The Second Adam in Gethsemane: Augustine on the Human Will of Christ

Though the idea that there were two distinct wills in Christ was articulated most prominently by Maximus the Confessor during the monothelite controversy of the seventh century, earlier Christian theologians had already affirmed this notion,\(^1\) among them Augustine of Hippo.\(^2\) Christ’s distinct human will surfaces

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1. K.J. von Hefele notes that the *Acta* of Lateran 649 cite the following fathers as ascribing a divine will to Christ’s divine nature and a human will to Christ’s human nature: Hippolytus, Ambrose, Augustine, Leo, Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Alexandria and John Chrysostom, along with his opponents Theophilus of Alexandria and Severian of Gabala. See K.J. VON HEFELE, *A History of the Councils of the Church, from the Original Documents*, trans. W.R. Clark, vol. 5, Edinburgh, 1896, p.107. On Ambrose’s interpretation of the Gethsemane passage, see G. MASCHIO, “La tristesse de Jésus à Gethsémani: L’exégèse d’Ambroise de Milan,” *Communio*, 35, 2010, p.91–102. Maschio argues that “the position of Ambrose allows him to attribute to the Son of God, having arrived at the hour of his death, a veritable suffering and a true sadness, a fully human will distinct from that of the Father” (p.100). While he compares Ambrose and Augustine on the issue of the agony of Jesus, specifically his sadness at the moment of his death, Maschio does not address the question of whether—and, if so, how—Augustine, with Ambrose, affirmed a fully human will in Christ distinct from that of the Father.

2. G.C. Berthold raises the question of whether Maximus had encountered the works of Augustine during his lengthy exile in the West in a short essay from 1982. Berthold identifies a number of areas in Maximus’ thinking suggestive of an “Augustinian influence”: his hospitality toward the *filioque*, his emphasis on Christ’s freedom from original sin in his humanity, his ambivalent view of history and time, his distinction between gnomic and full freedom (corresponding to Augustine’s distinction between humanity’s initial created freedom *possse non peccare* and eschatological freedom *non posse peccare*), and his division of salvation history into eight stages. See G.C. BERTHOLD, “Did Maximus the Confessor Know Augustine?” *Studia Patristica* 17, part I, 1982, p.14–17. Brian Daley has recently taken up Berthold’s question anew. Daley emphasizes that whether and to what extent Augustine exerted a direct influence on Maximus remains largely a matter of conjecture, but calls attention to further parallels in their conceptions of the role of Christ in human salvation: just as Augustine understood Christ to exemplify the workings of God’s grace towards humanity, so Maximus understood Christ to exemplify the deification of humanity. Both thinkers saw that if Christ reveals the meaning of human salvation in this
repeatedly in Augustine’s expository writings, where he demonstrates what it means for a human being to be right with God, as well as in his polemical writings against the Homoian Arians of his day, where he underscores Christ’s consubstantial unity with the Father. Augustine characterizes the human will of Christ differently in these contexts: by the time of his anti-Arian writings he has developed a new emphasis both on the obedience of Christ’s human will and on the distinction between the condition of the human will that was in Christ and the condition of Adam’s human will. Augustine thus comes, by the end of his career, to anticipate Maximus the Confessor’s understanding of the human will of Christ in at least these two respects.

Since Augustine understood the single divine will to be identical to the divine substance, Augustine necessarily affirmed also that Jesus Christ, God the Son, possessed the will of the Father as his own. For Augustine it is clear that the “will of the Father and of the Son is one” even as there is but “one will, one power and one majesty” of the trinity. What is unusual about Augustine’s affirmation of two wills in Christ is not his affirmation that Christ shared in the one divine will of the Godhead as God the Son but his explicit attribution of a human will to Christ.

way then he needs to have both a divine will and a human will. See B. Daley, “Making a Human Will Divine: Augustine and Maximus on Christ and Human Salvation,” in Orthodox Readings of Augustine, ed. A. Papanikolaou and G.E. Demacopoulos, Crestwood, NY, 2008, p.101–126. This paper investigates how the notion of two wills in Christ, which Daley observes in Augustine, may have developed over time in Augustine’s thought.

3. Dihle observes that for Augustine “God’s will is unchanging and unchangeable and, therefore, identical with His substance (conf. 11.10.2 [sic; recte 11.10.12], civ. D. 22.2…)…The will of God is the only structuring and preserving power in the order of being (civ. D. 12.23, c. Faust. 22.30, ep. 140.4, etc.).” See A. Dihle, The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity, Berkeley, 1982, p.234. See also conf. 12.15.18, where Augustine affirms that the divine will belongs to God’s single unvarying substantia (num dicetis falsa esse, quae mihi veritas vox fuit in aurem interiorem dicit de uera aeternitate creatoris, quod nequaquam eius substantia per temporas uarietur nec eius voluntas extra eius substantiam sit?), and c. s. Ar. VII.6, where he affirms that the Father and the Son share one and the same will with respect to the divinity of the Son (quod attinet ad diuinitatem filii, una eademque voluntas est patris et filii: nec potest ullo modo esse diuersa, ubi est natura trinitatis inmutabilis uniuersa). These and subsequent Latin citations come from the editions named in the list compiled by K.H. Chelius in the Augustinus-Lexikon vol. 2, XI-XXIV, unless otherwise noted.

4. Io. ev. tr. 111.1: Vnam uero esse patris et filii voluntatem, quorum etiam spiritus unus est, quo adiuncto cognoscimus trinitatem, etsi intellegere nondum permittit infirmitas, credit pietas. Io. ev. tr. 22.15: Faciamus ergo voluntatem patris, voluntatem filii, voluntatem spiritus sancti; quia trinitatis huia voluntas, una voluntas, una potestas, una maiestas est.

5. As A. Dihle observes, the fourth-century Fathers were forced to refine their understanding of the will of God in the crucible of Christological debate. Origen “had taught…that the Son proceeded from the will of the Father,” a teaching which had the implication, of which Arius approved, of separating the Son from the Father “like any other creature, by the hypostasis of the divine will” (p.116). Athanasius countered by proposing that the Son was the will of the Father. To preserve the idea that the Father generated the Son freely, rather than by necessity, Gregory
This article therefore focuses on identifying and analyzing instances in which Augustine refers to Christ’s human will in order to shed light on the development of Augustine’s notion of two distinct wills in Christ.

The Augustinian notion of human voluntas can have a variety of meanings. As Albrecht Dihle has argued convincingly, Augustine was the first to characterize the human will as distinct from cognition, emotion and sensual desires, but, as others have pointed out, he did not always use the term exclusively in this innovative sense. Marianne Djuth observes that “the most obvious meaning attributed to voluntas” in Augustine’s writings is “the will as a power or faculty of soul (potentia animi) that moves a being in a certain direction,” even while observing that Augustine on occasion uses the term to refer to a purpose, intention, or unfulfilled wish. Given the flexibility and creativity with which Augustine employs this word, I have made an effort not to interpret it with undue narrowness. In cases where multiple meanings for voluntas make sense in context, there is no compelling reason to rule out the possibility that more than one of the meanings more generally attested in his writings is in play, including the “most obvious” meaning of voluntas as a power or faculty of the soul.

I. – AUGUSTINE’S PORTRAIT OF CHRIST’S HUMAN WILL FROM 395-414 IN SERMONS AND EXPOSITORY WORKS

Augustine speaks of Christ’s human will in a number of his sermons and biblical expositions, whose suggested dates range from Augustine’s ministry as priest to the year 414. Most frequently, he designates Christ’s human will as his voluntas of Nazianzus proposed a distinction between God’s non-hypostatic will in generating the Son, beyond human understanding because this will is proper to God’s substance, and God’s hypostatic will as the cause of creation, which is available to human knowing. For Marius Victorinus, “Christ is the voluntas et potentia Dei” and as this one divine will he unites the trinity (p.118). Thus, though there was some disagreement among Athanasius, the Nazianzen and Marius Victorinus about how to conceive of the one will of God, they shared the assumption that Christ shared in the one will proper to the substance of the Godhead. See DIHLE, The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity, p.116–118.

6. Dihle writes, “From St. Augustine’s reflection emerged the concept of a human will, prior to and independent of the act of intellectual cognition, yet fundamentally different from sensual and irrational emotion, by which man can give his reply to the inexplicable utterances of the divine will.” See ibid., p.127.

7. M. DJUTH, “Will,” in Augustine Through the Ages, ed. A. Fitzgerald, Grand Rapids, MI, 1999, p.881. G. O’Daly also refers to the will as a “faculty” in the opening to Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind when defining the soul as “none other than the coherence of its faculties of memory, understanding, and will, whose co-operation is characteristic of all human behavior.” O’Daly describes the human will according to Augustine as “an essential motor of sense-perception, memory, imagination and cognition (which is only achieved and applied through the agent’s intention).” See G. O’DALY, Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind, Berkeley, 1987, p.6.

8. The text treated in this paper whose suggested date is the earliest is Augustine’s exposition of
humana, though he also refers to it as the hominis voluntas and voluntas filii hominis.9 Allusions to Christ’s human will surface in Augustine’s expositions of the Psalms when he brings up Christ’s agony in the garden in order to illustrate what the Psalmist means by the notion of being “right” or “straight” (rectus) before God. In his comments on Psalm 100, Augustine describes this kind of rectitude in a passive or negative sense, as having to do with avoiding or correcting a problematic response to God’s will. The person who has a right heart is one who does not not want all that God wants: “omnia quae vult deus, non ipse non vult.” The literal emphasis here is not on achieving something positively or actively, but rather on subjecting oneself to the will of God and not resisting this divine will.10 Jesus Christ’s humble submission to God’s will as reflected in his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane serves as the preeminent model of what it means to be aligned with God’s will in this way.

Augustine’s reading in his exposition of Psalm 100 is representative of the tendency in his earlier interpretation of the Gethsemane prayer to associate shrinking from death with Christ’s human will. Augustine identifies Jesus’ prayer that his passion be averted: “Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me,” as an instance in which his human will is expressed. The ultimate resolution of Christ’s prayer, however, “Yet not what I will, but what you will, Father,” shows his right heart.11 Likewise, Augustine observes in his exposition of Psalm 31 that whereas Christ’s human will shows through when he prays that, if possible, the cup pass

Psalm 100. Augustine’s reference to the book of Wisdom as Sapiencia Salomonis in this exposition suggests that it was composed sometime before he penned book two of On Christian Doctrine in 396. Cf. On Christian Doctrine 2.8-13 where Augustine calls Solomon’s authorship of the book of Wisdom into question. For a detailed treatment of Augustine’s evolving position on the authorship of the book of Wisdom and modes of citing it, see A.-M. La Bonnardière, Biblia Augustiniana, A.T.: Le Livre de la Sagesse, Paris, 1970, p.35–57. La Bonnardière concludes that Enarrationes in Psalmo 100 and 63, the only two Enarrationes that cite the book of Wisdom as Sapiencia Salomonis, belong to the time of Augustine’s priesthood (p.42). If La Bonnardière’s theory is correct, Augustine’s affirmation of a distinct human will in Christ antedates On Christian Doctrine, book two, and, along with his exposition of Psalm 100, stems from the period of Augustine’s ministry as a priest.

9. See en. Ps. 100.6, en. Ps. 32.II.1-2, en. Ps. 31.II.26, and serm. 296.8 for references to Christ’s human will as his voluntas humana; see en Ps. 32.II.1-2 and en. Ps. 93.9 for designations of it as the hominis voluntas. Io. ev. tr. 19.19 clearly distinguishes the voluntas filii hominis from the divine will, since the voluntas filii hominis is described as a will that resists God: Non quaevit voluntatem suam, sed voluntatem eius qui misit illum. Non mean, non propriam; non mean, non filii hominis; non mean, quae resistat deo.

10. En. Ps. 100.6: Rectum cor dicitur hominis, qui omnia quae uult deus, non ipse non uult. Intendite. Orat aliquis ut nescio quid non eueniat; orat, et non prohibetur. Petat quantum potest; sed contra voluntatem ipsius eueniit aliquid; subiungat se voluntati dei, non resistat voluntati magnae.

11. En. Ps. 100.6: Quid enim dixit? “Pater, si fieri potest, transeat a me calix iste.” Ecce habes voluntatem humanam expressam; uide iam rectum cor: “Verum, non quod ego uolo, sed quod tu uis, pater.”
him by, Christ’s statement “not what I will,” reveals that his heart is right. A similar pattern recurs in Sermon 296, probably from the year 413. Augustine quotes the first half of Christ’s prayer from Matthew 26:39, “Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me” and then interjects: “[see] how he shows his human will” before observing Christ’s obedience and quoting the remainder of the prayer: “however, not what I will, but what you will, Father.” Yet another example of Augustine’s association of the first half of Jesus’ Gethsemane prayer with his human will is found in his exposition of Psalm 32. There Augustine writes, “he showed a certain private human will, in which will of his he also represented ours, since he is our head, and, as you know, we assuredly belong to him as members. ‘Father,’ he said, ‘if it is possible, let this cup pass from me.’ This was his human will, wanting something personal and, so to speak, private.” Here again Augustine focuses on the first half of Christ’s prayer in Gethsemane as an expression of his human will. In each of these texts, Augustine attributes to Christ’s human will his request that the cup pass, while he attributes to Christ’s right “heart (cor)” or to Christ more generally his obedient submission to the will of the Father.

In some cases Augustine even ventures so far as to associate the human will of Christ with the wills of human persons that are in tension with God’s will. Continuing in his exposition of Psalm 32, for example, Augustine writes, “‘See yourself in me,’ he [Christ] says, ‘because you are able to want something personal so that you want something other than what God wants.'” In this passage, Augustine depicts the human will of Christ as reflecting the more general human tendency to will otherwise than God does. While he also points out Christ’s positive example of obedience, Augustine does not refer this obedience directly to the human will of Christ. As he draws attention to Christ’s human will in his comments on Psalm 32, Augustine is mainly concerned to show how it takes on the weakness of humanity at large, to underline the solidarity of Christ’s human will with ours.

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13. Serm. 296.8: “Pater, si fieri potest, transeat a me calix iste.” Quomodo ostendit humanam voluntatem, et continuo convertit renisum ad oboedientiam. “Verum, non quod ego uolo, sed quod tu uis, pater.”


15. En. Ps. 32.II.2: “Ecce uide, inquit, te in me; quia potes aliquid proprium uelle, ut aliud deus uelit, conceditur hoc humanae fragilitati, conceditur humanae infirmitati; aliquid proprium uelle, difficile est ut non tibi contingat.”
Augustine continues to depict Christ as capable of wanting something other than what the Father wanted even in the very late work *Contra Maximinum*: “Nonetheless, in saying, *Not as I want*, he showed that he wanted something other than the Father wanted [*aliud se ostendit uoluisse quam pater*], something that he could only do with his human heart, when he changed our weakness, not into his divine, but into his human love.” As I will argue, however, though in *Contra Maximinum* Augustine still associates Christ’s human will with the wills of human persons that are in tension with God’s will, in *Contra sermonem Arianorum* and in *Contra Maximinum* the distinction between Christ’s human will and the human will of Adam takes on a new importance.

In his exposition of Psalm 93, probably written during the Pelagian controversy, one finds an even more dramatic association of the human will of Christ with human wills that are in tension with God’s will than in his comments on Psalm 32. Augustine states in his exposition of Psalm 93 that in Gethsemane Christ prefigures in himself those who would come after him in the Church who “wanted to do their own will, but afterwards would follow the will of God.” He further observes that “if [Christ] had persisted in that will, he would have seemed to show a crooked heart.” Augustine does not distinguish clearly here between “Christ’s human will” as a faculty and “Christ’s human will” as a particular wish, or external circumstantial option, that was other than the will of the Father. Only a few lines after speaking of the perversity of heart to which Christ’s “human will (*hominis voluntas*)” would have led him had he insisted on it, Augustine uses the phrase *voluntas humana* as shorthand for sinful desires that oppose God’s will: “If a human wish (*voluntas humana*) should creep up on you—‘Oh if only God would kill this enemy of mine, so that he would not persecute me! Oh if only it were possible that I not suffer such things from him!’—now if you persist [in this kind of thinking], and this pleases you, and you see that God does not want this, you are crooked in heart.” In this context of pastoral concerns about desires opposed to the will of God, Augustine characterizes Christ’s *voluntas humana* as something he had to resist as he moved forward on the path to the cross.

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17. En. Ps. 93.19: *Quomodo autem complexus est dominus ex duabus voluntatibus unam factam in homine quem portabat? Praefigurans in corpore suo, id est in ecclesia sua, futuros quosdam qui voluntatem suam uellent facere, sed sequentur postea dei; quia infirmos quosdam ostendit quod ad ipsum pertineant, et eos praefiguravit in se. nam ideo et toto corpore sanguinem sudavit, quia in corpore suo, id est in ecclesia sua, martyrum sanguinem ostendit. Toto corpore sanguis exibat; ita ecclesia eius habet martyres; per totum corpus eius fuisse est sanguis. Quosdam ergo infirmos in se praefigurans, uel in corpore suo; ex persona infirmitum, commatiis illis, ait: “Pater, si fieri potest, transeat a me calix iste.” Ostendit hominis voluntatem; si in ipsa voluntate permaneret, iam praem cor uideretur ostendere.

Augustine does take the unity of the two wills of Christ as his starting point for explicating Psalm 93. He opens the discussion of Christ’s example by asking: “How did our Lord marry two wills so that they became one in the humanity he bore?” (93.19). Yet his exposition of Matthew 26:39 in his comments on Psalm 93 never explicitly rules out the possibility that this unity is based on Christ’s triumph over his human will rather than on the proper alignment of his human will. Even in treating the human will of Christ, Augustine highlights the tendency of the human will to attempt to compete with the divine will; he does not assert that Christ demonstrated a human will perfectly in sync with the divine will.

Given the perversity of the human will’s inclinations, which Augustine underscores in his comments on Psalm 93, a more radical solution than Christ’s example alone is required to rectify the will. The ability of the faithful to imitate Christ’s surrender of his human will is contingent upon Christ’s compassionate and liberating work: “but if he has had compassion on you and is liberating you in himself, imitate what follows, saying, ‘yet, not what I will, but what you will, Father.’”

The frailty of even Christ’s own human will dramatically illustrates the weakness of our human will, underlining its need for Christ’s assistance to be made right before God.

In the texts examined thus far, Augustine introduces the human will of Christ in order to set forth what it means to be right before God. Yet in the end, the human will of Christ seems to play a more important role in Augustine’s illustration of the tendency of the human heart to stray away from God’s will, a tendency that must be resisted to be right before God, than in his positive explanation of how to obey God’s will. The human will of Christ figures prominently in Augustine’s sermons when he is describing Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane that the cup might pass from him. When Augustine points to Christ’s demonstration of rectitude before God, however, the human will of Christ recedes from view.

II. – AUGUSTINE’S PORTRAIT OF CHRIST’S HUMAN WILL
IN CONTRA SERMONEM ARIANORUM AND CONTRA MAXIMINUM

The portrait of Christ’s human will that emerges in Augustine’s Contra sermonem Arianorum, probably written in 419, about five years after Augustine composed his comments on Psalm 93, shows a different set of emphases. In this treatise Augustine responds to an “Arian Sermon” comprised of a list of theses represent-
ing a “Homoian Arianism,” a theology whose proponents preferred to speak of likeness between the Father and the Son rather than a shared substance (ousia), even while affirming that the Son was a product of the Father’s will different from the creation the Father produced from nothing. As a part of his lengthy reply to the litany of texts where Jesus submits to the will of the Father cited in the *Sermo Arianorum*, Augustine considers John 6:38: “I came down from heaven, not to do my will, but to do the will of him who sent me.” Augustine’s main concern is to show that the Son’s obedience to the Father does not imply that the divine nature of the Son is different from the nature of God the Father. Yet in considering what implications this verse may have for understanding Jesus’ relation to the Father, Augustine’s strategy is not to showcase Christ’s divine nature while brushing his human nature under the carpet. Nor does he vindicate the identity of Christ’s substance with that of the Father by arguing that Christ’s divine nature overrides or suppresses his human nature. Instead Augustine makes a more nuanced argument, using Paul’s discussion of the first and second Adam in Romans 5 as a hermeneutical lens for considering this difficult text in John.

Rather than shifting the focus away from the human will of Christ, Augustine uses Romans 5 to establish a distinction between the condition of the human will that was in Christ and the condition of the human will that was in Adam. Adam brought sin into the world by choosing his own will, a will opposed to God. Christ’s statement in John 6:38 shows that Christ reversed the pattern Adam had set. Whereas Adam’s human will was opposed to God’s, Augustine insists,
“Christ did not have such a will.” Rather, Augustine implies, Christ had a human will in perfect accord with God’s, since, as is clear from Romans 5:19, “in him, insofar as he is man, we are taught the obedience which is just the opposite of the disobedience of the first man.” Christ could only achieve this obedience by grace—because his human nature belonged to him as a mediator who was not only man, but God and man. Thus in Augustine’s exegesis of John 6:38, the possibility of Christ overcoming the natural human temptation to oppose God autonomously (his capacity to say “not my will”) presupposes his divine nature. In the final analysis, Augustine’s explanation of how Jesus was able to resist doing his “own will,” but nonetheless attain perfect human obedience, functions to corroborate Augustine’s case that Jesus was non tantum homo, verum etiam deus. The obedience of Christ in his humanity becomes, in Augustine’s argument, not a reason to object to Christ’s full divinity, but rather a reason to acknowledge it.

A number of differences arise between Augustine’s characterization of the humanity of Christ in Contra sermonem Arianorum and his characterization of it in the earlier texts treated above. First, Augustine’s readings of Matthew 26:39 in his expositions of Psalms 31, 32, 93, 100 and Sermon 296 all explicitly identify Christ’s wish to let the cup pass as an expression of his human will. None of these passages attribute his prayer “not what I wish, but what you wish” to his human will. In those earlier writings, it is Christ’s request that the passion be averted, not his obedience to the divine will, that Augustine connects with the human will of Christ. In Contra sermonem Arianorum, however, Augustine writes of John 6:38, “the words, I came down from heaven, refer to the excellence of God, but the next words not to do my will, refer to the obedience of the man.” Augustine likewise affirms that Christ submits to the will of the Father in his humanity in a series of statements on Christ’s “twin substances” that follows soon after in the work: “Thus we have the same Christ, a twin-substanced giant, in the one obedient, in the other equal to God, in the one he says, The Father is greater than I (John 14:28); in the other he says, The Father and I are one (John 10:30). In the one he does not do his own will, but the will of the one who sent him; in the other, he says, As the Father raises the dead...”

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23. C. s. Ar. VII.6: *Ita quippe hoc loco [Rom. 5:12] dicitur ‘voluntas sua’, ut intellegatur esse propria contra voluntatem Dei...Hanc habuit Adam, ut in illo moreremur; hanc non habuit Christus, ut in illo uiueremus.*

24. C. s. Ar. VII.6: *Tamen oboedientia in illo quae contraria est inoboedientiae primi hominis, secundum id quod homo est, commendatur.*

25. C. s. Ar. VII.6: *Vt autem “mediator Dei et hominum homo Christus Iesus” non faceret proprium, quae Deo aduersa est, voluntatem, non erat tantum homo, sed Deus et homo; per quam mirabilem singularemque gratiam humana in illo sine peccato ullo posset esse natura.*

26. C. s. Ar. VII.6: *“Descendi de caelo”, referetur ad Dei excellentiam, quod uero adiunctum est: ‘Non ut faciam voluntatem meam’, propter Adam qui fecit suam, referetur ad hominis oboedientiam.*
and gives them life, so the Son also gives life to those he wants (John 5:21).”

In *Contra sermonem Arianorum*, then, Augustine is concerned to underscore the obedience of Christ in his human nature, which, we have learned from considering Augustine’s earlier expositional works, was, for Augustine, complete with a human will.

Secondly, whereas, in the sermons and expositions on rectitude before God considered earlier in the paper, Augustine associated Christ’s human will with the wills of human persons in tension with God’s will, in *Contra sermonem Arianorum* Augustine dissociates Christ from human wills that are in tension with God’s will. Augustine writes, “Adam had such a will [a will opposed to God’s] and, as a result, we died in him. Christ did not have such a will so that we might have life in him.”

Finally, whereas in earlier texts the human will of Christ receded from view when obedience was in question, here Augustine goes out of his way to underline Christ’s obedience in his human nature. In *Contra sermonem Arianorum* “the obedience of the man [Jesus Christ] on account of Adam who did his own will” is of paramount importance. Christ does not bring life by being less human than was Adam. Rather, we can have life in Christ because Christ did not have a sinful will like Adam, yet still achieved obedience precisely as a human being with a human will.

In the lengthy anti-Arian work *Contra Maximinum*, which he wrote towards the end of his career, Augustine follows further the trajectory along which he had been moving in *Contra sermonem Arianorum*. He continues to insist upon

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28. *C. s. Ar.* VII.6: *Hanc habuit Adam, ut in illo moreremur; hanc non habuit Christus, ut in illo uiueremus.*


Christ’s human obedience but makes more explicit the obedience of Christ’s human will in particular, which was implied though not affirmed in so many words in Contra sermonem Arianorum. Augustine refutes an argument centered on the line “But not as I want, but as you want,” from Mark’s version of Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane (Mark 14:36). He writes to his opponent: “Why does it help you to add your words and say, ‘He showed that his will was truly subject to his Father,’ as if we denied that the human will ought to be subject to the will of God? One who looks a bit attentively at this passage of the holy gospel quickly sees that the Lord said this in his human nature.” Augustine makes it clear that he does not disagree with the idea that Christ’s human will was subject to God’s will. Augustine, like Maximinus, affirms this. What differentiates his position from that of Maximinus is not that Maximinus affirms Christ’s human will while Augustine does not, but that Augustine affirms Christ’s divine will in a way that Maximinus does not.

In his earlier writings, before his controversy with the “Arians,” Augustine had emphasized only the direct connection between Christ’s shrinking from death and Christ’s human will. Here Augustine also connects the fiat with Christ’s human will.

Augustine also repeats in Contra Maximinum the comparison with Adam found in Contra sermonem Arianorum. Augustine distinguishes the quality of Christ’s perfectly obedient will from other human wills as represented in Adam, as shown above, even while affirming the unity of Christ’s human will with Adam’s human will in kind: “The second Adam, who took away the sin of the world, distinguished himself in this way from the first Adam, through whom sin came into the world, because the second Adam did not do his own will, but the will of him who sent


32. Augustine’s characterization of Maximinus’s view is that although Father, Son and Holy Spirit agree in an “incomparable” way in will and charity, they do not share one and the same divine will as they do for Augustine on account of a unity of nature and substance. See c. Max. II.20.1: Etiam nos quippe incomparablem consensum uoluntatis atque indiuiduae caritatis patris et filii et spiritus sancti confitemur, propter quod dicimus, haec trinitas unus est deus. Sed nos hoc etiam, quod uos non dicitis, dicimus, propter unam eamdemque naturam atque substantiam, hi tres unum sunt.

33. Augustine also contends that another verse dealing with Christ’s obedient submission to the will of the Father, John 6:38, can be understood as referring to Christ as man. See c. Max. II.20.3: Non absurdum est tamen etiam hoc, ut secundum id quod homo factus est, dixisse accipiatur: “Descendi de caelo, non ut faciam uoluntatem meam, sed uoluntatem eius qui me misit.”

34. C. s. Ar. VII.6: Ita quippe hoc loco [Rom. 5:12] dicitur ‘uoluntas sua’, ut intellegatur esse propria contra uoluntatem Dei...Hanc habuit Adam, ut in illo moreremur; hanc non habuit Christus, ut in illo uiueremus.
him, while the first Adam did his own will, not the will of him who created him.”

For Augustine, Christ the second Adam has a human will, but he is not a human being like us in every way without exception. Unlike the first Adam, Christ the second Adam makes a new beginning for humanity by obediently subjecting his human will to God’s will.

As this survey has shown, new developments surface late in Augustine’s career when he discusses Christ’s will in the context of the Arian debates. In *Contra Arianorum sermonem* and *Contra Maximinum*, Augustine presents a much more harmonious vision of the relation between the human and divine wills of Christ, one that clearly attributes obedience to Christ’s human will and draws a distinction between the human will of Christ and the human will that has become subject to sin in Adam.

III. – AUGUSTINE’S PORTRAIT OF THE HUMAN WILL OF CHRIST IN LARGER PERSPECTIVE

In his book *The Byzantine Christ*, Demetrios Bathrellos contends that two basic types of interpretations of Christ’s Gethsemane prayer had been articulated before the monothelite controversy of the seventh century, both of which emerged in the context of fourth-century anti-Arian polemics. The first type is exemplified in the writings of Gregory of Nazianzus, who, according to Bathrellos, believed that the “opposition between the will of the Father and the will of the Son merely brings to expression the opposition of our will to the will of God. It is not Christ who has a (human) will that opposes the will of the Father, but us.” For Gregory, writes Bathrellos, this entails that Christ’s will not to die does not belong “essentially to his humanity.” Bathrellos finds an alternative view in Athanasius, Marcellus of Ancyra and Gregory of Nyssa, who, he argues, attribute the “shrinking in the face of the passion to the flesh, [but] the fiat to the Logos.” Though Marcellus of Ancyra and Gregory of Nyssa acknowledge two wills in Christ, a human will and a divine will, they seem to oppose them to one another, Bathrellos writes, such that Christ’s human will does not become obedient to the divine will. Noting the potentially “satisfactory” interpretations of the prayer in Cyril of Alexandria

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35. C. Max. II.20.3: *Secundus enim Adam, qui tollit peccatum mundi, isto modo se discreuit a primo Adam, per quem peccatum intrauit in mundum, quia iste non fecit voluntatem suam, sed eius a quo missus est, cum ille fecerit suam, non eius a quo creatus est*. Augustine does state in *Contra Maximinum* that in saying “Not as I want, [Christ] showed that he wanted something other than the Father wanted [aliud se ostendit uoluisse quam pater], something that he could only do with his human heart” (II.20.2). This suggestion that Christ wanted something other than what God wanted, however, is now coupled with an emphasis on the ultimate obedience of Christ’s human will and an insistence on its distinction from that of Adam.


37. Bathrellos, p.142.
Bathrellos nonetheless concludes that “Maximus was the first to point out in an unambiguous way that it is the Logos as man who addressed the Father in Gethsemane…by arguing that both the desire to avoid death and the submission to the divine will of the Father have to do with the humanity of Christ and his human will.”

Augustine does not fit neatly into the typology Bathrellos provides. Indeed, he does not figure into it at all. Yet if one were to try to incorporate Augustine’s view into Bathrellos’s schema retrospectively, an interesting dilemma would result. As shown above, Augustine’s treatment of the human will of Christ in his earlier sermons and expositions aligns with the interpretation of the Gethsemane prayer espoused by Athanasius, Marcellus and Gregory of Nyssa. For many years Augustine, like these figures, tended to emphasize Christ’s shrinking from death in the face of the passion, though not the fiat, as a manifestation of his human will. Augustine recognized two wills in Christ, as did Marcellus and Gregory, very early on in his career. Like these two predecessors, he saw these wills as in tension, if not opposed to one another. Augustine, at this stage, did not tend to attribute obedience to the human will of Christ.

The late Augustine’s anti-Arian writings, however, show him championing a different view of Christ’s human will. Ironically it is in his own struggles with Homoian Arianism that Augustine shows he has moved clearly beyond the solutions his forebears had reached in their struggles with the Arianism of their own day. As Maximus the Confessor would two centuries later, Augustine had come to hear the distinctly human voice of Christ not only in the prayer that the passion be avoided, but also in Christ’s rejection of a course of action opposed to God’s will. In a further anticipation of Maximus, Augustine also came to observe an important distinction in quality between Christ’s perfectly obedient human will and Adam’s human will subsequent to the fall, which was subject to sin.

Augustine’s earlier emphasis on the weakness of even Christ’s own human will and his later insistence that Christ was obedient precisely in his human will would have dovetailed nicely with Augustine’s polemical aims in the Pelagian and Arian controversies as he strove first to defend the need for God’s grace to reorient the human will and then also to explain why Christ’s obedience did not entail a difference in being between the Son and the Father. But it is clear that Augustine’s affirmation of Christ’s human will was not driven solely by his polemical agenda. Well before the Pelagian controversy, Augustine affirmed two distinct wills in Christ, tending to associate Christ’s shrinking from death with his human will.

Augustine’s treatment of Christ’s human will does, however, highlight how he built on insights gained in the Pelagian controversy as he took on the Homoian Arians later in his life. Holding together both Christ’s human obedience and the

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inclination of the human will, since Adam’s fall, to resist God’s will, ultimately demanded a clear distinction between Christ’s human will and Adam’s. This distinction, in turn, helped to corroborate Augustine’s case against the Homoian Arians with whom he contended. With this distinction in place, Augustine could explain Christ’s submission to the Father’s will as taking place in his humanity. How, then, could a perfectly obedient human will, distinct from Adam’s fallen will, be possible? Given the vitiated state of the human will since Adam, the obedience of Christ’s human will pointed not only to Christ’s humanity but also to the unity of that humanity in one person with Christ’s divine nature, a unity that enabled Christ to achieve perfect human obedience by a “marvelous and singular grace.”

Augustine’s eventual affirmation of Christ’s graced obedience in his human will is significant, however, beyond the light it sheds on Christ’s unique identity as both “deus et homo.” Since Augustine’s mature understanding of grace is modeled on his understanding of the grace of Christ, the free graced obedience of Christ’s human will also sheds light on how Augustine understands grace to impact the human will of each Christian. Augustine came to see, in Gethsemane,

40. C. s. Ar. VII.6: *Vt autem “mediator Dei et hominum homo Christus Iesus” non faceret propriam, quae Deo adversa est, voluntatem, non erat tantum homo, sed Deus et homo; per quam mirabilem singularemque gratiam humana in illo sine peccato ullo posset esse natura. “But so that ‘the mediator of God and man, the man Jesus Christ’, would not do his own will, which is opposed to God, he was not only man, but God and man. And through this marvelous and singular grace human nature could exist in him without any sin.”

41. As B. Daley has observed, the mature Augustine came to see Christ, the mediator between God and humanity, “as the personal representation, and the prime instance, of God’s victorious and wholly unmerited grace.” B. D ALEY, “Christology,” in Augustine Through the Ages, ed. A.D. Fitzgerald, Grand Rapids, MI, 1999, p.168. See also B. D ALEY, “A Humble Mediator: The Distinctive Elements in Saint Augustine’s Christology,” Word and Spirit, 9, 1987, p.108–110, where he discusses Augustine’s mature teaching on Christ the savior as the paradigm of grace. A representative text where Augustine affirms this teaching is praed. sanct. 15.30, in which Augustine refers to Christ as the most brilliant Light of predestination and grace: praeclarissimum lumen praedestinationis et gratiae, ipse salvator, ipse mediator dei et hominum homo Christus Iesus.

42. Also in On the Predestination of the Saints 15.30, Augustine uses a series of rhetorical questions to make the point that the impossibility of Christ’s sinning increases, rather than decreases, his freedom: *Numquid metuendum fuit, ne accedente aetate homo ille libero peccaret arbitrio? Aut ideo in illo non libera voluntas erat, ac non tanto magis erat, quanto magis peccato seruire non poterat? In the Enchiridion 9.31, he describes a similar dynamic at work in Christians: when God makes a person good by grace, this act makes her truly free, rather than constricting her freedom.

Grace effects a recreation of the human person in Christ so that she may be good: “Therefore we are made truly free at the point when God makes us, that is forms and creates us, not so that we might be human beings, which he has already done, but so that we might be good human beings, which he does now by his grace, so that we might be a new creation in Christ” (tunc ergo efficimur uere liberis cum deus nos fingit, id est format et creat, non ut homines, quod iam fecit, sed ut boni homines simus: quod nunc gratia sua facit, ut simus in Christo nova creatura).
not only the obedience of Christ as the Son of God but also his obedience as the Second Adam, the Light who blazes a new path for those whose human will he shares. By grace, they too may know the freedom of this Way of self-sacrificial obedience, becoming a new creation in Christ.

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In the Enchiridion 11.36 he elaborates on this description of the workings of grace by treating the incarnation, the ultimate example of grace, in which the true character of grace is shown “abundantly and clearly” (hic omnino granditer et evidentem dei gratia commendatur). Augustine explicitly connects this grace of Christ with the grace at work in the lives of Christians: “here the great grace that is of God alone is shown manifestly to those considering it faithfully and soberly, so that they might understand that human beings are justified from sins through the same grace itself through which it was that the man Christ was not able to have any sin” (magna hic et sola dei gratia fideliter et sobrie considerantibus evidentem ostenditur, ut intellegant homines per eandem gratiam se iustificari a peccatis, per quam factum est ut homo Christus nullum posset habere peccatum).
ABSTRACT: In a number of his expositions of the Psalms, as well as in his late Anti-Arian writings, Augustine refers to a distinctly human will of Christ made manifest in his agony in Gethsemane. How he describes this human will evolves over time. In a first phase of his teaching on the subject, Augustine tends to associate Christ’s human will with other human wills that are in tension with God’s will; he explicitly connects Christ’s human will with his wish to let the cup pass, though not with the fiat that follows in Christ’s prayer. Later in his career, in contrast, Augustine tends to underline the distinctiveness of Christ’s human will as compared to Adam’s sinful will, and explicitly connects Christ’s human will with his obedient submission to the will of the Father in Gethsemane. Thus, despite differences in terminology, Augustine’s mature view of Christ’s human will shows parallels with that of Maximus the Confessor, and the development of Augustine’s thinking on this issue shows some similarities to a development in the history of doctrine often assumed to have happened only over the course of centuries.

RÉSUMÉ : Dans une partie de son exégèse des Psaumes aussi bien que dans ses derniers ouvrages anti-ariens, Augustin évoque une volonté humaine du Christ distincte, qui se manifeste à Gethsemani. La manière dont il définit cette volonté humaine se développe avec le temps. Dans la première partie de son enseignement sur le sujet, Augustin tend à associer la volonté humaine du Christ avec d’autres volontés humaines en tension avec la volonté divine ; il associe explicitement la volonté humaine du Christ avec la souhait que « cette coupe s’éloigne de lui », mais pas cependant avec le fiat qui suit, dans la prière du Christ. Plus tard dans sa carrière, de manière contrastée, Augustin tend à souligner la distinction de la volonté humaine du Christ comparée à la volonté pécheresse d’Adam, et il associe explicitement la volonté humaine du Christ à la soumission à la volonté du Père à Gethsemani. Ainsi, en dépit de différences de terminologie, la conception augustinienne de la volonté humaine du Christ, arrivée à sa maturité, montre des parallélismes avec celle de Maxime le Confesseur, et le développement de la pensée augustinienne sur ce point montre des similitudes avec un développement de l’histoire de la doctrine dont on supposait souvent qu’il s’était produit seulement au cours des siècles.