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

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Introduction

1. Introduction

And when they are about to eat bread they pray first, and tell the bread, "I neither reaped you, nor ground you, nor pounded you, nor put you into an oven; someone else did these things, and brought you to me. I have been eating without guilt." And whenever [an electus] says this for himself, he tells the catechumen, "I have prayed for you," and the catechumen withdraws.

*Apology to the Bread*¹

The "Apology to the Bread" is one of the most intriguing texts we will encounter in studying the testimonies of the Greek anti-Manichaica about the Manichaeans of the Roman East. It is recorded only in the Greek anti-Manichaean literature, and its original form is preserved in the earliest extant source of the corpus (end of third cent.).² Despite the characteristic irony that permeates Epiphanius' writings, this 'prayer/apology' does in fact reflect fundamental Manichaean beliefs and conducts.

The scene that it captures comes from the most important Manichaean ritual, their sacred meal. The protagonists of the scene are the two classes comprising the Manichaean community: the Elect (the highest echelons of the Manichaean Church), and the catechumens or hearers (the lay believers). The core of the prayer itself looks and could be authentic since it is compatible with dualism, the most notable feature of the Manichaean cosmogony. At the foundation of the Manichaean religion lies the doctrine of the two principles (also called roots or natures), which correspond to light and darkness, good and evil, spirit and matter. In addition, the apology reflects pivotal rules of the community: "The mystery of the elect, with their commandments. The mystery of the catechumens their helpers, with their commandments".³

Mani, the founder of Manichaeism, gave Manichaeans all the commandments, and himself established the foundations of his religion: its tenets (recorded in a series of canonical books), a set of rituals, the organisational structure of the religious community, and its missionary strategy.⁴ Living in the pluralistic environment of third-century Mesopotamia, the religion he instated contains elements of many religious traditions with which he was familiar, such as Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Christianity. Mani envisioned that his religion would surpass preceding ones by creating an ecumenical religion that would spread and unite the world.⁵ For the sake of universality and the attraction of new adherents, Manichaeism, "facing

¹ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 66.28 (Williams, 258). For the original text in Greek see ch.[5], 5.2.3.

² PRylands 3 Gr. 469.

³ *1Keph.* 1.15.15-19 (Gardner 1995, 21). An analysis and interpretation of the "Apology to the Bread" is provided in ch.[5], 5.2.3.

⁴ De Jong 2008, 104-05; Sala 2007, 56.

⁵ *1Keph.* 151.371.5-20 (Gardner and Lieu 2004, 266): "my hope, mine: It is provided for it to go to the west and also for it to go to the east; and in every language they hear the voice of its proclamation, and it is proclaimed in all cities. In this first matter my church surpasses the first churches: Because the first churches were chosen

many different religions, cultures and languages”, adapted the content of its teaching depending on the audience “to the local peculiarities”, to such an extent that “one wonders whether a system is behind it”.⁶ Indeed, Manichaeism spread very rapidly through land and sea transportation networks, first in the Greco-Roman world (within a century) and later to the east, as far as China, “but eventually disappeared altogether”.⁷ The present thesis intends to contribute to the study of Manichaeism in the Eastern Roman world during the fourth to sixth centuries.

2. The History of the Study of Manichaeism⁸

Manichaeism may be an ancient religion, but the study of Manichaeism is a fairly young academic discipline. The father of Manichaean studies is considered to be Isaac de Beausobre, with his monumental and pioneering work *Histoire critique de Manichée et du Manichéisme* (1734/39).⁹ However, the actual starting point for the discipline came more than a century later. This is mainly due to the fact that the only sources available for the study of Manichaeism until the middle of the nineteenth century were the anti-Manichaean literature (Greek and Latin). At the same time, the interest in scholarship for heresiological accounts was relatively limited.¹⁰ As Beausobre pointed out quite earlier, one has to be particularly critical when reading such material.

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, a decisive shift took place in the discipline, as the sources for Manichaean studies started to increase at an exponential pace. The first step in this came with the publications of Arabic¹¹ and later of Syriac¹² sources on Manichaeism that previously were unknown.¹³ However, a series of major discoveries of original Manichaean texts in Central Asia and Egypt truly transformed the field of Manichaean studies.

In the early twentieth century, four expeditions by German scholars (1902-1914) led to the discovery of literary and artistic remains from the Turfan oasis and Dunhuang in East Turkestan in China, a region crossed by one artery of the Silk Road. The textual findings were written in more than twenty languages and in different scripts. The publication of the Turfan material, begun in 1914, continues to the present day by a team of scholars based in Berlin, the *Turfan Research Group*.¹⁴

according to place, according to city. My church, mine: It is provided for it to go out from all cities, and its good news attains every country”.

⁶ Colditz 2015, 48; Cf. Lieu 2016, 546.

⁷ De Jong 2017, 654-55. In China Manichaean communities continued to exist until the seventeenth century.

⁸ Among the surveys focusing on the history and progress of Manichaean studies are: Lieu 2017, 144-158; Knuppel 2009, 179-182; Sundermann 2009; Wearing 2008, 249-261; Gardner and Lieu 2004, 25-45; Mirecki and BeDuhn 2001, 1-4; Mirecki and BeDuhn 1997, vii-x; Ries 1988; Stroumsa 2010, 113-123; Stroumsa 2000, 601-12.

⁹ de Beausobre 1734-1739.

¹⁰ Worth mentioning are those of Baur (1831) and Kessler (1889).

¹¹ *The Fihrist of al-Nadīm* (Flügel 1862; edited and translated into English by Dodge in 1970); Al-Biruni, *The chronology of Ancient Nations* (Sachau 1879).

¹² *The Book of Scholia (Liber Scholiorum)* by Theodore bar Kônai (Pognon 1898; Scher 1910). Severus of Antioch's 123rd Homily, in the *Cathedral Homiliae*, cf. “Extrait de la CXXIIIe homélie de Sévère d'Antioche” (Kugener and Cumont 1912, 83-172); *S. Ephraim's Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion and Bardaisan* (Mitchell 1912).

¹³ For the importance of a number of Arabic and Syriac testimonies, see Reeves 2011.

¹⁴ See <http://turfan.bbaw.de/projekt-en> and <http://idp.bl.uk/>. The edited texts are published by Brepols in the publication series *Berliner Turfantexte* (BTT).

With the discovery of genuine Manichaean texts in Egypt, the rest of the twentieth century proved to be revealing for Western Manichaeism. Firstly, in the late 1920s a collection of seven codices in Coptic was found at Medinet Madi. This included: (1) the *Kephalaia of the Teacher*, (2) the *Letters of Mani*, (3) the *Synaxeis* codex (a commentary on the *Living Gospel*), (4) a historical work with the life of Mani, (5) the *Homilies*, (6) the *Psalm-book*, and (7) the *Kephalaia of the Wisdom of my Lord Mani*. Part of these texts belongs to the Berlin collection, and another part to the Chester Beatty collection in Dublin.¹⁵

Another important breakthrough for Manichaean studies was the discovery of two more Manichaean texts: the *Tebessa Codex*,¹⁶ a Latin text found in Algeria in 1918, and the *Cologne Mani-Codex (CMC)*, an important find (supposedly) from Egypt. The latter was written in Greek and bought in 1969 by the papyrus collection of the University of Cologne. It recounts Mani's autobiography and his earliest missionary journeys.¹⁷

The publications of these new discoveries caused an increased interest in the topic of Manichaeism. An accelerating number of studies and monographs in the field appeared throughout the twentieth century.¹⁸ As the study of Manichaeism is an interdisciplinary topic, scholars from different disciplines (e.g. codicology, religious studies, theology, history, art, languages, patristics, etc.) oriented their research interests toward Manichaeism or even switched to Manichaean studies. Yet as Prof. Sam Lieu, a leading researcher among these 'converts' remarks, Manichaean studies were still in "a stage of infancy during the 1970s".¹⁹

An enormous step towards the transformation of the discipline occurred in the last decade of the twentieth century (1991 onwards) with the discovery of Manichaean texts in Coptic, Greek, and Syriac at ancient Kellis, the modern Ismant el-Kharab in the Dakhleh Oasis in Egypt. Unlike previous literary texts from Egypt, which "are still divorced from the presence of the living communities who created and used them", the new texts were found in situ.²⁰ A large-scale international project, the *Dakhleh Oasis Project*, continues until today to survey, excavate and record the archaeological sites of the whole Dakhleh Oasis, publishing the results of the project's fieldwork.²¹

A milestone for the starting point of Manichaean studies as an independent field was the 'First International Conference on Manichaeism' held in 1987 in Lund (Sweden), which was

¹⁵ To date, the following texts have been edited and published: (1) the Berlin *Kephalaia* (Polotsky, Böhlig and Ibscher 1935; Funk 1999-2018); (2) recently has been published a part of the Dublin *Kephalaia* (Gardner, Beduhn and Dilley 2018); (3) the *Homilies* (Polotsky 1934; Pedersen 2006) and (4) the *Psalm*s (Allberry 1938; Giverson 1986-88; Wurst 1996; Richter 1999). Cf. Robinson 2014.

¹⁶ Omont 1918 (edition princeps of the text).

¹⁷ *Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis (Περὶ τῆς γέννης τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ)*, edited by Koenen and Römer (1988). Henrichs and Koenen 1970 & 1978; Henrichs, Henrichs and Koenen 1975.

¹⁸ Indicatively I mention some of the most important: Cumont and Kugener 1908 & 1912; Alfarc 1918; Burkitt 1925/2010; Puech 1949; Klíma 1963; Widengren 1961; Asmussen 1965; Asmussen 1969; Henrichs 1979; Tardieu 1981; Sundermann's studies on Iranian Manichaean Church history (1986, 1987). The three outstanding works of Samuel Lieu: (1) *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China* (1985; 2nd ed. rev. 1992), (2) *Manichaeism in Mesopotamia and the Roman East* (1994a), and (3) *Manichaeism in Central Asia and China* (1998a). A paper which is still regularly cited as a standard work by Manichaean scholars published in 1969 in *JRS* is Peter Brown's "The Diffusion of Manichaeism in the Roman Empire".

¹⁹ Lieu 2017, 145-46, 151.

²⁰ Gardner and Lieu 2004, 259.

²¹ Worp 1995 (*Greek Papyri from Kellis I*); Gardner 1996 (*Kellis Literary texts, vol. 1*); Gardner, Alcock and Funk 1999 (*Coptic Documentary texts from Kellis, vol. 1*); Gardner 2007a (*Kellis literary text, vol. 2*); Gardner, Alcock, and Funk 2014 (*Coptic documentary texts from Kellis, vol. 2*). For more publications on Coptic, Greek, and Syriac texts from Kellis, see: <http://dakhlehoasisproject.com/our-projects/>

destined to be the first of a series of international conferences.²² So far, nine international conferences have been organised under the aegis of IAMS with contributions on all aspects of Manichaean studies. Along with the international conferences, a series of other bi-annual gatherings of scholars, participating in theme-based symposia, are organized in the intervening years.

Apart from the publications of the two major international projects (Turfan Studies project and *Dakhleh Oasis Project*), IAMS, since 1996, runs (and partly sponsors) an international research and publication project: the *Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum* (CFM). The aim of the project is to make all the “hitherto diversely published material”, available in a series.²³ CFM is divided into nine series along linguistic lines: Archaeologica et Iconographica, Arabica, Coptica, Graeca, Iranica, Latina, Sinica, Syriaca, Turcica, Biblia, Analecta Manichaica, Series Subsidia.²⁴

Apart from the publications of the Manichaeologists and the projects specializing in Manichaean Studies mentioned above, there are many other scholars who have dealt with the Manichaeans in varying degrees. Equally remarkable is the tremendous increase in dedicated PhD researchers over the last five years (2013-2018). A comprehensive bibliography of Manichaean studies until 1996 was compiled by Gunner Mikkelsen in 1997.²⁵

Without exaggeration, the growth that Manichaean studies has experienced over the past century remains unprecedented compared to any other field of religious studies. There is a wide variety in the forms and versions of Manichaeism, given the different eras and regions where it was practiced, and therefore its study is by nature interdisciplinary and necessitates interdependence between different scientific domains.

3. Greek anti-Manichaica (Christian and Pagan) in Manichaean Studies²⁶

This section discusses the role that the Greek anti-Manichaean sources (both Christian and pagan) played in the history of Manichaean scholarship. This role was and still remains rather limited, despite the growing interest of scholars in Manichaean studies that the past century witnessed. In examining the issue, firstly, I will highlight the reasons why the Greek corpus was neglected. In particular I will refer to the methodological problems of the Greek corpus which made researchers reluctant to study these sources. Then I will point out the negative effects on several research fields that resulted due to this undervaluation of Greek sources. Continuing on, I will review the relevant literature, which is admittedly quite minimal. I will end this section by highlighting a shift in the attitude of many scholars that has taken place over recent decades, regarding the reliability and importance of the Greek corpus.

²² Kurt 2005; Mirecki and BeDuhn 1997, viii. It was there that the idea of forming an International Association of Manichaean Studies (IAMS) was conceived. The association was founded during the second International Congress in 1989.

²³ <http://www.brepols.net/Pages/BrowseBySeries.aspx?TreeSeries=CFM>

²⁴ CFM is solely published by Brepols. Until 2020, 21 volumes were published. Another series published by Brepols under the auspices of IAMS is the *Manichaean Studies* (MAS) series which numbers five volumes (<http://www.brepols.net/Pages/BrowseBySeries.aspx?TreeSeries=MAS>). At the same time, Brill's formerly *Nag Hammadi Studies Series* was transformed into *Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies* (NHMS), now also including study tools and monographs in the field of Manichaean studies (<https://brill.com/view/serial/NHMS>). Brepols and Brill also published selected articles of most international conferences.

²⁵ Mikkelsen 1997.

²⁶ Elements from this section have been published in a different context in Matsangou 2017b.

The critical attitude towards Greek anti-Manichaica (late nineteenth - late twentieth centuries)
 After the discoveries of authentic Manichaean sources during the twentieth century, and the enthusiasm generated by these findings, scholars understandably focused on the Manichaean texts. As a result, the anti-Manichaica drifted to the margins of their interest. The general consensus of scholars was now that the usefulness of polemical literature for Manichaeism was very limited; their value had been “surpassed by the genuine Manichaean texts”.²⁷

Especially the Greek sources were more neglected than the respective Latin ones, since the quoted Manichaean material in the latter was more abundant. In particular, the writings of Augustine were considered to be much more promising sources for Manichaeism than anything in Greek, since Augustine, before converting to Christianity, was a Manichaean hearer for nine years.²⁸ In fact, the Greek anti-Manichaean (Christian) corpus is at least as voluminous as the writings of Augustine. However, it was employed much less often, because scholars had difficulty using these sources to answer historical questions.²⁹ In particular, among the methodological difficulties highlighted by modern scholarship are: (1) since the texts belong to the genre of heresiology their information must be considered unreliable, biased, untrustworthy, and driven by a polemical agenda, (2) the historical information they provide for the reconstruction of Manichaeism (if any) is too scanty, (3) their focus is mainly on argumentative polemics rather than on Manichaean mythology, which scholars prefer,³⁰ and (4) Greek authors appear not to know Manichaean texts, thus, the Manichaean material quoted by them is limited, fragmentary and questionable.

Furthermore, a progressive criticism of Greek sources took place for two additional reasons. Both of these comprise core issues for my research and will be examined in the present study.

First of all, most scholars believe that Greek anti-Manichaean literature as a whole is based on very few early sources (mainly the *Acta Archelai*),³¹ which were recycled by later authors. As Burkitt remarks, “In Greek there are many polemics against the Manichees, but when looked at carefully it is clear that the writers are all dependent on a very few original authorities”.³² Skjærvø characteristically points out, “as all the Greek Church fathers used the *Acta* as their primary source on Mani and Manichaeism, this entire tradition could not be considered original, and one therefore had to concentrate on the Oriental sources”.³³ However, this is an (over)generalization that results in the outright rejection of the Greek corpus altogether. As I will argue (especially in chs.[1] and [2]), the tradition of Greek anti-Manichaica did not, in fact, begin with the *Acta Archelai* nor are all Greek sources based on it. Furthermore, even those sources which are based on the *Acta* usually provide additional information.

²⁷ Pedersen 2015b, 572; Lieu 1994b, 258.

²⁸ Lieu, 1994b, 258.

²⁹ As Berzon (2013, 41) points out, although “the study of heresy has progressed by leaps and bounds” “the heresiologists themselves remain largely outside the reach of reevaluation and rehabilitation”; Cf. Cameron 2003.

³⁰ Stroumsa 2000, 607; Stroumsa and Stroumsa 1988, 38 fn. 5.

³¹ *Acta Archelai* is a pivotal anti-Manichaean source, written around the middle of the fourth century. I will discuss the *Acta Archelai* later in this chapter and more extensively in chs. [1] and [2]. Here I should just mention that Beausobre was the first who pointed out that *Acta Archelai* is a completely unreliable historical source. His critique was followed by scholars almost until the end of the twentieth century.

³² Burkitt 1925/2010, 13. See also Lieu 1994, 107.

³³ Skjærvø 2006a, 12.

However, the core issue, which stands at the top of the list of methodological problems, is the meaning of the word 'Manichaeism' in the sources, especially the patristic ones.

Although Greek patristic literature repeatedly stressed the danger of the Manichaean threat and created an impression that Manichaeism existed everywhere, it was pointed out early on, and has since gradually become embedded in academic discourse, that patristic writings use the word *Manichaean* as a term of abuse for religious opponents of all sorts. In a series of publications, scholars have argued against taking those accusations literally. The argument was that the Church Fathers did not confront real Manichaeism; that they had neither personal experience nor contact with them, as opposed to Augustine, who did. It has been argued that the incidents cited in Greek patristic literature and the stories about specific Manichaean individuals were either fictional (literary *topos*) or examples of slander. References to Manichaeism were therefore reinterpreted as actually targeting other religious groups.³⁴

Some representative examples displaying the way scholars tend to argue will be illuminating in this regard. As R.P. Casey, the editor of Serapion of Thmuis' *Against the Manichees*, remarks in his introduction:

His [Serapion's] method of attack resembles Titus of Bostra much more than Augustine and Alexander of Lycopolis. The latter [...] refute the heresy point by point, but Serapion and Titus launch a general attack on dualism, and develop it in detail by a series of supposititious claims and objections, which they imagine their opponents might plausibly but ineffectively advance at different stages of their arguments. This method is peculiarly confusing to the reader, who is often at a loss to know whether a real Manichaean tenet is in question or an imaginary one, invented for refutation by inference from the general premises of dualism.³⁵

The same argumentation about Serapion and his knowledge of Manichaeism is reproduced stereotypically by later scholars.³⁶

Along similar lines, M. Aubineau (editor and translator of Severianus of Gabala's *Contra Manichaeos et Apollinaristas*) expresses his view about all the Greek authors of the *Contra Manichaeos* works:

Les traités *Contra Manichaeos* ne manquent pas, pour n'évoquer que le seul secteur grec, et il n'est guère de prédicateur chrétien qui ne décoche à l'occasion quelques flèches contre des ennemies omniprésents. Naturellement tous ces prédicateurs n'avaient pas de la secte une expérience personnelle, aussi documentée que celle d'Augustin, et leur témoignage, comparé à celui du converti d'Hippone, peut paraître parfois assez faible. Souvent, ils nous renseignent

³⁴ See Jarry 1968, 139; Stroumsa and Stroumsa 1988, 38 fn. 5: "In the Byzantine world, "Manichaeism" soon became a term of opprobrium, thrown at various kinds of heretics whose beliefs were not even loosely connected to Manichaeism"; Lieu 1994, 101.

³⁵ Casey 1931, 18. Casey's edition is the only critical edition of the full Greek text. Cf. Fitschen 1992 for a translation in German.

³⁶ Willoughby (1932, 174) who reviewed Casey's edition reproduces his argument: "Professor Casey's study of the polemic against the Manichees convinces him that Serapion really knew very little of the system he was combating. For the sake of argument he freely invented positions the Manichees never thought of holding, in order to give himself the satisfaction of making a valiant attack on the dualism that he abhorred. Accordingly, the polemic discloses much more regarding the mind of Serapion, than it does regarding the Manichees". Cf. Lieu 1994, 101. However, as Stroumsa (1986b, 317) stresses, "This by no means implies [...] that Serapion did not have real Manichaeism before him [...] It merely reflects the topics that were likely to appear as most threatening from the bishop's point of view".

moins sur les Manichéens eux-mêmes que sur les Manichéens vus par les Chrétiens, mais un tel point de vue a son prix et relève aussi du domaine de l'historien.³⁷

Decret, assessing Basil of Caesarea's knowledge of Manichaeism (although Basil's *Contra Manichaeos* is lost) states:

Toutefois, à parcourir l'œuvre de Basile, les très rares références explicites au manichéisme ne permettent pas d'affirmer que l'auteur ait eu, par ses études, ses contacts ou son ministère pastoral une connaissance directe de la secte. On ne saurait voir des indices d'une telle connaissance personnelle dans le fait qu'il s'emploie, lui aussi, à dénoncer l'hérésie: 'la sottise des Manichéens', 'l'abominable hérésie des Manichéens, que l'on peut appeler, sans manquer à la justice, la pourriture des Eglises'.³⁸

Finally, Byard Bennett, after comparing (in several of his studies) Didymus the Blind's presentation of the Manichaean account of evil to the concept of evil as recorded in Manichaean texts (*Kephalaia* and *Psalm Book*), concludes that "Didymus had a limited knowledge of some of the principal features of the Manichaean account of evil".³⁹

I will adduce some more examples where references to Manichaeans are reinterpreted by scholars "as actually targeting other religious groups" (Arians, Monophysites, Origenists, etc.).⁴⁰ Tardieu, commenting on Athanasius of Alexandria's account of the general Sebastian whom he accused of Manichaeism, concludes in a definite way:

Telle est la pièce-maîtresse du dossier sur le manichéisme de Sebastianus. Elle est totalement inconsistante. Ce n'est que de la polémique de bas étage. L'évêque d'Alexandrie met dans le même sac ariens, manichéens, juifs, autorités civiles'. [...]

Le mot «manichéen» est un mot piège dans la littérature patristique et byzantine, et chez les auteurs orientaux. Il est regrettable que de simples croque-mitaines hérésiologiques soient pris pour argent comptant par certains historiens d'aujourd'hui.⁴¹

Whereas Lieu cautiously remarks on the same issue:

However, he [Sebastian] was not called a Manichaean in pagan sources and it is just possible that we are here witnessing a derogatory use of the title of the sect by Athanasius in return for the wrongs he endured at the hands of Sebastianus and his troops.⁴²

In general, Lieu seems more ambivalent and reserved in his arguments regarding the use of the *Manichaean name*, when for instance he states:

However, it is just as possible that Agapius was a Christian whose belief in a strong dichotomy between flesh and spirit led to a dualistic theology which was labelled "Manichaean" by more orthodox-minded churchmen.⁴³

By "Manichaeism" Procopius might have meant paganism or more probably Monophysitism.⁴⁴

The same aspect concerning the latter source was expressed by Stroumsa:

³⁷ Aubineau 1983, 64.

³⁸ Decret 1982, 1060-64, 1061-62.

³⁹ Bennett 1997, 97; Bennett 2001a, 67.

⁴⁰ For a thorough overview regarding the use of the word 'Manichaean' as a term of religious abuse, see Lieu 1994a, 101-124.

⁴¹ Tardieu 1988, 498, 500.

⁴² Lieu 1994a, 103.

⁴³ Lieu 1994a, 271.

⁴⁴ Lieu 1994a, 118.

Another such testimony, that of Procopius of Caesarea, who states that the Samaritans, having been forced to convert, preferred to become Manichees, might only reflect the use of this name as a term of opprobrium (for instance for Monophysites).⁴⁵

Bennett, disagreeing with the editors of Didymus, who identify certain unnamed opponents of the latter with the Manichaeans, argues: "I will suggest that these passages refer not to the Manichaeans but to other groups (Valentinians, Marcionites, Platonists and Epicureans)".⁴⁶

Indeed, even the references of western Roman authors to the Manichaeans of the Roman East have been interpreted as targeting other religious groups. The testimony of the pagan historian Ammianus Marcellinus (who wrote in Latin) that Strategius 'Musonianus' undertook (after Constantine's command) to carry out an investigation about the Manichaeans of the eastern provinces, was interpreted by Woods as an investigation which concerned not the Manichaeans, but the Arians. As Woods concludes, Ammianus' narrative on the investigation of Manichaeans and similar sects

[r]ather [...] is a derogatory characterization of church councils based on what Ammianus knew of them in the west by the end of the fourth century when various episcopal factions were accustomed to accuse their opponents of Manichaeism as a matter of routine.

For 'Manichean' was itself a common term of religious abuse by the end of the fourth century. Various Christian factions routinely denounced their theological opponents as 'Manicheans' even when there was little or no evidence to substantiate such a charge.⁴⁷

So, regardless of the difference in style (absolute or cautious), scholars seem to be unanimous that (any) references to Manichaeans in Greek patristic anti-Manichaica did not concern real Manichaeans. Lim, who is more suspicious of the very existence of Manichaeism as a religion, recapitulates succinctly the above trend. In his words: "In Late Antiquity, the *nomen Manichaeorum* was after all a label used [...] for marking the religious Other".⁴⁸

Thus, while patristic texts give the impression that Manichaeans existed everywhere, modern scholarship has reduced this to the extent that in the eastern part of the Roman Empire no Manichaeans actually existed. The modern critique is not groundless; Church Fathers often correlated their religious opponents to Manichaeans. In addition, there are cases where Church Fathers themselves proclaim that they could call other heretics Manichaeans, since they had similar beliefs. This being the case, one naturally wonders whether the Manichaeans of the Roman East were actually the equivalent of the witches of the western Middle Ages. To put it differently: was the word Manichaean exclusively used as a label which could ultimately incur the death penalty for occasional opponents?

It seems not. Apart from the large amount of anti-Manichaean texts which were produced during this period, and the legislation against Manichaeans, the Manichaean presence in the Eastern Roman Empire is evidenced by both pagan and Manichaean sources. Furthermore, the fact that the word Manichaean became a label for all opponents is itself a testimony to the reality of the Manichaean presence and its missionary success. Indeed, it was the seriousness of the Manichaean 'threat' that forced Church Fathers of different eras to compare or identify all kinds of 'heretics' (e.g. Arians, Monophysites, Nestorians, Origenists) to the Manichaeans, who are presented as the worst.

⁴⁵ Stroumsa 1985, 276, fn. 34.

⁴⁶ Bennett 1997, 97; Bennett 2001a, 67.

⁴⁷ Woods 2001, 264, 259. Cf. Matsangou 2017a, 395, fn. 3. That the investigation did concern Manichaeans is not questioned by other researchers: Drijvers (1996, 532–537), Lieu (1992, 96, 121–150; 1994, 101 f.), Sundermann (2009).

⁴⁸ Lim 2008, 167.

Certainly, there are (anti-Manichaean) writings which were not occasioned by a 'real' Manichaean threat. Instead, their composition continues the tradition of a discussion upon a 'Manichaean' repertoire that was passed down from teacher to student.⁴⁹ On the other hand, however, overgeneralizations (such as those mentioned above) predispose future researchers not to study these sources; this in turn generates a vicious circle of cause and effect. This is because the academic discourse continues to focus 'around' the evidence on the basis of a small selection of what is actually there. This is problematic, since although the argumentation for the 'imagined Manichaeans' may apply to individual cases, it does not stand up to scrutiny when the totality of the evidence is taken into consideration.

Thus, the fact that the word *Manichaean* was indeed used as a term of abuse should not cause an interpretive myopia, suggesting that any reference to Manichaeans is interpreted through this viewpoint. Since Manichaeans did exist in the Eastern Roman Empire, it is reasonable to believe that Greek anti-Manichaica do contain reports concerning real Manichaeans. The problem is whether we can think of a method with which to distinguish between references to 'real' Manichaeans and the use of the *nomen Manichaeorum* for other, polemical, purposes.

Resulting effects from undervaluing the Greek sources

It is worth pointing out that the Greek anti-Manichaean corpus was undervalued not only by Manichaean scholars and historians of religions but also by scholars of Patristics and of Byzantine culture. For the latter, Manichaeism is considered as a less important subject than other themes in patristic literature; for the former, Greek anti-Manichaica are considered unreliable, surpassed by the new findings, and less important than Augustine's writings.⁵⁰

Taken together, this attitude resulted in the lack of critical editions of Greek anti-Manichaean texts as well as in the lack of interest in studies based on this corpus. For instance, it is noteworthy that while many scholars have highlighted repeatedly the significance of Titus of Bostra,⁵¹ a contemporary critical edition of the Greek and the Syriac text was published only in 2013 and the first translation into a modern language in 2015.⁵²

Thus, in research on the Greek anti-Manichaica, a narrative slowly developed in which the Greek sources were given a place in the development of larger inquiries into Manichaean history (e.g. by Lieu and Stroumsa) but were not studied in their own right.

Review of the relevant literature

The first and only study (until today), examining the Greek anti-Manichaean sources *per se*, is Klein's *Die Argumentation in den griechisch-christlichen Antimanichaica* (1991). Therefore, as Pedersen suggests, it "deserves the epithet 'pioneering'".⁵³ Klein, recognizing the difficulty in using these sources to answer historical questions, investigated the anti-Manichaica from the perspective of the development of polemical literature, in order to categorise "the aims and methods of the polemic".⁵⁴ In his research, Klein has focused only on the main Greek Christian works which were devoted to the refutation of Manichaeism.⁵⁵ At the beginning of his work,

⁴⁹ Pedersen 2004, 142. See also ch.[5], 5.3.2.

⁵⁰ Pedersen 2004, 105; Klein 1991, 1-3.

⁵¹ See for example Stroumsa and Stroumsa 1988, 43; Stroumsa 1992, 338.

⁵² Roman et al. 2013; Roman, Schmidt, and Poirier 2015. The first edition was published by Lagarde in 1859.

⁵³ Pedersen 2004, 105.

⁵⁴ Pedersen 2004, 105-06.

⁵⁵ Pedersen 2004, 105-06; Lieu 1994b, 258-59.

he presents a “Patrology” of these sources, which he lists in alphabetical order. He then proceeds to a thematic survey of these sources. The themes examined include: the attack on dualism, the attack on Manichaeism, the apology for the Christian tradition, and the structure of the polemic.⁵⁶

Undoubtedly, “Klein’s study fills a real gap”⁵⁷ and is a contribution to both Manichaean and Patristic studies. However, his study presents some inadequacies for which it has been criticized.⁵⁸ The presentation of the sources in alphabetical rather than in chronological order, and the indiscriminate selection of his material from texts ranging from the fourth to the thirteenth century in the examination of his sub-themes, deprives the reader of the possibility to discern (1) the interdependence of the sources (and provenance from common sources), and (2) the development of Greek anti-Manichaean polemic argumentation over time. In addition, Klein restricts his research to a limited corpus, that of the basic anti-Manichaean Christian sources, and excludes the rest of Christian as well as the pagan (e.g. Simplicius and Alexander of Lycopolis) anti-Manichaean literature in Greek. The latter (pagan sources) would have complemented the image and would have offered Klein the ability to compare Christian to pagan argumentation on the issue. Finally, Klein’s research (as Klein himself states) has not dealt with a number of questions, such as: the origin of the arguments in Christian polemics, the impact of the anti-Manichaean concern on Christian theological thought (especially in theodicy), and the Greek anti-Manichaica as a source of knowledge on Manichaeism.⁵⁹

In addition to Klein’s monograph, two more major studies were published. Both of them focus on a specific *Contra Manichaeos* work and its author. These are Bennett’s (1997) *The Origin of Evil: Didymus the Blind’s Contra Manichaeos*, and Pedersen’s (2004) *Demonstrative Proof in Defence of God. A Study of Titus of Bostra’s Contra Manichaeos*. It has to be mentioned that Pedersen’s thorough study laid the groundwork for the critical edition of Titus’ text and its translation. Pedersen examines a variety of questions, such as the diverse philosophical roots of the argument of Titus and his philosophical location, the question of the Manichaean sources used by Titus and whether he had access to Manichaean texts, as well as the target groups that Titus addressed. His study is considered by modern scholarship as a major contribution to both Patristics and Manichaean studies, but also to religious studies and philosophy.⁶⁰

Yet, despite the importance of the above studies for the field, it is remarkable that so little research has been done until today. The result is that Manichaean scholars are familiar with a selection of these texts, which are ‘recycled’ in bibliography. However, very little is known about the Greek anti-Manichaean corpus in its own right.⁶¹

It is worth noting that another kind of sources suffered a similar fate to that of the Greek anti-Manichaica, the legal ones.⁶² The reservations that prevented researchers from systematically using the anti-Manichaean legal sources in order to reconstruct Manichaean history (an issue discussed further in ch.[3]) can be summed up in the following two arguments: (1) the promulgation of a law could be a mindless repetition, therefore laws do not necessarily reflect reality, and (2) in legislation too, the *nomen Manichaeorum* was

⁵⁶ Klein 1991. Cf. Lieu 1994b, 258-59; Pedersen 2004, 105.

⁵⁷ van Oort 1993, 202.

⁵⁸ van Oort 1993, 201-203; Lieu 1994b, 258-59; Pedersen 2004, 105-06.

⁵⁹ Klein 1991, 3-5.

⁶⁰ Klein 2007, 113-115, 115; BeDuhn 2008a, 301.

⁶¹ Pedersen 2004, 102.

⁶² Only one scholar, Valerio Minale, has systematically studied Roman anti-Manichaean legislation.

(probably) used as a technical term, a “container where every sort of religious deviance could be thrown”.⁶³ The result of this belief is that no single study at present examines thoroughly the entire Roman anti-Manichaean legislation, as such. There are studies either focusing on specific time periods or on individual laws,⁶⁴ or studies in which a small number of laws (usually the same) comprise part of a broader narrative (about Manichaeism in the Roman Empire) and serve as complementary evidence to other Christian, pagan, and Manichaean sources.⁶⁵

Greek patristic anti-Manichaica revisited

During the last three decades a progressive growth of the interest in the Greek-patristic anti-Manichaica can be identified. Actually, already since the 1980s some scholars have argued that the Greek sources preserve historical information; they have attempted through their writings to arouse interest, pointing out that these sources should not be ignored but be studied critically.⁶⁶

Especially after the findings at Kellis (1990s), a research that would compare the content of these texts to the respective themes incorporated in patristic literature is considered necessary by many scholars.⁶⁷ As Lieu characteristically points out, “at least one of its [Kellis] documents deserves notice by scholars of anti-Manichaica as it is a theological hymn (The Hymn of Emanations) in Greek which calls for terminological and theological comparison with the cosmogonic teaching of Mani as presented by the Greek Fathers”.⁶⁸ Pedersen, in his study about Titus, also defends the importance of the *Contra Manichaeos* Greek corpus, and supports the view that the patristic argumentation could reveal patterns of evolution of both Manichaean and Christian thought; he wishes his work to become a stimulus for further research.⁶⁹

Indeed, as the study and publication of the original Manichaean texts progresses, it turns out that the patristic writings are by no means as irrelevant and unreliable as originally believed. Gardner, in his *Mani's Letter to Marcellus: Fact and Fiction in the Acta Archelai Revisited*, claims that he found many more authentic elements in it than he had imagined in the beginning of his research. He further considers that, if the scientific community accepted his arguments, the study of anti-Manichaica would provide valuable information about Mani and Manichaeism.⁷⁰

⁶³ Minale 2012b, 176. As Minale (2012b, 190) states: “The substance of Manichaeism, an heretical dualism *par excellence*, started to appear less essential than its form: the *nomen Manichaeorum* was to include also other heterodox beliefs, without limitation of time and space, replacing the “part” with the “whole” and meaning the phenomenon of heresy in its entirety”.

⁶⁴ See for instance Kaden (1953, 55-68), Beskow 1988 and the rich bibliography on the issue by Minale: 2010, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016a and 2016b.

⁶⁵ Lieu 1994a and 1992.

⁶⁶ Stroumsa 1985, 274-75; Stroumsa and Stroumsa 1988, 39-40; Stroumsa 1992, 338-39; Lieu 1994a, 133.

⁶⁷ For the importance of Kellis’ findings, see Gardner and Lieu 2004, 44-45; Pedersen 2004, 101-02. For recent findings in Kellis, see Gardner and Worp 2018, 127-42.

⁶⁸ Lieu 1994b, 258.

⁶⁹ Pedersen 2004, 423: “A concern with *Contra Manichaeos* thus contributes to sharpening the attention to a circumstance that may never have been forgotten, but at times has been under-emphasised, namely that the history of Early Catholic theology should not merely be studied and explained as an internal development of the tradition, but should also be understood as being defined by the increasingly external relations to the surrounding pagan society and divergent Christian groups who were regarded as heretical”.

⁷⁰ Gardner 2007b, 46-48, esp. 47-48, 48.

4. Significance, Purpose, Aim, Focus of the Study

From what has been discussed, it becomes clear that there is a knowledge gap in the field of study. Apart from Klein (1991), no single study exists that investigates the Greek anti-Manichaean sources in their own right. Moreover, as underlined, Klein's study examines a limited number of sources and focuses only on their polemical argumentation.

In the early 1990s, Klein "noted that work on the Christian anti-Manichaean literature had hardly begun".⁷¹ More than a decade later, Pedersen (2004) remarked "Yet, scholarship on anti-Manichaean literature is still in its infancy".⁷² Today, three decades after Klein's study, it is still the case that far too little attention has been paid to the genre. Several scholars during the last decades have stressed this gap in research literature. Especially after the findings at Kellis, an increasing number of outstanding scholars identified the gap and called upon researchers to investigate the Greek sources critically and in comparison with the new findings. This was the first stimulus and starting point of my research.

However, apart from the shift in the scholarly attitude regarding the reliability of the Greek sources, an additional reason necessitating this inquiry is that no previous study has investigated the totality of the voluminous Greek corpus until recently; the same applies for the anti-Manichaean Roman legislation. Scholars, familiar with a relatively small number of these sources, tend to argue on a case-by-case basis, that the *nomen Manichaeorum* lacks religious associations in Byzantine literature,⁷³ and was used simply as a term of abuse. However, even if each one of these individual cases does not concern 'real' Manichaeans, even if not a single law or ecclesiastical document was occasioned by a 'real' Manichaean challenge, the fact that the Manichaean question occupies a very important position in both legal and ecclesiastical texts needs to be explained. This can only be done when the totality of the evidence is taken into consideration, something that has never been done so far.

Thus, my main aim in the present study is to show how this large body of literature can indeed be used to contribute to the history of Manichaeism in the Roman East. The major objective of this study is to readapt known yet neglected material into a new context in order to shine new light on the history of Manichaeism in the Roman East. This will be done by critically examining the voluminous Greek anti-Manichaean literature and by taking into account the data of new findings.

In order that this survey be conducted successfully, the knowledge of two scientific disciplines is required: Byzantine history and culture, and Manichaean studies. For the correct interpretation of the sources, one has to be well aware of the context and the content of the theological discourse of the era (patristics), as well as being informed of the new evidence and data that come to light for Manichaeism in the Eastern Roman Empire (Manichaeology). One of the reasons that Greek anti-Manichaica were overlooked by both Manichaean scholars and scholars of Byzantine culture (part of it being patristics) is that Manichaeologists know a limited amount about patristics, and scholars of patristics know little about Manichaeism.⁷⁴ By linking the two disciplines, this thesis intends to contribute to both fields of study. Firstly, it intends to be a contribution to the study of Manichaeism by promoting the knowledge of Manichaean history and thought. In turn, this knowledge may provide new perspectives for the study of early Christianity and Byzantine culture.

⁷¹ Klein 1991, 1-3.

⁷² Pedersen 2004, 102.

⁷³ Lieu 1994a, 110.

⁷⁴ Nagel in Pedersen 2004, ix.

This research intentionally does not address Manichaean theology and Christology to a great extent. The emphasis of the investigation is on the Manichaeans, on a history about Eastern Roman Manichaeans and not on a history of the Manichaean ideas and beliefs in the Roman East. Therefore, I focus mainly on those Manichaean beliefs that had a visible impact on the daily life of Manichaeans.

Geographical and chronological scope of the research

The geographical focus of this study is the Eastern Roman Empire. The chronological span of the study is from the fourth to the sixth century. I was led to this decision for the following reasons:

(1) The prevailing opinion in scholarship is that there is strong evidence that Manichaeans disappeared from the Roman East by the end of the sixth century, after Justinian's persecution.⁷⁵

(2) There is an abundance of *Contra Manichaeos* works that were written during that period.

(3) The authors of this period are considered by modern research to be more reliable than the later ones who identify Paulicians and Bogomils with Manichaeans.⁷⁶

In addition, if I expanded further than the sixth century, the volume of primary material would become unmanageable, and I would also have to explore Manichaeism's relationship with Paulicianism and Bogomilism, which in itself merits a separate dedicated study. Also, an extended chronological framework would require a different methodological approach, since the sixth century is considered a landmark for the Manichaean presence and visibility in the Roman East. In any case, the sixth century signals major historical changes and is a turning point in the history of the wider geographical area.

5. Methodological Considerations

5.1 Limitations and Research Design

The methodological problems of the Greek corpus that have been emphasised by researchers are to a great extent valid and constitute methodological difficulties also encountered in the present study. The research design of this thesis, as well as specific methodological tools that I discuss in this section, aim to address these problems.

In the first place, I have already stressed how important it is for accomplishing the aims of this study to examine the totality of the evidence. This and only this will allow us to trace cases where authors rely on other authors and cases where authors provide material they have freshly gathered. Such an approach will build confidence in identifying that a 'real' Manichaean 'problem' is actually there.

The methodology of the research will be the historical method, approached from a comparative perspective. The guiding axes for the examination of the primary sources will be thematic and chronological. Each chapter constitutes an autonomous thematic section with a central question and a particular corpus of sources which are examined in chronological order from the fourth to the sixth century (and beyond if necessary). The chronological order will more clearly illuminate the historical evolution of the theme investigated in each separate chapter, as well as the interdependence of the sources. Some chapters are based exclusively, or mainly, on a particular type or literary genre of primary sources. For instance, ch.[3] is based

⁷⁵ Skjærvø, 2006a, 32; Gardner and Lieu 2004, 111. I will discuss this issue in ch.[8].

⁷⁶ Lieu 1994a, 128-29.

solely on Roman imperial legislation and ch.[4] mainly on anti-Manichaean treatises (i.e. works devoted entirely or partly solely to Manichaeism).

In each chapter, I attempt to develop a comparative approach for a better understanding of the question under consideration. For this purpose, I incorporate (relevant) comparative material from Latin (mainly Augustine), Syriac, and Arabic sources, in order to supplement, complement, or compare them with the Greek sources. Material also comes from genuine Manichaean texts (from within and beyond the Roman Empire), in order to respond to the research question of what can be historically verified regarding the information provided by Greek anti-Manichaean authors.⁷⁷ In ch.[3] the comparative approach is attempted by comparing the laws against Manichaeans with the laws against other heretics and minority religious groups.

Concerning the issues of reliability of the patristic sources, as I have previously mentioned, what is needed is a critical reading, meaning that the information provided should not be accepted at face value.⁷⁸ Therefore, it is important, in analysing and interpreting sources, to investigate the authenticity of the information provided. As Bennett stresses in his study, *Didymus the Blind's Knowledge of Manichaeism*:

Before information from an anti-Manichaean writer is used in reconstructing aspects of Manichaean belief and practice, three questions should be asked:

(1) How much did the writer know about Manichaeism and how did he arrive at that knowledge? For example, had the writer met or debated with proponents of Manichaeism? Did the writer claim to have access to Manichaean writings or was his knowledge of Manichaeism derived from another anti-Manichaean work (or works)?

(2) Were the beliefs which the writer attributed to the Manichaeans substantially correct or did he confuse the Manichaeans' beliefs with those of other groups?

(3) Did the writer's reliance on earlier heresiological works shape how he understood and responded to Manichaean claims?⁷⁹

In sum, the critical examination of the whole corpus in a chronological order and with a comparative approach will identify the new information and will address the issues of reliability and the interdependence of sources. Regarding the problem of the use of the *nomen Manichaeorum* as a label, this will be treated below in the section 'Defining Terms'.

5.2 Primary Sources

Two types of sources comprise the main corpus of the primary researched material: (1) Anti-Manichaean writings in Greek (both Christian and pagan), which constitute the bulk of the material, and (2) the Roman imperial legislation, specifically the laws against heretics, pagans and Jews (*Codex Theodosianus* and *Codex Justinianus*).

Since the period under investigation is from the fourth to the sixth century, the goal is primarily to examine all the sources dating within this period. Sources from the seventh century until the ninth or tenth centuries will only be examined to the extent that they securely refer to Manichaeans and not to Paulicians or Bogomils. Sources from after the tenth

⁷⁷ In this effort I will also use the findings of secondary literature concerning the Syriac and Coptic Manichaean texts.

⁷⁸ Kaatz 2000, 2-3.

⁷⁹ Bennett 2001a, 38: "Greek Christian anti-Manichaean writings have often been used as sources of information about Manichaean belief and practice, complementing and supplementing the reports found in the extant Manichaean texts. At the same time, there has been little systematic analysis of these anti-Manichaean writings, so that their value as historical sources has yet to be critically assessed".

century I consider as going far beyond the timeframe of the researched period, and beyond the scope of the research questions of this thesis.

Apart from the Greek and legal sources, I will also use some of the Syriac, Arabic and Latin (Augustine) anti-Manichaean writings, as well as Manichaean sources, mainly the findings from Egypt. However, since the scope of this study is the examination of the Greek anti-Manichaean corpus and Roman legislation, there will be only a limited and selective use of the Manichaean sources, as well as of the anti-Manichaean East-Roman authors who wrote in Syriac and Arabic.

For texts written in Greek I am using the critical editions whenever these exist.⁸⁰ Texts written in other languages than Greek (Latin, Syriac, etc.) are studied through translations.

There is a variety of literary genres of Christian sources, such as theological treatises, histories (both ecclesiastical and secular), chronographies, homilies, epistles, proceedings of debates, anathema formulas, and church canons. Some of them are entire works or chapters of works solely devoted to the refutation of Manichaeism. The rest are scattered and dispersed mentions about Manichaeism and certain Manichaean individuals, which exist throughout the whole Christian corpus.⁸¹ In contrast to the latter group, most of the texts of the first group are rather well-known in the scholarship. Promising sources for historical information and 'real' Manichaeans are not so much the "*Against Manichaeans*" long treatises written for polemical purposes in which the discourse often is developed up to a theoretical level, but rather texts occasionally written (such as letters). Pagan anti-Manichaean works, such as the works of Alexander of Lycopolis and Simplicius, will be used since they provide information about Manichaeans from another point of view, as well as offering insight into a kind of intercultural literature that circulated in the Near East during Late Antiquity.

The majority of the lengthy anti-Manichaean works (treatises) were published during the fourth century (eleven out of thirteen).⁸² Unfortunately, five of them have not survived.⁸³ Of the other six, one is the work of a pagan philosopher.⁸⁴ Apart from the treatises, other less theoretically inclined authors recorded their concern and worries about Manichaeans in homilies delivered to their catechumen students and flock. In these works, references and warnings about Manichaeans abound.⁸⁵ Besides those, some other authors occasionally refer to Manichaeans, with varying degrees of consistency.⁸⁶

Passing into the fifth century, the picture changes: long treatises against Manichaeans are no longer produced. Moreover, texts referring to Manichaeans are much less numerous. The predominant type of literature in which we find references to Manichaeans is ascetic literature (which started by the late fourth century),⁸⁷ lives of saints,⁸⁸ *Erotapokriseis*

⁸⁰ For more information about translations, please see the "Note of Translations" in the beginning.

⁸¹ Most of the texts of this second group were obtained through the lemma/textual search on TLG.

⁸² The authors of these treatises are: Alexander of Lycopolis, Serapion of Thmuis, [Hegemonius], Eusebius of Emesa, George of Laodicea, Titus of Bostra, Epiphanius of Salamis, Didymus the Blind, Heraclian of Chalcedon, Basil of Caesarea, and Diodorus of Tarsus.

⁸³ We no longer possess the anti-Manichaean treatises of Eusebius of Emesa, George of Laodicea, Diodorus of Tarsus, Heraclian of Chalcedon, and Basil of Caesarea.

⁸⁴ Alexander of Lycopolis.

⁸⁵ See for example, Cyril of Jerusalem and John Chrysostom.

⁸⁶ Indicatively: Amphilochius of Iconium, Athanasius of Alexandria, Basil of Caesarea, Cyril of Alexandria, Cyril of Scythopolis, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Julian the Neo-Arian, Libanius, Nilus of Ankara, Severianus of Gabala.

⁸⁷ Palladius; *Apophthegmata patrum*; *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*.

⁸⁸ Mark the Deacon, *The life of Porphyry, bishop of Gaza*.

(questions and answers), and letters written by monks or clerics with instructions on issues concerning Manichaeans.⁸⁹

During the sixth century there is the continuation of the production of new anti-Manichaean literature originating in monastic and more provincial milieus.⁹⁰ In parallel, there is a reappearance of the kind of lengthy *Adversus Manichaeos* treatises, by two authors.⁹¹ In addition, there are new reports by pagans criticising Manichaeism.⁹²

5.3 Defining Terms

In this section, I will give an account of the crucial terms and the critical concepts that I employ in the thesis.

East-Roman vs. Byzantine

For reasons that serve the analysis and the discussion, I will use alternatively both terms according to the specific context and time. Generally, I opt in favour of the terms Byzantine/Byzantium: (1) for sources or events that refer to Justinian's era and beyond, and (2) for references to persons, in order to distinguish between the citizens of the eastern and western parts of the empire. In the rest of the cases, I use the term 'East-Roman'.

For the remainder of the terms, I will define their content from both an *emic* and an *etic* perspective. For the *emic* discourse, it is important to attribute the meaning to the crucial terms that the writers themselves attributed to them.⁹³

Catholics, Catholic Church, Heretics, Heresy

Emic perspective

According to the sources, Catholics are the representatives of the official church, the Catholic. This was a constitutional institution of the Empire, identified with legality, since the decisions of Ecumenical Synods concerning dogma were embodied in state legislation. Heretics are all the others, and heresy constitutes anything opposed to the Catholic Church. Two kinds of heresies are discernible: the *old* (pre-Byzantine) and the *new*, such as Arianism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism.

Two further clarifications are considered necessary. In the first place, it is important to note that during the period under examination, Christian dogma had not yet been fully fixed, making the content of the word *Catholic* subject to continuous revision, clarification, and re-configuration. This mutability of the term *Catholic* concerns both its theological content, as well as the exponents of this content, namely the representatives of the Catholic Church. This means that depending on the time-period and location one could find representatives from the entire range of Christian parties in the bishoprics; there also were emperors who did not support what was later established as orthodoxy. So, the term 'Catholic' did not coincide with what we now call 'Orthodox' or 'Catholic' Church, but it included Arians, Monophysites etc., when they held positions of authority (locally or state-wide). Thus, from a Manichaean point of view, an Arian or a Monophysite bishop also was considered to be a *Catholic*.

⁸⁹ Nilus of Ankara, Macarius of Magnesia.

⁹⁰ See for example Cyril of Scythopolis, Eustathius the monk, Barsanuphius, Olympiodorus the deacon.

⁹¹ The one is Zacharias (later) bishop of Mytilene. To Zacharias is also attributed the composition of the *Seven Chapters* (abjuration formula). The other is John of Caesarea the theologian and cleric. According to the testimony of John of Caesarea in his *Adversus Manichaeos*, the Manichaeans, unlike the followers of Marcion, still existed in his time.

⁹² Simplicius, Asclepius of Tralles, Ammonius of Alexandria.

⁹³ Cf. Cameron 2003, 471-92. See also Cameron 2008, 102-14.

Secondly, the content of the word heresy was much broader than its contemporary meaning and included concepts such as: the wrong choice, the different religious choices (especially the rival ones), the intra-Christianity parties, and the different religions (pagans and Jews). In brief, as Young concludes, answering his question “Did Epiphanius know what he meant by Heresy?” for Epiphanius the word “heresy is false religion and includes all that is outside the unity of the one, holy, catholic and orthodox Church”.⁹⁴

Etic perspective

For the sake of clarity in the *etic* discourse of the study, I will employ the term *Catholic* only for the group that finally dominated the other parties. Additional reasons for this choice are: (1) this party gradually formed the majority group; (2) it had the support of the state for the longest period of time (between the fourth-sixth centuries); and (3) most of my primary sources were exponents of this party. There are alternative terms that I could have used, such as ‘Orthodox’, however the term orthodox, identified with the official church, appears later.⁹⁵

For the rest of the parties, the terms heresy, heretics, and schismatics, will be employed conventionally. I will also keep the distinction (made by the sources) between the *old* (pre-Byzantine) and the *new* heresies, but for the latter I will adopt the term *noble* heresies, employed by Mango and Goulliar. *Noble* heresies were the result of an advanced theological discussion. Their dogma is different from the Catholic position only in sophisticated notions concerning the nature and relationships of the persons in the Holy Trinity.⁹⁶

Recapitulating, the term *Catholic* from an *emic* perspective is identical to the official Church, while from an *etic* it is identified with one of the Christian parties (not always the official church). More details on the terms heresy and heretics will be given in ch.[4].

Manichaeism: as a religion

The question remains as to whether I would treat Manichaeism as a separate religious entity, or whether I would include Manichaeism within Christianity. The answer to this question depends on the clarification of the following interrelated and debated issues: a) the definition of the term *religion*, and b) the relationship between Manichaeism and Christianity, which in turn is linked with the question of the origins of Manichaeism.

Religion

Disagreeing with the trend in modern scholarship that it is anachronistic to use the term *religion* (ῥησκειᾶ) when referring to late antiquity (or earlier periods) because the concept is a modern one, in this study, I will use the word in the same sense we mean it today. While the word existed already since fifth century BCE (Herodotus, *Historiae* 2.37), in the primary sources used in this study the term *religion* is used systematically, indeed, most of the time with the modern meaning of the term.⁹⁷ Moreover, as has been proposed by many modern

⁹⁴ Young 1982, 202.

⁹⁵ See the relevant discussion in Pedersen 2004, 6.

⁹⁶ Mango 1980, 94, 103. Gouillard 1965, 299-324.

⁹⁷ The same view has been supported by Tolan 2014, 55-75, 58: “The concept of religion as we know it is in many ways a product of the fourth-and fifth-century Christian Roman Empire”. The aspect that the concept ‘religion’ is a modern idea/category and for this reason we should not use it to study the distant past is dominant in modern scholarship. However, the fact that possibly in some societies the term did not exist or existed, but its use was different to the contemporary, does not mean that in these societies there was no corresponding socio-cultural category. There is a gargantuan bibliography on the issue. Below, I present indicatively the arguments developed by scholars who raise the above question in the context of the study of Manichaeism. Pedersen 2004, 8-9 and 6: “Firstly, it must be underlined that in a strict sense it is anachronistic to claim that the Manichaeans consciously

scholars, Manichaeism is the first religion in the modern sense.⁹⁸ The contribution of Mani and the Manichaeans to the formation of the category *religion* as we understand it today is considered decisive.⁹⁹ I will return with more details regarding the use of the term *religion* during the period under investigation in ch.[4].

Manichaeism in relation to Christianity

Etic perspective (The question of the origin)

A hotly debated issue in the academic discourse, which still remains open, is the question of the origin of Manichaeism. Scholars have advanced several theories, some of them arguing for an Iranian/Zoroastrian origin, with others proposing a Christian and Judeo-Christian one.

understood themselves as constituting a new religion, for the good reason that the concept of religion is a modern one. But the significance of this observation must not be exaggerated, for if the Manichaeans distanced themselves from the Christians in their awareness of being an independent group with a different identity, it is obvious in a modern context to interpret this self-understanding as constituting a new 'religion'". BeDuhn 2015b, 247, 272: "Yet its etic character, imposed at times on cultures that do not themselves recognize a distinct 'religion' category, has been increasingly noted, often in connection with the idea that religion is a peculiarly modern, even modernist, idea. It is purely tautological, however, to say that the way we moderns use the term religion is a modern invention, informed by distinctive, historically conditioned shifts in discourse and social organization. That fact does not preclude the possibility of a pre-modern concept that anticipated the modern one by identifying the same socio-cultural entities we would place at the center of the modern category of religion".

⁹⁸ As de Jong (2008, 104-05) remarks: "What was new about Manichaeism was its designer status. When the prophet was executed by the king of the Iranians, on unknown charges, the foundations for the religion, including its canonical texts, most of its ritual life, its missionary strategy, and the structure of its organisation, had all been laid. The well-known list of ten aspects in which Manichaeism was superior to the religions that had existed before, preserved in Iranian and Western texts, makes this absolutely clear". According to Sala (2007, 56), "Perhaps for the first time in history an individual deliberately devised a 'world religion.' In no other religion before did the 'founder' play such an important role. It was Mani himself who established the three major pillars of his religion: a complex set of doctrines outlined in a series of books, a clear body of rituals and a fixed organizational structure". Yet, Sala also expresses some reservations about whether this was Mani's intention or was set at a later stage by his followers. As he states: "However, as we lack the original works of Mani, which unfortunately are extant only in a limited number of fragments, it is impossible to assert with confidence the self-conscious creation of Manichaeism as a 'world religion' by Mani himself. There remains the possibility that this image is a retro-projection of a more developed stage of Manichaeism after the demise of its 'founder'." Gardner (2010, 147 & 147 fn. 1), revising his previous theses, disagrees with the aspect that Mani designed and delivered an organized religion in the modern sense to his community (and that this was the first time in the history of religions). According to his theory (stratigraphy), the above reservation (expressed by Sala) is not just a possibility, but what had actually happened. As he argues: "Over the last century and more, new discoveries and trends of scholarship have rescued the study of Manichaeism from the polemic of heresy, and identified it as a major world religion in its own right. It has even been claimed that it was the first real religion in the modern sense, in that it was (supposedly) created with its doctrines, practices, scriptures and institutions all in place. [...] As will be apparent here, however, I do not now believe this. Mani was not really different from other supposed religious 'founders' (such as Jesus), in that he saw himself within an established tradition where he had an especial call to interpret and present the true way. It was his followers, and a peculiar trajectory of development, (which would in many ways have astonished its originator), that led to the carving out of a discrete identity called 'Manichaeism', (similarly) 'Christianity', and so on".

⁹⁹ BeDuhn 2015b, 247, 272: "In what follows, I argue that Mani and his early successors in third-century Iran produced such a concept, within which they included such recognizable entities as Christianity, Mazdayasnianism, Buddhism and Jainism, as well as their own Manichaean community, in an unusually rich environment of cultural interchange and comparative awareness presaging the conditions typically associated with the modern era. [...] Mani attests the historical development in his own time from the locally-rooted traditions of the past to the new conditions of inter-cultural proselytism [...] 272: Mani was able to theorize about this change of religious landscape, as part of his crystallization of the very concept 'religion'. The role Mani and the Manichaeans seem to have played in defining the new kind of social entity we call 'religion'".

Some consider Manichaeism as the last form of Christian Gnosis, some argue that there are strong influences from Buddhism and Jainism, whereas others harmonize the above views and argue that Manichaeism borrowed and contains elements from many different religious traditions without being considered as the conceptual product of any of them exclusively.¹⁰⁰

Although the question of the origin lies beyond the aim of the current research, I must, for methodological reasons, make clear how I am treating the term Manichaeism in this study.

In contrast to Pedersen,¹⁰¹ who includes Manichaeism into Christianity in his study, and agreeing with Klein,¹⁰² who considers such a broad definition of Christianity problematic, as well as in accordance with contemporary trends in Manichaean scholarship,¹⁰³ I will treat Manichaeism as an independent religious entity. I will avoid defining it as deriving in a clean lineage from any of the earlier religious traditions (Zoroastrianism, Christianity, etc.), although it shares many elements with them.

Emic perspective (Manichaeism in the context of Roman Empire)

The issue of an *ab-extra* and *ab-intra* definition of Manichaeism (Manichaean exonyms and autonyms) in the context of the Roman Empire is also a debated issue.

Van Oort, criticizing Klein's distinction between 'Christians' and the 'Manichaeans', argues that the Fathers of the Catholic Christian Church considered the Manichaeans to be Christian heretics and themselves as orthodox Christians, stressing that we must finally accept the terminology that both Catholic Christians and Manichaean Christians themselves used.¹⁰⁴ I should stress here that I disagree as to whether this was indeed their own terminology. I think that scholars make a generalization and simplify the facts from the sources by arguing

¹⁰⁰ Initially the (pre)dominant aspect was that Manichaeans were Persians, and Manichaeism was regarded as an Iranian religion. Exponents of a Persian origin of Manichaeism were Widengren and Reitzenstein. Later, through the study of the new texts (especially the *CMC*), the Iranian origin was reassessed. The trend in scholarship thenceforth was that the origins of Manichaeism were more Judeo-Christian than Persian. For the majority of researchers the publication of the Cologne Mani Codex (*CMC*) has supported Brown's thesis that Manichaeism was not an Iranian religion but a religion with Judaeo-Christian origins, developed in the Judaeo-Christian milieu and that the first Manichaean missionaries in the Roman Empire were of Aramaic culture, Syrians and not Iranians; a thesis that two centuries ago Beausobre had already supported. As Brown (1969, 97), with his fascinating way of writing, states: "the history of Manichaeism is integral with the one that flourished in the ground of the Fertile Crescent, namely Syriac. [...] Whenever we meet a Syrian, we may meet a Manichee". However, during the recent decades, an increasing number of scholars argue that both hypotheses, i.e. the Zoroastrian (Persian) or the Christian origin, are the two extremes. As de Jong (2008, 92) puts it, the aspect that Manichaeism is a debased Zoroastrian religion is as uncritical, as is the aspect that Manichaeism is a variety of Christianity. In early Manichaeism there are both Christian and other "elements that unquestionably belonged to the Sasanian context. One of them, without a doubt, was geography". The gravity of notions such as "prophet, holy book and cultic meal" is common in Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Manichaeism" (de Jong 2008, 105). For further discussion on the discourse of the origins of Manichaeism, cf. Gardner and Lieu 1996, 146-48; Reeves 1992; Stroumsa 2000, 612; Gardner and Lieu, 2004, 27-28; Pedersen 2004, 6; Sala 2007, 49; De Jong 2008, 104-05; Gardner 2010; BeDuhn 2015b, 274; Pettipiece 2015. Lieu 2017, 157-58; Gardner, BeDuhn, Dilley 2018, 3-4.

¹⁰¹ Pedersen 2004, 6-9, 6: "The subject of the present study, ancient Christianity, involves both Catholic Christianity and the so-called 'heresies' (*in casu* Manichaeism). I do not therefore regard it appropriate to describe the relationship between them in terms of 'Christianity' meeting 'a foreign religion'. [...] In the present study therefore the terms Christianity/Christian/Christians etc. are used broadly, and include Manichaeism".

¹⁰² Klein 2007, 115.

¹⁰³ Gardner, BeDuhn and Dilley 2018, 3-4. BeDuhn 2015b, 274: "In light of this comparative project Mani initiated, it may be possible for us to put behind us once and for all vain efforts to define an 'essential' Manichaeism, deriving in a clean line of descent from either a 'Christian' or 'Mazdayasnian' heritage, or any other insular 'religious' tradition". Lieu 2017, 157-58.

¹⁰⁴ Van Oort 1993, 201.

that Church Fathers considered Manichaeans as Christian heretics; however, this is the central question of ch.[4], where it will be examined thoroughly.

Lim also concludes that “we owe the sense of a distinctive Manichaean identity to the works of catholic/orthodox Christian writers”, and “that people whom we have grown accustomed to calling Manichaeans mainly represented themselves as Christians”.¹⁰⁵ However, the distinctiveness of the Manichaean identity is also highlighted in the writings of the other Christian denominations (heretics according to Catholics), as well as in pagan anti-Manichaean writings.¹⁰⁶

As far as the *ab-intra* self-definition of the Manichaeans themselves is concerned, the data from Manichaean sources seem contradictory. In some cases they are self-perceived as a religious community distinct from that of the Christians,¹⁰⁷ while in other cases they considered themselves as Christians and their communities as assemblies of saints (i.e. a church in the Christian sense).¹⁰⁸ In addition, there are testimonies from other religious environments, where Manichaeans present themselves as exemplary Muslims, Buddhists, etc.¹⁰⁹

In conclusion, regardless of the origin of Manichaeism, of the way Manichaeans identified themselves, of whether they expressed an alternative Christianity which the official church expelled, what is important for this study and is beyond doubt, is that Manichaeans for their contemporary Catholics, heretics, and pagans, constituted a distinctive religious group. It is on this distinctive religious group that this thesis focuses.

Manichaeism, Manichaeans as labels

Finally, a rather thorny methodological problem is the use of the term *Manichaean* as a term of abuse, which requires a critical inquiry into each separate case where the term appears in the texts. If we read these texts in their own terms, we could possibly differentiate between the literal or non-literal use of the term. In this direction, it might be useful to highlight the distinction made by the writers themselves, who use three different terms: *μανιχαῖος* (*Manichaean*), *μανιχαιόφρων*, and *μανιχαῖζων*. Neither the *μανιχαιόφρων*, nor the *μανιχαῖζων* are Manichaeans. *Μανιχαιόφρων* is the Manichaean-minded individual, while *μανιχαῖζων* is the person whose specific views or statements on specific issues sound as if he were a Manichaean. I will adopt this distinction as a heuristic tool for the *etic* discourse, although this is not an absolute criterion because the authors often use the above terms alternatively for the same person(s).

Constantly keeping in mind, throughout the whole thesis, the differentiated content of the terms, *μανιχαῖος*, *μανιχαιόφρων*, and *μανιχαῖζων*, I will examine the questions I raise in each chapter (according to the following outline), aiming to illuminate some aspects of the identity (religious and social) and life of Byzantine Manichaeans.

¹⁰⁵ Lim 2008, 147.

¹⁰⁶ The distinctiveness of Manichaean identity is not only due to the writings of Catholic-Orthodox authors but, as has been pointed out by Perczel (2004, 21) too, is also due to “the rich anti-Manichaean polemics by Christians of different confessions and also by the Neoplatonist Simplicius”.

¹⁰⁷ *1Keph.* 105: “Once again he speaks: Chris[tia]n people [...] call people who love him by hi[s name]; / and bestow his name [the name of Christ] upon their children and children’s [child] /ren. [...] people who love me are c[a]lled of my name!”.

¹⁰⁸ Coyle 2004, 218, 225; Stroumsa 1986b, 308; Gardner and Lieu 2004, 35. Pedersen 2004, 12, fn. 23: “documentary texts from Ismant el-Kharab can even be interpreted to mean that the Manichaeans in ancient Kellis referred to their own congregation as the “Holy Church” (TEKKAHCIA ETOYABE) in contrast to the “Catholic Church” (καθολική ἐκκλησία)”.

¹⁰⁹ Lieu 1981a, 1981b, 1986b, 1992 and 1998a; Stroumsa and Stroumsa 1988; Klein 2007. Liu 1998, 182.

6. Outline of the Structure and Research Questions

This thesis has been divided into eight themed chapters. Chapter one lays out the two basic textual traditions of Greek anti-Manichaean literature, which, apart from their significance for the study of Manichaeism in the Roman East, are particularly important for the question of the next chapter. Chapter two is entitled “The arrival and spread of Manichaeism in the Roman East” and examines the way anti-Manichaean authors show and represent the arrival and missionary efforts of Manichaeism in the Roman East. In particular, this chapter presents and compares the ‘equipment’ of the Manichaean mission (i.e. books, missionaries, methods and strategies), as recorded in each separate textual tradition. The third chapter, “The Manichaeans in Roman imperial legislation”, outlines the profile of the Manichaeans as it is depicted in the laws of the state. Initially, the position that the Manichaean question occupies in the laws is pointed out through a comparison between the attitude of the law towards Manichaeans and its attitude towards other religious groups in a series of themes (e.g. the way they are classified, the characterization of their crime, the inquisitorial and prosecuting mechanisms, the penalties inflicted, etc.). The remaining part of the chapter looks at what the laws reveal and how they may have affected Manichaean daily life. Chapter four, entitled “Classifying Manichaeism”, focuses on the question of the religious identity of Manichaeans by examining whether the Manichaeans were considered by their contemporaries as Christian heretics or not Christians at all (followers of a foreign religion). The approach of the survey takes into account the opinions of both Christian and pagan specialists on Manichaeism. Chapter five, “Manichaean beliefs and practices”, analyses the religious and social implications of Manichaean beliefs (dualism) on Manichaean everyday behaviour and practices, as conveyed to us by anti-Manichaean authors (both Christian and pagan). For a more comprehensive and reliable picture, the testimonies of Augustine and of the Manichaean sources on the relevant issues are also examined. An important research question examined in this chapter is the extent to which the Manichaean challenge influenced the thought of theologians of eastern Christianity (especially on the issue of theodicy). Chapter six, “Manichaeism in society”, questions why and to whom Manichaeism was appealing. Specifically, it attempts a sociological classification of the groups to which Manichaeism was appealing, taking into consideration the following parameters: religious profile, age, gender, and social status. The issue of the relationship between Manichaeans and other extreme Christian ascetics, a group to which Manichaeism was particularly attractive, constitutes a core issue of this chapter. Chapter seven consists of two main parts: the first explores whether Manichaean communities and churches existed, investigating the case of two major cities of the eastern part of the Empire, Jerusalem and Antioch. The second part focuses on those individuals labelled as Manichaeans by Greek anti-Manichaean authors and attempts to assess (where possible) whether they were real or imagined Manichaeans. The final chapter eight, “The dissolution of Manichaeism in the Roman East”, draws upon the findings of the entire thesis, and investigates the question of the disappearance of Manichaeans from the Eastern Roman Empire. In this context, after examining the prevailing aspect in scholarship that the extinction of Manichaeans was the result of vigorous persecutions, and taking into account the dimensions of the phenomenon of crypto-Manichaeism, the chapter proposes that infiltration into Christianity is an alternative option for the disappearance of Manichaeism. The latter scenario, I argue, is supported by inherent features of Manichaeism as well as by comparative evidence from other religious environments and relevant testimonies about Manichaeism in the early Islamic world and medieval China.

Apart from the questions that each individual chapter addresses, there are questions that permeate the entire thesis and re-emerge steadily in all the chapters. These are: (1) the issue of interdependence and common sources of the anti-Manichaean writings, (2) the question of “real and imagined Manichaeans”, (3) why Manichaeans were persecuted to such a degree, (4) the (trans)formation of the Manichaean identity during their confrontation with the official Christian Church, and also exactly because of this confrontation, and (5) the question of the silence of the sources (i.e. the fact that the Greek anti-Manichaean authors do not discuss a number of issues, concerning Manichaean organization, conduct and beliefs).