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THE FEW AND THE MANY: A MOTIF OF AUGUSTINE'S CONTROVERSY WITH THE
MANICHAEANS*

Andreas Hoffmann

At first glance, the concept of the “few” and the “many” appears to be a very special side issue providing some interesting individual observations, but it does not seem to be of vital importance. In my point of view, this first impression needs to be revised on closer inspection. The contrast of the two groups is not only a topos of ancient philosophy in particular, but the comparison itself and its judgements play a repeated and not unimportant role in Augustine's intellectual biography.¹ It is not restricted to the function of a merely effective literary device. At the latest since the reading of Hortensius, the question of truth is at the center of the Augustinian thinking. All of his further life is influenced by the endeavour for “wisdom”. According to Cicero, this wisdom comprises in a broad sense “the knowledge of divine and human matters as well as their causal relations”.² This endeavour is, as is also shown in the Hortensius, an intellectual and practical-ethical undertaking at the same time. An insight into truth can only be gained if the search for knowledge is accompanied by a corresponding life style, thus the intellectual and the ethical aspect are interconnected.

The Hortensius therefore launches the search for truth in Augustine, which will remain a driving force throughout his entire life. The several stations of this search for truth from the reading of Hortensius to the return to the catholica are widely known and the internal relations have been clarified by many investigations.³ Hence, the following considerations aim at completing the picture by an aspect that has been little noticed so far. The motif of the few and the many can be found in the intellectual development from the young Augustine to the mature theologian. My focus will be on the significance of the contrast in the progression of the young Augustine from the Hortensius to Manichaeism and in his anti-Manichaean struggle. The following major questions have to be considered: What is the significance of the motif of the few and the many in Augustine's intellectual development? Which influence does it have on his shift towards Manichaeism? Which role does it play in his return to the catholica and in his later fight against Manichaeism?

* I am grateful to Lena Clemens for her translation.

¹ H.-D. Voigtländer, *Der Philosoph und die Vielen. Die Bedeutung des Gegensatzes der unphilosophischen Menge zu den Philosophen (und das Problem des argumentum e consensu omnium) im philosophischen Denken der Griechen bis auf Aristoteles*, Wiesbaden 1980.

² Cic., Hort. frg. 94 (Grilli) (M. Tullius Cicero, *Hortensius*, ed. Albertus Grilli, Milano 1962) = 6 (Straume-Zimmermann) (Cicero, *Hortensius. Lucullus. Academici libri*, ed. L. Straume-Zimmermann / F. Broemser / O. Gigon, München 1990): “sapientia autem est ... rerum divinarum et humanarum causarumque, quibus eae res continentur, scientia.”

³ Still essential are the studies of E. Feldmann (cf. below note 4.24); cf. also J. Trelenberg, *Augustin als Rhetor von 386*, in: V.H. Drecoll (ed.), *Augustin Handbuch*, Tübingen 2007, 144-148; G. Wurst, *Augustin als „Manichäer“*, *ibid.* 148-153; V.H. Drecoll, *Die „Bekehrung“ in Mailand*, *ibid.* 153-164; V.H. Drecoll / M. Kudella, *Augustin und der Manichäismus*, Tübingen 2011, 58-80.

1. Hortensius

Together with the impulse to search for truth⁴, the Hortensius leads Augustine to the conviction that this truth can only be found among the “few”. “The gods have given philosophy only to a few”, and this is the greatest gift they gave to the humans and the greatest gift they could have ever given.⁵ Augustine himself ascribes this statement to Cicero in *de ciuitate Dei*, unfortunately without indicating any sources. Grilli included this passage into his edition of the Hortensius as frg. 111,⁶ combining it with a statement by Cicero which was preserved by Lactantius and claims that philosophy is not “uulgaris”, because only scholars can achieve it.⁷ It is however controversial whether these two fragments can really be attributed to Hortensius or not. Besides the fact that Augustine could as well have encountered them within another context,⁸ Straume-Zimmermann refused to include frg. 111 (Grilli) in her Latin-German edition arguing that an emphasis on the difficulties connected with philosophy would not fit to the protreptic intention of the Hortensius.⁹ This argument, however, does not seem to be compelling. The Ciceronian Hortensius addresses himself to an educated audience which could potentially access the philosophical existence in consistently searching for truth and living a secluded-renouncing way of life. Belonging to the “few” who gained an insight in truth could actually be a desirable goal for this audience.

Regardless of the question whether these fragments can be ascribed to the Hortensius with certainty, there can be no doubt that the “elitist” trait of philosophy corresponds to the overall intention of the Hortensius and is also clearly expressed by Cicero. According to frg. 115, which certainly is a Hortensian utterance, the philosophical existence (*uita contemplatiua*) presents very high challenges, both intellectually and ethically. The one who “lives in philosophy” – and the fortune which all people desire can be found herein – has to be concerned with the search for truth “day and night”, sharpen one’s comprehensive capabilities and pay attention to constantly keep up these standards.¹⁰ A thorough education in the sciences is a crucial precondition for this objective¹¹ and the intellectual efforts must be linked to a life style determined by the virtues. Happiness cannot be attained if one lives how it pleases them, but only if one recognises and tries to accomplish what is morally appropriate (*quod decet / oportet*).¹² Earthly goods, such as reputation, wealth or pleasure gain are certainly not part of that, but the masses consider these worldly possessions signs of

⁴ Cf. Aug., *conf.* 3,7f.; *beata uit.* 4. Contemporary overview of the Hortensius: K. Schlapbach, *Art. Hortensius*, in: *AL 3* (2004-2010), 425-436; cf. esp. E. Feldmann, *Der Einfluss des Hortensius und des Manichäismus auf das Denken des jungen Augustinus von 373*, Münster (masch.) 1975; L. Straume-Zimmermann, *Hortensius. Versuch einer Rekonstruktion*, in: *Cicero, Hortensius. Lucullus. Academici libri*, ed. L. Straume-Zimmermann, / F. Broemser / O. Gigon, München 1990, 327-370.

⁵ Cf. Aug., *ciu.* 22,22 (CCL 48 l. 121-124): “(philosophia) quam dii quibusdam paucis, ait Tullius, ueram dederunt; nec hominibus, inquit, ab his aut datum est donum maius aut potuit ullum dari.”

⁶ Cf. Cicero, *Hortensius* frg. 111 (Grilli).

⁷ Cf. Cicero, *Hort.* frg. 88 (Grilli) = Lact., *inst.* 3,25,1; cf. also Cic., *Hort.* frg. 89 (Grilli) (Lact., *inst.* 3,25,12).

⁸ J. Doignon, *Fragments de l'Hortensius chez Augustin à récupérer ou à invalider*, in: *Latomus* 58 (1999), 169 points out that the evaluation of philosophy as the greatest gift of the gods could have taken place in Cicero’s *Academici* which hint at Plato’s *Timaios*, cf. Cic., *Acad* 1,2,7 as well as Plat., *Tim.* 47b. Furthermore, Grilli’s fragment 111 does not necessarily have to be a precondition for the immediately following fragment 112 which is explicitly marked as being part of the Hortensius; it might rather belong into the context of the controversy with Porphyrios considered from an anti-Pelagian perspective, cf. Doignon 169-171.

⁹ Cf. Straume-Zimmermann, *Rekonstruktion* 328.

¹⁰ Cf. Cic., *Hort.* frg. 115 (Grilli) = 102 (Straume-Zimmermann).

¹¹ Cf. Straume-Zimmermann, *Rekonstruktion* 331 with reference to frg. 14,78 (according to her own count).

¹² Cf. Cic. *Hort.* frg. 59a (Grilli) = 69 II / 70 II (Straume-Zimmermann).

happiness and pursue them. Cicero forcefully warns against them, especially against sexual desire as the greatest “*uoluptas*”, contradicting reasonable thought and being its strongest enemy.¹³ True wealth can be acquired only in the possession of virtues.¹⁴ Anyone who stays on track, i.e. who is determined by reason and the constant search for truth, does not get involved with the delusions and vice of “mankind”.¹⁵ This manifests the contrast between the few who are able to lead such a life and the broad, unphilosophical masses.

Cicero illustrates the background in the *Tusculan Disputations* which contain some passages closely related to the *Hortensius*. In his point of view, mankind is strongly influenced by bad behaviour and wrong attitudes, so that all good hereditary abilities are being debauched since their childhood. Family, teachers, poets, and basically “the people” (*populus*) convey these false attitudes. The masses (*multitudo*) all around have agreed on “vice” as a general rule; the adolescent adopts their false virtues and orientation. Only philosophy can cure from this “disease”.¹⁶ Cicero connects this consequence with the assertive reference to the *Hortensius* in which he displayed the praise of philosophy.¹⁷ As he explains later, the philosophical existence is an issue of only a few intellectually gifted and ethically superior people who distance themselves from society. Philosophy is thus “satisfied with a few being judges”, consciously avoids the masses and is accordingly looked at with suspicion.¹⁸

In this basic conviction, Cicero follows the platonic tradition. Only few can philosophise, the broad masses are unable to do so.¹⁹ The endeavour to vision the world of ideas is a lifelong process. “Die Vollendung des menschlichen Lebens lässt sich eben nicht durch einen einsemestrigen Kurs in platonischer Ideenlehre erzielen, sondern steht am Ende eines jahrzehntelangen Bildungsprozesses, in dessen Verlauf die gesamte Persönlichkeit umgeprägt werden muss.”²⁰ Also Lactantius refers to this principle and adds the hint that the Stoics²¹ and Epicureans promoted it as well. Although they generally assume that also women and slaves are able to philosophise, the world of philosophy effectively remains closed to them. The necessary preconditions of philosophy, namely holistic education in all knowledge domains and higher skills, can neither be met by women nor slaves as these core skills are not included

¹³ Cf. Cic., *Hort.frg.* 84 (Grilli) = 84 I (Straume-Zimmermann).

¹⁴ Cf. Cic., *Hort. frg.* 72 (Grilli).

¹⁵ Cf. Cic., *Hort. frg.* 115 (Grilli) = 102 (Straume-Zimmermann): “... sic existimandum est quo magis hi fuerint semper in suo cursu, id est in ratione et in investigandi cupiditate, et quo minus se admiscuerint atque implicuerint hominum vitiis et erroribus, hoc eis faciliorem ascensum et reditum in caelum fore.”

¹⁶ Cf. Cic., *Tusc.* 3,1-3 (listed as no. 4 in Straume-Zimmermann’s edition).

¹⁷ Cf. Cic., *Tusc.* 3,6.

¹⁸ Cf. Cic., *Tusc.* 2,4 (Straume-Zimmermann no. 3), also referring to the *Hortensius*. For the ideal of the wise also cf. *Tusc.* 5,68: Intelligence, virtue, and an eager search for truth are the preconditions for this ideal. The triple profit of such a mind lies in recognising things, explaining nature, distinguishing between what is worth striving for and what should be avoided, i.e. the right conduct of life and, finally, logic.

¹⁹ Cf. esp. Plat., resp. 6 491ab; 494a. Cf. Th. Fuhrer, *Die Platoniker und die civitas dei* (Buch VIII-X), in: Chr. Horn (ed.), *Augustinus. De civitate dei* (Klassiker auslegen 11), Berlin 1997, 102-105.

²⁰ J. Brachtendorf, *Augustinus und der philosophische Weisheitsbegriff*, in: Th. Fuhrer (ed.), *Die christlich-philosophischen Diskurse der Spätantike. Texte, Personen, Institutionen* (Philosophie der Antike 28), Stuttgart 2008, 262 with fn. 5 (cf. Plat., resp. 7 540a).

²¹ Cf. e.g. Seneca, *de ira* 2,10,6: “Non irascetur sapiens peccantibus: quare? Quia scit neminem nasci sapientem sed fieri, scit paucissimos omni aevo sapientis evadere, quia condicionem humanae vitae perspectam habet; nemo autem naturae sanus irascitur.”

in their education. Finally Lactantius concludes referring to Cicero that philosophy is inaccessible to the masses.²²

Thus, there can be no doubt concerning the “elitist” attitude of the Hortensius. This attitude furthermore corresponds with a widely accepted axiom in philosophy. Restricting true philosophy to a small circle of particularly proficient individuals in order to promote philosophy is, according to my opinion, not counterproductive from the start. Also, Cicero mentions a positive counterbalance at the end of his promotion speech: Anyone living as philosopher can hope for a more “peaceful” death, or if there is an afterlife, a facilitated “ascent and return to heaven” for their soul.²³

2. Manichaeism

Prompted by religious memories of his childhood, which were roused by the reading of the Hortensius, Augustine started to search for truth within the realm of Christianity. His unsuccessful attempt to read the bible indicates this. “Within a few days” he affiliates himself enthusiastically not with the catholica, but with the Manichaeans.²⁴ Apparently, the Manichaeans seem to offer the very true, higher Christianity Augustine is looking for. They identify themselves as Christians by their reference to the Holy Scriptures of Christianity, their “Trinitarian” creed and their Christ piety. In contrast to the mainline church, however, they define themselves as a small elite demanding higher standards. While they already constitute a community of the “few” as opposed to the many other (Catholic) Christians, they also clearly separate within their community between the “ordinary” *auditores* and the “*pauci electi*”.²⁵ As illustrated by the example of Faustus, the latter are believed to have a deeper knowledge of truth and to fulfil the tough demands of radical asceticism. Both the intellectual and the ethical demands of the Manichaeans are Augustine’s central motifs to affiliate with Manichaean Christianity and both of them are tightly connected with the motif of the few and the many.

2.1 Intellectual demand: The few “enlightened”

There is a lot of evidence for the intellectual demands of the North African Manichaeans.²⁶ The promise to provide reasonable insights into truth is based on the “*gnosis*”, the “*scientia*”

²² Cf. Lact., inst. 3,25,7-12 (Hort. frg. 89 [Grilli], cf. above): “... Ob eam causam Cicero ait abhorrere a multitudine philosophiam.”

²³ Cf. above note. 15. For Cic., Hort. frg. 115 and 110 (Grilli) cf. M. Testard, Observations sur la pensée de Cicéron, orateur et philosophe consonances avec la tradition judéo-chrétienne III. L'Hortensius, in: *Revue des études Latines* 79 (2001) 61-69.

²⁴ Cf. Aug., duab. an. 1 (CSEL 25 p. 51,6f.). For the motifs, cf. esp. Feldmann, Einfluss; furthermore: Id., Der Übertritt Augustins zu den Manichäern, in: A. v. Tongerloo (ed.), *The Manichaean NOYΣ*. Proceedings of the International Symposium organized in Louvain from 31 July to 3 August 1991, Louvain 1995, 103-128; id., Sinn-Suche in der Konkurrenz der Angebote von Philosophien und Religionen. Exemplarische Darstellung ihrer Problematik beim jungen Augustinus, in: C. Mayer / K.H. Chelius (eds.), *Homo spiritualis*. Festgabe für Luc Verheijen, Würzburg 1987, 100-117.

²⁵ Cf. Decret, *L’Afrique manichéenne (IV^e-V^e siècles)*. Étude historique et doctrinale 1, Paris 1978, 188-191. But the “*paucitas*” should not generally be restricted to the few “*electi*”.

²⁶ Cf. A. Hoffmann, Erst einsehen, dann glauben. Die nordafrikanischen Manichäer zwischen Erkenntnisanspruch, Glaubensforderung und Glaubenskritik, in: J. van Oort / O. Wermelinger / G. Wurst (eds.), *Augustine and Manichaeism in the Latin West*. Proceedings of the Fribourg-Utrecht Symposium of the International

which was brought by Mani. Mani is the Paraclete who has been augured by Christ and who guides “into all truth” (John 16,13). The Manichaean Felix decidedly phrases this fundamental conviction:

“In his proclamation, Mani taught us (“docuit nos”) about the beginning, the middle and the end; he taught us (“docuit nos”) of the creation of the world, why (“quare”) it was created, what it was created from and which powers shaped it; he taught us (“docuit nos”) why there is day and night; he taught us (“docuit nos”) about the course of the sun and of the moon. As we neither find this with Paul nor in the writings of the other apostles, we are urged to believe that Mani is the Paraclete.”²⁷

In this context, “the whole truth” is understood in a very pointed manner. The teachings of Mani fill in the gaps left by the New Testament of the catholici (the Old Testament is to be rejected anyway); they illustrate the beginnings, explain the present along with its cosmic phenomena, and inform about the eschata. The anaphora of “docuit nos” and “quare” underlines the rational character of this message. The proceedings of the world are supposed to become comprehensible by means of the teaching of the two principles. According to Fortunatus,²⁸ the “scientia rerum”, the knowledge of matters, which is able to explain the natural state of the world, lies in the cognition of this dualism. This thesis is reminiscent of the Ciceronian ideal of cognition concerning the “understanding of both divine and human matters and their causal relations”.²⁹ Within the Manichaean tradition, however, cognition is based on revelation which is given by the Paraclete’s proclamation. It is – entirely in accordance with the Gnostic self-conception – redeeming knowledge.³⁰ The *Epistula fundamenti* distinctly expresses this basic conviction: Anyone who listens to the words of the Paraclete Mani, “believes” in them and observes them (in their conduct of life) will not be subject to death. They gain a liberating, “divine knowledge” which enables them to stay within the realm of eternal life.³¹ The knowledge about the first beginnings until the emergence of the first human couple is one first part of this knowledge. According to the narrator of the *Epistula*, there are many different traditions about this issue, and no one but Mani – and the one who is granted the certain knowledge by him – knows “the truth” about these questions.³² By listening to the *epistula*, the individual is initiated, achieves the

Association of Manichaean Studies (IAMS) (NHMS 49), Leiden 2001, 77-85; J.D. BeDuhn, *Augustine’s Manichaean Dilemma 1. Conversion and Apostasy, 373-388 C.E.*, Philadelphia 2010, 29-33; Drecoll / Kudella, *Augustin* 63-66.

²⁷ Cf. c. Fel. 1,9 (CSEL 25 p. 811,13-18): “(et quia Manichaeus) per suam praedicationem docuit nos initium, medium et finem; docuit nos de fabrica mundi, quare facta est et unde facta est, et qui fecerunt; docuit nos quare dies et quare nox; docuit nos de cursu solis et lunae: quia hoc in Paulo non audiuimus nec in ceterorum apostolorum scripturis, hoc credimus, quia ipse est paracletus”.

²⁸ Fortunatus in: Aug., c. Fort. 14 (CSEL 25 p. 91,8-12); 20 (p. 99,21).

²⁹ Cf. above note 2.

³⁰ Cf. Feldmann, *Übertritt* 125.

³¹ Cf. ep. fund. frg. 2 (ed. Feldmann [Die „*Epistula fundamenti*“ der nordafrikanischen Manichäer. Versuch einer Rekonstruktion, Altenberge 1987, 10f.]).

³² Ep. Fund. frg. 4a (ed. Feldmann) (= Aug., c. ep. Man. 12,14): “de eo igitur, inquit, frater dilectissime Pattici, quod mihi significasti dicens nosse te cupere, cuiusmodi sit natiuitas Adae et Euae, utrum uerbo sint idem prolati, an progeniti ex corpore, respondebitur tibi, ut congruit. namque de his a plerisque in uariis scripturis reuelationibusque dissimili modo insertum atque commemoratum est. quapropter ueritas istius rei ut sese habet, ab uniuersis fere gentibus ignoratur et ab omnibus, qui etiam de hoc diu multumque disputarunt. si enim illis super Adae et Euae generatione prouenisset manifesto cognoscere, numquam corruptioni et morti subiacerent.”

previously mentioned knowledge, and thereby comes to “enlightenment”.³³ This distinguishes the disciples of Mani from “almost every people” and this is the reason why the Manicheans make for a small, exclusive group in contrast to the rest of the world.

The promise of a holistic rational understanding of the world is one decisive reason for Augustine to join the Manichaeans. “ueritas, ueritas” – with this slogan they entice the young Augustine.³⁴ The effects of this advertisement are particularly displayed in his treatise to the Manichaean Honoratus. During the time of their – apparently joint – studies in Carthage, Augustine managed to attract him for the Manichaeans against his prior resistance. Soon after his ordination as presbyter, Augustine tries to dissuade Honoratus from the Manichaeans and to lead him to the catholica.³⁵ Looking back on the time spent together in Carthage, Augustine summarises: The Manichaeans have been significantly more attractive for both young men due to their demands and promised rational cognition (“magna quadam praesumptione ac pollicitatione rationum”; they want to lead “mera et simplici ratione” to God); they rely on the consideration and “development” of truth (“discussa et enodata veritate”).³⁶ In contrast to this, the catholica “demands” the superiority of faith over rational cognition.³⁷ Due to the recourse on common experiences, the details are historically highly reliable. It is however interesting that in his argumentation which aims at leading its addressee to the catholica, Augustine generally argues where the search for truth should reasonably begin without recurring to any contents of teaching. In case of deviating doctrines he suggests to consider those teachers of wisdom who count the most disciples. By way of contrast Augustine has the discussion partner object: “But truth can only be found among the few”. He illustrates that the objection could be caused by the “nature of truth” (“ui ueritatis”).³⁸ Apparently and probably because of common traditions of thought, Augustine assumes that his addressee is familiar with the axiom of the few experts of truth and that it could be used against the catholica. That is why he anticipates their ideas in order to weaken them. We will have to come back to this point later on.

2.2 Ethical demand: The few “saints”

The claim for ethical exclusivity is even more obvious than the claim for intellectual distinctiveness. Especially Secundinus and Faustus reflect the self-conception of the Western Manichaeans. Secundinus, who is an auditor himself, regards mankind as being under the reign of the devil. Several New Testament episodes up to the crucifixion and in particular the behaviour of ordinary people confirm this. The “people” in its entirety (populus), the “crowd”

³³ Cf. Aug., c. ep. Man. 5,6 (CSEL 25 p. 197,8-10).

³⁴ Aug., conf. 3,10 (CCL 27 c. 6,6).

³⁵ For personal details on Honoratus cf. A. Hoffmann, Art. Honoratus, in: AL 3 (2004-2010) 421f.; id., Augustins Schrift De utilitate credendi. Eine Analyse (MBT 58), Münster 1997, 24-35.

³⁶ Cf. Aug., util. cred. 2 (FC 9 p. 82,22f.; 80,17; 80,23-82,1). Cf. A. Hoffmann, Einleitung, in: Augustinus, De utilitate credendi. Über den Nutzen des Glaubens (FC 9), Freiburg 1992, 21-23; ders., Augustins Schrift, 171-177.

³⁷ Cf. Aug., util. cred. 2 (FC 9 p. 80,21-23.): “... quod nos superstitione terreri et fidem nobis ante rationem imperari dicerent.”

³⁸ Cf. Aug., util. cred. 16 (FC 9 p. 122,1-4): “At enim apud paucos quosdam est ueritas. Scis ergo iam, quae sit, si scis, apud quos sit. Nonne dixeram paulo ante, ut quasi rudes quaereremus? Sed si ex ipsa vi ueritatis paucos eam tenere coniectas, qui uero sint, nescis: quid, si ...”

(multitudo), the masses (turba), especially the mass of women, cannot attain virtue, virtue remains beyond their reach.³⁹ The strict demands of Manichaean ethics have to be complied in order to reach eternal life, but only the few are able to manage this. Secundinus makes use of Mt 7,13f to support his contention: The devil tries to lead people astray from the “narrow path of the saviour” and therefore Secundinus urgently summons his former brother in faith to follow the narrow path.⁴⁰ With this argumentation he fosters the contrast between the many walking on the broad path and the few walking on the narrow path and justifies it with reference to Jesus’ sayings. The passage is often used with this intention in Manichaean literature.⁴¹

Faustus proves that the Manichaeans are a minority as opposed to the mainline church, which is mainly due to their higher ethical demands. In his manual for the discussion with “Half-Christians” and the defence of their “clever, devious theses” with their “cunning questions”,⁴² he deals with reproach that the Manichaeans would not accept the gospel, because they do not believe in Jesus’ (physical) birth. Faustus emphasises in his counter argumentation that the “acceptance” of the gospel includes two dimensions, namely the intellectual affirmation of confessional statements and the practical realisation of ethical demands. Faustus clearly regards the former to be the easier part and the latter to be more difficult and more valuable. As a Manichaean he meets both aspects, even if he rejects Jesus’ human nature arguing that he himself had spoken of his heavenly father.⁴³ His major focus is however on the ethical aspect. In his way of living, Faustus meets the central Christian demands as postulated in the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount, the speech on the last judgement, the missionary mandate or other biblical words of Jesus.⁴⁴ He holds against the Catholics that they would only verbally confess everything, including Jesus’ human birth, but they would not meet the ethical demands. In doing so, the Catholics have chosen the easier, childishly simple way. “The masses therefore rightly turn to you and away from me, not knowing that the kingdom of God does not depend on words, but on behaviour.”⁴⁵

Every Manichaean, regardless of their status within the community, can make use of Faustus’ model argumentation. Within the borders of the relatively small Manichaean communities, the “pauci electi” have to be distinguished from the *auditores*, as they have to meet even higher ethical demands. As opposed to the *auditores*, they are considered the “few saints” (*pauci sancti*).⁴⁶ The Codex of Tebessa⁴⁷ addresses the topic of the “two classes” within the

³⁹ Cf. Sec., ep. 4 (AOW 22 l. 19-22): “Illa nunc addo, quae praesens actitat multitudo, a qua tantum virtus procul est, quantum populo clausa est. Nec enim virtus est, ad quam turba pervenit, et turba quam maxime feminarum.” Kudella AOW 22, 236 note 56 assumes one has to distinguish between *populus* = people and *multitudo/turba* = the mainline Catholic Church.

⁴⁰ Cf. Sec., ep. 1 (AOW 22 l. 14f.); 3 (l. 22f.).

⁴¹ Cf. M. Stein, *Codex Thevestinus. Text, Übersetzung, Erläuterungen* (PapyCol 27, Manichaica Latina 3,1), Paderborn 2004, 259; Kudella, AOW 22, 335.

⁴² Cf. Faustus in Aug., c. Faust. 1,2 (CSEL 25 p. 251,22-252,7). The Manichaean Augustine himself drives Catholic Christians “*nonnullis quaestiunculis*” into a corner, cf. conf 3,21 (CCL 27 c. 12,10f.).

⁴³ Cf. Faustus in Aug., c. Faust. 1,3 (CSEL 25 p. 274,12-20). This is the applicable confession “*sine blasphemia*”.

⁴⁴ Cf. Faustus in Aug., c. Faust. 1,1.3.

⁴⁵ Faustus in Aug., c. Faust. 5,2 (CSEL 25 p. 273,1f.): “*Nec inmerito plebs ad te confugit, a me refugit, nesciens utique, quia regnum dei non sit in uerbo, sed in uirtute*”.

⁴⁶ Cf. Aug., c. Adim. 15 (CSEL 25 p. 156,21-25).

⁴⁷ Cod. Thev. A 30-51 (ed. Stein). For contents and reasoning cf. Stein, *Codex* 132-135. The core thought for the relation between the two groups is their mutual referencing (cf. Stein, *Codex* 132, see this passage also for the

Manichaean communities and their mutual relations and is apparently mainly directed at the “auditors”.⁴⁸ Just like the Electi they are disciples (discipuli) and belong to the same (true) church.⁴⁹ In this dichotomous church, they are still “within the world”, i.e. they are in possession of goods and they are married.⁵⁰ The Electi are the “perfect” (perfecti) disciples,⁵¹ because they are strangers to the world which they renounce⁵² and therefore earned a heavenly treasure.⁵³ They are poor as far as worldly possessions are concerned and they are few in numbers (pauci). The text underlines this with several phrases and refers to three central New Testament passages:⁵⁴ Firstly the picture of the small path (Mt 7,14) that leads to life and is walked upon only by few,⁵⁵ which also Secundinus makes use of⁵⁶, secondly Jesus’ warning that only few will enter the kingdom of heaven, although many counted themselves as belonging to the Lord (Mt 7, 21), and thirdly Mt 20,16 (Vulg.) / 22,14, which deals with the “chosen few” in contrast to the many who were invited.⁵⁷ With that, the “Electi” as the few are explicitly connected to Jesus himself and the contrast to the many is implied, yet not particularly mentioned.

It is highly likely that Augustine draws on his biographical background when depicting “chaste life” in *de moribus* as one of the Manichaeans’ finest enticements.⁵⁸ This enticement did obviously have a strong effect on him as he joined the Manichaeans. A note in the confessions claiming that during his time as a Manichaean auditor, he granted Mani a credit of trust in unresolved doctrinal questions due to his “alleged sanctity”, which gave him special authority, also proves this assertion.⁵⁹ Furthermore, Alypius is impressed by their (ostensible) chastity.⁶⁰

One can therefore proceed on the assumption that to the young Augustine the Manichaeans seemed to be the small elite, which makes both higher intellectual as well as ethical demands than the *catholica*, which again functions as venue for the “many” who are not able to grasp at higher standards. They correspond with the essence of the *Hortensius* also in this aspect. This might have additionally fostered Augustine’s impression that with them he found a group conforming to the Ciceronian ideal. Belonging to this elitist group certainly had its own attractiveness.

characterisation of the two groups in the codex): The auditors have to support the Electi especially with food supply and thereby contribute to the purification of the light. Conversely, they will be saved by the Elects’ intercessory prayer in the Last Judgement.

⁴⁸ Cf. Stein, *Codex* 125.132.

⁴⁹ Cf. *Cod. Thev.* A 34,9-17; A 47,4-9.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Cod. Thev.* A 31,12-14; 38,6f.

⁵¹ Cf. *Cod. Thev.* A 43,1; B 6,13.

⁵² Cf. *Cod. Thev.* A 31,8f.; A 50,2-5, also cf. Stein, *Codex* 281f., hinting at the parallel in *Faustus*, c. *Faust.* 5,1.

⁵³ Cf. *Cod. Thev.* A 39,1-8; 34,5-8.

⁵⁴ Cf. *Cod. Thev.* A 43,4-16: “... sunt [eni(m)] / et opib(us) pauperes e[t] / numero pauci et p[er] / artam uiam incedun[t] / [a]ngusto tramit[e] / [non] stipati sunt [..] / [...i] sunt pauc[i] / [..] fideles, qu[i in reg]- / [nu]m caeloru[m ingre]- / d[i]untur, sicut [dic]- / tum est: „multi qui- / dem sunt uocati, pau- / ci autem electi.”

⁵⁵ Cf. *Cod. Thev.* A 43,6-9; in B 6,13-28, the narrow and tight path tread by the “perfecti” is contrasted with the broad and spacious lane which gathers the many, cf. Stein, *Codex* 310; also cf. *Cod. Thev.* B 31,24f.

⁵⁶ Cf. above note 40.

⁵⁷ For variants of the text as well as further evidence in Manichaean literature cf. Stein, *Codex* 263-265.

⁵⁸ Cf. *Aug., mor.* 1,2 (CSEL 90 p. 4,9-13). Taking measures against this was the decisive motif to write this document, cf. *Aug., retr.* 1,7,1.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Aug., conf.* 5,9 (CCL 27 c. 5,35-37).

⁶⁰ Cf. *Aug., conf.* 6,12 (CCL 27 c. 7,49-51).

3. The Few and the Many in the controversy with the Manichaeans

When he realises that they can neither meet their intellectual nor ethical standards, Augustine breaks with the Manichaeans. The influence of neoplatonic literature cannot be dealt with here in detail. Whatever “Platonicorum libri” Augustine has read⁶¹ – Plotin and also Porphyrios readopt the platonic concept of the few who have these cognitive faculties, and they even intensify the idea, because the ability to view “the One” is restricted to even higher conditions. Augustine already realises when reading Plotin’s enneads, which he has most certainly received, that those who want to recognize the divine first need to become godlike by turning inwards and approaching the divine One with a gradual ascent. This however can only work if the individuals purify themselves by virtuous practice.⁶² It is obvious, of course, that only the few are able to master this challenge. In *de ciuitate Dei*, Augustine will ascribe a statement to Porphyrios claiming that only few were allowed to ascent to divine cognition and that absolute wisdom could not be achieved in this life. Those living according to reason would however gain whatever they miss after death.⁶³

Thus the elitist trait in Augustine’s thinking is supported by neoplatonic literature. In his early writings, which are considerably characterised by an epistemological optimism, Augustine reserves the knowledge of truth for the few with harsh judgements. Truth only reveals itself to the “very few and chosen admirers”.⁶⁴ Just the few’s ability to reason visions truth.⁶⁵ As opposed to them, the “stupid” and “simpleminded” make for an “incredibly large mass”.⁶⁶ His former biographical influences explain this baseline of Augustinian thought. The “sapientes”, “docti”, “sani”, “iusti”, “spiritaes”, who recognize God, thoroughly understand the Scriptures and live according to God’s commandments in distance to the world, are always the “pauci”.⁶⁷ The motif is once again influenced by the controversy over the teachings of grace and the doctrine of predestination. Many are called, but only few follow this call, which is those few who have been preordained and chosen by God’s grace.⁶⁸

⁶¹ Cf. Drecoll, *Bekehrung* 156f.; id., *Gnadenlehre* 45-48.

⁶² Cf. Plotin, *enn.* 1,6,8.9; 1,6,2; 1,6,6f. For the philosophical doctrine of virtues and Augustine’s use cf. Ch. Horn, *Augustinus über Tugend, Moralität und das höchste Gut*, in: Th. Fuhrer / M. Erler (eds.), *Zur Rezeption der hellenistischen Philosophie in der Spätantike. Akten der 1. Tagung der Karl-und-Gertrud-Abel-Stiftung vom 22.-25. September 1997 in Trier (PhA 9)*, Stuttgart 1999, 173-190, for neoplatonism esp. 178.181f.187f.

⁶³ Cf. Porphyr., *frg.* 297F (ed. Smith) = Aug., *ciu.* 10,29 (CCL 47 l. 11-13); 22,22 (CCL 48 l. 121-123). Cf. V.H. Drecoll, *Neuplatonismus*, in: id. (ed.), *Augustin Handbuch*, Tübingen 2007, 83.

⁶⁴ Cf. Aug., *sol.* 1,22 (CSEL 89 p. 34,4f.).

⁶⁵ Cf. Aug., *ord.* 1,32; cf. id. 2,30.38.

⁶⁶ Cf. Aug., *Acad.* 1,2 (CCL 29 l. 36f.): “stultorum hominum, quorum inmensa turba est”; 2,1 (l. 14): “... ut scientia raro paucisque proueniat”; *uera rel.* 27 and other passages. Cf. Th. Fuhrer, *Augustin contra Academicos (vel de Academicis)*. Bücher 2 und 3. Einleitung und Kommentar (PTS 46), Berlin 1997, 61f.418; J. Trelenberg, *Augustins Schrift „De ordine“*. Einleitung, Kommentar, Ergebnisse (BHTh 144), Tübingen 2009, 171 with note 256; 228 with note 122.

⁶⁷ Cf. e.g. *uera rel.* 51 (CCL 32 c. 28,13); 27 (c. 14,6); *util. cred.* 35 (FC 9 p. 184,6); *ep.* 118,32 (CSEL 34,2 p. 696,16f.) (“per pauciores pie doctos et uere spiritaes uiros”); *c. ep. Man.* 4,5 (CSEL 25 p. 196,5f.); *c. Faust.* 22,56 (CSEL 25 p. 652,2f.); *ord.* 1,32 (CCL 29 c. 11,45f.); *duab. an.* 16 (CSEL 25 p. 72,23).

⁶⁸ Cf. *exp. prop. Rm.* 55; *ad Simpl.* 1,2,10-13; *corrept.* 13f.23; *c. Iul.* 5,14 and other passages. Cf. A. Zumkeller, *Augustinus über die Zahl der Guten bzw. Auserwählten*, in: *Augustinianum* 10 (1970), 447-455; Drecoll, *Gnadenlehre* 165-168.229-232. Cf. also below note 98.

However, the question must arise, not least because of the Manichaean propaganda, how Augustine justifies his affiliation with the “mainline church” of the *catholica*. Does he thereby not align himself with the “many”? How does this fit with his elitist ideal?

His controversy with the Manichaeans plainly reveals that Augustine has dealt with this tension consciously and that he has tried to resolve it with the help of several different strategies and arguments.⁶⁹ His argumentation against Honoratus, “Still-Manichaean” and friend of his youth, shows that Augustine is aware that this topic is central at least to the educated and philosophically trained. “But truth can only be found among the few”⁷⁰ – this prejudice can potentially blight every approximation to the *catholica* within the search for truth.

Considering the most important lines in Augustine’s argumentation, one observes the tendency to stick to the principle of the perfect few and to complement or soften this principle by the positive assessment of the many. The background seems to be the argument of the “*consensus omnium*”.⁷¹ Cicero phrases the argument in the context of the immortality of the soul and argues that the consistent judgement of all can be considered the “voice of nature” and that one should affiliate with whatever all deem right.⁷² Seneca points out the maxim: “We consider truth to be proven if something particular seems right to everyone.”⁷³

1. The core argument regarding the elitist-rational approach is: Actually there are only few “wise men” among the *catholica* who have come to know truth, i.e. God. These few possess a certain authority, i.e. a personal effective and persuasive power enabling them to impress the many and to guide them towards truth.⁷⁴ Although the mass is not able to “comprehend” this truth intellectually, it “believes” in it, i.e. it accepts it as truth and tries to realise it in their lives. The background to this is Augustine’s epistemological approach of the two ways of cognition, “*credere*” and “*intellegere*”. They are directly linked with the two cognitive powers “*fides*” and “*ratio*” as well as with the concept of “*auctoritas*”.⁷⁵ It is possible to reach truth by

⁶⁹ The arguments developed here are of fundamental importance to Augustine’s later controversies with other heretics, cf. J. Trelenberg, *Das Prinzip „Einheit“ beim frühen Augustinus* (BHT 125), Tübingen 2004, 151.

⁷⁰ Aug., *util. cred.* 16 (FC 9 p. 122,1).

⁷¹ Cf. K. Oehler, *Der Consensus omnium als Kriterium der Wahrheit in der antiken Philosophie und der Patristik. Eine Studie zur Geschichte des Begriffs der Allgemeinen Meinung*, in: AA 10 (1961), 103-129.

⁷² Cf. Cic., *Tusc.* 1,35: “*Quodsi omnium consensus naturae vox est, omnesque qui ubique sunt consentiunt esse aliquid, quod ad eos pertineat qui vita descesserint, nobis quoque idem existimandum est.*”

⁷³ Sen., *ep. ad Luc.* 117,6: “*(multum dare solemus praesumptioni omnium hominum), et apud nos ueritatis argumentum est aliquid omnibus uideri.*”

⁷⁴ Cf. e.g. Aug., *util. cred.* 16 (FC 9 p. 122,3-7): “*Sed si ex ipsa vi ueritatis paucos eam tenere coniectas, qui uero sint, nescis: quid, si ita pauci sunt, qui uerum sciunt, ut auctoritate sua multitudinem teneant, unde se in illa secreta expedire et quasi eliquare paucitas possit?* in general; 16 (p. 124,4-8): “*Si enim uerissimus et sincerissimus dei cultus, quamvis sit apud paucos, apud eos tamen est, quibus multitudo quamquam cupiditatibus involuta et a puritate intellegentiae remota consentit – quod fieri posse quis dubitet? –, quaero ...*”; 18 (p. 130,1-5) with pointed reference to the *catholica*. For the argumentation cf. Hoffmann, *Augustins Schrift* 218-225; Trelenberg, *Das Prinzip „Einheit“*, 146-150.

⁷⁵ For the overall concept cf. A. Hoffmann, *Hermeneutische Fragen*, in: V.H. Drecoll (ed.), *Augustin Handbuch*, Tübingen 2007, 461-466 with further literature, esp.: K.H. Lütcke, *Art. Auctoritas*, in: AL 1 (1986-1994), 498-510; id., “*Auctoritas*“ bei Augustin. Mit einer Einleitung zur römischen Vorgeschichte des Begriffs (TBAW 44), Stuttgart 1968; E. TeSelle, *Art. Credere*, in: AL 2 (1996-2002), 119-131; id., *Art. Crede ut intellegas*, in: AL 2 (1996-2002), 116-119; Th. Fuhrer, *Zum erkenntnistheoretischen Hintergrund von Augustins Glaubensbegriff*, in: Th. Fuhrer / M. Erler (eds.), *Zur Rezeption der hellenistischen Philosophie in der Spätantike. Akten der 1. Tagung der Karl- und Gertrud-Abel-Stiftung vom 22. - 25. September 1997 in Trier* (PhA 9), Stuttgart 1999, 191-211.

means of cognition (*intellegere*) or faith (*credere*). The former option is obviously to be valued higher and will always be the ideal, because the direct vision offers personal certainty. It is also clear that only the few manage to walk this way – and Augustine becomes more and more reserved as to judge how far people can proceed on this way during their earthly lives.⁷⁶ The latter approach is valued lower, because in this case the seeker depends on a mediator (teacher) and as he cannot assess the validity of the teachings, he is at risk of being misled. This risk has to be and also can be minimised if the seeker thoroughly and rationally examines the “credibility” of the teacher by means of “reasonable” criteria. Therefore, Augustine demands to follow an authority. A reliable “authority” simply impresses the individuals by its characteristic features and causes them to behave in a way that is positive to them. Having made the right choice, i.e. a decision for the *catholica*, one will be led to truth. Truth is already anticipated within the realm of faith and should be fully recognised as far as this is individually possible.⁷⁷ Augustine however remains sceptical towards the masses which he considers unable to go beyond this stage. Yet they confidently perform their “*credendi simplicitas*” – as opposed to the “*intellegendi uivacitas*” of the “*pauci spiritales*”.⁷⁸ Accepting a reliable authority is thus the “more salutary”, if not the only possible option for the uneducated masses.⁷⁹

This approach allows Augustine to stick to the axiom of the “*pauci*” as small intellectual elite and at the same to connect them with the large number of followers. The *catholica* is the Christian community in which the “*multitudo*” fills the churches, but only few attain maximum insight and also guide the many there.⁸⁰

Augustine supports this argument with parallels of other domains, such as rhetoric:

“*Nonne videmus, quam pauci summam eloquentiam consequantur, cum per totum orbem rhetorum scholae adulescentium gregibus perstreant? Numquidnam inperitorum perterriti multitudine, quicumque boni oratores evadere volunt, Caecilii sibi potius aut Eruci orationibus quam Tullianis navandam operam existimant? Haec adpetunt omnes, quae maiorum auctoritate firmata sunt, eadem inperitorum turbae discere moliantur, quae a paucis doctis discenda recepta sunt, adsequuntur autem perpauci, agunt pauciores, clarescunt paucissimi. Quid, si tale quiddam est vera religio? Quid, si multitudo inperitorum frequentat ecclesias? Sed nullum argumentum est ideo neminem illis mysteriis factum esse perfectum..*”⁸¹

⁷⁶ Cf. e.g. Aug., c. ep. Man. 4,5 (CSEL 25 p. 196,4-7): “... sincerissimam sapientiam, ad cuius cognitionem pauci spiritales in hac uita perueniunt, ut eam ex minima quidem parte, quia homines sunt, sed tamen sine dubitatione cognoscant ...” For the decreasing epistemological optimism cf. Hoffmann, *Augustins Schrift* 22f. with further literature; Fuhrer, *Glaubensbegriff* 192; Brachtendorf, *Weisheitsbegriff* 261f.268f. This is why Augustine revokes overly optimistic statements in the retractions, cf. e.g. retr. 1,14,2.

⁷⁷ Cf. E. TeSelle, Art. *Crede ut intellegas*, in: AL 2 (1996-2002), 116-119.

⁷⁸ Cf. Aug., c. ep. Man. 4,5 (CSEL 25 p. 196,7-9).

⁷⁹ Cf. Aug., ord. 2,26 (CCL 29 c. 9,6f.); also cf. Trelenberg, *de ordine* 273-276; Lütcke, *Auctoritas*, in: AL 1 (1986-1994), 499f.

⁸⁰ Cf. Aug., util. cred. 16 (FC 9 p. 122,17-19); also Io eu. tr. 2,2-4, cf. Brachtendorf, *Weisheitsbegriff* 269-271.

⁸¹ Aug., util. cred. 16 (FC 9 p. 122,7-16). The whole passage is characterised by the contrast of the few and the many and culminates in the negative climax: *perpauci* (superlative!), *pauciores*, *paucissimi*; cf. Hoffmann, *Augustins Schrift* 221f.

The Ciceronian style is an ideal, traditionally valid and considered a desirable goal by the few scholars, but only few achieve it, even fewer realise it and the fewest become famous. In the context of another argument, the many are positively connotated.

“Et tamen si tam *pauci* studerent eloquentiae, quam *pauci* sunt eloquentes, numquam nos parentes nostri magistris talibus commendandos putarent. Cum igitur ad haec studia nos *multitudo* invitaverit, quae inperitorum parte *copiosa* est, ut id, quod *pauci* adipisci possunt, adamaremus, cur nobis esse similem in religione nolumus causam, quam cum magno animae discrimine fortasse contemnimus? Si enim verissimus et sincerissimus dei cultus, quamvis sit apud *paucos*, apud eos tamen est, quibus *multitudo* quamquam cupiditatibus involuta et a puritate intellegentiae remota consentit - quod fieri posse quis dubitet? -, quaero, si quis temeritatem vecordiamque nostram arguat, quod non apud eius magistros eam diligenter investigamus, cuius inveniendae nobis magna cura inest, quid respondere possimus? ‘Deterruit me *multitudo*’?”⁸²

Those who strive after something, such as rhetorical skills, intensively are both incentive and precondition for its desirability. This can be linked to the basic argument: The goal becomes attractive by the amount of those striving after it, even if this group mainly consists of the “beginners” (imperiti) and only very few fully accomplish the goal. Finally, Augustine argues that the big amount does not prevent from pursuing the same goal in other ways as well:

“Cur ab studio artium liberalium vix huic praesenti vitae aliquid commodi adferentium, cur ab inquirenda pecunia, cur ab honore adipiscendo, cur denique a comparanda et retinenda bona valetudine, postremo cur ab ipsa beatae vitae adpetitione, cum his *omnes* occupentur, *pauci* excellant, nulla deterruit *multitudo*?”⁸³

The liberal arts, or even more so wealth, honour, health and luck are all aims in life only few people achieve, but everybody aspires and nobody is deterred by the amount of those striving for them. Here, the argument of the consensus omnium is played off against the argument of the perfect few.

2. Augustine uses the same approach with Honoratus regarding ethics. The hint at the great success of the catholica, however, is much more explicit here. Just like in the other anti-Manichaeic passages Augustine emphasises the high ethical achievements of members of the Catholic Church. The creed of the indiscernible, immaterial God corresponds with the ethical dissociation of everything physical-material and of the “world”. As concrete examples, Augustine mentions asceticism in terms of renunciation of food and sexuality, the willingness to suffer, charity as well as the contempt of worldly affairs. By listing the extremes, he illustrates on the one hand that these ethical demands can compete with those of the Manichaeic Electi, and on the other hand he clarifies that there is a certain span in realisation. This establishes the basis for the conclusion:

⁸² Cf. Aug., util. cred. 16 (FC 9 p. 122,20-124,12).

⁸³ Cf. Aug., util. cred. 16 (FC 9 p. 124,12-17).

“*Pauci* haec faciunt, *pauciores* bene prudenterque faciunt, sed *populi* probant, *populi* laudant, *populi* favent, diligunt postremum *populi*, *populi* suam inbecillitatem, quod ipsa non possunt, non sine propectu mentis in deum nec sine quibusdam scintillis virtutis accusant.”⁸⁴

Augustine underlines the contrast between the “few” and the “many” by means of stylistic devices: The climax “*pauci – pauciores*” is followed by the anaphora of “*populi*”. These two groups form content-related contrasts (*sed*), but they are embraced by the alliteration (*pauci – pauciores – prudenter – populi probant – populi – populi – postremum populi – populi – possunt – propectu*). The first three statements about the peoples are parallel and isocolic; they are followed by two further statements with a pointed chiasm emphasising the “peoples” appreciation (“*diligunt*”) of the ethical ideals of Christianity. Again, the core thought is that the elite of the few should convert the masses like multipliers and improve them ethically.

3. This lays the basis for a positive assessment of the great number of those who have joined the *catholica*. The Catholic Church gains a plethora of members who reach truth and improve ethically by following its doctrine. This is particularly hard to reach and hence particularly notable.⁸⁵ The fact that the *catholica* reaches what Plato and his school could not reach and did not dare to reach is a strong argument against the Platonists.⁸⁶ The masses are won over to the truth and, even more remarkable, lead to a renouncing life style. Augustine illustrates this with a similar listing like in *de utilitate credendi*.⁸⁷ In contrast to the Manichaeans he underlines that incredibly many, especially also simple *catholici* achieve the highest ethical standards. This issue is discussed extensively in *de moribus ecclesiae catholicae*.⁸⁸ Augustine opposes Faustus’ claim to practically meet Jesus’ radical ethical demands as Manichaean Electus⁸⁹ with a forceful iteration stressing “how many” Catholics actually meet these demands.⁹⁰ The Catholic Church therefore has an extraordinary (God-given) “progress and success” (*profectum fructumque*).⁹¹ This success gives the church credibility and authority and suggests that the truth seeker should start searching here.⁹² The “many”, the large amount of followers, have now become one of the “reasonable” criteria for the authority of the *catholica*.⁹³

4. By implication, the negative evaluation of the few, which also and particularly concerns the Manichaeans, results from the same argument. They do not have any authority whatsoever to

⁸⁴ Aug., *util. cred.* 35 (FC 9 p. 184,15-20).

⁸⁵ Cf. Aug., *util. cred.* 35 (FC 9 p. 182,22-184,2).

⁸⁶ Cf. Aug., *uera rel.* 6 (CCL 32 c. 4,17-19).

⁸⁷ Cf. Aug., *uera rel.* 5. The numerically big success is being emphasized again and again, cf. Hoffmann, *Augustins Schrift 432f*.

⁸⁸ Cf. esp. Aug., *mor.* 1,65-71.77 with reference to monasticism, virgins, ascetic members of the clergy (bishops, presbyters, deacons), ascetic communities in cities etc.

⁸⁹ Cf. Faustus in Aug., *c. Faust.* 5,1-3, also cf. above note 45.

⁹⁰ Cf. Aug., *c. Faust.* 5,9 (CSEL 25 p. 281,1.3.4.5.6.8.11f.12.13.14).

⁹¹ Aug., *util. cred.* (FC 9 p. 186,5); this is where divine assistance becomes visible.

⁹² Cf. Aug., *util. cred.* 34f. After the Ascension of Christ it has the greatest authority, cf. *ibid.* 35 (FC 9 p. 186,5-11). The reasoning is introduced by the following thesis: “*Haec (sc. auctoritas) ... dupliciter nos movet: partim miraculis, partim sequentium multitudine*” (p. 178,19-21; 180,8f.). The former is primarily concerned with the time of Jesus and his disciples while the latter deals with the following times. Augustine however revokes the judgement that the miracles were absent in the following times in *retr.* 1,14,5.

⁹³ However, Augustine qualifies the success of the *catholica* as he gains more pastoral experience and biblical knowledge, cf. Zumkeller, *Zahl 423-432*. Cf. below note 98.

support their doctrines or sacred writings, precisely because they are “only few”.⁹⁴ In his answer to Secundinus Augustine even expands this negative assessment.⁹⁵ Insofar he complements the argument of the perfect few with the few very bad people. He takes up Secundinus’ claim who asserts that as Manichaeans, he belongs to the few walking on Jesus’ narrow path (Mt 7,14). Then, however, he turns the claim into the warning not to belong to the group of the few very bad people.⁹⁶ Only few are without sin (“innocentes”), but at the same time only few are felons. Again, Augustine uses comparatives, but this time negative ones. Among those who do something wrong are fewer murderers than thieves, fewer commit incest than adultery, fewer women are like Medea and Phaedra or men like Orest (Ochos) and Busirides than other criminals. The “paucitas” is hence a two-edged category. The Manichaeans are indeed few, but they belong to a “negative elite” advocating lunatic ideas. It is even more wondrous that people fall for them at all than the mere fact that they are few. The few saints walking on the narrow path, who the Lord is talking about, are definitely not the Manichaeans, but those among true Christians who fulfil the commandments.⁹⁷ As opposed to the vast number of sinners, the righteous are the few. Augustine does not delude himself about this and freely admits it in front of the Manichaeans. The righteous will be revealed in the Last Judgement.⁹⁸

This presupposes Augustine’s conviction that the Manichaeans’ standards are untenable both in the intellectual and in the ethical realm. The reasonable insight is an unjustified “presumption” (“praesumptio”) and a “promise” (“pollicitatio”) which they do not keep.⁹⁹ Particularly the radical ascetic ethics of the Electi is fictitious. Augustine goes so far as to claim that the Manichaeans had big problems spotting only one Electus among their “paucitas” who meets the ethical standards of Manichaeism.¹⁰⁰ These harsh and partly also unfair accusations show Augustine’s great personal disappointment about his own deception, which is now mixed with the pastoral endeavour to preserve others from the same mistake.

4. Conclusion

⁹⁴ Cf. Aug., util. cred. 31 (FC 9 p. 170,3-5). In addition to that they are “turbulenti” and “novi” while the catholica distinguishes itself “consensio” and “vetustate” (ibid. p. 170,1f.).

⁹⁵ Cf. Aug., c. Sec. 26.

⁹⁶ Cf. Aug., c. Sec. 26 (CSEL 25 p. 945,12-14.21f.): “... non te decipiat species paucitatis, quoniam ipse dominus dixit angustam uiam esse paucorum. inter paucos uis esse, sed pessimos ... uide ergo, ne forte apud uos nimius horror impietatis faciat meritum paucitatis.”

⁹⁷ Next to Aug., c. Sec. 26 cf. esp. mor. 2, which highlights, according to Augustine’s own account, (mor. 1,75 [CSEL 90 p. 81,7-10]) the discrepancy between the Manichaeans’ ethical standards and reality; cf. esp. 2,74f.; furthermore cf. mor. 1,2.75f.; retr. 1,7,1 and other passages.

⁹⁸ Cf. Aug., c. Sec. 26 (CSEL 25 p. 945,24-946,2); mor. 1,76 (CSEL 90 p. 81,19-82,3) both referring to the separation of the wheat from the chaff (Mt 3,12) on the barn floor of the Catholic Church. – Augustine in other (later) contexts underlines that many Christians fail to resist worldly temptations and do not adhere to the commandments. Therefore, the good ones who will be rescued in the end will only be few compared to the sinful masses, yet in absolute figures, they will be many, cf. s. 90,4f.; 111,1.3; ep. 93,30.33; c. Cresc. 4,63 u.ö. (cf. Zumkeller, Zahl 429 note 32, also above note 68).

⁹⁹ Cf. Aug., util. cred. 2.21.36. Cf. Feldmann, Einfluss 1,591-593; Decret, L’Afrique 1,244-247; Hoffmann, Augustins Schrift 176f.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Aug., mor. 1,75 (CSEL 90 p. 81,3-6). The Manichaeans seem to argue similarly in favour of their own community, cf. Aug., mor. 2,75 (p. 156,20-23).

We can trace a line of the motif of the few and the many throughout Augustine's entire intellectual biography from reading the Hortensius up to the discussion about grace and predestination. The young Augustine gets acquainted with the philosophical axiom of the few sapientes and the unphilosophical mass. He adopts this conviction from his reception of the Hortensius (and probably other philosophical scriptures) and abides by it until his time as mature theologian. Searching for a Christianity that corresponds to the intellectual and ethical ideal of the Hortensius, Augustine does not join the catholica, which gathers the many, but the Manichaeans. They promise to be a Christian "elite" of the few "illuminated" and "saints", explaining the world and all its proceedings from the macrocosmic movement of the stars to the microcosmos of human nature and yielding the highest ascetic performances. It is certainly also due to this basic conviction of the small elite that the Manichaeans seemed more attractive to him than the catholica, and that he joined them. The appreciation of the few is supported by neoplatonic writings. In his steering towards the catholica, Augustine holds on to the elitist approach which in some of his early works is expressed aggressively. When he later struggles with the Manichaeans and in doing so also defends his own affiliation with the church of the many against Manichaean polemics, Augustine comes to evaluate the multitudo more and more positively. He integrates the few and the many in his hermeneutic concept of the two approaches to truth. Those who obtain the highest possible insight by their respective moral conduct are also considered the few "wise" (or saints) within the catholica, but they impress the many and guide them towards truth, which they accept in their faith. Augustine increasingly rates the big success as an argument for the authority of the catholica. This concept combines the principle of the perfect few with the positive assessment of the many followers. Thus, the controversy with the Manichaeans considerably contributes to the development of this concept. Augustine can make use of this argument against them as well as against "all heretics" who praise themselves in front of the catholica because of their "paucitas".¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Cf. Aug., c. adu. leg. 2,42 (CCL 49 l. 1294f.).