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

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Propositions to the PhD dissertation
*The Manichaeans of the Roman East:
Manichaeism in Greek anti-Manichaica
& Roman Imperial Legislation*
by Rea Matsangou

1. The word 'Manichaean' in Greek anti-Manichaica is not just a term of religious abuse but also refers to real Manichaeans.
2. The distinctiveness of the Manichaean identity was not highlighted only by Catholic writers, as is often assumed, but was similarly emphasized by writers from all Christian denominations, as well as by pagans, Muslims, and Buddhists.
3. The fact that the Manichaeans were the most harshly persecuted religious group, in combination with the fact that the Manichaean question has never been addressed in any ecumenical or other church synod, shows that—for the authorities—Manichaeism went beyond ecclesiastical jurisdiction and extended to the socio-political sphere.
4. The death of Manichaeism in the Eastern Roman Empire seems to have been not as abrupt and violent as modern scholarship commonly implies, but was a rather slow process of absorption, assimilation, and dissolution into Christianity.

5. The term 'religion' (*θρησκεία*) already existed in the fifth century BCE (meaning mostly cult), and at least since the fourth century CE was used systematically, most of the time, with a meaning close to the modern one.
6. The term 'heresy' in Late Antiquity was not confined to its current meaning but was also used to imply a wrong choice, a rival religious choice, and just simply religion.
7. Scholarly narratives sometimes pass uncritically from one researcher to another, continuing a discourse that reproduces clichés stereotypically.
8. Comparison as a scientific operation is a quest for understanding because the mind works by identifying difference. In studying religions, a comparison is not only a way to understand the 'Other' religion but also applies to the study and understanding of a single religion/culture.
9. Journalists and political scientists often refer to contemporary political systems as Manichaean. However, historical Manichaeans were the victims of an unjust world, while modern power politicians are its agents.