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CHAPTER

13 Pelagius and Pelagians

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Abstract

The Pelagian controversy is generally considered to have been the first western theological controversy. The debate between Pelagius and his followers on the one hand, and Augustine, Jerome, Paulus Orosius, and the bishops of Rome on the other, deeply influenced theological developments in the West. Due to intense research over the last 50 years or so, it has become clear that Pelagianism as a well-organized movement never existed. Pelagianism as a consistent doctrine is a construction of its opponents, and Pelagius himself probably did not always recognize his own views in this construction. Such a construction does not do justice to the theological pluralism that existed at the beginning of the fifth century. However, the way in which Julian of Aeclanum criticized Augustine made clear that the Augustinian positions had some problems with the creation of the soul, the human nature of Christ, and baptism because of original sin.

Keywords: [western theological controversy](#), [Pelagian controversy](#), [Pelagianism](#), [theological pluralism](#), [Augustine](#), [Julian of Aeclanum](#)

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13.1 Introduction

THE Pelagian controversy is generally considered to have been the first *western* theological controversy. The debate between Pelagius and his followers, on the one hand, and Augustine, Jerome, Paulus Orosius, and the bishops of Rome (Innocent I, Boniface I, Celestine I, Sixtus I, Leo the Great), on the other hand, deeply influenced theological developments in the West. One may think here of Gottschalck of Orbais, Luther, Calvin, and Jansenius, who clearly took Augustine's side in the dispute about the relation between creation and salvation, nature and grace, freedom and grace, Adam versus Christ, predestination, etc. At the same time, one should remember that several of these authors, who, to a certain degree, wanted to be faithful to Augustine, were condemned by the Roman Catholic Church. Furthermore, they became the cause and object of many disputes in the Protestant communities. It should also be remembered that, from the beginning, not all of Augustine's positions in the controversy were accepted and received by tradition. To give one example, the Council of Orange (529) clearly did not follow Augustine's predestinarian ideas.

p. 259 With regard to the presentation of Pelagius and Pelagians as heretics, systematic theologians especially often took Augustine's presentation of these people for granted. In his extensive writings against the Pelagians, the *doctor gratiae* presented his opponents as enemies of grace (Bonner 1993). Excellent polemicist that he was, Augustine often offered the positions of his opponents in a concise and pointed summary (Wermelinger 1975). In line with Augustine, systematic theologians transformed Pelagianism into a coherent system (for a good survey, see Garcia-Sanchez 1978). The main features of such generalizing presentation were praise of human persons and their capacity to do what they were expected to do by God; praise of the potentialities of the free will; exclusion of a prevenient grace; reduction of grace to an external help, whereby the Law and the example of Christ were offered to human beings, who were completely free to accept or reject this help. Pelagians were accused of denying the doctrine of original sin and its consequences for human nature. At best, Pelagians were described as 'humanists', at worse, as naturalists (for a survey, see Lamberigts 2002).

Recent historical studies not only offer a good survey of the developments in the research on Pelagius and Pelagianism (Garcia-Sanchez 1978; Nuvolone-Solignac 1986; Wermelinger 1989; Bonner 1996b), but also contribute to an outspoken (Greshake 1972) or a more prudent rehabilitation of at least Pelagius himself (Wermelinger 1975; Lamberigts 2000). In any case, it has become clear that a doctrine of original sin, as held by Augustine and his African colleagues, was not present in the teachings of their predecessors, either in the West or in the East.

Although the Pelagian controversy took place mainly in the West, one should also pay attention to the fact that Pelagians had many contacts with the East. Pelagius, Caelestius, and Julian stayed for a longer or a shorter while in the East. Pelagian circles showed much interest in the work of Chrysostom. Some have linked the Pelagian *exemplum* idea to the Greek concept of *paideia* (Greshake 1972). With regard to the work of the Greek fathers, one might also think of Annianus of Celada (Nuvolone 1986; Pietri and Pietri 1999). Annianus, together with Pelagius, had to defend himself at the Synod of Diospolis (415). He criticized Jerome for his attack on Pelagius (Lamberigts 2002). He extensively translated work of Chrysostom in order to refute the 'Manichaeans' (Musurillo 1970; Skalitzy 1971). His translation of the sermons of Chrysostom on the Gospel of Matthew was dedicated to Bishop Orontius (Primmer 1972), one of the bishops who was eventually sent into exile by Zosimus. He is considered to be the translator of another collection of texts of Chrysostom (Pietri and Pietri 1999). His translation of the sermon of Chrysostom, *Ad neophytos* (Bouhot 1971), served Julian in his controversy with Augustine. In order to refute the allegedly Manichaean ideas in Augustine's writings, Julian made use of a translation of a work of Serapion of Thmuis against the Manichaeans (Cipriani 1987). Augustine received the acts of the Synod of Diospolis from Cyril of Alexandria (Augustine, *Ep.* 4*).

In the context of relations between East and West, one must mention the intriguing Rufinus the Syrian. During the lawsuit at Carthage against Caelestius (411), Caelestius mentioned this Rufinus as being opposed to the idea

of original sin (cf. Augustine, *Pecc. or.* 2. 3), a position which is indeed present in Rufinus's *Libellus fidei* and known to Augustine (cf. *Pecc. mer.* 1. 23). As a result of much scholarly discussion, specialists seemed to agree that this Rufinus could be identified with the monk who lived with Jerome in Bethlehem and came to Rome about 399 (de Veer 1975). Recently, however, it was suggested that one might identify this Rufinus with Rufinus of Aquileia (Dunphy 2000). In any case, it is clear that a satisfying identification of this Rufinus would be of great help with regard to the non-eastern roots of the beginning of Pelagianism.

13.2 The 'Corpus Pelagianum': A Problem

Due to many discoveries, the body of 'Pelagian' writings very much increased over the last 100 years or so, mainly due to the discovery of Pelagius's commentary on the letters of Paul, the attribution of several commentaries to Julian of Aeclanum, and the discovery of the Corpus Caspari (Caspari 1890). The Corpus Caspari consisted of the following treatises: *Epistula honorificentiae tuae*, *Epistula humanae referent litterae* (also known as *Epistula ad adolescentem*), *Epistula de possibilitate non peccandi* (also known as *Epistula qualiter*), *Epistula sancti Sixti episcopi et martyris de divitiis*, *Epistula sancti Sixti episcopi et martyris de malis doctoribus et operibus fidei et de iudicio futuro*, and *Epistula sancti Sixti episcopi et martyris de castitate*.

It is rather difficult to find helpful criteria to define what belongs to Pelagian literature and what does not. As long as scholars disagree about the extent of the corpus of treatises written by Pelagius himself, it will remain difficult to do justice to Pelagius and the ideas he might have held. In an article published in 1934, G. de Plinval attributed about thirty-four 'Pelagian' writings (books, letters, smaller treatises) to Pelagius himself. As a result, Pelagius suddenly could be considered as one of the most fruitful writers of the fifth century. However, de Plinval's attributions, mostly based on vocabulary and stylistic arguments, were soon criticized by J. Kirmer (1938), J. Morris (1965), and especially R. F. Evans (1968b). According to Evans, only the following works could be safely attributed to Pelagius: his commentary on the letters of Paul, *Ad Demetriadem*, *De virginitate*, *De lege divina*, *De vita christiana*, and *Ad Celantiam*. Evans came to this conclusion on the basis of similarity in themes and the use of the same biblical quotations (Evans 1968a). It should be emphasized that both the commentary and the letters did not really concern the key issues in the Pelagian debate. Indeed, of works which were at stake during the controversy, *De natura* (Löhr 1999), *Pro libero arbitrio*, and, to a lesser degree, *De trinitate*, only fragments have been preserved, mostly thanks to Augustine, who quoted from these works in order to refute Pelagius. It goes without saying that often the critical reader misses the context within which such fragments can be found.

Moreover, Wermelinger (1989) suggested that Evans might have attributed too many letters to Pelagius. Especially the attribution of *Ad Celantiam*, *De divina lege*, and *Ad Claudiam* to Pelagius was difficult to accept. Wermelinger's main argument was that Pelagius explicitly denied the authorship of some of these works, and that one has to accept that he thus lied. Further, Wermelinger hesitated about the possibility of proving authorship on the basis of philological and literary-critical arguments alone. Finally, he suggested that the content of these three letters could hardly be qualified as the doctrine of Pelagius. Other scholars, however, have continued to maintain Pelagius's authorship of these three letters (Rees 1988: 133–4; Duval 2003; Hunter 2007).

The attribution of the remaining treatises of the Caspari Corpus to a specific author or authors is still a matter of debate, and it is impossible to give an exhaustive survey of all the positions taken in this regard. We limit ourselves to the essential. Evans (1968a) suggested that the author of this corpus might be a Sicilian Breton, but without success (Nuvolone 1986). The prudent attribution of the works *De divitiis*, *De malis doctoribus*, and *De castitate* to Sixtus, the later bishop of Rome (Nuvolone 1986; Wermelinger 1989) was, with regard to *De divitiis*, rejected by Kessler (1999). Nuvolone and Wermelinger had suggested this attribution on the basis of the manuscript tradition and on the fact that Sixtus was described by Augustine as a patron of Pelagius (*Ep.* 191. 1).

Kessler rejected this attribution, however, and suggested that *De divitiis* was written by a spiritual author who did not belong to a Pelagian milieu. In line with Kessler, I would suggest that one should not immediately relate all kinds of ascetical ideals and societal critiques with Pelagius and Pelagianism. I am well aware of the fact that many authors, in line with Augustine, considered the promotion of such ideals as an expression of self-confidence and as a clear proof that these people exaggerated human nature's capacities. At the same time, one cannot deny that ascetical lifestyles were developing everywhere, and that the number of ascetic communities was growing; in other words, asceticism was in the air. The writings of the Caspari Corpus also promote virginity and celibacy in widowhood, and clearly prefer virginity over marriage. They highly appreciate willingness to sell everything to give it to the poor. The writings aim at a morally perfect life. They promote the reading of the Bible and Christian literature, and invite the reader to imitate Christ by searching for eternal values instead of riches, honour, and secular roles. The treatises give evidence of a strong belief in God's goodness, human beings' responsibilities, etc. Qualifying these treatises as Pelagian (with its 'heretical' connotation) seems to be an exaggeration. In that case, much ascetic literature, written before and after the Pelagian controversy, has to be labelled as 'Pelagian heresy'. Jerome, certainly not a Pelagian, is a good example of a promoter of ascetic life in Rome. In passing, it should be mentioned that there is still a broad range of treatises, dealing with ascetic ideals, that, for better or worse, were described as Pelagian; but, again, promoting ascetic ideals does not necessarily mean that one is a Pelagian (in this regard, Nuvolone 1986, s.v. 'Fastidius', gives a very convincing example).

Further, it would be unwise to qualify Pelagius's or Pelagians' works as heretical because they were written by them. The following example can probably clarify this. The authorship of Pelagius's *Epistula ad Demetriadem* was, for centuries, attributed to Jerome or to Augustine because of its highly ascetic content. Once it became clear that this letter was written by Pelagius, it suddenly received epithets such as 'un-evangelical' and 'non-Pauline' (de Plinval 1943; Valero 1980), a somewhat surprising change of perspective if one takes into account that Pelagius paid much attention to Paul's letters (Souter 1926; see now also Frede 1973–4; de Bruyn 1993; Tauer 1994). Frede's studies made clear that many of the 'Pelagian' ideas in the commentary were later additions, not Pelagius's own opinion (also Wermelinger 1989), and that Pelagius's approach to Paul was in line with what was at the time the custom in the Latin world (Tauer 1994). Indeed, in his commentary Pelagius was influenced by a Latin, mostly North African, anti-Jewish and anti-pagan tradition (de Bruyn 1993, Tauer 1994). He was also influenced by commentaries of predecessors such as Lactantius, Hilary, Ambrose, Jerome, to mention a few (Tauer 1994). At least in his commentary, Pelagius showed a great familiarity with scripture, and the often-heard critique that he was deeply influenced by Stoic philosophy has, in recent times, clearly been nuanced (cf. Tauer 1994).

In passing, it must be said that already in 1516 the humanist Erasmus considered Jerome to be the author of Pelagius's commentary on Paul (PL 33. 646–909). It remains surprising that simply because the letter to Demetrias—through the ages a real success—could be attributed to Pelagius, scholars changed their qualification of the work and that it became subject to critique.

While the debate on Pelagius's authorship continues, there is, at least in the twentieth century, common agreement about the attribution of a series of exegetical commentaries to Julian of Aeclanum. Because history attributed these commentaries to other, more 'orthodox' authors, they were preserved, again a proof that orthodoxy or heterodoxy often depend upon what we know about the author. In any case, Julian was recognized as the author of the *Tractatus prophetarum Osee, Iohel et Amos*, the *Expositio libri Job*, and the translator of Theodore of Mopsuestia's commentary on the Psalms (at least for Ps 1–16) (CCSL 88–88A). The authorship with regard to the summary of the rest (the so-called *Epitomē*) is more problematic (De Coninck and D'Hont 1977).

Less consensus is found with regard to the *Libellus fidei*. Bouwman (1957) attributed this work to Julian, and Cipriani (2004) thinks such attribution is probable. Julian's authorship is denied by Bruckner (1897), Nuvolone (1986), and Lössl (2001a). For a hesitant option, see Lamberigts (2002). While pros and cons regarding

Pelagius's authorship have been well examined, one still awaits an extensive philological, literary, and theological study of the relationship between Julian's *œuvre* and the *Libellus*, which is often assigned to a northern Italian milieu. If this opinion is correct, it would be proof that the opposition to the African perspectives was much greater than most of the surveys on the controversy suggest.

13.3 Pelagius

13.3.1 A Short Biography

Pelagius was born in Brittany (Augustine, *Ep.* 186. 1), a fact which has led some Anglo-Saxon authors to conclude that Pelagianism might have British roots (Myres 1960; Morris 1965), although such a position is rather questionable (Liebeschuetz 1963, 1967). Pelagius went to Rome, where he received a classical education, as is evident in his commentary on the letters of Paul (Tauer 1994), and where from 380 to 410 he gained fame as a Christian ascetic and teacher, as had been the case with Jerome (Brown 1972). He was highly respected in Roman aristocratic milieux (Brown 1967, 1972). In a period when many embraced Christianity for opportunistic reasons but did not take into account the demands of this religion, Pelagius reacted against these nominal Christians and promoted a genuine Christian ascetical way of life. Because of such a plea for a true Christian life, Pelagius has often been presented as a moral theologian, promoting a church of perfect people. Such an evaluation, however, does not do justice to him and is still deeply influenced by the positions of Pelagius's opponents at the time of the controversy (Bonner 1966; Wermelinger 1989).

Pelagius really wanted to be a (critical) theologian and an exegete. Already at an early stage, he criticized theological ideas of Augustine—he probably read work of Augustine in the library of Paulinus of Nola (Brown 1972)—about the dominance of grace over free will (Augustine, *Persev.* 20. 53) and in about 405/6 wrote a treatise on nature (Duval 1990). Before 410 he also wrote his commentary on the letters of Paul. After the invasion of the Goths in 410, Pelagius, together with Caelestius, left Italy and went to North Africa, where he arrived in Hippo and stayed for a short period in Carthage. During this stay in Carthage he twice met Augustine, to whom he had sent a letter of courtesy (den Boeft 1987; Duval 1999). Soon he left Africa and went to the East, where he lived in Palestine under the protection of Bishop John of Jerusalem and ran into trouble with Jerome (Evans 1964; 1968a, b). He remained a respected person: together with Innocent, Augustine, and Jerome, he was invited to write a treatise for Demetrias, daughter of Juliana Anicia and granddaughter of Proba, members of the aristocratic family of the Anicii. In 415 he was accused of heresy by the bishops Heros and Lazarus, both exiled in Gaul. The main inspirer of the accusations was Jerome (Nuvolone 1986). During meetings held in Jerusalem and Diospolis, Pelagius was acquitted by oriental bishops, proof that there did not yet exist a kind of universal 'orthodoxy' on the questions of Adam's fall, original sin, free will, and grace. Augustine's accusation that this acquittal was the result of dishonesty and lies remains a matter of scholarly discussion (Evans 1964; Wermelinger 1989).

The acquittal caused much unrest in Africa, where Augustine wrote a series of works directed against the 'heresy'. The Africans condemned 'Pelagian's' ideas at synods in Carthage and Milevis (416)—it is still unclear whether what was condemned was in fact held by Pelagius—and alarmed the bishop of Rome (Innocent I) and the emperor Honorius at Ravenna. Innocent deprived Pelagius and Caelestius of ecclesial communion, but gave them the possibility to appeal and to justify their positions. Both did so. Their appeals arrived in Rome after Innocent's death. Innocent's successor, Zosimus, first regarded Pelagius and Caelestius as orthodox. Both had shown their willingness to obey the Church by going in person to Rome (Caelestius) or by sending a letter and a *Libellus fidei* (Pelagius). It was on the basis of their oral and written testimony that Zosimus first set them free (Lamberigts 1992). However, under pressure from Africa and the court in Ravenna—Pelagius and Caelestius were both condemned at the Synod of Carthage, 1 May 418, and by a prescript of Honorius, 30 April 418—Zosimus finally condemned Pelagius and his allies with a letter, *Epistula tractoria*, in the summer of 418 (Lamberigts

1992). It remains a mystery why this letter, which was sent to bishops all over the empire, has been preserved only in fragments (Wermelinger 1979). What is preserved makes clear that one cannot qualify this letter as being 'clearly Augustinian' (Floëri 1955). Pelagius had to leave Palestine and probably took refuge in Egypt, where he died at an unknown date. Like Caelestius, Julian, and others, he was condemned at Ephesus in 431.

13.3.2 Pelagius's Basic Intuitions

Because it is hard to determine exactly what can be considered Pelagius's own writings, I will present Pelagius's basic ideas on the basis of the works which are undoubtedly considered to be his own writings. Certitude and unanimity exist only with respect to the commentary on Paul, the letter to Demetrias, the *Libellus fidei*, and a number of fragments, including *De natura* and *Pro libero arbitrio* (Evans 1968a, b; Wermelinger 1975, 1979, 1989; Kessler 1999).

p. 265 Pelagius really wanted to be a man of the Church, an orthodox writer. In his writings he distanced himself explicitly from the heterodox movements of his time, including Arianism, Manichaeism, and the positions adopted by Jovinian (Bohlin 1957; Bonner 1963; Greshake 1972). Mainly because he rejected Manichaean determinism, he emphasized the existence and value of human beings' free will. He considered Manichaeism as a threat to an authentic Christian life, for its ↪ deterministic view would annihilate human freedom and thus ethical responsibility. His Christology has been evaluated as orthodox (Rivière 1946; Dewart 1982).

Pelagius's emphasis on human beings' freedom and responsibility was closely related to his view of God as creator. According to Pelagius, God has given human beings the ability (*posse*) to do what they are expected to do. The gift of the *posse* is the gift *par excellence*. Our freedom depends upon God's gift of it. God enables us to do what we must do. In other words, what is often described as a sign of Pelagian arrogance, in fact must be seen as a divine gift. What we will (*velle*) or actually do (*facere*) belongs to our responsibility; that we are enabled to will and to act belongs to God's creative activity (Greshake 1972). Does this mean that Pelagius held that human beings *de facto* could live a sinless life, as Jerome suggested (*Dial.* 1. 26)? Not at all! Pelagius did not believe that human beings could live a sinless life. A careful reading of *De natura*, written in about 405/6 (Duval 1990), reveals that already at this relatively early stage, Pelagius had reacted against the charge that he had neglected God's grace. In Diospolis (415), he explicitly stated that one constantly needs this gift of grace (cf. Augustine, *Pecc. or.* 2. 2). Also Pelagius had a theology of grace, and this on the level of creation, revelation, and forgiveness (Bohlin 1957; Greshake 1972; Garcia-Sanchez 1978).

In line with Augustine, it is often suggested that Pelagius considered Christ to be an external example, a person one should imitate. Pedagogy has made clear that imitating someone influences the one who wants to imitate. It is also a process of inner development and being influenced. This is also the case with Pelagius. Christ's example is not simply a mere external example. Imitating Christ is the result of a conscious process, of interiorization of Christ's precepts, and thus has to do with adults (Geerlings 1978). Whereas Augustine put so much emphasis on original sin and, in that context, time and again pleaded in favour of infant baptism, Pelagius first and foremost addressed himself to adults. For Pelagius, as for many of his predecessors, baptism was a break with the old, the beginning of new life, unification with Christ, enlightenment (Garcia-Sanchez 1978). The gift of baptism is more than remission of sins or a defeat of the weaknesses of the flesh. Through this gift, mediated by the Church, human beings become the image of God, enter into the community of the saints, and are invited to obedience to God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Salvation in Christ is offered through the Church. Pelagius was a strong promoter of the sanctity of the Church and its members, but he would never accept the Novatianist idea of Christians as perfect people. Also for Pelagius, the Church consisted of saints and sinners. This explains why ideas such as humility play an important role in his writings. The emphasis on the need for repentance is to be understood not simply as a reaction against the Novatianists or Jovinianists, but as essentially part of his concern for the Church and a longing for Christian sanctity (Wermelinger 1989, rightly referring to Pelagius's commentary on the letter of Paul to the Ephesians). Christian

p. 266 sanctity is a task and a duty for ↳ the faithful, but it is a task and duty that requires the help of Christ's grace (Garcia-Sanchez 1978; Wermelinger 1989; Thier 1999).

A final remark: whether or not one shows sympathy for Pelagius and his allies, one must admit that at least some of the accusations against them are not present in their preserved writings. This is the case for the often repeated accusation that the Pelagians held a theologically indefensible distinction between the kingdom of God and eternal life (Refoulé 1963). The same must be said about the accusation that he defended an idea of sinlessness (*impeccantia*), an accusation formulated by Jerome (Annicchino 2004).

13.4 Caelestius

In line with Augustine and Jerome, people tend to refer to Pelagius and Caelestius in one and the same breath. Augustine himself spoke in this regard of *Pelagiani et Coelestiani* (or *Caelestiani*; *Nupt.* 2. 8), presenting their (eventual) followers as belonging to a coherent group. Jerome explicitly describes Caelestius as a disciple of Pelagius and as the leader of the group (Jerome, *Ep.*133. 5). Caelestius lived an ascetic life. He seems to have been attracted by Pelagius's teachings and way of life. In Rome, he met Rufinus, who openly rejected the idea of a transmission of sin. Caelestius himself wrote a (now lost) treatise against the *tradux peccati* idea (*Praedestinatus*, 88). After the fall of Rome (410), Caelestius joined Pelagius in Africa. Caelestius wanted to become a priest in the church of Carthage. However, his orthodoxy was questioned by the Italian deacon Paulinus of Milan. Whether Paulinus intervened because he knew Caelestius's ideas or because he was asked to by the Africans remains unclear (Nuvolone 1986). In any case, the minutes of the meeting in Carthage (411) (Wermelinger 1975), a meeting held in the absence of Augustine, make clear that the theological positions under discussion could not be accepted by the Africans (to a large extent, the issues under discussion, up to 418, are the same: Adam's fall and the consequence for himself and his progeny, the presence of original sin in babies and the need for baptism, the value of the Law, sinlessness).

At Carthage, Caelestius stated that the idea of a transmission of sin was considered to be a matter of discussion. In this regard, he explicitly mentioned Rufinus (Augustine, *Pecc. or.* 2. 3). Although he admitted the need for infant baptism, he did not accept that such baptism was intended for the remission of original sin (Augustine, *Pecc. or.* 2. 3). He was not admitted to the priesthood, and left Africa for the East, where he was ordained a priest at Ephesus. Although several theses, submitted to meetings in Jerusalem and Diospolis, were attributed to Caelestius, it is ↳ hard to prove whether Caelestius really held these positions. In any case, for a short while Pelagius distanced himself from Caelestius; but a reconciliation must have taken place shortly after Diospolis (Wermelinger 1975). Like Pelagius, Caelestius was the subject of condemnations in Africa (Carthage 416, Milevis 416) and in Rome (417). Under Zosimus, Caelestius again defended his case in Rome. First he was set free conditionally-Africa was requested to prove his (and Pelagius's) heterodoxy-again a proof that 'orthodoxy' in this matter was still a flexible concept.

Finally, because of pressure from Africa and the court at Ravenna, on the one hand, and his refusal to present himself before Zosimus for a more detailed examination of his positions, on the other hand, he was condemned by Zosimus and sent into exile. He tried to have his case be re-examined under the bishops Boniface and Celestine, but failed (Bonner 1992). In any case, a comparison of the *Libellus fidei* of Pelagius and Caelestius makes clear that their ideas were very near to each other (Bonner 1992). In about 428–9 Caelestius took refuge in Constantinople, but, at the instigation of Marius Mercator, was again expelled and finally condemned at the Council of Ephesus, together with Julian and his companions. Given the fact that most of his writings are lost, and attributions of preserved writings and/or fragments to Caelestius are problematic, it is rather difficult to have a clear view of his positions. But he must have been critical of the idea of a transmission of original sin. In this regard it should be repeated that Pelagius himself had also been critical of works of Augustine long before the outbreak of the controversy. It seems reasonable to suggest that Caelestius, more than Pelagius, emphasized

the importance of the freedom of the will and thus paid less attention to hamartiology and soteriology (Nuvolone 1986; Wermelinger 1989; Honnay 1994; Lamberigts 2002). In any case, it may be unfair to minimize Pelagius's role at the expense of Caelestius (Honnay 1994).

13.5 Julian of Aeclanum

13.5.1 A Short Biography

p. 268 Julian of Aeclanum was born in Apulia in about 380. He was the son of Memor, or Memorius, who may also have been the bishop of Aeclanum and predecessor of Julian (Lössl 2001a), and his wife, Juliana. Julian had two sisters. He received a good literary, rhetorical, and theological education (Gennadius, *Vir. ill.* 46; Cipriani 1975; Lamberigts 1999; Lössl 2001a; Moreschini 2004; Santorelli 2004). In about 400 he married Titia (or Ia), the daughter of Aemilius, the bishop of Beneventum. Bishop Aemilius was sent by Innocent, bishop of Rome, to the East in order to intervene in ↵ favour of John Chrysostom during the bishop's dispute with the emperor. It should be remembered that the Pelagians showed much sympathy for this Greek moral theologian.

At the occasion of Julian's wedding, Paulinus of Nola, friend of Aemilius, Augustine, and Pelagius, wrote a wedding song, or *epithalamium* (Paulinus, *Carm.* 25; Lössl (2001a) offers a detailed presentation of this wedding song). During his controversy with Augustine, Julian, like Pelagius, shows a certain familiarity with some of Augustine's early works. Julian must have been a promising man, for in about 408–9 Augustine asked his father to send Julian to Hippo (Augustine, *Ep.* 101). Julian indeed visited Carthage, where he met the Manichaean Honoratus (*Flo.* 5. 26), who in 411–12 would be warned by Augustine against the adversaries of grace (Bochet 2001); but whether Julian ever met Augustine is unknown. It is worth mentioning that Julian only twice mentioned the name of Pelagius in his works against Augustine (*Flo.* 4. 88, 112). In both cases he explicitly expressed his sympathy for Pelagius, but literal quotations from Pelagius's work are not present in Julian's writings.

Julian was really a man of the Church: when he married, he was a lector; at the time of the epistolary contacts between his father and Augustine, he was a deacon, and c.415/16 he became bishop of Aeclanum. He took care of the poor by distributing his possessions during a period of famine (Gennadius, *Vir. ill.* 46).

From 418 onwards, Julian was the main Pelagian player in the controversy. Together with eighteen colleagues, he refused to sign Zosimus's *Epistula tractoria*, for people were urged to sign this letter without discussion and under pressure (Lamberigts 1992). Julian defended his position in a letter to Count Valerius at the court of Ravenna in two letters to Zosimus during a public discussion and in a letter to the bishop of Thessalonica, Rufus; but it was all in vain, for Zosimus condemned Julian. In his writings Julian showed his disappointment about the change in the pope's position. After a new condemnation of the Pelagians by the emperor (summer 419), Julian had to leave Italy (Wermelinger 1975). He regarded his controversy with Augustine as a fight against Punic and Manichaean invaders, who wanted to destroy the church in Italy. He extensively criticized the first book of Augustine's *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* in a work addressed to his confrère Turbantius (*Ad Turbantium*). Later, in eight books written to his colleague Florus (six are preserved thanks to Augustine's reply, *Contra Julianum opus imperfectum*), Julian responded to the second book of *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* (the latter was Augustine's response to a summary of Julian's *Ad Turbantium*; Augustine's full reply is found in *Contra Julianum*). Julian probably wrote his eight books *Ad Florum* in the East, while taking refuge with Theodore of Mopsuestia (Nuvolone 1986). The work seems to have been intended for the West, for Alypius received it during his visit to Italy (427). It is possible that Julian also wrote a treatise *De bono constantiae* while in the East. Of this work, which clearly refers to John Chrysostom's *Quod nemo laeditur nisi a seipso* (translated by Annianus), only p. 269 fragments ↵ are preserved. It is suggested that Julian was also condemned by Theodore (Marius Mercator, *Versio symboli Theodori*, ACO I, V, p. 23), but Marius Mercator is not always trustworthy in his information. In 429

Julian, together with Caelestius and some of his colleagues, stayed in Constantinople. Here they asked Nestorius, bishop of Constantinople, for a review of their case. Although Nestorius made serious efforts to obtain information from Pope Celestine, he was not successful. Moreover, due to the interventions of Marius Mercator, Julian and his friends and Caelestius were exiled by the emperor (for details, see Lössl 2001a). The Council of Ephesus explicitly condemned the Pelagians (Lamberigts 1985). During the whole controversy, Julian had asked for an objective and open forum for discussion, but such opportunity was never given to him or any of his companions. This, too, belongs to the history of Pelagianism. Under Bishop Sixtus, Julian attempted to get a review of his case, but did not succeed. He died sometime before 455 (Lössl 2001a).

13.5.2 Julian the Exegete

As mentioned above, the list of writings attributed to Julian was substantially enlarged during the twentieth century. Although his exegetical works did not play an important role in the controversy, they greatly contributed to a better understanding of this polemicist, whom Augustine described as his most intelligent opponent. Research on Julian's exegesis started only in recent times (Strobl 1991; Lössl 2001a, b, c; 2003; 2004; Pennacchio 2004). The studies of Lössl especially have opened new perspectives, for they make clear that Julian's exegetical works should not be considered merely as the work of a 'western' exegete-although Julian owed an important part of his exegetical ideas and approaches to Jerome (see De Coninck and D'Hont 1977: *Indices*; Lössl 2001a; Canellis 2004)-but that one should also take into account the exegetical work of Theodore of Mopsuestia. In any case, Julian's exegetical approach can no longer be evaluated as merely rationalist and strictly literalist. His exegesis was driven by particular theological concerns, especially those derived from Christian tradition and spirituality (Lössl 2003). In his exegesis, he was, generally speaking, in line with the approach of the Antiochene school. Julian was very much in favour of a historical understanding of scripture. However, he accepted that a biblical text could also have a typological meaning, though he was of the opinion that this kind of exegesis always should remain within well-defined limits. In any case, Julian could not accept that the truth of reason and the truth of scripture were in contradiction with each other: results of sane rational reasoning will be confirmed by scripture (*Flo.* 4. 136; Lössl 2003). The rationale behind this position is, of course, that scripture and reason are both gifts of God. The one who speaks in scripture is the same as the one who created rational human beings.

p. 270 Whether Julian in his controversy with Augustine was influenced by eastern ideas remains an open question. An answer to that question depends upon the chronology of Julian's work: if one assigns Julian's exegetical works to the period before the controversy with Augustine, then such influence is possible. Unfortunately, Julian seldom shows a thorough knowledge of Greek in his works against Augustine. In the debate on Romans 5 (*Flo.* 2) Julian does not make use of the Greek text in order to refute Augustine. Further, he mentions Theodore only once, in a vague and general way (*Flo.* 3. 111). When referring to Greek literature, Julian seems to make use of translations (see Cipriani 1987). One also has to take into account that Julian visited Theodore only in the period when he was in exile in the East, i.e. after 422. Therefore, it seems not unreasonable to assign the exegetical works chronologically after Julian's controversial literature against Augustine (Nuvolone 1986; Canellis 2004; Pennacchio 2004). However, it is possible that, at the time he wrote his *Ad Florum*, Julian lived in the neighbourhood of Theodore (Cipriani 1994). In any case, Julian's exegesis of Genesis shows similarities to that of Theodore, if not influences by Theodore (Cipriani 1993). Since the exegetical works as such did not play a role in the controversy, I will not discuss them here, but it should be remembered that Julian's exegesis as present in the controversy with Augustine is described as 'well integrated in the traditional ecclesiastical context of his time' (Lössl 2003).

13.5.3 Julian the Theologian and Polemicist

Within the context of the Pelagian controversy, it is one of Julian's merits that he urged Augustine constantly to defend and explain his positions. Augustine's *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*, *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum*, *Contra Julianum*, and *Contra Julianum opus imperfectum*, together an impressive *œuvre*, contain not only citations but a complete version of the books I–VI of Julian's *Ad Florum*, a unique phenomenon in ancient Christian polemical literature.

p. 271 In his works against Augustine, Julian reveals himself as a scholar with a good classical background (Lamberigts 1999; Lössl 2001a; Weber 2001). He is a sharp debater, very familiar with all the techniques that one should use in a controversy (Weber 2001, 2003; Lamberigts 2003). However, his arguments in the controversy seem to be mainly theological in nature (Lamberigts 1988; for another opinion, see Smalbrugge 2004; on possible Greek influences in Julian's theology, see Cipriani 2004). His basic axiom was the following: the good God is the creator of a good nature. This goodness of creation is a contingent one: people are created mutable and mortal. Pain and suffering do not have 'ethical' connotations, but belong to nature as it is created (Lössl 2002b). Evil is not considered to be a substance, a position which explains Julian's outspoken critique of Manichaeism and the way ↪ in which he links Augustine to Manichaeans (Cipriani 1994). Both soul and body must be qualified as good. As a supporter of the creationist view with regard to the soul, he was of the opinion that God gives to every newborn a newly created soul, probably the best argument one can bring against Augustine's idea of original sin. Indeed, when the ethical behaviour of the human person must be situated on the level of the soul, the presence of an inherited sin in newborn infants-sin considered to be the result of an ethical act of an adult person-must be rejected. Any acceptance of sin and guilt on that level would be a criticism of God's creative activity: God himself would be responsible for this guilt, a view unacceptable to Julian (Lamberigts 1996). The conviction that God creates a new soul for every newborn also explains why, for Julian, the sin of Adam was not as dramatic as it was for Augustine. In fact, for Julian, Adam was a *homo olim defunctus* (Flo. 2. 163; Lamberigts 1990). All human beings are born with a free will. All are gifted with innate virtues. Therefore, all know what they have to do, and they are created by God as free human beings who can thus do what they have to do. Since Julian is convinced that God is also the creator of the body, everything that belongs to the body must be considered as good. In the context of the debate, this means that for Julian, in opposition to Augustine, concupiscence is to be qualified as good, for it is a necessary instrument for procreation. This is not to say that Julian is a promoter of sexual lust. For him, just as for Augustine, sexual concupiscence should be used only within the context of a legitimate marriage with the purpose of procreation. He simply considers this to be a necessary instrument to be used in order to fulfil God's command in Genesis 1: 28, 'Increase and multiply and fill the earth'. Julian appreciated the corporeality of human beings and their sexual desires as a prerequisite for bringing the natural good of marriage, procreation, to completion (Clark 1986a, b). With regard to Julian's view on sexuality, one should also take into account that Julian's medical knowledge had a role to play: concupiscence of both man and woman was considered as necessary for procreation (Brown 1983). Julian is a good example of a thinker who, in his theological reflection, integrates and elaborates what the sciences have to offer. He certainly tries to respect what is present in scripture and in Christian teaching, but does so while at the same time accepting scientific insights.

p. 272 Julian thus clearly presents himself as a promoter of the goodness of human beings. At the same time, he is well aware of the sinfulness of human beings. He rejects the idea that such sinfulness is the result of human nature. He considers sin to be the result of an act of a free human being. All people sin, and all are responsible for their sins (Barclift 1991). On this level, Julian presents a plea for a just God: God punishes human beings justly because of their sins, for all know what to do and thus deserve punishment. It is also on this level that he emphasizes the need to be saved by Christ. Christ forgives our sins and inspires us by his example. Within this context, it should be noted that for Julian, in opposition to Augustine, ↪ Christ possessed the same human nature as all other human beings. Julian did not worry about an eventual presence of concupiscence in Christ. Christ's function as an *exemplum* could only make sense insofar as he was, as human being, like all other

human beings. The greatness of the human being Christ lay in the fact that he, a human being like us, surpasses all of us, but at the same time inspires us with his magnificent example. He invites us to imitate him (Lamberigts 2005). Membership in the Church is a way to salvation. The gift of saving grace is the offer of a loving God. As such, this grace can never force people. It can never be described as opposed to human beings' freedom. On this level, Julian seems to be a defender of a balanced, synergetic interaction between human beings' freedom and God's saving and helping grace (Lamberigts 1993).

For Julian, such a position was also related to God's justice. In Julian's view, justice meant restoring to each person what is due without fraud or preferential treatment (*Flo.* 1. 35; McGrath 1983). This idea was not only present in Roman law, but could also be found in scripture: 'The child will not suffer for the injustice of his parents, nor will the parents suffer for the injustice of their child. The justice of the just will be upon themselves, and the sinfulness of the sinful will be upon themselves' (Ezek 18: 20) (see e.g. *Flo.* 3. 49), again a proof that Julian combined secular knowledge and scriptural material. According to Julian, God was not only a good God, but also a just God, which means that he gives every human being what he merits. In the case of original sin-which, for Julian, was synonymous with innate sin-human beings are already guilty before they are able to act properly and autonomously. As a result, they are already condemned before having acted themselves. Moreover, they are condemned by God, the good creator of both body and soul, simply because they are the result of his work. In a sense, God condemns his own work. Therefore, Julian could not accept the doctrine of original sin, not only because he believed in God as a good creator, but also because he considered this God to be a just judge of human beings, created as rational and responsible human beings, with a free will, able to choose good and evil.

Although Julian did not accept the doctrine of original sin, he strongly promoted the baptism of children, for he considered this to be a gateway to heaven, the way to become a member of the Church, and a means of sanctifying the newly born. Needless to say, the idea of baptizing children because of original sin (i.e. because of the sin of another person) could be considered a position that was accepted in Africa at the time of the controversy. The theological motivation for this practice, however, was not universally accepted prior to the beginning of the fifth century (Lamberigts 2000).

By way of conclusion, it should be stressed that Julian's role in the controversy is different from that of Pelagius. During the controversy, Pelagius had to defend himself. Julian chose to attack. He also paid much more attention to issues such as concupiscence and marriage. The overall impression remains that Julian, more than Pelagius, presented himself as a dogmatic theologian.

13.6 Conclusion

p. 273

Due to intense research over the last 50 years or so, it has become clear that Pelagianism as a well-organized movement never existed. The authors, labelled as 'Pelagians', took different positions and discussed quite a broad range of topics. The attribution of the writings to specific authors remains, for a large part, a *crux interpretum*. This makes evaluation of individuals a difficult, if not impossible, task. Pelagianism as a consistent doctrine is a construction of its opponents, and Pelagius himself probably did not always recognize his own views in this construction. Such a construction does not do justice to the theological pluralism that existed at the beginning of the fifth century.

The history of Pelagius and the so-called Pelagians is something of a drama. Pelagius and the Pelagians wanted to be, first and foremost, honest and genuine Christians. They wanted to take their faith seriously, and this on the level of both orthodoxy and orthopraxis. At least up to 410, their positions were not openly questioned, and their way of living was highly admired by the Roman nobility. Only in the confrontation with the African positions with regard to Adam, his fall and the consequences for his progeny, vitiated nature, the primacy of grace over human beings' free will, the uniqueness of Christ as Saviour, and the baptism of children because of

original sin, did their own intuitions become suspected of heresy, although it should be admitted that several of the so-called Pelagian writings did not develop clear positions on these topics.

Further, one should not forget that, at least before 410, the idea of the transmission of sin was still a matter of discussion, not a fixed doctrine. Moreover, in 415 the Synod of Diospolis acquitted Pelagius of the charges of which he was accused, and in 417 Bishop Zosimus of Rome was still convinced of Pelagius's and Caelestius's orthodoxy. Pelagius's and Caelestius's condemnations were the result of a well-organized action of the African episcopacy and of Augustine's involvement in it. Through these actions, resulting in condemnations at synods in Carthage and at Milevis (416)-decisions confirmed in a rather vague way by Innocent-and their influence at the court at Ravenna, the Africans finally succeeded in their efforts to have Pelagius and Caelestius condemned by both the western emperor and the bishop of Rome (418).

p. 274 The way in which Julian of Aeclanum criticized Augustine and the sometimes excellent arguments that he used in his controversy with Augustine made clear that the Augustinian positions themselves were not unproblematic, especially with regard to the creation of the soul, the human nature of Christ, and the baptism of children because of original sin. However, the critique was no longer taken into account, and a final condemnation of the Pelagians took place in Ephesus (431), although it is still unclear whether people there really knew what exactly they were condemning. History has made clear that, despite the official condemnation of the Pelagians, western Christianity continued to struggle with issues such as the relationship between grace and free will. Too rapid condemnations seldom, if ever, are of benefit to Christianity.

In any case, further research is needed. We still lack a detailed comparison of the theological positions present in the different 'Pelagian' writings. Do Pelagius and Julian of Aeclanum take the same positions with regard to freedom and free will, the fall of Adam, and the need of grace? There is still a need for such comparative studies. Further, it would be instructive to search for possible links between 'Pelagian' ideas and eastern theologies. Pelagian sympathy for John Chrysostom and Theodore's hospitality to Julian offer good reasons for such a search. It would also be interesting to compare the so-called Pelagian writings with non-Pelagian ascetic writings. This might well contribute to a redefinition of what is 'orthodox' or 'heterodox'. Indeed, one has the feeling that there is a large distance between the content of a condemnation and the specific views of the condemned one. Do we really find the canons as condemned at Carthage in 418 in the works of Pelagius? I have my doubts.

When Julian of Aeclanum speaks about justice, he refers to both Cicero and the Bible (Ezek 18: 20). Both references are legitimate, although they speak about concept of justice other than the one we find in Paul and Augustine. Is it not an urgent *desideratum* to show the complexity of the biblical language and messages, in order to do better justice to positions such as those of Julian? Does historical research not require that one take into account all elements of a dossier before formulating an evaluation? On this level, much work remains to be done.

In any case, a systematic comparison of the different theologies in the West might reveal that quite a large number of non-African authors did not share all details of the African positions with regard to topics such as grace and free will, the fall of Adam, and original sin. In fact, how can authors who hold a creationist view of the soul accept the existence of original sin?

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