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Can a leopard change its spots?: Augustine and the crypto-Manichaeism question

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Abstract

Throughout his life, Augustine faced the charge that, despite his apparent conversion to the orthodox Christian faith of the Catholic Church, his thought nonetheless retained vestiges of his roughly ten-year sojourn with the Manichees. No one was more relentless in this accusation than Augustine's Pelagian nemesis of his twilight years, Julian of Eclanum. Throughout most of church history, Augustine's reputation was little troubled by these allegations of crypto-Manichaeism. However, over the last century or so, the charge has once again taken on life. This article begins with a brief orientation to some of the main philosophical and theological tenets of Manichaeism, with an emphasis on those elements that will be important for assessing the Augustine question. Next, the history of the accusation that the Christian Augustine remained, in important if unconscious ways, a crypto-Manichaean will be traced from the time of Augustine to the present. Finally, one methodological direction in which an eventual resolution to this long-standing question may lie will be considered.

Can a leopard change its spots? In the 420s, Julian of Eclanum clearly suggested a negative answer to this rhetorical question.[1] The metaphorical leopard at hand was, of course, Augustine. The 'spots' under consideration were the marks left by Augustine's roughly ten-year sojourn as a Manichaean Hearer. Julian's claim is that, despite Augustine's best efforts to remove the scars of his Manichaean past, the cosmetic procedure had proven to be a failure. Instead, Augustine had carried the latent philosophical/theological seeds of the Manichaean heresy into his new life as a Catholic Christian. Those very seeds had now sprouted, infecting his mature theology in disastrous ways. Julian has not been alone in this assessment. Over 1500 years later – at the turn of the twenty-first century – one finds a similar claim being

[1] See Augustine's *Unfinished Work in Answer to Julian*, IV.42. Critical edn by Michaela Zelzer, *Contra Iulianum (opus imperfectum)*, CSEL 85 (Vindobonae: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1974). For a recent English trans. of the relevant passage see *Answer to the Pelagians*, vol. 3, *Unfinished Work in Answer to Julian*, trans. Roland J. Teske (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1999), p. 421.

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made in certain quarters of Augustine scholarship. Wallace Matson speaks, hyperbolically perhaps, for a growing number when he suggests that 'it would at least be a half truth to say that . . . Augustine converted the Church to Manichaeism'.[2]

The central question to be explored here is this: does this charge of 'Augustine as crypto-Manichaean' – beyond its obvious rhetorical and polemical dimensions – have any force to it, and if so in what ways and to what extent? This exploration will unfold in three sections. First, a brief summary will be offered of some of the main philosophical and theological tenets of Manichaeism, with an emphasis on those elements that will be important for assessing the Augustine question. Second, the history of the accusation that the Christian Augustine remained, in important if unconscious ways, a crypto-Manichaean will be traced. This section will represent the bulk of the study, given that this charge has a 1500-year history, ranging from Petilian's polemic not long after Augustine's conversion to the typically nuanced claims of a variety of scholars today. Finally, one methodological direction in which an eventual resolution to this long-standing question may lie will be considered.

A word on Manichaeism

Mani, the founder of this Gnostic religion, was born on 14 April 216 in the land of Babylon, in southern Mesopotamia, not far from present-day Baghdad. For many years scholars speculated upon the question of what influences led to the establishment of this new, aggressively missionary religion which Mani presented as both divinely revealed in nature and universal in its intended scope.[3] The eventual consensus through the mid-twentieth

[2] Wallace Matson, *A New History of Philosophy*, vol. 1, *From Thales to Ockham* (2nd edn, New York: Harcourt, 2000 [1987]), p. 240.

[3] Helpful sources on Manichaeism in general include: Christopher J. Brunner, 'The Ontological Relation between Evil and Existents in Manichaean Texts and in Augustine's Interpretation of Manichaeism', in Parviz Morewedge (ed.), *Philosophies of Existence: Ancient and Medieval* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), pp. 78–95; P. Bryder (ed.), *Manichaean Studies: Proceedings of the First International Conference on Manichaeism* (Lund: Plus Ultra, 1988); Francois Decret, *Aspects du Manicheisme dans l'Afrique Romaine: Les controverses de Fortunatus, Faustus et Felix avec saint Augustin* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1970); Ithamar Gruenwald, 'Manichaeism and Judaism in Light of the *Cologne Mani Codex*', in *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism: Studies in Apocalypticism, Merkavah Mysticism, and Gnosticism* (New York: Lang, 1988), pp. 253–77; Ludwig Koenen, 'How Dualistic is Mani's Dualism?', in *Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis: Atti del Secondo Simposio Internazionale*, ed. Luigi Cirillo (Cosenza: Marra, 1990), pp. 1–34; Samuel N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China: A Historical Survey* (2nd rev. edn, Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1992 [1985]); Paul Mirecki and Jason BeDuhn (eds), *Emerging from Darkness: Studies in the Recovery of Manichaean Sources*

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century, fuelled by the work of the Old *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, was that Manichaeism was essentially a Gnostic, dualistic Persian religion, closely tied to Zoroastrianism. With the discovery and eventual publication of the *Cologne Mani Codex* (*CMC*) in the mid-1970s, however, new light was shed upon Manichaeism's murky origins.[4] Under the illumination of the *CMC*, the former consensus has been decisively overturned.[5] The *CMC* – in terms of actual dimensions, the smallest parchment codex found to date – is written in Greek (though it is most likely a translation from a Syriac original), and is entitled 'Concerning the Origin of his Body'. It appears to contain Mani's own autobiographical comments amidst later redactional elements. It reveals that Mani grew up in a Jewish-Christian Elchasaite baptist sect.[6] While Mani certainly reacts against certain aspects of his religious upbringing, he also retains much of its general orientation. Thus, it appears that the generative matrix of Mani's new religion is to be identified as a complex amalgam of apocalyptic Jewish-Christian asceticism with Gnostic-dualist and esoteric elements.[7] Not surprisingly, the Manichees, like the Gnostics, rejected most

(Leiden: Brill, 1997) and *The Light and the Darkness: Studies in Manichaeism and its World* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2001); Albrecht Viciano, 'Mani (216–276) and Manichaeism', in Charles Kannengiessar (ed.), *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, 2 vols (Boston: Brill, 2004), vol. 1, pp. 647–69.

[4] The critical edn of this Greek text was originally published by A. Henrichs and L. Koenen in several issues of *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* over a span of seven years: 19 (1975), pp. 1–85; 32 (1978), pp. 87–199; 44 (1981), pp. 201–318; 48 (1982), pp. 1–59. For an English trans. by Ron Cameron and Arthur J. Dewey of the published text available in 1979 see *The Cologne Mani Codex (P. Colon. Inv nr. 4780) 'Concerning the Origin of His Body'* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979).

[5] Most scholars now largely reject the Zoroastrian origins of Manichaeism; see e.g. Stefan Rossbach, *Gnostic Wars: The Cold War in the Context of a History of Western Spirituality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 63. Some, however, continue to argue that Zoroastrian influence is still to be taken seriously; see e.g. Werner Sundermann, 'How Zoroastrian is Mani's Dualism?', in Luigi Cirillo and Alois Van Tongerloo (eds), *Atti del Terzo Congresso Internazionale di Studi 'Manicheismo e Oriente Cristiano Antico'* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), pp. 343–60. Also relevant is the observation that, among other polemical labellings (e.g. 'insane', 'demonic', 'unoriginal', 'heretical', 'illegal', 'impure'), by the fourth-century's end, Manichaeism was also widely known as 'foreign', and specifically 'Persian'. See J. Kevin Coyle, 'Foreign and Insane: Labelling Manichaeism in the Roman Empire', *Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses* 33 (2004), pp. 217–34.

[6] See Gruenwald, 'Manichaeism and Judaism', for a good summary of Mani's background.

[7] Against the common claim that Mani's thought-world held no place for esotericism and magic see Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, 'Esoterism in Mani's Thought and Background', in Luigi Cirillo (ed.), *Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis: Atti del Simposio Internazionale* (Cosenza: Marra Editore, 1986), pp. 153–68; Paul Mirecki, 'Manichaean Allusions to Ritual and

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of the Old Testament and its creator God, as well as what it considered to be corrupt Jewish interpolations into the New Testament. It has been established that the Manichees gravitated most strongly to the Gospels and, especially, the letters of Paul – particularly those passages that can be read as supporting a strong anthropological dualism.[8] In fact, as W. H. C. Frend has noted, 'African Manichaeism is almost a Paulinist heresy'.[9]

According to the standard rendition, the central Manichaean myth revolves around a radical dualism, the cosmic conflict between two co-eternal powers: the Good Principle and the Evil Principle. The Good Principle, or Father of Greatness, rules over the kingdom of light, and is the source of truth, goodness, beauty, tranquillity and soul. The Evil Principle, or King of Darkness, rules over the realm of darkness and is the source of wickedness, falsehood, hostility, matter and, thus, body. At some point in the past, the King of Darkness, in league with his demonic hosts, perceived the realm of light, desired it and sought to invade and vanquish it. The result is the world as we know and experience it today, a world wherein light and darkness, good and evil, blend in a seemingly inextricable mixture. What is true for the cosmos at large is true for humanity in particular. One of the most ingenious and tragic strategies of the Lord of Darkness eventuated in the creation of human beings. In an attempt to ensure that the captured particles of pure light could not escape the bonds of evil materiality, two demons

Magic: Spells for Invisibility in the Coptic *Kephalaia*', in Mirecki and BeDuhn, *Light and Darkness*, pp. 173–80.

[8] This Manichaean penchant for certain aspects of Paul's writings will become an important consideration below. On the Manichaean use of Paul see Hans Dieter Betz, 'Paul in the Mani Biography (Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis)', in Cirillo (ed.), *Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis: Atti*, pp. 215–34; Luigi Cirillo, 'The *NOUS* in the "Corpus Paulinum"', in Alois Van Tongerloo, with Johannes Van Oort (eds), *The Manichaean NOUS: Proceedings of the International Symposium Organized in Louvain from 31 July to 3 August 1991*, Manichaean Studies, 2 (Louvain: Ultraiecti, 1995), pp. 51–63; John Kevin Coyle, *Augustine's 'De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae': A Study of the Work, its Composition and its Sources* (Fribourg: Fribourg University Press, 1978), p. 148; F. Decret, 'La figure de Saint Paul et l'interpretation de sa doctrine dans le manicheisme', in L. Padovese (ed.), *Atti del I Simposio di Tarso su S. Paolo Apostolo* (Rome: Instituto Francescano di Spiritalita Pontificio Ateneo Antoniano, 1993), pp. 105–15; idem, 'L'utilisation des Epitres de Paul chez les Manicheens d'Afrique', in J. Ries, F. Decret, W. H. C. Frend and M. G. Mara (eds), *Le Epistole Paoline nei Manichei, i Donatisti e il primo Agistino* (Rome: Istituto Patristico Augustinianum, 1989), pp. 29–83; W. H. C. Frend, 'The Gnostic-Manichaean Tradition in Roman North Africa', *Journal of Ecclesiastical Studies* 4 (1953), pp. 21–2.

[9] Frend, 'Gnostic-Manichaean Tradition', p. 21. A similar observation is made by Gilles Quispel, review of J. Ries et al., *Le Epistole Paoline nei Manichei, I Donatisti e il primo Agostino*, *VigChr* 44 (1990), p. 402.

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mated and produced our first parents, Adam and Eve.[10] Thus, humans are not the creation of the Good God but rather of the Evil King. Each human being is a complex mixture of light and darkness, good and evil, soul and body. Each human being represents the Evil Lord's attempt to retain its hold on pure light, imprisoning it within the dense confines of body (i.e. matter). Since the spiritual state of each human being is directly tied to the particular mixture of light and darkness that constitutes them, Manichaeism – like other Gnostic expressions – naturally depends upon a strong soteriological determinism, wherein libertarian free will has no logical place. One of the most obvious effects of the evil impulse in humanity – one that both emanates from, and leads toward the further production of, material body – is the libido, the sexual impulse. The libido, irrational and aggressive, stirs within the human body, disrupting its tranquillity. Like the demonic realm from which it emanates, it hungers for gratification and, in the process, strives to invade and disrupt the 'pure light of a good and clear consciousness'.[11]

It was into this state of confusion and corruption that the Father of Greatness launched his salvific recovery operation. The celestial bodies – sun, moon, planets – were constructed as collector stations, designed to attract and absorb the dispersed particles of light and direct them back to their source, the heavenly realm of light.[12] Jesus was sent from the realm of light to reveal true knowledge – the secret *gnosis* – of what, in fact, humanity is and how they may participate in the recovery of light and the defeat of darkness. Enter Manichaeism, the product of this divine gnosis revealed. At the heart of Mani's religion is the committed core of ardent, ascetic followers – the Elect. The Elect were expected to maintain rigorous schedules of prayer and fasting. They were allowed neither marriage nor sexual activity. They were to abandon both family ties and all material possessions. Of vital importance was their diet. The Elect were called to a strict vegetarianism, which included the prohibition of 'killing' – that is, the harvesting and preparing – of the

[10] On the broader Gnostic sexual myth see Gedaliahu G Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), esp. pp. 169ff. Stroumsa discusses 'Gnostic myths in Manichaean garb' on pp. 145–67.

[11] Johannes van Oort, 'Augustine and Mani on *concupiscentia sexualis*', in J. den Boeft (ed.), *Augustiniana Traiectina* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1987), p. 141.

[12] The Manichaean fascination with things astrological is tied in here. It is probably the case that Mani derived his astrological interest, at least in part, from Elchasai and Bardaisan; see F. Stanley Jones, 'The Astrological Trajectory in Ancient Syriac-Speaking Christianity (Elchasai, Bardaisan, and Mani)', in Cirillo and Van Tongerloo (eds), *Atti del Terzo Congresso Internazionale*, pp. 183–200.

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produce that they ate. And all of this prepared them for their single, most important soteriological task – *digestion*.

The centrepiece of the Manichaean salvation plan involves an ironic soteriological twist. In his grand scheme to liberate the imprisoned light-particles from the material cellblocks that hold them, the Father of Greatness uses the material bodies of the Elect as instruments of salvation. As they live lives of rigorous asceticism, distancing themselves from all involvement in the things of darkness, they literally become human receptacles within which the distillation and liberation of light occurs. The process is as simple as it is ingenious. As the Elect eat and digest their vegetarian diet, the very food that they eat – like all things, composed of a complex mixture of imprisoned light and imprisoning matter – is broken down, and, in the process, its constituent light is extracted and liberated. This theory of 'salvation via metabolism' is not merely a graphic, physical metaphor for a more literal, spiritual phenomenon. On the contrary, this physical, digestive soteriology is a concrete and fundamental instantiation of the cosmos-wide liberation of light, instigated by the Father of Greatness himself.[13]

Many Manichees, the vast majority in fact, could not live the life of the Elect. This was not a problem, since one was either born a member of the Elect or one was not. In terms of sheer numbers, the majority of Manichees lived within the rank of 'Auditors' or 'Hearers'. The Hearers were not called to the same rigorous standards as the Elect. They were, for example, allowed to work and own property. They were allowed to marry, though procreation was discouraged. Given these areas of licence, it was expected that they would pray and fast less than the Elect. Still, they were expected to avoid murder, theft, adultery and lying. And, most importantly, they were expected to participate in a form of ritual 'killing' of sorts, a killing that enabled the Manichaean salvation plan to unfold. A central religious duty of the Hearer was to harvest and prepare the produce that would constitute the diet of the Elect. If they were faithful in their predestined role as Hearers, they could expect eventually to be reincarnated within the ranks of the Elect, and in this way would become eligible for salvation. According to his own report, it was within this world of the Manichaean Hearer that Augustine lived for roughly a decade.

[13] On this process see Jason David BeDuhn, *The Manichaean Body: In Discipline and Ritual* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); idem, 'The Metabolism of Salvation: Manichaean Concepts of Human Physiology', in Mirecki and BeDuhn, *Light and Darkness*, pp. 5–37.

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The Christian Augustine as crypto-Manichaean: the history of an accusation

The Christian Augustine never hid the fact that he had been a Manichaean Hearer for the better part of his third decade of life. While it seems he tried to understate the length of time he was among the Manichees – claiming in several writings that it was for a nine-year period when, in fact, there is good reason to think it was actually at least a ten year stint, running from his nineteenth to sometime in his twenty-ninth year[14] – he nonetheless is clear about his former Manichaean connections. Just as clearly, Augustine exhibits what appears to be first-hand and generally accurate knowledge of Mani's religion.[15] This is not the place to explore the complexities of what exactly led Augustine into and out of Manichaeism, nor whether and/or to what degree he continued to consider himself a Catholic catechumen during

[14] The renowned Augustine scholar Pierre Courcelle was one of the first to point out Augustine's inconsistency on this point (i.e. compare the 'nine year' claim in bk 4 with the apparent ten-year timeline in bk 5), concluding that he was with the Manichaeans for ten years; see *Recherches sur les Confessions de Saint Augustin* (Paris: de Boccard, 1950), p. 78. A number of scholars have followed Courcelle on this point; e.g. Frend, 'Gnostic-Manichaean Tradition', p. 22, and 'Pythagoreanism and Hermeticism in Augustine's "Hidden Years"', in E. A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica* 22 (Leuven: Peeters, 1989), p. 260 ('more than a decade'); J. Van Oort, 'Manichaeism in Augustine's *De civitate Dei*', in E. Cavalcanti (ed.), *Il De Civitate Dei* (Rome: Herder, 1996), p. 191; John Rist, 'Augustine of Hippo', in G. R. Evans (ed.), *The Medieval Theologians* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p. 4. For a helpful articulation of the 'ten years' case see Leo C. Ferrari, 'Augustine's "Nine Years" as a Manichee', *Augustiniana* 25 (1975), pp. 210–16.

[15] Contrary to some earlier estimations, most scholars now agree that – despite Augustine's obvious polemical rhetoric – his presentation of Manichaean thought is generally quite accurate (if not always precisely correct), at least with regard to its fourth-century Numidian manifestation. See J. Kevin Coyle, 'What did Augustine Know about Manichaeism when he Wrote his Two Treatises *De Moribus*?', in J. Van Oort et al. (eds), *Augustine and Manichaeism in the Latin West: Proceedings of the Fribourg-Utrecht Symposium of the International Association of Manichaean Studies (IAMS)* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2001), pp. 43–56; J. Van Oort, 'Augustin und der Manichäismus', *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 46 (1994), p. 128; idem, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine's City of God and the Sources of his Doctrine of the Two Cities* (New York: Brill, 1991), p. 45. For a convincing case that Augustine's intimate knowledge of Manichaeism and its texts came during his younger years as a Hearer (as opposed his later years as a Catholic), see Van Oort, 'The Young Augustine's Knowledge of Manichaeism: An Analysis of the *Confessiones* and Some Other Relevant Texts', *Vigilae Christianae* 62 (2008), pp. 441–66. That he was well acquainted with Manichaean thought well into his later years is apparent; see Van Oort, 'Manichaeism in Augustine's *De civitate Dei*', p. 214.

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his Manichaean sojourn.[16] What *are* important to note in this regard are the following two observations.

1. For a decade of his life – during what were (as John O'Meara reminds us) Augustine's 'impressionable and formative twenties' – Augustine moved within the Manichaean thought-world.[17] Given this fact, a good number of scholars have surmised that the Manichaean philosophical influence upon Augustine was both significant and persistent – perhaps, as J. A. Mourant suggests, 'far more persistent' than has traditionally been accepted.[18]

[16] Leo Ferrari has made an intriguing case for the young Augustine's fascination with astrology as playing an important role both in his embrace and eventual rejection of Manichaeism, and for the claim that Augustine remained a Catholic catechumen throughout his Manichaean years. See Ferrari, 'Astronomy and Augustine's Break with the Manichees', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 19 (1973), pp. 263–76; 'Augustine and Astrology', *Laval Theologique et Philosophique* 33 (1977), pp. 241–51; 'Halley's Comet of 374 AD', *Augustiniana* 27 (1977), pp. 139–50; 'Young Augustine: Both Catholic and Manichee', *Augustinian Studies* 26 (1995), pp. 109–28. The young Augustine's interest in things astrological, hermetic and Pythagorean has been documented; beyond Ferrari's articles above see Frend, 'Pythagoreanism and Hermeticism'; David Pingree, 'Astrologia, astronomia', in Cornelius Mayer (ed.), *Augustinus-Lexikon* (Basel: Schwabe, 1986–94), vol. 1, col. 482; Georges Tavard, 'St. Augustine between Mani and Christ', *Patristic and Byzantine Review* 5 (1986), p. 199. For a review of Augustine's relationship with astrology over the course of his life see Pingree, 'Astrologia, astronomia', cols. 482–90.

[17] John J. O'Meara, *Understanding Augustine* (Portland, OR: Four Courts, 1997), p. 15.

[18] J. A. Mourant, 'Augustine and the Academics', *Recherches Augustiniennes* 4 (1966), p. 95. Mourant has argued that Augustine's supposed 'Skeptical' period (see *Confessions* 8) was not precisely that. Rather, 'the evidence points to the greater persistence of the Manichaean influence upon the mind of Augustine. The doubts that Augustine experienced in this period of his life are not the doubts of a philosopher but those of a religious man. His doubts are directed to those Manichean principles that stand as an obstacle to the acceptance of Christiantity . . . . The Academics provided Augustine with the necessary means to challenge the Manichean position . . . The gradualness of the slow return to Christianity can be correlated to the gradual decline in the effectiveness of the Manichean influence. It is also a testimony to the strength of Augustine's Manichean convictions and the long hold that this doctrine exercised upon him' (pp. 77–8). It should be noted that some have questioned whether Augustine ever truly became a Manichaean. One can trace this charge to Secundinus, a Manichaean Hearer, in the early fifth-century (Secundinus, *Letter to Augustine*). While a few modern scholars have returned to Secundinus' contention, most rightly reject it. See K. Coyle, 'Saint Augustine's Manichaean Legacy', *Augustinian Studies* 34 (2003), pp. 7–9. On Secundinus' letter see J. Van Oort, '*Secundini Manichaei Epistula*: Roman Manichaean "Biblical" Argument in the Age of Augustine', in *Augustine and Manichaeism in the Latin West*, pp. 161–73.

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2. It was most likely during this decade that Augustine experienced his first serious exposure to the writings of the Apostle Paul – understood, of course, through a Manichaean hermeneutical lens.[19] This would mean, as Roland Teske has argued, that Augustine's request to 'study the Bible' in the early 390s is really a request to *restudy* the Bible in order to de-Manichaeise his prior formative reading.[20] More broadly, his prior Manichaean study of the scriptures would also explain the post-conversion negative reaction he had to certain Old Testament books of the Catholic Bible.[21] Both of these points will provide fuel for the claim that, even after his Christian conversion, Augustine remained in some way a crypto-Manichaean.

The crypto-Manichaean charge during Augustine's lifetime

According to Sir Leslie Stephen, 'Manichaeism may be disavowed in words' but 'it cannot be exiled from the actual belief of mankind'.[22] This very sentiment, personalised to Augustine, was repeated by his opponents from soon after his conversion until his dying day. No one can seriously question whether Augustine eventually rejected the religion of Mani and converted

[19] This means, of course, that Augustine would have been quite familiar with the Pauline corpus – and their Manichaean interpretation – well before the famous Garden conversion scene in his *Confessions*. The fact that he presents things otherwise only supports the now common assessment that more is going on in the Confessions than simple, straightforward autobiography. In the words of J. J. O'Meara, 'It is quite impossible to believe that Augustine had not read St. Paul fairly thoroughly – with Manichaean eyes, of course': *The Young Augustine: The Growth of St Augustine's Mind up to his Conversion* (Staten Island, NY: Alba, 1965 [1954]), p. 63. The consensus here is wide-ranging; see e.g. C. P. Bammel, 'Augustine, Origen and the Exegesis of St. Paul', *Augustinianum* 32 (1992), p. 348; Ferrari, 'Augustine's "Discovery" of Paul (Confessions 7.21.27)', *Augustinian Studies* 22 (1991), pp. 48–54; idem, 'Isaiah and the Early Augustine', in B. Bruning, et al (eds.), *Collectanea Augustiana: mélanges T. J. van Bavel* (Leuven: Peeters, 1990), vol. 2, pp. 744–5, 747; Coyle, 'What did Augustine Know?', pp. 50–1; Basil Studer, *The Grace of Christ and the Grace of God in Augustine of Hippo: Christocentrism or Theocentrism?*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1997), p. 101; Babcock, 'Comment: Augustine, Paul, and the Question of Moral Evil', in W. Babcock (ed.), *Paul and the Legacies of Paul* (Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990), p. 253; R. A. Markus, 'Augustine's *Confessions* and the Controversy with Julian of Eclanum: Manichaeism Revisited', in *Sacred and Secular: Studies on Augustine and Latin Christianity* (Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1994), XIX, pp. 916–17; Roland Teske, 'Augustine, the Manichees and the Bible', in Pamela Bright (ed. and trans.), *Augustine and the Bible* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997 [1986]), p. 210.

[20] Teske, 'Augustine, the Manichees and the Bible', p. 214.

[21] E.g. his reaction to Ambrose's request that he read Isaiah; on this matter see Ferrari, 'Isaiah and the Early Augustine'.

[22] Cited in Paul E. More, 'The Dualism of Saint Augustine', *Hibbert Journal* 6 (1908), p. 606.

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to Christianity in its fourth-century, North African Catholic form. There is no disputing that Augustine went on to become the most ardent and influential critic of the Manichaean religion that the Christian tradition has ever produced. His anti-Manichaean writings, largely penned during the 390s, are numerous and well-known.[23] Included among them is his *Confessions*, a text that, thanks to the work of Van Oort and others, we can now recognise, beyond its autobiographical and doxological aspects, as most likely an intentional anti-Manichaean polemical treatise.[24] What is in question, however, is the extent to which Augustine was able to purge himself of certain unconscious remnants of his former Manichaean worldview.

Tracing the history of this question is as fascinating as the search for its answer. To begin, we can certainly speculate as to whether Ambrose's request that the newly converted Augustine read the book of Isaiah was motivated by a suspicion concerning the sincerity of Augustine's conversion and/or a desire to expose any lingering, residual Manichaeism.[25] But speculation is all it would be. The first documented suspicion that Augustine remained a

[23] For helpful introductions to Augustine's anti-Manichaean texts see J. Kevin Coyle, 'Anti-Manichean Works', in Allan D. Fitzgerald (ed.), *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 39–41; Soren Giverson, 'Manichaean Literature and the Writings of Augustine', in Egon Keck, Svend Sondergaard and Ellen Wulft (eds), *Living Waters: Scandinavian Orientalistic Studies, Presented to Professor Dr Frede Lokkegaard* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum, 1990), pp. 63–74.

[24] Here, Van Oort explores an idea first suggested by Courcelle. On the *Confessions* as a primarily anti-Manichaean tract (visible as such once one recognises such features as well-crafted word-plays on, and allusions to, the Manichaean thought-world), see J. Van Oort, 'Manichaeism and Anti-Manichaeism in Augustine's Confessions', in Cirillo and Van Tongerloo (eds), *Atti del Terzo*, pp. 235–47; Van Oort, 'Augustine's Critique of Manichaeism: The Case of Confessions III,6,10 and its Implications', in Pieter W. van der Horst (ed.), *Aspects of Religious Contact and Controversy in the Ancient World* (Utrecht: University of Utrecht, 1995), pp. 57–68. See also the recent work of Annemaré Kotzé, including her 'Reading Psalm 4 to the Manichaeans', *Vigiliae Christianae* 55 (2001), pp. 119–36; *Augustine's Confessions: Communicative Purpose and Audience* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2004), esp. pp. 197–247; 'Augustine, Paul and the Manichees', in Cilliers Breytenbach et al. (eds), *The New Testament Interpreted: Essays in Honour of Bernard C. Lategan* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2006), pp. 163–74; 'Augustine's *Confessions*: The Social and Literary Context', *Acta Classica* 49 (2006), pp. 145–66; 'The "Anti-Manichaean" Passage in *Confessions* 3 and its "Manichaean Audience"', *Vigiliae Christianae* 62 (2008), pp. 187–200. In a forthcoming article ('Augustine Accused: Megalius, Manichaeism, and the Inception of the Confessions', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 17), Jason BeDuhn argues that one of the significant motivations behind Augustine's production of the *Confessions* was his desire to neutralise the lingering accusations of crypto-Manichaeism that continued to plague him. I am grateful to BeDuhn for making this article available to me prior to publication.

[25] Ferrari makes the case for this claim in 'Isaiah and the Early Augustine'.

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crypto-Manichaean can be traced to a letter written in 395/6 by Megalius, the Catholic primate of Numidia to Valerius of Hippo, when the latter was about to install Augustine as his co-adjutor.[26] While we have no extant copy of the letter, it is clear that many copies were circulating in Augustine's lifetime; both the Donatists and Augustine testify to its existence. This letter was eventually used by the Donatist Petilian of Constantine to challenge Augustine's ordination at Carthage in 411. An even more damaging piece of evidence is offered by Petilian, namely an extract of a letter written by Augustine himself – one which many theorise is to be equated with Augustine's letter to Paulinus of Nola in 396.[27] Here, Petilian interpreted the letter as saying that, during the time he was a candidate for episcopacy, Augustine had taken bread that had been contaminated by its use in Manichaean eucharistic rites and sent it to his Catholic constituents. Augustine eventually faced similar charges from other Donatists, including Primian and Cresconius. Even the Catholic monks of Gaul would come to wonder whether or not Augustine had completely shaken off the fatalism of his Manichaean past.[28] The general charge derived its persuasive force from the state of affairs in the North African church at the time. We have clear evidence that a number of individual Manichees and Catholics were mutually attracted to each other's religious views in a way that Donatists never were. Beyond this, there is evidence suggesting that 'a certain amount of secret Manichaeism persisted in the Catholic Church', sometimes even penetrating the ranks of clergy.[29]

[26] See Augustine, *Against the Letters of Petillian*, 11(10), 19(16), 20(17): *CSEL* 52.172, 177–8; idem, *Against Cresconius*, 3. 80, 92. For helpful discussions see especially BeDuhn, 'Augustine Accused'; also Frend, 'Manichaeism in the Struggle between Saint Augustine and Petillian of Constantine', in *Augustinus Magister: Congres International Augustinien, Paris, 21–24 septembre 1954*, 2 vols (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1954), vol. 2, pp. 862–3.

[27] E.g. Pierre Courcelle, *Recherches sur les Confessions de saint Augustin* (2nd edn, Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1968), p. 239, n. 2. This is, of course, only a hypothesis, and far from a historical certainty.

[28] As Prosper reveals in his *Letter to Augustine* 3, written around 427. See also *Letter to Rufinus* 3, 4. Marianne Djuth discusses this point in 'The Hermeneutics of *De libero arbitrio* III: Are there Two Augustines?', in E. A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica* 27 (Louvain: Peeters, 1993), p. 281.

[29] Frend, 'Manichaeism in the Struggle', p. 865; see pp. 864–65. Frend's essay on 'The Gnostic–Manichaean Tradition in Roman North Africa' is very helpful here. He reminds us that, at this point in time, North Africa contained three competing forms of Christianity: Donatism, Catholicism, and a Gnostic-Manichaean tradition. While the Donatists were quite insulated from losing converts to Manichaeism, the conversion boundaries between Catholics and Manichees were more permeable. In

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Whatever aggravation the Donatist charge caused Augustine, it is safe to say that it paled in comparison to that caused by the onslaught of Julian of Eclanum, Augustine's Pelagian nemesis of his twilight years.[30] There is little debate that Julian represents the most formidable theological adversary of Augustine's long polemical career.[31] The decade-long debate between these two men reveals that Julian was well-trained in rhetoric and dialectics. He was among the eighteen Italian bishops who refused to sign Pope Zosimus' condemnation of Pelagianism, and was himself eventually condemned and banished. He went on to find refuge in the East, where he wrote his eight-volume *To Florus*, largely in response to Augustine's *Marriage and Desire*. The final two volumes of *To Florus* have been lost to time. But thanks to Augustine's method (in his *Unfinished Work in Answer to Julian*) of quoting Julian's text as he responds to it, it appears that we have the first six volumes of *To Florus* preserved in their entirety.

It is interesting to note that Petilian's earlier charge does not appear to be linked to Augustine's theology *per se*. With Julian, however, Augustine's theology is precisely what is under suspicion. Julian minces no words when it comes to his assessment of Augustine's crypto-Manichaeism beliefs: 'You and Mani', he writes, 'have one and the same faith, but he is less impudent than you'.[32] Throughout their running battle, Julian suggests a number of points

North Africa, superstition and astrology were common, and thus Manichaeism's astrological elements could be particularly attractive. North African Manichaeism 'flourished' in Augustine's day, with a membership that included 'civil servants, merchants, lawyers, and not a few Catholic clergy'; Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), p. 661. See also Margaret R. Miles, '"Jesus patibilis": Nature and Responsibility in Augustine's Debate with the Manichaeans', in Sang Hyun Lee, Wayne Proudfoot and Albert Blackwell (eds.), *Faithful Imagining: Essays in Honor of Richard R. Niebuhr* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995), p. 7; Kotzé, 'Augustine, Paul, and the Manichees', p. 165; J. J. O'Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions*, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), vol. 2, pp. 34–5.

[30] Julian's works (e.g. *To Florus*, *To Turbantius*, etc.), of course, do not survive outside of the passages quoted by Augustine in his responses. For Julian's various charges that Augustine's theology retains Manichaean elements see Augustine's *Unfinished Work in Answer to Julian*, 1. 115, 123; 5. 25; etc.; again, see 4. 42 for the famous 'leopard's spots' quip. For an introduction to Julian, including a helpful bibliography see Mathijs Lamberigts, 'Julian of Eclanum', in *Augustine through the Ages*, pp. 478–9.

[31] The respected Augustine scholar Gerald Bonner identifies Julian as 'the most formidable antagonist that [Augustine] ever encountered'; 'Pelagianism Reconsidered', in E. A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica* 27 (Louvain: Peeters, 1989), p. 240.

[32] *Unfinished Work*, 5. 25 (trans. Teske, p. 549).

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at which Augustine's theology betrays Manichaean influence. His arguments present at least five areas of concern:[33]

1. Augustine's use of the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* to explain the rise of the evil will. Here, Julian suggests we have something very similar to the Manichaean doctrine of two co-eternal principles – namely God (the source of good) and 'nothing' (the source of evil).
2. Augustine's post-396 rejection of a robust view of human freedom and the Manichaean-like fatalism that results.[34]
3. Augustine's christology, in which he attempts to save Jesus from sharing either our inherently 'sinful flesh' or our 'desire' for sin. This betrays the signs of a mixture of the Apollinarian and Manichaean heresies.[35] For Julian, a Jesus without 'desire' is a Jesus without the human struggle against temptation. And that Jesus is not 'a genuinely human Christ but a "Manichean" one'.[36]
4. Augustine's overly negative views of marriage and human sexuality, reminiscent of Manichaeism's disdain for marriage, sex and procreation.[37]
5. Augustine's doctrine of original sin, both with respect to its generally negative assessment of human nature[38] and, more specifically, his particular theory of the transmission of original sin throughout the

[33] On Julian's accusation of crypto-Manichaeism against Augustine see Elizabeth A. Clark, 'Vitiated Seeds and Holy Vessels: Augustine's Manichean Past', in Karen L. King (ed.), *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), pp. 367–401; Gillian R. Evans, 'Neither a Pelagian Nor a Manichee', *Vigiliae Christianae* 35 (1981), pp. 232–44; Mathijs Lamberigts, 'Was Augustine a Manichaean? The Assessment of Julian of Aeclanum', in Van Oort et al. (eds), *Augustine and Manichaeism in the Latin West*, pp. 113–36; Markus, 'Augustine's *Confessions* and the Controversy'; Carol Scheppard, 'The Transmission of Sin in the Seed: A Debate between Augustine of Hippo and Julian of Eclanum', in Everett Ferguson (ed.), *Doctrinal Diversity: Varieties of Early Christianity* (New York: Garland, 1999), pp. 233–44.

[34] *Unfinished Work*, 5. 25 (trans. Teske, p. 548). As Robert Evans has noted, combating 'Manichaean fatalism' was a common activity of Christian theologians of the day; *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals* (New York: Seabury, 1968), p. 22.

[35] *Unfinished Work*, 4. 47–50; 6. 41 (trans. Teske, pp. 426–9, 718).

[36] Clark, 'Vitiated Seeds', p. 395.

[37] *Unfinished Work*, 5. 25 (trans. Teske, pp. 548–9). Following from this point, Julian also argues that, since Augustine believes that when two baptised Christian spouses procreate, they nonetheless retain enough original sin to pass it on to their offspring, he must deny that all sins are forgiven at baptism; Augustine, *Answer to Julian*, 2. 2 (trans. R. Teske, *Answer to the Pelagians*, 2, *Marriage and Desire, Answer to the Two Letters of the Pelagians, Answer to Julian* (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1998), p. 304).

[38] *Unfinished Work*, 5. 25 (trans. Teske, p. 548); *Answer to Julian*, 6. 21/66 (trans. Teske, p. 522).

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human race.[39] It is with this final point that Julian moves from casting his opponent as Manichaean in rather general terms and, instead, constructs a fairly detailed, precise and sustained argument. In essence, he proposes that Augustine's doctrine of original sin recapitulates the Manichaean philosophy/physiology of human reproduction and the inherent evil therein.[40] Similar to the Manichees, Augustine argued that, from Adam onward, in the act of sexual intercourse it was the male 'seed' that carried and transmitted concupiscence. This concupiscence – involving 'shameful desire' – was, itself, the just penalty for sin that was suffered by all post-fall human beings, Jesus excluded.[41] In Augustine's words: 'For a man first sows the seed in order for the woman to bear a child, and in that way *through one man sin entered into the world* (Rom 5:12), because it entered through the seed of generation which the woman received from the man when she conceived a child.'[42] Augustine is notorious for his refusal to embrace a particular view of the origin of the soul. Nonetheless, Julian points out that, when it comes to his understanding of the transmission of original sin, a traducian theory – similar to that held by Mani – is the only logical candidate. It is precisely this logical connection that Julian identifies and exploits.[43]

To his dying day, Augustine never ceased defending himself against the charge of crypto-Manichaeism. (Nor did he miss an opportunity to turn the tables on Julian, arguing that it was the Pelagians who had become

[39] Augustine, *Answer to the Two Letters of the Pelagian* 1. 4, 10; *Marriage and Desire* 2. 15, 34, 38, 49, 50; *Unfinished Work*, 1. 24, 115. Notable discussions of this aspect of Julian's argument include Lamberigts, 'Was Augustine a Manichaean?'; Scheppard, 'Transmission of Sin'; and especially Clark, 'Vitiated Seeds and Holy Vessels'. See also Paula Fredriksen's 'Response to "Vitiated Seeds and Holy Vessels: Augustine's Manichean Past" by Elizabeth Clark', in King (ed.), *Images of the Feminine*, pp. 402–9.

[40] Specifically, he compared Augustine's teaching in *Marriage and Desire* with (what Julian argued was) Mani's *Letter to Menoch*, focusing upon their similar views of concupiscence, etc.

[41] On the 'shameful desire' of the sex act see *Unfinished Work* 2. 45 (trans. Teske, p. 182). Contrary to some, Augustine's view of original sin would not have excluded Mary. While later medieval theologians read Augustine's words on Mary in *On Nature and Grace* (pp. 36, 42) as suggesting an immaculate conception, this is a misreading of the text. Augustine states that the body of Mary did, in fact, come from concupiscence (*Unfinished Work* 5. 15, 52).

[42] *Unfinished Work* 2. 56 (trans. Teske, p. 188).

[43] *Unfinished Work* 2. 178 (trans. Teske, p. 244). Here, Julian explicitly lumps Tertullian with Mani as well.

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the unwitting allies of the Manichees.[44]) But was Julian's charge really anything more than empty polemic? Was it merely a 'conventional bogey', the expected rhetoric of a Pelagian adversary making use of a now-infamous accusation against Augustine that had been forged in the Donatist controversy decades earlier?[45] Or was Julian on to something? Did he identify at crucial points in Augustine's thought something that, rhetorical hyperbole notwithstanding, revealed that the bishop of Hippo had failed to divest himself entirely of his Manichaean past? In recent years a growing number of scholars have concluded that Julian's charge – as overstated and polemical as it is – reveals that Augustine had, in some important sense, retained elements of his Manichaean heritage, elements whose source even he himself did not recognise.

The crypto-Manichaean charge in contemporary scholarship

Between his death and the end of the nineteenth century, Augustine's reputation was little troubled by allegations of crypto-Manichaeism. But in 1897, Albert Bruckner revived the charge.[46] Not long after, Paul More argued that Augustine 'never to the day of his death outlived the effects of this first surrender of his soul' to Manichaeism.[47] Within two decades, Luigi Tondelli reiterated the indictment.[48] By the 1950s, several scholars were arguing that Augustine was never completely successful in escaping the influence of Mani – an influence discernible, for example, in his notion of the 'two cities'.[49]

In the last few decades, Augustinian scholarship has increasingly realised that to understand Augustine one must first understand Manichaeism.[50] In

[44] E.g. see *Answer to Julian* 1. 3, 36, 42; 6. 66–7 (trans. Teske, pp. 269, 294–5, 298, 522–3); *Unfinished Work* 5. 25 (trans. Teske, p. 549).

[45] Evans, 'Neither a Pelagian Nor a Manichee', p. 233.

[46] Bruckner, *Julian von Eclanum: Ein Leben und seine Lehre* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897). For bibliography on the history of the crypto-Manichaean charge in modern Augustinian scholarship see Coyle, 'Legacy', p. 18, n. 81.

[47] Paul E. More, 'The Dualism of Saint Augustine', *Hibbert Journal* 6 (1908), p. 609.

[48] L. Tondelli, *Mani: Rapporti con Bardesane, S. Agostino, Dante* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1932), pp. 75–105.

[49] E.g. see Alfred Adam, 'Das Fortwirken des Manichaismus bei Augustin', *Zeitschrift fur Kirchengeschichte* 69 (1958), pp. 1–25 (repr. in his *Sprache und Dogma* (Gutersloh: Ruhbach, 1969), pp. 141–66); Lope Cilleruelo, 'La oculta presencia del manqueismo en la "Ciudad de Dois"', in *Estudios sobre la 'Ciudad de Dios' I* (Madrid: Real Monasterio de San Lorenzo del Escorial, 1955), pp. 475–509; Frend, 'Gnostic–Manichaean Tradition'.

[50] As noted by Coyle, 'Legacy', p. 1.

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the words of Johannes van Oort:

> More and more clearly, modern research has revealed the extent to which Augustine's life and works are linked to Manichaeism. His theology and philosophy would be difficult to understand without a basic knowledge of the 'Religion of Light', its hymns and prayers, its ethical and dogmatic teaching, its mythology and theology.[51]

One reason for this new awareness is the current renaissance of international Manichaean studies. From the discovery and analysis of the *Cologne Mani Codex* to the ground-breaking historical spadework of Samuel Lieu to the formation of the International Association of Manichaean Studies, it is a new day for Manichaean research. Another reason for this recent awareness is the growing realisation among early church historians that patristic theology and philosophy, Augustine's included, was typically conducted – and thus must be understood – within overtly polemical contexts. As one example: it makes all the difference whether one reads Augustine's *Confessions* as primarily a straightforward autobiography of a spiritual pilgrimage on the one hand, or as primarily an anti-Manichaean polemical treatise on the other.

It is within this context that the question of Augustine's crypto-Manichaeism has recently been reawakened. Two interesting – and when juxtaposed, ironic – observations can be made on the current state of the question. First, a growing number of scholars – including some who once denied it – are now concluding that, to one degree or another, Augustine's Christian thought-world was noticeably influenced by his Manichaean past. Second, there is no clear consensus about which areas of his thought reflect this influence.

The first observation is easy to document. While some scholars continue to reject the claim that Augustine's post-conversion thought is in any way tainted with residual Manichaeism, a growing number now argue that Augustine's Christian theology was, in fact, infected to some degree by his former heretical religion. Those within this latter group include scholars of the calibre of A. H. Armstrong, C. P. Bammel, William Babcock, Jason BeDuhn, Peter Brown, Elizabeth Clark, Kevin Coyle, Francois Decret, Leo Ferrari, William Frend, Robert Herrera, Gerald O'Daly, John O'Meara, Johannes van Oort, Gillies Quispel, Kurt Rudolph and Basil Studer. Their identification of Manichaean holdovers in Augustine's Christian thought range from a general mood of pessimism to quite specific philosophical and/or doctrinal

[51] Van Oort, 'Augustinus en het manicheïsme', *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdscrift* 47 (1993), pp. 276–7 (trans. Coyle, 'Augustine's Manichaean Legacy', pp. 1–2).

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formulations. The areas of Augustine's theological and philosophical thought most often identified as crypto-Manichaean – to one degree or another – include the following.

Augustine's general pessimism regarding human nature and free will

Scholars have long noticed the way in which Augustine's thought is marked by an increasing pessimism over his lifetime. Some have attributed it to the cumulative hardening effects of the various polemical battles in which he partook; some to Augustine's own experience of the power of concupiscence.[52] Others, however, have traced its source to the similar anthropological pessimism within Augustine's former religion.[53] As long ago as 1917, Buonaiuti suggested that 'It is therefore not untrue to affirm that his Manichaean fellowship left in the mind of Augustine a pessimistic background which was unconsciously brought to light again by the fervor of Pelagian controversy.'[54] Others argue that Augustine's radical shift in 396 on the question of human free will and divine grace – first clearly identifiable in his *Letter to Simplicianus* – can be compared with, and traced to, his Manichaean past. For example, Ludwig Koenen argues:

> It was Augustine's personal recognition of his own concupiscence and his Manichaean past which led him to regard free will in human nature only as severely conditioned by the consequences of original sin .... It seems that he did not forget that according to the Manichaeans the body is created out of concupiscence and sexual excess.[55]

[52] See e.g. J. Burnaby, *Amor Dei: A Study of the Religion of St. Augustine* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1938), p. 231; Rowan A. Greer, 'Augustine: The Pilgrim of Hope', in *Christian Hope and Christian Life: Raids on the Inarticulate* (New York: Crossroad, 2001), pp. 120–1.

[53] T. G. Sinnige, 'Gnostic Influences in the Early Works of Plotinus and Augustine', in David T. Runia (ed.), *Plotinus amid Gnostics and Christians* (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1984), pp. 93–7; Matson, *From Thales to Ockham*, p. 240; as well as the scholars noted below. For a voice in defence of Augustine, see Djuth: 'The necessity associated with ineffective choosing, though, must be distinguished from the coercive necessity that characterizes Manichaean fatalism. The former is a necessity of origin that is compatible with choosing, the latter a necessity of nature that is not': 'Hermeneutics of *De lib arb*', pp. 287–8. Those who question the coherence of the notion of compatibilistic freedom might, of course, take issue with Djuth's contrast.

[54] E. Buonaiuti, 'The Genesis of St. Augustine's Idea of Original Sin', *HTR* 10 (1917), pp. 174–5.

[55] Ludwig Koenen, 'Augustine and Manichaeism in Light of the Cologne Mani Codex,' *Illinois Classical Studies* 3 (1978) p. 161.

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Augustine's theological complex of the fall, original sin and 'concupiscence'

Following Julian, by far and away the area of Augustine's thought most commonly identified by contemporary scholars as beholden to his former Manichaean worldview is the nest of theological ideas revolving around his conceptions of sin and the fall, specifically his notion of concupiscence. Again, Augustine conceived of concupiscence as the divine penalty for the original sin, epitomised in the innate human tendency towards 'shameful sexual desire'.[56] There is no doubt that Augustine often has been unfairly singled out among the early fathers as inordinately derogatory in his assessment of human sexuality. Peter Brown, among others, has argued that, in the context of what we can call the 'ascetic paradigm' of early Christianity, Augustine's views on sexuality were actually relatively positive.[57]

[56] E.g. William Babcock writes: 'Augustine's argument against the Manichees had rested on the claim that sin, to be sin, must be voluntary, a free exercise of will . . . . Once he became convinced, however, that sin, after the first instance, is not avoidable, the shape of his argument had inevitably to change . . . . [H]ere, despite his best efforts, his analysis swivels between a position that, in effect, reduces the first evil will to a random outcome, a chance association between agent and act, and a position that, in effect, makes the first evil will a function of God's withholding aid . . . . In this sense, at least, he did not succeed in casting off his Manichaean past or in finding a strictly moral interpretation of angelic and human evil'; 'Augustine on Sin and Moral Agency', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 16 (1988), p. 49; see also idem, 'Comment', p. 261. John O'Meara writes: 'What is more, [Manichaeism's material dualism] cannot but have left its mark deeply on him, tainting for him any life of the senses with the suggestion of sin': *Understanding Augustine*, p. 15. Beyond these scholars and those discussed below see O'Connell, 'De Libero Arbitrio I: Stoicism Revisited', *Augustinian Studies* 1 (1970), p. 55 (see also pp. 50, 52); Lamberigts, 'Was Augustine a Manichaean?', p. 135. For several helpful discussions on Augustine's theory of concupiscence see Ugo Bianchi, 'Augustine on Concupiscence', in Elizabeth A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica XXII* (Louvain: Peeters, 1989), pp. 202–12; Gerald Bonner, 'Concupiscentia', in Mayer et al. (eds), *Augustinus-Lexikon*, vol.1, pp. 1113–21; Bonner, 'Appendix C: Concupiscentia and Libido', in *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies* (Norwich: Canterbury, 1963), pp. 398–401; Peter Burnell, 'Concupiscence', in *Augustine through the Ages*, pp. 224–7.

[57] Peter Brown, *Augustine and Sexuality* (Berkeley, CA: Center for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, 1983). Others who make this point include: John O'Meara, 'Man and Woman in Paradise', in *Understanding Augustine*, pp. 131–41; M. Lamberigts, 'Some Critiques on Augustine's View of Sexuality Revisited', in Elizabeth A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica XXXIII* (Louvain: Peeters, 1997), pp. 152–61; George Lawless, 'Augustine and Human Embodiment', in B. Bruning et al. (eds), *Collectanea Augustiniana: Melanges T. J. van Bavel* (Louvain: Peeters, 1990), pp. 167–86. On Augustine's views on these matters see also John J. Hugo, *St. Augustine on Nature, Sex and Marriage* (Chicago: Scepter, 1969).

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On the other hand, virtually all scholars acknowledge the striking similarities between Augustine and the Manichees with respect to the specific notion of concupiscence. As was pointed out in his own day, Augustine's understanding of the sinful concupiscence and its association with human sexuality is mirrored in the Manichaean religion, as seen in the *Letter to Menoch*, reportedly penned by Mani himself.[58] Augustine, of course, vehemently denied any connection. He argued that his views were in concert with earlier fathers, and that – ultimately – they were rooted in the clear teachings of the Apostle Paul.[59] Today, the obvious similarities not withstanding, some scholars argue that, since the two views derive from significantly different theologies, it is illegitimate to conclude for direct influence.[60] With Augustine himself no doubt, Marleen Verschoren asks whether the 'common root looked for between Augustine and the Manichees' regarding concupiscence might not 'simply be Paul?'[61]

On the other hand, a sizeable – and seemingly increasing – collection of scholars are willing to draw a direct line of influence from Manichaeism to Augustine at this point.[62] The work of two particular scholars can serve as representative examples. One of the most detailed, sustained and influential arguments here is that of Elizabeth Clark in her essay, 'Vitiated Seeds and Holy Vessels: Augustine's Manichaean Past'. Clark notes that, in his controversy with Augustine, Julian of Eclanum eventually moved from a general charge of 'Manichaeism' to a very specific charge – one that Clark argues 'gains a force it is too often denied'.[63] Specifically, Clark argues that Julian correctly identified in Augustine's notions of original sin, concupiscence, etc. an indebtedness

[58] For Julian's accusation see *Unfinished Work* 3, pp. 172–87. Frend notes that the Manichaean *Letter to Menoch*'s commentary on Paul 'stated that the evil of concupiscence was natural and permanent and was the origin of evil itself'; *Rise of Christianity*, p. 679.

[59] For Augustine's defence of his views on original sin and concupiscence as rooted in early fathers and/or Paul see e.g. *Answer to Julian*, bks 1 and 2; *Unfinished Work* 1. 59, 67.

[60] E.g. see Bonner, 'Concupiscentia', p. 1118.

[61] Marleen Verschoren, 'The Appearance of the Concept of Concupiscentia in Augustine's Early Antimanichaean Writings (388–391)', *Augustiniana* 52 (2002), p. 240.

[62] Beyond the scholars mentioned below, see Bianchi, 'Augustine on Concupiscence', pp. 202–3; 208; Bruckner, *Julian von Eclanum*, pp. 66–8; Brunner, 'Ontological Relation', p. 78; Frend, 'Gnostic–Manichaean Tradition', pp. 24, 26, and *Rise of Christianity*, p. 663; Kam-lun Edwin Lee, 'Augustine, Manichaeism, and the Good', Dissertation, Com, 1997, pp. 125–39; John J. O'Meara, 'Conditions of Controversy', in *Studies in Augustine and Eriugena* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1992), p. 310; Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature and History of Gnosticism*, trans. P. W. Coxon, et al. (Edinburgh: Clark, 1977), p. 370; Scheffczyk, *Urstand, Fall und Erbsunde: Von der Schrift bis Augustinus* (Freiburg: Herder, 1981), p. 205.

[63] Clark, 'Vitiated Seeds', p. 401.

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to the pessimistic and corrupting influence of the Manichaean notion of 'vitiated seeds', one that can be traced to the Manichean Myth of the Archons' Seduction. Clark concludes: 'In sum, although Augustine's general theory of human sinfulness since birth is found in "orthodox" as well as sectarian and heretical authors, the motif of seeds becoming mixed with evil can most likely be linked to his Manichean past.'[64] The influence of Clark's argument can be measured by the fact that Peter Brown – the definitive contemporary biographer of Augustine – has acknowledged that her essay has forced him to reassess the crypto-Manichaean question.[65]

A second indicator of the growing forcefulness of the concupiscence connection can be seen in the influential work of the noted Augustine scholar Johannes van Oort. In a paper originally presented at a 1986 conference, van Oort was hesitant to connect Augustine's *concupiscentia* doctrine and his Manichaean past. He noted that Augustine might just as well have taken the idea from a broader Jewish-Christian ascetic tradition. He did note, however, that: 'it is not impossible that especially in Augustine's emphasis on the *concupiscentia sexualis* as a *motus inordinatus*, in which the sinful nature of sexual desire reveals itself prominently, and through which sin is transmitted, we should see a relic of his Manichaean past'.[66] A year later, in a paper delivered at a 1987 conference, his hesitation has significantly eroded. He writes: 'But in the repeated stress on the fact that especially in the random motion the sinfulness of sexual desire is evident, and that through this random sexual desire sin is propagated, I can only see a remarkable conformity to Manichaeism.'[67] Since then, van Oort has consistently affirmed this connection.[68] Van Oort's shift in perspective is not an isolated case. Two other noted Augustine scholars, Kevin Coyle and Mathjis Lamberigts, appear to have made similar shifts. Where they once seemed quite resistant to the idea of making connections between Augustine and his former Manichaeism,

[64] Ibid., p. 400, n. 264; see also p. 391.

[65] Brown, 'Sexuality and Society: Augustine', in *Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 415, n. 109.

[66] J. van Oort, 'Augustine and Mani on *concupiscentia sexualis*', in den Boeft (ed.), *Augustiniana Traiectina*, pp. 151–2.

[67] J. van Oort, 'Augustine on Sexual Concupiscence and Original Sin', in E. A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica XXII* (Louvain: Peeters, 1989), pp. 385, 386, n. 30.

[68] E.g. see J. van Oort, 'New Light on Christian Gnosis', *Louvain Studies* 24 (1999), p. 38, and 'Manichaeism: Its Sources and Influences on Western Christianity', in Roelof van den Broek and Wouter J. Hanegraff (eds), *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 1998), pp. 46–7.

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they now acknowledge that the striking similarities must be acknowledged and accounted for.[69]

Augustine's post-396 predestination and grace doctrinal complex

Intimately tied to the last point is Augustine's doctrinal shift vis-à-vis the nature of divine grace and the workings of predestination, as first expressed in the *Letter to Simplicianus* in 396. Between 394 and 396, Augustine found himself wrestling with certain key Pauline texts – particularly the notorious Romans nine – in three different works.[70] While Augustine's study of Paul at this time certainly arose, in part, from his own internal motivations, it must also be seen in the context of a wider renaissance of Pauline study in the fourth century.[71] In the first two works, Augustine's conclusions followed the well-trodden path of all previous orthodox early church fathers – i.e. he maintained a strong doctrine of human freedom, and explained God's

[69] Compare respectively: Coyle, *Augustine's 'De Moribus'*, p. 53, with his 'Legacy', pp. 18–22, and idem, 'What did Augustine Know?', in Van Oort et al. (eds), *Augustine and Manichaeism in the Latin West*, pp. 54–5; Lamberigts, 'Some Critiques on Augustine's View of Sexuality', p. 158 with his 'Was Augustine a Manichaean?', pp. 120–31, 134–6. It should be noted that in 1927 E. Buonaiuti published an article in which he claimed that Augustine's idea of *massa perditionis* – the 'mass of perdition' which is the whole of humanity, apart from those whom God elects for salvation – is derived from his Manichaean background; see 'Manichaeism and Augustine's Idea of "Massa Perditionis"', *HTR* 20 (1927), pp. 117–27. While few scholars today are willing to make this same claim with any certainty, both Sinnige ('It seems probable that the idea of the massa damnata had its origins in Augustine's Manichaeism'; 'Gnostic Influences', 97) and Frend ('The rest of humanity, the "unredeemed mass" [Augustine retained the Manichean term], was destined for possession by the Devil and eternal fire'; *Rise of Christianity*, pp. 662–3; see also 'Gnostic–Manichaean Tradition', p. 26) have been persuaded.

[70] Namely *Eighty-Three Varied Questions*, qu. 68 (written in 394), *The Propositions from the Letter to the Romans* (395), and *Letter to Simplicianus* (396). For discussion see W. S. Babcock, 'Augustine's Interpretation of Romans (A.D. 394–396)', *Augustinian Studies* 10 (1979), pp. 55–74. Augustine began what was to be a massive commentary on Romans during this same period, but the project stalled at Rom 1:7 and was never resumed; see his *Unfinished Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*.

[71] On the importance of viewing Augustine's renewed interest in Paul in the 390s within the context of the wider fourth-century renaissance in Pauline study see Thomas F. Martin, 'Miser Ego Homo: Augustine, Paul, and the Rhetorical Moment', Ph.D. dissertation; Northwestern University, 1994, pp. 60–63; idem, '*Vox Pauli*: Augustine and the Claims to Speak for Paul. An Exploration of Rhetoric at the Service of Exegesis', *Journal of Early Christian Literature* 8 (2000), pp. 241–2. This renaissance of sorts was, in part, due to Manichaean interest in Paul, and the need for opponents (like Augustine) to offer counter-interpretations.

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election as predicated upon divine foreknowledge of (future) human choices, as opposed to divine preordination.[72]

In 396, however, virtually all agree Augustine's thought underwent a significant shift.[73] In that year, he wrote a letter in response to several questions about the book of Romans posed to him by Simplicianus, his former mentor and eventual successor to Ambrose as bishop of Milan. In his response, Augustine essentially recants his earlier approach, and moves to a view in which he locates the ultimate reason for the divide between two groups of humanity – the elect and the reprobate – as ultimately residing not within their respective human choices, but rather within the divine will itself. Decades later, Augustine would explain his reversal in his *Letter to Simplicianus* in these terms: 'I, indeed, labored in defense of the free choice of the human will; but the grace of God conquered, and finally I was able to understand, with full clarity, the meaning of the Apostle: "'. . . what hast thou that thou hast not received?"'[74]

[72] On the pre-Augustinian patristic consensus with respect to a robust doctrine of human freedom, even in conjunction with the exegesis of Romans 9, etc., see Peter Gorday, *Principles of Patristic Exegesis: Romans 9–11 in Origen, John Chrysostom, and Augustine* (New York: Mellen, 1983); Maurice F. Wiles, *The Divine Apostle: The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles in the Early Church* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 94–110, 135–6; Robert L. Wilken, 'Free Choice and the Divine Will in Greek Christian Commentaries on Paul', in Babcock (ed.), *Paul and the Legacies of Paul*, pp. 123–40.

[73] On Augustine's 396 shift to an essentially 'compatibilist' view of human freedom and his relocation of the cause of election from the human choice to God's effectual calling see Babcock, 'Augustine's Interpretation of Romans'; idem, 'Augustine and Paul: The Case of Romans IX', in E. A. Livingstone (ed.), *Studia Patristica XVI* (Berlin: Akademie, 1985), vol. 2, pp. 473–9; J. Patout Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1980), pp. 30–44; idem, 'The Atmosphere of Election: Augustinianism as Common Sense', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2 (1994), pp. 325–39; Gregory E. Ganssle, 'The Development of Augustine's View of the Freedom of the Will (386–397)', *Modern Schoolman* 74 (1996), pp. 1–18. The shift made by Augustine has been characterised by some as no less than 'revolutionary' – and not always in a positive direction. See e.g. Thomas Allin, *The Augustinian Revolution in Theology: Illustrated by a Comparison with the Teaching of the Antiochene Divines of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries*, ed. J. J. Lias (Boston, MA: Pilgrim; Clarke & Co., 1911); Rowan A. Greer, 'Sinned we All in Adam's Fall?', in L. Michael White and O. Larry Yarbrough (eds), *The Social World of the First Christians: Essays in Honor of Wayne A. Meeks* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), pp. 382–94; R. A. Markus, 'Comment: Augustine's Pauline Legacies', in *Paul and the Legacies of Paul*, 221–5. Carol Harrison's proposal that Augustine's doctrine of grace remained essentially the same throughout the 390s is unsustainable; see 'Augustine of Hippo's Cassiciacum *Confessions*: Toward a Reassessment of the 390s', *Augustinian Studies* 31 (2000), pp. 219–24.

[74] Augustine, *Retractions* 2. 1. 3; cited in Joseph T. Leinhard, 'Augustine on Grace: The Early Years', in Fannie LeMoine and Christopher Kleinhenz (eds), *Saint Augustine the*

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Augustine scholars have offered a variety of explanations for this fundamental shift in 396. Among the proposed catalytic influences are: Augustine's North African context, his new pastoral orientation, his renewed study of Paul's letters, his own personal experience of sin, the desire to nullify human boasting, a new vision of God's sovereignty, the writings of Tychonius and the list goes on.[75] For a number of contemporary Augustine scholars, however, his 396 shift on grace and predestination betrays not the embrace of a 'new' view so much as a retreat to an 'old' one – namely something akin to the pessimistic determinism of his former Manichaean understanding of predestination.[76] According to T. G. Sinnige, 'One of the most telling similarities [between Augustine and the Manichees] is the classification of human beings into the very small number of the elect and the great mass of men, who . . . will suffer damnation'. 'The "pattern of doctrine" here', Sinnige suggests, 'reproduces exactly the well-known gnostic one'.[77] William Frend argues that Augustine's 'Christian elect came to differ little from the

Bishop: A Book of Essays (New York: Garland, 1994), p. 190. For an introduction to the letter see James Wetzel, 'Simplicianum, Ad', in *Augustine through the Ages*, pp. 798–9.

[75] For various conclusions see Babcock, 'Augustine's Interpretation of Romans'; idem, 'Augustine and Paul: Romans IX'; D. Lyle Dabney, 'Nature Dis-Graced and Grace De-Natured: The Problematic of the Augustinian Doctrine of Grace for Contemporary Theology', *Journal for Christian Theological Research* 5 (2000), pp. 1–30; Paula Fredriksen, 'Augustine's Early Interpretation of Paul', Ph.D. dissertation; Princeton University, 1979, esp. 209–26; Eiichi Katayanagi, 'The Last Congruous Vocation', *Augustiniana* 41 (1991), pp. 645–57; Thomas Gerhard Ring's introduction to *An Simplicianus, zwei Bücher über verschiedene Fragen* (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1991); Judith Chelius Stark, 'The Pauline Influence on Augustine's Notion of the Will', *Vigiliae Christianae* 43 (1989), pp. 345–61; James Wetzel, 'Pelagius Anticipated: Grace and Election in Augustine's *Ad Simplicianum*', in Joanne McWilliam (ed.), *Augustine: From Rhetor to Theologian* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992), pp. 121–32.

[76] Beyond the scholars discussed below, see e.g. Brunner, 'Ontological Relation', pp. 78, 88; O'Meara, *Understanding Augustine*, p. 23; Rudolph, *Gnosis*, p. 371; A. Schindler, 'Augustinus', *TRE* 4 (1979), p. 658. Even Peter Brown recognises the striking parallels: 'To say, as Augustine said, that men felt their need for salvation only when stirred to do so by God, and that He has decided to stir only a few, appeared to counsel the blackest pessimism: it drew a line across the human race as immovable as the division of Good and Evil Natures proposed by Mani'; *Augustine of Hippo*, p. 401.

[77] Sinnige, 'Gnostic Influences', p. 94. A. H. Armstrong concurs in no uncertain terms: 'Here [with Augustine's later thought] . . . we are very close to the Gnostic view of the world at its darkest, and, though the figure of God is invested with a transcendent and absolute horror exceeding that of any Gnostic demiurge or even the Manichaean evil principle, his most eminent activity in the world in its present state is seen as the redemption and deliverance of the small number of the elect from its darkness. For the rest of humanity, of course, there is no hope at all, as God simultaneously with his work of redemption pursues his "awesome blood-feud against the family of

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Manichee Electi . . . . If Augustine drove both Donatism and Manichaeism out of sight, he may to some extent have perpetuated the latter in his theology of Grace.'[78] In a recent dissertation, Edwin Lee has attempted to flesh out this general observation. He concludes: 'Therefore, in total, we have shown a threefold influence of the Manichaean notion of the Good in Augustine's development of the doctrine of predestination: the context of *summum bonum*, the framework in *ordo*, and the deterministic factor exercised by *consuetudo* and *concupiscentia*.'[79]

Augustine's 'two cities' motif

The question of the inspiration behind Augustine's City of God – particularly the notion of two antithetical cities – has long intrigued scholars. Augustine himself points to scripture as the generating matrix. While biblical concepts such as the two kingdoms and two types of people no doubt exerted an important influence, a number of scholars have concluded that 'it is doubtful that Scripture is his one and only source'.[80] One commonly identified source is the renegade Donatist Tychonius. In the 1950s, however, several scholars argued that the originating impulse behind Augustine's 'two cities' motif

Adam"'; A. H. Armstrong, 'Dualism: Platonic, Gnostic, and Christian', in Richard T. Wallis and Jay Bregman (eds.), *Neoplatonism and Gnosticism* (Albany: SUNY, 1992), p. 51.

[78] Frend, 'Gnostic–Manichaean Tradition', pp. 25–6. In another context, Frend writes: '. . . [Augustine's idea of] the Christian elect would differ little from the Manichee "elect". Their "image" as the Coptic Manichee would have said, had been chosen out-predestined to grace and salvation': *Rise of Christianity*, p. 662.

[79] Lee, 'Augustine, Manichaeism, and the Good', 204. Recently, and along these same lines, Gene Fendt has suggested that Augustine's post-396 predestinarian doctrine leads to 'a deficiency in the love of God' and a 'return to a kind of Gnosticism'; 'Between a Pelagian Rock and a Hard Predestinarianism: The Currents of Controversy in *City of God* 11 and 12', *Journal of Religion* 81 (2001), p. 208. Fendt's conclusions are reminiscent of Julian's charge that Augustine's claim of God's arbitrary damnation of those he could have saved renders his justice meaningless; for a good discussion see M. Lamberigts, 'Julian of Aeclanum: A Plea for a Good Creator', *Augustiniana* 38 (1988), pp. 5–24.

[80] J. van Oort, '*Civitas dei–terrena civitas*: The Concept of the Two Antithetical Cities and its Sources', in *De civitate Dei*, ed. Christoph Horn (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), p. 164. Van Oort is no doubt correct that a multi-source theory is the only plausible explanation for Augustine's 'two cities' motif; see the published results of his dissertation, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine's* City of God *and the Sources of his Doctrine of the Two Cities* (New York: Brill, 1991), p. 351. J. J. O'Donnell, reminds us not to forget the influence of the very concrete historical context of Augustine's day – the sack of Rome and the refugees finding their way to North Africa; see 'The Inspiration for Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*', *Augustinian Studies* 10 (1979), pp. 75–9.

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was to be traced to his former Manichaeism.[81] There is no doubt that the Manichees referred to a heavenly kingdom – even a heavenly city – and the kingdom of darkness, or kingdom of this world. Even the language with which Augustine describes the two cities is reminiscent of the Manichaean descriptions.[82]

Perhaps the most extensive study of the sources behind Augustine's 'two cities' motif is van Oort's 1991 *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine's City of God and the Sources of his Doctrine of the Two Cities*. Here, he argues for a multi-source theory, emphasising that one does not have to turn to Manichaeism to account for it. Rather, the Jewish-Christian 'two ways' motif is a sufficient explanation, and that probably it influenced both Mani and Augustine independently.[83] In an article on the matter, written six years later, he still holds to the same conclusions.[84] However, in an article published the next year – in 1998 – he appears quite open to the possibility of direct Manichaean influence. He writes:

> there are many similarities between Augustine's famous and very influential doctrine of the two cities or kingdoms and the dualistic Manichaean view of the two realms, cities, or kingdoms . . . . These similarities in thought and even terminology seem to give some justification to the perception of direct influence here.[85]

Van Oort has continued to argue in this direction.[86]

While these four areas represent the primary doctrinal contexts within which most contemporary scholars identify Augustine's unconscious crypto-Manichaeism, several others have been suggested as well. These include (1) Augustine's construal of the *imago dei*;[87] (2) his formulation of creation *ex nihilo*

[81] Adam, 'Das Fortwirken des Manichaismus', pp. 16–25; Cilleruelo, 'La oculta presencia', pp. 491–509; Frend, 'Gnostic–Manichaean Tradition', p. 26.

[82] As noted by van Oort, '*Civitas dei–terrena civitas*', p. 165. Frend writes: 'Finally, the "two cities" into which mankind would become divided, were not merely "Types" as described by Tychonius, but in Augustine's hands they become entities peopled by good and evil elements, while the Kingdom of the Devil was portrayed as a place of smoky, noxious darkness, reminiscent of the Manichee's Hell'; 'Gnostic–Manichaean Tradition', p. 26.

[83] *Jerusalem and Babylon*, pp. 351–2.

[84] '*Civitas dei–terrena civitas*', pp. 166–8.

[85] 'Manichaeism: Its Sources and Influences', p. 47.

[86] E.g. see 'New Light on Christian Gnosis', p. 38; 'Young Augustine's Knowledge', p. 442, n. 2.

[87] Rudolph, *Gnosis*, p. 370; Kenneth B. Steinhauser, 'Creation in the Image of God According to Augustine's Confessions', *Patristic and Byzantine Review* 7 (1988), pp. 199–204.

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(a development of the charge already levelled by Julian);[88] (3) his notions of 'the Good' and 'Order';[89] (4) his articulation of God's Justice;[90] (5) certain aspects of his christology;[91] (6) his communal sensibilities;[92] (7) his use of specific imagery;[93] and (8) Augustine's own personal approach to the spiritual life.[94] Concerning the last point, van Oort writes:

> Probably [the] most important field of [Manichaean] influence seems to be Augustine's spirituality .... When reading Augustine's *Confessions*, for example, one is more than once reminded of the Manichaean Psalms .... In some essential features of Augustine's spirituality we may perceive one of the most important channels through which the Gnostic religion of Manichaeism has exercised a lasting influence on western culture.[95]

Augustine as crypto-Manichaean: toward an assessment of the charge

According to Edwin Lee, scholarly research into the question of Manichaeism's lasting effects upon Augustine's thought is 'still a virgin

[88] E.g. Koenen writes: 'Without Augustine's being aware of it, his *nihil* becomes an *aliquid* and assumes the negative qualities of the Manichaean *hyle*'; 'Augustine and Manichaeism in Light of the Cologne Mani Codex', p. 159.

[89] E.g. Edwin Lee: 'Therefore, in total, we have shown a threefold influence of the Manichaean notion of the Good in Augustine's development of the doctrine of predestination: the context of *summum bonum*, the framework in *ordo*, and the deterministic factor exercised by *consuetudo* and *concupiscentia*'; 'Augustine, Manichaeism, and the Good', p. 204. Gerard O'Daly: 'Manichaean hierarchies will have reinforced his assumption that the universe is hierarchical'; 'Hierarchies in Augustine's Thought', in F. X. Martin and J. A. Richmond (eds.), *From Augustine to Eruguna: Essays on Neoplatonism and Christianity in Honor of John O'Meara* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1991), p. 151.

[90] Frend: 'But, replied Augustine [to Julian], the justice of God was not the justice of humankind, God allowed the human race to be visited by his wrath. Disease, demons, catastrophes against which people were helpless were all around us. Thus had argued the Manichees also'; *Rise of Christianity*, p. 679.

[91] Lamberigts: 'It should also be recognized that in both Mani and Augustine the human or, better, earthly essence of Christ is at least problematic'; 'Was Augustine a Manichaean?', p. 136; see also van Oort, "Young Augustine's Knowledge', p. 442, n. 2.

[92] Coyle, 'What did Augustine Know?', p. 54.

[93] E.g. Coyle argues that Augustine's use of 'Christ as physician' is paralleled in Manichaeism: ibid.

[94] Already in the 1950s, P. J. de Menasce had argued that most scholars miss the residual Manichaean spirituality in the Christian Augustine; 'Augustin Manicheen', in *Freundesgabe für Ernst Curtius zum 14, April 1956* (Berne: Franke, 1956), pp. 79–93.

[95] Van Oort, 'Manichaeism: Its Sources and Influences', p. 47. He makes the same claim in 'New Light on Christian Gnosis', pp. 38–9; also in 'Augustinus en het manicheïsme', pp. 278–9.

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land of research'.[96] One of the most obvious signs of its fledgling state it that, thus far, there has been little in the way of a robust methodological proposal – including the requisite criteria – by which to make the type of judgements that are necessary. For example, it is far from clear when and how one is to judge a proposed point of comparison between Manichaeism and Augustine's thought as a significant parallel that betrays influence, on the one hand, or a misleading instance of 'parallelomania', on the other.[97] Typically, for example, there is little methodological reflection on the question of how to distinguish an instance of direct Manichaean influence upon Augustine from a case where a prior common source had influence upon them both.[98]

There is, however, one area of methodological development that should be noted. Several scholars have begun to refine the question of Augustine's crypto-Manichaeism in terms of the types of influence we might consider. Here, the rather simple and generally unnuanced theory of Augustine's 'borrowing' – consciously or not – from his Manichaean past is viewed as only one of several options. It is supplemented with other, more complex, models of influence. The final section of this article will briefly explore one example of this type of nuanced claim of crypto-Manichaeism within Augustine's thought today.

The specific issue in question is the aforementioned 396 shift in Augustine's thinking about divine grace, election and human freedom. The type of influence proposed is more subtle than a direct borrowing, conscious or otherwise. Instead, it suggests that in Augustine's polemical engagement with Manichaeism, he allowed his erstwhile co-religionists to set the terms of the debate in a number of important ways.[99] Perhaps the most significant of these ways, for the case at hand, involves the fact that Augustine

[96] Lee, *Augustine, Manichaeism, and the Good* (New York: Lang, 1999), p. xi. This volume represents the revised publication of his dissertation cited above.

[97] I am, of course, borrowing the now-famous term from Samuel Sandmel's article 'Parallelomania', *JBL* 81 (1962), pp. 1–13.

[98] E.g. while (as noted above) many scholars attribute a significant degree of Manichaean influence to Augustine's doctrine of concupiscence, Verschoren suggests that the similarities are due to a common source – namely Paul; see 'Appearance of the Concept *Concupiscentia*', p. 240. However, neither Verschoren nor those who argue for crypto-Manichaeism at this point offer anything like an in-depth methodological discussion on how to assess these complex questions. As we have noted above, van Oort appears to have changed his mind on this matter, yet nowhere does he provide a detailed discussion of what factors led to his new emphasis on the crypto-Manichaeism conclusion.

[99] Among those Augustine scholars who have suggested this sort of nuanced approach to the crypto-Manichaean question see Coyle, 'Legacy', p. 20; Lee, 'Augustine, Manichaeism and the Good', pp. 210–11.

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allowed his Manichaean opponents to dictate certain exegetical approaches and hermeneutical parameters for specific biblical texts that would prove to be crucial to the debate. The result was delayed but decisive: *Augustine would eventually adopt conclusions on divine grace and human freedom not unlike the very Manichaean views he initially set out to destroy*.

The background for this case is Augustine's two-day public debate with the Manichaean spokesperson Fortunatus, held in Hippo in August of 392.[100] As noted above, a variety of factors have been identified as the cause of Augustine's 396 shift. The view under consideration would not necessarily discount the fact that a number of these factors were in play. It would, however, place Augustine's debate with Fortunatus – and its eventual effects upon his thinking – at the top of the list. For centuries, common wisdom has had it that Augustine decisively won the debate. On the standard view, Fortunatus was effectively defeated by Augustine's use of the 'Nebridian Conundrum', which forces the question: if God cannot be harmed by evil, how do the Manichees justify their claim that He 'consigned a part of himself to combat with evil'.[101]

The view under consideration would argue that this bit of common wisdom is long overdue for a reassessment. Yes, it may be the case that by the end of the second day – politically and rhetorically speaking – Augustine

[100] We know of the debate from Augustine's *Against Fortunatus*; see also Augustine, *Retractions* 1. 15; Possidius, *Life of Augustine*, 6. For several helpful introductions and/or insightful interpretations of the debate see Malcom E. Alflatt, 'The Development of the Idea of Involuntary Sin in St. Augustine', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 20 (1974), pp. 113–34; Coyle, '*Fortunatum Manicheum, Acta contra*', in *Augustine through the Ages*, pp. 371–2; Decret, *Aspects du Manicheisme dans l'Afrique Romaine*, esp. pp. 40–5; Richard Lim, *Public Disputation, Power, and Social Order in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 93–6; J. van Oort, 'Heeding and Hiding their Particular Knowledge? An Analysis of Augustine's Dispute with Fortunatus', in T. Fuhrer (ed.), *Die christlich-philosophischen Diskurse der Spätantike* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2008), pp. 113–21. Here, I am also indebted to the work of Jason BeDuhn, particularly to an unpublished paper which he graciously made available to me: 'Did Augustine Win his Debate with Fortunatus?', originally read at the 2000 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature (Nashville) for the Manichaean Studies Group (forthcoming in a festschrift for J. van Oort). BeDuhn is currently in the process of developing his thought on (among other things) the lasting Manichaean influence upon Augustine in what will be a ground-breaking trilogy of books: *Augustine's Manichaean Odyssey: Conversion and Apostasy in the Late 4th Century*; *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma: Making a Catholic Self in Late Fourth Century Africa*; and *Augustine's Manichaean Shadow*.

[101] BeDuhn, 'Did Augustine Win?', p. 3.

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had won the debate.[102] Augustine tells us that he reduced his opponent to silence, with Fortunatus finally exclaiming, 'What then am I to say?'[103] However, as Jason BeDuhn notes, the standard view cannot easily account for three pieces of counter-evidence: (1) Fortunatus dodges the force of the Nebridian Conundrum by an appeal to several key Pauline texts that seem to support Manichaeism on this point; (2) Fortunatus effectively turns his own version of the Conundrum back upon Augustine;[104] and most important of all: (3) within a few years, Augustine had given up the interpretation of key Pauline texts that he argued for during the debate, and embraced an interpretation very much in line with Fortunatus'.[105]

It is this last point that is most crucial for our purposes. Three brief observations can be noted:

1. It appears that it was through Manichaeism in general – and now Fortunatus in particular – that Augustine was exposed to a reading of Paul that emphasised a view of divine grace that set it at odds with the robust (i.e. libertarian) exercise of human free will.[106]
2. We must not forget that the first day of the debate ended with Augustine on the exegetical defensive, an embarrassing conclusion to the first round and one not quickly forgotten by Augustine. Somehow, Fortunatus had turned Paul into an ally of the Manichaeans.[107]
3. Although, practically speaking, Augustine won the debate, the humiliation of the first day seems to have lingered with him. For not long after the debate, Augustine begins several years of intense study of Paul, and particularly of some of the very passages with which he was bested by Fortunatus. In fact, in both his *Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans* and the third book of *On the Freedom of the Will*, each written around 395, we

[102] Though, even here we must remember that the debate was largely staged and was anything but a fairly and impartially conducted affair. See e.g. Lim, *Public Disputation, Power*, pp. 93–6.

[103] *Against Fortunatus* 36.

[104] That is, Augustine's God is no less constrained to give humans free will so that they may be justly punished, than the Manichaean God is constrained to respond to the assault of the evil kingdom by sending part of himself – and thus human beings – into a world of suffering. In both cases, God is under constraint and is ultimately responsible for human suffering.

[105] BeDuhn, 'Did Augustine Win?', pp. 3–4.

[106] See *Against Fortunatus* 16 and Fortunatus' exegesis of Eph 2:1–18.

[107] Paula Fredriksen concurs: 'Though he lost the debate, Fortunatus apparently touched a nerve: from this point onward, Augustine proceeds against the Manichaean Paul by arguing exegetically'; 'Beyond the Body/Soul Dichotomy: Augustine against the Manichees and the Pelagians', *Recherches Augustiniennes* 23 (1988), p. 89.

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> find Augustine combining certain Pauline texts in precisely the same way that Fortunatus did. In short, Augustine has begun the process of giving up his robust doctrine of human freedom. He now concedes that, while the first man enjoyed unimpeded freedom, all of his progeny have been 'plunged into necessity' by the force of habit.[108]

As BeDuhn notes:

> Augustine combines Romans 7:18–19 with Ephesians 2:3, just as Fortunatus did in the debate . . . . [H]e combines Romans 7 with Galatians 5:17 – again, exactly as Fortunatus did in the debate. In other words, the system of internal exegesis of Paul that Augustine adopts is heavily influenced by Fortunatus. Augustine resists complete capitulation to Fortunatus' reasoning for some time. But by the end of the decade, he has swung entirely to Fortunatus' reading of Romans 7, and proceeds to go even further into a deterministic stance than that held by the Manichaeans. We can see, then, that Augustine opposes Fortunatus with a free will position he begins to abandon immediately after the debate.[109]

Thus, ironically – at least in terms of certain points of Pauline exegesis – the very Manichaean approach that Augustine consciously sought to undermine subtly shaped his own hermeneutical conclusions. It would not be the first or last time in Christian history when, in the context of a polemical engagement, the thought of one interlocutor was decisively influenced by the very conceptual world he was attempting to undercut.[110]

In conclusion: *can* a leopard change its spots? This analysis of Augustine suggests that, theologically and philosophically speaking, yes it can. There is no question that, after his conversion, Augustine fundamentally rejected the dualistic worldview of the Manichaeans and embraced the orthodox Catholic conception of God and creation *ex nihilo*. To the very end, he defended his

[108] *Against Fortunatus* 22; cited in Alflatt, 'Involuntary Sin', p. 129. See Bammel, 'Augustine, Origen and Exegesis of Paul', p. 349.

[109] BeDuhn, 'Did Augustine Win?', pp. 7–8. Bammel made a similar observation over a decade ago; see 'Augustine, Origen and Exegesis of Paul', pp. 349–50. Josef Lössl notes that Augustine's use of Romans 7:18–19 and Galatians 5:17 likewise parallels that found in the Manichaean *Letter to Menoch*; see 'Augustine on Predestination: Consequences for the Reception', *Augustiniana* 52 (2002), p. 265.

[110] A similar case can be seen in the attempt of sixth-century Origenists to distance themselves and even counter the Manichaean influence in the Eastern Empire. For discussion see Istvan Perczel, 'A Philosophical Myth in the Service of Christian Apologetics? Manichees and Origenists in the Sixth Century', in Yossef Schwartz and Volkhard Krech (eds), *Religious Apologetics – Philosophical Argumentation* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2004), pp. 205–36.

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explication of evil as he had laid it out in *On the Freedom of the Will*, locating its origin, not in God, but in the innate human capacity for free will. However, to side against Julian with respect to this rhetorical trope is not necessarily to dismiss his concern about Augustine's crypto-Manichaeism. *Can* a leopard change its spots? In Augustine's case, yes. But, as the case of Augustine also demonstrates, the erstwhile spots can also – and forever – change the leopard.[111]

[111] Thus, in certain respects, Gilles Quispel (review of Ries et al., *Epistole Paoline*, p. 404) may not be far off when he writes: 'Mani was always in Augustine's mind, consciously as his enemy, unconsciously as his twin'. An earlier version of this article was read at the 2004 annual meeting of the Evangelical Philosophical Society (San Antonio, TX). My thanks go to Jason BeDuhn, Jim Beilby, Justin Daeley and Julie Dahlof for comments on earlier drafts.

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