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

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Chapter 8: The Dissolution of Manichaeism in the Roman East

8.1 Introduction

The central question addressed in this chapter is how Manichaeism disappeared from the Roman East. Although, as far as I know, there has not been thorough research addressing this question, the prevailing opinion in scholarship up to recently is that the vigorous persecutions of the religion during the sixth century led to its extinction.¹ In the words of Lieu, “the Justinianic persecutions had probably reduced the Manichaeans to small pockets”.² Researchers are unanimous in thinking that “there was clearly no Manichaean danger in Byzantium after the sixth century”,³ and any references to Manichaeans thenceforth, do not pertain to real Manichaeans, but to later heretics like Paulicians and Bogomils, whom “Byzantine polemicists [...] regarded as Neo-Manichaeans”.⁴ Thus, later authors, such as John of Damascus, Peter the Higuomen, Peter of Sicily and Photius, are widely believed never to have been in contact with ‘real’ Manichaeans. Yet in their fight against Paulicians and Bogomils they combined information drawn from older anti-Manichaean literature with their knowledge about the new heretics, intending to “demonstrate the continuity of the Manichaean heresy”.⁵ Indeed, it is probable that thanks to this extensive use of the earlier anti-Manichaean work, much of it was preserved.⁶

In the same vein, according to many scholars, Justinianic laws “became fossilized” and were used by later Byzantine Emperors for the persecution of other heretics, especially Paulicians and Bogomils, “on whom the charge of Manichaeism could be more easily made to stick”.⁷

In this chapter I will examine an alternative, equally (if not more) likely scenario, according to which the cause of the disappearance of Manichaeism was not the violent extinction of the Manichaeans but their gradual dissolution into Christianity.⁸

¹ Lieu 1992, 215; Stroumsa and Stroumsa 1988, 56; Doniger 1999, 689-90; Skjaervø 2006a, 32: “Justinian continued persecuting Manicheans, and they apparently disappeared from Byzantium by the end of the 6th century. After this the term Manichean remained a disparaging name of any heretical sect that professed any degree of dualism or gnosticism”; Gardner and Lieu 2004, 111. About the importance of the question “how religions disappear” and the lack of any research studies addressing this question, see de Jong 2017, 646-664.

² Lieu 1994, 104 ; Lieu 1997, 233.

³ Stroumsa and Stroumsa 1988, 56. See also Lieu 1986b, 261; Lieu 2007, 294.

⁴ Lieu 1994, 137; Lieu 1992, 215-16.

⁵ Lieu 1994, 211; Garsoïan 1967/2011 and 1971; Stroumsa and Stroumsa 1988, 56; Lieu 1992, 216. See also Lieu 2007, 294; Klein 1991; Pedersen 2004, 67.

⁶ Lieu 1994, 159; Lieu 1997, 234. Pedersen 2004, 68. In his *Sacra Parallela*, John of Damascus used Titus quotations that have not been saved elsewhere in Greek. Cf. Klein 1991, 26 and Pedersen 2004, 115, 193 fn. 40, 293, 316, 351.

⁷ Lieu 1992, 216.

⁸ The discussion in this chapter builds on the main arguments of Matsangou 2017b and presents more evidence towards that direction. Similar ideas about the disappearance of Manichaeism have been expressed by de Jong 2017, 654-55.

8.2 Persecutions, Executions, and Conversions

The fact that Justinian's persecutions led to the disappearance of the Manichaeans in the Roman East mainly means two things: executions and forced conversions. Logically, both must have happened. It is well established that the fate of the Manichaeans during the reign of Justinian took a turn for the worse. Even if there would be some truth in the claim that the Manichaeans of Constantinople rejoiced and acquired a lot of boldness during Anastasius' reign, this clearly did not last very long, because with Justinian's decree the Manichaeans were ordered to disappear from the face of the Empire; they had no right to exist anywhere in Byzantine territory. Every Manichaean, "wherever on earth appearing", was "liable to extreme punishments".⁹ Manichaeans had to be identified and evicted from all the cities. Administrative and army officials were asked to detect their Manichaean colleagues and deliver them to the authorities. Anyone who demonstrably knew any Manichaeans and did not turn them in would be punished as a Manichaean, even though he was not one himself.¹⁰

So then, during Justinian's reign, executions and massive conversions from Manichaeism to Christianity, voluntary or forced, must have taken place. Procopius' account illustrates the whole atmosphere of Justinian's religious persecutions: "agents were sent everywhere to force any heretics they chanced upon to renounce the faith of their fathers".¹¹ Barsanuphius, a monk in a monastery in Gaza, speaks about Manichaeans who were baptized as Christians in an attempt to avoid persecution.¹²

However, caution is needed when data concerning persecution is interpreted as execution. Apparently, there must have been executions, but we have no direct evidence, either by Manichaean or anti-Manichaean sources, that allows us to assess on what scale they took place. As Averil Cameron argues, the question as to whether and how often "real persecution and in particular execution" took place in Byzantium, calls for further research.¹³ As shown previously, during the pre-Justinian era the laws were not implemented at least on a large scale. Persecutions had a rather occasional or local character and repressed Manichaeans mainly through financial measures and exile penalty.¹⁴ Evidently, under Justin and Justinian the persecutions were intensified. But did this mean mass executions? Malalas and Theophanes, the two well-known chronographers, give brief reports about the impact of the Justinianic laws on the persecuted Manichaeans. According to Malalas, "at that time many Manichaeans were punished (ἐτιμωρήθησαν) in every city. Among those punished was the wife of the senator Erythrius and other women as well".¹⁵ Justin, as Theophanes states, "carried out a great persecution of the Manichaeans and punished (ἐτιμωρήσατο) many".¹⁶ We note that both writers use the verb 'to punish' (τιμωρέω), which does not, however,

⁹ *CJ*. I.5.12.pr. (Coleman-Norton, 996); *CJ*. I.5.16.pr. (Coleman-Norton, 1006).

¹⁰ *CJ* 1.5.12.3, *CJ* 1.5.16.1. See Ch.[7], 7.3 and Ch.[3], 3.4.3

¹¹ Procopius, *Hist. Arcana* 11.21: Πολλοὶ δὲ εὐθύς πανταχόσε περιόντες δόξης τῆς πατρίου τοὺς παραπίπτοντας ἡνάγκαζον μεταβάλλεσθαι. Procopius here refers to all heretics; previously (11.14) he mentioned specifically the Montanists, the Sabbatians, and the Arians.

¹² Barsanuphius, *Ep.* 820.

¹³ Cameron 2003, 482. Cf. On the question whether Byzantium was a 'persecuting society' or a tolerant one, see Cameron 2007, 1-24.

¹⁴ Previous chapters, especially ch.[3]; Cf. Lieu 1992, 174.

¹⁵ Malalas, *Chron.* 17.21 (Jeffreys et al., 243): Ἐν δὲ τῷ αὐτῷ καιρῷ κατὰ πόλιν πολλοὶ ἐτιμωρήθησαν Μανιχαῖοι, ἐν οἷς ἐτιμωρήθη καὶ ἡ γυνὴ Ἐρυθρίου τοῦ συγκλητικοῦ καὶ ἄλλαι ἅμα αὐτῇ.

¹⁶ Theophanes, *Chron.* 177 (Mango and Scott, 260): ὁ δὲ εὐσεβὴς βασιλεὺς Ἰουστίνος [...] ἐποίησε δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς διωγμὸν μέγαν κατὰ Μανιχαίων καὶ ἐτιμωρήσατο πολλούς.

clearly determine the method of punishment. This can be interpreted as a punishment by *extreme penalties* (ταῖς ἐσχάταις τιμωρίαις), without this being the only possible interpretation. In addition, as already highlighted in ch.[3], the exact meaning of the terms *extreme penalties*, *ultimate sentence* and *capital punishment* is far from clear and does not necessarily mean the death penalty. These terms could also refer to other, particularly harsh, sentences that resemble death, such as forced labour in the mines, or deportation.¹⁷ The decision of the exact penalty up to the Justinianic era was within the jurisdiction of individual governors and judges. Later, as is reflected in the versions of the same laws in the *Basilica*, the type and the method of the punishment was determined by the law: decapitation (ἀποτεμνέσθω).¹⁸

Yet, even if the intention of the authorities was the physical extermination of all the Manichaeans in Roman territory, their identification would not have been an easy task. As is reflected in the Justinianic laws, due to persecutions the Manichaeans were no longer a discernible religious group. Justinian's agents were not asked to detect Manichaean assemblies, but those infiltrating into the institutions of the Empire.¹⁹

Lastly, an argument challenging the mass-execution scenario comes from the side of the persecuted Manichaeans who, as long as it was their choice, had two alternatives: either to choose the way of martyrdom (as the first Christians did), or to convert. The latter case seems more likely, if we accept as true the claim of anti-Manichaean authors that it was not a trait of Manichaeans to be sacrificed for their faith.

8.3 Manichaean Views on Martyrdom (According to anti-Manichaean Authors)

A frequently occurring accusation in anti-Manichaean literature (both Christian and pagan) is that of cowardice. The charge of cowardice was attributed by the opponents of Manichaeans to the Manichaean God (the *Father of Greatness*), to Mani, and to Manichaeans themselves.

The cowardice of the first principle

Archelaus, addressing Mani, criticizes the cowardice of the light principle, who built a wall in order to be isolated and protected from the evil principle, saying: "So if God, as you say, constructed the wall, he proves himself fearful and lacking in courage".²⁰ Simplicius' criticism is along similar lines: "What kinds of and how many blasphemies against God necessarily result from their teachings? For example, they describe him as a coward who dreaded the approach of evil to the borders lest it enters his domain".²¹ Commenting on another part of the Manichaean cosmogony, Epiphanius criticizes the weakness of the Manichaean God who, like

¹⁷ See Ch.[3], 3.4.3.

¹⁸ B 1.1.25: Ὁ Μανιχαῖος ἐν Ῥωμαϊκῷ τόπῳ διάγων ὀφθεῖς ἀποτεμνέσθω (= CJ 1.5.11). About *Basilica* see ch.[3], fn. 263. The need for a precise determination by the Law of the kind of the sentence and of the exact way the convict was executed was an innovation of the Isaurian *Eclogae*, and can be seen as a legislative reform aiming to limit the arbitrariness of local judges (Troianos 1997, 29).

¹⁹ Ch.[3], 3.4.2 & 3.4.3.

²⁰ AA 27.1-4 (Vermees, 79).

²¹ Simplicius, *Comm. Man. Epict.* 35.36-39 (Lieu 2010, 103): Οἷα δὲ καὶ ὅσα βλάσφημα εἰς τὸν θεὸν τοῖς ὑπ' ἐκείνων λεγομένοις ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἀκολουθεῖ; καὶ γὰρ δειλὸν εἰσάγουσιν αὐτὸν, δεδοικότες τὸ κακὸν ἐγγὺς τῶν ὄρων αὐτοῦ γενόμενον μὴ καὶ ἐντὸς εἰσέλθῃ.

a thief, could only think of one way to save the *Soul* from *Matter*, and that was to steal it secretly with the help of the luminaries.²²

The cowardice of Mani

One of the key features of Mani's portrait as outlined by the AA and its echo is his cowardice. Mani fled from the Persian prison by bribing the two guards; he ran away after he was defeated by Archelaus in the first and in the second debates.²³ Cyril gets very sarcastic when commenting on the claim of the fugitive Mani, who escaped before martyrdom rather than being sacrificed, to be called 'fighter for the truth' and a Paraclete. He compares his attitude towards martyrdom with that of Jesus and of other prophets of the OT.

And there was not only the shame of the prison, but also the flight from the prison; yea, he who said that he was the Paraclete, and the champion of Truth, fled. He was not a successor of Jesus, who readily came to the cross; he was the reverse, a runaway. Then the king of Persia ordered the keepers of the prison to be led off to capital punishment. [...] Ought he not to have followed Jesus, and said, *if you seek me, let these go their way* (John 18:8)? Ought he not to have said like Jonas, *take me, and cast me into the sea* (Jonah 1:12)?²⁴

Again he, who had fled from prison, flees from this place, too: and, having escaped his adversary, he comes to a very mean village; [...] Manes seeing his adversary [Archelaus] unexpectedly, rushed away and fled; and fled for the last time. For the guards of the king of Persia, being on the search, arrested the runaway [...].²⁵

The cowardice of the Manichaeans

Following the example of their God and of Mani, Titus of Bostra states that the Manichaeans regarded martyrdom for faith as an unnecessary sacrifice and an exaggeration; this was a very good reason for Titus not to consider them as Christians.

But the Manichaeans require no anointing for battles, since they regard virtue and vice as necessities of nature. Nor does Mani wish to see his followers persecuted to death [...] So the

²² Eriphanius, *Pan.* 66.56.8: ὅτι οὐκ ἰσχύει ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἀγαθὸς καὶ ζῶν καὶ δυνατὸς σῶσαι, οὐ λέγω τὴν ἑαυτοῦ δύναμιν τὴν ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἐσπασμένην, ἀλλὰ τὰ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ γεγεννημένα καὶ πεπλασμένα ἐὰν μὴ δι' ἄλλου τινὸς τρόπου ἢ διὰ ληστείας, κρυφῇ συλήσας τὴν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἀπεσπασμένην δύναμιν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐπουρανίων, ὡς ὁ ἀγύρτης οὗτος λέγει, οὐ δύναται [ἡμᾶς] σῶσαι.

²³ AA 65.7,9, (Vermes, 147): "Manes [...] escaped from the prison [...] having bribed the guards with a large sum of gold [...] The guard of the prison who had let him escape was punished"; Lieu in Vermes 2001, 6-7: "But Mani, forewarned in a dream of the King's intentions, bribed one of the guards and fled to Castellum Arabionis [...] the prison guards were executed because of his flight' Mani fled from the threatening crowd to a village". Cyril, *Catech.* 6.30: κατέκρινε καὶ διὰ τὸν τῶν δεσμοφυλάκων φόνον. AA 43.1 ("run away"), 43.3, (Vermes, 111): "So next, after Manes had fled, he was nowhere to be seen"; AA 66.1-2, (Vermes, 148): "[...] but finding him nowhere had departed, as he was then engaged in flight. 2. So when Archelaus had revealed the story as related, at once Manes launched into flight and succeeded in escaping, while no one pursued him".

²⁴ Cyril, *Catech.* 6.26.5-15 (LFHCC, 2:73): Καὶ οὐκ ἦν γε αἰσχύνῃ τῆς φυλακῆς μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ ἐκ τῆς φυλακῆς φυγὴ. Ὁ γὰρ λέγων ἑαυτὸν Παράκλητον καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας ἀγωνιστὴν, ἔφευγεν. Οὐκ ἦν διάδοχος Ἰησοῦ τοῦ τοιούτου ἐρχομένου εἰς τὸν σταυρόν· ἀλλ' οὗτος ἐναντίος ἦν, φυγὰς. [...] Οὐκ ἔδει μιμησασθαι Ἰησοῦν καὶ εἰπεῖν, Εἰ ἐμὲ ζητεῖτε, ἄφετε τούτους ὑπάγειν; Οὐκ ἔδει κατὰ τὸν Ἰωάννην εἰπεῖν, Ἄρατέ με καὶ βάλλετε εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν· δι' ἐμὲ γὰρ ὁ κλύδων οὗτος; Peter of Sicily, *Hist. ref. Man.* 55-56.

²⁵ Cyril, *Catech.* 6.30.2-15 (LFHCC, 2:75, modified): Φεύγει πάλιν καὶ ἐντεῦθεν, ὁ ἐκ τῆς φυλακῆς φυγὼν· καὶ τὸν ἀνταγωνιστὴν διαδράς, ἔρχεται ἐπὶ κώμην εὐτελεστάτην, [...] Ὁ δὲ Μάνης ἰδὼν ἐξαίφνης τὸν ἀντίδικον, ἐξεπήδησε καὶ ἔφυγεν· ἔφυγε δὲ τὴν τελευταίαν φυγὴν. Οἱ γὰρ τοῦ τῶν Περσῶν βασιλέως ὑπάσπισταί πανταχοῦ διερευνώμενοι, καταλαμβάνουσι τὸν φυγάδα·

Manichaeans are not anointed for battle and therefore do not have the right to the name of Christ.²⁶

Titus ends his fourth book with Christ's promise "that the Church will be spread throughout the world", aiming to highlight the contribution of the Christians martyrs to that very end: "Where the gates to martyrdom and confession are, there the Church of Christ is also manifest, but those who believe that martyrdom is superfluous are foreign to Christ and His Church".²⁷

A brief but revealing testimony of both the presumed Manichaean cowardice and of the equally presumed secretive character of the movement is that of Gregory of Nazianzus. In a canonical letter he sent from Arianus (381/2) speaking about the inner cycle of Apollinarians initiated into the secrets of their sect, Gregory compares them to the Elect Manichaeans who in their secret meetings did not hesitate to support their beliefs, whereas when interrogated and pressed confessed the Christian teachings, but distorted their meaning.²⁸

The alleged Manichaean cowardice when facing danger is best illustrated in the debate between the Manichaean teacher Photinus and the Christian Paul, the Persian. At the instigation of the Christian: "prove that it is the way you say it is" the Manichaean responds: "I am in bonds, so I am not able to do it". The Christian insists and when pressed a second time the Manichaean explains why he cannot speak: "When I have the support of the authorities I converse. But now that I have no support from anywhere, I have to remain silent".²⁹ This answer of the Manichaean gave his Christian opponent the opportunity to compare his stance with that of Paul, which created great difficulty for the Manichaean:

Christian: The Manichaean teachers do suffer for the sake of truth. Or do you say something different?

Manichaean: For the sake of truth, I reckon.

Christian: Did the blessed apostle Paul have the support of the rulers when he was in bonds, or else, since he did not have it, did he neglect his teaching for being captive?

The Manichaean remained silent; he did not answer but feigned a sudden illness.

That Manichaeans preferred to save their lives rather than confess their faith before danger appears to be legitimized by Mani himself in later sources. According to the *LAF*, the last anathema that the converted Manichaean had to recite and sign was as follows:

Anathema to those who never speak the truth under oath but always lie on purpose and swear falsely, conforming to the teaching of the thrice-accursed Mani who says: 'I am not without compassion like Christ, nor do I deny him who has denied me before men and has also lied for his own safety and I shall receive back with joy him who denied his faith through fear'.³⁰

²⁶ Titus of Bostra, c. *Manichaeos* 4.10-11 (CCT 21, 391-92) summarized in Pedersen 2004, 51.

²⁷ Titus of Bostra, c. *Manichaeos* 4.114 in Pedersen 2004, 64-65.

²⁸ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epistulae theologicae* (ep. 102): Οὔτοι γὰρ ἡνίκα μὲν ἂν τοῖς γνησίοις αὐτῶν μαθηταῖς καὶ μύσταις τῶν ἀπορρήτων θεολογῶσιν, ὥσπερ οἱ Μανιχαῖοι τοῖς ἐκλεκτοῖς λεγομένοις, ὅλην τὴν νόσον αὐτῶν ἐκκαλύπτοντες, μόλις καὶ τὴν σάρκα τῷ Σωτῆρι διδῶσιν. Ὅταν δὲ ταῖς κοιναῖς ὑπολήψει περὶ τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως ἥ ἡ Γραφή παρίστησιν ἐλέγχωνται καὶ πιέζωνται, τὰς μὲν εὐσεβεῖς λέξεις ὁμολογοῦσι, περὶ δὲ τὸν νοῦν κακουργοῦσιν. Gregory's letter is quoted by Euthymius Zigabenus in his *Panoplia* 14.884.

²⁹ *Disputationes Photini Manichaei cum Paulo Christiano* (PG 88:530-578, 533-36). See ch.[7], 7.3; Lieu 1994, 220.

³⁰ *LAF* (PG 1:1469C-D.226-234, Adam 1969, 103; trans. Lieu 1994, 298 & Lieu 2010, 142-43): Ἀνάθεμα τοῖς μηδέποτε δι' ὄρκου ἀληθεύουσιν ἀλλ' ἐξепίτηδες αἰεὶ ψευδομένοις καὶ ἐπιπορκοῦσι κατὰ τὴν τοῦ τρικατάρτου Μάνεντος διδασκαλίαν οὕτω λέγοντος. Οὐκ εἰμὶ ἀσπλαγχνος ὥσπερ ὁ Χριστὸς οὐδέ ἀρνήσομαι τὸν ἀρνησάμενόν με ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν ψευδόμενον τὴν οἰκείαν σωτηρίαν καὶ τὸν διὰ φόβον ἀρνούμενον τὴν ἰδίαν πίστιν μετὰ χαρᾶς προσδέξομαι. The same information is provided by Photius and Peter Higuem. Photius, c. *Manichaeos* 24 (p. 127.24-25): καίτοιγε τοῦ διδασκάλου αὐτῶν Μάνεντος διαπρυσίως

Because the above anathema (1) is the last of the ten anathemas which were directed against Paulicians and (2) does not exist in the two earlier abjuration formulas (*SC* and *SAF* which concerned solely Manichaeans), modern scholars have considered it to be either a slander, or as targeting Paulicians only.³¹ Yet, some counter-arguments can be made that cast some doubt on the conviction with which they have come to this conclusion.

Concerning the former (1), it has to be noted, that, this particular anathema is the last one (37th) of the whole *LAF*; it is immediately followed by the final statement of sincere conversion that also exists in the *SC*.

If I, so and so, do not believe or say these things with my whole soul, but have made these preceding anathemas hypocritically, let the anathema be on me and condemnation in the present age and in the age to come and may my soul be condemned and made to perish and perpetually be punished in hell.³²

Thus, thematically, the correct place of the anathema is here. After the anathematization of perjury (pseudo-conversion), follows the promise and commitment of a sincere conversion. The fact that the anathemas from the twenty-seventh onwards concerned Paulicians, does not exclude the probability that the concluding anathema concerns both Manichaeans and Paulicians.

Concerning the latter (2), as noted in ch.[2], the use of anathemas was sacramental and took place in an actual situation, during the conversion of real Manichaeans, at a specific place and time. Hence, it was almost necessarily the case that there existed different contemporary versions of the *AFs*, which could explain the differences between the *SC* and *SAF*. Thus, the fact that the *SC* and *SAF* did not record the specific anathema does not mean that it did not exist in any other contemporary *AF*.³³

In addition, there is some evidence to suggest that the anathema in question could have been addressed also against Manichaeans. (1) As said, hints concerning the presumed Manichaean cowardice that led to the avoidance of martyrdom existed much earlier. In particular, the specific anathema echoes Titus' saying "Nor does Mani wish to see his followers persecuted to death".³⁴ (2) Similar accusations (perjury and pseudo-conversion) were also laid against the Messalians, one of the ascetic groups with which Manichaeans had common spirituality and shared many features. Of particular interest is the information that for Messalians too, "the permission to perjure and anathematize" their own religion before

αὐτοῖς ἐμβοῶντος καὶ λέγοντος ὡς· 'Οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐγὼ ἀσπλαγχνος ὡς ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ εἰπών· "Ὅστις με ἀρνήσεται ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἀρνήσομαι αὐτὸν καὶ ἐγώ' [...]; Petrus Hegumenus, *Paulicianorum historia brevis* 18: Οὕτως γὰρ αὐτοῖς ὁ Μάνης παρέδωκεν ὅτι· 'Οὐκ εἰμὶ ἐγὼ ἀσπλαγχνος, φησὶν, ὡς ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ εἰπών· 'Ὅστις με ἀρνήσεται ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἀρνήσομαι αὐτὸν καὶ ἐγώ' [...]. About the relationship of Petrus Hegumenus with Peter of Sicily, see Garsoïan 1967/2011, 49. Other later authors reproducing the same saying/logion attributed to Mani are: Georgius Cedrenus, *hist. compend.* 2.13 (Bekker 1:760) and Euthymius Zigabenus, *Panoplia* 24.1196. Cf. Lieu 1994, 225.

³¹ As Lieu (1994, 225) states, "More important for the historian of Byzantine Manichaeism is that the new text [*SC*] proves beyond doubt that the second half of the *Long Formula* (viz. Anathemas 27 onwards) deals exclusively with Paulicianism. Even the condemnations of the Manichaean proclivity to undergo false conversion to Catholicism on the advice of Mani himself [...] which some historians have regarded as genuinely pertaining to the Manichaeans must now be seen as Byzantine polemics against Paulicians". Cf. Ch.[1] 1.3.

³² *LAF* (PG 1: 1469D, Lieu 2010, 143): ἐάν δε μὴ ἐξ ὅλης ψυχῆς ταῦτα φρονῶ, καὶ λέγω ἐγὼ ὁ δεῖνα, ἀλλὰ μεθ' ὑποκρίσεως ἐποίησα τοὺς προκειμένους ἀναθεματισμοὺς, ἀνάθεμά μοι εἴη καὶ κατάθεμα, ἐν τε τῷ νῦν αἰῶνι καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι, καὶ κατακριθεῖη καὶ ἀπόλοιτο ἡ ψυχὴ μου καὶ διηνεκῶς ταρταρωθεῖη.

³³ See ch.[2], 2.3.6 & 2.8.

³⁴ Titus of Bostra, c. *Manichaeos* 4.11 in Pedersen 2004, 51.

danger was [...] “bestowed upon them by [...] their teachers”.³⁵ (3) It may also be relevant that Donatists, in their polemic, put in the same basket Manichaeans and Catholics who accepted the *lapsi*, whom they considered *traditores*.³⁶ (4) Interestingly, among his arguments against Manichaean Docetism, Epiphanius states “if we were bought with the precious blood of Christ (1 Cor 6:20), you are not one of the purchased, oh Mani, for you deny the blood”.³⁷ With these words, Epiphanius obviously targets the docetic views of Mani, which annulled Christ’s sacrifice, but he may have hinted simultaneously at Mani’s more general stance towards martyrdom. (5) Finally, regardless of whether the Manichaeans renounce and anathematize their faith on the advice of Mani, what matters is that this attitude towards danger seems to be confirmed by Manichaean sources too (as will be seen below in section 8.7).

8.4 On the Converted Manichaeans: Sincere and False Conversions

In this section I will focus on the second, more probable scenario for the persecuted Manichaeans: conversion.

As we saw in chapter [4], and as is reflected in the canons, the procedure for the reception into the Church of converted Manichaeans was the most strict and time-consuming.³⁸ Summarizing it in two words, the converted Manichaeans were received ‘as pagans’ (ὡς Ἑλλήνες). In the present section, I will examine the whole procedure in detail. In this regard, apart from the canons discussed in ch.[4],³⁹ a text entitled *Ritual to be observed by those who are converted from among the Manichaeans to the pure and true faith of our Lord Jesus Christ (RCM)* is illuminating.⁴⁰ This text records the whole procedure with the words of the prayers in detail.

In brief, the stages of the ritual were as follows: Before the beginning of the procedure, the convert had to follow a preparatory programme with fasting and prayers. The first day, in the words of the canons: “we make them into Christians” (ποιοῦμεν αὐτοὺς χριστιανούς).⁴¹ To do this, the ex-Manichaean had, first, to anathematize Mani and Manichaeism, by means of an abjuration formula, “in the presence” of “as many other believers as wish to attend” the ritual. If the convert did not speak Greek, the anathema was pronounced through an interpreter. If the convert was a child, the anathema was said by his godparent. The priest then recited a prayer over him and after the ‘amen’ the former Manichaean was counted as a Christian, like the un-baptized children. The second day the convert was registered in the lists of the Christian catechumens. The third day an exorcism was performed: the priest breathed three times on his face and ears pronouncing the prayers of exorcism. The next step was to remain in the class of catechumens for as long as necessary until his mentor considered that he was worthy to be baptized. During this stage, the Christian catechumen, former-

³⁵ See ch.[6], 6.3.2.

³⁶ Cf. Frend 1976, 860-66.

³⁷ Epiphanius, *Pan.* 66.79.3 (Williams 2013, 306): καὶ πῶς ἠγόρασεν ἡμᾶς, εὐθύς ἐπιφέρει ὁ διδάσκαλος τῆς ἐκκλησίας φάσκων ὅτι ‘τμῆς ἠγοράσθητε’, ‘τμῷ αἵματι ἁμνοῦ ἀώμου καὶ ἀσπίλου Χριστοῦ’. εἰ τοῖνυν τῷ αἵματι ἠγοράσθημεν, οὐχ ὑπάρχεις τῶν ἠγορασμένων, ὦ Μάνη, ἐπειδὴ τὸ αἷμα ἀρνήσαι.

³⁸ See the seventh canon of the second Ecumenical Council (381), the 95th canon of Quinisext Council (692), and the canons of Basil and Gregory.

³⁹ Ch.[4], 4.2.1.

⁴⁰ *RCM* (PG 100:1324c-25c, Goar 700-01): Τάξις γινομένη ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀπὸ Μανιχαίων ἐπιστρέφουσι πρὸς τὴν καθαρὰν καὶ ἀληθινὴν πίστιν ἡμῶν τῶν Χριστιανῶν. For an English translation see Lieu 1994, 304-305.

⁴¹ Joannou 1962, 1a:54 and 232 (seventh and 95th canons).

Manichaeans, attended the catecheses, in order to be instructed in the Christian faith and Scriptures.⁴²

Thus, a prerequisite for the admission of the converted Manichaeans into the Church (in the class of believers) was their baptism, which, according to the canons, should take place after a long period during which they were instructed in the Christian teachings. Although the long period that this stage lasted is emphasized strongly (*χρονίζει*), its duration was not fixed by the canons. Presumably, it was left to the discretion of the cleric who was in charge of training the converts.

However, as early as the time of the First Council of Constantinople (381), there was a relevant instruction in Gregory of Nyssa's canonical letter (383/390) to Letoius, the bishop of Melitene. According to Gregory, the one who voluntarily apostatizes to Judaism or paganism or Manichaeism or any other similar kind of atheism and then reverts to the faith has to remain at the stage of penance for the rest of his life. He is neither allowed to participate in the mysteries of the Church with the believers, nor to receive the Holy Communion, unless it is at the moment of his death. If he would unexpectedly survive, he would once again be under the punishment of excommunication. Gregory accepts a shorter period of penitence only for those who were forced to apostatize by violence.⁴³ Thus, Gregory's canon seems to add a new category of converted, that of the apostates to atheism, namely, to Judaism, paganism and Manichaeism for whom the last stage of their conversion will end with the end of their life.

Summarizing the above: the converted Manichaeans, in order to be received into the Church as Christian believers (to participate in sacraments and communion), had to be baptized and their baptism would take place after a long period of training in Christian teachings. The Christian apostates to Manichaeism, who returned, constituted a separate category of converts (penitents), with a status analogous to that of the catechumens; yet, their stay on the margins of ritual life should last until the end of their life.

Observing the examined texts, it is noteworthy that both the church canons and *RCM*, just as the laws of the state (in their majority), do not discriminate between catechumens and Elect Manichaeans. It seems that both classes had the same treatment. The procedures for the converted Manichaeans, whether Elect or catechumens, were the same. The only text in

⁴² *RCM* (PG 100:1324c-25c, Goar 701): καὶ οὕτω πάλιν κατηχούμενος, εἴτ' οὖν διδασκόμενος χρονίζει εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, καὶ ἀκροᾷται τῶν γραφῶν. εἴτα τελουμένων πάντων τῶν ἐπὶ τῷ βαπτίσματι νενομισμένων, ἀξιοῦται τῆς θείας γεννήσεως.

⁴³ Gregory of Nyssa, *Ep. Letoium* 225: Τούτων τοίνυν κατὰ τὸν εἰρημένον διακριθέντων τρόπον, ὅσα μὲν ἀμαρτήματα τοῦ λογιστικοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς ἄπτεται μέρους, χαλεπώτερα παρὰ τῶν Πατέρων ἐκρίθη, καὶ μείζονος καὶ διαρκεστέρας καὶ ἐπιπονυτέρας τῆς ἐπιστροφῆς ἄξια· οἷον εἴ τις ἠνέησато τὴν εἰς Χριστὸν πίστιν, ἢ πρὸς Ἰουδαϊσμόν, ἢ πρὸς εἰδωλολατρείαν, ἢ πρὸς Μανιχαϊσμόν, ἢ πρὸς ἄλλο τι τοιοῦτον ἀθείας εἶδος αὐτομολήσας ἐφάνη, ὁ μὲν ἐκουσίως ἐπὶ τὸ τοιοῦτον ὀρμήσας κακὸν, εἴτα καταγνοῦς ἑαυτοῦ, χρόνον τὸν τῆς μετανοίας ἔχει, ὅλον τὸν τῆς ζωῆς αὐτοῦ. Οὐδέποτε γὰρ μυστικῆς ἐπιτελουμένης εὐχῆς, μετὰ τοῦ λαοῦ προσκυνῆσαι τὸν Θεὸν καταξιοῦται, ἀλλὰ καταμόνας μὲν εὕξεται· τῆς δὲ κοινωνίας τῶν ἁγιασμάτων καθόλου ἀλλότριος ἔσται· ἐν δὲ τῇ ὥρᾳ τῆς ἐξόδου αὐτοῦ, τότε τῆς τοῦ ἁγιάσματος μερίδος ἀξιωθήσεται. Εἰ δὲ συμβαίῃ παρ' ἐλπίδας ζῆσαι αὐτὸν, πάλιν ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ κρίματι διαβιώσεται, ἀμέτοχος τῶν μυστικῶν ἁγιασμάτων μέχρι τῆς ἐξόδου γινόμενος. Exception for those who were forced by violence to apostatize: Οἱ δὲ βασάνοις καὶ τιμωρίαις χαλεπαῖς αἰκισθέντες, ἐν ῥῆτῳ χρόνῳ ἐπετιμήθησαν, οὕτω τῶν ἁγίων Πατέρων φιланθρωπία ἐπ' αὐτῶν χρησαμένων, ὡς οὐχὶ ψυχῆς γεγεννημένης ἐν πτώματι, ἀλλὰ τῆς σωματικῆς ἀσθενείας πρὸς τὰς αἰκίας οὐκ ἀντισχούσης. Διὸ τῷ μέτρῳ τῶν ἐν πορνείᾳ πλημμελῶσάντων, καὶ ἡ βεβιασμένη τε καὶ ἐπώδυνος παράβασις ἐν τῇ ἐπιστροφῇ συνεμετρήθη. For an English translation, see Silvas 2007, 211-25, 225. Cf. Lieu 1992, 146-47. See also Ch.[4], 4.2.1, fn. 95.

which such a distinction exists comes from the western part of the Empire and is the *Commonitorium Sancti Augustini* (*Comm. Aug.*).⁴⁴

According to the *Comm. Aug.*, after the converted Manichaean had anathematized Manichaeism and had “handed over a written statement of his confession and his repentance”, he was given a (protective) letter by the bishop, certifying his conversion on the specific day and year, in order not to be considered guilty for his past, “either from state-laws or from Church discipline”. This procedure was followed if the convert was a hearer. Of course, in case he would relapse, he would immediately be subjected to the punishments of the law and would be socially isolated from other Christians. In case the convert was an Elect, things were not so simple. While the hearers received the protective letter immediately (at the end of the ritual of the first day),⁴⁵ the Elect had to wait until the end of the instruction period, even if they had confessed, or even if they had anathematized Mani according to the abjuration formula. Moreover, as we are informed by the *Comm. Aug.*, the Elect during this process were subject to a kind of confinement, and had to remain either in a monastery or in a *xenodochium* under the supervision of a cleric or a layman, until it was sure that they had truly converted. Then and only then could they receive the protective letter and be baptized.⁴⁶

The procedure as described in the *Comm. Aug.* does not differ from the one presented by the eastern canons, in that both classes (Elect and hearers) of converted Manichaeans have to be baptized in order to be received into the class of faithful Christians, and in that this (baptism) should take place after sufficient time to ensure their conversion.⁴⁷ So, where they are really different is that the Latin text provides some additionally illuminating information concerning when the protective letter was given to them, and the confinement of the Elect during their instruction period. Otherwise, both Elect and hearers, at the end of the stage of catechesis had to be baptized.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ *Comm. Aug.*, in Lieu 1994, 301-303.

⁴⁵ This can be inferred from a combination of the information in the canons, the *RCM*, and the *Comm. Aug.*

⁴⁶ I quote from *Comm. Aug.* (in Lieu 1994, 303) concerning the protective letter: (1) “Since you repent that you were a Hearer of the Manichaeans, as you, yourself have confessed, anathematizing their blasphemies [...] you shall have this letter [...] (2) The letter however must not be given readily to their Elect who say they have been converted to the Catholic faith, even if they themselves have anathematized the same heresy according to the above formula, but they must remain [...] in a monastery or a guest-house for strangers, until it appears that they are completely free of that superstition [...] And, when they have received the letter, let them not move quickly elsewhere and heedless in themselves on account of the same document. They must be questioned if they know of any [other Manichaeans] so that they also may themselves be healed and thus be admitted to [the Catholic Church]”.

⁴⁷ I quote from *Comm. Aug.* (in Lieu 1994, 301, 303) concerning baptism: (1) In the case the converted was a hearer: “When they have anathematized the same heresy [...] [and] handed over a written statement of his confession and his repentance, seeking a place in the church either of catechumen or penitent [...] the bishop give him a letter [...] And let them not be accepted readily for baptism if they are catechumens, nor for reconciliation if they have received the position of penitence, except under pressure of the danger of death, or if the bishop should learn that they have been approved for some considerable time, by the evidence of those to whom they were entrusted”. (2) In the case the converted was an Elect: “Elect who say they have been converted to the Catholic faith, even if they themselves have anathematized the same heresy according to the above formula [...] must remain with the servants of God, either clerics or laity, in a monastery or a guest-house for strangers (xenodochium), until it appears that they are completely free of that superstition itself. And then either let them be baptized, if they have not been baptized, or let them be reconciled, if they have received the status of penitence”.

⁴⁸ The above interpretation is different from the one of Lieu. As Lieu (1994, 212) argues: “It is interesting to note that in the procedure for admission given in the postscript to the *Commonitorium Sancti Augustini*, only the Elect, i.e. the priests, among the Manichaeans were required to be baptised before being received into the church. The Hearers would be given the protective *epistula* once they had abjured their former beliefs. This

So, the Greek texts actually do not differ from the *Comm. Aug.* The fact that the protective letter is not mentioned in the canons can be explained in two ways: either the custom did not exist in the East, or—perhaps more likely—since the custom mainly concerned the relationship of the convert to the State, those who drew up the church canons did not consider it necessary to include this particular aspect of the procedure.

In any case, the description of the whole process, especially the information for the protective letter just after the anathema, fits and complements what is known from the legislation. According to the law of 407 (*decrees of philanthropy*) as soon as the Manichaeans had accepted “the Catholic faith and rite” “by a simple confession” and “by a simple religious ceremony”, it was decreed that they “should be absolved from all guilt”.⁴⁹ A simple confession would suffice for the annulment of their penalties. Thus, once the converted hearer confessed the official faith and anathematized Manichaeism, he was named as Christian and was given the protective *epistula*, which stopped any subsequent prosecution by the law and annulled previously inflicted penalties. Afterwards, he could stay in the class of catechumens even for the rest of his life. For the converted Elect, on the other hand, persecution did not stop immediately after the anathematization and confession, since they had to wait a long time until they got the protective letter. However, the fact that they were in a mandatory restriction in the monasteries was also a kind of protection (asylum). It is noteworthy that this practice, which was a type of exile very frequent in Byzantine law, could have resulted into the infiltration of Manichaeism into monasticism. As seen in the case of Messalianism, the confinement of the suspected Messalians into monasteries was forbidden by the decision of the Council of Ephesus in 431 for that same reason (i.e. fear of Messalianism’s spread among the monks).⁵⁰

What has been pointed out from the above analysis is that it was one thing to be named Christian (which meant catechumen), and quite another to become a (faithful) Christian and member of the Church. In order to become members of the Church and participate in the mysteries, the converted Manichaeans had to be baptized. It has also been emphasized that the procedure to be baptized took a long time and that a converted Manichaean could remain in the class of catechumens for many years, even (in the case of apostasy and reconversion) for his entire life. So, it is not unreasonable to assume that many converts from Manichaeism were not baptized and remained Christian catechumens. If this was the case, however, the question in the Hippodrome “are you baptized in the one” could acquire an additional interpretation.⁵¹ The testimony of Olympiodorus, a deacon in Alexandria in the sixth century, that the Manichaeans do not receive the baptism (as Greeks and Jews too), could be an indication that the majority of converted Manichaeans did not proceed to the last stage of their conversion; they did not get baptized.⁵² Supporting the latter hypothesis

distinction was not made by Timothy, which seems to suggest that, in the Byzantine period, a Manichaean was considered as someone tainted by ‘Manichaean’ ideas rather than as a participant in a sect which observed a strict hierarchy of Elect and Hearer”.

⁴⁹ *CTh.* 16.5.41 (407) (Coleman-Norton, 504). As *RCM* states, the first day, the Manichaean converts “anathematize Mani and Manichaeism [...] in the presence of ‘as many other believers as wish to attend’ the ritual”. Cf. *Ch.*[3], 3.3.5.

⁵⁰ *ACO (Ephesenum anno 431)*, 1.1.7, 117-118.

⁵¹ Cf. *Ch.*[6], 6.5.2.

⁵² Olympiodorus, *Comm. Job.* 366: τοῦτο δὲ ἔστιν ἀκοῦσαι καὶ τῶν ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ ἐνεργουμένων Ἑλλήνων τε καὶ Ἰουδαίων καὶ τῶν ἀνόμων Μανιχαίων οὐ προσδεχομένων τὴν διὰ τοῦ Ἰορδάνου ἀπολύτρωσιν. οὐ γὰρ βαπτίζονται Μανιχαῖοι ἀνάξιοι τυγχάνοντες. A practice that was not unusual at that time. Indeed, the law *CTh*

is also the testimony of Barsanuphius who is particularly severe with some careless priests who ignored the canons and baptized persecuted Manichaeans without first ensuring that they have truly converted. He reminds them that in the case of Manichaeans the whole procedure has to be long-lasting.⁵³

With the passage of time, the conversions logically increased due to the persecutions and the Christianization of the empire. The era favoured the Christians. The stigma of *infamia* (forfeiture of the status of *civis Romanus*) which was inflicted upon Manichaeans already from the early 380s had very real consequences in their everyday life, such as depriving them of the right to make a will or to inherit, and many other legal disabilities. The price of being openly Manichaean was too high.⁵⁴ Thus, the option of conversion must have been gradually more and more attractive; especially during Justinian's time it was the only option, because of the threat of capital punishment. We hear of similar dilemmas also among the followers of other persecuted religious groups, like the Samaritans, the Jews, and the pagans. According to Procopius, when Justinian issued a law against the Samaritans, many of them, "regarding it as a foolish thing to undergo any suffering in defence of a senseless dogma, adopted the name of Christians" in order to shake off "the danger arising from the law". Some of them, as Procopius says, once they had adopted this religion, decided to remain faithful to it. However, the majority, because they had been converted "not by their own free choice, but under compulsion of the law [...] instantly slipped away".⁵⁵ As in the case of the Samaritans so in that of the Manichaeans: some of their conversions would have been sincere and others made in pretence.⁵⁶

A question arising at this point is: What were the practical implications for the converted Manichaeans in case they had (or opted) to stay as Christian catechumens for the whole of their life? I will investigate this question for the above two cases.

16.8.23 commanded the governors of the provinces, when they realized that any Jews were converted to Christianity for reasons of interest (i.e. not to be persecuted), to allow them to return to their faith.

⁵³ Barsanuphius, *Ep.* 820.: Διὰ τοὺς ὁμολογουμένους μανιχαίους, ὀφείλεις γράψαι ὡς κωλύων καὶ δηλῶν τοῖς θέλουσιν αὐτοὺς βαπτίσαι, ὅτι τοιοῦτοί εἰσι, καὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐστὶ τὸ βαπτίσαι αὐτοὺς ἢ μὴ βαπτίσαι, οὐ πάντες γὰρ ὡς δεῖ προσέχουσι τοῖς πράγμασι. Καὶ οὐκ οἶδασιν ὅτι πολλῆς σπουδῆς καὶ μακροῦ χρόνου, καὶ ἀκροάσεως θείων λογίων καὶ κατηχήσεως ὁσίων ιερῶν ἐπιδέονται οἱ τοιοῦτοι εἰς τὸ προσδεχθῆναι καὶ μὴ ἀφαρεῖ μὲν ὡς ἂν ἔλθῃ.

⁵⁴ As Peter Brown (1963, 291) has pointed out: "In an age in which the upper classes were especially dependent upon official privileges, titles, and their ability to protect their wealth by litigation, a penalty such as *infamia*, which prejudiced these advantages, was particularly onerous" (Cf. Brown in Lieu 1994, 155). Lieu and Lieu (1994, 155) comment: "Moreover, the opening sentence implies that Cresconius is very anxious to make a statement of some sort which would establish his conversion lest he should "depart" before the official *gesta* were properly signed. This would be important because the major disadvantage suffered by Manichaeans in the late Empire was their inability to make an effective will, which would lay it open to litigation if challenged".

⁵⁵ Procopius, *Hist. Arcana*, 11.24-27 (LCL 290, slightly modified): Νόμου δὲ τοῦ τοιοῦτου καὶ ἀμφὶ τοῖς Σαμαρείταις αὐτίκα τεθέντος ταραχὴ ἄκριτος τὴν Παλαιστίνην κατέλαβεν. ὅσοι μὲν οὖν ἐν τῇ Καισαρείᾳ τῇ ἐμῇ κἀν ταῖς ἄλλαις πόλεσιν ὤκουν, παρὰ φαῦλον ἡγησάμενοι κακοπάθειάν τινα ὑπὲρ ἀνοήτου φέρεσθαι δόγματος, ὄνομα Χριστιανῶν τοῦ σφίσι παρόντος ἀνταλλάξάμενοι τῷ προσήματι τοῦτ' ἐκ τοῦ νόμου ἀποσεισασθαι κίνδυνον ἴσχυσαν. καὶ αὐτῶν ὅσοις μὲν τι λογιζομένου καὶ ἐπιεικείας μετῆν, πιστοὶ εἶναι τὰ ἐξ δόξαν τήνδε οὐδαμῇ ἀπηξίου, οἱ μὲντοι πλεῖστοι ὥσπερ ἀγανακτοῦντες, ὅτι δὴ οὐχ ἐκούσιοι, ἀλλὰ τῷ νόμῳ ἡναγκασμένοι δόγμα τὸ πάτριον μετεβάλλοντο, αὐτίκα δὲ μάλ' ἐπὶ τῇ Μανιχαίου καὶ τοῦ καλουμένου Πολυθέου ἀπέκλιναν. The wording of Procopius "adopted the name of the Christians" in order to "shake off the danger arising from the law" fits perfectly with what is described above, concerning the first stage (catechumens) of conversion of the Manichaeans. The last sentence of Procopius that the falsely converted Samaritans have "instantly inclined to the Manichaeans and to the Polytheists" needs further research. I am not sure that Procopius here means the Monophysites, as has been argued, cf. Stroumsa (1985, 276) and Lieu (1994, 118).

⁵⁶ See ch.[3], 3.3.4, 3.4.3.

If the former Manichaean was converted sincerely, having the protective letter meant that he was no longer persecuted by the state and was discharged from all previous guilt; however, perhaps, without all the privileges (full status of *civis Romanus*) of the baptized Christians. Indeed, as indicated in a law of Justinian (529?), a prerequisite for appointment to governmental service was that the candidate was a baptized Christian.⁵⁷ Yet, even if they had the same privileges as the faithful in theory, in practice it is probable that they faced a kind of social discrimination.⁵⁸ Concerning their relation with the Church, while they were counted as Christians, they were still not considered faithful Christians: they did not participate in the ritual life of the Church; in the congregations they could stay only during the teachings, not during the mysteries, etc.⁵⁹ In a way, they were somewhere between being Manichaeans and becoming Christians, their religious identity was blurry, under configuration.⁶⁰ Thus, the sincerely converted Manichaeans in both their relation to the state and to the Church were probably treated as second class citizens and Christians.⁶¹ So, since they had reasons to be dissatisfied, the possibility of apostasy or crypto-Manichaeism could have been appealing.

The second case is that of the Manichaeans who converted in pretence or in an effort to save their lives; these did not want to renounce their faith, but were forced to do it by the circumstances (e.g. persecutions, legal prosecutions, harassment by the Church). Therefore, they anathematized Manichaeism and confessed the official faith in order to receive the protective letter and the name of the Christian, but actually they remained Manichaeans (i.e. they became crypto-Manichaeans). This is a common phenomenon in the history of religions when believers are forced by violence, either physical or psychological, to renounce their faith in order to save their own lives, to safeguard their properties, and to secure a more bearable everyday life.⁶² It seems that the same had happened in the case of the persecuted pagans who, according to Procopius' *Historia Arcana*, in order to avoid torture and economic plundering by Justinian, "decided to become nominal Christians, seeking thus to avert their present misfortunes", yet "not much later" "were caught performing libations and sacrifices and other unholy rites".⁶³

⁵⁷ *CJ* 1.11.10 6-7; *CJ* 1.5.12.11 (527): "in the certificates of appointment [of] many officials concerning their office, it is added that the person obtain it must be orthodox".

⁵⁸ See for example the case of converted Jews in Visigothic Spain. As Benveniste (2006, 73, 78) comments: "The Fourth Council of Toledo (633), under King Sisenand, decreed [that] [...] converts [from Judaism] could not assume public office and were to refrain from associating with ex-coreligionists. [...] the canons of the Fourth Council of Toledo dealt extensively with *relapsi*, and they also affected an innovation decreeing that "those who were formerly Jews should not seize public offices" (canon 65)".

⁵⁹ Anyone to the rank of catechumen was entitled to be called a Christian, though he was not looked upon as one of the 'faithful'. "Ask a man, 'Are you a Christian?' He answers, 'No', if he is a pagan or a Jew. But if he says 'Yes', ask him again, 'Are you a catechumen or one of the faithful?'" (Augustine, *In Joannis* 44.2).

⁶⁰ For the issue of the blurred religious identity of the converts and that they were regarded as a suspect population, see Benveniste (2006).

⁶¹ As Benveniste (2006, 74) argues, the converts from Judaism in Visigothic Spain were also treated "as a different class of Christians".

⁶² Cryptoreligions are a well attested interreligious and diachronic phenomenon. A known case from modern history (18th century) is that of the converted crypto-Jews in Persia, who accepted Islam superficially, whereas they privately remained faithful to their traditions, Cf. de Jong 2017, 659.

⁶³ Procopius, *Hist. Arcana*, 11.31-33 (LCL 290, 139, 141; Atwater, 50-51): 'Ἐντεῦθεν ἐπὶ τοὺς Ἕλληνας καλουμένους τὴν δίωξιν ἦγεν αἰκίζόμενός τε τὰ σώματα καὶ τὰ χρήματα ληϊζόμενος. ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτῶν ὅσοι τοῦ Χριστιανῶν ὀνόματος δῆθεν μεταλαχεῖν ἔγνωσαν τῷ λόγῳ τὰ παρόντα σφίσιν ἐκκρούοντες, οὗτοι δὲ οὐ πολλῶ ὕστερον ἐπὶ ταῖς σπονδαῖς καὶ θυσίαις καὶ ἄλλοις οὐχ ὁσίοις ἔργοις ἐκ τοῦ ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἡλίσκοντο. On Procopius' *Historia Arcana*, see Cameron 1985/2005, 47-65.

For this second group of Manichaean converts, the prospect of a long-lasting period as Christian catechumens could probably be convenient. First, because they were not forced to be baptized (something Manichaeans abhorred). Secondly, because the rules and canons of the Church, in terms of everyday religious and social behaviour, were less stringent for the catechumens, than for the faithful (i.e. the baptized). The Church was more tolerant with the 'sins' and the 'crimes' of the catechumens since they were not yet initiated in the "legislation of Christ". As Basil explains in another letter to Amphilochius (which also became canon of the Church), "for the deeds during the stage of catechesis no responsibility is asked for", for "those who are not yet subjected under the yoke of Christ do not know the legislation of the Lord"⁶⁴. Moreover, those Manichaeans who were formerly hearers (the majority) were familiar with the idea of being catechumens for all their life.

Thus, the only option for a Manichaean who on the one hand did not want to renounce his faith, and on the other could not bear the consequences of the law, who wanted to rescue his patrimony, and to have the rights and privileges that the followers of the official religion had, was to be enlisted in the class of Christian catechumens, remaining a crypto-Manichaean.

What seems to have happened is that the laws themselves, in combination with the canons of the Church, to a certain extent contributed to the boosting of the phenomenon of crypto-Manichaeism. In both the above scenarios, the Christian catechumens, former Manichaeans, for different reasons each, were flirting with Manichaeism. In the first case (sincere conversion) the vague religious identity and the possible social marginalization could lead them to apostasy or crypto-Manichaeism; in the second case, because they were crypto-Manichaeans.

Therefore, to conclude, except for the use of the terms *μανιχαῖος*, *μανιχαϊόφρων* and *μανιχαῖζων* as labels that the various Christian groups (Catholics, Arians, Monophysites, Nestorians, etc.) exchanged between each other as a curse, and except ordinary Byzantine citizens who adopted here and there some 'Manichaean' ideas or practices, there was a group within Christianity, a part of Christian catechumens (converts from Manichaeism), who were inclined to Manichaeism (*μανιχαϊόφρονες* and *μανιχαῖζοντες*). This may have been either consciously, or not knowing it distinctly (*ἀνεπιγνώστως*), or were considered and treated by the authorities as a population suspected of apostasy and crypto-Manichaeism. In the eyes of the leading state and church authorities, such a converted Manichaean, who was not baptized (and probably not intending to be baptized), was much easier to be considered a suspect (and accused) or be prone to apostasy and crypto-Manichaeism. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that there would be a permanent suspicion that questioned the sincerity of his conversion.

A relevant case is that of the converted Jews in Visigothic Spain, who in the eyes of the authorities were always a suspect population. For this, although they had converted to Christianity, they were still called Jews. As Benveniste states,

Although the legislation was originally aimed against Judaic practices among Jews, willing or forced converts to Christianity soon became equally subject to controls. Converts were treated as a different class of Christians and preoccupied the Fourth, Sixth, Ninth and Sixteenth Councils. Finally, legislation against Judaic practices evolved into measures against people of Jewish origin [...] At the Seventh Council of Toledo converts were simply called Jews (646) [...]. Finally, by 694, the term "Iudaei" itself is far from clear. It refers to Christians of Jewish origin, especially those

⁶⁴ Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 199.

who preserved some of their ancestral rites, or to those known or suspected of defying royal and episcopal policy.⁶⁵

This permanent suspicion is possibly the reason why Justinian's law (*CJ* 1.5.16) targeted the converted Manichaeans, who were suspected of both apostasy and crypto-Manichaeism. It is then probable that, for this reason, during Justinian's persecution, as Barsanuphius states, many of those revealed to be Manichaeans rushed to be baptized.⁶⁶ In particular, the status of 'non-baptized' was sufficient as a label for religious diversification and marginalization. A well-known case is that of an isolated community of pagans in Laconia (Greek Peloponnese); despite their Christianization during the reign of Basil I (867-886), because they had remained non-baptized for a long period, the local population in the mid-tenth century still called them 'Greeks' (which in this setting meant 'pagans').⁶⁷

In this sense, I consider it likely that (a number of) the protestors in the Hippodrome could have been such a group, consisting of Christian catechumens, unbaptized Manichaean converts, converts who had relapsed, or converts verging or suspected of verging on Manichaeism. Similarly, this could also be true for Jews and Samaritans. "To distinguish between these categories" was impossible, because, as Benveniste observes for the case of Jews in Spain, "the fear of pollution and the blurring of the lines as a rhetorical strategy worked both ways".⁶⁸

8.5 Crypto-Manichaeism Was an Old Story

Whatever the true identity of the "Manichaeans" in the Hippodrome was, the fake conversion of Manichaeans and crypto-Manichaeism were old stories which had caused problems for the Church Fathers of previous eras, before the issue of the capital punishment prevailed. Both the state and the Church were very cautious and always on high alert with the converted Manichaeans because there was the danger of fake conversions.⁶⁹ The converted Manichaeans, who were not baptized, reinforced suspicions about the phenomenon of crypto-Manichaeism. This fear is reflected at the end of the anathema formulas, where the converted ex-Manichaean promised and signed that he was not faking conversion.

A signed statement must be made as follows: "I so-and-so having made these preceding anathemas have signed (below), and if I do not think, utter or speak these with the whole of my soul, but do so hypocritically, may I be anathematized and be accursed both in the present time

⁶⁵ Benveniste 2006, 74: "The 'relapsi' were a constant preoccupation (in the years 506, 633, 638, 654, 655, 681 and 693) [...] the history of laws and canons [...] are interesting on account of ideological nature and, more specifically, for the way the terms "Jew", "baptism" and "conversion" were defined in the context of Visigothic taxonomies. The sincerity of the converts may be debatable".

⁶⁶ Barsanuphius, *Ep.* 820.

⁶⁷ Constantinus VII Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio* 50.71-76: Ἰστέον, ὅτι οἱ τοῦ κάστρου Μαΐνης οἰκήτορες οὐκ εἰσὶν ἀπὸ τῆς γενεᾶς τῶν προρρηθέντων Σκλάβων, ἀλλ' ἐκ τῶν παλαιότερων Ῥωμαίων, οἳ καὶ μέχρι τοῦ νῦν παρὰ τῶν ἐντοπίων Ἕλληνας προσαγορεύονται διὰ τὸ ἐν τοῖς προπαλαιοῖς χρόνοις εἰδωλολάτραις εἶναι καὶ προσκυνητὰς τῶν εἰδώλων κατὰ τοὺς παλαιούς Ἕλληνας, οἵτινες ἐπὶ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ ἀοιδίμου Βασιλείου βαπτισθέντες Χριστιανοὶ γεγόνασιν. Cf. Anagnostakis 1993, 25-47.

⁶⁸ Benveniste 2006, 79.

⁶⁹ See, for example, Serapion, *c. Manichaeos* 3.5-27, 30; Titus of Bostra, *c. Manichaeos* 3.1.13-24 (CCSG 82: 243-45); John of Caesarea, *Adv. Manichaeos*, *hom.* 1; Didymus the Blind, *c. Manichaeos* (PG 39:1105.49-53); Chrysostom, *Hom. Gen.*¹⁻⁹ 1, (PG 54:581-630, 585).

and in future and may my soul be (destined) for destruction and perpetually be cast into (punished with) hell (ταρταρωθείη)".⁷⁰

The same fear is also implied in John of Caesarea's and Cyril's warnings to the converted Manichaeans among their flock:

Flee hence my beloved, from those who have received Mani's decay [...] if someone of you was previously infected/polluted by those beliefs [...] should now keep with the beliefs of the prophets and apostles.⁷¹

Here let converts from the Manichees gain instruction, and no longer make those lights [luminaries] their gods; nor impiously think, that this sun which shall be darkened is Christ.⁷²

Manichaeans: the experts in pretending

Regardless of the cases of false conversions, what both legal and ecclesiastical sources repeatedly stressed is the ability of Manichaeans to adapt their teachings and style of life to pretend to be Christians. Serapion begins and ends his work by emphasizing that his main aim was "to stress the danger" of "the Manichaeans, who surpass [all] previous heretics (Valentinians, Marcionites)" in passing themselves off as Christians "in order to convert those who [were] sincerely [Christians]".⁷³ This is also the tactic that Cyril combats, emphasizing to his catechumens that there is nothing in common between Manichaeism and Christianity.⁷⁴ In the words of Mark the Deacon, the Manichaeans are Christians only *δοκήσει* (in appearance, in a docetic way).⁷⁵ On every occasion it is underlined that Manichaeans pretended to be Christians for tactical reasons. According to anti-Manichaean authors, this was not a matter of ignorance, but instead was a tactic which served their missionary strategy.⁷⁶

The biblical *topos* of the wolf in sheep's clothing was attributed also to other heretics, not solely to the Manichaeans.⁷⁷ Yet, what Church Fathers point out as a characteristic feature of the Manichaeans is that they used the same strategy in various (different) religious environments; the Manichaean adaptability resembled the tactic of a chameleon. As Titus says, with Christians the Manichaeans pretend to be Christians, while with Greeks they pretend to be Greeks.⁷⁸ Epiphanius concludes his chapter *Against Manichaeans* by likening

⁷⁰ SC, ch.7: Καὶ δεῖ ὑπογράφειν οὕτως Ὁ δεῖνα ποιησάμενος τοὺς προκειμένους ἀναθεματισμοὺς ὑπέγραψα, καὶ εἰ μὴ ἐξ ὅλης ψυχῆς ταῦτα φρονῶ καὶ φθέγγομαι καὶ λέγω ἀλλ' ὑποκρινόμενος, ἀνάθεμά μοι εἴη καὶ κατάθεμα καὶ ἐν τῷ νῦν αἰῶνι καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι καὶ εἰς ἀπώλειαν εἴη ἡ ψυχὴ μου καὶ διηνεκῶς ταρταρωθείη. The translation in English is a combination of Lieu 1994, 254 and Lieu 2010, 125. For the same anathema in LAF, see Lieu 2010, 142-43.

⁷¹ John of Caesarea, *Adv. Manichaeos*, hom. 1, 17.271-273 & 279-281: Φεύγετε τοίνυν, ἀγαπητοί, τοὺς εἰσοδεγμένους τοῦ Μάνεντος τὴν σιπηδόνα [...] εἰ δέ τις ἐν ὑμῖν πρότερον τούτοις ἐρρωπημένος τοῖς δόγμασιν, νῦν [...], φυλαττέτω τῶν προφητῶν καὶ ἀποστόλων τὰ δόγματα.

⁷² Cyril, *Cath.* 15.3 (LFHCC, 2:185): παιδευέσθωσαν οἱ ἐκ Μανιχαίων ἐπιστρέψαντες, καὶ τοὺς φωστῆρας μηκέτι θεοποιεῖτωσαν, μηδὲ τὸν σκοτισθόμενον τοῦτον ἥλιον τὸν Χριστὸν εἶναι δυσσεβῶς νομιζέτωσαν.

⁷³ Serapion, c. *Manichaeos* 3.5-27 & 36.10-13; Cf. ch.[4], 4.2.1.

⁷⁴ Ch.[4], 4.2.1.

⁷⁵ Mark the Deacon, *Vit. Porph.* 86; Ch.[4], 4.2.1.

⁷⁶ Ch.[4], 4.2.1.

⁷⁷ Chrysostom, *Hom. Gen.*¹⁻⁹ 1 (PG 54: 581-630, 585, 613); *Hom. Gen.*¹⁻⁶⁷ (PG 53: 30.6-10); John of Caesarea, *Adv. Manichaeos*, hom. 1, 17.273-77; Epiphanius, *Ancoratus* 107.5.

⁷⁸ Titus of Bostra, c. *Manichaeos* 3.1: Παρὰ δὲ χριστιανοῖς, τὰ χριστιανῶν δῆθεν μετιών. Titus of Bostra, c. *Manichaeos* 4.2, in Pedersen, 2004, 50 (CCSG 82, 243): "However, towards the pagan Greeks, [they] abandon the Christian material and instead set out to prove that his message accords with their traditions". See also ch.[4],

Mani with the snake *cenchritis*, whose skin changes colours following immediate environmental or social stimuli.

this amphisbaena⁷⁹ and venomous reptile, the cenchritis, which has coils of many illustrations for the deception of those who see it, and conceals beneath it the sting and poisonous source [...] For since Mani is a pagan with the pagans [...] and [...] he knows the lore of the magi and is involved with them, and he praises astrologers and practices their mumbo jumbo. He merely mouths the name of Christ, as the cenchritis too conceals its poison, and deceives people with its tangled coils by hiding in deep woods and matching its background.⁸⁰

Crypto-Manichaeism in the Catholic clergy and monasticism

As we have seen, the fear that there were crypto-Manichaeans among Christian catechumens and faithful (baptized) and, even worse, among Catholic clergy and monks, is repeatedly stressed in Greek anti-Manichaean literature. Figures such as those examined in previous chapters (e.g. presbyter Philip, presbyter/painter from Cyzicus, the archdeacon John,⁸¹ the Alexandrian clerics of Cyril⁸², etc.) labelled as 'Manichaeans' (or *μανιχαῖζοντες* or *μανιχαιοφρονες*), are clear examples of the fear that there were Catholic clerics and monks who adopted Manichaean doctrines and practices, and thereby threatened the integrity of the church from within. Nilus of Ankara, a monk and a prolific author, in several letters addressed to clerics, monks, and state officials accuses his recipients of adopting Manichaean beliefs and practices; he stresses the responsibility they had against the Manichaean danger and expansion due to their position. Characteristic of his anxiety is his letter to Philon, a presbyter of a church in the sensitive area of the borders of the Empire, whom he reproaches in a strict and critical tone: "Stop, therefore, preaching the Manichaean myths to the people of the Lord to the church at the very outskirts of the Empire, pretending to deliver spiritual teaching".⁸³

Moreover, as chapter six (and also chs. 5 and 7) argued extensively, the Christian ascetic movement "was frequently attacked as a disguised Manichee infiltration" already from the fourth century onwards.⁸⁴ The latter is clearly illustrated in the law of Theodosius in 381, according to which Encratites, Apotactites, Hydroparastates and Saccophori were regarded as

4.2.1. As Mark the Deacon (*Vit. Porph.* 85) states: "In fact the Manichaeans say that there are many gods, wishing in this way to please the Hellenes".

⁷⁹ Amphisbaena is a mythological serpent which was believed to have a head at both ends, therefore it was supposed to go either forwards or backwards (*TLG*), cf. Levy 1996. Its name derives from the Greek words *ἀμφί* (on both sides) and *βαίνω* (walk, go).

⁸⁰ Eriphanus, *Pan.* 66.88.17-28 (Williams, 315): ἡμεῖς δὲ πολλὴν ἐπιβεβηκότες ὁδὸν τραχεῖαν καὶ κινδυνώδεις τόπους μόλις ταυτησὶ τῆς ἀμφισβαιίνης καὶ θηρὸς ὀλετηρίου τῆς κεγχρίτιδος, ἀπὸ πολλῶν ὁμοιωμάτων πεποικιλμένης πρὸς ἀπάτην τῶν ὀρώντων, ἐχούσης δὲ κεκρυμμένην κάτω τὴν κεντρώδην καὶ ἰοβόλον πηγὴν τῆς ἐκ πάντων ὁρμωμένης ἐπειδὴ γὰρ μετὰ Ἑλλήνων Ἑλλήνην ἐστίν, ἥλιον προσκυνῶν καὶ σελήνην καὶ τὰ ἄστρα καὶ δαίμονας, ὁ ἀνὴρ, ἀγαπητοί, τυγχάνει καὶ ἡ αὐτοῦ αἵρεσις τὰ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ὑψηλεῖται, τὰ μάγων ἐπίσταται καὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐγκυλινδεῖται, ἀστρονόμους ἐπαινεῖ, τὰ αὐτῶν περιεργαζόμενος, μόνον Χριστοῦ σεμνύνεται ὄνομα λόγῳ, ὥς καὶ αὕτῃ ἡ κεγχρίτις κρύπτει μὲν τὸν ἰόν, ἀπατᾷ δὲ διὰ τῆς ποικιλίας, ἐν μέσῳ ὧλῶν πολλῶν γενομένη καὶ ἀφομοιούμενη μετὰ τῶν ὄντων.

⁸¹ See Ch.[7], 7.3.

⁸² See Ch.[4], 4.2.2.

⁸³ Nilus of Ankara, *Ep.* 321: Πέπαυσο τοῖνυν ἐν προσποιήσει δῆθεν διδασκαλίας πνευματικῆς τὰ Μανιχαίων μυθεύματα παρατιθέμενος τῷ λαῷ τοῦ Κυρίου, ἐπὶ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς ἐν τῇ ἐσχρατῇ. Other letters with references to Manichaeans are the following: book 1: 117, 167, 170, book 2: 8, 10, 11, 317. About the authenticity of the letters of Nilus, see Alan Cameron (1976b).

⁸⁴ Chadwick 1998, 582.

camouflaged Manichaeans.⁸⁵ The fear of the diffusion of Manichaeism in ascetic environments continued to exist until the sixth century, when the 'Manichaean' label was frequently used in the Origenist controversy. According to Cyril of Scythopolis (sixth cent.), in the monastery of Holy Laura (of St. Sabbas) in Palestine, there was a faction of monks (Origenists) that believed the Greek, Jewish, and Manichaean dogma. Finally, they seceded and established their own monastery, the New Laura.⁸⁶ Justinian's *Epistula ad synodum de Origene* speaks about monks in Jerusalem who, like Origen, became adherents of the Pythagorean, Platonic, Plotinian, and Manichaean dogmas. He claims that the misleading dogmas must be anathematized, as well as their inspirers and anyone who believes in them.⁸⁷

Western crypto-Manichaeans among the clergy and monks in Africa & Rome

It has often been argued that those accused as "Manichaeans" in the Greek texts were not 'real' Manichaeans. If we seriously want to think through the option that some of them actually were, it will be very helpful to make a comparison with the richer dossier on this subject from the Latin West.

Augustine was terrified when he discovered that Victorinus, one of his sub-deacons in Mauritania, had been for many years a crypto-Manichaean hearer and "used his position in the church as cover" to teach the Manichaean doctrine "without apparently awakening the least suspicion".⁸⁸ The anxiety of Pope Leo that "numerous Manichees who behaved outwardly as Catholic Christians" had infiltrated among the clerics of the Italian metropolises and of Rome is also recorded in his pastoral letters and sermons.⁸⁹ "Both Pope Gregory I and Gregory II issued warnings against accepting African priests entering Italy without investigation, as they might turn out to be Manichees".⁹⁰ A well-known testimony which reflects "the extent of Manichaean infiltration into the ranks of the [Egyptian] clergy and monastics", is the food-test ("the eating of meat on festive days") that Timothy the patriarch of Alexandria adopted in order to uncover crypto-Manichaeans among Christian clerics and monks.⁹¹ In a similar fashion, clerics detected the Manichaeans (or *μανιχαϊόφρονες*) among their flock by observing who of the "communicants at the Eucharist accepted the consecrated bread but not the cup of wine".⁹²

Crypto-Manichaeism in administration

The presumed Manichaean infiltration in the imperial administration was vigorously fought by Justinian. However, measures against it appear much earlier, as is reflected in the constitution of Valentinian III in 445, according to which it was forbidden for Manichaeans to hold public office. A fine was set for the officials who allowed such appointments.

⁸⁵ *CTh* 16.5.7.

⁸⁶ Cyril of Scythopolis, *Vit. Sab.* 124: ἀνὴρ τις Παλαιστινὸς Νόννος καλούμενος, ὅστις χριστιανίζειν προοποιούμενος καὶ εὐλάβειαν ὑποκρινόμενος τὰ τῶν ἀθέων Ἑλλήνων καὶ Ἰουδαίων καὶ Μανιχαίων δόγματα ἐφρόνει.

⁸⁷ Justinian, *Epistula ad synodum de Origene* 122.

⁸⁸ Lieu 1992, 202-03; According to Frend (1976, 864-65), "there is evidence to suggest that a certain amount of secret Manichaeism persisted within the Catholic Church" in Numidia.

⁸⁹ Lieu 1992, 205-06; Frend 1976, 865-66.

⁹⁰ Lieu 1994, 210; Frend 1976, 865.

⁹¹ Eutychius, *Annales* 148, in Lieu 1992, 183-84, Stroumsa 1986b, 312-315. See Gardner and Lieu 2004, 121-22 for the whole text.

⁹² Chadwick 2001, 171.

The Manichaeans must be deprived of the dignity of governmental service [...]. The chief men of every government service or of every office staff then should be smitten by a fine of ten pounds of gold to be exacted by your apparitors, if they allow anyone polluted by this superstition to be in governmental service.⁹³

Nevertheless, as can be derived from later legislation, Manichaeans had disregarded the legal ban and infiltrated governmental services and guilds.⁹⁴ Indeed, it seems that there were some Manichaeans who had come even to baptism, in order to take an office or a public position.

Moreover we command that as many as fraudulently indeed have come or should have come to salutary baptism by a motive of having governmental service or rank or property, [...] should be subjected to punishments worthy of them, since they clearly have not obtained holy baptism by pure faith of their own accord. These things, therefore, we legislate in the case of sinning pagans and Manichaeans, of which Manichaeans it has been shown that Borborians are also a part.⁹⁵

8.6 The Hypothesis of *Entryism*

Feigned conversions seem to have existed even in the time of Cyril of Jerusalem, when there was still religious tolerance, before the first decree which forbade Manichaeans to assemble in churches was issued (372). Cyril of Jerusalem, in his catechetical lectures, warns his catechumens to keep aloof from converted Manichaeans, at least until it was sure that they had truly repented.⁹⁶ Equally relevant is Gregory of Nyssa's reservation which set as the appropriate time of penitence for apostates to Manichaeism the whole of their life.⁹⁷ So, it is probable that there were crypto-Manichaeans in the Catholic Church, at a time when there was tolerance and they could have their own places of worship, as argued in ch.[7]. If this was the case, however, we can assume that, at least, for Byzantine Manichaeism, crypto-Manichaeism was not only the result of necessity, but also a missionary strategy. In this scenario, we are talking about *entryism*. This tactic is not unknown in political history. The most known modern example is Trotskyism.⁹⁸ Webber, explaining Trotskyist *entryism*, states:

Trotsky thought that an independent Trotskyist organization would be isolated from the larger leftist movement and even destroyed. By entering larger leftist parties, Trotskyists could exert influence among the working classes with less risk of being isolated. Entryism was thus born as a pragmatic response to the local weakness of sectarian Trotskyist appeals by entering larger

⁹³ *NVal* 18 (445), (Coleman-Norton, 730-31).

⁹⁴ *CJ* 1.5. 12, *CJ* 1.5. 16.

⁹⁵ *CJ* 1.11.10.6-7 (529?) (Coleman-Norton, 1049-50).

⁹⁶ Cyril, *Catech.* 6.36.2-4: Συναγελάζου τοῖς προβάτοις· φεῦγε τοὺς λύκους· τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μὴ ἀναχῶρει. Μίσει καὶ τοὺς ποτε εἰς τὰ τοιαῦτα ὑποπτευθέντας· καὶ ἐὰν μὴ χρόνῳ καταλάβῃς αὐτῶν τὴν μετάνοιαν, μὴ προπετῶς σεαυτὸν ἐμπιστεύσῃς. Παρέδόθη σοι τῆς μοναρχίας ἡ ἀλήθεια. See also Cyril, *Cath.* 6.34; *Cath.* 15.3. Cf. Lieu 1994, 205, 212; Lieu 1992, 131.

⁹⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *Ep. Letoium* 225.

⁹⁸ The term *entryism* is borrowed from modern history and political science (in particular Trotsky's strategy) in order to describe a very old tactic, cf. the 'Two Letters to the International Secretariat', 1 November and 16 December 1934, in *The Spanish Revolution 1931-39* (1973, 245-46, 251), a collection in English of Leon Trotsky's writings on the revolutionary developments in Spain. About 'entryism' as a Trotskyite strategy, see Sennett 2014 (220, 280-82, 184-89, 196, 90-92, 122, 154). The idea of using the term *entryism* developed in the context of the discussions with Prof. Dimitris Kyrtatas at the University of Thessaly Late Antiquity discussion group. Cf. Matsangou 2017a, 168-69.

political organizations that offer both protection from isolation and access to the larger working class.⁹⁹

According to a definition of *entryism*, given by John Tomlinson, a theorist of the phenomenon, entryism (be it Trotskyist or not) has three basic objectives for its participants: 1. To identify support for its own cause within the host group, or stimulate it; 2. To provoke and/or exploit division within that group to its own political ends and in order to achieve a degree of executive power; 3. To exert influence on the nature and direction of policy within the infiltrated group.¹⁰⁰

I support that something similar could have happened with the Manichaeans. That there were crypto-Manichaeans is not a new research finding.¹⁰¹ What I am arguing here, is that crypto-Manichaeism, apart from prudential purposes, also served the politics of Manichaean mission.¹⁰² The choice of this tactic was not irrelevant to the fact that Manichaeans could not compete with the official Church on equal terms. Entering into the structures of the dominant Church became a good tool for the Manichaeans. On the one hand, it offered them protection and reduced the risk of their extinction. On the other, instead of being on the margins of politico-religious developments and in isolation, borrowing Tomlinson's and Webber's phraseology, they "could exert influence" "within the infiltrated group". In the case of Manichaeans, as in the twentieth-century case of Trotskyists, occupying positions of authority enabled them "to achieve a degree of executive power". Thus, they were able to play a role in the formation of the religious landscape. Therefore, one could argue that the policy of *entryism* was "born as a pragmatic response" to the weakness of the sectarian character of the Manichaean movement.¹⁰³

A vivid illustration of our authors' fear regarding this presumed Manichaean *modus operandi* is the account of the missionary Julia. As Mark the Deacon recounts, Julia entered undetected (ὑπείσσελθοῦσα) in the Christian Church of Gaza, and corrupted (ὑπέφθειρεν) secretly and gradually some of the Christian neophytes.¹⁰⁴

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 Christians) there were some novices who were not yet confirmed in the holy faith, this woman [Julia] infiltrated herself among them and surreptitiously corrupted them with her bewitching doctrine, and still further by giving them money.¹⁰⁵

John of Caesarea, in his first homily against the Manichaeans, targeted the same tactic (διορύττειν καὶ τοὺς τῆς ἐκκλησίας διασαλεύειν τροφίμους ἐπιχειροῦσι), as shown by the

⁹⁹ Webber 2009, 33.

¹⁰⁰ Tomlinson in Webber 2009, 33-34.

¹⁰¹ Relevant references have been made by many scholars. See for example, Brown 1969, 100: "Secondly, Manichaeism became a problem increasingly as a form of crypto-Christianity. Mani had trumped Christ: the Manichaean missionary had to prove it by dogging the Christian community; and his converts would tend to remain prudently hidden under the shadow of the Catholic Church"; Stroumsa and Stroumsa 1988, 38: "Hence, the Christians treated Manichaeism as a threat from within, -regarding it as 'the worst of all heresies,' the last and most vicious trick of the Devil"; Stroumsa 1986b, 312-315, 315: "In any case, the indisputable presence of Manichaeans among Christian clerics"; Chadwick 1998, 582: Christian asceticism "was frequently attacked as a disguised Manichee infiltration"; Lieu 1992, 202-03.

¹⁰² It is for this reason that I use the term 'entryism': to differentiate it from simple infiltration that does not necessarily mean strategic infiltration.

¹⁰³ Webber 2009, 33-34.

¹⁰⁴ Mark the Deacon, *Vit. Porph.* 85: Ἰουλίᾳ, [...] γνοῦσά τινας νεοφωτιστοὺς [...] ὑπείσσελθοῦσα ὑπέφθειρεν αὐτοὺς διὰ τῆς γοητικῆς αὐτῆς διδασκαλίας, πολλὰ δὲ πλέον διὰ δόσεως χρημάτων.

¹⁰⁵ Mark the Deacon, *Vit. Porph.* 85 (Lieu 2010, 97; Lieu 1994, 56).

introduction and the end of his work. As John stresses, aiming to safeguard his flock (τῆς ὑμῶν ἔνεκεν ἀσφαλείας), the Manichaeans with their feigned paleness and Christ's name deceived the naive. By concealing their true self, they could 'leap in upon' (ἐπεισηδῶσι) the Church attempting to tear her in pieces (διασπαράττειν).¹⁰⁶

Of course, the fear of our sources regarding strategic Manichaean infiltration is not proof that this actually happened. Manichaean texts testifying that this was an operative missionary method do not exist. There are, however, some Manichaean features, as well as testimonies concerning Manichaean infiltration in other religious contexts which could support such a hypothesis. Before proceeding to the examination of the latter, it is important firstly to present the Manichaean views on martyrdom, based on Manichaean sources.

8.7. Manichaean Views on Martyrdom (According to Manichaean Sources)

Prudential secrecy

As we have seen, anti-Manichaean writers often state that Manichaeans regarded martyrdom for faith as an unnecessary sacrifice, which they had to avoid. The same attitude towards danger is also alluded to in Manichaean sources. As we read in the *CMC*: The prophet Mani declared, "[and again, when] I [am surrounded] by oppression or affliction or persecution, I might be hidden from the sight of my enemies". So, "during that great period of time" he remained "in silence" among the Baptists, and "with the greatest possible ingenuity and skill" he conformed to their Law and he "[revealed nothing] of what happened", "nor what it is that ... [he] knew to anyone", "lest someone become envious and destroy [him]".¹⁰⁷ The disclosure of the identity of the Elect (Mani), and "the proclamation of Truth among devotees of false dogmas" should not be done if it endangers the life of the prophet. This is the tactic of prudential secrecy, according to which the Elect "must keep silent" in a hostile environment, "until these circumstances are changed",¹⁰⁸ an attitude which recalls that of the Manichaean teacher Photinus.

Concealment of the beliefs, as a protective and prudential technique imposed by social circumstances, is recorded in other Manichaean texts too. According to a Sogdian source, "Lord Mar Mani said to the magus":

I, together with my disciples and Electi, am like that child who was silent as an expedient (...) (who) did not speak and did not hear. .. So we too are silent and we speak with no one and perform good deeds and pious actions as an expedient, (but) that time will come at last when I shall speak before all, like that child, and we shall demand justice for ourselves.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ John of Caesarea, *Adv. Manichaeos* (hom. 1), 1.8-15: Ἀλλ' ἐπειδή τινες τῆς τοῦ Μάνεντος ἐμφορηθέντες μανίας διορύττειν καὶ τοὺς τῆς ἐκκλησίας διασαλεύειν τροφίμους ἐπιχειροῦσι, τῷ σίτῳ παραμυγνόντες ζιζάνια καὶ τοῖς ὀρθοῖς δόγμασι τῶν ἀποστόλων ὑποσπείροντες γέλωτος πλήρεις μυθολογίας, τῆς ὑμῶν ἔνεκεν ἀσφαλείας ὡς ἐν βραχεῖ τὸν πρὸς ἐκείνους πόλεμον ἀναδέξομαι καὶ τὰς ἀκάνθας προρρίζους ἀνασπῶν ἐλεύθερον ἀσεβείας τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἀναδείξω τὸ λήϊον"; *ibid.*, 17. 271-280: Φεύγετε τοίνυν, ἀγαπητοί, τοὺς εἰσδεγμένους τοῦ Μάνεντος τὴν σηπεδὸνα, οἱ πολλάκις ὠχρότητι σώματος τὸ δοκεῖν ἐγκρατεῖς εἶναι θηρώμενοι, τῷ σχήματι καὶ τῷ βλέμματι καὶ τῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ προσηγορίᾳ τοὺς ἀπλουστέρους ἐξαπατῶσι καὶ κωδῶ προβάτου τὸν ἔνδοθεν λύκον ὑποκρυπτόμενοι ἐπεισηδῶσι καὶ τὴν Χριστοῦ ποιμνὴν διασπαράττειν ἐπιχειροῦσιν. Φεύγετε τοίνυν καὶ τοῖς τοιοῦτοις χαίρειν μὴ λέγετε· Φθεῖρουσιν ἡθὴ χρηστά ὁμίλια κακαί.

¹⁰⁷ *CMC*: 4.12-13, 8.11-14, 25.2-13, 26.1, 38.1-4 (Cameron & Dewey). Cf. Gardner and Lieu 2004, 53.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Stroumsa 1986a, 153-58; On the protective character of secrecy in religions, see Simmel 1906, 441-98 (471-72). On secret knowledge, rituals, and identities in the ancient world, see de Jong 2006b, 37-59 and 2006a, 1050-54.

¹⁰⁹ Sims-Williams 1981, 231-240, esp. 238.

A corresponding form of secrecy is the *taqiyya* of Shiite Islam which can be defined as the concealment of one's beliefs in times of danger.¹¹⁰

The 'Manichaean body' in Manichaean theology

The avoidance of blood-martyrdom by the Manichaeans has been pointed out by several researchers. As Frend highlights, the Manichaeans argued that "Not martyrdom, but a well-instructed mind, was the most acceptable sacrifice to God".¹¹¹ As Coyle comments, "The Manichaean bishop Faustus of Milevis scorned the veneration of martyrs so popular among both Catholics and Donatists of North Africa; and nowhere do the Manichaean psalms say that they *were* martyrs, let alone how they might have become such".¹¹² For Manichaeans like Faustus, the worship of martyrs did not differ from the worship of the idols of the pagans.¹¹³

The Manichaeans may have rejected the idea of the 'resurrected body', and considered the dead bodies as corpses, yet, in the present life, the 'Manichaean body', especially the bodies of the Elect, was precious, for it had a divine mission; therefore, it had to be safeguarded. Contrary to what many researchers have argued, BeDuhn says that the Manichaeans took care of their body, because without it, the soul's salvation was impossible: "Manichaeans prayed to the heavenly powers for the health and security of their bodies. 'Bright Mani, lord of fair name, life-giver, guard me in body; Jesus, lord, save my soul [...]'".¹¹⁴ Particularly without the body of the Elect, the release of the *Living Self* was unattainable. Taking into consideration the above remarks, in combination with the Manichaean belief that slain animals had no *psyche* because the divine element in them was destroyed by the slaughter,¹¹⁵ it is possible to imagine that the same might apply in the case of the violent death of martyrdom. The above could possibly explain why Manichaeans rejected blood-martyrdom as well as suicide as a means for the purification of the *Living Self* from Matter. According to Alexander, one of the main Manichaean tenets dictated, "One should not, by committing suicide, bring about an artificial purification of the stains inflicted upon the power by the admixture of matter".¹¹⁶ Killing yourself (and therefore also seeking death via martyrdom), would harm the light encased in the body. In spite of the prophetic example of Mani, this was logically not a viable option for the Elect; it would not make sense for the Hearers either, because that would remove one more fighter for the cause of good from the earth, or one more supporter for the salvific work of the Elect.

¹¹⁰ According to Etan Kohlberg (2012, 269) *Taqiyya* became "an article of Imami faith" since the eighth century and "helped to preserve the Imami community in a hostile environment". Further on the phenomenon of *taqiyya*, see Kohlberg, 1975, 1995 & 2003/2016; Stroumsa 1986a, 156, 156 n.7. On other aspects of secretive attitudes among Manichaeans, see Stroumsa 1982.

¹¹¹ Frend 1976, 860, 860 fn. 7; Augustine, *Faust.* 13.1 (NPNF¹ 4:343, CSEL 25.1, 378,28).

¹¹² Coyle 2009d, 203 (see also fn. 92 and 93 about two ambiguous references to ΜΑΡΙΑ ΘΕΟΝΑ ΜΑΡΤΥΡΕ in *Ψαλμοὶ σαρακωτῶν* 157.13 and 173.12). Cf. Augustine, *Faust.* 20.4 (p. 538.6) and *Conf.* 6.11.

¹¹³ Augustine, *Faust.* 20.4 (NPNF¹ 4:436): "In a schism, little or no change is made from the original; as, for instance, you, in your schism from the Gentiles, have brought with you the doctrine of a single principle, for you believe that all things are of God. The sacrifices you change into love-feasts, the idols into martyrs, to whom you pray as they do to their idols. You appease the shades of the departed with wine and food". Cf. Coyle 2009d, 203 fn. 92.

¹¹⁴ M 311.V.10-13 in BeDuhn 2000, 114: "It needs to be emphasized that Manichaeans were every bit as concerned with their bodies as with their 'souls.' One could say, in fact, that the salvation of the Manichaean soul absolutely necessitated a concern with the body — and not solely in negative terms".

¹¹⁵ See ch.[5], 5.2.2.

¹¹⁶ Alexander of Lycopolis, *Tract. Man.* 4 (Horst and Manfeld, 57): μή ἐξάγειν δὲ ἑαυτοὺς μηχανωμένους καθαρίσιν ὧν ἐλυμήνατο ἡ μῆξις τῆς ὕλης τὴν δύναμιν.

Therefore, apart from prudential purposes, the avoidance of blood-martyrdom is fully consonant with basic Manichaeism theology.

8.8 Manichaeism Features Supporting the Hypothesis of *Entryism*

The Manichaeism Concept of Sacrifice (Martyrdom): Dissolution?

Furthermore, the hypothesis of *entryism* is supported by some key features of the nature of Manichaeism, such as: (1) universality of religion precedes the theology of religion, (2) the dualistic background, and (3) eclecticism.

It is known that for the sake of universality and for the attraction of new adherents, Manichaeism had been adapting its teaching to incorporate elements of the religions of the areas where its missionary activities took place.¹¹⁷ Theoretically, such a position can be grounded in Paul's first epistle to Corinthians: 'To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews [...] to those who are without law, as without law [...] so that I might win those who are without law, [...]' (1 Cor. 9:19-22). The concept of sacrifice can be interpreted through the same passage.¹¹⁸ The sacrifice should not be taken to mean blood-martyrdom, but as the suffering of being *ὄθνεϊος* (stranger) and *μονήρης* (solitary), in the midst of error, for the sake of truth.¹¹⁹ As Mani perceives himself in the *CMC*,

[I am] in multitude, but I am solitary. For these are rich, but I am poor. How then shall I, alone against all, be able to reveal this mystery in the midst of the multitude [entangled in] error? [...] and [I] became a stranger and a solitary in their midst.¹²⁰

Behind this rationale lie the dualistic substratum and Manichaeism eclecticism: "The One [elect] versus the Many, Light versus Darkness, Gnosis versus Ignorance".¹²¹

The 'sacrifice' of the Primal Man (Manichaeism God) in Manichaeism cosmogony

Moreover, it could be argued that some key components of the Manichaeism cosmogonical myth support the above idea of sacrifice providing the necessary theological ground for the tactic of *entryism*.

Such a component is the idea that the *Father of Greatness* (light principle) voluntarily offers a portion of his substance (Primal Man), in "the guise of tempting bait" to the *King of Darkness* (evil principle), in order that he "be captured by this mingling".¹²²

¹¹⁷ Lieu 1992, 250, 262: "This process of assimilation began under the guidance of Mani [...] It was continued by his disciples as the religion spread eastwards and we can tell [...] that this process developed gradually without overall control by the *archegos* in Babylonia"; "By adapting some aspects of their religion to Buddhism and Taoism the Manichaeism had succeeded in narrowing the cultural gap between China and the west".

¹¹⁸ Titus of Bostra, c. *Manichaeism*, 4.11 in Pedersen 2004, 51: "Nor does Mani wish to see his followers persecuted to death, but believes on the basis of 1 Cor. 9:19.22 that it is permissible to make sacrifices" (CCSG 82: 340-41).

¹¹⁹ *CMC* 44.2-12, 31.1-9.

¹²⁰ *CMC* 31.1-9, 44.2-12, 84.12 ff (Cameron and Dewey 27, 35, 66).

¹²¹ Henrichs 1973, 27. On the "Manichaeism discourse of suffering", see also Brand 2020, 112-34.

¹²² Severus of Antioch, 123 *Cathedral Homily* (Excerpts from an untitled Manichaeism Scripture), pp. 164.10-166.15 (Lieu 2010, 33): "On account of this disturbance, which was prepared out of the depths against the land of light and against the holy fruits, it was necessary that a part should come out of the light and be mingled with the evil ones, so that the enemies would be captured by this mingling [...] And no harm comes to it; but rather this exodus or crossing-over takes place in order that, by virtue of the part which came from the light, the enemies, being scattered, might cease their attack and are captured by the mingling"; pp. 174.3-8: "this portion of light was given to Matter in the guise of tempting bait and a deception, so that after this "the mixture" –as you say- 'would be purified'. [...] 'And after the purification' [...] according to you – 'matter will be completely reduced to destruction'!".

Then the Primal Man offered himself [...] and his five sons as nourishment to the five sons of darkness, like one who, having an enemy, mixes a deadly poison into a cake and offers it to him. When the sons of darkness had eaten, the intelligence of the Five Shining Gods [ziwane = sons of the First Man] was toppled.¹²³

The dualistic background and Manichaean eclecticism is dominant in the next act of the myth. The *Father of Greatness* dispatches a second divine power to the Land of Darkness, the *Living Spirit* and his five sons, who

found the Primal Man swallowed up by the darkness and his five sons. Then the Living Spirit called out in a loud voice. The voice of the Living Spirit was like a sharp sword, and it laid bare the form of the Primal Man and said to him: "Peace be with you, who are the good amid the wicked, the light amid the darkness, the god who dwells amid wrathful animals that know not the magnificence [of the sons of light]!"¹²⁴

Whereas at the end of this act "the *Primal Man* was brought back [...] in the land of light", with the help of *Living Spirit* who "held out his right hand [...] and drew him out of the darkness", his five sons (his armour) remained "swallowed up" by the *Hylē* in order to act like the deadly poison in the cake; through the 'cosmic belly' of the *King of Darkness* they would work towards the salvation of *Light* and the destruction of *Matter*.¹²⁵ Thus, during the *Middle Time*, the process of purification from Matter is advancing, until the *Final Time*, when the last particle of light from the mixture will be pumped out, and the scattered Primal Man will be restored again to form the *New Man*, the *Perfect Man*. So, after his descent "into dissolution" in the Land of Darkness, the Primal Man finally "ascends reconstituted", having purged the world from the evil principle.¹²⁶

The idea of Primal Man's sacrifice is echoed in a parable of the Manichaean Psalms, according to which a shepherd temporarily sacrifices one of his sheep, in order to trap the lion threatening to devour all his flock.

Like unto a shepherd that shall see a lion coming to destroy his sheep-fold: for he uses guile and takes a lamb and sets it as a snare that he may catch him by it; for by a single lamb he saves his sheep-fold. After these things he heals the lamb that has been wounded by the lion.¹²⁷

The 'sacrifice' of the Manichaean God according to the Greek anti-Manichaica

Greek anti-Manichaean authors knew and commented on the part of the myth about the 'swallowing'.¹²⁸ Some of them, such as Alexander, Titus and Simplicius, highlight that this swallowing was a sacrifice planned by the Light principle aiming for its victory over the Evil principle from within. This victory sometimes is described as the "death of matter" (Alexander), the "involuntary reformation of matter" (Titus), or as the "dominion over Evil" (John of Damascus). Yet, according to anti-Manichaean authors, this sacrifice reveals the cowardice and the nonsense of the Manichaean *King of Light*. Alexander considered it "much more reverential and in conformity to the superiority of God" to devastate Matter from the

¹²³ Tardieu 2008, 76-78. The version of the myth transmitted by the Nestorian doctor Theodore bar Konai. See ch.[5], 5.2.1.

¹²⁴ Tardieu 2008, 76-78, 77.

¹²⁵ Tardieu, 2008, 87.

¹²⁶ Gardner and Lieu 2004, 19, 12-13, 155.

¹²⁷ 2PsB 9.3-11.32. Psalm 223 (The community sing 'the knowledge of Mani') in Gardner and Lieu 2004, 176-79, 177, (text no 56). Cf. Lieu 2010, 190.

¹²⁸ In the SC, ch. 6: "I anathematize those who say that the human souls are consubstantial with God and, being part of (the) good (principle) were swallowed up by the *Hylē* and out of this necessity the world was created" (Lieu 2010, 123).

very beginning.¹²⁹ Furthermore, he criticizes as unfounded and absurd the claim that it was necessary for the two principles to be mixed:

Therefore he [God] sent a power, which we call the soul, to confront matter, with the aim of bringing about a complete mingling with it. And its consequent separation from this power would result in the death of matter.¹³⁰

The statement "God sent down a power towards matter" is given without any proof whatsoever, and is in no way plausible. [...] As the cause of this occurrence they give what follows; "In order that nothing be bad and all things good, the power had to mingle with matter [...] in order to vanquish matter and to stop it from being."¹³¹

Simplicius develops his critique in a similar vein. He additionally informs us, asserting the originality of his sources, that the Manichaeans paralleled the tactic of their God to that of a general.

What kinds of and how many blasphemies against God necessarily result from their teachings? For example, they describe him as a coward who dreaded the approach of evil to the borders lest it enters his domain. Out of fear, he unjustly and arbitrarily submitted portions and parts of himself (which were formerly innocent souls) to evil so that he might save the rest of the good souls. He acted, as they say, like a general, who sensing the approach of the enemy, sacrificed part of his army in order to save the rest. These are their own words, If not, at least the words of the reports about them.¹³²

As Titus describes the goal of the project, the dispatched benevolent power acted as a lure to *Hylē/Evil*, which provoked its "involuntary reformation" (*ἀκούσιον τῇ ὕλῃ σωφρονισμόν*).

The good (principle) dispatches a power [...] to become a bait for the involuntary reformation of matter. That is what happened. For when *Hylē* saw the power sent, she longed for it as if she fell in love with the power, and grabbed her with great impetus and swallowed her; hence was bound to her like a beast.¹³³

Or in the words of John of Damascus:

And the Light principle sent a power, and a struggle took place where the archons of darkness ate part of the Light. That is, the Light principle let them grab a part of his power, and did so to gain dominion over Evil with the part he let them have.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Alexander of Lycopolis, *Tract. Man.* 12 (van der Horst and Mansfeld, 73).

¹³⁰ Alexander of Lycopolis, *Tract. Man.* 3 (Lieu 2010, 39; cf. van der Horst & Mansfeld, 54).

¹³¹ Alexander of Lycopolis, *Tract. Man.* 12 (van der Horst and Mansfeld, 73). See also *Tract. Man.* 5 (van der Horst and Mansfeld, 58): "their assumptions are not expressed in a generally acceptable ratiocinative form; hence a scrutiny of these assumptions is out of the question. Nor are there any proofs to be found which would be based on postulates, which renders it impossible to consider what these postulates would entail".

¹³² Simplicius, *Comm. Man. Epict.* 35 (Lieu 2010, 103): Οἷα δὲ καὶ ὅσα βλάσφημα εἰς τὸν θεὸν τοῖς ὑπ' ἐκείνων λεγομένοις ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἀκολουθεῖ; καὶ γὰρ δειλὸν εἰσαγοῦσιν αὐτὸν, δεδουκὸτα τὸ κακὸν ἐγγὺς τῶν ὄρων αὐτοῦ γενόμενον, μὴ καὶ ἐντὸς εἰσελθῇ. Καὶ διὰ ταύτην τὴν δειλίαν ἀδίκως καὶ ἀσυμφόρως μέρη ἑαυτοῦ καὶ μέλη τὰς ψυχὰς οὐσας, ὥς φασι, μηδὲν ἀμαρτούσας πρότερον, ἔρριψε τῷ κακῷ, ἵνα τὰ λοιπὰ τῶν ἀγαθῶν διασώσῃ· ὥσπερ στρατηγὸς, φασὶ, πολέμιων ἐπιόντων, μέρος αὐτοῖς τοῦ οἰκείου στρατοῦ προῖεται, ἵνα τὸ λοιπὸν διασώσῃ. Ταῦτα γὰρ ἐστὶν αὐτῶν τὰ ῥήματα, εἰ καὶ μὴ ἐπ' αὐτῶν ἴσως τῶν λέξεων. Simplicius, as an honest researcher, does not conceal the possibility of his information to have been of second-hand provenance.

¹³³ Titus of Bostra, c. *Manichaeos* 1.17.6-13: Ὁ δὲ ἀγαθὸς δύναμιν ἀποστέλλει τινὰ [...] δέλεαρ ἐσομένην εἰς ἀκούσιον τῇ ὕλῃ σωφρονισμόν. Ὁ δὲ καὶ γέγονε· θεασαμένη γὰρ ἡ ὕλη τὴν ἀποσταλεῖσαν δύναμιν, προσεκίσσῃ μὲν ὡς δὴ ἔρασθεῖσα, ὁρμῇ δὲ πλείονι λαβοῦσα ταύτην κατέπιε, καὶ ἐδέθη τρόπον τινὰ ὥσπερ θηρίον.

¹³⁴ John of Damascus, c. *Manichaeos* 2.19: καὶ ἀπέστειλεν ὁ ἀγαθὸς δύναμιν παρ' αὐτοῦ, καὶ συμπλοκῆς γενομένης ἔφαγον μέρος τοῦ φωτὸς οἱ ἄρχοντες τοῦ σκότους. Παρεχώρησε γὰρ ὁ ἀγαθὸς ἀρπαγῇ δύναμιν ἐξ αὐτοῦ [...] Τοῦτο δὲ ἐποίησεν, ἵνα διὰ τῆς μοίρας, ἧς παρέδωκε, κατακυριεύσῃ τῆς κακίας.

Other sources, such as the AA, while aware of the ‘swallowing’, do not point out that it was a voluntary ‘sacrifice’. They do not say that Primal Man gave himself on purpose to the *Prince of Darkness*, as a means of trapping him.¹³⁵ However, the AA’s author knows and uses the parallel image that exists in the *PsB* where a shepherd (God) temporarily offers one of his sheep (children/souls) to the lion (Evil) in order to trap the lion, saving thereby the whole flock.¹³⁶

The ‘sacrifice’ of the Manichaeans

The above mythical events are of particular importance for our query, given the relationship between the microcosm and macrocosm in Manichaean cosmological narrative. The adventure of the Primal Man in the Land of Darkness was one of the favourite motifs of the Manichaean Psalms. The psalms that the Manichaean believers chanted in their congregations often speak in the voice of the *Living Self*:

Since I went forth into the darkness I...am in the midst of my enemies...The strangers with whom I mixed...I am the life of the world; I am the milk that is in all trees; I am the sweet water.¹³⁷

The *Psalms of the Wanderers* speak of the ‘long-sufferingness’ and the ‘endurance’ of the envoys of the Land of Light to the Land of Darkness encouraging the wandering Manichaean ascetics to imitate their divine archetypes.

[...] spirit of endurance come to us, let endurance endure and let us bear up that we may [...] endurance [...] the First Man, he was sent out to the fight, and endurance came to him. He left his land of light behind him, he went out to the land of darkness and endurance came to him. He left also his people behind him, he went out to the field [...] and endurance came to him. [...] We also, my brethren, have our part of suffering: we shall join with them in the suffering and rest in their rest;¹³⁸

So, the Elect Manichaeans had to act accordingly, and imitate the Primal Man, who suffered and showed patience. Thus, there are grounds to assume (without much violation of historical probability) that the sacrifice of the Manichaean God served as an exemplar for the sacrifice of Manichaeans. As the *King of Greatness* responds to the invasion of darkness not in a violent way¹³⁹ (as Alexander suggests), but wisely lets himself be partly swallowed (while simultaneously working out his salvation through the “cosmic belly of the *King of Darkness*”),¹⁴⁰ the Manichaean Elect instead of clashing with their religious opponents, choose the smart tactic of ‘being swallowed’ within their opponent’s structures: the few Elect mingled within the crowd of ignorant, with a view to transform them. In Paul’s words, “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (Gal 5:9, μικρά ζύμη ὅλον τὸ φύραμα ζυμοῖ). The implementation of such a plan required coexistence, not conflict. Secrecy was a *sine qua non* prerequisite for its success.¹⁴¹

¹³⁵ Cf. Kaatz 2007, 103.

¹³⁶ AA 28. Cf. 2*PsB* 9.31-10.2.

¹³⁷ 2*PsB* 54.11 ff (Psalm 246, Allberry). A practice which, as it seems, Titus knew: Κέχρηνται γὰρ καὶ τῷδε τῷ ὑποδείγματι, ὡς δι’ ἐπωδῆς τῆς ἀποσταλείσης δυνάμεως ἐκοιμίσθη (c. *Manichaeos*, 1.17).

¹³⁸ A psalm of endurance, 2*PsB* 141.1–143.34 in Gardner and Lieu 2004, 240 (no 80). Cf. Drijvers 1984, 107-110.

¹³⁹ About the ‘gentleness’ of the Manichaean God, see Pettipiece 2007, 119.

¹⁴⁰ Tardieu 2008, 87.

¹⁴¹ About the concealment of Manichaean scriptures and communities, see Lieu 2015, 130-139.

8.9 Comparative Evidence Supporting the Hypothesis of *Entryism*

The hypothesis of *entryism* is further supported by comparative evidence (from different times and places) which demonstrates that such practices were and still are actually happening. The following cases are indicative and do not aim to constitute a thorough study.

Simon the Magus and the Gnostics

Religious *entryism* as a tactic certainly existed before Manichaeism. Apart from the Manichaeans, various groups of heretics, especially the ‘old heretics’ and Gnostics, were accused of entering Christian communities with subversive purposes.¹⁴² As expected, the first instructor of this tactic was considered to have been Simon the Magus.

Then [...] [Simon] [...] submitted, and feigned faith in Christ even to the point of baptism. It is worthy of wonder that this is still done by those who continue his most unclean heresy to the present day, for following the method of their progenitor they attach themselves to the Church like a pestilential and scurfy disease.¹⁴³

Eusebius’ view about Simon should not be taken at face value but, instead, as evidence that the method of *entryism* was not unusual.

Apparently, crypto-religions and the tactic of strategic infiltration did not stop in Late Antiquity.

The last of the Paulicians?

An impressive testimony, revealing how resilient the secret identity of crypto-religions through time may be, is the story of Mr. Lion, “The last of the Paulicians”, given by Russell.¹⁴⁴

Mr. Lion, a native of Sivas (born 1901 in Sebastia, western Asia Minor), had lived in America since 1912 and was interviewed in 1995 about the communities of crypto-Paulicians in the area of Sivas in the early 20th century; in it he declared from the beginning that he was a Paulician.¹⁴⁵ According to him, amongst the 500 Armenian families of Sivas, there were twenty-five families of crypto-Paulicians (“Tondrakites”). He himself was raised by his grandmother, who as a faithful Paulician imparted her ideas to him. Russell repeatedly points out many beliefs and practices of Manichaean origin deriving from Mr. Lion’s interview, the most prominent of which are the following: (1) the belief that “there are two forces in the universe”, (2) the “demonization of the Old Testament which Mr. Lion called an ‘evil book’” and “toilet paper”, and (3) that they ought not to “eat animal food, but only fruit and vegetables”.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² However, Lieu (1992, 146) says that “for the church the Manichaeans were not like the Gnostic heretics of the second century who infiltrated the Christian communities and sought to destroy them from within. Manichaeans formed an exclusive community and strove to convert both pagan and Christian Romans to their religion. This made them rivals and competitors”. However, with the gradual prevalence of Christianity, there was no such possibility.

¹⁴³ Eusebius, *HE* 2.1.11-12 (LCL 108-09): τότε δ’ οὖν καὶ οὗτος τὰς ὑπὸ τοῦ Φιλίππου δυνάμει θεία τελούμενας καταπλαγεῖς παραδοξοποιίας, ὑποδύεται καὶ μέχρι λουτροῦ τὴν εἰς Χριστὸν πίστιν καθυποκρίνεται ὃ καὶ θαυμάζειν ἄξιον εἰς δεῦρο (ἕως τώρα) γινόμενον πρὸς τῶν ἔτι καὶ νῦν τὴν ἀπ’ ἐκείνου μιαιρωτάτην μετιόντων αἵρεσιν, οἳ τῇ τοῦ σφῶν προπάτορος μεθόδῳ τὴν ἐκκλησίαν λοιμώδους καὶ ψωραλέας νόσου δίκην ὑποδύομενοι, τὰ μέγιστα λυμαίνονται τοὺς οἷς ἐναπομάξασθαι οἳ τε ἂν εἶεν τὸν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἀποκεκρυμμένον δυσάλθῃ καὶ χαλεπὸν ἰόν.

¹⁴⁴ Russell 2004, 677-691.

¹⁴⁵ Russell 2004, 688.

¹⁴⁶ Russell 2004, 689.

Among the rest of their beliefs, he also mentions that (a) they were Docetist and disbelieved in the divinity of Christ, and (b) that they rejected: (1) the Armenian worship of the Cross, (2) infant baptism and chrismatic oil, (3) the virginity of Mary, (4) the intercession of the Saints, and (5) the various fasts. They also “had a book of doctrine [...] which the Armenian Synod confiscated. Its title was the ‘Key of Truth’”.¹⁴⁷ In his report concerning the practices of the community Mr. Lion reported that

[his grandmother] was a humble woman, but held the Churches in contempt [...] [she] turned to the Sun in prayer every morning, and spoke, [...] of the “Children of the Sun”. [...] They prayed separately and alone, but sometimes got together, some six families at a time, at various private houses, often at [...] [his] grandmother’s house. These meetings were not advertised. [...] Grandmother had a scroll [...] in Armenian, and sometimes [...] a man or woman came over to read it [...] conducting a kind of ceremony.¹⁴⁸

In an earlier reference to the above scroll, Mr. Leon had named it ‘the key’.¹⁴⁹ In 1995, when Mr. Lion gave this interview, he lived in San Diego. He was an active and founding member of the Armenian church of the city, giving “occasional free sermons” in which, one can guess, he expressed “with vigor and eloquence” “his Paulician convictions”, which he “never abandoned”, as Russell points out.¹⁵⁰

Comparative evidence from other religious contexts: Islam and China

The hypothesis of *entryism* is, moreover, supported by testimonies coming from other religious contexts, in which Manichaeans were active as missionaries, namely the early Islamic world and China.

As Stroumsa argues, the Muslim heresiographers “dreaded the Manichaean skill to infiltrate secretly into the Muslim community in order to lure the simple people and to corrupt Islam from within, for instance by falsifying prophetic traditions.”¹⁵¹ According to the Mu’tazilite theologian Abd al-Jabbar (tenth cent.), the “enemies of Islam”, among which he classifies the crypto-Manichaeans, were “everywhere, but above all in the Muslim community itself”.¹⁵² In a story recounted by the famous Iranian scholar Al-Biruni (tenth-eleventh cent.), the protagonists are two “notorious crypto-Manichaeans”. Apart from describing their activities, Al-Biruni also identifies their “four-fold infiltration techniques across the various religious communities [in] which [they] entered”.¹⁵³ Though these could be merely labelled as Manichaeans, this story is indicative of religious infiltration as a tactic during that period. It is important to note here that food-tests, similar to those mentioned previously, were also “applied to Manichaeans under Islamic rule”.¹⁵⁴

According to scholars who study eastern Manichaeism, similar things happened, indeed, in the context of China, where Manichaeism was increasingly ‘Buddhified’. In 732 the Emperor Hsüan-tsung (also known as Xuanzong) of the Tang dynasty banned Manichaeism which he declared was a “heretic religion”, and which confused people by claiming to be Buddhism.¹⁵⁵ As Lieu observes, “The primary task of the Buddhist writers, therefore, was to

¹⁴⁷ Russell 2004, 688.

¹⁴⁸ Russell 2004, 689-90.

¹⁴⁹ Russell 2004, 690.

¹⁵⁰ Russell 2004, 691.

¹⁵¹ Stroumsa and Stroumsa 1988, 39, fn. 7.

¹⁵² Crone 2006, 21.

¹⁵³ Browder 1982, 7-8.

¹⁵⁴ Stroumsa 1986b, 312-315.

¹⁵⁵ Liu Xinru 1998, 182.

show that Manichaeans were not genuine Buddhists. The Taoists, too, were anxious to reject the claim that Manichaeism was a form of Taoism".¹⁵⁶ In South China the Manichaean "meeting-places were often disguised as Taoist temples".¹⁵⁷ "This find", as de Jong observes, "strongly supports a scenario for the disappearance of Manichaeism in terms of a process of gradual dissolution or dilution".¹⁵⁸ A famous Taoist teacher presents Mani "as a failed Taoist and Buddhist", who founded the religion of Manichaeism "after he had failed to acquire Taoist immortality or Buddhist philosophy". We have here, as Lieu observes, "an interesting parallel to the version of Mani as a rogue prophet in the *Acta Archelai*".¹⁵⁹

To conclude, two remarks need to be pointed out. According to scholars, "The assimilation of Manichaeism to Buddhism and Taoism was partial or even superficial".¹⁶⁰ The same, regarding Christianity, was repeatedly stressed by anti-Manichaean authors of the Roman Empire. A further claim in Greek anti-Manichaica, that seems to be confirmed by the Muslim, Buddhist and Chinese testimonies, is that Manichaeans used the tactic of assimilation in various (different) religious environments.

8.10 Conclusions

By taking into account both Manichaean and anti-Manichaean sources, as well as testimonies of relevant religious phenomena and behaviours from other religious environments, I attempted to answer the central question of this chapter. I argued that the cause of the disappearance of Manichaeans from the Eastern Roman Empire was not only their physical extinction through executions (as modern scholarship implies), but also the high numbers of conversions and their dissolution within Christianity.

The latter (dissolution), was to a great extent due to the phenomenon of crypto-Manichaeism, carried out by those Manichaeans who, when confronted with the consequences of the law and the intensification of persecutions, preferred to convert falsely and become crypto-Manichaeans: a practice common to all cases of persecuted religions. The difference that I propose here as a possible and plausible scenario, is that the phenomenon of crypto-Manichaeism existed *before* the vigorous persecutions and served as a missionary technique (*entryism*). This is an alternative interpretation that fits the known facts more harmoniously and is supported by comparative evidence showing that such practices are actually possible. The fear that the Manichaeans intruded on religious communities (both Christian and pagan) permeates Greek literature since the early fourth century. Of course, as has been said, the label 'Manichaean' came to be applied to all kinds of perceived 'heretics'. However, at the same time, the label would also apply to 'real' Manichaeans. Scholars have simply given up hope of ever being able to distinguish the one from the other. This difficulty may have been caused because the Church Fathers were correct in their assumption that (some) Manichaeans joined the Church and attempted to preserve their own religion while remaining invisible within the Church.

Thus, in conclusion, we can assume that the phenomenon of crypto-Manichaeism, apart from being an option of necessity, was a deliberate missionary technique and strategy. The Manichaeans did not pursue their organizational clarity and independent structure, but

¹⁵⁶ Lieu 1986b, 235-275, 260-61.

¹⁵⁷ Lieu 1981a, 153-173.

¹⁵⁸ De Jong 2017, 655.

¹⁵⁹ Lieu 1986b, 260-61.

¹⁶⁰ Lieu 1992, 261-62.

rather preferred to penetrate existing structures. The aim of their strategy was not to dominate the Catholic Church, but while maintaining their ideas, to infiltrate the existing structures of its power (e.g. state, clergy, monasticism), in order to spread their ideas from within. The religious pluralism that existed in the Eastern Roman Empire facilitated this procedure. Further, the hypothesis of *entryism* explains to some extent the problem we have with the patristic sources, i.e. that although the Manichaean danger was repeatedly stressed, it was scantily substantiated, and justifies the fear of the Church Fathers that behind every *μανιχαῖζων* and *μανιχαϊόφρων* could be a concealed Manichaean.