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The Manichaeans of the Roman East: Manichaeism in Greek anti-Manichaica & Roman Imperial legislation

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Chapter 6: Manichaeism in Society

Children of Manichaeans have spread abroad; such heresies does the country of the Pisidians contain, and of the Isaurians; Cilicia also, and Lycaonia and all Galatia. (Macarius of Magnesia)¹

Some of these brethren < refrain from all mundane labor* >—as though they had learned this from the Persian immigrant, Mani. (Epiphanius of Salamis)²

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will address the question of which groups were attracted to Manichaeism in the East-Roman Empire, according to the available evidence. It has been argued that the factors that made Manichaeism particularly attractive in the Roman West were its critical, dualistic, aesthetic, ascetical, and sectarian appeal, as well as its relationship with astrology.³ Taking into account these factors, I will attempt a sociological classification of the groups to which Manichaeism was appealing in the Roman East. Examining the data given by the Greek sources, several suggestions can be made about the following parameters: religious profile, age, gender and social status. The appeal of Manichaeism to ascetics and monks (especially urban ones), as well as the relationship between Manichaeans and other ascetics, due to their particular importance, will be examined in a separate section of the present chapter.

As explained in the introduction, we shall follow mainly what the Greek anti-Manichaean sources themselves say, and draw conclusions only after careful analysis of *all* of the evidence.

6.2 Manichaeism as an Appealing Model: To Whom and Why

6.2.1 Religious Profile: Pagans and Christian Neophytes

At a time when the empire's religious profile was changing and traditional Greek religion gradually gave way to Christianity, it seems that Manichaeism—which presented itself as a higher, more perfect, form of Christianity—was an attractive religious option for Christian neophytes (catechumens or believers), as well as for pagans. This is reported not only by Christian authors, but also by our main non-Christian witness, Alexander of Lycopolis. Alexander's work testifies that the Manichaean missions were successful among the pagans of Egypt. Especially Lycopolis (the birthplace of Plotinus and centre of Gnosticism), must have been a major centre of Manichaean propaganda since the middle of third century.⁴ As

¹ Macarius of Magnesia, *Apocriticus*, 3.151.25–28, §25 (Grafer, modified). For the original text in Greek see section 6.3.1.

² Epiphanius, *Pan.* 80.4.3 (Williams, 648). For the original text in Greek see section 6.3.2.

³ Lieu 1992, 151–191. On Manichaean attractiveness, see Chadwick 1990, 203–22.

⁴ Stroumsa 1992, 338. As van Lindt (1992, 229) remarks, “all scholars agree that two main centers of Manichaeism were established in Egypt: one at Alexandria and a second in the neighbourhood of Lycopolis (Assiut)”. According to Lieu (1994, 93): “It is very probable that the Manichaean community at Kellis was an offshoot of that at Lycopolis”. Contra Lieu, van Lindt argues that “on the basis of the new discoveries in Egypt, one may presume that the local center was situated in the Dakhleh Oasis, east of Assiut where the road to the oasis starts” (229, fn.79). Cf. Brand (2019, 182, fn. 80), on Kellis – Lycopolis relationship.

mentioned in ch.[4], the Manichaean missionaries that Alexander met are described by him as people invoking the fables of the Greek poets and the ideas of the Greek philosophers. This attracted educated pagans to their movement and among them were some of Alexander's fellow philosophers.⁵ Although Alexander claimed that the Manichaeans misinterpreted the Greek philosophers, their repertoire undoubtedly exerted a critical appeal and was an attractive factor for pagans with philosophical tendencies.⁶

Writing around 326, the Egyptian Serapion of Thmuis, in his work *Contra Manichaeos*, appears to be especially concerned about pagans who had only recently converted to Christianity.⁷ He feared that their faith needed to be fortified against Manichaean propaganda, for he considered these recent converts a precarious group particularly vulnerable to apostasy and to conversion to Manichaeism. It is possible that Serapion was also addressing those pagans who were (in principle) open to conversion to Christianity, but still had doubts about some issues, such as accepting the OT. When Serapion composed his treatise, pagans were still the majority in the empire, and were especially well represented among most officials in administrative functions. That Serapion's work addressed pagans is suggested by the fact that he criticizes the Manichaean cosmogony with the same arguments that Alexander used.⁸ Yet unlike Alexander, Serapion states that he will not talk about the Manichaean's invented legends, such as the battles of the giants (γιγαντομαχίας), the emanations (τάς προβολάς) of the powers of light, the fighting (τάς μάχας) etc.; according to him, these fables resemble the chatter of elderly women.⁹ Serapion's statement gives the impression that he was aware of Alexander's treatise. Addressing an audience with the same concerns and preoccupations, Serapion seems to refer to Alexander's work and to declare that he will not tell them what Alexander had already said.

The main topic in Serapion's treatise is the age-old question concerning the origin of evil, and the Manichaean answers to it. Yet, although Serapion was a student and a friend of Anthony, the famous ascetic, his explanations for the existence of evil in the world largely avoided references to the forces of evil, which are so prominent in ascetic literature.¹⁰ Serapion refers to the Devil only once, in order to refute the Manichaean idea that the human body originates from the Devil. His argumentation is philosophical, emphasizing human free will and free agency, a line of argumentation that Titus of Bostra further developed.¹¹ The

⁵ Alexander, *Tract. Man.* 5.15-19.

⁶ Lieu 1992, 152-53, 165. For the success of Manichaean mission among pagan intellectuals see also Lieu 1994, 94; Gardner and Lieu 2004, 38. As Pedersen (2004, 161) remarks, Alexander's presentation "appears to be adapted to people with a more philosophical taste in that the names of the Manichaean gods/hypostasings of the deity are for the most part replaced by philosophical concepts".

⁷ Serapion was the cultural 'product' of two different types of education. On the one hand he was cultivated with Greek philosophical education and on the other he was a student of the narrow circle of Antonius' disciples. He knew and used Manichaean technical terms, such as: 'roots/ρίζες', 'emanations/πρόοδοι/couriers', 'archons of evil/οἱ τῆς πονηρίας ἄρχοντες', that the OT is a creation of 'πονηροῦ τινος, ἀφεγγοῦς, ὅλου σκότους'.

⁸ See for example his criticism on Manichaean literalism; cf. Serapion, c. *Manichaeos* 33, 42.

⁹ Serapion, c. *Manichaeos* 35-36: Ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ γραῶδῃ καὶ μυθῶδῃ φθέγγονται, οὔτε ἂ λέγουσιν εἰδότες [...] Καὶ τοιοῦτου μὲν τοιοῦτος ὁ ἔλεγχος, ἵνα πολλὴν συστείλωμεν ὁμίλιαν, τὰς προβολὰς αὐτῶν, τὰς μάχας, τὰς μυθοποιῆας ἐκεῖνας καὶ γιγαντομαχίας σιωπῶντες.

¹⁰ The AA deals with the same issues. Probably, both were written during the same period (firstly Serapion). Nevertheless, in AA there is a detailed discussion about devil, as an autonomous entity which exists in man's life (not as an equal to Good power) using his free will.

¹¹ See ch.[5], section 5.3.2. As Dix (1932, 236) comments, Serapion's "treatise shows the mind of a well-educated Greek theologian of a philosophic and dialectical piety rather than a mystic".

philosophical language and rationale he employed strongly suggest that the audience he aimed to address was educated in Greek culture.

Apart from dualism and its impact on anthropology, the other major topic that Serapion elaborates upon is the defence of the OT against attacks by the followers of Valentinus, Manichaios, and Marcion.¹² However, as Serapion states, he will not present the argumentation of those heretics in detail “lest their theses will be attracting”.¹³ This suggests two things: the first is that Manichaean arguments (combating OT) were convincing to some, and the second is that Serapion’s audience were Christians of gentile origin, and not of Jewish origin. The OT was a “major obstacle” to the Christianization of the pagans and the Manichaean polemic against it was a great advantage in favour of the Manichaean mission among pagans.¹⁴ In the AA, Mani’s criticism of the OT appears to have persuaded “some simple folk” from the audience “as he spoke”.¹⁵ This forced Diodorus to seek the assistance of bishop Archelaus’ authority and competence in order to convince them that the “Law of Moses does not belong [...] to the evil prince”, as Mani had claimed.¹⁶

As Pedersen underlines, both Alexander’s and Titus’ works are a presentation of Manichaeism for philosophically educated circles.¹⁷ The same is true, I argue, for Serapion’s work. The use of philosophical terminology and concepts, especially in his interpretation of the origin of evil, as well as the rejection of the OT exerted a powerful pull on such circles.

In the middle of the fourth century, when Cyril delivered his lectures to the Christian catechumens in Jerusalem, the religious setting was different. Christianity had already been promoted by the emperors for two to three decades, being the favoured religion (but not yet the official religion of the Empire), and the number of Christian catechumens steadily increased. Cyril’s sixth lecture, devoted to the Manichaeans, as well as the multitude of references to Manichaeans that appear in all his speeches show that the Christian catechumens were susceptible to what Cyril saw as Manichaean propaganda. The theme of his sixth lecture, entitled *About God’s Monarchy*, was the interpretation of the first article of the Nicene Creed: “I believe in one God...”. Instead of arguing in favour of monotheism by attacking polytheism, as would be expected, Cyril instead targeted dualism: “Heretics dare to say that there are two gods, and two sources, those of good and evil, which were not born”.¹⁸ The most plausible background to this is that Cyril was aware of the appeal of Manichaean dualism to many. He seems afraid of the fact that the idea of evil as the first principle responsible for the existence of all the evil in the world was more convincing (and comforting) to many than the Christian position that God is one and that he is good.¹⁹

Titus of Bostra continues along these lines; for him too, the two religious groups of pagans and of Christian neophytes were also more at risk of being charmed by Manichaean propaganda. In the first two books of his *Contra Manichaeos* (363-377/8), Titus addresses the pagans of Bostra who, it seems, were still numerous even in the last quarter of the fourth century. His argumentation is based on the ‘common notions’ (*κοιναί ἔννοιαι*) through which,

¹² Serapion of Thmuis, c. *Manichaeos* 37-50.

¹³ Serapion of Thmuis, c. *Manichaeos*, 40: μή ταύτης τῆς ὑποθέσεως ἡμᾶς ἐλκούσης.

¹⁴ See Lieu 1992, 158, 155-58.

¹⁵ AA 45.6 (Vermes, 114).

¹⁶ AA 44.6 (Vermes, 112); AA 52.5 (Vermes 124). AA 44.3.

¹⁷ Pedersen 2004, 88.

¹⁸ Cyril, *Catech.* 6.13.1-2: Ἐτόλμησαν αἰρετικοὶ λέγειν δύο θεοὺς, καὶ δύο πηγὰς ἀγαθοῦ τε καὶ κακοῦ, καὶ ταύτας ἀγεννήτους [εἶναι].

¹⁹ As Cyril points out (*Catech.* 6.20.8-11), those who are outside the Church (μᾶλλον δὲ τοὺς ἐκτὸς τῆς ἐκκλησίας) are in danger due to the Manichaean propaganda.

as he says, he aims to empower the minds of the pagans against Manichaeans.²⁰ This suggests that Manichaean arguments were convincing and appealing to some pagans. Titus' evidence also confirms the view that Manichaean missionaries were particularly active in communities with a strong pagan element. Indeed, Bostra was the site of intense confrontation between pagans and Christians, and Titus had problems with the pagans induced by Julian.²¹ Thus, Pedersen argues that there may have been an alliance between the pagans and the Manichaeans of the city which threatened the position of the Catholic Christians.²² In his other two books, which are addressed to Christians, Titus' argumentation is based on the Christian Scriptures. He considers that the Christians who are more likely to apostatize to Manichaeism are those who either find it difficult to understand the Christian position in the discourse 'concerning the origin of Evil', or those who reject it. As Titus confesses in his fourth book, he hopes that his analysis of the concept of evil would be beneficial to the Christians who are uncertain about this issue.²³ This shows that in the discourse regarding evil there was fertile ground for Manichaean mission.

As shown in ch.[5], Titus refutes Manichaean dualism by claiming that the existence of evil in the world is neither due to an independent first evil principle nor due to man's evil nature, but is only realized through the actions of men. In the books addressed to the pagans, Titus uses arguments from Aristotelian ethics (possibly using the *Nicomachean Ethics*) in order to defend man's free will. One gets the impression that his readers were familiar with Platonic, Neoplatonic or Plotinian perceptions, which were characterized by a certain aversion to materiality and the human flesh, and thus had some ideological affinity with Manichaean dualism. For example, Titus argues strongly against the view that the body is a prison for the soul.²⁴ In the books he addressed to the Christians, the basis of Titus' argumentation is a reinterpretation of the Paradise narrative. Here again, it seems that Titus' readers were influenced by and familiar with Neoplatonism and Plotinus. Such theoretical positions within Christianity were expressed by theologians like Evagrius Ponticus, who had a great influence on ascetic environments and ascetic literature. Titus, in contrast to other more pessimistic Christian interpretations of the Paradise narrative, which disdain the human body, supported the integrity of human nature after the fall.²⁵

Thus, it seems wholly plausible that the target audience of Titus was philosophically educated pagans and Christians, and more specifically, Neoplatonist pagans and Christian ascetics or mystics. The latter were Christians who in their anthropology emphasized the 'fallen' human nature as a result of the original sin. Both audiences represented trends in which there was an intense polarity between body and soul.

An additional factor attracting pagans and Christian neophytes to Manichaeism was its ascetical appeal.²⁶ Dress codes, for example, played an important role in promoting their ideas. As Titus observes, "in appearance the Manichaeans resemble ascetics or philosophers,

²⁰ Titus of Bostra, c. *Manichaeos* 3.1.1-5.

²¹ Flavius Claudius Julianus, *Ep.* 114: "Ιουλιανὸς Βοστρονηοῖς".

²² Pedersen 2004, 4.

²³ Pedersen 2004, 60.

²⁴ Titus of Bostra, c. *Manichaeos* 1.17.25-26: σῶμα δὲ καὶ τὴν σάρκα τῆς ὕλης, πῆ μὲν κατέχουσιν ὡς ἐν εἰρκτῇ τὴν ψυχὴν; 1.38.1-5: Ἐπειδὴ καὶ λόγος ἕτερος καταγέλαστός ἐστι τοῦ μανέντος, ὡς οἱ τῆς ὕλης, ἀντεμνηχανήσαντο τῆς σαρκὸς τὴν κατασκευὴν, δεσμὸν μέγιστον ταῖς ψυχαῖς. Cf. 2.1-14 & 3.5. Cf. Pedersen 2004, 263.

²⁵ Cf. Pedersen 2004, 320-65, esp. 349-65.

²⁶ Cf. Lieu 1992, 180-187 (The ascetical appeal of Manichaeism).

but that is simply hypocrisy, a cover for magic and secret felonies (4.43)".²⁷ He declares that with his arguments he intends to persuade those pagans and Christians who were fascinated by the asceticism of the Manichaeans. However, as he confesses towards the end of his work, he had little hope of convincing "those who have been totally captured by Manichaeism". His hopes were on the strongest, those who had been immunized against it;²⁸ those who, like Augustine, were restless in nature and in their spiritual quest ended up being dissatisfied with Manichaeism.

The account of Mark the Deacon about the activities of the Manichaean missionary Julia from Antioch, who came to Gaza (ca. 400) in order to proselytize Christian neophytes, "confirms the view that Manichaeism had a special appeal to those recently converted".²⁹ As Mark the Deacon recounts, Julia entered into the Church undetected and secretly and gradually corrupted the neophytes through her bewitching teachings.

About that time, a woman from Antioch named Julia arrived in the city [Gaza]. She belonged to the abominable sect of those known as Manichaeans. Now discovering that (among the Christians) there were some novices who were not yet confirmed in the holy faith, this woman infiltrated herself among them and surreptitiously corrupted them with her bewitching doctrine, and still further by giving them money.³⁰

Apart from the unsteady Christian neophytes, Mark the Deacon attests that another target group of Manichaean missionaries were pagans, for whose proselytism the corresponding material was disseminated.

In fact the Manichaeans say that there are many gods, wishing in this way to please the Hellenes (i.e. pagans); besides which, they believe in horoscopes, fate, and astrology.³¹

As time passed and the Christianization of the empire advanced, the number of authors who addressed the pagans decreased.

6.2.2 Age: Appealing to the Youth

Examining the parameter of age, there are some testimonies that support the argument that one more group to which Manichaeism seems to have had a special appeal (and for that reason was a very promising target), were young people. The anti-conformist style, the unconventional and antisocial behaviour, the vagabond lifestyle, and the profile of the ascetic-philosopher, were all feared by Christian writers as being attractive to the youth.

According to Titus, the Manichaeans with their views about childbearing and sexual life become friends with the young men and women because they felt allowed to sin freely.³²

Car il est ainsi en tout temps l'ami des adolescents et des jeunes parce qu'en plus des autres (choses) et aussi de ses histoires, ils se réjouissent de la licence de pécher et, sans bride qui les

²⁷ Titus of Bostra, c. *Manichaeos* 4.43 in Pedersen (2004, 55); CCT 21, 417: "Or, leur apparence extérieure est celle des philosophes mais leur agir est celui des Chaldéens perdus et des magiciens en ce qui concerne les choses qu'ils cachent, mais c'est un ingrat pour celles qui sont connues".

²⁸ Titus of Bostra, c. *Manichaeos* 4.112.

²⁹ Lieu 1992, 158, cf. Mark the Deacon, *Vit. Porph.* 85-89.

³⁰ Mark the Deacon, *Vit. Porph.* 85.1-7 (Lieu 2010, 97): Κατ' ἐκεῖνον δὲ τὸν καιρὸν ἐπεδήμησεν τῇ πόλει γυνὴ τις Ἀντιόχισσα καλουμένη Ἰουλίᾳ, ἥτις ὑπῆρχεν τῆς μυσταρᾶς αἰρέσεως τῶν λεγομένων Μανιχαίων, καὶ γνοῦσά τινας νεοφωτιστοὺς εἶναι καὶ μήπω ἐστηριγμένους ἐν τῇ ἀγίᾳ πίστει, ὑπεισελοῦσα ὑπέφθειρεν αὐτοὺς διὰ τῆς γοητικῆς αὐτῆς διδασκαλίας, πολλὰ δὲ πλέον διὰ δόσεως χρημάτων.

³¹ Mark the Deacon, *Vit. Porph.* 85.15-17 (Lieu 2010, 97): Θεοὺς γὰρ πολλοὺς λέγουσιν, ἵνα Ἑλλῆσιν ἀρέσωσιν, ἔτι δὲ καὶ γένεσιν καὶ εἰμαρμένῃν καὶ ἀστρολογίαν φάσκουσιν.

³² Cf. Pedersen 2004, 55.

retienne, comme des poulains, ils courent impétueusement vers les plaisirs [...] il n'est aucune des actions qui sont prohibées qu'ils n'aient osée.³³

The above excerpt highlights Titus' concern for the spread and perpetuation of Manichaean ideas to the next generations; the imaginative stories of Manichaeans, but mainly their attitude towards sex and childbearing would seem attractive at all times to teenagers and young people alike.

The general Sebastian, who persecuted Athanasius, the bishop of Alexandria, is depicted by the latter as a merciless Manichaean and an immoral young man.³⁴ Young and beautiful, but all pale, were the two men and two women who accompanied Julia.³⁵ Young were also the twenty-two Elect men and women who accompanied Mani in his debate in Carchar.³⁶ Further, let us not forget that Augustine too was attracted by Manichaeism at the tender age of nineteen as he writes in his *Confessions*.³⁷

Moreover, as I have already mentioned, one of the duties of Manichaean catechumens was to give a child to the community of the Elect.³⁸ The latter is confirmed by the Kellis material; by the correspondence between travelling children alongside the Elect teacher and their families. In an epistle preserved at Ismant el-Kharab/Kellis (written probably in the 350s) a father (Makarios) instructs his young son (Matheos): "I may be grateful for you and God too may be grateful for you, and you will be Glorified by a multitude of people. [...] Study (your) psalms, whether Greek or Coptic, <every> day (?) Do not abandon your vow"; "Write a daily example, for I need you to write books here".³⁹ From the instructions given by the father to his son, it is implied that the son was intended to become an Elect. However, a later correspondence informs us that his brother was finally the one that was given as Elect to the entourage of the Teacher.⁴⁰

Aesthetics and dress code played an important role in the attraction of Manichaeism to young people. Apart from Titus' testimony, that Manichaeans looked like ascetics or philosophers, Epiphanius' text at some point suggests that Manichaean men had long hair, which they "called ... the Glory of God" (δόξαν θεοῦ).

And once more, in another passage the same apostle [Paul] says, "A man ought not to have long hair, forasmuch as he is the glory and image of God." And you see how he [Mani] called hair the glory of God, though it is grown on the body and not in the soul.⁴¹

³³ Titus of Bostra, c. *Manichaeos* 4.43 (CCT 21, 417).

³⁴ Athanasius of Alexandria, *H. Ar.* 59.1: ἔχοντες δὲ ὑπουργοὺς εἰς τὴν πονηρίαν τὸν δοῦκα Σεβαστιανόν, Μανιχαῖον ὄντα καὶ ἀσελγῆ νεώτερον καὶ τὸν ἑπαρχον καὶ τὸν κόμητα καὶ ὑποκριτὴν τὸν καθολικόν. Cf. *Oratio III c. Ar.* 3.50.2.

³⁵ Mark the Deacon, *Vit. Porph.* 88: Τῇ δὲ ἐπαύριον παραγίνεται ἡ γυνή, ἔχουσα μεθ' ἑαυτῆς ἄνδρας δύο καὶ τοσαύτας γυναῖκας ἦσαν δὲ νεώτεροι καὶ εὐειδεῖς, ὥχροι δὲ πάντες, ἡ δὲ Ἰουλία ᾗν προβεβηκυῖα.

³⁶ AA 14.2.

³⁷ Augustine, *Conf.* 4.1.1; Cf. Lieu 1992, 151.

³⁸ See ch.[5], 5.2.1, fn. 32. Cf. Gardner and Lieu 2004, 167: "Indeed, my loved one, I was obliged to write a mass of words to you this time; but God himself knows that these young people, whom you sent and who came, found me in how much pain".

³⁹ P. Kell. v Copt. 19 (*A father instructs his young son*, no 93 in Gardner and Lieu 2004, 272-275, 273-274).

⁴⁰ P. Kell. v Copt. 25 (*The son writes to his mother*, no 94 in Gardner and Lieu 2004, 275-276). Cf. Brand 2019, 140-45 & 293-99.

⁴¹ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 66.54.4 (Williams, 279): καὶ πάλιν ἐν ἄλλῳ τόπῳ ὁ αὐτὸς ἀπόστολος 'ἀνὴρ οὐκ ὀφείλει κομᾶν, δόξα καὶ εἰκὼν θεοῦ ὑπάρχων' (1 Cor 11:7). καὶ ὁρᾷς ὡς δόξαν θεοῦ ἔφη τὴν κόμην, ἐπὶ σώματος φερομένην καὶ οὐκ ἐν ψυχῇ; Corresponding testimony for long-haired men, and women who cut off their hair, is also provided by Jerome in his letter to Eustochium (Ep. 22.27f.): "Some women, it is true, disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. [...] They cut off their hair and are not ashamed to look like eunuchs. [...]"

Paleness also, “seems to have been a hallmark of the Manichaeans, at least of the Elect, especially females”.⁴² In many writings the Manichaean Elect are described as pale and having sad faces.⁴³ The ascetic look was identified to such a degree with the Manichaeans, that, as Jerome says, any woman who looked like an ascetic was called a Manichaean. This implies that anyone who had ascetic tendencies could be labelled by his opponents as a Manichaean.⁴⁴ As we shall see in later section of this chapter, such practices (men with long and women with short hair, etc.), which were adopted by other ascetics too, were persistently condemned by the church canons.⁴⁵

Lastly, in order to underline the importance that Manichaean missionaries gave to appearance, we should recall how Mani himself is described in the *Acta Archelai* and the impression he made on Marcellus and the audience of the debate.⁴⁶ The key-role that appearance played in the case of Mani’s appeal is underlined also by the priest Diodorus in his letter to the bishop Archelaus: “For in actual fact the man is extremely forceful both in what he says and what he does, as is also clear in his appearance and his dress”.⁴⁷

The emphasis of Manichaean missionaries on the aesthetic appeal is also shown by the care and diligence that they devoted to the decoration of their books (picture book, hymns, etc.) with the use of calligraphy and illustrations by specialized scribes.⁴⁸ This may also explain why the Manichaeans, according to anti-Manichaean authors, had the tendency to create fanciful names and astonishing doctrines:

His silly talk is chaotic; what he calls elements, and the twelve “water jars” as he futilely terms them, and the “device” by which he wants to astonish those who are led astray by him.⁴⁹

6.2.3 Gender: Manichaean Women

The fact that there were women in the movement, and that they were able to climb to the rank of the Elect, is well known.⁵⁰ The question of this section is whether there are testimonies about the Manichaean women of the Eastern Roman Empire, and especially about the Manichaean Elect and their involvement in the religious life of the community. What were their duties? Did Manichaean women assume, for example, offices such as missionaries or teachers? Did they play a key role in proselytizing?

Avoid men also, when you see them loaded with chains and wearing their hair long like women, contrary to the apostles’ precepts, not to speak of beards like those of goats, black cloaks, and bare feet braving the cold”.

⁴² Coyle 2009d, 200.

⁴³ Chrysostom, *Hom. Gen.* (PG 54:584-585): Πύξινον ἔχουσιν ἐκεῖνοι τὸ χρῶμα, καὶ κατεσταλμένην τὴν ὀφρὺν, καὶ ῥημάτων ἐπιείκειαν. John of Caesarea, *Adv. Manichaeos* (hom. 1) 17: οἱ πολλάκις ὠχρότητι σώματος τὸ δοκεῖν ἐγκρατεῖς εἶναι θηρώμενοι, τῷ σχήματι καὶ τῷ βλέμματι.

⁴⁴ Jerome, *Epist. 22 ad Eustochium* 13. Cf. Coyle 2009b, 154, fn. 53.

⁴⁵ See below, section 6.4.1.

⁴⁶ AA 14.3.

⁴⁷ AA 44.4 (Vermes, 111).

⁴⁸ Cf. Lieu 1992, 175-177 (*The aesthetic appeal of Manichaeism*); Cf. Gulácsi 2015, 2005.

⁴⁹ Epiphanius, *Pan.*, 66.50.6 (Williams 276, modified): ἀσύστατος αὐτοῦ ἡ φλυαρία· πρὶν γὰρ τοῦ εἶναι ἄνθρωπον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ἐγένοντο τὰ κατ’ αὐτὸν καλούμενα στοιχεῖα καὶ οἱ δώδεκα μάτην καλούμενοι κάδοι καὶ ἡ μηχανή, † ἣν βούλεται χαριστικοῖς ὀνόμασι φαντάζειν τοὺς ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ πεπλανημένους. Cf. Alexander of Lycopolis, *Tract. Man.* 2.

⁵⁰ For a full treatment of women in Manichaeism, see Kristionat 2013. On Manichaean women see also Coyle 2009, Scopello 1997, 2001, 2005(a&b), van Oort 2020, and Franzmann forthcoming (a&b).

Recent research has shown that “the prominence of women is a notable feature of the Manichaean documentary texts from Kellis”.⁵¹ The descriptions suggest independent women, who, in addition to household management and childbearing, were successful businesswomen supporting their community's economy and their husbands on their commercial trips. In religious life, too, they appear to have had an active involvement: they were “givers of the *agape*”, “keepers of religious texts”, they supported the itinerant Elect with supplies. It is not clear, however, whether apart from the catechumens there were also Elect among these women. In addition, there are no testimonies referring to missionary activities of any female Manichaean Elect. It remains an open question whether some of the titles attributed to some of these women, such as ‘mother’ and ‘great mother’ are familial or religious terms, or social markers of age and respect.⁵²

Anti-Manichaean literature preserves several testimonies of female missionaries, but they are very few and scattered. Strangely, there are no relevant references to the activities of male Manichaean missionaries (except for the first generation of missionaries after Mani).

Apart from the brief reference in the *Acta*, where Mani is presented as arriving in Carchar “bringing with him twenty-two Elect young men and women,”⁵³ there are two other cases involving female missionaries, as well as an archaeological finding that may be relevant to our subject. All three have been examined thoroughly by Scopello,⁵⁴ Coyle,⁵⁵ and Kristionat.⁵⁶

The oldest of these mentions is the one attributed to Theonas, the bishop of Alexandria. According to it, the Manichaean *Electae*, apart from being honoured, seem to have had missionary duties as well:

we may be on our guard against those who with deceitful and lying words steal into our houses, and particularly against those women whom they call ‘Elect’, whom they honour.⁵⁷

As Coyle points out, “the more interesting (and factual?) aspects of this text are that these women conducted door-to-door canvasses, and that they were indeed Elect, enhancing the impression that Manichaean missionary activity was confined to that class and that women were participants”.⁵⁸

The second and more extensive testimony concerns the missionary activities of the Manichaean Julia.⁵⁹ Coyle remarks that in the episode of Julia there is not a “clear reference” to her as an Elect, as is the case in Theonas’ testimony.⁶⁰ However, if his suggestion is correct

⁵¹ Gardner 1997, 161-175, 170. Brand 2019, 211: “This general trend is clearly visible in the Kellis papyri, where the women had a central role as key figures (or hub) in the family network when their husbands and sons traveled into the Nile valley to conduct trade and sell agricultural goods from the oasis”. Cf. Franzmann (forthcoming[a]).

⁵² Gardner et al. 1999, 19-20; Brand 2019, 128. Franzmann (forthcoming[a]). Clackson 2000.

⁵³ AA 14.2 (Vermees 2001, 58).

⁵⁴ Scopello 2001, 35-44; Scopello 2005b, 44-7; Scopello 1997, 187-209; Scopello 2005a, 237-91 & 93-315.

⁵⁵ Coyle 2009d, 194-198.

⁵⁶ Kristionat 2013, 134-63.

⁵⁷ P¹RYlands 3, Gr. 469: τῆς μονίας τῶν Μανιχέων ἵν’ ἐπιτηρώμεν τοὺς ἐν ἀπάταις καὶ λόγοις ψευδέσι εἰσδύοντάς εἰς τὰς οἰκίας· καὶ μάλιστα τὰς λεγομένας παρ’ αὐτοῖς ἐκλεκτάς, ἅς ἐν τιμῇ ἔχουσιν. Cf. Lieu 2010, 36-37. Similar information to that of Theonas about Manichaean missionaries intruding the houses propagating their religion is provided by Ambrosiaster a century later. However, Ambrosiaster does not clarify whether the missionaries were male or female, but just that they deceive naïve women. Like Theonas, Ambrosiaster uses 2 Tim’s (3:6-7) comments on feminine weakness and persuasiveness to warn the faithful that the Manichaeans exploit this weakness. Cf. Lieu 1992, 180-187. Gardner and Lieu 2004, 119.

⁵⁸ Coyle 2009d, 195-96.

⁵⁹ Mark the Deacon, *Vit. Porph.* 85-91, 88.

⁶⁰ Coyle 2009d, 198. Kristionat (2013, 158-63) is even more cautious/sceptical, challenging the historicity of Julia.

that “missionary activity was confined” only to the class of the Elect, then not only Julia, but also the other two ladies who accompanied her, should have belonged to the class of Elect. As is denoted in the text, all four companions of Julia participated in the discussions of the missionary endeavour.

The next day the woman arrived with two men and the same number of women. All four of them were young and good-looking, but very pale; as for Julia she was well on in year. All of them, especially Julia, based their reasoning on the principles of worldly education. Their attitude was humble and their conduct gentle. [...] Then, having been asked to sit down, they began the enquiry.⁶¹

Besides, Mani’s numerous companions belonged to the class of the Elect too. As is implied by a relevant reference in Augustine, missionary duties were mainly undertaken by those who belonged to the higher ranks of the Manichaean hierarchy, but also by any of the Elect who had the appropriate qualifications.⁶²

Finally, we possess one tantalizing piece of archaeological evidence, which in all likelihood belonged to a tomb and was discovered near Salona in Dalmatia. It is a burial inscription that is dated to the early fourth century, and it belonged to a woman, the ‘Elect’ (παρθένος) Manichaean Bassa from Lydia (in Asia Minor), as indicated in the inscription: ΒΑΚΚΑ ΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΣ ΛΥΔΙΑ ΜΑΝΙΧΕΑ.⁶³ Scopello supports the view that Bassa was a Manichaean missionary who came to Dalmatia/Illyria in order to spread her religion.⁶⁴ Coyle has expressed some reservations about this interpretation and argues that the evidence of the monument is so scant that we can neither support nor exclude such an interpretation.⁶⁵

Coyle concludes that the only testimony in which it is clearly stated that Elect women were involved in missionary activities is that of Theonas. Further, he considers that the account provided by Mark the Deacon does not indicate anything other than that in a male-dominated society, male authors preferred to attack active women like Julia.⁶⁶ As he notes, the “equality of the genders, at least among the Elect—surely [was] part of the motivation behind the attacks on Manichaean women”.⁶⁷

In the rest of our literature, there are a few brief references to Manichaean women that do not specify whether they concern *Electae* or catechumens, and in fact may not all be addressing real Manichaeans. The church historians Socrates and Sozomenus recount an episode about a woman in Alexandria, Manichaean in religion (γυναῖκά τινα Μανιχαῖαν τὴν θρησκείαν); the arch-presbyter Petrus admitted her to the holy sacraments of the Church without her having first withdrawing from the Manichaean heresy. However, according to the sources, this story was slander and part of a plot of Theophilus, the bishop of Alexandria, who

⁶¹ Mark the Deacon, *Vit. Porph.* 88 (translation by Gardner and Lieu 2004, 127 and Lieu 2010, 99 modified): “Ὅλοι δὲ ὥρμουν ἀπὸ λόγων τῆς κοσμικῆς παιδείας, πολλῶ δὲ πλέον ἡ Ἰουλία. Τὸ δὲ πρόσχημα αὐτῶν ἦν ταπεινὸν καὶ τὸ ἥθος ἥπιον, εἴτα ἐπιτραπέντες καθίσαι, τὴν ζητήσιν ἐποιοῦντο.

⁶² Augustine, *Haer.* 46.16 (Gardner and Lieu 2004, 191): “[...] The rest are called merely the elect; but even any of their members who seem suitable are sent to strengthen and support this error where it exists, or to plant it where it does not”. See also ch.[2], section 2.7.3 (*The Participants*): “It seems that it was a common Manichaean practice for the leader of the debate to be accompanied by young Elect”.

⁶³ See Cumont 1912, 175-77.

⁶⁴ Scopello 2001, 42; 2005, 293-315.

⁶⁵ Coyle 2009d, 197-98. Kristionat (2013 141-42), following Coyle argues that “due to the lack of comparison pieces, an identification of Bassa as a missionary cannot be clearly proven, 142. [...] The fact that she died far from her hometown does not automatically imply missionary activity”.

⁶⁶ Coyle 2009d, 198.

⁶⁷ Coyle 2009d, 194.

disliked Petrus and wanted to expel him from the Church.⁶⁸ Another reference to Manichaean women in general is Titus' report that pregnant Manichaean women were forced to end their pregnancies through abortion, since Manichaeans eschewed childbirth.⁶⁹

Apart from the references to unknown Manichaean women, testimonies that associate named Byzantine women with Manichaeism are the following: (1) the testimony of the sixth-century chronographer Malalas, who records that during the reign of Justinian many Manichaean women were punished and among them was the wife of the senator Erythrius;⁷⁰ (2) the information provided by Theodorus Anagnostes that the mother of the emperor Anastasius (491-518) was a zealous supporter of the Manichaeans.⁷¹

There are also testimonies about women who were attracted by Manichaeism, not because the idea of a promising career as missionaries-teachers appealed to them, but because of their weakness. According to the account provided by Mark the Deacon, the teachings of the apostle Julia, apart from the childish men, attracted also 'foolish weak women' (*γυναικάρια*).⁷² As Ephrem the Syrian observes, folk women, because of their naivety, were especially vulnerable to the Manichaean propaganda as they were easily impressed.⁷³

Of course, there would also have been women who consciously chose to become Manichaeans because they found something fascinating and intriguing in it. For this case, it makes sense to investigate what this could have been, because it shows the comparative advantage of Manichaeism over other religious options for this portion of the population. In other words, what was the more interesting and promising choice for a woman of that time who had spiritual queries and wanted to pursue an ascetic life? Would she become a Manichaean Elect, or a Christian nun?

In addition to the attraction exerted by asceticism on women due to a kind of autonomy that it offered them,⁷⁴ there were several other reasons that made the option of 'Manichaean Elect' more appealing to women, and which are highlighted in the relevant academic discourse. First, the class of the Elect was open to them (i.e. they could be initiated into the class of the Elect) and as Elect they had equal status with their male counterparts. As Coyle points out, "finally, it appears certain that Manichaeans provided a more public and (to a certain extent, anyway) equal status to women, which could have been another factor in the attraction".⁷⁵ And what does equal status mean in our case? That they could wander, carry out missions and participate in debates. The Manichaean Elect women, as missionaries and teachers, could also (like men) compete against their religious opponents in the public debates

⁶⁸ Socrates the Scholastic, *HE* 6.9.3 Sozomenus, *HE* 8.12. Cf. ch.[7], 7.3.

⁶⁹ Titus of Bostra c. *Manichaeos* 2.56. See also in *SC* 7.211-213 another accusation of the same kind (homosexuality) against Manichaean women ("they commit shameless acts ... against nature with men and women even as do the women among them").

⁷⁰ Malalas, *Chronographia* 17.21: Ἐν δὲ τῷ αὐτῷ καιρῷ κατὰ πόλιν πολλοὶ ἐτιμωρήθησαν Μανιχαῖοι, ἐν οἷς ἐτιμωρήθη καὶ ἡ γυνὴ Ἐρυθρίου τοῦ συγκλητικοῦ Ἐρυθρίου καὶ ἄλλαι ἅμα αὐτῇ.

⁷¹ Theodorus Anagnostes, *HE* 4.448. I shall return to both of them in the next chapter.

⁷² Mark the Deacon, *Vit. Porph.* 85: ἐφελκομένων γυναικάρια καὶ παιδιῶδεις ἄνδρας κοῦφον ἔχοντας τὸν τε λογισμὸν καὶ τὴν διάνοιαν.

⁷³ Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymni*, in Lieu 1994, 42-43: "and also today he [the demon] seduces the simple women through diverse pretenses: he catches one by fasting, the other by sackcloth and leguminous plants." Lieu 1992, 181: "It was the Devil, Ephrem warned, that had given Mani a pale complexion in order to deceive the unwary". This is more clearly a topos.

⁷⁴ Burrus 1987. Cf. Coyle 2009b, 153. Regarding the attraction ascetic Christianity exerted on certain women, see Kraemer 1980, 298-307.

⁷⁵ Coyle 2009d, 193.

conducted in various cities, “chose unique pour l’ époque” as de Stoop comments.⁷⁶ Yet, it seems that Manichaean women, although they participated in the class of the Elect and assumed missionary and teaching tasks, could not assume “any office or ministry which belonged to the official hierarchy”.⁷⁷

More than thirty years ago, Peter Brown, based mainly on Julia’s account and on a reference to Thecla in the Manichaean Psalm-book, recounted in his vivid narrative style:

throughout the late third and fourth centuries, Paul and Thecla walked the roads of Syria together, in the form of the little groups of “Elect” men and women, moving from city to city. As members of the “Elect,” Manichaean women traveled on long missionary journeys with their male peers. Christian bishops believed that Manichaean women were capable of acting as spokesmen in public debates.⁷⁸

Does recent research justify Brown’s thesis? Is there sufficient evidence for this? Coyle, initially, in his paper “Prolegomena to a Study of Women in Manichaeism” questioned Brown’s assertion and concluded that women do not “appear [in sources] to have shared the rootlessness that often characterized male Elect, at least in the West.”⁷⁹ In a subsequent paper, however (“Women and Manichaeism’s Mission to the Roman Empire”), he revisits his view, arguing that until the middle of the fifth century there is some (but not much) evidence that supports Brown’s view for women being active in the mission. However, he points out that this evidence comes from polemical literature, while, on the contrary there is no relevant testimony in Manichaean sources.⁸⁰ Ten years after Coyle’s second publication, the study of Kellis’ findings so far does not seem to shed more light on our question.

In conclusion, I will further highlight three points worthy of note that could be indicative for the active role of Manichaean women in the East-Roman Empire: (1) it is true that the testimonies we have about Manichaean *Electae* in action are very few; yet, they all come from the eastern part of the empire;⁸¹ (2) furthermore, it is striking that the only known evidence we have so far for the existence or/and the activity of Byzantine Manichaean missionaries concern female Elect (Alexandria, Julia and Bassa?). This probably shows the active involvement of women in the movement; (3) lastly, as shown above in chapter [3], Manichaeism was the only case in which the law turned against the women of a religious

⁷⁶ De Stoop in Coyle 2009d, 205. Another important reason for the attraction of women to the Manichaean sect may have been the importance and roles of women in Manichaean narratives. In contrast to the culture of the era that was ‘misogynistic’, women in Manichaean literature are rather honoured; “specific women were even revered” (Coyle 2009b, 145). Coyle (2009a, 164 and 2009c, 176 ff.) highlights the important role of certain women in Manichaean texts, such as the ‘Psalms of Heracleides’ where they appear to have the important role of a guide and instructor. Indicative of women’s position in Manichaeism is also the fact that the paradigmatic Manichaean exemplar was the female model/pattern of the evangelical sisters Martha and Maria. This model, where Mary acts like a man (“she hunts, she casts the net, and later like her Gnostic counterpart, she becomes talkative”), whereas “Martha, on the other hand, is a servant (though a joyful one)” exists also in *Cologne Mani Codex* (92.15–22), in the Latin fragment from Tebessa, and in the Manichaean *Psalms* (2PsB 192.21–24).

⁷⁷ Van Oort 2020c: 499, 502; Kristionat 2013. See also van Oort 2020b, 418–432 and van Oort 2020a 433–442.

⁷⁸ Brown 1988, 202. Cf. 2PsB 143.4–16: “... Thecla, the lover of God ...”; 195.8–12: “... they went from village to village. They went into the roads hungry, with no bread in their hands”.

⁷⁹ Coyle 2009b, 144. Coyle (2009b, 144–45) also concludes that there are not evidences “that women exercised ‘special’ ministries carried out by the Elect, such as preacher, lector, scribe, or cantor”.

⁸⁰ Coyle, 2009d, 204 ff.

⁸¹ Cf. Coyle 2009d, 198.

group (heresy).⁸² The same applies to the *LAF* where both male and female Elect are anathematized.⁸³

6.3 Appeal to and Relationship with Other (Extreme) Ascetic Groups⁸⁴

In the sources examined in the previous chapters, the Manichaeans are often associated or even identified with several other ascetic groups, namely the Encratites, the Apotactites, the Hydroparastates, the Saccophori, and the Messalians. As these groups are classified together with the Manichaeans both in legal and in ecclesiastical literature for their common practices, behaviours, and lifestyle, the investigation of what exactly these ascetics meant in the eyes of the state and Church, as well as their relationship with Manichaeans, must be explored here.

6.3.1 Encratites, Apotactites, Hydroparastates, Saccophori

Laws

In the legislation, the association of Manichaeans with the Encratites, Apotactites, Hydroparastates and Saccophori (Encratites et al., thereafter) first appears in the early 380s. This was in the context of the first three laws of Theodosius I against heretics which were issued in three successive years and were addressed to the Prefects of Illyria (in 381) and the East (in 382 and 383).⁸⁵

Indeed, in the first law, it is not the Encratites et al. who are persecuted, but the Manichaeans, who hide “themselves under the pretense of those fallacious names”.⁸⁶ In the next two laws, the Encratites et al. are persecuted alongside the Manichaeans as independent religious groups. The reason for their persecution (particularly in the first two laws) is their “secret and hidden assemblies”⁸⁷ in places which are portrayed as “wonted sepulchres of funereal mysteries”;⁸⁸ or because, by their customs and behaviour they threaten to become “a profaner and a corrupter of Catholic discipline”.⁸⁹

As Beskow points out, “Theodosius was not the first Roman Emperor to take measures against the Manichaeans”.⁹⁰ Diocletian, Valens and Valentinian I and Gratian had preceded him. But while the rescript of Diocletian targets Manichaeans because they injured “the civic communities” and infected “the innocent, orderly and tranquil Roman people [...] with the damnable customs and perverse laws of the Persians”, the laws of Theodosius, do not suppose that the values and the customs of the empire are threatened by Persians but by the practices of these ascetics.

⁸² There are at least two laws in which the two genders, *Manichaeos* and *Manichaeas*, are mentioned separately: *CTh* 16.5.7 (381) and 16.5.40 (407) in the version of *CJ* 1.5.4. Cf. ch.[3], section 3.3.3. See also *Nov.* 109 (541).

⁸³ *LAF* 1468A: ἀναθεματίζω καὶ καταθεματίζω [...] ἐκλεκτοὺς καὶ ἐκλεκτάς.

⁸⁴ This section provides the basis for Matsangou 2020.

⁸⁵ *CTh* 16.5.7 (381) to Prefect of Illyria Eutropius; *CTh* 16.5.9 (382) to the Prefect of East Florus and *CTh* 16.5.11 (383) to the Prefect of East Postumianus.

⁸⁶ *CTh* 16.5.7 (381) (Coleman-Norton 1966, 1: 368).

⁸⁷ *CTh* 16.5.9.1 (Coleman-Norton 1966, 2: 379).

⁸⁸ *CTh* 16.5.7.3 (Coleman-Norton 1966, 1: 368).

⁸⁹ *CTh* 16.5.9.pr (Coleman-Norton 1966, 2: 378).

⁹⁰ Beskow 1988, 6-11, 6.

In later laws, while the Manichaeans are persistently persecuted, these other ascetic groups do not reappear except for the Hydroparastates, who are found again in the laws of 428 and 438.⁹¹

Ecclesiastical literature

In patristic literature, the association of Manichaeans with the aforementioned ascetic movements is common. Many years before the Theodosian laws, as early as the 350s-60s, the Arian writer Julian (357-365?), for example, attributed to Manichaeans and pseudo-Encratites convictions such as that the body is evil and food is poisonous (*αἱ τροφαὶ φαῦλαι*).⁹² Amphilochius of Iconium, in his most extensive work, *On False Asceticism*, fights the Encratites, whom he characterizes as 'pseudo-ascetics'. He appears to consider the Manichaeans as mentors of their 'false' practices.⁹³ Indeed, as he explains, these Manichaean ascetic practices (adopted by the Encratites) were ordained by the Manichaean leaders. As he characteristically says:

They abstain from eating animate beings (*ἐμψύχων*) according to the teaching of Manichaeans. Because their leaders have ordained, once and for all, to abstain from eating living beings [...].⁹⁴

From Amphilochius' correspondence with Basil of Caesarea it seems that in the region of Lycaonia (Iconium was its Metropolitan Archbishopric) there were many ascetics such as Encratites et al. The young Amphilochius needed the pastoral guidance of Basil in order to deal with various challenging issues. Interestingly, there is a discussion between the two concerning the baptism of the Encratites, Hydroparastates and Catharoi. In his first letter to Amphilochius in 374, Basil expresses reservations towards the baptism of the ascetics mentioned above. Particularly, he cautions against the Encratites, because, as he says, in order to make themselves not acceptable (!) by the Church they established their own, peculiar baptism, counterfeiting even their own tradition. The only known source for the baptism of the Encratites is this brief and mysterious reference of Basil. Though Basil, initially, appears ambiguous, he finally suggests that their baptism could be accepted (for the sake of a pastoral economy and homogeneity, local ethos), provided that they would be anointed with Holy Oil before the faithful.⁹⁵ However, in his second letter, just a year later (375), Basil discusses the same issue with Amphilochius. This time, he appears more unbending in arguing that the Encratites, Saccophori and Apotactites have to be rebaptized, since their sect is an offspring of the Marcionites and other similar heretics, who abhor marriage, abstain from wine, and consider God's creations polluted. Presumably, the expression "similar heretics" included the Manichaeans, since in contemporary literature they were always grouped together with the Marcionites. Basil concludes his letter with the enigmatic phrase:

⁹¹ *CTh* 16.5.65 (428) = *CJ* 1.5.5; *NTh* 3.1.9 (438).

⁹² Julianus, *comm. Job* 67.8.

⁹³ Amphilochius, *c. Haer.* 1067-71. See ch.[5], 5.2.2.

⁹⁴ Amphilochius, *c. Haer.* 1067-71.

⁹⁵ Basil, *Ep.* 188.1.63-69 (to Amphilochius): Ἐπειδὴ δὲ ὅλως ἔδοξέ τισι τῶν κατὰ τὴν Ἀσίαν οἰκονομίας ἕνεκα τῶν πολλῶν δεχθῆναι αὐτῶν τὸ βάπτισμα, ἔστω δεκτόν. Τὸ δὲ τῶν Ἐγκρατιτῶν κακούργημα νοῆσαι ἡμᾶς δεῖ, ὅτι, ἵν' αὐτοὺς ἀπροσδέκτους ποιήσωσι τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ, ἐπεχείρησαν λουπὸν ἰδίῳ προκαταλαμβάνειν βαπτίσματι· ὅθεν καὶ τὴν συνήθειαν τὴν ἑαυτῶν παρεχάραξαν.

Thus, they should not dare to claim that they were baptized to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, those who perceive God as the source of evil, as their heresiarchs, Marcion and other heretics, did.⁹⁶

In his *Panarion*, which was written in the same year (375), Epiphanius points out that even during his days the Encratites were gaining new adherents, mainly in Pisidia and Phrygia Combusta but also in Asia, Isauria, Pamphylia, Cilicia, and Galatia. He seems astonished to observe that by his time Encratites have been ‘planted’ even in big cities such as Rome and Antioch.⁹⁷ According to Epiphanius’ description, the Encratites had a dualistic standpoint. They speak about “different first principles” (*ἀρχαὶ διάφοροι*) and not “about one deity” (*περί μιᾶς θεότητος*).⁹⁸ They say, as Epiphanius states, that “there are certain first principles and that the < power > of the devil [...] is not subject to God; he has power of his own and acts as in his own right”.⁹⁹ Further, Epiphanius points out the implications of their dualism in everyday life. They claim that marriage serves the Devil’s plan. They detest meat, not “for the sake of continence or as a pious practice”, but from fear lest they “be condemned for eating flesh”. They “do not drink wine at all” claiming that it comes from the Devil and they “celebrate mysteries with water”.¹⁰⁰ They use as their scriptures “principally the so-called Acts of Andrew, and of John, and of Thomas, and certain apocrypha”. In order to support their views in their propaganda, they use selectively texts from OT (*οἷς βούλονται λόγοις τῆς παλαιᾶς διαθήκης*) where the patriarchs (Noah, Lot, etc.), whom they call drunkards, misbehaved under the influence of wine.¹⁰¹ “They pride themselves on supposed continence, but all their conduct is risky. For they are surrounded by women, deceive women in every way, travel and eat with women and are served by them”.¹⁰²

The fact that in the area of Antioch, among the many other monastic communities, there also existed Encratite communities, is also testified by John Chrysostom. One of his lectures, which Chrysostom delivered when he was still a presbyter in Antioch (before 398), is dedicated to the monks of the Antioch monasteries. The targets of the homily are the Manichaeans and their leaders (*ἀρχηγῶν τούτων*), the Encratites, the Marcionites, and the whole “factory” (*ἐργαστηρίου*) of those apostates from faith, who prevent marriage and abstain from food.¹⁰³ The following remarks are necessary at this point: First, it is interesting

⁹⁶ Basil, *Ep.* 199.47.1-16 (to Amphilochius): Μὴ γὰρ λεγέτωσαν ὅτι «Εἷς Πατέρα καὶ Υἱὸν καὶ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν» οἱ γὰρ κακῶν ποιητὴν ὑποτιθέμενοι τὸν Θεόν, ἐφαμίλλως τῷ Μαρκίῳ καὶ ταῖς λοιπαῖς αἰρέσεσιν. Both Basil’s letters (188 and 199) later became canons of the Church.

⁹⁷ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 47.1.2-3.

⁹⁸ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 47.1.4; 47.2.1. 4 (Williams 2013, 3 modified).

⁹⁹ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 47.1.4 (Williams, 3): Φάσκουσι δὲ καὶ οὗτοι ἀρχὰς τινὰς εἶναι τὴν τε τοῦ διαβόλου (216) <δύναμιν> [...] μὴ ὑποτασσομένου Θεῷ, ἀλλὰ ἰσχύοντος καὶ πράττοντος ὡς κατὰ ἰδίαν ἐξουσίαν.

¹⁰⁰ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 47.1.6 (Williams, 4): τὸν δὲ γάμον σαφῶς τοῦ διαβόλου ὀρίζονται. ἔμψυχα δὲ βδελύσσονται, ἀπαγορεύοντες οὐχ ἕνεκεν ἐγκρατείας οὔτε πολιτείας, ἀλλὰ κατὰ φόβον καὶ ἰνδαλμὸν τοῦ μὴ καταδικασθῆναι ἀπὸ τῆς τῶν ἐμψύχων μεταλήψεως. κέρηνται δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ μυστηρίοις δι’ ὕδατος· οἶνον δὲ ὅλως οὐ μεταλαμβάνουσι, φάσκοντες εἶναι διαβολικὸν καὶ τοὺς πίνοντας καὶ τοὺς χρωμένους ἀνόμους εἶναι καὶ ἁμαρτάδα.

¹⁰¹ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 47.1.5 (Williams, 3): κέρηνται δὲ γραφαῖς πρωτοτύπως ταῖς λεγομέναις Ἀνδρέου καὶ Ἰωάννου Πράξεις καὶ Θωμᾶ καὶ ἀποκρύφους τισὶ καὶ οἷς βούλονται λόγοις τῆς παλαιᾶς διαθήκης; 47.2.3-4 (Williams, 4). Epiphanius (47.2.3) also accuses them of using the NT as it suits them. They even discredit Paul “calling him a drunkard” (τοῦτον μεθυστὴν καλοῦντες) when they disagree with his ideas.

¹⁰² Epiphanius, *Pan.* 47.3.1 (Williams, 5): Σεμνύνονται δὲ διήθεν ἐγκράτειαν, σφαλερῶς τὰ πάντα ἐργαζόμενοι, μέσον γυναικῶν εὐρισκόμενοι καὶ γυναικὰς πανταχόθεν ἀπατῶντες, γυναιξὶ δὲ συνοδεύοντες καὶ συνδαιτώμενοι καὶ ἐξυπηρετούμενοι ὑπὸ τῶν τοιούτων.

¹⁰³ Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Tim.* 62.557. 47-50: Περὶ Μανιχαίων, καὶ Ἐγκρατιτῶν, καὶ Μαρκιωνιστῶν, καὶ παντὸς αὐτῶν τοῦ ἐργαστηρίου τὰ τοιαῦτα φησιν, ὅτι ἐν ὑστέροις καιροῖς ἀποστήσονται τινες τῆς πίστεως; 558.27-30:

that Chrysostom refers to their leaders only in the case of the Manichaeans. Thus, for the second time, Manichaean leaders are mentioned in the discourse associating Encratites and Manichaeans.¹⁰⁴ Second, the term “factory” for Manichaeans and Encratites et al. also was used by the legislation.¹⁰⁵ This usage suggests an interplay between the rhetoric of church leaders and the language of the law. Third, the law against the apostates to Manichaeism was issued at the same time.¹⁰⁶ Possibly, this was not a coincidence; Chrysostom's discussion about apostates, which reflects a fear of Manichaean influence on other groups of ascetics, could have been one of the factors that triggered the promulgation of the law.

In spite of the bishops' polemic and the laws and canons against them, these ascetic practices were still appealing, and the number of ascetics who adopted them seems to have continuously increased even in the fifth century. According to Macarius of Magnesia, “children of Manichaeans” (*Μανιχαίων παῖδες*) who were self-proclaimed with names difficult even to pronounce (Encratites, Apotactites and Hermits), mushroomed everywhere in Pisidia, Cilicia, Isauria, Lycaonia and Galatia,¹⁰⁷ in the same territories mentioned by Epiphanius (and Amphilochius). “*Μανιχαίων παῖδες*” literally means Manichaean children, but in our context, it could also be translated as the followers/disciples/servants of the Manichaeans, or ascetics who adopted Manichaean practices and attitudes. For Macarius, as for Chrysostom, these ascetics were not Christians but apostates from faith. They abstained from foods and held marriage to be illegal.¹⁰⁸ Macarius also speaks about a certain Dositheus of Cilicia, a leader among them, and about eight books by means of which he strengthened his doctrines.

At the head of their chorus doubtless stands Dositheus, a Cilician by race, who confirms their teaching in the course of eight whole books, and magnifies his case by the splendour of his language, saying again and again that marriage is an illegal act, and quite contrary to the law. Here are his words, “Through communion (*koinōnia*) the world had its beginning; through abstinence it has to be terminated.”¹⁰⁹

According to Goulet (the editor of the text), it is not easy to find out what Macarius presupposes as historical or dogmatic relationship between Manichaeans, Encratites, and Dositheus. Most likely he suggests that Macarius does not consider that the above ascetics (including Dositheus) were formally members of the Manichaean movement, but describes

Οὐ περὶ Ἰουδαίων λέγει ταῦτα· πῶς γὰρ τὸ, Ἐν ὑστέροις καιροῖς, καὶ τὸ, Ἀποστήσονται τινες τῆς πίστεως, ἔχει χώραν; ἀλλὰ περὶ Μανιχαίων, καὶ τῶν ἀρχηγῶν τούτων.

¹⁰⁴ The first time was by Amphilochius.

¹⁰⁵ *CTh* 16.5.9.1 (382). In the law “all this workshop” comprise the Manichaeans, Encratites, Saccophori, and Hydroparastates.

¹⁰⁶ *CTh* 16.7.3 (383).

¹⁰⁷ Macarius of Magnesia, *Apocriticus*, 3.151.25-28 (§25) (Grafer, modified): Τοιοῦτοι δὲ Μανιχαίων παῖδες ἐξεφοίτησαν· τοιαύτας αἰρέσεις ἡ τῶν Πισιδ[έ]ων ἔχει καὶ τῶν Ἰσαύρων χώρα, Κιλικία τε καὶ Λυκαονία καὶ πᾶσα Γαλατία, ὧν καὶ τὰς ἐπωνυμίας ἐργῶδες ἀπαγγέλλαι· Ἐγκρατῆται γὰρ καὶ Ἀποτακτῖται καὶ Ἐρημίται καλοῦνται, οὐ Χριστιανοὶ τινες. Macarius was probably a bishop of Magnesia and a friend and supporter of John Chrysostom.

¹⁰⁸ Macarius of Magnesia, *Apocriticus*, 3.151.36-40 (§27); 3.151.29-31 (§25): οὐ Χριστιανοὶ τινες, οὐδὲ πρόσφυγες τῆς οὐρανίου χάριτος, πίστεως μὲν εὐαγγελικῆς ἀποστάται καὶ [ἀπόδημοι]. “They are not Christians, nor [are they] refugees of celestial grace, [they are] apostates from evangelical faith and expatriates (ἀπόδημοι)”. See also ch.[5], 5.3.3.

¹⁰⁹ Macarius of Magnesia, *Apocriticus* 3.151.32-36 (§26) (Grafer, modified): Ἀμέλει Δοσίθεος ὁ κορυφαῖος παρ' αὐτοῖς, Κίλιξ τὸ γένος ὑπάρχων, δι' ὅκτω βιβλίων ὄλων κρατύνει τὸ δόγμα καὶ λαμπρότητι λέξεων μεγαλύνει τὸ πρᾶγμα, ἄθεσμον ἔργον καὶ λίαν παράνομον ἀποθρυλλῶν τὸν γάμον, λέγων· «Διὰ μὲν κοινωνίας ὁ κόσμος τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔσχε· διὰ δὲ τῆς ἐγκρατείας τὸ τέλος θέλει λαβεῖν». About Dositheus see also ch.[5], 5.3.3.

them as “Manichaeans children” for their similarities with the latter.¹¹⁰ Without disregarding Goulet’s view, it is not unlikely that Macarius had in mind a closer relationship between Manichaeans and the above ascetics, since in his next book he points out that the Manichaean heresy is active and acquires followers “corrupting the *oikoumene*” up to and during his time.¹¹¹ In addition, although we know nothing about the eight books which Macarius claims that Dositheus had at his disposal and through which he supported his doctrines,¹¹² the summary of Dositheus’ teachings based on these books (as recorded by Macarius) and their number (eight), inevitably leads us to suspect a closer connection with Manichaeism. Especially the verbatim quotation of Dositheus’ own words that: “Since this world (humanity) had its beginning through communion, it has to be terminated through abstinence” sounds very Manichaean and not Christian at all.¹¹³

At this point, it is possible to make some concluding remarks concerning Encratites et al. and their relationship with Manichaeans:

(1) References to and correlation of Manichaeans and Encratites et al. appear in ecclesiastical literature earlier than in legislation. A boom in the growth of the phenomenon of radical asceticism is recorded in ecclesiastical literature during the 370s-380s. Just after this boom (early 380s) the first laws against these ascetics appeared. The fast pace of this phenomenon seems to have continued at least during the first half of the fifth century, when the laws against Hydroparastates were promulgated.

(2) Both Amphilochius and Macarius present Encratites et al. as followers or disciples of the Manichaeans, who were regarded as the mentors of their ascetic practices. Moreover, it is emphasized that these practices were established by Manichaean leaders. This indicates an additional concern: the organized character of the Manichaean movement.

(3) According to the first law of Theodosius (381), the Encratites et al. are names behind which the Manichaeans were hidden; the same is implied by the wording of Macarius for the Encratites et al. of his time (children of Manichaeans who are self-identified as Encratites, Apotactites, and Hermits).

(4) The areas where the presence of communities of such ascetics is recorded are the central provinces of Asia Minor, mainly Pisidia, Lycaonia, and Phrygia Combusta (τῇ κεκαυμένῃ),¹¹⁴ but also major cities such as Rome and Antioch. Pisidia heads both lists given by Epiphanius and Macarius.

In addition, the intense presence of Encratites in Pisidia and Lycaonia is confirmed by archaeological monuments. Two burial inscriptions dating back to 375 prove that there were Encratite communities in Laodicea Combusta (κεκαυμένη) of Pisidia or Lycaonia,¹¹⁵ a neighbouring city of Iconium.¹¹⁶ From the burial inscriptions the following can be deduced:

¹¹⁰ Goulet 2003, 59-60.

¹¹¹ Macarius of Magnesia, *Apocriticus* 4.184.8-11(3): Αὐτίκα γοῦν ὁ Μαν[ῆ]ς ἐν Περσίδι τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Χριστοῦ ὑποκρινάμενος πολλὴν μὲν σατραπείαν, πολλὴν δὲ τῆς ἀνατολῆς χώραν τῇ πλάνῃ διέφθειρε καὶ μέχρι τήμερον φθείρει λυμαντικοῖς ὑφέρων τὴν οἰκουμένην σπέρμασιν.

¹¹² Goulet 2003, 60.

¹¹³ Interpreting Dositheus’ statement in a Manichaean perspective, he seems to claim that marriage is illegal because it counteracts the plan of the forces of Light, which is the deconstruction of the cosmos. See ch.[5], 5.3.3.

¹¹⁴ Epiphanius *Pan.* 47.1.2 (Williams, 3) says about Scorched Phrygia (Φρυγία τῇ κεκαυμένῃ): “Perhaps the country has come to be called this by divine dispensation, for this very reason—its inhabitants have been scorched by the perversity of such error, and so much of it. For there are many sects in the area”.

¹¹⁵ Some ancient authors situate Laodicea Combusta in Lycaonia (not the Laodicea of Frygia) and others in Pisidia; cf. Socrates, *HE* 6.18.

¹¹⁶ Calder 1929, 645-46: (a) Αὐρ. Ἀντώνιος Μίρου ἅμα τῇ ἑαυτοῦ θιά Ἐλα[φ]ίη διακονίσση [τῶν Ἐν]κρατῶν [ἀνεστη]σάμεν...(SEG 6 348) (b) Ἐλαφία διακόνισσα τῆς Ἐνκρατῶν θρισκίας ἀνέστησα τῷ πρ(εσ)β(υτέ)ρ(ω)

the members of this religious community self-identified as Encratites, meaning that the appellation 'Encratites' is not a label *ab extra*, but can also be an autonym; they called their movement a religion (τῆς Ἐνκρατῶν θρισκίας); they had active women in the class of deaconesses¹¹⁷ (Ἐλαφία διακόνισσα τῆς Ἐνκρατῶν θρισκίας); they distinguished their own religion from that of the Catholics (independent self-understanding). One of the inscriptions records a provision for the protection of the tomb against those who drink wine (i.e. Catholic Christians): "And if any of the wine-bibbers intrudes (a corpse), he has to deal with God and Jesus Christ".¹¹⁸ The above provision "in the context of this epitaph must be regarded as a piece of propaganda"¹¹⁹ against the criticisms of Catholics (Epiphanius and Basil wrote against Encratites during the same year), concerning the Encratite abstinence from alcohol (even for the Eucharist). It sounds like the last word of an Encratite in the debate with the Catholics, engraved in eternity.

(5) Despite the self-identification just mentioned, it is most likely, as suggested by many scholars, that Encratites et al. were not organized movements or "closed communities with distinct characteristics". Instead, they were "interchangeable names for irregular ascetic groups"¹²⁰ which adopted certain ascetic practices, as is revealed by their names. Encratites abstained from animal food and wine and they condemned marriage; Apotactites renounced marriage and private property; Hydroparastates substituted water for wine in the Eucharist (abstaining from all other drinks but water); and Saccophori wore the sackcloth. Such tendencies to self-negation had existed since the beginning of Christianity, from Paul's era, and earlier in the pagan world. Already from the mid-second century, well before the appearance of Manichaeism, there were Encratite groups in the eastern provinces, whose practices initially were broadly within the limits of 'acceptability' for the church leaders.¹²¹ These same practices also were performed by the Manichaeans who, in addition, used the same apocrypha, especially the Acts of Thomas, and who also had women involved in the services and the ministries of their sect (as missionaries and Elect). Yet Manichaeans, in contrast to Encratites et al., were a distinct and well-organized religious group. Thus, while these ascetic groups initially were considered 'harmless' (although their practices were condemned), it seems that once they were associated with the Manichaeans, imperial and church leaders were alarmed.

6.3.2 Messalians

Another ascetic group associated with Manichaeism by anti-Manichaean authors are the Messalians (Euchites in Greek). Messalians appear chronologically later than Manichaeans. According to Theophanes the Confessor "the heresy of the Messalians, that is of the Euchites

Πέτρῳ ἅμα τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτῷ Πολυχρονίῳ μνήμης χάριν (SEG 6 349). Also, on the west side of Laodicea was found a burial "doorstone" with the inscription: [Με][ῖρος Ἀεντίνου τῷ]ν Ἐνκ[ρ]α[τ]ῶν ζῶν κὲ φρονῶν ἀνέστ[η]σεν ἑαυτῷ τε κὲ τῇ ἀνεψιᾷ Τατῇ [κ]ὲ τῷ ἀδε[λ]φῷ Παύλῳ κὲ ἀδελφῇ Πρ[ι]βι μνήμης χάριν' εἰ δὲ τις τῶν οἰν[ο]ποτῶν ἐπενβάλη, εἴσχι πρὸς τὸν Θ(εὸ)ν καὶ Ἥ(σο)ῦ(ν) Χ(ριστό)ν (SEG 6 345).

¹¹⁷ Cecire 1985, 175. Cf. Quispel 1985/2008, 356-60.

¹¹⁸ Calder 1929, 646: εἰ δὲ τις τῶν οἰν[ο]ποτῶν ἐπενβάλη, εἴσχι πρὸς τὸν Θ(εὸ)ν καὶ Ἥ(σο)ῦ(ν) Χ(ριστό)ν.

¹¹⁹ Calder 1929, 646.

¹²⁰ Beskow 1988, 8-11, esp. 9; Caner 2002, 85. Cf. Gregory 1991, 1350.

¹²¹ See for example the opinion of Dionysius of Alexandria in Basil's letter 188/199. Eusebius (*H.E.* 4.28-29) is the first one who mentions Encratites.

and Enthusiasts, sprouted up” during the reign of the emperor Valens (375/6).¹²² Messalians, as well as Encratites et al., resided by and large in the provinces of central and southern Asia Minor (Lycaonia, Pamphylia, etc.),¹²³ as well as in the city of Antioch.¹²⁴ According to Photius, the Messalians reached their zenith during the fifth century. The last bishop who fought them was, according to Photius, Severus of Antioch.¹²⁵

Laws

A single law issued in 428 exists in the codes (*CTh* & *CJ*) that persecuted, among many other heretics, the Messalians. This is the same law explored in ch.[3] which ranked heretics according to the severity of their crime and the corresponding inflicted penalty. The Messalians are co-classified along with the Hydroparastates and Manichaeans in the third and worst group. They have no right to gather and pray anywhere on Roman soil. The Manichaeans, as the worst of the worst, had in addition to be exiled/expelled from the municipalities.¹²⁶

Ecclesiastical Synods

Messalianism was condemned as heretical by a series of local synods held at Antioch, Side, and Constantinople. The most important of these was the Synod convened at Side of Lycaonia in the 390s (or earlier in 383),¹²⁷ which was presided over by Amphilochius.¹²⁸ Next, Messalianism was condemned by the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus in 431.¹²⁹ According to the decision of the synod, both priestly and lay Messalians (even those suspected to be such) should abjure their ‘heresy’ by a written statement. Otherwise, clerics were forfeiting their priesthood and were ex-communicated (*ἐκπίπτειν καὶ κλήρου καὶ βαθμοῦ καὶ κοινωνίας*), whereas laymen were anathematized. In addition, the suspects should not be confined in monasteries during their interrogation (a common penalty during the Byzantine era for criminals and heretics) in order to prevent the spread of Messalianism among the monks. The

¹²² Theophanes, *Chron.* 63.14-20 (Mango and Scott, 97-98): Τοῦτω τῷ ἔτει [under Valens] ἡ τῶν Μεσσαλιανῶν αἵρεσις ἤγουν Εὐχιτῶν καὶ Ἐνθουσιαστῶν ἀνεφύη.

¹²³ *ACO (Ephesenum anno 431)*, 1.1.7, 117-18: περὶ τῶν λεγομένων ἐν τοῖς τῆς Παμφυλίας μέρεσι Μεσσαλιανιτῶν εἴτ’ οὖν Εὐχιτῶν ἢ γοῦν Ἐνθουσιαστῶν εἴτε ὅπως οὖν. About the many heretics who according to Epiphanius were found in Asia Minor and the ‘heresy-belt’ from Constantinople to Alexandria, see Young 2006, esp. 244. For differing views on Messalianism, in general, and on when and where they appeared, see Caner (2002 esp. 84-85). For Caner, the above testimonies provided by the church leaders are unreliable and serve their heresiological construction of the Messalian profile.

¹²⁴ Epiphanius (*Pan.* 80.1.3-3.1, 3.6) seems to differentiate the origins of the Messalians of Asia Minor and those of Antioch. Whereas, according to him, the motherland of the latter was Mesopotamia, he considers the former as successors of an earlier movement dated at the reign of Constantius II and called by him pagan Messalians.

¹²⁵ Photius, *Bibl.* 52.26-27. See Fitschen 1993, 354.

¹²⁶ *CTh* 16.5.65 (428)= *CJ* 1.5.5.

¹²⁷ As Anna Silvas (2007, 213) states, “Karl Holl [...] dated this synod of Side as early as 383, with Flavian’s synod at Antioch following afterward. More recently however, Klaus Fitschen, [...] places Flavian’s council first, and dates the Synod of Side well into the 390s. The maturity of doctrine and phraseology in this letter [...] points perhaps to a later rather than an earlier dating for this letter, so that the year 390 or thereabouts it might be reasonably nominated”.

¹²⁸ Photius, *Bibl. cod.*, 12b.7-11: 52(12b): Ανεγνώσθη σύνοδος γενομένη ἐν Σίδῃ κατὰ τῆς αἰρέσεως τῶν Μεσσαλιανῶν ἤγουν Εὐχιτῶν ἥτοι Ἀδελφιανῶν. Ἐξῆρχε δὲ τῆς συνόδου Ἀμφιλόχιος ὁ τοῦ Ἰκονίου, συνεδρευόντων αὐτῷ καὶ ἐτέρων ἐπισκόπων τὸν ἀριθμὸν πέντε καὶ εἴκοσι. Cf. Caner 2002, 90: “Actions taken against certain Mesopotamian monks (Messalians) in the 380s and 390s at synods held in Antioch and Side”.

¹²⁹ *ACO (Ephesenum anno 431)*, 1.1.7, 117-18.

synod also condemned the book of the heresy, “the so called *Asceticon*”.¹³⁰ Apart from Amphilochius, the bishops of Melitene (Letoius) and of Antioch (Flavianus) combated Messalianism actively.¹³¹

Ecclesiastical literature

In the ecclesiastical literature, Messalians are reported first in the 370s by Ephrem the Syrian¹³² and Epiphanius.¹³³ According to Epiphanius, Messalians came from Mesopotamia and could also be found in Antioch. Their basic features as depicted by Epiphanius are the following:

- They lack principles, authorities, rulers, (foundation of a name, or Legislation) constitution, rules; their prayer and fasting is also irregular.¹³⁴
- They build certain places and call them prayers or houses of prayer. In some places, these houses resemble a church, purposing to counterfeit the truth and imitating the example of the Church.¹³⁵
- Women played an important role in the sect. Men and women assemble together [in mixed companies]. They abandoned their homes and their families under the pretence of the world's renunciation, and they cohabit together, males and females.¹³⁶

¹³⁰ ACO (*Ephesenum anno 431*), 1.1.7, 117-18: “Ὅρος τῆς αὐτῆς ἁγίας καὶ οἰκουμένης συνόδου τῆς ἐν Ἐφέσῳ κατὰ τῶν δυσσεβῶν Μεσσαλιανιτῶν ἢ γοῦν Εὐχιτῶν: Συνελθόντες [...] ἐπίσκοποι Οὐαλεριανὸς καὶ Ἀμφιλόχιος [...] περὶ τῶν λεγομένων ἐν τοῖς τῆς Παμφυλίας μέρεσι Μεσσαλιανιτῶν εἶτ’ οὖν Εὐχιτῶν ἢ γοῦν Ἐνθουσιαστῶν εἴτε ὁπωσοῦν [...] χαρτίον συνοδικὸν περὶ τούτων [...] ὥστε τοὺς ὄντας κατὰ πάσαν ἐπαρχίαν τῆς Μεσσαλιανῶν ἢ γοῦν Ἐνθουσιαστῶν αἰρέσεως ἢ καὶ ἐν ὑποψίαις τῆς τοιαύτης νόσου γεγεννημένους, εἴτε κληρικοὶ εἴεν εἴτε λαικοί, μεθοδεύεσθαι, καὶ ἀναθεματίζοντας κατὰ τὰ ἐν τῷ μνημονευθέντι συνοδικῷ διηγορευμένα ἐγγράφως, [...] τοὺς [...] καὶ μὴ ἀναθεματίζοντας, τοὺς μὲν πρεσβυτέρους καὶ διακόνους καὶ τοὺς ἑτερόν τινα βαθμὸν ἔχοντας ἐν ἐκκλησίαις ἐκπίπτειν καὶ κλήρου καὶ βαθμοῦ καὶ κοινωνίας, τοὺς δὲ λαικοὺς ἀναθεματίζεσθαι· μοναστήρια δὲ μὴ συγχωρεῖσθαι ἔχειν τοὺς ἐλεγχομένους ὑπὲρ τοῦ μὴ τὸ ζιζάνιον ἐκτείνεσθαι καὶ ἰσχύειν”. See also Photius, *Bibl.* (*Codex 52 Bekker*) 12b-13b: Ἐξήνεγκε δὲ καὶ ὄρον ἢ ἁγία καὶ οἰκουμένη συνόδος, ἢ ἐν Ἐφέσῳ τρίτη, ἀπογυμνώσασα αὐτῶν καὶ τὰ ἐν τῷ λεγομένῳ αὐτῶν βιβλίῳ ἀσκητικῷ βλάσφημα καὶ αἰρετικά κεφάλαια, καὶ καθυποβαλοῦσα τῷ ἀναθέματι. Ἐγραψε δὲ καὶ Ἀρχέλαος ὁ Καισαρείας τῆς Καππαδοκῶν ἐπίσκοπος ἀναθεματισμοὺς εἰκοσιτέσσαρας τῶν κεφαλαίων αὐτῶν.

¹³¹ Theodoret, *HE*, 4.10, p 230.2-5: Λητώϊος μὲν οὖν ὁ τὴν Μελιτηνῶν ἐκκλησίαν ἰθύνας, ἀνὴρ ζήλῳ θείῳ κοσμούμενος, πολλὰ τῆς νόσου ταύτης σπάσαντα θεασάμενος μοναστήρια, μᾶλλον δὲ σπήλαια ληστροκά, ἐνέπρησε ταῦτα καὶ τοὺς λύκους ἐκ τῆς ποιμνῆς ἐξήλασεν.

¹³² Ephrem the Syrian, *Beati Ephraem Testamentum* 421.

¹³³ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 80.1.2: “For another sect has actually arisen after these, a foolish, entirely stupid one, wholly ridiculous, inconsistent in its doctrine, and composed of deluded men and women. They are called Massalians, which means ‘people who pray’”.

¹³⁴ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 80.3.3 (Williams, 647): “But they have no beginning or end, no top or bottom, they are unstable in every way, without principles, and victims of delusion. They are entirely without the foundation of a name, a law, a position, or legislation”.

¹³⁵ Epiphanius begins his chapter with the (earlier) pagan Messalians, the predecessors of his contemporary—nominally Christian—Messalians, pointing out their habit to built assembly places that look like Christian churches. Cf. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 80.1.4; 80.2.1; 80.2.3; 80.3.3 (Williams, 647): “Today, however”, Epiphanius explains, “these people who are now called Massalians <have adopted*> their customs”.

¹³⁶ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 80.3.4 (Williams, 647): δοκοῦσι τοίνυν οὕτοι ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἄνδρες τε καὶ γυναῖκες * δῆθεν εἰς Χριστὸν πεπιστευκέναι λέγοντες, ὥς ἀποταξάμενοι τῷ κόσμῳ καὶ τῶν ἰδίων ἀνακεχωρηκότες, ὁμοῦ δὲ ἀναμίξ ἄνδρες ἅμα γυναῖξ καὶ γυναῖκες ἅμα ἀνδράσιν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ καθεύδοντες.

- Wandering in the open air and within cities, they spend their time in prayers and singing hymns.¹³⁷ Four centuries later, Theophanes completes the picture by adding that they danced using castanets while they chanted.¹³⁸

- “In the summertime they sleep in the public squares, all together in a mixed crowd, men with women and women with men, because, as they say, they own no possession on earth. They show no restraint and hold their hands out to beg, as though they had no means of livelihood and no property”.¹³⁹

- In this way, as Epiphanius comments, they made their life a public show. Thus, even if they were chaste as they claimed, or had spouses, they provoked people “by their silly, extravagant activity”.¹⁴⁰ Elsewhere, however, he denotes that “vice or sexual misconduct” among them is probable, but states that he is unable to know it.¹⁴¹

- Outlandish also was the appearance of Messalians, who, according to Epiphanius had long hair, were beardless and wore a sackcloth. As Epiphanius stresses, these practices were also adopted by some Catholic monks in the Mesopotamian monasteries. However, as he points out, both the female hairstyle and the sackcloth were practices alien to the Catholic Church.¹⁴² Apart from the Saccophori and the Messalian monks, Manichaeans possibly wore the sackcloth too.¹⁴³

Although all the aforementioned features also existed in Manichaeism (apart from the anarchist character), *argia*—the refusal to work—and its consequent begging is clearly the most important feature for Epiphanius, as well as the main reason for connecting Messalians with Manichaeans.¹⁴⁴ *Argia* seems to have been the hallmark of Manichaeans. Whoever was against manual labour was considered to have certainly learned it from the Manichaeans. Indeed, according to Epiphanius, the “horrid” Manichaean practice of idleness had found supporters among certain simple-minded Catholic monks in the Mesopotamian monasteries; misinterpreting the evangelical command (Mt. 19:21), they believed they should not work, and should “< be > idle and without occupation and [...] < be like > drones”.¹⁴⁵ As Epiphanius states:

¹³⁷ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 80.3.2: ἐπειδὴ γὰρ τὰ ἴσα ἐν ὑπαίθρῳ ἐξαγόμενοι, ἔξω βεβηκότες τῆς ἀληθείας, ἐπὶ τὸ εὐχεσθαι καὶ ὑμνεῖν ἐσχολάκασιν.

¹³⁸ Theophanes, *Chron.* 63.14-20: οὗτοι ψάλλοντες βαλλίζουσι καὶ κροταλίζουσι.

¹³⁹ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 80.3.4 (Williams, 647): ὁμοῦ δὲ ἀναμίξ ἄνδρες ἅμα γυναῖξι καὶ γυναῖκες ἅμα ἀνδράσιν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ καθεύδοντες, ἐν ῥύμαις μὲν πλατείαις, ὅπηνίκα θέρουσ ὥρα εἶη, διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔχειν, φησί, κτῆμα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. ἀκώλυτοι δὲ εἰσι καὶ ἐκτείνουσι χεῖρας μεταιτεῖν ὡς ἀβίωτοι καὶ ἀκτῆμονες.

¹⁴⁰ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 80.8.4-6 (Williams, 652).

¹⁴¹ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 80.3.7 (Williams, 648): περὶ δὲ αἰσχροτήτος ἢ λαγνείας οὐ πάνυ τι δύναμαι εἰδέναι. πλὴν οὐδὲ τοῦτου εἰσὶν ἀποδέοντες, μάλιστα ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ κοινῇ τὸ κοιτάζειν ἐσχηκότες ἅμα γυναῖξι καὶ ἀνδράσιν.

¹⁴² Epiphanius, *Pan.* 80.6.5-7 (Williams, 651): οἱ αὐτοὶ τίμιοι ἡμῶν ἀδελφοί, οἱ κατὰ Μεσοποταμίαν ἐν μοναστηρίοις ὑπάρχοντες [...] κόμαις γυναικικαῖς <χρηῖσθαι> προβαλλόμενοι καὶ σάκκω προφανεῖ ἐπερειδόμενοι; Epiphanius (*Pan.* 80.6.6): ἀλλότριον γάρ ἐστι τῆς καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας σάκκος προφανῆς καὶ κόμη <μη> ἐκτεμνομένη. His comment about beards: (80.6.7): Τὸ δὲ χεῖρον καὶ ἐναντίον οἱ μὲν τὸ γένειον, τὴν μορφὴν τοῦ ἀνδρός, ἀποτέμνουσι, τρίχας δὲ τῆς κεφαλῆς πολλάκις κομῶσι. καὶ περὶ μὲν οὖν τοῦ γενείου ἐν ταῖς διατάξεσι τῶν ἀποστόλων φάσκει ὁ θεῖος λόγος καὶ ἡ διδασκαλία μὴ φθεῖρειν τουτέστι μὴ τέμνειν τρίχας γενείου.

¹⁴³ Cf. Lieu 1981a, 166.

¹⁴⁴ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 80.7.5 (Williams, 652): “But I have been obliged to say this because of these Massalians, since they [...] have been made a sect with the horrid custom of idleness and the other evils”. Ammonius of Alexandria (fifth-sixth cent.) connects Messalians with Manichaeans for the same reason (*argia*), *Fragmenta in Joannem*, *frag.* 193.

¹⁴⁵ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 80.4.1-2 (Williams, 648): [...] <εἶναι> ἀργὸν [...] ἄεργον καὶ ἀκαιροφάγον, [...] <εὐοικεῖναι> τῷ κηφῇ τῶν μελισσῶν.

Some of these brethren < refrain from all mundane labor* >—as though they had learned this from the Persian immigrant, Mani, if I may say so. They have no business to be that way. The word of God tells us to mark such people, who will not work.¹⁴⁶

For Epiphanius, the right thing is to do both (work and pray), something which, as he states, many of the clerics did, though they were not obliged to. In addition, they shared the fruits of their work with the needy.¹⁴⁷ The way labour is combined with unceasing prayer is explained magisterially by Abbas Lucius in a conversation he had with a group of Messalian monks. To the claim of the Messalians that they do not work because they pray unceasingly, Abbas Lucius, first, forced them to admit that they do not pray when they sleep and eat. Then, he demonstrated how he achieves both simultaneously. As he explains, while he is working he prays unceasingly and gives a part from the money he earns to the poor who in turn pray for him when he eats or he sleeps.¹⁴⁸ The whole discussion reflects the confrontation between the two rival theories on the issue of labour that divided ascetic environments and troubled ecclesiastical and civil authorities.

The next portrait of the Messalians is outlined by Theodoret of Cyrrhus a few decades later. Theodoret gives us an account of the Messalians of his time, in three of his works: *Haereticarum fabularum compendium* (after 453), *Historia ecclesiastica* (449-450) and *Historia Religiosa* (437-449). In the two former, he depicts their basic features in detail.

Like Epiphanius, Theodoret points out the anarchist, lawless, and irregular character of the movement: that they have neither teachings nor rules regulating their ascetic practices (fasting, etc.).¹⁴⁹ He also attests that they do not work, calling themselves *pneumatikoi*/πνευματικοί (spirituals), that they rest the whole day, doing nothing, because they supposedly spend their day in praying,¹⁵⁰ and because in addition, as Theodoret remarks, “they avert the manual labour as evil”.¹⁵¹ The Messalian *pneumatikoi* resembled the Manichaean Elect and the division of the Manichaean community into the two classes. Theodoret adds, interestingly, that when Messalians are interrogated it is easy for them to deny everything they believe and perform, by anathematizing those who accused them as slanderers.¹⁵² In his words: “Trying to hide their ‘sickness’, after being examined, they shamelessly repudiate and renounce publicly those who have these beliefs”.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁶ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 80.4.3 (Williams, 648): τινές δὲ τῶν προειρημένων ἀδελφῶν, ὡς ἀπὸ τοῦ Μάνη μεμαθηκότες τάχα, ἴν' οὕτως εἶπω, τοῦ ἀπὸ Περσίδος ἀναβεβηκότος, * ἅτινα οὐκ ἐχρῆν οὕτως εἶναι· σκοπεῖν δὲ μᾶλλον τοὺς τοιοῦτους παραγγέλλει ὁ θεῖος λόγος τοὺς μηδὲν ἐργαζομένους. As Caner (2002, 89) observes, Epiphanius associates “their [Messalians’] idleness with simple-minded Mesopotamian monks. Although he admits the latter to be orthodox Christians, he suggests that they ‘had learned this [argia] from Mani’. Thus Epiphanius sought to discredit the Messalian trait he found most reprehensible by linking it with the great Mesopotamian heresiarch. His message was clear: ‘the divine word tells us to mark such people who do not work’”.

¹⁴⁷ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 80.6.1-3 (Williams, 650).

¹⁴⁸ *Apophthegmata patrum* (collectio alphabetica) PG: 65:253.17-43 (Ἀρχὴ τοῦ Λ στοιχείου. Περὶ τοῦ ἀββᾶ Λουκίου).

¹⁴⁹ Theodoret, *HE* 231.10-11: μήτε νηστείας πιεζούσης τὸ σῶμα μήτε διδασκαλίας χαλινούσης καὶ βαίνειν εὐτακτα παιδεύουσας.

¹⁵⁰ Theodoret, *Haer.* 83.429.41-43: ἔργον μὲν οὐδὲν μετῴσι (πνευματικούς γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς ὀνομάζουσι), τῇ δὲ εὐχῇ δῆθεν ἐσχολακότες, τῆς ἡμέρας τὸ πλεῖστον καθεύδουσιν.

¹⁵¹ Theodoret, *HE* 229.9-10: ἀποστρέφονται μὲν τὴν τῶν χειρῶν ἐργασίαν ὡς πονηρίαν.

¹⁵² Theodoret, *Haer.* 83.432.1-6: Πρόχειροι δὲ εἰσιν εἰς ἄρνησιν, κἂν βιασθῶσιν, ἀναθεματίζουσιν εὐπετῶς τοὺς τούτων τι λέγοντας. [...] Αὐτίκα τοίνυν ἐπὶ τοῦ πανευφήμου Φλαβιανοῦ, τοῦ τῆς Αντιοχείων ἐπισκόπου, κρινόμενοι, συκοφαντίας ἐκάλουν τὰς γεγενημένας κατηγορίας.

¹⁵³ Theodoret, *HE* 229.17-18-230.1-2: κρύπτειν δὲ τὴν νόσον πειρώμενοι, καὶ μετὰ ἐλέγχους ἀναιδῶς ἐξαπονοῦνται, καὶ ἀποκηρύττουσι τοὺς ταῦτα φρονοῦντας ἅπερ ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς περιφέρουσι.

Further, apart from their behaviour and attitudes, Theodoret in explaining their appellations informs us about some of their doctrinal positions. They are called ‘Euchites’ (Εὐχῖται, translation of Messalians in Greek) because, as they claim, only continual prayer (εὐχή) drives out from man his “indwelling demon” (τὸν ἐνοικον δαίμονα), “who has been allocated/attached to him” from his birth and who incites him to misconduct. They claim that this demon “cannot be driven out of the soul either by baptism or by any other power”.¹⁵⁴ Further, they are called Enthusiasts (Ὑνθουσιασταί) because they claim that after the innate demon is expelled they become possessed by the Holy Spirit, which enables them to predict the future.¹⁵⁵ As Caner comments, “not only had” Messalians “suggested the inefficacy of a basic church sacrament” (baptism), but they “had also conjured the almost Manichaean specter of a congenitally indwelling demon, an innate source of evil that could only be exorcised through constant prayer”.¹⁵⁶

However, Theodoret does not make any comment on this point, but he does link Messalians and Manichaeans in his *Historia Religiosa* (437-449). As he remarks, the so-called ‘Euchites’ follow the example and adopt the customs of the Manichaeans under the pretext of monastic life.¹⁵⁷ It seems that for Theodoret, what was happening with the Encratites et al. also happened with the Messalians. Manichaeans hid themselves behind the names of other ascetics; in the former case behind Encratites et al., in the latter behind Messalians.

Lastly, Theodoret, in contrast to Epiphanius, names some of their leaders, and mentions the bishops who fought the Messalians, such as, Amphilochius of Iconium, Letoius of Melitene, and Flavianus of Antioch.¹⁵⁸

More than a century later, at the time of Timothy the Presbyter (sixth-seventh cent.), Messalianism does not seem to constitute a problem in the way that Manichaeism still did, to judge from Timothy’s lists of converted heretics. In grouping the converted heretics, Timothy classifies Messalians in the third category (they had only to anathematize their previous

¹⁵⁴ Theodoret, *Haer.* 83.429.25-41: Μεσσαλιανοὶ δὲ (τοῦνομα δὲ τοῦτο μεταβαλλόμενον εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα φωνήν, τοὺς Εὐχίτας σημαίνει), τὸ μὲν βάπτισμά φασι μηδὲν ὀνεῖν τοὺς προσιόντας· ξυροῦ γὰρ δίκην ἀφαιρεῖται τῶν ἀμαρτημάτων τὰ πρότερα, τὴν δὲ ρίζαν οὐκ ἐκκόπτει τῆς ἀμαρτίας· ἡ δὲ ἐνδελεχὴς προσευχή, καὶ τὴν ρίζαν τῆς ἀμαρτίας πρόρριζον ἀνασπᾷ, καὶ τὸν ἐξ ἀρχῆς συγκληρωθέντα πονηρὸν δαίμονα τῆς ψυχῆς ἐξελαύνει. Ἐκάστῳ γὰρ φασιν ἀνθρώπῳ τικτομένῳ παρατυκὰ συνέπεσθαι δαίμονα, καὶ τοῦτον εἰς τὰς ἀτόπους πράξεις παρακινεῖν. Τοῦτον δὲ οὔτε τὸ βάπτισμα, οὔτε ἄλλο τι δύναται τῆς ψυχῆς ἐξελάσαι, ἀλλὰ μόνῃ τῆς προσευχῆς ἡ ἐνέργεια. Some parts between quotation marks in the text are from Cope’s (1990, 195) translation.

¹⁵⁵ Theodoret, *HE* 229.6-12: ἔχουσι δὲ καὶ ἑτέραν προσηγορίαν ἐκ τοῦ πράγματος γενομένην Ὑνθουσιασταὶ γὰρ καλοῦνται, δαίμονός τινος ἐνέργειαν εἰσδεχόμενοι καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου παρουσίαν ταύτην ὑπολαμβάνοντες [...] ὕπνῳ δὲ σφὰς αὐτοὺς ἐκδιδόντες τὰς τῶν ὀνείρων φαντασίας προφητείας ἀποκαλοῦσι; *Haer.* 83.429.45-46: ἀποκαλύψεις ἐωρακέναι φασί, καὶ τὰ ἐσόμενα προλέγειν ἐπιχειροῦσιν.

¹⁵⁶ Caner 2002, 91.

¹⁵⁷ Theodoret, *Phil. hist.* 3.16.7-8: ἀπεστρέφετο δὲ κομιδῇ καὶ τοὺς ὀνομαζομένους Εὐχίτας ἐν μοναχικῷ προσήματι τὰ Μανιχαίων νοσοῦντας.

¹⁵⁸ Theodoret, *Haer.* 83.432.34: Ταύτης ἡγήσατο τῆς αἰρέσεως Σάββας, καὶ Ἀδελφίος, καὶ Δαώδης, καὶ Συμεώνης, καὶ Ἑρμᾶς, καὶ ἄλλοι τινές. Ἐγραψε δὲ κατὰ τούτων ἐπιστολὰς ... Λητούιος, ὁ τῆς Μελιτινῆς ἐπίσκοπος... Ἀμφιλόχιος, ὁ τοῦ Ἰκονίου; *HE* 229.12-14: ταύτης ἐγένοντο τῆς αἰρέσεως ἀρχηγοὶ Δαδῶνης τε καὶ Σάβας καὶ Ἀδελφίος καὶ Ἑρμᾶς καὶ Συμεώνης καὶ ἄλλοι πρὸς τοῦτοις [...] ; 230.3-231.4: Λητούιος μὲν οὖν ὁ τὴν Μελιτηνῶν καὶ Ἀμφιλόχιος ... τὴν Λυκαόνων μητρόπολιν ... Φλαβιανὸς ... Ἀντοχέων ἀρχιερεὺς. Theophanes in his *Chronographia* (63.14-20) mentions the same bishops, but omits the heresiarchs Symeonēs, and Ermas. Instead, he mentions that some considered also Eustathius of Sebasteia as Messalian heresiarch. Timothy the Presbyter mentions Cyril of Alexandria, Flavian and Theodot of Antioch, Letoius of Melitene and Amphilochius of Iconium, as bishops who combated Messalianism. However, he does not name the source of the Messalian *Kephalaia* he is referring to: Πρὸς δὲ εἰδῆσιν καὶ ἀσφάλειαν τῶν ἐντυχανόντων, ἀναγκαῖον καὶ τὰ κεφάλαια τῶν δογμάτων αὐτῆς ὑποτάξαι ἅπερ εἰσὶ ταῦτα.”

heresy), as opposed to Manichaeans whom he places in the first, more deviant, group (they had to be baptized). Besides 'Euchites' and 'Enthusiasts', other names that Timothy uses for Messalians are: Markianists, Choreuts (dancers), Lampetians, Adelphians, and Eustathians.¹⁵⁹ Timothy, like Epiphanius and Theodoret, criticizes the stance of Messalians towards manual labour, which, as he remarks, they considered abominable. Moreover, Timothy emphasizes that they are against giving alms to the needy (neither to widows nor to the orphans), because, as they say, the truly poor (in spirit), are they themselves, hence everything must be provided to them.¹⁶⁰ Timothy, like Epiphanius, underlines the prominent role of the Messalian women, specifying further, that the women of the heresy assume important offices, such as those of a teacher or of a priest.¹⁶¹ Timothy elaborates further on the interesting information provided by Theodoret, according to which:

When Messalians are interrogated [by authorities] about their doctrines, they do not hesitate to renounce their faith and anathematize promptly all those who still have or ever had the same beliefs, and to swear without fear that they hate and abhor such doctrines.¹⁶²

Another new and interesting feature in Timothy's report is the Messalian concept of *apatheia*, which, when conquered, as they claim, provides a kind of immunity that makes them unaffected to the exposure of all kinds of sins.¹⁶³ The same information is provided by Jerome, according to whom the Manichaeans, Priscillians, and Messalians say that those who have overcome passions can freely and fearlessly sin.¹⁶⁴

However, the most noticeable information concerning Messalians' *apatheia* is that neither perjury nor anathematization of their own faith could harm those who had conquered *apatheia*, since, as they say, they became *pneumatikoi* (spirituals).¹⁶⁵

Thus, even betrayal of their own faith does not harm those who have conquered *apatheia*. *Apatheia* provides protection even in this case. Further, "the permission to perjure and anathematize" their own religion before danger was a tradition of the community "bestowed upon them by the tradition of their teachers".¹⁶⁶ This need for legitimization of apostasy (or pseudo-apostasy) is striking and may show that the situation for Messalians was difficult due to their persecution.

Fitschen, examining the existence of Messalians in Asia Minor after 431 CE, argues that whatever information Timothy offers derives from earlier sources; he himself seems to have no personal experience with Messalianism (current Messalians):

There is an amazing fact in Timothy's report: he does not know one single current event about that heresy ... He merely reports on traditions from earlier sources [...] the anti-Messalian protagonists of the 4th and 5th century, namely Cyril of Alexandria, Flavian and Theodotus of Antioch, Letoius of Melitene and Amphilochius of Iconium. The records of these bishops seem

¹⁵⁹ Timothy the Presbyter, *Recept. Haer.* PG 86^A:45-52. Cf. Fitschen, 1993.

¹⁶⁰ Timothy the Presbyter, *Recept. Haer.* PG 86^A:49.13, 52.15.

¹⁶¹ Timothy the Presbyter, *Recept. Haer.* PG 86^A:52.18.

¹⁶² Timothy the Presbyter, *Recept. Haer.* PG 86^A:52.19.

¹⁶³ Timothy the Presbyter, *Recept. Haer.* PG 86^A:49.10: "they say that to surrender your self to delights/indulgency and licentiousness after having conquered apathy, is guiltless and not risky".

¹⁶⁴ Jerome, *Dialogus adversus Pelagianos*, prol. 1, in Caner 2002, 92.

¹⁶⁵ Timothy the Presbyter, *Recept. Haer.* PG 86^A:52.19: μήτε τῆς ἐπιτορκίας μήτε τοῦ ἀναθεματισμοῦ βλάπτειν λουπὸν δυναμένων τοὺς μετὰ τὴν ἀπάθειαν, ὡς αὐτοὶ λέγουσι, πνευματικούς γενομένους.

¹⁶⁶ Timothy the Presbyter, *Recept. Haer.* PG 86^A:52.19: ἐπιτορκεῖν τε καὶ ἀναθεματίζειν ἑαυτοὺς ἐπ' ἄδειας ἐχόντων αὐτῶν ἐκ τῆς τῶν διδασκάλων αὐτῶν παραδόσεως. The same attitude towards danger appears to be legitimized by Mani himself in the last anathema of LAF against Manichaeans. More details on this will be provided in ch.[8].

to be the basis for Timothy's survey on Messalian doctrine [...]. Therefore is doubtful whether Messalianism still had virulent power in the days of Timothy.¹⁶⁷

Although I agree with Fitschen that it "is doubtful whether Messalianism still had virulent power in the days of Timothy", I disagree with the argumentation he employs to support it. Though Timothy, in his introduction, states that these earlier bishops had combated Messalianism through their writings and also kept minutes, we do not possess any texts of these that describe the behaviour or the doctrines of Messalians. What we do know about these bishops stems from the records of the third Ecumenical Synod, as well as the accounts of Theodoret and Theophanes, and concerns their active engagement in the fight against the spread of Messalianism.¹⁶⁸ So, the question whether Timothy based himself on their records or not must remain open. However, the fact that Timothy ranks the converted Messalians third in the procedure for their reception into the Church, while ex-Manichaeans had to follow the first most severe procedure, implies that Messalianism was not considered a real danger in Timothy's time.¹⁶⁹

Evaluating the data of the sources, one observes a change in the profile of the Messalians over time. The image of mixed companies of men and women wandering through the cities, chanting, dancing with castanets and sleeping together in the public squares that Epiphanius had sketched gradually fades out. On the contrary, the Messalians of Theodoret's time are persecuted and interrogated. It seems that after the synods of Side and Ephesus, the show of eccentricity they performed (as described by Epiphanius) was scaled down since they were persecuted. Flavian of Antioch was one of the bishops who had been active in limiting the spread of the 'heresy'. He interrogated a certain Adelphius, "an old man on the edge of the grave", who was the leader of a group of Messalians who lived in Edessa.¹⁷⁰ From such interrogations new evidence emerged, which complemented the Messalian profile and which was related to both their doctrine (e.g. baptism, indwelling demon) and practices, especially to their attitude towards danger (whereby they were permitted to anathematize their own religion).¹⁷¹ Stable elements of the Messalian profile over time remain: the non-institutional character and lack of rules, the participation of women in ministries, and above all idleness and the consequent demand to be nourished by others.

Fitschen points out that we must be careful when reading heresiological sources. In his article "Did 'Messalianism' exist in Asia Minor after A.D. 431?", he explains that he had put 'Messalianism' in inverted commas in order to highlight that it was an 'amorphous movement'. Based on the fact that in the condemnatory decision in the records of the third Ecumenical Council (431), various names are attributed to Messalians (Euchites, Enthusiasts), and no one is named as their heresiarch, Fitschen argues that Messalianism was not an

¹⁶⁷ Fitschen 1993, 354.

¹⁶⁸ *ACO (Ephesenum anno 431)*, 1.1.7, 117.4-14; Theodoret, *HE* 230.1-14; Theodoretus, *Haer.* 432.1-6; Theophanes, *Chron.* 63.17-21.

¹⁶⁹ Comparing Timothy's outline of the profile of the Messalians to that sketched by Epiphanius and Theodoret, I would argue, that Timothy is based on the latter's accounts enriching the Messalian portrait with additional details about their behaviour and doctrines.

¹⁷⁰ Theodoret, *Haer.* 83.432.6-22: Ἀλλ' ὁ πάνσοφος ἐκεῖνος ἀνὴρ τὴν λανθάνουσαν ἐφώρασεν αἵρεσιν. [...] Ἀδελφίον· αὐτὸς γὰρ ἠγεῖτο τῶν ἐγκαλουμένων τὴν αἵρεσιν, ἀνὴρ πρεσβύτερος καὶ τυμβογέρων, καὶ παρ' αὐτὰς λουπὸν ὦν τοῦ θανάτου τὰς πύλας [...] Καὶ ἄλλα δὲ πολλὰ φρενίτιδος ἔργα τολμῶσι. Καὶ γὰρ ἐξαπίνης πηδῶσι, καὶ δαίμονας ὑπερπεπηδηκέναι νεανιεύονται ... Καὶ ἕτερα ἅττα δρῶσι παραπλησίως παραπληξίας μεστὰ, διὸ δὴ καὶ τῶν Ἐνθουσιαστῶν ἐσχῆκασιν ὄνομα; *HE* 432.1-28.

¹⁷¹ Contra this view, Caner (2002, 91-96, esp. 92) argues that the new doctrinal features were unfounded additions by later church authorities, in order for a dogmatically heretical Messalian profile to be generated.

organized heresy but a spiritual movement.¹⁷² Disagreeing with the view that Messalianism was a movement, even a spiritual one, Caner argues that researchers reproduce stereotypes and labels of that era when they treat “such groups as separate historical phenomena”, “distinct and isolated historical movements”, and that they tend to “identify objections to manual labor with marginal or heretical ascetic groups such as Manichaeans, Messalians or circumcellions”.¹⁷³ Further, Caner, questioning the credibility of the sources, argues that the later Messalian profile (e.g. from Theodoret or Timothy), with its doctrinal features, was a heresiological construction aimed at the marginalization of Christian ascetic practices that followed the apostolic paradigm of the wandering life and threatened church hierarchies. For this reason, Caner also suggests a shift in the focus of the methodology of Messalian scholarship “on behavioral rather than doctrinal features” of Messalianism.

Through an alternative methodology that focuses on behavioral aspects of the Messalian profile [...] rather than doctrinal features [...] it will become apparent that what church leaders were confronting under the “Messalian” label was not in fact a novel movement, but rather a complex of ideals, practices, and assumptions deeply rooted in the apostolic model for Christian ascetic life.¹⁷⁴

Taking into account the observations of these specialists, some clarifying remarks are necessary at this point:

The fact that Messalians, as well as Encratites et al., were not organized but amorphous movements, is first of all clearly stated by their opponents (e.g. Epiphanius, Theodoret). Besides, as is entailed by the legislation, the state also held the same view. There is only one law against Messalians (428) and three against Encratites et al., in one of which the latter are portrayed just as masks of Manichaeans (the target is Manichaeans, not the Encratites et al.), while the twenty-five laws against Manichaeism (eighteen in *CTh* and seven in *CJ*), which was an organized movement constituting a threat, are more numerous than those of any other heresy. Hence, it is not legitimate to put Manichaeans together in one conceptual basket with Messalians and Encratites by considering that these names were used just as alternative labels for various trends within Christian asceticism that Church and state authorities of the era wished to marginalize.¹⁷⁵

The fact that the focus of church leaders’ rhetoric is the behaviour and attitudes of the above ascetics rather than their doctrines is also evident in the examined primary sources. The same is true for Ephrem, who wrote at about the same time as Epiphanius.¹⁷⁶ As Caner points out, “Indeed, Epiphanius, Ephrem, and the Gangra synod demonstrate that by the fourth century ascetic practices, themselves, could be deemed heretical without reference to specific doctrinal deviations”.¹⁷⁷ However, as we also saw, most of the authors we examined do not condemn these practices as such, but their interpretation which is grounded on doctrinal assumptions (e.g. meat is poisonous because it consists of matter, plants are alive,

¹⁷² Fitschen 1993, 352-355.

¹⁷³ Caner 2002, 13, 85.

¹⁷⁴ Caner 2002, 85. Indeed, as Caner (2002, 78) points out, “Manichaeans became the most notorious heirs to the apostolic paradigm for Christian life.” The question of the Messalian identity and its relationship with mainstream Christianity and spirituality has raised much discussion in scholarship. See for instance: Fitschen 1993, 352-55; Stewart 1991; Louth 2007, 110-121, esp. 112-13; Caner 2002, 97-103; Casiday 2003, 429. Hunt 2012. On the question of whether the ‘problem’ was just the practices in themselves or/and the doctrines behind them, see also Beskow (1988, 10) and Goodrich (2004, 209).

¹⁷⁵ Contra Caner 2002, 15, 101.

¹⁷⁶ Ephrem Syrus, *Hymni contra Haereses* 22.4, p. 79. Caner 2002, 115, 90.

¹⁷⁷ Caner 2002, 101.

wine is of Devil, marriage is illegal and serves the Devil's plan). Therefore, focusing only "on behavioral rather than doctrinal features", as Caner suggests, is problematic because it completely leaves the doctrines out of the discussion, which are those that differentiate and finally make sense of the specific practices.

6.3.3 Concluding Remarks Regarding Encratites et al., Messalians and their Relationship with Manichaeans

Taking together the findings of the preceding analysis, I will attempt some concluding remarks regarding the relationship between Manichaeans and both the Encratites et al. and Messalians, with the ultimate aim of answering the question: what does this link (made by our sources) reveal about the Manichaeans?

The outbreak of the phenomenon of radical asceticism during the decades 370 and 380, which resulted in the increase of the number of anarchist ascetics (Encratites etc.), in combination with the simultaneous appearance of the Messalians, was connected by the official Church and state with Manichaean influence. Therefore, the laws against Manichaeans constituted the first priority of Theodosian religious policy.

Indeed, from the above presentation, it became apparent that both Encratites et al. and Messalians share a series of common features with the Manichaeans. In both cases, these features primarily concern the behaviour and attitudes of these ascetics, such as the wandering ascetic lifestyle even within the cities, women's active role in the sect, the renunciation of possessions, extravagant appearance, idleness and begging (Messalians), extreme forms of fasting, etc. Doctrinal issues which arose secondarily, mainly, underline the dualistic perspective of these movements. Indeed, both the 'indwelling daimon in every man' of the Messalians (Theodoret), and the 'distinct principles' (*ἀρχαὶ διάφοροι*)—among them the Devil as an autonomous entity—of the Encratites (Epiphanius) echo Manichaean positions.¹⁷⁸ Moreover, what is emphasized by our sources is that the Manichaeans were the mentors of the above ascetics. Manichaeans were presented as the teachers of the false ascetic practices of Encratites. Manichaeans were also deemed as the teachers of idleness, which was highlighted as the main feature of Messalians. The 'bad' influence of Manichaeans was considered to have transformed the above ascetical environments into 'factories' for producing apostates. Thus, it is logical to assume that for the authorities (civil and ecclesiastical) the independent and amorphous groups of ascetics, such as Encratites et al. and Messalians, were likely to be attracted, influenced, and even swallowed up by the highly organized sect of the Manichaeans. Their common practices and outlook were a serious reason for their appeal and possible recruitment by Manichaeans into their movement. Moreover, according to some sources, the names of these ascetic groups were used as camouflage (or were considered as such) by disguised Manichaeans.

Therefore, the link between these ascetics and the Manichaeans, in the minds of Church and state leaders, seems to have been of crucial importance. Whether or not this link actually existed or was only in their minds, or whether the authorities sought to discredit Encratites et al. and Messalians by linking them with Manichaeans, are all probable alternative interpretations. To a certain extent, it is more likely that all had happened together at the same time. However, this may be, it is certain that the practices themselves were considered

¹⁷⁸ Additional references to Messalian dogmatic theses by Timothy may refer to their successors, namely, the Lampetians and Markianists (end of 6th century). However, the conducted so far research does not allow us to say whether we can consider these groups as direct heirs of the Messalians. Cf. Fitschen 1993, 355.

dangerous and alarmed both Church and state authorities. Their preoccupations were not only religious but clearly extended to the social domain as well.¹⁷⁹

And while, initially, for both the Church and the state (in the law of 381) the terms Encratites et al. referred to practices (not illegal), the sudden shift of imperial religious policy which rendered illegal the Encratites et al. as groups in their own right (law of 382) indicates that it was soon realized that:

(1) The boundaries between various ascetic groups were blurred. In practice, it was difficult to judge whether someone who adopted radical ascetic practices was a Manichaean or a Christian ascetic.

(2) regardless of whether the Manichaeans were hidden behind other ascetic groups, or inspired, or even recruited the members of the other groups, the danger was that the adoption of such practices (and ideas) by a growing number of ascetics constituted a threat. Beyond the religious side effects, the lifestyle promoted through those ascetics, even in urban areas, was a threat to the social values and social institutions of the empire.

6.4 Socially Alarming Dimensions of Manichaean Attractiveness and Ways to Deal with them

6.4.1 Similar but Different

Manichaean ascesis (The pseudo-ascetics)

The fact that the spread of Manichaeism in the Roman Empire coincided with the growing prevalence of Christianity (one of whose essential elements was asceticism), gave the Manichaeans the opportunity to present themselves as exemplary ascetics. One of the main tricks that Manichaeans devised in order to seduce the unwary, as Augustine states, was that of “making a show of chastity and of notable abstinence”.¹⁸⁰ The image of the non-conformist, like a philosopher ascetic, in an era during which asceticism was fashionable, was attractive and influential. Manichaeans through their ascetic ‘pale look’ and their philosophic-scientific-religious speculations about the cosmos, charmed especially young people and women.¹⁸¹ What annoyed the representatives of the Catholic Church about the Manichaeans’ ascetic appeal, was that they promoted themselves not just as ideal ascetics, but as ideal *Christian* ascetics, while most Christian parties did not regard them as Christians at all. Thus, church leaders feared that ordinary Christians would be unable to distinguish the Manichaean ‘pseudo-ascetics’, and be led astray by them, because, while the forms of Manichaean and Christian *ascesis* were similar, the theological interpretation of ascesis was completely different.

As explained in ch.[5], for the Church Fathers, Manichaean fasting was based on totally false theological assumptions. Instead of fighting gluttony, their fasting was an insult to God and his creation. They had similar problems with the logic underlying Manichaean sexual abstinence. Marriage was rejected not for the sake of virginity (the early Christian writers saw virginity as a way of life to fortify spiritual progress), but because childbearing was construed

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Caner 2002, 14-15, 89.

¹⁸⁰ Augustine, *Mor. Manich.* 1.2 (Stoherth in *NPNF*¹ 4:46); cf. Lieu 1992, 180, 185 and 180-187 about the ascetical appeal of Manichaeism.

¹⁸¹ Cf. Caner 2002, 80.

as the Devil's plan. But while Christian and Manichaean asceticism were distinct on a doctrinal level, on a practical level there were few visible differences.¹⁸²

A good example of this is the following hagiographical account about the early Manichaean missionary Mar Ammo. When he reached the border of the Kushan state, he explained to the guardian spirit of the East (Bagard) the commandments of Manichaean discipline: "We do not consume meat or wine (and) we stay far from women", the spirit replies, "Where I rule, there are many like you (already)".¹⁸³ It is generally assumed that the Spirit here refers to the presence of Buddhists in the Kushan Empire, but that is precisely the point. Manichaean practices of fasting and of celibacy instead of marriage can be found in many religions and do not differ significantly from those promoted by Christian monks and ascetics. For this reason, Faustus refutes the Catholics' assertion that Paul's prophesy about those who abstain from meat and forbid marriage "applies to the Manichaeans more than to the Catholic ascetics, who are held in the highest esteem in the Church".¹⁸⁴

Apart from the ascetic practices, there were also similarities in ascetic terminology, representations, and concepts. Expressions such as, 'good thoughts', 'good words', 'good deeds' were interreligious in ascetical environments and were present not only in Manichaean and Christian practices, but also in Zoroastrian and Buddhist. The terms, 'rest/*anapausis*',¹⁸⁵ 'quietness/*hesychia*', and 'discerning/*diakrisis*',¹⁸⁶ were widespread, as was the Pauline concept of the 'old' and the 'new man',¹⁸⁷ and especially the idea that the senses are gates which must be guarded.¹⁸⁸

As Manichaean and Christian asceticism did not differ in form, there was a fear of Manichaean influence upon accepted forms of asceticism.¹⁸⁹ Further, through the ascetics, the Manichaean influence would spread into society, since ascetics at that time constituted spiritual exemplars and acted as mentors and instructors of believers. In order to enable the Christian faithful to distinguish true from false ascetics, instructions were given by Church Fathers. Ephrem warned the Christians in Mesopotamia not to admire Manichaeans as exemplary Christians, for, as he says, "their works are similar to our works, as their fasting is similar to our fasting, but their faith is not similar to our faith".¹⁹⁰ Also, it is interesting to note

¹⁸² Cf. Liebeschuetz 2011, 21, 32: "All these dualistic groupings clearly troubled many generations of leaders of main-line Christianity. For their ideas were obviously so closely related to those of Christianity that Christian leaders found it difficult to convince their followers that their doctrines were distinct from Christian doctrines, and even totally incompatible with them" [...] "the attitudes of the followers of some Gnostic sects and of Manichaeans to sexuality came close to Christian views. The way of life of Manichaean 'elect' was quite similar to that of Christian ascetics, particularly to that of the wandering encratite ascetics of Mesopotamia". See also Lieu 1992, 180-187. Stroumsa (1985, 276) states: "It is significant, moreover, that the Manichaeans, who had appeared in Eleutheropolis in the third century – close to the main monastic area and to the locus of the Archontics, are still found in the Judaeian wilderness in the sixth century. It must remain the task of further research to evaluate whether dualist groups and Christian monks were more, throughout this period, than casual neighbors".

¹⁸³ BT 11 no. 1 M 2 MP in BeDuhn 2000b, 33. See also Skjærvø 2006, 7.

¹⁸⁴ Augustine, *Faust*. 30.1-6 (trans. by Stothert in *NPNF*¹ 4:563-567).

¹⁸⁵ About the Manichaean concept of *rest* in the documentary texts from Kellis, see Brand 2019, 177-78.

¹⁸⁶ However with another meaning: the "gnosis of separation" = a practical knowledge.

¹⁸⁷ 2PsB 167.54-55; 153.20. 1Keph. 86.215.1-3.

¹⁸⁸ 2PsB 150.23-31; 1Keph. 38.100.1-6 & 86.215.1 - 216.13. Cf. Serapion, c. *Manichaeos* 53.43-47. Cf. Pedersen (2012, 133-43), about the Manichaean use of the term '*Μυστήριον*'.

¹⁸⁹ "The most intriguing question", as Van Oort (2009, 129) points out, is whether Manichaeism exerted any influence on "mainstream Christianity". The similarity between Manichaean and Christian ascetical ideals naturally raises the question of mutual influence. Cf. Drijvers 1981, 130.

¹⁹⁰ Ephrem the Syrian, *Prose Refutations* cxix. Cf. Lieu 1992, 181; Lieu 1994, 42.

that the great ascetic exemplars in ascetic literature were represented as avoiding contacts with Manichaeans or with ascetics who held Manichaean views and practices. According to Athanasius, Antony, the great anchorite and father of monasticism,

[Did not have] friendly dealings with the Manichaeans or any other heretics; or, if he had, only as far as advice that they should convert to piety; for he thought and asserted that intercourse with these was harmful and destructive to the soul.¹⁹¹

As Lieu points out, “Athanasius might have felt it necessary to mention this so that Antony's ascetic endeavours would not be construed as a form of Manichaeism”.¹⁹² The hermit Marcianus from Cyrrhus, as Theodoret recounts, avoided Messalians, because under the pretext of monasticism they were Manichaean-minded.¹⁹³ Cyril of Scythopolis, in his *Life of Euthymius*, makes clear that the grand ascetic and abbot abhorred all the sects but especially he hated six heresies. Of these, he hated more than any other the Manichaean “disgust”.¹⁹⁴

Further, descriptions were provided that depicted the image of the pseudo-ascetic body and outfit, which could guide faithful readers to identify heretics. According to ecclesiastical authors, one could distinguish pseudo-ascetics by their conspicuous appearance: paleness, long hair among the men, short-cut hair among the women, and the wearing of dark sackcloth. Thus, the body could be used as a marker to identify heretics.¹⁹⁵ For Ephrem the Syrian, ascetic practices such as paleness and the wearing of sackcloth was just a show intended to deceive the naive. As Ephrem warned, “the faithful must learn to judge them not by the outward filth of their garments but by the inward filth of their doctrines”.¹⁹⁶ The most representative example of this kind is Jerome's detailed description in his letter to Eustochium.¹⁹⁷

Church canons also condemned these ascetic practices early on, in case their theoretical background was a theology directed against creation, or when the ascetic discipline was considered an end in itself. According to the canons of the Synod held at Gangra in Paphlagonia in 340, the following practices were condemned and those who adopted them were anathematized: those who abhor meat-eating,¹⁹⁸ those who condemn lawful marriage,¹⁹⁹ those who remain celibate not for the sake of chastity,²⁰⁰ those boasting for practicing celibacy,²⁰¹ women wearing men's clothes under the pretence of asceticism,²⁰²

¹⁹¹ Athanasius of Alexandria, *Vit. Ant.* 68.1.4-7 (Kennan, altered): Οὔτε Μανιχαίοις ἢ ἄλλοις τισὶν αἰρετικοῖς ὠμίλησε φιλικὰ ἢ μόνον ἄχρι νοουθεσίας τῆς εἰς εὐσέβειαν μεταβολῆς, ἡγούμενος καὶ παραγγέλλων τὴν τούτων φιλίαν καὶ ὁμίλιαν βλάβην καὶ ἀπώλειαν εἶναι ψυχῆς.

¹⁹² Lieu 1992, 183: “Athanasius in his *Life of Antony* made the point that this great Christian ascetic studiously avoided contacts with the Manichaeans during his sojourn in the desert”.

¹⁹³ Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Phil. hist.* 3.16.7-8: ἀπεστρέφετο δὲ κομιδῇ καὶ τοὺς ὀνομαζομένους Εὐχίτας ἐν μοναχικῷ προσήματι τὰ Μανιχαίων νοσοῦντας.

¹⁹⁴ Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vit. Euth.* 39.20-30: καὶ ὁ μακάριος Σάβας καὶ ἄλλοι πλεῖστοι γέροντες ἐθαύμαζον τοῦ μεγάλου Εὐθυμίου [...] ὅτι πᾶσαν μὲν αἵρεσιν τῷ ὀρθῷ τῆς πίστεως λόγῳ ἐναντιουμένην ἀπεστρέφετο, ἐξαιρέτως δὲ τὰς ἐξ ταύτας αἰρέσεις τέλειον μῖσος ἐμίσει. τὴν τε γὰρ Μανιχαϊκὴν βδελυρίαν ἐμυσάττετο καὶ τοῖς τὰ Ὀριγένους φρονοῦσιν πολλοῖς τότε οὖσιν ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα περὶ Καισάρειαν τόποις καὶ σήματι δῆθεν εὐλαβείας ἐρχομένοις πρὸς αὐτὸν διεμάχετο γενναίως τὴν παρ' αὐτοῖς μυθευομένην τῶν νοῶν προὑπαρξιν καὶ τὴν ταύτῃ ἐπομένην τερατώδη ἀποκατάστασιν.

¹⁹⁵ About the identification of heretics “by virtue of the senses”/observable attitudes, cf. Berzon 2013, 262-64.

¹⁹⁶ Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymni contra Haereses* in Lieu 1992, 181.

¹⁹⁷ Jerome, *Ep.* 22.27f.

¹⁹⁸ Joannou 1962, 90 (no 2). (*I, 2, Les canons des Synodes particuliers*).

¹⁹⁹ Joannou 1962, 89 (no 1).

²⁰⁰ Joannou 1962, 93 (no 9).

²⁰¹ Joannou 1962, 93 (no 10).

²⁰² Joannou 1962, 94-5, 482 (no 13).

women cutting off their hair pretending piety,²⁰³ women who leave their husbands,²⁰⁴ parents who abandoned their own children pretending asceticism,²⁰⁵ children leaving their parents pretending piety,²⁰⁶ those who fast on Sunday under the pretence of asceticism,²⁰⁷ those who despise the assemblies of the Catholic Church and hold their private assemblies.²⁰⁸

Apart from the similarities in ascesis, as said above (ch.[2]), there was a further remarkable resemblance between the grades of the Manichaean hierarchy and the corresponding ranks of the Christian priesthood.²⁰⁹ It is striking therefore, that apart from the SC, no other Greek anti-Manichaean author documents this structure in detail, or comments on the similarity with the respective Christian hierarchy. So, they did not give any relevant instructions to Christian believers, as they did in the case of ascesis and other similarities.

Finally, as we shall see in ch.[7], similarities also existed between the form of Christian and Manichaean churches as well as between Christian and Manichaean sacred meals.²¹⁰

6.4.2 Wandering Asceticism as a Challenge to Both Religious and Social Institutions

The anarchist, atypical, amorphous, un-institutional groups of wandering ascetics were a challenge to the institutional Church, official authorities, hierarchies and worship. Both Messalians and Encratites (as denoted by Basil's letter) questioned the efficacy of Christian holy sacraments, in particular catholic baptism. It was an era characterized by competition between bishops and monks for which of these power-structures would gain power and control over the Christian landscape and would become the dominant authority in the conscience of faithful Christians. In this context, the Christian bishops also had to compete "with the Manichaean ascetic Elect [and other ascetics] who lived in their cities".²¹¹

The fact that the Manichaean ascetic model was that of the wandering asceticism is supported by both Manichaean and anti-Manichaean sources. Although it has been argued by some scholars that there were also Manichaean monasteries in Egypt that preceded and inspired the coenobitic type of Christian monasticism, this cannot be verified due to the lack of sufficient evidence at present.²¹² Thus, from the sources we have at our disposal it is presumed that the Manichaean ascetic model in the Roman Empire should have been the wandering small *conventicula*: small groups of Elect surrounded by catechumens. The latter is also confirmed by the material from Kellis.²¹³ The case of the missionary Julia is one such

²⁰³ Joannou 1962, 97 (no 17).

²⁰⁴ Joannou 1962, 95 (no 14).

²⁰⁵ Joannou 1962, 95 (no 15).

²⁰⁶ Joannou 1962, 96 (no 16).

²⁰⁷ Joannou 1962, 96 (no 18).

²⁰⁸ Joannou 1962, 91-92 (no 5 & 6).

²⁰⁹ See ch.[2], section 2.4.

²¹⁰ See also chs. [3] (*Manichaean Churches*) and [5] (*Manichaean rituals*).

²¹¹ Caner 2002, 124. Cf. Maier 1995a, 52. On the "formation of the early Christian leadership", see Kyrktas 1988, 365-383, 365.

²¹² On this issue, see Lieu 1985, 145. Lieu 1981a, 155-56, 155: "Modern scholars have not refrained from investigating the ascetical practices and organization of the sect and from assessing its influence on the development of Christian monasticism. Voobus, for instance, regards Manichaeism as a major stimulus to the growth of asceticism in the Syrian Orient but this has not gone unchallenged". Stroumsa 1986b, 307-319. Gardner 2000, 247-257. As Brand (2019, 246) concludes, "Stimulating as it may sound, there is no evidence from the Roman Empire for a Manichaean group style with elect living communally in monastic buildings". See also the relevant discussion in ch.[2].

²¹³ The documentary material from Kellis portrays Elect as continually travelling in the Nile Valley, cf. Brand 2019, 140-145.

example in action. In this respect, Libanius' testimony is also relevant. According to him, the Manichaeans "are found in many places in the world but everywhere they are only few in number".²¹⁴ Such small cells of Manichaean ascetics seem to have gathered in the countryside, outside the city walls, but especially within the cities.

Representatives of the official church rejected the individualism of wandering ascetics and supported the social character of coenobitic monasticism. The *Constitutiones Asceticae* (ascribed to Basil) was the result of an attempt to gain control over the enthusiastic waves of wandering ascetics who spread irregularly across the eastern provinces of the empire, without constitutions and with radical manifestations in discipline. It determined the terms and the rules that should regulate the monastic life and became the basis upon which monasticism was organized thereafter.²¹⁵ In contrast to the Messalian and Manichaean view, according to which the Elect/*pneumatikoi* should not work, in order to offer their spiritual services through their prayers, the new model of economic life inspired by Basil stated that the monks not only had to work to feed themselves, but by their labour, they also had to support the needy. Basil implemented his vision in practice and founded a "new city" (*καινήν πόλιν*) for the poor of Caesarea, on the outskirts of the city: the Basiliad (Basileias). This was a complex of buildings that included a hospital, hospices, and hostel.²¹⁶

6.4.3 The Diffusion of Radical Ideas into Wider Society

Another major side-effect of wandering asceticism was the diffusion of radical ideas into wider society. Although the Manichaean wandering ascetics used the "language of monasticism", they did not withdraw from society, but lived inside the world as the Messalians did because "their constant mission" was "to transform it", to 'cure' it by transferring their values to it.²¹⁷ Thus, in the words of Beskow, they "were regarded by the Roman authorities as socially harmful, not because they were ascetic, which might in itself be acceptable, but because they tended to upset law and order by questioning the laws of marriage, property, [labour] and social behaviour in general".²¹⁸ Throughout legislation, we find the fear that the Manichaeans would corrupt and infect society with their morals and customs. Therefore, the laws record the repeated insistence that Manichaeans should be exiled from the cities.

6.4.4 The Dilemma Between Concealment and Disclosure: To Speak or not to Speak?

Apart from the aforementioned patterns (i.e. the 'similar but different' argument, the example of great Christian ascetics, the human body as a marker of heresy) and measures (church canons, regulation of monastic life) an additional tactic of the Church Fathers' rhetorical strategy to combat Manichaean attractiveness (strange as it may sound) was the concealment of heretical information. As Berzon remarks:

²¹⁴ Libanius, *Ep.* 1253 (Lieu 2010, 43): πολλαχοῦ μὲν εἰσι τῆς γῆς, πανταχοῦ δὲ ὀλίγοι.

²¹⁵ Pseudo-Basil of Caesarea, *Constitutiones Asceticae* PG, 31:1381.46-49, 1385.25 (*Asceticon fus.*: 901-1052 and *Asceticon brev.*: 1052-1305). Basil's authorship of *Constitutiones Asceticae* is doubted, cf. Tzamalikos 2012, 196; Thomas, Constantinides-Hero & Constable, 2000, 30.

²¹⁶ Basil in his epistles (94, 150, 176) calls it *πρωχοτροφεῖον* (*ptôchotropheion*). Gregory of Nazianzus, in his funeral oration (*Funerbris* 63.1.3) in honor of Basil, calls Basiliad *καινήν πόλιν*. Cf. Rousseau 1994, 139-144; Crislip 2005, 103.

²¹⁷ Gardner and Lieu 2004, 23.

²¹⁸ Beskow 1988, 11. Cf. Drijvers 1984, 118.

In their position as pastoral caretakers, the heresiologists managed the information at their disposal with a dual mandate: reveal and restrict. [...] the fear of overexposing the heretics remained a looming concern [...] While heresiology served to protect its readers from the disease of heresy by means of identificatory and curative knowledge, the bishop of Salamis, like Hippolytus, Tertullian, and Theodoret, ensures his audience's protection by consciously restricting the flow of heretical information. [...] It was not lack of knowledge that defined down the scope of Theodoret's inquiry, but a defensive inclination to maximize potency and minimize peril.²¹⁹

Thus, in some cases, our authors conceal information lest Manichaean beliefs and conduct would seem appealing. As Serapion declares at the end of his treatise:

Let us stop here, indicating, by these few points, the meaning of all the rest, and systematically refute their views through what has already been said. It is necessary for those who are diligent to show caution, so that after overcoming any deceitful attraction, they may ensure that their ears have remained unharmed by their wickedness, as if they (their ears) were the key holders/keepers.²²⁰

Those who happen to encounter a (heretical) doctrine must be in contact with it, as much as is enough for them to realize its harmful effect; that is, to understand from what has been said those things that have been silenced.²²¹

Now I leave aside that which is ridiculous and offensive in order to avoid filling my audience's ears with the sound of scandalous words and monstrous suggestions.²²²

However, in other cases, they end up saying what they do not want to say (either explicitly or symbolically), although they stress that this is in the best interests of believers.

We say things which we would prefer not to say, seeking not our own profit, but the profit of many that they may be saved.²²³

I do not dare give an account [...] I do not dare say [...] But I will only reveal it speaking symbolically (through symbols/signs) [...] We truly pollute our mouth speaking about these things. The Church informs you about these things and teaches you, and touches the filth, so that you may be not besmirched: it speaks of wounds, that you may not be wounded. It is sufficient for you to know these facts; now do not attempt to learn about it by experience!²²⁴

6.5 Political Reflections on the anti-Manichaean Discourse

The question of the last sub-section is the investigation of a probable correlation between social stratification factors and Manichaean attractiveness. Was Manichaeism appealing to a

²¹⁹ Berzon 2013, 247-49.

²²⁰ Serapion, c. *Manichaeos* 40.5-6 & 53.43-47: μέχρι τούτων σῶμεν, διὰ τῶν ὀλίγων καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ὑποδείξαντες καὶ διὰ τῶν προλεχθέντων τὸν ἔλεγχον κατασκευάσαντες. ἐπιμελείας δὲ τοῖς σπουδαίοις χρειαί, ἵνα πᾶσαν γοητείαν ὑπερβεβηκότες ἀλήπτους τὰς ἀκοὰς ἀπὸ τῆς πονηρίας διαφυλάξωσιν, ὥπως κλειδοφύλακες.

²²¹ Pseudo-Didymus, *Trin.* (PG 39:989.33-34): ἀνάγκη τοῦ δόγματος τοσοῦτον ἐφάψασθαι, ὅσον ἱκανὸν ἐστὶ τὸ βλαβερὸν τοῦ δόγματος γνωρίσαι τοῖς ἐντυγχάνειν ὀφείλουσι· δηλαδή, ἐκ τῶν λεχθησομένων στοχάζεσθαι τὰ σιωπώμενα.

²²² Mark the Deacon, *Vit. Porphy.* 86.3-5 (Lieu 2010, 97, 99): Τὰ γὰρ γέλωτος καὶ δυσφημίας ἄξια παραλιμπάνω, ἵνα μὴ πληρώσω τῆς ἀκοῆς τῶν ἐντυγχανόντων ἤχους βαρυτάτου καὶ τερατολογίας.

²²³ P Rylands 3, Gr. 469 (Lieu 2010, 37).

²²⁴ Cyril, *Catech.* 6.33-34 (trans. partly from Lieu 2010, 55): Οὐ τολμῶ εἰπεῖν ... Διὰ συσσήμων δὲ μόνον δηλούσθω [...] Μιαινομεν ἀληθῶς καὶ τὸ στόμα, ταῦτα λέγοντες [...] Παραγγέλλει ταῦτα ἡ Ἐκκλησία καὶ διδάσκει, καὶ ἅπτεται βορβόρων, ἵνα σὺ μὴ βορβορωθῇς. Λέγει τὰ τραύματα, ἵνα μὴ σὺ τραυματισθῇς. Ἀρκεῖ δέ σοι τὸ εἰδέναι μόνον· τὸ δὲ πείρα παραλαβεῖν ἀπέχου.

particular social group? And if so, is there evidence of activities undermining governmental power and state authorities? To this end, I will firstly refer to the few relevant references I have traced in the anti-Manichaean literature. Secondly, I will focus on one episode, a dialogue in the Hippodrome in Constantinople held between Justinian and a group of protestors (the green *dēmos*); as far as I know, this has so far escaped the attention of Manichaean scholarship.

6.5.1 Dualism Means Anarchy?

Monotheism and monarchy were the ideal forms of religion and government respectively in the Late Roman Empire. One god and one ruler as his divine representative on earth were the cornerstones of Byzantine political theology. Therefore, Manichaean ontological dualism could lead to *ἀναρχία* (anarchy), *ἀταξία* (disorder), and *στασιῶδες* (sedition) at the political level. Revealing of the Byzantine political theology of the era is Gregory of Nazianzus' third theological oration, *De filio*.

There are three main views about God: anarchy, polyarchy, and monarchy. The children of the Greeks [pagans] played with the first two—and will continue to play. Anarchy is synonymous with disorder, and polyarchy is characterized by constant conflicts, and therefore is also connected with anarchy and disorder. So, both (anarchy and polyarchy) lead to the same result, to disorder, and this subsequently leads to dissolution. This is because disorder is nothing but the study of dissolution. To us, only the monarchy is honoured; a monarchy that does not include a single person.²²⁵

For Gregory, theological *πολυαρχία* (polyarchy, includes polytheism, dualism) means by definition *στασιῶδες* (sedition), which then leads to *ἀναρχία* (anarchy) and this in turn to *ἀταξία* (disorder). The final stage of the above process is *λύσις*: the breaking down of laws and the dissolution of the government (*πολιτείας*). Conversely, the correct perception of God, which according to Gregory is *μοναρχία* (monarchy), ensures political peace and social order.²²⁶

Alexander's criticism of the ambiguity of Manichaean teachings could be a hint of such a kind, namely that dualism entailed sedition. For Alexander, the complexity of the Manichaean doctrine resulted in the lack of rules and laws, and this led the crowd to become seditious.

²²⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus, *De filio* 2.1-7: Τρεῖς αἱ ἀνωτάτω δόξαι περὶ θεοῦ, ἀναρχία, καὶ πολυαρχία, καὶ μοναρχία. αἱ μὲν οὖν δύο παισὶν Ἑλλήνων ἐπαίχθησαν, καὶ παιζέσθωσαν. τὸ τε γὰρ ἀναρχὸν ἄτακτον· τὸ τε πολυαρχὸν στασιῶδες, καὶ οὕτως ἀναρχὸν, καὶ οὕτως ἄτακτον. εἰς ταῦτόν γὰρ ἀμφοτέρω φέρει, τὴν ἀταξίαν, ἡ δὲ εἰς λύσιν· ἀταξία γὰρ μελέτη λύσεως. ἡμῖν δὲ μοναρχία τὸ τιμώμενον· μοναρχία δέ, οὐχ ἦν ἐν περιγραφῇ πρόσωπον.

²²⁶ Orthodoxy as a political tool (*political orthodoxy*) aimed at religious unity and united worshiping that was directly linked (1) to social unity, prosperity and peace and (2) to the loyalty of citizens towards the state and the emperor. For more on Byzantine political theology and the formulation of the 'Kaiser-ideologie' by Eusebius, see Beck (1978, 87-108, *Politische Orthodoxie*; esp. 95-98: "Eusebios formuliert seine Kaiser-ideologie sehr persönlich"); Mango (1980, 88): "One God, one Empire, one religion - these were the cornerstones of Byzantine political thinking [...] it was the emperor's duty—in fact, his highest duty—to enforce its [religion's] universal observance". See also Barnes 1981, 224-71. For the relationship/correlation between monotheism and monarchy (as the preferred forms of government and religion) in early Christian thought, see Peterson's (1935) *Monotheismus als politisches Problem*. Cf. Pettipiece 2007, 119: "On a more worldly level, however, this reflects a correlation that was being drawn between monarchy and monotheism as the preferred forms of government and religion as well as a trend towards the harmonization of Christian theology with a new political situation after the rise of Constantine".

[...] ethical instruction declined and grew dim, [...] and since the common people became more inclined to internal strife. For there was no norm or laws on the basis of which issues could be decided.²²⁷

As Stroumsa underlines, for “both Alexander and Titus, dualism meant anarchy”, and was an attitude which could also have political implications.²²⁸ When Manichaeans defended their belief in two first principles, this always resulted in the same question: Whence comes evil and disorder?

For Mani, as Titus of Bostra says, *ἀταξία* (disorder) originates from the principle of evil. Titus explains that, by *ἀταξία* Mani means the inequalities that exist in society. “Wealth and poverty, health and disease are not equally distributed among people. Instead of criminals, who manage to escape the punishment of the law, the innocent are punished. The corrupt people rule all the others”.²²⁹ Could such statements be interpreted as political ones? According to Pedersen “this is extremely unsure”.²³⁰ However, as Pedersen adds, “even though the Manichaeans have not fought for any alternative political or socio-economic system, it nonetheless makes sense to say the fact that in the eyes of the leading forces in society these accusations must have made Manichaeism unsuitable as ideological legitimation”.²³¹

However, are there testimonies according to which the fear that dualism means anarchy, disorder, and sedition would become real action, or does this remain just a fear? Is there any evidence that connects Manichaeans with political activities in the literature of the era, as is indicated by the law²³² (social unrest, upset of the urban communities, instigation of seditious mobs, etc.)? The whole picture does not reveal something like this. However, there are some occasional reports linking real or imagined Manichaeans to sedition and riots, but these cases concern mainly ecclesiastical disputes.

One such case, as the Catholic church historian Theodorus Anagnostes recounts, is that of a Syro-Persian Manichaean painter, whose icons were so alien to the Catholic tradition that they caused a rebellion in Constantinople.²³³ The sources (again Catholic church historians) report another case as a troublemaker who they labelled as Manichaean. This was Philoxenos, the Monophysite bishop of Hierapolis, (nick)named by the authors as Xenaias. According to the authors, Xenaias disrupted the surrounding cities of Antioch and agitated the Syrian monks to rebel against the Catholic bishop of Antioch.²³⁴ However, as the term ‘Manichaean’ was a label attributed to the Monophysite bishop Philoxenos, it could also be the case of the icon painter. In addition, both episodes concern either conflicts among rival factions within the Church or theological issues. However, political and religious events in Byzantine political theology are interconnected.

²²⁷ Alexander of Lycopolis, *Tract. Man.* 1.26-28 (Horst and Mansfeld, 51): [...] τοῦ δὲ πολλοῦ πλήθους στασιαστικώτερον πρὸς αὐτὸ διατεθέντος, κανόνος δὲ οὐδενὸς ὑπόντος οὐδὲ νόμων [...].

²²⁸ Stroumsa 1992, 345; Pedersen 2004, 171.

²²⁹ Titus of Bostra, c. *Manichaeos* 2.15.3-9 (CCSG 82, 123): Ἀταξίαν δὴ πολλὴν ψηφίζεται τῶν καθ’ ἡμᾶς πραγμάτων, πλοῦτόν τε καὶ πενίαν, ὑγείαν τε καὶ νόσον ὡς ἄνισα διαβάλλων· ἔτι μὴν καὶ τὸ πολλάκις τὸν μὲν κακοῦργον διαφεύγειν τὴν τῶν νόμων τιμωρίαν, τὸν δ’ ἀναίτιον τιμωρεῖσθαι, καὶ τοὺς φαύλους ἔστιν ὅτε τῆς κατὰ τῶν ἄλλων ἀρχῆς ἐπιβαίνειν.

²³⁰ Pedersen 2004, 172.

²³¹ Pedersen, 2004, 172.

²³² *CTh* 16.5.7; 16.5.9; 16.5.38. See ch.[3], 3.3.2 & 3.3.6.

²³³ Theodorus Anagnostes, *HE* 4.467; Theophanes, *Chron.* 149.28-33. Cf. ch.[7].

²³⁴ Theodorus Anagnostes, *HE* 3.444; Evagrius the Scholastic, *HE* 130 etc. (ch. 32).

The latter is reflected in the uprising of 512 (after the Synod of Sidon, 511), during which both the Blue and the Green factions rose against the emperor Anastasius for a theological issue. Specifically, this concerned the Monophysite addition to the Trisagion hymn: “the One crucified for us” (ὁ σταυρωθεὶς δι’ ἡμᾶς).²³⁵ Jarry considers it likely that the Manichaeans participated in the revolt too, protesting the edict Anastasius decreed against them in 510, which, for the first time, inflicted on them capital punishment.²³⁶

The heroic gesture of a Manichaean who threw a pamphlet in front of the royal bookstore could also be interpreted as a political act. This occurred immediately after Justinian issued his edict against Manichaeans, which re-activated Anastasius’ edict enforcing capital punishment for Manichaeans. The pamphlet, according to Zacharias of Mytilene (who undertook the task to refute it), was “challenging the truth of the one and only principle”.²³⁷ Was it a challenge to monotheism and/or the monarchy? In any case, even if it was a literary *topos*, the whole incident reflects practices which could have been real.

Apart from the above incidents, there is an episode cited by the Chronographer Theophanes in his *Chronicle*,²³⁸ which has been neglected by previous Manichaean scholars. Theophanes places it in the beginning of the Nika Revolt, and according to some scholars echoes the protestors’ dualistic views.

6.5.2 Excursus: The ‘Circus Dialogue’

The famous dialogue which took place in the Hippodrome between the Greens and the Emperor Justinian has been characterized by scholars as noteworthy, curious, odd,²³⁹ obscure in meaning, and “much misunderstood, both in details of interpretation and in its over-all purpose and significance”.²⁴⁰

The dialogue is included among the sources under investigation, because Justinian through his *Mandator* (herald), addressing at some point the Greens, called them: “Jews, Samaritans and Manichaeans”.²⁴¹ Thus, the question is whether the protesting Greens were just labelled as Manichaeans, or whether they were in fact Manichaeans or verging on Manichaeism (e.g. *μανιχαῖζοντες, μανιχαϊόφρονες*). If the latter is true, what would this reveal for the social and political profile of the Manichaeans? In scholarship, this dialogue has been debated from many different angles. In specific, both the time frame of the event and its interpretation have been endlessly debated. Some historians have challenged Theophanes’ historical context and argued that the dialogue did not take place during the Nika Revolt.²⁴² Some of them suggest this episode occurred more likely at the beginning and some others at the end of Justinian’s reign.²⁴³ What is not doubted is that the dialogue took place during Justinian’s reign.

²³⁵ The revolt of 512 (4/11) in Theodorus Anagnostes, *HE* 4.483(145.15-18); Theophanes, *Chron.* 159.14-18.

²³⁶ Jarry 1968, 302-305.

²³⁷ Zacharias of Mytilene, *Adv. Manichaeos (Antirresis)*, (Cod. Mosquensis gr. 3942): Πρότασις Μανιχαίου παραλογιζομένη τὴν ἀλήθειαν τῆς μιᾶς καὶ μόνης παντοκρατορικῆς ἀρχῆς: Ἀντίρρησις Ζαχαρίου Μιτυλήνης ἐπισκόπου, εὐρόντος ταῦτα ἐπὶ τῆς ὁδοῦ, ῥίψαντος αὐτὰ Μανιχαίου τινὸς ἐπὶ βασιλείᾳ Ἰουστινιανοῦ.

²³⁸ Theophanes, *Chron.* 181.25-186. An abbreviated form of the dialogue is found in *Chronicon Paschale* 112-115.

²³⁹ Mango and Scott 1997, 280. See Bury 1889, 56; Bury 1897 92.

²⁴⁰ Cameron 1976a, 318.

²⁴¹ Theophanes, *Chron.* 182.16. As Mango and Scott (1997, 282) note, in the Late Roman Empire it was a common practice “for an Emperor to address the crowd through a herald rather than by gesture or in writing”.

²⁴² Maas 1912, 49-51; Cameron 1976a, 322-329.

²⁴³ Cameron 1976a, 322-329, 323 (beginning); Maas 1912, 50 (end). See Cameron 1976a, 142; Bury suggested that the events took place between 11 and 19/1/532; Karlin-Hayter 1973 (11th or 10/1/532); Stein, Palanque,

What is debated concerning the dialogue's interpretation is whether there are allusions revealing the religious identity of the protesting Greens. The different interpretations made by scholars in various points of the dialogue derive from their stance on this key issue. In brief, the theses of the researchers on the above question could be summarized as follows. According to Bury, there are hints in the dialogue revealing the Monophysitism of the Greens.²⁴⁴ For Jarry, the protestors in the Green faction were Nestorians verging on Manichaeism.²⁴⁵ Karlin-Hayter finds in the critical points of the dialogue "une profession incontestable de dualisme".²⁴⁶ Cameron, exercising harsh criticism on the above scholars, claims that there is no hint in the dialogue revealing any kind of religious beliefs of the Greens.²⁴⁷ Finally, the translators of Theophanes (Mango and Scott) hold a neutral stance on the issue.²⁴⁸

I believe that what complicates the discussion is that it concerns the well-known Greens, in combination with the theory (in research) which dissociates heresies from social-political motives and intentions; according to some researchers, heresies do not seem to have political goals and purposes. However, all agree that especially the dualistic heresies attracted discontented and dissatisfied persons and are a kind of heresy which by and large could be associated with socio-political causes and social consequences.²⁴⁹

Indeed, my first impression, realizing that the protestors were the Greens was to think that this is another example of the use of the term 'Manichaeism' as a 'label'. Thus, I would propose to make a subtractive suggestion, namely, that to remove the word 'Green' from the dialogue, and to examine the crucial and controversial parts of the dialogue, as if we did not know this aspect of the protestors' identity.

The protestors come to the Hippodrome in order to complain and denounce their oppressors to the Emperor. The latter was something common and in fact the only opportunity they had to make requests, to express complaints, to exert criticism of the rulers, and to denounce the maladministration or the corruption of certain governmental officials. They start the dialogue saying that the injustice towards them (from a person with authority) is unbearable, but initially they are reluctant to name their oppressor, lest worse afflictions would find them. Eventually, they denounce a certain Calopodius (whom one can find in the *τζαγγαρεῖα*/shoemaker's quarter) and start cursing him. The Mandator/Justinian gets angry, tells them that they did not come to watch but to insult their rulers, and invites them to settle down. The first critical part of the dialogue goes as follows:

—Herald: Silence, you Jews, Manichaeans, and Samaritans!

—[Protestors]: Do you call us Jews and Samaritans? May the Mother of God be with everyone. [or, the Mother of God be with all the Manichaeans].²⁵⁰

and Stein 1949 (few days before the executions); Mango and Scott (1997, 281): "it cannot be taken for granted that the dialogue had anything to do with the Nika revolt".

²⁴⁴ Bury 1889, 57, fn. 3.

²⁴⁵ Jarry 1968, 138-144.

²⁴⁶ Karlin-Hayter 1973, 95.

²⁴⁷ Cameron 1976a, 323, 141. According to Cameron (p. 323) the arguments of the above scholars who identify religious allusions and argue for "supposed religious arguments" of the Greens, are "too fragile to permit serious discussion". Cf. Cameron 1974, 92-120.

²⁴⁸ Mango and Scott 1997, 280-285.

²⁴⁹ Jones 1959; Mango 1980, 103-04; Kazhdan 1991, 918-20. Cf. Garsoïan 1971, 85-113.

²⁵⁰ Theophanes, *Chron.* 182.16-18. (Mango and Scott, 277): —Μανδάτωρ· "ἡσυχάσατε, Ἰουδαῖοι, Μανιχαῖοι καὶ Σαμαρεῖται." — Οἱ Πράσινοι· "Ἰουδαίους καὶ Σαμαρείτας ἀποκαλεῖς; ἢ θεοτόκος μετὰ ὅλων [τῶν μανιχαίων]". For the addition at the end see Jarry 1968, 139.

As Jarry points out, when Justinian called the protestors Jews, Samaritans and Manichaeans, they complained about the two first names, as if they were insulted, but they did not react to being called 'Manichaeans'. Jarry, supporting the view that the protestors were Nestorians verging on Manichaeism, interprets "Jews" as a label for the Nestorians, which was a usual way to label the Nestorians in the religious abuse of the era.²⁵¹ Cameron considers that all three names were 'labels' with no theological significance and underlines that the word 'Manichaean' was "an insult applied indifferently" to all religious opponents. Commenting on Jarry's observation, Cameron argues that the fact that the Greens did "only expressly repudiate the first two names [Jews, Samaritans] [...] does not mean they deserve the third [Manichaeans]". If this was the case, he says, "the Mandator would not have confused the issue by dragging in the other two names".²⁵²

These three religious groups are often associated with riots and uprising, either because they did rebel, or because they were suspected of doing so. During Justinian's reign there are several examples of rebellions by Jews and Samaritans.²⁵³ The three religious groups are also co-classified as equally threatening religious groups in the law²⁵⁴ and in the taxonomical lists of heretics by Church Fathers. As Cameron notes, "All three are in fact frequently linked in Byzantine religious abuse [...]. They are constantly evoked by John of Ephesus as the source of all trouble and temptation".²⁵⁵

Obviously, the fact that the protestors did not react to the name 'Manichaean' is not proof that they were Manichaeans. However, the fact that they were offended only by the first two names and not by the third, which, as we have seen, was the ultimate insult, may be an indication that they were somehow related to, tolerant with, or were sympathetic to the Manichaeans. Moreover, if they were Manichaeans, their reaction to the 'labels' 'Jews' and 'Samaritans' would make sense.²⁵⁶ A further argument in favour of the hypothesis that the protestors had a kind of relationship with the Manichaeans is a different version of the text, provided by Jarry, which strangely enough has not been commented upon by other scholars. According to this, at the end of the protestors' answer the word Manichaeans is added, thus becoming: "La mère de Dieu est avec tous les Manichéens".²⁵⁷

The next crucial verses of the text are the following:

—Herald: I am telling you: Get baptized in one [God].

—[Protestors]: shouted above each other and chanted, as Antlas demanded, 'I am baptized in one [God]'.²⁵⁸

These verses are among the most commented upon and obscure parts of the dialogue. Firstly, different opinions have been suggested concerning the grammatical clause (affirmative, interrogative, imperative) of the Mandator's words.²⁵⁹ The discussed interpretive problems are twofold: the meaning of the word 'baptism' and the identity of Antlas. According to Bury, "the Greens apparently take up the words of the Mandator, 'εἰς ἓνα βαπτίζεσθε' (get baptized

²⁵¹ Jarry 1968, 138-144.

²⁵² Cameron 1976a, 141, 323, fn. 2, 141.

²⁵³ Mango 1980, 112-13.

²⁵⁴ See for example *CJ*, "Against heretics, Manichaeans and Samaritans" and *CTh* 16.7.3.

²⁵⁵ Cameron 1976a, 141 & 141 fn. 2.

²⁵⁶ Manichaean anti-Semitism/Judaism is well known. Cf. BeDuhn 2020, 295-316.

²⁵⁷ Jarry 1968, 139.

²⁵⁸ Theophanes, *Chron.* 182.20-22 (Mango and Scott, 277): —Μανδάτωρ· "ἐγὼ ὑμῖν λέγω, εἰς ἓνα βαπτίζεσθε." —Οἱ δὲ [σασασιαστές] ἀνεβόησαν ἐπάνω ἀλλήλων καὶ ἔκραζον, ὡς ἐκέλευσεν Ἀντλας· "εἰς ἓνα βαπτίζομαι."

²⁵⁹ Karlin-Hayter argues in favour of an affirmative type, Cameron of an interrogative and Bury and others of an imperative.

in one [God]], in a monophysitic sense”.²⁶⁰ However, as Jarry²⁶¹ observes (followed by Cameron),²⁶² the Monophysites did not administer baptism ‘εἰς ἓνα’ (in one, i.e. in the name of the one of the three persons of the Holy Trinity, which is something only Eunomians did), so there is not a hint of Monophysitism. Cameron argues that the ‘εἰς ἓνα βαπτίζεσθε’ is a question of abuse labelling the Greens as polytheists; as he wonders “Why doubt that the Greens are simply repudiating the imputation that they are pagans, as they had already repudiated the Mandator’s other cheap smears” (i.e. as Jews and Samaritans).²⁶³ Why however, suggest that the ‘εἰς ἓνα’ is an allusion to polytheism instead of dualism, since the Mandator had called them Manichaeans before and not pagans? It is far more plausible to assume that the above phrase is a hint that they did not administer baptism; alternatively, it may mean that they had another type of baptism, which was not considered by the Church as baptism.

The second hermeneutical problem is the identity of Antlas. Two suggestions have been made in terms of the punctuation of the phrase, which corresponds to different interpretations. The disagreement is whether there is a comma after the word ‘ἐκραζον’ (chanted), so the two versions are: (1) chanted, ‘as Antlas demanded, I am baptized in one’, and (2) chanted as Antlas demanded, ‘I am baptized in one’. According to the first version, a certain Antlas had introduced a type of baptism, whereas according to the second, a certain Antlas in the Hippodrome commanded the protestors to shout ‘I am baptized in one’.

Researchers that support the first version are Bury, Karlin-Hayter and Jarry. Bury, in supporting his view that the protestors were Monophysites, argues that Antlas is a nickname for Anastasius, a hypothesis grounded on the etymology of the word ἀντλή (pump), which Bury interprets “in the sense of ‘fetch water’, for the baptismal rite”.²⁶⁴ Thus, his interpretation should be: we are following the command of Anastasius and we apply the Monophysite baptism. The same etymological origin (ἀντλή) has been suggested by Karlin-Hayter yet resulting in a different interpretation. Karlin-Hayter interprets Antlas as “the one who sucks dry” and considers it as a nickname for the Emperor Justinian, which implies that the protestors’ answer expressed a discontent over heavy taxation, which actually happened at the period of the Nika Revolt.²⁶⁵ Jarry is the only scholar who takes Antlas as a real name, rather than an ironic nickname, and connects it with the known Omoforos (Ἀτλας) of the Manichaean myth.²⁶⁶

The second version, ‘chanted as Antlas demanded, I am baptized in one’ (ἐκραζον ὡς ἐκέλευσεν Ἀντλας· εἰς ἓνα βαπτίζομαι), has been supported by Cameron. Consistent with his thesis that there are no religious allusions in the dialogue, Cameron argues that Antlas was the leader of the Greens, and criticizes Jarry’s thesis: “It is building on sand [...] to take Antlas to be an otherwise unknown heresiarch who ordered a particular form of baptism”.²⁶⁷ Lastly, Mango and Scott consider Cameron’s interpretation plausible, but do not exclude the

²⁶⁰ Bury 1889, 57.

²⁶¹ Jarry 1968, 355-6.

²⁶² Cameron 1976a, 320.

²⁶³ Cameron 1976a, 141.

²⁶⁴ Bury 1889, 57, fn. 3: “we may assume it [Ἀντλας] to be a nickname of Anastasius”.

²⁶⁵ Karlin-Hayter (1981, 7-8) in Mango and Scott 1997, 282.

²⁶⁶ Jarry 1968, 139: “Atlas (ou Saclas) était un démon que les manichéens rêveraient fort ; ils lui attribuaient même les tremblements de terre”.

²⁶⁷ Cameron 1976a, 319, 139.

possibility that there are hints targeting Justinian's economic policy, as highlighted by Karlin-Hayter.²⁶⁸

It is further important to highlight that the above answer of the protestors (chanted, as Antlas demanded, 'I am baptized in one') enraged the Mandator, who then threatened them: "Surely, if you do not keep quiet, I shall behead you".²⁶⁹ This reaction is quite unexpected in the case of the second version (i.e. that their answer was just "I am baptized in one"). Capital punishment, as said in the previous chapters, had first been imposed on Manichaeans by the law of 487 or 510 (Zeno or Anastasius) and successively by Justinian's laws (527 onwards). What I am arguing here is not that the protestors were Manichaeans. During Justinian's age, the laws were very strict for the Manichaeans. They had to disappear from the Roman Empire, and in case they were found anywhere, the punishment was the ultimate (decapitation according to Basilica).²⁷⁰ Thus, it is likely that they would not dare to appear so openly in broad daylight in front of the emperor and quarrel with him. However, I consider it a plausible hypothesis that the protestors had adopted Manichaean ideas or practices, in other words, that they were, in a way, *μανιχαῖζοντες*.

The next crucial point of the dialogue is the protestors' answer to the Mandator's threat to behead them:

—[Protestors]: Everyone tries to get office for security. So whatever we say in our distress, Your Majesty should not get angry, for deity endures everything.

—[Protestors]: We have a case, emperor, and we shall now name everything. We do not know even where the palace is, thrice-august, nor where is the state ceremonial. I come only once to the City, when I am seated on a mule (on the way to execution). And I would rather not then, thrice-august.²⁷¹

The above answer of the protestors, one of the more obscure parts of the episode, has not been commented upon enough. Concerning the first part of the answer, Cameron considers that the phrase "Everyone tries to get office for security" is an abrupt transition and wonders whether a text is missing to explain it. However, I believe that there is coherence in the text; the current verses are linked with both the previous and the next verses. As far as the second part of the answer is concerned, the exclusion of the protestors from Constantinople, given the fact that they were the Greens, had troubled a lot the researchers. According to Bury, "one might conclude from this that members of the Green faction were not allowed to reside in the city, and were confined to quarters in Pera and Galata, on the other side of the Golden Horn".²⁷² Cameron pointed out that the interpretation of the *πολιτείας κατάστασις* (state ceremonial) as government is problematic, and considers it odd that the Greens did not know where the palace was.²⁷³ According to some other interpretations, the Greens had been 'kept out of politics'.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁸ Mango and Scott 1997, 282. The truth is that the name Antlas is quite strange to be a byzantine one, unless it was a nickname.

²⁶⁹ Theophanes, *Chron.* 182.22-23 (Mango and Scott, 277): ὄντως εἰ μὴ ἡσυχάσητε, ἀποκεφαλίζω ὑμᾶς.

²⁷⁰ *CJ* 1.5.16.

²⁷¹ Theophanes, *Chron.* 182.23-29 (Mango and Scott, 277-78): —[στασιαστές]· ἕκαστος σπεύδει ἀρχὴν κρατῆσαι, ἵνα σωθῇ· καὶ εἴ τι ἐὰν εἴπωμεν θλιβόμενοι, μὴ ἀγανακτήσῃ τὸ κράτος σου· τὸ γὰρ θεῖον πάντων ἀνέχεται." —[στασιαστές]· "ἡμεῖς λόγον ἔχοντες, αὐτοκράτωρ, ὀνομάζομεν ἄρτι πάντα· ποῦ ἐστίν, ἡμεῖς οὐκ οἶδαμεν, οὐδὲ τὸ παλάτιον, τρισαύγουστε, οὐδὲ πολιτείας κατάστασις. μίαν εἰς τὴν πόλιν προέρχομαι, ὅτ' ἂν εἰς βορδώνην καθέζομαι εἰθίσις μὴδὲ τότε, τρισαύγουστε.

²⁷² Bury 1889, 57.

²⁷³ Cameron 1976a, 320.

²⁷⁴ Cameron 1976a, 320.

I consider that the dialogue from the point of the Mandator's threat onwards depicts an atmosphere of persecution. It seems that the protestors comprise a group that is persecuted, probably exiled from the cities, and certainly excluded from the capital which they visit only when driven to execution.²⁷⁵ Within this climate of persecution, "everyone tries to get office for security" (*ἕκαστος σπεύδει ἀρχὴν κρατῆσαι, ἵνα σωθῇ*). As Cameron rightly interpreted, "seeking of office" means "presumably the office which is now protecting Calopodius".²⁷⁶ Thus, the phrase should mean that everyone (in order to save his life) tries to hold an authoritative position, or to have access to persons of authority: in other words, to have the proper 'contacts'.

Could such a contact be Petrus Barsymes, an outranked official and Theodora's favoured (PPO since 543, before he was a count and patrician), who, according to Procopius, amazed the Manichaeans, probably even joined the sect and did not hesitate to protect them openly?²⁷⁷ Such a scenario could explain the infiltration of Manichaeans in the imperial administrative structure that Justinian faced from the very beginning of his reign.²⁷⁸ The laws of the early sixth century present the Manichaeans as having intruded into the imperial service, holding public offices in the state's civil and military structure, in both Constantinople and in the provinces; a situation which forced Justinian to take drastic measures. Let us recall the law which invited officials in the administration, in the army and in the guilds, to denounce their fellow Manichaeans, or otherwise risk their lives (the punishment would be the same as if they were Manichaeans).²⁷⁹ A victim of this policy would have been the wife of the senator Erythrius, who according to Malalas was among the Manichaeans who were punished during Justinian's time. The latter further illustrates the influence that Manichaeans could have had over the ruling classes.

The conversation about persecutions is continued in the next verses of the Hippodrome episode:

- Herald: Every free man can go where he likes in public without danger.
- [Protestors]: To be sure, I am a free man, but I am not allowed to show it. For if a free man is suspected of being a Green, he is sure to be punished in public.
- Herald: Are you ready to die then, and will you not spare your own lives?
- [Protestors]: Let this colour be removed and justice disappears. Stop the murdering and let us face punishment. See here a gushing fountain, punish as many as you like.²⁸⁰

This dialogue, which I consider of particular importance, has not been substantially commented upon by the researchers. As it seems, the Greens, unlike the Blues, during Justinian's reign had problems of freedom. Initially they speak ironically about the supposed freedom they had according to the claim of the Mandator. However, what is really remarkable is their answer: "Let this colour be removed", to the new threat of the Mandator. It is

²⁷⁵ Bury 1889, 57, fn. 5: "Prisoners were drawn by mules to execution or punishment, and perhaps there is some such reference here".

²⁷⁶ Cameron 1976a, 320.

²⁷⁷ Procopius, *Hist. Arcana* 22.25: τοὺς καλουμένους Μανιχαίους ἐτεθήπει τε καὶ αὐτῶν προστατεῖν ἐκ τοῦ ἐμφανοῦς οὐδαμῇ ἀπηξίου. I will return to Barsymes in ch.[7], 7.3.

²⁷⁸ See ch.[3], 3.3.4.

²⁷⁹ *CJ* 1.5.16.

²⁸⁰ Theophanes, *Chron.* 183.1-7 (Mango and Scott, 278): —Μανδάτωρ· "ἕκαστος ἐλεύθερος ὅπου θέλει ἀκινδύνως δημοσιεύει." —[στασιαστές]· "καὶ θαρρῶ ἐλευθερίας, καὶ ἐμφανίσαι οὐ συγχωροῦμαι· καὶ ἐάν ἐστιν ἐλεύθερος, ἔχει δὲ Πρασίνων ὑπόληψιν, πάντως εἰς φανερόν κολάζεται." —Μανδάτωρ· "ἐτοιμοθάνατοι, οὐδὲ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν φείδεσθε;" —[στασιαστές]· "ἐπαρθῇ τὸ χρῶμα τοῦτο, καὶ ἡ δίκη οὐ χρηματίζει· ἄνες τὸ φονεύεσθαι· καὶ ἄφες, κολαζόμεθα. ἴδε πηγὴ βρύουσα, καὶ ὅσους θέλεις, κόλαζε ...".

impressive because the protestors make the same subtractive hypothesis as the one I made in order to interpret the text. So, what would happen if this “colour be removed”? It is likely that executions would take place, bypassing the legal prosecution procedures: “Let this colour be removed and justice disappears”. What the protestors are requesting is to have equal treatment by the law. They call for the stopping of killings, of vigilantism, of executions without trial; they demand to be judged and penalized according to the legal procedure: “Stop the murdering and let us face punishment. See here a gushing fountain, punish as many as you like”. They do not dispute the right that each one has to accuse them; on the contrary they offer themselves at the disposal of justice to be punished, if the legal prosecution will be observed.

So according to the dialogue, after the Mandator’s statement that everyone is free to go “where he likes in public, without danger” the protestors become furious. Interpreting the text freely, they asked: what freedom are you talking about, since we are not allowed even to appear in public? We are punished even for the fact that we are Greens. If indeed, the green colour would be removed, we would not just be punished but killed without a trial. As it seems, they claim that if they were not Greens, things would be even worse for them, which reveals that apart from their identity as Greens, they had another distinct identity too. Thus, the text gives the impression that for the protestors the fact that they were Greens was a kind of protection for them; they were safeguarded behind the label of the Greens and being Greens, although they were punished, at least they were not killed. What is here described by the Greens (i.e. killing without observing the prosecuting procedure) is reminiscent of Justinian’s law against Manichaeans: “Every Manichaean should be put to death, whenever found”.²⁸¹ Relevant is the testimony from the *Erotapokriseis* (sixth cent.), according to which the laws of the time of Justinian condemned those who were undoubtedly killers, or Manichaeans, immediately, without trial, in order for the rest of the sect to be made into an example.²⁸²

Having clarified that the protestors also had another distinctive identity in addition to being Greens, the name of the Greens can be returned to the discussion. Passing in the next scene of the dialogue, the Blues enter the discussion. It seems that the above accusations from the side of the Greens about vigilantism and killings were addressed to the Blues. This can be deduced from a quarrel that follows between the Blues and the Greens in which the Emperor took the side of the Blues, resulting in the Greens’ outburst:

—The Greens: Now, now, have pity O Lord. Truth is being suppressed. I want to quarrel with those who say events are controlled by God. For what is the source of this misery?

—Herald: God cannot be tempted with evil.

—The Greens: God cannot be tempted with evil? But who does me wrong? If there is a philosopher or hermit here, let him explain the difference.

—Herald: You God-hated blasphemers, will you never be silent?²⁸³

²⁸¹ *CJ* 1.5.12.

²⁸² Pseudo-Caesarius, *Erotapokriseis*, 146.85: οὐδὲ γὰρ οἱ τήμερον νόμοι τὸν πρόδηλον φονέα ἢ Μανιχέα τῆς εἰρκτῆς ἐκφωνήσαντες μακρηγορία κρίνουσιν, ἀλλ’ αὐθις τοῦ κρίνεσθαι κατακρίνουσιν ἐν ὧσιν τῆς φρικτῆς ὁμηγύρεως, ἐκείνῳ δι’ ἐκείνου σωφρονίζοντες.

²⁸³ Theophanes, *Chron.* 183.20-26 (Mango and Scott, 278): —Οἱ Πράσινοι· “ἄρτι καὶ ἄρτι· κύριε ἐλέησον. τυραννεῖται ἡ ἀλήθεια. ἤθελον ἀντιβάλλαι τοῖς λέγουσιν ἐκ θεοῦ διοικεῖσθαι τὰ πράγματα· πόθεν αὕτη ἡ δυστυχία;” —Μανδάτωρ· “ὁ θεὸς κακῶν ἀπείραστος.” —Οἱ Πράσινοι· “θεὸς κακῶν ἀπείραστος; καὶ τίς ἐστιν ὁ ἀδικῶν με; εἰ φιλόσοφος ἐστιν ἢ ἐρημίτης, τὴν διαίρεσιν εἴπη τῶν ἐκατέρων.” —Μανδάτωρ· “βλάσφημοι καὶ θεοχόλωτοι, ἕως πότε οὐχ ἡσυχάζετε;”

This is the last crucial part of the dialogue. Both Jarry and Karlin-Hayter argue that the idea of God as outlined by the Greens in the above dialogue is dualistic.²⁸⁴ On the contrary, Cameron, once more rejecting the views which support religious allusions, interprets the doubts of the Greens about the divine governance as a “natural human reaction to the sight of evil”.²⁸⁵

However, the identities of people are not monolithic. The fact that the protestors belonged to the Greens cannot exclude the possibility that they also had a religious identity. The latter would not mean that all the Greens necessarily had the same religious identity, though we cannot exclude the possibility that civilians’ preferences for one or another faction (*dēmos*) was to a certain extent linked to their religious inclination. Thus, taking into account that the specific group of Greens had an additional identity, which apparently caused problems for them, why not hypothesize that this was a religious one, not least because religious issues were of particular importance in Byzantine society and culture? Further, if we assume that there are no religious allusions, certain parts of the dialogue do not make sense.

In my opinion, the above dialogue is an additional testimony that certain protestors, apart from being members of the Green faction, were in a way *μανιχαῖζοντες*, because they held some views that could sound as Manichaeism. The doubts expressed by the Greens echo the classic Manichaean question, “whence evil”? The Greens question divine providence and governance of human affairs as well as “what is the source of this misery”; the Mandator responds (in defending God) that “God is not the source/cause of evil”. Surely this is the eminent topic, the hallmark, that runs throughout Christian and pagan literature in its discourse with Manichaean dualism. The spirit of the dialogue in the Hippodrome recalls what was said by Titus: for Mani, *ἀταξία* (disorder) is due to the principle of evil, and by *ἀταξία* he means the inequalities in society [...] Instead of criminals, who manage to escape the punishment of the law, the innocent are punished. The corrupt people rule all the others”.²⁸⁶

Thus, summing up, I consider that there are many indications in the dialogue to support the view that those who speak on behalf of the Greens were *μανιχαῖζοντες* and not just labelled as such. Although all individual evidence is insufficient, I believe that the evidence in its totality permits us to support such a hypothesis. *Μανιχαῖζοντες* does not mean Manichaeism, although, as it seems, they were often treated in the same way as the Manichaeism were. So, what kind of *Μανιχαῖζοντες* were they? Jarry claims that they were Nestorians (extreme Chalcedonians) verging on Manichaeism. In ch.[8] I will make some assumptions based on church canons in order to further illuminate their religious identity.

6.6 Conclusions

From the above analysis it appears that our sources made a correlation between religious, age and gender factors and Manichaean attractiveness. Apart from the general appeal of Manichaeism, which is also reflected in the combat against it, what our sources steadily point out is the particular attraction Manichaeism had to Christian neophytes and pagans. For the

²⁸⁴ Jarry 1960, 365-66: “Une telle alternative n'est ni nestorienne, ni monophysite. Cette idée d'un Dieu cruel, inflexible et méchant, Dieu de l'Ancien Testament, choisi pour gouverner un monde que le Christ vient lui racheter au prix de ses souffrances, est une idée marcionite. [...] En cette journée exceptionnelle, malgré la peine de mort prévue depuis 527 pour ce genre de délit, les Verts s'avouent manichéens”; Karlin-Hayter 1973, 95: “une profession incontestable de dualisme”.

²⁸⁵ Cameron 1976a, 141: “natural human reaction to the sight of evil prospering and age-old theme in the schools of rhetoric, designed of course to shock the Mandator by its skepticism but in no way a ‘manifestation d’opposition à l’orthodoxie”.

²⁸⁶ Titus of Bostra, c. *Manichaeos* 2.15.3-9 (CCSG 82, 123). Pedersen 2004, 25.

former, the Manichaean response to the question of the origin of evil was of particular importance; for the latter, the critical dimension of the Manichaean discourse was particularly appealing.

Although the references are few, it seems (as is expected) that the anti-conformist attitudes, vagabond lifestyle, and extravagant appearance of Manichaeans were appealing to young people. This constituted a problem for both imperial and church authorities because it meant the dissemination of socially threatening ideas to a critical group prone to radicalization, and the perpetuation of these ideas to subsequent generations. That the young people were one of the target groups of the Manichaean missionary strategy is also testified by the Manichaean testimonies about the recruitment of young Elect.

It is noteworthy that the only testimonies we have regarding female Manichaean missionaries (two, perhaps three) concern the missionary activity of Manichaean women in the eastern Roman Empire. However, the scarcity of this evidence and the lack of corresponding material from Manichaean sources do not allow us to draw any secure conclusions. As current research evidences, the women of Kellis do not appear to have shared the wandering lives of their male Elect compatriots. There are no testimonies (at least to date) about female Kellites in the entourage of the Egyptian Manichaean teacher. Generally, references to all the above three groups (neophytes, the young, and women) must be interpreted with caution, since their 'vulnerability to heresy' is a common polemical *topos* in Christian literature.

The group to which Manichaeism was most appealing, and through them to the whole of society, since they acted as paradigms, were the ascetics. Both the Encratites et al. and Messalians are associated by our authors with Manichaeans. Indeed, they had a lot of common features. Their main difference is that the former were amorphous movements, while Manichaeans were highly organized. Encratites et al. appeared chronologically before Manichaeans, and Messalians after them; both originated from the same motherland (Central Minor Asia, Antioch).

Anarchist and wandering forms of asceticism, to which both groups belonged, predated Manichaeism, though they were not widely accepted as is reflected in the canons of the Church and ecclesiastical literature. However, with the appearance of Manichaean ascetics in the Christian ascetical landscape, they were linked by Church and state authorities with the Manichaeans. Manichaeans were considered the mentors of both Encratites et al. and Messalians. All of them constituted a laboratory producing apostates from faith and cultivating social radicalism that threatened structural social institutions and values. The increase in the number of anarchist monks in the 370s and 80s, and mainly their presence in the cities, coupled with the appearance of Messalians in the foreground, necessitated repressive and persecutory measures. In the laws, the persecution of the Encratites et al. and Messalians by the state is sluggish and ends early, while it continues to preoccupy the Church (which is often contradictory in its stance) as is reflected in the canons and church synods. On the contrary, Manichaeism's persecution is intensified. The latter shows the gravity of the Manichaean issue, which went beyond the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical leaders and extended to the political sphere, whereas for the state the issue of Encratites et al. and Messalians was an intra-ecclesiastical affair.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁷ Because the boundaries between the several forms of asceticism were blurred, in the implementation of the law the Manichaean label could have been assigned to any kind of extreme ascetics. However, for our discussion, important is the normative and not any occasional framework.

However, subversive action against the authorities or purely political radicalization (as the laws imply) in the ecclesiastical literature does not appear. Nor is there any evidence to correlate social stratification and Manichaeism's attractiveness. On the contrary, as we shall see in the next chapter, Byzantine Manichaeans come from all social classes. The only testimony involving the '*nomen Manichaeorum*' in protest against the emperor is the Hippodrome episode. Whether this was just a label of abuse, or there was indeed a connection between Manichaeans and the party of Greens is beyond the scope of the current research as this incident requires a thorough investigation. In ch.[8] I will return to this subject with additional suggestions.