most

<sup>101</sup> Less crucial, but still interesting is the way in which several of these writers could also be ambivalent about the degree of sanctification that the natural law makes possible in this life.



of the exegetes of our own day: a *lectio difficilissima* within what is probably Paul's *epistula difficilissima*.

**Appendix: Rom 2:14-15 in the so-called "Budapest Anonymous"  
ca. 396-405<sup>102</sup>**

Given that so little is known about either the actual authorship, the precise context, or the influence and impact of this commentary, it is difficult to say much about its importance for the questions under discussion in this study. However, if we may assume that Frede is correct in dating its fundamental stratum to the period 396-405 and in (ultimately) assigning its provenance to Rome,<sup>103</sup> it must remain at least theoretically possible that some of its contents may have influenced several of the writers and thinkers of the period in question; that it influenced Pelagius, at least to some degree, was recognized and discussed by Frede and has since been confirmed by others.<sup>104</sup> At the very least, it seems fair to conclude that the comments and the interpolations do reflect the thinking of some (and probably the northern Italian) portion of the Latin-speaking church in or around the first decade of the 5<sup>th</sup>-century.

While there are several passages in the manuscript that either offer comments on Rom 2:14-15 or reflect interestingly on ideas connected to natural law,<sup>105</sup> there are three that are particularly worthy

<sup>102</sup> The source for this commentary is the much-discussed study by Frede. See H.J. Frede, *Ein neuer Paulustext und Kommentar*, i. *Untersuchungen*; ii *Die Texte*, *Vetus Latina: Die Reste der altlateinischen Bibel*, Aus der Geschichte der Lateinischen Bibel, 7-8 (Freiburg: Herder, 1974).

<sup>103</sup> It should be noted that Frede's original opinion regarding the commentary was that it stemmed from "wohl in der Gegend von Aquileja." This view, which appeared in both vol. i of his *Ein neuer Paulustext und Kommentar* (cf. previous n.) and in the forward matter of his *Epistulae ad Thessalonicenses, Timotheum, Titum, Philemonem, Hebraeos*, *Vetus Latina Die Reste der altlateinischen Bibel*, 25/1 (Freiburg: Herder, 1975-1982), 31-32, was later referred to as a "supposition (*Vermutung*)" and was discarded in favor of Rome. For this later, but still less than certain, conclusion, see *idem*, ed., *Epistulae ad Thessalonicenses, Timotheum, Titum, Philemonem, Hebraeos*, *Vetus Latina Die Reste der altlateinischen Bibel*, 25/2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1983-1991), 1103-1004.

<sup>104</sup> For Frede's views, see *Ein neuer Paulustext und Kommentar*, vol. i, 164-215 *passim*; for a later confirmation of the commentary's influence on Pelagius, see, e.g., De Bruyn, *Pelagius's Commentary*, 4, where he observes that "Pelagius was indebted to his interpretation at a number of points, but the debt does not appear to be as extensive as that to other commentaries."

<sup>105</sup> E.g., see comment 30A (p. 32) for the Budapest Anonymous's assumption that natural law exists and that Paul both accepted and taught it; comment 31 (p. 32)



of consideration for this study. Following Frede's own system for organizing the commentary's various hands or sources,<sup>106</sup> the first can be said to reflect *both* the Budapest Anonymous and the so-called Pseudo-Jerome interpolator,<sup>107</sup> the second that of *only* the Budapest Anonymous, and the third that of *only* the Pseudo-Jerome interpolator.

**Passage 1 (Budapest Anonymous and Pseudo-Jerome):**

**024 (p. 28):** Up to this point here [i.e., Rom 2:12], the word is directed toward all those who are under obligation to the natural law, among whom the Jews are also equally included. And for that purpose the Jew is to be preferred to the Gentile, because he has the written Law of Moses in addition to the natural law.<sup>108</sup>

**Passage 2 (Budapest Anonymous):**

**40A (p. 38):** Here, the Apostle is showing how, by means of a single sinning Adam, sin has entered into all human beings in this world. On account of this, no one has been able to fulfill the natural law much less the scriptural Law.<sup>109</sup>

**Passage 3 (Pseudo-Jerome):**

**42 (p. 38):** Again, now the Apostle indicates the death of the soul by which 'the sinning Adam' died, just as the prophet said: 'The

for Pseudo-Jerome's claim that Rom 3:20 does not contradict Rom 2:14-15; comment 43 (p. 38) for the claim that Cain was the first "sinner" against natural law; comment 53 (p. 45) for the claim that the written law actually contains the natural law; comment 72 (p. 52) for the claim that, at Rom 7:24, Paul's teaching demonstrates the need to transcend both natural law and Mosaic Law; and, although it is somewhat more vague, comment 88 (p. 60) for the claim that there are some "saints" who have been pleasing (*placuerunt*) to God by means of the natural law, good examples being those who followed Moses as his disciples.

<sup>106</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this system, see *Ein neuer Paulustext und Kommentar*, vol. ii, 9.

<sup>107</sup> To be more precise, Frede (*ibid.*) notes that this group of comments belongs "ohne Zweifel zum Bestand des Anonymous."

<sup>108</sup> For the Latin, see *ibid.*, 28: "Huc usque sermo dirigitur ad omnes naturali obnoxios legi, in qua etiam Iudaei pariter continentur. Idcirco autem Iudaeus gentili antefertur, quoniam praeter naturalem legem et Moysi 'legem scriptam' habebat."

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 38: "Hic ostendit apostolus, 'quemadmodum uno Adam praevaricante peccatum in hunc mundum ingressum sit cunctis', eo quod tam naturalem quam scriptam legem nullus potuisset implere."



soul which sins, this same soul shall die' (cf. Ezk 18:4); 'for it has also passed through into all men,' who have transgressed against the natural law.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*: "Item: Nunc apostolus 'mortem' animae significat, qua 'Adam praevaricans' mortuus est, sicut et propheta dicit: 'Anima quae peccat, ipsa morietur'; 'transiit enim et in omnes homines' qui naturalem legem praevaricati sunt."



## LEX IN CORDIBUS SCRIPTA AND CONSCIENCIA (ROMANS 2:15) ACCORDING TO AUGUSTINE

In this article I would like to shed some light on Augustine's interpretation of Romans 2:15. I will do this on the basis of his writings up to 412 (*De spiritu et littera* included). Some commentators have considered the start of the Pelagian controversy to be a turning point in Augustine's interpretation of Romans 2:14-15. In his early writings, some commentators have said, Augustine interpreted these verses as dealing with gentiles. But writing *De spiritu et littera* (412) Augustine would have come to the conclusion that this text must be about gentile-christians, i.e. non-Jewish people holding the Christian faith. In other words: Augustine would have changed his interpretation from gentiles to gentile-christians because of his discussion with pelagianism.<sup>1</sup> Philip Platz, however, pointed out that Augustine was simply not involved in a discussion with Pelagius on Romans 2:14.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Pelagius was not particularly 'Pelagian' in his

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Otto Kuss who refers to Gutjahr: 'Während Augustinus in seinen Schriften *De sermone Domini in monte* (393/4 n. Chr.) 2,9,32 (Migne L 34, 1283 f.) und *Contra Faustum* (397/400 n. Chr.) 19,2 (CSEL 25,1 S. 497 f.) für Röm 2,14,15 an Heiden denkt, wird er in seinem Kampf gegen den Pelagianismus zu einer Änderung seiner ursprünglichen Auffassung gezwungen, wie aus seinen antipelagianischen Schriften *De Spiritu et littera* (412 n. Chr.) 26-28 (CSEL 60, S. 196-205) und *Contra Julianum* (422 n. Chr.) 4, 23-25 (Migne L 44, 749-751) hervorgeht. Aufschlußreich ist die Bemerkung von Gutjahr Röm 1923, p. 79: "Pelagius faßte φύσει = solis uiribus naturae, sine fide et gratia, und indem er unsere Stelle von den heilsverdienstlichen Werken erklärte, kam er auf die irrtümliche Lehre daß rein natürliche Werke heilsverdienstlich und Glaube und Gnade zur Seligkeit nicht notwendig seien. Aber auch sein Gegner Augustinus irrte. Mit Pelagius einerseits festhaltend an der Voraussetzung, die in diesem Verse in Frage stehenden Werke seien heilsverdienstlich, und andererseits im Hinblick auf jene Stellen der Heiligen Schrift, die die absolute Notwendigkeit des Glaubens und der Gnade für die Seligkeit aufs schärfste betonen, kam er ... zur Deutung, die εὐνη an unserer Stelle seien Heidenchristen (im Gegensatz zu den Judenchristen), φύσει sei = natura per gratiam reparata und der νόμος sei die von den Propheten für die messianische Zeit vorherverkündete Gnadenerleuchtung und Gnadenbewegung zur Erkenntnis und Erfüllung des Gesetzes". O. Kuss, 'Die Heiden und die Werke des Gesetzes (nach Röm 2,14-16)', in: *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 5 (1954, 2), 77-98, p. 78 n. 4; Id., *Auslegung und Verkündigung*, vol. 1: Aufsätze zur Exegese des neuen Testaments (Regensburg: Pustet, 1963), p. 215 n. 5.

<sup>2</sup> 'Augustin erklärt Rom 2:14 in *De Spiritu et Littera* recht ausführlich, wohl einfach aus der Freude, den Text des hl. Paulus mit dem Propheten Jeremias in Einklang zu bringen; 'naturaliter' spielt hier keine besondere Rolle. Man kann also den Pelagianismus kaum als Ursache der eigenartigen Erklärung Augustinus ansehen, höchstens als entfernten Anlaß, zumal die Worte Augustins noch erkennen lassen, welcher Erklärung er den Vorzug gibt', Ph. Platz, *Der Römerbrief in der Gnadenlehre Augustinus*, Cassiciacum 5, (Würzburg, 1937), p. 128.



interpretation of this verse: Pelagius did *not* explain it in the sense that people *solis uiribus naturae, sine fide et gratia* can obtain salvation.<sup>3</sup> In his commentary on Romans, Pelagius mentions that the passage 'they do by nature what pertains to the law' (Romans 2:14a) can refer to the ability to perform 'some good (*boni aliquid*)' without knowledge of Christ.<sup>4</sup> Gathercole correctly pointed the attention to the fact that Augustine could well have agreed with this interpretation, because Augustine, trying to explain Romans 2:14 in *De spiritu et littera* 27.48 mentions people who do not worship the true God, but who nevertheless perform actions, 'which we not only cannot blame, but which we must justly and rightly praise'.<sup>5</sup> Confronted with these facts, I first intended to find out whether Augustine did change his position at all, and if yes, when he did so and why. Soon I discovered that this was not the right line of approach, because Augustine's so-called 'early' interpretation of Romans 2:14a as dealing *exclusively* with gentiles (and not with Christians) might not be as clear cut as one thinks. Moreover, from the above quotation in *De spiritu et littera* it becomes clear that in 412 Augustine had still not given up the interpretation that Romans 2:14 might correctly be interpreted as referring to gentiles, though Augustine sets out other lines of interpretations as well in *De spiritu et littera* (see *infra*). By means of the database *Library of Latin Texts* (CLCLT)<sup>6</sup> I searched in Augustine's works for *loci* of the concepts *lex in corde scripta*, *conscientia* and *cogitationes accusantes* and *excusantes* or *defendentes*, concepts which Augustine

<sup>3</sup> By 'Pelagian' I mean what is traditionally understood as being Pelagian. However, it should be noted that also Pelagius had a concept of grace and also a concept being bound by the habit of sin.

<sup>4</sup> In fact Pelagius offers two alternative explanations: '*Naturaliter quae legis sunt faciunt*. Siue: De his dicit qui naturaliter iusti fuerunt ante legem. Siue: Qui etiam nunc boni aliquid operantur' A. Souter, *Pelagius's expositions of thirteen epistles of St. Paul II: text and apparatus criticus*, Texts and Studies: contributions to biblical and patristic literature 9/2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1926), p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> S. J. Gathercole, 'A conversion of Augustine: From Natural Law to Restored Nature in Romans 2:13-16', in: D. Patte and E. TeSelle, *Engaging Augustine on Romans: Self, Context, and Theology in Interpretation* (Harrisburg/Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 2002), p. 168. – The relevant passage in Augustine is: 'si autem hi, qui naturaliter quae legis sunt faciunt, nondum sunt habendi in numero eorum, quos christi iustificat gratia, sed in eorum potius, quorum etiam impiorum nec deum uerum ueraciter iusteque colentium quaedam tamen facta uel legimus uel nouimus uel audiuius, quae secundum iustitiae regulam non solum uituperare non possumus, uerum etiam merito recteque laudamus – quamquam si discutiatur, quo fine fiant, uix inueniuntur quae iustitiae debitam laudem defensionemue mereantur', *De spiritu et littera* 27, 48 CSEL 60, p. 202.

<sup>6</sup> The Library of Latin Texts (CLCLT) is the online databank published by Brepolis ([www.brepolis.net](http://www.brepolis.net)).



quotes from Paul's letter to the Romans 2:15. According to Richard Sorabji, Paul might well have been the first to combine the 'law written in the heart' with *conscientia*.<sup>7</sup> The purpose of this article is to make clear that, according to Augustine, the law written in the heart and *conscientia* are closely related. Moreover, I would like to show that Romans 2:14-15 occupies a different place in Augustine's theology as to whether Augustine interprets the 'law written in the heart' as the *lex uniuersalis*, which, as will become clear, is an equivalent of the Mosaic Law, or whether he interprets it as the Law of the New Covenant.

### 1. *Lex in cordibus scripta*

The *lex in cordibus scripta* must be considered against the background of the *lex aeterna* and the *lex naturalis*. Anton-Herman Chroust has drawn attention to the fact that Augustine elaborated the idea of an eternal and unchangeable rational law from a Christian point of view and that he fills it out with a personal concept of God.<sup>8</sup>

In *De diversis quaestionibus* 83 Augustine offers his view on Plato's concept of the Ideas. The Platonic Ideas are 'enduring and immutable' (*stabiles atque incommutabiles*), 'not created' (*formatae non sunt*), 'neither generated nor subject to corruption' (*[cum] neque oriantur neque intereant*). Moreover, they exist as thoughts 'in the Divine Intellect' (*diuina intelligentia*).<sup>9</sup> Augustine was convinced that Plato did not err in holding the existence of a purely intellectual world, although Plato did not use the terminology usually employed in the tradition of the church.<sup>10</sup> Augustine's theology 'transfers' the platonic eternal and unchangeable ideas to the divine intellect.<sup>11</sup> Following Chroust, I use the word 'transfer' because Plato had located the Ideas in an impersonal and transcendent intelligible world (*mundus intelligibilis*), whereas, according to Augustine, these Ideas exist in the mind

<sup>7</sup> R. Sorabji, Lecture 'Conscience: the Graeco-Roman Contribution' held at the Fifteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, 6th-11th August 2007.

<sup>8</sup> A.-H. Chroust, 'The fundamental ideas of St. Augustine's Philosophy of Law', in: *American Journal of Jurisprudence* (1973), 57-79, p. 58; A.-H. Chroust, 'The philosophy of law of St. Augustine', in: *The Philosophical Review* 53 (1944), p. 195-202, p. 195-196.

<sup>9</sup> *De diuersis quaestionibus octaginta tribus* 46,2 CCSL 44A, p. 153.

<sup>10</sup> *Retractationes* 1,3,2 CCSL 57, p. 12-13.

<sup>11</sup> A.-H. Chroust, *The fundamental ideas*, p. 58.



of the Creator.<sup>12</sup> Apart from Neoplatonism, Augustine was familiar with the teachings of the stoics. One of the key stoic principles is that of a universal law of rational causation. That means that all things are ordered by a rational and divine *logos* and all events are bound by the rules of cause and effect.<sup>13</sup> To the stoics, the eternal cosmic law is identical to a 'natural rationality' which permeates the universe.<sup>14</sup> Change and accident do not have a place in the stoic system, but the stoics also hold the theory of the *logoi spermatikoi*, which can account for apparently inexplicable events. The *logoi spermatikoi* contain the germs of everything they are to become. They are comparable to a human embryo, which contains all the features of the future baby. But they also account for unexpected and seemingly exceptional events. In this case they function as 'time bomb effect, triggered to go off at some later date according to a divinely ordained schedule'.<sup>15</sup> This notion of rational orderliness is known to Augustine, but according to the church father the *lex aeterna* is a 'deliberate act' of God and it is not identical with nature nor with God himself.<sup>16</sup> Marcia L. Colish shows that Augustine made use of stoic materials in three different ways. In most cases, Augustine's attitude (positive, negative or adaptive) towards stoic ideas is consistent throughout his career although he may emphasize one aspect or another depending on the context. Towards other stoic teachings Augustine has changed his mind over time. In yet other cases – and this is certainly the case with the teaching of the natural law – Augustine is being inconsistent in his use of the stoic ideas.<sup>17</sup> In short:

'Augustine sometimes equates natural law with reason as a cosmic, an ethical, or a political principle, in a manner evocative of Cicero. At other points he treats natural law as reasonable but as transcendent, not immanent in the world, attaching it to a hierarchical Neoplatonic conception of being and goodness. At other times he identifies natural law with the new covenant of grace revealed by Christ, assimilating it

<sup>12</sup> A.-H. Chroust, *The fundamental ideas*, p. 58.

<sup>13</sup> M. L. Colish, *The Stoic tradition from antiquity to the early middle ages, Vol. I: Stoicism in Classical Latin Literature*, Studies in the history of Christian Thought (Leiden: Brill, 1985), p. 31.

<sup>14</sup> A.-H. Chroust, *The philosophy of law*, p. 196; A.J. Holloway, *The transformation of Stoic Themes in St. Augustine*, microfilmed Ph.D. dissertation, Fordham University, 1966, p. 200.

<sup>15</sup> M.-L. Colish, *The stoic tradition. Vol. I*, p. 31.

<sup>16</sup> A.-H. Chroust, *The fundamental ideas*, p. 60.

<sup>17</sup> M. L. Colish, *The Stoic tradition. Vol. II: Stoicism in Christian Latin Thought through the Sixth Century*, Studies in the history of Christian Thought (Leiden: Brill, 1985), p. 152-153.



firmly to a divine law that embraces both natural and supernatural phenomena. At still other times he contrasts the law of nature with the law of God'.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore the modern scholar trying to explain Augustine's theory of the *lex naturalis* and the *lex aeternis* in connection with the *lex in cordibus scripta* is warned to carefully look to the context of the text under consideration. In *Contra Faustum* Augustine defines the *lex aeterna* as 'the divine reason or the will of God, which commands that the natural order be preserved and forbids that it be disturbed'<sup>19</sup>. Immutable is the *lex aeterna*, and it is all-encompassing: even non-rational creatures are subjected to the *lex aeterna*, though they are not aware of it. To Augustine law (*lex*) and order (*ordo*) are two closely related or even synonymous terms. *Ordo* implies the natural order as well as the moral order. Order signifies harmony and peace: a person who lives, thinks and acts in conformity with the divinely ordained order enjoys true peace of mind. Augustine derives the meaning of *lex* from *legere* (to read) or *eligere* (to select). Hence, *lex* signifies the 'selection of what is just'.<sup>20</sup> The moral order has relations with the natural order: 'the rational soul acts well in these if it preserves order and, by distinguishing, choosing, and weighing them, subordinates lesser goods to greater ones, bodily ones to spiritual ones, inferior ones to superior ones, temporal ones to everlasting ones'.<sup>21</sup> Observing the universal and divinely ordained order is following the road to God.<sup>22</sup>

What is the interrelationship of the *lex aeterna* and the *lex naturalis*? For Augustine the *lex naturalis* is the 'imprint' of the *lex aeterna* in the human soul. It is 'the conscious participation of rational

<sup>18</sup> M.L. Colish, *The Stoic tradition. Vol. II*, p. 159-160.

<sup>19</sup> Translation: WSA I,20, p. 317 *Contra Faustum* 22,27 CSEL 25, 1, p. 621: 'Lex aeterna est ratio diuina uel uoluntas Dei, ordinem naturalem conseruari iubens, perturbari uetans'.

<sup>20</sup> A.-H. Chroust, *The fundamental ideas*, p. 61. The passage Chroust refers to is *Quaestionum in Heptateuchum* 3.20 CSEL 28/2, p. 249 and CCSL 33, p. 186: '... legem a legendo, id est ab eligendo latini auctores appellatam esse dixerunt'; Chroust remarks that this statement might be under the influence of Cicero, *De legibus* 3.

<sup>21</sup> Translation: WSA II, 2, p. 246 *Epistula* 140,2,4 CSEL 44, p. 157: '... ita bene in his agit anima rationalis, si ordinem seruet et distinguendo, eligendo, pendendo subdat minora maioribus, corporalia spiritalibus, inferiora superioribus, temporalia sempiternis ...'; Noted by A.-H. Chroust, *The fundamental ideas*, p. 60.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Chroust, *o.c.*, p. 60; *De ordine* 1,9,27 CCSL 29, p. 102: 'Ordo est, quem si tenuerimus in uita, perducet ad Deum, et quem nisi tenuerimus in uita, non peruenimus ad Deum'.



man in the *lex aeterna*'.<sup>23</sup> God establishes his law in the hearts of people. In *De Trinitate* (399-422/426) the relationship of the universal law or Truth on the one hand, and the *lex naturalis* on the other hand, is illustrated with the beautiful image of the signet ring and its seal:

Where [...] are they [=these standards] written but in the book of that light which is called truth, from which every just law is copied, and transferred into the heart of the man who does justice, not by locomotion but by a kind of impression (*tamquam imprimendo*), rather like the seal which both passes into wax and does not leave the signet ring?'<sup>24</sup>

Regarding the *lex naturalis* Augustine makes ample use of biblical language. The expression *opus legis in cordibus scriptum* of Romans 2:15 becomes *lex in cordibus scripta* in Augustine. Similar expressions are found in 2 Corinthians 3:3, Jeremiah 31:33 (in LXX: Jeremiah 38:33) where a quotation of Hebrews 8:10 is found; Psalm 40:4 and 9. Because of his Christian point of view, Augustine had to clarify the relationship between the inner law and the Tora. The inner law already existed before Tora, but people did not keep its prescripts:

'Even before the law was given no one was allowed to be ignorant of it, for even those to whom the law had not been revealed were held liable to judgment by this standard. But to take away from human beings any ground for complaining that they had not been provided for, a law written on tablets was given. It stated what was already written in their hearts, for they had not hitherto lacked a written law; they had simply been unwilling to read it'.<sup>25</sup>

The Tora is the law shown to people before their eyes, that is from outside, so that they are forced to look inside, in their *conscientia*:

'What appeal does the written law make to those who have abandoned the law engraved in their hearts? *Return to your hearts, you transgressors* (Is 46:8)'<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> A.-H. Chroust, *The philosophy of law*, p. 198.

<sup>24</sup> Translation: WSA 1/5, p. 387 *De Trinitate* 14,15,21 CCSL 50A, p. 451: 'ubi ergo scriptae sunt, nisi in libro lucis illius quae ueritas dicitur unde omnis lex iusta describitur et in cor hominis qui operatur iustitiam non migrando sed tamquam imprimendo transfertur, sicut imago ex anulo et in ceram transit et anulum non relinquit?'

<sup>25</sup> Translation: WSA III/17, p. 120 *Enarratio in Psalmum* 57,1 CSEL 39, p. 708: 'hoc et antequam lex daretur nemo ignorare permissus est, ut esset unde iudicaretur et quibus lex non esset data. Sed ne sibi homines aliquid defuisse quaererentur, scriptum est et in tabulis quod non cordibus non legebant. Non enim scriptum non habebant, sed legere nolebant'.

<sup>26</sup> Translation: WSA III/17, p. 120 *Enarratio in Psalmum* 57,1 CSEL 39, p. 708: 'propterea scripta lex quid clamat eis qui deseruerunt legem scriptam in cordibus suis?' *Redite, praeuaricatores, ad cor*'.



The natural law written in the hearts of people does not make the Tora superfluous. Rather on the contrary, the Law can be seen as a help because people do not know the *lex naturalis* any more. Moreover, neither temporal nor human laws are superfluous in regard to the eternal law. They serve to maintain society and to combat evil of the worst kind. It is clear that Augustine's interpretation of the *lex in cordibus scripta* in the above quoted *Enarratio in psalmum* 57 is not an adequate reading of Romans 2:15. Paul is speaking of gentiles doing by nature what the law requires, whereas Augustine is dealing with transgressors of the law, in other words: those who have abandoned the Mosaic law and are asked to 'return within' in order to read the law written in the heart. One can easily see that Augustine operates in a creative way by interpreting the concept of the *lex in cordibus scripta* (cf. Romans 2:15) against a cluster of biblical references (e.g. 2 Corinthians 3:3; Isaiah 46:8). He fits the concept in his preaching as he judges it to be suitable in the new context of his own sermon.

In *De sermone Domini in monte* 2.9.32 (392/395) Augustine interprets Romans 2:14-16 as an explanation of the natural law which God laid in the hearts of people (*in cordibus hominum*). Every rational being (*animal rationale*) is able to use his *ratio* and has a conscience (*conscientia*) in which God speaks.<sup>27</sup> In the process of rational thinking, each single rational soul, regardless of the degree to which it is blinded by desire, may not attribute to itself whatever is true in its reasoning, but what is true must be attributed to the light of Truth itself, by which the rational soul is enlightened.<sup>28</sup> Apparently, Augustine's Manichean opponents who did not accept the authority of the Old Testament had some difficulties understanding how the devil could possibly enter into consultation with God (cf. Job 1: 6-12). Because even evil people do possess a *conscientia* in which God speaks, it is not surprising that the devil has learned from God, the Truth himself, everything he veraciously knows about Job. Here, the *lex naturalis* refers to the ever-existing link between God and his creation. To the Manicheans the *princeps tenebrarum* is an independent substance. They held a radical dualism. North African Manicheism presented itself as a form of Christianity. This form of Christianity had previously attracted Augustine because of its explanation of the origin of evil.<sup>29</sup> In his antimanichean writings, however, Augustine is careful to

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Simon J. Gathercole, *A conversion of Augustine*, p. 149-150.

<sup>28</sup> *De sermone Domini in monte* 2,9,32 CCSL 35, p. 122.

<sup>29</sup> J. Kevin Coyle, 'The manichaeism of Augustine', in: T.J. van Bavel (ed.), *Saint Augustine* (Brussel: Mercatorfonds, 2007), p. 184.



distinguish his doctrine from the Manichean teaching of a substantial principle of evil. According to Augustine, the devil is a fallen angel, subordinated to God. 'He and his angels are ontologically good (*uera rel.* 13), but fell by their own will, by the sin of pride (*lib. ar.* 3, 25)'.<sup>30</sup> Should a creature in some way try to escape from God, it nevertheless always remains connected with its Creator. Compare it with an umbilical chord, but one that cannot be snipped in two. The Manichean *electi* thought that they alone could gain access to *gnosis* because they collected light-particles within them, whereas Augustine reasons that even bad people can know the truth.<sup>31</sup> He makes *gnosis* universally accessible. One might say that Augustine, in *De sermone Domini in monte*, interprets Romans 2:15 as a text about gentiles,<sup>32</sup> however, it is much more correct to say that it is – as Augustine states – about *omnis anima rationalis* even if it is *cupiditate caecata*. Moreover, it should be noted that this is a polemical text and that Augustine had (so to say) no other option as to speak of an *anima cupiditate caecata*, precisely because his task consisted in explaining how the devil could possibly get in touch with God.

The quotation of Romans 2:15 in *Contra Faustum* (397/399) has equally served as a proof that Augustine interprets this verse as a text about gentiles. Simon J. Gathercole has rightly drawn the attention to the fact that this quotation does not appear in a text of Augustine himself, but in one of Faustus's speeches, quoted by Augustine in order to criticise Faustus's reasoning.<sup>33</sup> The discussion between Augustine and his Manichean opponent is about Jesus's statement: 'Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish, but to fulfil' (Matthew 5:17). According to the Manichean Faustus there are three kinds of laws:

'One is (...) that of the Hebrews, which the apostle calls the law of sin and death (See Rom 8:2). Another is the law of the gentiles, which he calls the natural law. He says, *For the gentiles by nature do what pertains to the law, and, not having the law, they are a law for themselves, for they show that the work of law is written in their hearts*

<sup>30</sup> F. van Fleteren, 'devil', in: A.D. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Augustine through the Ages* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), p. 268.

<sup>31</sup> *De sermone Domini in monte* 2, 9,32 CCSL 35, p. 122: 'Nam quando illi [= the Manicheans] ualent intellegere nullam esse animam quamuis peruersam, quae tamen ullo modo ratiocinari potest, in cuius conscientia non loquatur deus?'

<sup>32</sup> Cf. e.g. Gutjahr 1923 (see note 1).

<sup>33</sup> S.J. Gathercole, *A conversion of Augustine*, p. 149.



(Rom 2:14-15). But the third kind of law is the truth. In order to indicate this, the apostle said: *For the law of the Spirit in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death* (Romans 8:2).<sup>34</sup>

Faustus is of the opinion that Jesus is not talking about the law of the Hebrews in Matthew 5:17, but about the law in general. Looking closer, Faustus argues, Jesus would have meant that he came to fulfil the law of the gentiles, for the prescripts of the righteous men of antiquity are confirmed by Jesus and their defects are supplied (e.g. 'they shall not kill' becomes: 'be not even angry'), whereas the precepts of the Jews are destroyed (e.g.: 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' becomes: 'whosoever shall smite thee on they right cheek, turn to him the other also'). Clearly, in Faustus's view, Romans 2:15 functions as a proof text that the gentiles have a law of nature. What Augustine criticises is the way in which Faustus goes on straining, trying to seek (but not finding!) a way out 'through the three kinds of law and three kinds of prophets'<sup>35</sup>. Gathercole is completely right, when he says that Augustine is not criticising Faustus's taxonomy of laws.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, one should be careful not to see *Contra Faustum* as a proof text of the early Augustine interpreting Romans 2:15 as a text about Gentiles. On the other hand, nothing here proves that in Augustine's view an interpretation of Romans 2:15 as dealing with gentiles would be wrong.

Time and time again, the natural law turns up in the lives of individuals. This becomes clear from the *Confessiones* (397/401), Augustine's description of his personal quest for God. Discussing the famous pear theft in the second book of the *Confessiones*, Augustine mentions 'the law written in human hearts':

'Beyond question, theft is punished by your law (*lex tua*), O Lord, and by the law written in human hearts (*et lex scripta in cordibus hominum*), which not even sin itself can erase'.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Translation: WSA I/20, p. 237 *Contra Faustum* 19,2 CSEL 25, 1, p. 497: 'sunt autem legum genera tria: unum quidem hebraeorum, quod peccati et mortis Paulus appellat; aliud uero gentium, quod naturale uocat. Gentes enim, inquit, naturaliter, quae legis sunt, faciunt; et eiusmodi legem non habentes ipsi sibi sunt lex, qui ostendunt opus legis scriptum in cordibus suis. Tertium uero genus legis est ueritas, quod perinde significans apostolus dicit: lex enim spiritus uitae in Christo Iesu liberauit me a lege peccati et mortis'.

<sup>35</sup> Translation: WSA I/20, p. 241 *Contra Faustum* 19,7 CSEL 25, 1, p. 501: 'nec perges extendi per tria genera legis et tria genera prophetarum quaerens, qua ex eas, et non inueniens'.

<sup>36</sup> S.J. Gathercole, *A conversion of Augustine*, p. 149.

<sup>37</sup> Translation: WSA I/1, p. 67 *Confessiones* 2,4,9 CCL 27, p. 21: 'Furtum certe punit lex tua, domine, et lex scripta in cordibus hominum, quam ne ipsa quidem delet iniquitas'.



In fact Augustine speaks of two laws: God's law and the law written in human hearts. The first is the *lex aeterna*, the second the *lex naturalis*.<sup>38</sup> The law written in human hearts cannot be erased, not even by sin. Augustine reports the pear theft as an incomprehensible act and as something contrary to reason. The young Augustine was in no way in need of pears. On the contrary, he had an amount of pears at his disposal; even of a better taste than the ones he stole. The irrationality of the sin is at odds with the rationality of the *lex naturalis*. Irrationality exists precisely in not conforming oneself to *ratio*. When Augustine tries to find out what could have moved him to steal and waste the fruit, he distinguishes sin from crime (*facinus*) and allies his theft with the former (2.5.11). Crimes are intelligible in reference to an object of desire – material gain, fame, revenge; sin is not. In this passage, God's law and the inner law function as a call to conversion. This is not a text about a gentile pur sang, but about a potential Christian, Augustine himself, who, even before his conversion, religiously lives within a Christian, but sectarian environment. In fact, Augustine discovers that the true God of both Old and New Testament had always been present in his life.

*Enarratio in psalmum* 57 (possibly preached in 403) sheds some light on the content of the law to which everyone has knowledge:

'by the hand of our Fashioner truth has written in our very hearts the precept, *Do not do to another what you would not want anyone to do to you* (Tb. 4:16)'.<sup>39</sup>

The content of the inner law is the Golden Rule, which in this passage is formulated by means of Tobias 4:16. Augustine offers plenty of examples of situations in which people judge an action to be bad from the fact that they do not want to have it done to themselves, for example adultery and theft. The formulation of the Golden Rule is also mentioned in Augustine's account of the pear theft: 'for when does any thief tolerate being robbed by another thief, even if he is rich and the other is driven by want?'<sup>40</sup> It should be noted that the Golden rule is also formulated as doing something positive, that is: kind actions such as generosity in giving, sheltering a foreigner etc.

The mutual relation between the existence of the natural law and the interpretation of scripture works in two ways. On the one hand,

<sup>38</sup> Cf. S.J. Gathercole, *A conversion of Augustine*, p. 150.

<sup>39</sup> Translation: WSA III/17, p. 120; *Enarratio in psalmum* 57,1 CCL 39,p. 708: 'quandoquidem manu formatoris nostri in ipsis cordibus nostris ueritas scripsit: *quod tibi non uis fieri, ne facias alteri*'.

<sup>40</sup> Translation: WSA I/1, p. 67 *Confessiones* 2,4,9 CCSL 27, p. 21-22: 'quis enim fur aequo animo furem patitur? Nec copiosus adactum inopia'.



Augustine derives the universality of the natural law from scriptural passages on the basis of logical thinking. Wisdom 1:9 reads: 'An enquiry will be instituted in the thoughts of a godless person'. An 'inquiry', Augustine reasons, presupposes a law according to which the inquiry takes place: this is the inner law, which already existed before the Tora. On the other hand, the concept of the natural law provides Augustine with a key to understand difficult and apparently contradictory biblical passages. For instance, how could it be that, according to the psalmist 'all sinners have been judged to be transgressors' (Psalm 118:118); whereas, at the same time, according to the apostle Paul, 'where there is no law, there is no transgression' (Romans 4:15)? Augustine offers two different possibilities to resolve the apparent contradiction. In Letter 157 (written around 414) Augustine's use of the law of the heart is triggered by a reference to Romans 4:15: 'For where there is no law, there is no transgression'. Augustine goes on to argue that the law which is the precondition of transgression in the verse is not confined to Israel 'since there is also a law in the reason of a person (*in ratione hominis*) who already uses free choice, a law naturally written in the heart (*naturaliter in corde conscripta*), by which he is warned that he should not do anything to anyone else that he himself does not want to suffer'.<sup>41</sup> In other words: by interpreting the law mentioned in Romans 4:15 as the law written in the heart, the apparent contradiction between Psalm 118:118 and Romans 4:15 is resolved. In *Enarratio in Psalmum* 118 Augustine offers a different interpretation of Romans 4:15. This time Augustine states that the apostle is referring to the Mosaic law, but, Augustine goes on, according to the apostle, it is possible to sin outside the scope of the Mosaic law, otherwise he would not have written: 'Those who have sinned without the law, will perish without the law' (Romans 2:12). But what law had the psalmist in mind when he wrote: 'all sinners have been judged to be transgressors'? According to Augustine the answer lies in Romans 2:14b: 'they are a law to themselves'. Subsequently, there is good reason to reckon all sinners on earth as violators of the law (cf. Psalm 118:118). Therefore, the psalmist must have had the natural law in mind, containing the Golden Rule.<sup>42</sup>

The law of Romans 2:14 is not merely the natural law known to people before the revelation of the Mosaic Law. Augustine also

<sup>41</sup> Translation: WSA II/3, p. 25 *Epistula* 157,3,15 CSEL 44, p. 463: 'proinde quoniam lex est etiam in ratione hominis, qui iam utitur arbitrio libertatis, naturaliter in corde conscripta, qua suggeritur, ne mali aliquid faciat quisque alteri, quod pati ipse non uult...'

<sup>42</sup> *Enarratio in Psalmum* 118, 25, 1-4 CCSL 40, p. 1747-1750.



interprets Romans 2:14 as the prophecy of the New Covenant. In *Enarratio in Psalmum* 45,6 Augustine refers to Jeremiah 31:22 (= Hebrews 8:10): 'these laws, these commandments, that were stamped upon the faith and believing hearts of all nations by the apostle'.<sup>43</sup> The new law is the grace of the Holy Spirit, which is given to believers through faith in Christ. This law is operative through *caritas*; it provides grace for people in order that they might be able to fulfil the prescripts of the law. In fact, what Augustine is doing here, is harmonizing different passages from scripture: Romans 2:14, Jeremiah 31:3 and Romans 5:5: '*caritas tua diffusa est in cordibus nostris per spiritum sanctum*'. In *Enarratio in Psalmum* 118 sermo 22 we find a similar connection between the Spirit, the new covenant and the law written in the heart:

'You, who are more intimate to me than my inmost self (*tu interior intimis meis*), have set a law within my heart by the action of your Spirit (*tu intus in corde legem posuisti mihi spiritu tuo*), as though writing it with your finger (*tamquam digito tuo*). You have written it within me so that I may not dread it like a loveless slave but love it with chaste fear like a son or daughter and fear it with chaste love'.<sup>44</sup>

The old law prescribes *caritas*, but, according to Augustine, people fulfilled that law with fear. As to the new law, Augustine speaks of people who fulfil the law with chaste love.

It seems evident that the law written in the heart cannot be erased. This is confirmed by the *Confessiones*: 'the law written in human hearts, which not even sin itself can erase'<sup>45</sup>. Sin might cause that the imprint of the law is fading away, whilst the keeping of God's prescripts (*praecepti dei*), on the other hand, makes the imprint clearer. In *De spiritu et littera* (412) it is mentioned that God's law has been removed from the hearts of sinners (*lex dei est deleta de cordibus*)<sup>46</sup>, which seems to contradict the *Confessiones*. Nevertheless, a bit further on in *De spiritu et littera* it becomes clear that the image of God (*imago Dei*) has not been removed to such a point that no vague lines can be perceived and that the imprint cannot be repaired by grace.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Translation: WSA/16, p. 315 *Enarratio in Psalmum* 45,6 CCSL, 38, p. 522.

<sup>44</sup> Translation WSA III/19, p. 448 *Enarratio in psalmum* 118,22,6 CCSL 40, p. 1740: 'tu interior intimis meis, tu intus in corde legem posuisti mihi spiritu tuo, tamquam digito tuo; ut eam non tamquam seruus sine amore metuerem, sed casto timore ut filius diligerem, et dilectione casta timerem'.

<sup>45</sup> Translation: WSA 1/1, p. 67; *Confessiones* 2.4 CCL 27, p. 21: 'lex scripta in cordibus hominum, quam ne ipsa quidem delet iniquitas'.

<sup>46</sup> *De spiritu et littera* 27,47 CSEL 60, p. 201.

<sup>47</sup> *De spiritu et littera* 28,48 CSEL 60, p. 202.



Before I proceed, let me recapitulate the theory of the *lex in corde scripta*. This law can be interpreted as the natural law because it belongs to human nature. The *lex naturalis* is the imprint of God's eternal law. It brings knowledge of good and evil. This law was given in Paradise, before the Mosaic law, but the content is not different from the Tora: *caritas* and the Golden Rule. The Mosaic Law was intended to remember people of the law written in their hearts. The 'law written in the heart' refers to the New Covenant as well (cf. *En. in Ps.* 45; *En. in Ps.* 118, 20): the Holy Spirit pouring out *caritas* in the hearts of people. The Holy Spirit pours out grace in order that one might be able to actually fulfil the prescripts of the law. The law written in the heart contains not merely the prescripts, it also refers to the 'works of the law', that is: the fulfilment of the law.

## 2. Conscientia and the conflicting thoughts

The concept of *conscientia* will be investigated in relationship with Romans 2:15. What is the function of *conscientia* and what is the relationship of *conscientia* and the *lex naturalis* regarding the relationship with God, moral prescripts and salvation?

Etymologically *conscientia* means 'the holding of knowledge in common'. Consciousness is the act of being aware of something one has done or for which one is responsible. In particular it can refer to consciousness of right and wrong. This is the moral sense or conscience. One can have a good conscience or a guilty conscience.<sup>48</sup> To Augustine, *conscientia* has essentially to do with God.<sup>49</sup> It is no self-awareness without God. '*Deum et animam scire cupio*', Augustine writes in *Soliloquia*.<sup>50</sup> The religious character of *conscientia* is stressed by the formula '*coram Deo*': *conscientia tua coram Deo (est)*.<sup>51</sup> Augustine's concept of *conscientia* is based on a biblical-christian conception of God. In the bible, the idea of people being aware of an all-knowing God who sees everything is present e.g. in 2 Corinthians 4:2 and Galatians 1:20.<sup>52</sup> When Paul says in 2 Corinthians 1:12a: 'this is our boast, the testimony of our conscience (*testimonium conscientiae, testis conscientiae*)', this is not to be understood autonomously, but,

<sup>48</sup> P.G.W. Glare (ed.), *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968-1982), p. 411; Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon, s.d.), p. 426.

<sup>49</sup> J. Stelzenberger, *Conscientia bei Augustinus*, p. 27.

<sup>50</sup> *Soliloquia* 1.2.7. CSEL 89, p. 11.

<sup>51</sup> E.g.: *Enarratio in Psalmum* 7,4 CCSL 38, p. 38; *sermo* 47, 11 CCSL 41, p. 581.

<sup>52</sup> J. Stelzenberger, *Conscientia bei Augustinus*, p. 37.



to use a neologism, theonomously. The testimony of his conscience is not a merely human matter, it is established in God. Of course, there is a difference between the testimony of the *conscientia* and the testimony of God, in that the latter is absolute.<sup>53</sup>

*Conscientia* is an 'organ of the soul', whose specific function is aimed at people's character and conduct of life.<sup>54</sup> *Conscientia* operates *intus*, in the inner part: nothing is more interior to a person than his conscience. Augustine compares the *conscientia* as one's inner self with the depths of the sea: 'You may plumb the depths of the see, but what is deeper than the human conscience (*quid profundius humana conscientia*)?'<sup>55</sup> In order to illustrate *conscientia* with visual aids, he depicts it in a metaphorical way as 'the belly of the inner man' (*uenter interioris hominis*)<sup>56</sup>. *Conscientia* operates assisted by *mens*. Therefore both are mentioned together: '*in mente atque conscientia*'<sup>57</sup> and '*in conscientia et intellectu*'.<sup>58</sup> In fact, they are already mentioned together in the bible, for example in the letter of Paul to Titus 1:15, where minds and consciences of the unbelievers are linked together. Because the *conscientia* operates in the inner part, Augustine exhorts to return within: 'Return to your conscience, question it (...) Return within, brothers, and in all the things whichever you do, look upon God as your witness'.<sup>59</sup>

*Conscientia* is *intus hominis*, the place of the encounter with God: 'There is only yourself and God'.<sup>60</sup> *Confugere ad conscientiam* and *confugere ad dei conspectum* are in fact one and the same activity: 'we must take flight within, to our conscience, to the place where God sees'.<sup>61</sup> The *conspectus conscientiae* and the *conspectus Dei* are closely related to each other. According to Augustine, 'what human sight cannot penetrate, like the secrets of *conscientia*, that is properly and specially called the sight of God'.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>53</sup> J. Stelzenberger, *Conscientia bei Augustinus*, p. 37-38.

<sup>54</sup> C. Mayer, 'conscientia', in: C.P. Mayer, K.H. Chelius and E. Feldmann (eds.), *Augustinus-Lexikon* (Basel: Schwabe, 1986-), col. 1222.

<sup>55</sup> *Enarratio in Psalmum* 76, 18 CCSL 39, p. 1063.

<sup>56</sup> *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus* 32, 4 CCSL 36, p. 301-302.

<sup>57</sup> *De musica* 6,40 PL 32, col. 1185.

<sup>58</sup> *Quaestiones euangeliorum* 2,40,3 CCSL 44B, p 99.

<sup>59</sup> *In Iohannis epistolam ad Parthos tractatus* 2 PL 35, col. 1992.

<sup>60</sup> *Enarratio in Psalmum* 54,9 CCSL 39, p. 663: 'Si forte in conscientia, quo nullus hominum intrat, ubi nemo tecum est, ubi tu et Deus es'.

<sup>61</sup> Translation: WSA III/15, p. 99 *Enarratio in Psalmum* 5,11: 'et ideo intro ad conscientiam et ad dei conspectum confugiendum est'.

<sup>62</sup> Translation: WSA III/1, p. 300-301 *sermo* 12,6 CCSL 41, p. 169: 'sed ille proprie conspectus dei dicitur, quod humanus non potest penetrare conspectus, sicut sunt secreta conscientiae'.



In *Contra litteras Petiliani* (400/403) and *Ad Cresconium* (405/406), two of Augustine's works against the Donatists, the concept of *conscientia* appears many times.<sup>63</sup> Because the discussion on *conscientia* is not related to Romans 2:14-15 I will just briefly mention it. During the Donatist controversy the concept of *conscientia* receives a special interpretation. Among other things the discussion is about the legitimacy of baptism. According to the Donatists the sacrament of baptism could not be valid, unless the minister had an integer faith and morality, and belonged to the true church. The Donatists hold a broad concept of *conscientia*. Regarding baptism they spoke of: '*conscientia sancte dantis attenditur quae abluit accipientis*' or 'what we look for is the conscience of the one who gives in holiness, to clean that of the recipient'.<sup>64</sup> This inner state which the Donatists required of the minister was not the one catholic priests, who during the persecution of Diocletianus had brought offers for the gods, could possibly possess. These priests possessed a *damnata conscientia*. Augustine's arguments against the Donatists are not directed against their dogmatic interpretation of *conscientia*. Here, Augustine himself is holding a dogmatic concept of *conscientia* in that his concept of *conscientia* is essentially aimed at the unity of the church: '*conscientia* is das Innere als Basis des Religiösen und Kirchlichen'<sup>65</sup>. Augustine is aware that it is impossible to find out whether the *conscientia dantis latenter immunda* or *munda* is. Though the Donatists and the Catholics did not share the unifying *caritas*, they shared the same *fides*. Therefore, according to Augustine, sacraments were valid regardless of the inner state of the minister who performed the action. Moreover, according to Augustine, the actual minister of the sacrament is Christ as *origo et radix et caput*.<sup>66</sup> The *conscientia Christi* provides security.<sup>67</sup>

The concept of *conscientia* plays an essential role within moral conduct. In the *conscientia* God speaks in an excellent way about the

<sup>63</sup> 'Nach der EDV-Frequenzliste dominiert c. in den beiden 401-406 entstandenen (cf. retr. 2,25sq.) antidonatistischen Schriften *Contra litteras Petiliani* (110 mal A.; 45 mal Petil.) und *Ad Cresconium grammaticum partis Donati* (95mal A.; 9 mal Cresc.) in denen A. den Terminus apologetisch wie kirchenpolitisch bedingt verwendet.' 'Conscientia', in: *Augustinus-Lexikon*, col. 1222.

<sup>64</sup> *Contra litteras Petiliani* 1,1,2 CSEL 52, p. 4; See: 'Note complémentaire 19: Conscientia [sancte] dantis', in: *Saint Augustin. Traités anti-donatistes V*, trad. de G. de Finaert; intr. et notes par A.C. De Veer, Bibliothèque augustinienne. Œuvres de saint Augustin 32 (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1968), p. 773-777.

<sup>65</sup> J. Stelzenberger, *Conscientia bei Augustinus*, p. 96.

<sup>66</sup> J. Stelzenberger, *Conscientia bei Augustinus*, p. 105.

<sup>67</sup> J. Stelzenberger, *Conscientia bei Augustinus*, p. 103-105.



natural law, which is in line with the *ordo rerum*.<sup>68</sup> The natural law dictated the law written in the heart (Romans 2:14). God is present in the one who carries *caritas* in the heart. Moral prescripts, such as the Golden Rule, are situated in the *conscientia*. As *tribunal mentis* the *conscientia* not only reacts on actual transgression of the law, it also judges moral conduct in advance.<sup>69</sup>

God is not merely the author of the law written in the heart. He also plays an essential role in the working of *conscientia*. God is the *scrutans corda et renes*.<sup>70</sup> He examines a person's heart and inward parts, that is: God sees the thoughts of everyone, because that is what the word 'heart' means. God supervises a person's conscience and is the arbiter (*Confessiones* 5,11). A person owes an account of his *conscientia* to God. In line with scripture, Augustine sees the functioning of the conscience as a lawsuit. God is present both as Witness and as Judge. Or as Augustine formulates it:

'they do not deceive God who is their witness, nor do they escape him as their judge, for the human conscience lies open to him'.<sup>71</sup>

Or elsewhere:

'The judge's tribunal is within your mind. There God takes its seat; there your conscience serves as counsel for the prosecution, and there stands the torturer waiting, the torturer whose name is Fear'.<sup>72</sup>

Hence, God is the author of the inner law, He is a witness of the deeds of people and He is Judge in the *conscientia*.

Since the Fall *conscientia* is referred to either as *bona* or as *mala*. In metaphorical language the disadvantage of an evil conscience are depicted and the advantages of a good *conscientia* are praised. A *conscientia mala* might become a *conscientia bona* through *confessio peccatorum in corde paenitentis* and through forgiveness a person has longed for. This happens through God's grace in Christ.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>68</sup> C. Mayer, 'conscientia', in: *Augustinus-Lexicon*, col. 1224.

<sup>69</sup> J. Stelzenberger, *Conscientia bei Augustinus*, p. 124-128; C. Mayer, *conscientia*, col. 1225.

<sup>70</sup> *Enarratio in Psalmum* 7.9 and 11 CCSL 38, p. 42-44.

<sup>71</sup> Translation: WSA II/2, p. 309 *Epistula* 144,3 CSEL 44, p. 265: '...(qui tales sunt, quoniam) deum, cui nuda est humana conscientia, nec testem fallunt nec iudicem fugiunt'.

<sup>72</sup> Translation: WSA III/17, p. 122 *Enarratio in Psalmum* 57,2 CCSL39, p. 709: 'iudicis tribunal est in mente tua; sedet ibi deus adest accusatrix conscientia, tortor timor'.

<sup>73</sup> C. Mayer, 'conscientia', in: C.P. Mayer, K.H. Chelius and E. Feldmann (eds.), *Augustinus-Lexicon* (Basel: Schwabe, 1986- ), col. 1225.



Although *conscientia* is involved in the judgement, it does not guarantee salvation. It rather testifies the correctness of God's judgement. I will illustrate this with two examples. Firstly, in *Enarratio in Psalmum* 5:13 (written around 392) Augustine explains what Psalm 5:10b means: 'Judge them, Lord; Let them fall by their own thoughts'. Because the psalm text deals with people who obstinately persevere in sinfulness, the meaning must be negative. Augustine writes: 'their own conscience bears witness against them, as the apostle says, whether their thoughts accuse or defend them, when God's just judgment is revealed' (Romans 2:15-16). A second example is provided by *Expositio quarundam propositionum ex epistula ad Romanos* 10. Explaining the concept of *conscientia* of Romans 2:15, Augustine uses 1 John 3:20: '*Quod autem dicit "contestante conscientia illorum", secundum illum locum loquitur Iohannis apostoli, quod ait: "Dilectissimi, si cor nostrum nos reprehenderit, maior est Deus conscientiae nostrae et cetera"*'. With his use of 1 John 3:20 Augustine says that Paul is referring in Romans 2:15 to God's acquittal of 'us' despite the testimony of the conscience.<sup>74</sup>

In *De Spiritu et littera* (412), Augustine discusses Romans 2:14-15 at length. He offers a theological and exegetical comment on Romans 2:14-15a. The explanation of these verses fits in a broader explanation of the Old and the New Covenant. Augustine interprets Romans as referring to the New Covenant. The law of the New Covenant is not written on tablets of stone, but it is written on the hearts of people (cf. 2 Corinthians 3:3). Whereas the Law of the Old Testament fills someone with dread from outside, the Law of the New Testament brings inner joy. Against this background Augustine clarifies the meaning of Romans 2:15a ('they show that what the law requires is written in their hearts'). Doing so, Augustine uses two bible verses as key passages. Firstly, the promise of the New Testament is mentioned in Jeremiah 31(38):33: 'I will put my laws within them (*in mente eorum*) and I will write it on their hearts (*in cordibus eorum*)'. Augustine interprets the law written in the heart as the fulfilment of the promise and the presence of the Holy Spirit as 'God's finger' (Luke 11:20). A second key passage is Romans 5:5: the love for God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, which has been given to us. Hence, the law of Romans 2:15a is the descent of the Holy Spirit announced for the messianic time, a pouring out of grace in order that one might be able to fulfil the law.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>74</sup> S.J. Gathercole, *A conversion of Augustine*, p. 160.

<sup>75</sup> *De spiritu et littera* 25,42-28,49 CSEL 60, p. 194-204.



According to Augustine, when Paul is speaking of the gentiles who have the work of the law written in their hearts, he must have meant those gentiles who belong to the new covenant (26,44), in other words: 'those who believe in Christ' (26,44). Would it be possible that gentiles who have not yet come to Christian faith possess the law by nature? Since the beginning of creation, the image of God (*imago Dei*) is imprinted in the human soul. Meanwhile this image had faded away, but it is not erased totally by sin. It is repaired *gratia Christi*. The one who does not allow grace to come upon him – that is the godless person – gains nothing regarding eternal life from the good he might occasionally have done. Augustine interprets the 'gentiles' of Romans 2:14 as gentile-christians who are receptive for God's grace. Augustine does in no way exclude that an impious person might occasionally do some good works. Even a random scoundrel does not escape from doing some good in his lifetime, he says. But the one who is not receptive for God's grace does not gain anything in respect of eternal salvation'. Of what use will be their 'excusing thoughts' on the day when God will judge the secrets of men (Romans 2:16)? Might it perhaps procure a milder punishment? It is clear that Augustine does not see a possibility for salvation without grace.

What does it mean when Paul says that the gentiles (to be understood: the gentile-christians) do *naturaliter* what the law requires? It is nature that has been renewed and restored by grace: *natura per gratiam reparata*. Grace and nature are therefore not contradictory concepts: grace restores nature towards its original form as *imago Dei*.

Does this mean that gentiles are excluded from being saved? And what about people who lived their lives before the coming of Christ? It should be noted that Augustine is not a systematic theologian. He states that 'God always existed and always willed to save righteous and pious persons who did his will. Christ (...) remains the same from the creation of the world up to the end of it, despite the various stages of salvation history. (...) Augustine claims that Christ has chosen to reveal himself to human beings whom he knew would believe in him. So too, Augustine claims that from the time of Adam the salvation brought by the true religion was never lacking to anyone who was worthy of it'<sup>76</sup>.

<sup>76</sup> Summary of *Epistula* 102, §10-15 (CSEL 34.2, p. 552-558) quoted from the introduction to Letter 102 in WSA II/2, p. 21.



### 3. Conclusions and final considerations

Augustine is a rhetorician. He could interpret Romans 2:14-16 à la bonheur, but it is always fitting within his theology. The verses can refer to *omnis anima rationalis* even if it is *cupiditate caecata* (as in *De sermone Domini in monte*) when Augustine had to explain how God and the devil could possibly talk to each other. The verses can refer to everybody especially when Augustine must explain that nobody can possibly say that he or she did not know the law.

The law written in the heart is the natural law, which existed before the Tora. It is also the law one can discover in one's heart. The Law written in the heart can also be the law of the New Covenant, It is the law which the Holy Spirit writes in the heart with his finger. This interpretation is the one Augustine favours when he interprets Romans 2:15a in a cluster, together with Romans 5:5; Jeremiah 31:33 and 2 Corinthians 3:3. Because of these divergent interpretations of Romans 2:15, one should take care not to speak too easily of Augustine first interpreting Romans 2:15 as referring to the gentiles and only later as referring to gentile-Christians. Augustine rather gave different interpretations regarding the context of the text.

As to *conscientia* I can say that *conscientia* (in a moral sense) and the law written in the heart (as a parallel to the Mosaic Law) are closely related, sometimes nearly identical. Both the Law written in the heart and *conscientia* refer to God. The law written in the heart is the imprint of the *lex aeterna* on our soul. The *conscientia* is the place where God is witness and judge. The law is written in the heart. The *conscientia* operates within, in the inner part. Both the law written in the heart and the *conscientia* prescribe the Golden Rule. Neither the Law, nor *conscientia* is a guarantee for salvation.

Augustine's two interpretations of the law written in the heart (Romans 2:15) represent two different degrees of one and the same scale of participation. In the case of the inner law, Augustine speaks of the fallen nature that has fled from God. Regarding Romans 2:15 as the law written in the heart by the Holy Spirit (that is: the New Covenant), humans ascertain the higher degree of participation in the person who by *fides* and *caritas* both owns and participates in Christ's revelation in history and Church.

Marleen Verschoren







## THE RELATION BETWEEN *PAGANI*, *GENTES* AND *INFIDELES* IN AUGUSTINE'S *SERMONES AD* *POPULUM*: A CASE STUDY OF AUGUSTINE'S DOCTRINE OF GRACE

Augustine's thinking on grace has been investigated extensively over the last few decades. The philosophical foundations, the hermeneutical dimension, the anthropological and theological presuppositions and implications, the biblical basis, the controversial church political background have already been the subject of comprehensive studies. The presence, however, of the doctrine of grace in Augustine's *Sermones ad populum* has not yet been investigated. Although Augustine's *sermones* are the least studied writings of his oeuvre, some of their aspects have already been explored, such as Augustine's homiletic methodology, and his use of the Bible and of rhetoric. Also some of the more specific themes of content have already been looked into, such as his view of the pastoral office of the episcopacy and the theology of the martyrs' veneration. Other studies made use of his *sermones* to form a picture of the relationship between preacher and audience. The problem of dating the sermons and of their chronology has also been comprehensively dealt with. Yet, a study of the *sermones* regarding Augustine's doctrine of grace is still lacking.

Rom. 2:14 is potentially a good research avenue for exploring the *gratia* theme in Augustine's sermons, since it can be used to open the debate on the possibility of salvation and justification before and without the law of man in general, and, more specifically, of the *gentes*, and the question of whether *pagani* can be virtuous. However, we find this verse only once quoted in the *sermones*: *sermo* 51.28.<sup>1</sup> In this sermon Augustine shows the harmony between Matthew and Luke concerning Christ's genealogy. The preacher Augustine is confronted with the fact that the two genealogies mention a different father of Joseph. Augustine explains this discrepancy with the concept of adoption: Jacob is the natural father of Joseph (Mt. 1:16), while Eli (Lk. 3:23) is his adoptive father. Augustine then elaborates on adoption in the Scriptures, and finds many examples in the Old Testament

<sup>1</sup> F. Dolbeau and P.-M. Hombert reject Kunzelmann's dating of this sermon to 417-418, and they argue convincingly to place this sermon at the end of December 403, which means before the Pelagian controversy. P.-M. Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie augustinienne*, (Paris, 2000), 82-84.



and in Paul.<sup>2</sup> On the adoption of Moses by Pharaoh's daughter, Augustine comments in *sermo* 51.28:

Non erant quidem ipsae iuris formulae quae sunt modo, sed arbitrium uoluntatis pro norma legis habebatur, sicut et alio loco dicit apostolus quia gentes legem non habentes, naturaliter quae legis sunt faciunt [Rom. 2:14].<sup>3</sup>

Rom. 2:14 denotes for Augustine that Moses' adoption by the Pharaoh's daughter, despite the fact there was not yet any jurisprudence on this matter, is as valid as the legally organised adoptions of his own times. It is noteworthy that Augustine equates *arbitrium uoluntatis* with *norma legis*, and this with the natural fulfilling of the law by the *gentes*, without them having this law. One should, however, be very careful to use this quote of Rom. 2:14 to draw conclusions about *gratia*, since Augustine is here talking about *lex* as a specific legal stipulation (on adoption), and not about *lex* in the soteriological-eschatological *gratia* context.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the absence of Rom. 2:14 in the sermons, the theological questions connected with it are nonetheless present, especially those concerning the position of the gentiles, the *pagani* and, to a lesser degree, the *infideles*. This article investigates how Augustine speaks about pagans, gentiles and non-believers in his *Sermones ad populum*, and, more specifically, whether and how he perceives grace in this context.

Augustine referred in two ways, and on two levels, to gentiles (*gens*, *gentes*, *gentiles*) and pagans (*pagani*) in his *sermones*.<sup>5</sup> Firstly,

<sup>2</sup> Christ as natural son, Christians as adopted by God.

<sup>3</sup> (RB 91, 40/699-702.) "To be sure, they didn't have the legal formulae that are in use now, but the choice of will was held to have the force of law; as the apostle says somewhere else, *The Gentiles who do not have the law perform by nature what the law requires*." E. Hill (trans., notes), J.E. Rotelle (ed.), *Sermons III/3. On the New Testament* (51-94), (New York, 1991), 38.

<sup>4</sup> J. Yates elaborates in his contribution on Augustine's use of Rom. 2:14. *De spiritu et littera* 26.43-28.49 is an analysis of Rom. 2:14-15. Paul distinguishes between the Jews and the Gentiles. Gentiles could not have had greater access, through nature, to salvation than the Jews did, who have the revealed law. According to Augustine, Paul is "referring not to nonreligious Gentiles but precisely to those Greeks who have now come to the gospel, but not through the Law of Moses, these Gentiles do 'by nature' things of the law because they have been restored by the gospel to the condition they were prior to the fall (c. Jul. 4, 24). 'Nature' here, then, refers not to the condition of humans in their unguided philosophic pursuit of wisdom, but rather to that condition wherein they are restored by grace to their previous order (see Trin. 8.9.13)." R.J. Dougherty, 'Natural Law', in A.D. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Augustine through the Ages. An Encyclopedia*, (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, 1999), 582-584, 583.

<sup>5</sup> H. Chadwick, 'Augustin et les païens', in G. Madec (ed.), *Augustin Prédicateur* (395-411). *Actes du Colloque International de Chantilly* (5-7 septembre 1996), (Paris, 1996), 323-326. R. Dodaro, 'Auseinandersetzung mit dem 'Heidentum'', in



there were the pagans of his time, distinct from Christians, with whom he was entangled in discussion and controversy. Secondly, Augustine spoke about the 'eschatological gentiles': those before the coming of Christ, and the converted pagans of the *ecclesia gentium* after the coming of Christ.

## 1. Augustine's debate with paganism

### 1.1 *Rejection of contemporary paganism*

Augustine's *sermones* bring to light some of the topics which he discussed with the pagans of those days.<sup>6</sup> Pagans apparently could not accept Christ's incarnation.<sup>7</sup> Some pagans accused Christianity of giving permission to sin by proclaiming forgiveness of sins. Augustine replies that when sinners do not receive forgiveness, they would sin even more easily, since they would suppose that salvation has become for them unattainable anyway.<sup>8</sup> Some 'unbelievers' argue that biblical miracles, such as raising the dead, no longer occur. Augustine counters this by referring to the miracle of prophecies written down in the Scriptures being fulfilled in his own time (e.g. the conversion of the gentiles, the end of pagan worship, etc.).<sup>9</sup> Then there was also the pagan accusation that Rome fell in a Christian era, whereas in the past, with pagan sacrifices still being performed, the city had held out. This

V.H. Drecoll (ed.), *Augustin Handbuch*, (Tübingen, 2007), 203-208. W. Hübner, 'Gentes', in C. Mayer (ed.), K.H. Chelius (red.), *Augustinus-Lexikon*, (Basel, 1986-2006), 140-147. A. Mandouze, 'Saint Augustin et la religion romaine', *Recherches Augustiniennes* 1 (1958), 187-223. A. Solignac, 'Le salut des païens d'après la prédication d'Augustin', in Madec, *Augustin Prédicateur*, 419-428. J.T.T. Wang, *Saint Augustin et les vertus des païens*, (Paris, 1938). See also: F. Bovon, *De Vocatione Gentium. Histoire de l'interprétation d'Act. 10, 1-11, 18 dans les six premiers siècles*, (Tübingen, 1967). P. Hacker, 'The Religions of the Gentiles as Viewed by Fathers of the Church', *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft* 54 (1970), 253-278. J. Riedl, 'Röm 2, 14ff. und das Heil der Heiden bei Augustinus und Thomas', *Scholastik* 40 (1965), 189-213.

<sup>6</sup> See: G. Madec (ed.), *Augustin Prédicateur*: C. Lepelley, 'L'aristocratie lettrée païenne: une menace aux yeux d'Augustin', 327-342. S.A.H. Kennell, 'Ut adhuc habeat fides nostra reprobatores: Augustine's Hostile Hearers', 343-352. J. Schneid, 'Les réjouissances des calendes de janvier d'après le sermon Dolbeau 26. Nouvelles lumières sur une fête mal connue', 353-365. R. Dodaro, 'Christus sacerdos: Augustine's preaching against pagan priests in the light of S. Dolbeau 26 and 23', 377-393.

<sup>7</sup> *Sermo* 159B.12. Cf. G. Madec, 'Le Christ des païens d'après le «de consensu euangelistarum» de saint Augustin', *Recherches Augustiniennes* 26 (1992) 3-67.

<sup>8</sup> *Sermo* 352. 9.

<sup>9</sup> *Sermo* 374.12.



accusation prompted Augustine to write his massive work *De civitate Dei*. In the *sermones*, he replies in a twofold way. Christians should not bother about the fate of Rome since they are not supposed to be focused on earthly things, but instead on heavenly things. He further recalls the fact that Rome had fallen for the third time, and that the first two times this happened under pagan rule.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, Christians also suffered from the fall of Rome. Actually, the cause of Rome's fall was in fact the worship of pagan gods. Constantinople, which had already replaced pagan gods with the Christian God, remains and thrives, just as Carthage does, in the name of Christ.<sup>11</sup> The Christian era is not 'worse' than pagan times, since in the past there had been wars and famines too.<sup>12</sup>

Augustine urged his congregation to withdraw from pagan feasts, customs and practices.<sup>13</sup> His negative perception of paganism was founded upon the fundamental opposition he perceived between pagans and Christians, namely between an earthly and a heavenly orientation. Christians followed God, the heavenly, the spiritual, while pagans followed the earthly, the material, themselves.<sup>14</sup> This earthly attitude of pagans culminated in their idolatry, venerating creatures instead of the Creator.<sup>15</sup> We find all of these elements returning in a more condensed form in two *sermones contra paganos*: *sermo* 198 and 360A.

### 1.1.1 Pagan pride

In the long *Sermo* 198<sup>16</sup> Augustine reacted against the pagan accusation that Christians venerated idols.<sup>17</sup> As a reply, he argued vehemently against pagan idolatry, against worshipping creatures instead of the Creator.<sup>18</sup> Pagan idolatry is an expression of their earthly orientation and an attestation of their pride. Accepting the notion of

<sup>10</sup> *Sermo* 296.9.

<sup>11</sup> *Sermo* 105.12.

<sup>12</sup> *Sermo* 23B.

<sup>13</sup> *Sermo* 62.11. Cf. *Sermo* 77A.4; 196.4; 198.1; 279.13; 293B.5; 311.5; 360B.22; 391.1.

<sup>14</sup> *Sermo* 23B.14; 72.16; 177.2; 198.2; 296.9; 335K.5; 360B.22; 361.4.

<sup>15</sup> *Sermo* 23B.3-4; 223A.4; 273.3; 273.6-7.

<sup>16</sup> *Sermo* 198 = *Sermo* Dolbeau 26, Mainz 62. See in Madec, *Augustin Prédicateur*: J. Schneid, 'Les réjouissances des calendes de janvier d'après le sermon Dolbeau 26. Nouvelles lumières sur une fête mal connue', 353-365. R. Dodaro, 'Christus sacerdos: Augustine's preaching against pagan priests in the light of S. Dolbeau 26 and 23', 377-393.

<sup>17</sup> P. Brown, 'Augustine and the practice of the imperiti. Qui adorant columnas in ecclesia (S. Dolbeau 26.10.232)', in Madec, *Augustin Prédicateur*, 367-375.

<sup>18</sup> *Sermo* 198.17.



creation, pagans were aware of the Creator, but due to their *superbia* they attributed everything to their own capacities.<sup>19</sup> Pagan pride comes in two forms: (1) Philosophers trusting their own capacities, as if they do not need a *mediator*. Augustine however explained that nobody can be liberated without *confiteri* their own sins and without Christ the *mediator*. (2) The use of magic to attain God.<sup>20</sup> Although these pagans realize that there is a God with whom they have to be reconciled, in their *superbia* they still trust self-confidently in their own powers to achieve this. Others look for a *mediator*, but are looking amongst the demons, searching for a false *mediator*, since Christ is the only true – royal and divine – *mediator*.<sup>21</sup> Reacting against pagan *superbia*, Augustine emphasized the *humilitas* of the incarnation.<sup>22</sup> For this reason Christians, in following Christ, have to be humble. Pagans love the world and not Christ.<sup>23</sup> In this respect, bad Christians resemble pagans. They do not put Christ but their own lusts at the centre of their lives.<sup>24</sup> Pagans as such were not rebuked by Augustine, only their earthly orientation was. Christians are allowed to have contact with pagans, but they have to make sure to maintain a separation *mentis*.<sup>25</sup> Augustine asked his faithful to grieve, out of *compassio*, over the bad deeds of the pagans and to pray for them.<sup>26</sup> Christians have to arm themselves against the pagans, by praying in the right way, fastening and almsgiving, so that the pagans might get to know God and worship Him as He deserves to be worshipped.<sup>27</sup>

Besides the grace theme in treating the pagan *superbia* this *sermo* contains several explicit references to grace. The conversion of *gentes* to Christianity was an example of God's grace.

*Saluantur autem qui congregantur de gentibus, saluantur salute fidei, salute spiritali, salute promissorum dei, salute spei bonae, salute sincerissimae caritatis.*<sup>28</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *Sermo* 198:29-32.

<sup>20</sup> *Sermo* 198:36. Cf. *Sermo* 198:58-59.

<sup>21</sup> *Sermo* 198:37. Cf. *Sermo* 198:39.41.49.50.51.53.

J. Pépin, 'Falsi mediatores duo. Aspects de la médiation dans le sermon d'Augustin Contra paganos (S. Dolbeau 26)', in Madec, *Augustin Prédicateur*, 395-417. Solignac, 'Le salut des païens', 420-425.

<sup>22</sup> *Sermo* 198:60.62.

<sup>23</sup> *Sermo* 198:1-3.8.

<sup>24</sup> *Sermo* 198:9.

<sup>25</sup> *Sermo* 198:2.

<sup>26</sup> *Sermo* 198:8.

<sup>27</sup> *Sermo* 198:58.

<sup>28</sup> *Sermo* 198:2. (F. Dolbeau, *Augustin d'Hippone. Vingt-six sermons au peuple d'Afrique*, (Paris, 1996), 366.) *Sermo* 198:2: "... those who are gathered from among



Christ had to suffer in order for gentiles to be converted, to buy them back, and to enable them to become Christian.<sup>29</sup>

This *sermo* highlights the redemptive nature of Christ's death on the cross. Christ took our flesh, and, being himself sinless, He carried our sin. He had no debt to death, but paid what He did not owe, in order to pay our debt.<sup>30</sup> Reacting against pagan *superbia*, Augustine emphasized the *humilitas* of the incarnation and the salvation that came precisely from that incarnation.<sup>31</sup> Pagans have a certain spirituality, but because of their pride, it is one without grace. From the mountain of their pride, they see the *patria* on another mountain, but they do not descend to the valley of humility.<sup>32</sup> God is faithful (1Cor. 10:13).

[...] *consolans nos in omnibus et implens gaudio spei bonae, donec perducatur quo ducit uia quam nostrae infirmitati praeberere dignatus est.*<sup>33</sup>

Augustine's preaching on divine grace was combined with an appeal to a moral life. Christians should avoid sin. Against the waves of the sea of this world, they have to use good works to pump out the bilge. They should let the wounds of daily sins be cured with the remedies of alms, fastening and prayer.<sup>34</sup> In doing so, they give the pagans

the Gentiles are made safe with the soundness of faith, the soundness of hope, the soundness of the most genuine charity, a spiritual soundness, the utterly reliable soundness of the promises of God." E. Hill (trans., notes), J.E. Rotelle (ed.), *Sermons III/6. On the Liturgical Seasons (184-229z)*, (New York, 1993), 73. E. Hill (trans., notes), J.E. Rotelle (ed.), *Sermons III/11. Newly Discovered Sermons*, (New York, 1997), 180.

<sup>29</sup> *Sermo* 198.5.

<sup>30</sup> *Sermo* 198.5. Cf. 1Pt. 2:24; Is. 53:4.12.

<sup>31</sup> *Sermo* 198:60.62. Cf. *Sermo* 198.43. Christ is central. Those who cling to Christ, will not be abandoned by hope (*sermo* 198.60). Everyone who fears Christ should not be feared by a fellow Christian. Everyone who loves Christ, should be loved in Christ (*sermo* 198.62). In fastening, Christ should be imitated (*sermo* 198.6). "Notons aussi que, si nous cherchons avant tout dans ce grand *Tractatus contra paganos* la genèse de la pensée qui devait prendre sa pleine mesure dans la *Cité de Dieu*, on peut aussi y discerner une autre genèse: la réaction d'Augustin devant la *superbia* des nobles lettrés païens annonce sa future attitude devant les pélagiens, qui devaient également se vouloir une élite morale et religieuse, fière de sa valeur et «de ses mérites, fort méprisante envers le menu peuple chrétien, et se recrutant elle aussi dans la bonne société." Lepelley, 'L'aristocratie lettrée païenne', 341-342.

<sup>32</sup> *Sermo* 198.59.

<sup>33</sup> *Sermo* 198.63. (Dolbeau, 417.) *Sermo* 198.63: "Thus he comforts us in all circumstances, and fills us with the joy of good hope (Wis. 12: 19), until he brings us through to the place we are being led to, by the way which he has in his gracious goodness provided for our weakness." Hill, *Sermons III/11*, 228.

<sup>34</sup> *Sermo* 198.56.



the opportunity to come to know God, to honour Him as He should be honoured.<sup>35</sup> Augustine asked to love what was promised (eternal life) and to fear what was threatened with (eternal fire). Who lives morally out of fear, is a slave. Who does this with love, is a free person. Fear comes first, *caritas* only afterwards, *caritas* that reduces fear and makes fear disappear. Good deeds are rewarded with a prize, bad behaviour is punished.<sup>36</sup>

### 1.1.2 Gentile grace

*Sermo* 360A was a call to pagans to convert themselves, but it was also directed to Donatists. Pagans should not be angry that things happened which they disliked, such as the disappearing of the pagan cult, since this meant that God was fulfilling his promises. The fault, the offence of the pagans is actually not as grave as that of the Donatists. Pagans unknowingly do not believe, while Donatists have all the material sources at their disposal to embrace the orthodox faith.<sup>37</sup>

The theme of grace featured particularly at the beginning of this sermon. "God's promises were the foundation of faith for our ancestors, and God's gifts are the fulfillment of faith for us."<sup>38</sup> The Church was given the means to please God. The sins of Christians were forgiven, not by their own merit, but by the gift of God.<sup>39</sup> Augustine elaborated further on the distinction he made: in the past, Jews had grace while other nations did not; nowadays this is the other way around:

"The whole world was bare of Christians, and dry for lack of grace. There was one people worshipping God, sprung from the fleshly stock of Abraham by descent through the generations. This people comprised many saints, prophets, just men, patriarchs, our ancestors; in it grace

<sup>35</sup> *Sermo* 198.58.

<sup>36</sup> *Sermo* 198.4.

A house (the Church) contains hired working forces: they look for temporary advantages in Church. There are also slaves: they belong more to the house than those hired, but they serve out of fear. Thirdly, there are the sons: they belong even more to the house and are created from the slaves serving with love instead out of fear. Martyrs belong to the sons: they rejected the *uoluptates omnes saeculi* out of love for Christ (*sermo* 198.12). Our natural parents, both of them, gave us our mortality. God and Church, our father and mother, gave us our immortality (*sermo* 198.42). Christ is born as son, and we are son by adoption (*sermo* 198.44).

<sup>37</sup> *Sermo* 360A.5 = *Sermo* Dolbeau 24. Mainz 60.

<sup>38</sup> *Sermo* 360A.1. Hill, *Sermons III/11*, 354. *Sermo* 360A.1: *Fidem parentibus nostris dei promissa fecerunt, fidem nobis dei dona impleuerunt.* (Dolbeau, 232.)

<sup>39</sup> *Sermo* 360A.2.



was to be found in the worship of God, and the merit that deserved and hope that looked forward to receiving a reward.<sup>40</sup> And this was one nation among all nations, with the whole world otherwise being devoid of this grace. Come now to our times; that nation alone has remained in drought for lack of this grace, and the rest of the world has been well watered."<sup>41</sup>

According to Augustine this change between Jews and gentiles in their relation towards grace could be allegorically read in the Book of Judges, namely in the sign asked by Gideon. Augustine explained that the sign given not really suited to the particular situation of Gideon, but that it foretold the future. The first sign: the woolen fleece (metaphor for the Jewish people) was wet of rain, the threshing floor (metaphor for the world) dry. This sign metaphorically indicated that the Jews possessed grace, while all (other) nations were without it. Grace was to be found 'IN the fleece': faith was not manifest but hidden. Wringing out the fleece symbolized the suffering and the humility of Christ. Afterwards the water was tossed away outside: they threw away Christ, grace, making it possible that his humility would spread further, to all nations. This was the second sign given to Gideon, the symbols were now reversed: dry fleece, wet threshing floor. Jews no longer did have grace, but the rest of the world did. This faith was not hidden but openly manifest, proclaimed to and known by all.<sup>42</sup>

## 1.2 Conversion of pagans

Augustine's approach towards contemporary paganism was not always negative. Despite his rejection of their '(a-)religious attitude', the basis of his positive approach towards pagans consisted in his

<sup>40</sup> This is a significant sentence. Augustine sees *patres nostri* as belonging to Abraham's stock according to the flesh (instead of a spiritual belonging) and talks in a rather 'pelagian' way about *sancti* and *iusti* of the Jewish people (in the Old Testament, before Christ). Augustine however does not give further explanations about his assertions. There is a *consensus* to date this sermon between 399 and 405 (probably 30/6/404).

<sup>41</sup> *Sermo* 360A.3. Hill, *Sermons* III/11, 355. *Sermo* 360A, 3: *Orbis terrarum christianis nudus erat et inopia gratiae siccus erat. Unus populus deum colens, natus ex Abraham stirpe carnis et serie generationis; in quo populo erant multi sancti, prophetae, iusti, patriarchae, patres nostri; ibi gratia in colendo deo, et meritum promerendi et spes accipiendi mercedem. Et haec una gens erat inter omnes gentes, ab hac gratia uacuo toto orbe terrarum. Uentum est ad nostra tempora: gens illa una ab hac gratia sicca remansit, et irrigatus est orbis terrarum.* (REAug 37 (1991) p. 45/82; Dolbeau, 234.)

<sup>42</sup> Judg. 6:38. *Sermo* 360A.3.



constant hope that pagans eventually would convert. For this reason Augustine asked to pray and fast, for pagans as well as for Christians gone astray,<sup>43</sup> to encourage others to convert by way of their exemplary lifestyles, and not to prevent possible conversions by treating pagans negatively,<sup>44</sup> but to speak actively to pagans about Christ.<sup>45</sup>

Here we touch upon the connection between 'contemporary pagans' and 'eschatological gentiles'. Pagans have the ability to convert, precisely because God has created them. Also pagans, godless people and enemies of the Church are created by God, even though they do not belong to his flock. Augustine said in the anti-pelagian *Sermo* 26: *Communis est omnibus natura, non gratia*.<sup>46</sup> All men have the same nature in common, but not the same *gratia*. The grace which established human nature, by which human beings are created, is common to Christians and pagans. The greater grace, however, is the one which makes Christians believers, and this, pagans do not have in common with Christians.<sup>47</sup> Augustine repeated this assertion explicitly in *Sermo* 348A.9 against the Pelagians. When Pelagians talked about *gratia*, they only referred to creational grace: the grace all people received by being created. This Pelagian concept of grace Christians have in common with pagans. Pelagians refused, according to Augustine, to consider another kind of grace: the grace that makes it possible for Christians to be Christian.<sup>48</sup> Pagans, just as Christians, just as every man, are created good. They can convert. Moreover, they should not despair, their blasphemy will be forgiven in baptism.<sup>49</sup> This conversion however, as will be shown later on, requires grace.

## 2. Gentiles

### 2.1 Pre-conversion gentes

Pagan philosophers did not have the prophets or the Law. God however spoke silently to them *through* his works and the beauty of the world, inviting them to find the *auctor* of all this. By studying the

<sup>43</sup> *Sermo* 341.26.

<sup>44</sup> *Sermo* 178.5; 400.9.

<sup>45</sup> *Sermo* 306B.7. Cf. *Sermo* 3.2.

<sup>46</sup> *Sermo* 26.4. (SL 41, 78.)

<sup>47</sup> *Sermo* 26.7. Cf. *Sermo* 26.5.

<sup>48</sup> *Sermo* 348A.9.

<sup>49</sup> *Sermo* 71: *passim*.



work of creation, the *sapientes gentium* could have discovered the Creator. However, they did not.<sup>50</sup> *Gentes* did not deduce the Creator and his Laws from creation. They proudly attributed everything to their own merits. If they would have recognized Him humbly, they would have been saved. For this reason, God made them into worshippers of demons. They venerated idols, creatures. These sins were the result of their pride, these sins were sin and punishment at the same time.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, when Christ came to earth, he found only sinful people, people to condemn, Jews as well as gentiles.<sup>52</sup>

In the context of *gentes* and *pagani* we find some theological case studies in Augustine's sermons of what can be labelled as pre-Christian Christians. Augustine gave the example of the Maccabee brothers, who were Christian martyrs before the coming of Christ.<sup>53</sup> Similarly the children murdered by Herod in Bethlehem were Christians without baptism.<sup>54</sup> Centurion Cornelius could be considered to be a Christian, before being baptized, since he already had the Lord in his heart: Cornelius thus received the Spirit before his baptism.<sup>55</sup> This distinction between baptism and receiving the Spirit underlines the fact that it was grace and not human actions which brought about conversion.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>50</sup> *Sermo* 241.1. Cf. *Sermo* 198.

<sup>51</sup> *Sermo* 197.1.

<sup>52</sup> *Sermo* 32.12.

<sup>53</sup> 2Macc 7. Augustine regards the Maccabees as martyrs, crowned because of their suffering with the martyr's crown: *Sermo* 286.6; 300:1-7; 301:1-2; 301A.7; 343.2. They are Christian martyrs before the coming of Christ. This he asserts only once explicitly in *Sermo* 300:1-2.5-6.

<sup>54</sup> Mt. 2:16. *Sermo* 202.2; 373.3. (Cf. *Sermo* 375, of which the authenticity is doubtful.)

<sup>55</sup> *Sermo* 99.12; 260A.3; 266:6-7; 269.2.

<sup>56</sup> *Sermo* 269.2. This topic of pre-Christian Christians is connected with the question of salvation of people living before Christ. In the Pelagian controversy, especially in his discussions with Julian of Aeclanum, Augustine will stress the need of baptism for salvation. Other sermons also contain indications of Christ's grace working before his incarnation: *Sermo* 142.11; 198.38; 260C.8; 360B.19. *Sermo* 198.38 explains that Christ's salvation was already at work before his incarnation, and that this was not restricted to only patriarchs and prophets of Israel, but extended to people of other nations such as Melchisedek and Job. *Sermo* 360B.19 states that people who believed in the coming of Christ already believed in Christ. "[...] Augustin enseigne bien que des païens seront sauvés. Il intègre dans la Cité céleste nombre de justes ayant vécu avant le Christ, et en dehors d'Israël. Il est vrai qu'il enseigne dans le même temps, et inlassablement, que la réception du baptême est la condition indispensable pour parvenir au Royaume éternel. Mais les textes qui le disent, si nombreux soient-ils, ne peuvent faire oublier les autres. On peut regretter qu'Augustin n'ait pas cherché à résoudre cette contradiction, d'autant plus qu'il affirme bien que le salut des païens ou des justes de l'Ancien Testament dépend de l'unique Médiateur, et que la



## 2.2 Positive eschatological perception – After the coming of Christ

### 2.2.1 Conversion of gentes

Gentiles however did not remain in their non-recognition of God. They converted, were cleansed of their previous sins and became part of the Church.<sup>57</sup> Even more, at present mainly (converted) gentiles constitute the Church. The Church, just as Noah constructed his Ark with wood, was built by Christ from the forests of the gentiles.<sup>58</sup> The theme of gentile conversion was indicated by four allegorical images: the healing of the woman who kept bleeding,<sup>59</sup> the Canaanite woman,<sup>60</sup> the pagan centurion Cornelius,<sup>61</sup> and the donkey on which Christ entered Jerusalem.<sup>62</sup> The prayers of the Israelites in Babylon portended the conversion of the gentiles.<sup>63</sup> Prophets, by the way, foretold that gentiles would come to faith, and Christ also spoke about His 'other sheep' (John 10:16).<sup>64</sup>

*Ergo audite ipsam unitatem uehementius commendatam: «habeo», inquit, «alias oues, quae non sunt de hoc ouili». Loquebatur enim primo ouili de genere carnis Israel. Erant autem alii de genere fidei ipsius Israel, et extra erant adhuc, in gentibus erant, praedestinati,*

grâce qui les sauve est la volonté salvifique universelle de Dieu." P.-M. Hombert, *Gloria Gratiae. Se glorifier en Dieu, principe et fin de la théologie augustinienne de la grâce*, (Paris, 1996), 315.

<sup>57</sup> *Sermo* 149.7.

<sup>58</sup> *Sermo* 114B.2.

<sup>59</sup> Lk. 8:43-46. *Sermo* 63A:2-3; 63B.3; 78.2; 299B.5; 299C.5; 375C.6.

<sup>60</sup> Mt. 15:21-28. *Sermo* 60A.2; 77:1.12; 121.3; 154A.5; 203.2; 218A.2. The Canaanite woman as *figura* of the Church: *Sermo* 26.2; 77.7; 88.11. According to A.-M. La Bonnardièrre the topic of the Canaanite woman gives Augustine the occasion to give a threefold teaching: "(1) Le Christ a réservé aux Juifs seuls sa présence visible: il a ainsi réalisé les promesses de l'Ancien Testament et prouvé que la fidélité divine était vraie. (2) Les Gentils, dans une économie divine de miséricorde devaient accéder au salut par la prédication des Apôtres: l'Evangile était proposé à leur ouïe, non à leur vue. Ils devaient *entendre* parler de ce que les Juifs avaient *vu*. (3) Mais le Christ, pierre angulaire, a joué son rôle de médiation entre les deux peuples en prophétisant l'entrée des Gentils dans l'Eglise, soit en paroles, soit en actions. La conversion de la Chananéenne est un de ces moments privilégiés de la prophétie: la femme de Chanaan a d'avance joué, par l'humilité de sa foi, le rôle de l'Eglise qui monterait des peuples païens à l'appel des Apôtres." A.-M. La Bonnardièrre, 'La Chananéenne. Préfiguration de l'Eglise des Gentils d'après saint Augustin', *Augustinus* 12 (1967), 209-238, 213-214.

<sup>61</sup> Acts 10:24. *Sermo* 99.12; 266:6-7; 269.2. Cf. Mt. 8:8-10 in *Sermo* 77.12; 88.10.

<sup>62</sup> Mt. 21:2-3. *Sermo* 359B.11.

<sup>63</sup> *Sermo* 51.14.

<sup>64</sup> *Sermo* 60A.2.



*nondum congregati. Hos nouerat qui praedestinauerat: nouerat qui redimere sanguine suo fuso uenerat. Uidebat eos, nondum uidentes eum: nouerat eos, nondum credentes in eum. «Habeo», inquit, «alias oues, quae non sunt de hoc ouili»: quia non sunt de genere carnis Israel. Sed tamen non erunt extra hoc ouile, quia «oportet me eas adducere, ut sit unus grex et unus pastor».*<sup>65</sup>

That the conversion of *gentes* was and is the work of God's grace was explicitly stated three times in the *sermones*.<sup>66</sup>

Augustine preached in *sermo* 113A.7 on God's calling of the *gentes*. The coming, passion and resurrection of Christ took place as the fulfillment of a promise (and as such the payment of a debt) towards the Jews. Towards the gentiles, God, however, was not in debt because of a promise made earlier. That *gentes* came to God, i.e. converted themselves, was because they were called by God, and therefore the result of divine grace.<sup>67</sup>

Abraham's real children are all who imitate his actions, not only Jews but also converted pagans. Gentiles receive grace, a grace that transforms them into children of God.<sup>68</sup>

Gentile conversion is the result of the *misericordia* God showed to *gentes*. He changes 'dogs' (because of their humility) – using the metaphor of the gospel of the Canaanite woman – in human beings and as such they deserve to eat the bread from the table.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>65</sup> *Sermo* 138.5 (PL 38, 766/8): "So listen to this unity being even more urgently drawn to your attention: *I have other sheep*, he says, *who are not of this fold*. He was talking, you see, to the first sheepfold of the race of Israel according to the flesh. But there were others, of the race of the same Israel according to faith, and they were still outside, they were of the Gentiles, predestined but not yet gathered in. He knew those whom he had predestined; he knew those whom he had come to redeem by shedding his blood. He was able to see them, while they couldn't yet see him; he knew them, though they didn't yet believe in him." E. Hill (trans., notes), J.E. Rotelle (ed.), *Sermons III/4. On the New Testament (94A-147A)*, (New York, 1992), 387-388.

<sup>66</sup> Coming to faith is always grace according to Augustine. *Sermo* 360B, a sermon preached with pagans present in the church, applies this general grace topic on the specific condition of pagans. A believer is sick, but already allowed the therapy by *Christus Medicus*. Gentiles however are still refusing the physician (*sermo* 360B: 16.19).

<sup>67</sup> *Sermo* 113A.7.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Jn. 8:33.39-40. *Sermo* 121.3.

<sup>69</sup> *Sermo* 218A.2. Pagans are called dogs because of their idolatry: *Sermo* 2.8; 121.3; 154A.5; 203.2. The name of the Canaanite woman is changed from dog to 'O Mulier', because of her humble faith: *Sermo* 77.6; 77B.1; 154A.5.



2.2.2 Converted *gentes* versus non-converted *Iudaei*

Augustine used several images to express the contrast of the gentile conversion with the observation that Jews did not convert.

In *Sermo* 10 he compared this with the two women judged by Solomon. The woman with the dead child represented the Jews, with their 'dead works of the Law'. The mother with the living child was a symbol of the gentiles, of the Church with spiritual grace.<sup>70</sup>

Christ was on his way to the daughter of the head of the synagogue, symbolizing the Jews – He came to save the Jews (Mt. 15:24) – when the woman who kept bleeding, representing the Church of the gentiles, touched Him.<sup>71</sup> The humility of that woman was her medicine, in contrast with the *superbia* of the Jews.<sup>72</sup>

Particularly in the Epiphany *sermones*<sup>73</sup> Augustine illustrates this difference between Jews and pagans with another biblical image. Pagans, as a wild olive, are grafted onto the olive tree of the Jews, of which Christ was the root. This image expressed a difference – grafting on of something new – and at the same time a continuity – grafting onto an already existing tree, that as such was not (completely) rejected. Jews, the natural branches, were broken off because of their unbelief. All those who are too *superbi*, who do not remain in faith, will be broken off. Those however who do not persevere in unbelief, will be grafted on.<sup>74</sup> *Gentes* – because of their humble belief – were the new branches grafted on, while the root Christ remained and carried the new branches.<sup>75</sup> Augustine used in *Sermo* 89 another biblical tree image, this time to highlight a complete contrast between Jews and gentiles. The shriveled tree represented the rejected Jews. The mountain throwing itself into the sea symbolized Christ giving himself to the gentiles.<sup>76</sup>

The basic difference between Jews and pagan gentiles was that Christ was physically present amongst Jews, but not amongst gentiles.<sup>77</sup> Jews saw Christ, gentiles heard his witnesses.<sup>78</sup> Augustine perceived this difference as somewhat more sophisticated. Christ's presence amongst Jews was *only* a physical presence; he was not in their

<sup>70</sup> 1Kgs. 3:16-17. *Sermo* 10.2.

<sup>71</sup> *Sermo* 63B.2; 77.8.

<sup>72</sup> *Sermo* 77:8-12.

<sup>73</sup> *Sermo* 200.4; 201.2; 203.3; 342.4.

<sup>74</sup> Rom. 11:17. *Sermo* 77:12.15; 162A.9.

<sup>75</sup> *Sermo* 218.7.

<sup>76</sup> Mt. 21:18-22. *Sermo* 89.2.

<sup>77</sup> *Sermo* 77.8. Cf. *Sermo* 63B.2; 260E.1. Cf. La Bonnardière, 'La Chananeénne', 215-216.

<sup>78</sup> *Sermo* 154A.5.



hearts. They did not believe in Him and even crucified Him.<sup>79</sup> The gentiles however had Him already in their heart.<sup>80</sup> This is symbolized by the centurion,<sup>81</sup> the woman which kept bleeding and the Canaanite woman.<sup>82</sup> For pagans Christ was physically absent, but He was present to them in the form of a *praesentia uirtutis*.<sup>83</sup> Exactly because one has to have Christ in one's heart, Augustine exhorted his fellow Christians not so much to destroy the idols in pagan temples (as was unlawfully done by *circumcelliones*), but to destroy the idols inside the hearts of the pagans.<sup>84</sup> Jews are of the race of Israel according to the flesh, gentiles are of the race of the same Israel according to faith.<sup>85</sup> Opposition between Jews and gentiles was also expressed by the metaphor of being blind and seeing. The Jews were able to see, since they had the Law, but by not recognizing Christ they were at the same time blind. The teachers of the Law crucified the author of the Law. Blindness fell upon Israel in order for pagans to be able to see. Jews, claiming they could see the light, killed the Light. For this reason, the Light enlightened the blind. With his blood Christ had made a medicine to cure the blind.<sup>86</sup>

This difference between Jews and *gentes* is related to grace. *Sermo* 10 points this out, using the two women of Solomon's judgment: the child of the Jews – the works of the Law – was dead while the gentiles received life through grace – Christ. This difference in grace was also dealt with in *sermo* 136: Jews had the Law, but did not recognize the Lawgiver – Christ –, this opposed to gentiles who did not have the Law but still recognized Christ.

Augustine applied the tension between faith and works to the opposition between Jews and *gentes*. There were people in the Law (Jews) who boasted about the works of the Law, but perhaps did not perform them out of love but out of fear, and they wanted to consider themselves as just and standing above the *gentes* who did not perform the works of the Law. The apostle Paul, preaching faith to such people, observed that they were justified by faith in such a way that they were performing good works only after they had come to faith. This

<sup>79</sup> *Sermo* 62.4.

<sup>80</sup> *Sermo* 62:4-5; 62A:1-3.

<sup>81</sup> *Sermo* 62A:1-2.

<sup>82</sup> *Sermo* 154A.5.

<sup>83</sup> *Sermo* 62:4-5. In the discussion with Julian of Aeclanum, Augustine is sceptical about pagan virtues (cf. *infra*).

<sup>84</sup> *Sermo* 62.17.

<sup>85</sup> *Sermo* 138.5.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Jn. 9:39; Rom. 11:25. *Sermo* 136.4. Cf. *Sermo* 165.5.



meant that they did not deserve the gift of faith because they were doing good works. For this reason, Paul was confident in declaring that a person could be justified by faith without works of the Law, implying that Jews who acted out of fear were not justified, because faith works through love in the heart, even when that faith does not perform outward actions (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 5:6).<sup>87</sup> Paul made it clear to the gentiles that faith would give the help necessary to fulfill the Law.<sup>88</sup> Precisely because of the pagans, Paul emphasises this point: Jews think that the Law is sufficient to guide their freedom of choice.<sup>89</sup>

Everything foretold about Christ in the Old Testament had been fulfilled. Jews continued to read the texts, but they did not understand it. The grace of the Lord enabled the apostles to understand it. The hearts of the Jews however remained closed, so they could not comprehend Scripture. The faith and understanding given by God to the apostles, was *gratia*.

*Ergo isti discipuli ut separarentur a Iudaeis, quorum cor clausum erat ne intellegent scripturas, gratia domini fecit separationem. O apostole, o Petre, o Mathae, o Thomas, o ceteri, «quis enim te discernit?» [1Cor. 4:7] Forte dicis, fides mea. Credo, si ille non daret, quia tu non haberes. Fides tua te discernit. «Quid autem habes quod non accepisti? Si autem accepisti, quid gloriaris, quasi non acceperis?» [1Cor. 4:7] Ecce gratia, ecce resurgit, ecce se oculis ostendit apostolorum, qui non est dignatus se ostendere oculis Iudaeorum. Ecce praebebat se uidendum oculis, praebebat manibus contrectandum. Parum est: lege, commemorat scripturas. Et hoc parum est: aperit sensum, ut quod legis intellegas.<sup>90</sup>*

As before, some Jews believed, and others did not, in Augustine's time some gentiles believed and others did not. Many Jews who crucified Christ, came to faith later on by the preaching of the apostles about the resurrection. His blood came over them, not to destroy them, but to wash them. As some Jews believed and others did not, now some pagans believe and others do not. Who believes, believes by God's grace and should not boast about this: it is a divine gift.<sup>91</sup> God's judgement, through which some received grace and others did not – the gentiles were enlightened, the Jews had been blinded; some

<sup>87</sup> *Sermo* 2.9.

<sup>88</sup> *Sermo* 156.4.

<sup>89</sup> *Sermo* 156.4.

<sup>90</sup> *Sermo* 229J.4. (MA 584/17-26.) Christ's death on the cross was necessary to bring pagans to faith.

<sup>91</sup> *Sermo* 229F.1.



babies were cleansed by baptism, others remained in the death of the first man – God's judgment is *profundum*.<sup>92</sup>

The discussion between Peter and Paul about the necessity to judaize *gentes* was dealt with in Augustine's *Sermo* 162C.<sup>93</sup> Jews, after being converted to the Christian faith, were not asked to cease the practice of their rites (such as circumcision). Pagans however were asked to give up their rites (sacrifices) after conversion. Such sacrifices were never required, and always evil. The Jewish sacraments were once necessary because they foretold the coming of Christ. After the coming of Christ the function and salvational capacity of these sacraments disappeared.<sup>94</sup> Peter forced converted gentiles to follow the Jewish sacraments. Augustine explained that these converted pagans, according to Paul, accepted from Peter the Jewish sacraments only because of their salvation and not because they loved them. Observance of the Law is not a condition to be saved.<sup>95</sup> Paul circumcised Timotheus, who came from a Jewish mother, in order not to scandalize the Jews. He however did not force pagans to undergo the same ritual. When some used Timotheus' circumcision to argue that Paul, too, finds the Jewish sacraments necessary for salvation, Paul refused to circumcise Titus, a Greek and not a Jew.<sup>96</sup>

Augustine introduced the relation Jews-*gentes* into his anti-pelagian position regarding to grace. This is very clear in *Sermo* 131, in which Augustine explained that grace superseded human merits, that a good life should be attributed to God and not to a person's own strength. Jews not following Christ only had to blame themselves. Gentiles following Christ should not ascribe this to their own merits: *nemo uenit ad me, nisi datum fuerit ei a patre meo* (John 6:66). Everyone who walks on the path of justice, and attributes this to themselves, will disappear from this path. God works in us: we should accept and receive the rain. Grace is the rain. Grace is not given to *superbi*, but to *humiles*.<sup>97</sup> And this feature of humility was according to Augustine characteristic of the *gentes*, converted *pagani*. *Sermo* 131 contains also other aspects of *gratia*. The two signs given to Gideon were a symbol of grace.<sup>98</sup> The *iustitia* God justifies with is *gratia*. Jews, not knowing God's justice, wanted to establish their own justice,

<sup>92</sup> *Sermo* 165.5.

<sup>93</sup> Gal. 2:3-5.11-14. Cf. *Sermo* 56.1.

<sup>94</sup> *Sermo* 162C:6-7.

<sup>95</sup> *Sermo* 162C.9.

<sup>96</sup> *Sermo* 162C.10.

<sup>97</sup> *Sermo* 131.3.

<sup>98</sup> *Sermo* 131.9. Cf. *Sermo* 360A.3.



even in the current period of open grace (*aperta gratia*), a time in which the previously hidden (*occulta*) grace had been revealed: Christ.<sup>99</sup> The Jews could be forgiven, since they did not have grace. Christians however, who have grace openly at their disposal, but are hostile to the grace of God, who trust in themselves, who are ungrateful, and who overestimate nature and Law, can not be forgiven. When there would be justice by Law and nature alone, Augustine replied, Christ would have died in vain. Augustine preached here very clearly against the Pelagians, against *inimici gratiae Christi*.<sup>100</sup>

### 2.2.3 Christ as *lapis angularis*: unity of converted jews and gentiles

The relationship between (eschatological) pagans/gentiles and Jews after the coming of Christ was not solely a matter of opposition. There were also Jews who converted to Christianity. One only needs to look to the example of the apostles. Other Jews came to believe through the apostles preaching the resurrection.<sup>101</sup> Christ will gather the gentiles, his other sheep, into his sheepfold "so that there will be one flock and one shepherd (John 10:19)".<sup>102</sup> Augustine said in *Sermo* 137:

*Nonne ideo dominus uenit, ut institueret ecclesiam, ipsosque iudaeos bene credentes et bene sperantes et bene diligentes segregaret tanquam frumenta a paleis, et faceret unum parietem circumcisionis, cui coniungeretur alius paries ex praeputio gentium, quibus duobus parietibus de diuerso uenientibus esset ipse lapis angularis?*<sup>103</sup>

The Church is the one mother of these two peoples.<sup>104</sup> Converted gentiles and converted Jews form the one Church, united in Christ. The image Augustine used most to portray this union was that of two walls coming together at one cornerstone, Christ (Ps. 118:22).<sup>105</sup> Such

<sup>99</sup> *Sermo* 131.9.

<sup>100</sup> *Sermo* 131.9.

<sup>101</sup> *Sermo* 229F.1.

<sup>102</sup> *Sermo* 138.5.

<sup>103</sup> *Sermo* 137.6 (PL 38, 757): "The reason the Lord came, surely, was to establish the Church, and to separate those Jews who had the right kind of faith, and the right kind of hope and the right kind of love, like wheat, from the chaff; and to make one wall from the circumcision, to which was to be joined another wall from the uncircumcised Gentiles, and for these two walls coming from different directions he would himself be the cornerstone." Hill, *Sermons* III/4, 375.

<sup>104</sup> *Sermo* 192.2.

<sup>105</sup> *Sermo* 4.18; 51.15; 60A.2; 88.10; 89.4; 137.6; 200.4; 201.1; 202.1; 203.1; 204.2-3; 229M.1; 249.2; 252.3; 258.1.



a cornerstone image was often combined with the theme of the two catches of fish in the Gospel (Lk. 5 and John 21), the first before the resurrection (with the good and bad intermingled) and the second after the resurrection (with only the good). The two boats, the two fishing nets of the first catch symbolizes the two peoples, Jews and gentiles, synagogue and Church, circumcision and non-circumcision, two walls peacefully coming together with Christ as the cornerstone.<sup>106</sup>

The image of the cornerstone was explicitly connected to the grace theme. As cornerstone, Christ unites two peoples *suae pacis gratia*,<sup>107</sup> *Christus, pacificam iuncturam et gratia copulante*.<sup>108</sup> The cornerstone establishes peace between two walls, Jews and gentiles, coming together from different directions.<sup>109</sup>

### 2.2.4 Epiphany sermons

A distinct category of *sermones* concerning pagans in general, and about the relationship *gentes*-Jews in particular, were preached at the feast of Epiphany. The opposition between non-converted Jews and converted gentiles (blind *versus* seeing, broken *versus* grafted branch, pride *versus* humility) as well as the equation of converted Jews and converted gentiles in the one Church (two walls in one cornerstone) were dealt with in these sermons.<sup>110</sup>

These sermons also show more about Augustine's view of Judaism. Augustine elaborates on the story that the magi were not led by the star to Bethlehem, but that they needed to consult Jewish scribes. The Jews were able to tell the magi where to find Christ: they gave others the possibility to escape while vanishing themselves. They showed the way, as milestones do, but were not able to walk that way themselves.<sup>111</sup> This is according to Augustine the 'use' Jews have after they rejected Christ. Actually, the star was able to guide the magi to Bethlehem, but it did not, so the magi were obliged to seek advice

<sup>106</sup> *Sermo* 4.18; 137.6; 229M.1; 248.2; 249.2; 252.3-4; 252A.2. Christ uniting Jews and gentiles within one Church, is also symbolised by other images: the two blind men (*sermo* 88.10; 137.6), the two goats killed by Jacob and the two different kinds of sheep (*sermo* 4.18), the two flocks united by Christ (*sermo* 137.6; 138.5), the two fishes from the story of the multiplication of bread (*sermo* 130.1), Lea and Rachel (*sermo* 137.6).

<sup>107</sup> *Sermo* 89.4.

<sup>108</sup> *Sermo* 204.3.

<sup>109</sup> *Sermo* 258.1.

<sup>110</sup> *Sermo* 199; 200; 201; 202; 204; 204A; 342; 372; 373; 374; 375.

<sup>111</sup> *Sermo* 373:4.14; 375.



with the Jews. In this way, it is indicated that the Jews possess Scripture, the sacred text necessary for the salvation of the pagans. This is the significance of the Jewish Diaspora in Augustine's time: the dispersal of those writings which proclaim Christ throughout the world. As for the magi, the Jews are also 'useful' today, namely to prove that the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament, and to convince the pagans. Since Jews preserve the prophecies about Christ, it cannot be claimed that Christians themselves wrote those prophecies *ad hoc/post factum*. Jews are not slain by God in order that they can preserve the Law, despite the fact that they are doing this *carnaliter*.<sup>112</sup>

Explicitly present in the Epiphany *sermones* was the theme of the wild olive. The magi prefigured the wild olive grafted onto the olive tree.<sup>113</sup> His own people, the Jews, did not accept Him. For this reason, they became strangers, broken away from the olive tree because of their pride. The rest of the world deserved, because of its humility, to be grafted as wild olive onto the olive tree.<sup>114</sup> The wild olive deserved to be changed of nature through grace (*gratia*).<sup>115</sup>

The Epiphany *sermones* dealt with grace. In *Sermo* 200 Augustine urged his community addressed as *carissimi, gratiae filii et haeredes*,<sup>116</sup> to remain (as converted pagans) *via* Christ (the cornerstone) connected with the remains of Israel (prefigured by the shepherds) saved *per electionem gratiae*.<sup>117</sup>

The shepherds saw Christ first: *gratia* came first for them, they were more humble and as such quicker to rejoice over their salvation. The magi carried the heavy burden of many sins and sought forgiveness. That humility was more present within pagans than Jews, as the examples of the magi, the centurion and the Canaanite woman illustrated.<sup>118</sup> Because of that humility, the wild olive deserved a change of nature through grace.<sup>119</sup>

As previously mentioned, Christ's grace unites the two walls.<sup>120</sup> The magi, the first fruits of gentiles, were warned not to return to Herod, and they changed their way of living.<sup>121</sup> Because of their many

<sup>112</sup> *Sermo* 201.3; 202.4; 374.14; 374.22.

<sup>113</sup> *Sermo* 201.2.

<sup>114</sup> *Sermo* 342.4. Cf. *Sermo* 200.4 on breaking off the *haeretici*-branches.

<sup>115</sup> *Sermo* 203.3.

<sup>116</sup> *Sermo* 200.4.

<sup>117</sup> *Sermo* 200.4. *Sermo* 204.3: Converted Jews are part of the Jewish wall.

<sup>118</sup> *Sermo* 203.2.

<sup>119</sup> *Sermo* 203.3.

<sup>120</sup> *Sermo* 204.3.

<sup>121</sup> *Sermo* 202.4.



sins, grace could be even more abundant (Rom. 5:20). As God changed their path, He changes now the lives of the bad.<sup>122</sup> Ultimately, Christmas and Epiphany are feasts of grace. The heavens, by a star or by angels, proclaimed the glory of God in order that by Christ's grace the apostles might proclaim to the whole world.<sup>123</sup>

### 3. The status of bad/false believers and non-believers

Augustine repeatedly warned his community to remain faithful to the Christian religion. This implies that they should neither participate in pagan festivities and festivals, nor in pagan customs and practices.<sup>124</sup> The foundation of this rejection of pagan customs is the 'earthly' way in which they happen: they are aimed at temporary advantage.<sup>125</sup> Pagans believe in demons, put their hope in the vanities of this time, and love this world. Christians, on the other hand, believe in God, hopefully await eternal life and love the Creator of this world. That Christians mingle with pagans is not so harmful, since Christians and pagans are profoundly separated from each other. Christians must demonstrate this separation with their deeds, by not following the lifestyle and morals of the pagans. All who are living like pagans, do not recognize Christ as redeemer.<sup>126</sup> In short, Christians, instead of looking for the goods of the pagans, should look for the only searchable good: the Lord.<sup>127</sup> According to Augustine Christians with an excessively materialistic attitude are almost pagans.<sup>128</sup> The expression *par excellence* of the pagans' earthly orientation is their idolatry.<sup>129</sup> The invisible Christian God can only be observed in his works.<sup>130</sup> Christians worship the one God, which makes them into gods. As such, Christians are distinct from pagans. Pagans worship gods of their own

<sup>122</sup> *Sermo* 374.23.

<sup>123</sup> *Sermo* 373.1.

<sup>124</sup> *Sermo* 62.11; 77A.4; 196.4; 198.1; 279.13; 293B.5; 311.5; 360B.22; 391.1.

<sup>125</sup> *Sermo* 360B.22.

An allegoric expression is the fight of David against Goliath in *sermo* 335K.5: *Iacuit omnis superstitio gentium, quae non potuit deinceps se erigere aduersus ecclesiam dei, quia et quando se erigebat, ipsa tum ictuabatur, sed martyrium coronabatur.* (PLS 2, 820/1-11).

<sup>126</sup> *Sermo* 198.2.

<sup>127</sup> *Sermo* 16.16; 72.16. Cf. *Sermo* 23B.14; 177.2.

<sup>128</sup> *Sermo* 361.4.

<sup>129</sup> *Sermo* 273.3.

<sup>130</sup> *Sermo* 223A.4.



making, through which they lose the capacity to become gods themselves.<sup>131</sup> Paganism, as opposed to Christianity, stands for an earthly orientation. Augustine expands this opposition. Pagans and Jews are, in common opposition with Christians, equated in their striving for the earthly and worldly.<sup>132</sup> Augustine explains Esau's lentil soup from Gn. 25:31 as his preoccupation with transitory goods, which can thus also be understood as referring to the adoration of idols among pagans and Jews.<sup>133</sup> Another parallel between pagans and Jews is that although they accept the life and death of Christ, they deny his resurrection.<sup>134</sup> This is an evident corollary of their earthly, non-heavenly orientation.

This equating of different groups of people on the basis of their earthly orientation, which separates them from Christians, goes even further: pagans, Jews, as well as *haeretici* and *schismatici* are opposed to Christians.<sup>135</sup> All who are outside the Church do not take distance from *iniquitas* and are inwardly divided: Jews, pagans, Arians, Photinians, Donatists, and Maximianists.<sup>136</sup> The last group Augustine added to the list of the earthly orientated people is the group of bad Christians ('the bad *intus*'). They are, together with Jews and pagans ('the bad *foris*'), opposed to the good Christians.<sup>137</sup>

"There are adulterous souls and there are fornicating souls. Let us see what the difference is. Fornicating souls are those which in one way or another have prostituted themselves to many false gods. Adulterous ones have, so to speak already been married to a lawful consort and do not preserve chastity of soul for that lawful consort. To put it more plainly: the pagan has a fornicating soul, the bad Christian an adulterous one. The pagan soul has no lawful husband; it is corrupted by prostituting itself with a variety of demons. And why is the bad Christian's soul adulterous? Because it neither loves chastity nor leaves its husband."<sup>138</sup>

Pagans, Jews, Manicheans, and all *haeretici* deny Christ's coming in the flesh, as do bad Catholics. They confess in their words that

<sup>131</sup> *Sermo* 23B.3.

<sup>132</sup> *Sermo* 60.5.

<sup>133</sup> *Sermo* 4.12.

<sup>134</sup> *Sermo* 215.6; 233.1; 234.3. Cf. *Sermo* 240.2.

<sup>135</sup> *Sermo* 3.2; 34.6; 313G.2.

In *Sermo* 400.9 pagans are presented as an example for Donatists. Pagans have many gods but have inner unity. Donatists apparently have found the one Christian God, but do not have unity.

<sup>136</sup> *Sermo* 71.4.

<sup>137</sup> *Sermo* 15.3.

<sup>138</sup> *Sermo* 15.3. E. Hill (trans., notes), J.E. Rotelle (ed.), *Sermons I. On the Old Testament (1-19)*, (New York, 1990), 324.



Christ came in the flesh, but they deny this through their deeds.<sup>139</sup> Pagans, Jews and *haeretici* (Donatists) fast, but they do not do this, as Christians do, for the sake of God.<sup>140</sup> The goal is to be inwardly good and to tolerate the bad *foris* (the pagan, the Jew, the *haereticus*) and *intus* (the bad Christian).<sup>141</sup> To put it another way, pagans in Augustine's time are a large-scale example and application of what it means to sin: to orientate oneself to creatures instead of to the Creator. Furthermore, it shows that sin is present inside as well as outside the Church.

To sum up: three different categories are indicated with the adjective/substantive *infidelis/infideles*.

Bad Christians are to be considered as *infideles*; they do not belong to Christ's flock, to his wheat.<sup>142</sup> *Serui mali, serui infideles* divide Christ's flock.<sup>143</sup> Augustine gives the newly baptized the following advice:

"Beware of imitating the bad faithful, or rather the false unfaithful; those who are faithful in their confession of faith, but unfaithful, unbelievers in the bad lives they lead."<sup>144</sup>

Because of our *excusationes infidelis infirmitatis* the martyrs gave us an example to imitate.<sup>145</sup>

The Jewish olive branch was broken off because of their unbelief in Christ.<sup>146</sup> The Jewish scribes showed the magi the way to Bethlehem: the *infideles* (Jews) talked about the grace of faith to the *fideles* (magi).<sup>147</sup> The *gentes* belong to Abraham's *stirps*, because they are born out of him by imitating him. The unbelievers, the Jews, however, lost Abraham's fatherhood and are transformed into strangers.<sup>148</sup> Jacob's fight with the angel (Gn. 32:25-29) prefigured both the Jews believing in Christ and those not believing.<sup>149</sup>

<sup>139</sup> *Sermo* 183.13.

<sup>140</sup> *Sermo* 400.7.

<sup>141</sup> *Sermo* 15.6. Cf. *Sermo* 224.1.

<sup>142</sup> *Sermo* 117.6.

<sup>143</sup> *Sermo* 147A.2.

<sup>144</sup> *Sermo* 260. E. Hill (trans., notes), J.E. Rotelle (ed.), *Sermons III/7. On the Liturgical Seasons (230-272B)*, (New York, 1993), 185. *Cauete ne imitemini malos fideles, imo falsos fideles; quasi confitendo fideles, sed male uiuendo infideles*. (PL 38, 1202/15-18.)

<sup>145</sup> *Sermo* 325.1.

<sup>146</sup> *Sermo* 218.7; 300.3.

<sup>147</sup> *Sermo* 199.2; 201.2.

<sup>148</sup> *Sermo* 352.3. Cf. *Sermo* 293.4.

<sup>149</sup> *Sermo* 229F.2.

Cf. *increduli* as indication of the Jews: *Sermo* 1.2; 77.15; 229I.3.



Since the definition of *infidelis* is 'not believing in Christ', this adjective is most frequently applied to the *pagani*. An *infidelis* is an *idolorum cultor, daemonum seruus*.<sup>150</sup> Augustine exhorts his community to treat pagans as they themselves were treated by God before they converted to Christianity.<sup>151</sup> Augustine's use of the word *impius* is most often directed to *pagani*.<sup>152</sup> *Pagani, iudaei* and *impii* only believed in Christ's passion, and not in his resurrection.<sup>153</sup> The pagan persecutors of the martyrs were *impii, daemonum et idolorum cultores*.<sup>154</sup> Christians worship the one God, Who makes them into gods. Pagans, *impii*, create their gods in their own image, and in doing so, lose the capacity to become gods.<sup>155</sup> Augustine rarely calls *gentes impii*, but when he does, he is referring to their (pagan) state before their conversion.<sup>156</sup> Cyprian revealed the *stultitia* of the *gentes*, and in doing so he was able to convert them.<sup>157</sup> That the *epitheton infidelis* belongs to *pagani* (and in this sense to the not yet converted *gentes*) is very clear in *sermo* 217.4:

"If we were pagans, we would make temples for the gods; because we would be making temples for false gods, as the unbelieving nations made them, who were estranged from God."<sup>158</sup>

In conclusion, the lack of faith in Christ defines *infides*.<sup>159</sup> From this perspective, the whole of humanity was *infidelis* when Christ

<sup>150</sup> *Sermo* 240.2.

<sup>151</sup> *Sermo* 198 (Dolbeau 26).4. "Adhuc enim gentes estis, iugum ducentes cum infidelibus. Dominus tuus pro te quod fecit, fac tu pro paganis, quia, cum pro te fecit dominus, nondum eras christianus." (Dolbeau 370/95-97.)

<sup>152</sup> *Sermo* 279.11; 328; 349.2.

Cf. *Sermo* 299A (Dolbeau 4).8; 313B.2: *impii* symbolised by Babylon (vs. Jerusalem).

<sup>153</sup> *Sermo* 233.1.

<sup>154</sup> *Sermo* 313B.2.

<sup>155</sup> *Sermo* 23B.3.

<sup>156</sup> *Sermo* 374.21.

<sup>157</sup> *Sermo* 312.4.

<sup>158</sup> E. Hill (trans., notes), J.E. Rotelle (ed.), *Sermons III/6. On the Liturgical Seasons (184-229z)*, (New York, 1993), 179. *Si pagani essemus, faceremus templa diis: nam diis falsis templa faceremus, sicut fecerunt infideles gentes alienae a deo.* (MA1, 598/10-11.)

<sup>159</sup> The great sin of the *infideles* is that they do not believe in Christ (*sermo* 144.2, cf. *sermo* 130A (Dolbeau 19).7; 294.14; 313B.2). More specifically, they do not believe in the incarnation (*sermo* 189.4) and can not accept that a virgin conceived and remained virgin (*sermo* 370.3, cf. *increduli* in *sermo* 191:1-2), they reject the divine *providentia* (*sermo* Dolbeau 29:9-12). In general, they refuse to believe before understanding (*sermo* 140.6; 235.4; 312.5). Claiming that martyrs have their patience from themselves, and not from God, is *infidelis* (*sermo* 284.3). The Old Testament writings are kept by the Jews, to prove to the *infideles* that the prophecies about Christ were not concocted by the Christians (*sermo* 374.15). *Increduli* do not seem to



came<sup>160</sup>, He came to justify the *impii* (Rom. 4:5)<sup>161</sup>, “Christus pro impiis mortuus est (Rom. 5:6)”<sup>162</sup>. Christ brings the *infideles* to faith, *infideles* are converted to *fideles* by *gratia*<sup>163</sup> – with the transformation of Saul to Paul as an example.<sup>164</sup> Despair is not necessary, conversion is always possible, for *infideles* just as for *pagani*, *iudaei*, *haeretici* and *schismatici*.<sup>165</sup>

When Augustine mentions *infideles* in general in his sermons, he says the following. The *infideles* are mingled with the *fideles*.<sup>166</sup> *Fideles* and *infideles* are opposed to each other, like heaven and earth<sup>167</sup>, life and death<sup>168</sup>, light/day and night/darkness are.<sup>169</sup> Furthermore, *fideles* will be rewarded, *infideles* will be punished, and will perish in the eternal fire.<sup>170</sup> *Infideles* are *delectores mundi tenebrarum*.<sup>171</sup> All people die the first death, “secunda solis malis, impiis, infidelibus, blasphemis, et quidquid aliud sanae doctrinae aduersatur.”<sup>172</sup> Not believing is the death of the *anima*.<sup>173</sup> The woman subject to bleeding for twelve years is cured by Christ; she is brought from unbelief to belief, from ugliness to beauty.<sup>174</sup> *Fides* is *pulchra*,

understand the difficult passages of the Gospel (*sermo* 245.4). Cf. the apostle Thomas not believing in Christ’s resurrection in *sermo* 239.7; 245.2; 259.1; 375C:2-3.4.7.

Cf. *Sermo* 94A (Dolbeau 14):6-8: *Impii*, ignorant of the Law, cut off from God’s grace, God’s *miseriordia* unworthy, claim Christians stimulate sinning by promising a complete immunity at the moment of conversion. Augustine replies that without this promise of forgiveness, people would on the contrary sin more out of despair, out of the *infidelis desperatio* that man eventually will not be forgiven. Opposite is the *spes perversa* that man is permitted to do everything, since conversion wipes out all sins. Cf. *Sermo* 396.2. Cf. a similar rebuke, addressed to pagans, in *sermo* 352.9 (here in footnote 8).

<sup>160</sup> *Sermo* 163.3.

<sup>161</sup> *Sermo* 2.9.

<sup>162</sup> *Sermo* 112A.10.

<sup>163</sup> *Sermo* 62.8; 65A.7; 127:7.9; 336.2. Cf. *Sermo* 286.6; 301.2: the conversion of Nebuchadnezzar.

<sup>164</sup> *Sermo* 24.7; 168:4.6.8.

<sup>165</sup> *Sermo* 71.21. Cf. *et noli esse incredulus, sed fidelis* [John 20:27] in *Sermo* 112.15; 145A; 239.7; 375C:2-3.

<sup>166</sup> *Sermo* 163.3.

<sup>167</sup> *Sermo* 58.4; 59.5; 121.1.

<sup>168</sup> *Sermo* 62.2; 100.2; 127:7.9.

<sup>169</sup> *Sermo* 49.3; 190.1; 198 (Dolbeau 26).26; 222; 223K; 336.2; 342.1; 360A (Dolbeau 24).1; 380.7. Cf. E. Lamirande, ‘Fidelis’, in C. Mayer (ed.), K.H. Chelius (red.), *Augustinus-Lexikon*, (Basel, 1986-2006), 1330-1333.

<sup>170</sup> *Sermo* 229D.1; 235.4; 294.18; 113A:3-4; 299E.3. Cf. *Sermo* 143.4.

<sup>171</sup> *Sermo* 67.5.

<sup>172</sup> *Sermo* 344.4. (PL 39, 1514/5-7.)

<sup>173</sup> *Sermo* 65:6-7.

<sup>174</sup> *Sermo* 62.8.



while *infides* is the opposite: *deformis*.<sup>175</sup> *Infideles* are *immundi* (frequently linked with Tit. 1:15).<sup>176</sup>

When Christians live morally bad lives, Augustine considers this as *uiuere infideliter*.<sup>177</sup> An *infidelis*, who will go into the eternal fire, is an adulter, homicida, fraudator, sacrilegus, blasphemator.<sup>178</sup> Clearly the *impii* are *peccatores*<sup>179</sup> and Augustine ascribes to these sinful *infideles* a lot of vices: being *steriles, infructuosi*,<sup>180</sup> being *stulti* by looking for happiness in this world,<sup>181</sup> being alienated from God,<sup>182</sup> being blasphemers<sup>183</sup> and adulterers.<sup>184</sup> The unbelieving flattery that tries to convince the martyr that he has his patience from his own powers is to be considered as: "superbia ista, impia, iniqua, ingrata."<sup>185</sup> Augustine considers fornication as a metaphor for paganism<sup>186</sup> and equates it with *iniquitas*.<sup>187</sup> He very strongly links the *infideles* with vices in *sermo* 279.9: "Impiis, infidelibus, blasphemis, periuris, iniquis, et omnibus malis gehennae ignes ardentis et aeternas flammis minatus est deus."<sup>188</sup> *Sermo* 13.2 also states this very clearly when Augustine preaches to his audience that they received from God not only their being human but also their being just:

*Iam enim uideris tibi iustus, non rapiendo alienum, non adulterando, non homicidium faciendo, non falsum testimonium aduersus proximum dicendo, patrem et matrem honorando, unum deum colendo, idolis et daemoniis non seruendo. De hac uia peribis, si tibi ista praesumpseris, si tibi ista a te ipso esse putaueris. Infideles enim non intrans in uiam iustam, superbi pereunt de uia iusta.*<sup>189</sup>

<sup>175</sup> *Sermo* 159:3.5.

<sup>176</sup> *Sermo* 12.12; 121.1; 159B (Dolbeau 21).13; 183.10; 208.1.

<sup>177</sup> *Sermo* 106.4. Cf. *Sermo* 110.5.

<sup>178</sup> *Sermo* 389.5.

<sup>179</sup> *Sermo* 164A.

<sup>180</sup> *Sermo* 110.1

<sup>181</sup> *Sermo* 299E:2-3.

<sup>182</sup> *Sermo* 375B.4

<sup>183</sup> *Sermo* 286.5; 344.4.

<sup>184</sup> *Sermo* 392.2.

<sup>185</sup> (PL 38, 1289/45.) *Sermo* 284.3.

<sup>186</sup> *Sermo* 15.3.

<sup>187</sup> *Sermo* 71.4.

<sup>188</sup> (PL 38, 1280/15-18.) "The godless, unbelievers, blasphemers, perjurers, the unjust, and all evil people have been threatened by God with the burning fires and eternal flames of Gehenna." E. Hill (trans., notes), J.E. Rotelle (ed.), *Sermons III/8. On the Saints* (273-305A), (New York, 1994), 65.

<sup>189</sup> (CCL 41, 177/26-32.) "You are already just, you see, in your own estimation – committing no theft, no adultery, no murder, bearing no false witness against your neighbour, honoring your father and mother, worshiping the one God, not serving idols and demons. You will get lost from this way if you take the credit for all this to yourself, if you think it all comes from yourself. It is unbelievers who do not set out



This anti-pelagian line of argument equates being *infidelis* with being *iniustus*. This equation *infideles/impii-iniusti/iniqui* frequently occurs in the sermons.<sup>190</sup> By converting to faith, man is brought back to *iustitia*.<sup>191</sup> This transformation and healing of the human *mens* is established by Christ and by the precepts He gave.<sup>192</sup> However, on earth this *iustitia* is not yet *perfecta*.<sup>193</sup>

#### 4. The question of virtues and the salvation of the non-believing pagans

The problem of *Les vertus des païens* within the interpretation of Augustine's thought was brought to the foreground by the study of J. Wang Tch'ang Tche. He observes:

"A partir de la controverse pélagienne, le langage de saint Augustin au sujet des "vertus" des païens, se fait donc de plus en plus net, même quand il en parle dans ses prédications populaires. Il reconnaît bien que parmi les païens, il y en a, et même beaucoup, qui paraissent bons et honnêtes, fidèles observateurs de la loi naturelle. Mais, puisqu'ils se trouvent en dehors du bercail du Christ, ils accomplissent ces œuvres sans savoir à quelle fin les rapporter. Soit qu'ils ignorent par aveuglement, soit qu'il méprisent par orgueil la fin véritable qui est la vie éternelle et qui ne se réalise que dans le Christ, il est toujours clair que leurs œuvres n'ont aucune valeur véritable ni ne peuvent être regardées comme de vraies vertus [Tract. in Jo. xlv, 2: XXXV, 720]."<sup>194</sup>

Despite the fact that the *sermones* do not give an explicit answer to the question of whether and how pagans can be virtuous, they do provide some clues on the matter. *Sermo* 286.5 states that immortality is not given to *infideles*. Baptism is the *conditio sine qua non*:

"So just as the unbelieving man is sanctified in his [believing] wife, and yet perishes if he isn't baptized; in the same way the children of

along the way of justice, it is the proud who get lost from it." E. Hill (trans., notes), J.E. Rotelle (ed.), *Sermons III/1. On the Old Testament (1-19)*, (New York, 1990), 308-309.

<sup>190</sup> *Sermo* 277.2; 335L.3; Dolbeau 29.12. Cf. *Sermo* 292.4: Wis. 5:6.8-9 and *Sermo* 361.6: Rom. 1:17.

<sup>191</sup> Cf. *Sermo* 337.2.

<sup>192</sup> *Sermo* 113A.1; 159B (Dolbeau 21).8.

<sup>193</sup> *Sermo* 159B (Dolbeau 21).8.

<sup>194</sup> J.T.T. Wang, *Saint Augustin et les vertus des païens*, (Paris, 1938), 116.



the faithful, even though sanctified in some fashion, perish all the same if they are not baptized."<sup>195</sup>

In the anti-pagan sermons studied above, Augustine rebukes the proud and non-heavenly attitude of the pagans. Reconciliation, forgiveness and conversion can not be found without God. Moreover, *natura* appears to be insufficient: grace is needed. As mentioned above, Augustine clearly holds the opinion that unbelievers cannot be virtuous.<sup>196</sup> Even more so, he equates *infides* with *iniustitia*. Regarding the *infideles pagani*, Augustine indicates that without belief in Christ, without Christ's grace, *iustitia*, forgiveness and salvation are impossible. This assertion is the consequence of the link he perceives between *fides* and *iustitia* – *iustitia* as an eschatological and also as a moral category. Augustine finds scriptural grounds for this in Rom. 4:5: "*fides eius ad iustitiam*"<sup>197</sup> and especially in Rom. 1:17/Gal. 3:11/Hab. 2:4 "*iustus ex fide uiuit*"<sup>198</sup>, quoted frequently in his anti-pelagian writings in general, and in his anti-pelagian sermons in particular. In *sermo* 26.5 Augustine says that being just and being a believer – Hab. 2:4 (Rom. 1:17/Gal. 3:11) linking *iustitia* with *fides* – comes from God and not from man.<sup>199</sup> *Sermo* 363.2 (412-416) combines this idea with Rom. 4:5: "*credendo in eum qui iustificat impium, ut deputetur fides eius ad iustitiam*." This induces Augustine to say about the people of God (the baptized):

[...] *per fidem iustificati sunt [...], sed gubernasti iustitia tua populum tuum, non praesumentem de iustitia sua, sed ex fide uiuentem sub gratia tua: populum tuum hunc, quem liberasti.*<sup>200</sup>

Aided by Hab. 2:4 (Rom. 1:17/Gal. 3:11) *iustitia* and *fides* are coupled in *sermo* 143.4 and 158.4. *Fides* is donated to man. Christians already possess some *iustitia* – by believing what they cannot

<sup>195</sup> *Sermo* 294.8. E. Hill (trans., notes), J.E. Rotelle (ed.), *Sermons III/8. On the Saints* (273-305A), (New York, 1994), 193.

<sup>196</sup> The *praesentia uirtutis* of *sermo* 62:4-5, does not contradict this. Augustine indicates that Christ already was the norm for the moral life of the *gentes* that will convert, without them knowing this. Christ is constitutional for being virtuous. So, when *gentes* are called virtuous before their conversion, they were virtuous because of Christ's hidden presence in their hearts. Because of the absence of Christ in the hearts of *pagani*, they can not be virtuous.

<sup>197</sup> *Sermo* 2.9; 10.3; 125.2; 130A.3; 292.6.

<sup>198</sup> *Sermo* 10.2; 49:2.4-5; 158.4; 189.2; 260D.1; 335M.5; 361.6.

<sup>199</sup> *Sermo* 26.5. *Fideles sumus – si tamen sumus quando ista contra gratiam disputamus – sed ecce fideles sumus. Etiam fideles, etiam iustos, quia iustus ex fide uiuit, ipse fecit nos, et non ipsi nos.* (SL 41, 97-98.)

<sup>200</sup> *Sermo* 363.2. (PL 39 p. 1637/14.) Cf. *Sermo* 160.7.



see (Joh. 20:27-29) – but this *iustitia* still has to grow day by day through receiving the H. Spirit.<sup>201</sup> This strong and explicit link between faith and justice implies that non-believers cannot be considered just – virtuous – according to Augustine.<sup>202</sup> This implication is, however, not explicitly present in Augustine's sermons. The above mentioned quotes do not occur in the context of *gentes, pagani, impii* and *infideles*.

Although not explicitly present in the sermons, they also reveal something of Augustine's scepticism regarding pagan virtues. In his other writings, esp. in the discussion with Julian of Aeclanum, he argues that pagans, if they would possess virtues, these would be vain, since they are not grounded in God's love. The existence of pagan virtues would make Christ's death senseless, because it would mean that everybody could attain justice without needing Christ. Moreover, not the action itself but the aim of the action makes a virtue truly a virtue, and this aim is to glorify God. Pagans can only act virtuously when they recognize that they accomplish this not with their own capacities, but acknowledge that they have received their virtues from Christ. It is actually also Christ's grace that saved the Old Testament just.<sup>203</sup> In conclusion, one has to be Christian to be virtuous and to be saved.

“Wichtig ist, dass der entscheidende Unterschied nicht zwischen den verschiedenen Formen des Heils zu suchen ist, sondern zwischen Heil und Nicht-Heil (Unheil). Es ist entscheidend, “innen” zu sein, innerhalb des rettenden Zirkels, ausserhalb dessen der Schrecken der berechtigten Angst vor der Vernichtung der Gottlosen aufgrund mangelnder Einsicht der Gnade Gottes herrscht (forinsecus terret). “Draussen” kann einem nicht einmal Christus helfen. Nur wer von vornherein “innen” vom Jenseits des inneren Menschen und seines Willens her vom magister interior das Wollen und Wirken bereitet bekomme, kann wenigstens hoffen.”<sup>204</sup>

<sup>201</sup> *Sermo* 158.5.

<sup>202</sup> “Le véritable et le dernier argument du saint Docteur contre les “vertus” des païens, est donc tout simplement l’affirmation du principe de la nécessité absolue de la foi au Christ pour l’acquisition de toute vraie vertu, et rien de plus. D’ailleurs, Augustin s’est bien gardé, en 412 comme en 421, de donner une explication définitive de ces bonnes œuvres par lesquelles un païen accomplit la loi «naturellement». C’est toujours une double hypothèse qu’il présente pour maintenir la vérité fondamentale du Christianisme: Si quelqu’un a de vraies vertus, c’est qu’il a la foi au Christ; si quelqu’un n’a pas la foi au Christ, il ne peut pas avoir de vraies vertus.” Wang, *Saint Augustin*, 137.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. P.-M. Hombert, *Gloria Gratiae*, 279-281. R. Dodaro, ‘Heidnische Tugenden und die Frage nach dem Heil’, in *ibid.*, ‘Auseinandersetzung’, 207-208.

<sup>204</sup> J. Lössl, *Intellectus gratiae. Die erkenntnistheoretische und hermeneutische Dimension der Gnadenlehre Augustins von Hippo*, (Leiden/New York/Köln, 1997), 192. Cf. “Sein [Julians] *intellectus gratiae* besagt, dass sich alle Menschen auf eine von allen als eine einzige wahrnehm- und mitteilbare, durch Gottes Schöpfergnade auf



Wolfgang Hübner summarizes (regarding *Sermo* 26:4.6):

“Obwohl auch die Heiden durch Christus geschaffen sind, gibt es keine gemeinsame Gnade für Christen und Nichtchristen; deshalb unterscheidet A. bei der Auslegung von Rm 2, 14 gegen den eigentlichen Sinn zwischen ‘Heidenchristen’ und unbegnadeten *gentes*.<sup>205</sup>

## 5. Some chronological notes<sup>206</sup>

*Sermones* against the earthly orientation of pagans are found in all periods of Augustine’s preaching. His reactions against pagan idolatry are mainly part of his early sermons (before and around 400), but the elaborate *sermo* 198 *contra paganos* dates from 420-425. The positive perception that pagans were created through grace with the same good nature as Christians, but however do not share Christian grace, was a late topic (417-430), clearly situated in the Pelagian controversy. The negative eschatological appreciation – fitting into the Pauline scheme of before the Law, the Law, Christ – seems to be situated around 403, but this date lacks a sufficient amount of confirmation. The topic of pre-Christian Christians apparently belongs to the first Pelagian controversy: Maccabees mainly after 417, Cornelius around 410. *Sermo* 138, about the ‘predestined other sheep’ is situated around 411-412. The image of converted *gentes* of the woman who kept bleeding, and of the centurion Cornelius, have a place in the whole period that Augustine was active as a preacher, while the metaphor of the Canaanite woman appears after 410. The assertion that the conversion

natürlicher Basis aufruhender Wirklichkeit beziehen. Auch die spirituell-moralische Basis der Menschheit ist eine einzige. Auch die uirtutes der Heiden tragen bereits im eigentlichen, gnadentheologischen Sinne zum von Gott intendierten Heil aller Menschen bei. Wenn Augustin meint, diese natürlichen Fähigkeiten für wertlos oder gar für Laster erachten zu müssen, um die Taufgnade als allwirksam für das Heil zu profilieren zu können, denkt er pervers. Julians intellectus gratiae besagt, dass in der Schöpfung nichts verloren gehen kann. Natürlich ist auch für Julian die durch die Taufe vermittelte Gnade allwirksam für das Heil. Das nimmt aber der Heilswirksamkeit der natürlichen moralischen Fähigkeiten nichts von ihrer Bedeutung.” Ibid., 351-352.

<sup>205</sup> W. Hübner, ‘Gentes’, 146.

<sup>206</sup> E. Hill (trans., notes), J.E. Rotelle (ed.), *Sermons*, (The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. I-XI), (New York, 1990-1997). E. Rebillard, ‘Sermones’, in A.D. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Augustine through the Ages. An Encyclopedia*, (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, 1999), 773-792. P.-M. Hombert, *Nouvelles recherches de chronologie augustiniennne*, (Paris, 2000). R. Gryson (red.), *Répertoire général des auteurs ecclésiastiques Latins de l’Antiquité et du Haut moyen âge*, (Freiburg, 2007).



of pagans is due to God's grace is to be found after 400, particularly around 410. In approximately the same period, the opposition between Jews and Christians is clearly made in Augustine's sermons: 404 or 411.<sup>207</sup> This difference is applied to grace especially around the year 417, in particular in the anti-pelagian *sermo* 131 (417). Christ uniting gentiles and Jews is a topic Augustine comes back to during his whole preaching office. The majority of the Epiphany *sermones* is situated around 405-413, also these regarding grace. The identification of *infideles* with Jews and pagans has been made by Augustine throughout his whole preaching career; his identification of *infideles* with bad Christians, however, is noticed to have been predominantly around 410-420. There are some early examples in Augustine's sermons showing the vices and injustice of the *infideles*, but most examples come from after 410 and around 420, i.e. during the heat of the Pelagian controversy. This is also the case of Augustine's use of Rom. 1:17 and Rom. 4:7.

## 6. Conclusion

Concerning the use of the terminology *pagani* and *gentes* one can conclude that Augustine did not always see a strict difference between the two words, and often used them closely linked. In general, a rather negative approach towards pagans – esp. their earthly orientation, their idolatry, their sacrifices – was indicated with the term *pagani*. Yet the two anti-pagan *sermones* 198 and 360A also used, to a lesser degree, the *gentes* terminology. It is noteworthy that the double use of *gentes* and *pagani* within one sermon occurs frequently in these two *sermones* Dolbeau: *sermo* 198 (D. 26) and 360A (D. 24), but also in other Dolbeau sermons studied here: *sermo* 341 (D. 22), 162C (D. 10), 374 (D. 23).<sup>208</sup> *Christiani* and *pagani* had a *communis natura*. The eschatological gentiles – the more positive approach to pagans, namely due to their conversion to Christianity, and the opposition between converted gentiles and non-converted Jews – were most often called *gentes*. The difference in *gratia* compared to the Jews was expressed by the term *gentes*.<sup>209</sup> The theme of the unity of Jews and

<sup>207</sup> Exceptions: *Sermo* 2.9 (391): not works out of fear, but out of love. *Sermo* 162C (397 of 405) on the discussion between Peter and Paul.

<sup>208</sup> This double use is also found outside the *Sermones* Dolbeau, e.g. *Sermo* 88; 200.

<sup>209</sup> The theme of the presence of Christ for gentiles different from Jews uses *pagani* and *gentes*.



gentiles in the cornerstone Christ and the Epiphany sermons, were formulated in the *gentes* vocabulary, although there are some examples of the use of *pagani* in this context. In this sense the terminology of *gentes* and *pagani* had distinguishable features, but were still intertwined, because ultimately they would meet the same salvation in their conversion through God's grace.

Chronology seemed to influence content. The shift of Augustine's debate with paganism to the controversies on Donatism and especially on Pelagianism was not without importance. Paganism – gentiles – changed from a discussion partner into a case study that proved that not one's own merits but grace prevailed, and that faith was God's gift. The *superbia* he accused the pagans of, became a frequent refrain against the Pelagians.

Thematically, it can first be concluded that Augustine's treatment of the position of *gentes* and *pagani* was not a black-and-white picture. Jews had grace in the past, now gentiles, and also converted Jews do have grace. Anyway, the question was whether the Jews really had grace: *superbia* and fear instead of *humilitas* and love. Gentiles have grace now, but there are also non-converted pagans. Moreover, also in the past gentiles had not been completely deprived of grace: *praesentia uirtutis* of Christ, his presence in their hearts, the 'pre-Christian' martyrs, the predestined other sheep already known by Christ.

Secondly, one cannot help but notice the – sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit – importance of the *gratia*-topic in sermons dealing with *pagani*, *gentes* and *infideles*. Augustine reacts strongly against all forms of *superbia*, and stresses that not human nature or merits but God's *gratia* and *misericordia* provide conversion, faith, reconciliation and salvation. Thirdly, it is quite evident that this research of the *gratia*-position of *pagani* and *gentes* in the *sermões* should be supplemented by studying Augustine's sermons regarding his conception of *human natura (uitiata)* (and its relation to *gratia*), natural law as the rational law knowable by means of reason, implanted in the *conscientia*<sup>210</sup>, the relation between natural and moral law, between natural and divine law, his view on the need of grace and faith (of which *initium* and *perseuerantia* are also grace) for salvation. Dogmatically, Augustine remains strict in his sermons: virtues and salvation are not available to non-Christians.<sup>211</sup>

<sup>210</sup> See the contribution of M. Verschoren.

<sup>211</sup> See the contribution of M. Lamberigts.



Finally, we may conclude that Augustine displayed a positive pastoral attitude towards pagans and gentiles. He rejected their earthly orientation, but as he tells us in his *Confessiones* he, too, had once been likewise orientated. Salvation was only attainable if converted, but conversion is a gift from God. In a very polemical sermon, such as *sermo* 198, Augustine always kept an eye on the possible conversion of pagans. He never rejected them and he always exhorted his congregation to facilitate conversions. This positive and open attitude was a characteristic of Augustine's pastoral concerns in his *Sermones ad populum*.

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## JULIAN OF AECLANUM ON NATURAL VIRTUES AND ROM. 2:14

In his *Ad Turbantium* II, Julian of Aeclanum, Augustine's most vehement opponent within the context of the Pelagian controversy, discusses the virtues of the pagans. The reason for doing so is, quite obviously, Julian's conviction that the created human beings' nature cannot be harmed by the sin of Adam. *Ad Turbantium* was written in about 419, i.e., during the second period of the Pelagian Controversy.<sup>1</sup> It was a reply to Augustine's first book *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*. *Ad Turbantium* can be read as a plea in favour of God, the good creator, and of humanity, the good creation. This work wants to be an homage to God and all human beings, whether they are Jews or Christians or pagans. In this paper I will only pay attention to Julian's position, not to the one of Augustine, for the latter's ideas about natural law have often been the subject of learned studies.<sup>2</sup>

Julian was of the opinion that the way in which pagans (sometimes) do what all human beings (including Christians and Jews) are expected to do, is a proof that humanity as a whole, because of its natural capabilities, is able to do what God expects them to do. Indeed, according to Julian, what human beings as created beings are, is the result of God's creative activity and such activity deserves the label good. As a result of this position, Julian cannot accept the doctrine of original sin as presented by Augustine, for such a doctrine, at least in the view of Julian, not only rejects the idea of a good creator and creation – how could a being, born with natural evil, be qualified as theologically good?; how could the creator of a *mala natura* deserve the label “good creator? – but also excludes, from the very beginning of human beings' existence, the possibility that human beings are able to act in a moral way.<sup>3</sup> For Julian, a good nature, the result of a good creator, is the precondition for every moral behaviour. Further, according to Julian, every human being is responsible for his own deeds, not for those of others (including Adam). For Julian, this is simply a matter

<sup>1</sup> The second period of the controversy starts with the condemnation of Pelagius and Caelestius in 418 and ends with the death of Augustine in 430.

<sup>2</sup> See the survey of R.J. DOUGHERTY, *Natural Law*, in A. FITZGERALD, *Augustine Through the Ages. An Encyclopedia*, Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K., 1999, pp. 582-584.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. M. LAMBERIGTS, *Julian of Aeclanum: A Plea for a Good Creator*, in *Augustiniana* 38 (1988): 5-24.



of justice. Judging one's personal moral activities is an essential part of God's qualification as just.<sup>4</sup>

Within this context, Julian used the actual moral behaviour of the pagans as an argument to prove that the acting will belongs to all human beings' capacities. In order to substantiate this claim, Julian seemingly quoted Rom. 2:14b-15a, where Paul stated that those, who do not know the Law, "naturaliter" fulfil what is ordered by the Law.<sup>5</sup> According to Augustine, Julian quoted this text in order to show that also those who did not believe in Christ (*alienos a fide Christi*) could have true justice because they did what was prescribed by the Law.<sup>6</sup> Like Paul, Julian is of the opinion that pagans also have a certain conscience of what is good and evil and, as responsible beings, can concretize this conscience.<sup>7</sup> Julian not only quoted the Pauline text, he

<sup>4</sup> Julian's position clearly differs from that of Augustine; see, among others, A.E. McGRATH, *Divine Justice and Divine Equity in the Controversy between Augustine and Julian of Eclanum*, in *Downside Review* 101 (1983), pp. 312-319; J. LÖSSL, *Julian von Aeclanum. Studien zu seinem Leben, seinem Werk, seiner Lehre und ihrer Überlieferung* (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, 60), Leiden-Boston-Köln, 2001, pp. 130ff.

<sup>5</sup> See Julian, *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 109, CCSL 88, p. 365. The text, quoted by Julian, runs as following: "Gentes legem non habentes ipsi sibi sunt lex, qui habent opus legis scriptum in cordibus suis." The text is not really discussed by J. LÖSSL, *Julian von Aeclanum*, p. 207.

<sup>6</sup> Julian, *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 109, CCSL 88, p. 365. It should be mentioned that Julian's point of departure is quite different in comparison to that of Augustine in his anti-Pelagian works. While Augustine strongly related true justice and belief in the redeemer, Jesus Christ, Julian, for his part, on the one hand offered the classical philosophical definition of justice as found in, among others, Cicero (compare *De natura deorum* III, 38; *De finibus* V, 65; V, 23 with Julian, *Ad Florum* I, 35, CSEL 85, 1, p. 26; I, 131, CSEL 85, 1, p. 143; III, 2, CSEL 85, 1, p. 352); on the other hand, he based his ideas on Scriptural texts such as Ez. 18. In fact, large parts of *Ad Florum* III can be read as a commentary on this Scriptural text. Further, for Julian, it was evident that justice has its roots in God, who revealed this through his laws and his judgements; see, e.g. *Ad Florum* I, 37ff., CSEL 85, 1, pp. 27ff. This reference to Biblical texts is neglected by M. SMALBRUGGE, *L'identification interdite et imposée avec Dieu. Sur le moralisme de Julien d'Éclane*, in *Augustiniana* 54 (2004), pp. 307-323, esp. pp. 310-313.

<sup>7</sup> The correct understanding of Paul's text was, for a long time, a matter of much debate. Current scholarship seems to agree that Paul, when speaking about the Gentiles, does not have in mind Gentile Christians as was suggested by Augustine in *Contra Iulianum* IV, 25, PL 44, 750; see, in this regard, among others, U. WILCKENS, *Der Brief an die Römer (Röm 1-5)* (Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, VI, 1), Zürich-Einsiedeln-Köln-Neukirchen-Uluy, 1978, p. 133. The idea that pagans are actually a law to themselves, is clearly present in Stoic philosophy. Moreover, Paul seems to affirm that knowledge of what one should do is a present, real condition of Gentile awareness; cf. WILCKENS, pp. 133-134. J.A. FITZMYER, *Romans. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Bible, 33) New York-London-Toronto-Sydney-Auckland, 1992, pp. 305-312, esp. pp. 310-311. Therefore, it will be no surprise that recent commentators can offer the same explanation



also tried to substantiate his claim that before and outside Christianity human beings existed who, through their acts, proved to act as ethically responsible beings. While Augustine claimed that one can only live justly through faith in Christ (cf. Rom. 1:17) and vehemently rejected the idea that, apart from faith, one could be just,<sup>8</sup> Julian tried to demonstrate that human nature *in se* was capable to do the good. Indeed, for Julian, the goodness of creation as such is already a gift of God and deserves to be described as an act of divine grace. Moreover, the good creator really wants to help and support humanity in order that it should attain perfection.<sup>9</sup>

From an Augustinian perspective, this could be interpreted as a sign of arrogance.<sup>10</sup> For the bishop of Hippo, it was unthinkable that we, sinful human beings, in our current situation, might be able to start ourselves in doing theologically good works.<sup>11</sup> However, within Julian's perspective, such position must be understood as a logical next step in the process of human beings moral developments: a nature which deserves the helping grace of God, must be qualified as good.<sup>12</sup> In other words, *because* our nature is good, it deserves to be helped by God. Furthermore, God gives, to every newborn human being a soul, a rational soul, gifted with a will, freedom, etc. Where, with regard to the creation of the body, one can speak of an interplay between God and men, on the level of the creation of the soul, God is the sole creator. On the level where one will situate reason, will, freedom, ethical responsibility, God and God alone is creating and, with regard to the created product as such, before it becomes an actively behaving

of the two verses as the one found in Julian. See, e.g., S. BÉNÉTREAU, *L'épître de Paul aux Romains* (Commentaire évangélique de la Bible, 17), Vaux-sur-Seine, 2002, pp. 86-87: "Paul, toujours soucieux d'attester l'impartialité divine, veut montrer que pour les païens aussi il y a une base pour le jugement: ils n'ont pas la loi révélée, mais ils ont une certaine connaissance du bien et du mal et une conscience qui approuve ou désapprouve, ce qui fonde une responsabilité précise. (...) Au v. 15, il est précisé que «l'œuvre de la loi» (...) est gravée dans leur cœur. Cette thèse suppose un certain accord entre les requêtes de la loi révélée et celles de la conscience."

<sup>8</sup> See Augustine, *Contra Iulianum* IV, 17, PL 44, 745.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 101, CCSL, p. 364.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Augustine, *Contra Iulianum* IV, 17, PL 44, 745: "Sed absit ut sit in aliquo uera uirtus, nisi fuerit iustus. (...) Quis porro eorum qui se christianos haberi uolunt, nisi soli Pelagiani, aut in ipsis etiam forte tu solus, iustum dixerit infidelem, iustum dixerit impium, iustum dixerit diabolo mancipatum?"

<sup>11</sup> This is not to say that, for Augustine, we completely lost the "capax boni", but simply that we, because of our fallen nature, without God's grace are not able to act properly; see, e.g., Augustine, *Opus imperfectum* V, 58, CSEL 85, 2, p. 267.

<sup>12</sup> *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 103: "Bonam ... hominum naturam, quae talis gratiae opitulationem meretur."



moral person, the only one responsible.<sup>13</sup> One should stress the importance of Julian's point: if God creates, for every newly born baby, a new soul, the chain of sin and guilt between predecessors and successors, between parents and children, between Adam and his progeny no longer exists!

As creator of all and everything, God gives this soul to all newborn babies, thus not only to Christians, but also to pagan babies. In other words, according to Julian, all human beings are, on the level of the soul, as rational beings, *imago Dei*.<sup>14</sup> In order to know what one is expected to know and to do, one does not need the Jewish Law. All human beings, pagans, Jews, Christians, are gifted with reason. Pagans do know what should be done, for reason *naturaliter* enables them to obey God's precepts. The possession of the Law is no reason for the Jews to boast. On the other hand, the fact that the Law is not given to the pagans, cannot be invoked by them as an excuse for their sinful behaviour. The gift of reason as such is sufficient to know what one should do.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, God has revealed himself to all through all He has created: all should be able to obey God's commands through the gift of reason. According to Julian, there can be no doubt: if people, not having received the Law, do not do what they all are expected to do, this is the result of a kind of negligence of reason, and therefore, there is no excuse for their sinfulness.<sup>16</sup>

In order to substantiate his position, Julian refers to those heroes of the past who, although not familiar with the Christian faith, abounded in virtues. These people possess the goodness of nature, not the help of grace, but, as we all can observe, they often are merciful, modest, chaste and sober, and they are so due to the powers of their innate freedom.<sup>17</sup> Julian, in opposition to the late Augustine,<sup>18</sup> can refer

<sup>13</sup> See, in this regard, M. LAMBERIGTS, *Julian of Aeclanum and Augustine on the Origin of the Soul*, in *Augustiniana* 46 (1996), pp. 243-260.

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., *Ad Florum* IV, 39, CSEL 85, 2, p. 40: "Ut enim imaginem Dei mentis ratione suscepimus ..."; cf. also I, 94, CSEL 85, 1, p. 109.

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 138, CCSL 88, p. 369; *Ad Florum* II, 151, CSEL 85, 1, p. 274; II, 185, CSEL 85, 1, p. 302.

<sup>16</sup> *Ad Florum* II, 186, CSEL 85, 1, p. 303: "Ut quibus lex data non est, intelligentur non esse praecepta transgressi, rei autem conuincantur, quoniam negligentes rationem, quam proprii in unoquoque protestantur affectus, uel humanae societatis uel pudoris iura temerauerint ...". See also J. WANG TCH'ANG TCHE, *Saint Augustin et les vertus des païens*, Paris, 1938, pp. 106-112.

<sup>17</sup> *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 105, CCSL 88, p. 364: "... in quibus sine adiutorio gratiae, solum est naturae bonum, licet superstitionibus mancipatum, qui solis libertatis ingenitae uiribus et misericordes crebro et modesti et casti inueniuntur et sobrii ..."

<sup>18</sup> According to Augustine, every ethical act must be done *propter Deum*. If this is not the case, such an act does not deserve to be qualified as good.



to concrete Roman people, known for their high ethical way of living. In this regard, Julian refers to people like Fabricius, Fabius, Scipio and Regulus.<sup>19</sup> Fabricius, a very successful military leader, had, as consul, beaten several tribes. His most famous victory was the one against the Samnites in 282 B.C. In classic antiquity he was seen as the model of Roman virtue and ethical excellence. Cicero himself – and we know how much Julian borrowed from Cicero<sup>20</sup> – praised Fabricius for his honesty because, in the war against Pyrrhus, he refused to accept the offer of a captive who had proposed to poison Pyrrhus<sup>21</sup> and was very much impressed by Fabricius freely chosen life of poverty.<sup>22</sup> Quintus Fabius Cunctator, who deliberately avoided to fight with the Punic troops during the Second Punic War, was praised in classical tradition for his statesmanship and his brilliant glory, his cleverness, wisdom and his clement humaneness.<sup>23</sup> Cornelius Scipio Africanus Maior was described as a great and wise man. Cicero stressed his superiority of character and praised his search for “otium et solitudo.”<sup>24</sup> Atilius Regulus was a man of his word and showed to be honest and trustworthy. Indeed, imprisoned by the Punics, he was sent by them to Rome in order to negotiate about Carthaginian prisoners. He refused to give his support to the Punic request and instead of staying in his homeland and with his family, he preferred to respect his given word for he considered the good of the state as more important than his personal fate.<sup>25</sup> Honesty, wisdom, faithfulness, loyalty and the like, are all virtues that, according to Julian, are attributed to these heroes of the pagan past. Julian’s defence of the intrinsic values of pagan behaviour is, in a sense, a logical consequence of his conviction that all virtues have their origin in the rational mind:

“The origin of all the virtues is located in the rational mind, and all the dispositions by which we are good either in a fruitful or in a barren

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 106, CCSL 88, p. 364. For similar ideas in the work of a contemporary of Julian, Salvian of Marseille, see M. L. COLISH, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages. II. Stoicism in Christian Latin Thought through the Sixth Century* (Studies in the History of Christian Thought, 35), Leiden, 1985, pp. 113-114.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. M. LAMBERIGTS, *Iulianus IV (Iulianus von Aeclanum)*, in RAC 19 (1999), pp. 483-505, esp. 491-493.

<sup>21</sup> Cicero, *De officiis* I, 40; III, 86.

<sup>22</sup> Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes* III, 56.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Cicero, *De officiis* I, 84.108. For a critical evaluation of this classical view, see art. *Quintus Fabius Maximus Verrucosus*, in G. WISSOWA (ed.), *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* VI, Stuttgart, 1909, 1814-1830, 1830.

<sup>24</sup> Cicero, *De officiis* III, 1ff. The topic of *otium* was well known in both classical and Christian antiquity.

<sup>25</sup> Cicero, *De officiis* I, 39; III, 99.115.



manner are found in the subject that is our mind: prudence, justice, temperance, courage. Therefore, though the power of these dispositions is naturally in all, it does not, nonetheless, move toward one end in all of them. Rather, in accord with the judgment of the will whose least indication they serve, they are directed either to eternal or to temporal goods. When this happens, they differ not in what they are, not in what they do, but only in what they merit. They cannot suffer the loss of their proper name or of their proper kind, but they are either enriched by the largeness or disappointed by the slimness only of the reward they sought."<sup>26</sup>

Human beings are created as rational, mortal beings, capable of virtue and vice, for, by nature, created in such a way that they are able to fulfil or transgress God's commandments or protect, on the basis of natural teaching, the rights of human society. They possess the freedom to opt for either of the two options, wherein one will find the essence of either sinning or doing justice.<sup>27</sup> What makes us good depends upon what we are and do as rational beings. In theory, we all are expected to fulfil what is required by virtues such as prudence, justice, temperance, courage. *De facto*, the will's choices orientate our moral behaviour. Whether we choose for eternal or temporal goods is, Julian claims, the result of our own will. What kind of merits we will deserve, is the result of our choices.

It is interesting to see that Julian's appeal to the moral behaviour of pagans is directly related to his view that all human beings are gifted with innate virtues, and he will quote in this context Rom. 2:14-15 as an argument for his own position. One can say that for Julian there is no contradiction between good ethical ideas, present in classical tradition, and what one can find as valuable insights in Scripture.

<sup>26</sup> *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 108, CCSL 88, p. 365: "Cunctarum origo uirtutum in rationabili animo sita est, et affectus omnes, per quos aut fructuose aut steriliter boni sumus, in subiecto sunt mentis nostrae: prudentia, iustitia, temperantia, fortitudo. Horum igitur affectuum uis cum sit in omnibus naturaliter (...), non tamen ad unum finem in omnibus properat; sed pro iudicio uoluntatis, cuius nutui seruiunt, aut ad aeterna aut ad temporalia diriguntur. Quod cum fit, non in eo quod sunt, non in eo quod agunt, sed in eo solo uariant quod merentur. Nec nominis sui igitur (...) possunt nec generis sustinere dispendium, sed solius quod appetuerunt praemii aut amplitudine ditantur aut exilitate frustrantur." The translation is taken from *Answer to the Pelagians, II: Answer to Julian*. Introduction, Translation and Notes by R.T. TESKE (*The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century*, I, 24), New York, 1998, pp. 391-392.

<sup>27</sup> *Ad Florum* I, 79, CSEL 85, 1, p. 94: "Factum est enim animal rationale, mortale, capax uirtutis et uitii, quod posset ex concessa sibi possibilitate uel seruare dei mandata uel transgredi uel magisterio naturali conseruare ius humanae societatis liberum que haberet alterutram uelle partem, in quo peccati et iustitiae summa est."



As Julian will state elsewhere, virtues are *congenital*.<sup>28</sup> All human beings possess an innate nobility,<sup>29</sup> for virtues such as wisdom, justice, self continence and courage belong to the domain of the rational soul, God's gift par excellence. Indeed, Julian can easily combine Christian thinking about the goodness of creation with Stoic reflection about human beings ethical possibilities.<sup>30</sup>

In book II of *Ad Turbantium*, within a context where he is describing the task of the soul in its relation to the body – for Julian, it is clear that the soul, gifted with reason, must direct and control the body – Julian explicitly refers to Sallust. Julian was of the opinion that human beings consist of two unequal elements, soul and body: the soul is expected to rule over the body, “quorum alterum nobis cum diis, alterum cum beluis (...) esse commune” (Sallust, *De Catilinae Coniuratione* 1, 2), for the soul is gifted with virtue and thus requested to commend the body.<sup>31</sup> Julian indeed is aware of the fact that what Christians hold also belongs to the culture he lives in: the distance between his Christian world and his “secular” training is, indeed, much smaller as it was, at that time in history, the case for Augustine.<sup>32</sup>

According to Julian, these virtues are, on the one hand, innate, but must also be acquired by the use of perfect reason.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, for Julian, the presence and knowledge of innate virtues as such is not sufficient. Human beings are expected to develop these virtues by living according to them: human beings not only need to know these virtues, but are also expected to make them concrete.<sup>34</sup> God enables human beings to fulfil his laws. Pious and just as He is, He will never ask that should be done what is impossible, for He is a good creator

<sup>28</sup> *Ad Florum* IV, 129, *CSEL* 85, 2, p. 155: “(...) homo per omnia probus, congenitis dicatur florere uirtutibus.”

<sup>29</sup> *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 85, *CCSL* 88, p. 362: “(...) atque ob hoc dicatis non esse in carne mali necessitatem, ut erubescat unusquisque laudabiliter conditus, deformiter uiuere, ac sic pudor turpi occurrat ignauiae de commendatione nobilitatis ingenitae ...”

<sup>30</sup> On the Stoic aspect, see, e.g., *Paradoxa Stoicorum* 22.

<sup>31</sup> *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 116, *CCSL* 88, p. 366: “(...) quoniam ex imparibus bonis compositi sumus, animum corpori debere dominari, quorum alterum nobis cum diis, alterum cum beluis (...) commemoras esse commune; et ideo id quod est melius, id est, animum, uirtute praeditum (...) et membris corporis bene et cupiditatibus imperare.”

<sup>32</sup> Cf. LÖSSL, *Julian von Aeclanum*, pp. 83-90 (Säkulare Bildung und kirchliches Milieu).

<sup>33</sup> *Ad Florum* III, 165, *CSEL* 85, 1, p. 469: “Sed de illis ego uirtutibus dico, quas usu iam perfectae rationis adipiscimur.” See also F. REFOULÉ, *Julien d'Éclane. Théologien et philosophe*, in *RSR* 52 (1964), pp. 42-84, p. 53.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum*, frg. 9, *CCSL* 88, p. 400: “(...) sic ergo et in te, cuius generositatem doctrina componit, ut uirtutes, quas natura inchoet, disciplina consummet.”



of human beings, who are innocent by nature, and at the same time able to freely live according to the virtues,<sup>35</sup> for God made us all *capax virtutis*.<sup>36</sup> It will be evident that Julian, with his belief in a God who is the creator of all human beings, a God who created his humanity in such a way that they *naturaliter* know what they must do, hardly can accept the idea that people are born guilty because of the sin of their ancestor, Adam.<sup>37</sup>

Julian's position will result in a firm protest against any idea of natural evil, because of his concern for a life according to the *verae virtutes*. Like Hincmar of Reims and Hrabanus Maurus in the ninth century, he fears that the idea of natural evil might question one's personal responsibility, something a Roman citizen, even in the fifth century, could not accept.<sup>38</sup> It should be emphasized that Julian's protest against any idea of natural evil is thoroughly related with this concern for the autonomy of the individual, rational and thus ethically responsible human being.<sup>39</sup>

Julian is well aware of some other consequences of his appreciation of the pagans' ethical capacities. Indeed, it seems unfair to him that those who are able to act in a just way, who prove that true justice is in themselves, will receive eternal condemnation.<sup>40</sup> In a sense, Julian questions Augustine's clear but radical position: without faith in Christ no one can be saved, i.e., those who do not believe in Christ (e.g., because they lived before Christ's coming), will be condemned to eternal death. Julian is of the opinion that such a radical position is, in a sense, unjust towards those who did not know or still do not know Jesus Christ, while at the same time fulfilling what ethically was and is requested from them. Cynically, Julian remarks that if one is no longer allowed to call the chastity of the pagans chastity, one no longer

<sup>35</sup> *Ad Florum* III, 82, CSEL 85, 1, p. 406: "Ergo Deum et iustum et pium credimus et ueracem ac per hoc nihil impossibile mandasse legem eius tenemus, nihil falsum confirmare testimonia, nihil iniquum pronuntiare iudicia, sed ipsum esse hominum conditorem, quos nullo crimini obnoxios creat, uerum plenos quidem innocentia naturali, uoluntariarum autem uirtutum capaces."

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *Ad Florum* I, 79, CSEL 85, 1, p. 94.

<sup>37</sup> For Julian's ideas about Adam, see M. LAMBERIGTS, *Julien d'Éclane et Augustin d'Hippone: deux conceptions d'Adam*, in *Augustiniana* 40 (1990), pp. 373-410, esp. pp. 373-382; LÖSSL, *Julian von Aeclanum*, pp. 102ff.

<sup>38</sup> See, e.g., *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 85, CCSL 88, p. 362.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Ad Florum* III, 197, CSEL 85, 1, p. 496; IV, 129, CSEL 85, 2, pp. 153ff. With regard to Julian's distinction between human beings' created nature and their moral activity, see F. REFOULÉ, *Julien d'Éclane: théologien et philosophe?*, in *RSR* 52 (1964), pp. 42-84; pp. 233-247.

<sup>40</sup> *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 111, CCSL 88, p. 365.



can call their bodies bodies, nor the fruits of their fields fruits. This is absurd, Julian concludes.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, Julian asks Augustine, "If a pagan were to clothe the naked, rescue the one in danger, care for the wounds of the sick, share his wealth in honest friendship and could in no way be forced to give false testimony even by torture, is this all sin, because it does not come from faith?"<sup>42</sup> In Julian's view, one must evaluate what people actually do. One gets the impression that, in Julian's argumentation, *what* we do is more important than *why* we do it. In any case, one cannot separate the *why* from the *what*.

Faithful to his conviction that human beings' nature deserves the qualification good, he repeats that human beings can be without sins by pursuing holiness, a pursuit which is supported by God.<sup>43</sup> In Julian's view, God helps his humanity two times: first through the gift of a good creation; next through his constant help and support of those who want to do what He requests them to do.<sup>44</sup>

In a sense, Julian emphasizes the importance of human beings' responsibility simply because he fears that an idea in which only faith should lead to salvation might result in a kind of laziness or fatalism. Julian fears that such idea annihilates human beings' free will and ethical responsibility, for if evil is in one's created nature, he will never be able to overcome it and do the good, one is expected to do.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, Julian interprets 1 Tim. 2:4: "(Deus) qui omnes homines vult salvos fieri et ad agnitionem veritatis venire" in its broadest sense, *id est*, God wants all human beings to be saved, for all are his creatures.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>41</sup> *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 112, CCSL 88, p. 365: "Si dicatur (...) quia castitas infidelium castitas non est, eadem fronte dicitur, quia corpus paganorum corpus non sit et oculi paganorum sensum non habeant intuendi et frumenta quae in paganorum nascuntur agris frumenta non sint; et multa (...) alia quae tantae absurditatis sunt, ut risum possint intelligentibus commovere."

<sup>42</sup> *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 114, CCSL 88, p. 366: "Si gentilis nudum operuerit, periclitantem liberauerit, aegri uulnera fouerit, diuitias honestae amicitiae impenderit, ad testimonium falsum nec tormentis potuerit impelli, numquid quia non est ex fide, peccatum est?" The translation is, with some small changes, taken from *Answer to the Pelagians, II: Answer to Julian*. Introduction, Translation and Notes by R.T. TESKE (*The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century*, I,24), New York, 1998, p. 398.

<sup>43</sup> *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 113, CCSL 88, p. 366: "Perfacile igitur studio sanctitatis, quod Deus adiuvat, potest homo carere peccatis."

<sup>44</sup> It should be remembered that people like Pelagius and Julian constantly add: "with the help of God" when they speak of human beings ability to do the good they are expected to do.

<sup>45</sup> *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 118, CCSL 88, p. 366: "Si aliquis malus condi posset (...) numquam in bonum ablutione transiret."

<sup>46</sup> *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 123, CCSL 88, p. 367.



This is possible for God's Law is written in the heart of all people and, as can be seen in the moral behaviour of the prophets, patriarchs and other saints of the Old Testament, of pagans and Christians, people can really excel through their own efforts<sup>47</sup>. Julian really thinks through the consequences of God's universal creativity and the goodness related to it.

Julian reproaches Augustine that the latter does not expect anything from human beings' ethical efforts. According to Julian, Augustine thus contradicts Mt. 7:7-8par. where the Lord explicitly states: "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives; everyone who seeks finds; and the door will be opened for everyone who knocks."<sup>48</sup> Scholars dealing with the Pelagian controversy quite often claim that one of the issues, underdeveloped by the Pelagians, is prayer. I think this reproach is correct: one will seldom find a systematic discussion of the importance of prayer in Pelagian writings. At the same time, one must admit that a text as the one quoted above makes clear that somebody like Julian, when dealing with evangelical texts, referring to prayer, interprets these texts literally: we are expected to ask, seek and knock. We are expected to take the initiative. We have to recognize that we need God's help. In other words, although Julian does not share Augustine's view of a *gratia praeveniens*, or a *voluntas a Deo praeparata* – at least in so far as such ideas are related to a postlapsarian status –, he is still well aware of the need to pray in order to be helped. At the same time, this does not exclude our duty to make use of the capacities we all received.

Julian is of the opinion that Augustine too easily attributes to the *gratia Christi* (to the saving and restoring grace) what can be considered as belonging to human beings' created nature as such. E.g., Julian reproaches Augustine for considering marital chastity as a gift of grace, while such chastity is also present among unbelievers.<sup>49</sup> Julian here seems to suggest that by attributing too many human qualities and activities to Christian grace, one, in a sense, is endangering the

<sup>47</sup> *Ad Florum* I, 124, CSEL 85, 1, p. 137: "Prophetas et patriarchas omnesque sanctos ueteris testamenti constat baptismatis expertes fuisse, sed a Deo conditos propriis deinceps fulsisse uirtutibus ...".

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 122, CCSL 88, p. 367.

<sup>49</sup> *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 125, CCSL 88, p. 367: "(Quid est autem quod loqueris) nihil pertinere ad laudem gratiae, si id donet suis, quod peccata impiis largiuntur (propter pudicitiam scilicet coniugalem, quam tibi habere uidentur et impii? (...)) Ut quid autem pudicitiam et uirginitatem quasi eiusdem generis iungis?"



actual value and specificity of such grace, for the qualities and activities mentioned, are also present with pagans.<sup>50</sup> Not without rhetorical exaggeration, Julian states: "But if on account of this evil of sexual desire even Christian spouses produce a sinful offspring, it follows that virginal chastity is the bearer of happiness. And since (...) it is found in people without the faith, those unbelievers exalted by the virtue of chastity are better than Christians defiled by the stain of sexual desire."<sup>51</sup> Again, Julian's point is clear: much of what is considered to be done "sub gratia",<sup>52</sup> is already present in the pagans, who, although not having experienced God's grace, are doing the same things as the Christians. It seems to me that Julian's main concern – and I frankly admit that the bishop sometimes can be extremely boring in his arguments – consists in protecting and defending what can be qualified as common to humanity. By doing so, he in no way wants to depreciate Christian ethical behaviour, but wants to avoid that what can be done by human beings because of their own natural capacities, should be attributed by Christians to an external saving power, wrongly called "grace".<sup>53</sup>

This is not to say that, from the perspective of the Christian faith, there should be no problem with these pagans' positions. Indeed, the pagans' *bonum naturae* is caught in superstition,<sup>54</sup> which can, according to Julian, in no way be excused, for the pagans too could have known God's law on the basis of their innate reason, for God had revealed himself through his creation.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, that human beings must venerate and honour the one and true God is imprinted in them

<sup>50</sup> Of course, it should be admitted that, for Augustine, the core of his argument had not so much to do with what one *de facto* is doing, but with what motivates someone to act in such a way.

<sup>51</sup> *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 127, CCL 88, p. 367: "Sed si propter hoc (...) libidinis malum etiam de coniugibus christianis proles criminosa profertur, sequitur ut pudicitia uirginalis sit felicitatis illatrix; et quia in impiis inuenitur (...), antecellunt infideles pudicitiae uirtute sublimes, christianis libidinis tæbe pollutis." The translation is, with some small changes, taken from *Answer to the Pelagians, II: Answer to Julian*. Introduction, Translation and Notes by R.T. TESKE (*The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century*, I, 24), New York, 1998, pp. 409.

<sup>52</sup> Meant is the saving grace of Christ.

<sup>53</sup> In *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 128ff., CCL 88, pp. 368ff. Julian will try to show that, on the corporeal level, elements such as concupiscence should be considered as belonging to our created nature and thus, *in se*, deserve the qualification good for they refer to God's creative activity. According to Julian, moral qualifications such as good or evil should be related to moral activities of human beings, not to their substance, in its creation result of God's own activity.

<sup>54</sup> *Ad Turbantium*, frg. 105, CCL 88, p. 364.

<sup>55</sup> *Ad Florum* IV, 23, CSEL 85, 2, pp. 23-24.



as images of God through their natural reason<sup>56</sup>. In other words, Julian does believe that pagans can perform good acts but at the same time points out that their adoration of the pagan gods can in no way be an excuse for them.

In this regard, one should remember that Julian, throughout the controversy, constantly protested against Augustine's accusation that the Pelagians claimed that they were able to venerate God without his help.<sup>57</sup> For Julian, the cult of God is so rich and diverse and has so many implications that it is simply nonsensical to suggest that a human being could fulfil all these things without God's helping grace.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, on the level of doctrine and mystery, the human beings' free will is simply insufficient.<sup>59</sup> Julian clearly said 'yes' to a grace that helps us to believe and understand Christian doctrine.

As far as I can see, Julian never read, or better, never replied to Augustine's *Contra Iulianum*. Therefore, it is hard to know whether he ever would have agreed with Augustine that the great heroes of ancient Rome could not be truly righteous because they did not have the true faith in Christ. At the same time, it must be recognized that also for Julian, Christ's coming, suffering, death and resurrection are a great momentum in Christian history. Indeed, Julian speaks of Christ's manifold grace: Christ created all out of nothing, gave us reason, made us

<sup>56</sup> Julian, *Ad Florum* II, 151, CSEL 85, 1, pp. 274-275; III, 106, CSEL 85, 1, p. 426: "Cum utique ista omnia, tam quae dogmatibus quam quae mysteriis continentur, libertas arbitrii per se non potuerit inuenire, quamuis, ut nec idola colerentur nec Deus, qui innotescebat mundi ipsius conditor, sperneretur, magistro gentium teste docere potuerit ratio naturalis."

<sup>57</sup> *Ad Florum* III, 106, CSEL 85, 1, p. 425: "Quod enim ais ad colendum recte Deum sine ipsius adiutorio dici a nobis sufficere unicuique libertatem arbitrii, omnino mentiris."

<sup>58</sup> *Ad Florum* III, 106, CSEL 85, 1, pp. 425-426: "Cum enim cultus Dei multis intellegatur modis et in custodia mandatorum et in exsecratione uitiorum et in simplicitate conuersationis et in ordine mysteriorum et in profunditate dogmatum, quae de trinitate uel de resurrectione multisque aliis similibus fides christiana consequitur, qui fieri potest, ut nos inconfuso dicamus sine adiutorio Dei liberum arbitrium sufficiens ad eius esse culturam, cum legamus in euangelio dicentem dominum: confiteor tibi, Pater, Domine caeli et terrae, qui abscondisti haec a sapientibus et prudentibus et reuelasti ea paruulis: ita, Pater, quoniam sic fuit beneplacitum ante te?"

<sup>59</sup> *Ad Florum* III, 106, CSEL 85, 1, p. 426: "Cum utique ista omnia, tam quae dogmatibus quam quae mysteriis continentur, libertas arbitrii per se non potuerit inuenire, quamuis, ut nec idola colerentur nec Deus, qui innotescebat mundi ipsius conditor, sperneretur, magistro gentium teste docere potuerit ratio naturalis." On Julian's view about grace, see 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, 1993, pp. 342-349.



his image, and granted us free will. Through grace, benefits increased. Grace itself gave us the law as a help that should stimulate the light of reason. Christ's incarnation was described as belonging to the fullness of grace. It was seen as an expression of God's incalculable affection for us, so that we would love him in return. God's love was so great that He did not spare his son but delivered him for us. Through baptism, He not only forgives our sins but raises us up, adopts us and makes us holy. The only thing Julian cannot accept is that, through the gift of grace, the essentials of the created human nature are radically changed or destroyed.<sup>60</sup>

Finally, it should be stressed that Julian's position was not simply held because he wanted to undermine Augustine's doctrine of original sin. Indeed, it was an integral part of his own theological convictions. In this regard, one might refer to Julian's *Expositio libri Iob* XXIII, 12. Here, Julian explicitly states that the Biblical text: "Mandatis labiorum eius non recessi" should be interpreted as follows: God's orders are impressed in the human nature by the power of reason and as such they are, like the law, able to teach justice to human beings, a position, confirmed by Paul in Rom. 2:14.<sup>61</sup> In other words, the belief that all human beings as rational images of God know what should be done and are created in such a way that they are able to

<sup>60</sup> Julian, *Ad Florum* I, 94-95, CSEL 85,1, pp. 109-110: "Gratiam ergo Christi multiplicem confitemur: primum munus eius est, quod facti ex nihilo sumus. Secundum, quod ut uiuentibus sensu ita sentientibus ratione praestamus, quae impressa est animo, ut conditoris imago doceretur, ad cuius aequae respicit dignitatem arbitrii concessa libertas. Ipsi etiam gratiae beneficiorum, quae nobis praestare non desinit, augmenta reputamus; ipsa gratia legem in adiutorium misit; ad eius spectabat officium, ut rationis lumen, quod prauitatis exempla hebetabant et consuetudo uitiorum, multimodis eruditionibus excitaret atque imitatos suos foueret; ad istius ergo gratiae, id est diuinae benevolentiae, quae rebus causam dedit, plenitudinem spectauit, ut uerbum caro fieret et habitaret in nobis. Reposcens enim Deus ab imagine sua amoris uicem palam fecit, quam totum in nos inestimabili egisset affectu, ut uel sero redamaremus eum, qui commendans caritatem suam nobis filio suo non pepercit, sed pro nobis illum tradidit pollicens, quia, si uoluissimus deinceps uoluntati eius oboedire, unigeniti sui praestaret nos esse coheredes. Haec ergo gratia, quae in baptismo non solum peccata condonat, sed cum hoc indulgentiae beneficio et prouehit et optat et consecrat, haec, inquam, gratia, meritum mutat reorum, non liberum condit arbitrium, quod eo accipimus tempore quo creamur, utimur autem, quo ualentiam inter bonum et malum discretionis adipiscimur. Bonae itaque uoluntati innumeras adiutorii diuini adesse species non negamus, sed ita, ut non per adiutorii genera aut fabricetur quae fuerit arbitrii destructa libertas aut aliquando ea exclusa uel boni uel mali cuiquam necessitas credatur incumbere, uerum arbitrio libero omne adiutorium cooperatur."

<sup>61</sup> Julian, *Expositio libri Iob* XXIII, 12, CCSL 88, p. 265: "Mandata labiorum Dei esse dicit naturae suae uim rationis impressam, quae uice legis potuit homines docere iustitiam, sicut et apostolus ait: cum enim gentes quae legem non habent, naturaliter ea quae legis sunt faciunt, eiusmodi legem non habentes, ipsi sibi sunt lex."



realize God's commandments belonged to the essentials of Julian's personal conviction, whether this was defended in a controversy or explained in an exegetical commentary.

I think that the following conclusions can be drawn from what is developed in this article:

1. The idea that the good God is the good creator of all human beings (Christians, Jews, pagans) is one of the cornerstones of Julian's theology.
2. All human beings are born with a rational soul and are, especially on that level, images of God. Moral behaviour happens on the level of the soul; here, one must situate the innate virtues and the personal conscience. Moreover, here, in a sense, every human being starts *ab ovo*. No previous sinners, not even Adam, can destroy the "purity" and innocence of the newly created soul of a baby.
3. Further, that all humans beings are created with a morally good nature is proved by the ethical behaviour of pagans.
4. As a Christian, Julian stresses that God wants all human beings, including pagans, to be saved, for all are born with the needed capabilities (cf. Rom. 2:14).
5. Julian radically denies the existence of any natural evil in human beings' created constitution, for that might result in the negligibility of human beings' personal and ethical responsibility.
6. Julian's praise of the moral life of the pagans does not mean that pagans do not need the saving grace of Christ.

Of course, Julian's position, in its logical coherence, also causes some problems especially on the level of concrete human beings' moral behaviour. Indeed, all human beings are born in a concrete context. The influence of education on children is well known and nobody is born *tabula rasa*. At the same time, it remains true that Julian's creationist approach is a very fundamental critique of Augustine's ideas about original sin. Moreover, his view that non-Christians can live and act as ethically speaking good humans is not only a challenging statement towards Christians, it is even, in the context of today, a very relevant position. Julian is convinced that non-Christians are able to do what should be done, but, at the same time, he stresses that these non-Christians have no excuse for not venerating the true God.

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## AUGUSTINE VERSUS JULIAN OF ECLANUM ON THE LOVE OF WISDOM

In his article “*Philosophia Christiana* (Augustin, *Contra Iulianum*, IV, 14, 72)” Goulven Madec raises the issue of the relevance of philosophy in Augustine’s late works, particularly in relation to the controversy with Julian of Eclanum.<sup>1</sup> Rather than divide Augustine’s works into two distinct periods – a philosophical period prior to 396 and a theological period after 396 – Madec observes continuity in Augustine’s works from the earliest period onwards.<sup>2</sup> That continuity revolves around the notion of the *uera philosophia* of Christianity and Augustine’s identification of it with the term *philosophia Christiana* in *Contra Iulianum* IV, 14, 72. Imploring Julian to embrace the true philosophy of Christianity, Augustine writes: “I beg you, do not let the philosophy of Gentiles be more honest than our Christian philosophy, which is the one true philosophy, in as much as the study or the love of wisdom is signified by this name.”<sup>3</sup> Augustine then encourages Julian to consider the implications of Cicero’s *Hortensius* for overcoming his erroneous views.

Madec’s interest in Augustine’s use of this term in his late works is no doubt significant given the current tendency to cast the thought of the late Augustine solely in theological terms.<sup>4</sup> Augustine, however, uses the term *philosophia Christiana* on three different occasions in the controversy with Julian of Eclanum, once in the *Contra Iulianum* and twice in the *Opus imperfectum contra Iulianum*.<sup>5</sup> The central theme in these passages is the extent of humankind’s ability to resist the love of the world, or the temptations of the flesh, in the fall’s aftermath. Thus, in the midst of his controversy with Julian of Eclanum over the

<sup>1</sup> Goulven Madec, “‘*Philosophia christiana*’ (Augustin *Contra Iulianum*, IV, 14, 72) in *Petites Études Augustiniennes*, Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité, 142 (Paris, 1994: Institute d’Études Augustiniennes), 163-177.

<sup>2</sup> Goulven Madec, “Le ‘Platonisme’ des Pères,” in *Petites Études Augustiniennes*, 27-50. See also *Le Dieu d’Augustin* (Paris: du Cerf, 1998), 83.

<sup>3</sup> *Contra Iulianum* 4, 14, 72 (PL 44, 774): Obsecro te, non sit honestior philosophia Gentium, quam nostra Christiana, qua una est uera philosophia, quandoquidem stadium vel amor sapientiae significatur hoc nomine.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Carol Harrison, *Beauty and Revelation in the Thought of Saint Augustine* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 36, 274.

<sup>5</sup> *Contra Iulianum* 4, 14, 72 (PL 44, 774); *Opus imperfectum contra Iulianum* 2, 166 (CSEL 85/1, 286-287), 4, 22 (CSEL 85/2, 22-23). The notion of theology appears in neither of these works.



Christian understanding of marriage, original sin, and the evil of carnal concupiscence Augustine recalls Julian's attention to the role that the love of wisdom plays in combating the ill effects of humanity's fall from goodness.

In this respect, Augustine's use of the term *philosophia Christiana* indicates that even at the end of his life he never relinquished his interest in philosophy because it provides the sure means of countering the threat that Pelagians like Julian of Eclanum posed to Christianity. When viewed from this perspective, Augustine's response to Julian is much more complex than initially meets the eye. For underlying the preoccupation with marriage and human sexuality is the concern that carnal concupiscence, the residual effect of the fall, is inimical to the philosophical way of life. And if this is so, then the lust for pleasure constitutes the antithesis of the love of wisdom.<sup>6</sup>

In order to draw out the implications of these claims, I will address three concerns in the remarks that follow: the distinction between an authentic and inauthentic Christian philosophy, the development in Augustine's response to secular philosophy, and the extent of Augustine's reliance on a vertical model of Christian philosophy. Far from undermining the importance of philosophy in Augustine's thought, the polemical nature of the controversy manifests the need to defend the possibility of Christian philosophy against the attacks of pseudo-Christians like Julian of Eclanum, who fail to perceive the relevance of Christ's incarnation and redemption for the practice of philosophy.

Augustine's substitution of the term *philosophia Christiana* for *vera philosophia* in the controversy with Julian of Eclanum signals a subtle shift in his perspective on philosophy. There are three factors that may have contributed to this change in outlook. First, it may simply be the case, as Madec has argued, that Augustine acquired the notion of Christian philosophy from his acquaintance with Rufinus of Aquileia's *Historia ecclesiastica*, an early fifth century text.<sup>7</sup> Second, assuming that he indeed had some acquaintance with Rufinus' text, Augustine may very well have recognized the usefulness of the expression for distinguishing a genuine Christian philosophy from a fraudulent one, such as that of Julian of Eclanum. Aware of the threat to Christian philosophy from dissenters within the Christian community, Augustine could have regarded the expression as a convenient way of differentiating pseudo-Christians, like Julian, from true, or orthodox,

<sup>6</sup> *Contra Iulianum* 4, 14, 65 (PL 44, 769-770); 5, 10, 42 (PL 44, 808).

<sup>7</sup> Goulven Madec, *Petites Études Augustiniennes*, 164.



lovers of wisdom.<sup>8</sup> Finally, given the established nature of the Church as an institution in fifth-century society and Augustine's mature grasp of Christian doctrine, Augustine could easily have seen in the term a clear expression of Christianity's effective possession of the true wisdom of Christ embodied in salvific religion as opposed to the worldly wisdom found in other sects.

Whatever the explanation for this linguistic shift may be, in his anti-Pelagian writings, Augustine represents Julian as the antithesis of a Christian philosopher on account of his denial of original sin and his failure to affirm the devastating effect that carnal concupiscence has on human nature. In his own works, first to Turbantius, and then, later on, to Florus, Julian rejects the idea that the taint of Adam's sin was transmitted to his descendents in the form of carnal concupiscence. As a result, Julian's conception of Christian marriage and the role human sexuality has in it differs considerably from Augustine's, as does his doctrine of divine grace.

Since, for Julian, human beings still possess the *possibilitas boni* in their nature and are therefore capable of choosing between good and evil, a protective form of divine assistance suffices to enable them to regulate carnal desire and to channel it in the proper direction. A conception of grace more intrusive than this, such as Julian construed Augustine's to be, robs the will of its freedom to choose and depicts God as a cruel and unjust arbiter who divides humanity into two groups: the *massa damnata* who perish through no personal faults of their own and the elect who attain salvation solely on account of divine favor. In so far as Augustine's doctrine of original sin implies humanity's complete inability to resist the force of carnal concupiscence without divine grace, Julian concludes that human sexuality must be evil because fallen human nature, deprived of its original goodness, is now naturally capable only of evil.<sup>9</sup>

Given the public nature of the controversy between Augustine and Julian and the concern that ordinary Christians might be misled by Julian's statements, Augustine's strategy to refute Julian's arguments inevitably involved many layers. Not only was the controversy over whose theodicy was more appropriate or whose position was ultimately Manichaean, but it was also over who truly lived and thought as a Christian should live and think. From Augustine's perspective, what

<sup>8</sup> For the gravity of the threat posed to Christianity, see *Contra Iulianum* 1, 6, 21 (PL 44, 654-655); 6, 26, 83 (PL 44, 658).

<sup>9</sup> For the debate between Julian and Augustine on the *possibilitas boni* see *Opus imperfectum* 5, 31-63 (CSEL 85/2, 229-285).



was at stake was the very nature of Christian philosophy. As a result, an important strand of Augustine's refutation of Julian's writings in defense of Pelagianism was to strip away Julian's pretense of being a Christian philosopher and in so doing to clarify the true nature of Christian philosophy.<sup>10</sup>

For Augustine, the obvious sign of an inauthentic Christian philosophy is its complete disregard for the necessity of the incarnation and redemption. If wisdom is to be attained, then the intellectual content of philosophy must conform to the Christian understanding of reality. Julian's denial of the doctrine of original sin and the evil effect of carnal concupiscence on the soul even after it has been regenerated by baptism implies, to Augustine, that Julian's conception of fallen human nature is radically different than that of true Christianity. As a result, Julian places too much emphasis on a human being's natural ability to resist the evil of carnal concupiscence. In so doing, he denies the absolute necessity for grace in overcoming an evil that married couples, at best, can use for a good end, namely, the reproduction of children. For Augustine, Christian reality dictates that, in the absence of divine grace, the struggle between the flesh and the spirit is a permanent disability that afflicts human beings in this life.<sup>11</sup>

Julian's confidence in the good of carnal concupiscence, however, strikes Augustine as indicative of his inability to adhere to the intellectual, moral, and religious demands of the Christian philosophical life.<sup>12</sup> To Augustine, Julian's failure to follow his arguments demonstrates the truth of the doctrine that Julian strives to undermine with his dialectics, namely, the doctrine of original sin.<sup>13</sup> For carnal concupiscence, not just personal wrongdoing, weighs the mind down with the lure of pleasure that obstructs the mind's efforts to find the truth.<sup>14</sup> Julian's faulty syllogistic reasoning, his irrelevant remarks and

<sup>10</sup> *Contra Iulianum* 4, 11, 57 (PL 44, 765); 5, 9, 37 (PL 44, 806); 6, 20, 64 (PL 44, 862).

<sup>11</sup> Augustine distinguishes sensation from concupiscence at *Contra Iulianum* 5, 15, 55 (PL 44, 814-815); 6, 18, 56 (PL 44, 855-856); *Opus imperfectum* 4, 27 (CSEL 85/2, 27) and good and bad concupiscence at *Contra Iulianum* 6, 16, 50 (PL 44, 851-852). For a definition of carnal concupiscence, see *Contra Iulianum* 6, 18, 53 (PL 44, 854-855) and *Opus imperfectum* 3, 177 (CSEL 85/1, 476-478). See also *Contra Iulianum* 6, 23, 70 (PL 44, 865-866) for Augustine's change of heart in regard to the applicability of carnal concupiscence to the lives of saints.

<sup>12</sup> *Opus imperfectum* 4, 20 (CSEL 85/2, 19-20).

<sup>13</sup> *Contra Iulianum* 3, 21, 44 (PL 44, 724-725); 26, 65 (PL 44, 735-736).

<sup>14</sup> For a study of the concept of mind in patristic literature, see A. N. Williams, *The Divine Sense: The Intellect in Patristic Theology* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2007).



verbal manipulation, his wordiness and loquacity, his reliance on Aristotle's *Categories* and abuse of scripture are all symptomatic of his ignorance of the truth.<sup>15</sup>

Underlying this intellectual struggle is the moral difficulty Julian experiences in acknowledging the ineffectiveness of his arguments in the presence of others. Even if he does comprehend the truth of Christianity, his stubbornness and pride prevent him from admitting his mistakes and moderating his desires. Contentious and vain, Julian reminds Augustine of the Athenian philosopher Polemo who, as a dissolute young man, burst into the school of Xenocrates in the middle of a talk on temperance and was converted to philosophy. Conjuring up in his mind an assembly of holy men before whom Julian stands, Augustine suggests that, following Polemo's example, Julian should desist from his sophistic wrangling with them. For these venerable bishops are to be revered more than Xenocrates since Christ is their teacher, and surely Christ is more worthy of respect than Plato, the teacher of Xenocrates, is. If Julian exhibits more reverence for holy men of this temper from both east and west, then perhaps he, too, would be able to recognize the true worth of Christian philosophy.<sup>16</sup>

Julian's unwillingness to submit to the truth of Christian philosophy, therefore, contributes to his ignorance of the truth. His defense of the natural virtues of the pagans reflects not only the extent of his Pelagian sentiments, but also his ignorance of the need for faith if virtuous actions are to be at all effective. The virtuous deeds of unbelievers, such as Fabricius and Regulus, are of no avail in the attainment of salvation because they are not done for the sake of divine glory. They are, in short, ineffectively good as long as they rely on the law of nature apart from faith in Christ.<sup>17</sup>

In language reminiscent of Aristotle's ethics, Augustine attributes Julian's error to his inability to discern the difference between the function and the end of an action. True virtue takes into account the end of the action, the reason for which the action is to be done, in addition to its function, the action that is to be done.<sup>18</sup> To judge an

<sup>15</sup> *Contra Iulianum* 2, 6, 16 (PL 44, 685); 6, 6, 15 (PL 44, 831-832); 20, 64 (PL 44, 735); *Opus imperfectum* 2, 51 (CSEL 85/1, 199-200).

<sup>16</sup> *Contra Iulianum* 1, 4, 12 (PL 44, 617-618) 7, 35 (PL 44, 665-666).

<sup>17</sup> *Contra Iulianum* 4, 3, 17 (PL 44, 745-746); *Opus imperfectum* 1, 83 (CSEL 85/1, 96). Compare Augustine's response to Julian on the righteous people of the Old Testament at *Opus imperfectum* 1, 124 (CSEL 85/1, 137-138).

<sup>18</sup> Augustine provides an example at *Contra Iulianum* 4, 14, 66 (PL 44, 770-771).



action's moral worth solely on the basis of its function is to run the risk of mistaking the appearance of virtue for real virtue. The vice of stubbornness, for example, deceptively mimics constancy, and yet, its resemblance to virtue is as far removed from actual virtue as the other vices are.<sup>19</sup>

In Augustine's mind, then, the presence of true virtue in the soul depends upon the possession of true wisdom. On this account, Augustine can truly say that without faith that works through love an unbelieving will is no will at all.<sup>20</sup> And if this is the case, then the natural virtues of the pagans are insufficient for salvation because they are not from God, but solely from a nature that, when deprived of divine grace, lacks the capacity to love others as it ought to through the love of God.<sup>21</sup> In this respect, even the moral nobility of the pagans is suspect because it inevitably involves a love of the world, which is not from God.

To Augustine, then, Julian's attempt to philosophize without Christ manifests not only the extent of his intellectual and moral confusion but also the degree of his religious impairment. For even though he identifies human goodness for the most part with virtue instead of with bodily pleasure, as the Epicureans do, he fails to comprehend that true virtue is synonymous with the virtue of true piety. "Piety is wisdom," Augustine says, quoting Job 28:28; that wisdom, namely, that comes only from God.<sup>22</sup> This kind of piety implies faithfulness, the devoted loyalty of a humble servant of God who, like Job, remains steadfast in truth and goodness even in the midst of great trials and tribulations.<sup>23</sup>

Augustine, however, can think of no greater source of misery than the struggle between the flesh and the spirit. The stark contrast that he draws between Job's fidelity and Julian's infidelity highlights the intractability of Julian's impiety in stubbornly refusing to relinquish his belief in the natural goodness of carnal concupiscence.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, Julian's failure to live up to the intellectual, moral, and religious demands of the Christian philosophical life implies, to Augustine at least, that Julian is nothing but a sophist, a living example of what it means to be a false, or inauthentic, Christian philosopher.

<sup>19</sup> *Contra Iulianum* 4, 3, 20-22 (PL 44, 748-749).

<sup>20</sup> *Contra Iulianum* 4, 3, 19 (PL 44, 747-748); 3, 30 (PL 44, 753-754); 8, 51 (PL 44, 763-764) and *Opus imperfectum* 5, 57 (CSEL 85/2, 264-266).

<sup>21</sup> *Contra Iulianum* 4, 3, 33 (PL 44, 755-756).

<sup>22</sup> *Contra Iulianum* 3, 21, 48 (PL 44, 726-727).

<sup>23</sup> Compare Augustine's remark at *Contra Iulianum* 6, 16, 50 (PL 44, 851-852) in which he maintains that the antidotes to ignorance and difficulty, namely, truth and charity, are the gift of divine grace.

<sup>24</sup> *Contra Iulianum* 2, 5, 14 (PL 44, 683-684).



Unlike Julian, a true or authentic Christian philosopher orders his life in keeping with the love of divine wisdom and thereby shuns the wisdom of this world that Julian finds so attractive. Because the wisdom that he seeks is Christian, it is inconceivable to Augustine that anyone could ever philosophize without Christ, much less that the wisdom the philosopher ultimately finds could ever be divisive.<sup>25</sup> Thus, Julian's efforts to set dialectical traps for unwary Christian philosophers like Augustine inevitably fail because to philosophize with the Mediator implies that truth defies all contradictions, both inner and outer.<sup>26</sup> If the purpose of the redemption is to reconcile human beings with God, then the purpose of philosophy is to reconcile all opposing views in the harmony of truth; for it is in the harmony of truth that Christ is found.<sup>27</sup>

In rejecting worldly wisdom, though, Augustine is careful to distinguish the pseudo-wisdom that Julian promotes from that of pagan philosophers who, while ignorant of the fullness of truth revealed in Christianity, hold views that more or less approximate to it.<sup>28</sup> Augustine's rejection of Julian's dialectics should not be construed as implying a Manichaean denunciation of the secular world for being inherently evil and, hence, a complete avoidance of it. From the time of his conversion onwards Augustine displays an ambivalent attitude towards the world although, as he himself admits, his youthful appraisal of it lacked the sobering effect that the mastery of scripture eventually provided for him regarding the full implications of the fall and the power of divine grace. Much like Julian, whom he represents as a wayward son and the heretical antithesis of the one who sought out Ambrose and Simplicianus, he was struck by the goodness of creation, so much so that in the *Retractationes* he voices his regret for having put too much emphasis on the insights of the Platonists in his early works.<sup>29</sup> But unlike Julian, Augustine insists that even as a

<sup>25</sup> *Opus imperfectum* 5, 23 (CSEL 85/2, 211): Ego uero non Aristotelem uel Chrysippum, multo minus uanum cum sua loquacitate Iulianum, magister delector habere; sed Christum, qui profecto nisi natura humana magnum esset bonum non pro illa homo fieret, cum Deus esset.

<sup>26</sup> *Contra Iulianum* 6, 18, 55 (PL 44, 855); 19, 60 (PL 44, 858-859).

<sup>27</sup> *Contra Iulianum* 6, 5, 11 (PL 44, 828-829).

<sup>28</sup> *Contra Iulianum* 5, 16, 60 (PL 44, 544-545); *Opus imperfectum* 4, 18 (CSEL 85/2, 18-19).

<sup>29</sup> *Retractationes* 1, 1, 4 (CCL 57, 10-11). Compare the remark at *Contra Iulianum* 6, 12, 39 (PL 44, 843). See also Augustine's use of the image of wandering in relation to Julian, an image that recalls the parable of the prodigal son, at *Opus imperfectum* 2, 59 (CSEL 85/1, 206-207); 3, 20 (CSEL 85/1, 362-363); 64 (CSEL 85/1, 400-401).



recent convert to Christianity he never denied the doctrine of original sin.<sup>30</sup>

Now, an aging bishop well-versed both in scripture and in secular philosophy, Augustine adopts a balanced approach with respect to the pagans' appropriation of the truth of Christianity. By collating scripture with the texts of pagan philosophers, in his writings against Julian Augustine is able to discern the difference between truth and error.<sup>31</sup> Thus, when Julian tries to paint him as an irrational extremist for choosing scripture over logic, Augustine is quick to point out to Julian that dialectical reasoning is to be avoided only if it is used improperly as a means of personal aggrandizement rather than in pursuit of the truth. As in the case of the Platonists, it is Julian's pride, not dialectic, that is at issue.<sup>32</sup>

For this reason, Augustine prefers to focus on the insights of moral philosophers more so than on the natural philosophers that Julian lists as opponents of the doctrine of original sin. To counter Julian's claim, Augustine produces his own list of philosophers from Cicero's *Hortensius*, who, despite their ignorance of Christianity, recognize the dangers inherent in carnal concupiscence far more than the bishop of Eclanum does.<sup>33</sup> Long before Augustine's debate with Julian, these philosophers, among whom Cicero mentions Aristotle, were able to grasp the empirical basis of the doctrine of original sin from their familiarity with the errors and hardships of life.

As a result of the insights gained from the collation of Christian and pagan texts, the model of Christian philosophy that Augustine finds most appropriate to the pursuit of Christian wisdom is one that reconciles the opposition between faith and reason, revelation and dialectic, grace and freedom, openness and hiddenness, and divinity and humanity, for it is in this fashion that the Mediator restores the eternal harmony of creation.<sup>34</sup> Even during this period Augustine continues to fuse ascension and journey imagery in a paradoxical harmony of horizontal and vertical indicators of salvation. Both the horizontal image of the Christian's pilgrimage through time and the vertical image

<sup>30</sup> *Contra Iulianum* 6, 12, 39 (PL 44, 843).

<sup>31</sup> *Contra Iulianum* 2, 9, 32 (PL 44, 695-696).

<sup>32</sup> *Contra Iulianum* 3, 7, 16 (PL 44, 710) 10, 20 (PL 44, 712); 5, 14, 51 (PL 44, 763-764).

<sup>33</sup> *Contra Iulianum* 4, 12, 60-61 (PL 44, 767-768); 14, 72 (PL 44, 774-775); 15, 75-78 (PL 44, 776-779); 16, 83 (PL 44, 781-782); 5, 8, 33 (PL 44, 804).

<sup>34</sup> Augustine recognizes the difficulty of undertaking such a task at *Contra Iulianum* 4, 8, 47 (PL 44, 761-762).



of the mind's liberation from the force of carnal concupiscence weighing it down are integral to his efforts to refute Julian's arguments.<sup>35</sup>

Augustine's interest in Christian philosophy in the works against Julian may seem odd at times when viewed from the perspective of contemporary theologians who often posit a sharp division between philosophy and theology in interpreting Augustine's works after 396. But when viewed historically in the context of fifth century thought and in keeping with Madec's suggestion that the continuity in Augustine's thought is rooted in the inability to conceive of reason functioning independently of Christian belief, Augustine's appropriation of the term Christian philosophy is perfectly understandable.<sup>36</sup> In fact, it reveals the extent to which philosophically-minded bishops like Augustine excelled in co-opting secular philosophies and replacing them with a distinctive philosophy of their own. Both Goulven Madec and Pierre Hadot have observed that in late antiquity the notion of philosophy is often used synonymously with Christianity.<sup>37</sup> In this sense, it is completely fitting that Christian philosophy is nothing other than the true religion of Christ that all true lovers of wisdom embrace.

Furthermore, Julius Domanski, in tracing the development of the notion of Christian philosophy in Western thought, has noted that it is only in the thirteenth century that theology as a science, or as a discipline in its own right, emerges from the shadow of patristic philosophy.<sup>38</sup> Because Augustine's influence on early Medieval thought was considerable, Julian's perspective on the fall and its consequences was largely lost to sight in the west until the twelfth century when Abelard's objections to Augustinianism surfaced in his *Collationes*, a dialogue in which he associates Christian, or true, philosophy with theology.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, the passages at *Opus imperfectum* 1, 69 (CSEL 85/1, 75-78); 3, 44 (CSEL 85/1, 384-385); 5, 1 (CSEL 85/2, 165-167); 11 (CSEL 85/2, 179-183) for weight imagery.

<sup>36</sup> See n. 2 above.

<sup>37</sup> Goulven Madec, *Petites Études Augustiniennes*, 177; Pierre Hadot, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique?* Folio 280 (Gallimard, 195), 355.

<sup>38</sup> Julius Domanski, *La philosophie, théorie ou manière de vivre? Les controverses de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance*, Vestigia 18 (Freiburg, Switzerland: Éditions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1996), 61-79. Compare Hadot's remarks on philosophy as the servant of theology at *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique*, 379-387.

<sup>39</sup> See Peter Abelard, *Collationes*, edited and translated by John Marenbon and Giovanni Orlandi (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 88: ... a quo tanquam uera Sophia idest sapientia Dei quicumque instructi sunt, ueri sunt dicendi philosophi. Abelard construes this wisdom as the wisdom of Christ in *Ep.* 13. See n. 23 in Marenbon, 89. See also Madec's comment in *Petites Études Augustiniennes*, 177: "La vraie philosophie, dans l'esprit d'Augustin, s'identifie à la vraie religion, dans cette entreprise d'intelligence de la foi qui s'appellera plus tard, – avec Abélard précisément –, la théologie."



Augustine, however, never ceased philosophizing with Christ because he was convinced that Christ was the sole Mediator who could liberate human nature from the evil of carnal concupiscence that Adam transmitted to his descendents in the fall.

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## SAINT AUGUSTINE'S MILAN VISION RECONSTRUCTED

A hundred years ago no one doubted that Augustine's autobiography told the story of his conversion to Christ and the Church.<sup>1</sup> In the early 1920s, however, the historical accuracy of the *Confessions* was challenged for the first time. Prosper Alfarcic pointed to discrepancies between Augustine's early works and the *Confessions* in order to argue that the text was an idealized reconstruction of his experience, claiming that Augustine's original conversion had not been to Christianity but to Neo-Platonism.<sup>2</sup> In the decades that followed many scholars came to the defense of the traditional interpretation, but the debate was not stabilized until the 1950s with the arrival of Pierre Courcelle's *Recherches*.<sup>3</sup> Here Courcelle established that the account of Augustine's exposure to Neo-Platonism in the *Confessions* was still compatible with orthodox Christianity by demonstrating that the 4<sup>th</sup> century Christian community of Imperial Milan was steeped in Platonism, and therefore that a Christian experience rich in Platonic language and themes was to be expected. As a result of Courcelle's work contemporary scholarship on the *Confessions* has centered on further illuminating the exact nature of Augustine's relationship with the Neo-Platonic tradition.

One of Courcelle's more notable contributions has been his interpretation of book 7 chapter 10 of the *Confessions* where Augustine recounts the content of his first contact with Platonic philosophy,

<sup>1</sup> J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions*. Vol. 1., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. xx.

<sup>2</sup> P. Alfarcic, *L'évolution intellectuelle de Saint Augustin: I, Du Manichéisme au Néoplatonisme*, (Paris, 1918). See also, G. Boissier, "Est-ce à dire que, dans ses *Confessions*, saint Augustin ait volontairement altéré la vérité?: La conversion de saint Augustin", *Revue des Deux Mondes* 85, (Paris, 1888), p. 43-69.

<sup>3</sup> P. Courcelle, *Recherches sur les 'Confessions' de saint Augustin*, (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1950), p. 60-4. Early defenders of the more traditional interpretation include scholars such as Jules Martin, see J. Martin, "Saint Augustin a Cassiciacum veille et lendemain de sa conversion", *Annales de philosophie Chrétienne*, XXXIX (1898), E. Portalie, see E. Portalie, "Saint Augustin", *Dictionnaire de théologie Catholique* (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1903), Etienne Gilson, see E. Gilson, "Revue critique", *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Etranger*, LXXXVIII, (1919), and, most famously, Charles Boyer, C. Boyer, S.J., *Christianisme et Néoplatonisme dans la formation de saint Augustin*, (Paris: G. Beauchesne, 1920). For a thorough treatment of the debate in general see M. Garvey, *Saint Augustine: Christian or Neo-Platonist?*, (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1939).



an encounter, he says, that results in the vision of an immutable light which transcends his mind. According to Courcelle's interpretation of this passage, while reflecting on the immaterial nature of Truth, Augustine has a mystical vision that, although partially frustrated, reveals God's ultimate nature as He Who *is*.<sup>4</sup>

Debate, however, still continues concerning the exact nature of Augustine's vision: essentially, interpretations of how Augustine arrives at knowledge of God's ultimate identity fall into two main categories. The first consists of those who hold that it is through a Neoplatonic inspired mystical vision, while the second consists of those who hold that it is through an argument for God's existence based on the transcendence of Truth.<sup>5</sup> What is common to both interpretations, however, is their reliance on the internal ascent to God found in the *De Libero Arbitrio* for establishing the proper understanding of the chapter. Simply, the internal ascent functions as a template against which the vision passage is structured.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> James O'Donnell describes *Confessions* 7.10.16 and Courcelle's reading in the following manner: "This paragraph contains the first of two (by some counts: three) accounts of what Courcelle defined as 'vaines tentatives d'extases plotiniennes'... Courcelle's views are most concisely presented at *Recherches*, 160-164, where he presents three passages – 7.10.16 (a), 7.17.23 (b), and 7.20.26 (c) – in parallel columns, marking seven stages, which he identifies: (1) reading the *platoniorum libri* (ac), (2) searching for truth and finding above himself (abc), (3) ascent by degrees (b), (4) Rom. 1:20 (bc), (5) sense of certainty but incapacity (abc), (6) 'faiblesse' (abc), and Rom. 1:20 (a). This schema highlights the parallels among these paragraphs, but imposes a structure that should not be understood as originating with Augustine"; see, J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions*. Vol. 2, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 434-435.

<sup>5</sup> With regard to the former see S. Mac Donald, "Augustine", *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jorge J. E. Gracia and Timothy B. Noone, (Blackwell: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), p. 167, and, C. Vaught, *Encounters with God in Augustine's Confessions*, (New York: SUNY, 2004), p. 44. With regard to the latter see, P. Cary "Inner Vision as the Goal of Augustine's Life", *A Readers Companion to Augustine's Confessions*, ed. K. Paffenroth, & P. Kennedy, (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2003), pp. 115-126, S. Menn, *Descartes and Augustine*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 136-150, and, R. O'Donnell, *Images of Conversion in Augustine's Confessions*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1996), p. 142.

<sup>6</sup> This understanding of the *De Libero Arbitrio* argument as Augustine's principal argument for the demonstration of God's existence was furthered by the great Medievalist Etienne Gilson, see E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Augustine*, trans. L.E.M. Lynch, (New York: Random House, 1960), pp. 11-24, and is typified in the entry under the subject heading "God" in the Augustinian encyclopedia *Augustine Through the Ages*: "First Augustine realized that God was the "light" of truth itself [i.e. in the vision passage]: immaterial, eternal, and everywhere and indivisibly present. God was the immaterial source of all perfections and all truth... Third, Augustine realized that God was Being itself. "Truth itself" was identical with



But acute contradictions arise when one attempts to project this text onto the vision passage, and therefore, in order to arrive at the true nature of Augustine's experience in *Confessions* book 7 chapter 10, it is necessary to overcome the history of interpretation that superimposes the *De Libero Arbitrio* onto the vision passage. A twofold strategy will be employed in order to accomplish this. First, various readings of the vision passage will be shown to be contradictory, and, broadly speaking, this will show that it is neither the account of a mystical vision nor an argument for God's existence based on the transcendence of Truth, that is, based on the nature of truth as the transcendent standard of one's value judgements. Second, it will be demonstrated that the principal argument Augustine uses to reason to God's essential nature is the existential proof, the form of argumentation which shows that created being is dependent upon uncreated Being. More specifically, close analysis will establish that the chapter which precedes the vision passage, chapter 9, certainly foreshadows the use of the existential argument, that the chapter that follows it, chapter 11, explicitly references it, and that chapter 10 itself describes what Augustine saw in terms of ontological dependence: therefore, because all three chapters touch on the defining characteristic of the existential argument, that is, *rational* knowledge of God as Being gained through reflection on one's ontological dependence, and because there is no other known argument for God's nature used by Augustine that makes use of this relationship, Augustine must be giving a description of its use in chapter 10. In short, in book 7 chapter 10, Augustine attains the rational insight that his being is dependent upon Being Itself.<sup>7</sup>

the real source of all existence, and thus the incorporeality and infinity of truth itself did not mean that God was literally nothing". This reduction of Being to Truth may also be seen in John Rist's presentation of Augustinian metaphysics in his work *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*. See, L. Ayres and M. Barnes, "God", *Augustine Through the Ages: an Encyclopedia*, ed. A. Fitzgerald, O.S.A., (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999) and J.M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Interestingly, Gilson offers the most unique but least plausible reading of *Confessions* 7.10, denying the presence of the *De Libero* argument in the chapter, and claiming that it is an example of a "spontaneous natural theology", see E. Gilson, *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1936), p. 51.

<sup>7</sup> For discussion on Augustine's understanding of God as Being see J.F. Anderson, *Augustine and Being* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1965), and E. Zum Brunn, *St. Augustine: Being and Nothingness*, trans. R. Namad (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1998). With Gilson, it is accurate to say that Augustine's understanding of being remains on the level of essence, if what is meant by this is that *esse* is a concept intuited by the mind: clearly, for Saint Augustine, apprehension of the verb *to be* is not



## 1. A History of interpretation

In book 7 of the *Confessions* Augustine relates three chapters that describe the Platonic arguments which allowed him to set aside his materialistic conception of God. According to James O'Donnell, "All discussions of Augustine's Platonic indebtedness since Courcelle have returned to these paragraphs in which we get our fullest – if not clearest or most concrete – view of the impact that the *platoniorum libri* had on him."<sup>8</sup> Of these three chapters chapter 10 is certainly the most controversial, and if one is to have full insight into Augustine's understanding of the Platonists' contribution to his intellectual formation the essential content of this passage must be identified. Because the history of commentary surrounding the passage is so extensive, this section will cover the alternative interpretations of the chapter that have been advanced thus far and the paradox that results as a consequence of these interpretations. Such an analysis will demonstrate that book 7 chapter 10 of the *Confessions* can neither be understood as a rational insight based on a Neo-Platonic meditative ascent to Truth nor as the account of a mystical vision.

Augustine's fusion of Biblical and Platonic themes in the vision chapter makes its proper interpretation challenging, but a careful reading of the text establishes that he is giving the description of a rational insight reached via reflection on his ontological dependence. In order to see this the passage itself must first be considered:

By the Platonic books I was admonished to return into myself. With you as my guide I entered into my innermost citadel and was given power to do so because you had become my helper (*Psalms* 29: 11.) I entered and with my soul's eye, such as it was, saw above that same eye of my soul the immutable light higher than my mind – not the light of every day, obvious to anyone, nor a larger version of the same kind which would, as it were, have given out a much brighter light and filled everything with its magnitude. It was not that light, but a dif-

reduced to a judgment, that is, the properly Thomistic mode of grasping *esse* for Gilson. If, however, one claims that Augustine's "essentialist" understanding of *esse* means that Augustine understands *esse* to be capable of definition, (for example, Gilson seems to indicate that Augustine understands the essence of *esse* to be immutability) then such an understanding would not be compatible with this essay. In regard to the role of immutability in Augustine's thought it seems reasonable to offer that Augustine understands immutability to be convertible with *esse*. See for example *De Moribus Manichaeorum*: 2.1.1. With regard to Augustine's "essentialist" understanding of *esse* see E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, trans. L. Shook (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), pp. 49,50,89.

<sup>8</sup> Augustine: *Confessions*: p. 434.



ferent thing, utterly different from our kinds of light. It transcended my mind, not in the way that oil floats on water, nor as heaven is above earth. It was superior because it made me, and I was inferior because I was made by it. The person who knows the truth knows it, and he who knows it knows eternity. Love knows it. Eternal truth and true love and beloved eternity: you are my God. To you I sigh 'day and night' (*Psalms* 42:2.) When I first came to know you, you raised me up to make me see that what I saw is Being, and that I who saw am not yet Being. And you gave a shock to the weakness of my sight by the strong radiance of your rays, and I trembled with love and awe. And I found myself far from you 'in the region of dissimilarity,' and heard as it were your voice from on high: 'I am the food of the fully grown; grow and you will feed on me. And you will not change me into you like the food your flesh eats, but you will be changed into me.' And I recognized that because of iniquity you discipline man and 'cause my soul to waste away like a spiders web' (*Psalms* 38:14), and I said: 'Surely truth cannot be nothing, when it is not diffused through space either finite or infinite?' And you cried from far away: 'I am who am' (*Exodus* 3:14.) I heard in the way one hears within the heart, and all doubt left me. I would have found it easier to doubt whether I was myself alive than that there is not truth 'understood from the things that are made' (*Romans* 1:20).<sup>9</sup>

Scholars argue that there are two lines that constitute the nucleus of Augustine's insight in the above, and they claim that the key to

<sup>9</sup> *Confessions*: 7.10.16: Et inde admonitus redire ad memet ipsum intravi in intima mea duce te et potui, quoniam *factus es adiutor meus*. Intravi et vidi qualicumque oculo animae meae supra eundem oculum animae meae, supra mentem meam lucem incommutabilem, non hanc vulgarem et conspicuam omni carni nec quasi ex eodem genere grandior erat, tamquam si ista multo multoque clarius claresceret totumque occuparet magnitudine. Non hoc illa erat, sed aliud, aliud valde ab istis omnibus. Nec ita erat supra mentem meam, sicut oleum super aquam nec sicut caelum super terram, sed superior, quia ipsa fecit me, et ego inferior, quia factus ab ea. Qui novit veritatem, novit eam, et qui novit eam, novit aeternitatem. Caritas novit eam. O aeterna veritas et vera caritas et cara aeternitas! Tu es Deus meus, tibi suspiro die ac nocte. Et cum te primum cognovi, tu assumpsisti me, ut viderem esse, quod viderem, et nondum me esse, qui viderem. Et reverberasti infirmitatem aspectus mei radians in me vehementer, et contremui amore et horrore; et inveni longe me esse a te in regione dissimilitudinis, tamquam audirem vocem tuam de excelso: "Cibus sum grandium: cresce et manducabis me. Nec tu me in te mutabis sicut cibum carnis tuae, sed tu mutaberis in me". Et cognovi, quoniam *pro iniquitate erudisti hominem et tabescere fecisti sicut araneam animam meam*, et dixi: "Numquid nihil est veritas, quoniam neque per finita neque per infinita locorum spatia diffusa est?". Et clamasti de longinquo: "Immo uero ego sum qui sum". Et audivi, sicut auditur in corde, et non erat prorsus, unde dubitarem faciliusque dubitarem vivere me quam non esse veritatem, quae per ea, quae facta sunt, intellecta conspicitur. All English translations are those by Chadwick; see H. Chadwick, *St. Augustine's Confessions*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).



understanding this chapter lies in the proper interpretation of these lines, each of which admits of two different readings. The first line relates, "The person who knows the truth knows it, and he who knows it knows eternity... love knows it." This line can be read either literally or figuratively. According to the literal reading the statement *qui novit veritatem novit eam et qui novit eam novit aeternitatem* means just that: Truth is what Augustine saw and it is Truth that is eternal and Truth that is known by love.<sup>10</sup> The alternative way of reading the line would understand the phrase, "he who knows the Truth knows it," figuratively, that is, as understanding truth, love, and eternity to point beyond themselves in order to signify a reality other than them. The interpretation of the second line depends on the rendering of the latin *tu adsumpsisti me ut viderem esse quod viderem, et nondum me esse qui viderem*. Thus, it can be read as either, "you raised me up to make me see that what I saw was Being and that I who saw was not yet Being," as in the above, or as, "you raised me up so that I could see that there was *Something* [emphasis added] to be seen, but also that I was not yet able to see it."<sup>11</sup> If one restricts oneself to the use of the *De Libero Arbitrio* argument and the absolute centrality of these two lines, there are basically four possible ways of interpreting the above, and each of these four readings has had a concrete historical realization. In the following, these four interpretations will be briefly sketched, and it will be seen that the first pair of scholars interpret the vision passage as the description of a rational insight, and that the second pair interpret it as the account of a mystical vision. After this survey has been made the most probable interpretation will be identified and shown to account for a portion of the content and form of the experience Augustine relates in chapter 10.

Philip Cary is an example of a scholar that defends the first possible interpretation.<sup>12</sup> According to Cary *qui novit veritatem novit eum* is read literally, that is, as knowledge of Truth, and *ut viderem esse* is understood as knowledge of "something." Advocates of this position are forced, due to the literal reading of *qui novit veritatem novit eum*, to understand the passage as referring to a rational insight based on the

<sup>10</sup> Although this reading seems unlikely it is still adopted by some scholars; see, Philip Cary, *A Reader's Companion to Augustine's Confessions*, p. 115.

<sup>11</sup> The strong reading of *esse* was first suggested by Solignac. See, Solignac, Aime, S.J. *Les Confessions. Bibliothèque Augustinienne*, series of *Œuvres de Saint Augustin* vol. 13, (Paris, 1962), pp. 616-617. See also, Mac Donald, S. "The Divine Nature", *Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Kretzmann, N. & Stump, E. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 86-87, n. 4.

<sup>12</sup> *A Reader's Companion to Augustine's Confessions*, p. 115.



internal ascent to Truth found in the *De Libero Arbitrio*.<sup>13</sup> In other words, those who advance this reading generally use the *De Libero Arbitrio* as a template against which to structure the passage, and therefore the *De Libero Arbitrio* must be briefly considered.

Augustine's argument in the *De Libero Arbitrio* runs as follows. If something exists that is superior to one's mind then it is God. Truth exists and is superior to one's mind. Therefore God exists, that is, God is Truth. Advocates of this interpretation hold that at the center of the Augustinian metaphysic is the notion of immutable Truth, for, because one judges according to its standards (standards such as "the inferior is subject to the superior"), Truth is higher than one's mind, and because God has been defined as that which is greater than one's mind, Truth must, therefore, be called "God." Further, Truth does not change, and what does not change simply *is*: therefore, God is He Who *is*. It follows that this interpretation leads to the reading that, in book 7 chapter 10, Augustine gives the account of a rational deduction, an insight reached via reflection on the nature of Truth, for it is the nature of Truth that is explicitly (i.e. literally) referenced by the phrase *qui novit veritatem novit eum*.

Robert J. O'Connell is a proponent of the second possible interpretation. He holds that *qui novit veritatem novit eum* should be read literally, again, as a vision of Truth, while *ut viderem esse* should be read as referring to the insight *that* God exists.<sup>14</sup> In regard to the former line, as with Cary, O'Connell's literal reading moves him to interpret the passage as a rational insight. In regard to the latter, he renders it: "And when first I came to know You, You raised me up, so that I might see that what I saw *existed* [emphasis added], and that I, who saw, did not yet exist." O'Connell's literal reading of *qui novit veritatem novit eum* forces him to interpret the reference to *esse* as a *verification* of God's existence made immediately after the conclusion of an ascent to Truth. So even though O'Connell holds that Augustine makes an explicit *reference* to *esse*, his literal reading of *qui novit veritatem novit eum* forces him to understand it as referring to the fact *that* God exists and not to the truth that God *is* Existence.

Carl Vaught supports the third possible interpretation, holding that *qui novit veritatem novit eum* is figurative and that *ut viderem esse* refers to a vision of "Something," a reading most conducive to being interpreted as a mystical vision. Vaught claims that, "At this crucial

<sup>13</sup> *De Libero Arbitrio*: 2.7-2.12.

<sup>14</sup> *Images of Conversion in St. Augustine's Confessions*, pp. 129-131.



juncture [i.e. the vision line of book 7 chapter 10], Augustine is not drawing a conclusion from an argument for God's existence... [instead] he is responding to what he hears from what exists beyond his soul where the truth that stands over against him can be seen and understood through the things that are made." According to Vaught, Augustine uses the language of seeing, speaking, and hearing, along with analogy and metaphor, in order to describe, in purely figurative expressions, an experience that "could not be reduced to scientific terms."<sup>15</sup>

Finally, Scott MacDonald advocates the fourth possible interpretation.<sup>16</sup> Here *qui novit veritatem novit eum* is read figuratively, as signifying something other than Truth, and *ut viderem esse* is interpreted as a vision of Being, not "Something." MacDonald, again, as with most of the other scholars above, uses the *De Libero Arbitrio* as the ultimate model for Augustine's metaphysics, but argues that it is unable to give Augustine an insight into God's ultimate nature. MacDonald claims that there is an intrinsic difficulty with the conclusion that Truth is superior to one's mind as reached in the *De Libero Arbitrio*, a difficulty, he says, that is acknowledged by both Augustine and his interlocutor in the text.<sup>17</sup> That is, MacDonald notes that Augustine's interlocutor in the *De Libero Arbitrio* points out that to demonstrate that there is something higher than reason does not yet prove that God exists, for when one says "God" one does not simply mean "that which is higher than one's self," but, "that than which nothing is higher."<sup>18</sup> MacDonald holds that this argument does not reveal "that than which nothing is higher," or Being Itself, and so he argues that an experience *beyond reason* is the only way to explain Augustine's mature understanding of God's nature. Consequently, he says, "Augustine's own intellectual ascent seems to have succeeded where his argument [the *De Libero Arbitrio* argument] falls short... because, as he reports it, his own ascent culminated in a glimpse of the divine nature itself." Immediately after this sentence he quotes book 7 chapter 10 of the *Confessions*, relating to the reader the first version, cited above, of the *ut viderem esse* line. According to MacDonald chapter 10 must be understood as an account of a vision of Being for three additional

<sup>15</sup> *Encounters with God in Augustine's Confessions*, p. 44.

<sup>16</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, pp. 86-87, n. 4. It is important to note that Courcelle and Henry hold a version of this argument. They differ from MacDonald in that they are not committed to the strong reading of the *viderem esse* line that he advances.

<sup>17</sup> *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, p. 167.

<sup>18</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, pp. 86-87, n. 4.



reasons.<sup>19</sup> First, he argues that the translation which holds that Augustine has a vision of "Something" does not capture Augustine's own thoughts concerning the experience, for, describing this vision, Augustine says things such as, "I first came to know *You*," and, afterward, "I was loving *You*," and, "a memory of *You* remained in me." MacDonald claims that if one accepts the second reading of the *ut viderem esse* line, these claims become unjustified, for, "if Augustine has come to know and love the true God as a result of this event, he must have seen more than merely that there was *something* [emphasis added] to be seen – he must have seen *what* it was he was seeing."<sup>20</sup> Second, Augustine goes on to say that he is *nondum esse*, "not yet Being," a phrase, claims MacDonald, that is often intentionally mistranslated, but which certainly reads "not yet Being." This statement, claims MacDonald, would make no sense unless Augustine intended to draw a contrast between God's nature as Being (*esse*) and Augustine's nature as that which is not yet Being (*esse*.) Finally, MacDonald holds that the second reading fails to connect with the chapter that immediately follows it, chapter 11, where Augustine says, "I turned my gaze to the other things below you (*inspexi cetera infra te*) and saw that they are neither entirely being nor entirely non-being."<sup>21</sup> The second interpretation of the *ut viderem esse* line would not convey Augustine's principal philosophical point clearly articulated in chapter 11, again, the chapter immediately following the vision chapter, for here he relates that all beings are dependent upon Being Itself. In other words, according to MacDonald, in chapter 11 Augustine applies to creation the point that his vision of God as Being has made clear to him in chapter 10.

Given the premises that Carey, O'Donnell, Vought, and MacDonald start with their four conclusions are only natural, but a more fundamental way of reading the passage is possible. Before this is shown, however, it must be seen that these four readings don't allow for a coherent account of Augustine's experience, for several contradictions surface when one attempts to read the chapter as either a Neo-Platonic inspired mystical vision or as a rational argument based on the transcendental proof.

Consider first the claim that the passage describes an experience beyond reason. The first inconsistency involves Augustine's use of the phrase, "not yet Being." Such language explicitly opposes the

<sup>19</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, pp. 86-87, n. 4.

<sup>20</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, pp. 86-87, n. 4.

<sup>21</sup> *Confessions*: 7.11.17.



idea that Augustine had a mystical vision, for Plotinus maintains that mystical visions amount to an absolute assimilation of the soul with the One: in such a state there is no distinction between the soul and the ultimate principle because the soul's identity is "absorbed," for lack of a better term, into the One.<sup>22</sup> If this had been an authentic Neo-Platonic ascent Augustine would not have claimed that he could see that he was "not yet Being." Second, and most importantly, this cannot be the account of a mystical vision because, immediately after the vision passage, Augustine claims that his insight was the conclusion of a rational process, for he says that he came to know the truth, "from the things that are made," a quotation of *Romans*: 1:20.<sup>23</sup> Now, in the account of his insight that God is Being Augustine claims that God raised him up in order to see either *esse* or "Something," and that he, who saw, was "not yet Being" or "not yet able to see." But, no matter how one reads this line, if this is the account of a mystical vision then it cannot be the account of Augustine's grasping truth "from the things that are made," for then the truth that God is Being would not be inferred but "seen" in *The Thing* (i.e. God) that is unmade. That is, the account given in chapter 10, if it were to be a mystical vision, would communicate to Augustine immediately that God is Being and that Augustine receives his being from God: this would not be knowledge received through a created reality, and therefore *Romans* 1:20 would have been quoted in vain. Augustine would be moving from the cause to its effect, not from an effect to its cause, and Augustine certainly understands Saint Paul to mean the latter. Nor can one say that Augustine experienced God's immediate presence, and then, at a subsequent time after the withdrawal of God's immediate presence, formed a concept of this reality, a concept of Being, and, after that, inferred that he was not Being and required a cause for his being. This is not possible because it is clear that there are not two separate experiences related in chapter 10. There is only one. In other words, if Augustine was to have had a purely mystical experience of God's presence in this passage he would then require a second experience in which he confirmed God's existence purely through rational inference prior to his claim that God can be known from the things that are made. However, there is no second experience made before this claim. Therefore, Vaught and MacDonald's positions can be set aside for the experience Augustine describes is not a mystical one.

<sup>22</sup> B. Switalski, *The Neoplatonic Ethics of Saint Augustine*, (New York: Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, 1946).

<sup>23</sup> See, *City of God*: 8.6 and 22.29



Incredibly, neither is it possible for the vision passage to be an account of a rational argument for God's existence based on Augustine's famous internal ascent to Truth. Simply, this argument does not harmonize with rigorous analysis, for the language of ontological dependence used in describing Augustine's relationship to what he saw takes on a much stronger and more central role than would be found in an argument based on the *De Libero Arbitrio*. Again, what is meant by an ascent to Truth is a demonstration for God's existence and nature as found in book 2 of the *De Libero Arbitrio*. According to this theory the individual mind participates in the mind of God, the unchanging and eternal exemplars that are the patterns of all changing and temporal things. One uses a meditative ascent that is meant to clear from one's mind those images, impressions, and ideas that prevent one from seeing the mind's self-evident participation in Truth itself. Augustine, however, cannot be understood to be referring to a demonstration for God's existence based on such an argument. This is clear from his use of the verb *facere* in the lines that precede the vision, for here Augustine uses the verb *facere* in order to designate a relationship of ontological dependence: "It was superior because it made me (*fecit me*), and I was inferior because I was made by it (*factus ab ea*)."<sup>24</sup> This relationship is totally alien to the context of the *De Libero Arbitrio* argument, but is often used by Augustine in the context of existential dependence.<sup>24</sup> This is not to say that Augustine does not

<sup>24</sup> The verb *facere* is not used in Augustine's demonstration from Truth in the *De Libero Arbitrio*: 2.15, or in *Confessions*: 7.17.23. It is, however, often used within the context of Augustine's "existential" proofs for God's existence or passages in which he is discussing the dependence of beings on Being. There are several instances of the latter, for example, *De Civitate Dei*: 8.6, *Confessions*: 11.4.6. In the latter Augustine says, "See, heaven and earth exist, they cry aloud that they are made, for they suffer change and variation. But in anything which is not made and yet is, there is nothing which previously was not present. To be what once was not the case is to be the subject to change and variation. They also cry aloud that they have not made themselves: 'The manner of our existence shows that we are made, for before we came to be, we did not exist to be able to make ourselves.' And the voice with which they speak is self-evidence. You, Lord, who are beautiful, made them for they are beautiful. You are good, for they are good. You are, for they are. Yet they are not beautiful or good or possessed of being in the sense that you their maker are. In comparison with you they are deficient in beauty and goodness and being. We know this – thanks to you – and yet our knowledge is ignorance in comparison with yours." The latin reads, *Ecce sunt caelum et terra, clamant, quod facta sint; mutantur enim atque variantur. Quidquid autem factum non est et tamen est, non est in eo quidquam, quod ante non erat: quod est mutari atque variari. Clamant etiam, quod se ipsa non fecerint: 'Ideo sumus, quia facta sumus; non ergo eramus, antequam essemus, ut fieri possemus a nobis'. Et vox dicentium est ipsa evidetia. Tu ergo, Domine, fecisti ea, qui pulcher es: pulchra sunt enim; qui bonus es: bona sunt enim; qui es: sunt enim. Nec ita*



have a secondary demonstration for God's existence based on such a proof, but simply that such a demonstration is not at work in this passage.<sup>25</sup>

So as is clear from *Romans* 1:20, Augustine cannot be understood as giving the account of a mystical vision, and therefore Vaught and MacDonald's position is found to be deficient, but, neither can it be said that the argument based on the transcendence of Truth is at work here because such a proof is not grounded in a relationship of ontological dependence, while the argument in book 10 certainly does. Therefore, this passage presents the reader with a seemingly insurmountable paradox: it explicitly states it is not the account of a mystical vision yet it does not relate what scholars believe is Augustine's most trusted argument for God's existence. In what way then does Augustine come to knowledge of God's ultimate nature?

## 2. The philosophy of *Acts* 17:28

The phrase "in Him we live and move and are" found in *Acts* 17:28 is borrowed by Paul from a 6<sup>th</sup> century Greek poet named Epimenides and it occurs 33 times in the Augustinian corpus.<sup>26</sup> One of

pulchra sunt nec ita bona sunt nec ita sunt, sicut tu Conditor eorum, quo comparato nec pulchra sunt nec bona sunt nec sunt. Scimus haec, gratias tibi, et scientia nostra scientiae tuae comparata ignorantia est.

<sup>25</sup> There is a second way of reading the *De Libero Arbitrio* argument. The second way is based on the movement from immutable truth to Truth Itself. This reading of the *De Libero* holds that the immutable and eternal truths grasped by the mind are not Truth Itself; truths that are not Truth Itself however require an eternal sustainer: therefore all truth must have a ground in Truth itself. However, neither form of the *De Libero Arbitrio* argument can be at work in book 7 chapter 10. More specifically, second version cannot be implemented in chapter 10 because there is no intermediary between Augustine's mind and what he sees. That is, the text explicitly says that Augustine moves from his mind to that which transcends it: there is no account of a move from his mind to truth, and from truth to Truth Itself. Thus, it is certain that Augustine gives a description of the existential proof.

<sup>26</sup> These 33 occurrences may be found in the following texts: *Epistulae* 140 and 187; *De Genesi ad Litteram*: 4.12 (2), 4.18, 5.16; *Quaestionum in Heptateuchum*: 4.42; *Expositio Quarundam Propositionum ex Epistula ad Romanos*: 3; *Enarrationes in Psalmos*: 34.2.6, 99.5, 137.2; *Sermones*: 7, 68 (2), 171, 362, 369, 198; *De Civitate Dei*: 8.10; *Contra Ad Versarium Legis et Prophetarum*: 2; *De Trinitate*: 4.1, 4.17, 8.3, 14.12(2); *Contra Litteras Petiliani*: 2.30.69; *De Unico Baptismo*: 4.6 (2); *Contra Gaudentium*: 2.10.11; *Contra Julianum*: 3.56; *Contra Maximinum*: 1.12; *Contra Sermonem*; *Arianorum*: 30. The preceding passages have been identified with the aid of the *Cetedoc Library of Christian Latin Texts (CLCLT)*, ed. P. tombeur. Turnhout: Brepols, 1991. For articles concerning *Acts* 17:28 see: Francois Chatillon, "Quidam secundum eos": Note d'exégèse augustinienne (*Conf.*, 7, ix, 15), dans *Revue*



these occurrences is found in *Confessions* book 7 chapter 9, and understanding Augustine's use of *Acts* 17:28 in this chapter is essential for the correct reading of *Confessions* book 7 chapter 10. But before chapter 9 can be analyzed, one must first understand how Augustine interprets this passage in general. More specifically, study of this passage will reveal that Augustine understands *Acts* 17:28 to refer to an axiom that reveals one's ability to attain knowledge of God as He Who is by way of natural reason.

The metaphysical core of *Acts* 17:28 is interpreted literally by Augustine only once, and this interpretation is found in his work *De Genesi ad Litteram* in a passage that concerns the manner in which one is to understand Scripture's claim that God rested on the seventh day of creation. According to Augustine there are at least two different ways to understand God's rest on the seventh day. The first is as a type of pre-figurement of the spiritual rest that God's people were going to experience through Christ, a rest which is to be had prior to Christ by imitating God's model of inactivity on the seventh day. The second is to see it as referring to His having rested from making any new types of creatures. Augustine qualifies this latter form of rest by noting that, although no new creatures were made, God continued to conserve the existence of the things he had already made:

It is the creator's power, after all, and the virtuosity, the skill and tenacity of the almighty, that causes every created thing to subsist. If this tenacious virtuosity ceased for one moment to rule and direct the things that have been created, their various species would at once cease to exist, and every nature would collapse into nothingness...

Indeed, the very expression employed by the Lord, *My Father is working until now*, points to the continuousness of his work, by which he holds together and manages the whole of creation. It could, you see, have been understood differently if he had said, "and is now working," here we would not have to take the work as being continuous. But by saying *until now*, he forces us to understand it in the other sense, that is, as meaning from the time when he had worked at the original establishment of all things. And then there is what is written about his Wisdom: *She reaches from end to end mightily, and arranges all things sweetly* (*Wisdom* 8:1) about whom

*du moyen âge latin*, 1, 1945, pp. 287-304; Pierre Courcelle, *Un vers d'Epiménide dans le "Discours sur l'Aréopage"*, dans *"Revue des études grecques"*, 76, 1963, pp. 404-414; G. Folliet, *Les Citations de Actes 17,28 et Tite I, 12 Chez Augustin*, dans *Revue des études augustinienne*s, 11, 1965, pp. 293-295.



it is also written that her movement is swifter and more nimble than all movements...

And then there is what the apostle said when he was proclaiming God to the Athenians, that *in him we live and move and are* (Acts 17: 28); interpreted straightforwardly, to the extent of the human mind's capacity, it will support this conviction which makes us believe and say that God is ceaselessly at work in the things he has created. We are not in him, I mean to say, like his substance, in the way it is said that *he has life in himself* (John 5:26); but evidently, since we are something different from him, we are only in him because he is working at this, and this is his work by which he holds all things together, and by which his Wisdom *reaches from end to end mightily and arranges all things sweetly*, and it is by this arrangement that "in him we live and move and are." From this the conclusion follows that if he withdraws this work from things, we will neither live nor move nor be.<sup>27</sup>

According to Augustine, Acts 17:28 and Wisdom 8:1 signify God's continuous creative action, and, as is clear from the language he uses to illuminate this passage, Augustine understands Acts 17:28 to be pregnant with the most fundamental theme of metaphysics, the tension between being and non-being, for God actively sustains creatures by giving them being and by preventing them from collapse into non-being. What establishes this reading for Augustine is Paul's use

<sup>27</sup> *De Genesi ad Litteram*: 4.12.22-23: Creatoris namque potentia, et omnipotentis atque omnitenentis virtus, causa subsistendi est omni creaturae: quae virtus ab eis quae creata sunt regendis, si aliquando cessaret, simul et illorum cessaret species, omnisque natura concideret... Proinde et quod Dominus ait: *Pater meus usque nunc operatur*, continuationem quamdam operis eius, qua universam creaturam continet atque administrat, ostendit. Aliter enim posset intellegi si diceret: Et nunc operatur, ubi non esset necesse ut operis continuationem acciperemus: aliter autem cogit intellegi cum ait: *Usque nunc*, ex illo scilicet quo cuncta cum conderet operatus est. Et quod scriptum est de sapientia eius: *Pertingit a fine usque ad finem fortiter, et disponit omnia suaviter*; de qua item scriptum est, quod *motus eius agilior celeriorque sit omnibus*... Et illud quod ait Apostolus cum Deum Atheniensibus praedicaret. *In illo vivimus, et movemur et sumus*, liquide cogitatum quantum humana mens valet, adiuvat hanc sententiam, qua credimus et dicimus Deum in iis quae creavit, indesinenter operari. Neque enim tamquam substantia eius sic in illo sumus, quemadmodum dictum est, quod habeat vitam in semetipso: sed utique cum aliud sumus quam ipse, non ob aliud in illo sumus, nisi quia id operatur, et hoc est opus eius, quo continet omnia, et quo eius *sapientia pertendit a fine usque ad finem fortiter, et disponit omnia suaviter*; per quam dispositionem *in illo vivimus, et movemur, et sumus*. Unde colligitur quod si hoc opus suum rebus subtraxerit, nec vivemus, nec movebimur, nec erimus. The English translation used above was taken from *On Genesis: A Refutation of the Manichees/Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis/The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, ed. J. Rotelle, trans. E. Hill (Hyde-Park: New City Press, 2002).



of *summus*. Because of God we *are*, as opposed to not. Therefore, *summus* demonstrates that the phrase refers to a form of ontological dependence in which one receives the totality of what one is, the totality of one's being, from God.

Due to the ontological primacy of the concepts Augustine finds latent in this passage, it should come as no surprise that several books later he develops the full implications of this insight in a passage concerning the immutable and eternal nature of the divine exemplars, and in this passage, *De Genesi ad Litteram* 5.16, Augustine clearly indicates that he holds the phrase "in Him we live and move and are" to refer to rational knowledge of God as Being reached through reflection on one's ontological dependence:

So then, that eternal and unchangeable nature, which God is, having in itself to be, just as Moses was told: "I am who am" (*Exodus* 3:14), is totally different from those things which have been made. Only that, you see, really and truly and primordially is, which always is in the same way, and not only never changes but is absolutely incapable of changing. So without bringing into existence yet any of the things which he made, he has all things primordially in himself in the same manner as he is. After all, he would not make them unless he knew them before he made them; nor would he know them unless he had them with him; and he would not have with him things that had not yet been made except in the manner in which he himself is not made.

So what I am saying is that although that substance is inexpressible and can only be presented by one human being to another in words taken over from space and time, though it is before all times and places, still for all that the one who made is nearer to us than the many things which he made, "for in him we live and move and are," while most of these things are removed from the human mind on account of their dissimilarity in kind, being corporeal.

Nor is our human mind capable of seeing them where they are with God, in the formulae according to which they were made, so that in this way we might know how many, how great and of what sort they are, even though we do not see them with the senses of the body. The fact is they are remote from our bodily senses, being so far away, or cut off from our observation and activity by the interposition of other bodies. The result is that it is much harder work to find out about them than about the one by whom they were made, and furthermore it is incomparably more satisfying and worthwhile for the devout mind to come into the slightest contact with him, than for it to comprehend the whole universe. So how right the book of Wisdom is to find fault with the investigators of this world and age! "For if they were capable," it says, "of so much that they could appraise and weigh up the world,



how is it that they did not more easily find its Lord?" (*Wisdom* 13:9.) The foundations of the earth, after all, are inaccessible to our eyes, and [yet] the one who laid the earth's foundations draws near to our minds.<sup>28</sup>

In the above *Acts* 17:28 is interpreted as an axiom used to reach the conclusion that God is more easily known, that is, "near to us," than the things that are made. This is clear from the relationship between the second and first paragraph. The second paragraph is a commentary on the first, and what Augustine is saying in the second paragraph is that it is easier to know God as He is described in the first paragraph, as Being (*Ego sum qui sum*), than it is to know material things due to *Acts* 17:28: therefore *Acts* 17:28 leads to knowledge of God as Being. The argument takes the form of a "reversed" syllogism. As with all reversed syllogisms the conclusion is stated first, "He who makes is nearer to us than the things that are made," followed by the second premise, "in Him we live and move and are." Augustine then indicates what one is to draw from *Acts* 17:28 in order to reach this conclusion by opposing it to the first premise he uses in the argument, a premise which explicitly contrasts its content: "*while most of these things are remote from the human mind on account of their dissimilarity in kind, being corporeal.*" This line is meant to designate the opposite of *Acts* 17:28, and therefore if one

<sup>28</sup> *De Genesi ad Litteram*: 5.16.34: Quamvis ergo illa aeterna incommutabilisque natura, quod Deus est, habens in se ut sit, sicut Moysi dictum est: *Ego sum qui sum*; longe scilicet aliter quam sunt ista quae facta sunt: quoniam illud vere ac primitus est, quod eodem modo semper est, nec solum non commutatur, sed commutari omnino non potest; nihil horum quae fecit existens, et omnia primitus habens, sicut ipse est: neque enim ea faceret, nisi ea nosset antequam faceret; nec nosset, nisi videret; nec videret, nisi haberet; nec haberet ea quae nondum facta erant, nisi quemadmodum est ipse non factus: quamvis, inquam, illa substantia ineffabilis sit, nec dici utcumque homini per hominem possit, nisi usurpatis quibusdam locorum ac temporum verbis, cum sit ante omnia tempora et ante omnes locos; tamen propinquior nobis est qui fecit, quam multa quae facta sunt. *In illo enim vivimus, et movemur, et sumus*: istorum autem pleraque remota sunt a mente nostra propter dissimilitudinem sui generis, quoniam corporalia sunt; nec idonea est ipsa mens nostra, in ipsi rationibus quibus facta sunt, ea videre apud Deum, ut per hoc sciamus quot et quanta qualiaque sint, etiamsi non ea videamus per corporis sensus. Remota quippe sunt a sensibus corporis nostri, quoniam longe sunt, vel interpositis aut oppositis aliis a nostro contuitu actuque separantur. Ex quo fit ut maior ad illa inveniendae sit labor, quam ad illum a quo facta sunt, cum sit incomparabili felicitate praestantius illum ex quantalacumque particula pia mente sentire, quam illa universa comprehendere. Unde recte culpantur in libro Sapientiae inquisitores huius saeculi: *Si enim tantum, inquit, potuerunt valere, ut possent aestimare saeculum; quomodo eius Dominum non facilius invenerunt?* Ignota enim sunt fundamenta terrae oculis nostris, et qui fundavit terram, propinquat mentibus nostris.



inverts its meaning one arrives at Augustine's understanding of *Acts* 17:28 in this context. His argument may be expressed more clearly as follows:

1. Material things are not easily known.
2. God is easily known (*Acts* 17:28).
3. Therefore God is more easily known than material things.<sup>29</sup>

According to Augustine if one understands the full implications of *Acts* 17:28 one will see how the second premise used in the argument above can be generated from it. More precisely, Augustine is able to derive the premise "God is easily known" from *Acts* 17:28 because he interprets his description of God's nature in the first paragraph as an insight that follows from *Acts* 17:28 considered as an axiom that reveals God's existence and nature immediately upon the definition of its terms:

1. Created being is not the cause of its own being.
2. Uncreated Being is the cause of its own being.
3. Therefore created beings receive their being from uncreated Being or "In Him we live and move and are".

From the argument above, it is clear that the premise needed to establish his conclusion in the second paragraph follows from *Acts* 17:28, for it demonstrates that knowledge of God is easily attained and that God is immaterial.<sup>30</sup> It is certain that Augustine intends *Acts* 17:28 to refer to *rational* knowledge due to the quotation from the book of *Wisdom* in the third paragraph which says, "If they could know so much that they could speculate about the universe, how did they not more easily discover the Lord of this world and its Creator?" This quote from *Wisdom* repeatedly signifies rational knowledge for Augustine.<sup>31</sup> In addition, because the phrase refers to *rational knowledge of God as Being itself reached by way of reflection on one's ontological dependence* one must conclude that Augustine is describing the use of the existential argument here, for, as was mentioned previously, the transcendental proof argues for God's nature by showing the mind something qualitatively superior than itself and not

<sup>29</sup> Or "Most of these things are remote from the human mind because they are corporeal", but "In Him we live and move and are": therefore, "He who makes is nearer to us than the things that are made".

<sup>30</sup> i.e. He Who *is* is unchanging and what is unchanging is non-material.

<sup>31</sup> See Augustine's *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 3.3.



through reflection on its contingency. That is, analysis of this axiom demonstrates that God can be known as He Who *is* by way of natural reason, a conclusion that is grounded in Augustine's most basic interpretation of the scriptural passage given earlier in book 4, reflection on creation's ontological dependence. It is only by reading *Acts* 17:28 in this manner that one can explain the conclusion reached in the second paragraph quoted above.

*Acts* 17:28 is explicitly associated with knowledge of Being attained through reflection on one's ontological dependence in at least 3 other places. The first occurs in book 8 chapter 3 of *De Trinitate* in a passage which concerns the nature of the Good. Here Augustine begins his description of the Good by reflecting on the various experiences one has of predicating goodness of things. For example, when one says that "Food is good" it is because it is "conducive to health," and when one says that a "Farm is good" it is because it is "pleasant and fertile." Augustine claims that if one takes away the subject of the statement "x is good," one will see that which is "Goodness Itself," the Good of every other good. According to Augustine, one would not be able to make value based predicative statements if the idea of the Good Itself had not been impressed on one. This is because the Good is not that which one judges but that by which one judges, and therefore the true object which one loves, the true object that one values. Augustine attempts to clarify his position with the example of a "good soul." He explains that he understands two concepts when he hears these two words: one by which the object spoken about is a "soul," and one by which it is "good." These must be separate, says Augustine, because, "certainly the soul itself had nothing to do with making itself a soul, for at that time it was not, so that it could not bring about its own being." Augustine continues, this time giving a more properly philosophical account of the relationship that he is trying to explain. He begins by stating the Platonic axiom that holds that "there are no changeable goods without an unchangeable Good." It follows from this that when one sees goods that are not good in all respects one understands the Good Itself simultaneously for these goods are good by participation in the Good Itself. In other words, if one strips away from one's mind the goods that are good by Goodness one will see that which is absolute Goodness. Therefore, one should love goods for the sake of the Good Itself and the one who loves goods for their own sake is foolish. Augustine then qualifies this position, for, even though goods are loved only for the sake of the ultimate Good, the soul that properly understands itself may love itself insofar as it understands itself in the "Art" in which it was made: that is, one does



not love the soul itself because of itself, but because in it one sees the eternal archetype in which it was made. This archetype is "the Truth and the simple Good." Augustine then attempts to clarify his understanding of this Platonic axiom by rearticulating his argument in other terms, and it is here that *Acts* 17:28 contributes to his account of one's knowledge of the Good. Augustine begins his attempt to illuminate his previous line of reasoning by noting that in order to be good the soul turns to the Good it owes for being a soul:

In order to be good therefore, the soul turns to this Good to which it is also indebted for being a soul. Hence, the will then works in harmony with nature when, in order that the soul may be perfected in good, that Good is loved by the will turning to it, from which that other good also comes that is not lost even by the turning away of the will. For by turning away from the Supreme Good, the soul ceases to be a good soul, but it does not cease to be a soul, and even as such it is already a better good than the body. The will, therefore, loses that which the will acquires. For there already was a soul that could wish to be turned to that from which it was, but there wasn't yet a soul that could wish to be before it was. And this is our Good, when we see that it [the soul] owes or has owed being we comprehend whatever has or had to be, and when we see that it [the soul] could not be unless it owed being we do not in anyway comprehend whatever had to be. Therefore this Good is not far from anyone of us, for "In Him we live and move and have our being."<sup>32</sup>

Here again one sees the basic metaphysical theme of being and non-being. The Good is that which gives being: "the Good is loved by the will turning to it, from which that other good also comes that is not lost even by the turning away of the will" for "by turning away from the supreme Good...the soul does not cease to be a soul." By turning away from its source the soul does not lose its being but the

<sup>32</sup> *De Trinitate*: 8.2.5: Ad hoc se igitur animus convertit ut bonus sit, a quo habet ut animus sit. Tunc ergo voluntas naturae congruit ut perficiatur in bono animus, cum illud bonum diligitur conversione voluntatis, unde est et illud quod non amittitur nec aversione voluntatis. Avertendo enim se a summo Bono, amittit animus ut sit bonus animus; non autem amittit ut sit animus, cum et hoc iam bonum sit corpore melius; hoc ergo amittit voluntas quod voluntas adipiscitur. Iam enim erat animus, qui converti ad id vellet a quo erat; qui autem vellet esse antequam esset nondum erat. Et hoc est bonum nostrum, ubi videmus utrum esse debuerit aut debeat, quidquid esse debuisset aut debere comprehendimus, et ubi videmus esse non potuisse nisi esse debuisset, quidquid etiam quomodo esse debuerit non comprehendimus. Hoc ergo bonum non longe positum est ab unoquoque nostrum: In illo enim vivimus, et movemur, et sumus. The English translation found above is mine made with the aid of Edmund Hill's translation. See, *The Trinity*, (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1996).



Good Itself: "The will therefore loses that which the will acquires." The reason it must be the Good Itself that is lost is that the soul loves the Good Itself but is not the Good Itself: "for there already was a soul that could wish to be turned to that from which it was but there wasn't yet a soul that could wish to be before it was." This is merely the reapplication of the principle articulated earlier in the chapter which holds that a thing cannot bring about its own being. Finally, this rather cryptic manner of revealing the soul's relationship with its source is then explicitly given content in the second to the last line: "This then is our Good, when we see that it [the soul] owes or has owed being we comprehend whatever has or had to be, and when we see that it [the soul] could not be unless it owed being we do not in anyway comprehend whatever had to be." A point must be made regarding the correct English rendering of, *et hoc est bonum nostrum, ubi videmus utrum esse debuerit aut debeat, quidquid esse debuisset aut debere comprehendimus, et ubi videmus esse non potuisse nisi esse debuisset, quidquid etiam quomodo esse debuerit non comprehendimus*. The latin expression *debere esse* is typically rendered "ought to be," and so, for example, the McKenna translation reads: "And this is our good, wherein we see whether the thing ought to have been or ought to be, insofar as we comprehend whatever ought to have been or ought to be; and wherein we see that the thing could not have been, unless it ought to have been, although at the same time we do not even comprehend in what manner it ought to have been."<sup>33</sup> There are, however, several deficiencies that surface if this reading is accepted, a point that becomes clear when one considers what *must* be present in these lines simply by virtue of their context. First, due to the presence of *ergo* in the final line, knowledge of God must be understood as a conclusion that follows from the lines that preceded it; but what exists in the conclusion must pre-exist in the premises, and therefore the *Et hoc est bonum nostrum* line must be understood as the initial part of an argument that refers, in some manner, to the nature of the Good. Second, the theme of ontological dependence is so strong in chapters 4 and 5 that it is certain that Augustine intends to focus on the fact that finite beings owe their being to God, an observation he makes in the *De Libero Arbitrio* with the use of *debere* reflected in the translation offered here.<sup>34</sup> This is clear from the fact that the theme of ontological

<sup>33</sup> *On the Trinity*, trans. Stephen McKenna, ed. Gareth B. Matthews, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>34</sup> See for example *De Libero Arbitrio* 3.15.32, "Thus temporal things do as much as was given them to do, and they repay their debt to God, to whom they owe the fact



dependence is mentioned at least 6 times, for example, the reference to a good's participation in Goodness, the need for an unchanging principle to sustain any changing thing, the dependence of a mutable form on an eternal archetype, and the notion that the Good gives the soul being, to name the most obvious instances. Third, it must be the case that whatever insight is conveyed in the first clause is mirrored in the second due to the repetition of *ubi*, *videmus*, *debere*, *quidquid*, and *comprehendimus*. It is precisely these three points that are not met by the McKenna translation. That is, if we accept the necessity of finding a reference to the Good in the *Et hoc est bonum nostrum* line it is unclear what manner the phrase "whatever ought to be" would describe this Good, if in fact it was even intended to do so; if one does not read the *Et hoc est bonum nostrum* as referring to the Good then the use of *ergo* and the nature of the final line as a conclusion are left unexplained. Second, it is clear that the theme of ontological dependence reflected in chapters 4 and 5, as well as *Acts* 17:28 itself would also be left totally unexplained in the McKenna translation. Finally, if McKenna is referring to the Good with the phrase "whatever ought to be" he does not parallel this reference in the final clause, and therefore the intended symmetry between the two clauses would be broken. Simply, Augustine uses *Acts* 17:28 to signify the soul's radical ontological dependence on its cause, a dependence grasped by natural reason, a fact that is clear from the Platonic language and Augustine's description of the soul's relationship to its ultimate cause. With regard to the phrase *quidquid esse debere* itself Augustine merely wishes to point out that something had to be in order for the soul to owe being (i.e. to give being to the soul), an insight that is reflected in the irony of the two senses of *debere esse* which is revealed in what is essentially a play on words.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, according to Augustine, to see that one owes one's being does not mean that one will understand *how* whatever had to be had to be: simply, one will not fully grasp what one sees.<sup>36</sup> Further, as the dependent nature of the soul illustrates, something that participates in being needs a cause that does not

that they exist in whatever degree they exist" (*Quantum enim acceperunt, tantum agunt, et tantum reddunt ei cui debent quod sunt in quantumcumque sunt*), and 3.16.45, "Therefore, all creatures owe something to God. First, they owe him whatever they are insofar as they are natures" (*Omnia ergo illi debent, primo quidquid sunt, in quantum naturae sunt*).

<sup>35</sup> In the irony of the two possible uses of the verb one can see the necessary metaphysical connection between contingency (owing) and necessity (having to).

<sup>36</sup> This reading is confirmed by the fact that it is precisely the theme of God's incomprehensibility that begins the chapter that follows.



participate in being because it is itself Being. In highlighting this insight Augustine is merely returning to a theme that he begins in chapter 1 of *De Trinitate* and with which he touches on repeatedly throughout the text, for God's nature as He Who *is* is one of the key interpretive tools he uses to describe the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity. Finally, it should be noted that the methods of demonstration touched on before the final argument function as analogs for the nature of the ultimate and more fundamental argument reflected in the final line. That is, when he takes up the theme of the soul's being in the final paragraph with phrases such as "the soul could will that from which it was but there wasn't yet a soul that could will to be before it was," Augustine elevates the argument to the existential level.

Augustine addresses the meaning of *Acts* 17:28 again later in the *De Trinitate*. The theme of *De Trinitate* 14.15 concerns the human mind's ability to always remember, understand, and love itself, and, according to Augustine the mind's love for itself is so strong that even when it is immersed in the love of material goods it loves itself more. He uses the example of a man confronted with the choice of loosing either his mind or his sight, and he argues that such a man would clearly choose to loose his sight, even though it is the highest of physical powers, because without his mind he would be a mere animal. He goes on to explain that the mind could not love itself if it did not know itself, and this ability of the soul to know and love itself is significant for Augustine because the human mind is made in the image of God, and therefore, in loving itself, the mind also manifests its love of God. Further, Augustine claims that the image of God that is the soul of man has the power to "cleave" to its Creator, and when it finally cleaves to Him in its destined state of eternal bliss everything that it sees will be "unchangeable." In the soul's present fallen state it can in no way see the unchangeable Good. According to Augustine, this is clear from the fact that the soul is unhappy, but yet desires to be happy. This could not be the case if the soul could see the unchangeable good, that is, it could not be changed from a state of unhappiness to happiness. Further, Augustine claims that the soul cannot even remember what it is like to be happy. It can only believe in the tradition passed on to it by the prophets concerning Adam's original state in the temporal bliss of paradise. Interestingly, although it cannot remember this state of original bliss but it can remember its Creator:

The mind does however remember its God. He always is; it is not the case that he was and is not, or is and was not, but just as he never will not be, so he never was not. And he is all of him everywhere, and



therefore *in Him it lives and moves and is* [emphasis added], and for this reason is able to remember Him.<sup>37</sup>

Here again Augustine links *Acts* 17:28 with Being (*est*) in order to indicate knowledge of God reached via the insight that one is ontologically dependent. It is important to note that this account of the soul's ability to remember its creator is the conclusion of a theme set forth at the end of chapter 12 where Augustine makes an explicit reference to *Acts* 17:28 and comments on the paradox it sets forth: namely, that one cannot be without Him in whom one is, and yet, if one does not remember, understand and love Him, one is *not* with Him in whom one is. This paradox is resolved, as one can see in the above, when one realizes that one truly is (exists) not just by being but by imitating (remembering, understanding, and loving) Being Itself. Although there is a change in person and number it is clear that Augustine understands the two formulations to convey the identical philosophical point. In other words, in the above, *Acts* 17:28 is slightly adapted in order to highlight the soul's dependence on God, but the terms and meaning are identical to the original formulation. With regard to the line of argumentation itself, Augustine holds that due to the fact that the soul lives, and moves, and is in God it is possible to remember Him, for the soul has a notion of the Divine impressed on it that is revealed through rational reflection on one's contingency. This is possible because God is everywhere. He is everywhere in the sense that he cannot be reduced to a finite interval of time, (either past, present or future), or place: He *is*. The soul, however, which is finite, is and is not: therefore the soul is (exists) through God because God always is. It is worth nothing that this reading is supported by the manner and context in which *Acts* 17:28 was used in chapter 8, treated above, where Augustine pointed out that "the soul had nothing to do with making itself a soul, for at that time it was not, so that it could not bring about its own being." Again, the crucial notion is that the soul had a beginning, a bringing into being, which requires a source that had no beginning, a source that can give being because it always is, and it is precisely this understanding of God that underlies Augustine's line of reasoning in chapter 8. Ultimately, no matter how this example of *Acts* 17:28 is supported by the reading offered in chapter 8, it is important to note that the above passage clearly stands by itself, that is, separate from any other textual evidence, as a paradigmatic example of Augustine's use of the phrase.

<sup>37</sup> *De Trinitate* 14.15.21: Ille quippe semper est, nec fuit et non est, nec est et non fuit, sed sicut numquam non erit ita numquam non erat. Et ubique totus est, propter quod ista in illo et vivit et movetur et est, et ideo eius reminisci potest.



Finally, *Acts* 17:28 is treated again in a sermon on *Exodus*. Here Augustine wishes to explain the meaning of God's self given name "I am who am:"

So now the angel, and in the angel the Lord, was saying to Moses when he asked his name, *I AM WHO AM; this is what you shall say to the children of Israel: He who is has sent me to you (Exodus 3:14)*. "Is" is a name for the unchanging. Everything that changes ceases to be what it was and begins to be what it was not. "Is" is. True "is", genuine "is", real "is", belongs only to one who does not change... If in any way at all we are able to seek God and track down Him Who is – and indeed He is hidden *not far from each one of us; for in him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:27-28)* – let us then praise, though we cannot find words for it, his being and love his mercy. Amen.<sup>38</sup>

In the above Augustine claims that one is able to "seek God and track down Him Who is" (*Eum qui est*), that is, know Him, due to *Acts* 17:28. Simply, as in *De Genesi ad Litteram* and *De Trinitate*, reflection on the relationship of ontological dependence seen in *Acts* 17:28 leads one to knowledge of God's ultimate nature.

The above survey of Augustine's use of *Acts* 17:28 is significant for, again, it establishes that it leads to rational knowledge of God as Being by way of reflection on one's ontological dependence. Further, because it leads to rational knowledge of God as Being by way of reflection on one's ontological dependence as does the existential argument and because there are no known alternative arguments that use this relationship, *Acts* 17:28 must, therefore, refer to an insight generated by the existential proof. Again, *Acts* 17:28 cannot be interpreted as a reference to the *De Libero Arbitrio* argument for two principle reasons. First, of the 33 times it is used by Augustine, the movement from reflection upon one's ontological dependence to the insight that God is He Who is is never mediated by truth. Second, as was argued earlier, the argument from Truth is not rooted in the notion of

<sup>38</sup> *Sermones* 7.7: *Iam ergo angelus, et in angelo Dominus dicebat Moysi quaerenti nomen suum: Ego sum qui sum. Haec dices filiis Israel: Qui est misit me ad vos. Esse nomen est incommutabilitatis. Omnia enim quae mutantur desinunt esse quod erant et incipiunt esse quod non erant. Esse est. Verum esse, sincerum esse, germanum esse non habet nisi qui non mutatur. Ille habet esse verum cui dicitur: Mutabis ea et mutabuntur, tu autem idem ipse es. Quid est: Ego sum qui sum, nisi, aeternus sum? Quid est, Ego sum qui sum, nisi, qui mutari non possum... Si quo modo possimus Deum quaerere et investigare eum qui est, et quidem non longe positum ab unoquoque nostrum: In illo enim vivimus et movemur et sumus; laudamus ergo ineffabiliter eius essentiam et amemus misericordiam. The English passage above is taken from *Sermons* (1-19), trans. Edmund Hill, (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1990).*



God as the sustaining cause of all beings. Instead, it establishes that there is something superior than reason by revealing those normative standards that are presupposed in one's value judgments. The argument referred to here, however, concerns a relationship of ontological dependence, a relationship totally foreign to the *De Libero Arbitrio* argument.

### 3. Book 7 chapter 10 reconstructed

Book 7 chapter 10 of the *Confessions* is often misinterpreted because scholars neglect to read it within the context of the chapters that precede and follow it. Review of these chapters, however, is essential for the proper understanding of the vision passage. More specifically, the theme of ontological dependence found in the existential argument can also be found in chapters 9, 10, and 11, and close analysis of these chapters will establish that chapter 10 is the account of its use.

In book 7 chapter 9 Augustine uses a slight variation on the meaning of *Acts* 17:28 presented above. Of the 33 times that *Acts* 17:28 is used 10 of these instances include the concluding remark "as some of you have said." For example, Augustine's work *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* was composed in 394, approximately three years before he began work on the *Confessions*, and here, in what is the earliest known use of the phrase, Augustine clearly indicates that he holds "in Him we live and move and are, as some of you have said," to refer to the Athenians' ability to know God through natural reason. More specifically, Augustine's interpretation of *Romans* 1:18 is that God's existence and intended order can be known from His effects, and he arrives at this interpretation with the help of *Wisdom* 13:9 and *Acts* 17:28. He begins by observing that, in the book of *Wisdom*, those whom Solomon chastised did not come to knowledge of God through reflection on creation even though they could have, a fact which is established, says Augustine, by Paul's statement to the Athenians:

"The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all impiety" and so on (*Romans*: 1:18). Even Solomon said, concerning those whose wisdom is of this world, "If they could know so much that they could speculate about the universe how did they not more easily discover the Lord of this world and its Creator?" (*Wisdom* 13:9). Those whom Solomon reproved had failed to know the Creator through his creation; but those whom the Apostle reproved knew but did not give thanks



and, claiming to be wise actually became fools and fell into idolatry. For that the wise among the Gentiles had discovered the Creator, the Apostle himself plainly showed when he spoke to the Athenians. For when he had said "In Him we live and move and are," he added, "so even some of you have said" (*Acts* 17:28).<sup>39</sup>

From the above it is clear that *Acts* 17:28, when linked with the phrase "as some of you have said," means that the Athenians have attained rational knowledge of God, for Augustine says that those whom Solomon chastised "had failed to know the creator through his creation" (a phrase derived from *Romans* 1:20), while "the wise among the Gentiles had discovered the Creator," that is, had attained this knowledge, a fact which he establishes by quoting *Acts* 17:28. Augustine believes that *Acts* 17:28 establishes that the Athenians had rational knowledge of God because he reads the phrase "in Him we live and move and are" as an axiom which holds that all beings are dependent upon Being Itself, an axiom that, upon definition of its terms, demonstrates God's existence and nature.

As was mentioned previously, in all the instances that *Acts* 17:28 is used 10 of them include the concluding remark "as some of you have said," a phrase which almost always refers to a rational insight, and it is in precisely this manner that it is used in *Confessions* book 7 chapter 9. In this chapter, again the chapter immediately preceding the vision passage, Augustine is introduced to the books of the Platonists and in these books he reads what he describes

<sup>39</sup> *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* 3.3: Quod autem dixit: Revelatur ira Dei de caelo super omnem impietatem et cetera, ait et Salomon de sapientibus mundi: Si enim tantum potuerunt scire, ut possent / aestimare saeculum, quomodo ipsius mundi Dominum et Creatorem non facilius invenerunt? Sed quos arguit Salomon, non cognoverunt per creaturam Creatorem; quos autem arguit Apostolus, cognoverunt, sed gratias non egerunt et dicentes se esse sapientes stulti facti sunt et ad colenda simulacra deciderunt. Nam sapientes gentium quod invenirent Creatorem, manifeste idem Apostolus, cum Atheniensibus loqueretur, ostendit. Cum enim dixisset: Quia in ipso vivimus et movemur et sumus, addidit: Sicut et quidam secundum vos dixerunt. The English passage above is taken from *Augustine on Romans: Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans & Unfinished Commentary on the Epistle of the Romans*, trans. P. Fredriksen-Landes, P (Chicago: Scholars Press, 1982). Another example is *De Civitate Dei* 8.10: '[T]hat he may not suppose that all philosophers are such as do this [i.e. deceive Christian believers], he hears the same apostle say concerning certain of them "Because that which is known of God is manifest among them, for God has manifested it to them. For his invisible things from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, also his eternal power and Godhead." And when speaking to the Athenians, after having spoken a mighty thing concerning God, which few are able to understand, "In Him we live, and move, and have our being," he goes on to say, "As certain also of your own have said"'.



as a scientific account of the beginning of Saint John's gospel. Augustine is quick to point out that the books make no reference to the incarnation or Christ's saving action through His death on the cross, but despite the fact that the gentiles lacked this revealed knowledge, they were, he says, still "called into God's inheritance" through those truths generated by natural reason. He goes on to explain that it was through these truths that he himself came to know God. Augustine justifies this path by referring to the pillaging of the of the Egyptians by the Hebrews in *Exodus*, a passage that establishes for him scriptural support for the Christian practice of appropriating truths from pagan texts, and it is in the course of this explanation that Augustine appeals to *Acts* 17:28:

So also I read of 'the glory of your incorruption' changed into idols and various images 'in the likeness of corruptible man and birds and beasts and serpents', that is the Egyptian food (lentils) for which Esau lost his birthright (*Genesis* 25:33). Your firstborn people honored animal's heads instead of you, 'being turned in heart towards Egypt' (*Acts* 7:39) and making your image, their own soul, bow down before a calf that eats hay (*Psalms* 105:20). I found this in those books and did not feed on it. It pleased you, Lord, to 'remove from Jacob the opprobrium of being junior' (*Psalms* 118:22), that the 'elder should serve the younger' (*Romans* 9:13); and you called the Gentiles into your inheritance. And I had come to you from the Gentiles and fixed my attention on the gold which you willed your people to take from Egypt, since the gold was yours, wherever it was. And through your apostle you said to the Athenians, that in You 'we live and move and are' (*Acts* 17:28), as also some among them had said, and Athens is where these books came from. I did not give attention to the idols of the Egyptians which they served with your gold and 'changed the truth of God into a lie and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator' (*Romans* 1:25).<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> *Confessions*: 7.9.15: Et ideo legebam ibi etiam inmutatam gloriam incorruptionis tuae in idola et varia simulacra, in similitudinem imaginis corruptibilis hominis et volucrum et quadrupedum et serpentium, videlicet Aegyptium cibum, quo Esau perdidit primogenita sua, quoniam caput quadrupedis pro te honoravit populus primogenitus, conversus corde in Aegyptum et curvans imaginem tuam, animam suam, ante imaginem vituli manducantis faenum. Inveni haec ibi et non manducavi. Placuit enim tibi, domine, auferre opprobrium diminutionis ab Iacob, ut maior serviret minori, et vocasti gentes in hereditatem tuam. Et ego ad te veneram ex gentibus et intendi in aurum, quod ab Aegypto voluisti ut auferret populus tuus, quoniam tuum erat, ubicumque erat. Et dixisti Atheniensibus per Apostolum tuum, quod in te vivimus et movemur et sumus, sicut et quidam secundum eos dixerunt, et utique inde erant illi libri. Et non attendi in idola Aegyptiorum, quibus de auro tuo ministrabant, qui



The purpose of this passage is to tell the reader what Augustine took and what he did not take from the books of the Platonists. What he did not take was polytheism. What he took was the gold of the Egyptians (i.e. the pagans) defined in terms of *Acts* 17:28. The argument runs as follows: the Athenians say, "In Him we live, and move, and are," and the books were written by the Athenians: therefore, the books say, "In Him we live and move and are." In other words, according to Augustine, the Athenians say that rational knowledge of God as Being is attained by reflection on one's ontological dependence (in Him we live and move and are), and Athens is where these books he read came from: therefore *the books say that rational knowledge of God as Being is attained by reflection on one's ontological dependence*. The gold that Augustine gleaned from the pagans, the gold that is defined in terms of *Acts* 17:28, is the Platonic insight which holds that all beings are dependent upon Being Itself. Consequently, Augustine, as found in *De Genesi ad Litteram* 5.16, *De Trinitate* 8.3 and 14.14, and *Sermon* 7, consistently interprets *Acts* 17:28 as an axiom that demonstrates God's existence and nature.

Again, in book 7 chapter 10 of the *Confessions*, Augustine, while reading the books of the Platonists, has the vision of an immutable light higher than his mind. The central lines of this chapter should be briefly revisited. Augustine describes his relationship to what he saw in two critical lines that precede the vision passage. The first reports, "[I] saw above the same eye of my soul the immutable light higher than my mind (*mentem meam*)," and the second, "it [the Light] was superior because it made me (*fecit me*) and I was inferior because I was made by it (*factus ab ea*)."<sup>41</sup> From these passages it is clear that Augustine is describing the most primordial relationship of ontological dependence possible, the dependence of one's individual being upon Being Itself, due his use of *facere*, a verb that is consistently used by Augustine to refer to such a relationship.<sup>41</sup> Further, no matter how the *viderem esse* line is read, one knows that the passage concerns the insight that God is Being because Augustine says, "And you called out from far away: 'I am who am'" (*Et clamasti de longinquo: 'Immo uero ego sum qui sum'*). Again, one also knows

*transmutaverunt veritatem Dei in mendacium et coluerunt et servierunt creaturae potius quam creatori.*

<sup>41</sup> Again, the verb *facere* is not used in Augustine's demonstration from Truth in the *De Libero Arbitrio*: 2.15, or in *Confessions*: 7.17.23. It is, however, often used within the context of Augustine's "existential" proofs for God's existence or passages in which he is discussing the dependence of beings on Being. Again, there are several instances of the latter, for example, *De Civitate Dei*: 8.6, *Confessions*: 11.4.6. See fn. 25.



that Augustine understands it to be a rational insight, for he says, "I would have found it easier to doubt whether I was myself alive than that there is no truth 'understood from the things that are made'" (*Romans* 1:20) (*faciliusque dubitare vivere me quam non esse veritatem, quae per ea, quae facta sunt, intellecta conspicitur*). That is, through reading the books of the Platonists Augustine comes to understand that his mind has being but is not the cause of its own being: he sees, therefore, that there must be a cause for his mind's being that is itself absolute Being. Moreover, this interpretation is further substantiated by chapter 11, and, although Mac Donald notes this, he does not develop its full implications.<sup>42</sup> In chapter 11, the chapter immediately following the vision chapter, Augustine applies his experience to the world around him:

And I considered the *other things* (*cetera*) below you, and I saw that neither can they be said absolutely to be or absolutely not to be. They are because they come from you. But they are not because they are not what you are. That which truly *is* is that which unchangeably abides.<sup>43</sup>

Here again one can see the repetition of the same theme. Created being is dependent upon uncreated Being, and it is clear that this axiom is understood by Augustine to be apprehended by natural reason. What Mac Donald does not develop is that, when he says, "the *other things* (*cetera*) below You," Augustine indicates a first thing other than God that he understood to be neither absolutely being nor absolutely non-being from which the existence of God is inferred. What could this first finite effect be? From the fact that Augustine begins his meditation by entering his "innermost self" it is clear that he is not speaking of matter, and because he says it is, "below You," it cannot be God. Therefore it is clear that the original object contemplated by Augustine was his own mind (*mentem meam*), for it is the last finite reality referred to before his vision.

## Conclusion

In summation, from *Romans* 1:20 and *Acts* 17:28 it is certain that Augustine is referring to a rational insight in chapter 10, and therefore it is not possible to interpret it as the account of a mystical

<sup>42</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, pp. 86-87, n. 4

<sup>43</sup> *Confessions*: 7.11.17: et inspexi cetera infra te, et vidi nec omnino esse nec omnino non esse: esse quidem, quoniam abs te sunt, non esse autem, quoniam id quod es non sunt. Id enim vere est, quod incommutabiliter manet.



vision. Further, due to Augustine's use of the verb *facere* in the description of his vision it is not possible to interpret chapter 10 as a rational ascent to Truth, for this argument, the *De Libero Arbitrio* argument, refers to the transcendent standard presupposed in one's value judgments and not to a relationship of ontological dependence as is designated by this verb.

In order to come to the correct understanding of this chapter one must remember that chapter 9 certainly foreshadows the use of the existential argument due to the presence of *Acts* 17:28, that the chapter that follows it, chapter 11, explicitly deals with it in its treatment of the *cetera* which *nec omnino esse nec omnino non esse*, and, as it has been repeatedly noted, that chapter 10 itself describes what Augustine saw in terms of radical ontological dependence as is indicated by the use of the verb *facere* – in terms of the fundamental relationship described in the existential proof. Therefore, because all three chapters deal with the defining characteristic of the existential proof – *rational* knowledge of God as Being gained through reflection on one's ontological dependence – and because there is no other known argument for God's nature used by Augustine that makes use of this relationship, Augustine must be giving a description of its use in book 7 chapter 10. It is the connection between *Acts* 17:28, *Romans* 1:20, the verb *facere*, and the use of *cetera* that form the essence of this interpretation, for these points of congruence, taken as a whole and put against the backdrop of the proven incoherence of previous interpretations, establish the reading of *Confessions* book 7 chapter 10 offered here as the strongest possible.

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## JEROME'S ANIMOSITY AGAINST AUGUSTINE

### Introduction

Between 394 and 419 C.E., Augustine and Jerome carried out a letter correspondence that addressed a number of topics including exegesis, Jerome's translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew, and the origin of souls. This fascinating exchange between two of the Latin Doctors has caused numerous papers by modern scholars over the past 50 years. One feature that has warranted comments is the hostility of Jerome's response to Augustine's initial letters. Augustine had written to Jerome praising him for his literary works, hoping to gain a friendly relationship with Jerome,<sup>1</sup> and insisting that "in body only, and not in mind, we are two, so great is the union of heart, so firm the intimate friendship subsisting between us."<sup>2</sup> Jerome's abrasive retort to Augustine was surprising and – to many readers – unduly pointed.

There have been many responses given concerning why Jerome was fiercely aggressive against Augustine's initiation of their correspondence. Most scholars have placed the onus on Jerome's rough personality, or the fact that he had recently endured attacks from Rufinus concerning Origenism. J.N.D. Kelly argued in his renowned biography of Jerome, for example, that Jerome was "morbidly suspicious and ready to take offence."<sup>3</sup> Carolinne White has also suggested that "the deterioration of Jerome's relations with his old friend Rufinus at this time, and the subsequent violent rupture of their friendship against the background of the Origenist controversy, clearly made Jerome suspicious of everybody."<sup>4</sup> These explanations are not satisfactory,

<sup>1</sup> Alfons Fürst argues that "...hatte allein Augustinus ein ernsthaftes Interesse an engen, intensiven Kontakten auf freundschaftlicher Basis." Fürst, Alfons. *Augustins Briefwechsel Mit Hieronymus: Jahrbuch Für Antike und Christentum Ergänzungsband 29*. Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1999, p. 130. See also pp. 126-130.

<sup>2</sup> *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine with a Sketch of His Life and Work*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Publishing Company, 1886, letter 27:i. "Non enim animo me atque illum, sed corpore duos, qui nouerit, dixerit, concordia dumtaxat et familiaritate fidissima, non meritis, quibus ille antecellit." Schmid, Josefus, ed. *SS. Eusebii Hieronymi et Aurelii Augustini Epistulae Mutuae*. Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1930, p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Kelly, J.N.D. *Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies*. Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1975, p. 264.

<sup>4</sup> White, Carolinne. *The Correspondence (394-419) Between Jerome and Augustine of Hippo*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990, p. 5.



however, because they entirely ignore Augustine's role in the correspondence.<sup>5</sup> Although Jerome may have had a suspicious personality and had recently finished his battles with Rufinus, these reasons do not convincingly account for Augustine as the object of Jerome's ire. I believe that Jerome's invectives against Augustine were caused by

<sup>5</sup> There are many more answers offered by scholars concerning why Jerome was so aggressive against Augustine's initiation of their correspondence that should be noted: "in addition to his natural defensiveness, Jerome in these years had to fear that he could be attacked at any moment for 'Origenism.'" O'Donnell, James. *Augustine: A New Biography*. New York: HarperCollins, 2005, p. 96; "It is hard not to regard this as simply the eruption of an irascible, morbidly sensitive old curmudgeon." Cannon, Stephen. "The Jerome-Augustine Correspondence." *Word and Spirit: A Monastic Review* 9, *St. Augustine (387-1987)*. Ann Arbor: St. Bede's Publications, 1987, p. 39; "Unfortunately, [Augustine] did not know how sensitive Jerome was about his opinions, which to him were truth and not open to discussion. Nor did Augustine know how fiercely Jerome resented adverse criticism." Hellenga, Virginia. "The Exchange of Letters between Saint Augustine and Saint Jerome." *Daidalikon: Studies in Memory of Raymond V. Schroder, S.J.*, Ed. Robert F. Sutton Jr. Wauconda: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 1989, p. 177; Jerome was "sensitive and easily offended" and Augustine's language was "tactless, his letters miscarried, and Jerome was quick to take offense." Bonner, Gerald. *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963, p. 147; "Augustine provoked Jerome; and Jerome, though treating Augustine with more respect than others who had crossed him, would not resist playing cat and mouse." Brown, Peter. *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000, p. 271-2; "les critiques d'Augustin l'avaient irrité, et la divulgation de la lettre 40 à Rome l'avait humilié." Bruyne, Donatien de. "La Correspondance Échangée entre Augustin et Jérôme." *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 31, 1932, p. 236; "in Augustine's request for a palinode, Jerome reads the tone and intent of his earlier use of the phrase against Rufinus." Jamieson, Kathleen. "Jerome, Augustine and the Stesichoran Palinode." *Rhetorica* 5, 1987, p. 362; J.A. Möhler's text on this issue written in 1839 seems to have set the tone for subsequent modern scholarship concerning why Jerome was aggressive. Anne P. Carriker summarizes his position when she claims that "Jerome's recent confrontation with Rufinus, Möhler maintains, may have led him to avoid confrontation with others." Möhler, J.A., "Hieronymus und Augustinus im Streit über Gal. 2, 14, *Gesammelte Schriften und Aufsätze*. J. Döllinger, ed., vol. 1 Regensburg: 1839, 1-18. As quoted in Carriker, Anne P. "Augustine's Frankness in his Dispute with Jerome over the Interpretation of Galatians 2:11-14." *Nova Doctrina Vetusque*. Ed. Douglas Kries and Catherine Brown Tkacz. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999, p. 125; "he must put up with this relatively recent convert, this Carthage-educated upstart! But add to this Jerome's prickly character...and none was readier to suspect that only the darkest of motives could inspire any criticisms of himself. Few men could be more terrible in their anger." O'Connell, Robert J. "When Saintly Father Feuded: The Correspondence between Augustine and Jerome." *Thought* 57, 1979, p. 346-7; "it all seemed so uncalled for." Pope, Hugh. *Saint Augustine of Hippo*. London: Sands and Company, 1937, p. 217; "by reason of the peculiar circumstances of its [Augustine's letter] reaching Jerome, was occasion of offence and probably ten years of distrust and misunderstanding." Tourscher, Francis E. "The Correspondence of Saint Augustine and Saint Jerome - a Study." *The American Ecclesiastical Review* 57, 1917, p. 480.



Augustine's biography, not with Jerome's personality or the Origenist controversy.

This paper will argue that Jerome was guarded against Augustine because Jerome knew of Augustine's association with Ambrose of Milan. Jerome had harshly criticized Ambrose on three points and, as a result, braced himself against what he thought was a reprisal from Augustine. To elucidate this thesis, the first section of this paper will review the three criticisms Jerome leveled against Ambrose: being a weak scholar, not being prepared for his office, and plagiarism. The second section will revisit the relationship between Ambrose and Augustine. After this context has been established, the third section will analyze the letters of Augustine and Jerome between 394 and 404 C.E. to determine what Jerome knew of Augustine's life and also of Augustine's relationship with Ambrose. After a close reading of these letters, it will become clear that Jerome was well acquainted with Augustine's biography and that Jerome knew Ambrose was an important part of Augustine's spiritual life. Knowing these facts, then, Jerome's aggressiveness against Augustine was not a result of Jerome's personality but was a result of his knowledge of the relationship between Augustine and Ambrose.

### The Criticisms Jerome Leveled against Ambrose

Before we take a close look at the letters between Jerome and Augustine, we must recount the criticisms that Jerome leveled against Ambrose in order to begin to understand the context of the correspondence between Jerome and Augustine. Starting in 384<sup>6</sup> and continuing past the death of Ambrose, Jerome condemned Ambrose both anonymously and overtly. Without question, Jerome's most famous critique comes from chapter 124 of his *On Illustrious Men* when he said "I withhold my judgment of him, because he is still alive, fearing either to praise or blame lest in the one event, I should be blamed for adulation, and in the other for speaking the truth."<sup>7</sup> Although this quote

<sup>6</sup> Neil Adkin convincingly suggests that Jerome's first critique of Ambrose was in his letter 22 to Eustochius where the charge of plagiarism was leveled. "Ambrose and Jerome: The Opening Shot." *Mnemosyne* 46, 1993, 364-376.

<sup>7</sup> Jerome, Saint. "On Illustrious Men" *Jerome: The Principal Works of St. Jerome*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1892. "Ambrosius, Mediolanensis episcopus, usque in praesentem diem scribit, de quo, quia superest, meum iudicium subtraham, ne in alterutram partem, aut adulatio in me reprehendatur, aut ueritas." "Ἀμβρόσιος, Μεδιολάνου ἐπίσκοπος, ἕως τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας συγγράφεται καὶ ἐπέιπερ περίεστι, τὴν ἐμὴν κρίσιν



is rather cryptic concerning Jerome's specific issues with Ambrose, Jerome would eventually censure for incompetence as a biblical scholar, his lack of preparation for his office, and plagiarism.

Jerome attacked Ambrose's biblical scholarship because of what Jerome saw as flawed exegesis and because Ambrose did not know Hebrew. Although Ambrose's name is not mentioned in Jerome's *Commentary on Ephesians*, Jerome was referring to Ambrose when he said

it is one thing to compose one's own books – for example on avarice, faith, virginity, or widows – and to unite secular eloquence on each subject with testimonies from the Scriptures selected and another to display a splendid style on rather common topics. It is another thing to enter into the meaning of the prophets and apostles, to understand why they wrote, in what way they have declared their thinking, [and] what they regard...<sup>8</sup>

S.M. Oberhelman has shown that Jerome was referring to Ambrose here because Ambrose wrote treatises on avarice, faith, virginity, and widows.<sup>9</sup> The first instance when Jerome disparaged Ambrose's exegesis was in his *Preface to the Translation of Origen on St. Luke*. At the beginning of this short work addressed to Paula and Eustochium, Jerome said "A few days ago you told me that you had read some commentaries on Matthew and Luke, of which one was equally dull in perception and expression, the other frivolous in expression, sleepy in sense."<sup>10</sup> Rufinus claimed that this was an attack on

ἀναστέλλω, μήπως κολακείας μᾶλλον ἢ ἀληθείας εὐθύνωμαι." *Patrologia Latina* Vol. 23 Chapter 124.

<sup>8</sup> Jerome, Saint. *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*. Ed. Ronald E. Heine. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 76. "Sed cum aliud sit proprios libros componere, uerbi gratia, de auaritia, et de fide, de uirginitate, de uiduis, et super unaquaque materia testimoniis Scripturarum hinc inde quaesitis eloquentiam iungere saecularem, et paene in communibus locis pompaticum iactare sermonem: aliud in sensum prophetarum et apostoli ingredi, intelligere cur scripserint, qua sententiam suam ratione firmauerint, quid habeant in ueteri Lege proprium Idumaei, Moabitae, Ammonitae, Tyrii, Philistiim, Aegyptii, et Assyrii; quid rursum in nouo Testamento Romani, Corinthii, Galatae, Philippenses, Thessalonenses, Hebraei, Colossenses, et quam nunc ad Ephesios Epistolam habemus in manibus." *Patrologia Latina* Vol. 26, Prologue.

<sup>9</sup> Oberhelman, S.M. "Jerome's Earliest Attack on Ambrose: On Ephesians, Prologue." *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 121, 1991, 393-401.

<sup>10</sup> Jerome, Saint. "Preface to the Translation of Origen on St. Luke" *Jerome: The Principal Works of St. Jerome*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1892. "Ante paucos dies quorumdam in Matthaeum et in Lucam Commentarios uos legisse dixistis, e quibus alter et sensibus hebes esset, et uerbis; alter in uerbis luderet, in sententiis dormitaret." *Patrologia Latina* Vol. 26, Prologue.



Ambrose and, because Jerome never denied it, one is inclined to agree with Rufinus.<sup>11</sup>

A second criticism of Ambrose's scholarship comes from Jerome's *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*. In this text, Jerome stated "I know that a certain man has referred Gog and Magog...in Ezekiel to the account of the Goths who were recently raging in our land: whether this is true is shown by the outcomes of the actual battle (recorded in Ezekiel 39-9). But in fact all learned men in the past had certainly been accustomed to calling the Goths Getae rather than Gog and Magog."<sup>12</sup> This is a direct reference to Ambrose's exegesis in *On Faith* when Ambrose said "for Ezekiel, in those far-off days, already prophesied the minishing of our people, and the Gothic wars, saying: 'prophesy, therefore, Son of Man, and say: O Gog, thus saith the Lord – Shalt thou not, in that day when My people Israel shall be established to dwell in peace, rise up and come forth from thy place?'"<sup>13</sup>

Yet another critique from Jerome comes from his letter 54 to Furia. In this letter, Jerome stated that "some, from a misapprehension, number Deborah among the widows, and suppose that Barak the leader of the army is her son, though the scripture tells a different story."<sup>14</sup> Ambrose made this exegesis in *On Widows* when he said "for she [Deborah] showed not only that widows have no need of the help of

<sup>11</sup> Rufinus of Aquileia's *Apology* (2:25-28, 39, 47). See also Adkin, Neil. "Jerome on Ambrose: The Preface to the Translation of Origen's Homilies on Luke." *Revue Bénédictine* 107, 1997, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Jerome, Saint. *Saint Jerome's Hebrew Questions on Genesis*. Ed. C.T.R. Hayward. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 39. "Scio quemdam Gog et Magog, tam de praesenti loco, quam de Ezechiel, ad Gotthorum nuper in terra nostra bacchantium historiam retulisse, quod utrum uerum sit, praelii ipsius fine monstratur. Et certe Gotthos omnes retro eruditi, magis Getas, quam Gog et Magog appellare consueuerunt. Hae itaque septem gentes, quas de Japheth uenire stirpe memorauimus, aquilonis partem inhabitant." *Patrologia Latina* Vol. 23. Chapter 10:ii.

<sup>13</sup> Ambrose, Saint. "On the Christian Faith." *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Ed. Schaff, Philip and Henry Wace. Vol. X., New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1896, p. 241. "Namque et futuram nostri depopulationem, et bella Gothorum Ezechiel illo iam tempore prophetauit; sic enim habes: Propterea prophetiza, fili hominis, et dic: O Gog, haec dicit Dominus: Nonne in die illa cum constituetur habitare populus meus Israel in pace, surges et uenies de loco tuo, ab extremo Aquilone: et gentes tecum multae, sessores equorum omnes, congregatio multa et magna, et uirtus copiosa; et ascende ad populum meum Israel ut nubes operire terram in nouissimis diebus." *Patrologia Latina* Vol. 16. II:xvi:137.

<sup>14</sup> Jerome, Saint. "Letter 54 to Furia" *Jerome: The Principal Works of St. Jerome*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1892. "Quidam imperite et Deborah inter uiduas numerant, ducemque Barac, arbitrantur Deborahae filium; cum aliud Scriptura commemoret." *Patrologia Latina* Vol. 22 section 17.



a man, inasmuch as she, not at all restrained by the weakness of her sex, undertook to perform the duties of a man, and did even more than she had undertaken." Later, Ambrose also said "Barak, as he was bid-den, led forth the army."<sup>15</sup> These incorrect interpretations fueled Jerome's attacks on Ambrose.

Jerome not only censured Ambrose for his exegesis but Jerome was also responding to an attack on his Hebrew scholarship from Ambrose.<sup>16</sup> At the beginning of Jerome's *Preface to the Translation of Origen on St. Luke*, as we have already seen, Jerome critiqued Ambrose for his *Commentary on St. Luke*. Later in this same text, however, Jerome asserted that "I hear on the left of me the raven – that ominous bird – croaking and mocking [*ridere*] in all extraordinary way at the colors of all the other birds, though he himself is nothing if not a bird of gloom."<sup>17</sup> Modern scholarship, following Rufinus, has assumed that this criticism, like the criticism earlier in this *Commentary*, was a slight on Ambrose's exegesis.<sup>18</sup> Neil Adkin,<sup>19</sup> however, has suggested that "here Jerome is responding to

<sup>15</sup> Ambrose, Saint. "Concerning Widows." *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Ed. Schaff, Philip and Henry Wace. Vol. X., New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1896, p. 398-99. "Haec enim docuit non solum uiri auxilio uiduas non egere, uerum etiam uiris esse subsidio: quae nec sexus infirmitate reuocata, munia uirosum obeunda suscepit, et suscepta cumulauit. Denique cum Iudaei Iudicum regerentur arbitrio, quia uirili non poterant uel aequitate regi, uel uirtute defendi, bellis hinc inde ardentibus, Debboram sibi cuius regerentur iudicio, cooparant. Itaque multa millia uirosum una uidua et in pace rexit, et ab hoste defendit." *Patrologia Latina* Vol. 16 (VIII:xliv). "Debbora ergo praelii prophetauit euentum, Barach iussus produxit exercitum: Iael cepit triumphum; huic enim prophetiae in Debbora militauit, quae mystice nobis ortum surrecturae ex gentibus Ecclesiae reuelauit, cui triumphus de Sisara spiritali, hoc est, de aduersariis potestatibus quaereretur" *Patrologia Latina* Vol. 16 (VII:xlvi).

<sup>16</sup> There is no extant text from Ambrose critiquing Jerome for his Hebrew scholarship.

<sup>17</sup> Jerome, Saint. "Preface to the Translation of Origen on St. Luke" *Jerome: The Principal Works of St. Jerome*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1892. "praesertim cum a sinistro oscinem coruum audiam crocitantem, et mirum in modum de cunctarum auium ridere coloribus, cum totus ipse tenebrosus sit." *Patrologia Latina* Vol. 26, Prologue.

<sup>18</sup> Rufinus of Aquileia's *Apology* (2:25-28, 39, 47). Adkin goes into detail about what much of modern scholarship has made of this passage including Fournir, Shenkl, Süss, Steinmann, and Testard. Adkin, Neil. "Jerome on Ambrose: The Preface to the Translation of Origen's Homilies on Luke." *Revue Bénédictine* 107, 1997, p. 7-9.

<sup>19</sup> Adkin, Neil. "Jerome on Ambrose: The Preface to the Translation of Origen's Homilies on Luke." *Revue Bénédictine* 107, 1997, 5-14. Richard Layton does raise reasonable questions about Adkin's thesis, but I am still convinced by Adkin. Layton, Richard. "Plagiarism and Lay Patronage of Ascetic Scholarship: Jerome, Ambrose, and Rufinus." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10, 2002, p. 511 footnote 74.



Ambrose's mockery of his Hebrew scholarship...Jerome's aim in making the translation [Origen's commentary on Luke] is...to show up the ineptitude of his exegesis."<sup>20</sup> One of Jerome's most stringent criticisms of Ambrose, then, was on his exegesis and, more specifically, as a response to Ambrose's critique of Jerome's Hebrew scholarship.

Jerome also disparaged Ambrose for his lack of preparation for his office. It was well known throughout the Christian world that Ambrose was made a bishop while still a catechumen. Ambrose, himself, admitted that he was unprepared for his office when, in the opening chapter of his book *On The Duties of the Clergy*, he said "I was carried off from the judgment seat, and the garb (*infulis*) of office, to enter on the priesthood, and began to teach you, what I myself had not yet learnt."<sup>21</sup> Jerome, of course, was highly critical of this ordination and made this clear in his letter 69 to Oceanus. Jerome argued in his letter saying that "no one regards a commandment so clear and unmistakable as this about bishops not being novices. One who was yesterday a catechumen is today a bishop; one who was yesterday in the amphitheatre is today in the church; one who spent the evening in the circus stands in the morning at the altar: one who a little while ago was a patron of actors is now a dedicator of virgins."<sup>22</sup> The 'commandment' upon which Jerome rested his remarks is from 1Timothy that says "He [a potential bishop] must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1Timothy 3:6).<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Adkin, Neil. "Jerome on Ambrose: The Preface to the Translation of Origen's Homilies on Luke." *Revue Bénédictine* 107, 1997, p. 13-14.

<sup>21</sup> Ambrose, Saint. "On the Duties of the Clergy." *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Ed. Schaff, Philip and Henry Wace. Vol. X, New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1896, p. 1. "Quod ne ipsum quidem mihi accidit. Ego enim raptus de tribunalibus atque administrationis infulis ad sacerdotium, docere uos coepi, quod ipse non didici. Itaque factum est ut prius docere inciperem, quam discere. Discendum igitur mihi simul et docendum est; quoniam non uacauit ante discere." *Patrologia Latina* Vol. 16. I:i.

<sup>22</sup> Jerome, Saint. "Letter 69 to Oceanus" *Jerome: The Principal Works of St. Jerome*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1892. "cum tam apertum euidentque praeceptum nemo custodiat. Heri catechumenus, hodie pontifex: heri in amphitheatro, hodie in Ecclesia; uespere in circo, mane in altario: dudum fautor histrionum, nunc uirginum consecrator." *Patrologia Latina* Vol. 22 section 9.

<sup>23</sup> *Non neophytum ne in superbia elatus in iudicium incidat diaboli; μή νεόφυτον, ἵνα μή τυφωθείς εἰς κρίμα ἐμπέσῃ τοῦ διαβόλου*. The second canon of the Council of Nicea also asserts that a recently baptized Christian may not be advanced to the episcopate or presbyterate.



Jerome's third and most serious charge against Ambrose was the indictment of plagiarism. His harshest accusation was directed at an anonymous thief, but the reference is unmistakable:

and as I have confessed the name of the author [Didymus] in the title, I have preferred to stand forth as the translator of the work of another, rather than to adorn myself as some do with foreign colors, as some deformed little crow. I read not long ago the slight books of a certain author concerning the Holy Spirit and I saw, in keeping with the opinion of the comic, bad Latin made from good Greek. There was nothing in these books of dialectic, nothing manly and rigorous, which even in difficult points draws the reader to assent, but everything was weak, soft, yet refined and beautiful, embellished here and there with painted colors.<sup>24</sup>

Later in this same preface, Jerome claimed "surely, whoever reads the work of Didymus will recognize the plagiarism of the Latins, and will condemn the trickle when he has begun to drink from the spring."<sup>25</sup> The object of this invective is most certainly Ambrose for he had written a tract on the Holy Spirit shortly before this translation of Didymus. Rufinus was well aware of the allusions made in this preface and vigorously defended Ambrose saying "you observe how he [Jerome] treats Ambrose. First, he calls him a crow and says that he is black all over; then he calls him a jackdaw who decks himself in other bird's showy feathers; and then he rends him with his foul abuse, and declares that there is nothing manly in a man whom God has singled out to be the glory of the churches of Christ."<sup>26</sup> Jerome most certainly intended for his slight to be noticed.

<sup>24</sup> As translated by Layton, Richard. "Plagiarism and Lay Patronage of Ascetic Scholarship: Jerome, Ambrose, and Rufinus." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10, 2002, p. 500-501. "Et ut auctorem titulo fatear: malui alieni operis interpret existere, quam (ut quidam faciunt) informis cornicula, alienis me coloribus adornare. Legi dudum cuiusdam libellos de Spiritu sancto: et iuxta Comici [Scil. Terentii] sententiam ex Graecis bonis, Latina uidi non bona. Nihil ibi dialecticum, nihil uirile atque strictum, quod lectorem uel ingratis in assensum trahat: sed totum flaccidum, molle, nitidum, atque formosum, et exquisitis hinc inde odoribus pigmentatum." From Jerome's translation of Didymus's treatise on the Holy Spirit. *Patrologia Latina* Vol. 23, Prologue.

<sup>25</sup> As translated by Layton, Richard. "Plagiarism and Lay Patronage of Ascetic Scholarship: Jerome, Ambrose, and Rufinus." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10, 2002, p. 501. "Certe qui hunc legerit, Latinorum furta cognoscet: et contemnet riuulos, cum coeperit haurire de fontibus." From Jerome's translation of Didymus's treatise on the Holy Spirit. *Patrologia Latina* Vol. 23, Prologue.

<sup>26</sup> Rufinus of Aquileia "Apology" *Theodoret, Jerome, Gennadius, and Rufinus: Historical Writings*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1892. "Audistis quomodo quem ante corum dixerat et totum tenebrosum, nunc iterum corniculam dicat, alienis se pennis uel coloribus depingentem, et quam turpiter



The other accusation of plagiarism – Jerome's first ever criticism of Ambrose in 384 C.E. – was so subtle that modern scholarship has missed it until recently.<sup>27</sup> In his letter 22 to Eustochium, Jerome argued "if you want to know from how many vexations a virgin is free and by how many a wife is fettered you should read...the treatises recently written for his sister by our own Ambrose (*Ambrosii nostri*). In these he has poured forth his soul with such a flood of eloquence that he has sought out (*exquisierit*), set forth (*ordinarit*), and put in order (*expresserit*) all that bears on the praise of virgins."<sup>28</sup> On an initial reading, this seems to be complimentary of Ambrose's work. However, Adkin has convincingly argued that the three verbs (*exquirere*, *ordinare*, *exprimere*) Jerome used were, in fact, latent charges of plagiarism. This, Adkin insists, is "to be seen as an allusion to the derivative nature of Ambrose's work. It would appear therefore that these words are an anticipation of the charge of plagiarism which Jerome makes in 387 against Ambrose."<sup>29</sup> Jerome was saying, in effect, that the ideas on Ambrose's text were good simply because they were compiled from other sources and that Ambrose himself is not to be lauded for his cribbing. This passage may also be seen as a cryptic attack on Ambrose because of Jerome's use of *Ambrosii nostri*. P. Lardet has noted that this use of *noster* by Jerome in letter 22 to Eustochium is "*ironique*"<sup>30</sup> and Adkin has noted that "Jerome has accordingly combined a malicious sneer with an unctuous claim to intimacy."<sup>31</sup> Jerome's use of *noster*, then, was not intended as a term of endearment.

laceret, et nihil uirile dicat habere uirum, qui ad Ecclesiarum Christi gloriam electus a Deo est, qui in testimoniis Domini locutus est, in conspectu persecutorum regum, et non est confusus." *Patrologia Latina* Vol. 21 Book II:xxv.

<sup>27</sup> For this argument, I am relying on Neil Adkin "Ambrose and Jerome: The Opening Shot." *Mnemosyne* 46, 1993, p. 364-376.

<sup>28</sup> Jerome, Saint. "Letter 22 to Eustochium" *The Principal Works of St. Jerome*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1892. "Et si nupserit, inquit, uirgo, non peccat. Tribulationem tamen carnis habebunt huiusmodi. Et in principio libelli praefatus sum, me de angustiis nuptiarum, aut nihil omnino, aut pauca dicturum: et nunc eadem admoneo, ut si tibi placet scire quot molestiis uirgo libera, quot uxor astricta sit, legas Tertullianum ad amicum Philosophum, et de Virginitate alios libellos, et beati Cypriani uolumen egregium, et Papae Damasi super hac re, uersu, prosaque composita; et Ambrosii nostri quae nuper scripsit ad Sororem opuscula. In quibus tanto se effudit eloquio, ut quidquid ad laudes uirginum pertinet, exquisierit, expresserit, ordinarit." *Patrologia Latina* Vol. 22, section 22.

<sup>29</sup> Neil Adkin "Ambrose and Jerome: The Opening Shot." *Mnemosyne* 46, 1993, p. 366.

<sup>30</sup> Lardet, P. *Saint Jerome: Apologie contre Rufin. Commentaire du livre premier, II* (unpublished dissertation, Paris 1980), 283. As cited by Neil Adkin "Ambrose and Jerome: The Opening Shot." *Mnemosyne* 46, 1993, p. 368.

<sup>31</sup> Adkin, Neil. "Ambrose and Jerome: The Opening Shot." *Mnemosyne* 46, 1993, p. 369.



## The Relationship between Ambrose and Augustine

It is also important to review the relationship between Ambrose and Augustine in order to fully establish the context of the correspondence between Augustine and Jerome. Because the relationship between the Bishop of Milan and the African convert is widely known, we will not exhaustively examine it here.<sup>32</sup> Without question, their relationship was unequal, as the influence that Ambrose had on Augustine was not reciprocated.<sup>33</sup> Ambrose's sway over Augustine, as we shall see, was certainly "more intellectual than personal."<sup>34</sup> In this section, we will analyze two central aspects of the relationship between Augustine and his "spiritual father":<sup>35</sup> Ambrose's preaching and oratorical acumen helped initiate Augustine's eventual conversion and the theological influences from Ambrose helped shape Augustine's views of Christianity.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> See Brown, Peter. *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000, p. 69-79; Paredi, Angelo. *Saint Ambrose: His Life and Times*. Trans. M. Joseph Costelloe, S.J. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964, p. 278-295; Dudden, Frederick Homes. *The Life and Times of St. Ambrose*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935, p. 321-345.

<sup>33</sup> Papini argues that Ambrose never quoted any of Augustine's works. Papini, Giovanni. *Saint Augustine*. Trans. Mary Pritchard Agnetti. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1930, p. 99.

<sup>34</sup> Stock, Brian. *Augustine the Reader: Mediation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation*. Cambridge, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 58.

<sup>35</sup> Moorhead, John. *Ambrose: Church and Society in the Late Roman World*. New York: Pearson Educated Limited, 1999, p. 10.

<sup>36</sup> Scholars have cited a number of other important influences from Ambrose on Augustine that should be noted: Ambrose influenced Augustine by telling him that he observed the local customs of the different churches he visited. Brown, Peter. *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000, p. 77; Ambrose was the greatest mediator of Greek thought into the Latin context because of his direct influence on Augustine. Ramsey, Boniface. *Ambrose*. New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 54; Augustine received the theme of his *City of God* from Ambrose. Morino, Claudio. *Church and State in the Teaching of St. Ambrose*. Trans. M. Joseph Costelloe, S.J. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, Inc., 1969, p. 54; Later in life, Augustine did not object to the use of civil authority in ecclesial matters. This idea came from Ambrose. Morino, Claudio. *Church and State in the Teaching of St. Ambrose*. Trans. M. Joseph Costelloe, S.J. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, Inc., 1969, p. 120-1; Ambrose taught Augustine a lesson of the relationship between reading and contemplative silence. Stock, Brian. *Augustine the Reader: Mediation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation*. Cambridge, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 61; The idea of original sin that Augustine elaborated came from Ambrose. Paredi, Angelo. *Saint Ambrose: His Life and Times*. Trans. M. Joseph Costelloe, S.J. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964, p. 313; Ambrose's mysticism



Ambrose's reputation for eloquence was known to Augustine and Augustine tested Ambrose's "oratorical skill to see whether it merited the reputation it enjoyed or whether his fluency was better or inferior than it was reported to be."<sup>37</sup> Augustine's hagiographer, Possidius, recounted that Augustine "used to listen with fixed attention to the discourses frequently delivered in the church by this preacher of God's word."<sup>38</sup> He found Ambrose's style to be less "vivacious and insinuating, but more erudite, than that of Faustus."<sup>39</sup> Although Augustine found Ambrose's oratorical manner in his preaching to be less electrifying than the Manichean's technique, Ambrose's sermons "had enlightened Augustine."<sup>40</sup> Through Ambrose's direction, Augustine came to realize that "Catholic Christianity was intellectually far more defensible than he had imagined."<sup>41</sup> Earlier in his life, Augustine had believed that Christianity was intellectually inferior to philosophical inquiry and Manichean illumination.

More than the realization that the Church could be intellectually challenging, specific ideas in Ambrose's sermons theologically shaped Augustine's views of Christianity. One of the most important of these was the Pauline dichotomy between the spirit and the letter. "Encouraged by the allegories of Ambrose," Brian Stock argues, "he [Augustine] came to understand that the reader could distinguish between what Paul called the "spirit" and the "letter" as a parallel to the

influenced Augustine and, therefore, the later mystical tradition in the west. Paredi, Angelo. *Saint Ambrose: His Life and Times*. Trans. M. Joseph Costelloe, S.J. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964, p. 314.

<sup>37</sup> Augustine. *Confessions*. Trans. Henry Chadwick. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 88. "studiose audiebam disputantem in populo, non intentione, qua debui, sed quasi explorans eius facundiam, utrum conveniret famae suae, an maior minorve proflueret, quam praedicabatur." Augustine. *Confessions*. The Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 256.

<sup>38</sup> Possidius. "The Life of Saint Augustine." *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. Ed. Thomas F.X. Noble and Thomas Head. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995, p. 34. "Huius interea uerbi Dei praedicatoris frequentissimis in ecclesia disputationibus astans in populo, intendebat suspensus atque affixus." *Vita Sancti Aurelii Augustini, Hipponensis Episcopi, Auctore Possidio Calamensi Episcopo*. *Patrologia Latina* Vol. 32 *Caput Primum*.

<sup>39</sup> Dudden, Frederick Homes. *The Life and Times of St. Ambrose*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935, p. 328.

<sup>40</sup> Papini, Giovanni. *Saint Augustine*. Trans. Mary Pritchard Agnetti. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1930, p. 100.

<sup>41</sup> Dudden, Frederick Homes. *The Life and Times of St. Ambrose*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935, p. 328.



“inner” and “outer” self.”<sup>42</sup> Indeed, Augustine claimed in his *Confessions* that he was “delighted to hear Ambrose in his sermons to the people saying, as if he were most carefully enunciating a principle of exegesis: the letter kills, the spirit gives life. Those texts which, taken literally, seemed to contain perverse teaching he would expound spiritually, removing the mystical veil.”<sup>43</sup> This new exegetical framework allowed Augustine to understand that the Bible was worthy of exploration despite its apparent lack of rhetorical style. Earlier in his life when he had first attempted to read the Scriptures, Augustine found them to be “unworthy in comparison with the dignity of Cicero.”<sup>44</sup> Through the sermons of Ambrose, Augustine was able to broach the Christian canon with a new interpretive lens.

Another revelation from Ambrose’s preaching was the understanding that the Christian God was not a material God. In his earlier days, Augustine, like many late antique thinkers, believed in a material existence of God.<sup>45</sup> When encountering Christianity again in Milan, Augustine still thought of the Catholic God in material form, which was probably “a hangover from Manichaeism.”<sup>46</sup> Listening to the preaching of Ambrose, Augustine came to realize that many educated Christians thought of God immaterially. Peter Brown argued that Ambrose “introduced Augustine to some totally new ideas. Augustine found himself in the position of a man, ‘influenced by an authoritative statement, and prepared to say that there was something ‘immaterial,’ but unable to think other than in terms taken from material things.’”<sup>47</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Stock, Brian. *Augustine the Reader: Mediation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation*. Cambridge, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 54.

<sup>43</sup> Augustine. *Confessions*. Trans. Henry Chadwick. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 94. “et tamquam regulam diligentissime commendaret, saepe in popularibus sermonibus suis dicentem Ambrosium laetus audiebam: Littera occidit, spiritus autem uiuificat, cum ea, quae ad litteram peruersitatem docere uidebantur, remoto mystico uelamento spiritaliter aperiret, non dicens quod me offenderet, quamuis ea diceret, quae utrum uera essent adhuc ignorarem.” Augustine. *Confessions*. The Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 278.

<sup>44</sup> Augustine. *Confessions*. Trans. Henry Chadwick. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 40. “non enim sicut modo loquor, ita sensi, cum attendi ad illam scripturam, sed uisa est mihi indigna, quam Tullianae dignitati compararem.” Augustine. *Confessions*. The Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 112.

<sup>45</sup> Brown, Peter. *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000, p. 75.

<sup>46</sup> Stock, Brian. *Augustine the Reader: Mediation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation*. Cambridge, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 54.

<sup>47</sup> Brown, Peter. *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000, p. 76. The text quoted in the following: “aut etiamsi



Augustine himself attributed this to Ambrose when he said that he "noticed, repeatedly, in the sermons of our bishop [Ambrose]...that when God is thought of, our thoughts should dwell on no material reality whatsoever, nor the case of the soul, which is the one thing in the universe nearest to God."<sup>48</sup> Augustine's capacity, then, to disregard the material nature of God and hold an immaterial notion of God was directly influenced from Ambrose's preaching.

### Jerome's Knowledge of Augustine's Life<sup>49</sup>

Now that we have reviewed the context surrounding the correspondence between Jerome and Augustine, we may turn to the letters themselves. When we do a close reading of Augustine's letters to Jerome, Jerome's initial response in 402 C.E. and his two definitive responses in 404 C.E., we can glean a significant amount of information of what Jerome knew about Augustine at that time.

First, we can easily determine that Jerome knew that Augustine did not side with Rufinus concerning the Origenist controversy. Augustine wrote to Jerome in letter 28 asking him – not Rufinus who also translated Origen – to translate Greek Christian authors for Latin readers saying "you may thus put us also in possession of these [Greek] men, and especially of that one whose name you seem to have singular pleasure in sounding forth in your writings (Origen)."<sup>50</sup> Because Augustine had asked Jerome in his first letter to make Origen

auctoritate commota, fateatur aliquid esse incorporeum, de illo tamen nisi per imagines corporeas cogitare non possit, et tale aliquid esse credere, quale fallax corporis sensus infligit. *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum*, *Patrologia Latina* I, xxi, 38.

<sup>48</sup> Augustine "Animaduerti enim et saepe in sacerdotis nostri, et aliquando in sermonibus tuis, cum de Deo cogitaretur, nihil omnino corporis esse cogitandum, neque cum de anima: nam id est unum in rebus proximum Deo." *De beata vita*, *Patrologia Latina* I, 4 as quoted in Brown, Peter. *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000, p. 75.

<sup>49</sup> This correspondence is recorded in the *oeuvres* of both Jerome and Augustine. I am using the numbering system from the corpus of Augustine. See the contents page of White's book for a helpful conversion chart of the numbering system for these letters. White, Carolinne. *The Correspondence (394-419) Between Jerome and Augustine of Hippo*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1990.

<sup>50</sup> *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine with a Sketch of His Life and Work*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Publishing Company, 1886, letter 28:ii. "Potes enim efficere, ut nos quoque habeamus tales illos uiros et unum potissimum, quem tu libentius in tuis litteris sonas." Schmid, Josefus. ed. *SS. Eusebii Hieronymi et Aurelii Augustini Epistulae Mutuae*. Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1930, p. 28.



accessible to Latin readers, we can safely assert that Jerome knew that Augustine was not an adversary on this point.

Second, we can determine that during 402 and 404 C.E., Jerome knew Augustine's writings intimately. Jerome stated the contrary when he claims in his letter 72 from 404 C.E. that he could not "pronounce anything in your works to merit censure. For, in the first place, I have never read them with attention; and in the second place, we have not beside us a supply of copies of what you have written, excepting the books of Soliloquies and commentaries on some of the Psalms."<sup>51</sup> On a closer reading, however, we can determine that Jerome did, in fact, know Augustine's writings and that Jerome's statement that he has never read them with attention was simply a rhetorical maneuver. Two years earlier – when relating to Augustine that he had recently received Augustine's letter 40 through his friend Sysinnius after Sysinnius had brought Jerome a copy of it – Jerome claimed to know Augustine's style well enough that this copied letter seemed to be from Augustine. Jerome stated that "although the style and the method of argument appeared to be yours I must frankly confess to your Excellency that I did not think it right to assume without examination the authenticity of a letter of which I had only seen copies"<sup>52</sup> In his letter 72, Jerome again hints that he knew Augustine's style well when, discussing the lost letter 40, Jerome said "I was afraid lest you should have reason to remonstrate with me, saying, 'What! Had you seen the letter to be mine, had you discovered in the signature attached to it the autograph of a hand well known to you, when you carelessly wounded the feelings of your friend and reproached me with that which the malice of another had conceived?'"<sup>53</sup> Despite Jerome's assertions of his

<sup>51</sup> *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine with a Sketch of His Life and Work*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Publishing Company, 1886, letter 72:v. "Et hoc dico, non quod in operibus tuis quaedam reprehendenda iam censeam. Neque enim lectioni eorum umquam operam dedi nec horum exemplariorum apud nos copia est praeter 'Soliloquiorum' tuorum libros et quosdam commentariolos in Psalmos, quos si uellem discutere, non dicam a me, qui nihil sum, sed a ueterum Graecorum docerem interpretationibus discrepare." Schmid, Josefus. ed. *SS. Eusebii Hieronymi et Aurelii Augustini Epistulae Mutuae*. Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1930, p. 46.

<sup>52</sup> *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine with a Sketch of His Life and Work*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Publishing Company, 1886, letter 68:i. "Ego simpliciter fateor dignationi tuae, licet stilus et ἐπιχειρήματα tua mihi videntur, tamen non temere exemplaribus litterarum credendum putavi, ne forte me respondente laesus iuste expostulares, quod probare ante debuissen tuum esse sermonem et sic rescribere." Schmid, Josefus. ed. *SS. Eusebii Hieronymi et Aurelii Augustini Epistulae Mutuae*. Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1930, p. 39.

<sup>53</sup> *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine with a Sketch of His Life and Work*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Publishing Company, 1886, letter 72:ii.



ignorance of Augustine's writings, we can be sure that Jerome did know Augustine's texts well.

Third, we know definitively that Jerome knew Augustine was a bishop. Augustine had been consecrated the Bishop of Hippo in 395 C.E., seven years before Jerome's first response to Augustine. Jerome acknowledged four times in his letters in 402 and 404 C.E. that Augustine was a bishop. Moreover, Jerome knew of Augustine's growing fame as a bishop and author; Jerome stated so in his second letter of 404 C.E. when he was rebuking Augustine for Augustine's exegesis of the confrontation between Peter and Paul over the Jewish Law in Galatians 2. Jerome said that "if this [exegesis] is your opinion, or rather since it is your opinion, that all from among the Jews who believe are debtors to do the whole law, you ought, as being *a bishop of great fame in the whole world*, to publish your doctrine, and labor to persuade all other bishops to agree with you" (my italic).<sup>54</sup> Augustine's name was not lost in a sea of bishops; his growing reputation preceded him.

Fourth, we learn from Augustine's letter 71 to Jerome that Augustine had censured Jerome for his Hebrew scholarship – as Ambrose had done. Previously, we saw that Adkin has argued that Ambrose mocked Jerome's Hebrew scholarship.<sup>55</sup> Although Jerome's reply to Ambrose was subtle and anonymous, his reply to Augustine was explicit:

It is, however, more in keeping with your enlightened judgment, to grant to all others the liberty which you tolerate in yourself for in my attempt to translate into Latin, for the benefit of those who speak the same language with myself, the corrected Greek version of the Scriptures, I have laboured not to supersede what has been long esteemed, but only to bring prominently forward those things which have been either omitted or tampered with by the Jews, in order that Latin readers

"ad extremum, ne tu iure expostulares et diceris: 'Quid enim? Epistulam meam uideras et notae tibi manus in subscriptione signa deprehenderas, ut tam facile amicum laederes et alterius malitiam in meam uerteres contumeliam?'" Schmid, Josefus. ed. *SS. Eusebii Hieronymi et Aurelii Augustini Epistulae Mutuae*. Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1930, p. 45.

<sup>54</sup> *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine with a Sketch of His Life and Work*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Publishing Company, 1886, letter 75:v. "Hoc si placet, immo quia placet, ut, quicumque credunt ex Iudaeis, debitores sint legis faciendae, tu ut episcopus in toto orbe notissimus debes hanc promulgare sententiam et in adsensum tuum omnes coepiscopos trahere." Schmid, Josefus. ed. *SS. Eusebii Hieronymi et Aurelii Augustini Epistulae Mutuae*. Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1930, p. 57.

<sup>55</sup> Adkin, Neil. "Jerome on Ambrose: The Preface to the Translation of Origen's Homilies on Luke." *Revue Bénédictine* 107, 1997, p. 5-14.



might know what is found in the original Hebrew. If any one is averse to reading it, none compels him against his will. Let him drink with satisfaction the old wine, and despise my new wine.<sup>56</sup>

This is not the only response that Jerome offered to Augustine concerning this issue but, in fact, Jerome spent two pages on his response. This citation should be a sufficient quote to demonstrate Jerome railing at Augustine's needling. Just as with Ambrose, Jerome felt the need to defend himself against Augustine's attacks on his Hebrew scholarship. Augustine's pleas would not have made Jerome pleased and he most surely viewed this as the protégé following in the master's footsteps.

Fifth, Jerome knew that Augustine had read his *On Illustrious Men*. Augustine had written to Jerome asking him the name of this text that he had read, for the text did not come with a title. "A certain book of yours came into my hands," Augustine stated, "the name of which I do not yet know, for the manuscript itself had not the title written, as is customary, on the first page....[it is a work] of the lives or writings of those only who are deceased. Inasmuch, however, as mention is there made of the works of some who were at the time when it was written, or even now, alive."<sup>57</sup> In *On Illustrious Men*, as we saw earlier in this paper, Jerome criticized Ambrose when he said that he was "fearing either to praise or to blame [Ambrose] lest in the

<sup>56</sup> *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine with a Sketch of His Life and Work*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Publishing Company, 1886, letter 75:xx. "Quin potius humanitatis tuae est, in quo ueniam tibi tribuis, indulgere et ceteris. Ego enim non tantum uetera abolere conatus sum, quae linguae meae hominibus emendata de Graeco in Latinum transtuli, quam ea testimonia, quae a Iudaeis praetermissa sunt uel corrupta, proferre in medium, ut scirent nostri, quid Hebraea veritas contineret. Si cui legere non placet, nemo compellit inuitum. Bibat uinum uetus cum suauitate et nostra musta contemnat, quae in explanatione priorum edita sunt, ut, sicubi illa non intelleguntur, ex nostris manifestiora fiant." Schmid, Josefus. ed. *SS. Eusebii Hieronymi et Aurelii Augustini Epistulae Mutuae*. Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1930, p. 70-71.

<sup>57</sup> Letter 40: Chapter ii. *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine with a Sketch of His Life and Work*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Publishing Company, 1886. "Liber quidam tuus inter cetera non diu est ut uenit in manus nostras. Quae sit eius inscriptio, nescimus adhuc; non enim hoc codex ipse, ut adsolet, in liminari pagina praetendebat. 'Epitaphium' tamen appellari dicebat frater, apud quem inuentus est. Quod ei nomen tibi placuisse ut inderetur, crederemus, si eorum tantum uel uitas uel scripta ibi legissemus, qui iam defuncti essent. Cum uero multorum et eo tempore, quo scribebatur, et nunc usque uiuentium ibi commemorentur opuscula, miramur, cur hunc ei titulum uel inposueris uel imposuisse credaris. Sane utiliter a te conscriptum eundem librum satis adprobamus." Schmid, Josefus. ed. *SS. Eusebii Hieronymi et Aurelii Augustini Epistulae Mutuae*. Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1930, p. 32-33.



one event, I should be blamed for adulation, and in the other for speaking the truth.”<sup>58</sup> We can be confident, then, that Jerome knew that Augustine was well aware of at least one of his criticisms of Ambrose. It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that because Jerome knew that Augustine had read *On Illustrious Men* that Jerome would have braced himself against a rebuttal from Augustine.

Sixth, and most importantly for our purposes, we know that Jerome was well aware of the relationship between Augustine and Ambrose. Jerome said in his second letter in 404 C.E. – in reference to earlier translators of Origen – that “...among Latin writers the bishops Hilary of Poitiers, and Eusebius of Vercell, have translated Origen and Eusebius of Caesarea, the former of whom has in some things been followed by our own Ambrose (*noster Ambrosius*).”<sup>59</sup> This *noster Ambrosius* clearly denotes that Jerome knew that Ambrose had been Augustine’s mentor.

The use of ‘*noster*’ as a term of familiarity is used throughout many of these letters, not just in this one particular instance with Ambrose. Jerome uses ‘*nostrum papam Alypium*’ in letter 39 in reference to their shared friendship with Alypius.<sup>60</sup> Both Jerome and Augustine use ‘*noster*’ in reference to a mutual acquaintance, a deacon named Cyprian who later became a bishop.<sup>61</sup> Augustine first uses ‘*noster*’ in reference to Cyprian in section one of letter 71 written in 403 C.E. when he refers to the man who took Augustine’s letter to Jerome as “our son Cyprian, deacon.”<sup>62</sup> He uses the same language in

<sup>58</sup> Jerome, Saint. “On Illustrious Men” *Jerome: The Principal Works of St. Jerome*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1892. “Ambrosius, Mediolanensis episcopus, usque in praesentem diem scribit, de quo, quia superest, meum iudicium subtraham, ne in alterutram partem, aut adulatio in me reprehendatur, aut ueritas.” “Ἀμβρόσιος, Μεδιολάνου ἐπίσκοπος, ἕως τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας συγγράφεται καὶ ἐπεὶ περὶ περιστάσεως, τὴν ἐμὴν κρίσιν ἀναστέλλω, μήπως κολακείας μᾶλλον ἢ ἀληθείας εὐθύνωμαι.” *Patrologia Latina* Vol. 23 Chapter 124.

<sup>59</sup> *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine with a Sketch of His Life and Work*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Publishing Company, 1886, letter 75:xx. “Apud Latinos autem Hilarius Pictavensis et Eusebius, Uercellensis episcopus, Origenem et Eusebium transtulerunt, quorum priorem et noster Ambrosius in quibusdam secutus est.” Schmid, Josefus. ed. *SS. Eusebii Hieronymi et Aurelii Augustini Epistulae Mutuae*. Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1930, p. 70.

<sup>60</sup> See also the beginning of letter 28 for Augustine’s discussion of Alypius’s encounter with Jerome.

<sup>61</sup> *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine with a Sketch of His Life and Work*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Publishing Company, 1886, letter 82, section 30.

<sup>62</sup> *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine with a Sketch of His Life and Work*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Publishing Company, 1886. “Filius



section one of letter 73 (404 C.E.) when Augustine referred to him as "our son the deacon Cyprian, a servant of God."<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, Augustine also uses the term "our Ambrose"<sup>64</sup> in section 21 of letter 82, mirroring Jerome's reference to their mutual acquaintance that we saw in letter 75.<sup>65</sup>

The importance of this usage of '*noster*,' however, does not end here. As we saw earlier in this paper, Lardet and Adkin both pointed to a derogatory usage of Jerome's use of '*noster*' in letter 22 to Eustochium. I believe that the same "*ironique*"<sup>66</sup> and "unctuous"<sup>67</sup> flavor that was in Jerome's letter 22 is present here in Jerome's letter 65 to Augustine. Jerome was not simply articulating to Augustine that he, like Augustine, knew Ambrose; Jerome was subtly informing Augustine that he is in no way sympathetic to Ambrose. It should also be noted that this reference to Ambrose is embedded in the section of Jerome's response to Augustine's criticism of his Hebrew scholarship. In responding to Augustine's remarks on Jerome's Hebrew scholarship, Jerome evoked the name of Ambrose. This is most certainly not a coincidence and may be seen as an allusion to Jerome's remarks in his *Preface to the Translation of Origen on St. Luke*.

noster Cyprianus diaconus." Schmid, Josefus. ed. *SS. Eusebii Hieronymi et Aurelii Augustini Epistulae Mutuae*. Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1930, p. 41.

<sup>63</sup> *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine with a Sketch of His Life and Work*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Publishing Company, 1886. "Per Dei servum, filium nostrum Cyprianum diaconum." Schmid, Josefus. ed. *SS. Eusebii Hieronymi et Aurelii Augustini Epistulae Mutuae*. Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1930, p. 47.

<sup>64</sup> *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine with a Sketch of His Life and Work*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Publishing Company, 1886. "Ambrosius noster." Schmid, Josefus. ed. *SS. Eusebii Hieronymi et Aurelii Augustini Epistulae Mutuae*. Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1930, p. 86.

<sup>65</sup> In section 24 of the same letter, Augustine again uses the term "our Ambrose" and also "our Cyprian" (not in reference to the deacon just stated, but the famous bishop of Carthage). However, the usage of '*noster*' in these two cases does not denote a mutual acquaintance between Augustine and Jerome but is used in creating a dichotomy between Latin writers and Greek writers. *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine with a Sketch of His Life and Work*. Ed. Philip Schaff. New York: Christian Publishing Company, 1886. "Noster Ambrosius...noster itidem Cyprianus." Schmid, Josefus. ed. *SS. Eusebii Hieronymi et Aurelii Augustini Epistulae Mutuae*. Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1930, p. 88.

<sup>66</sup> Lardet, P. *Saint Jerome: Apologie contre Rufin. Commentaire du livre premier, II* (unpublished dissertation, Paris 1980), 283. As cited by Neil Adkin "Ambrose and Jerome: The Opening Shot." *Mnemosyne* 46, 1993, 368.

<sup>67</sup> Adkin, Neil. "Ambrose and Jerome: The Opening Shot." *Mnemosyne* 46, 1993, p. 369.



## Conclusion

It is clear, then, that Jerome would not have been guarded against an attack from Augustine concerning Origen because Augustine asked Jerome, not Rufinus, to translate more of Origen's texts; Jerome knew Augustine's rhetorical style, method, argumentation, and his autograph; he knew Augustine's reputation as a rising bishop with great fame; Augustine, like Ambrose, criticized Jerome for his Hebrew scholarship; Augustine most certainly had known at least one of Jerome's criticisms of Ambrose when Augustine read Jerome's *On Illustrious Men*; we know that Jerome was aware of Augustine's relationship with Ambrose by his use of the term '*noster*,' which he used in reference to several men with whom both Augustine and Jerome were associated such as Ambrose, Alypius, and Cyprian the deacon. It is much more likely, therefore, that Jerome's aggressive responses to Augustine's inquiries were a result of his knowledge that Augustine was a mentee of Ambrose, instead of the previous suggestions made by modern scholars that Jerome was cantankerous, or that he was defensive because of the Origenist controversy.

But what makes Donatism unique among so-called North African Christianity is the way in which its constituent elements—longed and easily-evolving political theology, the socio-political yearnings and cultural influences of its active population into a theological-behavioral paradigm that was dynamic and potent, Donatist political theology, the combination of the North African theological tradition and social context, is that which can be said to underwrite and influence the multifaceted, and seemingly inconsistent, evolution of the life, thought, and secular interactions of Christians in Late Roman Africa.

It was this political theology that partly explains the myriad complexities of Donatist maneuvers in interacting with the Roman Empire and Roman Catholics. What seems to have been a disparate network initiating an amalgam of blindly driven activities in history is decipherable through comprehension of their composite ecclesial-political orientations.

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<sup>1</sup> W.H.C. FREND, *The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa* (Oxford, 1952), 336.

<sup>2</sup> See J. DANILOU, *Les Origines du Christianisme latin. Histoire des Doctrines Chrétiennes Avant Nicée*, Vol. II (Paris, 1978), 32. Or see the English version: *The Origins of Latin Christianity*, trans. and ed. D. SUTER and J.A. BATES (Philadelphia, 1978), 341-404.







## THE EVOLUTION OF DONATIST THEOLOGY AS RESPONSE TO A CHANGING LATE ANTIQUE MILIEU

The Donatist Christians of North Africa in the fourth and fifth centuries have been treated variously throughout history according to the interpreter: selfish schismatics, vile heretics, controversy mongers, or even as victims of belligerent Roman policies. It seems, however, that a more accurate summation of the late antique phenomenon can be located within the writings of W.H.C. Frend; that is that being more than just a run-of-the-mill sectarian group; Donatism was actually "part of a revolution."<sup>1</sup>

Every revolution has its causes and Donatism is no different. The Donatist revolution was initiated and sustained by a potent mixture of religious fervor, economic and social tensions that pitted native North Africans against colonial Romans, as well as the idiosyncratic traditions from being one of the oldest forms of Latin Christianity.<sup>2</sup>

But what makes Donatism unique among so-called revolutions is the way in which its constitutive elements coalesced into a prolonged and easily-evolving political theology that enabled that form of North African Christianity to channel the socio-political yearnings and cultural influences of its native population into a theological-behavioral paradigm that was dynamic and potent. Donatist political theology, the combination of the North African theological tradition and social context, is that which can be said to underlie and influence the multifaceted, and seemingly inconsistent, evolution of the life, thought, and secular interactions of Christians in Late Roman Africa.

It was this political theology that partly explains the myriad complexities of Donatist maneuvers in interacting with the Roman Empire and Roman Catholics. What seems to have been a disparate network initiating an amalgam of blindly-driven activities in history is decipherable through comprehension of their composite creedal-political orientations.

<sup>1</sup> W.H.C. FREND, *The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa* (Oxford, 1952), 336.

<sup>2</sup> See J. DANÉLOU, *Les Origines du Christianisme latin. Histoire des Doctrines Chrétiennes Avant Nicée*, Vol. III (Paris, 1978), 32. Or see the English version: *The Origins of Latin Christianity*, trans. and ed. D. SMITH and J.A. BAKER (Philadelphia, 1978), 341-404.



The possibility of piecing together any sort of theological or political rationale today within the known history of the Donatist controversy is a difficult endeavor, but it would have been even more so one hundred years ago. Because of the considerable advances made in reconstructing the socio-political and economic realities that framed the Donatist world, particularly that of Paul Monceaux, W.H.C. Frend, and Serge Lancel, it is possible today to arrive at a more adequate comprehension of the external forces that supplied the basis for the existence of Donatism and its successes.

Corollary with the advances of those twentieth century scholars, a more penetrative reconstruction of the Donatist theological schema became possible. This fact is evident in the breakthrough research of Gary Wills, Peter Brown, and Maureen Tilley, who have been successful in piecing together a more coherent and satisfactory account of the diverse religious motivations and undercurrents at work within Donatism and Roman North Africa, than has otherwise been available since the time of Augustine of Hippo in the fifth century.

The time has come where it is finally feasible to link the extant original sources from Donatist Christians with the aforementioned research into the socio-political and theological realities of fourth and fifth century North Africa. As such, the focus of this paper will be to identify and articulate Donatist (political) theology.

As stated before, deducing such a political theology (which has heretofore never been attempted as such) is a complicated objective. And before this process can be initiated, it is prudent to declare what is meant by "political theology" within the context of my research.

By "political theology", I hope to avoid the tendency of analyzing the subject through a disproportionately historical, theological, or political method. I also seek to bypass the trend of dismissing time-tested political philosophies and theological traditions often at work in the original sources, in favor of anachronistic or even simplistic revolutionary ideologies.

Instead, for this research, the description of political theology provided in the writings of Oliver O'Donovan works: "It postulates an analogy-not a rhetorical metaphor only, or a poetic image, but an analogy grounded in reality- between the acts of God and human acts, both of them taking place within the one public history..."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> O. O'DONOVAN, *The Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology* (Cambridge, 1996), 2.



So to extrapolate such an “analogy” at work in Donatist sources, I will first analyze the historical record of Donatism and then seek from them scriptural themes, language, and theological models from which a Donatist political theology can be reconstructed.

In particular, I will present the historical foundations of Donatism since the phenomenon did not occur within a contextual vacuum. Then I will examine the beginnings of Donatist Christianity, especially during the Great Persecution of 303-305 and more formally in 311/12<sup>4</sup> with the controversial election of Caecilian.<sup>5</sup> Next, I will highlight the interaction between Donatist partisans and Constantine and his successors. Afterwards, I will illustrate the events surrounding the reign of Emperor Julian and the innovations that Donatism engendered in the closing decades of the fourth century, with particular attention given to the role of the Circumcellion movement and the militant regime of Gildo. Finally, I will report the developments that occurred in the opening decades of the fifth century which involved Augustine of Hippo and the joint-effort of Roman Catholic and Roman Imperial authorities to suppress the Donatist Church.

After examining the relevant events that a political theology can be traced from, I will then explicate and synthesize the joint theological-political substratum that is to be found within Donatist sources and answer whether or not a political theology exists. From this, a theological schema will be compiled that is two-fold, categorized into the general theological categories of ecclesiology and eschatology. This *eschatological ecclesiology* described below will also serve the purpose of illuminating Donatist foundational theology.<sup>6</sup> One of the objectives of this research is to contribute, in part, to a more thorough and expansive understanding of the core thought of the North African church, which I argue was motivated by their eschatological ecclesiology.

<sup>4</sup> W.H.C FRENCH and K. CLANCY, “When Did the Donatist Schism Begin?” *Journal of Theological Studies* 27/1 (1977): 104-109.

<sup>5</sup> M. TILLEY, *The Bible in Christian North Africa: The Donatist World* (Minneapolis, MN, 1997), 10, 18; H. CHADWICK, “Augustine”, in *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, ed. F. YOUNG, L. AYRES, A. LOUTH (Cambridge, 2004), 332.

<sup>6</sup> The concept of political theology as foundational theology is adapted from a proposition of FRANCIS SCHLÜSSLER FIORENZA in which he argued that political theology is constitutive of the overall theology in the Christian realm; see “Political Theology as Foundational Theology,” *The Catholic Theological Society of America Proceedings of the Thirty-Second Annual Convention* 32 (Toronto, 1977): 142-177. Another illuminating article on the theological core of Donatism is: J. ALEXANDER, “Donatistae”, in *Augustinus-Lexikon* 2, ed. C. MAYER (Basel, 1999): 622-638.



Furthermore, mindful that Donatism was not a “monolithic, apocalyptic community of pure Christians seeking martyrdom”<sup>7</sup> or a static theology which in fact adapted and changed as circumstances demanded as Tilley argues, how does one explain the evident decline in the public role and prestige of Donatism throughout North Africa after the Council of 411 up to the arrival of the Vandals in 429 through to the Arab occupation in the seventh century? Is it proper to even speak of a “decline” or “collapse” of Donatism at all? Is it possible instead that the events commonly understood to be the collapse of Donatism in the fifth century can instead be seen as a correction in the political theology of the Donatists away from the refuge of seeking to be the officially recognized state religion of North Africa (i.e., away from Rome) and instead a movement towards the traditional African Christian theological understanding of the Church as set apart from the fallen world by God?

By the end of this paper, it will be clear how history attests to Donatist political theology at work in the choices of its membership. I will also be able to answer whether the demise of Donatism was, in part, because of the rejection of their own political theology, namely in the recourse to and espousal of Roman Imperial intervention which provided the basis for the eventual suppression of Donatist Christianity as a social force in North Africa.

Likewise, by the end of this paper, the historical record and theologies at play will have spoken for themselves. And by examining these respective elements in their context, I intend to avoid “the temptation to impose an academic consistency”<sup>8</sup> on what the sources indicate about the dynamic interchange that occurred in the Donatist Controversy, instead allowing the voices and sources of Donatist North Africans to reveal their political theology.

## I. TYPOLOGIES AND CATEGORIES OF DONATIST POLITICAL THEOLOGY

The history of the Donatist Controversy contains more than mere names, places, and dates of a mere schismatic group on the fringes of Romanized North Africa. The history of Donatism contains

<sup>7</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 8.

<sup>8</sup> P. BROWN, “St. Augustine’s Attitude Towards Religious Coercion”, *Journal of Roman Studies* 54 (1964), 263, reprinted in Peter Brown, *Religion and Society in the Age of Augustine* (London, 1972): 260-278.



within its annals the pulse and life-blood of an entire culture which predated the Roman Empire's presence in North Africa. This pulse was manifested in the concrete beliefs and actions by North Africans towards the end of the existence of the Western Roman Empire. These actions and beliefs, when analyzed in connection with each other and within their particular context, form the crux of what can be classified as Donatist (political) theology.

This (political) theology is in no way abstract. It is to be found specifically in the activities of Donatist Christians. In their actions, beliefs, and faith a theology became realized in their late antique world. In acting in accord with their faith, they made the Biblical God they believed in intersect with their context, i.e., their time and place in the world.

The manner with which the Donatists brought about their God's intersection with the world, 'God's acts and human acts in the one public history', can be categorized into two overarching and interpenetrating categories that are deducible to an ecclesiology and an eschatology.

What will therefore be accomplished in this segment is the synthesis of the said political theology from history into the three prescribed categories. The result of such a synthesis will be a nuanced method with which to peer into the theological depths of Donatist Christianity. By identifying their political theology, readers will be exposed to Donatist foundational theology as well.

## **§1. Two Cities / Societies**

At the core of Donatist thinking was a foundational theology which consists of two substrata: ecclesiology and eschatology. The two categories are independently intelligible, but are also deeply interconnected and in fact contingent upon each other, thus forming an eschatological ecclesiology.

All the other myriad examples of Donatists beliefs made manifest in their history, that were often endemic to North African Christianity, e.g., rebaptism, emphasis on/ and pride in martyrdom and purity, insistence on the integrity of the Church and the sacraments, episcopal collegiality, and separation from secular authority (i.e., Rome), and the frequent sources of division and contention are not in and of themselves constitutive of their political/ foundational theology but rather derivative of Donatist eschatological ecclesiology.



More specifically, the two theological categoriae inform a concrete "superstructure," that provided a context in the North African world within which the Donatist God and the revelation of whom could enter into the 'public history' of their niche in late antique civilization. This "superstructure" can be identified most simply in two allegorical cities or societies. North African tradition clearly illustrated the radical difference between those who had accepted the tradition of Christ with a deep, abiding faith in the Word of God and those who were at best ignorant of Christ and at worst, active persecutors of it. Their eschatological ecclesiology pitted the community of faith, among whom the Holy Spirit dwelled and enabled their understanding of the Scriptures, who made God present in their midst by their immediate response to prepare for Christ's second coming (eschaton) against a city of the world in its shadow, populated by those who have not entered God's ark of salvation and were threatened with damnation.

In order to advance a more certain comprehension of the 'two cities' superstructure as the context within which Donatist political/foundational theology (categorically divided into ecclesiology and eschatology) flourished, this paper will synthesize Donatist eschatology and ecclesiology separately in their compositional elements. The result will be that a nuanced theological/historical approach to understanding the Donatist phenomenon is appropriated.

#### A. *Donatist theology of the Church (ecclesiology)*

The notion of the nature of the Church in North Africa had a long period of gestation, dating back to at least Tertullian and possibly before him. Already in the late second and early third centuries, the concept of the Church as an alternative to the rest of the world had evolved *in nucleo*. By the time of Augustine, Donatist ecclesiological notions had changed considerably as the needs of North African Christians changed.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, the belief in the Church as opposed to the world persisted in various degrees as Donatists' eschatological notions expanded and contracted based on exterior pressures.

<sup>9</sup> Donatist ecclesiological notions ranged from a sense of being the persecuted church of the martyrs to being God's chosen collecta of God. And it was the image of collecta that served as the definitive and sustaining image for Donatist Christianity; TILLEY, *BCNA*, 178.



The historical Donatist understanding of the Church can be divided into roughly two over-lapping models: the church of the martyrs and as the collecta of Israel. This section will focus on those models, with the model of the church of the martyrs examined first.

### 1. Before Cirta

Scores and decades before the proto-Donatists 'drew lines in the North African sand' in 305 after the Great Persecution,<sup>10</sup> there existed a theology of the Church deeply rooted in the model of the martyrs and in the Scriptures.<sup>11</sup>

Tertullian, the grandfather of Donatism, elaborated upon the Latin African theology he had inherited and helped partly create.<sup>12</sup> Already in the early third century he articulated a vision of the Church as "the Bride of Christ, without spot or wrinkle."<sup>13</sup> Particular care was given to emphasize the separateness of the church from the world which included taking measures to safeguard sacramental life particularly the rite of baptism,<sup>14</sup> and in extolling the heroic model of the martyrs.<sup>15</sup> For these early proto-Donatists, defending the integrity of their faith was a deadly serious affair.<sup>16</sup> They were prepared and exhorted to rally for their *fraternitas* of truth of "two or three...gathered together in the unity of the Spirit."<sup>17</sup>

Tertullian bolstered these ideas with his integration of Roman methods of interpretation of the Bible.<sup>18</sup> From this source, they found the Scriptures to be revealed to them through the Spirit directly in their circumstances.<sup>19</sup> He also adopted a form of typological interpretation as part of his approach to the biblical literature,<sup>20</sup> whereby accounts of the past could illuminate the circumstances of the present or the future.

<sup>10</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 58.

<sup>11</sup> M. TILLEY, "The Ascetic Body and the (Un) Making of the World of the Martyr," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59/3 (1991): 467-479.

<sup>12</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 21.

<sup>13</sup> CYPRIAN, *De Pudicitia*, 21, "non habentem maculam aut rugam"; *Gesta Colationis Carthaginiensis* III.258.

<sup>14</sup> TERTULLIAN, *De Baptismo*, 5 and *De Exhortatione Castitatis*, 7; G. WILLIS, *Saint Augustine and the Donatist Controversy* (London, 1950), 145-147.

<sup>15</sup> CYPRIAN, *De Pudicitia*, 22.

<sup>16</sup> In essence, a Christian must be prepared to defend one's faith with one's own life; TERTULLIAN, *De Spectaculis*, 1, "christianos, expeditum morti genus." TERTULLIAN, *Ad Scapulam*, 5, "Nos haec non timere sed ultro vocare."

<sup>17</sup> TERTULLIAN, *Apologeticum*, 80.

<sup>18</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 21-23.

<sup>19</sup> Matt. 22:43 and Acts 4:25.

<sup>20</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 24,26.



In a sense, time was collapsed.<sup>21</sup> The eschaton prophesied about in the Scriptures was no longer something of the distant future but possible now, as evidenced by the unprecedented experience of martyrdom for his community.<sup>22</sup>

Tertullian's nuanced approach to typological interpretation of Scripture was particularly effective at enlisting potent models for the Church. He found Peter, Paul, and the Apostles to be exquisite examples of spiritual authority codified in the Christian faith by their efficacious martyrdoms, carried out in obedience to the Spirit.<sup>23</sup>

North African ecclesial theology was advanced further during the episcopate of Cyprian (248/249-258).<sup>24</sup> The Bishop of Carthage made considerable developments in the tradition through his experience of persecution in the reign of Emperor Decius. As a result of those persecutions, enhanced attention was placed on notions such as the purity of the Church, the distinguishing differences between the Church and the world, and the exemplification of the martyrs in pronouncing the coming of the reign of Christ (eschaton) with the assurance of the presence of the Spirit.<sup>25</sup>

Cyprian likewise contributed to the formation of Donatist theology through his continuation and *nuancement* of the North African Biblical hermeneutic. It is certainly true that Cyprian was heavily indebted to Tertullian's influence; nonetheless he diverged in how the Bible was to be reappropriated for his church.<sup>26</sup> For one, Cyprian posited the continued inspiration of the Spirit in the life of the Church.<sup>27</sup> This specifically gave shape to the later Donatist model,

<sup>21</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 26.

<sup>22</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 42-43.

<sup>23</sup> TERTULLIAN, *De Pudicitia*, 16: "Paulum, columnam immobile discinarum." TERTULLIAN, *De Exhortatione Castitatis*, 4, "Proprie enim Apostoli Spiritum sanctum habent..."

<sup>24</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 28.

<sup>25</sup> CYPRIAN, *Epistula*, 76.3, 5.

<sup>26</sup> Among the many points where Cyprian adopted Tertullian's biblical methodology and theological speculation were his belief in the unity of the Bible (albeit for Cyprian there was a hierarchy in the Bible: first the Gospels, then NT epistles, and then the OT) which confirmed and schematized typologies for the Church; M. FAHEY, *Cyprian and the Bible: A Study in Third-Century Exegesis*, *Cyprian and the Bible: A Study in Third-Century Exegesis* (Tübingen, 1971), 47. Too, Cyprian accepted that the Bible was the voice of the Spirit influencing the writer, *Ep.* 55.27. This aspect allowed for the illumination of passages alluding to Christ in the OT, especially the relationship between God and his nation Israel, the collecta, CYPRIAN, *De Catholicae Ecclesiae Unitate*, 2; *De Lapsis* 10; *Dominica Oratione*, 15; *Ep.* 58.1; *Ep.* 63.17.

<sup>27</sup> CYPRIAN, *Ep.* 66.10; PONTIUS, *Vita Cypriani*, 12-13.



whereby it was viewed that the Spirit rendered communication in interpreting texts. The needs of the community would be able to be guided in their changing circumstances.<sup>28</sup>

Secondly, Cyprian concluded that Scripture did not provide anecdotal evidence for living a just life, but actually gave God's commands.<sup>29</sup> This meant that the life and thought of the Church was able to be directed by the orders of God. This concept too would be used liberally by Donatists later, as was his facile use of the Bible as a unified text.<sup>30</sup>

Cyprian's system of biblical interpretation proved to be a potent mix, especially when combined with the literal and typological reading of the Bible he had inherited from Tertullian.

Perhaps one final remark about Cyprian's contribution to the ecclesiological tradition of Donatism would be about the bountiful examples of typologies he integrated into the tradition of the North African Church. For Cyprian, the figures in the Old Testament were not only types for the New Testament but also for his congregation.<sup>31</sup> So not only were Christ, the sacraments, and the Church rooted typologically speaking,<sup>32</sup> but so were the martyrs.<sup>33</sup> For Cyprian, like Tertullian and later the Donatists, the martyrs had a position of authority. However, it was not simply by the fact of martyrdom that martyrs were attributed authority, but because they were like the disciples, i.e., aided by the Spirit:

Beware of people; for they will hand you over to the assemblies and they will flog you in their synagogues. And you shall stand before kings and officials giving testimony to them and to the nations for my sake. And when they hand you over, do not think about how or what you shall say. What you are to say will be given to you at that time. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who is speaking in you.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>28</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 31-32.

<sup>29</sup> P. MONCEAUX, *Histoire Littéraire de l'Afrique Chrétienne Depuis les Origines Jusqu'à l'Invasion Arabe*. Tome Deuxième. *Saint Cyprien et Son Temps* (Paris, 1902), II. 317.

<sup>30</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 32.

<sup>31</sup> CYPRIAN, *Ad Fortunatum* 4.

<sup>32</sup> Tilley points out that Cyprian found a basis in the OT for among other things: (1) baptism, *Ep.* 69.2, *Ep.* 79.11, *Ep.* 70.1; (2) Christ, *Testimoniorum* 1.8, 2.1; *Ep.* 63.6; (3) Eucharist, *Ep.* 63.3, 4-6, 11; (4) priesthood, *Ep.* 59.4, 5, *Ep.* 77.4; (5) the Church, *Test.* 1.19, 1.20; *Unit.* 4, *Dom.* 5, *Ep.* 74.11, 75.15.

<sup>33</sup> CYPRIAN, *Ep.* 59.5-6.

<sup>34</sup> Matt.10:17-20 in CYPRIAN, *Ep.* 10.3-4; cf. *Ep.* 57.5, 76.5.



In Cyprian's favorite verses he codified the North African belief in martyrs as being true interpreters of the Word of God, living exegesis.<sup>35</sup> For Cyprian the Church is rooted in its present experience with typologies of the martyrs. Abel, the three youths in Daniel, the Maccabean brothers were modern-day examples or types of martyrs.<sup>36</sup> Their position was forecasted in the words of the prophets, presented by Jesus Christ, performed by the apostles, and made manifest in contemporary North Africa through the advocacy of the Holy Spirit.<sup>37</sup>

The final period of development for the North African view of their Church as the persecuted ark of salvation occurred in the span of time between Cyprian's death (258) and roughly the Great Persecution (303-305).

The literary record of martyrdom accounts of the time indicates a certain degree of solidification around the identification of the Church with martyrs. In short, persecution became to be seen as a mark of the true Church as the fledgling Christians to make sense of persecution and to define a path to withstand their tribulations.<sup>38</sup>

As was found above with Tertullian, the *Passio Perpetuae* was crucial in articulating an understanding of the Church in troubled times. The *Passio* established the Donatist literary genre, particularly with its rich application of biblical imagery of the Last Days. An eschatological ecclesiology was emphasized in this early North African work, replete with biblical imagery of the Devil and with the idea that the 'end of days' was now upon them.<sup>39</sup> The martyrs assumed the role of the latter-day saints, and the church of these martyrs was assured of protection as the elect of God.<sup>40</sup>

Later in the third century evidence surfaces that the North Africans view of ecclesiology began to change from a higher to lesser eschatology commensurate with the reality of having to persist day after day without the certainty of martyrdom.<sup>41</sup>

From the *Vita Cypriani* and *Acta Proconsularia* (268), the eschaton became less of an immediate reality as it was in the *Passio*

<sup>35</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 10.

<sup>36</sup> CYPRIAN, *Ep.* 10.4; *Ep.* 58.5.

<sup>37</sup> CYPRIAN, *Ep.* 10.4.

<sup>38</sup> Tilley indicates that the Bible was crucial for the Donatists in the period too as it provided imagery and theological depth necessary to keep the Christians united and able to comprehend their situation in the face of danger; TILLEY, *BCNA*, 41, 50.

<sup>39</sup> *Passio Sanctarum Perpetuae et Felicitatis*, in *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, trans. H. MUSURILLO (Oxford, 1972), 4.4; 12.1-7; 20.10.

<sup>40</sup> *Pass. Perp.* 4.3.

<sup>41</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 45.



*Perpetuae* but nonetheless the centrality of the martyrs remained, especially the example of Cyprian,<sup>42</sup> explained through the use of new typologies: the ministration of the angels in Daniel to elaborate Cyprian's utter dependence on God, the suffering of Job, the works of Tobias, the reliance of Elijah on God,<sup>43</sup> and even Christ's passion as the model for Cyprian especially in the temptation to flee persecution and death, the arrest in the garden, and examination by the Roman official before the crowds.<sup>44</sup>

The transformation to a model of the Church as a quotidian reality was furthered in a contemporary document, the *Passio Sanctorum Mariani et Iacobi* (259). Although this Numidian account, from Cirta, utilizes eschatological terms similar to those in the *Passio Perpetuae* such as epidemics, trumpets calls, latter-day saints, earthquakes, plagues, and horsemen of the apocalypse, the account differs from ancestral stories by its clearly Cyprianic influence whereby the martyrs were credited not only for their self-sacrifice but also because of their continuation of revelatory prophecy and the vicarious contribution of strengthening Christians for the path ahead by their example, which indicates that martyrdom was beginning to be understood as unnecessary for the continuation of the Church.<sup>45</sup>

This transition was again reiterated by another Proconsular account of the time. The *Passio Sanctorum Montani et Lucii* evidences a near complete change from worries about exterior threats to the Church and instead focuses on internal fissures rent by the devil, or the 'Evil One', responsible for interior schisms within the Christian community.<sup>46</sup> By this time the martyrs were used to emphasizing "endurance to the end and solidarity in times of stress."<sup>47</sup> In the years

<sup>42</sup> *Acta Proconsularia* 2 (CSEL. 3/3. CXI); PONTIUS, *Vita Cyp.* 11; TILLEY, *BCNA*, 44.

<sup>43</sup> PONTIUS, *Vita Cyp.* 3, 10, 11.

<sup>44</sup> PONTIUS, *Vita Cyp.* 14-18.

<sup>45</sup> Tilley illustrates this point with a direct reference from the *Passio Sanct. Mont. Luc.* (10.2, 11.1-7, 14.5; MURSILLO, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 196): "When they were on the point of waging their sublime struggle against the distresses of a cruel world and against the pagan onslaughts, it was their wish that their battle, which they had joined under the influence of the Spirit in heaven, should be communicated to their fellow citizens through me. And they did this not because that wanted the glory of the martyr's crown to be arrogantly broadcast, but rather that the ordinary men [sic] who constituted God's people might be given strength in the test of faith by the sufferings of those who had gone before."

<sup>46</sup> *Pass. Sanct. Mont. Luc.* 10.2; 11. 1-7; 14.5 (MURSILLO, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 222-24, 26).

<sup>47</sup> The *Pass. Sanct. Mont. Luc.* indicates a completed break from the earlier forms of martyr stories as it uses no apocalyptic message. Instead to ease the anxiety of the



directly before the Cirta council in 305, the early development of North African ecclesiology had concluded. What had started as a heavily apocalyptic eschatology-focused conception of the Church defined by its martyrs had gradually changed into a Church that relied heavily on biblical models for stability. At the same time that being a Christian in public became more common-place, it also started to become necessary for Christians to distinguish themselves from the rest of the world. This is observable in the last specimens of martyr stories in the pre-Cirta era.

The *Acta Maximiliani* (298) provided an account of a Roman soldier who was executed for refusing to continue his service to the Empire and hence commit an idolatrous act: "I cannot fight...for I am Christian."<sup>48</sup> Biblical imagery was used to support the separation of Christians from the world. In this case, Maximilian could not bear the military insignia for he bore the mark of Christ just as the saint in the Book of Revelation.<sup>49</sup> At the same time in Mauretania, the *Acta Marcelli* described another soldier who forthrightly renounced his duty to Rome to avoid idolatry through the symbolic public divestment of his military uniform. Instead of resorting to the typologies in past martyr stories that lent one to passively accept death, the *Acta Marcelli* placed significant importance on Maccabean typology for its defiant stand against oppression and confident confession of faith in creedal form.<sup>50</sup> This movement of bold action in response to state persecution was a literary water-shed for North Africa.<sup>51</sup>

community, the example of Cyprian is used to appease the fear of execution (*Pass. Mont. Luc.* 21.3-4; MURSILLO, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 234), the Good Thief at Jesus' Passion who asked to be remembered when Jesus entered his kingdom is typologized (*Pass. Mont. Luc.* 13.5-6), as well as the Maccabean matriarch and the hemorrhaging woman in Lk. 8:24-33 (*Pass. Mont. Luc.* 16.3-5; MURSILLO, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 230), and the three youths in Daniel (*Pass. Mont. Luc.* 3.4; MURSILLO, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 216) to serve as types of confidence and endurance under the pressure of death.

<sup>48</sup> *Acta Max.* 1.3 (MURSILLO, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 244).

<sup>49</sup> Rev. 7:2 in *Acta Max.* 2.4 (MURSILLO, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 246).

<sup>50</sup> 2 Macc. 7:13 and 4 Macc. 9:9, in *Pass. Mont. Luc.* 14.1 (MURSILLO, *Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, 226).

<sup>51</sup> This bold action was followed up in another contemporary document, the *Acts of Saint Felix Bishop and Martyr*, based on the Great Persecution in 303. Although the biblical typologies common in prior documents was absent, it strongly followed the developing tradition found in the *Acta Marcelli* with the document's insistence on defiance in the face of persecution and the continued emergence of the theme of the separation, and indeed superiority, of the Christian faith over the secular world. This is particularly clear in the dialogue between Felix and his Roman interrogator Magnilianus: "Magnilianus the curator said, 'Turn over whatever books or parchments you have.' Felix the bishop said, 'I have them but I won't turn them over.'" Magnilianus



By the time of composition of the final two martyr stories before the Great Persecution, ecclesiological considerations had driven the authors of the *Acta Crispinae* (303/304) and the *Passio S. Typasii Veterani* to all together ignore martyrdom as Christians began to deepen their sense of the nature of the Church define by their identity of separateness from the *saeculum*, which essentially replaced the role of the martyr.<sup>52</sup>

## 2. After Cirta

After the Council of Cirta (305) the outrage felt by the supporters of the recent martyrs and confessors towards the oppressors and cooperative clergy manifested itself in a split that formally matured into schism in 311. This split pitted agitated North African Christians who, in line with their tradition, were growing apart from the secular world against a minority who saw the future of the church at peace with the temporal regime.

The split between these groups was also definitive in articulating the desire of separation from the world in North African ecclesiology. The central description of the moment in Donatist history is preserved in the *Acts of the Abitinan Martyrs* (*Passio Ss. Dativi, Saturini presbyteri et aliorum*).<sup>53</sup> The martyrdom account, which actually fails to describe the actual martyrs' executions since martyrdom had become less emphasized in place of ecclesial separateness by that time (304-311),<sup>54</sup> evidences a distinctive change in how the Church was beginning to be understood. Not only did the incident described in its pages spur the rise of two churches but also concretized "Donatist self-identity and provided the impetus for a hermeneutical shift that ensured the survival of the Donatist "church of the martyrs" long after there were no more martyrs."<sup>55</sup>

The *Acts of the Abitinian Martyrs* captured this hermeneutical shift by reporting the complete division between true Christians and

the curator said, "It is better for me to be burned in the fire than the sacred scriptures, because it is better to obey God than any human authority (Acts 5:29)." Magnilianus the curator said, "What the emperor ordered takes priority over what you say." Felix the bishop said, "The Lord's command takes priority over human authority", *The Acts of Saint Felix Bishop and Martyr* §3, in M. TILLEY, *Donatist Martyr Stories: The Church in Conflict in Roman North Africa*. Translated Texts for Historians, vol. 24 (Liverpool, 1996), 9-10.

<sup>52</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 48-50.

<sup>53</sup> TILLEY, *DMS*, introduction, XI.

<sup>54</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 58.

<sup>55</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 11.



false ones. Lines had certainly then been drawn in the North African sand, with an ecclesiology intertwined with condemnation of *traditio* and the importance of the example of the martyrs. The Donatists had kept the faith, fought and died for the Word of God and have honored the martyrs while the false Christians betrayed God's Church:

Some fell from faith at the critical moment by handing over to unbelievers the scriptures of the Lord and the divine testaments so they could be burned in unholy fires. But how many more in preserving them bravely resisted by freely shedding their blood for them! When the devil had been completely defeated and ruined and all the martyrs were filled with God's presence, bearing the palm of victory over suffering, they sealed with their own blood the verdict against the traitors and their associates, rejecting them from communion of the Church. For it was not right that there should be martyrs and traitors in the Church of God at the same time.<sup>56</sup>

A final foray into this period highlights again the growing sense of separateness characteristic of Donatist ecclesiology. *The Passio Ss. Maximae, Donatillae, et Secundae* (304) and the *Sermo de passione Ss. Donati et Advocati* (317-321), two post-Cirta documents, provide evidence of a clear movement in the ecclesiological transformation of Donatism as well.

By the time these writings had arisen, eschatological language found previously in North African martyrdom accounts had nearly disappeared and an effort was made to downplay the theme of unity among Christians, more so in the latter than in the former.<sup>57</sup> As the occasions of martyrdoms decreased, the Donatist reliance on the Bible to understand their context as a large group in ordinary circumstances increased.<sup>58</sup> The Donatists defined their church with biblical typologies meant to differentiate themselves from *traditores* and the *saeculum*. They did this through labeling their opponents scribes and Pharisees, idolaters and worshippers of Nebuchadnezzar,<sup>59</sup> Caiaphas,<sup>60</sup> Judas, pseudo-Christ and pseudo prophets.<sup>61</sup> As the prospect of sustaining Donatist group cohesion lessened through identification as *ecclesia martyrorum*, these Christians revamped their ecclesiology to be validated through the Scriptures as God's own collecta, separated from the follies of the world.

<sup>56</sup> *Acts of the Abitinian Martyrs*, §2, in TILLEY, *DMS*, 29.

<sup>57</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 63-64.

<sup>58</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 62-63.

<sup>59</sup> Dan. 3:7 in *Pass. Max.* 1 (TILLEY, *DMS*, 17-24); TILLEY, *BCNA*, 64.

<sup>60</sup> Matt. 26:63 in *Pass. Max.* 2 (TILLEY, *DMS*, 52-60); TILLEY, *BCNA*, 65.

<sup>61</sup> *Sermon Given on the Passion of Saints Donatus and Advocatus*, 1 (*DMS*. 52-60; *PL*. 753A).



### B. *The elect of God and Collecta of Israel*

From the reign of the Christian Emperor Constantine to the end of the fourth century the Donatists were forced to continually streamline their *raison d'être* in a milieu where being a 'Christian' was becoming the norm in the Roman Empire.<sup>62</sup> Donatists in this period found success in maintaining their church in both good and bad times by solidifying their use of biblical typology of the Church as the *collecta* of Israel who obeyed the Laws of God, separated from those who did not.<sup>63</sup> Their church was a 'garden enclosed, a sealed fountain' (Cant. 4:12),<sup>64</sup> the Ark of salvation (Gen. 6-9) sealed against the outside world.<sup>65</sup> The Church is understood as the 'inside' (*intus*) and the world as 'outside' (*foris*) with light, godliness, and purity within and darkness, godlessness, and sin on the outside in the world. The "darkness will not mix with light, gall with honey; life will not mix with death nor innocence with guilt..."<sup>66</sup>

For the Donatists at that point, the "sacred and secular were two separate spheres, each contained within its own sociological milieu: the Church of the pure face-to-face with a hostile, persecuting world, with secular society and the Roman government, and with an apostate Church which had come to terms with them. The 'secular' was irretrievably 'profane.'"<sup>67</sup> In this context it was Donatist North Africa where God and the Church resides (Habakkuk 3:3), and the north is where the devil and the *saeculum* are found (Is. 14:15).<sup>68</sup>

#### 1. Between Constantine and Parmenian

Between 346 and 348, the distance which North African ecclesiology went in leaving behind the definition of their church as the *ecclesia martyrorum* and in accepting their church as the *collecta* is

<sup>62</sup> M. TILLEY, "Sustaining Donatist Self-Identity: From the Church of the Martyrs to the *Collecta* of the Desert", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 5:1 (Baltimore, 1997): 21-35.

<sup>63</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 65.

<sup>64</sup> CYPRIAN, *Ep.* 69.2, 74.11; OPTATUS, *De Schismate*, I.10; II.13; AUGUSTINE, *Contra Cresconium grammaticum partis Donati* I.34-40, IV.63.77. See also R.A. MARKUS, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge, 1970), 112.

<sup>65</sup> AUGUSTINE, *Ad Catholicos Epistulae de Secta Donatistarum*, 5.9.

<sup>66</sup> AUGUSTINE, *Contra Litteras Petiliani*, II.39.92.

<sup>67</sup> MARKUS, *Saeculum*, 122.

<sup>68</sup> H. CHADWICK, "Donatism", in *The Church in Ancient Society. From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (New York, 2001), 383.



evident as they entered a cycle of calm times as well as times of moderate turbulence from the state. In two martyrdom accounts from this period, the *Sermo de passio Maximiani et Isaac* and the *Passio Benedicti Martyris Marculi* (347), no eschatological motifs are used<sup>69</sup> and in its place were instead typologies of the collecta such as the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16),<sup>70</sup> who are always on the alert ("He says, 'I sleep while my heart keeps watch.'" [Cant.5:2; Gen. 22])<sup>71</sup> against the Catholic *tyrannus* and *carnifex* as well as the Jews who had conspired with idolaters.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, the watchword of Donatism had become *separatism* with martyrdom a rare and distant reality.<sup>73</sup>

The last decades of the fourth century brought new challenges to the leadership of the Donatist Church and the same holds true for its ecclesiology. With the arrival of Emperor Julian and the subsequent ascension of the Donatist Church as the majority religion in North Africa, it became impossible to use the same ecclesiological paradigms any longer. As such, the church had to constantly redefine itself through the notion of separateness from the world and the worldly Catholics, the *sine qua non* for the survival of the Donatist Christians.<sup>74</sup>

## 2. After Parmenian and up to the Council of Carthage of 411

Parmenian's most significant contribution was his implementation of policies to encourage inclusivity towards non-Donatists, including Rogatists and Catholics. The 'dotes' theology of Parmenian was an attempt by Parmenian to broaden the ecclesiology of the church in order that more could enter into it, specifically by rejecting the notion of the Donatist Church as the church of the pure.<sup>75</sup> The idea of a church of the pure was deflated by Parmenian's explanation that personal sin, particularly that of a minister, was of less importance in conferring a

<sup>69</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 74.

<sup>70</sup> *Pass. Maximiani* (DMS. §11; PL. 8.771); TILLEY, *BCNA*, 73.

<sup>71</sup> *Pass. Maximiani* (DMS. §8; PL. 8.770B); TILLEY, *BCNA*, 75.

<sup>72</sup> 2 Macc. 7:29, Matt. 26:57 in *Passio Marculi* (PL. 8.761A-B, 762B, 763D, 765A); *Passio Maximiani* (PL. 8.769A); TILLEY, *BCNA*, 76.

<sup>73</sup> Tilley emphasizes this point to illustrate that concepts such as the church of the pure and the church of martyrs had fallen out of usage long before the Council of 411; TILLEY, *BCNA*, 179.

<sup>74</sup> M. TILLEY, "Donatus, Donatism", in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. A. FITZGERALD (Grand Rapids, MI, 1999), 286.

<sup>75</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 101, 179.



valid sacrament. What was paramount was membership in the authentic church, the one free of the stain of *traditio* and the contagion of the sons/ heirs of the *traditores*.<sup>76</sup> And it is this church that is identifiable by the dots theology. Perhaps Parmenian's contribution is best stated in the following:

The significant advance Parmenian made was to provide in a well-articulated form what had been heretofore only latent in Donatist ecclesiology, that is, it is not the personal holiness but the ecclesial affiliation of the minister of the sacrament that is necessary for validity.<sup>77</sup>

The combination of Parmenian's ecclesiological innovation which strengthened the church position as the justifiable majority church in Africa was enabled further by his enhanced usage of biblically-based eschatology as a means of arguing for conversion to Donatist Christianity immediately, as the hour of judgment was sooner rather than later. Indeed Donatist theology under Parmenian matured as God's kingdom was to be realized in their immediate context.<sup>78</sup>

Tyconius followed Parmenian in attempting to adapt Donatist ecclesiology to changing circumstances. Like Parmenian before him, Tyconius acknowledged the reality of sin in the Church. In his *Liber regularum*, *De Diable et corpora eius*, Tyconius moved to state that not only is sin a reality in the church, but actually an inherent element of it. As surely as there is north and south, the Church has a bipartite nature.<sup>79</sup> This bipartite nature, consisting of two 'peoples' or 'cities' exists as if one body as a *corpus permixtum* until the separation of the two cities or peoples at the Last Judgment, the eschaton.<sup>80</sup> This finding had pronounced results in advancing both for Donatist theology and other Latin Christianities. Augustine, a Roman Catholic, would adopt the '*corpus permixtum*' concept into Catholic thought, claiming its biblical basis. The *permixta ecclesia* was to be found in among other places, Christ's example of the parable of the tares interspersed with the wheat in the Gospel of Matthew (13: 47-48).<sup>81</sup>

<sup>76</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 102-103, 106.

<sup>77</sup> TILLEY, *BCNA*, 106.

<sup>78</sup> For more on Parmenian's eschatological ecclesiology, see TILLEY, *BCNA*, 108-112.

<sup>79</sup> TYCONIUS, *Liber Regularum*. Texts and Translations 31. Early Christian Literature Series 7, trans. W. BABCOCK (Atlanta, 1989), §7 (pp. 72-75).

<sup>80</sup> MARKUS, *Saeculum*, 117.

<sup>81</sup> AUGUSTINE, *De doctrina christiana*, III. 32.



This duality would find itself continually reappearing in Augustine's thought. His *Civitate Dei* is an outstanding example with its insistence on classifications such as the *civitas Dei peregrine* shadowed by *civitas terrena*, two realities in one existence until the return of Christ:

In this wicked world, and in these evil days...many reprobate are mingled in the Church with the good. Both are as it were collected as in the net of the Gospel; and in this world, as in a sea, both swim together without separation, enclosed in the net until brought ashore.<sup>82</sup>

By the final decade of the fourth century, the ecclesiological advances of Parmenian and Tyconius were retarded as the Donatist Church and North Africa saw an unprecedented period of expansion of Donatist temporal power and a Catholic ascendancy afterwards. In the short time between the death of Parmenian in 392 and the Council of Carthage in 411, Donatist ecclesiology endured a series of setbacks as the new generation of leadership retreated from the pathways of Parmenian and Tyconius and instead resorted to an earlier ecclesial model of *ecclesia martyrorum* to handle the combined threat of the Catholic Church and renewed imperial intervention. This development was at the heart of the so-called defeat of Donatism in 411. By refusing to remain open to the fact of being the new majority church and adapting to changing circumstances in the 390s and 400s, Donatism was unable to do anything other than regressing. This event deeply and undeniably affected the existence of Donatist Christians in their daily life as their church became persecuted again; which deeply affected its political theology overall. Only by regaining a sense of being the collecta of Israel later in the 410s and 420s and beyond did Donatist Christianity regain its ecclesiological, and hence political-theological, bearings which enabled its persistent existence until the arrival of the Arab invasion in the seventh century.

## §2. Eschatological Urgency

The centrality of Donatist ecclesiology as reviewed in the previous section was evident. Ecclesiology was at the heart of Donatism and the source of its theological dynamism in the fourth and fifth centuries as the church responded to ever-changing realities. Without the

<sup>82</sup> AUGUSTINE, *De civitate Dei*, XVIII, 49. For further analysis on the Donatist influence on Augustine, see the excursus on Tyconius' influence on Augustine in: J. VAN OORT, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study Into Augustine's City of God and the Sources of His Doctrine of the Two Cities* (Leiden, 1991), ch. 4, sect. C.



Donatist Church's eschatological ecclesiology, it would not have been possible for the religion to adapt to changing from a persecuted minority to a powerful majority, from the model of an *ecclesia martyrorum* to the collecta of Israel.

But armed only with their ecclesiology the Donatist Christians would have remained powerless against the attacks and maneuvers of the more powerful and resourceful Romans and Catholics. Where Donatist put their faith into practice, or made their theoretical components of their theology play out in their context, and genuinely realized a political theology was by acting in accord with their eschatology: an eschatology of urgency. This eschatology which animated Donatist ecclesiology and theology as a whole into political theology also had as a by-product the source of many of the controversies that the Donatists encountered with the Catholics. It was by passionately defending the faith means of salvation, a matter of necessity for the Donatists that issues such as rebaptism, ecclesial affiliation, the integrity of ordination, and especially the activities of the Circumcelliones came to the fore.

In this section, the Donatist eschatology will be analyzed in its respective parts and manifestations in order to complete the portrait of foundational political theology.

#### A. *The integrity of the Church*

One of the driving forces behind much of what Donatists said and did was their trademark sense of immediacy in achieving their agenda, and this was particularly true in articulating their eschatology.<sup>83</sup> Because Donatist theology held that Scripture was guiding their community in their contemporary experience to follow God's Law and because of their collective experience of the unpredictability of an encounter of martyrdom, the Church must adhere faithfully to the Word of God and act as if the final hour were upon them. This perhaps explains the level of seriousness the Donatists employed while defending and adhering to the ways in which God's revelation and will was actualized in their time and place as political theology.

<sup>83</sup> Parmenian was perhaps the best example of a Donatist who articulated the nearness or immediacy of Judgment Day. See TILLEY, *BCNA*, 111; M. TILLEY, "When Schism Becomes Heresy in Late Antiquity: Developing Doctrinal Deviance in the Wounded Body of Christ", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 15:1 (Baltimore, 2007), 18.



# 1. The Dignity of Ordination and Sacramental Transmission or Conference

Although the topic of the validity of ordination was a hot-button ecclesiological and sacramental subject from the time of the Cirta council to well after the Council of Carthage in 411, it was also a particular concern for the Donatists' eschatology. The whole dilemma of whether a church was transmitting grace or *traditio* was a concern at the time the Donatist Church formally sprang into existence as a separate entity and reached its most cultivated expression with Parmenian. The error that the *traditores* committed occasioned the penetration of sin into the inner-life of the Church in a profound way. Those who opted against the Church, and instead for the world, had set themselves outside the safe confines of salvation. In the context where the Last Judgment was a much nearer reality than their Catholic counterparts believed, it was of the utmost importance to rectify *traditio* or risk damnation through disconnection from God's grace in the sacramental order.

Parmenian led the development of Donatist eschatology, and as with his ecclesiological work, relied again on typological references in the Bible. He used one particular parable, the parable of the vine and the branches (Jn. 15:1-8) to emphasize the necessity for Catholics to reconnect to the 'vine', the true Church:

Amongst other things you [Parmenian] have said that the schismatics [Catholics, *traditores*] have been cut off, like branches, from the vine, and they have been reserved, marked off for punishment, like dried wood, for the fires of hell [the Last Judgment].<sup>84</sup>

For the Donatists worries about the Last Judgment were for the present, not the future. Conversion was necessary immediately!

Parmenian also used biblical typology to be unambiguous in allotting the designation of the legacy of *traditio* on the Catholics in North Africa. To Parmenian the Catholics were "the children of adulterers [who] do not grow up...false shoots cannot strike deep roots" (Wis. 3:16, 4:13).<sup>85</sup> The sons of the *traditores*, of those who forsake the fountain and dug broken cisterns for themselves (Jer. 2:13)<sup>86</sup> offer sacraments that must be avoided to escape contamination as directed by God "Let not the oil of the sinner anoint my head" (Ps. 140.5).<sup>87</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Parmenian quoted by OPTATUS, *De Schismate*, 1.10.

<sup>85</sup> OPTATUS, *De Schismate*, 4.8.

<sup>86</sup> AUGUSTINE, *Contra Epistulum Parmeniani*, 2.10.20.

<sup>87</sup> OPTATUS, *De Schismate*, 4.7.



## 2. Rebaptism

Perhaps no other theological matter in the entire Donatist saga sparked as much reaction and was as prolific as the rebaptism controversy. In order to understand the reason behind why the Donatists so adamantly defended the North African tradition of reconciling those who had lapsed with a new baptism it seems that this too can be best explained best within the Donatist eschatological context.

The vast array of baptismal typologies used by the Donatists attests to their view that the Catholics had faulty sacraments and thus no access to the means of salvation, but what these typologies also attest to is the need for Catholics to come to be rebaptized as a matter of utmost urgency:

Heaven trembled because the people of God have done two malevolent deeds: they have abandoned the fountain of living water and they have dug for themselves leaky cisterns which cannot hold water.<sup>88</sup>

For the Donatists, their political theology necessitated the gathering-in of those Christians in the world who were baptized with "living water which did not contain faith."<sup>89</sup> The only solution, before it was too late, was to bring into the Donatist Church those outside it typified in John 19:34, into the real body of Christ where the real water of life flows.<sup>90</sup> This Body of Christ, the ark (Gen. 6:14), the walled in garden (Cant.4:12)<sup>91</sup> is where one must be for the impending return of Christ. With the greatest sense of urgency possible, Donatist political theology motivated North Africans to bring about the conformity of all in their lands to the one "one Lord, one faith, one baptism."<sup>92</sup> Without a doubt, the matter of rebaptism is given a deeper meaning in the long debate between the Donatists and Catholics when it is brought in under the umbrella of the Donatist eschatological ecclesiology.

Augustine and the Catholic understanding of baptism was starkly opposed to the Donatists'. From their perspective, baptism is efficacious regardless of the dispositions of the minister because it the channeled grace of God at work in the sacrament.<sup>93</sup> It is this grace that imposes an indelible mark on the baptized that is permanent like a

<sup>88</sup> Jer. 2:13 in OPTATUS, *De Schismate*, 4.9.

<sup>89</sup> Jer. 5:18 in AUGUSTINE, *Cont. Ep. Parm.* 2.10.20; AUGUSTINE, *Cont. Cresc.* 2.23.28; AUGUSTINE, *Epistula ad Catholicos de Secta Donatistarum*, 23.64.

<sup>90</sup> AUGUSTINE, *Ep. ad Cath.* 24.68.

<sup>91</sup> OPTATUS, *De Schismate*, 1.12; TERTULLIAN, *De pud.* 21.9; TERTULLIAN, *Unit.* 4.

<sup>92</sup> Letter to the Ephesians, 4:5 in AUGUSTINE, *Cont. Cresc.* 1.28.33 (353), AUGUSTINE, *De Unico Baptismo contra Petilianum*, 10.17.

<sup>93</sup> AUGUSTINE, *In Ioannis Evangelium Tractatus*, 5.15; *De baptismo*, III.10.15.



branding of flesh.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, Augustine would accept Donatists back into the church without the condition of rebaptism.<sup>95</sup>

### 3. The Collegiality of Church Leaders

Another way in which the Donatists realized their eschatological ecclesiology was in their insistence on ecclesial collegiality. This example is not as obvious in and of itself as the instances of rebaptism and the conference of sacraments. Only within the context where an urgent sense of the arrival of the Last Judgment where all the saved will be equals before God does this example make sense.

The first example of Donatist collegiality is that of the *seniores laici*. This group of lay people (who had an important role in two periods covered in this research, the scandal over the election of Mensurius in 311 and the controversy involving Primian in 393) remains highly elusive in history.<sup>96</sup> However, what seems to be clear is that within the North African Christian tradition there was for a considerable period of time a group of laymen alternately titled *fidelis seniores*,<sup>97</sup> *seniores plebis*,<sup>98</sup> *seniores christiani populi*,<sup>99</sup> *seniores laicorum*<sup>100</sup> in charge of collaboration with the bishops and material management.

From what records remain it seems that the main duties for the *seniores laici* involved administrative and disciplinary matters.<sup>101</sup> Beyond the disciplinary involvements in 311 and 392/393,<sup>102</sup> the group also acted as an oversight committee in reviewing the alleged traditio

<sup>94</sup> AUGUSTINE, *In Ioannis Evangelium Tractatus*, 6.15; *De baptismo*, I.4.5.

<sup>95</sup> AUGUSTINE, *Contra Epistulum Parmeniani*, 2.13; *De symbolo ad catechumenos*, 8.16.

<sup>96</sup> W.H.C. FREND, "The Seniores Laici and the Origins of the Church in North Africa", *Journal of Theological Studies* 12/2 (1961): 280-284. P. MONCEAUX opined that the group had a probable origin with the village chieftains in Numidia and Proconsularia; *Histoire Littéraire de l'Afrique Chrétienne Depuis les Origines Jusqu'à l'Invasion Arabe. Tome Troisième. Le IV<sup>e</sup> Siècle, D'Arnobé à Victorin* (Paris, 1905), III.83.10.

<sup>97</sup> OPTATUS, *De Schismate*, I.17.

<sup>98</sup> *Gesta apud Zenophilium*, in *S. Optati Milevitani Libri VII* (CSEL. 26, ed. C. ZIWSA (Vienna, Prague, Leipzig, 1893), 189.

<sup>99</sup> *Acta Purgationis Felicis episcopi Autumnitani*, CCSL. 26, ed. C. ZIWSA (Turnhout, 2000), 198, 201.

<sup>100</sup> *Breviarium Hipponense* [Breviary of the Council of Hippo] in *Concilia Africae A.345-A.525* (CCSL. 149, ed. C. MUNIER (Turnhout, 1974), can. 100; AUGUSTINE, *Epistula*, 78.

<sup>101</sup> FREND, *Seniores Laici*, 281.

<sup>102</sup> OPTATUS, *De Schismate*, I.17, 18; AUGUSTINE, *Ennarationes in Psalmos*, 36.20.



of Felix of Apthunga as well as direct involvement with appointing and interacting with episcopal arbitrators concerning complaints by the *seniores* against the Bishop of Nova Germanica.<sup>103</sup>

Regardless of the exact historicity of this endemic North African ecclesial vestige, the case can and should be made that these Christianized village-chieftains participated in living out Donatist political theology in a unique way precisely by realizing the Donatist eschatological ecclesiology where distinctions between laity and clergy disappear since the final days were at hand.

The second example of Donatist eschatological collegiality is that of the North African bishops.<sup>104</sup> From the inception of Latin Christianity in the second and third centuries, bishops played a predominate, yet collegial, function in the life of the African church in conjunction with the *seniores laici*. We know that in this period of history presbyters held a much less important role in ecclesial leadership than the ubiquitous bishops found in every city and village.<sup>105</sup> Among the bishops themselves they “selected candidates for episcopal ordination, made provincial policy, and took care of disputes between priests and other clergy.”<sup>106</sup> Additionally, North African bishops shared governance jointly within their provinces (broken down into Proconsularia, Numidia, Byzacena, Tripolitania, Mauretania),<sup>107</sup> the primate of which was based on seniority rather than a hierarchical see-city (with the historically rich example of Carthage as an exception).<sup>108</sup> This collegiality extended between provinces too which allowed for the attainment of common policies and to concentrate on joint areas of interest.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>103</sup> *Breviarium Hipponense*, can. 100.

<sup>104</sup> M. TILLEY, “North Africa”, in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. I, *Origins to Constantine*, ed. M. MITCHELL and F. YOUNG (Cambridge, 2006): 380-396.

<sup>105</sup> Examples of the superior placement of bishops over presbyters, see M. TILLEY, “The Collapse of a Collegial Church: North African Christianity on the Eve of Islam,” *Theological Studies* 62:1 (March, 2001), 6. The term *sacerdos* was reserved for bishops alone (VICTOR OF TUNNENNA, 466 in *Victoris episcopi Tonnennensis Chronica* (444-567) in *Mon. Germ. Hist.*, AA 11/1.187 [Berlin, 1844]); priests rarely exercised independent thinking and governance (CYPRIAN, *Ep.* 66.8.3).

Regarding the omnipresence of bishops in North Africa, see A. von HARNACK, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*. 2 vols, trans. J. MOFFATT (New York, 1908), 1.281-86; D. HUNT, “The Church as a Public Institution”, in *The Cambridge Ancient History, Volume XIII. The Late Empire, A.D. 337-425*, ed. A. CAMERON and P. GARNSEY (Cambridge, 1998): 242.

<sup>106</sup> TILLEY, *Collapse*, 7.

<sup>107</sup> TILLEY, *Collapse*, 8.

<sup>108</sup> TILLEY, *Collapse*, 8.

<sup>109</sup> TILLEY, *Collapse*, 8. North African episcopal collegiality was to continue beyond the Council of Carthage in 411, albeit in a gradually weaker form. Tilley



The fact that such consensus existed in the late antique Church, even after the legalization of Christianity is impressive. But for the sake of this paper, what is important is the manner in which Donatist episcopal collegiality fit within the context of their eschatological ecclesiology. Though this example of collegiality has been studied before for the purposes of understanding the evolution of bishops in early church history, it is my opinion that the collegiality of North Africans bishops, along with the *seniores laici*, is best understood within the framework of the Donatist concept of an impending eschatology. The end of days was soon to come, God had given humanity the ark of salvation in preparation for the eschaton and the leaders and ministers of the ark, the Church, were to act as if the eschaton was already upon them. This is an example of bringing North African belief into their real world and everyday life, hence creating a political theology.

At the same time it is interesting to note how strongly the Donatist sense of collegiality differed from the Catholics'. Beginning with the reign of Constantine,<sup>110</sup> Catholic bishops experienced a progressive sharing in imperial authority and of being answerable on a spiritual as well as secular level.<sup>111</sup> This became such a burden by

indicates that the collapse of Christianity upon the advent of Islam was actually the result of a series of setbacks. These setbacks included the suppression efforts of the Vandals after their arrival in 429 (TILLEY, *Collapse*, 9-13), the restructuring of civil and ecclesiastical power in the 530s by the Byzantine Empire (TILLEY, *Collapse*, 13-17), and the long term efforts of the church and bishops of Rome to exert stronger influence and oversight over the affairs of the see of Carthage; AUGUSTINE, *Letter 20\**, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Letters 211-270, 1\*-29\* (Epistulae), II/4*, trans. R. TESKE, ed. B. RAMSEY (Hyde Park, NY, 2005); J.E. MERDINGER, *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine* (New Haven, CT, 1997), chapters 8 (111-135) and 11 (183-199); TILLEY, *Collapse*, 17-22).

<sup>110</sup> One example is from c.318 when it apparently became possible under Constantine for bishops to preside over court affairs when properly delegated, the evidence however is scant; *Codex Theodosianus. The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions*, trans. C. PHARR (Princeton, 1952), I.27.1.

<sup>111</sup> An abundance of recent scholarship offers insight into phenomenon, see: P. BROWN, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison, WI, 1992); J. MERDINGER, *Rome and the African Church in the Time of Augustine* (New Haven, 1997); C. RAPP, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley/L.A., 2005); R. ENO, "The Significance of the Lists of Roman Bishops in the Anti-Donatist Polemic", *Vigiliae Christianae* 47 (1993); E. LAMIRANDE, "Coercitio", *Augustinus-Lexikon* 1, ed. C. MAYER (Basel, 1999): 1038-1046; M. GAUMER-A. DUPONT, "Understanding Augustine's Changing Justification for State-sponsored Religious Coercion and its Context Within Donatist North Africa", *Augustinus* 55 (2009); F. RUSSELL, "Persuading the Donatists: Augustine's Coercion by Words", in *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honor of R.A. Markus*,



Augustine's time that he openly complained about spending an inordinate amount of energy on matters not pertaining to the Church.<sup>112</sup> But, in all fairness, the gradual assumption of secular duties by Western bishops did eliminate the reality of lay influence in acclaiming bishops in late antiquity in general. The examples of Martin of Tours, Hilary of Arles, and many others are well preserved.<sup>113</sup>

### *B. In defense of the Church in preparation for the Lord*

One of the most concrete proofs for the existence of a Donatist political theology is the method used by North African Christians to bring about the radical reality of their faith into their villages and cities. One of the distinguishing characteristics of Donatist Christianity is the zeal and intensity with which these Christians displayed their faith in everyday life and in times of persecution. There was no doubt for the people of late antiquity that the Donatists truly believed their faith and were not bashful to express it. The most potent example of this phenomenon was the existence of the Circumcelliones.

#### 1. Circumcelliones as harbingers of Donatist eschatological ecclesiology and as defenders of the ark of the salvation

Part of the complexity of demonstrating the manner in which the Circumcelliones were in fact part and parcel of the realization of Donatist political theology is found in the fact that the Numidian group has always been stigmatized as excessively fanatical barbarian "disruptors" hell-bent on eradicating any semblance of Roman "civilization."<sup>114</sup> This is largely due to the efforts of late antique Catholic polemicists, most notably Augustine.<sup>115</sup>

ed. W.E. KLINGSHIRN and M. VESSEY (Ann Arbor, MI, 1999): 129-130; M. LENSKY, "Evidence for the *Audentia episcopalis* in the New Letters of Augustine", in *Law, Society, and Authority in Late Antiquity*, ed. R. MATHISEN (Oxford, 2001): 83-97.

<sup>112</sup> Evidence of this is found in AUGUSTINE, *Serm.* 287.11; refer also to POSSIDIUS, *Vita Augustini*, 19, 24.

<sup>113</sup> An extensive study of lay participation in episcopal elections and the process in general is found in: P. NORTON, *Episcopal Elections 250-600: Hierarchy and Popular Will in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2007).

<sup>114</sup> Augustine condemns the Circumcelliones for being "disrupters of the existing, divinely ordained, social order" (*Ep.* 185.4.15); see W.H.C. FREND, "The Roman Empire in the Eyes of Western Schismatics during the Fourth Century A.D.", *Extraits des Miscellanea Historiae Ecclesiasticae Stockholm 1960* (Louvain, 1961), 13.

<sup>115</sup> AUGUSTINE, *Cont. Ep. Parm.* 1.12.19, "Ubi etiam circumcellioneum menti facta est, si more suo vilenter obsisterent"; *Ep.* 185.25 (*De Correctione Donatistarum liber unus*), "Sed in quorum regionibus aliaquas violentias a clericis vel circumcellionibus



It is, however, my contention that denigrating the Circumcelliones as mere barbarians completely obscures the actual purpose of the group in the North African context. In short, the Circumcelliones can and should be considered within the entirety of the eschatological/ ecclesiological framework explored in these pages. If so, then it would be sensible that in a church where the coming of Christ and direct inspiration of the Scriptures to follow God's commands, such Christians could easily adopt a form of religious expression predating the arrival of Christianity in Africa for the purposes of demonstrating in their daily lives and routines the nearness and will of God.

In the Donatist worldview, with its deeply eschatological sense of separation from the world, of *civitas Dei* (the Church) pitted against the *civitas Diaboli* (the world and false Christians),<sup>116</sup> it is no surprise that the walls of the garden of salvation (Cant. 4:12) would require brave Christians willing to defend it against the citizens of the *civitas Diaboli* wishing to overtake it.<sup>117</sup>

verl populis eorum ecclesia catholica paterentur..." *Contra Gaudentium Thamugadensen episcopum Donatistarum*, 1.32, "Les Circumcelliones faisaient irruption dans l'arène, et les jeunes gens les perçaient de leurs épieux ou de leurs petites lances"; *Cont. Parm.* 2.6.19, "Leur religion est avant tout le culte des martyrs, et leurs errances prennent la forme d'un pèlerinage à leurs tombes; ils sont fidèles à la pratique de la "laetitia" près de ces "memoriae", et leurs célébrations sont des bacchanales d'ivrognes, célébrées avec des bandes de femmes se disant "sanctimoniales" donatistes, avec les quelles ils vivent dans la débauche."

This polemical approach to the Circumcelliones continues even up to contemporary times, e.g., FREND, *DC*, the Circumcelliones are referred to as "terrorists" (172) and "religious fanatics" (173); F. VAN DER MEER, *Augustine the Bishop: The Life and Work of a Father of the Church*, trans. B. BATTERSHAW and G.R. LAMB (London, 1961), "The Donatists and the Circumcelliones known for their hotheaded violence" (79-128); C. LEPELLEY, "Circumcelliones", in *Augustinus-Lexikon* 1, ed. C. MAYER (Basel, 1999); C. LEPELLEY, "Les Circumcelliones étaient, au temps d'Augustine, l'aile extrême et violente de l'église donatiste" (930); C. LEPELLEY, "les circumcelliones comme des brigands et des fanatiques" (934); J. KELEHER, *Saint Augustine's Notion of Schism in the Donatist Controversy, Dissertationes ad Lauream* 34 (Mundelein, IL, 1961), the Circumcelliones as "terrorists" (24); J. O'DONNELL, *Augustine: A Biography* (New York, 2006), "Donatism, had it prevailed and become the Christianity of the middle ages, would have been far more like Islam" (359, footnote 365).

<sup>116</sup> TYCONIUS, *Commentarius in Apocalypsin Ioannis*, trans. BEATUS OF LIBANA (Madrid, 1772), ed. H. FLORENZ (American Academy of Rome, 1939), 506, "Ecce duas civitates, unam Dei, unam diaboli...et in utrasque reges terrae ministrant." Quoted in FREND, *DC*, 204.

<sup>117</sup> TYCONIUS, *In Apocalypsin* (Beatus, 316), "Diximus quator angelos bipartitos esse, et invicem mixtos, id est ecclesiam et regna mundi: cirabimus opportune commemorare mundi regna, vel maxime presens regnum, in medio esse ecclesia, per orbem in falsos fratres." Quoted in FREND, *DC*, 317.



The fact that violence accompanied the actions of the Circumcelliones is beyond a doubt. Many reasonable theories have been developed to explain the radical element of this manifestation of Donatism, particularly how the deep economic and social undercurrents of rural Numidians drove the movement.<sup>118</sup> But what has been largely ignored and could indeed provide a deeper insight into the Circumcelliones are the largely religious motivations of the group.<sup>119</sup>

## 2. Circumcellion Origins and Spirituality

The Circumcelliones entered into Donatist literary history in 340 during the years of Donatus' greatest episcopal strength.<sup>120</sup> These Christians primarily originated in Numidia and Mauretania and as agrarian laborers, organized in protest against economic conditions set by the wealthier, Roman plantation owners.<sup>121</sup> These Donatist Christians referred not to themselves as Circumcelliones as such, but rather as *agonistici* or *milites Christi*.<sup>122</sup> The appellation 'Circumcellion' derived from the method of their living arrangements 'around the

<sup>118</sup> A number of theories stand out, an example spread consists of the following: F. MARTROYE, "Une tentative de révolution sociale en Afrique. Donatistes et circoncellions", *RQH* 76 (1904): 353-416; 77 (1905): 5-53; F. MARTROYE, "Circoncellions", *DACL* 3/2 (1914): 1692-1710; H.-J. DIESNER, "Methodisches und Sachliches zum Circumcellionentum", *WZHalle* 8 (1959): 1009-1016; 9 (1960): 183-190; H.-J. DIESNER, "Die Periodisierung des Circumcellionentums", *WZHalle* 11 (1962): 1329-1338; C. LEPELLEY, "Les cités de l'Afrique romaine qu Bas-Empire 1" (Paris, 1979); M. OVERBECK, "Augustin und die Circumcellionen seiner Zeit", *Chiron* 3 (1973): 457-463.

<sup>119</sup> M. GADDIS, *There Is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ: Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley/L.A., 2005), 107 (footnote 14).

<sup>120</sup> Frend disagrees with the assertion of P. MONCEAUX in *Histoire Littéraire de l'Afrique Chrétienne Depuis les Origines Jusqu'à l'Invasion Arabe. Tome Quatrième: Le Donatisme* (Paris, 1921), IV.179, that the Circumcellion movement began in 316-317 and opts for the period closer to 340. See FREND, *DC*, 171 and S. LANCEL, *The Donatist Dispute*, trans. A. NEVILL (London, 2002), 196.

<sup>121</sup> AUGUSTINE titled the early Circumcelliones as *agrestes* or farm workers; *Cont. Gaud.* I.28.32; POSSIDIUS, *Vita Aug.*, 10. The initial Circumcellion uprising was captured in writing by OPTATUS, "nulli licuit securum esse in possessionibus suis; debitorum chirographa amiserant vires, nullus creditor illo tempore exigendi habuit potestatem", *De Schismate*, III.4.

<sup>122</sup> AUGUSTINE, *Enerr. in Ps.* 132.6; W.H.C. FREND, *The Rise of Christianity* (London, 1984), 74; H. CHADWICK, "Orthodoxy and Heresy from the Death of Constantine to the Eve of the First Council of Ephesus", in *The Cambridge Ancient History, Volume XIII. The Late Empire, A.D. 337-425*, ed. A. CAMERON and P. GARNSEY (Cambridge, 1998), 585.



shrines' (Lat. *circum cellas*)<sup>123</sup> of the martyrs which also served as large granaries and farm hubs.<sup>124</sup> These shrines were the expressive *loci* of their faith where they venerated the tombs of saints and commemorated pilgrimages in their honor.<sup>125</sup>

But what makes the Circumcellion movement most attractive as a case study for identifying a manifestation of Donatist political theology is its distinctive and overt spirituality by which they sought to implement God's kingdom, and in doing so came to implement Donatist doctrine in its extreme form."<sup>126</sup>

The veneration of the martyrs and of martyrdom stood out as one of the most significant and controversial Circumcellion trademarks. In addition to living and worshiping at the shrines of martyrs,<sup>127</sup> Circumcelliones were reported to have actively prepared for martyrdom,<sup>128</sup> going so far as to create provocations with non-Donatist Christians so as to be murdered.<sup>129</sup> For this reason Augustine noted that they lived as robbers, died as Circumcelliones, and were honored as martyrs.<sup>130</sup>

The emphasis on martyrdom and the cult of the martyr in Circumcellion theology goes to show more than just the polemicized aspects that Augustine spun in order to discredit them. For these *agrestes*, Donatism lent Berber-Punic descendents a means of coping with their status of subjugation at the hands of the landed Roman elite.<sup>131</sup> The explicit, and implicit, eschatology of Donatism validated

<sup>123</sup> *Corpus Inscriptorum Latinarum, Africa*, VIII (Berlin, 1881), VIII.9585; AUGUSTINE, *Cont. Cresc.* IV.66.83; D. BENEDICT, *History of the Donatists, History of the Donatists With Notes*. The Dissent and Nonconformity Series 12 (Providence, 1875) (Reprinted by The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc., Paris, AR), 151.

<sup>124</sup> AUGUSTINE, *Cont. Gaud.* I.28.32; MONCEAUX, *Hist. Litt.* IV.180.

<sup>125</sup> TYCONIUS, *In Apocalypsin*, 26, "Sed ut discimus, diversas terras circuire et sanctorum sepulchra pervidere quasi pro salute animae suae." Quoted in FREND, *DC*, 173.

<sup>126</sup> FREND, *DC*, 175. The Circumcellion agenda was so aggressive that its pundits sought to operate within its own governmental enclave; C.R. WHITTAKER and P. GARNSEY, "Rural Life in the Later Roman Empire", in *The Cambridge Ancient History, Volume XIII. The Late Empire, A.D. 337-425*, ed. A. CAMERON and P. GARNSEY (Cambridge, 1998), 281.

<sup>127</sup> AUGUSTINE, *Cont. Cresc.* IV.66.83; *Cont. Gaud.* I.28.32.

<sup>128</sup> TYCONIUS, *In Apocalypsin*, 68, "Et isti [Circumcelliones] non vivunt acqualiter ut ceteri fraters, sed quasi amore martyrum semetipsos perimunt, ut violenter de hac vita discedentes et martyres nominentur."

<sup>129</sup> AUGUSTINE, *Ep.* 185.3.12; *De Haeresibus*, 69; *Cont. Ep. Parm.* I.10.16; *Cont. Gaud.* I.28.32; *Cont. Gaud.* I.22.25, I.27.30, I.28.32.

<sup>130</sup> AUGUSTINE, *Ep.* 88.8, "Vivunt ut latrines, moriuntur ut circumcelliones, honorantur ut martyrs."

<sup>131</sup> Circumcelliones attempted to upstage their Roman overlords by freeing compatriot slaves, cancelling debts owed to Romans, and by neutralizing Roman



and uplifted these rural Numidians with the rallying cry "*Deo laudes*"<sup>132</sup> which gave them hope by means of this original liberation theology.

Circumcellion spirituality did not merely center on martyrdom. In fact, what is interesting about this North African movement is the survival of descriptions of their faith life in practice that attested to their deep level of understanding of the eminence of God's kingdom. Perhaps the most preeminent sign of Circumcellion sophistication was the highly developed ordering of religious life on the basis of being a community of saints.<sup>133</sup> This community consisted of a type of North African or Donatist mendicant monk<sup>134</sup> and women religious known as *sanctimoniales*.<sup>135</sup> The religious were recognizable by distinctive habits,<sup>136</sup> use of utilitarian weaponry known as 'Israel's' and the ubiquitous presence and use of martyr's relics.<sup>137</sup> These early monastic forerunners had a primordial function in Circumcellion devotional practice. Evidence of this comes in a subliminal fashion through Augustine's polemic whereby he described the group's proclivity towards excessive drinking and dancing at the martyrs' shrines.<sup>138</sup> These celebrations of liturgical dance are another example of how this

capabilities for collecting on debts and enforcement of Roman laws, a veritable social revolution; A. MARCONE, "Late Roman Social Relations", in *The Cambridge Ancient History, Volume XIII. The Late Empire, A.D. 337-425*, ed. A. CAMERON and P. GARNSSEY (Cambridge, 1998) 368.

<sup>132</sup> AUGUSTINE, *Ep.* 108.5.14; FREND, *DC*, 174.

<sup>133</sup> The early Circumcellion leaders Fasir and Axido were alternately known as "the leaders of the saints", "*Fasir et Axido duces sanctorum*." See also LANCEL, "The Donatist Dispute", 196; P. SCHAFF, "The Donatist Schism", in *History of the Christian Church*, vol. III. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity: From Constantine the Great to Gregory the Great, AD 311-600* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1910), 362.

<sup>134</sup> POSSIDIUS, *Vita Aug.* 10, "velent sub professione continentium ambulantes." See also W.H.C. FREND, "Circumcelliones and Monks", *Journal of Theological Studies* 20/2 (1969): 542-59.

<sup>135</sup> AUGUSTINE, *Ep.* 35.2; *Cont. Ep. Parm.* 11.3.6; *Cont. Gaud.* I.36.46.

<sup>136</sup> ISIDORE, *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis*, CCSL. CXIII, ed. C. LAWSON (Turnhout, 1989), II.15, "*De Monachis*", "Quitum genus [monachorum] est Circumcellionum, qui habitu monachorum usque quaque vagantur..."

<sup>137</sup> ISIDORE, *De Officiis ecclesiasticis*, II.15, "*De Monachis*", "alii membra martyrum, si tamen mqrtyrum venditant." Frend stipulates that the term 'Israel' may have likely come from a Berber-Punic corruption of the phrase 'Azael' (strength of God); Frend, *DC*, 174.

<sup>138</sup> AUGUSTINE, *Sermo*, 311.5, "ubi jacet tam sancti martyris [of Cyprian] corpus, invaserat pestilential et petulencia saltatorum. Per totam noctam cantabantur nefaria"; *Ep.* 29.11; *Cont. Cresc.* IV.63.77, "Negas eas quas dixi tyrannicas vestorum in fundis alienis dominationis et bacchationes ebrietatum"; *Cont. Litt. Pet.* I.24.26; *Ep.* 199.11.3. See also BENEDICT, *History of the Donatists*, 145-149..



branch of Donatism brought about the recognition of the nearness of Christ's return in their context.

### 3. Summary Remarks about Circumcellion Theology

The case of the Circumcelliones provides an interesting opportunity to look further into Donatist eschatological ecclesiology. When analyzing this historically denigrated and easily stereotyped religious faction through the prism of the theological framework which motivated Donatists, it becomes clear that the pejorative appellations of the Circumcelliones as being 'extremists' and 'bandits' may not be warranted. The Circumcelliones stand as one more example of how Donatist Christians actualized their belief in the nearing eschaton and in an ecclesiology in preparation for the Last Judgment. Their often radical utilization of temporal means to attain their view of the kingdom of God in their time and place serves as a clear example of Donatist theology at work.

## II. CONCLUDING REMARKS ON DONATIST POLITICAL THEOLOGY

This paper began with the daunting prospect of synthesizing the past one hundred years of academic exploration in the area of Donatist Christianity. In the process, progress made in the area of understanding Donatist social and political realities was analyzed through the lens of more recent research in deriving the church's theological orientations. The result of the process was the ability to enter into the realm of understanding the method with which Donatist Christians applied and evolved their theology as their everyday realities changed especially in dealing with the Roman Empire and Roman Catholics. At the heart of this present research was the attempt, first, to identify if there exists within Donatist history an analogous political theology whereby the acts of humans and of God took place or made present in the one public history.<sup>139</sup> This attempt also led us to examine if a coherent theological system existed whatsoever for the Donatists and if it was in anyway foundational for their thought and *modus vivendi*. In the end, this paper will consider if all these dynamics indeed amount to such a

<sup>139</sup> See O'DONOVAN, *The Desire of the Nations*, 2.



degree that the Donatist movement could have been considered as part of a revolution.<sup>140</sup>

The first aspect of this research, on whether there existed a Donatist political theology whatsoever, brought us through an overview of the history of the North African church. Included in this overview were summaries of the contributions of so-called proto-Donatists such as Tertullian, Cyprian, and an entire genre of martyrdom stories and a continuously evolving biblical hermeneutic to cope with the changes that their church encountered. This period seemed to have produced the beginnings of a distinctive method among North African Christians with which to understand themselves as separated from the world in preparation for Christ's return (the eschaton).

In the next period, we reviewed the time of the origins of the Donatist Church between 305-311, the influence of Constantine and his successors. This section of Donatist history resulted in tracing a dynamic evolution in how the Donatists saw themselves and related to the world. From the beginning of the Donatist Church to the time of Primian and Augustine, the Donatists developed their theology according to the signs of the times. At first they assiduously clutched on to their identity as an *ecclesia martyrorum* starkly different and beyond the *traditores* and those who would easily reconcile with the state. With Constantine's arrival, the Donatists both attempted the first of a series of unsuccessful and out of character appeals to Rome in order to be validated as the authentic African church and also a hardening of their separation identity. After Constantine's death, the Donatists grew in number as they also compensated for such demographic change by emphasizing their separateness more than their exclusive identification with the hero-martyrs. In the late 340s Donatist leaders tried for a second time to appeal to Rome (*ad Romam*) to be officially recognized as the true church in Africa. This too resulted in negative consequences for their church.

In the following years Donatists made do by strengthening their identity as a persecuted *ecclesia martyrorum*, persecuted because of its separateness from the fallen world. With the revival of Donatism under Julian, the Donatist Church experienced another realignment of its political theology as they became far and away the majority church in Africa. In such a context, the Donatist leaders figured, an *ecclesia martyrorum* mentality would have been faulty and incapable of providing relevance in a changed world.

<sup>140</sup> See FREND, *DC*, 336.



Soon after, Parmenian and Tyconius strengthened the integrity of Donatist political theology by expanding their church's approach to the rest of the world in a context in which they were now the majority. These gains were reversed soon after their deaths by the actions of their successors, namely Gildo, Optatus of Timgad, and Primian. Contrary to the Donatist theological tenant of separation from the world, as evidenced by Scriptural typologies, they sought all too effectively to enhance Donatist temporal authority even to the point of militarizing their Circumcellion devotees. This was the third attempt by Donatists to use temporal means to cement their position as the dominant North African church, which resulted in a similar fashion. The newly minted Augustine, through the preceding works of Optatus of Milevis, led an emboldened Catholic offensive against the Donatists in this period which resulted in a fourth consecutive denouncement by the Roman Empire. By 411, at the tail-end of the Catholic attempt to suppress Donatism, the Donatist leadership reluctantly but nonetheless *did* come face to face with the Catholics and their Roman overseers. By attempting a fifth time to be validated by Rome, the Donatist Church was finally defeated, so to speak, by violating, yet again, their core political theology tenant of separateness from the world. Although the Council of 411 did come as a major structural defeat for the Donatist institutional church's temporal influence and prestige it was not defeated in the conventional sense (used to define the moment as a completely mortal blow to Donatism) since the Church quickly regained its theological bearings as the separated collecta of Israel.

In this sense then, Donatism was not defeated, but merely suffered as its political theology was maligned at several crucial junctures in time. In the end, the Donatist Church disappeared by the time of the arrival of the Arabs in the seventh century. But between 411 and the arrival of the Arabs, the Donatists pressed on in reduced form after they recalibrated their political theology again to correspond to their new reality as the collecta, pitted against the naked cruelty of the world.

But what still remains unclear after this research on Donatist political theology is the degree to which a rupture exists throughout the Donatist Controversy concerning the acceptance and utilization of North African Christian tradition. This fact becomes clearly evident in the works of Augustine and his use of Cyprian as an *auctoritas* in the later Pelagian Controversy while he diverged from Cypriano theology in his dealings with the Donatist Christians, the "heirs of African Christianity."<sup>141</sup> This issue of whether or not Augustine can be said to

<sup>141</sup> M. TILLEY, "North Africa", 396.



have engaged in theological innovation or *novitas*, i.e. a rupture with North African *traditio*, will have to be more thoroughly and systematically explored.

As an ending thought, this paper started with the premise that what made the Donatist movement special as well as prolific was that it was part of a revolution. As opposed to what occurred in the eastern, Greek-speaking Roman Empire,<sup>142</sup> North Africans maintained a distinguished theological tradition that set them apart from the world as God's elect, the adopted collecta of Israel. At the same time, their Catholic counterparts were creating ever stronger bonds with the Roman Empire, resulting in such extreme changes such as using coercive techniques to demand conformity to the Catholic Church. In this sense then, one could certainly consider Donatist Christianity to have been revolutionary for it came at a time when ancient Christianity was at an end.<sup>143</sup> The Church that had developed at odds and with secular authority, *vis a vis* the Roman Empire, for hundreds of years was becoming a subsidiary of the temporal power (the Romans and then the Byzantines, etc). Donatism in its revolutionary character was nearly singular in its stark opposition to the intermingling of church and state. For this reason, Donatism, because of its singular (political) theology, can and should be considered revolutionary.

## I. De natura

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<sup>142</sup> DUPONT, A., *Die Christenheit des Pelagius. Rekonstruktion der Christologie des Evangelium von Pelagius zum Romerbrief des Paulus*, Augustinus 36/3-4 (2006) 321-372.

<sup>143</sup> Y.-M. Duval and W. A. LOHR, supported by M. Lamberigts and S. Lancel, argue that Pelagius wrote it around 405/406 in Rome. Others think it was 409-411 in Sicily or between 413-414 in Palestine. Duval, Y.-M., *Le date du "De natura de Phage. Les premières étapes de la controverse sur la nature de la grâce"*, in *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 36 (1990) 257-288-1998. W. A. LOHR, *Pelagius's "De natura de Phage"*, in *Recherches Augustiniennes* 32 (1996) 235-294. Cf. Lamberigts, M., *Recent Research into Pelagianism with Particular Emphasis on the Role of*

<sup>142</sup> FREND, "The Eyes of Westerns Schismatics", 9.

<sup>143</sup> See R.A. MARKUS, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, 1990), 16, 213-228.







## 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*.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> The text has been only fragmentarily preserved in Augustine's *De natura et gratia*.<sup>3</sup> W. A. Löhr reconstructed and structuralized what remains of

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

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> CSEL 60, 233-299.



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

*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.<sup>5</sup> 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*.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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*.<sup>8</sup> Sin results from the wrong action and does not belong intrinsically to man.<sup>9</sup> 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).<sup>10</sup>

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

<sup>5</sup> *De nat.* 11, 3-4, p. 253.

<sup>6</sup> *De nat.* 1-2, 8, p. 251.

<sup>7</sup> *De nat.* 13, 21, p. 256.

<sup>8</sup> *De nat.* 43, 63, p. 268; 45, 66, p. 269.

<sup>9</sup> *De nat.* 13, 21, p. 256.

<sup>10</sup> *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*.<sup>11</sup> These references have no Christological subject matter, but they illustrate the possibility of sinlessness, providing a similar list of biblical examples of sinless persons.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> G. Greshake rightly argues that Pelagius does not deny the necessity of the grace of God in the preserved fragments of *De natura*.<sup>14</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *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.

<sup>12</sup> *De nat.* 28, 42, p. 263.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

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

<sup>15</sup> *De nat.* 12, 20, p. 256.

<sup>16</sup> *De nat.* 35, 53, p. 266.

<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> Christ dying without sins demonstrates according to Pelagius that sin and death are not causally related.<sup>19</sup> "Unter der Formel Sündenlosigkeit wird konkret das Problem der wahren Freiheit verhandelt. Das sündenlose Leben Jesu ist also Leitbild der Freiheit."<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> Christ, by the price of his death, bought humanity back from death.<sup>22</sup> For this reason, Pelagius refers to Christ as *Salvator*.<sup>23</sup> That is why he compares sin with an illness, with a wound, and Christ with the *medicus* who came to heal the sick.<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup>

## 2. De fide trinitatis

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

<sup>18</sup> *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.

<sup>19</sup> *De nat.* 14, 23, pp. 256-257.

<sup>20</sup> GRESHAKE, *Gnade*, p. 117: n. 138.

<sup>21</sup> *De nat.* 31, 48, p. 265.

<sup>22</sup> *De nat.* 16, 26, p. 258. See here n. 18.

<sup>23</sup> *De nat.* 28, 42, p. 263.

<sup>24</sup> *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.

<sup>25</sup> LÖHR, *Pelagius's Schrift De natura*, pp. 256-257.

<sup>26</sup> 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*.<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup>

Gennadius of Marseille mentions in his *De viris inlustribus* XCII, that Pelagius had written his *De fide trinitatis* before he became known as *haereticus*.<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup> 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<sup>e</sup> ed.), nr. 748, pp. 255-256.) MIGNE, *PL Supplementum*, 1, 1544-1560.

<sup>27</sup> 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.

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

<sup>29</sup> 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.

<sup>30</sup> 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.

<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup>

Pelagius's concern for Christological orthodoxy has a prominent place in *De fide trinitatis* just as in his Romans Commentary.<sup>33</sup> In fragment 6, he mentions two 'Christological *haeretici*' by name: Apollinaris<sup>34</sup> and Photinus<sup>35</sup>. Their modalistic denial of Christ's true and fully human nature and person is considered an *error* by Pelagius.<sup>36</sup> 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.<sup>37</sup> 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*<sup>38</sup>, an *impietas*<sup>39</sup>. 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.<sup>40</sup> 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

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

<sup>33</sup> 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.

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

<sup>35</sup> *De fid. trin.* frag. 6 (PLS1, 1560).

<sup>36</sup> *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).

<sup>37</sup> 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.

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

<sup>39</sup> *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 *abusue* (frag. 1, 1544), *stultitia* (frag. 1, 1545), an *impietas* that one has to *amputare* (frag. 5, 1555).

<sup>40</sup> *De fid. trin.* frag. 4 (PLS1, 1553).



humani'.<sup>41</sup> God assumed humanity in the incarnation<sup>42</sup> and invested himself with it.<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup> 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."<sup>45</sup> 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 have<sup>46</sup>, and remained at the same time God *in interiore natura*<sup>47</sup>. 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.<sup>48</sup> Pelagius clarifies this with an anthropological comparison. The soul and the body of man are clearly two substances, and from

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

<sup>42</sup> 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.

<sup>43</sup> *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.

<sup>44</sup> *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.)

<sup>45</sup> *De fid. trin.* frag. 3 (PLS1, 1548).

<sup>46</sup> *De fid. trin.* frag. 3 (PLS1, 1548).

<sup>47</sup> *De fid. trin.* frag. 3 (PLS1, 1548).

<sup>48</sup> 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.<sup>49</sup> To summarize Pelagius's elaboration of Christ's *natura*: Christ is truly and fully human.<sup>50</sup>

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.<sup>51</sup> 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.<sup>52</sup> Paul affirms this repeatedly.<sup>53</sup> Above all, Christ clearly calls Himself a man.<sup>54</sup> 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

Pelagius emphasized the two natures of Christ, truly divine and human.

<sup>49</sup> *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.

<sup>50</sup> 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).

<sup>51</sup> *De fid. trin.* frag. 6 (PLS1, 1557).

<sup>52</sup> *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.

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

<sup>54</sup> 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.<sup>55</sup>

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

<sup>55</sup> 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.

<sup>56</sup> 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*.

<sup>57</sup> *De fid. trin.* frag. 5 (PLS1, 1555).

<sup>58</sup> *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).

<sup>59</sup> *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).

<sup>60</sup> 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).

<sup>61</sup> *De fid. trin.* frag. 4 (PLS1, 1552-1554).

<sup>62</sup> *De fid. trin.* frag. 4 (PLS1, 1553).

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

<sup>64</sup> *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.<sup>65</sup> Christus 'deus uerus est.'<sup>66</sup> Pelagius asserts that everybody who denies this, is diverting from the Christian creed.<sup>67</sup>

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.<sup>68</sup> 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*<sup>69</sup>, 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.<sup>70</sup>

Christ is the Creator.<sup>71</sup> The substance of the creature has nothing in common with the substance of the Creator.<sup>72</sup> Man however is made in such a way that he refers to his Creator, Christ.<sup>73</sup> 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-Manichaean 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."

<sup>65</sup> *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 (PLS1, 1545-1546).

<sup>66</sup> *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 (PLS1, 1544-1545).

<sup>67</sup> *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 (PLS 1, 1545).

<sup>68</sup> *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.

<sup>69</sup> *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).

<sup>70</sup> *De fid. trin.* frag. 5 (PLS1, 1555-1556).

<sup>71</sup> *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 (PLS1, 1546-1547).

<sup>72</sup> *De fid. trin.* frag. 1 (PLS1, 1546).

<sup>73</sup> *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.<sup>74</sup>

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.<sup>75</sup> 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*

<sup>74</sup> *De fid. trin. frag. 1* (PLS1, 1546).

<sup>75</sup> *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*.<sup>76</sup> He addressed his *Libellus fidei* to Pope Innocent I in defence of his orthodoxy that was being questioned by the African episcopate.<sup>77</sup> 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.<sup>78</sup> The central theme is Trinitarian-Christological. Evidence to establish orthodoxy is apparently to be found within this area according to Pelagius.<sup>79</sup> Incidentally, the only real difference with

<sup>76</sup> *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.

<sup>77</sup> 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.

<sup>78</sup> 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."

<sup>79</sup> 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.<sup>80</sup>

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.<sup>81</sup> *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*.<sup>82</sup> *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.<sup>83</sup>

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.<sup>84</sup> 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*.

<sup>80</sup> 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.

<sup>81</sup> *Lib. fid.* 17 (PL 48, 490).

<sup>82</sup> *De nat.* 14, 23, pp. 256-257.

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

<sup>84</sup> *Lib. fid.* 20.



ideas on the human soul.<sup>85</sup> 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.<sup>86</sup> 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.<sup>87</sup> 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.<sup>88</sup> *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*).<sup>89</sup> 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*.<sup>90</sup> 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.

<sup>85</sup> *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).

<sup>86</sup> *Lib. fid.* 21 (PL 48, 491).

<sup>87</sup> *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*.

<sup>88</sup> *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.

<sup>89</sup> 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.

<sup>90</sup> 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 Manicheism<sup>91</sup> 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.<sup>92</sup> 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.”<sup>93</sup> 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.<sup>94</sup> They refer in everything to each other. That is why

<sup>91</sup> 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.

<sup>92</sup> *Lib. fid.* 19 (PL 48, 491).

<sup>93</sup> WERMELINGER, *Rom*, p. 139.

<sup>94</sup> *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.<sup>95</sup> 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.<sup>96</sup>

This is also the case for the Holy Spirit.<sup>97</sup> 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.<sup>98</sup> This does not undo the difference between the three persons, each with their own name.<sup>99</sup> 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.<sup>100</sup> 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.<sup>101</sup>

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

<sup>95</sup> *Lib. fid.* 3 (PL 48, 489).

<sup>96</sup> *Lib. fid.* 14 (PL 48, 490).

<sup>97</sup> *Lib. fid.* 4 (PL 48, 489).

<sup>98</sup> *Lib. fid.* 5. (PL 48, 489).

<sup>99</sup> *Lib. fid.* 7. (PL 48, 489).

<sup>100</sup> *Lib. fid.* 6 (PL 48, 489).

<sup>101</sup> 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.

<sup>102</sup> *Lib. fid.* 8 (PL 48, 489).

<sup>103</sup> *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.<sup>104</sup> Christ unified in Himself two substances, the divine and the human, without the one changing into the other.<sup>105</sup> 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.<sup>106</sup> 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.<sup>107</sup> 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.<sup>108</sup>

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.<sup>109</sup>

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.<sup>110</sup> 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).

<sup>104</sup> *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).

<sup>105</sup> *Lib. fid.* 10 (PL 48, 490).

<sup>106</sup> *Lib. fid.* 2 (PL 48, 489).

<sup>107</sup> *Lib. fid.* 9 (PL 48, 489-490).

<sup>108</sup> *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.'"

<sup>109</sup> *Lib. fid.* 26 (PL 48, 491).

<sup>110</sup> 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*<sup>111</sup> and as an *impietas*<sup>112</sup>. *Libellus fidei* uses a much more condemning language: it is now about *blasphemia*<sup>113</sup> and *haeresis*<sup>114</sup> that one has to *damnare*<sup>115</sup>, *condemnare*<sup>116</sup>, *anathematizare*<sup>117</sup>. 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

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

<sup>112</sup> *Lib. fid.* 6 (PL 48, 489).

<sup>113</sup> *Lib. fid.* 10, 21 (PL 48, 490; 491).

<sup>114</sup> *Lib. fid.* 10, 24 (PL 48, 490; 491).

<sup>115</sup> *Lib. fid.* 22, 24 (PL 48, 491; 491).

<sup>116</sup> *Lib. fid.* 9, 20 (PL 48, 489; 491).

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



is questioned.<sup>118</sup> 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.<sup>119</sup>

#### 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

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

<sup>119</sup> 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*.<sup>120</sup> 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*.

<sup>120</sup> 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.<sup>121</sup> Regarding prayer, Pelagius declares in *De fide trinitatis*, as in the Romans Commentary, that the Holy Spirit helps Christians to pray.<sup>122</sup> In *De natura* and *De fide trinitatis*, he asks for intellectual caution in approaching faith.<sup>123</sup> 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

<sup>121</sup> *De nat.* 12, 20, p. 256, here in n. 13.

<sup>122</sup> *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.

<sup>123</sup> *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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# DIE LIEBE IN DEM TRAKTAT *DE REGIMINE PRINCIPUM* VON AEGIDIUS ROMANUS

## 1. Pädagogik im Fürstenspiegel

Das Werk von Aegidius Romanus *De regimine principum*, in den siebziger Jahren des 13. Jahrhunderts verfaßt, wird dem Genre der Fürstenspiegel zugeordnet. Es gehört daher zu den politiktheoretischen Schriften.<sup>1</sup> Die folgenden Überlegungen knüpfen gleichwohl zunächst nicht an die politischen Inhalte des Werkes von Aegidius an, sondern, ausgehend von dessen pädagogischen Absichten, die die Erziehung des künftigen Herrschers behandeln, soll untersucht werden, in welcher Weise der Autor das Konzept der Liebe erörtert und für mehrere Lebensbereiche anwendet. Zu fragen ist, in welchen Handlungsfeldern Aegidius Romanus Liebe als Motiv vorstellt. Zweitens soll untersucht werden, in welcher Weise Aegidius den Begriff der Liebe versteht, in unterschiedliche Termini kleidet und mit der Natur des Menschen verbindet. An dieses Thema schließt sich die Frage an, welche Ziele und welche Auswirkungen von der Liebe ausgehen. Indem Aegidius die Liebe als Fundierung des sozialen Zusammenhaltes voraussetzt und damit einen hohen Wert zur Begründung geordneter Verfassung einführt, ergibt sich die Möglichkeit, ein Konzept zu analysieren, das in der breiten internationalen Forschung zur Sozialdisziplinierung im Mittelalter bislang nicht beachtet wurde.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Christoph Flüeler, Rezeption und Interpretation der aristotelischen *Politica* im 13. Jahrhundert. Studien, Texte, Quellen (Bochumer Studien zur Philosophie), Amsterdam, Philadelphia 1993; zu Wilhelm von Moerbeke, dem Übersetzer der Politik von Aristoteles s. Guillaume de Moerbeke. *Recueil d'études à l'occasion du 700e anniversaire de sa mort* (1286), hg. v. Jozef Brams/Willy Vanhamel, Löwen 1989; Roberto Lambertini, Individuelle und politische Klugheit in den mittelalterlichen Ethikkomentaren (von Albert bis Buridan), in: *Individuum und Individualität im Mittelalter*, hg. v. Jan A. Aartsen, Andreas Speer (Miscellanea Mediaevalia. Veröffentlichungen des Thomas-Instituts der Universität Köln 24), Berlin/New York 1996, S. 464-478.

<sup>2</sup> Heinrich Schmidt, Sozialdisziplinierung? Ein Plädoyer für das Ende des Etatismus in der Konfessionalisierungsforschung, in: *HZ* 265 (1997), S. 639-682; Heinz Schilling, Disziplinierung oder „Selbstregulierung der Untertanen“? Ein Plädoyer für die Doppelperspektive von Makro- und Mikrohistoire bei der Erforschung der frühmodernen Kirchengründung, ebda., S. 675-691; Gerd Schwerhoff, Zivilisationsprozesse und Geschichtswissenschaft. Norbert Elias' Forschungsparadigma in historischer Sicht, in: *HZ* 266 (1998), S. 561-605; Marjorie McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior* (Cambridge Studies in Population, Economy and Society in Past Time 34), Cambridge 1998.



Die Vorstellung, die Aegidius Romanus zur Liebe entwickelt, ist der Ausgang meiner Erörterung, die danach fragt, in welcher Weise die Liebe als Fundament des sozialen Konnexes gedeutet werden kann. Indem, einen theoretischen Text des Mittelalters analysierend, untersucht werden soll, wie mittelalterliche Zeitgenossen über die Grundlegung sozialer Ordnung nachgedacht haben und dazu Angebote des Verstehens gemacht haben, ist es nicht das Ziel dieses Aufsatzes, die praktischen Verfahren von familiärem Zusammenleben, von Vergesellschaftung zwischen den Menschen und von Herrschaft zu erforschen, sondern vielmehr darum, zu untersuchen, welche Deutungsangebote im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert bestanden, um diese Verfahren zu verstehen, und welche Interventionsinstrumente vorgestellt wurden, sie zu verbessern. Die Interpretation der Zeitgenossen ist die Grundlage für die hier vorgelegte historische Analyse. Der Diskurs zur Liebe, der hier vorgestellt wird, besteht in der Konstruktion von Begründungszusammenhängen, der einen Sinn konstruiert und ihn in der Aufnahme oder Zurückweisung alternativer zeitgenössisch wirksamer Konzepte entfaltet.

Die pädagogische Intention, die dem Werk des Aegidius zugrunde liegt und auch die politischen Probleme lösen soll, leitet seine Argumentation. Das Werk ist eingebettet in einen breiten Strom von Moraldidaxen, die seit dem hohen Mittelalter eine Ordnung des guten Tuns vorstellen und damit auf ein Bedürfnis nach Aufklärung über das Handeln der Menschen reagierten angesichts eines seit dem 12. Jahrhundert geänderten sozialen und religiösen Umfeldes. Breite Bevölkerungsgruppen verlangten Auskunft über die Modalitäten des moralischen Handelns in ihren jeweiligen Lebensbereichen.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Michaud-Quantin, *Universitas. Expressions du mouvement communautaire dans le moyen-âge latin*, Paris 1970; Alfred Haverkamp, *Aufbruch und Gestaltung 1056-1273* (Neue deutsche Geschichte 2), München 1984, S. 17-92; Knut Schulz, „Denn sie liebten die Freiheit so sehr...“. Kommunale Aufstände und Entstehung des europäischen Bürgertums im Mittelalter, Darmstadt 1992; Einungen und Bruderschaften in der spätmittelalterlichen Stadt, hg. v. Peter Johanek (Städteforschung. Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für vergleichende Städtegeschichte in Münster, Reihe A: Darstellungen 32), Köln/Wien 1993; Rudolf Holbach, „Gravissima coniuratione introducta“. Bemerkungen zu den Schwureinungen in Bischofsstädten im Westen des Reiches während des Hochmittelalters, in: *Geschichtliche Landeskunde der Rheinlande, Regionale Befunde und raumübergreifende Perspektiven*, Georg Droege zum Gedenken, hg. v. Marlene Nikolay-Panter u.a. Köln/Wien 1994, S. 159-184; Ulrich Meier/Klaus Schreiner, *Regimen civitatis. Zum Spannungsverhältnis von Freiheit und Ordnung in alteuropäischen Stadtgesellschaften*, in: *Stadtregiment und Bürgerfreiheit. Handlungsspielräume in deutschen und italienischen Städten des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit* (Bürgertum 7), Göttingen 1994.



Die Disziplinierung des Individuums machte dieses für seine jeweilige soziale Funktion tauglich. Zwar seit der Auflösung oder zumindest Abschwächung der Grundherrschaft seit dem 11. Jahrhundert von herrschaftlicher Unterordnung mehr als zuvor herausgelöst und in die Freiheit entlassen, waren die Individuen Regulationsmechanismen unterworfen, die nicht notwendigerweise auf Befehlen fußten und die unabhängig von willkürlichen Anweisungen wirksam waren, vielmehr die persönliche Einsicht in die prinzipielle Geltung von Regelwerken voraussetzten. Sie durchzusetzen, verlangte den Einsatz von Predigern, von Beichtvätern, nicht anders als die von Juristen, von städtischen und ländlichen Obrigkeiten, eben von Ordnungskräften aller Art, so daß ein dichtes Netz von Normierungsinstanzen sich über den Einzelnen legte.<sup>4</sup> Nicht allein juristische Texte definierten Normen, auch pädagogische, moralische und technische Anweisungen.<sup>5</sup> Die Regeln des guten Handelns fußten auf einer großen Mannigfaltigkeit von Textgattungen. Dazu gehörten nicht zuletzt Predigten, Ständeregeln, Fürstenspiegel.

Das hohe Mittelalter kannte einen Akkulturationsprozess, den pädagogische Interventionen herbeiführen sollten. Diese Interventionen theoretisch zu begründen und anzuleiten, versuchten auch die Autoren der Fürstenspiegel. Ihre Texte kombinierten Sozialtheorie mit Sozialintervention. Ähnlich den Rechtsaufzeichnungen waren sie bestrebt, das Verhalten der Menschen durch Normen zu bestimmen. Anders aber als jene enthielten die Fürstenspiegel des hohen und späten Mittelalters nicht Strafandrohungen, benannten konsequenterweise auch keine mit Strafen bewehrten Verhaltensweisen. Sie gruppieren daher nicht nach Verhaltenstypen und stellten keinen Katalog auf, der jene in linearer Abfolge vorstellte, sondern verketteten die Elemente in einem argumentativen Zusammenhang. Die Fürstenspiegel beruhten auf philosophischen und theologischen Begründungen, weshalb ihr Gedankengang regelhaft argumentativ aufgebaut war. Ziel war eine Verbesserung, die der Realität abgerungen werden sollte. Die Gegenüberstellung von gegebenen Bedingungen und zu erreichendem Ideal sollte einen Veränderungsprozess in Gang setzen. Dazu war die Rechtfertigung des Ideals ebenso nötig wie die der Realisierungschancen.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Ertl, Religion und Disziplin. Selbstdeutung und Weltordnung im frühen deutschen Franziskanertum (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 96), Berlin/New York 2006.

<sup>5</sup> Allein juristische Verfahrensregeln als Texte der Normensetzung begreifend: Neithard Bulst, Normes, in: Les tendances actuelles de l'histoire du moyen âge en France et en Allemagne. Actes des colloques de Sèvres (1997) et Göttingen (1998) organisé par le Centre de la Recherche Scientifiques et le Max-Planck-Institut für Geschichte, hg. v. Jean-Claude Schmitt/Otto Gerhard Oexle, Paris 2002, S. 483-492



Mit dem Begriff „Spiegel“ wird zweierlei ausgedrückt: Ein Spiegel zeigt die Unvollkommenheit des Menschen und er zeigt einen Gegenentwurf zur Realität, der als Ansporn zur ihrer Verbesserung oder gar Vervollkommenung dienen soll.<sup>6</sup>

Wenn die Fürstenspiegel bislang vornehmlich als politiktheoretische Traktate, aber bis jetzt in der Forschung nicht als pädagogische Programmschriften untersucht worden sind, so wird darin ein entscheidender Impuls der Lösungsstrategie für ein politisches Dilemma übersehen – nämlich zwischen der Rechtfertigung einer durch Erbgang übertragenen Alleinherrschaft und der Behauptung ihrer Vortrefflichkeit gegenüber anderen theoretisch konzipierten Formen der Herrschaftsausübung.<sup>7</sup> Die Erziehung des Thronfolgers sollte eine gute Politik gewährleisten – auch unter den Bedingungen einer Erbmonarchie. Daher wurde die Erziehung Gegenstand theoretischer Erörterung. Indem Politik an die Lehre von der Erziehung angebunden wurde, war die Pädagogik als Thema etabliert. Es eröffnete sich sogar die Möglichkeit, sie auch unabhängig von der politischen Theorie als Objekt der Gelehrsamkeit und der praktischen Philosophie zu begründen, so daß sie, sozial undifferenziert und nicht an die Herrschaftsausübung angebunden, behandelt und gelehrt werden konnte. In der Tat haben einige der Fürstenspiegel, indem sie pädagogische Intervention vorsahen, den Anwendungsbereich ihrer Thematik ausgedehnt und den argumentativen Rahmen verlassen, welcher Lösungsmöglichkeiten eines politischen Problems im politischen Handeln vorsah. Die sozial breit gefächerte Rezeption des Werkes ist durch den Text selbst angelegt und in der handschriftlichen Verbreitung verwirklicht. Die Abschriften des Traktates sind eng mit Texten der Predigtliteratur verbunden. Aber auch die Ausführungen selbst legen nahe, daß sie für Predigten genutzt werden sollten, jedenfalls für eine öffentliche Rede zur Moraledidaxe. Daher gelten auch dieselben rhetorischen Regeln hinsichtlich der Exemplifizierung allgemeiner Prinzipien, so wie sie in Predigtanweisungen formuliert worden sind<sup>8</sup> und die Aegidius für sein Werk

<sup>6</sup> Georg Theuerkauf, Einführung in die Interpretation historischer Quellen – Schwerpunkt Mittelalter, Paderborn 1991, S. 157-159.

<sup>7</sup> Wilhelm Berges, Die Fürstenspiegel des hohen und späten Mittelalters, Leipzig 1938; Jürgen Miethke, Politische Theorien im Mittelalter, in: Politische Theorien von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart, hg. v. Hans-Joachim Lieber, 2. verb. Aufl. Bonn 1993 (Studien zur Geschichte und Politik 299), S. 47-156, 83-94; Alain Boureau, Le prince médiéval et la science politique, in: Le savoir du prince du moyen âge aux Lumières, hg. v. Ran Halévi, Paris 2002, S. 25-50.

<sup>8</sup> Guibert de Nogent, Liber quo ordine sermo fieri debeat, in: PL 156, Paris 1880, Sp. 21-32; Thomas de Chobham, Summa de arte praedicandi, hg. v. Francesco



als verbindlich ansieht: *Sermones universales circa morale negocium minus proficiunt. (...) Sermones universales circa mores despicendo non sunt, quia ignorantia universalium saepe facit particularia ignorare, ipsis tamen universalibus sermonibus sunt particularia addenda, quia cum negocium morale circa particularia consistat in talibus particularibus sermones plus proficiunt.*<sup>9</sup> Aegidius bezeichnet sein Werk *De regimine* als Predigt, womit zwar ganz offensichtlich nicht intendiert war, es in mündlicher Rede vorzustellen, aber Textbestandteile für Predigten anderer anzubieten, so wie ansonsten auch die schriftlich festgehaltenen *sermones* dazu dienten, als Muster und als Textbausteine der Predigt zu dienen. Die Gattungszugehörigkeit ist flexibel, so daß das Werk *De regimine* nicht allein als Traktat verwendet worden ist, vielmehr auch als Predigthandreichung.<sup>10</sup>

Das zweite Buch des *De regimine principum* behandelt mit dem *regimen familiae* die Leitung der Hausgemeinschaft. Aegidius bezeichnet – hierhin Aristoteles folgend – das Sachgebiet als Ökonomik. Bereits in diesem sozialen Bereich, der kleinsten Form der Vergesellschaftung, wirkt die Eigenschaft des Menschen, das Gute im sozialen Verband zu erreichen: *Quod naturale est homini vivere in societate et quod hoc decet reges et principes diligenter advertere, quantum deseruiat societas humanae vitae, ut ad bene vivere sciant se et alios ordinare.*<sup>11</sup> Die Könige treten in einer doppelten Funktion auf: Bereits auf der Ebene des Haushaltes und der Familie sind sie – so wie alle anderen Familienväter – zur Leitung einer Gemeinschaft von Menschen

Morenzoni (Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio medievalis 82), Turnhout 1988; Un manuel de prédication médiévale, in: Revue néo-scholastique de philosophie 25 (1923), S. 192-209 Robert Basevorn, Forma praedicandi, in: T.-M. Charland, Artes praedicandi. Contribution à l'histoire de la rhétorique au moyen âge (Publications de l'Institut d'études médiévales 7), Ottawa/Paris 1936, S. 231-323; H. Caplan, Rhetorical Invention in Some Tractatus on Preachim, in: Speculum 2 (1927), S. 284-296; Ders., Classical Rhetoric and the Medieval Theory of Preachim, in: Ders., Of Eloquence. Studies in Ancient and Medieval Rhetoric, Ithaca (N.Y.), 1970, S. 105-135; James Jerome Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages. A History of the Rhetorical Theory from Saint Augustine to the Renaissance, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1974, S. 301-334; Richard H. Rouse/Mary Rouse, Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons. Studies on the Manipulus florum of Thomas of Ireland (Studies and Texts 47), Toronto 1979, S. 8-25; Louis Jacques Bataillon, Les instruments de travail des prédicateurs au 13<sup>e</sup> siècle, in: Culture et travail intellectuel dans l'Occident médiéval, hg. v. Geneviève Hasenohr/Jean Longère, Paris 1981, S. 197-229; P. O. Lewry, Rhetoric at Paris and Oxford in the Mid-Thirteenth Century, in: Rhetorica 1 (1983), S. 45-63.

<sup>9</sup> Aegidius Romanus: *De regimine principum libri tres*, Rom 1556, unveränderter Ndr. Frankfurt a. M. 1968, I, 2, 16.

<sup>10</sup> Jean Longère, *La predication médiévale*, Paris 1983.

<sup>11</sup> Aegidius Romanus, *De regimine* (Anm. 9), I, 2, 2.



berufen, und darüber hinaus regieren die Könige über die Untertanen ihres Reiches. Da die Aufgabe im Haushalt nicht spezifisch königlich ist, eignet sich der ihm gewidmete Abschnitt in besonderem Maße, als allgemein gehaltene Anweisung für Personen aller sozialen Gruppen verstanden zu werden. Deswegen ist dieser Abschnitt zur Familie auch auf eine anthropologisch umfassende Lehre ausgerichtet, in der die Verhältnisse zwischen den Ehegatten und die zwischen den Eltern und den Kindern und darüber hinaus zur Dienerschaft ausgeführt werden.

## 2. Elterliche Liebe

Aegidius stellt an den Anfang seiner Überlegungen zur Kindererziehung die Fürsorge, welche die Eltern den Kindern entgegenzubringen haben. Wird diese Fürsorge von den Eltern erkannt, werden sie sich um eine gute Erziehung der Kinder bemühen. Es gilt also die natürlichen Anlagen aller Menschen zu nutzen und zum Guten zu führen, so daß die Eltern ihre Aufgabe wahrnehmen. Auf dreifache Weise zeigt Aegidius, wie die elterliche Fürsorge in der natürlichen Ausstattung aller Menschen wurzelt.

Die Natur gibt erstens keinem Wesen das Sein, ohne sich auch für dessen Erhaltung einzusetzen. Das *conservari in esse* ist wesensnotwendig. Zweitens leitet und erhält naturgemäss das Höhere das Niedere. Die Eltern – so folgert Aegidius – tun dies für ihre Kinder, indem sie über sie das *regimen* ausüben, welches durchaus auch als Herrschaft, aber auch als Verantwortlichkeit gedeutet werden kann. Schließlich besteht zwischen Eltern und Kindern eine natürliche Liebe, aufgrund derer die Eltern für ihre Kinder Sorge tragen. So wie zwischen Liebhaber und Geliebten, so bestehe eine *amicitia naturalis*, die an anderer Stelle als *amor naturalis* bezeichnet wird, zwischen Eltern und Kindern, so daß als wechselseitige Beziehung hier vorgestellt wird, was auf Seiten der Eltern die Fürsorge begründet: *Patres ergo eo ipso quod naturaliter praesunt filiis, debent circa eorum regimen esse solliciti (...). De ratione enim amaris est, ut sollicitet amantem circa rem amatam, quilibet enim solcitur circa dilectum, quare cum inter patrem et filium sit amor naturalis; decet patres ex ipso amore naturali, quem habent ad filios, sollicitari circa eos.*<sup>12</sup> Neben dem *regimen*, der Herrschaftsausübung im Haushalt, steht der *amor*, die Liebe der

<sup>12</sup> Ebda., II,2,1.



Eltern zu den Kindern. Beide sind Ergebnisse der natürlichen Disposition des Menschen, sind durch die Schöpfung Gottes angelegt, bedürfen keiner zusätzlichen Weckung durch göttliche Gnadenakte. Die Liebe ist eine Kraft, die das gute Handeln motiviert.

Diese Liebe entsteht aus der Natur des Menschen und allein über sie vermittelt wird sie auf Gott bezogen und von ihm wiederum abgeleitet. Die Liebe, die Aegidius mit *amor* bezeichnet, ist stets hierarchisch eingebunden. Es ist eine Liebe, die Unterordnung voraussetzt. Die Fürsorge ist eine asymmetrische Relation. Innerhalb der Familie wirkend, verweist sie zugleich auf ein allgemeines Prinzip, das alle Stufen der gesellschaftlichen Organisation durchtränkt. Liebe und Herrschaft sind in analoge Relationen eingebunden, die systematisch das zwischenmenschliche Leben auf allen Ebenen gestalten: *Quare si naturale est, ut superiora et praeeminentia in inferiores influant e ea regulent et conservent, decet quemlibet dominantem et praeeminentem sollicitari, quomodo per debita auxilia influat et subeniat suis subiectis, et quomodo eos regulet et conservet. Unde ipse Deus, qui singulis rebus praeest, habet sollicitudinem et providentiam totius universalis.*<sup>13</sup>

Mit dem Begriff des *amor* wird die Relation zwischen Eltern und Kindern emotional aufgeladen. Stärker noch als die *amicitia* erweckt der Begriff eine Vorstellung enger Bindung, die auf persönlichen Neigungen beruht, zugleich aber auch einen natürlichen Automatismus vorstellt, der die Kind-Eltern-Beziehung aus einer Relation frei gewollter Bindung herauslöst und sie zur notwendigen Antriebskraft in jedweder Familie macht. Der Begriff *amor* – ansonsten im hohen Mittelalter auf die Erotik und metaphorisch auf die Liebesmystik angewandt – erhält eine Bedeutung, die ihm eine Funktion in der Kohäsion sozialer Beziehungen zuweist. Deswegen ist der *amor* auch keineswegs ausschließlich auf zweiseitige Beziehungen anwendbar. Die Liebe ist der Nährgrund vieler emotional eingefärbter Beziehungen zwischen den Menschen. Keineswegs ist vorausgesetzt, daß ein Mensch nur für einen einzigen geliebten Menschen Zuneigung empfinden könne, daß wahre Liebe alle anderen Menschen aus der Beziehung ausschließe. Eben weil die Liebe die komplexen sozialen Relationen der Menschen antreibt, eben weil sie aus einer auf sexueller Vereinigung beruhenden und auf sie zielenden Beziehung zwischen Mann und Frau abgelöst wird, trägt sie keine Ausschließlichkeit, kann sie nie prinzipiell bilateral sein, sondern ist – zumindest potentiell – stets multilateral.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Ebda., I,1,14.

<sup>14</sup> Rüdiger Schnell, *Causa amoris. Liebeskonzeption und Liebesdarstellung in der mittelalterlichen Literatur* (Bibliotheca Germanica 27), Bern 1985, S. 141-144.



Indem Aegidius Romanus die Liebe mit *amor* umschrieb, damit allgemein dem Sexuell-Triebhaften annäherte, aber zugleich als Beweggrund zum Guten in vielen Handlungsfeldern rechtfertigte, gelangte er zu einer Deutung, die mehr nach sich zog als spielerischen Gebrauch von Worten und Themen in poetischen oder epischen Texten, deren Fiktionalität größere Freiheit in der Themengestaltung, der narrativen Anordnung und in der Argumentation erlaubte, sondern reale Beziehungen beschrieb und faktische Veränderungen durch das pädagogische Verhalten beabsichtigte. Die Liebesthematik, in der fiktionalen Literatur seit dem endenden 12. Jahrhundert eingeführt und dort durch ihre Fiktionalität gerechtfertigt und damit auch in ihrer soziale Bindung sprengenden Wirkung bejaht<sup>15</sup>, wird von Aegidius in eine sozial gebändigte Verwendung eingefügt. Der Begriff *amor* ist bei Aegidius breit angewandt. Er meint neben der Liebe zwischen Eltern und Kindern auch die Liebe zwischen den Eheleuten, der Begriff kann aber auch – in der Form *amor operositatis* – zur Bezeichnung von Arbeitseifer eingesetzt werden. *Amor* besteht auch in der Beziehung der Menschen zu Gott, ohne daß bei letzterer Aegidius eine persönliche Erfahrung und persönliche Beziehung zwischen Gott und den Menschen voraussetzt, vielmehr gemäß einer auf die Texte von Dionysius Areopagita gründenden Vorstellung die natürliche Schöpfungsordnung als Urgrund der Liebesrelation angibt. Sie verweist auf die Grundlage jeder Liebe, welche zu einem höheren und letztlich höchsten Gut strebt.<sup>16</sup> Stets aber ist der *amor* dem Natürlichen verbunden, stets entspringt er den ursprünglichen Anlagen der Menschen, ist ein Beweggrund seines Handelns. *Amor* ist Teil der stets präsenten,

<sup>15</sup> Alfred Jeanroy, *La poésie lyriques des troubadours*, Bd. 2, Paris 1934, S. 339-341; Jonathan Saville, *The Medieval Erotic Alba. Structure as Meaning*, New York 1972; Dietmar Rieger, *Gattungen und Gattungsbezeichnungen der altprovenzalischen Sirventes* (*Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, Beihefte 148), Tübingen 1976; Ulrich Knoop, *Das mittelhochdeutsche Tagelied*, Marburg 1976; Volker Mertens, *Erzähler, Kleinstformen, Die genres objectifs im deutschen Minnegesang*, in: Klaus Grabmüller (Hrsg.), *Kleinere Erzählformen im Mittelalter*, Paderborn 1988, S. 49-65; Walter Haug, *Gotfrieds von Straßburg «Tristan»*. Sexueller Sündenfall oder erotische Utopie, in: *Kontroversen – alte und neue. Akten des 7. Intern. Germanisten-Kongresses Göttingen 1985*, Bd. 1, hg. v. Albrecht Schöne, Tübingen 1986, S. 41-52; Walter Haug, *Die Entdeckung der personalen Liebe und der Beginn der fiktionalen Literatur*, in: Ders., *Brechungen auf dem Weg zur Individualität. Kleine Schriften zur Literatur des Mittelalters*, Tübingen 1995, S. 233-248; Ders., *Die höfische Liebe im Horizont der erotischen Diskurse des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit* (Wolfgang Stammer-Gastprofessur 10), Berlin/New York 2004; André Schnyder, *Das geistliche Tagelied des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit* (*Bibliotheca Germanica* 45), Tübingen 2004.

<sup>16</sup> Aegidius Romanus, *De regimine* (Anm. 9), I,1, 13, u. I, 2, 13.



von Gott gesetzten Ordnung seiner Schöpfung, ist daher immer gerechtfertigt und bedarf zwar einer Formung durch moralische Prinzipien, nicht aber einer Dämpfung oder gar Zurückdrängung. *Amor* ist ein positiver Wert; er befähigt zu moralisch gutem Handeln und dies in vielen Lebensbereichen.

Die optimistische Grundannahme über die Natur des Menschen ist bei Aegidius auch die Voraussetzung dafür, Erziehung als Aktivierung der im Menschen angelegten guten Eigenschaften anzusehen. Nicht Zurückdrängung von Trieben, nicht Abtötung von Impulsen, sondern deren Förderung und Hinführung auf gute Ziele ist die Aufgabe der Eltern und der anderer Erzieher. Die in der Liebe konzentrierten guten Eigenschaften zu fördern, dient ein Programm, das, nach Alter differenziert, Lernfortschritte in Gang setzt. In Altersstufen von jeweils sieben Jahren entwirft Aegidius Hinweise, wie der heranwachsende Mensch zu behandeln sei. Er folgt dabei einem bereits klassischen Muster, dessen Ursprünge in die Antike zurückreichen und das im Mittelalter üblich war.<sup>17</sup> Die ersten Lebensjahre dienen vornehmlich der Ernährung der Kinder. Aber sie sollen auch anderweitig körperlich gefördert werden. Hierzu gehört die Gewöhnung an Kälte und an Entbehrungen. Die Kinder sollen sich viel bewegen. Trägheit ist zu vermeiden. Ziel ist, die Gesundheit der Kinder zu erhalten. Das Verfahren, das Aegidius in diesem Lebensabschnitt vorschlägt, ist die Gewöhnung. Sie gilt für alle Kinder gleichermaßen. Hingegen schlägt Aegidius für die Lebenszeit vom siebenten zum vierzehnten Jahr eine individuell verschiedene, einzelne Begabungen berücksichtigende Erziehung vor. Auf besondere und unterschiedliche Fähigkeiten soll eingegangen werden. Das Schwergewicht liegt in jedem Fall aber auf der Erziehung des Willens. Der junge Mensch soll vor allem seinen Charakter formen. Körperliche Übungen sollen intensiviert werden. Die intellektuelle Ausbildung ist hingegen in dieser Phase aufgrund des noch nicht voll ausgebildeten Verstandes immer noch nicht vorrangig. Für diese Altersgruppe angemessen ist hingegen vor allem eine Anleitung zur Zählung der Impulse und der Leidenschaften; Heftigkeit und Übermaß sollen eingedämmt werden. Die Ordnung der Seelenkräfte soll erreicht werden, deren kraftvolle Wirkung zwar in sich gut, aber auf die Umstände geformt werden sollen. Übertreibungen sind zu verhindern. Die Anleitung ist umso wichtiger, als die Lenkung durch den Verstand des jungen Menschen noch nicht als ausreichend gilt: *Probat autem prius esse curandum de ordinatione*

<sup>17</sup> The Ages of Man. A Study in medieval Writing and Thought, hg. v. A. Burrow, Oxford 1986.



*voluntatis quam de perfectione intellectus. In secundo autem septenniio quia pueri iam incipient consupiscere, non tamen habent perfectum rationis usum, potissime videtur esse curandum circa ipsos ut habeant ordinatam voluntatem (...) Si ergo iuvenes sunt insectuores passionum et concupiscentiarum et de facili mentiuntur et omnia faciunt valde ita quod cum amant nimis amant, cum incipiunt luder nimis lundunt et in ceteris aliis semper excessum faciunt, adhibendea est cautela ne insequantur concupiscentia. Sed sint abstinentes et sobrii, ne sint mendaces sed viridici, nec omnia agant alde sed in suis ab actibud et semonibus moderantionem accipiant.*<sup>18</sup>

Die intellektuelle Schulung der Kinder erfolgt nach den Vorstellungen von Aegidius ab dem vierzehnten Lebensjahr und dauert sieben Jahre. Es sind die Wissenschaften, die den Menschen weise und einsichtig machen. Hierbei gilt es sowohl nach den Fähigkeiten des jungen Menschen als auch nach dessen künftigen Tätigkeiten zu unterscheiden. Eine obligate Absolvierung eines klassischen Bildungskansons, etwa die der sieben freien Künste, ist nicht zwingend, obwohl Aegidius die Materien der Grammatik, Rhetorik, Dialektik und Musik nennt und sie als Vorbereitung für weitere und höher stehende Wissensgebiete ansieht, welche er indes nicht weiter präzisiert. Wohl aber empfiehlt er, daß diejenigen, die als Herrscher berufen sind, in ihrer intellektuellen Ausbildung sich auf die Aufgaben vorbereiten und sich Wissen aneignen sollen, die ihnen ihr künftiges Amt später abfordern wird.<sup>19</sup> Nicht aber Kenntnisse stehen im Mittelpunkt. Wichtiger ist die moralische Fundierung des Verhaltens; Nutzenoptierung und Machterweiterung werden nicht angestrebt und Kenntnisse hierzu nicht vermittelt. Praktische Klugheiten und Fertigkeiten im Bereich des politischen Handelns spielen in den Ausführungen bei Aegidius Romanus keine Rolle. Das Wissen um die gute Regierung ist ein moralisches Wissen: *Nam si volunt vivere vita politica vel militari, potissime studere debent in moralibus scientiis, quia per eos scire poterunt, quomodi se et alio debeant gubernare.*<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Aegidius Romanus, Regimine (Anm. 9), I, 2, 16.

<sup>19</sup> Ebda., II, 2, 8; The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages, hg. v. David Wagner, Bloomington 1983; Friedrich Dechant, Die theologische Rezeption der Artes liberales und die Entwicklung des Philosophiebegriffs in theologischen Programmschriften des Mittelalters von Alkuin bis Bonaventura, (Dissertationen. Theologische Reihe 6), St. Ottilien 1993; Michael Stotz, Artes-liberales-Zyklen. Formationen des Wissens im Mittelalter (Bibliotheca Germanica 47), Tübingen 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Aegidius Romanus, De regimine (Anm. 9), II, 2, 17. Anders das Bildungs- und Erziehungsprogramm des Pierre Dubois in seinem Werk zur Wiedergewinnung des Heiligen Landes nur wenige Jahre später präsentiert, in dem die Vermittlung praktischer



Die optimistische Sicht, die die guten Anlagen im Menschen als vorhanden voraussetzt, zeigt sich darin, daß Aegidius natürliche Antriebe zu lenken und zu moderieren empfiehlt, Gefährdungen den heranwachsenden Menschen hingegen nach seiner Auffassung einzig aus den äußeren Einwirkungen drohen. Eine *prava societas* bedroht die Kinder. Die schädlichen Einflüsse können einwirken, nicht weil die Natur des Menschen grundsätzlich schlecht ist, sondern weil der Charakter junger Menschen noch nicht gefestigt ist.

Ähnlich wie Augustinus bekräftigt Aegidius, daß Gott alle Dinge gut gemacht habe. Das Böse sei nichts anderes als die Abwesenheit des guten Seins. Anders aber als Augustinus ist bei Aegidius das Böse damit nicht nur ontologisch als nicht-existent ausgeschieden. Es entfaltet auch deswegen keine Wirkung im Menschen, weil er grundsätzlich mit guten Eigenschaften ausgestattet ist und aufgrund dieser zum guten Leben befähigt ist. Die von Augustinus angenommene angeborene Verderbtheit aller Menschen, die auch die Kinder vom Tag der Geburt an zu schlechtem Handeln antreibt, ist nach dessen Auffassung nicht durch die Kräfte der Natur heilbar. Schon die Säuglinge zeigen ein ungebärdiges Begehren. Augustinus stellt das natürliche Verlangen als Auswirkung einer sündigen und – ohne die Gnade Gottes – zum Verderben vorherbestimmten Seele hin. Anders Aegidius: Es gibt nicht einen Makel in der menschlichen Wesensart, sondern lediglich ein Fehlen von Eigenschaften, welche in der Kindheit erst entstehen und dann in einer voll entfalteten Persönlichkeit eines Erwachsenen vorhanden sind. Man soll aber – so Aegidius – nicht auf ihre spontane Entfaltung warten, vielmehr muß man sie durch Anleitung fördern: *Pueri et iuvenes, quia sunt magis molles et ductiles quam adulti, facilius imprimuntur eis mores sociorum in aetate iuvenili quam in alia. (...) Si ergo iuvenes sunt proni ad malum, ut patuit com determinavimus de moribus iuvenum.*<sup>21</sup> Die positive Bewertung des Menschen erlaubt Aegidius, auf die Aktivierung der

Kenntnisse im Vordergrund stehen; Pierre Dubois, *De recuperatione terrae sanctae*, hg. v. Charles-V. Langlois, Paris 1891, 58 ff.; Jacques Verger, *Ad studium augmentandum. L'utopie éducative de Pierre Dubois dans son „De recuperatione Terrae Sanctae“*, in *Mélanges de la Bibliothèque de la Sorbonne* 8 (1988), S. 106-122; Hans-Joachim Schmidt, *Bildungsreform als Kriegsvorbereitung. Die Vorschläge von Pierre Dubois zur Wiedergewinnung des Heiligen Landes*; in: *Personen der Geschichte – Geschichte der Personen. Studien zur Kreuzzugs-, Sozial- und Bildungsgeschichte. Festschrift für Rainer-Christoph Schwinges zum 60. Geburtstag*, hg. v. Christian Hesse/Beat Immenhauser/Oliver Landolt/Barbara Studer, Basel 2003, S. 421-440.

<sup>21</sup> Aegidius Romanus, *De regimine* (Anm. 9), II, 2, 14; Aurelianus Augustinus, *Confessionum libri XIII*, hg. v. Lucas Verheijen (Corpus Christianum. Series Latina 27), Turnhout 1981, lib.I, cap. VI u. lib. VII, cap V.



natürlichen Anlagen zu setzen. Daher ist Erziehung keine Intervention gegen diese Anlagen, daher fehlt auch jeglicher Zwang in den Erziehungsempfehlungen von Aegidius. Das Wecken von Anlagen ist mit einem liebevollen Umgang mit den Kindern vereinbar. Das Fördern von Eigenschaften, die natürlicherweise vorhanden sind, ist das Ziel. Die Kooperationsbereitschaft des zu erziehenden Kindes ist vorausgesetzt, so wie der Impuls seitens der Eltern vorhanden ist. Beide sind durch die Liebe bewirkt.

Ein Scheitern der Erziehung wird gar nicht erst erwogen. Die Liebe, die die Eltern zu ihren Kindern hegen, befähigt sie, deren Eigenschaften zu erkennen und zu fördern. Das Wirken der natürlichen Anlagen bietet die Gewähr dafür, daß die Beziehungen zwischen Eltern und Kindern nicht gestört sind. Die Disposition des Menschen ist der Garant, der Aegidius zu einer insgesamt positiven Bewertung des Handelns gelangen läßt. Moralisches Handeln heißt, naturgemäß handeln. Nicht ein mühsames Abringen des guten Tuns ist verlangt, nicht ein Verzicht auf Handlungsmöglichkeiten, nicht eine angestrenzte Unterdrückung der Antriebe, sondern die Realisierung der vorhandenen Anlagen. Ein asketisches Ideal zu propagieren, steht Aegidius fern. Das gute Leben wird nicht einem zu kasteienden Körper abgezwungen. Nicht Triebunterdrückung, sondern Trieblenkung soll die Erziehung bewirken.

Die Auffassung des Aegidius zur elterlichen Liebe hat Konsequenzen für seine weiteren Ausführungen zum Erziehungsstil. Dieser unterscheidet sich deutlich von zeitgenössischen Auffassungen. Sein etwas früherer Zeitgenosse Vinzenz von Beauvais, der ebenfalls einen Fürstenspiegel verfaßte und Erziehungslehren vorstellte, empfahl sowohl bei der geistigen Erziehung als auch der Erziehung zu guten Sitten das Kind mit der Geißel zu traktieren; er sah vor, daß sein Wille mit Gewalt gebrochen werden müsse; für ihn besaß die elterliche Zuneigung keine Bedeutung.<sup>22</sup> Aegidius hebt sich auch von der zeitgenössischen Praxis ab, in der das Ankämpfen gegen Emotionen üblich war. Vielmehr empfahl Aegidius an zahlreichen Stellen seines Werkes, die natürlichen Anlagen des jungen Menschen zu wecken, nicht gegen

<sup>22</sup> Vincenz von Beauvais, *De eruditione filiorum nobilium*, hg. v. Arpad Steiner, Ndr. New York 1970; Astrik L. Gabriel, *Vinzenz von Beauvais – ein mittelalterlicher Erzieher*, Frankfurt a. M. 1967; *Emotionen und materielle Interessen. Sozialanthropologische und historische Beiträge zur Familienforschung*, hg. v. Hans Medick/David Sabeau (Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 75), Göttingen 1984; Pierre J. Payer, *The Bridling of Desire: Views on Sex in the Later Middle Ages*, Toronto 1993.



seine Wesensart anzukämpfen, stattdessen sie zu fördern. Der erzieherische Umgang, der durchaus Gehorsam verlange, solle nach Aegidius nicht in erster Linie auf Zwang beruhen. Er empfahl ein liebevolles Benehmen. Züchtigungen waren von ihm nicht vorgesehen. Anders als Vinzenz von Beauvais lehnte er eine brutalisierte Erziehung ab.

Drei Gründe gibt es, so Aegidius, daß die Eltern die Kinder mehr lieben als umgekehrt. Erstens lieben sie sie länger, nämlich vom Zeitpunkt der Geburt an. Die Kinder hingegen werden zweitens ihre eigenen Eltern erst allmählich erkennen und zu lieben anfangen. Aufgrund dieser sicheren Gewißheit haben die Eltern eine größere Zuneigung. Deshalb lieben die Mütter die Kinder auch mehr als die Väter. Als weiteres, drittes Argument verweist Aegidius auf das Verhältnis vom Teil zum Ganzen. Im Kind als Teil der Eltern, die als das Ganze vorgestellt werden, findet sich nichts, was vom Ganzen verschieden ist, im Ganzen hingegen liegt etwas vom Teil durchaus Verschiedenes. Der Teil nun, der in Liebe zum Ganzen hingezogen wird, erkennt im Ganzen deshalb ein von sich selbst Verschiedenes und ein ihm Fehlendes. Umgekehrt findet das Ganze, das in Liebe zum Teil hingezogen ist, nichts, das nicht im Ganzen schon angelegt wäre. So ist also das Quantum der Liebe im Ganzen größer als im Teil.<sup>23</sup>

Nachdem Aegidius die größere Liebe der Eltern begründet hat, folgert er hieraus die Konsequenzen: Den Eltern erwächst die Pflicht, für ihre Kinder zu sorgen und dies gemäß dem *regimen*, das ihnen auferlegt ist. Denn jeder umsorgt das und muß es umsorgen, was er am heftigsten liebt: *quia quilibet sollicitus esse debet circa ea quae vehementi amore diligit*.<sup>24</sup> Die Kinder haben hingegen den Eltern zu gehorchen. Unterschiedliche Pflichten gestalten das Verhältnis.

Während bei Aegidius die Liebe das Motiv ist, das die Eltern zur Leitung der Kinder veranlaßt und das diese zum Gehorsam gegenüber Vater und Mutter bringt, argumentiert Vinzenz von Beauvais mit dem von Gott eingerichteten *ordo*, demgemäß alle Gott zu gehorchen hätten und abgestuft dem jeweils Höhergestellten in den jeweiligen sozialen Verbänden, bis zu den leiblichen Vätern.<sup>25</sup> Die Hierarchisierung von Befehlsgewalt begründet bei Vinzenz damit eine väterliche Autorität, die keine emotionale Bindung zur Voraussetzung hat.

Das väterliche *regimen*, d.h. die Befugnis, Anweisungen zu erteilen, hat ihren Ursprung in einem natürlichen Trieb, dem *amor*.

<sup>23</sup> Aegidius Romanus, De regimine (Anm. 9), II,2,4.

<sup>24</sup> Ebda., II,2,4.

<sup>25</sup> Vinzenz von Beauvais, De eruditione (Anm. 21), S. 109.



Ein Vater kann seine Kinder nach freiem Belieben leiten, es soll aber stets zum Wohl der Kinder geschehen. Dieses Wohl ist gesichert, da die Erziehung aus Liebe zum Kind geschieht und dies aus den Bedingungen der natürlichen Disposition aller entspringt. Aber weil die Liebe der Seinsgrund der väterlichen Befehlsgewalt ist, ist diese unumschränkt, duldet keine Begrenzung, kann nicht an Bedingungen geknüpft werden, ist also abgelöst von jeder „politischen“, d.h. von rechtlich gebundenen und durch Verhandeln, gemeinsame Beratungen und durch Verträge festgelegten Institution. Die Liebe, weil sie ein natürlicher Antrieb ist, ist *per se* gerechtfertigt und bedarf daher keiner juristischen Bestimmung. Gegenüber der Ehegattin hingegen soll sich der *Pater familias* in einer Weise verhalten, die Aegidius als politisch deutet. Indem er sich *civiliter* benimmt, weist er auf den Seinsgrund der Ehe hin, die auf gegenseitiger Vereinbarung beruht. Gegenüber dem Hausgesinde verhält sich der Familienvorstand dagegen despotisch. Zwar sind auch die Diener wohlwollend zu behandeln, aber indem Aegidius hier den Begriff des *diligenter* verwendet, setzt er das Verhalten deutlich von dem gegenüber der Ehefrau und auch in Beziehung zu den Kindern ab, das er mit dem Begriff *amanter* umschreibt. Kinder müssen – so Aegidius – mit Liebe umsorgt, gut ernährt und religiös erzogen werden.

Aegidius unterlässt es nicht, auf die Staatsformen zu verweisen, die in Analogie zu den drei Verhaltensweisen stehen. Wegen der Gesetze und der Vereinbarung, die die Ehe festlegen, entspricht sie der Verfassung der Polis. Da die Diener dem Hausherrn unterworfen sind, ist dieses Verhältnis das einer Despotie. Da die Kinder zu ihrem eigenen Wohl vom Vater aus Liebe geleitet werden, nennt Aegidius dieses Verhältnis königlich. Die Einteilung fußt auf der von Aristoteles, der im ersten Buch der Politik schreibt, daß es dem Manne zustehe, seine Frau und seine Kinder zu regieren, beide als Freie, aber nicht in derselben Weise, sondern als Politiker über die Frau herrsche, als Fürst über die Kinder.<sup>26</sup> Anders aber als bei Aristoteles führt Aegidius den Antrieb der Liebe in die Argumentation ein und begründet damit sowohl eine emotionale Bindung als auch eine unumschränkte väterliche Gewalt. Zwar hat auch Vincenz von Beauvais die Stellung von Frau und Kind in der Familie ähnlich zu Aristoteles definiert, aber nicht die Liebe zu den Kindern als wesentliche Begründung des Verhältnisses angenommen und damit kein Korrektiv gegenüber unumschränkter Herrschaft ihnen gegenüber vorgesehen.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Aristoteles, Politik, lib. 1, cap. 12.

<sup>27</sup> Vincenz von Beauvais, De eruditione (Anm. 21), S. 149; Gabriel, Vincenz (Anm. 21), S. 30.



Die Liebe als Seinsgrund der sozialen Ordnung mindert nach Aegidius nichts an deren Rigidität. Aber der *amor* verlangt eine andere Beziehung als nur die Anerkennung von Autorität, die Ableistung von Gehorsam gegenüber Höhergestellten und deren Befehlsgewalt. Der *amor* bewirkt, daß die sozialen Beziehungen zum Guten führen. Er ist damit auch mehr als die emotionale Bindung, die die sexuellen Begierde, sofern kultiviert gebändigt und personal ausgerichtet, hervorruft. Aegidius erweitert den kirchlich-kanonistischen Diskurs zur Positionsbestimmung der menschlichen Sexualität, überträgt ihn auf alle Bindungen in der Familie und entkleidet damit die Emotionen gegenseitiger Sympathie zwar nicht der erotischen Konnotation, wohl aber der sexuellen Praxis, erachtet aber zugleich die Wirkung des *amor* als umfassender, als dies andere mittelalterliche Autoren tun. Der Liebesbegriff ist zwar durchaus angereichert mit den Motiven der zeitgenössischen Liebesrhetorik, mit der Erweiterung des Begriffsinhaltes geht aber eine De-Sexualisierung einher, ohne freilich zu einer Minderung der emotionalen Intensität zu führen. Die personale Liebe ist der Wert, der aus der höfischen Literatur gerettet wird. Sie bewirkt die emotionale Intensität, die Menschen vereint. Aber anders als die willkürlich und ungeahnt hereinbrechende Liebessehnsucht, ist die elterliche Liebe regelhaft und regelmässig vorhanden. Sie ist keine Ausnahme, sie befähigt nicht zu ungewöhnlichen Taten; sie beruht auf der menschlichen Natur, ist also ein Merkmal des Wesens „Mensch“ in seiner Verallgemeinerung. Ihre stete Präsenz verleiht ihr Wirkung.

Liebe, bezeichnet als *amor*, ist ein hoher Wert, der in den Gefühlen der Menschen angelegt ist, vor jedem Vernunftgebrauch – gleichwohl ihn fördernd – ihr Handeln bestimmt und sie zu gutem Tun in der Familie und in der Gesellschaft anhält. Dies gilt auch für die Beziehungen zwischen den Ehegatten. Indem Aegidius die Liebe nicht als exzeptionelles Erleben zwischen zwei Einzelwesen auffaßt, sondern als Gattungsmerkmal der menschlichen Natur, bringt sie keine die üblichen sozialen Regeln transzendierenden Impulse hervor. Bei Aegidius erscheint die Liebe domestiziert; sie ist der Normalfall; sie entbehrt einer emotionalen Steigerung; sie dient einer rational konzipierten Lebensführung. Leidenschaftliches, vernunftwidriges Ausleben ihrer Triebe ist ihr fremd. Liebe bringt keine Glücksempfindungen hervor, weswegen sie auch nicht als Ziel des Handelns der Menschen vorgestellt wird, sondern als dessen Ursache. Sie besitzt eine stabile, in sich ruhende Daseinsform, welche keine Veränderungen und Wendungen kennt. Der *amor* ist als eine genuin menschliche Eigenschaft vorgestellt, die stets wirkt und keiner außergewöhnlicher



Erlebnisse und Empfindungen bedarf. Liebe und Vernunft sind keine Gegensätze. Mit dem Begriff des *amor* erscheint auch weniger ein aktuelles Gefühl, als vielmehr eine konstante Disposition des Menschen gemeint zu sein. Weil sie in der Natur begründet ist, ist auch nicht vorgesehen, sie für Personen und Situationen in jeweils unvorhergesehener Weise wachzurufen.

### 3. Eheliche Liebe

Die Liebe durchtränkt die verschiedenen Stufen der Vergesellschaftung, die nach Aegidius zugleich Stufen der Herrschaft sind. Die Ehe ist hiervon nicht ausgenommen. Deswegen verwendet Aegidius auch zu ihrer Bestimmung die Begriffe *communitas* und *regimen*. Innerhalb des *regimen domesticum* bildet die Ehe die erste Gemeinschaft: *Communitas ergo maris et foeminae, quae est propter generationem, est prima pars domus et praecedit communitatem domini et servi*.<sup>28</sup>

In Analogie zur aristotelischen Bestimmung des Menschen als *animale politicum* charakterisiert Aegidius Romanus den Menschen als *animale coniugale*. Die Zuneigung zwischen den Eheleuten ist durch die menschliche Natur gegeben. Diese Zuneigung, die Aegidius als *amicitia* bezeichnet, ihr also den Begriff *amor* am Anfang seiner Ausführungen zur Ehe zunächst noch vorenthält, begründet ein Herrschaftsverhältnis. Dieses ist Voraussetzung, um die für das Leben notwendigen Dinge bereitzustellen und in geordneter Weise zu verteilen. Im Haus gibt es, so Aegidius, drei Arten der Unterordnung: die der Knechte unter ihre Herren, die der Kinder unter ihre Eltern, die der Ehefrau unter ihren Mann. Die Frau schuldet dem Mann Gehorsam, sie ist ihm untertan. Dies erscheint Aegidius unerlässlich, da – so wie in allen anderen sozialen und politischen Gebilden, – auch im Haus nur einer regieren kann. Wenn es anders wäre, wenn das Haus gleichermaßen dem Mann wie der Frau unterworfen wäre, würde dies dazu führen, daß Untergebene mehreren Oberhäuptern zugleich gehorsam sein müßten, Diener mehrerer Herren wären, der soziale Organismus zwei Häupter hätte – für Aegidius eine monströse Vorstellung, die schlechterdings undenkbar und vor allem wider die natürliche Ordnung wäre. Die Hinordnung auf einen Höchsten ist vielmehr auf allen Stufenleitern der Vergesellschaftung durch die Naturnotwendigkeit gegeben. Das Haus macht davon keine Ausnahme. Nicht ein

<sup>28</sup> Ebda., I, 2, 7.



geschlechtspezifisches Defizit, den Frauen zugeschrieben, sondern die soziale Relation formt den Hausstand und damit eine führende Rolle des Hausvaters auch gegenüber seiner Gattin: *Nam secundum ordinem naturalem (...) semper vir debet esse praeeminens, mulier vero debet eum subjecta. Rursus secundum ordinem naturalem in eisdem operibus nullus aequè per se duobus vel pluribus potest esse subiectus. Si aliqua persona duobus subiicitur, hoc non est aequè per se, sed hoc est, quia unus ad alium ordinatur.*<sup>29</sup>

Die Analogie zur politischen Herrschaft wird von Aegidius ausdrücklich bekräftigt, allein dadurch daß die Unterscheidung der politischen Organisation gemäß den von Aristoteles formulierten Begriffen auch für die Familie gültig ist. Er schreibt, daß die Herrschaft des Mannes über die Frau nicht der Tyrannis entsprechen dürfe, vielmehr einer politischen Verfassung, welche das allgemeine Wohl befördere und das gute Leben der Untergebenen zu befördern habe, so daß die Vorrangstellung des Mannes gegenüber der Frau abgemilderte Herrschaft sei, ausgerichtet auf die Verfolgung gemeinsamer Ziele und vor allem gemildert durch die Beachtung der Gesetze, die nicht willkürlich übertreten werden dürften und damit einen rechtlichen Rahmen setzten, innerhalb dessen die eheliche Gemeinschaft stattfindet und der beiden – Mann und Frau – Regeln auferlege. Die Familie ist damit kein rechtsfreier Raum, der der Willkür des Herrn ausgeliefert wäre. Sie ist von Normen, die außerhalb des familiären Lebensbereiches gesetzt sind, reguliert. Es sind aber nicht nur Gesetze, sondern auch die zwischen den Ehegatten getroffenen Vereinbarungen, die bindende rechtliche Wirkung besitzen und daher die Befehlsgewalt des Mannes beschränken. Rechtsetzung durch Vertrag reguliere die Ehe. Die männliche Suprematie in der Ehe unterscheide sich damit von der Befehlsgewalt gegenüber den Kindern: *Nam regimen paternale assimilatur regali, coniugale vero politico. Debet enim vir praeesse uxori regimine politico, quia debet ei praeesse secundum certas leges, scilicet secundum leges matrimonii et secundum conventiones et pacta.*<sup>30</sup>

Anders als die Kinder müsse die Ehefrau nicht für ihre Aufgaben vom Herrn des Hauses angeleitet werden, sie bedürfe keiner Vorbereitung, sie ist vollständig befähigt, ihre Aufgaben selbständig, ohne Anweisung und ohne Ermahnung auszuüben. Die gemäß der Konzeption von Aegidius alle Lebensbereiche erfassende Hierarchisierung kennt also durchaus Abschwächungen und Moderierungen. An ande-

<sup>29</sup> Ebda., I, 2, 8.

<sup>30</sup> Ebda., I, 2, 8.



rer Stelle seines Werkes kann Aegidius durchaus von einer Gleichheit zwischen Mann und Frau in der Ehe sprechen, weil die beiden Gatten in gleicher Weise auf die natürliche Bestimmung der Ehe hingeeordnet seien, denn es gebe keine relationale Divergenz, vielmehr allein Konvergenz und Komplementarität hinsichtlich des Zweckes der Ehe, nämlich der Zeugung von Nachkommen.<sup>31</sup> Die Gleichberechtigung der beiden Gatten ist bei Aegidius gleichwohl begrenzt auf den Akt der Zeugung und auf die Erziehung der Kinder. Sie gilt nicht für das Binnenverhältnis der Eheleute. Zwischen ihnen ist die Relation asymmetrisch, von Herrschaft und Unterordnung gekennzeichnet. Genauso wenig könne die Ehefrau in den Außenbeziehungen der Familie eine gleiche Stellung wie der Mann beanspruchen. Ihre Rechte seien innerhalb des Haushaltes beschränkt und erfassen nur dessen Relationen. Aber eine vollkommene Unterordnung schließt Aegidius aus. Rechtliche Garantien stehen ihr entgegen.

Aegidius stellt ethische Forderungen, um ein zivilisiertes Betragen unter den Eheleuten zu erreichen. Frauen wie Knechte zu behandeln, sei barbarisch, schreibt Aegidius, also ein Verhalten, das einer an Vernunft und am allgemeinen Wohl ausgerichteten Verfassung von der guten sozialen Gemeinschaft widerspreche. Die Verurteilung als barbarisch verweist auf eine Aristoteles eigentümliche Unterscheidung, die den voll entwickelten Menschtyp allein in einer politischen Organisation vorhanden ansieht und Abweichungen davon als ethnisch begründeten Makel vorstellt, der bei fremden Völkern außerhalb der Zivilisation bestehe. Aegidius hingegen insistiert auf der universal-humanen Geltung der ehelichen Ordnung. Die Frau sei durch ihre Natur zum Gebären von Kindern bestimmt, nicht zum Dienen. Eine doppelte Aufgabe oder Bestimmung – Aegidius verwendet den Begriff *officium* – der Frau aufzuerlegen, widerspreche der göttlichen Schöpfungsordnung, denn sie ist vollkommen, und jedes Geschöpf erfülle einzig eine Bestimmung, der es sich vollständig widme. Ein weiteres Argument präsentiert Aegidius: Da die Frau in freier Entscheidung ihren Gatten gewählt habe, also gemäß dem kanonischen Recht der Konsens beider Eheleute eine Heirat konstituiere<sup>32</sup>, könne sie nicht

<sup>31</sup> Ebda., I, 2, 14.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Bartsch, Die Rechtsstellung der Frau als Gattin und Mutter. Geschichtliche Entwicklung ihrer persönlichen Stellung im Privatrecht bis in das 18. Jahrhundert, Leipzig 1903; René Metz, Recherches sur le statut de la femme en droit canonique. Bilan historique et perspective d'avenir, in: L'année canonique 12 (1968), S. 85-116; La femme et l'enfant dans le droit canonique médiéval (Variorum Reprints 222), Aldershot 1985; Jean Gaudemet, Le mariage en Occident. Les mœurs et le droit, Paris 1987; James Brundage, Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval



der willkürlichen Verfügung ihres Mannes ausgeliefert sein. Beide hätten einen Vertrag miteinander abgeschlossen. Die rechtmäßigen Schranken sind es, die der Herrschaft des Mannes in seiner Ehe nicht allein Grenzen ziehen, sondern seine Frau als Inhaberin von Ansprüchen einsetzen. Sie seien dreifach verbürgt: durch die Natur, durch Gesetze und durch freie Vereinbarungen. Gerede letztere sind es, die Aegidius in besonders einprägender Verbindlichkeit das Verhalten leiten lassen: *Sed inter virum et uxorem semper interveniunt quaedam conventiones et pacta et sermones quidam, quomodo vir habere se debeat circa ipsam*.<sup>33</sup> Die Herrschaft ist nicht total, denn sie beruht auf freier Wahl – *ex electione*.<sup>34</sup>

Aegidius Romanus bezeichnet die Wahl als Entstehungsgrund der Ehe. Sie verlangt Gleichberechtigung. Beide Gatten treffen die Entscheidung, die sie für ein gemeinsames Leben bestimmt. Selbständigkeit ist die Voraussetzung für die Heirat und zugleich deren Auswirkung. Eine unfreie Stellung kann durch die Eheschließung nicht begründet werden. Dies bedeutet, daß das *regimen* nach der Auffassung von Aegidius keine Schmälerung der persönlichen Freiheit nach sich zieht. Da eine in der Diktion von Aegidius „politische“ Verfassung der Ehe besteht, zielt sie auf den Nutzen aller beteiligten Personen. Herrschaft begründet daher innerhalb der Ehe stets ein Wohl, das indes nicht nur distributiv gewährt, sondern von den beiden Gatten aktiv erworben wird.<sup>35</sup>

Um die Stellung der Frau in der Ehe zu beschreiben, verwendet Aegidius juristische Denkfiguren. Es ist also nicht die Liebe, die Herrschaft vor despotischer Entartung bewahrt. Aegidius ist konsequent, wenn er zwischen Herrschaft und Liebe keinen Gegensatz konstruiert. Beim Zusammentreffen beider verlieren sie nichts an ihrer Wirkung. Aber da Liebe kein Garant gegen einen exzessiven Gebrauch der Herrschaft darstellt, sucht Aegidius andere Sicherungsinstrumente. Sie bestehen in rechtlichen Regeln, ohne daß sie indes von ihm präzisiert werden und ohne daß er Verfahren vorschlägt, wie Konflikte in der

Europe, Chicago 1987; Ders., *Sex, Law and Marriage in the Middle Ages* (Variorum Reprints 397), Aldershot 1993; Ruth Wiegand, *Liebe und Ehe im Mittelalter* (Bibliotheca euditorum 7), Goldbach 1993; M. Sheehan, *Marriage, Family, and Law in the Medieval Europe*. Collected Studies, hg. v. J. Farge, Toronto 1996.

<sup>33</sup> Aegidius Romanus, *De regimine* (Anm. 9), I, 2, 14.

<sup>34</sup> Ebda., I, 2, 15.

<sup>35</sup> Vgl. Herbert Grundmann, *Freiheit als religiöses, politisches und persönliches Postulat im Mittelalter*, in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 183 (1957), S. 23-53; Johannes Fried, *Über den Universalismus der Freiheit im Mittelalter*, in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 240 (1985), S. 313-361.



Ehe in rechtlicher Weise gelöst werden können. Die zeitgenössische Praxis kannte hingegen durchaus vor Gericht ausgetragene Streitfälle zwischen Ehegatten, die mittels rechtlicher Prozeduren Ansprüche durchsetzten und verteidigten. Verfahren vor geistlichen Gerichten zur Regelung der Gütergemeinschaft, zu den ehelichen Pflichten, zu Anschuldigungen des Ehebruchs, zur Trennung der Eheleute oder zur Feststellung der Ungültigkeit der Ehe waren die übliche Praxis im späten Mittelalter. Solche Verfahren konnten auch von den Ehefrauen angestrengt werden.<sup>36</sup>

Die Auffassung von Aegidius, der jede Gewaltanwendung gegen die Ehefrau verurteilte, entspricht dem kanonischen Eherecht. Ausdrücklich war in der *Collectio Francofurtuna*, einer am endenden 12. Jahrhundert in der Champagne erstellten Sammlung von päpstlichen Dekretalen, festgelegt, daß eine mit Gewalt herbeigeführte Ehe keinen rechtlichen Bestand habe solle, sofern die Frau aus dieser Ehe fliehe. Ihr war selbst das Recht eingeräumt, eine neue Ehe einzugehen. Die Entscheidung, die einst Papst Alexander III. gefällt hatte, war insofern auch langfristig bedeutsam, weil damit das Institut der Muntehe als rechtlich nichtig gewertet wurde, womit diese Eheform zurückgedrängt werden sollte, welche seit dem frühen Mittelalter ermöglichte, eine neben der Hauptehe eingegangene weitere Ehe zu begründen, welche aber kein einvernehmliches Einverständnis beider Partner erforderte und überdies nicht selten aus einer Gewaltanwendung gegen die Frau hervorgegangen war. Eine Dekretale, die in den *Liber Extra* (1234) aufgenommen wurde<sup>37</sup>, stellt die Schwierigkeit der Beweisführung heraus, so daß eine Entscheidung, ob Gewalt angewendet worden sei, um die Frau zum Beischlaf und zur Ehe zu zwingen, problematisch sei und deswegen eine Auflösung der bestehenden Ehe nicht

<sup>36</sup> Jean Dauvillier, *Le mariage dans le droit canonique classique de l'Eglise. Depuis le décret de Gratian (1140) jusqu'à la mort de Clément V (1314)*, Paris 1933; Richard Helmholz, *Marriage Litigation in Medieval England* (Cambridge Studies in English Legal History), Cambridge 1974; A. Lefèbre, *Règle et réalité dans le droit matrimonial à la fin du moyen âge*, in: *Revue de droit canonique* 30 (1980), S. 41-54; Charles Denahue, *The Canon Law on the Formation of Marriage and Social Practice in the Later Middle Ages*, in: *Journal of Family History* (summer 1983), S. 144-158; K. Lindner, *Courtship and the Courts: Marriage and Law in Southern Germany 1350-1550*, Diss. Theol. Harvard University 1988; F. Pedersen, *Romeo and Juliet of Stonegate: Marriage Litigation and the Ecclesiastical Courts in York in the Fourteenth Century*, Phil. Diss., University of Toronto 1992; Florence Demoulin, *Exceptio temporis, prescription romaine et dispense en matière matrimoniale au début du 13e siècle*, in: *Papers of the 10th International Congress of Medieval Canon Law*, Syracuse (N.Y.) 1996; Ines Weber, *Consensus facit nuptias. Überlegungen zum ehelichen Konsens in normativen Texten des Frühmittelalters*, in: *ZRG KA* 118 (2001), S. 31-66.

<sup>37</sup> X. 4.16.



stets verfügt werden müsse. Eine lange Zeit des ehelichen Verkehrs würde die ursprüngliche Gewaltanwendung rechtlich irrelevant machen. Argument hierfür ist, daß aus einer unfreiwillig eingegangenen Ehe sich noch eine Konsensehe entwickeln könne. Das Rubrum *Non omnis violentia impedit concontractum matrimonii*, unter der die Dekretale im *Liber Extra* verzeichnet ist, zeigt die Möglichkeit an, von der Gewalt am Anfang der Ehe abzusehen – freilich nur als Ausnahme. Der allgemeine Grundsatz, der des Konsens' und der Gewaltfreiheit, war festgeschrieben.<sup>38</sup> Damit bot das Rechtsverständnis der Kirche einen Anknüpfungspunkt für Aegidius, der den Vertragscharakter der Ehe und ihre darauf gründende Beteiligung an Rechten herausstellte und auf der permanenten Wirkung des Konsens' beharrte. Dieser verlangte eben mehr als den gemeinsamen Willen zum Zeitpunkt der Heirat, sondern auch eine rechtlich verfaßte und Rechtsgarantien gewährende dauerhafte Ausgestaltung des Verhältnisses zwischen den beiden Gatten. Ohne auf rechtliche Verfahren einzugehen, was ja auch außerhalb seines Themas gelegen hätte, beschreibt Aegidius in seinem Traktat eine Rechtsgemeinschaft der Ehe, die eine willkürliche Behandlung der Frau und ihre Unterjochung ausschloß.

Mag auch die juristische Lehre der Konzeption des Aegidius entsprechen, so wich sie doch von der zeitgenössischen Praxis ab. Diese war in den Familien des hohen Mittelalters an politischen und ökonomischen Interessen ausgerichtet, ohne daß Liebe zwischen den Beteiligten vorausgesetzt worden wäre. Es ging bei der Eheschließung um Besitz und Macht. Ehen wurden arrangiert, Kinder als künftige Objekte erneuter Arrangements behandelt. Der familiäre Druck lastete auf allen Mitgliedern der Familien, zwang ihnen Rollen auf und ließ wenig Spielraum für die Ausbildung persönlicher Wünsche.<sup>39</sup> Liebe war in diesem Kontext nicht vorgesehen. Mag auch die Konsensehe, von den Kirchenrechtlern seit dem 11. Jahrhundert verlangt, auch die rohesten Formen von Zwangsheiraten eingedämmt haben, die Verfügung der Eltern über ihre Kinder war umfassend und sie betraf auch

<sup>38</sup> Gisela Drossbach, Gewalt gegen Frauen. Untersuchungen zum Dekretalenrecht des 12. Jahrhunderts, in: Das Mittelalter 12 (2007), S. 62-71.

<sup>39</sup> Karl-Heinz Spieß, Familie und Verwandtschaft im deutschen Hochadel des Spätmittelalters. 13. bis Anfang des 16. Jahrhunderts (Vierteljahresschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte. Beiheft 111), Stuttgart 1993); Famille et parenté dans l'Occident médiéval. Actes du colloque de Parsi 6-8 juin 1974, hg. v. Georges Duby/Jacques Le Goff, Rom 1977; Anita Guerreau-Jalabert, Prohibition canoniques et stratégies matrimoniales dans l'aristocratie médiévale de la France du Nord, in: Pierre Bonté u.a., Epouser au plus proche. Inceste, prohibitions et stratégies matrimoniales autour de la Méditerranée (Civilisations et sociétés 89), Paris 1994, S. 293-321.



die Auswahl der Gatten, ohne daß realiter ein Einverständnis der Brautleute vorausgesetzt wurde. Kinder unterstanden der Befehlsgewalt ihrer Eltern. Ihre Bedürfnisse zu berücksichtigen, war nicht vorgesehen. Vielmehr war ihre Arbeitskraft ein begehrtes Gut, genauso ihre generative Potenz. Die Lebensplanung der Kinder war Aufgabe der Eltern und sie hatte sich an der Verwirklichung von Zwecken auszurichten, die die Weckung von Liebe nicht vorsahen. Die Vorbereitung auf die Anforderungen des Lebens sollte erfolgen, um schnellen Nutzen in den Arbeitsleistungen und langfristigen Gewinn durch die Erzeugung einer neuen Generation zu erzielen. Kinder waren ein Gut. Dieses war zu nutzen. Frühe Eingliederung in den Arbeitsprozess war verlangt und praktiziert, genauso wie die Gebärfähigkeit der Frau durch frühe Verheiratung genutzt werden sollte. Dies bedeutete eine rasche Angleichung kindlicher Lebensumstände an die der Erwachsenen. Entgegen einer mittlerweile als veraltet geltenden Auffassung von Philippe Ariès<sup>40</sup> gab es gleichwohl keine affektive Distanzierung der Eltern von ihren Kindern, gab es durchaus das Bewußtsein, daß Kindheit ein gesonderter Lebensabschnitt darstelle. Tod, Krankheiten und Unfälle eines Kindes wurden gefürchtet und wurden beklagt. Für diese Auffassung sprechen allein die beredten Zeugnisse der Mirakelberichte, in denen die Errettung von verunglückten und die Heilung von kranken Kindern einen großen Raum einnehmen und anzeigen, wie sehr der frühe Tod von Kindern oder deren körperliche Gebrechen als schlimme Not und als seelische Pein wahrgenommen wurden, deren Linderung – mangels wirksamer medizinischer Verfahren – allein durch das Eingreifen von Heiligen erwartet wurde.<sup>41</sup>

Indem Aegidius Romanus Notwendigkeit und natürliche Disposition im Verhältnis der Ehegatte und dieser zu ihren Kindern miteinander in eine harmonische Verbindung bringt, die keinen Gegensatz kennt, kann er darauf verzichten, eine rechtliche Kontrolle vorzusehen und eine rigide Instanz der Affektkontrolle einzuführen. Deswegen

<sup>40</sup> Philippe Ariès, *Geschichte der Kindheit*, 10. Aufl. München 1992; David Herlihy, *Medieval Children*, in: *Essays on Medieval Civilisation*, hg. v. B. K. Lackner/K. R. Philip, Austin/London 1978, S. 109-141; Klaus Arnold, *Die Einstellung zum Kind im Mittelalter*, in: *Mensch und Umwelt im Mittelalter*, hg. v. Bernd Herrmann, Stuttgart 1986, S. 53-64; Ders., *Kind und Gesellschaft in Mittelalter und Renaissance – Beiträge und Texte zur Geschichte der Kindheit*, Paderborn/München 1980; Shulamith Sahar, *Kindheit im Mittelalter*, München 1991; Didier Lett, *L'enfant dans la Chrétienté (5e-13e siècles)*, in: *Les enfants au moyen âge: 5e-15e siècles*, hg. v. Danièle Alexandre-Bidon/Didier Lett, Frankfurt 1998, S. 17-31.

<sup>41</sup> Maria Elisabeth Wittmer-Busch/Constanze Rendtel, *Miracula. Wunderheilungen im Mittelalter. Eine historisch-psychologische Annäherung*, Köln u.a 2003.



ist die große Bedeutung, die er der Liebe zumißt, ein befreiendes Element, das Selbstdisziplinierung entbehrlich macht. Vielmehr sieht er in der Verwirklichung der natürlichen Anlagen die Grundlage des moralisch richtigen Handelns. Weil die Ehe darauf beruht, die in der Natur des Menschen vorhandenen Fähigkeiten zu realisieren, ist Liebe aufgewertet als die Quintessenz dieser Fähigkeiten. Aegidius, der im Unterschied zu anderen Autoren des hohen Mittelalters<sup>42</sup> darauf verzichtet, Liebe zu definieren, sie vielmehr einzig in ihrer Wirkung vorstellt, kann ihr somit viele Lebensbereiche erschließen, in der sie sich verwirklicht. Er verfährt in dem Kapitel über die Eheleute in ähnlicher Weise, wie er dies für die Verbindung zwischen Eltern und Kindern tut, indem er den affektiven Gehalt der Liebe und ihren zugleich vernünftigen Gebrauch voraussetzt. Diese affektive Zuneigung ist unter den Eheleuten sogar insofern noch größer, als sie auf freier Wahl beruht und sie durch die wechselseitige sexuelle Begierde angetrieben wird. Indes ist sie insofern geringer, als die Liebe zu den Kindern erst die Erfüllung der ehelichen Liebe bedeutet.

Aegidius verwendet einerseits den Begriff der *amicitia*, um die emotionale Bindung zwischen den Ehegatten zu beschreiben, andererseits den des *amor*, um die erotische Anziehung zwischen ihnen zu betonen und um auf die sexuelle Vereinigung zu verweisen. Der *amor* in der Ehe ist der Antrieb, der nicht allein die Gatten miteinander verbindet, sondern zur Zeugung von Nachkommen hinlenkt und damit dem Erhalt und der Fortpflanzung der Familie und des Menschengeschlechts insgesamt dient. *Amor* ist mit der sexuellen Anziehung und dem Sexualakt gekoppelt, umschreibt aber damit nicht vollständig die natürliche Zuneigung zwischen Mann und Frau in der Ehe. Insofern *amicitia* einen weiteren Begriffsinhalt abdeckt als *amor*, unterscheidet Aegidius den generativen Akt der Sexualität von der die Gemeinschaft stiftenden Tätigkeit, die sich auch in der Leitung des Hauses verwirklicht.<sup>43</sup>

Aegidius erachtet den *amor* als einen Spezialfall der *amicitia* und ordnet ihn begrifflich dieser unter. *Amor* meint aber auch eine Steigerung der *amicitia*: *Inter uxorem et virum debet esse amor magnis, quia amicitia excellens et naturalis*.<sup>44</sup> Die Ehe ist der institutionelle Ort für die emotional fundierte Zuneigung. *Amor* partizipiert

<sup>42</sup> Andreas Capellanus, *De amore libri tres*. Text nach der Ausgabe von E. Trosjek, übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen versehen von Fritz Peter Knapp, Berlin/New York 2005.

<sup>43</sup> Aegidius Romanus, *De regimine* (Anm. 9), I, 2, 7.

<sup>44</sup> Ebda., I, 2, 8.



nicht an einer einzigen seelischen Regung, sie umgreift vielmehr andere. In dieser zweiten Bedeutung ist ihr die *amicitia* begrifflich untergeordnet. Da die Liebe eine Zunahme erfahren kann, greift Aegidius zum Mittel der begrifflichen Differenzierung. In einer weiteren Bedeutung schließen sich beide Begriffe indes gegenseitig aus. Dies dient Aegidius als Argument, das Verbot der Verwandtenehe zu begründen. Weil zwischen den Familienmitgliedern bereits eine *amicitia* bestehe, könne eine Ehe zwischen ihnen keinen zusätzlichen Wert stiften. Einer solchen Gemeinschaft sei die Erhöhung in den Zustand des *amor* vorenthalten.<sup>45</sup>

Gemäß der Auffassung von Aegidius ist die unterschiedliche Steigerungsfähigkeit der Liebe in Beziehung zu ihrer sozialen Funktion zu setzen. Wie diese zu bewerten ist, ist nicht eindeutig. An einer Stelle führt er aus, daß der *amor* umso größer sei, je mehr Personen er einschließe. Also nicht die intime Exklusivität, sondern im Gegenteil die umfassendere Sozialisierung der Liebe vermehre die Wirkung. Weil die Kinder das Ziel der Ehe und das erstrebte gemeinsame Gute seien, bewirkten sie eine positive Rückkoppelung auf die eheliche Bindung und auch auf die gegenseitige Zuneigung. Der *amor* zwischen den Gatten werde größer durch die Sorge um die Kinder. Der *amor* knüpft auf mehreren Ebenen familiäre Bande; er erhält seine Funktion durch die Zuneigung zu den Kindern, er entfaltet sich nicht allein in der ehelichen Gemeinschaft: *Inclinantur ex ipsa prole, quae est ipsorum commune bonum, immo eo ipso quod aliqui sunt amici unius, habent quandam inclinationem ut sint amici inter se parentes, qui naturaliter diligunt suam prolem, ex dilectione naturali quam habent ad ipsum, augmentatur eorum amicitia naturalis. Sed cum omnis amor vim quaedam unitativam dicat, augmento amore propter prolem genitam, augmentatur quoque eorum propositum, ut velint inseparabiliter permanere.*<sup>46</sup>

Aegidius nennt Gründe für die Gattenwahl. Der *amor* wird geweckt durch seelische Vorzüge, zu denen ausdrücklich auch der Arbeitseifer der Frau gehöre. Er entspringt außerdem aus der körperlichen Attraktivität. Diese bewirke, Liebe zu wecken. Der *amor* folge aus der sexuellen Anziehung und ziele auf die sexuelle Erfüllung, die in der Vereinigung der sich begehrenden Körper bestehe. Dazu ist die Schönheit des Körpers Voraussetzung. Ohne sie wäre eine Ehe nicht möglich. Von der Schönheit angezogen zu werden, gehört nach Aussage von Aegidius ebenfalls zu den gerechtfertigten Gründen einer

<sup>45</sup> Ebda. I, 2, 11.

<sup>46</sup> Ebda., I, 2, 8.



Eheschließung. Die körperlichen Reize seien besonders bei der Frau wichtig, erstens um den Mann vor Unzucht zu bewahren und ihn in Treue an sich zu binden, zweitens um Kinder zu zeugen und drittens um die Chance zu erhöhen, daß schöne Kinder geboren werden. Der Mann, der seine Ehefrau begehre, suche nach den körperlichen Vorzügen, zu denen neben der Schönheit auch die körperliche Größe gehöre: *Quantum ergo ad bona corporis, quaerenda est in uxore pulchritudo et magnitudo*.<sup>47</sup> Das Erfordernis, einen schönen Körper zu haben, gelte bei Herrschern in noch höherem Maße als bei anderen Menschen, da sie darauf angewiesen seien, auch die Zuneigung ihrer Untergebenen zu gewinnen. Der *amor* wirkt auch im politischen Verband, macht das *regimen* im Königreich möglich.

#### 4. Liebe als ordnende Kraft in der Gesellschaft

Liebe ist in eine normative Ordnung eingebunden, indem sie erstens auf der natürlichen Veranlagung der Menschen beruht und zweitens auf die Verwirklichung der natürlichen Ziele hinwirkt, nämlich auf die Zeugung von Nachkommenschaft, und drittens die familiäre Bindungskräfte schafft und somit geordnete soziale Beziehungen ermöglicht. Aegidius steht damit in Opposition zu einer Konzeption von *amor*, *amour*, *lîbe*, die insbesondere außerehelichen Verhältnissen eigentümlich sei, auf jeden Fall als aufwühlendes erotisches Gefühl, als unberechenbar und unerbittlich den Menschen unterwerfende Kraft, als leidenschaftlichen Ausnahmezustand, als gefühlsintensives Erleben und damit als soziale Regeln übertretendes menschliches Empfinden vorgestellt worden ist. Klassisch ausgeführt ist diese Auffassung am Ende des 12. Jahrhunderts von Andreas Capellanus, dessen Einfluß auf die Literatur seiner und der folgenden Zeit groß war.<sup>48</sup> Die Liebe ist seit dem endenden 11. und dem 12. Jahrhundert als ein herausragendes Thema in der Literatur des okzidentalen Europa entdeckt worden. Dies gilt auch für das religiöse Bewußtsein. Die Liebe zu Gott und die, welcher er den Menschen entgegenbringt, traten an die Stelle einer Vorstellung einer strafenden und belohnenden Instanz, die die Menschen richtet.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Ebda., I, 2,13

<sup>48</sup> Andreas Capellanus, *De amore libri tres*. Text nach der Ausgabe von E. Trogue, übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen versehen von Fritz Peter Knapp, Berlin/New York 2005.

<sup>49</sup> Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual 1050-1200*, London 1972; Ders., *Individualism in the Twelfth-Century Religion. Some further Reflections*, in: *The*



Aegidius führt den Begriff des *amor* in den familiären Bereich ein, der ihm bislang weitgehend verschlossen war.<sup>50</sup> Liebe erweist sich als Bindeglied zwischen der menschlichen Bedürftigkeit, als gesellschaftliches Wesen zu existieren, und der Motivation seiner Handlungen. Liebe ist der Kitt sozialer Bindungen. Sie motiviert zu Handlungen, die sich als sozial nützlich erweisen, ja überhaupt erst Soziabilität erzeugen. Dies gelingt gemäß Aegidius aber nur, insofern der *amor* einen weiten Begriffsumfang hat. Er eröffnet auch Handlungsfelder, die, bar einer sexuellen Konnotation, sich als konstitutiv für die elterliche Intervention gegenüber ihren Kindern erweisen.

Die Liebe, die in vielen Lebensbereichen wirkt, verweist auch auf die Liebe zu Gott, aber Aegidius verzichtet in seinem Fürstenspiegel darauf, diese Liebe inhaltlich zu präzisieren und als eindeutig christlich zu begründen und dogmatisch festzulegen. Aegidius bietet eine originelle Konzeption. Er verweigert sich sowohl einem ausschließlich religiösen Diskurs, wie er auch eine einzig an Interessenübereinstimmung begründete Vergesellschaftung der Menschen ablehnt. In der Anwendung säkularer Argumentationsweisen, die durch die Rezeption der Texte von Aristoteles vorgegeben ist, sucht er nach einer Begründung der sozialen Bindungskräfte, die in der Natur des Menschen liegt. Diese Natur verweist bei Aegidius aber auf mehr als die grundsätzlich und *a priori* angenommene politische und soziale Disposition aller Menschen. Vielmehr liegt es in der Liebe begründet, daß Menschen in geordneten sozialen Verbänden leben. Liebe ermöglicht den Gebrauch der Vernunft im Zusammenleben von Individuen. Mit der Liebe führt Aegidius ein Konzept ein, daß in einer christlichen Vorstellung begründet ist und damit aristotelische Vorstellungen zu überwinden vermag.

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Journal of Ecclesiastical History 31 (1980), S. 195-206; Caroline Bynum, Did the Twelfth Century Discover the Individual?, in: The Journal of Ecclesiastical History 31 (1980), S. 1-17; Aaron Gurjewitsch, Das Individuum im europäischen Mittelalter (Europa bauen), München 1994; Horst Bredekamp, Das Mittelalter als Epoche der Individualität, in: Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Berichte und Abhandlungen 8, Berlin 2000, S. 190-240.

<sup>50</sup> Famille et parenté dans l'Occident medieval. Actes du colloque de Paris 6-8 juin 1974, hg. v. Georges Duby/Jacques LeGoff, Rom 1977; James A. Brundage, Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe, Chicago/London 1987.



## **PATERNUM IMPERIUM, FILIALE OBSEQUIUM**

### **l Das gehorsame Vertrauen des Sohnes in Gott den Vater als Leitmotiv der Passionsdarstellung des Simon Fidati**

Der Evangelienkommentar des Augustiners Simon Fidati von Cascia (ca. 1295-1348)<sup>1</sup> behandelt die markanten Punkte des Lebens Jesu. Genannt seien seine Predigt- und Wundertätigkeit. Im 13. Buch seines Evangelienkommentars legt Simon ausführlich die Passionsgeschichte Jesu nach den Evangelien aus. Bei der Lektüre seiner Darstellung fällt auf, dass er im historischen Verlauf des Passionsgeschehens einige Gesichtspunkte besonders heraushebt.

So nennt er das Kreuz einen schrecklichen Lehrstuhl (*horrida cathedra*), von dem herab Christus lehrt, auf dem er sich zur Betrachtung darbietet.<sup>2</sup> In den Schriften Augustins findet sich bereits dieses Motiv, dass das Kreuz eine Schule Christi ist.<sup>3</sup> Als Gegenstand der Lehre Christi betont Simon vor allem den Sohnesgehorsam Jesu (*filiale obsequium*) gegenüber seinem himmlischen Vater, der ihm das Werk der Erlösung auferlegt hat (*paternum imperium*).

In diesem Beitrag sollen der Auftrag des Vaters und der Gehorsam des Sohnes herausgearbeitet werden, da sie die Darlegungen Simons bestimmen.<sup>4</sup>

### **1. Der Todesbeschluss des Vaters über Jesus**

Als erster Punkt sei der Beschluss des Vaters genannt, dass Jesus sterben muß. Jesus geht also nicht deshalb in den Tod, weil die

<sup>1</sup> Siehe den Sammelband: Simon Fidati von Cascia OESA. Augustinische Theologie und Philosophie im späten Mittelalter, hrsg. von C. M. Oser-Grote und A. E. J. Grote (Cassiciacum 52), Würzburg 2006, in dem die neuesten Ergebnisse der Simon-Forschung vorgelegt werden.

<sup>2</sup> Simon Fidati, *De gestis XIII*, 112 (VI, 320, 78).

<sup>3</sup> Augustinus, *Io. eu. tr.* 119, 2; s. 234, 2; s. 315, 8; s. 328; s. 386, 2; s. Guelf. 32, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Für den historischen Kontext der Ausführungen Simons verweise ich auf W. Baier, *Untersuchungen zu den Passionsbetrachtungen in der Vita Christi des Ludolf von Sachsen. Ein quellenkritischer Beitrag zu Leben und Werk Ludolfs und zur Geschichte der Passionstheologie*, I-III (Analecta Cartusiana), Salzburg 1977.



Hohenpriester, die Volksmenge oder der Richter Pilatus seine Hinrichtung wollten, sondern weil der Vater es so beschlossen hatte.

Simon hebt diesen Beschluss bei der Auslegung der Perikope hervor, welche die Verhaftung Jesu und speziell das Eingreifen des Petrus mit dem Schwert beschreibt. (Joh 18, 10-11)

Nachdem Jesus dem Petrus befohlen hatte, sein Schwert in die Scheide zu stecken, heisst es wörtlich: *Der Kelch, den mir der Vater gegeben hat – soll ich ihn nicht trinken?* (V. 11) Der Kommentar Simons dazu lautet, dass der Vater dem Sohn den Kelch eines sehr bitteren Leidens gab, den er bis zum Boden leerte. Er tat es deshalb, weil sein Vater ihm diesen Kelch gegeben hatte. Es ist nicht der alleinige Grund. Jesus selbst fasste den festen Entschluss (setzte für sich fest), dass er dem Willen des Vaters nichts vorziehen werde. (Joh 5, 30) Schon im Ölgarten hatte er sich dazu durchgerungen, als er betete, dass der bittere Kelch, d. h. die Bitterkeit des Leidens und Todes, von ihm genommen werde. (Mt 26, 39) Dieser Bitte kam der Vater aber nicht nach, sondern er hielt seinen Beschluss aufrecht. Jesus mußte deshalb den Kelch des Leidens und des Todes trinken.<sup>5</sup>

Eine Erklärung dafür gibt Simon, indem er Jesus eine Rede an Petrus in den Mund legte, in der er folgendes feststellte:

*Der Vater gab mir den Kelch mit der Auflage, ihn nicht zurückzugeben. Denn wer wird verändern wollen, was der ewige Vater beschlossen hat? Wer ist außer mir in der Lage, den für mich bestimmten Kelch zu trinken? Diese Aufgabe obliegt allein mir. Ein anderer kommt dafür nicht in Frage. Mir und keinem sonst ist der Kelch der Erlösung zuge-dacht.*

*Willst du, Mensch, nicht, was Gott will, willst du, Geschöpf, nicht, was der Schöpfer will und du, Knecht, nicht, was der Herr will?*

So lässt Simon Jesus über sich reflektieren.

*Wenn ich nicht trinke, wer trinkt? Wenn ich nicht leide, wer leidet dann für das Menschengeschlecht? Warum willst du nicht, dass ich ihn trinke? Wenn ich ihn nicht trinke, werden alle vom ewigen Durst berührt.*<sup>6</sup>

In dieser Ansprache, die Simon durch Jesus an Petrus richtet, kommen einige wichtige Punkte vor, die seine Ausführungen bestimmen. An erster Stelle steht der ewige Beschluss des Vaters, dass sein Sohn Jesus Christus die Erlösung durchführen soll. Zweitens muß der

<sup>5</sup> Simon Fidati, *De gestis XIII*, 62 (VI, 156, 4-10).

<sup>6</sup> Simon Fidati, *De gestis XIII*, 62 (VI, 156, 11-18).



Erlöser bestimmte Voraussetzungen mitbringen, die ihn für diese Aufgabe qualifizieren. Für sie kommt nur der Gott - Mensch Jesus Christus in Frage. Der Befehl des göttlichen Vaters und der Empfänger des Befehls, der Gottessohn Jesus Christus bilden deshalb wichtige Bezugspunkte der Passionsauslegung Simons.

Der von Gott vorgesehene Weg, auf dem der väterliche Beschluss ausgeführt werden soll, muß im Gehorsam gegen Gott gegangen werden. So wie David bei seiner Flucht aus Jerusalem vor seinem Sohn Abschalom es nicht zuließ, dass man Schimi aus der Sippe Sauls, der ihn verfluchte und mit Steinen bewarf, tötete, weil er dies nach der Meinung Davids auf Gottes Befehl tat, (2 Sam 16, 5-8)<sup>7</sup> so darf sich auch Jesus bei der Durchführung seines Auftrages nicht behindert lassen. Wer dazu rät oder wer Hindernisse aufstellt, ihn zu verwirklichen, den hält Simon für einen Teufel, auch wenn er in Worten oder im Verhalten Frömmigkeit vortäuscht. Ein solches Verhalten darf auch nicht akzeptiert werden, da es den Menschen vom Leben abwendet. Denn das Leben entwickelt sich nur im Gehorsam gegen Gott. Simon schreibt wörtlich: *Das ganze Leben besteht im Gehorsam gegen Gott.*<sup>8</sup>

Damit ist ein dritter Punkt genannt, der für Simon bei seiner Auslegung der Passion von Bedeutung war, nämlich als negativer Bezugspunkt der Ungehorsam der Stammeltern und als positiver der Gehorsam Christi.

Mit dem Tadel des Petrus und dem Hinweis auf den Jesus vom Vater gereichten Kelch beseitigt er jedes Zögern, wehrt entgegengehaltene Gründe ab und beendet zu diesem Punkte das Gespräch. Da ihm der Vater das Kreuz auferlegt hat, duldet Jesus keinen Widerspruch. Er hört nicht auf Verlockungen. Jeden vermeintlichen Freund, der ihm solche unterbreitet, betrachtet er als seinen Feind, wie er es schon vorher bei Petrus getan hatte, als er ihn einen Satan nannte (Mt 16, 23; Mk 8, 33).<sup>9</sup>

### *Der Wille des Vaters und die freie Zustimmung des Sohnes*

Aufgrund der Aussagen zur Unabänderlichkeit des Willens des Vaters könnte man meinen, Jesus habe sich nicht freiwillig den körperlichen Leiden gebeugt, sondern er sei dazu gezwungen worden.

Simon widerspricht einer solchen Annahme, indem er auf Mt 26, 53 verweist. Er führt dazu aus, dass der Vater mehr als 12 Millionen Engel geschickt hätte, wenn es darauf angekommen wäre, zu kämpfen.

<sup>7</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 62 (VI, 157, 31-41).

<sup>8</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 62 (VI, 156, 22-26).

<sup>9</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 62 (VI, 157, 42-52.).



Seine zwölf Apostel hätten ihm keine Hilfe bedeutet. Aber diese Unterstützung ist jetzt auch nicht erforderlich. Es ist an der Zeit, dass Jesus die körperlichen Leiden auf sich nimmt, sich ihnen nicht widersetzt oder sich mit Waffengewalt schützt. Dies widerspräche der Sendung, zu der er gekommen war. Die Welt wollte er ohne Waffengewalt erobern und umformen. Die Dämonen suchte er durch sein Wort zu überwinden.<sup>10</sup>

Aus diesen Darlegungen folgert Simon für diejenigen, die Jesus vollkommen nachfolgen wollen, dass sie für ihre Verteidigung nicht die Mittel der Welt suchen sollen. Bei den Angriffen der Ruchlosen dürfen sie darauf vertrauen, dass die Unterdrückung für sie förderlich ist und ihnen zum Besseren gereicht.<sup>11</sup>

### *Die Verhaftung Jesu*

Jesus ließ sich auf Grund eines verbrecherischen Befehls festnehmen. Es geschah in der üblichen Weise. Auf Grund seines Körpers war Jesus allen übrigen Menschen ähnlich. Er unterschied sich von ihnen jedoch nach seiner Gottheit. Es entsteht durch die Festnahme der paradoxe Zustand, dass die Häscher denjenigen fesseln, der gekommen war, alle von den Banden der Sünden loszusprechen und aus den Schlingen des Teufels zu befreien.<sup>12</sup>

Zum gefesselten Jesus bemerkt Simon, dass der Mensch oder die Knechtsgestalt Jesu die Gefangennahme und Fesselung auf sich nahm, dass jedoch derjenige frei blieb, der die menschliche Gestalt, die Form eines Knechtes angenommen hatte.

Aus dieser Feststellung zieht Simon eine Folgerung für den Menschen. Das geistige Bild im Menschen braucht sich nicht zu fürchten, wenn die sichtbare Gestalt gefangen und gefesselt wird. Wie nämlich Gott ausserhalb und im Menschen frei ist, so besitzt die Seele hinsichtlich des Körpers Freiheit. In den Empfindungen und im Wollen kann die Seele nicht bedrängt werden, es sei denn sie fesselt sich selbst. Dies ergibt sich daraus, dass die Seele und nicht der Körper der Sitz der Freiheit ist. Der Körper des Menschen wird gefesselt, der seelische Bereich erleidet dieses Schicksal aber nicht. *So wird der Mensch Christus gebunden, aber ungebunden bleibt Gott.*<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 63 (VI, 158, 4-18).

<sup>11</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 63 (VI, 158, 18-22).

<sup>12</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 66 (VI, 165, 9-11).

<sup>13</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 66 (VI, 165, 12-26).



Mit dieser Unterscheidung macht Simon auch die einzigartige Stellung des Erlösers Jesus Christus deutlich. Auf Grund seiner göttlichen Natur ist er in der Lage, die Erlösung des Menschengeschlechtes zu bewirken. Jesus erscheint vor den Menschen als der Gebundene, als der Hilflose, in Wirklichkeit ist er jedoch frei auf Grund seiner inneren Freiheit. Jesu Freiheit übertrifft aber die innere, seelische Freiheit, über die auch der gebundene Mensch verfügt. Sie ist nur ein schwaches Abbild für die Freiheit, über die Jesus als der Gottmensch verfügt. Trotz seiner Fesselung bleibt er im Besitz seiner Freiheit, durch die er vollkommen frei, also ohne Zwang, das Werk der Erlösung durchführen kann.

### *Die Flucht der Jünger*

Nach der Verhaftung Jesu verließen ihn seine Jünger und flohen (Mt 26, 56), obwohl sie ihm versprochen hatten, in seinen Verfolgungen bei ihm zu bleiben. Christus hatte ihre Flucht vorausgesagt, da er ihr Inneres besser kannte als sie selbst.<sup>14</sup>

Simon zieht aus einem solchen Verhalten im Hinblick auf Gott und auf Jesus Christus für den Fliehenden gewisse Konsequenzen.

Mit Blick auf Gott sagt er, dass derjenige, der ihn verlässt, die Sicherheit verloren hat. Ist sie abhanden gekommen, dann dringt verwirrende Furcht in das Leben des Flüchtenden ein. Sie führt häufig zu Zweifeln und einem Schwinden der Hoffnung.

Das Verlassen Christi bezeichnet Simon als Verlassen des Lebens. Statt dem Leben läuft er dem Tod in die Arme. Wer Christus verlässt, ist vor dem rechten Weg zurückgeschreckt. Vom Stachel der Furcht getrieben flieht er die Wege und gerät in die Finsternis.

Wer Christus verlässt, erfährt alle Bitterkeit (Kol 3,4). Denn er hat damit das in Aussicht gestellte Leben verneint. Es gibt kein schlimmeres Übel und keine grausamere Bitterkeit, als dem Tod entgegen zu gehen, besonders mit dem Gefühl, man werde ihn ewig erleiden.

Wer Christus verlässt, der läuft in jede Abseitigkeit hinein. Er hat den verlassenen, der für den Glaubenden die höchste Wahrheit ist (Joh 14, 6).<sup>15</sup>

Auf das menschliche Verhalten geht Simon in diesem Zusammenhang ein, wenn er feststellt, dass ein solches Verhalten auch unter Freunden vorkommt, wenn der ungetreue Freund den Freund

<sup>14</sup> Simon Fidati, *De gestis XIII*, 66 (VI, 165, 26- 166, 32).

<sup>15</sup> Simon Fidati, *De gestis XIII*; 66 (VI, 166, 34-47).



verlässt. Der getreue dagegen verlässt ihn auch im Tode nicht. Wer den Freund verlässt, versagt in der Liebe. Ihr Fehlen ruft die Furcht herbei, da sie in der wahren Liebe nicht vorhanden ist. Sobald die Furcht jedoch Platz gegriffen hat, veranlasst sie zur Flucht, um den Schwierigkeiten zu entkommen. Aber häufig gerät der Untreue in das hinein, was man unter ihrem Antrieb vermeiden will. Unter diesem Gesichtspunkt bedeutet, Christus zu verlassen, den Teufel zu finden. Die Flucht in irgendeinen Bereich, in dem Christus durch die Tugend nicht anwesend ist, bringt den Schutz unter den Flügeln des großen Drachens, wie Simon sich ausdrückt. (Offb 12, 9) Dieser kann ihn aber nicht vor dem bewahren, was er fürchtet. Es ist auf jeden Fall sicherer, die Schmerzen des Todes zusammen mit dem unbesiegbaren Leben zu ertragen, als ausserhalb seines Bereiches noch ein wenig leben zu wollen.<sup>16</sup>

Aus dem Verhalten der Apostel folgert Simon auf Grund der vorausgegangenen Überlegungen, dass sie die Flucht schlecht bedachten, indem sie das Leben verließen, das allen Menschen von Jesus gewährt wird.

Wohin hat sie die Apostel geführt? Simons Antwort lautet: Ins Ungewisse. Sie wurden von der Furcht angetrieben. Sie hatten vorher erklärt, mit Christus sterben zu wollen. Einen Fluchtplan hatten sie nicht entwickelt. Sie waren auch unerfahren hinsichtlich der Schläge der Gegner. Es mangelte ihnen an Zutrauen zu sich selber und sie waren unsicher über ihre Glaubensstärke. Simon urteilt über sie, dass sie sich wie Vögel verhielten, unter die ein Stein geworfen wurde. Sie fliegen in bestimmte Richtungen, lassen sich auf Höhen nieder und auf den Ästen der Bäume. Das hatten sie vorher nicht geplant. So streifte auch die Schar der Apostel auf ihrer Flucht umher. Sie war von der Zuversicht begleitet, irgendwo einen Zufluchtsort zu finden.<sup>17</sup>

Durch die Flucht der Apostel stand Jesus als ihr gefangener Anführer allein da. Es entwickelte sich der schwerste Kampf seit der Erschaffung der Welt. Denn es handelte sich bei dem Gefangenen um *Christus, den Sohn Gottes, den Herrn der Welt, den Herrscher über die Könige der Erde (Offb 1, 5), den Anführer in den Sitten, den Führer in den Himmel, den Vernichter der Hölle, den Vertreiber des Todes*. Aber gerade in diesem Alleinsein wird sein Triumph deutlich sichtbar. Er steht dem Widersacher allein gegenüber. Damit *muß ihm auch allein der Sieg über den ewigen Tod zugeschrieben werden*.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 66 (VI, 166, 48- 56).

<sup>17</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 66 (VI, 166, 56- 167, 64).

<sup>18</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 66 (VI, 167, 75- 82).



In dem jungen Mann, der nur mit einem leinenen Tuch bekleidet dem gefangenen Jesus folgte und sich selbst durch die Flucht der Gefangennahme entzog, als man ihn festnehmen wollte (Mk 14, 51-52), erblickt Simon eine Andeutung des jetzt einsetzenden Kampfes. Es sollte die Armut und die Absage an die Welt herausgestellt werden. Mit diesen Waffen sollten die Nachfolger Jesu über ihre Feinde triumphieren und die Welt erobern.<sup>19</sup>

### *Die Verleugnung durch Petrus*

Das Verhalten des Petrus hebt sich krass von dem seines Meisters ab. Er folgte diesem zwar von weitem bis zum Hof des hohepriesterlichen Palastes (Mt 26, 58) und fand Zugang zu ihm (Joh 18, 16), versagte dann aber im Gespräch mit der Pförtnerin, den Knechten und dem Verwandten des Malchus. Dabei leugnete Petrus drei Mal, dass er zu Jesus gehört oder ihn kennt.

Diese dreimalige Verleugnung Jesu durch Petrus führt Simon darauf zurück, dass Petrus Jesus nur von weitem folgte. Er war mit ihm nicht in der rechten Weise verbunden. Das Wanken im Glauben hatte seinen Geist gänzlich bedrückt. In die Liebe zu Christus hatte sich die Furcht vor den Menschen eingeschlichen. Diese Beeinträchtigungen führten dazu, dass Petrus sich von seinem Meister entfernte und ihn drei Mal verleugnete.

Als Erschwerung der Verleugnung verweist Simon darauf, dass Gott Vater das Bekenntnis zu Christus als dem Sohn Gottes inspiriert hatte (Mt 16, 16). Zu seinem Messiasbekenntnis wurde Petrus *nicht durch einen Menschen oder Engel, sondern durch den unfehlbar lehrenden ewigen Vater veranlasst*.<sup>20</sup> Darauf hatte Petrus vergessen.

Simons Überlegungen, wie es zur Verleugnung durch Petrus kommen konnte, enthalten einige bemerkenswerte Punkte.

Da ist zuerst die Anhänglichkeit an das irdische Leben. Sie zeigt, in welchen Abgrund des Bösen der Mensch hinabsteigen kann, *dass er für einen Teil des schwindenden Lebens das ganze und ewige Leben verleugnet*.<sup>21</sup>

Die Türhüterin veranlasst Simon zu einer Bemerkung über das Laster des Geizes. Er sieht ihn besonders in den in die Kirche eingeführten Prälaten verwirklicht, wenn sie durch ihr Verhalten

<sup>19</sup> Simon Fidati, *De gestis XIII*, 66 (VI, 167, 85-168, 99).

<sup>20</sup> Simon Fidati, *De gestis XIII*, 68, (VI, 175, 85-98).

<sup>21</sup> Simon Fidati, *De gestis XIII*, 68, (VI, 176, 99-199).



Jesus verleugnen und durch ihre Worte die Wahrheit in die Lüge verkehren.<sup>22</sup>

Im Wärmen am Feuer der Juden wegen der äußeren Kälte sieht Simon einen Hinweis auf die innere Kälte. Sie wurde bei Petrus durch das Löschen des Feuers des Hl. Geistes dadurch hervorgerufen, dass er sich nach dem wärmenden Feuer der Juden sehnte.<sup>23</sup>

Das Krähen des Hahns und der Blick Jesu veranlassten Petrus, den Ort zu verlassen und bitterlich zu weinen. Simons Folgerung aus dem Verhalten des Petrus lautet, man solle die Orte verlassen, die Anlass zur Sünde gaben, und ebenso die Gesellschaften, die zur Sünde ermunterten. Man soll aus sich herausgehen, wenn man innerlich sündigte, und sich einem anderen anvertrauen.

Petrus weinte zu Recht bitterlich, da nichts bitterlicher ist, als den Herrn Jesus Christus verleugnet zu haben.<sup>24</sup> Hier wird der Abstand deutlich zwischen der Treue Jesu zum Willen seines Vaters und dem Versagen des Petrus, der seine Zusicherung nicht einhielt.

#### *Das ausdrückliche Bekenntnis Jesu zu seiner Gottessohnschaft*

Bei seinem Verhör vor dem Hohen Rat unter dem Vorsitz des Kajaphas bekannte Jesus ausdrücklich, dass er der Messias, der Sohn des lebendigen Gottes ist. (Mt 26, 64) Er kündigte an, dass sie ihn jetzt zwar als reinen Menschen verachten, nach seiner Erhöhung aber zur Rechten der Macht Gottes sitzen sehen werden. Dann werden sie anerkennen, dass der Menschensohn eins und wesensgleich mit dem Vater ist, dass der Sohn auf wunderbare Weise Gott wurde. Wunderbar empfangen und geboren ist er als Mensch mit der Gottheit verbunden, wobei die Gottheit unbewegt blieb, aber die Menschheit in die höheren Bereiche erhoben wurde.<sup>25</sup>

Die Antwort auf das Bekenntnis Jesu war keine gläubige Zustimmung, sondern fiel ironisch und spöttisch aus. Die Bemerkungen brachten Jesus nicht von seiner Antwort ab. Was auch immer die Fragenden erreichen wollten, Jesus blieb dabei, dass er der Sohn Gottes ist. Davon ließ er sich weder durch den Vorwurf der Gotteslästerung abbringen noch durch das Zerreißen der Kleider und das über ihn ausgesprochene Todesurteil.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 68 (VI, 176, 101-104).

<sup>23</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 68 (VI, 176, 105-107).

<sup>24</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 68 (VI, 176, 101-119).

<sup>25</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 73 (VI, 186, 3-18).

<sup>26</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 73 (VI, 188, 83-90), 74 (VI, 189, 4-9).



*Die Verurteilung Jesu durch Pilatus*

Nachdem alle Hohepriester und die Ältesten des Volkes beschlossen hatten, Jesus dem Tod zu überliefern, wurde er zur Aburteilung dem römischen Statthalter Pontius Pilatus überstellt. (Mt 27, 1-2)<sup>27</sup>

Weder Pilatus noch Herodes fanden aber ein Vergehen bei Jesus, das den Kreuzestod verdiehnt hätte.<sup>28</sup> Nach der Geißelung Jesu forderten seine jüdischen Ankläger die *schändlichste Todesform*, die Kreuzigung. *Damals – so Simon – war es die unehrenhafteste Form des Todes, am Holz gekreuzigt zu werden.* Sie wählten diese Todesart deshalb, *damit auf Christus die Verfluchung Gottes und des Mosaischen Gesetzes falle.* (Dt 21, 23; Gal 3, 13)<sup>29</sup>

Aus den Aussagen, die Jesus beim Verhör vor Pilatus machte, soll besonders darauf geachtet werden, wie sein Bekenntnis aufgenommen wurde, er sei der Sohn Gottes.

Von den an der Verurteilung Jesu beteiligten Personen stellt Simon fest, dass die unglückliche Rolle der Juden am Tod Jesu die des Richters Pilatus übertraf. Sie übergaben nämlich Jesus dem Pontius Pilatus. Dieser hatte ihn nicht gesucht. Die Juden schrien, er solle dem Tod des grausamen Kreuzes übergeben werden, Pilatus bemühte sich mit Eifer, Jesus frei zu sprechen.<sup>30</sup>

Bei Pilatus meint Simon eine Verwunderung darüber feststellen zu können, dass Christus gegenüber den Anklägern schweigt und sich nicht verteidigt. Er ruft bei ihm den Eindruck hervor, dass er sich selbst vernachlässigt, obwohl sich sein Geist in die Höhe erhob, als wäre er nicht von dieser Welt.<sup>31</sup>

Die Aussage der jüdischen Ankläger, Jesus habe sich selbst zum Sohn Gottes gemacht (Joh 19, 7), rief bei Pilatus Furcht hervor. Es war eine Aussage, die den menschlichen Sinn und Geist überstieg, *dass sich ein Mensch zum Sohn Gottes gemacht hatte oder dass er es war.*<sup>32</sup>

In dem Verhör, das Pilatus mit Christus über dessen Herkunft durchführte, schwieg Jesus zunächst. Er tat es, so meint Simon, weil Pilatus seine Antwort nicht verstanden hätte.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 78 (VI, 199, 4-11).

<sup>28</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 88 (VI, 238, 39-49).

<sup>29</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 88 (VI, 239, 91-95).

<sup>30</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 89 (VI, 244, 123-127).

<sup>31</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 90 (VI, 247, 48-50).

<sup>32</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 89 (VI, 241, 24-27).

<sup>33</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 89 (VI, 243, 79-83).



Als Pilatus aber auf die Macht zu sprechen kam, die er über Jesus zu haben glaubte, brach Jesus sein Schweigen und stellte klar, dass sie ihm nicht vom Kaiser, sondern von Gott gegeben war.

Simon führt zu dem von Pilatus erhobenen Anspruch aus, dass Christus frei war von den Unterwerfungen unter die Menschen, denn er war auf wunderbare Weise geboren und er hatte den Auftrag, die Menschen durch sein Leiden zu retten. Aus diesem Grunde hatte der Schöpfer von allem dem Pilatus erlaubt, Christus zum Tode zu verurteilen.<sup>34</sup>

Nach der Auffassung Simons hat der eine grössere Sünde auf sich geladen, der Christus angezeigt hat, als Pilatus, der zu aller Nutzen mit der Zulassung Gottes Christus zum Tode verurteilte.<sup>35</sup>

Simon schätzt das Urteil des Pilatus als ein verdrehtes Urteil ein. Denn es wird ein Unschuldiger zum Tode verurteilt. Dies geschieht nicht gemäß der sachlichen Wahrheit, sondern nach der Bitte der Feinde des Verurteilten. Ein solches Vorgehen ist für einen Richter ein verwerfliches Vergehen. Es hat nicht nur auch Auswirkungen auf den Richter, sondern auch auf das Vertrauen der Gerechten. Es wird ihnen genommen, da sie nicht mehr daran glauben können, dass ihnen Gerechtigkeit widerfährt, wenn sie in eine ähnliche Situation kommen. Deshalb darf das Herz für die Bitten der Bösen nicht aufgeschlossen sein.<sup>36</sup>

### *Der Kreuzweg Jesu*

Der Kreuzweg, den Jesus nach seiner Verurteilung antreten mußte, zeigt an verschiedenen Punkten dieses Weges, wie Jesus den Willen seines Vaters erfüllte.

Jesus werden die Kleider genommen, die man ihm zu seiner Verspottung übergezogen hatte, und es werden ihm seine eigenen zurückgegeben, damit sie, so kommentiert Simon, mit dem Verurteilten verurteilt würden. Auf den Rücken Jesu wurde ein massives Holzkreuz gelegt. Er trug die schwere Last wie ein Lasttier, ohne aber etwas von ihr zu haben, sondern um an ihr zu Grunde zu gehen.<sup>37</sup>

Zu Beginn seiner Darstellung des Kreuzweges Jesu erinnert Simon an Abrahams Sohn Isaak, der das Holz für den Altar, auf dem er selbst geopfert werden sollte, auf seinem Rücken trug. Zu diesem Opfer kam es nicht, da der himmlische Vater es anders beschlossen

<sup>34</sup> Simon Fidati, *De gestis XIII*, 89 (VI, 244, 106-111).

<sup>35</sup> Simon Fidati, *De gestis XIII*, 89 (VI, 244, 112-114).

<sup>36</sup> Simon Fidati, *De gestis XIII*, 96 (VI, 264, 37-44).

<sup>37</sup> Simon Fidati, *De gestis XIII*, 97 (VI, 265, 15-27).



hatte. (Gen 22, 1-19) Jesus trug nicht nur das Holz für sein Opfer, sondern er wurde an ihm auch geopfert. Ihn hat der Vater nicht verschont. Er starb an dem Holz, von dem er auf dem Weg niedergedrückt wurde.<sup>38</sup>

Simon hat sich in die Lage des Kreuzträgers Jesus hineinvertieft und mit ihm ein Gespräch geführt. Für ihn ist er körperlich zwar abwesend, aber im Geiste anwesend. Er spricht ihn so an:

*Herr, wohin gehst du von der Last des Kreuzes bedrückt, von der Last des trockenen Holzes niedergedrückt? Wozu trägst du es, wo wirst du es einpflanzen? Der Ort, zu dem du geführt wirst, ist felsig. Wie wirst du es pflanzen? Wer wird es begiessen? Es ist trocken, es hat keine Wurzeln, aus denen aus der Erde die Feuchtigkeit genommen in die Zweige verbreitet wird. Das Land dürrt und ist ein Ort der Verurteilten und Ermordeten, niemals waren Setzlinge in ihm, Hölzer pflegten zur Gerechtigkeit der Verurteilten in sie eingelassen zu werden, es sind verfälschte Pflanzungen, sie lassen keine tiefen Wurzeln zu, sie legen kein festes Fundament, sie breiten die Zweige nicht zur Frucht aus, sondern zur Marter, sie haben keine Blätter der Schönheit, sondern der Verachtung und der Schande, sie haben auch keine Früchte, die zum Essen nützlich sind, sondern von ihnen ist wegen des Schmerzes vom Essen abzuraten, sie reifen nicht zum Gebrauch, sondern um das Leben auszulöschen, sie verhärten gänzlich. Warum also, Herr, trägst du diese Bürde der Hölzer? Weißt du nicht, dass du an ihnen angeheftet wirst, dass du an allen Gliedern des Körpers gepeinigt wirst? Ja du wirst an ihnen gekreuzigt und dienst dem ganzen Volk zur Verspottung, schließlich erlöschst du an ihnen.*

Auf diese Worte läßt Simon den kreuztragenden Jesus antworten:

*Aber ich trage das Holz wegen des verbotenen Holzes, das bestrafende Holz wegen der verbotenen Frucht (Gen 3, 6-7). Ich trage das Holz, damit ich am Holz den unsichtbaren Feind besiege, der am Holz siegte. Ich trage das Holz, dass ich jenseits der menschlichen Künste aus ihm die Stufen des Aufstiegs in den Himmel herstelle. Ich trage das Holz, um am Holz aufgehängt zu werden, um alles gänzlich an mich zu ziehen (Joh 12, 32). Ich trage das Holz des Todes und des Lebens, ich trage das Holz der Erfahrung der Vorverurteilten.<sup>39</sup>*

Simon verweist darauf, dass die äussere Erscheinung des Kreuzes abschreckend wirkt. Aber durch seinen Tod am Holze des Kreuzes wird Jesus sterbend triumphieren und die unsichtbaren Kräfte völlig besiegen. Deshalb wirkt das Kreuz mehr durch seine innere Kraft

<sup>38</sup> Simon Fidati, *De gestis XIII*, 97 (VI, 265, 28-266, 31).

<sup>39</sup> Simon Fidati, *De gestis XIII*, 97 (VI, 266, 32-52).



als durch seine äußere Erscheinung (Figur). Es bietet ein unsichtbares Bild der unsichtbaren Güter und zeigt der ganzen Welt das Leben durch den Tod eines Menschen.

Bei den Menschen, die am Rande des Weges standen, den Jesus gehen mußte, mag der Eindruck aufgekommen sein, dass er nur unter Zwang und Gewalt sein Kreuz trägt. Dieser Eindruck war jedoch falsch. Simon führt ein anderes Motiv für Jesu Opferbereitschaft an. Er schreibt: *Es war die Liebe, nicht der Zwang, der Jesus zum Tode führte.*<sup>40</sup>

### *Das Kreuztragen des Simon von Zyrene*

Anders als bei Jesus verhielt es sich bei Simon von Zyrene. Ihm wurde als *einem Kräftigen und Starken und frisch Beladenen*<sup>41</sup> befohlen, Jesus das Kreuz nachzutragen.

Mit dem Kreuzträger Simon von Zyrene bringt Simon Fidati das Wort vom Tragen des Kreuzes durch den Jünger hinter Jesus her in Verbindung. (Mt 16, 24) Er unterscheidet zwischen dem Tun Jesu und Simons genau und weist beiden im Kreuztragen unterschiedliche Wirkungen zu: *Aber in dem, dass dieser das Kreuz Jesu hinter ihm her trägt, werden die Verdienste von der Gnade getrennt und unsere Handlungen von den Wirkungen des Erlösers.*<sup>42</sup> Diese Unterscheidung wendet Simon auch auf die ganze Kirche an. Er sagt von ihr, dass jedes Leiden, das die Kirche um Christi willen erduldet, das Leiden Christi ist. Die Kirche hat auch kein eigenes Verdienst in den Leiden der Heiligen, sondern nur im Ertragen für Christus. Deshalb ist alles Gute, das für Christus entweder leidend oder anders getan wird, das Werk Christi und auch des Handelnden. Dafür, dass es dem Handelnden zugeschrieben und von ihm ausgeführt wird, gibt Christus Gnade und gerechte Belohnung. Der freie Wille führt das herbei, was wir tun. Aber der Nachfolger Jesu geht als Kreuzesträger hinter Jesus her, weil der wahre christliche Streiter ihm folgt und nicht vorausgeht.<sup>43</sup>

Im Zusammenhang mit dem Vorausgehen und der Nachfolge führt Simon den Gedanken ein, dass Jesus als Sohn Gottes seit Ewigkeit vorausgegangen ist. Ihm ist das Menschengeschlecht von der Schöpfung an, mit Ausnahme eines kleinen Intervalles im Paradies,

<sup>40</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 98 (VI, 268, 10).

<sup>41</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 98 (VI, 268, 18).

<sup>42</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 98 (VI, 271, 127-128).

<sup>43</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 98 (VI, 272, 141-143).



mit dem Kreuz der Sünden nachgefolgt. Dieses Kreuz haben die Stammeltern auf sich geladen. Ohne das Weitergehen der Sünde wäre Christus nicht getötet worden, auch wenn er geboren wäre. *Deshalb war die Sünde die bitterste Wurzel des Kreuzes.* Das Menschengeschlecht trägt also hinter Jesus das Kreuz her, weil es gesündigt hat. Zur Sühne der Sünden wurde Jesus gekreuzigt.<sup>44</sup>

Eine Kreuzigung des Mannes aus Zyrene hätte für die Rettung der Menschheit nichts bewirkt. Denn für ihre Erlösung kam nur eine menschliche Natur in Frage, die mit einer göttlichen verbunden ist, Jesus Christus. Nur ein Mensch, in dem Gott leidet, war dazu in der Lage.. Dennoch haben die frommen Gläubigen, wie Simon von Zyrene einer war, eine Aufgabe. Sie sehen betrachtend den leidenden Christus und nehmen so Anteil an seinem Leiden.<sup>45</sup>

Diese Anteilnahme beschreibt Simon an der Reaktion der Menschen, die Jesu Leidensweg beobachteten oder begleiteten.

Den Betrachtern konnte sich der Eindruck aufdrängen, dass Jesus nur gezwungen den Weg zur Hinrichtungsstätte ging. Simon betont jedoch, dass Jesus es freiwillig tat.<sup>46</sup> Er interpretiert das Wort Jesu an die Frauen, die über ihn weinten und klagten, als eine Aufforderung, sie sollten nicht beim Beweinen der körperlichen Leiden stehenbleiben, sondern sich um die Bereinigung der inneren Sündhaftigkeit bemühen.<sup>47</sup>

Im Anschluss an das Wort vom grünen und dünnen Holz unterstreicht Simon die Gottheit und Menschheit Jesu und seine Mittlerrolle. Er stellt die Frage, was mit den übrigen Menschen geschieht oder geschehen müsste, *wenn der Mittler Gottes und der Menschen als Übeltäter bestraft wird, der Mensch Christus Jesus, der Sohn Gottes, der wahre Mensch?*<sup>48</sup>

Simon bezieht das Wort vom grünenden, lebendigen Holz auf Christus und bemerkt dazu, dass er wegen der Kraft der Wurzel so bezeichnet wird, die auf dem ewigen Wort ruht. Die Empfängnis durch den Hl. Geist, die Ruhe, die er den durch schlechte Begierden Erhitzten gewährt, seine Worte, die nicht matt werden und die Kraft, die er den Gläubigen einflößt, haben zu dieser Bezeichnung geführt.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 98 (VI, 272, 153-158).

<sup>45</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 98 (VI, 272, 161-165).

<sup>46</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 100 (VI, 276, 28-29).

<sup>47</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 100 (VI, 278, 86-88).

<sup>48</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 101 (VI, 282, 16-18).

<sup>49</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 101 (VI, 282, 19-27).



### Die Kreuzigung Jesu

Die Kreuzigung zeigt, dass Jesus diese bittere Qual nicht gezwungen auf sich nahm, sondern freiwillig erduldet, um den Willen seines Vaters zu erfüllen.

Bevor die Soldaten Jesus ans Kreuz schlugen, gaben sie ihm Wein zu trinken, der mit Galle gemischt war. Jesus kostete nur davon, er trank ihn nicht. (Mt 27, 34)

Dieser Vorgang zeigt, so kommentiert Simon ihn, dass Jesus bereit war, alle Leiden auf sich zu nehmen, ohne sie aber abzuschaffen. Seine Nachfolger sind von ihnen genau so betroffen wie auch vom Tod. (Gen 3, 3. 19) Das Leiden Jesu bewirkte, dass unsere Sünden hinweggenommen und wir mit dem Vater versöhnt wurden.<sup>50</sup>

Die Kreuzigung des Erlösers aller Menschen bezeichnet Simon als *eine ganz abscheuliche Handlung*.<sup>51</sup> Er beurteilt den Bericht, den die vier Evangelisten von ihr geben, aber mit diesen begeisterten Worten: *Und unter den übrigen evangelischen Schriften, die durch Bewunderung meine Seele bewegen, ist dies das Vorzüglichste, dass das so große Geheimnis der Kreuzigung eines so großen Menschen ohne Angabe der Reihenfolge nur als Geschehen ausgesagt wird.*<sup>52</sup> Alle Evangelisten berichten lediglich, dass sie durchgeführt wurde (*factum*), die Einzelheiten übergehen sie.<sup>53</sup>

Die Vorbereitung der Kreuzigung bestand darin, dass die Soldaten Jesus alle Gewänder auszogen. Sie taten dies, um ihn in seiner Nacktheit der Schande preiszugeben und leichter martern zu können. Dies mag für die Soldaten der praktische Grund gewesen sein, Simon sieht darin eine Botschaft an die Nachfolger Jesu.

Jesus sollte deshalb ganz ohne Verhüllung gezeigt werden, weil sie auf die Schau des verklärten Jesus hinweisen sollte. Er schreibt: Er zieht den nackten Körper in der Passion vor, damit wir zur Anschauung des nackten Wortes in der Gottheit gelangen. Deshalb geschieht in der Passion der Vorzug des nackten Körpers, weil man zur hellen und nackten Schau Gottes nur durch das Verdienst seiner Passion gelangt.<sup>54</sup>

Bei der Kreuzigung wurde der Körper Jesu niedergedrückt und mitleidlos angeheftet. Er war in jener Stunde der schrecklichen Passion verlassen. Die Hilflosigkeit Jesu veranlasst Simon zu der Bemerkung,

<sup>50</sup> Simon Fidati, *De gestis XIII*, 103 (VI, 287, 3-7).

<sup>51</sup> Simon Fidati, *De gestis XIII*, 104 (VI, 288, 5).

<sup>52</sup> Simon Fidati, *De gestis XIII*, 104 (VI, 288, 7-9).

<sup>53</sup> Simon Fidati, *De gestis XIII*, 104 (VI, 288, 23-28).

<sup>54</sup> Simon Fidati, *De gestis XIII*, 104 (VI, 289, 33-44).



*Christus habe sich selbst in den Leiden verlassen, damit sie nicht durch die Kraft der Gottheit entschärft, sondern großherzig getragen würden.*<sup>55</sup> Simon äußert sich nicht dazu, wie er sich diesen Vorgang näher vorstellt.

Bedrängt von seinen Widersachern betete Jesus in seinen Schmerzen zum Vater. Er tat dies in lebendiger Liebe aber nicht für sich, sondern für seine Peiniger. (Lk 23, 34)<sup>56</sup>

Im Zusammenhang mit der anschließenden Verteilung seiner Kleidungsstücke unter die Soldaten bemerkt Simon, dass Jesus kein Testament über materielle Dinge hinterlassen hat, sondern nur eines über Tugenden für seine Nachfolger, die auf die Welt verzichten würden. *Auf der Erde hat Christus kein Eigentum erworben. Er war vom Himmel gekommen und war wahrer Gott; zu Himmlischem und für sich selber hatte er die menschliche Natur angenommen, die er darstellte. Es wäre zur Schande der Gottheit und des angenommenen Menschen, wenn Christus sich irgendwelche zeitlichen Güter angeeignet hätte. Sein Omega kehrte zu seinem Alpha zurück. Wie er arm geboren wurde, so starb er auch. Nackt ohne Besitz und ohne Wunsch, etwas besitzen zu wollen, ist er gekommen, so hat er sich entwickelt und so ist er gegangen.*<sup>57</sup>

#### *Das Ausharren am Kreuz*

Auf die Erfüllung des väterlichen Willens durch Jesus Christus kommt Simon auch im Zusammenhang mit den Lästerungen zu sprechen, die gegen den am Kreuz hängenden Jesus ausgesprochen wurden.

Die am Kreuz Vorübergehenden riefen Jesus zu, er solle vom Kreuz herabsteigen, wenn er der Sohn Gottes ist. (Mt 27, 40) Simon sieht die Lästerung aus der Unkenntnis der unsichtbaren Wahrheit hervorgehen. Sie ist auch bei jenen Bibellesern vorhanden, die nur die Buchstaben mit den Augen lesen, *aber nicht die Seele bilden, um das zu erkennen, was in den Schriften verborgen ist.*<sup>58</sup>

Die Vorübergehenden charakterisiert Simon als Menschen, welche die verborgenen Güter übergehen. Sie verweilen nicht mit Gebeten und Tugenden vor Gott, damit er ihnen den Quell der Wahrheit und das Verständnis gewährt. Sie beschäftigen sich weder mit den Schriften, auf die Christus sie verwiesen hatte (Joh 5, 39), noch verweilen sie bei der Betrachtung der schrecklichen und heilbringenden Leiden.

<sup>55</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 104 (VI, 289, 56-58).

<sup>56</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 105 (VI, 291, 19-21).

<sup>57</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 107 (VI, 302, 65-75).

<sup>58</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 108 (VI, 305, 9-10).



Mit einem drohenden und mitleidigen Unterton fügt Simon hinzu, dass diejenigen, die am Kreuz und Tod Jesu vorübergehen, an seinem Gericht nicht vorbeikommen werden.<sup>59</sup>

Das Wort Jesu von der Zerstörung des Tempels und dessen Wiederaufbau nach drei Tagen nahmen einige der Vorübergehenden zum Anlass, Jesus jetzt aufzufordern, das Wunder zu wirken und vom Kreuz herabzusteigen. Jesus ging auf diese Verhöhnung nicht ein, da er nicht durch die Gewalt der Menschen gekreuzigt war. Der Kreuzigung ging Jesu freier Entschluss voraus. Deshalb löste er sich auch nicht durch Überredungsversuche der spöttischen Zuschauer vom Kreuz.<sup>60</sup>

Ein weiterer Versuch, Jesus zum Verlassen des Kreuzes zu veranlassen, geht von denen aus, die mit seinen körperlichen Qualen Mitleid hatten und ihn deshalb aufforderten, vom Kreuz herabzusteigen. Simon sagt von ihnen, sie würden Jesus für einen reinen Menschen halten und glichen dem Teufel, der Jesus nach seinem Wüstenaufenthalt versucht hatte. (Mt 4, 1-11)<sup>61</sup>

Die Verspottung durch die Hohepriester nennt Simon eine große Niedrigkeit, da sie einen Menschen traf, der kurz vor dem Sterben stand.<sup>62</sup>

Mit der spöttischen Bemerkung, *anderen hat er geholfen, sich selbst kann er nicht helfen*, (Mt 27, 42) verkannte die jüdische Führungselite, dass Jesus das Leid für die Erlösung der ganzen Menschheit auf sich genommen hatte. Ihm mangelte es keineswegs an Macht und Tüchtigkeit. Er hatte sich zu diesem Opfer nach dem Willen seines Vaters entschlossen.<sup>63</sup> Er war zu dem Experiment, das Kreuz zu verlassen,<sup>64</sup> nicht bereit, sondern strebte nach dem Göttlichen und bemühte sich, den Geboten zu entsprechen<sup>65</sup>. Von dieser Haltung sagt Simon, dass sie Jesus als den Sohn Gottes zeigt, der gekommen war, den Willen seines Vaters zu erfüllen.<sup>66</sup>

In die Verhöhnungen stimmte auch einer der mit Jesus gekreuzigten Verbrecher ein. (Lk 23, 39) Seine Aufforderung, Jesus solle ihnen und sich selbst helfen, lief auf die Beendigung des Erlösungswerkes hinaus und die Nichterfüllung des väterlichen Willens.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 108 (VI, 305, 11-24).

<sup>60</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 108 (VI, 305, 25-306, 35).

<sup>61</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 108 (VI, 306, 36-43).

<sup>62</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 108 (VI, 306, 44-54).

<sup>63</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 108 (VI, 306, 55-61).

<sup>64</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 108 (VI, 307, 76).

<sup>65</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 108 (VI, 307, 82-83).

<sup>66</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 108 (VI, 307, 96-99).

<sup>67</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 109 (VI, 308, 22-309, 34).



### Die Verlassenheit Jesu

Der Ausruf des am Kreuz hängenden Jesus, warum Gott ihn alleingelassen habe, zeigt seine große Ratlosigkeit und Spannung an, unter der er stand. Jesus selbst stellt hier die Frage nach der Sinnhaftigkeit seines Leidens. Er fordert gleichsam einen Grund dafür, dass er als Unschuldiger in den Strafen allein gelassen ist.

Zur Erläuterung des Ausrufs führt Simon verschiedene Aussagen an. Er entscheidet sich für die Interpretation, dass Jesus nicht seinetwegen, sondern wegen des Menschengeschlechtes verlassen wurde.<sup>68</sup> Christus bittet als Mensch, Gott möge auf ihn blicken, damit er seine Unschuld und Gerechtigkeit sieht, und er möge bewirken, dass alle die Wahrheit einsehen, dass er nicht für sich, sondern für die Sünden der Menschen leidet, dass seine Leiden unsere Befreiung von den Sünden herbeiführen, dass seine zeitliche Verlassenheit uns vor den ewigen Strafen bewahrt.<sup>69</sup>

Zur Verlassenheit Jesu trägt Simon folgende Überlegung für die Nachfolger Jesu vor: *Wer erträgt nicht geduldig Unrecht und jegliche Verfolgungen, wenn wir von Christus als einem Verlassenen hören? Wer duldet nicht für sich selbst bereiten Herzens, wenn Jesus für uns in seiner Verlassenheit so leidet?*<sup>70</sup>

Das Gefühl der Verlassenheit führte bei Jesus jedoch nicht dazu, dass er das Vertrauen in Gott seinen Vater verlor. Simon sieht in dem Wort Jesu *Mich dürstet* (Joh 19, 28) deshalb kein Anzeichen von Schwäche, sondern einen Hinweis auf den Wunsch Jesu, schnell den Willen des Vaters erfüllen zu wollen.<sup>71</sup>

### Die Vollendung des väterlichen Willens

Jesus beschließt sein Leiden mit den Worten: *Es ist vollbracht!* (Joh 19, 30) Im Tod, der diesem Wort sofort folgt, wie Simon feststellt, wird jedes Geheimnis unserer Erlösung vollendet. Er zählt einige Punkte auf, die dieses Wort erläutern:

*Vollendet ist das Leben Christi nach dem Wohlgefallen seines Vaters, ausgeführt ist der väterliche Befehl, durchgeführt ist der Gehorsam des Sohnes, erfüllt ist die Sehnsucht des Vaters, zerstört ist die gewaltsame Herrschaft der Dämonen.*

<sup>68</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 114 (VI, 331, 8-18).

<sup>69</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 114 (VI, 332, 47-333, 65).

<sup>70</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 114 (VI, 333, 82-84).

<sup>71</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 115 (VI, 338, 45-46).



Nach dem Bericht der Genesis vollendete Gott, der Schöpfer von allem, *alle seine Werke am sechsten Tag und ruhte am siebten* (Gen 2, 1). Die Schöpfung ist für Simon ein Vorbild für die von Jesus Christus am Kreuz vollzogene Neuschöpfung. Auch Jesus *vollendete am Kreuze am sechsten Tage alle Werke der Neuschöpfung und ruhte am Sabbat im Grabe*. (Joh 19, 42)<sup>72</sup>

Zur Auslegung des Todes Jesu führt Simon auch die Berichte der Evangelisten dazu an.

Nach Mt 27, 50 schrie Jesus noch einmal laut auf und hauchte dann seinen Geist aus. Bei Lk 23, 46 tat Jesus dies, nachdem er laut gerufen hatte: *Vater, in deine Hände lege ich meinen Geist*. Aus diesen Worten spricht nach Simon die Stimme eines sterbenden und aus der Welt scheidenden Menschen, der sich körperlich verlassen fühlt und deshalb fromm betend seine Seele Gott zuwendet, damit diese nicht verlassen wird.<sup>73</sup>

Christus hat in allen Situationen seines Lebens zum Ausdruck gebracht, dass er als Mensch Gott als seinen Vater anerkennt. Er tat dies auch, als er in der äussersten und letzten mit geneigtem Haupt dem Vater seinen Geist übergab (Joh 19, 30). Für Simon sollte spätestens an dieser Stelle allen klar werden, dass Jesus ein wahrer Mensch war. Denn im Todeskampf ist Gott die letzte und die beste Zuflucht. Ihm hat Jesus seine Seele ohne Zögern empfohlen, denn er hat allein die Macht, sie unbeschadet zu erhalten.<sup>74</sup>

Die Worte, die den Tod Jesu beschreiben, zeigen nach Simons Aussage, dass Jesus willentlich und kraftvoll gestorben ist. Die Seele Christi wurde mit einer unsagbaren Liebe erfüllt, weil er die väterlichen Befehle ausgeführt hatte und bis zum Tode gehorsam war. (Phil 2, 8)<sup>75</sup>

Simon interpretiert die Aussage, Christus habe mit geneigtem Haupt seinen Geist übergeben (Joh 19, 30), als eine Geste des Gehorsams. Auch in der Trennung des Geistes vom Körper wollte Jesus in seinem Geist seinen Gehorsam ausdrücken. Diesen vollzog er, indem er nach dem Beschluss des Vaters in den Lymbus hinabstieg, dann zum Grab zurückkehrte und den Körper wiederbelebte.<sup>76</sup>

*Schluß*

Überblickt man die Auslegung der Passionsgeschichte durch Simon, dann ist der Aspekt des Gehorsams und des Ungehorsams in

<sup>72</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 117 (VI, 342, 9-14).

<sup>73</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 118 (VI, 346, 4-9).

<sup>74</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 118 (VI, 347, 55- 348, 65).

<sup>75</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 119 (VI, 350, 3-13; 23-24).

<sup>76</sup> Simon Fidati, De gestis XIII, 119 (VI, 351, 58-61).



den Darlegungen nicht zu übersehen. Die Aussagen zum Ungehorsam der Stammeltern werden von Simon zwar nicht ausführlich kommentiert, bilden aber den Hintergrund für Simons Passionsauslegung. In der Leidensgeschichte ist Jesus derjenige, der den Willen des Vaters bis in die extremen Augenblicke des Todes ausführt. Durch den Gehorsam des Sohnes gegenüber dem Willen des himmlischen Vaters wird das Menschengeschlecht wieder mit Gott versöhnt. Der Ungehorsam des ersten Menschen hatte seine Trennung von Gott mit ihren verheerenden Konsequenzen zur Folge. Der Gehorsam Jesu hob die Trennung des Menschengeschlechtes von Gott auf.

Auf den verschiedenen Stationen des Kreuzweges Jesu zeigt Simon sehr einfühlsam die praktische Verwirklichung des Gehorsams des Sohnes gegenüber seinem Vater. Jesus hat den Ungehorsam der Stammeltern und der von ihnen abstammenden Menschen gesühnt. Er hat sich von seiner Gehorsamshaltung gegenüber dem Vater auch von jenen nicht abbringen lassen, die ihn verspotteten oder vor dem schrecklichen Kreuzestod aus Mitleid bewahren wollten. Die Annahme und das Tragen des Kreuzes durch Jesus ist deshalb auch eine Ermunterung für seine Nachfolger, ihr Kreuz anzunehmen und ihm nachzufolgen.

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<sup>1</sup> Recently especially biographical research has been done by I. Crutius: 'Geburt Biel und die oberdeutschen Stifte der Spätmittelalters', in: I. Crutius (ed.), *Studien zum weltlichen Kulturpatronat in Deutschland* (Göttingen 1995), 294-322 (Veröffentlichungen







# GABRIEL BIEL: BROTHER OF THE COMMON LIFE AND *ALTER AUGUSTINUS*? AIM AND MEANING OF HIS *TRACTATUS DE COMMUNI VITA CLERICORUM*<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

Gabriel Biel (\*Speyer, 1410) has entered history as the last important exponent of Scholasticism and as an influential Nominalist in the second half of the fifteenth century. He lived his life in the public view until request for entry into the community of the *Fraterherren* in Butzbach in 1469 or 1470. After his ordination to the priesthood in 1438/39 he studied and taught in Heidelberg and read theology in Cologne and Erfurt. Subsequently he completed five comprehensive cycles of sermons as cathedral preacher in Mainz from Christmas 1457 to the fourth Sunday of Advent. These cycles were interrupted twice during the *Stiftsfehde* or diocesan feud of Mainz: once voluntarily (11 November 1459 to 26 October 1460) and once on account of his exile from the city (end of 1461 to 28 November 1462). The *Stiftsfehde* was an armed conflict between two claimants of the episcopal see of Mainz and was not settled until 1475 when Dither von Isenberg acceded to the position. Biel felt compelled to justify his fidelity to the Pope and support for the papal candidate during the feud in an *Offener Brief an einen guten Freund in Mainz* and in a *Defensorium oboedientiae apostolicae*. These works show that he had become a figure of note in the town. Both works became quite influential. Advancing in years and perhaps disconcerted by the troubled times in which he had fulfilled the *officium predicandi*, Biel retired to the Brethren House of Marienthal near Geisenheim (Rheingau) in 1463 to prepare for the possibility of entering the community of *Fraterherren*. At the time he was an unbeneficed priest. He eventually entered the Brethren House of St. Mark in Butzbach (Hessen) and became provost in 1468. After his entry in Butzbach, Biel became involved in the foundation of several monasteries. His role in bringing these houses together in the general chapter of Upper Germany earned him the title of 'Primus inceptor vite communis fratrum in Alemanie'.<sup>1</sup> Count Eberhard of Württemberg

<sup>1</sup> Recently especially biographical research has been done by I. Crusius, 'Gabriel Biel und die oberdeutschen Stifte der devotio moderna', in: I. Crusius (ed.), *Studien zum weltlichen Kollegiatstift in Deutschland*. (Göttingen 1995), 298-322 (*Veröffentlichungen*



asked him to co-operate with ecclesiastical reform in Württemberg in 1476. At Eberhard's request, Biel founded the chapter of Urach and became provost there in 1479. After the count had founded the University of Tübingen, Biel became professor of theology and philosophy there in 1484 and retained the office until 1489/1491. As provost of Schönbuch he worked at his *Collectorium circa IV libros sententiarum* until his death in 1495. This book was a commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard, and provided a clear exposition of the teachings of William of Ockham, of whose doctrines Biel was an ardent advocate.<sup>2</sup>

This article addresses the question as to whether Gabriel Biel may be regarded as an exponent of the Modern Devotion. H. Oberman has contended that the extraordinary interaction between the *via moderna* and the *devotio moderna* at the university of Tübingen was due to Gabriel Biel's influence. The events of Biel's life seem to confirm this idea. This appraisal of Biel is founded entirely upon his *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*. The problem is, however, that Biel provided very little information there about how the *via moderna* and the *devotio moderna* were connected in his life.<sup>3</sup> The *Tractatus* is primarily an argument for a communal form of life, where members would live according to the evangelical counsels of obedience, poverty

*des Max-Planck – Instituts für Geschichte* 114; *Studien zur Germania Sacra* 18); id., 'Gabriel Biel – eine Karriere zwischen vita contemplativa und vita activa', in: U. Köpf, S. Lorenz (ed.), *Gabriel Biel und die Brüder vom gemeinsamen Leben. Beiträge aus Anlaß des 500. Todestages des Tübinger Theologen* (Stuttgart 1998), 5-23 (*Contubernium. Tübinger Beiträge zur Universitäts- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 47); G. Faix, *Gabriel Biel und die Brüder vom gemeinsamen Leben. Quellen und Untersuchungen zu Verfassung und Selbstverständnis des Oberdeutschen Generalkapitels* (Tübingen 1999), 36-55. (*Spätmittelalter und Reformation Neue Reihe* 11). For an initial study on Biels tribute to the Modern Devotion: P. van Geest: 'The Interiorisation of the Spirituality of the Modern Devotion by Gabriel Biel (+1495). Preconditions and Outlines', in: *Augustiniana* 51(2001), 183-223. The question whether the Christian view of God is the basis for a consciousness of liberty in modern times is answered by an analysis of Biels theology in: H. Stinglhammer, *Libertas semper bona: Gottesgedanke und menschliche Freiheit bei Gabriel Biel. Ein Beitrag zur christlichen Legitimität der Neuzeit*. Winzer, 2006 [Habilitationsschrift Tübingen].

<sup>2</sup> See for a historiography of the research on Biel: P. van Geest, 'Das Niemandland zwischen *Via moderna* und *Devotio moderna*. Der Status quaestionis der Gabriel-Biel-Forschung', in: *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis/Dutch Review of Church History* 80(2000), 157-192.

<sup>3</sup> H. Oberman, 'Via Moderna-Devotio Moderna: Tendenzen im Tübinger Geistesleben 1477-1516. Ecclesiastici atque catholici gymnasii fundamenta', in: M. Brecht (ed.), *Theologen und Theologie an der Universität Tübingen Beiträge zur Geschichte der Evangelisch-Theologischen Fakultät*. (Tübingen, 1971), 1-64, esp. 41: 'Wir sind in der glücklichen Lage, mit Hilfe der Verteidigungsschrift, in der Gabriel Biel die Ideale der Brüder beschreibt und vertritt, wesentliche Züge der *devotio moderna* in Tübingen rekonstruieren zu können'.



and chastity, but without taking vows to a Rule. This meant that they did not receive the canonical status of 'religious'. In Biel's time, the word *religio* was confined to the religious life in the canonical sense of the term. Biel certainly demonstrated affinity with the Modern Devotion by arguing in the *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum* that the word *religio* should be rid of this strictly canonical connotation. According to him, it was possible to live in *religio* by forming communities in the spirit of the primitive Church without taking monastic vows. Scholars such as Landeen, Oberman and Faix have regarded the *Tractatus* as an apologia, because Biel's defence of the semi-religious life reveals an essential trait of the *devotio moderna*. Geert Grote had also advocated a form of life in which *conclusa et proposita* were preferred to *vota*, or vows, which bestowed the canonical religious state. This classification of Biel as an adherent of the Modern Devotion was further based on the fact that he was familiar with certain ideas that were typical for the movement, formulated by Gerard Zerbolt's apologia *Super modo vivendi devotorum hominum simul commorantium*.<sup>4</sup>

This article attempts to give a more precise definition of Biel's connection to the Modern Devotion and of the extent of his indebtedness to the movement. It will venture to do this by examining the dating of the *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, its apologetic character and textual structure, and also by analysing the way Biel treated his sources. It will become clear that Biel's connection to the spirituality of the *devotio moderna* was a matter of convenience rather than of essential indebtedness or real affinity.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. W. Landeen, 'Gabriel Biel and the Devotio Moderna in Germany', in: *Research Studies of the Washington State University* 28(1960), 22: 'The opening sentences show that it was a defense which had been solicited – that is, in effect, an answer to his critics'; *ibidem*: 26: '... an able treatment. The proud modesty with which its author claims for the brethren the privilege of attaining, according tot the measure of their ability and without becoming monks, the evangelical purity and perfection which existed in the primitive church, (...) – all lend vitality to the *Tractate*“; *ibidem*, 26., footnote 21: 'Biels treatise on the common life naturally invites comparison whith that of Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen, written during the early struggles of the *Devotio Moderna* for existence. Zerbolt's treatise – more thoroughgoing, better arranged, and more accurate in detail than Biel's – has been edited by Hyma...'; H.A. Oberman, *Werden und Wertung der Reformation: vomWegestreit zum Glaubenskampf* (Tübingen 1977), 41 (*Spätscholastik und Reformation* 2) characterises the work as 'Verteidigungsschrift' and states: 'Biel gibt potentiellen Angreifern zu verstehen, dass die Windesheimer nicht mehr ohne Schirm und Schutz dastehen' (43); Oberman characterizes *De communi vita clericorum* as a treatise, in which Biel 'nur die Windesheimer Kongregation und nicht auch die Brüder und Schwester des Gemeinsamen Lebens ins Auge fasst' (69). See also Faix, *Gabriel Biel und die Brüder vom Gemeinsamen Leben*, 61.



## 2. The date of the *Tractatus* as the key to understanding the reason for its inception

Only one known copy of Gabriel Biel's *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum* is extant. It is in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek in The Hague, ms. 75 G 58 (fol. 1r-21r). Three critical editions have been published up to 1998: by W. Landeen and, more recently, by W. Werbeck and G. Faix.<sup>5</sup> The postscript records that Brother Hieronymus completed the copying of the manuscript in Windesheim on 9 June 1475. This has led one of the more recent editors, W. Werbeck, to conclude that the manuscript had been transcribed in *Fraterherr* circles or in the Congregation of Windesheim.

The autograph of the tract has not been preserved and its dating is consequently much in dispute. W. Landeen has suggested that Biel wrote it between 1464 and 1468, after entering the Brethren House in Marienthal and before moving to Butzbach. However, W. Ernst has argued correctly that Biel did not enter the brethren house in Marienthal at all, but in Butzbach. He has consequently concluded that Biel must have written the tract either directly after his resignation as cathedral preacher in Mainz or in Butzbach after 1469. H. Oberman has concurred with this by suggesting 1468/9 as the earliest dates. But Oberman has not ruled out the possibility of a later date, because Biel could also have written the tract as a manifesto upon his departure to Württemberg. Biel wrote the *Tractatus* in the first person plural, and this has led G. Faix to conclude that it must have been written after his entry into the 'fraternity': i.e. between 1469 and 1470 at the earliest. He was not called *bruder sant Marcs zu Butzbach* before that date.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ed. W. Landeen in: *Research Studies of the Washington State University* 28(1960), 79-95; ed. G. Faix in: G. Faix, *Gabriel Biel und die Brüder vom Gemeinsamen Leben*, 347-368; ed. W. Werbeck in: U. Köpf, S. Lorenz (ed.), *Gabriel Biel und die Brüder vom gemeinsamen Leben. Beiträge aus Anlaß des 500. Todestages des Tübinger Theologen* (Stuttgart 1998), 137-154.

<sup>6</sup> G. Faix, *o.c.*, 60-61, gives a summary of older literature concerning dating. W. Landeen, 'Gabriel Biel and the Devotio Moderna in Germany', in: *Research Studies of the Washington State University* 26(1959), 155, considers that Biel had written the treatise after he entered in Marienthal. W. Bayerer, *Gabriel Biel Gratiarum Actio und andere Materialien zu einer Testimonien-Biographie bezüglich seiner Universitätsjahre in Heidelberg, Erfurt, Köln (und Tübingen)*, in: *Forschungen aus der Handschriftenabteilung der Universitätsbibliothek Gießen*. (Gießen 1985) considers the treatise to have appeared before 1468; W. Ernst, *Gott und Mensch am Vorabend der Reformation. Eine Untersuchung zur Moralphilosophie und -theologie bei Gabriel Biel* (Leipzig 1972), 27 (*Erfurter Theologische Studien* 28) and I. Crusius, 'Gabriel Biel und das Oberdeutsche Generalkapitel', 307-308 remove this misconception;



However, arguments derived from the text itself allow for a much more precise dating of the *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*. Biel mentioned Popes Eugene IV (1431-1447), Callistus III (1455-1458) and Pius II (1458-1464) as *auctoritates* because all three had granted special privileges to the Brethren House.<sup>7</sup> But he did not mention Pope Paul II (1464-1467), who granted permission to the house at Königstein to establish a collegiate monastery on 23 August 1466.<sup>8</sup> It is unlikely that Biel would not have known about this last privilege, or that he bore Pius a grudge because the Christian Renaissance took a pagan turn during his pontificate. We may therefore safely assume that Biel wrote the treatise before 23 August 1466. Moreover, Biel revealed in the prologue of *De communi vita clericorum* that he himself supported the form of life of the brethren, although he wasn't a *Fraterherr*. Since we know from a charter that he held the position of cathedral preacher in Mainz on 29 November 1465, it is possible to conclude that he must have completed it after that date.<sup>9</sup> Therefore Biel must have written the tract between 29 November 1465 and 23 August 1466.

W. Ernst has persuasively demonstrated that the theory that Biel entered the brethren house in Marienthal before 23 August 1466 is erroneous and that he only officially joined the *Brüder* around 1469 in Butzbach. This gives rise to the question as to why Biel consistently used the first person plural in his tract, even though he had not joined the brethren yet. As has been seen, there were at least three full years between the completion of the *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum* and Biel's final entry into the 'fraternity'. However, the early dating advocated here makes it possible to establish Biel's reasons for writing the tract. It also enables us to discern Biel's 'sovereignty'. Both contentions will now be substantiated.

cf. furthermore H. Oberman, *Werden und Wertung*, 66; G. Faix, *Gabriel Biel und die Brüder vom Gemeinsamen Leben*, 62.

<sup>7</sup> *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Faix, 357: 'Ex quibus fuit unus bone memorie Eugenius papa quartus. Hic cum <a> quodam de istis fratribus, qui ad eum de domo Monasteriensi missus erat, intellexisset, quod ista communis vita clericorum in inferioribus Almanie partibus resuscitata vigeret, admodum gavisus est multisque ex his, pro quibus supplicabatur, ad instar fratrum suorum canonicam et collegialem foundationem dedit multaque privilegia apostolica large concessit, que postea a successoribus suis domino Calixto papa tertio et domino Pio papa secunda ampliata sunt et dilatata.'

<sup>8</sup> Cf. H. Langkabel, 'Königstein', in: W. Leesch, E. Persoons, A. Weiler, *Monasticon Fratrum Vitae Communis* (Brüssel 1979), dl. 2, *Deutschland*, 121-125, esp. 124.

<sup>9</sup> 'Quaesitum est a me pridem, unde ordo noster vel institutio communis vitae clericorum, sub qua et in qua nos vivere dicimus, sumpserit exordium', ed. Faix, 347. Compare for the relevant act W. Ernst, *Gott und Mensch*, 22-23.



Biel explicitly remarked at the beginning of the *Tractatus* that he had been asked to write it.<sup>10</sup> It is no surprise that the brethren chose Biel, because he had helped them to found Marienthal, and he must have struck them as a learned and able man. A conflict between two schools of thought had emerged among the brethren in Germany around 1465 during the process of reflecting on and defining their form of life. Until 1431, the Colloquium of Zwolle had united all existing houses of brethren and sisters of the Common Life. In that year a second Colloquium was founded by Henry of Ahaus, the Colloquium of Münster, which consisted of all the German brethren houses. A tendency towards restructuring the life and organisation of the brethren houses according to the monastic model subsequently emerged in the houses of the Münster Colloquium.

This tendency towards 'monasticisation' was encouraged by the fact that Pope Eugene IV had offered the brethren the opportunity of reconstituting their houses at Münster, Cologne and Wesel as collegiate churches in 1439.<sup>11</sup> At the 1440 colloquium of Münster, some brethren regarded this privilege as a break with the past. Ever since Geert Grote, the fraternity had aimed to embody the ideals of the primitive Church without seeking a foundation in canon law, whereas the assumption of the status of canons would provide such a foundation. It is important to realise that the process of 'monasticisation' had a long history among followers of the Modern Devotion. The free associations of women which Geert Grote and others had encouraged had already been transformed into regulated houses of sisters of the Common Life, tertiary convents or observant convents of Windesheim. Similarly, when accusations of heresy had been made against the brethren in the diocese of Utrecht with a view to suppressing them, they had acquiesced in canonical recognition by the bishop as a means of survival.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, Floris Radewijns had established a house of regular canons of

<sup>10</sup> See previous footnote.

<sup>11</sup> The Bull of pope Eugene IV is published in: R. Doebner (ed.), *Annalen und Akten der Brüder des gemeinsamen Lebens im Lüchtenhofe zu Hildesheim* (Hannover-Leipzig 1903), 210-212 (*Quellen und Darstellungen zur Geschichte Niedersachsens* 9).

<sup>12</sup> *Corpus documentorum inquisitionis haereticae pravitatis neerlandicae. Verzameling van stukken betreffende de pauselijke en bisschoppelijke inquisitie in de Nederlanden*. Ed. P. Fredericq, a.o. Gent's Gravenhage, 1889-1906. 3 vols. vol. 2, 190-192; See also the approval by the other bishops that only Frederik van Blankenheim: R.R. Post, *The Modern Devotion. Confrontation with Reformation and Humanism* (Leiden 1968), 216 (*Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought* 3); Jacobus Traiecti alias de Voecht, *Narratio de inchoatione domus clericorum in Zwollis met akten en bescheiden betreffende dit fraterhuis*. Ed. M. Schoengen (Amsterdam 1908), 526-539. See also K. Goudriaan, 'De derde orde van Sint Franciscus in het bisdom Utrecht. Een



Windesheim as early as 1387. This foundation was to become the motherhouse of the Congregation of Windesheim, which attracted the allegiance of several houses of third order men after 1418.<sup>13</sup> As far as their external manifestation was concerned, the brethren could hardly be distinguished from the religious; the 'only' difference being that they did not take vows to a Rule and thus did not become religious in the canonical sense of the term.<sup>14</sup> Apart from the communal life practised in the Colloquiums of Zwolle and Münster, a third form also emerged: the 'canons of the Common Life' in Upper Germany and the Middle Rhineland. This development involved the transformation of brethren houses into secular chapters and collegiate churches.<sup>15</sup> The brethren houses that joined the Upper German general chapter became chapters of canons and, like secular chapters, sang the office in choir and fulfilled pastoral duties. However, unlike secular chapters, they had a fully communal life – a feature they shared with the houses of the Congregation of Windesheim. The fact that they did not take vows to a Rule distinguished them from Windesheim, while the fact that they sang the entire office and that pastoral responsibilities were entrusted to the community as such set them apart from the brethren of the Common Life in the *Colloquia* of Zwolle and Münster.

Some of the brethren regarded Pope Eugene's privilege, which had stood at the beginning of these developments, as a renunciation of the ideals of the original brethren of the Common Life. Following in the spirit of Grote, they had rejected the *vota* (vows), which would have made them religious in the canonical sense, in favour of *proposita* (intentions). According to them, the status of canons resembled the vowed religious life too closely. Pope Eugene's privilege was consequently not invoked until 1463 – just before Biel wrote the *Tractatus* –, and then by the house of Hildesheim. The brethren of this house had become embroiled with the magistrates of the city, and at the instigation of Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa they decided to reconstitute their house into a collegiate chapter, which enhanced their legal security.

voorstudie', in: *Jaarboek voor middeleeuwse geschiedenis* 1(1998), 205-260, esp. 207-210.

<sup>13</sup> Johannes Busch, *Liber de origine devocionis moderne*, in: *Des Augustiner-propstes Iohannes Busch Chronicon Windeshemense und Liber de reformatione monasteriorum*. Herausgegeben von der Historischen Commission der Provinz Sachsen. Bearbeitet von Karl Grube (Halle 1886), 25 (*Geschichtsquellen der Provinz Sachsen und angrenzender Gebiete*, dl. 19).

<sup>14</sup> R.R. Post, *Modern Devotion*, 460-463.

<sup>15</sup> R.R. Post, *Modern Devotion*, 450-452; R. Doebner, *Annalen und Akten der Brüder des gemeinsamen Lebens im Lüchtenhofe zu Hildesheim*, 22, 61-64.



Almost paradoxically, but very much in the spirit of their form of life, they received the privilege of not having to assume the title of canons. Thus the privilege of the *Bulla* gradually became a leading principle in the organisation of the *Fraterherren*, the German brethren of the Common Life.<sup>16</sup>

In his *Narratis itaque quibusdam* (1467), Peter of Dieburg, a brother of Hildesheim, strongly disapproved of this development. He also upbraided the members of the Congregation of Windesheim, who were religious in the canonical sense. He accused them of deluding the brethren in Hildesheim into thinking that it was safer to assume the canonical status of religious, because their current status only caused uncertainty and confusion.<sup>17</sup> It is obvious that relations between the house in Hildesheim on the one hand and the Colloquium of Münster and the Congregation of Windesheim on the other had become rather strained between 1465 and 1470.

During this confusing episode, Biel found himself in a phase in which his involvement with the brethren gradually increased. He became more committed. It is consequently quite natural – especially in view of his stature and reputation – that the brethren asked him to clarify their status and form of life in the Catholic Church. Biel's *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum* did the brethren a great service in what appeared to have been a very dark hour for them indeed. But it also provided Biel with an opportunity to shape the further development of the Modern Devotion in a way he desired himself.

Biel did not refer to the conflict between the 'schools of thought' at all in the *Tractatus*. He did reveal that he preferred Pope

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Van Geest, 'The Interiorisation of the Spirituality of the Modern Devotion by Gabriel Biel', *passim*. By the way, W. Ernst and H. Oberman do not minimise the difference between *Fraterherren* and Windesheimers; cf. W. Ernst, *Gott und Mensch am Vorabend der Reformation*, p. 26, n. 91; H.A. Oberman, *Werden und Wertung der Reformation*, 41-42, 57, 66, 69. See also the *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Faix, p. 350.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Peter van Dieburg, *Narratis itaque quibusdam*, in: *Annalen und Akten der Brüder des gemeinsamen Lebens im Lüchtenhofe zu Hildesheim*. Ed. R. Doebner (Hannover-Leipzig 1903), 154-159. In de kroniek stelt Dieburg: 'Nam inpetrare a se[de] ap[ostolica], ut hujusmodi compellantur intrare religionem aut redire, videtur mihi nichil aliud esse quam cum expensis nostris vendere libertatem nostram, singulare decus Christianae religionis, et emere laborem magnum vincula et carceres ad complacendum et conformandum religiosis in hac parte, ut et nos inveniamur subjecti servituti generis servorum, qui non nisi cum suppliciis emendantur. Unum enim est, ac si solempnem faceremus professione. Restat, ut et regula acceptetur' (ed. Doebner, 113). See also U. Hinz, *Die Brüder vom Gemeinsamen Leben im Jahrhundert der Reformation. Das Münstersche Kolloquium*. (Tübingen 1997), 25-29 (*Spätmittelalter und Reformation*. Neue Reihe 9).



Eugene's 'solution' to the problem of the form of life of the devout. Thus, he reminded his readers that the pope had allowed the brethren to transform their houses in Münster, Cologne and Wesel into collegiate churches in 1439. He must have viewed the canonical form of life as a middle way between the monasticism of the Colloquium of Münster and the 'love of freedom' of the brethren house of Hildesheim. It is almost certainly due to Biel's influence that the brethren houses of Königstein (1467), Butzbach, Urach (1477), Wolf (1478), Herrenberg (1481), Tübingen (1482), Dettlingen (1482), Dachenhausen (1486) and Einsiedeln (1492) became collegiate churches, giving their members the canonical status of canons.

When we consider that Biel must have written his *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum* between 29 November 1465 and 23 August 1466, it is very likely that Biel allowed his own decision whether or not to join the *Fraterherren* to depend on what side the brethren themselves would take in the conflict between the schools of thought. Biel seems to have written his tract to gauge if the brethren were prepared to order their life (and potentially his own life) according to his own principles before he decided to throw his lot in with them. If the brethren chose the form of life advocated in the *Tractatus*, they would be making a choice for him. If they decided to adopt the order of life and the canonical status advocated by him, he would make a choice for them. It must be noted that Biel approached this issue in a spirit of humility.<sup>18</sup> The brethren must have valued Biel's organisational and human qualities and must have realised that they could expect to find in him an energetic leader if they embraced the letter and the spirit of the *Tractatus*.

In view of the dating of the *Tractatus*, Biel's use of the first person plural was therefore intended to express his ideological, though not yet formal, affinity with the brethren. Biel only finally decided to enter the brethren house after it had agreed to adopt 'his' ideas about the order of life. Shortly after they did so, the brethren in Butzbach 'institutionalised' their bonds of friendship into the canonical form of life which Pope Pius had offered them in his bull. The bull was their security, the *Tractatus* was their programme.

The dating thus not only provides insight into Biel's aim in writing the tract, but also suggests that he could not possibly have expected his life after entry in Butzbach (1469) to have consisted only of prayer

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Faix, p. 368: 'Que et satis, ut arbitror, sobrie sunt descripta et correctioni cuiuslibet sanum sapientis humillime submittenda'.



and study. Biel must have known very clearly that the writing of the *Tractatus* would bring him further responsibilities. He must have sought these responsibilities purposefully.

### 3. The *Tractatus* in the light of the apologetic literature of the Modern Devotion

#### 3.1 Introduction

In order to assess Biel's debt to the Modern Devotion properly, it is necessary to view the *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum* in the light of the movement's apologetic literature. Several apologies are included in the *Corpus documentorum inquisitionis haereticæ pravitatis neerlandicae*, in which erudite followers of the Modern Devotion vehemently defended their form of life.<sup>19</sup> This collection is the third component of the movement's legacy to fifteenth-century Middle Dutch spiritual prose. Firstly, adherents wrote or copied spiritual works in imitation of the Carthusian example, initially to help their own progress in virtue, but subsequently also to aid the formation of others.<sup>20</sup> These works were incorporated into their own spirituality and were disseminated among the movement's following. The readers-copyists integrated these works into their own spirituality and subsequently transmitted the fruits of this process of interiorisation to the community. Sometimes the line between copying an existing treatise and writing a new one was a very fine one indeed. Secondly, followers of the Modern Devotion wrote chronicles. These recorded events in the lives of the communities or of figures worthy of imitation for the purposes of edification and consolation.<sup>21</sup> John Busch's *Liber de*

<sup>19</sup> *Corpus documentorum inquisitionis haereticæ pravitatis neerlandicae. Verzameling van stukken betreffende de pauselijke en bisschoppelijke inquisitie in de Nederlanden*. Ed. P. Fredericq, e.a. Gent-'s Gravenhage, 1889-1906. 3 vols. vol. 1: *Tot aan de herinrichting der inquisitie onder keizer Karel V (1025-1520)*. Gent-'s Gravenhage, 1889; vol. 2: *Stukken tot aanvulling van het eerste deel (1077-1518)*. Gent-'s Gravenhage, 1896; vol. 3: *Stukken tot aanvulling van deelen I en II (1236-1513)*. Gent-'s Gravenhage, 1906. From here indicated as *Corpus*.

<sup>20</sup> Th. Mertens, 'Boeken voor de eeuwigheid. Ter inleiding', in: Th. Mertens e.a. (ed.), *Boeken voor de eeuwigheid. Middelnederlands geestelijk proza*. (Amsterdam 1993), 8-35, esp. 16-20.

<sup>21</sup> Examples are: Wilhelmus Vorncen, *Epistola de prima institutione monasterii in windesem* (1450). This letter is published in J.R.G. Acquoy, *Het klooster Windesheim en zijn invloed*. Utrecht, 1875-1880. 3 vols. vol. 3, 235-255; Rudolf Dier van Muiden, *De magistro Gherardo Grote, domino Florencio et multis aliis devotis fratribus* (1455), published in G. Dumbar, *Analecta seu vetera aliquot scripta inedita*,



*origine devocionis moderne* may be regarded as a link between the second and the third category, that of the apologias, since Busch not only described the origins of the Congregation of Windesheim through the foundation of monasteries, but also defended its form of religious life. He emphasised that it was the explicit desire of Geert Grote's to establish monasteries within his movement.

Not the religious but the semi-religious among the Modern Devotion were eventually called upon to defend their origins, their right to exist and their form of life against accusations from outside.<sup>22</sup> The *Corpus* contains seven apologias by semi-religious: firstly, *Nos publice protestamus*, (1394; *Corpus* II 156-158); secondly, *Ex tribus*

*ab ipso publici juris facta*. Deventer 1719. 2 vols., vol. 1; Jacobus Traiecti alias de Voecht. *Narratio de inchoatione domus clericorum in Zwollis met akten en bescheiden betreffende dit fraterhuis*. Ed. M. Schoengen. Amsterdam, 1908; Johannes Busch, *Liber de origine devocionis moderne*, in: *Des Augustinerpropstes Iohannes Busch ...*, ed. K. Grube; *Het Frensweger handschrift betreffende de geschiedenis van de moderne devotie*. Ed. W. Jappe Alberts and A.L. Hulshof. Groningen 1953; Thomas a Kempis, *Chronicon Montis Sanctae Agnetis* and *Dialogi noviciorum* in: *Thomae a Kempis Opera omnia*. Ed. M.J. Pohl. Freiburg, 1902-1922. 7 vols., vol. 7, 3-329; 333-478. Cf. R. Th. M. van Dijk, 'De spiritualiteit van de devote regulier. Beschouwingen over de Agnietenbergkroniek van Thomas van Kempen', in: *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 78(1998), 54-104; U. de Kruijf +, J. Kummer, F. Peereboom+ (ed.), *Een klooster ontsloten. De kroniek van Sint-Agnietenberg bij Zwolle door Thomas van Kempen in vertaling en commentaar*. Kampen, 2000.

<sup>22</sup> Th. M.M. van Rooij, *Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen. I. Leven en geschriften*. Nijmegen-Utrecht-Antwerpen, 1936 discusses on p. 251-276 the contents of the apologia of Zerbolt. Cf. voor Zerbolt: N. Staubach, 'Christianam sectam arripe. Devotio Moderna und Humanismus zwischen Zirkelbildung und gesellschaftlicher Integration', in: K. Garber, H. Wissmann (ed.), *Europäische Sozietätsbewegung und demokratische Tradition. Die europäischen Akademien der Frühen Neuzeit zwischen Frührenaissance und Spätaufklärung*. Tübingen, 1996. 2 vols. Vol. 1, 112-167; id., 'Gerhard Zerbolt von Zutphen und die Apologie der Laienlektüre in der Devotio moderna', in: Th. Kock, R. Schlusemann (ed.), *Laienlektüre und Buchmarkt im späten Mittelalter* (Frankfurt a.M. 1997), 221-289. (*Gesellschaft, Kultur und Schrift* 5); id., 'Memores pristinae perfectionis. The Importance of the Church Fathers for devotio moderna', in: I. Backus (ed.), *The Reception of the Church Fathers in the West from the Carolingians to the Maurists*. Leiden, 1997. 2 vols. vol. 1, 405-469. Cf. also F. van de Borne, 'De aanvallen op Geert Grote en zijn Stichtingen', in: *Studia Catholica* 18(1942), 19-40. He refutes the opinion that the brothers encountered much resistance by the mendicants by showing that this view can be reduced to the appearance of Matheus Grabow in later times. C. van der Wansem, *Het ontstaan en geschiedenis der Broederschap van het Gemene Leven tot 1400*. Leuven, 1958. (*Publicaties op het gebied der geschiedenis en der philologie, vierde reeks* 12), discusses several pleas in ch. IX and X. Cf. further R.R. Post, *The Modern Devotion*, 271-292. He states that the key of the defense speeches was: 'to show that the Brethren and Sisters did not found any new order, even though their way of life bears much resemblance to that of any established order' (287).



*medijs videntur isti velle procedere contra istos pauperes* (1397; *Corpus* II 169-172); thirdly, *Primo quaeritur utrum* by Everard Foec (1397; *Corpus* II 159-167); fourthly, *Quaesitum est mihi* by Arnold Willemsz. (1397; *Corpus* II 172-176); fifthly, *Sequentes quaestiones* (1398; *Corpus* II 503-511); sixthly, *Reverendissime pater et domine* by Pierre d'Ailly (1417; *Corpus* II, 221-222) and seventhly, *Contra conclusiones Matthei Grabow* by Jean Gerson (1417; *Corpus* II 222-224; = *Super assertiones Fr. Matthaei Grabow* in: Johannes Gerson, *Opera Omnia*, ed. Ellies du Pin (Antwerpiae 1728), 5 vol., vol. 1, 468).

M. Haverals has also counted the treatise *Super modo vivendi devotorum hominum simul commorantium* (1398), the *Defensio veritatis agnita* by William of Lochem (1415), *De communi vita* (1406/9-1415; 141) and *De utilitate monachorum* by Dirk of Herxen (1419) among this category.<sup>23</sup> *Super modo vivendi* was handed down anonymously, but can plausibly be ascribed to Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen.<sup>24</sup> This brings the total number of extant apologies to eleven. Others have also included the anonymous and unpublished work *Apologeticus perbrevis* (1455) and Peter of Dieburg's *Narratis itaque quibusdam* (1467).<sup>25</sup> These works lost none of their influence after the demise of

<sup>23</sup> M. Haverals, 'Contra detractores monachorum alias *De utilitate monachorum* van Dirk van Herxen', in: W. Verbeke, M. Haverals, R. De Keyser, J. Goossens (ed.), *Serta devota in memoriam Guillelmi Lourdaux. Pars Prior: Devotio Windeshemensis* (Leuven 1992), 241-294, esp. 247, footnote 13 (*Mediaevalia Lovaniensia Series I/Studia XX*).

<sup>24</sup> A. Hyma, 'Is Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen the author of the "super modo vivendi"?', in: *Nederlandsch Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* N.S. 16(1921), 107-128. Cf. Van Rooij, *Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen*, 47-90. He states great parallels in *Super modo vivendi* on the one hand and *De reformatione virum animae* and *De spiritualibus ascensionibus* on the other. Cf also Post, *The Modern Devotion*, 286, and G.H. Gerrits, *Inter timorem et spem. A Study of the Theological Thought of Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen (1367-1398)* (Leiden 1986), 190 (*Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought* 37).

<sup>25</sup> Zerbolt's work has been published by A. Hyma, in: *Archief voor de Geschiedenis van het Aartsbisdom Utrecht* 52(1926), 1-100; William's work has been published by St. Wachter, 'Matthäus Grabow. Ein Gegner der Brüder vom gemeinsamen Leben', in: *Sankt Gabrier Studien. Festschrift zum 50-jährigen Bestandsjubiläum des Missionshauses Sankt Gabriel Wien-Mödling* (Wien-Mödling 1939), 289-376; Dirk van Herxen, *De communi vita*, has not been published; the consulted manuscript of *De communi vita*, is kept in the UB in Utrecht, Catal. cod. Ms. II 1909, Ms. 1586, fol. 206r-212r; Dirk van Herxen, *De utilitate monachorum* is published by M. Haverals in: M. Haverals, 'Contra detractores monachorum alias *De utilitate monachorum* van Dirk van Herxen', in: W. Verbeke, M. Haverals, R. De Keyser, J. Goossens (ed.), *Serta devota in memoriam Guillelmi Lourdaux*, 249-294; cf also Ph. H.J. Knierim, *Dirk van Herxen (1381-1457). Rector van het Zwolsche Fraterhuis* (Amsterdam 1926), 95-98, 135-136; W. Lourdaux, 'Dirk of Herxen's Tract *De utilitate monachorum*: A Defence of the Lifestyle of the Brethren and Sisters of the Common Life', in:



the Modern Devotion and continued to be used, for instance by the Jesuits.<sup>26</sup>

As has been seen in the introduction, scholars have always maintained that Biel's *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum* was an apologetic work. This view was based on the fact that Biel constantly referred to ideas from apologies of the Modern Devotion. However, just as the dating rules out the possibility that Biel wrote it as a defence of his entry into a house of the brethren, Biel's aim in writing the tract undermines this notion.<sup>27</sup> The question now arises as to what these apologies reveal about Biel's *Tractatus*.

### 3.2 Apologetic literature of the Modern Devotion

The Dutch brethren of the Common Life were not mistaken in regarding ecclesiastical, and occasionally secular, statutes as serious threats to their way of life. Such statutes often led to the writing of an apology.

In his bull *Ex iniuncto* (7 January 1394), Pope Boniface IX ordered the Archbishops of Trier, Mainz and Cologne and their suffragan bishops to investigate those men and women who lived a communal life in poverty without seeking entry into a religious order.<sup>28</sup>

R. Lievens, a.o. (ed.), *Pascua medievalia. Studies voor Prof. Dr J.M. de Smet* (Leuven 1983), 312-336 (*Mediaevalia Lovaniensia* series I, studia X); W. Lourdaux, 'De utilitate monachorum van Dirk van Herxen: een verdediging van de moderne devoten tegenover de burgerlijke overheid', in: *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 59(1985), 184-196. *De utilitate monachorum* is left out of consideration because this is an independent legal defense in which the right to property and inheritance of the brothers is defended against the civil leaders of Zwolle. The work of Peter van Dieburg is published by R. Doebner in: *Annalen und Akten der Brüder des gemeinsamen Lebens*, 154-159.

<sup>26</sup> K. Elm, 'Vita regularis sine regula. Bedeutung, Rechtsstellung und Selbstverständnis des mittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Semireligiosentums', in: Fr. Šmahel (ed.), *Häresie und vorzeitige Reformation im Spätmittelalter*, esp. 262-262 (*Schriften des Historischen Kollegs Kolloquien*): 'Im Rückgriff auf ältere kirchenrechtliche Bestimmungen, vor allem aber ausgehend von den Digesten entwickelten die Kanonisten so für die *vita media* eine Rechtsfigur, die bereits im 14. Jahrhundert (...) von den Apologeten der *Fratres vitae communis* in zahlreichen juristischen Gutachten gestützt, ausgebaut und so präzisiert wurde, dass sie ein Jahrhundert später von der *Societas Jesu* (...) übernommen werden konnte'.

<sup>27</sup> Cf for example W. Landeen, *The Brethren*, 155; G. Faix, *Gabriel Biel und die Brüder vom Gemeinsamen Leben*, 61.

<sup>28</sup> *Instrumentum protestationis prioris et subprioris in Windesem, prioris in Arnhem...* Ed. J.A. Hofman, in: *Archief voor de Geschiedenis van het Aartsbisdom Utrecht* 2 (1875), 225-229; cf. *Corpus* II, 156-158 and M. Schoengen, *Jacobus Traiecti alias de Voeght*, 499-501.



A result of this bull was that several Dutch members of the Congregation of Windesheim who had originally been part of the brethren responded by swearing an affidavit on 19 March 1395. In this document, which was entitled *Nos publice protestamus*, they recorded before the imperial notary William Hendriksz that the brethren's form of life was orthodox and contributed to the edification of the Church. The anonymous *Ex tribus medijs* was written to defend the brethren against prosecution by the Inquisition. This threat of involvement of the Inquisition also inspired the provost of St Saviour's church in Utrecht, the civil and canon lawyer Everard Foec to write *Primo queritur utrum*, which was published circa 1397. After Pope Boniface XI issued his bull *Sedis apostolicae providentia* on 31 January 1396 in which he branded all Beghards, Lollards and Zwestriones illegal heretics, the Inquisition started to investigate these groups in Cologne, Utrecht, Mainz, Salzburg and Magdeburg. The brethren feared that this measure would also affect them and Foec's work was an attempt to prevent an inquiry of the Inquisition.<sup>29</sup> The treatise *Quesitum est mihi* by Arnold, Abbot of Diknningen, and the *Sequentes quaestiones* were written with a similar aim during this period. The *Sequentes quaestiones*, two versions of which have been handed down, were written by a group of theologians and jurists from Cologne and was essentially a synthesis of the three apologias mentioned.<sup>30</sup>

Gerard Zerbolt subsequently wrote his *Super modo vivendi* (1398) when the papal Inquisitor attempted to refute the defence of the Cologne theologians. He tried to obtain a condemnation of the *secta Gherardinorum*, the female branch of the Modern Devotion.<sup>31</sup> Dirc of Herxen, rector of the brethren house in Zwolle, wrote his *De communi vita* and *Contra detractores monachorum* or *De utilitate monachorum* between 1405 and 1419, when the magistrates of the city

<sup>29</sup> 'Tercio ex bulla, sed ista bulla non videtur esse nisi executoria c. Ad nostrum, ut patet ex forma bulle'; *Corpus* II, 170; *Corpus* I, 257. After all Foec stated: 'Ecce quomodo clarissime est ostensum, quod predicti homines (...) in communi extra religionem viuentes non sunt de iurisdictione inquisitoris...', *Corpus* II, 166. William wrote his work with the intention that his work could serve the approval of the brothers by the bishop of Utrecht; an approval which came in 1401. Cf. *Corpus* II, 190-193.

<sup>30</sup> The first version is published in: *Corpus* II, 176-181; the second in: Jacobus Traiecti alias de Voecht, *Narratio de inchoatione domus clericorum in Zwollis*, ed. M. Schoengen, 503-511.

<sup>31</sup> G. Dumbar, *Analecta*, dl. 1, 88. Cf. Van Rooij, *Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen*, 247



and the guilds tried to ban the brethren from possessing and acquiring property through inheritances. The orthodoxy of their form of life was thus not an issue in this case, but the form of life itself came under serious threat nonetheless.<sup>32</sup>

A third cluster of apologies were written when the Groningen Dominican Mattheus Grabow embarked on a campaign against the Modern Devotion. Grabow used the Fourth Lateran Council's prohibition of the establishment of new religious orders (1215) to denounce the brethren's form of life to the Bishop of Utrecht.<sup>33</sup> Since the Bishop of Utrecht had already approved it in 1401, he unsurprisingly ruled that Grabow's charges were unsubstantiated. Grabow refused to let the matter rest and took his case to the Council of Constance. The Bishop subsequently asked William of Lochem to write his *Defensio veritatis agnate* before 15 November 1417. This treatise was probably intended to advise one of the cardinals on the tribunal.<sup>34</sup> Pierre d'Ailly also addressed Cardinal Anthony of Verona in his sharply-worded *Reverendissime pater et domine* to secure a condemnation of Grabow's propositions. Much of this work was derived from the *Sequentes quaestiones*, written by the Cologne theologians. Finally, d'Ailly's pupil and friend Jean Gerson, later chancellor of the university of Paris, trod in his master's footsteps and used arguments from d'Ailly for his *Contra conclusiones Matthei Grabow* (3 April 1418).<sup>35</sup>

The remaining group of apologies of the Modern Devotion consists of two works. The anonymous *Apologeticus perbrevis pro*

<sup>32</sup> Cf for literature on Dirc van Herxen note 25. *Contra detractores* is published in: M. Haverals, 'Contra detractores monachorum alias *De utilitate monachorum* van Dirk van Herxen', in: W. Verbeke, M. Haverals, R. De Keyser, J. Goossens (ed.), *Serta devota in memoriam Guillelmi Lourdaux. Pars Prior: Devotio Windeshemensis* (Leuven 1992), 249-294. (*Mediaevalia Lovaniensia Series I/Studia XX*).

<sup>33</sup> The accusation against Grabow is published in: *Corpus* II, 216-220. See for the Grabow case: R.R. Post, *The Modern Devotion*, 269-290, 358-59, 430. The convicted statements can be found in: St. Wachter, 'Matthäus Grabow. Ein Gegner der Brüder vom gemeinsamen Leben', 356-358; *Corpus* II, 133-137, 216-227, 397-411. Cf. *Corpus* II, 220: 'excommunicati sunt omnes vitam communem ducentes extra religionem approbatam'. St. Wachter, *o.c.*, 352-358 has pointed out that there are two traditions of Grabow's statements and that he can not be held responsible for the first. This also applies for the reproduction of his opinion of the council of Konstanz.

<sup>34</sup> St. Wachter, 'Matthäus Grabow. Ein Gegner der Brüder vom gemeinsamen Leben', 331.

<sup>35</sup> The conviction of Grabow by d'Ailly is published in: *Corpus* II, 220-221; the conviction of Grabow by Gerson in: *Corpus* II, 222-224; the repeal of Grabow's conviction in: *Corpus* II, 226-227. Cf also the summary in *Chronicon Windeshemensis* by Busch, published in *Corpus* II, 227-229.



*fraternitate Gregoriana alias communi vitae* was completed circa 1455 and was probably prompted by a treatise written by Jan Hus. During the Council of Constance, Hus appealed to the example of the primitive Church to downplay the importance of ecclesiastical authority. This reference to the primitive Church was most unwelcome to the brethren, who themselves used its example to legitimise their own form of life and who did not wish to be associated with Hus. After the condemnation of Hus at the Council of Constance (6 July 1415), the brethren felt compelled to distance themselves from him.<sup>36</sup> Finally, when the Congregation of Windesheim put pressure on the brethren of Hildesheim to become religious, Peter of Dieburg responded by writing the second of these works, the *Narratis itaque quibusdam* (1467). Although Windesheim had assisted the brethren in their defence of themselves in 1394 in *Nos publice protestamus*, relations had clearly deteriorated much by 1467, at least in Germany. In his *Descriptio quorundam eventuum circa domus nostre primarium erectionem et institutionem anno domini LXVIII*, Dieburg had already identified the animosity of the citizenry and the continuing obstruction of the magistrates as serious threats to the semi-religious form of life.<sup>37</sup> In this second work, however, Dieburg branded the canons of Windesheim persecutors of Christians, who worked to eliminate the primitive Church and were criminal intruders in the sheepfold of Christ.<sup>38</sup> Nor did he hesitate to characterise the transformation into a religious order as a sign of impatience, vanity, instability and even depravity. Dieburg

<sup>36</sup> Cf. E. Wilks Dolnikowski, 'The Encouragement of Lay Preaching as an Ecclesiastical Critique in Wyclif's Latin Sermons', in: B. M. Kienzle e.a. (ed.), *Models of Holiness in Medieval Sermons. Proceedings of the International Symposium (Kalamazoo, 4-7 May 1995)* (Louvain-La-Neuve 1996), 193-209 (*Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Etudes Médiévales. Textes et Etudes du Moyen Age* 5).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. R. Doebner, *Annalen und Akten der Brüder des gemeinsamen Lebens im Lüchtenhofe zu Hildesheim*, XXIII-XXIV; XXVII. See also G. Boerner, *Die Annalen und Akten der Brüder des gemeinsamen Leben im Lüchtenhof zu Hildesheim. Eine Grundlage der Geschichte der deutschen Brüderhäuser und ein Beitrag zur Vorgeschichte der Reformation*. Fürstenwalde, 1905; E. Barnikol, 'Bruder Dieburgs deutsches Christentum und Luthers Stellung zu den Brüdern vom gemeinsamen Leben', in: H. Etzrod, K. Kronenberg (ed.), *Das Eisleber Lutherbuch* (Magdeburg 1933), 18-28; W. Schültke, *Die Brüder vom gemeinsamen Leben und Peter Dieburg, 1420-1494*. Rostock, 1969.

<sup>38</sup> 'a spiritualibus quibusdam amicis et proximis nostris et religiosis nunc aperte nunc occulte a juventute sua et usque nunc expugnata sit et expugnatur, dijudicatur, ut non dicamus condempnatur. Nec hoc mirum et novum videatur nobis, cum et pene omnis religio, eciam Christiana sepe a juventute sit expugnata' (154); 'non ut fideles persuasores set Christi ovilis crudeles invasores statim in occulto insidiantes rapere festinant, dum attrahunt eum' (ed. R. Doebner, 155).



regarded the binding character of religious vows as a curtailment of free religious self-development.<sup>39</sup>

The example of this last tract shows that Biel did not intend his *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum* to be an apologia. It is true that both Biel and Dieburg rejected an intrinsic and exclusive connection between perfection and monasticism. But while Dieburg criticised Windesheim, poured scorn on its handling of the crisis and listed the negative aspects of religious life, Biel pointed to the age-old diversity of forms of life in the Church. He also played down the importance of the *ordo canonicus* by emphasising that the brethren were the foundation and first centre of the Modern Devotion.<sup>40</sup> And while Dieburg flamed against the canonical interpretation of the concept of 'ordo', Biel used it in an Augustinian sense by applying the term primarily to the ordering of life by reason.<sup>41</sup> The contrast between the *Tractatus* and the contemporaneous *Narratis itaque quibusdam* suggests that Biel's tract should not be regarded as an apologia.

It is possible that the recruitment of brethren of the Common Life by the Congregation of Windesheim had a more threatening and polarising effect in Northern Germany than in Southern Germany. This could perhaps also explain the emotive tone of Dieburg's *Narratis itaque quibusdam*. At any rate, Gabriel Biel certainly judged the atmosphere in Southern Germany to be less competitive and his *Tractatus* has a thoughtful tone. He carefully reflected on the subject of the brethren's

<sup>39</sup> 'taceo de vita clericorum ad religionem aliquam, set quia *recessus* (sic, pvg) omnes communiter mutacionesque locorumque ceteris paribus quasi origines et indices esse impaciencie, vanitatis, instabilitatis aut eciam perversitatis sepe inventi sunt et ideo omni studio, discussione et discrecione examinandi aut vitandi non solum patrum sentenciis set eciam cotidianis exemplis docemur, cum non loco mutando (...) set viriliter pugnando laudabilius reperitur et fructuosius' (Ed. R. Doebner, 155); 'Legitur autem, b[eatum] Benedictum mandasse cuidam: "Si verus dei servus est, non te liget cathena ferrea, pene dixissem professio tua set caritas Christi"', ed. R. Doebner, 156-157). In 1490 Dieburg wrote after all that the return to a religious order or entering in one seems 'quam cum expensis nostris vendere libertatem nostram, singulare decus Christianae religionis (...) ut et nos inveniamur subjecti servituti generis servorum, qui non nisi cum suppliciis emendatur. Unum enim est, ac si solempnem faceremus professionem. Restat, ut et regula acceptetur. In qua opinionem me quondam fuisse recolo, sed resipui audiens magistrum Gabrielem super hec respondisse, quod sufficerent religiosi', ed. Doebner, 113.

<sup>40</sup> *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Werbeck, 146-147.

<sup>41</sup> After 1 Cor. 14, 40. Biel and Dieburg give *ordo* the same definition. The cynical manner in which Dieburg asks whether the apostle in the biblical passage quoted directs himself towards religious when the order have not even been founded yet shows that Dieburg felt more pressure than Biel. Cf. R. Doebner, 158.



form of life. As we will see, he also discussed its canonical status. He diplomatically argued that the *medius vivendi modus* created a space for people who wished to be protected from the dangers of the secular state without actually assuming the religious state.<sup>42</sup> He had nothing negative to say about Windesheim, which admittedly might have been less of a threat in Southern Germany because of Biel's influence with the secular authorities – an influence which Dieburg lacked in the north.

The contrast between Biel's tract and the other apologias also demonstrates that the *Tractatus* cannot be characterised as an apologia. There is not a trace of specific or immediate threats from the outside, nor of any need to seek approval from the ecclesiastical authorities. While Pierre d'Ailly and Jean Gerson were at pains to undermine Grabow's accusations in their apologias, Biel merely referred to the Grabow affair in passing. He nevertheless made sure to show in the *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum* that he was well aware of the Bishop of Utrecht's approval of the brethren's form of life in 1401, of the Council of Constance's silence on their account and of various popes' granting of privileges to the brethren of the Common Life.<sup>43</sup> The dating advocated above has shown that the *Tractatus* was an attempt to prepare both the author and the brethren for a decision. Biel's aim and the fact that he had influence with the secular power in Southern Germany make it unlikely that his tract was intended to be an apologia. We will now analyse the structure of argumentation in the apologetic works of the Modern Devotion in order to probe further the meaning and aim of Biel's *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Werbeck, 141.

<sup>43</sup> *Corpus Iuris Canonici. Editio Lipsiensis secunda post Aemilii Ludouici Richter curas ad Librorum manu scriptorum et editionis Romanae fidem recognovit et adnotatione critica instruxit Aemilius Friedberg. Pars prior: Decretum Magistri Gratiani. Pars secunda: Decretalium collectiones.* (Leipzig 1879<sup>2</sup>) *Decretales Gregor. IX, liber III, titulus XXXVI, De religiosis domibus, capitulum IX, Ne nimia*: 'Ne nimia religionum diversitas gravem in ecclesiam Dei confusionem inducat, firmiter prohibemus, ne quis de cetero novam religionem inveniat, sed quicumque ad religionem converti voluerit, unam de approbatis assumat. Similiter qui voluerit religiosas domum de novo fundare, regulam et institutionem accipiat de (religionibus) approbatis. Illud etiam prohibemus, ne quis in diversis monasteriis locum monachi habere praesumat, nec unus abbas pluribus monasteriis praesidere'. The council of Lyon would enforce this decision of 1215 and add that receiving clothing resembling religious habit was prohibited. For Gerard Zerbolt was the *Ne nimia* point of departure for his defensive speech. Cf Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen, *Super modo vivendi devotorum hominum simul commorantium*, ed. A. Hyma, in: *Archief voor de Geschiedenis van het Aartsbisdom Utrecht* 52(1926), p. 1-100, esp. 2. The convicted statements of M. Grabow can be found in: St. Wachter, 'Matthäus Grabow. Ein Gegner der Brüder vom gemeinsamen Leben', 356-358.



### 3.3 *The structure of argumentation in the apologias of the Modern Devotion*

The *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum* has a different structure of argumentation than the apologetic works of the Modern Devotion. Though Biel's tract does reflect the debate of his day about the legitimacy of the brethren, neither his reasons for writing it, nor the structure of argumentation he used, nor the sources he used indicate that it was intended to be an apologia for the brethren.<sup>44</sup> On the contrary, Biel used the apologetic literature of the Modern Devotion to his own ends.

The argument of *Nos publice protestamus* concluded with a denial of heresy among the brethren and a protestation of their obedience to the hierarchy.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, the strategically constructed arguments in *Ex tribus medijs* and in the works of Foec, Willemsz. and the Cologne theologians reveal that a vindication of the semi-religious form of life is their primary objective. In all of these works, the strongest arguments for the legitimacy of this form of life and its immunity from prosecution are given at the beginning or at the end. Just as in an army, the flanks needed cover most. Thus the first tract started by disputing that the injunction against the Beghards and the Zwestriones in the legal ordinance *Sancta Romana* was applicable to the Modern Devotion and then argued that the brethren of the Common Life were not Beghards. It ended by concluding that the bull *Sedis apostolica providentia* had nothing to say about a communal form of life based on the example of Acts 4: 31-36, and stated: 'ex quo patet, quod perfectionis est eciam extra religionem in societate honesta et caritatiua communiter viuere.'<sup>46</sup>

Other apologists of the Modern Devotion used the Scholastic question-and-answer method for their argument, the most important issues being dealt with in the first and last question.<sup>47</sup> The *quaestiones* about the legitimacy of the Modern Devotion's form of communal life

<sup>44</sup> For the rhetorical analysis the following has been used: A. C. Braet, A.B. Lee-man, *Klassieke retorica: haar inhoud, functie en betekenis*. Groningen, 1987.

<sup>45</sup> 'Videlicet nullam haeresim, sectam, scisma aut occulta conventicula reperimus inter ipsos, nec percepimus eos predicare extra ecclesias vel disputare de articulis fidei vel de Summa Trinitate aut de divina clementia vel assumere sibi regulam aliquam novam vel ordinem aut habitum novae religionis'. The argument is that the Modern Devote the 'Romanae ecclesiae eorumque praelatis ... reverenter obediunt, ecclesias devote frequentant nec aliquibus se erroribus involvunt sed intimo charitatis amore sibi invicem serviunt...', *Nos publice protestamus*, in: *Corpus* II, 157.

<sup>46</sup> *Corpus* II, 170-171.

<sup>47</sup> 'Cum quorum responsionibus concordat dominus et magister Everhardus Foec (... ) sicut patet in eius scriptis, et multi alii', *Corpus* II, 177.



were addressed first, followed by those about obedience to the superior and the *obedientia caritativa*. The *propria confessio* of fraternal *correptio* were discussed subsequently, as were the delicate topics of the reading of books in the vernacular and the use by non-religious of a monastic daily schedule with alternating times of prayer and manual work.<sup>48</sup> These points culminated in the final question of whether the Inquisition had the right to intervene. The reply, of course, was that no such right existed.<sup>49</sup>

Zerbolt also used the format of nine *quaestiones* to structure his strongly-worded legal treatise *Super modo vivendi*. Again he chose the first and the last question to answer the most substantial objections against the Modern Devotion's form of life. The first *quaestiones* proved that it was perfectly legitimate to live together as a *societas simplex* or as an *unio fraterna caritatis* (1), without belonging to a religious order (2). He went on to rebut the criticism that community of property is a prerogative of religious orders (3) and to contest the charge that gatherings of members of such communities are unlawful (4). In the two subsequent *quaestiones* he attempted to prove the legitimacy of fraternal correction (5) and the legality of possessing and reading books in the vernacular (6). Other topics addressed were obedience (7) and the confession of sins outside of the sacrament of confession (8). These *quaestiones* culminated in the final *quaestio*, which challenged the view that the brethren's form of life was unlawful because it reflected monastic life but did not require the taking of vows.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> For the issue of reading books written in the vernacular by lay people, and the apologia written for this by Zerbolt, Foec, abbot Arnold and the lawyers from Cologne, see: V. Honemann, 'Zu Interpretation und Überlieferung des Traktats *De libris teutonicilibus*', in: E. Cockx-Indestege and F. Hendrickx (ed.), *Miscellanea Neerlandica. Opstellen voor dr. Jan Deschamps ter gelegenheid van zijn zeventigste verjaardag* (Leuven 1987), 113-124. The agreements between *Super modo* and *De libris teutonicilibus* (and thus the authenticity of the first work) have been researched by V. Honemann, 'Textvarianz im Milieu der Devotio Moderna. Zur Genese der verschiedenen Fassungen von 'Super modo vivendi devotorum hominum simul commorantium' und 'De libris teutonicilibus'', in: J. Cajot, L. Kremer, H. Niebaum (ed.), *Lingua Theodisca. Beiträge zur Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaft. Jan Goossens zum 65. Geburtstag* [z.p., z.j.], 969-978; cf for the different versions and Grote's more practical suggestions: N. Staubach, 'Gerhard Zerbolt von Zutphen und die Apologie der Laienlektüre in der Devotio moderna', 231-248, 258-263.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. E. Foec, 'Utrum inquisitor heretice prauitatis potest inquirere de vita et consensatione predictarum personarum sic extra religionem simul habitantium et viuencium in communi', in: *Corpus II*, 165-166.

<sup>50</sup> *Super modo vivendi* has been published by A. Hyma, in: *Archief voor de Geschiedenis van het Aartsbisdom Utrecht* 52(1926), 1-100; see also: A. Hyma, A.,



The tracts of Pierre d'Ailly, Jean Gerson and William of Lochem were also structured strategically. They culminated not in a refutation of Grabow's accusations, but rather in his denunciation as a heretic.<sup>51</sup> Revealing the influence of *Ex tribus medijs*, William of Lochem started his *Defensio* by repudiating the view that the brethren could be placed on the same line as the Lollards, the Beghards and the Zwestriones. He concluded his treatise by reminding his readers of the 1401 episcopal approbation.<sup>52</sup> Dirc of Herxen concluded his *Tractatus de communi vita* in a similar fashion. However, in spite of the polemical tone of his tract, Dirc also addressed the substance of the issue by discussing the values of communal life. Thus he contended that a communal struggle for the necessities of life can lead to closer observance of the commandments of God, to greater self-knowledge and to the practice of virtue.<sup>53</sup> This argument corresponds to similar points argued in Biel's *Tractatus*.

Many substantial similarities exist between Biel's *Tractatus* and this work. Like Gerson, d'Ailly, Zerbolt, Dieburg and the author of the *Apologeticus perbrevis*, Biel attempted to broaden the concepts of *ordo* and *religio*.<sup>54</sup> All of them contended that the perfect communal life instituted by Christ, the Abbot, must be described as *religio*. This term may not be restricted to the monastic form of life only.<sup>55</sup> Incidentally,

'Is Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen the author of the "super modo vivendi"?', in: *Nederlandsch Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* N.S. 16(1921), 107-128, esp. 117-120.

<sup>51</sup> Pierre d'Ailly, *Reverendissime Pater et Domine*, 'Est igitur deliberatio mea, quod propter ista et similia, que tractatus vel libellus, a quo sunt extracte conclusiones seu propositiones antedictae, continet, damnandus est ut erroneus et temerarius et scandalosus et ut dogma falsum sacre scriptura contrarium, et per consequens quod tractatus est hereticus et igni tradendus....' (*Corpus* II, 221).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. St. Wachter, 'Matthäus Grabow. Ein Gegner der Brüder vom gemeinsamen Leben', 365-370.

<sup>53</sup> See for the works by Dirc van Herxen note 25. M. Haverals was so kind to provide me with a microfilm of the *Tractatus de communi vita*. For the *Apologeticus perbrevis* I depended on the doctoral thesis by B. Leurink, *Ut securius Deo serviant. De broeders van het Gemene Leven in het licht van hun verdedigingsgeschriften*. Amsterdam, 1988. [Unpublished doctoral thesis KTUA]

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Peter van Dieburg: 'Ergo in christianae religione viventes citra religiones sine ordine sunt? ...nonne clericus in ordine est clericali, sacerdos sacerdotali, virgines virginali, vidue viduali, maritati aut uxorati in maritali seu matrimoniali?' (Ed. R. Doebner, 158); 'nonne possibile esset eam, scilicet obedienciam, fieri tali utpote corde magno et perfecto ac omnimoda sui suorumque resignacione efficaci necnon animo jugiter sic manendi, quia coram deo qui intuetur cor equipari valeat voto... solempni', (ed. R. Doebner, 157); *Apologeticus perbrevis*, fol. 61v: 'Religio enim christiana que prior et maior est omnium religionum approbatissima est, utputa a christo legislatore instituta et approbata'. For the passages in the work of Biel, see below.

<sup>55</sup> Zerbolt states, after Hendrik van Gorkum, *Quolibet* III, *quaestio* XV, 'Religio est modus quidem et ordo vivendi sub certe regula professione et alicuius superioris regimine (...) Largo autem modo, secundum Hostiensem, ubi supram, dicitur aliquis



Geert Grote had also argued this case.<sup>56</sup> Like the *Ex tribus medijs* and the works of Foec, Willemsz, d'Ailly, Gerson and Gerard Zerbolt of Zutphen, Biel appealed to Acts 4: 31-35.<sup>57</sup> Almost all apologies also quoted from the Letter of Clement and mentioned Seneca's views on private property. Biel also referred to them in his *Tractatus*. Zerbolt and others mentioned the notion that private property was a disastrous consequence of original sin and that community of property was therefore an inherent aspect of humanity and by no means exclusive to religious, and so did Biel. He argued that the brethren undid this negative consequence of original sin by adopting community of property.<sup>58</sup>

religiosus non ideo, quod asstrictus sit alicui certe regule, sed respectu vite, quam arciolem et sanctiorem ducit quam ceteri homines seculares' (Cf. Ed. A. Hyma, 17, cf also 19-20). The *Apologeticus perbrevis* states that the evangelical vows in the most perfect way have been fulfilled by the *religio* as founded by Christ. Cf. B. Leurink, *Ut securius Deo serviant*, 86. Dirc van Herxen stated in his *De communi vita* just as Jean Gerson that the *religio christiana* in non-canonical sense can be attained by living out the evangelical vows. 'Ille status [perfectionis, pvg] non dicit apud religiosos perfectionem habitam vel acquisitam,... sed dicit tantummodo perfectionem acquirendam. Constat autem quod perfectio acquirenda non est iam acquisita', *Contra conclusiones Matthei Grabow*, in: *Corpus* II, 223; cf. *Corpus* II, 224. For the image of Christ as abbot in Gerson's *Super Magnificat* see: H. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology. Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge (Mass.) 1963), 343-346.

<sup>56</sup> 'Dese doeghet religio is seer geestlic vnde na den gotliken doechten gheloue, hope vnde mynne, een de geestelixte doecht ... Vnde so een mensch in synen werken, oefenisse, leuene vnde staet dese dinge, meer vnde meer, vaster vnde puerliker vnde beredeliker doet, so he meer heft de doghet der religien... Vnde dit mach men wal hebben alse vullencomelike buten ghemeynte vnde buten cloesteren vnde buten cappen, alse sulke in den cloesteren. (...) Vnde so woert de doeght vulcomen, de religio heit', R. Langenberg, 'Gerrit de Grootes verlorener Traktat 'de Simonia ad Beguttas'', in: *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte der deutschen Mystik* 2(1902), 1-33, esp. 27, 29. Grote therefore develops the idea of *religio* as holiness and as a virtue which is not connected to taking final vows, as in Thomas Aquinas: 'Sic igitur et in statu perfectionis proprie dicitur esse aliquis, non ex hoc quod habet actum dilectionis perfectae, sed ex hoc quod obligat se perpetuo, cum aliqua solemnitate, ad ea quae sunt perfectionis', *Summa Theologiae* II-II 184. 4; Cf. *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Werbeck, 140 '... quod excellentius et melius sit vivere ex voto quam sine voto'.

<sup>57</sup> Gerard Zerbolt, *Super modo vivendi*, ed. Hyma, 29-30; *Ex tribus medijs*, in: *Corpus* II, 170-172; Arnold Willemsz., *Quesitum est mihi*, in: *Corpus* II, 172-175, esp. 173; *Apologeticus perbrevis*, fol. 68v-69r. All apologies refer to Acts 4: 31-35, when the restoration of the communal way of life is discussed. Cf. E. Foec, *Primo queritur utrum*, in: *Corpus* II, 160-161; cf. *Ex tribus medijs*, in: *Corpus* II, 170-171; A. Willemsz., *Quesitum est mihi*, in: *Corpus* II, 173; *Sequentes quaestiones*, in: *Corpus* II, 178; *Super modo vivendi*, ed. Hyma, 7-8; *Apologeticus perbrevis*, fol. 60r. Cf. *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Werbeck, 139, 143.

<sup>58</sup> *Super modo vivendi*, ed. Hyma, 29; 34; *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Werbeck, 139-140; 145. *Apologeticus perbrevis*, fol. 68r: 'Proprietas vero bonorum solum malicia hominum introducta est, ut dicit Seneca'.



Following the Cologne jurists, Biel also defended the use of a monastic daily schedule.<sup>59</sup> And like Zerbolt, Foec and William of Lochem he emphasised that the brethren were not mendicants but supported themselves with their own work. As most apologists he appealed to Genesis 3: 19 and Psalm 128: 2 in this regard.<sup>60</sup> Finally, Biel's reference to the First Letter of Peter (1 Peter 1: 22) demonstrated his knowledge of the apologetic tradition of the movement, because all apologias used this quote to explain the value of the *oboedientia caritatis*. Even his diplomatic argument that the *medius vivendi modus* should be regarded as a way for those unsuited for monastic life was derived from the apologetic tradition of the Modern Devotion.<sup>61</sup> It is clear that Biel was acquainted with more than one work from this genre, because none of these themes can be traced back to one specific source in particular.

Biel's *Tractatus* was nonetheless not itself an apologia. It is nothing short of misleading to conclude that it is because Biel used sources also used by apologists. Even apart from the fact that Biel's tract did not include any legal arguments, the organisation of the different parts of the text and the structure of the argument prove that the *Tractatus* differs essentially from the apologias. He did not use the format of *quaestiones* ('an sit prohibitum', etc.) nor a strategic order of arguments in the Scholastic format. The dating and the organisation of the text argue against the view that it was an apologetic work. Biel did not reinforce his own opinion with persuasive arguments. Neither did he advance the views of opponents with counterarguments in order to weaken their views. Biel did not use similar arguments as the apologists to support his views. Neither did he advance counter-arguments against the views of opponents. Moreover, the issues addressed by Zerbolt in the fourth, fifth, sixth, eighth and ninth *quaestio* did not interest Biel, even though they contained points raised by critics. He rarely used rhetorical questions or an argumentative strategy. The predominantly referential character of Biel's tract is further borne out by the extensive historical overview which he gave to show the roots of

<sup>59</sup> *Sequentes quaestiones*, in: *Corpus II*, 179.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Willem van Lochem, *Defensio veritatis agnita*, in: St. Wachter, 'Matthäus Grabow. Ein Gegner der Brüder vom gemeinsamen Leben', 366. cf. *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Werbeck, 145-146.

<sup>61</sup> *Apologeticus perbrevis*, fol. 72v-73r; cf. *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Werbeck, 140: 'Nobis interim satis est ad omnem perfectionem stare et vivere in libertate legis christianae sub uno abbate Christo Iesu, ... voluntarie sacrificare Deo, servando nonnulla ex consiliis euangelicis quae possumus. In his vero quae non possumus, satius nos iudicamus non esse irretitos et obligatos voto vel professione strictiori'.



the Fraterherren in the diversity of forms of life in the history of the Church. This historical survey demonstrates again that Biel must have written the book in an atmosphere of sympathetic co-operation rather than angry polemics. There is no indication that he believed that he was being pressurised into writing a tract to convince the reader of the orthodoxy of the brethren.

These observations lead us to the following question. If the *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum* cannot be considered part of the Modern Devotion's apologetic genre on the basis of the dating advocated above and of other arguments extrinsic to the text, to what genre does it then belong?

#### 4. Structure and first characterisation

Biel wrote at the beginning of the *Tractatus*: 'Quesitum est a me pridem, unde ordo noster vel institutio communis vite clericorum, sub qua et in qua nos vivere dicimus sumpserit exordium'. In view of the dating, it is more than likely that this demand came from his future brethren. G. Faix has rightly divided the rest of the book into three parts: *Defensio communis vita tamquam medii modo vivendi* (fol. 1r-5v); *Progressus et commendatio communis vite* (fol. 5v-13r) and *constitutio communitatis* (fol. 13r-20r).<sup>62</sup>

In the first part, Biel offers a justification for the *medius modus vivendi* – the semi-religious form of life – by examining the original meaning of the concepts of *ordo* and *religio*. As has been seen, these terms had become exclusive to the religious orders. Biel characterised this use as 'improprie et in significatione minus principali'. By following Augustine and Gerson in defining *ordo* as 'forma alicuius honeste et ordinate vite' (fol. 1v), he denied that there was any exclusive connection between the monastic *status perfectionis* on the one hand and the way to perfection on the other.<sup>63</sup> And he defined 'religio' primarily as that form of life 'quam Christus observavit perfectissimo

<sup>62</sup> G. Faix, *Gabriel Biel und die Brüder vom Gemeinsamen Leben*, 62-67.

<sup>63</sup> Gerson saw the *religio christiana* as the way of living and ordered life as lived through by Christ in the most perfect way: 'Prima propositio. Sola religio christiana est propria, vere et anthonomastice dicenda religio, quam Christus obseruauit perfectissimo et summo modo', *Contra conclusiones Matthei Grabow*, in: *Corpus* II, 222; he sees religious orders as derived ('religiones factities') from the true *religio*. For the observance of the *religio christiana* it is therefore not necessary to take religious vows (*ibidem*, 223); cf. *Apologeticus perbrevis*, fol. 61v.: 'Religio enim christiana, que prior et maior omnium religionum approbatissima est, utputa a christo, summo legislatore, instituta et approbata et a fidelibus deinceps observata nec indigens aliqua



modo' (fol. 2v). For Biel, *religio* was of a higher order than the *religiones* in the canonical sense. Continuing the line of argumentation developed by Foec, Willemsz. and the Cologne jurists, Biel asserted at the end of the first part that it was therefore lawful 'non esse monachum et nihilomenus religiose vivere ut monachum' (fol. 3v). Following Gerard Zerbolt, Biel concluded that the *status medius* between the 'saeculares saeculariter viventes' and the 'status religiosorum' is of benefit to the Church (fol. 5v).

In the second and central part, Biel demonstrated how 'his' form of life was derived from the apostles in the *ecclesia primitiva*. Community of property was of its essence.<sup>64</sup> Biel's treatment of the *possessio communis* was interwoven with a survey of the diverse forms of life in the Church and an overview of groups that had practiced the *vita communis* without taking vows. Biel also reminded his readers of the approbation of the Council of Constance. Moreover, he mentioned several *auctoritates* to stress the legitimacy of the semi-religious form of life. Biel thus attempted to create an awareness of the normality of this form of life in the Church.

Biel also included a remarkably lengthy quotation from a letter from 'Pope Clement' at the beginning of the second part of his tract. This quotation recommended the communal life with community of property as the *status perfectissimus*. Some seven percent of the *Tractatus* is taken up by it.<sup>65</sup>

approbatione sedis apostolice'; *Ex tribus mediis*, in: *Corpus* II, 170, '...nobis interim satis est ad omnem perfectionem stare et viuere in libertatis legis christianae'.

<sup>64</sup> *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Werbeck, 142, 'Subinde magis accedendo ad propositum, dicimus quod institutio vitae nostrae exordium et formam sumpsit a primitiva ecclesia. (...) Deinde ne paulatim succedente tempore refrigeret fervor iste devotionis et unusquisque ad vitium proprietatis deflecteret, etiam apostolica constitutione sancitum est per sanctum Clementem papam...'

<sup>65</sup> See for this letter: *Corpus Iuris Canonici*. Pars prior: *Decretum Magistri Gratiani*. Ed. A. Friedberg, kolom 812f. This letter is not to be confused with the two genuine letters of Clement. Here it concerns a letter of 'pope Clement' from one of the collections which together form the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals. These Decretals which consist of five collections of canon law, is known as the most elaborate and influential falsifications from the Middle Ages. For a survey of the works and letters in this collection see: E. Seckel, 'Pseudoisidor', in: *Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*<sup>3</sup>, vol. 16 (1905), 265-307. Doubts on the authenticity of the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals (large parts of which have also appeared in the *Decretum Gratiani*) already existed in the fifteenth century, with eg Nicolaus Cusanus, but apparantly not with Gerard Zerbolt (cf note 86) and Biel. K. Zechiel-Eckes has shown that the later abbot of Corbie, Paschasius Radbertus (842-847) was one of the ones who may have bene involved in the forgery; cf. K. Zechiel-Eckes, 'Auf Pseudoisidors Spur. Oder: Versuch einen dichten Schleier zu lüften', in: W. Hartmann, G. Schmitz (ed.), *Fortschritt durch Fälschungen? Ursprung, Gestalt*



Ideas of Zerbolt's resonate as Biel contends that communal property was an inherent aspect of the human condition before the Fall. He regarded community of property as a *proprium* of the entire Church which was awaiting restoration.<sup>66</sup> Biel viewed this unadulterated form of the *vita communis* as something restored by Christ and renewed by Augustine. It had always been retained in the Church, not in the least because of papal protection (fol. 8v-9v). Following John Busch, Biel subsequently described the origins and development of the Modern Devotion as a renewal of the life of the primitive Church, starting with Geert Grote and Florens Radewijns. He emphasised the reforming zeal of the brethren and canons in Germany (10r-13r). Moreover, his survey of the history of the Modern Devotion also served to gently enlighten the members of the Congregation of Windesheim about their own origins. Thus Biel stressed that they owed a debt of gratitude to the brethren of the Common Life, who had stood at the beginning of the Modern Devotion and continued to provide recruits for its monastic branch.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, the tract's third part or *constitutio communitatis*, deals with the internal organisation of the brethren houses (fol. 13r-20r). It reemphasised the importance of communal property. It also recommended the *labor manuum*, in a given case the copying of manuscripts, as the most important means of support. Following Gerson's tract *De laude scriptorum*, this activity was characterised as 'spiritualibus studiis et exercitiis devotionis magis vicinus et accomodus' (fol. 15r) and also as beneficial to the cure of souls and to the preaching of the Word. However, Biel added the condition that it was to be alternated

und Wirkungen der pseudoisidorischen Fälschungen. Beiträge zum gleichnamigen Symposium an der Universität Tübingen vom 27. und 28. Juni 2001 (Hannover 2002), 1-28 (*Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Studien und Texte*, vol. 31; id., 'Pseudoisidorische Dekretalen', in: *Lexikon der Kirchengeschichte* 2 (2001), 1345 ff.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Th. Wetzstein, 'Jenseitsvorsorge im Spätmittelalter. Die Bruderschaftspredigten Gabriel Biels als frömmigkeitsgeschichtliche Quelle', in: *Roma, magistra mundi. Itineraria culturae medievalis. Mélanges offerts au Père L.E. Boyle à l'occasion de son 75e anniversaire*. Turnhout 1998. 3 vols. vol. 3, *Parvi Flores*, 383-406, esp. 393-394, 405-406; *sermo In commemoratione fraternitatis*.

<sup>67</sup> 'Itaque factum est, ut ex ista radice annuente gratia Dei pullulaverit fructus tam universalis reformationis non solum illius ordinis, verum etiam plurimorum aliorum ordinum, quibus adhuc usque in hodiernum diem per fratres istos de communi vita clericorum instituuntur et providentur personae idoneae et regularibus disciplinis aptae. (fol. 13r) Utinam autem multi ex his, qui noviter surrexerunt atque defunctis patribus succedere, etsi debita gratitudine non responderunt, saltem ingrati non existerent his ipsis fratribus communis vitae, a quibus primum tanti profectus tantaeque utilitatis beneficium susceperunt.', ed. Werbeck, 146-147.



with other activities.<sup>68</sup> Analogous to the way in which he rid the terms *ordo* and *religio* of the exclusivity of their canonical reference to the religious life, Biel continued by separating the evangelical counsels of obedience and chastity from the attendant monastic vows. He also emphasised that in the primitive Church, superiors were obeyed not 'ex necessitate', but 'ex caritate' (fol. 18r). This was a reference to the distinction between *obedientia iusticie* (to a superior who exercises *potestas iurisdictionalis* – as in the religious orders) and *obedientia caritatis* (to each other, based not on vows and duty, but on freedom and compatibility). This distinction had also been made by Everardus Foec, Arnold of Dikningen and Gerard Zerbolt. The *necessitas* alluded to referred to the canonical obligation binding upon everyone who had taken the vow. Biel clearly regarded it as a dangerous thing, because living according to the letter of the vow was likely to diminish awareness of the original good it embodied. By contrast, *caritas* implied a free and conscious decision made before the community to follow the way of poverty, chastity and obedience. His terse discussion of the canonical regulation of chastity suggests that the observance of this counsel was non-contentious. A slightly apologetic note emerged when discussing the habits worn by the brethren. Apart from stipulating that the brethren's clothing was to be 'pretio mediocris et in colore humilis', Biel took up position in the debate about the attire of the *Fraterherren* that was taking place at the time. Mindful of the decrees of the Council of Lyons (1274), Biel argued that the wearing of habits did not mean that a religious order had been founded and did not constitute a 'habitus nove religionis' (19r/v). Biel concluded his tract with the observation that it bore a 'provisional' character.

It is not easy to give a definite characterisation of Biel's *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*. Historical surveys and directives about the organisation of communal life go hand in hand with *auctoritates* from the apologetic literature of the Modern Devotion. However, unlike the apologias, the *Tractatus* placed particular stress on the community of property and the organisation of communal life. Biel's semantic and historical explanations of the terms *ordo* and *religio* and his interpretation of the evangelical counsels indicate that he was aiming for acceptance of the proposed form of life and not primarily to prove its canonical legitimacy. There is more to be said about this issue, however. As will be seen, Biel's primary intention was to write

<sup>68</sup> *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Werbeck, 146–147.



a Rule, vaguely resonant of Augustine's and indicative in particular of his own interest in the Christian communities of the first centuries.

### 5. The individual character of the *Tractatus* in the light of Gerson's *Discours sur l'excellence de la virginité* and Zerbolt's *Super modo vivendi*

The individual character of Biel's *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum* is probably best discovered through an examination of the sources used by Biel. Apart from Biel's translation of Jean Gerson's *Opus tripartitum* and the latter's *Contra conclusiones Matthei Grabow* which has been mentioned already, scholars have also suggested that Gerson's *Discours sur l'excellence de la virginité* helped Biel to explore the Modern Devotion's perspective on the communal life and its spirituality. Scholars have suggested that Biel discovered the spirituality of the Modern Devotion through reading Gerson's works.<sup>69</sup> As has been seen, however, the influence of Gerard Zerbolt's *Super modo vivendi* is also evident.

#### 5.1 Jean Gerson's *Discours sur l'excellence de la virginité*

Gerson, who was at a crucial phase of his life at the time, completed his *Discours sur l'excellence de la virginité* around 1400. This work proposed an alternative form of life for the female inhabitants of the convent of St. Donatus in Bruges.<sup>70</sup> Gerson set out to show which *estat* was the most certain way *pour bien vivre en ceste presente misere: mariage charnel or mariage spirituel*. Exploring the latter option, he advised the inhabitants of the convent to live from the proceeds of their work in community of property, to learn to read, to meditate on manuals of virtue, but not to join an order (*religion*) or become Beguines.<sup>71</sup> He made no reference to the condemnation of the Beguines

<sup>69</sup> H. Kraume sees a 'weitgehenden Abhängigkeit Biels von Gerson in der Verteidigung der freien Laiengemeinschaft gegen die traditionelle monastische Lebensweise', in: H. Kraume, *Die Gerson-Übersetzungen Geilers von Kaysersberg. Studien zur deutschsprachigen Gerson-Rezeption* (München 1980), 54.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Jean Gerson, *Oeuvres Complètes*. Ed. P. Glorieux. Paris-Tournai-Rome-New York, 1960-1973. 10 vols., vol. 7 (1966) *L'oeuvre Française*, 416-421. Cf. also H. Kraume, *Die Gerson-Übersetzungen*, 20-22.

<sup>71</sup> 'Vous, mes six suers, demourez adez ensamble, sans entrer en religion, sans demourez en citez (de begijnhoven, pvg), et durant la vie de nos pere et mere vous serez avecque eulx comme vous avés est jusquez cy, et a plus grant devocion selonc aussy que mieulx le porriez faire par la maniere que je diray ou samblable, et viverez de nostre labeur ensamble ... Et serez toutes ficheez et arresteez de jamais non prendre



by several authorities. In his tract *Quaestio determinata De consiliis evangelicis et statu perfectionis*, Gerson defended the view against objections by Dominicans and Franciscans that lay people could attain to perfection without taking vows and that a *consilium* (evangelical counsel) did not necessarily have to become a *lex* (law) in order to bear fruit.<sup>72</sup>

In *De consiliis evangelicis* (written circa 1390) and in *De perfectione cordis* (1428), Gerson referred to the primitive Church as his example. He argued that the first Christians achieved perfection without taking vows. His vernacular tracts, such as manuals of confession, treatises on the Decalogue and the *La Montagne de contemplation* written for *simple gens*, showed that Gerson was convinced on principle of the fact that perfection could be attained by lay people.<sup>73</sup> This notion is also emphatically present in the *Contra conclusiones Matthei Grabow*. Gerson must have regarded the Modern Devotion as a prime example of his concept of the *semen vivificum* and *reformativum*, the life-giving and reforming seed which penetrates the entire body of the Church.<sup>74</sup>

In this regard the Modern Devotion, Gerson and Biel are in complete harmony with one another.<sup>75</sup> Gerson's argument in the *Discours* has led some scholars to observe that Biel's views on the *vita communis* are remarkably similar to his.<sup>76</sup>

The library of Butzbach provides clear evidence that the brethren of the Common Life indeed read Gerson intensively.

autre estat et de jamais non demander autre mari que Dieu'; liures qui declairent les commendemens de Dieu', ed. P. Glorieux, 416.

<sup>72</sup> 'car a vray dire et sans blasse de religion, je n'avoie pas inclinacion grande que vous fuciés mises en religion que je cogneusse, pour causes plusieurs qui a ce me mouvoyent', ed. P. Glorieux, 417; Cf. Chr. Burger, *Aedificatio, Fructus, Utilitas. Johannes Gerson als Professor der Theologie und Kanzler der Universität Paris* (Tübingen 1986), 159-164 (*Beiträge zur historischen Theologie* 70).

<sup>73</sup> Cf. D. C. Brown, *Pastor and Laity in the Theology of Jean Gerson* (Cambridge ..., 1987), 47, 74-77, 274.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. L. Pascoe, *Jean Gerson: Principles of Church Reform* (Leiden 1973), 44-48, 99-104 (*Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought* 7).

<sup>75</sup> *Dominus his opus habet*, ed. Glorieux, vol. 5, 223: 'Sic instituta videtur et gubernata fuisse sufficienter Ecclesia primitiva sub Apostolis, ac deinde per successiones varias usque ad doctores sanctos, ... quibus temporibus non erat distinctio theologorum et canonistarum'; cf. Johannes Busch, *Liber de origine devocionis moderne*, ed. K. Grube, 11: '... cum iuxta primitive ecclesie institutionem sine solempni professione vita vivant apostolica'. For the opinion of Geert Groote on the *curiositas* see: N. Staubach, 'Gerhard Zerbolt von Zutphen und die Apologie der Laienlektüre in der Devotio moderna', 253-263.

<sup>76</sup> Kraume speaks of a 'überraschende Übereinstimmung Biels mit Gersons bereits zitierten Überlegungen zum Thema der Laienhäuser', in: H. Kraume, *Die Gerson-Übersetzungen Geilers von Kaysersberg*, 52.



It contained not only the first three printed *opera omnia* of the famed chancellor's writings, but also almost all Latin Gerson-editions and no less than four copies of his *Tripartitum*.<sup>77</sup> Biel – ever true to the principle of community of property – integrated his own library with the Butzbach collection and we may therefore assume that the brethren's interest in Gerson is due to him. Biel also drew inspiration from Gerson in his reflection on the reasons for choosing the particular order of life he favoured. Thus he used Gerson's description of Jesus as Abbot in the *Tractatus*. Similarly, his assessment of the relation between copying manuscripts and other forms of labour as asceticism ('pro deuitando ocio') is derived from Gerson's *De laude scriptorium*, as is his interpretation of manuscript copying as a form of pastoral work because it amounts to preaching and not only as a source of income.<sup>78</sup> Biel's translation into *Rheinfränkisch* of the *Opus Tripartitum* is another clue that he took Gerson as an important guide during his formation in the Modern Devotion. It is significant that the first edition of this work was printed by the press of the Marienthal brethren house in 1468.<sup>79</sup> It is quite possible that Biel also prepared the translation of Gerson's tract about the ten commandments, his manuals of virtue and the *ars moriendi* during in the same orientational phase before his entry in 1469, probably just after he had completed the *Tractatus*. Biel must have regarded the translation of Gerson's works as a source of inspiration for his own new life as a follower of the Modern Devotion, and he must have considered it a good way of creating order in the lives and faith of a wider readership.

This assumption that Gerson was the most important source for Biel is nevertheless only partly true. Gerson's *Discours sur l'excellence de la virginité* and Biel's *Tractatus* were written with the same aim, addressed the same issues and were both sceptical about the religious life. But it is not likely that Biel used Gerson's *Discours* directly when he writing his own tract. He did not use the distinction between *mariage charnel* and *mariage spiritual*. Nor did he include the prayers to *Dieu, nostre Sauveur* ('Tu sces, vray Dieu...') or to the *tres digne et glorieuse mere de Jhesucrist nostre Seigneur* that are characteristic

<sup>77</sup> *ibidem.*, 51–52.

<sup>78</sup> 'Quod sane artificium quam commendabile et fructuosam sit, luculenter exsequitur venerabilis magister Iohannes Gerson.... Nos... voce tacemus, scripto praedicamus damusque operam, ut sancti libri et sacrae litterae multiplicentur et venia[n]t in usus plurimorum ex quibus verbum salutis populo deinceps possit ministrari', ed. Werbeck, 148.

<sup>79</sup> H. Kraume, *Die Gerson-Übersetzungen Geilers von Kaysersberg*, 49.



of Gerson's book. Moreover, there was no trace in Biel's *Tractatus* of the *sept enseignemens* which Gerson used to instruct women not to be proud, to say their prayers at the proper time, to eat soberly, go to confession frequently, live together in harmony, not to speak to strangers and to learn to read.<sup>80</sup> Biel and Gerson undoubtedly share several fundamental ideas. Biel has certainly followed Gerson's example as a popularising theologian and above all as a champion of the primitive Church. And like Gerson, he regarded the Modern Devotion as a good example of the realisation of these ideas. Nevertheless, the *Tractatus* betrays more of an affinity with ideas advanced by reformists than a great indebtedness to Gerson.<sup>81</sup>

## 5.2 Gerard Zerbolt's *Super modo vivendi devotorum hominum simul commorantium*

Did writers of the Modern Devotion form the greatest influence on Gabriel Biel's thought about the communal life? Zerbolt's *Super modo vivendi* provides the best clue as to Biel's debt to the Modern Devotion.<sup>82</sup> As has been seen, Biel's acquaintance with the movement's apologetic tradition influenced the development of several of his ideas. Zerbolt, Biel and the apologists shared certain notions about the legitimacy of the *medius vivendi modus* and used the same sources to defend their views.<sup>83</sup> Thus they were all agreed that community of

<sup>80</sup> *Discours sur l'excellence de la virginité*. Ed. P. Glorieux, 418, 419-420.

<sup>81</sup> Gerson's comment on the *castitas* as well, as stated in the *Dialogus apologeticus pro celibatu ecclesiasticorum*, does not resound in the *Tractatus*. Nowhere does Biel mention that chastity is the difference between animal and human and enables him to meditate. Cf. N. Grévy-Pons, *Célibat et nature. Une controverse médiévale. à propos d'un traité du début du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris 1975), 110-115 (*Centre d'histoire des sciences et des doctrines. Équipe de recherche sur l'humanisme français des XIV<sup>e</sup> et XV<sup>e</sup> siècles. Textes et études 1*).

<sup>82</sup> Cf note 24.

<sup>83</sup> To use but one example: Gerard Zerbolt, *Super modo vivendi*, ed. Hyma, 33: 'Septimo, sicut dicit Beda in quadam omelia, perfectum vite magisterium est semper ecclesie primitive actus imitari illamque edificii spiritualis normam ad finem usque servare, quam ab ipsis apostolis in fundamento fidei liquet esse propositam. Status enim ecclesie fuit status perfectissimus christianitatis, ut dicit Thomas quolibeto IV, questio XXIII. Sed in primitiva ecclesia omnia erant communia, ut patet Actuum IV, cum tamen nondum erant religiones alie quam vite Christiane. Ergo sequitur, quod sit meritum in hac parte primitivam ecclesiam imitari. Unde ad communem vitam exemplo primitive ecclesie pulchre hortatur Clemens, scribens ad Iacobum Iherosolimitanum episcopum et habetur in decreto XII, questio 1, capit. II. "Communis", inquit, "vita omnibus est necessaria, fratres, maxime hiis, qui irreprehensibiliter Deo militare cupiunt et vitam apostolorum, eorumque discipulorum imitari volunt"; Gabriel Biel, *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Werbeck, 142: 'Unde sanctus Thomas



property was a trait of the prelapsarian state of mankind and an essential aspect also of the primitive Church and of their own form of life.<sup>84</sup> They clearly concurred with one another in regard to fundamental concepts about the order of life.

A further analysis of the way in which Zerbolt and Biel treated shared sources provides a clearer picture of Biel's intentions in writing the tract. It will become evident that Biel used sources also used by the apologists of the Modern Devotion, but to achieve a different aim.

Biel and Zerbolt both quoted from the Letter of St Clement, which has since been proven false. However, Biel quoted from this source much more profusely than any of the writers of the Modern Devotion. He quoted from Psalm 132 ('Ecce quam bonum et quam iocundum habitare fratres in unum') and Acts 4: 32-35 ('...erat multitudinis eorum cor unum ut anima una...') in order to place the letter, which dealt with community of property, explicitly in the context of the unity of the community and the joys of communal life.<sup>85</sup> By contrast, Zerbolt used the letter not as a general source of inspiration but to extract from it a number of *rationes* as to why non-religious could also have communal possessions.<sup>86</sup> Biel's quotations from Seneca were

Quodlibeto quarto quaestione 23: "Status", inquit, "primitivae ecclesiae perfectissimus erat". In cuius etiam praeconium scribit venerabilis Beda: "Perfectum", inquit, "vitae magisterium est ecclesiae primitivae semper actus imitari illamque aedificii spiritualis normam ad finem usque servare, quam ab ipsis apostolis in fundamento fidei liquet esse propositam."; cf also 142-143 (Letter of Clement).

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Gabriel Biel, *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Faix, 347: 'ad modum vel formam alicuius honeste et ordinate vite dicimus nos habere vel gerere ordinem apostolorum vel discipulorum Christi vel sancte primitive matris ecclesie...'; cf. *ibidem*, 355: '[communis vita] a Christo et primitiva ecclesia iterum instituta et servata ut supra'; Gerard Zerbolt, *Super modo vivendi*, ed. Hyma, 33: 'Ergo sequitur, quod sit meritorium in hac parte primitivam ecclesiam imitari'; *ibidem* 39: 'Quomodo autem hic modus vivendi in statu gratiae sit, quodammodo a Christo innovatus, ab apostolis et eorum discipulis observatus et continuatus, superfluum est dicere'; Gabriel Biel, *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Faix, 355: 'Est [hec communis vita, pvg] enim ab initio nascentis mundi instituta'; Gerard Zerbolt, *Super modo vivendi*, ed. Hyma, 37 '...semper fuit in communi vivere, non solum a principio ecclesie, sed a principio creacionis humane [...] Hic enim modus vivendi incepit in statu innocentie in paradyso ...'. Cf also f.i.: ed. Faix 351-ed. Hyma 23; ed. Faix 367-ed. Hyma, 20.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Gabriel Biel, *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Faix, 354.

<sup>86</sup> Gerard Zerbolt, *Super modo vivendi*, ed. Hyma, 34-42: 'Hierosolymis erant quidam qui propriis renuntiaverunt cum ipsis Apostolis sed non bene servabant: & ideo Clemens Papa (...) docet, quod omnia debent esse communia. Et hoc probat sex rationibus ... Prima est, quia de uno naturali a principio (...) Secundo auctoritate Platonis ... Tertio, auctoritate Prophetarum .... Quarto, exemplo Apostolorum. Quinto, exemplo christianorum primitivae Ecclesiae ... Sexto, exemplo Ananiae et Saphirae...'



also more precise than Zerbolt's. He used the philosopher's words – famous among followers of the Modern Devotion – to substantiate the notion that communal property brought peace to a community.<sup>87</sup> Zerbolt was not interested in this argument. He was writing an apologia, while Biel's intention was to explain rather than defend the form of life he was proposing. Biel also quoted more copiously from other shared sources, such as *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* and *De vita honestate clericorum*. He was more interested than Zerbolt in the advice these works had to offer about the order of life.<sup>88</sup> We may conclude that Biel was more concerned to clarify his form of life than to defend it. Biel wanted to motivate, inspire and perhaps confront his readers with his own decision, while Zerbolt primarily wished to prove the legitimacy of his community. The difference between their respective aims is demonstrated by the way they dealt with mutual sources.

These differences also emerged in their discussion of manual labour. Both Zerbolt and Biel quoted Genesis 3: 19, 1 Thessalonians 4: 11 and 2 Thessalonians 3: 11. But while Zerbolt mentioned these passages in a list of *auctoritates* (including Ambrose, Bernard, the *sancti patres in Egipto...*), Biel argued that manual labour was instituted to avoid idleness and that the holy fathers recommended it to strengthen the autonomy of the community because it was a source of income. Moreover, he supplemented these admonitions with quotations from Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians (2 Thessalonians 3: 8 and 12: 8).<sup>89</sup> Biel therefore added other counsels to those taken from the sources shared with Zerbolt to achieve his objectives more clearly. This comparison between Zerbolt's *Super modo vivendi* and Biel's tract shows that Biel aimed to give a detailed explanation of the form of life he was proposing inspired by the example of the primitive Church. Again it is

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Gerard Zerbolt, *Super modo vivendi*, ed. Hyma, 32; '...iuxta illud Senece, "De moribus": "Quietissimam vitam homines agerent, si duo verba a natura rerum tollerentur, meum et tuum"; cf. Gabriel Biel, *De communi vita clericorum*, ed. Werbeck, 145: 'Est etiam paci et quieti vitae temporalis magis accommoda, quemadmodum supra in Glossa Dilectissimi allegatur dictum Philosophi: "Quietissimam vitam ducerent homines, si de medio sublata essent ista duo pronomina" meum "et" tuum'.

<sup>88</sup> See Gabriel Biel, *De communi vita clericorum*, ed. Werbeck, 153-154; ed. Faix, 358; 364-366.

<sup>89</sup> See Gabriel Biel, *De communi vita clericorum*, ed. Werbeck, 147; Gerard Zerbolt, *Super modo vivendi*, ed. Hyma, 98-99; cf also the constitutions of the Brotherhood in Deventer: *De labore* (in: A. Hyma, *The christian Renaissance. A history of the "Devotio Moderna"* (Hamden 1965<sup>2</sup>), 445: 'Que causa promovit beatissimum Paulum, cum scribit ad Thessalonicenses: "Nec panem gratis manducamus ab aliquo, sed in labore et fatigacione, ne quem vestrum gravaremus"'.



clear that while Zerbolt's intention was to prove legitimacy, Biel wished to inspire. And lest his essentially referential treatise might fail to do this, he quoted papal exhortations to supplement his own deficiencies.

A further example of the way Biel used sources also used by apologists of the Modern Devotion for his own ends comes in the way Zerbolt and Biel availed of the writings of Augustine. Both quoted Augustine with reverence and assent. Zerbolt quoted him 23 times and mentioned him 36 times. Biel's *Tractatus*, though only a quarter of the length of *Super modo vivendi*, quoted Augustine 17 times. The two works share just one quotation, a passage often used by writers of the Modern Devotion. It is taken from *De opere monachorum* and is in turn derived from Cicero. It argues that inner harmony is the result of an orderly daily routine.<sup>90</sup> The fact that Zerbolt and Biel share so few quotations from Augustine is due to the fact that their aims were different. Thus Zerbolt mentioned the Church father among other *auctoritates* when addressing themes not referred to at all by Biel: Christ's secret teachings, study engaged in by lay people, the advantages of community life as compared to solitude and its legitimacy even outside of the religious life. He mentioned Augustine as an *auctoritas* on seven occasions in this section among many other sources.<sup>91</sup> Biel's way of dealing with Augustine was different. Thus he hardly mentioned him as an *auctoritas*, but quoted freely from *De opere monachorum*, the *Praeceptum* and *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae*: works in which Augustine specifically addressed the issue of the order of life. While Zerbolt 'simply' used Augustine as one of many *auctoritates*, Biel's use of directives taken from *De opere monachorum* shows that he was concerned with writing a work that was both a statute and a rule of life.

In this respect, Biel derived nothing from other works of the Modern Devotion. It is true that the statutes for the Master Geert House

<sup>90</sup> Gerard Zerbolt, *Super modo vivendi*, ed. Hyma, 99: 'Unde Augustinus in libro "De opere monachorum": "Optima est", ait, "gubernacio, ut omnia suis temporibus distributa gerantur ex ordine, ne animum humanum turbulentis implicacionibus involuta perturbent". Cf also the constitutions of the Brotherhouse in Deventer, in Hyma, *The Christian Renaissance*, 441: the quote under consideration was much cited in the circle of the Devotes. Cf also L.A.M. Goossens, *De meditatie in de eerste tijd van de moderne devotie* (Haarlem-Antwerpen 1952), 180.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Gerard Zerbolt, *Super modo vivendi*, ed. Hyma, 53-56; 56-58. Zerbolt legitimizes the transcription and reading of books by lay people by using a reference to Augustine's *epistola ad Bonifacium*, *De fide et operibus* and the *Retractationes*. Books in vernacular were legitimized by referring to *De civitate Dei* and *De doctrina christiana* (ed. Hyma, 57, 78-80).



and Florens Radewijns' *Tractatulus devotus* – and consequently Zerbolt's *Super modo vivendi* – prove that manual labour was an important part of the tradition of the Modern Devotion, as it was for Augustine.<sup>92</sup> But Biel's *Tractatus* betrays no structural influence of statutes such as those of the Master Geert House in Deventer, the *Consuetudines domus nostre* (the brethren house of Zwolle) or the *Consuetudines sive statute domus fraternae Embricensis*, a house that maintained close relations with the Master Florens House in Deventer.<sup>93</sup> Who then inspired Biel in writing a Rule?

## 6. Towards the basic structure of the *Tractatus*

### 6.1 *Jordan of Quedlinburg and Augustine as sources for writers of the Modern Devotion*

Biel wrote the *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum* to revitalise the form of life of the primitive Church. This aspiration was wholly in line with the spirit of the Modern Devotion. However, in spite of this affinity with the apologias of the Modern Devotion, Biel's greatest debt was to the writings of the Order of Augustinians.

Of course Augustine also played an important role among the adherents of the Modern Devotion. Geert Grote had insisted that the brethren of the Common Life and the religious of his movement should adopt the Rule of Augustine.<sup>94</sup> Augustine's *Praeceptum* formed the

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen, *Super modo vivendi*, ed. Hyma, 99; Florens Radewijns, *Tractatulus devotus*, in: L.A.M. Goossens, *De meditatie in de eerste tijd van de moderne devotie*, 213-254, esp. 232 (quote from *De opere monachorum*: Cantica vero divina cantare eciam manibus operante facile possunt, *op. mon.* 17.20). Cf. Biel, *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Faix, 364-365. Cf. G. Epiney-Burgard, 'Saint Augustin et la "vie commune" dans la dévotion moderne', in: *Medioevo. Rivista di storia della filosofia medievale* 9(1983), 61-75, esp. 73.

<sup>93</sup> For Deventer, see: P. Verdeijen, 'La dévotion moderne: une spiritualité pour les laïques', in: *Rencontres de Colmar-Strasbourg (29 septembre au 2 octobre 1988): "La dévotion moderne dans les pays bourguignons et rhénans des origines à la fin du XVIe siècle"*. Actes publiés sous la direction de Jean-Marie Cauchies (Neuchâtel 1989), 5-8, esp. 6-7; for Zwolle see: Jacobus Traiecti alias de Voecht. *Narratio de inchoatione domus clericorum in Zwollis*, ed. M. Schoengen, 239-273; for Emmerik see: *Fontes historiam domus fratrum embricensis aperientes*, ed. W. Jappe Alberts and M. Ditsche (Groningen 1969), 81-115 (*Teksten en Documenten, uitgegeven door het instituut voor middeleeuwse geschiedenis*).

<sup>94</sup> W. Lourdaux, 'De broeders van het gemene leven', in: *Bijdragen* 33(1972), 372-416, esp. 380; id., 'Dévotion moderne et humanisme chrétien', in: *The late Middle Ages and the Dawn of Humanism outside Italy. Proceedings of the international*



basis for the 1402 *Constitutions* edited by John Vos of Heusden. Thomas a Kempis' *Sermones ad novicios* and Zerbolt's *De reformatione virium anime* described the community of property according to the ideal of the *Praeceptum*.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, the Congregation of Windesheim adopted the Rule of Augustine because it propagated the ideal of the primitive Church that community of property is necessary to enable unity of hearts and souls (cf. *Praeceptum* 1.1-2). The Rule served as an inspiration to the brethren and as a means of legitimisation for the Congregation of Windesheim.<sup>96</sup> G. Epiney-Burgard has nevertheless contended that the Congregation of Windesheim only adopted Augustine's views on communal property to a limited extent, as it placed too much emphasis on the connection between renunciation of property and renunciation of one's own will.<sup>97</sup> The *Fraterherren* of Butzbach also held Augustine in high regard. They possessed many manuscripts containing his works and the *florilegia* which they made consisted mostly of quotations from Augustine. These *florilegia* were often organised according to dogmatic themes, and must have been used as an aid for preachers.<sup>98</sup>

How did Gabriel Biel relate to the spirituality of the Modern Devotion and the Augustinian tradition respectively? Three works provide an answer: the *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, a sermon preached before a confraternity between 1461 and 1466 entitled *In commemoratione fraternitatis* and the *Collatio de vita communi*, possibly held in 1477. These writings describe communal life on the basis of community of property as a 'sanctissima vetustissimaque institutio', which had been an intrinsic aspect of the human condition

conference Louvain, May 11-13, 1970 (The Hague-Leuven 1972), 57-77, esp. 67; G. Epiney-Burgard, 'Saint Augustin', 62-63.

<sup>95</sup> G. Epiney-Burgard, 'Saint Augustin', 68.

<sup>96</sup> L. Verheijen, 'Réflexions sur les identités augustinienes 386, 397, 412, 426, "1215", in: L. Verheijen, *Nouvelle approche de la Règle de saint Augustin*. II. *Chemin vers la vie heureuse* (Louvain 1988), 74-85 (*Institut Historique Augustinien Louvain*).

<sup>97</sup> *Ibidem*, 72-74: '...La référence aux *Actes des Apôtres* (4, 32-35), aux commentaires du psaume 131 sur le partage des biens et du psaume 132 sur la vie fraternelle est constitutive des communautés dévotes, avec le lien entre l'union des âmes et des cœurs et la mise en commun des biens, la conception de la communauté comme "lieu pour Dieu". Pourtant, la Dévotion Moderne n' épuise pas la richesse de ce thème tel qu'il se développe dans la pensée augustinienne: il y manque la quête de la vérité, une dimension plus contemplative (sauf chez Grote) et surtout ce sens ecclésiale, figurée par l'unité de la communauté'.

<sup>98</sup> W. Bayerer, 'Libri Capituli Ecclesiae Sancti Marci. Zur Katalogisierung der Butzbacher Handschriften an der Universitäts-Bibliothek Giessen', in: *Wetterauer Geschichtsblätter* 24 (1975), 68.



before the Fall.<sup>99</sup> Biel blamed *avaritia humana* for the disappearance of community of property, which necessitated the creation of *ius humanum*; the *vita communis* was continued however by the philosophers, renewed by Christ and practised again in the primitive Church.<sup>100</sup>

Biel continually demonstrated that he viewed communal property as an instrument to restrain man's desire for *delicias*, *diuicias* (private property) and *honores*, which enslave the world and those who live in it.<sup>101</sup> Biel apparently derived his remedy against the interrelated maladies of world and private property from Jordan of Quedlinburg's *Liber Vitasfratrum* – a work associated with the Augustinian tradition rather than that of the Modern Devotion. Jordan was a fourteenth-century Augustinian friar and was the first to write a history of his order. He also composed more sermons than any other Augustinian in the Later Middle Ages.<sup>102</sup>

Just as many other medieval spiritual writers, Biel seems to have regarded Jordan's work as a veritable mine of ideas. G. Faix has established that Biel transcribed *capita* I–VI of the *tertia pars* of the *Liber Vitasfratrum* while in Butzbach. In a marginal comment, Biel referred to this excerpt as *Commendacio communis vite*. The index of the manuscript (now ms 675, Universitätsbibliothek Giessen) records the transcript as *Sermo recommendatorius communis vite et de diversis modis vivendi communi*.<sup>103</sup> In the context of an extensive treatise about Augustinian monasticism, Jordan devoted these chapters to the origins and development of communal life and of voluntary poverty, which he argued was intrinsic to community of property and to the original

<sup>99</sup> Th. Wetzstein, 'Jenseitsvorsorge im Spätmittelalter', 391, 393–394; Cf. for the *Collatio* see G. Faix, *Gabriel Biel und die Brüder vom Gemeinsamen Leben*, 68–71.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Jean Gerson, *Conversi estis nunc ad pastorem*. Ed. Glorieux, vol. 5, 172: 'non aliter Ecclesia primitiva legem evangelicam cum canonica conjungebat quamvis evangelica ad Deum et canonica magis ad proximum ordinaret'; Jordanus van Quedlinburg, 'Ab exordio enim rationalis creaturae de iure naturali et divino omnia fuerunt communia omnibus', in: Jordani de Saxonia, *Ordinis Eremitarum S. Augustini, Liber Vitasfratrum*. Ed. R. Arbesmann, W. Hümpfner (New York 1943), 320: 18–19 (*Cassiciacum. Studies in St. Augustine and the Augustinian Order*, 1 (*American Series*)).

<sup>101</sup> Gabriel Biel, *Collatio de vita communi*. Ed. Faix, 374: 'Evellatis carnis concupiscentias, destruat is fraudes diabolicas, disperdat is proprietates noxias, dissipet is presumptiones superbas, edificet is autem humilia, plantet is virtutum germina!'

<sup>102</sup> For Jordans biography and the historiography on Jordan see E.L. Saak, *High Way to Heaven. The Augustinian Platform Between Reform and Reformation, 1292–1524* (Leiden 2002), *passim* (*Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought* 89).

<sup>103</sup> Hs. Giessen 675, fol. 87r–96v; cf. G. Faix, *Gabriel Biel und die Brüder vom Gemeinsamen Leben*, 72, footnote 100–101.



condition of humanity. In this *status originalis rectitudinis* the *ius naturale et divinum* prevailed and there was as yet no need for the ordering of private property according to the *ius humanum* (I). In *caput* II, Jordan explained the eight *modi vivendi in communi* that arose over the centuries by tracing their origins to different ways of dealing with communal property. According to Jordan, the splitting up of ecclesiastical property into prebends (*septimus modus*) and private property of clerics (*octavus modus*) was the undoing of the ideal of the *communis possessio*. He presented Augustine as the *renovator vitae communis* in the subsequent four *capita*, because Augustine had written a Rule which, unlike other rules, derived its inspiration from the Acts of the Apostles (III, IV). Jordan argued that Augustine had done this because Acts regards the *communis possessio* as an unconditional precondition of communal life.<sup>104</sup>

Jordan's writings probably prompted Biel to turn to Augustine for inspiration when he was developing his order of life.<sup>105</sup> Faix has correctly suggested that *caput* I is similar to certain passages in the *Collatio*.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, Biel followed Jordan precisely by mentioning that Augustine wrote three versions of his Rule: The *Regula Consensoria* was a provisional compendium for lay monks in the desert, which he later ascribed to Basil; he presumed that Augustine had written the *Regula secunda* while he was a priest and the *Regula tertia* when he had been made a bishop and had the *fratres* and *canonici* in mind.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>104</sup> *Liber Vitasfratrum*, ed. R. Arbesmann, W. Hümpfner, III: 1-6; 320-340; cf. G. Faix: *Gabriel Biel und die Brüder vom Gemeinsamen Leben*, 72-79.

<sup>105</sup> G. Faix, *Gabriel Biel und die Brüder vom Gemeinsamen Leben*, 74.

<sup>106</sup> *ibidem*, 74; *Liber Vitasfratrum*, ed. R. Arbesmann, W. Hümpfner, III: 1-6; 324: 103-116: 'consequenter haec paupertas a Christi fidelibus in primitiva Ecclesia acceptata et observata... pretia ponebant ante pedes apostolorum... Et non dicatis aliquid proprium, sed sint vobis omnia communia'. Cf. Chapter III: 'Qualiter beatus Augustinus primus communionem apostolicam per regulam renovavit', and IV: 'Qualiter Regula sancti Augustini super actus apostolorum est fundata. Quia erant illis omnia communia, et distribuetur unicuique sicut cuique opus erat. Ecce quomodo fundata est haec Regula in Actibus Apostolorum'. (*Liber Vitasfratrum*, ed. R. Arbesmann, W. Hümpfner, 333-334).

<sup>107</sup> In general with the *Regula Prima* the *Regularis informatio* is meant (see note 114). Jordanus meant the *Ordo Monasterii*; with the *Regula Secunda* the *Ordo monasterii* is meant; with the *Regula Tertia* both the *Praeceptum* as the *Regula recepta* are referred to. L. Verheijen, *La règle de saint Augustin*. Paris, 1967. 2 vols. vol. 1: *La tradition manuscrite*; dl. 2: *Recherches historiques*. [diss.]. vol. 2, 7-16, esp. 14-16. Cf. *Liber vitasfratrum*, pars II, caput 14 (De regula sancti Augustini, qualiter fratribus nostri ordinis sit collata et de constitutionibus ordinis (*Liber Vitasfratrum*. Ed. R. Arbesmann, W. Hümpfner, 165-179, cf. lxxv-lxxxvi. Cf. However also G. Faix, *Die Brüder vom Gemeinsamen Leben*, 356, footnote 85.



In view of the fact that Biel transcribed some of Jordan's work, it is not impossible that he copied these sources directly from him.<sup>108</sup> The passages in which Biel described the history of communal life up to Augustine and the treatise on the Rules have the same *ductus* as Jordan's *pars* III, *caput* I, III and IV. Biel's thought about the communal life was thus informed by ideas stemming from the tradition of Augustinian hermits, and especially from the work of the Augustinian hermit Jordan of Saxony. Remarkably, while Biel was at pains to emphasise the canonical distinction between 'his' form of life and the religious state, he drew his inspiration for the organisation of life from the works of Jordan, which enjoyed great popularity during the Middle Ages. As an Augustinian hermit, Jordan was a member of one of the four mendicant orders, which were embedded in the canonical structures of the Church!

The dating of the *Tractatus* and the *Commendacio communis vite* shows that Biel must have completed the transcription of Jordan's work after he wrote his own *Tractatus*. However, it is quite possible that he had become acquainted with Jordan's writings before he started working on the *Tractatus*. Perhaps he realised in Butzbach that the passage from the *Liber Vitasfratrum* which he copied could serve as

<sup>108</sup> The relevant passages from the *glosa Nolo*, in: *Codex Iuris Canonici editio Lipsiensis .... Pars Prior Decretum Gratiani*. ed. A. Friedman (Leipzig 1879<sup>2</sup>), kol. 683; cf. G. Faix, *Die Brüder vom Gemeinsamen Leben*, 356 (footnote 87); Cf. Jordanus *Liber Vitasfratrum*. ed. R. Arbesmann, W. Hümpfner, 168: 105-111-169: 112-119: 'Propter hoc sciendum, quod, sicut notatur XII<sup>a</sup>, q. 1<sup>a</sup>, *Nolo*, Augustinus fecerat tres Constitutiones super proprietate clericorum. Prima fuit, quod clerici non possunt habere propria. Secundo, illa male servabatur; et quia plurimi erant transgressores illius, ideo revocavit eam. Tertio, de consensu clericorum suorum conformavit primam Constitutionem. De prima Constitutione sua loquitur in primo sermone De communi vita clericorum, qui incipit *Propter quod volui*, usque *Certe ego sum, qui statueram*. Et ibi loquitur de secunda Constitutione revocatorie primae, ut XII<sup>a</sup>, q. 1<sup>a</sup>, *Certe*. De tertia loquitur in secundo sermone De communi vita clericorum, qui incipit *Caritati vestrae*... Et omnes has tres complectitur Gratianus sub eodem capitulo *Nolo*...'. Biel summarizes the developments in the very same way as Jordanus: cf. Gabriel Biel, *De communi vita clericorum*, ed. Faix, 356: '...Est et per sanctum Augustinum iterum renovata et reservata, ut in eodem capitulo *Nolo* et capitulo sequenti, et in sermonibus suis de communi vita clericorum (*sermo* 355, 356, pvg) et in regula sua, (...) Et licet sanctus Augustinus istam constitutionem revocaverit adhuc vivens propterea, quia vidit multos transgressores eius et minus malum iudicaverit revocare preceptum, quam non obedientibus augere transgressionis peccatum. Postea tamen eam iterum conformavit pro clericis suis, qui secum vivebant et constitutioni huic voluntarie obediebant, nam non revocaverat eam ut malam, sed ne vergeret in maius discrimen et periculum eorum, quos contravenire videbant, ut videtur in *glosa Nolo* ut supra et eadem questio prima capitulo *Certe* etc. Fecit itaque sanctus Augustinus in ea revocatione non quidem, quod ipse voluit, sed quod eum inobedientia clericorum et contumacia facere coegit'.



an excellent continuation of his own tract. Jordan provided a Christological foundation for the community of property. He interpreted Christ's poverty as a 'paupertas perfectissima et nobilissima' (cf. *caput* I of the *Commendacio communis Vitae*). Jordan's historical treatise was also more exhaustive than Biel's in the *Tractatus*. Moreover, Jordan's contention that Augustine had rediscovered communal life was argued more persuasively. Biel traced the origins of his movement back to the spirit of Geert Grote, but then argued that Grote's life and work were important because they supported the ideal of the primitive Church, which itself came from Augustine.<sup>109</sup> Grote's significance was subordinate to that of Augustine and not vice versa. It is likely, therefore, that Biel turned to Jordan and the Augustinian tradition rather than to the Modern Devotion when he was developing his own order of life during and after his entry into a house of the brethren. Perhaps Jordan was important to Biel because he enjoyed general popularity in the Middle Ages and not because he belonged to the Order of Augustinian hermits. Nonetheless, his influence was such that Biel regarded his own *Tractatus* as connected with Jordan's *Commendacio communis vite*. This observation brings us to the last argument of this article. What was the significance of the Rule of Augustine according to Biel?

## 6.2 The canonical 'dismantling' of the Praeceptum

Biel had found confirmation in Gerson's writings that Augustine did not write his Rule exclusively for *monachos*. Both wanted to rid Augustine's *Regula* from their canonical connotations.<sup>110</sup> The fact that

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Gabriel Biel, *De communi vita clericorum*, ed. Faix, 359-360. This piece follows a treatise where Biel after diverging on versions of the Rule of Augustine (see note 106) renders the developments of the fraternities in Italy, founded on this Rule, and the developments in Modern Devotion around Grote. Of Grote it is also explicitly said that he drew his inspiration from the works by Augustine. Gabriel Biel, *De communi vita clericorum*, ed. Faix, 359: 'Cum itaque non inveniret, ubi requiesceret pes eius, excogitato consilio una cum sibi adherentibus presbiteris et clericis communem vitam instituere decrevit et, quemadmodum de sancto Augustino legitur, monasteriorum clericorum mox instituit et cepit vivere secundum regulam sub sanctis apostolis constitutam'. By tailoring this quote from Possidius, *Vita S. Augustini Episcopi*, c. 5; *Patrologia Latina* 32, kol. 37) to Grote, he identifies Grote with the church father and legitimizes the foundation of semireligious ways of living, for he ascribes the foundation of a similar way of living also to Augustine.

<sup>110</sup> Jean Gerson, *Contra conclusiones Matthei Grabow*, in: *Corpus* II, 223: 'Religio christiana non requirit ad perfectionem sui observationem tam in preceptis quam in consilijs, quod superaddatur alia religio quales dicuntur observationes institute per sanctos Basilium et Augustinum, etc. et quales Anselmus vocat religiones facticias, patet ex precedentibus'



there were different versions of the Rule convinced Biel that rules did not necessarily have to be definitive and unchangeable, but that they can be rewritten to take the possibilities and the limits of a community into account. As soon as a rule became a static entity used merely to obtain legal certainty, it became unable to avoid the pitfall of hubris. Biel believed that the religious state in the canonical sense implicitly embodied hubris because it claimed to be the sole *via perfectionis*.<sup>111</sup> Just as he had freed the concept of *ordo* of its exclusively canonical sense by quoting from *De civitate Dei*, he divested Augustine's Rule of its canonical implications, thus restoring its power as a moral guide and legitimising his own interpretation of the Rule. But what exactly did this interpretation amount to? Are his quotations from Augustine's *Praeceptum* and *De opere monachorum* in the *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum* merely ornamental, or do they truly reveal the influence of Augustine – an influence which precludes the possibility of any substantial indebtedness to the Modern Devotion? In order to discover the extent of Augustine's influence on Biel's *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum* it is necessary to examine some of the Church father's writings.

### 6.3 *The Praeceptum and De opere monachorum*

When Augustine returned from Italy in 388, where he had become acquainted with the monastic life and its rhythm of manual work, prayer and study, he established a community in his parental home in Thagaste (*Provincia Africa*). Having been elected to the priesthood in Hippo in 390, he founded a similar community there. L. Verheijen has demonstrated that Augustine completed the *Praeceptum* or Rule around 397. Verheijen has also established that the *Praeceptum* was a compendium and index to all of Augustine's works. The Rule's scope of words, thoughts and spirituality is not fully discovered until it is viewed in the context of Augustine's teaching in his other writings.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Gabriel Biel, *De communi vita clericorum*, ed. Faix, 356.

<sup>112</sup> 'Les idées n'y sont guère développées, bien au contraire, elles sont présentées de façon très concise (...) Pour les familiers de saint Augustin, la Regula a certainement été une sorte d'aide-mémoire renvoyant et faisant suite à un enseignement oral habituel', T. van Bavel, 'Parallèles, vocabulaire et citations bibliques de la "Regula sancti Augustini"', Contribution au problème de son authenticité, in: *Augustiniana* 9(1959), 12-77, quote 75; L. Verheijen, 'La Règle de saint Augustin comme prisme pour une lecture "orientée" de ses oeuvres', in: L. Verheijen, *Nouvelle approche de la Règle de saint Augustin. II. Chemin vers la vie heureuse* (Louvain 1988), 60-73



Alypius brought the *Praeceptum* back to Italy.<sup>113</sup> The history of the manuscript shows that the tradition of the *Praeceptum* was linked to that of the *Ordo Monasterii* at least from the sixth century onwards. The latter was a Rule probably compiled by Alypius and authorised by Augustine and was based on Eastern rules. The two works were frequently copied together in Gaul, Spain and Italy and were included in collections of rules to serve as source material for the writing of other rules. Copies of the *Praeceptum* without the *Ordo monasterii* have survived from the ninth century onwards. Very often the *Praeceptum* was transcribed with the first lines of the *Ordo monasterii*: 'Ante omnia, fratres carissimi...', followed by the text of the *Praeceptum*. The *Praeceptum* was disseminated very rapidly, especially in Spain and Gaul. In Spain this happened because the female version of the *Praeceptum*, the *Regularis informatio*, was always transmitted together with a female version of the *Ordo monasterii*.<sup>114</sup>

The *Praeceptum* succinctly covered all aspects of the life of the community. The initial aim of this life was the unity of hearts and souls (*Praeceptum* 1.1; Acts 2: 42-47 and 4: 32-37). This unity was itself but the prelude to the final aim of communal life: to be moved by a longing for spiritual beauty, 'giving forth the good

(Institut Historique Augustinien Louvain). Parallel textual passages which deepen the insight into certain passages of the *Praeceptum* are for example found in *De opere monachorum* (on manual work and obedience to the *prepositus*), *Epistola* 210 and 48 (on the question whether monk should accept priestly duties), *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 131, 5 (*Corpus Christianorum* 40, 1913-1914 and *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 132, 2 and 5 (*ibidem*, 1927); *sermões* 355 and 356 (*De vita et moribus clericorum suorum*) (on communal goods). Cf also: L. Verheijen, 'Réflexions sur les identités augustiniennes 386, 397, 412, 426, "1215"', in: id., *Nouvelle approche de la Règle de saint Augustin*. II, 74-84, esp. 82-83. For Augustine's opinion on the early Christians: 41-43; see also: id., 'Spiritualité et vie monastique chez Saint Augustin. L'utilisation monastique des Actes des Apôtres 4, (31) 32-35 in: id., *Nouvelle Approche de la Règle de Saint Augustin* (Bégrolles en Mauges 1980), 75-105 (*Vie monastique* 8).

<sup>113</sup> L. Verheijen, 'La Règle de saint Augustin', *L'état actuel des questions* (début 1975), in: *Augustiniana* 35(1985), 193-263.

<sup>114</sup> The four different religious rules which in later times were ascribed to Augustine are delivered to us in nine different versions: four for men and five for women. See for the history of research on the *Regula Prima* (sometime named the *Regularis informatio*), the *Regula secunda* (*Ordo monasterii*) the *Regula tertia* (either *Praeceptum* or *Regula recepta*): L. Verheijen, *La Règle de saint Augustin. II Recherches Historiques* (Paris 1967), 7-85; id., 'La Règle de saint Augustin', *L'état actuel des questions*, 193-263, completed in: id., 'La Règle de saint Augustin. Complément bibliographique', in: *Nouvelle approche de la Règle de saint Augustin. II. Chemin vers la vie heureuse* (Louvain 1988), 394-400 (*Institut Historique Augustinien Louvain*).



odour of Christ in the holiness of your lives' (*Praeceptum* 8.1).<sup>115</sup> Community members' dealings with each other were to be such as to make Christ's presence felt almost tangibly. Because perfection in communal life is related to perfection in the individual life of each member of the community, Augustine formulated seven *praecepta viuendi* that could contribute to establishing this unity. Community of property was the first condition for a unity of hearts.<sup>116</sup> Other precepts concerned communal and individual prayer, the use of the refectory, reading during meals, leaving the house, personal hygiene, the young who have yet to reach adulthood, dealings with the opposite sex, fraternal correction, service to the community such as the washing of clothes and the lending of books, the asking and giving of forgiveness and relations between the *praepositus* and the other brothers (1: 2-8; 2: 1-4; 3: 1-5; 4: 1-11; 5: 1-11; 6: 1-4; 7: 1-4).<sup>117</sup>

*Wanderprediger* of the twelfth century defended the theory that the *Ordo monasterii* betrayed the strong hand of Augustine himself, and that the *Praeceptum* was the softer version of the canons (*canonici ordinis antiqui*). As a consequence, the regular canons (*canonici ordinis novi*) who developed out of these circles took their vows on the *Ordo monasterii*.<sup>118</sup> All versions of Augustine's *Praeceptum* have deeply influenced communities, by providing them with legitimacy or inspiration or both.<sup>119</sup> It is no surprise, therefore, that

<sup>115</sup> 'Primum, propter quod in unum estis congregati, ut unanimes habitetis in domo et sit vobis anima una et cor unum in deum' (*Praeceptum*, ed. Verheijen, I, 417). English translation: Robert Russell, O.S.A. at <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/1534/ruleaug.html> [4 June 2008].

<sup>116</sup> Cf. *Praeceptum*, ed. Verheijen, I, 417-419.

<sup>117</sup> 'Donet dominus, ut obseruetis haec omnia cum dilectione, tamquam spiritualis pulchritudinis amatores et bono Christi odore de bona conuersatione flagrantēs, non sicut serui sub lege, sed sicut liberi sub gratia constituti' (*Praeceptum*, ed. Verheijen, I, 437); Cf. L. Verheijen, 'Eléments d'un commentaire de la Règle de saint Augustin. Comme des amants de la beauté spirituelle. Dans Augustin évêque', in: L. Verheijen, *Nouvelle approche de la Règle de saint Augustin*. II, 117-165, esp. 122-126, 138, 140-149.

<sup>118</sup> L. Verheijen, *La Règle de saint Augustin*. II. *Recherches Historiques* (Paris 1967), 7-85, esp. 19-20.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. B. Meijns, 'Veelheid en verscheidenheid. De kanonikale instellingen in het graafschap Vlaanderen tot circa 1155', in: *Trajecta. Tijdschrift voor de geschiedenis van het katholieke leven in de Nederlanden* 9 (2000), 233-25, esp. 233-237. See also K. Elm, 'Vita regularis sine regula. Bedeutung, Rechtsstellung und Selbstverständnis des mittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Semireligiosentums', in: Fr. Šmahel (ed), *Häresie und vorzeitige Reformation im Spätmittelalter* (Wien-München 1998), 239-273 (*Schriften des Historischen Kollegs Kolloquien* 39).



the *Praeceptum* left a profound mark on Biel's *Tractatus de comuni vita clericorum*. However, it is easier to detect direct quotations from *De opere monachorum* in the *Tractatus* because they are more numerous.

Augustine wrote *De opere monachorum* in 400 to challenge the Messalians or Euchytes. They were a group of monks who withdrew from manual work and intended to live only from the offerings of the faithful in deference to Matthew 6: 22-34, thus arousing the ire and concern of the Primate, Aurelius of Carthage (I,2; XXIII, 27-35). Augustine shared Aurelius' concerns as he felt the autonomy and credibility of all monks were at stake. He emphasised that manual work was an intrinsic part of monastic life, excepting only the sick and those engaged in preaching. He regularly quoted a verse from 2 Thessalonians 3: 10: 'quoniam si quis non vult operari, nec manducet' (II, 3 and *passim*). In the first part of *De opere monachorum*, Augustine vehemently disputed the theory that Paul only referred to only spiritual work in this passage. He presented evidence from Paul's writings and especially from his life to refute the assumption that manual work contravened the evangelical instruction to avoid worldly things and that it hindered the preaching of the gospel, which was a task given by Christ to the preachers (Prima pars, sectio prima and VIII, 9, *passim*). However, Augustine also admitted, with Paul, that it should be possible to adjust manual work to the circumstances and that charitable donations should be given to the servants of God as the Church of Jerusalem had done (XV, 16; XVI, 17, 18, 19). In the second part, he frequently used irony to stress that manual work could very easily be combined with spiritual activities and preaching in the lives of monks (XVII, 20; XVIII, 21; XXI, 25; XXII; cf. *Praeceptum* I, 5, 6).<sup>120</sup> The work of human hands was a way of earning one's livelihood, it strengthened humility and contributed to the common good (XXV, 32-33). Augustine believed that a form of life in which spiritual and manual work alternated sensitised its adherents to the essence and the activity of God: 'quia et hoc quod possumus, ejus munere possumus, et cum hinc vivimus, illo largiente vivimus, qui largitis est ut possimus' (XXXVII).

Biel must have felt attracted to the *Praeceptum* because Augustine gave his instructions about the life of the community with a view

<sup>120</sup> *De opere monachorum* is published by J. Zycha in the *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*. Wien 1877-..., vol. 41 (Wien, 1900), 529-596.



to revitalise the ideal (and, indeed, idealised) life of the first Christians of Jerusalem.<sup>121</sup> The emphasis of *De opere monachorum* lay on the insight that inner harmony could be fostered by finding a balance between physical and spiritual labour. Although Biel regarded *De opere monachorum* as an important source of practical advice for communal life, it was nevertheless the *Praeceptum* which really determined the basic structure of his *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*. Moreover, to discern this structure means to discern to ultimate aim of Biel's *Tractatus*.

#### 6.4 *The Tractatus de communi vita clericorum in the light of Augustine's Praeceptum and De opere monachorum*

Our analysis of the apologetic writings of the Modern Devotion has demonstrated that Biel's *Tractatus* was not an apologia. Biel certainly took a stand against the prevailing view that the concept of *ordo* applied exclusively to the religious state. He argued that there were many different forms of life in the Church and that the Council of Constance had approved of non-monastic communal life. However, Biel's aim in writing the *Tractatus* was to write a work similar to Jordan of Quedlinburg's *Liber Vitasfratrum*. As has been seen, Jordan interspersed instructions about the organisation of the life of the community with historical observations about the history of the Augustinian Order to which he belonged.

When we regard Biel's *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum* in the light of Augustine's *Praeceptum*, it becomes obvious that it has the same basic structure, although we do not know which version of the *Praeceptum* Biel was acquainted with. But it is clear that his primary aim was to write a rule similar to Augustine's. Like Augustine in the *Praeceptum*, Biel stressed at the beginning of the *Tractatus* that community of property was the foundation of communal life. He included the entire Letter of St. Clement in order to support this assertion. And like Augustine in the *Praeceptum*, Biel subsequently provided specific instructions about the form of life to be adopted. These instructions were derived entirely from *De opere monachorum*. The similarities indicate that Biel's aim was to write a *Regula* and not an apologia or a historical treatise. The historical and apologetic passages of the *Tractatus* are merely asides.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. T.J. van Bavel, 'Parallèles, vocabulaire et citations bibliques de la *Regula sancti Augustini*. Contribution au problème de son authenticité', in: *Augustiniana* 9(1959), 12-77: 'On sait que "De opere monachorum" renferme de nombreuses phrases dont le libellé est tout proche de celui de la Règle'; cf. L. Verheijen, *La Règle de saint Augustin*, II *Recherches historiques*, 187-193; L. Verheijen, *Nouvelle approche de la Règle de saint Augustin*. II. *Chemin vers la vie heureuse*, 178-193.



Like Augustine in the *Praeceptum*, Biel regarded the communal life of the first Christians as an orthopraxic ideal.<sup>122</sup> Unlike Augustine, however, he addressed the developments described in Acts 4: 31-35 at length at the beginning of the *Tractatus*. Augustine was content merely to remind his readers of the importance of harmony of hearts and souls in the *Praeceptum* 1.1. Biel by contrast started by discussing the communion of all the faithful: 'Multitudinis autem credencium erat cor unum et anima una'. The fact that he quoted this passage from Acts integrally is significant, because he was attempting to situate the form of life he was proposing within the context of the communion of all the faithful. Moreover, he explicitly if subtly denied that Augustine's aim of the harmony of hearts and souls was attainable for religious only.

Biel's reading and interiorisation of Augustine's *Praeceptum* must have led him to recognise the nature of his own basic intention. L. Verheijen has contended that the *Praeceptum* has a profound fundamental structure, which is obscured somewhat by the fact that it is subdivided into twelve chapters. He has argued that a division into two parts is more appropriate:

'Une repartition qui se laisse guider par le déroulement même de la pensée arrive nécessairement à une division en deux parties: a) fondement de la vie religieuse augustinienne; b) aspects de la vie quotidienne de monastère, vus à la lumière de la première partie.'<sup>123</sup>

The same structure can be discerned in the *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*. Biel also used the image of the first Christian community in Jerusalem as his theme. He repeated Augustine's argument – and at great length – that community of property is a necessary condition for unity of hearts and souls. Biel regarded community

<sup>122</sup> Gabriel Biel, *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Faix, 347: 'Et sic accipiendo et applicando istum terminum (*ordo* understood in the sense of Augustine's definition in *De Civitate Dei* 19.3: '*ordo est parium dispariumque rerum sua cuique loca tribuens dispositio*', pvg) alicuius honeste et ordinate vite dicimus nos habere vel gerere ordinem apostolorum vel discipulorum Christi vel sancte primitive matris ecclesie, de cuius ordine vel modo vivendi scribetur Actus 4<sup>o</sup>: *Multitudinis credentium erat cor unum et anima una* in Domino, *nec quisquam eorum de his, que possidebat, aliquid suum esse dicebat, sed erant illis omnia communia* (...) *vendentes afferebant precia eorum, que vendebant, et ponebant ante pedes apostolorum. Dividebatur autem singulis prout opus erat cuique*'.

<sup>123</sup> L. Verheijen, 'Théologie de la vie monastique de Saint Augustin, in: *Nouvelle Approche de la Règle de Saint Augustin*. I, 33-44, esp. 35; id., 'Spiritualité et vie monastique chez Saint Augustin. L'utilisation monastique des Actes des Apôtres 4, (31) 32-35 in: *ibidem*, 75-105.



of property as a guarantee for the preservation of peace and true freedom, which are lost through living in the world.<sup>124</sup> This negative appraisal of the world explains why Biel was more forthright than Augustine in recommending the *possessio communis*: 'Qui non renuntiaverit omnibus quae possidet, non potest meus esse discipulus'.<sup>125</sup> He mentioned Ananias as a warning. Both Augustine and Biel however believed that it was a condition for as well as a result of the virtue of *caritas* to be able to give up the desire for private possessions and live in community of property.<sup>126</sup>

Like Augustine in the *Praeceptum*, Biel provided instructions for the communal life on the basis of community of property in the second part of the *Tractatus*. In this part of the tract, he followed the *Leitmotiv* formulated by Augustine in *De opere monachorum* that everything must be organised according to a fixed time, so that everything will take place without confusion and nothing will disturb the human mind.<sup>127</sup>

Biel argued on the basis of quotations from *De opere monachorum* that a balanced life depended on a balanced daily rhythm. Just as Augustine had done, he mentioned Paul as a witness to this truth.<sup>128</sup> Biel's discussion of manual work, obedience, clothing and chastity was consistently based on passages from *De opere monachorum*.

Biel devised a schedule of time and activities in which inner balance was facilitated by alternating manual work and prayer. Again like Augustine in the *Praeceptum* and *De opere monachorum*, he described manual labour and thinking as complementary activities.

<sup>124</sup> Gabriel Biel, *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Faix, 358, 'Docet etiam experientia quotidiana, quod multo quietius vivitur et expeditius servitur Deo a pluribus in unum habitantibus, si eis per unum dispensatorem de rebus necessariis providetur... Facit ad hoc Augustini regula (cf. *Praeceptum*, 1.3. and 5, pvg) ...'.

<sup>125</sup> Gabriel Biel, *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Werbeck, 143 (Luc. 14: 33).

<sup>126</sup> *Praeceptum*, ed. Verheijen, II, 429-430: 153-156: 'Ita sane, ut nullus sibi aliquid operetur, sed omnia opera uestra in commune fiant (...) Caritas enim, de qua scriptum est quod "non quaerat quae sua sunt", sic intellegitur, quia communia propriis, non propria communibus anteponit'.

<sup>127</sup> Gabriel Biel, *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Werbeck, 149: 'Commendat hoc Augustinus in memorato libro De opere monachorum ita dicens: Ista "optima gubernatio est, ut omnia suis temporibus distributa gerantur ex ordine, ne animum humanum turbulentis implicationibus involuta perturbent'.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Gabriel Biel, *De communi vita clericorum*, ed. Faix, 364: 'Testem, inquit (=Augustinus, pvg), invoco Deum super animam meam, et quantum attinet ad meum commodum, multo mallet per singulos dies certis horis, quantum in bene moderatis monasteriis constitutum est, aliquid manibus operari et ceteras horas habere ad legendum et orandum, dum et aliquid de divinis litteris agendum liberas, quam tumultuosas perplexitates causarum alienarum pati de negociis secularibus' etc.' (= *De opere monachorum*, 29.37).



Like Augustine, he emphasised that contemplation and prayer could occur during manual work or during the activity of writing.<sup>129</sup> Biel allowed Augustine to speak for himself on this issue. No less than six per cent of the *Tractatus* was taken up by a passage from *De opere monachorum*, in which Augustine recommended the *contemplatio in actione* as a real possibility:

‘Cantica vero divina cantare, etiam manibus operantes facile possunt, et ipsum laborem tamquam divino celeumate consolari. An ignoramus, omnes opifices in quibus vanitatibus et plerumque etiam turpitudinibus theatricarum fabularum donent corda et linguas suas, cum manus ab opere non recedant? Quid ergo impedit servum Dei manibus operantem in lege Domini meditari (Ps 1, 2), et psallere nomini Domini Altissimi (Ps 12, 6).<sup>130</sup>

At the end of *De opere monachorum* and the *Praeceptum*, Augustine wrote that there is a connection between the way the life of the community is ordered and man’s openness to the grace of God. Especially in the *Praeceptum*, he presented community life as an excellent way of becoming attuned to the person of Christ. The *Tractatus* omitted this Christological dimension of freedom. Biel ‘merely’ stated that he believed human freedom would emerge when people refrained from taking vows, and he followed Augustine in arguing that community of property and a harmonious daily rhythm also gave rise to freedom.

This short description of the similarities between Augustine’s *Praeceptum* and *De opere monachorum* on the one hand and Biel’s *Tractatus* on the other suggests that Biel greatly respected Augustine’s orthopraxic writings. He must have held *De opere monachorum* close at hand when he was working on his own tract. It is also remarkable that the structure of the *Tractatus* clearly reflects the bipartite structure which L. Verheijen has observed in the *Praeceptum*. The historical and apologetic passages are anchored in this

<sup>129</sup> Gabriel Biel, *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Faix, 365: ‘...Quid ergo impedit servum Dei manibus operantem in lege Dei meditari die ac nocte ....?’ (= *De opere monachorum* 17.20). That Biel was influenced by Augustine and not by the literature of the Modern Devotion as far as work is concerned is also seen in the comparison with a similar passage in the work of Florens Radewijns’ *Tractatulus devotus*, in: L.A.M. Goossens, *De meditatie in de eerste tijd van de moderne devotie*, 213-254: ‘Nec etiam labor manuum impedit sanctas meditationes, ymmo ad eas habendas multum iuvat...’. Where Florens paraphrases the core, Biel is quoting literally.

<sup>130</sup> *De opere monachorum*, ed. J. Zycha, 17. 20; cf. G. Biel, *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Faix, 356.



structure which was derived from Augustine's Rule. This structure served as Biel's model. In view of the dating of the tract and the fact that the *Tractatus* cannot be classified as an apologia, it is a mistake to regard the historical and apologetic passages of the *Tractatus* as its core.

## 7. Epilogue. Gabriel Biel: *Alter Augustinus*?

Contemporaries referred to Gabriel Biel as the last of the Scholastics and his systematic commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard, which he wrote while professor of the *via moderna* at the recently founded university of Tübingen, greatly influenced Luther and Melancthon. The Fathers of the Council of Trent also referred to his theological writings.<sup>131</sup> Biel himself wrote that, as a Scholastic theologian, he regarded Ockham as his model.<sup>132</sup>

It is more difficult to discern who was Biel's model as an adherent of the Modern Devotion, or, more appropriately, as a priest seeking a Christian form of life for himself and for others. D. Metz has assumed correctly that Biel 'durch die spirituelle Kraft der Devotio Moderna alte Strukturen (...) mit einem neuen Geist erfüllt und die bisher eher neben der Kirche laufenden Bewegung als Instrument für die Kirchenreform entdeckt'.<sup>133</sup> However, this conclusion also lacks a certain depth.

Oberman has observed that 'Die Charakteristika dieser Bewegung [the Modern Devotion] verschieben sich nach Zeit und Ort und sind somit nicht leicht in einem "Programm" zu fassen'.<sup>134</sup> Biel certainly contributed to this diversity with his *Tractatus*. The form of life which he presented to the brethren in Southern Germany in his *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum* differed significantly from that defended by the brethren of the Common Life in the Northern

<sup>131</sup> Especially the *Sacri canonis Missae expositio resolutissima literalis et mystica* and his *Collectorium sive epitome in magistri sententiarum libros IV* were quoted.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. W. Bayerer, *Gabrielis Biel Gratiarum Actio*, 33; W. Werbeck, 'Gabriel Biel als spätmittelalterlicher Theologe', in: U. Köpf, S. Lorenz (ed.), *Gabriel Biel und die Brüder vom gemeinsamen Leben. Beiträge aus Anlaß des 500. Todestages des Tübinger Theologen* (Stuttgart 1998), 25-34, esp. 26-27 (*Contubernium. Tübinger Beiträge zur Universitäts- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 47).

<sup>133</sup> Cf. D. Metz, *Gabriel Biel und die Mystik* (Stuttgart 2001), 63 (*Contubernium. Tübinger Beiträge zur Universitäts- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 55).

<sup>134</sup> H.A. Oberman, *Werden und Wertung der Reformation. Vom Wegestreit zum Glaubenskampf*, 57.



Netherlands, or from that attempted by Peter of Dieburg in Northern Germany. In canonical terms, Biel advocated the status of 'canons of the Common Life'. His form of life was based on the *Regula S. Augustini*.

Our analysis of the *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum* has revealed to what extent Biel was influenced by the Rule of St. Augustine. Scholars have traditionally regarded the tract as important material evidence that Biel was a follower of the Modern Devotion. It is certainly true that Biel found much that was interesting, enthusing and motivating in the history of the Modern Devotion. But the spirituality of the Modern Devotion was not the primary source of his thinking about communal life, which was his main concern when writing the *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*. His inspiration for it came mostly from Augustinian writings and from Augustine's orthopraxic works. Biel's *ordo vitae* is 'Augustinian' rather than inspired by the life and work of Geert Grote.

Dating and structure of the tract suggest that it *cannot* be classified as an apologia for the way of life practiced by the Modern Devotion. Biel was at a time of personal decision when he wrote the *Tractatus* and the brethren houses of Marienthal and Butzbach had little to fear from ecclesiastical or secular authorities. The dating therefore suggests that Biel intended to make a proposal to his future brethren about an order of life. If the brethren decided to adopt the rule embodied in the *Tractatus*, they would be making a choice for him, and he would decide to join them.

Both the dating of the *Tractatus* and Biel's development reveal a remarkable parallel with the life of Augustine. The form of life which Biel advocated by way of preparation for his entry in Butzbach bears many similarities to that pursued by Augustine and his community in Thagaste. The Thagaste community was not a monastic foundation in the strict sense of the word. 'Seine mit ihm dort versammelten Freunde legten keine Gelübde ab, stets in der Klostersgemeinschaft zu verweilen, noch gelobten sie ihm Gehorsam. Auch handelte es sich dort immer noch um einen ausgewählten Freundeskreis, der durch ein gewisses Bildungsniveau gekennzeichnet war.'<sup>135</sup> Biel may well have been acquainted with the nature of the community in Thagaste and this is likely to have

<sup>135</sup> I. Hadot, 'Amicitia', in: C. Mayer (ed.), *Augustinuslexikon*. Basel, 1986-..... vol. 1, 287-293, esp. 291; cf. I. Crusius, 'Gabriel Biel und die oberdeutschen Stifte der devotio moderna', on the institutionalised friendships in Butzbach.



led him to a closer study of works such as the *Praeceptum* and *De opere monachorum*. Biel also stated explicitly that Augustine did not write his rule for monks but for clerics.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, he included a discussion of these early developments in North Africa in the *Tractatus*.<sup>137</sup>

In any event, when considering the different layers of the *Tractatus*, it is evident that as a future *Fraterherr*, Biel drew inspiration from the spiritual writings of Geert Grote and of younger authors from the Modern Devotion. However, he appears to have studied these sources almost cursorily, even perfunctorily, compared to the writings from the Augustinian tradition. Clearly, Biel regarded the Modern Devotion as a credible reform movement. He described the beginning of the Modern Devotion as an example and showed how it was rooted in the history of the Church. Some of the accusations countenanced by adherents of the Modern Devotion in their struggle for survival are addressed in Biel's *Tractatus*. Compared to Augustine's *Praeceptum*, however, the apologias of the Modern Devotion served merely as a collection of quotations. Biel made much use of it to prove that the semi-religious state was a legitimate form of life in the Church. The Modern Devotion was also useful for him because it enabled him to use the canonical state as a 'cover' for his own proposal. But these ideas from the apologetic literature of the Modern Devotion only served the purpose of supporting the legal and technical part of the *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*. They remained at the surface level of the text and did not form the essence of the tract.

Biel adopted arguments for the legitimacy of his form of life from the apologetic literature of the Modern Devotion, but he derived his inspiration from the Augustinian tradition. This is evident in the way he dealt with Jordan of Quedlinburg's *Liber Vitasfratrum*. In the historical part of his tract, Biel imitated Jordan's practice of combining reflections on the history of the order with observations on the way the evangelical counsels had influenced the daily rhythm in Augustinian communities and their way of dealing with authority. The fact that Biel copied a part of the *Vitasfratrum* is another indication of his interest in Jordan. In his search for a suitable order of life, Biel primarily consulted works dealing with the charism of communal life from the Augustinian tradition.

<sup>136</sup> *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Werbeck, 144: 'Est [vita communis, pvg] et per sanctum Augustinum iterum renovate et reservata ut in eodem capitulo Nolo et capitulo sequenti, et in sermonibus suis de communi vita clericorum et in regula sua, quam praesumitur adversus clericos scripsisse et non ad monachos, licet postea a multis religiosis assumpta sit'.

<sup>137</sup> *Tractatus de communi vita clericorum*, ed. Werbeck, 144.



The basic structure of the *Tractatus* suggests that Biel intended to write a Rule that was 'Augustinian', and not a work inspired by the Modern Devotion or an apologia. In view of this basic structure, it is clear that Biel wanted to write a Rule for himself and his future brethren. Its structure is essentially derived from that of Augustine's *Praeceptum*. After explaining the initial aim of the order of life and of the community (unity of hearts and souls) and discussing at length an indispensable condition for achieving it (community of property), Biel gave instructions on how to order the day and shape mutual relations. L. Verheijen has established that the same structure can be observed in the *Praeceptum*. Moreover, Biel derived many of these instructions directly from Augustine's *De opere monachorum*.

Several scholars have argued that Biel interpreted quotations from Augustine in a sense contrary to their actual meaning in his academic work. In his spiritual writings, however, Biel appears to have understood the Church father very well indeed.<sup>138</sup> Augustine's influence on Biel was immense, not only in this instance, but also in others. His exegesis of the Our Father in the *Canonis Missae expositio* is another case in point.<sup>139</sup>

We may conclude that Gabriel Biel had recourse to the history of the Modern Devotion to enthuse his readership and to establish a connection with a reform movement. He made use of the apologetic tradition of the Modern Devotion to legitimise his own proposed form of life. But while the Modern Devotion legitimised and enthused, Augustine and his order inspired. Biel's debt to Augustine and to the Augustinian heritage much exceeds his debt to the literature of the Modern Devotion. He integrated the wisdom of the Modern Devotion into the wisdom of Augustine, but it was the latter which essentially determined the shape of his own thoughts.

It would be an exaggeration to say that Biel intended to become an *alter Augustinus* for his brethren. He turned to Augustine to be inspired by the forms of spiritual life that existed in the first centuries of Christianity. Biel's interest in the first Christians stemmed from his conviction that the structures of the primitive Church were as yet

<sup>138</sup> M. Schulze, 'Marsilius von Inghen und die vorreformatorische Theologie: Augustinrezeption, Willensfreiheit und Gnadenlehre', in: M.J.F.M. Hoenen, P.J.J.M. Bakker (ed.), *Philosophie und Theologie des ausgehenden Mittelalters. Marsilius von Inghen und das Denken seiner Zeit* (Leiden-Boston-Köln 2000), 67-87.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. P. van Geest, 'Aquinas or Augustine? On the sources of Gabriel Biels *Canonis Missae Expositio*', in: *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum/Journal of Ancient Christianity* 11(2007), 73-95.



unsullied by a clerical or canonical character. According to Biel, Augustine had been the creator *par excellence* of these structures.

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