



The Diffusion of Manichaeism in the Roman Empire

Peter Brown

The Journal of Roman Studies, Vol. 59, No. 1/2. (1969), pp. 92-103.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0075-4358%281969%2959%3A1%2F2%3C92%3ATDOMIT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-W>

The Journal of Roman Studies is currently published by Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/sprs.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE DIFFUSION OF MANICHAISM IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

By PETER BROWN

A study of the fate of Manichaeism in the Roman Empire derives its interest from three main problems. First, Manichaeism was invariably associated with Persia: to study the growth of Manichaeism in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, and to trace the attitude of the Roman governing-class to its expansion, is to touch on an important sector of the cultural relations between the Sassanian Empire and the Roman world. Secondly, the repression of Manichaeism in the Christian Empire was the spear-head of religious intolerance: the only Christian heretics to be executed in the Early Church were Manichees or those, such as Priscillian, on whom the accusation of Manichaeism could be made to stick. Thirdly, Manichaeism was a missionary religion: its rapid expansion in the third and fourth centuries makes it the last religion from the eastern provinces to attempt to make headway in Roman society, just as its appearance in the T'ang Empire of China, alongside Buddhism and Nestorian Christianity, place it among the leading 'barbarian' religions that spread into an Empire which had suddenly opened to the Western World. Conversely, the withering away of Manichaeism in the Roman Empire is a symptom of the growth of a new, more exclusive, more localized society, that foreshadows the embattled Christendom of the Middle Ages.

I

The Rescript of Diocletian, of A.D. 297, to Julianus, Proconsul of Africa, is our first evidence of the official reaction to the spread of Manichaeism:

'Eos [sc. Manichaeos] audivimus nuperrime veluti nova et inopinata prodigia in hunc mundum de Persica adversaria nobis gente progressa vel orta esse . . . et verendum est, ne forte . . . conentur per execrandas consuetudines et scaevas leges Persarum innocentioris naturae homines, Romanam gentem modestam atque tranquillam, et universum orbem nostrum veluti venenis anguis malivoli inficere.'¹

The Emperor has been taken a little too seriously. Many scholars have simply assumed that, because Manichaeism entered the Roman Empire from across the political frontier, it was a Persian religion.² More precisely, others have argued that Manichaeism could find a place in the religious beliefs of the Iranian governing class of the Sassanian Empire,³ and that both its expansion within the Sassanian Empire and its missionary activity in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire served the statecraft of the King of Kings.⁴ The unquestioning identification of Manichaeism with Persia has acted, also, as a labour-saving device for students of religious intolerance in the Later Empire: it has lulled us into believing that we know precisely why this group, at least, was so hated.

Manichaeism was not a 'Persian' religion in the strict sense. It is unfortunate that the first and only study of the diffusion of Manichaeism in the Roman Empire, by de Stoop, in 1909, should have been the work of a pupil of Cumont, and written at a time when the 'Iranian' interpretation of Manichaeism was at its height, recently fed, as it had been, by

¹ *Mosaicarum et Romanarum Legum Collatio* xv, 3, §4, ed. E. Seckel-B. Kuebler, *Jurisprudentiae anteiustinianae reliquiae* II, 2, 1927, pp. 381 ff., whose text I follow: see below p. 98 on the imagery of the *anguis malevolus*. Now in A. Adam, *Texte zum Manichäismus* (Kleine Texte für Vorlesungen und Übungen, 175), 1954, no. 56, pp. 82-83.

² Recently accepted by E. Volterra, 'La costituzione di Diocleziano e Massimiliano contro i Manichei', *Persia e il mondo greco-romano* (Accademia dei Lincei, anno 363, quaderno 76), 1966, pp. 27-50 at pp. 40-44.

³ G. Widengren, *Mesopotamian Elements in Manichaeism* (Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift) 1946, p. 179: 'By propagating a syncretistic religion, Mani

was able to offer the Sassanian King of Kings a religion well-suited to be acceptable both to his Iranian and Mesopotamian subjects'.

⁴ Notably by W. Seston, 'L'Égypte manichéenne', *Chronique d'Égypte* xiv, 1939, pp. 362-372; 'Le roi Narsès, les Arabes et le manichéisme', *Mélanges R. Dussaud*, 1939, pp. 227-234; and *Dioclétien et la Tétrarchie* (Bibliothèque de l'école française d'Athènes et Rome, 162), 1946, pp. 149-159; and accepted, for instance, by A. Chastagnol, *La préfecture urbaine sous le Bas-Empire*, 1960, p. 156: 'Ce sort particulier s'explique sans doute par les origines iraniennes de la doctrine et par la crainte de trahisons au moment des guerres entre la Rome et la Perse'. (My italics).

the discovery of Manichaean manuscripts in their most 'Iranian' form, in Central Asia.⁵ For Cumont, Manichaeism was the direct successor of Mithraism in the Roman world.⁶

The general reassessment of the nature of Manichaeism,⁷ followed by the discovery of the Coptic Manichaean documents in the Fayyūm in Egypt⁸ has made it increasingly difficult to represent Manichaeism as a development of Iranian religion.⁹ The Manichees entered the Roman Empire, not as a final version of the *Mages Hellenisés*, but at the behest of a man who claimed to be an 'Apostle of Jesus Christ': they intended to supersede Christianity, not to spread the *scaevae leges Persarum*.¹⁰ Diocletian had made the mistake, pardonable in a Roman if not in a modern historian of Near Eastern culture, of treating Persian-controlled Mesopotamia *tout court* as 'Persia'.

Mani belongs where he said he belonged, to the 'land of Babylon'. He came from southern Mesopotamia, the Sassanian province of Asorestan, Ἀσοῦρια.¹¹ Of his seven great books, one only was written in Middle Persian: the rest, in an Aramaic closely related to Syriac.¹² He looks back to the Gnostic Christianity of Osroene: his dialogue is with Marcion and Bardaisan of Edessa; ¹³ Zoroaster is a distant figure to him. To study Mani and Manichaeism, is to study cultural frontiers that have nothing to do with the political frontiers of the two Empires. The history of Manichaeism is to a large extent a history of the Syriac-speaking belt, that stretched along the Fertile Crescent without interruption, from Antioch to Ctesiphon. 'The frontier territory between Rome and Parthia was neither a cultural barrier nor a mere gateway and point of passage between East and West. It was a vital creative centre in its own right, and it was this fact above all which enabled it to serve as an effective intermediary between the two great civilisations that flourished on its borders.'¹⁴ What Ward-Perkins has said of the art of the Parthian period, remains true of the religious history of the whole Late Antiquity. Mesopotamia was the 'religiöse Wetterecke der Spätantike'. What we must first discover is why, from this *Wetterecke*, the wind of Manichaeism appears to have blown so strongly to the West.

This problem has been brought yet further from solution by ill-founded speculations on the relations between Mani, the Manichees and the Persian Kings, Shapur I, Ohrmizd I, Bahram I and Narseh I. These speculations ascribe to Shapur I the intention of using the message of Mani as a religious cement for his diverse Empire,¹⁵ and to Narseh, the plan of rallying the Manichees in the Roman world as a Persian fifth-column, and, hence, of provoking the justified indignation of the Emperor Diocletian.¹⁶ Such an interpretation of the rise of Manichaeism raises the general problem of the relations of the Sassanians to their non-Iranian subjects in general and to non-Zoroastrian religions in particular—a problem that has recently been handled by J. Neusner, for the case of the Jews in Babylonia, with exemplary caution and largely negative results.¹⁷

⁵ G. de Stoop, *Essai sur la diffusion du manichéisme dans l'empire romain* (Université de Gand. Recueil de travaux publiés par la faculté de philosophie et lettres, 38) 1909. For the development of Manichaean studies, and its relation to the finds in Egypt and Central Asia, the best account is by J. Ries, 'Introduction aux études manichéennes', *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* xxxiii, 1957, pp. 453-482; xxxv, 1959, pp. 362-409.

⁶ See F. Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithra* (trans. McCormack), Dover Editions, 1956, p. 207: 'The sect of Manichaeus spread throughout the empire during the fourth century, at the moment when Mithraism was expiring, and it was called to assume the latter's succession'.

⁷ Most notably E. Waldschmidt—W. Lentz, *Die Stellung Jesu im Manichäismus* (*Abhandlungen der Akad. d. Wissenschaften*, Berlin 1933, 13); H. Schaefer, *Urforn und Fortbildung des manichäischen Systems* (*Vorträge der Warburg-Bibliothek* iv, 1924-1925), 1927, and F. C. Burkitt, *The Religion of the Manichees*, 1925.

⁸ C. Schmidt—J. J. Polotsky, *Ein Mani-Fund in Ägypten: Originalschriften des Mani und seiner Schüler*. (*Sitzungsberichte der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philol.-Hist. Klasse*, 1933, 1).

⁹ See A. Böhlig, 'Christliche Wurzeln im Manichäismus', *Bulletin de la société d'archéologie*

copte xv, 1960, pp. 41-61, esp. p. 47—Zoroaster and Buddha are distant figures, compared to Jesus. The best statement of the nature of Manichaeism relates Mani to Gnosticism, not to Zoroaster: H. C. Puech, *Le Manichéisme: son fondateur, sa doctrine* (Musée Guimet, Bibliothèque de diffusion lvi) 1949, esp. pp. 69-70.

¹⁰ See especially, J. Ries, 'Jésus-Christ dans la religion de Mani', *Augustiniana* xv, 1964, pp. 437-454.

¹¹ On Asorestan-Ἀσοῦρια, see E. Honigmann—A. Maricq, *Recherches sur les Res Gestae Divi Saporis*, 1953, pp. 41-42 and 49, n. 2.

¹² Henning, 'Mitteliranisch', *Handbuch der Orientalistik, I. Abt., IV Bd. (Iranistik)*, 1958, 73: 'in seiner dem Syrischen naheverwandten ostaramäischen Muttersprache'.

¹³ As rightly emphasized by Burkitt, op. cit. (n. 7) and Höhlig, art. cit. (n. 9), pp. 47 ff.

¹⁴ J. B. Ward-Perkins, 'Frontiere politiche e frontiere culturali', *Persia e il mondo greco-romano* cit. (n. 2), 395-409: from the English summary at p. 395.

¹⁵ See Widengren, op. cit. (n. 3).

¹⁶ See Seston, art. cit. (n. 4).

¹⁷ J. Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia, II: The Early Sassanian Period* (Studia Post-Biblica, xi), 1966, pp. 2-3, 28 and 41.

In the case of the relations between Mani and Shapur I the evidence is, quite literally, fragmentary: much has hinged on the possible reading of a lacuna in one Coptic papyrus.¹⁸ Excited glimpses in the literature of a sect, of the confrontation of holy man and monarch, are hardly firm ground on which to build grandiose hypotheses on the relation of religion and statecraft in the Sassanian Empire: as Dr. Maricq concludes, 'cette trame est bien lâche encore'.

Such speculations are not so much groundless as misplaced. We are dealing with a religious movement of a very radical type. Faced by such a phenomenon, the historian should begin with enthusiasm, not with statecraft. To begin any other way in trying to understand Manichaeism, is to abandon a coherent body of vivid and contemporary religious literature in favour of a few dubious fragments.

We know three of the most important things about Mani.¹⁹ He was a missionary: not for nothing did he borrow the Pauline title of 'Apostle of Jesus Christ' for his letters.²⁰ He was deeply preoccupied with the problem of national boundaries.²¹ He believed that he had founded a universal religion: unlike Christianity and Zoroastrianism, he would be able to spread the 'hope of life' in East and West alike. East had been East, and West had been West; and only in Mani had the twain met.²² He was a man with a *daemon*. From the age of twelve, he had acted on the prompting of his 'Twin Spirit'. The final distillation of religious truth—the Holy Ghost that had been promised three centuries before Christ—had descended in him. With this belief he sent his disciples to East and West, and he himself lived a life of great missionary journeys.²³

Now, the interest of Mani's journeys is that, radiating from Mesopotamia, they usually strike inland, into the traditional world of the Iranian plateau: only once did he hover on the frontiers of the Roman Empire.²⁴ Socially, he seems to have impinged intimately on the Iranian governing class: he acted on the fringes of the Sassanian royal family;²⁵ he converted client kings²⁶ and female members of the Iranian aristocracy.²⁷ Thus for thirty years Mani had preached, performed exorcisms, conjured visions²⁸ near the heart of traditional Persian society, which knew him as 'the doctor from the land of Babylon'. When he was executed, in 276, it was at the instigation of the Zoroastrian clergy, led by the *mobedhan mobedh*, Karter, on the charge of having provoked apostasies from Zoroastrianism.²⁹ Mani was not the last religious leader in the Sassanian Empire to suffer for claiming that his was a universal faith, and that the 'Good Religion' of Zoroaster was both demonic and parochial.³⁰

The fatal interview with King Bahram took place at Bēth-Lāpāt, Gundeshapur. Gundeshapur had been thoroughly 'westernized' by Shapur I: the Emperor Valerian was said to have died in captivity there;³¹ it had been largely settled with prisoners of war from Shapur's great raids into the Roman Empire;³² it boasted a centre of learning that

¹⁸ *Kephalaia* I, ed. H. J. Polotsky and A. Böhlig, 1940, p. 15, admirably re-examined by A. Maricq in Honigsmann-Maricq, op. cit. (n. 11), pp. 24–25.

¹⁹ See esp. the summary of L. J. R. Ort, *Mani. A religio-historical description of his personality* (Supplementa ad Numen, altera series, 1), 1967.

²⁰ Schmidt-Polotsky, op. cit. (n. 8), p. 23. Augustine, *Contra epistolam Fundamenti*, c. 1 = A. Adam, op. cit. (n. 1) no. 10, p. 27: 'Manichaeus apostolus Jesu Christi providentia dei patris.'

²¹ Puech, op. cit. (n. 9), pp. 62–64. See esp. *Kephalaia* cliv, cited in Schmidt-Polotsky, op. cit. (n. 8) p. 44; and F. C. Andreas, 'Mitteliranische Manichaica, II' (*Sitzungsberichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1933, 5), p. 295 in A. Adam, op. cit. (n. 1) no. 3d, p. 6.

²² I know of no treatment of the possible source of this idea: it is far more drastic than any contemporary Christian statement of the supra-national quality of the Church—on which, see E. Peterson, 'Das Problem des Nationalismus im alten Christentum', in *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis*, 1959, pp. 51–53.

²³ Mani as the Holy Ghost: Puech, op. cit. (n. 9), pp. 43–44, nn. 164–166 at pp. 127–128. On Mani's journeys after his revelation: Puech, op. cit.,

pp. 44–49. Schaeder, op. cit. (n. 7), p. 129: 'Er ist weniger Stifter als Missionär. Sein ganzes Lebenswerk, seine Reisen, seine Schriftstellerei sind Mission.'

²⁴ *Kephalaia* I, ed. cit. (n. 18), p. 15.

²⁵ M. 3: F. W. K. Müller, 'Handschrift-Reste in Estrangelo-Schrift aus Turfan', *Anhang, Abhandlungen preuss. Ak. Wiss.*, 1904, p. 87, pp. 81–82, in Ort, op. cit., (n. 19), p. 53.

²⁶ M. 6031 and *Manichäische Homilien*, ed. H. J. Polotsky, 1934, pp. 42–67. See O. Klima, 'Baat the Manichee', *Archiv Orientalni* xxvi, 1958, pp. 342–346.

²⁷ Schmidt-Polotsky, op. cit. (n. 8), p. 27, n. 2.

²⁸ M. 566 I Recto: in Ort, op. cit. (n. 19), p. 51.

²⁹ M. 3, Müller, op. cit. (n. 25).

³⁰ M. 42: in Henning, op. cit. (n. 21), pp. 879–880. Compare the speech of Mār Abā, Nestorian *catholicos* of the sixth century, *Vita*, c. 14 in Braun, *Ausgewählte Akten persischer Märtyrer*, 1915, pp. 198–199.

³¹ *Chronicle of Seert*, *Patrologia Orientalis* iv, p. 220.

³² *Chronicle of Seert*, *Patrol. Or.* iv, pp. 220–221: see N. Pigulevskaja, *Les villes de l'état iranien*, 1963, pp. 159–161.

drew on Greek sources ;³³ it may have been decorated with sub-Antiochene mosaics like those at Bishapur ;³⁴ Syriac would have been spoken in the streets. Yet, Mani would only be allowed to approach the Iranian King of Kings through an interpreter.³⁵ The execution of the 'doctor from Babylon' was a warning : Shapur I had wrested non-Iranian traditions, skills and manpower from Anērān—from Mesopotamia and the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire—and had placed them in the heart of Ērān ;³⁶ Bahram I was to teach these non-Iranian elements to know their place. From 276 onwards, traditional Persian society, as a whole, was opaque to Manichaeism. Like a bow-sprit, its compact mass broke the Manichaean movement in two, scattering its missionaries to the North East into Soghdia and Central Asia (the Siberia of Persian dissidents),³⁷ and westwards into the Roman Empire.

Thus at no time in Late Antiquity or the Middle Ages can Manichaeism be firmly identified with 'Persia'.³⁸ Under the Abbasid Caliphate, for instance, the revival of Persian aspirations and Persian literature in the ninth and tenth centuries involved not so much a revival of Manichaeism as a bitter revival of the *persecution* of Manichaeism. A courtier such as Ibn Khurdadbeh, whose grandparents had been Zoroastrian noblemen, and whose idea of the *adab* of a cultured Muslim gentleman had to include knowledge of 'to which princes Ardasher gave the title of king',³⁹ would have regarded the Manichees as his traditional enemies : his new Islamic orthodoxy only gave him an additional incentive to crush a religious group that he had continued to call by its ancient, pehlevi name—*Zindiks*, 'corruptors of the Law', the *Zend*.⁴⁰

Mani, a man with a *daemon*, had overreached himself. But the Manichaean community remained. This community may have remained far closer to their Mesopotamian roots than had their ambitious, much-travelled leader.⁴¹ I would suggest that the 'Christian' and 'Western' elements in Manichaeism asserted themselves immediately after the execution of Mani, as the basis of an organized Manichaean Church. For the next persecution of Manichaeism, in around A.D. 287, is a persecution of a group regarded as indistinguishable from the Christians in the Sassanian Empire.⁴² This is hardly surprising. What we know of the Gnostic tendencies of Mesopotamian Christianity points inevitably to Manichaeism : as Ephrem of Nisibis would say, Marcion had divided the sheep of Christ, Mani merely robbed the robber.⁴³ More important, the great raids of Shapur I had filled the areas where Mani preached with Syriac-speaking settlers, many of whom were Christians.⁴⁴ The new sect spread among these uprooted men ; and from the late third century onwards, Manichaeism would dog, not the Zoroastrian establishment of Ērān, but the insecure Christian communities of the western parts of the Sassanian Empire.⁴⁵

If this is so, we can appreciate with what ease and in what form Manichaeism entered the Roman world. The rapid conquests and retreats of Shapur I had ensured that a trail

³³ H. W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems*, 1943, p. 81 and C. A. Nallino, 'Tracce di opere greche giunte agli Arabi per trafilata pehlevica', *Raccolta di scritti* VI, 1948, pp. 285-303.

³⁴ See E. Will, 'L'art sassanide et ses prédécesseurs', *Syria* xxxix, 1962, pp. 45-63.

³⁵ M. 3 in F. W. K. Müller, ed. cit. (n. 25), p. 92.

³⁶ *Gesta Divi Saporis*, lines 34 f. in Honigsmann-Mariq, op. cit. (n. 11), p. 34.

³⁷ W. Henning, 'Neue Materialien zur Geschichte des Manichäismus', *Zeitschr. d. deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* xc, 1936, pp. 11-14.

³⁸ For this reason, I would not accept the statements of A. Abel, 'Les sources arabes sur le manichéisme', *Annuaire de l'Institut de philologie et histoire orientales et slaves* xvi, 1961-1962, pp. 31-73, esp. at pp. 46-47.

³⁹ R. Paret, 'Contribution à l'étude des milieux culturels dans le Proche-Orient médiéval : l'encyclopédisme arabo-musulman de 850 à 950', *Revue historique* ccxxxv, 1966, pp. 47-100.

⁴⁰ See G. Vajda, 'Les Zindiks en pays d'Islam au début de la période abbasside', *Rivista degli studi orientali* xvii, 1938, pp. 173-229 and B. Spuler, *Iran in der frühislamischen Zeit*, 1952, pp. 206-209.

⁴¹ *Kephalaia* LXXVI, ed. cit. n. (18), pp. 183-188. The community at 'Gaukhai' is concerned at its leader's constant absence. It is these communities, in southern Mesopotamia, that Mani visits on his last journey : see W. Henning, 'Mani's Last Journey', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* x, 1942, pp. 941-953.

⁴² *Chronicle of Seert, Patrol. Or.* iv, pp. 237-238.

⁴³ Ephraem, *C. Haereses* xx, 3, ed. E. Beck, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, Scr. Syr. LXXVIII, 1957. On the diffusion of Gnosticism, especially of Marcionism, in Mesopotamia, see A. von Harnack, *Marcion*, 1921, pp. 190 ff. and, especially, A. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient : I, The Origin of Asceticism ; Early Monasticism in Persia* (*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, vol. 184, Subsidia, 14) 1958, pp. 45-48.

⁴⁴ See esp. M. L. Chaumont, 'Les Sassanides et la Christianisation de l'Empire iranien au III^e siècle', *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* CLXV, 1964, pp. 165-202.

⁴⁵ Excellently described, with much unpublished Syriac material, by Vööbus, op. cit. (n. 43), pp. 159-162.

of expatriates linked Antioch to the heart of the Persian Empire.⁴⁶ Later, the fall of Palmyra and the establishment of Edessa and Nisibis as the bulwarks of the Roman defence in Northern Mesopotamia gave greater prominence to the areas that were Syriac-speaking, partly Christian, endemic with gnostic radicalism.⁴⁷

As for the Manichees, they entered the Roman Empire as a group thoroughly alienated from the Sassanian state. They had lost Mani, then Sisinnios, at the hands of the Magi. Whether we are prepared to interpret the *détente* in persecution, granted by Narseh I in around 295, as part of a plan to rally the Manichees as a fifth-column in the Roman Empire, as Prof. Seston has done (and everyone after him), depends on whether we think it humanly possible for a tiny sect to forget overnight a generation of bloodshed. The Manichaean Coptic Homilies that refer to events in the Persian Empire make this seem unlikely.⁴⁸ The Manichees had bitter memories: in this alone, they would have appeared in the Roman world in the same position as their Christian rivals; they were the first Christian or para-Christian group to be able to boast of suffering for their faith at the hands of 'the Magi, the servants of fire'.⁴⁹

One can never ignore the Fertile Crescent. The Manichaean missionaries were only a small part of the steady trickle of Syriac-speakers across the frontiers of the two Empires: men like Aphraat who, in the mid-fourth century, moved from Southern Mesopotamia to Edessa, and only found it necessary to launch out from Syriac into pidgin-Greek when he reached Antioch;⁵⁰ or like Mâr Âba, who could travel easily, in the early sixth century, from Nisibis (by that time a Persian city) to Alexandria 'like a new Abraham from the land of the Chaldees'.⁵¹

Two points are worth noticing. First: it is the Christian communities and their radical off-shoots who do most to maintain the links across the Fertile Crescent in the Late Roman period. Tourists and philosopher-diplomats became rare;⁵² Christian priests were more common.⁵³ It is only in the Christian community in Antioch, for instance, that there is a chink in the curtain that veiled the fate of the inhabitants of the surrendered city of Nisibis from Roman eyes.⁵⁴

Secondly, Syria was the bridgehead of Manichaeism in the Roman world. The discovery of the Manichaean Coptic literature in Fayyûm has tended to distort our perspectives on this issue. The Manichaean Psalms were first written in Syriac;⁵⁵ Syriac Manichaean fragments were discovered alongside the Coptic documents;⁵⁶ the Manichaean community in Alexandria was a Syrian implantation (just as many Coptic Christian legends seem to echo the events of Antioch in the 260's).⁵⁷ The first Manichaean to settle in the Roman world was a characteristic figure of Roman religious history—a veteran, demobilized from Mesopotamia, returning with his own version of the sect to Palestine.⁵⁸ In the fourth century, Manichaeism was rife as a crypto-Christianity in Antioch and Palestine.⁵⁹ Most surprising of all is the group of well-known Syrians who stood, as it were, 'on the touch-line' of the Manichaean movement: Libanius intervened to protect them;⁶⁰ Strategius Musonianus whose culture (did it include Syriac?) led him to be

⁴⁶ Chaumont, art. cit. (n. 44), p. 176: see Pigulevskaja, op. cit. (n. 32), pp. 161–169, for a discussion of the diffusion of Syrian techniques in textile-production in the Sassanian Empire.

⁴⁷ See most recently, H. J. W. Drivers, *Bardaisan of Edessa* (Studia Semitica Neerlandica, 1) 1966, and Vööbus, op. cit. (n. 43), pp. 187–189.

⁴⁸ *Manichäische Homilien*, ed. cit. (n. 26), pp. 84–85, refers to bitter persecution in Persia.

⁴⁹ *Manichäische Homilien*, ed. cit. (n. 26), p. 160.

⁵⁰ Theodoret, *Historia Religiosa*, c. viii (Patrol. graeca LXXXII, 1368 B).

⁵¹ See esp. W. Wolska, *La Topographie chrétienne de Cosmas Indicopleustes* (Bibliothèque byzantine), 1962, pp. 63–73.

⁵² For which see recently J. F. Duneau, 'Quelques aspects de la pénétration de l'hellénisme dans l'Empire perse sassanide', *Mélanges René Crozet* 1, 1966, pp. 13–22.

⁵³ Shown recently by E. Follieri, 'Santi persiani nell'innografia bizantina', *Persia e il mondo greco-romano*, pp. 227–242; see esp. G. Mercati, 'Per la

vita e gli scritti di "Paolo il Persiano"', *Studi e Testi* v, 1901, pp. 180–206, esp. pp. 180–181.

⁵⁴ R. Turcan, 'L'abandon de Nisibe et l'opinion publique', *Mélanges André Piganiol* II, 1966, pp. 875–890.

⁵⁵ See T. Save-Söderbergh, *Studies in the Coptic Manichaean Psalm-Book*, 1949.

⁵⁶ Ed. by Burkitt, op. cit. (n. 7), p. 111.

⁵⁷ J. Schwartz, 'Dioclétien dans la littérature copte', *Bulletin de la société d'archéologie copte* xv, 1960, pp. 151–166. For artistic relations between Egypt and Syria in the third century, see esp. E. Drioton, 'Art syrien et art copte', *Bull. soc. archéologie copte* III, 1937, pp. 29–40.

⁵⁸ Epiphanius, *Panarion* LXVI, 1 (ed. K. Holl, *Griechische Christliche Schriftsteller* 37).

⁵⁹ See de Stoop, op. cit. (n. 5), pp. 61 sq. esp. Epiphanius, *Pan* LXVI, 87 and Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses* VI, 21.

⁶⁰ Libanius, Ep. 1253, ed. Förster; Teubner XI, p. 329.

commissioned by Constantine to examine the doctrines of the Manichees; ⁶¹ the *dux* Sebastianus, accused of being a Manichaean *auditor*; ⁶² Hierius, to whom Augustine addressed his first crypto-Manichaean treatise. ⁶³ Plainly, Manichaeism became part of the Syrian scene. Wherever we meet a Syrian, indeed, we may meet a Manichee. At Salona, for instance, we find the inscription of a Manichaean nun in a town where the origins of the Christian community point to Nisibis; ⁶⁴ at Carthage, a flourishing Manichaean 'cell' appears in the only western city where the Syrian eccentricities of the Messalian—'The Praying'—monks seem to have gained a foothold. ⁶⁵

The pattern continues as long as there are Manichaean communities at both horns of the Fertile Crescent. The journey of the philosophers from the Platonic Academy of Athens to the court of Khusro I in 531–532, is not quite as quixotic a flit as the account of Agathias would make us suppose. ⁶⁶ It is part of the history of the Fertile Crescent. For it had been preceded by a visit of the Nestorian professors of Nisibis, Mâr Aba and Paul the Persian, to Constantinople. ⁶⁷ The leader of the Athenian party was a Syrian, Damascius: he may well have discussed Plato in Syriac, the *lingua franca* of the sixth-century Near East. ⁶⁸ While the exceptionally empathetic analysis of Manichaeism by Damascius' colleague, Simplicius, contains a fragment of the original mythology of the Mesopotamian Manichees—this may be a strange souvenir of his visit to Ctesiphon. ⁶⁹ A little previously, a no less extraordinary encounter had taken place in Constantinople. In 529, the Manichaean leader, Photeinos, was confronted in debate by a nominee of the Emperor Justinian, Paul the Persian. Paul, also, would play his part in gratifying the philosophical tastes of Khusro, by translating Aristotle into Syriac; ⁷⁰ now, in Constantinople, he would debate in the stilted philosophical Greek of the Byzantine clergy and university professors. ⁷¹ The incidents are a reminder that right up to the sixth century, the diffusion of Manichaeism must be seen against the background of the extraordinary richness and homogeneity of the cultures of the Near East.

II

To return to the Emperor Diocletian. Students of the suppression of religious dissent too often forget that the declarations of persecuting authorities throw little light on the motives of the persecuted: what they do enable us to grasp are the fears and assumptions of the society that persecutes. As we have shown in Part I, Diocletian's edict has not taken us very far in our understanding of the Manichees. But it is vital evidence for his own form of Roman patriotism and for that of the officials and local notables in Africa who evidently regarded the arrival of Manichaean missionaries with horror. ⁷² As such it is a most revealing document. For it is a symptom of the increasing rigidity of the barrier that existed in the minds of the governing class of the later Empire, between 'Rome' and 'Persia'. The Manichees, as inhabitants of the open society of Mesopotamia, were caught between two professedly reactionary states—the 'Romanity' of Diocletian being matched by Narseh, a man 'driven on by praise of his ancestors'. ⁷³

This rigidity increases notably at the end of the fourth century: the laws against the Manichees are repeated with increasing severity from the reign of the Emperor Valentinian I onwards. ⁷⁴ I would suggest the following reason: in the treatment of Manichaeism we have

⁶¹ Ammianus Marcellinus xv, 13.

⁶² Athanasius, *Historia Arianorum* 73.

⁶³ Augustine, *Confessiones* iv, xiv, 21.

⁶⁴ F. Cumont—M. A. Kugener, *Recherches sur le manichéisme* III, 1912, pp. 175 ff.: in Adam, op. cit. (n. 1), no. 6, pp. 106–107. See R. Egger, *Römische Antike und frühes Christentum* 1, 1962, pp. 186–188.

⁶⁵ G. Folliet, 'Les moines euchites à Carthage en 400–401' (*Studia Patristica* ii), *Texte und Untersuchungen* LXIV, 1957, pp. 386–399. Independently arrived at by Vööbus, op. cit. (n. 43) II, 1960, p. 32, n. 72.

⁶⁶ Agathias II, 27. On this incident, I am indebted to the illuminating treatment of Dr. Averil Cameron, shortly to appear in *Dumbarton Oaks Studies*.

⁶⁷ See Wolska, op. cit. (n. 51) and Mercati, op. cit. (n. 53).

⁶⁸ See P. Peeters, *Le tréfonds orientale de l'hagiographie byzantine*, 1950, pp. 20 sq., on the use of Syriac by diplomats.

⁶⁹ Suggested by Dr. Ilsetraut Hadot: to appear in *Studia Patristica*. (Communications of the International Patriotic Congress, 1967.) Though not accepted by Dr. Alan Cameron, 'The Last Days of the Academy at Athens', to appear in the *Proc. Camb. Philol. Soc.*

⁷⁰ See Mercati, op. cit. (n. 53), pp. 183 f.

⁷¹ In *Patrologia Graeca* LXXXIX, coll. 528–578.

⁷² The document is a rescript, see Volterra, art. cit. (n. 2), p. 32.

⁷³ Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum* ix, 5.

⁷⁴ See E. H. Kaden, 'Die Edikte gegen die Manichäer von Diokletian bis Justinian', *Festschrift für Hans Lewald*, 1953, pp. 55–68.

a clear index of the fusing of Roman prejudice with Christian doctrinal intolerance. Writing of Mani, Eusebios of Caesarea will use exactly the same language as the Emperor Diocletian: a poisonous snake, entering the Roman world from 'barbarous' Persia.⁷⁵ But the effects of this fusion, already so obvious in an educated court-bishop of the age of Constantine, were delayed for a few generations. Traditional pagans seem always to have regarded the Manichees with horror;⁷⁶ but the Christians were less certain.⁷⁷ Manichaeism existed on the fringes of the Christian community: the bishops might fulminate, but they were also prepared to debate.⁷⁸ The resumption of outright persecution of the Manichees coincides with the partial Christianization of the lay governing-class of the Roman world. It is the mysterious 'Ambrosiaster,' a man in touch with the opinions of senators in Rome, who will cite the edict of Diocletian in his commentary on St. Paul: Manichaeism is a Christian 'heresy', for him; but it is also deeply hated as the 'new and unexpected monstrous-birth from Persia' that had disturbed conservative Romans.⁷⁹

The Manichees, therefore, suffered a double outlawry. The Christianized Roman Empire, already chauvinistic in its attitude to Persia, now orthodox, would have little patience with 'snakes' from outside its frontiers. Manichaeism, at least, was a very small snake compared with the more imposing outsiders in the Roman world: Diocletian's image of the 'snake,' amplified by a century and a half of religious zeal, will appear as a motto on the coins of Emperors committed to the most fateful of all confrontations with non-Roman heretics—on the coins of the Emperor Majorian, on the eve of his luckless expedition against the Arian Vandal kingdom established in Africa.⁸⁰

Altogether, the history of the original impetus of Manichaeism in the Roman Empire cannot be written as if it were a direct continuation of the spread of the oriental cults and of Mithraism. For the times had changed. Horizons had narrowed, frontiers hardened, in men's minds at least. In the second century, the doctrines of Elchasai would be warmly received in Rome: here was a 'Parthian book', to be treated with awe. But it is the open world of the second century that 'stands amazed' at the Wisdom of the East.⁸¹ Some of this 'amazement' survives in pagan circles of the fourth century: the author of the *Kyranides* will claim to have discovered his occult recipes through a visit to Seleucia, guided by a plausible figure—an old Syrian who had been brought to Persia as a prisoner of war.⁸² But most of the 'amazement' had worn off: 'Haec si aliquis Indus eloquitur, aut Persa commemorat, suae genti praecipiat . . . Cessa, Justine, cessa istius *vanitatis barbariem* diligenter cura captere, et *Romanus vir a Persico vel Armeniorum sacrilegio* nitere removeri'.⁸³

To study Manichaeism is to study the fate of a missionary religion in a world of shrinking horizons.

III

There are two ways of approaching the way in which Manichaeism spread within the Roman Empire: the jig-saw puzzle and the Chinese boxes.

The approach of the jig-saw puzzle sees Manichaeism exclusively as a product of religious syncretism. The scholar asks what pieces in the jig-saw of Manichaean beliefs appealed to what religious groups in the Roman world: the pagans, it is said, were attracted by the Manichaean reverence for the Sun; the Christians, by the name of Christ.⁸⁴ This approach has severe limitations. I would prefer the approach of the Chinese boxes. To

⁷⁵ Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* VII, 31.

⁷⁶ Augustine, *de utilitate credendi* I, 2.

⁷⁷ It was to the credit of Saint Anthony, wrote Athanasius, that he did not associate with Manichees: *Vita Antonii*, c. 68.

⁷⁸ See P. Ryl. 469 in Adam, op. cit. (n. 1), no. 35, pp. 52–54.

⁷⁹ 'Ambrosiaster', *Comment. ad II ep. Tim.* III, 6 (*Patrol. latina* XVII, 521).

⁸⁰ See P. Courcelle, 'Le serpent à face humaine dans la numismatique impériale du V^e siècle,' *Mélanges André Piganiol* I, 1966, pp. 343–355.

⁸¹ See esp. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste* I, 1944, pp. 19–27, p. 20: 'le monde gréco-romain est comme en stupeur'.

⁸² Festugière, op. cit. (n. 81), pp. 201 f.

⁸³ *Ad Justinum manichaeum* XVI, *Patrol. latina* VIII, 1008 C–D.

⁸⁴ This is the normal accusation of Christian polemicists: v. Epiphanius, *Panarion* LXVI, 87, followed by Marc le Diacre, *Vie de Porphyre*, ed. H. Grégoire—A. Kugener, 1930, c. 86, p. 67. It is accepted by de Stoop, op. cit. (n. 5), p. 33 *et passim*, and carried *ad absurdum* by H. J. Grondijs, 'Le diversità delle sette manichee', *Studi bizantini e neoellenici* IX, 1957, pp. 176–187 and 'Analyse du manichéisme numidien au IV^e siècle', *Augustinus Magister* III, 1955, pp. 391–410. For my disagreement on one significant item—the meaning of the Manichaean worship of the Sun—see P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 1967, p. 56.

become a Manichee or to favour the Manichees meant favouring a group. This group had a distinctive and complex structure. Because of this structure, the Manichaean group impinged on the society around it in a distinctive way; and this structure, in turn, exposed it to distinctive pressures from its Roman environment.

First, the Manichaean religion was based on a rigid distinction between the perfect, the Elect (men and women), and the rank-and-file, the Hearers.⁸⁵ The *sancta ecclesia* of Mani was limited to the Elect.⁸⁶ The Elect secured the salvation of the Hearers, by forgiving their sins and by purging their souls through entirely vicarious rituals.⁸⁷ The Hearers sheltered and fed the Elect.⁸⁸ Manichaeism, therefore, was a group with an unmistakable inner core: the Elect were vagrant, studiously ill-kempt, they carried exotic books, they were committed to elaborate liturgies and fenced in with drastic taboos.⁸⁹ The Hearers, by contrast, were indistinguishable from their environment.⁹⁰ The Manichaeism that we know most about in the fourth century is the Manichaeism of the Hearers—of the 'Fellow-Travellers'. Augustine and his friends were only Hearers.⁹¹ A less-known example was the *dux* Sebastianus. This able and popular general was said to be a 'Hearer' of the Manichees.⁹² At one moment, he might have become Emperor.⁹³ His eccentricity is a tribute to the Late Roman army as an oasis of religious freedom.

A religion that has to shelter behind patrons and half-adepts is an interesting phenomenon. Strange alliances could occur. Symmachus, the pagan, will choose Augustine, the Manichaean 'Hearer' for the chair of rhetoric in Milan at the behest of the Manichees.⁹⁴ He probably acted for the same reasons as a very similar pagan, Libanius, had done. Here was a small group suffering from the violence of the Christian communities; they were harmless, they were spread throughout the world in tiny enclaves, they worshipped the Sun.⁹⁵ In fact, they were an ugly reminder of what the pagans might become. It was a case of hang together or hang separately, such as would frequently cause the most unlikely religious minorities to strike up alliances throughout the Late Roman period.

Now these patrons and Fellow-Travellers were the most exposed to social pressures. For the heresy-laws of the Later Empire succeeded in one point only: they did damp the zeal of the upper-classes for religious non-conformity.⁹⁶ By the end of the fourth century, therefore, Manichaeism was already shorn of an intelligentsia that had come in equal numbers from pagan and Christian families.⁹⁷ African Manichaeism, for instance, was left with a rump of hard-core *Electi*, and with Hearers drawn exclusively from the fringes of the average Christian communities. The effect of persecution in the Christian Roman Empire, therefore, was to increase the 'Christianization' of Manichaeism, by encouraging occasional conformity and by cutting off its access to a large pool of post-pagan intellectuals.

Secondly, Manichaeism became a problem increasingly as a form of crypto-Christianity.

⁸⁵ Puech, *op. cit.* (n. 9), pp. 88–91.

⁸⁶ Evodius, *de fide* 5 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiae Latinorum* xxv).

⁸⁷ Hegemonius, *Acta Archelai*, 10; *Manichäische Homilien*, ed. cit. (n. 26), p. 38; Augustine, *Contra Faustum* v, 10 and *Confessiones* iv, i, 1. The same mentality is vividly described in the twelfth-century Cathars, see R. Manselli, *L'eresia del male*, 1963, esp. p. 237.

⁸⁸ P. Alfarc, 'Un manuscrit manichéen', *Revue d'histoire et de littérature religieuses*, n.s. vi, 1920: in Adam, *op. cit.* no. 16, pp. 34–35 and *Patrologia Latina Supplementum* II, 1378–1388.

⁸⁹ Vividly described by Vööbus, *op. cit.* (n. 43), vol. I, pp. 117–131.

⁹⁰ This is a constant feature of such movements: see A. Abel, 'Aspects sociologiques des religions manichéennes', *Mélanges René Crozet* I, 1966, pp. 33–46. It explains, in part, the success of Manichaeism along with Buddhism, among the nomads of Central Asia. Both were religions of groups of 'perfect', settled in the midst of laymen of totally different habits: see J. Maenchen-Helfen, 'Manichaeans in Siberia', *University of California Publications in Semitic Philology* XI, 1951, pp. 311–326, at p. 318–9... 'there is an aura of solemnity around them (the frescoes of Manichaean Elect), something

ceremonial, a dignity which sets them worlds apart from the quick and fierce Qyrgyz noblemen'.

⁹¹ Brown, *op. cit.* (n. 84), p. 54.

⁹² Athanasius, *Historia Arianorum*, 73.

⁹³ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* xxx, 10, 3.

⁹⁴ Augustine, *Confessiones* v, xiii, 23; see Brown, *op. cit.* (n. 84), p. 70.

⁹⁵ Libanius, *Ep.* 1253. For the violence with which Christian communities treated such small groups, see Julian, *Ep.* 41 (ed. Loeb, iii, p. 128).

⁹⁶ See P. Brown, 'Religious coercion in the Later Roman Empire', *History* XLVIII, 1963, at pp. 289–292.

⁹⁷ On such circles, see de Stoop, *op. cit.* (n. 5), p. 6. The coteries of alchemists and philosophers, with their womenfolk, who were treated as 'sisters' and 'fellow-philosophers', were favourable to such ideas: e.g. Agapios, writing to his συμφιλόσοφος Urania, *apud* Photius, Βιβλιοθήκη, ed. P. Henry II, 1960, pp. 184–187. I feel, however, that such people were not representative: the eclecticism, even the confusion, of Gnostic literary remains at Nag Hammadi contrasts vividly with the organized dogmatism of the Manichaean scriptures. Manichaeism was a religion organized for survival in a harsher age than that which saw the spread of a *salonfähig* Gnosticism.

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. This accounts for the exceptional rôle of the Catholic bishop in the suppression of Manichaeism. The only studies of the rôle of the bishop in the trial of heretics in the Later Empire—because the only evidence—concern the trials of Manichees.⁹⁸ For, whatever the severity of the Imperial laws, only the bishop on the spot could find out to whom they applied. Thus the severe laws of Theodosius⁹⁹ were rendered practicable in Egypt by the zeal of the patriarch Theophilus. Theophilus imposed a food-test on his monks.¹⁰⁰ Hence the inquisitorial atmosphere accompanying the suppression of Manichaeism and that other form of Gnostic crypto-Christianity, Priscillianism: we hear of *agents provocateurs* (one zealous priest suggested adultery as a fine way of obtaining the names of heretics¹⁰¹). The discovery of Manichees would be accompanied by lurid public 'confessions', before the bishop, throned in the apse of his basilica, like a Justice of the Peace.¹⁰²

The suppression of religious dissent was rarely a victory for the Imperial administration: the *tertius gaudens* was always the bishop. The Manichees were the first to perceive this: they supported the Arian nominee of Constantius II against Athanasius; for they had far less to fear from the strict, but distant Emperor, than from a man of the calibre of Athanasius, established on their doorstep as the undisputed leader of the Christian community.¹⁰³

The Christian Church appears as a labour-saving institution for the Roman state. For the problem of identifying the Manichee and of absorbing the convert devolved on the Christian clergy: the good faith of the converted Hearer would be guaranteed by his Catholic neighbours;¹⁰⁴ the converted Elect would spend a period under observation in a monastery; the bishop would distribute certificates to both, protecting them against further trouble from the laws.¹⁰⁵

Now it is interesting that this evidence is almost exclusively Western, and from the fifth and sixth centuries. We are reminded of the very different evolution of Church and State in the two parts of the Roman world. In Constantinople and the Eastern Empire, in 529, the problem of the converted Manichee was still being handled exclusively by the traditional police-mechanisms of the lay world: the bishop is peripheral.¹⁰⁶ In the West, the duty of identifying and absorbing heretics had long devolved on the clergy. It is a reminder that the more thoroughly 'Christianized' early Byzantine Empire will never be 'clericized' as rapidly as the less Christian but under-governed West.

Thirdly, Manichaeism was a missionary-religion. The Elect were obliged to travel; they would bring the seven great books of Mani with them; these scriptures, laid out on a high throne in front of the Hearers, were a reminder of the presence of Mani in his church, and a token that the 'cry of salvation', given forth in Babylon, had reached one's own town.¹⁰⁷ It is essential to remember this. Manichaeism did not grow out of any established group in a Late Roman town: it was not a schism or a peaceable deviation as the Gnostics had been. It had to come from the outside, through outsiders. What is more, in the fourth century the Manichees liked to come with *éclat*: the public dispute is a distinctive weapon of Manichaean propaganda;¹⁰⁸ and the arrival in the forum, or in front of the Christian

⁹⁸ See esp. E. Volterra, 'Appunti intorno all'intervento del vescovo nei processi contro gli eretici', *Bullettino dell'Istituto di diritto romano* XLII, 1934, pp. 453-468, and W. Ensslin, 'Valentinians II Novellen xvi u. xviii von 445', *Zeitschr. der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte*, Röm. Abt. 57, 1937, pp. 367-378.

⁹⁹ *Cod. Theod.* xvi, 5, 9 (382).

¹⁰⁰ Eutychius, *Annales (Patrologia Graeca* CXI, coll. 1023-1025).

¹⁰¹ Augustine, *Contra Mendacium* vii, 17.

¹⁰² e.g. Leo, *Sermo* 16, 4 (*PL* LIV, 178B); Augustine, *de haeresibus* 46, 2 (*PL* XLII, 36), in Adam, op. cit. (n. 1), no. 49, p. 67.

¹⁰³ Athanasius, *Historia Arianorum* 73.

¹⁰⁴ See the document in *Patrologia Latina* LXV, 25 B-C.

¹⁰⁵ See Brown, art. cit. (n. 96), pp. 301-305.

¹⁰⁶ *Cod. Just.* I, v, 11 and 12.

¹⁰⁷ See esp. J. Ries, 'La Gnose manichéenne dans les textes liturgiques manichéens coptes', *Le Origini dello Gnosticismo. Colloquio di Messina*, 1967, pp. 614-624.

¹⁰⁸ Public debates: Addas in Alexandria: F. C. Andreas—W. Henning, M. 2 in *Sitzungsberichte der preuss. Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 1933, 7, p. 301. Challenge by Apthionius to Aetius of Antioch: Philostorgius *Hist. Eccl.* III, 15 ed. Bidez, p. 461. Arrival from Antioch to Gaza: Marc le Diacre, *Vie de Porphyre*, ed. cit. (n. 84), c. 85, p. 66. Histrionic gestures: Augustine, *C. Felicem* i, 12—where Felix appears in the forum and offers to be burnt with his books if proved wrong. See Rufinus, *Historia Monachorum* 9 (*Patrologia Latina* XXI, coll. 426-427), for a gesture that misfired.

church, of a group of pale men and women, clasping mysterious volumes and dressed with ostentatious barbarity, was a sight to be seen.¹⁰⁹

Now the history of intolerance in the Later Roman Empire should never be treated in the abstract. More often than not, it is an aspect of the history of the Late Roman town. In the case of Manichaeism, it raised the problem of what to do with outsiders. The edicts are of misleading vehemence. The Manichaean 'Elect' was seldom 'deprived of the very elements' by execution; he was rarely 'exiled from Roman soil'; he was usually told, in no uncertain terms, to 'get out of town'.¹¹⁰ When Augustine unexpectedly left Carthage for Rome it was obvious to his enemies that, as a Manichee, he had been 'struck by sentence of exile' by the Proconsul.¹¹¹ The Manichaean Elect risked a fate suffered by many a religious mischief-maker, from St. Paul to St. Martin of Tours—a flogging and the open road.¹¹²

This fate, of course, is not without its compensations for a zealous missionary. Manichaeism was constantly scattering from the great cities, where officials and bishop were on the alert, to sleepy provincial towns and to the safety of remote villages¹¹³—Augustine retired from Carthage to Thagaste,¹¹⁴ Pascentius, from Rome to Asturia.¹¹⁵ The problem, therefore, is not why the Imperial legislation failed to stamp out Manichaeism—for it acted like a man scattering sparks as he beats out a fire—but why, despite the dispersing effect of this legislation, the Manichaean missionary endeavour had ceased, by the sixth century, to have the disturbing mobility of a plague.

The question is worth our while to ask. For, in the fifth century, the Western provinces of the Roman Empire lay wide open to Manichaean propaganda. Pope Leo was genuinely alarmed: the barbarian invasions had dislocated the security-system of the Catholic episcopate and had paralysed the Imperial authorities.¹¹⁶ The spiritual atmosphere was chilly: it contained much the same raw admixture of asceticism and an obsession with the Devil as ruler of this world that would 'escalate' into neo-Manichaeism in Bulgaria, in Italy and in Southern France in the eleventh century.¹¹⁷ The para-Manichaeism of the Priscillianists had already swept North-Western Spain.

I would suggest four reasons for the loss of momentum of the Manichaean movement.

First: by the fifth century, the Western town had become a very small place and had collapsed inwards around its bishop. We can see this most clearly with Augustine in Hippo. By 405, the Donatist bishop has gone; the local notables have rallied to Catholicism; he can meet the Manichaean missionary from the height of his own *cathedra* in his own basilica, while only ten years previously, he had met him on equal terms, on the neutral ground of a public bath-house, in front of an audience of mixed beliefs.¹¹⁸ Later, when Arian propaganda reached Hippo, Augustine appealed to the *civitas* against the *peregrini*.¹¹⁹ His activity is matched, at the far end of the Roman world, by bishops such as Rabbula of Edessa.¹²⁰ Later, one need read only Gregory of Tours to realize that religious eccentricity would receive short shrift in Gallic towns dominated by their bishop.¹²¹

Second: Manichaeism was out of date. It is often assumed that Manichaeism was one of the causes of the monastic movement. This is not so. The Manichees made great use of

¹⁰⁹ See esp. Marc le diacre, *Vie de Porphyre*, ed. cit. (n. 84), c. 85, p. 66. The Georgian version of this incident still further emphasizes the wild dress of the Elect: P. Peeters, *Analecta Bollandiana* LXI, 1941, p. 198.

¹¹⁰ See *Cod. Theod.* xv, 5, 18 (389): 'ex omni quidem orbe terrarum sed quam maxime ex hac urbe pellantur'. The *Acta Archelai*, c. 65, reflects fourth-century conditions faithfully: 'valde enim hi qui missi fuerant ab eo per singulas civitates ab omnibus hominibus execrationi habebantur, maxime apud quos christianorum nomen veneratione erat'. Compare Rufinus, *Hist. Mon.* 9.

¹¹¹ Augustine, *C. litt. Petiliani* III, xxv, 30.

¹¹² Sulpicius Severus, *Vita Martini* VI, iv, 5.

¹¹³ Gregory, *Reg.* v, 8, refers to Manichaean tenants on the estates of the Church in Sicily. For a similar 'de-urbanization' of heretics in medieval Italy, see the excellent study of C. Violante, 'Hérésies urbaines et hérésies rurales en Italie du XI^e au

XII^e siècles', *Hérésies et Sociétés dans l'Europe préindustrielle*, ed. J. Legoff, 1968, pp. 171-197, esp. pp. 179-188.

¹¹⁴ See Brown, op. cit. (n. 84), p. 54. In Carthage, by contrast, the Manichees lived under constant fear of denunciation: Augustine, *de moribus Man.* (II), xix, 29.

¹¹⁵ Hydatius, *Chron.* no. 24 (*Patrol. Lat.* LI, 882).

¹¹⁶ Leo, *Sermo* 16, 5 and *Ep.* 15 (*Patrol. Lat.* LIV, 680A).

¹¹⁷ See, most recently, C. N. L. Brooke, 'Heresy and religious sentiment: 1000-1250', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* XLI, 1968, pp. 115-131.

¹¹⁸ See Brown, art. cit. (n. 96), pp. 304-305; esp. *C. Felicem* i, 18.

¹¹⁹ Augustine, *Tractatus in Johannem* XL, 7.

¹²⁰ See R. Duval, *Histoire politique, littéraire et religieuse d'Edesse*, 1892, pp. 169-171.

¹²¹ Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum* IX, 6.

a common Christian literature of apocryphal gospels. These had always placed a heavy weight on chastity: and a young man who had gained access to these skilfully-inverted *erotica* through the Manichees did, indeed, end up in Augustine's monastery.¹²² But Manichaeism had arisen some generations before monasteries. It represents a more primitive strand of asceticism: it continued the radical isolation from the world, the obligatory vagrancy of its Syriac homeland.¹²³ By the 380's, the Western Manichees were already behind the times. A Manichaean Hearer in Rome, Constantius, tried to found a monastery for the Elect: he was embarrassed by their vagrant life.¹²⁴ Constantius was in touch with the atmosphere of late fourth-century Rome. In the 370's, the Manichaean Elect had already suffered from the Emperor Valentinian's 'new broom' in the city:¹²⁵ their conventicles had come to the notice of a government capable of introducing licensing-laws and concerned with all forms of vagrancy. The Christian community at Rome was also putting its house in order. Ascetic eccentricity was clamped into monasteries; and a powerful clergy would pray pointedly that God should protect their flock from ill-kempt ascetic *confessores*.¹²⁶

Thirdly: Manichaeism lost its most characteristic lay supporter—the merchant. The merchant figured largely in Christian romances on Manichaeism.¹²⁷ The Soghdian merchants, known to the Chinese as men who 'travel all over the world in search of gain',¹²⁸ were the mainstay of Manichaeism in Central Asia and Northern China, in the seventh and eighth centuries.¹²⁹ Augustine converted one such Manichee—the rich merchant Firmus.¹³⁰ I suspect that, as a Catholic priest, Firmus continued to satiate his zeal and his wanderlust by travelling from Bethlehem, to Sicily, to Africa, to Rome, to Ravenna, as *factotum* of the senatorial ladies around S. Jerome and as literary agent of S. Augustine.¹³¹ The merchant's life was still a good life in the fourth century: 'Navigare . . . et negotiari magnum est, scire multas provincias, lucra undique capere, non esse obnoxium in civitate alicui potenti, semper peregrinari, et diversitate negotiorum et nationum animum pascere'.¹³² And travelling broadens the mind. In sixth-century Alexandria the eccentric merchant survives: Cosmas Indicopleustes had contacts with Axum and the India trade. This had led him into a world dominated by Persia and by the Nestorian Christianity of the Persian dominions. This layman had the courage of his eccentricity, if not the scientific judgement, to attack the academic Establishment of his city—the proud professor, John Philoponos, ensconced as the protégé of the Patriarch of Alexandria and the self-appointed hammer of the Platonic Academy of Athens.¹³³ But in the West, trade receded and the merchant settled down as a local landowner, tied to the opinions of his locality. The Syrians of sixth-century Gaul are a harmless source of orthodox relics and pious legends. They are so 'integrated' into the Catholic community that one enterprising firm could invest money by buying up a Catholic bishopric.¹³⁴ Manichaeism would not revive until the 11th and 12th centuries; until the missionary activity fostered by the itinerant weavers of the new cloth-towns of Northern France and the 'tourist boom' of the Crusades marked the end of the rigid and parochial structure of early medieval Western society.¹³⁵

Fourth: There was no reason why Manichaeism in the Eastern Empire should have been hamstrung in this way. Yet, after the savage purges of 527 and 530, there appears to be

¹²² Augustine, *Ep.* 64, 3.

¹²³ Vividly characterized by Vööbus, *op. cit.* (n. 43), I, pp. 85 f. and II, pp. 22–35 and esp. pp. 187–192, on the well-merited tribulations of the vagrant Alexander the Sleepless. How little the Western authorities tolerated a religious vagrancy that was normal in the East, is shown in the total outlawry of the Circumcellions, whose oriental parallels have been shrewdly exposed by Salvatore Calderone, 'Circumcelliones', *La Parola del Passato* cxiii, 1967, pp. 94–109.

¹²⁴ Augustine, *de moribus Man.* (II), xx, 74.

¹²⁵ *Cod. Theod.* xvi, 5, 3 (372).

¹²⁶ L. Duchesne, *Christian Worship: its origin and evolution*, transl. McClure, 1919, p. 421.

¹²⁷ Scythianus: in Hegemonius, *Acta Archelai* 61–65.

¹²⁸ The New T'ang History, cited in E. G. Pulleybank, 'A Soghdian Colony in Outer Mongolia', *T'oung Pao* xli, 1953, pp. 317–356 at p. 317.

¹²⁹ See Maenchen-Helfen, *art. cit.* (n. 90), p. 324: 'Merchant and Manichaean must for some time have been practically synonymous'; and A. Adam, *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, I Abt., viii, 2, pp. 118–119.

¹³⁰ Possidius, *Vita* xv, 5.

¹³¹ Augustine, *Ep.* 172, 2 and H. I. Marrou, 'La technique de l'édition à l'époque patristique', *Vigiliae Christianae* III, 1949, p. 218, n. 36.

¹³² Augustine, *Enarratio in Ps.* 136, 3.

¹³³ See esp. Wolska, *op. cit.* (n. 51), pp. 3–11.

¹³⁴ On the identification of the merchant with the landowning classes, see L. Ruggini, 'Ebrei ed orientali nell'Italia settentrionale', *Studia et Documenta Historiae et Juris* xxv, 1959, pp. 186–308.

¹³⁵ See esp. C. Thouzelier, 'Hérésies et croisades au XII^e s.', *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* XLIX, 1954, esp. at pp. 864–865.

a complete standstill in Manichaean propaganda; ¹³⁶ and there is no revival of Manichaeism during the fourteen years when the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire were part of the Persian dominions of Khusro II Aparvez.

I suspect a turning-point within Persian-controlled Mesopotamia itself. Up to the beginning of the sixth century, this region still 'bubbled' with radical Gnostic movements. These occasionally 'boiled-over', as the Catholic authorities put it, into the Roman Empire, as Manichaeism had done.¹³⁷ This is not surprising. In the late fifth century, Persia was the Sick Man of the Near East; the Iranian hold on Mesopotamia was seriously weakened.¹³⁸ But the savage suppression of the Mazdakite movement in 528 (a movement identified with Manichaeism in many sources ¹³⁹) is the beginning of the reestablishment of the traditional Persian monarchy, and an omen of the end of sectarian Mesopotamia. From 528 onwards, the Nestorian Church is increasingly assimilated to Persian society and, so, impervious to Manichaeism. Manichaeism itself became an exclusively Soghdian affair. The Manichaean Pilgrim Fathers of Samarkand looked down, from a safe distance, on their cowed brethren in Mesopotamia—'the damned Syrians'.¹⁴⁰ The heart of Manichaeism was burnt out.¹⁴¹ No matter how impressive its diffusion might appear in Central Asia and China, Manichaeism was tied to the increasingly out-of-date landroutes through central Asia to the Yangtse.¹⁴² There is no evidence of Manichaeism along the new booming sea route, that linked Mesopotamia directly with Canton. We may be sure that there were no Manichaean stowaways in the ships of Sinbad the sailor.

This is the end of a great missionary religion. The Later Roman Empire has usually been presented as a society of growing anarchy and dislocation. A Manichee would have liked it better that way. I think the exact opposite is closer to the truth. Whatever the fate of the central government, the fifth and sixth centuries are marked by increasing tidiness and rigidity on the local level. The Christian communities are better organized. The 'flock of the Lord' fills the Western towns right up to the narrow circle of their walls. The ascetic fringe knows its place, in the monasteries. The horizon of the average man is narrower, more firmly orientated. In such a world, the Manichees would have been an unwelcome reminder of the wider horizons of a past age. For us, the extraordinary activity of the Manichaean missionaries, who linked one end of the Fertile Crescent to the other within a generation, and who would spread the only *premeditated* universal religion in the history of thought from Babylon to Northern Spain, is a reminder of the blessings of political uncertainty and intellectual ferment that we are, perhaps, ill-advised to deprecate in the 'crisis' of the third century A.D.

All Souls College, Oxford

¹³⁶ I am unconvinced by most of the arguments propounded by J. Jarry, 'Les Hérésies dualistes dans l'empire byzantin du vième au viième siècle', *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* LXIII, 1965, pp. 89-120.

¹³⁷ For instance, the account of the Borboriani in Bar-Hebraeus, *Chronicon Ecclesiasticum* I, ed. Abbe-loos, Louvain 1872, pp. 220-222.

¹³⁸ See esp. Pigulevskaja, op. cit. (n. 32), pp. 218-221.

¹³⁹ See esp. Malalas, *Chronographia* (Bonn), pp. 309-320 and Theophanes, *Chron. Anno Mundi* 6016, ed. De Boor I, pp. 169-171.

¹⁴⁰ Henning, art. cit. (n. 37), p. 16.

¹⁴¹ There may be one exception: Manichaean propaganda in Armenia may lie at the origin of the Paulician heresy, see D. Obolensky, *The Bogomils*, 1948, pp. 17-18. But even if it did spread into Armenia in the sixth century, Manichaeism lost its identity in the Paulician movement, where it is 'Christianised' beyond recognition. For an alternative explanation of the origin of Paulicianism, that minimises direct Manichaean influence, see N. G. Garsoian, *The Paulician Heresy. A Study of the Origin and Development of Paulicianism in Armenia and the Eastern Provinces of the Byzantine Empire*, 1964.

¹⁴² O. Franke, *Geschichte des chinesischen Reichs* II, 1936, esp. p. 552, l. 27.