



## SELECTION AND ADAPTATION: THE POLEMICAL TREATISE *DE FIDE CONTRA MANICHAEOS* IN DIALOGUE WITH AUGUSTINE'S MANICHAEAN ADVERSARIES

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*Selección y adaptación: el tratado polémico De fide contra Manichaeos en diálogo con los adversarios maniqueos de Agustín*

Aäron Vanspauwen<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

*De fide contra Manichaeos* is a polemical treatise against the Manichaeans. It is attributed to Evodius of Uzalis, a friend and contemporary of Augustine. The most important sources of *De fide* are Augustine's anti-Manichaean writings. This article situates the argumentation of *De fide* within the broader framework of the polemics between Manichaeans and the "Catholic" African Church at the end of the fourth/beginning of the fifth century. More in particular, it will concern the manner in which *De fide* made use of Manichaean testimony provided by Augustine. An introductory chapter discusses several significant historical questions on the treatise. Subsequently, the debates between Augustine and his Manichaean adversaries are introduced. The third and most important section deals with several key arguments in the Manichaean-Catholic debate, and how *De fide* responded specifically to Manichaean testimony in its argumentation. A conclusion allows for a critical evaluation of *De fide's* purpose as a pragmatic compendium of anti-Manichaean argument.

The comparative analysis of this paper gives insight in following aspects of the African Church in Late Antiquity. First, it reveals the *modus operandi* and concerns of Manichaean preachers in their appeal towards a Christian identity; second, the inquiry into the selection of arguments from Augustine's oeuvre illustrates the reception of Augustine's polemical (anti-Manichaean) works in a contemporary patristic text. Although, in general, Augustine's example is followed rather faithfully, *De fide* did have the opportu-

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1 Ph.D in Religious Studies at KU Leuven, Research Unit of History of Church and Theology. Email: aaron.vanspauwen@kuleuven.be

nity to correct or complement Augustine's earlier statements; third, the paper allows for an evaluation of the efficiency, or, conversely, the futility of *De fide's* and Augustine's anti-Manichaeic endeavour.

**Keywords:** Manichaeism, Augustine, Evodius, Christianity, History, polemics, *De fide contra Manichaeos*, Africa.

## RESUMEN

*De fide contra Manichaeis* (Sobre la fe, contra los maniqueos) es un tratado polémico contra los maniqueos atribuido a Evodius de Uzalis, contemporáneo y amigo de Agustín. Las fuentes más importantes del *De Fide* son los escritos antimaniqueos de Agustín. Este artículo sitúa la argumentación del *De fide* en el amplio marco de las polémicas entre los maniqueos y la Iglesia "católica" africana hacia el final del siglo IV y el inicio del siglo V. En particular, se ilustra cómo el *De fide* utiliza los testimonios maniqueos proporcionados por Agustín. En un capítulo introductorio, el artículo considera varias preguntas históricas significativas en torno al tratado. Subsecuentemente, se introducen los debates entre Agustín y sus adversarios maniqueos. En la tercera y más importante sección del artículo se estudian varios argumentos clave del debate entre católicos y maniqueos, y cómo el *De Fide* responde específicamente a los testimonios maniqueos en su argumentación. La conclusión ofrece una evaluación crítica del propósito del *De fide* en tanto compendio paradigmático de argumentos antimaniqueos.

El análisis comparativo realizado por este artículo profundiza la comprensión de los siguientes aspectos de la Iglesia africana de la Antigüedad tardía. Primero, revela el *modus operandi* y las preocupaciones de los predicadores maniqueos en su intento por apelar a una identidad cristiana. Segundo, su investigación acerca de la selección de los argumentos provenientes de la obra de Agustín ilustra la recepción de los trabajos polémicos (antimaniqueos) de este por un texto patrístico de su tiempo. Aunque, en general, el ejemplo de Agustín es seguido de manera más bien fiel, *De fide* efectivamente fue una oportunidad para corregir o complementar sus afirmaciones previas. Tercero, la eficiencia o, al contrario, la futilidad del *De fide* y de la empresa antimaniquea de Agustín pueden ser evaluadas.

**Palabras clave:** maniqueísmo, Agustín, Evodius, cristiandad, historia, polémicas, *De fide contra Manichaeos*, África.

## INTRODUCTION

The topic of religious communication in polemic literature raises questions about a text's persuasiveness. The *ars rhetorica* of Late Antiquity was developed by the Ancient Greeks and Romans into an elaborate systematic approach to structure, argumentation, literary techniques and interaction with an audience (Walker, 2000; Pepe, 2013; Kennedy, 1972). This paper focuses on the argumentative efficiency of the polemical treatise *De fide contra Manichaeos* (hereafter *De fide*), attributed to Evodius of Uzalis. Evodius was a younger contemporary of Augustine, and, like him, was born in Thagaste (present Souk Ahras, Algeria). He met Augustine in

Milan in 387, befriended him and became one of his closest friends (Mandouze, 1982; Féliers, 1964, pp. 1-34). He was present when Monnica, Augustine's mother, passed away, and sung a psalm in an intimate funerary ritual: "As soon as we had persuaded the boy to stop weeping, Evodius took up the psalter and began to sing a psalm" (Augustine, *Confessions* IX,12,31; ed. Verheijen, 1981, p. 150; translation Boulding, 1997, p. 232). Afterwards, he returned to North Africa with Augustine and joined his community of laymen, first in Thagaste and later in Hippo. Between 397 and 401, he was ordained bishop of Uzalis (present El Alia, Tunisia). As a bishop, he played a significant role in several religious polemics, such as the Donatist controversy (Féliers, 1964, pp. 12-18) and the Pelagian controversy (Duval, 2003). In addition, if the attribution of *De fide* can be accepted (e.g. Vanspauwen, 2016, pp. 398-399), he was also a prominent opponent of the Manichaeans.

*De fide* is a polemical treatise written against the Manichaeans. Its argumentation is primarily doctrinal-biblical, and its author does not pay much attention to historical events in his anti-Manichaean argumentation. For this reason, namely the ahistorical nature of the treatise and its arguments, the general scholarly consensus holds that the author conceived this treatise as a pragmatic compendium for anti-Manichaean argumentation (Decret, 1991). His source material consists primarily of Augustinian source texts, although he also provides information on Manichaeism, which is not found in Augustine. For example, some fragments of the Latin *Epistula Fundamenti* and *Thesaurus*, two Manichaean canonical texts, only appear in *De fide* (Stein, 2002, pp. 34-41; Stein, 2016, pp. 34-35). In addition, some important Manichaean doctrines, such as the doctrine of Mani's divine twin (*geminus/syzygos*; Hoffman, 2001, pp. 77-78) or the divine Third Messenger/Ambassador (*tertius legatus*; Van Oort, 2016, pp. 115-116; Clackson *e.a.*, 1998) do not appear in Augustine's works, but are present in *De fide*. Thus, while surely the author was indebted to Augustine, he was himself familiar with many Manichaean teachings as well. In this paper, the treatise *De fide* will be studied with regard to its usage of Augustinian source material. So far I have been able to discern influence from Augustine's *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum* (387-388), *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* (388-389), *Contra Fortunatum* (392), *Contra Adimantum* (394), *De agone christiano* (396-397), *Contra Faustum* (400-404), *Contra Felicem* (404-405), *De natura boni* (405), *Contra aduersarium legis et prophetarum* (420), and perhaps *Contra epistulam quam uocant Fundamenti* (396). This article will illustrate in particular how *De fide* provided the African church father the opportunity to respond *post factum* to several Manichaean adversaries addressed in Augustine's anti-Manichaean works. It is difficult to assess the exact date *De fide* was written, although its dependence on *Contra Aduersarium legis et prophetarum* situates the treatise after 420.

## AUGUSTINE'S MANICHAEAN ADVERSARIES

This contribution examines how *De fide* incorporated Manichaean objections in its argumentation. In particular, the Manichaean adversaries to which *De fide* seems to respond are Fortunatus, Faustus and Felix. The Manichaeans Honoratus and Secundinus will not be considered in this overview, because the works in which Augustine responded to them (*De utilitate credendi* and *Contra Secundinum*, respectively), did not seem to have influenced *De fide* (see the overview of Augustinian sources given above).

Fortunatus was a Manichaean *presbyter* from Hippo. Augustine challenged him to a public debate early on in his career, in the year 392, when he was yet a priest. This dispute was important for Augustine's further development as a theologian. On the one hand, the debate marked the first public victory for the Catholic Augustine against the Manichaeans. On the other hand, in recent scholarly literature it has been observed that Fortunatus did have some valid arguments against Augustine's stance, and could have had an influence on the development of his thinking, or, in the very least, on the value of founding one's theological argument on a biblical source (BeDuhn, 2011).

Augustine was already familiar with Faustus when he was still a member of the Manichaean movement. Faustus, a Manichaean bishop, was a famous preacher, and Augustine looked forward to meeting the well-known intellectual Faustus in person. However, Faustus was unable to respond to the questions of Augustine. This experience discouraged Augustine, and perhaps contributed to his eventual departure from Manichaeism (See *Confessions* V,6,10-13). Later, Faustus wrote his *Capitula* between 386 and 390. The work was a pragmatic text, and included a list of Catholic objections against the Manichaeans (and their appeal towards a Christian identity), each followed by a model answer from Faustus (Wurst, 2001; BeDuhn, 2015). The genre of Faustus' *Capitula* is that of *erotapokriseis*, or "question-and-answer". The different questions do not seem to be structured according to an overarching logical development of argumentation. On the contrary, their order seems quite arbitrary and corresponds to the *ad hoc* nature of the genre. Each *Capitulum* dealt with a specific possible Catholic objection and constituted a finished whole.

The work *Contra Faustum* by Augustine is only a debate in appearance, as it does not reflect a historical dialogue between Augustine and Faustus. The work is a systematic refutation of Faustus' 33 *Capitula*, probably in their original order (Wurst, 2001, pp. 313-318). As Faustus' *Capitula* have not been transmitted independently, Augustine's *Contra Faustum* contains the largest corpus of extant "primary" Latin Manichaean testimony. The work was important to Augustine for three reasons. First, it allowed him to distance himself firmly from his Manichaean past. Second,

the genre of a debate would have given the impression Augustine won a resounding victory *publicly* against his Manichaean adversary, whose arguments were refuted time and again; in reality, however, Faustus was unable to respond to Augustine's objections, as he passed away before Augustine wrote his *Contra Faustum* (Decret, 1996-2002). Third, Augustine believed his *Contra Faustum* contained a final and satisfactory treatment of some biblical questions, as he mentions, for example, in book XVI of his *De ciuitate Dei*: "I have explained all this in my argument against the Manichean Faustus, and that, I think, is enough [...]" (*De ciuitate Dei* XVI,41; ed. Dombart/Kalb 1955, p. 547; trans. Babcock, 2013, p. 232).

Similarly to *Contra Fortunatum*, Augustine's *Contra Felicem* again describes a public debate held between Augustine and a Manichaean intellectual, Felix. While once again Felix proves himself a capable thinker (Augustine describes him as "more clever than Fortunatus"; Augustine, *Retractationes* I,34; ed. Knoll 1902, pp. 141-142), adept to respond to Augustine's objections, he ultimately surrenders. During the aftermath of the debate, Felix is said to have converted to Catholic Christianity. While this description does not entirely convince, Augustine's *Contra Felicem* does represent a historical debate, well situated in time and place: December 404 in the district of Gesta.

One question that comes to mind when discussing *De fide* in light of its sources is whether or not Evodius was present at these public debates. As has been noted before, Evodius was a member of Augustine's community at Hippo until he was ordained bishop of Uzalis, at the latest in 401. In other words, he was in Hippo when the debate between Augustine and Fortunatus was held. In addition, Evodius was Augustine's interlocutor in two of Augustine's earlier, more philosophical works, namely *De quantitate animae* and *De libero arbitrio*. Of these two dialogues *De libero arbitrio*, which reflected a discussion between the two in Rome in 387, had a profound anti-Manichaean undertone. Evidently, during these (and similar) oral discussions, Augustine could have informed Evodius on the Manichaeans. It is difficult to discern, however, to what extent this oral exchange could have influenced the treatise.

There is another methodological concern that needs to be addressed here, namely the authorship of *De fide*. While scholars see no reason to reject Evodius' authorship, it should be noted this attribution cannot easily be taken for granted. There are no testimonies on Evodius as the author of an anti-Manichaean treatise, and the earliest source which attributes the text to Evodius is the ninth-century manuscript (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 12219; see Vanspauwen, 2016, pp. 398-399). For this reason, the analysis in this contribution will focus primarily on the text of *De fide* itself. For pragmatic reasons, I will continue to refer to the author

of *De fide* as Evodius. However, it should be noted that it is difficult—if not wholly impossible—to identify Evodius of Uzalis with “Evodius, the author of *De fide*”.

With regard to its source material, the text of *De fide* reveals influence from several of Augustine’s “later” anti-Manichaean texts (i.e. when Evodius already left Hippo and was ordained bishop of Uzalis), such as *Contra Felicem* (404), *De natura boni* (405) and *Contra aduersarium legis et prophetarum* (420) (see Vanspauwen, 2019 [forthc.]). This seems to indicate the author of *De fide*—whether he can be identified with Evodius or not—was able to consult the works of Augustine in their written form, and did not need to reproduce the aforementioned oral exchanges by memory.

## DE FIDE AS A RESPONSE TO AUGUSTINE’S MANICHAEAN ADVERSARIES

### THE NEBRIDIAN CONUNDRUM

One of the most favoured arguments in the debate between the Catholic Church leaders and the Manichaeans was the so-called Nebridian conundrum. The argument is named after Nebridius, an old friend of Augustine who was once a member of the Manichaean movement but afterwards gave lectures against the Manichaeans. In his *Confessions*, Augustine reports how the Nebridian conundrum sufficiently debunked the Manichaean dualistic myth:

Yes, I had a sufficient argument, one which Nebridius had been wont to propose ever since our days in Carthage, which left us all shaken who heard it. Those so-called powers of darkness, whom they always postulate as a horde deployed in opposition to you: what would they have done to you if you had refused to fight? If the reply is that they could have inflicted some injury on you, it would imply that you are subject to violation and therefore destructible. If, on the other hand, it is denied that they had power to injure you, there would have been no point in fighting. Yet the fighting is alleged to have been so intense that some portion of yourself, a limb perhaps, or an offspring of your very substance, became entangled with hostile powers and with the natures of beings not created by you, and was by them so far corrupted and changed for the worse that its beatitude was turned to misery, and it could be rescued and purified only with help; and this portion is supposed to be the soul, enslaved, defiled, corrupt, and in need of aid from your Word, which must necessarily be free, pure and

unscathed if it is to help, and yet, since it is of the same nature as the soul, must be equally corrupt itself! It follows that if they admitted that, whatever you are, you are incorruptible (your substance, that is, by which you exist), this whole rigmarole would be shown up as untrue and to be rejected with loathing; but if they alleged that you are corruptible, their position would already be false and no sooner stated than to be condemned. (*Confessions* VII,2,3; ed. Verheijen, 1981, pp. 93-94; trans. Boulding, 1997, pp. 160-161)

Both Evodius and Augustine made ample use of the Nebridian conundrum. Augustine used the argument to great success in his debates against Fortunatus and against Felix. Both Manichaean interlocutors could not formulate a satisfactory response to Augustine's continuous accusations. For Augustine, their failure to respond to the conundrum proves his victory. However, this point of contention also illustrates how Augustine and his Manichaean opponents held conflicting conceptualisations of God. Augustine posits God's incorruptibility as a fundamental doctrine. His hermeneutical method, at the very least in *Contra Fortunatum*, is that of a philosophical deduction. Fortunatus argues in a different manner altogether. While he is able to understand the philosophical position of Augustine, he prefers two other types of arguments. The first is an existential argument, in which the experience of evil founds or confirms Manichaean teaching: "You do not want there to be a root for sin except for the evil that is found in us, though it is clear that, even apart from our bodies, there are evils in the whole world" (Augustine, *Contra Fortunatum* 21; ed. Zycha, 1892, p. 101; trans. Teske, 2006, p. 156; see also BeDuhn, 2011, p. 466); The second type of argumentation consists of a profound biblical foundation of Manichaeism. The New Testament, and in particular the Pauline Epistles, situate the existential experience of evil in a cosmological and theological framework. In their missionary practice, the Manichaeans emphasized the biblical texts that supported their dualistic thinking:

We hold what the blessed apostle Paul taught us. He said, *Have this mind in you that was also in Christ Jesus. Since he was established in the form of God, he did not think it robbery to be equal to God, but he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, having come to be in the likeness of men, and, having been found in appearance like a man, he humbled himself and became subject even to death.* (Augustine, *Contra Fortunatum* 7; ed. Zycha, 1892, pp. 87-88; trans. Teske, 2006, p. 147)

During the debate with Fortunatus, at one instance Augustine explicitly reflects on his and Fortunatus' different modes of reasoning: "Our listeners have imposed upon us the task of discussing in rational arguments the belief in two natures. But since you have had recourse to the scriptures again [...]" (Augustine, *Contra Fortunatum* 19; ed. Zycha, 1892, p. 96; trans. Teske, 2006, p. 153). Augustine's insistence on philosophical/rational arguments and his application of the Nebridian conundrum seem to go hand in hand. Philosophically, the Nebridian conundrum aptly refutes Manichaean dualism. However, through existential and biblical arguments, Fortunatus could present the Manichaean dualistic cosmology as plausible.

As mentioned before, Augustine and Fortunatus used different means to conceptualize God. While Fortunatus did indeed accept the notion of God's incorruptibility, he qualified this incorruptibility as follows: "for God is incorruptible and His substance is immaculate and holy" (Augustine, *Contra Fortunatum* 11; ed. Zycha 1892, pp. 89-90; trans. Teske, 2006, p. 149). Somewhat surprisingly, in the debate against Fortunatus Augustine does not once use the term *sanctus* in reference to God. In other words, if Augustine uses a more philosophical—in some sense quite distant and apathetic—image of God in his application of the Nebridian conundrum, Fortunatus corrects this image by stressing the good intent and sanctifying character of God. This image of God has moral implications as well, since we as humans are admonished to imitate the goodness of God.

The author of *De fide* seems to have paid attention to these subtle objections of Fortunatus. In general, he is clearly inspired by Augustine's application of the Nebridian conundrum. However, Evodius' approach is never strictly philosophical/rational. Likewise, he never neglects the morally qualified attributes of God, for example in the following fragment: "one God, almighty incorruptible, inapproachable, immutable, true, good, holy, clement, righteous" (Evodius, *De fide* 46; ed. Zycha, 1892, p. 973; trans. mine).

## BIBLICAL ARGUMENT

In the public debates between Augustine and his Manichaean opponents, Augustine is eager to cite Manichaean sources in order to highlight their estranging mythology and doctrine. His adversaries, on the other hand, are reluctant or even unable to do so. On this topic, Felix says the following at the beginning of the second day of the debate between him and Augustine:

And I have had in my hands no [Manichaean] scriptures, since none were given to me by which I might derive instruction [...]. I am asking for them now; let the books be restored to me, and I shall come



for the debate after a period of two days. (Augustine, *Contra Felicem* II,1; trans. Teske, 2006, p. 298)

Instead of basing themselves on Manichaean scripture, their defence is primarily based on biblical material. Felix is very clear on this regard: “You said: ‘I will destroy the teaching of Mani’, and I say, ‘*Every human being is a liar. God alone is truthful*’. The writings of God have spoken” (Augustine, *Contra Felicem* I,6; trans. Teske, 2006, p. 284). While one should not overlook the rhetorical and missionary value of this appeal to biblical texts (e.g. Decret, 2001, p. 61), their reliance on biblical citations is striking. In the public debates, the Manichaeans appear more biblical than Augustine. Evodius seems aware of this risk. At several strategic junctions, he inserts biblical material in order to defend the Catholic position. Often, these citations were previously used by Augustine’s Manichaean opponents.

One such case is the verse I Tim 6:16 (“It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honour and eternal dominion. Amen”; trans. NRSV). This verse was popular among Manichaeans, and was often incorporated in their confessions of faith:

Fortunatus said: “And this is our profession: God is incorruptible, bright, *unable to be approached*, unable to be held, unable to suffer; *he dwells in an eternal light* of his own”. (Augustine, *Contra Fortunatum* 3; ed. Zycha, 1892, p. 85; trans. Teske, 2006, p. 146; emphasis mine)

[Faustus said:] “We worship, then, the divinity of God the almighty Father and of Christ his Son and of the Holy Spirit, one and the same God under their three names. But we believe that the Father himself inhabits the highest and principal light, *which Paul elsewhere calls inaccessible*”. (Augustine, *Contra Faustum* XX,2; ed. Zycha, 1892, p. 536; trans. Teske, 2007, p. 262; emphasis mine)

Evodius responds to this usage of I Tim 6:16. In the opening chapter of *De fide* Evodius cites the verse more fully: “*It is he alone who has immortality* and dwells in an unapproachable light” (Evodius, *De fide* 1; ed. Zycha, 1892, p. 951; trans. NRSV; emphasis mine). This Pauline verse then functions as the foundation to reject the Manichaean dualism and affirm the unique transcendence of God (see also Vanspauwen, 2016, pp. 401-402). The appeal to Paul is essential in the opening chapters of *De fide*. Since the verse is so prominent in Manichaean confessions, it was both necessary and rhetorically efficient to explicitly restore the Pauline verse in a clearly Catholic and anti-Manichaean setting. Doing so, Evodius intended to

demonstrate that—contrary to what their missionary practice would suggest—the Manichaeans' appeal to Paul is fallacious.

With regard to the selection of biblical material, the Manichaeans show a predilection for Paul. Especially those fragments which most obviously evoke a dualistic worldview or which speak of the body in a depreciating tone are among their favourite sections. Two of these examples are found in *Contra Fortunatum*:

You claim that he was born according to the flesh as a descendant of David, though it is proclaimed that he was born of a virgin and was glorified as the Son of God. It is necessary, after all, that what comes from spirit be regarded as spirit and that what comes from flesh be understood to be flesh. Against this there is the authority of the gospel in which it is said, *Flesh and blood shall not possess the kingdom of God, nor shall corruption possess incorruption* (I Cor 15:50). (Augustine, *Contra Fortunatum* 19; ed. Zycha, 1892, p. 97; trans. Teske, 2006, p. 153)

It is clear from this that the good soul is seen to sin not of its own accord but because of the influence of the wisdom that is not subject to the law of God. For the same apostle goes on to say, *The flesh has desired opposed to the spirit and the spirit has desires opposed to the flesh, so that you do not do the things that you will* (Gal 5:17). (Augustine, *Contra Fortunatum* 21; ed. Zycha, 1892, p. 103; trans. Teske, 2006, p. 157)

Evodius cites both these verses in the 40th chapter of *De fide* (ed. Zycha, 1892, pp. 970-971). Although the verses appear in a different theological context, it remains significant that the author considers both Pauline testimonies as potentially dangerous and thus in need of a correct exegesis. Without a doubt, the Manichaeans' predilection for these texts was known to Evodius. In *De fide*, these verses are situated within a wider eschatological discussion, more in particular on the bodily resurrection. Evodius' argumentation is twofold: first, the current weakness of the body will be overcome in the eschaton; second, in the meantime the Pauline citations function as an exhortation for us to temper our bodily desires and subject them to the guidance of the soul. It is striking how the author, in his anti-Manichaean position, is willing to link bodily desire to a positive purpose: "he does not condemn the flesh so that we would consider it as if it were an enemy, but he admonishes us rather so we would subject it to us. Thus the flesh like a wife will serve the spirit in its desire to bring forth good works" (Evodius, *De fide* 40; ed. Zycha, 1892, p. 970; trans. mine). Here, it should be reiterated that *De fide* was probably written in the third decade of the fifth century, thus after the clash between the African church

and Pelagius. The length to which Evodius is willing to push an anti-Manichaean argument is therefore not without risks. In the Pelagian controversy, the African Church (including Augustine and Evodius) accused Pelagius and his associates of an excessive appeal to the free will and the capabilities of man, which risked neglecting the necessity of divine grace. In this passage of *De fide*, the exegesis of the Pauline citations sounds quite “Pelagian”. Subtly, the author averts the risk of being associated with Pelagian thinking by immediately adding the following: “which he says cannot happen, unless by the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Evodius, *De fide* 40; ed. Zycha, 1892, p. 970; trans. mine). This clarifying note is quite significant within the treatise *De fide*, as it is the only instance in which the author makes use of the word “grace” (“*gratia*”). It was challenging for an author of an anti-Manichaean treatise after the Pelagian controversy to find the right balance between a defence of human free will and the necessity of divine grace. Against Manichaean dualism and its presumed deterministic cosmology and anthropology, it was necessary to defend the non-substantiality of evil and thus the value of free will as the determining factor between good and evil conduct. However, an excessive emphasis on the defence of free will would, conversely, undermine the notion that salvation can only be achieved through Christ’s grace. The fact that this instance is the only moment in which Evodius explicitly uses the term *gratia* underlines both the importance he ascribed to the exegesis of these citations and the Manichaeans’ dependence on Pauline authority. Although biblical verses such as these posed an intellectual challenge for Evodius, he deemed it necessary to not neglect the Manichaean dualistic potential of these verses, while simultaneously attending to the concerns Augustine’s circle had with Pelagianism.

### MANICHAISM AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

Many of Faustus’ accusations against the Catholics pertain to their relation towards the Old Testament. Time and again, Faustus and the Manichaeans with him refute the Old Testament, claiming it is an immoral text. He was in all probability inspired to do so by the influential work of Adimantus. In the introduction to *Contra Faustum*, Faustus himself testifies:

Since their errors have already been more than sufficiently brought into the light and since the lies of the Jewish superstition and of the semi-Christians have been amply exposed, namely by the most learned Adimantus, who alone after our blessed father Mani should be studied. (Augustine, *Contra Faustum* I,2; ed. Zycha, 1892, pp. 251-252; trans. Teske, 2007, p. 69)

Adimantus, or Addas, was one of Mani's first pupils and had written a treatise in which contradictions between Old and New Testament would prove the falsity of the Old Testament (van den Berg, 2010). Earlier in his life, Augustine refuted sections of this treatise in his *Contra Adimantum*. The Manichaean criticism holds that Catholics are doubly erroneous when they claim the Old Testament is sacred and canonical literature. On the one hand, this means the Catholics identify with the immoral (according to the Manichaeans) lives and sayings of the patriarchs. On the other hand, the Catholics do not follow the precepts of the Old Testament, and are thus hypocritical in their acceptance of it. Faustus put heavy emphasis on the topic: of the 33 *Capitula* or model objections against the Catholics, 19 (*viz.* 1, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 30, 31, 32, 33) are explicitly aimed at either the refutation of the Old Testament or the defence of the Manichaeans' rejection of it. Evodius' silence on several often-discussed themes in *Contra Faustum* is striking. For example, Moses, the patriarchs and the Old Testament prophets are practically absent in *De fide*. The terms *prophetarum* or *patriarcharum* and the names of Moses and the patriarchs do not appear once throughout the treatise. Adam and Eve are each mentioned twice, and Evodius implicitly mentions the Exodus narrative by referring to Paul's I Cor 10:11 in *De fide* 38 ("and [although] the apostle Paul writes that everything happened to that people as an example"; ed. Zycha, 1892, p. 968; trans. mine). Nevertheless, these references to the Old Testament are only made in passing and do not receive particular attention in *De fide*. In addition, the author does not mention several Jewish practices—such as the Sabbath, the sacrifices, or food regulations—which Faustus often mentioned in his criticism. Perhaps Evodius was aware of the monumental effort behind a thorough and nuanced explanation on these topics (for example, Augustine's exegesis on the patriarchs in the 22nd book of *Contra Faustum* occupies 117 pages, or roughly a fifth of the CSEL edition by Zycha), and thought it better to not mention these topics at all rather than to deal with them in depth. Faustus had challenged Augustine to formulate his views on the Old Testament clearly and carefully. In order to accept a typological interpretation of Old Testament texts as prophecies for New Testament narratives, Augustine had to prove the literal validity of the Old Testament "type" first (BeDuhn, 2017).

Although Evodius is silent on the topic of the Old Testament patriarchs and precepts, he did dedicate a section to the defence of the Old Testament. Chapters 37-39 as a whole focus on the *concordia* between both Testaments. The author demonstrates the concordance in several complementary steps. First, both Testaments contain literary parallels. For the Old Testament passages that Manichaeans found offensive, parallels can be found in the New Testament. Second, evidence from the gospels and from Paul's letters illustrates how the Old Testament can and should be understood allegorically. Third, the New Testament miracles and moral

prescriptions could all be found in the Old Testament. The Old Testament prefigures or corroborates the New Testament narrative. In *De fide* 37, the author cites several short citations from the Old Testament:

If you want to inspect with an earnest eye, you would easily see the concordance of the two testaments, O Manichaeans. For you angrily get carried against what is written: *the spirit of God swept over the face of the water* (Gn 1:2) and *God saw that it was good* (Gn 1:10) and *Adam, where are you?* (Gn 3:9) and *a jealous God* (Exod 20:5) and *a devouring fire* (Deut 4:24) and *my sword* (Deut 32:42) etc... what you, in your amazing madness are wont to say: “where was God before there were heaven and earth?” And [he, another ignorant man, would also want to criticize] what is written: *and Jesus was amazed* (Lk 7:9), although nobody is amazed at something, unless he is unfamiliar with it. However, seeing that something is good does not reveal that someone is ignorant, but rather that he is pleased with what he did. (Evodius, *De fide* 37; ed. Zycha, 1892, p. 967; trans. mine)

The unity of these different Old Testament fragments is not immediately clear. In general, they describe God in supposedly negative or immoral terms (ignorant, jealous, violent). However, this explanation does not completely suffice, as it does not explain why Gn 1:2 (*Spiritus Dei superferebatur super aquam*) is included as well. In addition, for all other bible verses cited above, Evodius cites a New Testament parallel, but not for Gn 1:2. A comparison with Augustine’s *Contra Faustum* 22 can perhaps reveal more on this topic. The objections of Faustus do seem to have been mirrored in *De fide*, at least to a certain extent:

And it was surely possible that the same men impudently made up such great lies about God. For they say *he initially lived in darkness from eternity and afterwards was surprised when he saw the light*. They said that he was initially ignorant of the future, so that he gave the commandment that Adam was not going to keep. They said that he was initially *sightless*, so that he could not see Adam when he hid in a corner of paradise after realizing his nakedness. They said that he was initially envious and fearful that, if his man tasted fruit from the tree of life, he would live forever, and that he was afterward *seeking blood* and fat from every kind of *sacrifice*, and that he was *jealous* if the same sacrifices were offered to other gods as were offered to him. They said he was angry now at other peoples, now at his own, now destroying a thousand

men on account of slight sins that they committed or none at all, now also threatening that he would come *with the sword* and spare no one, neither a just man or a sinner. (Augustine, *Contra Faustum* XXII,4; ed. Zycha, 1892, p. 593; trans. Teske, 2007, p. 299; emphasis mine)

It is difficult to discern whether Faustus' testimony was typical for Manichaean preachers in Late Antiquity, or whether he was unique among Manichaean leaders. In any case, Faustus' testimony illustrates how a verse such as Gn 1:2 in particular could be included in a series of Old Testament citations in Manichaean propaganda. Not only did the Manichaeans criticise moral flaws described by the Old Testament, Genesis also gave an unsatisfactory description of the beginning of time. Faustus interpreted the Genesis narrative as if God "initially lived in darkness". This is irreconcilable with Manichaean doctrine. In Manichaean protology, the kingdom of good and the kingdom of evil were completely distinct, which excluded a scenario in which God was surrounded by or was inhabiting darkness. As Evodius had consulted *Contra Faustum*, he surely knew of Faustus' interpretation. However, he slightly modified the Manichaean objection. His cited "accusation" emphasises the Manichaeans' (wilful) ignorance or misreading of Genesis. The Manichaeans struggled to understand where, in a spatial and temporal sense, God was before creation. In a Catholic perspective, this question is not really pertinent. God is neither temporal nor spatial (see, on this topic, also the contribution of dr. Matthew Knotts in this volume); before creation, there was no time, for God created time (e.g. Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* I,3; ed. Weber, 1998, pp. 68-69); God did not achieve creation through previously existing matter, but created *de nihilo* (e.g. Augustine, *De natura boni* 26; ed. Zycha, 1892, p. 867). Although Evodius did not explicate all ramifications on the Catholic doctrine of creation, the Catholic and Augustinian interpretation of Genesis founded his criticism of the Manichaeans (Evodius, *De fide* 41; ed. Zycha, 1892, p. 971). Instead of providing an elaborate exegesis of the disputed Old Testament fragments, Evodius simply underlined Manichaean ignorance, on the one hand, and New Testament parallels, on the other hand.

## CONCLUSION

Did the argumentation of *De fide* convince its audience? Decret argues that Evodius' biblical argumentation was mostly futile. The church father maintained premises that differed from the Manichaeans' premises (Decret, 2000). At times, the author of *De fide* does admit that the Manichaeans hold completely different positions compared to the Catholic Church. He does not thoroughly reject the underlying foundation of the Manichaeans' "misinterpretation" of Christian tradition, however.

Ultimately, the African church—the author of *De fide* as well as Augustine—were unable to convince the Manichaeans through argumentative means and had to rely on imperial policy to achieve its victory over Manichaeism. With regard to *De fide*'s persuasiveness, Decret's conclusion deserves two corrections.

First, this contribution illustrated how Evodius had access to authentic Manichaean testimony. He was well familiar with their doctrine and scripture, and his anti-Manichaean argument did take Manichaean objections into consideration. While the outlines of the Nebridian conundrum were reiterated in *De fide*, the author subtly incorporates Manichaean criticism in order to provide a more nuanced image of God: not only was he a “philosophical” construction, an incorruptible principle at the foundation of all reality; the author also continuously underlined the moral goodness and sanctity of the “Christian” God. Evodius was definitely aware of the importance the Manichaeans attributed to biblical testimony in their missionary activity. Furthermore, he knew which biblical passages were fundamental for the Manichaeans. These passages are addressed at key junctions in *De fide*'s argumentation. With regard to the Old Testament, Evodius probably concluded that an elaborate defence of these texts would not be fruitful. However, he did not neglect the topic entirely. In *De fide* 37, he proved aware of Manichaean arguments in their rebuke of the Old Testament. As *De fide* was written after consultation of Augustine's anti-Manichaean works, the author had an overview of Manichaean argumentation. This also meant that he was able to respond *post factum* to convincing arguments made by his opposition and could accordingly modify and correct Augustine's statements.

Second, it is not entirely correct to limit the target audience of *De fide* to merely the Manichaeans. While the audience is indeed addressed as Manichaeans (e.g. *nam deus uester, o Manichaei*), implicitly the text was also conceived as a protreptic treatise, to provide his (Catholic) Christian community with a model discourse against Manichaean claims to a Christian identity, or—more broadly—against “Manichaean” (i.e. dualistic) interpretations of Christianity. Additionally, the treatise addressed the risk of a possible resurgence of a Manichaean movement. At least in part, *De fide* was meant to serve for posterity. For this purpose, the author made use of various Augustinian works and synthesised them in one easily digestible and well-structured whole. On this regard, *De fide* would have been more pragmatic as a model text than Augustine's dialogues *Contra Fortunatum* and *Contra Felicem*, or his elaborate *Contra Faustum*. While it remains difficult to assess to what extent the treatise *De fide* had success in converting Manichaeans to the Catholic Church, at the very least *De fide* fulfilled its purpose as an anti-Manichaean compendium in its reception. From the earliest stages of its transmission onwards, the treatise was included in a collection of African polemical texts against Arianism and Manichaeism (Müller, Weber, & Weidmann, 2008, p. 49).

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