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MOTIVES AND JUSTIFICATIONS FOR ENFORCING RELIGIOUS CONFORMITY

A Manichaean-Priscillianist Case Study (302–572)

The religious landscape changed considerably from the middle of the 3rd century to the end of the 6th century: The syncretistic atmosphere that had been characteristic of the Roman Empire slowly began to dissolve. Along with, but not necessarily because of the diffusion of Christianity among the elites of the Roman Empire, certain religious groups – under pagan emperors Christians and Manichaeans, after Christianity's accession to power pagans and ›heretics‹ – were classified as a threat to society more and more frequently¹. The objective of the following article is to highlight why contemporaries thought action against certain religious groups necessary. Groups that deviated from existing religious norms were such a frequent and multifarious phenomenon of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages that it is impossible to consider all the data available. Therefore, a case study must suffice: The religious movements to be dealt with in this article are the Manichaeans, active throughout the whole Empire since the death of their founder Mani in about 276 A. D., and the Priscillianists, active from the late 4th century to about the middle of the 6th century mainly on the Iberian Peninsula and in Aquitaine.

Why treat these religious movements together? Priscillianism and Manichaeism are not identical. In one of his treatises Priscillian even condemns Manichaeism as anathema: Manichaeans, in his view, deserve to be persecuted by the sword and sent to hell². In addition, an analysis of Priscillian's writings leads to the conclusion that certain important aspects of the Manichaean creed were unknown to Priscillian³. In spite of this, contemporary critics such as Orosius, Augustine, and Pope Leo I treated both groups as one⁴. Furthermore, a comparison of Priscillian's and Mani's teachings

- 1 Cf. Daniel KÖNIG, *Bekehrungsmotive. Untersuchungen zum Christianisierungsprozess im römischen Westreich und seinen romanisch-germanischen Nachfolgern*, Husum 2008, p. 28–99, 373–428.
- 2 Priscillian, *Tractatus* I,26,13–17, I,28,3–5, ed. Georg SCHEPSS, Vienna 1889 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 18), p. 22, 24; cf. Henry CHADWICK, *Priscillian of Avila. The Occult and the Charismatic in the Early Church*, Oxford 1976, p. 96–97.
- 3 Hendrik Gerhard SCHIPPER, Johannes VAN OORT (ed.), *St. Leo the Great. Sermons and Letters Against the Manichaeans. Selected Fragments*, Turnhout 2000 (*Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum Series Latina*, 1), p. 4.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 4: »according to many of its contemporaries, Priscillianism was a mere variation of Manichaeism. After Ithacius had accused Priscillian of Manichaean sympathies, Orose in his *Commonitorium* (written about 414) voiced the same suspicion [cap. 2, ed. Klaus-Detlef DAUR, Turnhout 1997 (*Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, 49), p. 158]. In his response to Orose,

shows that a number of striking parallels exist⁵: (1) For both asceticism and, connected with it, a negative attitude towards the body and the material in general, played a very important role. (2) Both accepted that Jesus Christ was and is linked to divine power. Based on their acceptance of Jesus Christ both religious movements tried to establish themselves within the Catholic church at a certain stage of their religious development, either as Manichaean Crypto-Christians or, in the Priscillianist case, as representatives of the episcopal establishment. (3) Both did not restrict themselves to orthodox canonical teaching as the only source of divine revelation. Priscillian vehemently defended the use of apocryphal texts and searched for deeper religious experience in occultism, whereas Mani regarded prophets in the various religious traditions of mankind, e. g. Buddha, Zoroaster, and Jesus Christ, as divinely inspired teachers. (4) Both religious leaders were open to dualistic ideas: They attributed an independent existence to evil and believed in some form of apocalyptic showdown. (5) Both groups were accused in the most slanderous way of pagan and magical practices as well as immoral and obscene behaviour by contemporary and later representatives of orthodoxy. Schipper and van Oort conclude: »All in all, Priscillianism could best be conceived as a dissident movement within the Catholic Church, which was conspicuously open to Manichaean and other Gnostic ideas⁶.« What makes both movements so interesting in comparison to heresies such as the Arian is their ambiguity: On the one hand, Manichaeans and Priscillianists accepted Christ, and, as will be shown further below, tried to infiltrate the Catholic Church. Therefore, neither of them can be classified as being completely estranged from orthodox Christianity. On the other hand, pagan and magic practices attributed to both groups, the dualistic elements inherent in their doctrine, as well as their interest in astrology, show that their doctrine contained elements alien to Christianity. They appear to oscillate between orthodoxy, heresy, and a non-Christian movement altogether.

Augustine refers to those anti-Manichaean works of his hand, where refutations of Priscillianist errors are to be found [Ad Orosium I,1, ed. DAUR, *ibid.*, p. 165]. Turribius of Astorga speaks of »the Manichaeans and the Priscillianists, or whatever sect is akin to them« [ep. 15a,5, MIGNE PL 54, col. 694]. In the eyes of Leo the Great, the Priscillianists »agree in all respects to the Manichaeans, their kin« [ep. 15,4, MIGNE PL 54, col. 682: *et cognatis suis Manichaeis per omnia consonantes*]. In the same letter, the Pope declares that they agree on almost every point [ep. 15,7, MIGNE PL 54, col. 683: *pene in omnibus, cum Manichaeorum profanitate concordant*]. It is with great ease that Leo applies the results of his Roman investigations to the Spanish situation. As he says himself, both Priscillianists and Manichaeans attend Catholic masses with a wrong intention; both corrupt the canonical scriptures and practise impure rites as well [ep. 15,16, MIGNE PL 54, col. 688–689; cf. ep. 15,4, col. 682]. Therefore the Pope concludes: »So act the Priscillianists, so act the Manichaeans; so much are their hearts coupled with the latter that one finds them to be different only in name, but united in their blasphemies« [ep. 15,16, MIGNE PL 54, col. 689: *Faciunt hoc Priscillianistae, faciunt Manichaei, quorum cum istis tam foederata sunt corda, ut solis nominibus discreti, sacrilegiis autem suis inveniuntur uniti*]. The identification of Priscillianism with Manichaeism has been dismissed as untenable by the critical historian. Notwithstanding, this identification was beyond doubt in the eyes of both Leo and Turribius. It must be admitted that both knew Manichaeism at first hand.«

5 For the following paragraph cf. CHADWICK, Priscillian (as in n. 2), p. 57–110, on Priscillian's teachings; SCHIPPER, VAN OORT (ed.), St. Leo (as in n. 3), p. 87–108, on Mani's teachings.

6 SCHIPPER, VAN OORT (ed.), St. Leo, p. 4.

In the following pages the development of motives and justifications to take action against Manichaeans and Priscillianists is traced: The analysis will focus on (1) Diocletian's reasons for issuing his anti-Manichaean Rescript in 302, (2) the phase of ›tolerance‹ which followed the Edict of Milan in 313, (3) Anti-Manichaean activities of church and state and their respective justification in the post-Constantinian era, (4) the motives for persecuting Priscillian and his followers at the end of the 4th up to the middle of the 5th century, (6) Pope Leo's motives to take action against the Manichaeans between 443 and 447 as well as the last measures taken against Manichaeans and Priscillianists in the 6th century.

1. Diocletian's Reaction Towards Manichaeism

In 302, Diocletian received an inquiry by the proconsul of Africa, Amnius Anicius Julianus, about how to deal with the Manichaean sect, recently very active in areas within the proconsul's jurisdiction. Diocletian's answer was very harsh indeed: He ordered their leaders and books to be burnt, their followers of lower social standing to be executed, and their followers of official rank to be sent to the mines⁷. He explained the necessity of these measures by stating:

»It is indeed highly criminal to alter those things which have been stated and defined since ancient times and still hold their status and have the right to go on holding it. [...] We have heard that the Manichaeans, concerning whom your Resourcefulness has written to our Serenity, have set up new and hitherto unheard-of sects in opposition to the older creeds so that they might cast out the doctrines vouchsafed to us in the past by divine favour for the benefit of their own depraved doctrine. They have sprung forth very recently like new and unexpected monstrosities among the race of the Persians – a nation still hostile to us – and have made their way into our empire, where they are committing many outrages, disturbing the tranquillity of our people and even inflicting grave damage to the civic communities: We have cause to fear that with the passage of time they will endeavour, as usually happens, to infect the modest and tranquil Roman people of an innocent nature with the damnable customs and the perverse laws of the Persians as with the poison of a malignant (serpent)⁸.«

7 Collationes XV,5–7, in: Emil SECKEL, Bernhard KUEBLER (ed.), *Iurisprudentiae anteiustinianae reliquias in usum maxime academicum compositas a Ph. Eduardo HUSCHKE*, Leipzig⁶ 1911, p. 382–383.

8 *Ibid.*, XV,4, p. 381–382: *Maximi enim criminis est retractare, quae semel ab antiquis statuta et definita suum statum et cursum tenent ac possident. [...] Manichaeos audiimus nuperrime ueluti noua et inopinata prodigia in hunc mundum de Persica aduersaria nobis gente progressa uel orta esse et multa facinora ibi committere; populos namque quietos perturbare nec non et ciuitatibus maxima detrimenta inserere: et uerendum est, ne forte, ut fieri adsolet, accedenti tempore conentur per execrandas consuetudines et scaeuas leges Persarum innocentioris naturae homines, Romanam gentem modestam atque tranquillam, et uniuersum orbem nostrum ueluti uenenis anguis maliuoli inficere*; transl. in: Samuel LIEU, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China*, Tübingen² 1992, p. 121–122.

In this edict, Diocletian presents himself as a Roman traditionalist who regards new religious habits as alien to the Roman way of life. He is afraid of seeing traditional Roman religion corrupted by Manichaean proselytizing and concerned that this might provoke the anger of the traditional divinities thus neglected in worship⁹. The Persian origin of Manichaeism is another cause of concern for him. He obviously regards the Manichaeans as Persian spies whose aim it is to provoke social unrest and to undermine the Empire's resolve to maintain its contest with the arch-foe Persia by seeking to pervert the morals of Roman society¹⁰.

Diocletian's new concept of power-division, the tetrarchy, gives further clues to the importance of the ›correct‹ religious observance in the emperor's eyes. In the tetrarchian theology, Diocletian is identified with Jupiter, his co-regent Maximus with Hercules. Religious piety is thereby indispensably linked with the acceptance of imperial authority and the veneration of the emperors. Seen in connection with the persecution of Manichaeism and later Christianity, it becomes clear that Roman piety, as regarded and demanded by Diocletian, entails religious loyalty to the Roman pantheon as well as political loyalty to the emperors. Putting into doubt or even eliminating the religious aspect of this double-set of loyalties would, in Diocletian's view, automatically question imperial authority. A religious movement such as Manichaeism that imported and actively spread ideas foreign to the Roman religious tradition (as understood and interpreted by Diocletian) naturally would be regarded as undermining imperial authority and social stability¹¹.

We cannot determine how well Diocletian was informed about the Manichaean worldview. It may be that he thought Manichaeism to be connected with sorcery and magic, thus constituting a further potential danger to Roman society¹². If he had some knowledge of the movement, we can assume that he regarded Manichaeism, with its strong emphasis on asceticism and its antagonism towards procreation, as a religious movement with anti-social tendencies¹³. The term *otia maxima*, as used in the prologue of Diocletian's answer to the proconsul, may imply that Diocletian had knowl-

- 9 Erich-Hans KADEN, Die Edikte gegen die Manichäer von Diokletian bis Justinian, in: Max GERWIG, August SIMONIUS (ed.), Festschrift für Hans Lewald, Basel 1953, p. 56–57; Panayotis PACHIS, Extra Imperium et religionem nulla salus. Die Religionspolitik des römischen Staates gegen die Manichäer, in: Kairos. Zeitschrift für Religionswissenschaft und Theologie (1994), p. 815–819; LIEU, Manichaeism (as in n. 8), p. 123; Peter BROWN, The Diffusion of Manichaeism in the Roman Empire, in: Id. (ed.), Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine, Worcester 1972, p. 116.
- 10 LIEU, Manichaeism (as in n. 8), p. 121–124; Walter SESTON, Echtheit und Datierung des diokletianischen Edikts gegen die Manichäer, in: Geo WIDENGREN (ed.), Der Manichäismus, Darmstadt 1977, p. 374–384; BROWN, Diffusion (as in n. 9), p. 116; Franz Joseph DÖLGER, Konstantin der Große und der Manichäismus, in: Id. (ed.), Antike und Christentum, Münster 1930 (Kultur- und Religionsgeschichtliche Studien, 2), p. 302.
- 11 PACHIS, Extra Imperium (as in n. 9), p. 817–818, 823–824; LIEU, Manichaeism (as in n. 8), p. 122–124; SESTON, Echtheit (as in n. 10), p. 381–383; Joseph VOGT, Zur Religiosität der Christenverfolger im Römischen Reich, in: Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse 1962/1, Heidelberg 1962, p. 25.
- 12 LIEU, Manichaeism (as in n. 8), p. 122, 142; SESTON, Echtheit (as in n. 10), p. 382; DÖLGER, Konstantin (as in n. 10), p. 302.
- 13 PACHIS, Extra Imperium (as in n. 9), p. 817–818, 823–824; LIEU, Manichaeism (as in n. 8), p. 124; SESTON, Echtheit (as in n. 10), p. 381–383; DÖLGER, Konstantin (as in n. 10), p. 302.

edge of the Manichaean caste-system of ›Hearers‹ and ›Elect‹. The fact that the latter did not work but lived off the Hearers, may have been regarded by Diocletian as a refusal to contribute to society and its material basis¹⁴.

The conviction that upholding traditional religious values was necessary for the welfare of the Empire and the stability of imperial authority, Roman patriotism and anti-Persian xenophobia, maybe fear of oriental sorcery and magic, as well as a general disregard for the values and social structures represented by Manichaeism seem to have been the prime motives for Diocletian to take action against the Manicheans. One can detect a spirit that is akin to the one that led to the persecution of Christians in 303¹⁵.

2. A Phase of ›Tolerance‹

Several sources indicate that the end of the Christian persecution in 311 was followed by an atmosphere of religious tolerance that was not only restricted to Christians. The tombstone of the Manichaean elect Bassa from Lydia who died at Salona in this period, shows that her friends and relatives did not think it necessary to hide her sect and the rank she held¹⁶. Furthermore, we do not possess any anti-Manichaean legislation issued by Constantine or his successors before 372, the year the first anti-Manichaean edict was issued by a Christian emperor in Trier¹⁷. One of the better known converts to Manichaeism, Sebastianus, even rose to the office of *magister pedium Orientis* as late as 378¹⁸.

Augustine of Hippo leads us into the world of Manichaeism in Northern Africa and Rome in the third quarter of the 4th century¹⁹: Augustine, son of a Christian mother and a pagan father, educated and well learned in classical Greek and Roman literature and mythology, did not hesitate to adopt Manichaean ideas and to spend time with Manichaeans in his search for spiritual truth. This search, documented in his famous *Confessiones*, led to his conversion and baptism in the year 387. But before he was convinced completely of the truth of the Christian message, Augustine maintained relations with quite a number of Manichaean friends, could not wait to hear their famous representative Faustus speak, spent a period of sickness in the house of a Manichaean in Rome, and even convinced friends to join the movement. Augustine

14 Collationes XV,1, in: SECKEL, KUEBLER (ed.), *Iurisprudentiae anteiustinianae reliquias* (as in n. 7), p. 381: *Otia maxima interdum homines incommodioris condicionis naturae humanae modum excedere hortantur et quaedam genera inanissimae ac turpissimae doctrinae superstitiosis inducere suadunt, ut sui erroris arbitrio pertrahere et alios multos uideantur, Iuliane karissime*; LIEU, *Manichaeism* (as in n. 8), p. 123; PACHIS, *Extra Imperium* (as in n. 9), p. 819–820, 826–827.

15 Cf. VOGT, *Zur Religiosität der Christenverfolger im Römischen Reich* (as in n. 11).

16 LIEU, *Manichaeism* (as in n. 8), p. 126.

17 *Codex Theodosianus*, ed. Theodor MOMMSEN, Paul M. MEYER, 2 vol., Berlin³ 1962, XVI,5,3, Valentinian, Valens to Ampelius, Prefect of the City, March 372, Trier.

18 LIEU, *Manichaeism* (as in n. 8), p. 127.

19 Cf. Johannes VAN OORT, *Augustine and Manichaeism in Roman North Africa. Remarks on an African Debate and its Universal Consequences*, in: Pierre-Yves FUX et al. (ed.), *Saint Augustin. Africanité et universalité, actes du colloque international Alger-Annaba, 1–7 avril 2001*, Fribourg 2003, p. 199–210.

furthermore reports that Manichaeans like Faustus spoke publicly and were refuted publicly by Christian rhetoricians like Elpidius²⁰. They did not live under cover and obviously had nothing to fear either from orthodox Christianity or the Roman state²¹. Being a Manichaean in this period seemed to involve an occasional nuisance: When Augustine unexpectedly left Carthage for Rome, it was obvious to his critics that, as a Manichaean, he had been struck with a sentence of exile by the Proconsul²². If this really was the case, being an exile in Rome cannot have been all that bad, especially since Augustine, warmly welcomed by the Manichaean community of the city, was soon to take up a new post in Milan, where the final phase of his conversion later took place. In the *Confessiones*, Augustine never mentions any danger in dealing with the Manichaeans: The Manichaean worldview rather appears to have been an integral part of the Roman Empire in which he grew up.

A number of scholars attribute this religious freedom enjoyed by the Manichaeans to the Edict of Milan (313). They assume that, since toleration was granted to all religious worldviews, Manichaeans enjoyed religious freedom, too. The rescript of Diocletian, whose aim was to uphold traditional Roman religion, had lost its value in the face of a new religious orientation in imperial circles²³. Some scholars oppose this view by pointing to the fact that Constantine already tried to gather information about the Manichaeans. Considering that one of his most prominent court-bishops, Eusebius of Caesarea, condemns the Manichaeans in his *Ecclesiastical History*, it seems as if Constantine was not as impartial towards the Manichaean sect as the lack of legislation against it implies²⁴. Other scholars highlight the fact that Manichaeism gave a prominent place to Jesus in its doctrines and psalmody. According to them, the sect could have readily assimilated into the new religious scene: By presenting their beliefs in a language that conformed with the Nicene Creed, the Manichaeans could have given the impression to the imperial authorities of being one of the many groups which constituted the Christian Church²⁵. This hypothesis is corroborated by the

20 Augustinus, *Confessiones* V,6,10, ed. Luc VERHEIJEN, Turnhout 1981 (*Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina, 27), p. 61: *Et per annos ferme ipsos novem, quibus eos animo vagabundus audivi, nimis extento desiderio venturum expectabam istum Faustum*; V,7,13, p. 63: *Ceterum conatus omnis meus, quo proficere in illa secta statueram, illo homine cognito prorsus intercidit, non ut ab eius omnino separarer, sed quasi melius quicquam non interveniens eo, quo iam quoquo modo irrueram, contentus interim esse decreveram, nisi quid forte, quod magis eligendum esset, eluceret*; V,10,18, p. 67: *Et iungebar etiam tunc Romae falsis illis atque fallentibus sanctis: non enim tantum auditoribus eorum, quorum e numero erat etiam is, in cuius domo aegrotaveram et convalesceram, sed eis etiam, quos electos vocant*; V,11,21, p. 69: *Deinde quae illi in scripturis tuis reprehenderant defendi posse non existimabam, sed aliquando sane cupiebam cum aliquo illorum librorum doctissimo conferre singula et experiri, quid inde sentiret. Iam enim Elpidii cuiusdam adversus eosdem manichaeos coram loquentis et disserentis sermones etiam apud Carthaginem movere me coeperant, cum talia de scripturis proferret, quibus resisti non facile posset.*

21 LIEU, *Manichaeism* (as in n. 8), p. 126–127, 176; BROWN, *Diffusion* (as in n. 9), p. 112.

22 Augustinus, *Contra litteras Petiliani* III,25,30, ed. Michael PETSCHENIG, Vienna 1909 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 52), p. 185.

23 LIEU, *Manichaeism* (as in n. 8), p. 125–126; KADEN, *Edikte* (as in n. 9) p. 57.

24 Cf. DÖLGER, *Konstantin* (as in n. 10), p. 304–306, referring to: Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* XV,13,1,2, ed. Victor GARDTHAUSEN, Stuttgart² 1967 (*Bibliotheca Teubneriana*), p. 75; Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia Ecclesiastica* VII,31,1, ed./transl. Gustave BARDY, Paris 1955 (*Sources Chrétiennes*, 41), p. 221; LIEU, *Manichaeism* (as in n. 8), p. 127.

25 LIEU, *Manichaeism*, p. 126–127; DÖLGER, *Konstantin* (as in n. 10), p. 308.

fact that several measures were taken at the end of the 4th century to prevent Manichaeans from presenting themselves as orthodox Christians: In 381, the emperor Theodosius decried and proscribed the Manichaean practice of using different names in order to dissimulate their true identity when facing imperial functionaries²⁶. According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, the Roman bishop Anastasius (sed. 399–401) only allowed clerics from overseas into the service of the Roman church if five bishops vouched for their dogmatical integrity, because so many Manichaeans had established themselves in the city of Rome²⁷. Another reason for not taking any serious action against the Manichaeans seems to be that Church and Roman State were busy dealing with other problems in the first three quarters of the 4th century: Compared to the Arian heresy, the Donatist schism, and the pagan revival attempted during the short reign of Julian the Apostate (360–363), Manichaeism was not important enough to be dealt with – yet²⁸.

3. Anti-Manichaean Activities in the Post-Constantinian Era

As stated above, the Roman state took no assertive measures to suppress Manichaeism in the first three quarters of the 4th century. But the number of verbal assaults against the Manichaeans by Church leaders increased in this period. As soon as the persecutions had ended, orthodox Christianity, once itself a religious group practicing its creed undercover, began to regard other religious movements of secretive nature as a threat. The more the ›Arian danger‹ abated towards the end of the 4th century the more Manichaeism was considered a rival to Christianity: It became a source of concern to the papacy as early as the pontificate of Miltiades (311–314)²⁹, only to receive attention again at the court of Constantine: In his ecclesiastical history, Eusebius of Caesarea, one of the most prominent bishops at Constantine's court, defines Manichaeism as a poison originating in Persia that tries to infiltrate the Roman Empire. He thus uses the same language Diocletian had used in his anti-Manichaean rescript³⁰. An anonymous commentator on the Pauline epistles, commonly called Ambrosiaster, who wrote in the last quarter of the 4th century, even refers openly to Diocletian's rescript, as he denounces the Manichaeans to be ruthless liars and impostors who seduce Eve so that Adam may fall prey to sin³¹. The Mani-

26 Cod. Theod. (as in n. 17), XVI,5,7,1–3, May 381, Gratian, Valentinian, Theodosius to Eutropius, Pretorian Prefect, Constantinople.

27 *Liber Pontificalis* XLI,2, ed. Louis DUCHESNE, t. 1, Paris 1955, p. 218: *Et hoc constituit ut nullum clericum transmarinum suscipi, nisi V episcoporum designaret cyrographum, quia et eodem tempore Manichei inventi sunt in urbe Roma.*

28 LIEU, Manichaeism (as in n. 8), p. 132; BROWN, Diffusion (as in n. 9), p. 106–107; KADEN, Edikte (as in n. 9), p. 57.

29 Cf. LIEU, Manichaeism (as in n. 8), p. 116–117, 126, 128, 143, 204.

30 Eusebius of Caesarea, *Historia Ecclesiastica* VII,31,1 (as in n. 24), p. 221; BROWN, Diffusion (as in n. 9), p. 106.

31 Ambrosiaster, in ep. ad Timotheum secunda 3,7,1–2, ed. Heinrich Joseph VOGELS, Vienna 1969 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 81,3), p. 312: *Quamvis omnibus hereticis hoc conveniat, ut subintrantes domos mulieres subdolis et versutis verbis capiant, ut per eas viros decipiant more patris sui diaboli, qui per Evam Adam circumvenit, Manicheis tamen prae ceteris congruit. nulli enim tam inopportuni, tam fallaces, tam captiosi sunt, quam ipsi, quos constat aliud*

chaeans' success at winning converts and infiltrating the church is echoed in the writings of Filastrius of Brescia from the end of the 4th century: Filastrius describes Manichaeism as a religious movement that steals souls while professing to be truly Christian³².

Maybe under this influence, the state's neutral and laissez-faire attitude towards the Manichaeans and their ideas mentioned above slowly changed towards the end of the 4th century: The first edict against the Manichaeans, issued in 372 by the emperor Valentinian in Trier, was not directed against the Manichaean creed as such. The edict orders the movement to be dissolved, to confiscate teaching rooms and to lead teachers to trial. Manichaeans »shall be segregated from the company of men as infamous and ignominious«³³. But dogmatical concerns are not expressed. This has led a number of scholars to suppose that dogmatical differences did not motivate this first aggressive measure against the Manichaeans. Valentinian is characterised by these scholars as an emperor with a deep instilled fear of magic and sorcery against which he and his predecessors had legislated quite severely before³⁴. Consequently, they argue that the »conventicles«, at which magic rituals, divination, and moral excesses allegedly took place, had aroused the suspicions of the imperial authorities³⁵.

colere et aliud profiteri, aliud intus gerere et foris aliud vindicare. nam sanctimonium defendunt et lege sua favente turpiter vivunt; misericordiam laudant, cum inter se iniusti deprehendantur; mundum spernendum adserunt et semper accurati procedunt; ieiuniis insistere se iactanter praedicant, cum omnes saginati videantur, tantum quod arte quadam pallidi cernuntur, ut fallant. haec ergo apostolus maxime de his profetavit, quos constat apostolorum tempore non fuisse, sicut nec Arrianos, quippe cum Diocletianus imperator constitutione sua designet dicens: sordidam nactam et impuram heresim, quae nuper, inquit, egressa est de Persida. hi inveniunt mulieres prae vanitate nova aliquid desiderantes audire et per ea, quae placita sunt, suadent illis foeda et illicita; cupidae enim sunt discendi, cum iudicium non habeant probandi. hoc est semper discere et veritatis scientiam non habere; LIEU, Manichaeism (as in n. 8), p. 126.

- 32 Filastrius Brixianus, *Diversarum hereseon liber LXI* (33), 1–5, ed. Friedrich MARX, Vienna 1898 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 38), p. 32: *Manichei post hos de Persida a Mane nomine siue Turbone ita dicto surrexerunt, fomenta de illis perniciosa sumentes prioribus, qui duos deos, unum bonum et unum malum esse adserentes, et pugnam inter deum et deum esse praedicantes, et hominis quidem animam de deo esse proprie putantes, corpus autem a diabolo factum arbitrantur, resurrectionem negantes, iudicium non sperantes, daemones colentes, elementa adorantes, deorum dearumque nomina, ut pagani, inuocantes, et masculofeminas quasdam esse docentes et utriusque naturae participes, et nefandae turpitudini servientes. Qui ab Archelao sancto episcopo in disputatione superati, abiecti atque notati, manifestati sunt uniuersis in illo tempore, et ut latrones iam sub figura confessionis Christianae multorum animas mendacio ac pecudali turpitudine non desinunt captiuare: qui et in Hispania et quinque prouinciis latere dicuntur, multosque hac cottidie fallacia captiuare.*
- 33 Cod. Theod. (as in n. 17), XVI,5,3, Valentinian, Valens to Ampelius, Prefect of the City, March 372, Trier. The following translations from the Codex Theodosianus are taken from Clyde PHARR, *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions*, transl. C. PHARR, T. SHERRER DAVIDSON, M. BROWN PHARR, New York 1952.
- 34 Cod. Theod. (as in n. 17), IX,16,4, Jan. 357, Constantius to the people, Milan; Cod. Theod. IX,16,6, July 357/58, Constantius to Taurus, Pretorian Prefect, Ariminium; Cod. Theod. IX,16,7, Sept. 364, Valentinian and Valens to Secundus, Pretorian Prefect; Cod. Theod. IX,16,11, August 389, Valentinian, Theodosius, Arcadius to Albinus, Prefect of the city, Rome; CHADWICK, *Priscillian* (as in n. 2), p. 53, 141.
- 35 KADEN, *Edikte* (as in n. 9), p. 58; LIEU, *Manichaeism* (as in n. 8), p. 143–144; CHADWICK, *Priscillian* (as in n. 2), p. 142–143.

But with the accession to the throne of Theodosius in 379, dogmatical issues began to play a more prominent role: An extremely pious Christian, Theodosius began to devote himself to the extirpation of paganism and heresies from the Empire. »In the mind of Theodosius, Christianity and citizenship were coterminous and anyone who denied Christ automatically made himself an outlaw of the Christian Roman society³⁶.« The next edict issued against the Manichaeans in 381 expresses the conviction that firm legislation against this sect deems necessary in the face of Manichaean stubbornness, their criminal habits and their tendency to dissimulate their real identity by pretending to be orthodox Christians. Manichaeans are accused of »inveterate obstinacy, crimes, and dishonest fraud under the pretense of those deceptive names by which many, as We have learned, wish to be called and signified as of approved faith and chaste character³⁷.« In an edict issued in 382, the Manichaean sect is explicitly labelled as a danger to Catholicism, being defined as a »profaner and corrupter of the Catholic discipline, which we all revere«. Their »secret and hidden assemblies« give rise to further suspicions³⁸. In an edict of 389 Manichaeans are described as people who »disturb the world³⁹.« Theodosius' son Honorius, who officially ruled the Western half of the Empire after his father's death in 395, issued several edicts between 405 and 407 that give insight into the Western imperial elite's motives and justifications to take legal proceedings against the Manichaeans. First of all, the imperial administration expresses its firm intention of establishing religious conformity along Catholic precepts: »There shall be one Catholic worship, one salvation; equal sanctity within the Trinity, harmonious within itself, shall be sought⁴⁰.« It legitimates action against the Manichaeans by stating that a failure to do so could lead to negative consequences for society, in this case divine wrath: »We prosecute with the most deserved severity the Manichaeans and the Phrygians and the Priscillianists. [...] It is Our will that such heresy shall be considered a public crime, since whatever is committed against divine religion redounds to the detriment of all⁴¹.« The firm conviction is expressed that it is the imperial administration's responsibility to lead humans to the worship of God, thereby to fight the forces of evil and to preserve human qualities essential to the functioning of society:

»The regulations of Our laws have not become ineffective, which also by the terror of punishment that has been proposed shall lead back to the worship of Almighty God those persons who go astray, and which shall prepare the ignorant also for divine service. But without doubt the very force of evil, which confuses human and divine affairs alike, has driven very many persons, who have been deceived by wicked persuasions, to a present as well as to a future

36 LIEU, *Manichaeism* (as in n. 8), p. 147, see also p. 144; KADEN, *Edikte* (as in n. 9), p. 59.

37 *Cod. Theod.* (as in n. 17), XVI,5,7,1–3, May 381, Gratian, Valentinian, Theodosius to Eutropius, Pretorian Prefect, Constantinople.

38 *Ibid.*, XVI,5,9, March 382, Gratian, Valentinian, Theodosius to Florus, Pretorian Prefect, Constantinople.

39 *Ibid.*, XVI,5,18, June 389, Valentinian, Theodosius, Arcadius to Albinus, Prefect of Rome.

40 *Ibid.*, XVI,5,38, Feb. 405, Honorius, Arcadius and Theodosius: Edict, Ravenna.

41 *Ibid.*, XVI,5,40, Feb. 407, Honorius, Arcadius, Theodosius to Senator, Prefect of Rome.

destruction, and it has destroyed the lives of the unfortunate at the same time for God and for Us, in that it has delivered such persons to the laws here and it compels them to bear the judgement here. [...] This provision [...] has been made to preserve the morals and the religion of men⁴².«

The legislation of the late 4th and the early 5th century shows that several motives lead to anti-Manichaean action: Certain emperors' fear of sorcery gave rise to a climate of suspicion as regards the exercise of magical practices as well as immoral and anti-social behaviour in general. Secretive meetings directed imperial suspicions to the Manichaean community. At the beginning, dogmatical issues were of secondary importance, if at all. Only with the accession of more dogmatic leaders to power, »heresy«, i. e. the deviation from established religious norms, »redounding to the detriment of all«, was regarded increasingly as a danger to morals as well as to the divine protection and unity of society and the state. The Manichaeans' refusal to conform to orthodox Christianity was thus interpreted as resistance against the imperial policy of creating orthodox unity within the Empire. Instilling fear was regarded as a legitimate means of bringing heretics such as the Manichaeans back to the bosom of the Church⁴³.

4. The Priscillianist Issue and its Aftermath

In this religious atmosphere of rising intolerance the Priscillian issue came up: Priscillian, a lay ascetic of probably high social standing, began to gather followers around the last quarter of the 4th century on the Iberian peninsula. At the end of the seventies, his ascetic movement seems to have grown to such proportions that the bishops Hyginus of Córdoba and Hydatius of Mérida grew uncomfortable and tried to rally support. A council convened in Zaragoza in 380 condemned several ascetic practices. It cannot be clarified if Priscillian and some of his followers holding an episcopal office were condemned explicitly at this council, as is stated by Sulpicius Severus. The extant acts do not mention any names, as Priscillian himself observes in a letter to pope Damasus. According to Severus, bishop Ithacius of Ossonuba was pronounced responsible of informing the Spanish bishops of the council's decision. To strengthen their position, two Priscillianist bishops, Instantius and Salvianus, decided to consecrate Priscillian bishop of Avila. When they interfered in an internal conflict in Mérida which threatened the position of the city's bishop, Hydatius, the bishop requested and received a rescript from the emperor Gratian condemning the Spanish heretics, thereby endangering the Priscillianist bishops' position. Priscillian, Instantius and Salvianus decided to appeal to Pope Damasus and bishop Ambrose. On their way to Rome, they were driven from Bordeaux by the local bishop Delphinus. In Rome and Milan they were denied a hearing. By allegedly bribing imperial officials the Priscillianist bishops regained their sees without conflict and began to

42 *Constitutiones Sirmondianae* (as in n. 17), XII, Nov. 407, Honorius and Theodosius, Rome.

43 LIEU, *Manichaeism* (as in n. 8), p. 143–144, 147; Peter STOCKMEIER, *Leo I. des Großen Beurteilung der kaiserlichen Religionspolitik*, Munich 1959, p. 112; KADEN, *Edikte* (as in n. 9), p. 57–66; BROWN, *Diffusion* (as in n. 9), p. 106–107.

take measures against the anti-Priscillianist bishop Ithacius, accusing him of disturbing the peace of the Church. Ithacius appealed to the imperial prefect Gregorius. By again bribing imperial officials, the Priscillianists managed to see their case treated by a more friendly official residing in Spain. Ithacius, again in the defensive, sought asylum with the bishop Britannius of Trier and decided to appeal to the emperor Maximus. Maximus ordered a council to be convened at Bordeaux in 384/85 where the Priscillianist bishop Instantius was condemned. Seeing that he would not receive a favorable hearing, Priscillian, in turn, appealed to the emperor, thereby avoiding the council's judgement. Instead of seeing the conflict resolved, Priscillian was accused again, and confessed, probably under torture, to having devoted himself to magical practices, nocturnal prayers with doubtful women and immoral teachings. Declared a criminal by the imperial official Evodius, Priscillian and a number of his followers, including a woman, were executed around 385⁴⁴.

Differing interpretations of Christianity have to be recognized as at least one reason for the confrontation between Priscillian and his followers on the one hand, and the representatives of orthodoxy on the other hand⁴⁵. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this article to deal with these differences in detail or to evaluate the very complicated constellation of contemporary sources. Therefore, a short summary of Priscillian's deviations from the orthodox interpretation of Christianity must suffice⁴⁶: Priscillian's accusers portray him as a Manichean, implicated in sorcery and sexual orgies. Priscillian's self-portrayal as extant in the so-called Würzburg tracts does not imply this⁴⁷. Nevertheless, we can attribute to Priscillian a number of beliefs and interests that do not correspond to the orthodox view of Christian truth: A sharp moral and maybe metaphysical dualism between God and the world/devil, a defence of vegetarianism, requests for voluntary poverty, a deep interest in demonology, a strong emphasis on celibacy not yet practiced by the majority of the orthodox clergy, a high appreciation of apocryphal scriptures, and a high value set upon the Christian service of the laity. To Priscillian, »the Spirit's activity is not confined to the episcopate and the clergy [...], but is found in all who aspire to holiness and to an understanding of the deeper meaning of scripture⁴⁸.« This last point seems to be important, especially when regarded in conjunction with Priscillian's pronounced views on the equal capacity of women and men as vehicles of the spirit. The canons of

44 This short summary of events is based mainly on Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* II,46–51, ed./transl. Ghislaine DE SENNEVILLE-GRAVE, Paris 1999 (*Sources Chrétiennes*, 441), p. 332–346; and Priscillianus, *Tractatus II – Liber ad Damasum* (as in n. 2), p. 34–43; Conc. Caesaraugustanum, in: *Concilios visigóticos e hispano-romanos*, ed. José VIVES, Barcelona 1963, p. 16–18. For an account of the facts established by scholars, cf. CHADWICK, *Priscillian* (as in n. 2), p. 8–148; Virginia BURRUS, *The Making of a Heretic. Gender, Authority, and the Priscillianist Controversy*, Berkeley 1995, p. 25–101.

45 Todd BREYFOGLE, *Magic, Women, and Heresy in the Late Empire: The Case of the Priscillianists*, in: Marvin MEYER, Paul MIRECKI (ed.), *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, Boston 2001, p. 451, 453.

46 See Chadwick's chapter on the teaching of Priscillian, in: CHADWICK, *Priscillian* (as in n. 2), p. 57–110, esp. p. 60–61.

47 Priscillianus, *Tractatus I–XI* (as in n. 2).

48 CHADWICK, *Priscillian* (as in n. 2), p. 79.

the Council of Zaragoza convened in 380, as well as the charges of illicit sexual relations with female associates directed at Priscillian convey that Priscillian's equal treatment of laity and clergy, women and men made the orthodox establishment uneasy⁴⁹. It is obvious that differing interpretations of Christianity contributed to the orthodox establishment's desire to take action against the Priscillianists. The above stated elements of Priscillianist doctrine show, too, that, to an unfriendly observer, Priscillian could justly be accused of Manichaeism, magic and immoral practices.

The establishment's fear of an ascetic rival is another factor that has to be considered when analysing the motives to persecute the Priscillianists: The initial steps taken against the Priscillianists by Hyginus of Córdoba and Hydatius of Mérida seem to have been motivated by their fear of being threatened in their position by a growing ascetic movement that was backed by a number of bishops. The question of how to deal with this movement led to the Council of Zaragoza in 380, described by Sulpicius Severus⁵⁰. An analysis of the canons of the council shows that the aim of the convened bishops was to redirect the ascetic zeal of certain ascetic groups into practices that supported rather than undermined the authority of the established episcopal Church. The council obviously tried to subordinate ›rebellious‹ ascetic subgroups to the bishop's control⁵¹. The Priscillianists reacted by ordaining Priscillian bishop of Avila, thereby making him and his movement part of the established Church⁵². When the Priscillianist bishops Instantius and Salvianus interfered in local squabbles between Hydatius of Mérida and his community, the ascetic movement's threat to the episcopal establishment became personal⁵³. In order to hold his position, Hydatius drew powers into the conflict that were not directly involved by enlisting the support of Ambrose of Milan and appealing to the emperor Gratian. Gratian, probably not able to judge whether the accusations directed at the Priscillianists were justified, condemned heretics in general⁵⁴. Sulpicius Severus' characterization of one

49 BURRUS, Heretic (as in n. 44), p. 34, 39–40, 80, 100; CHADWICK, Priscillian (as in n. 2), p. 37.

50 Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* II,46,3 (as in n. 44), p. 332: *Iamque paulatim perfidiae istius tabes pleraque Hispaniae peruaserat, quin et nonnulli episcoporum deprauati, inter quos Instantius et Saluianus Priscillianum non solum consensione, sed sub quadam etiam coniuratione susceperant, quoad Hyginus, episcopus Cordubensis, ex uicino agens, comperta ad Ydacium Emeritae sacerdotem referret*; transl. A. ROBERTS, in: Philip SCHAFF, Henry WACE (ed.), *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2nd series, 11, New York, 1894, p. 119; Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* II,47,1 (as in n. 44), p. 336: *Igitur post multa inter eos nec digna memoratu certamina apud Caesaraugustam synodus congregatur, cui tum etiam Aquitani episcopi interfuerunt*; transl. A. ROBERTS, *ibid.*, p. 119.

51 Conc. Caesaraugustanum, can. I–VIII, in: *Concilios visigóticos* (as in n. 44), p. 16–18; BURRUS, Heretic (as in n. 44), p. 35–47; CHADWICK, Priscillian (as in n. 2), p. 25.

52 Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* II,47,2 (as in n. 44), p. 336: *Interim Instantius et Saluianus damnati iudicio sacerdotum Priscillianum etiam laicum, sed principem malorum omnium, una secum Caesaraugustana synodo notatum, ad confirmandas uires suas episcopum in Abilensi oppido constituunt, rati nimirum, si hominem acrem et callidum sacerdotali auctoritate armassent, tutiores fore sese*; transl. A. ROBERTS, in: SCHAFF, WACE, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers XI* (as in n. 50), p. 120.

53 CHADWICK, Priscillian (as in n. 2), p. 31–32.

54 Priscillianus, *Tractatus* II,50–51 (as in n. 2), p. 41,2–5; Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* II,47,2 (as in n. 44), p. 336: *Tum uero Ydacius atque Ithacius acrius instare, arbitantes posse inter initia malum comprimi: sed parum sanis consiliis saeculares iudices adeunt, ut eorum decretis atque executio-*

of the staunch opponents of Priscillianism, bishop Ithacius of Ossonuba, sheds more light on the established Church's fear of an ascetic rival: Ithacius is characterized as a man »without weight, without any touch of holiness, rash, talkative, impudent, given to high living, much enjoying the pleasures of the stomach and a gormandizer«, in brief, a person who probably felt seriously threatened by the rising ascetic movement⁵⁵. It has to be noticed that Sulpicius generally regards the standards of discipline in the episcopate of his time as very low. He »does not actually suggest that Ithacius was seriously worse than most other contemporary bishops⁵⁶«, especially compared to his highly venerated idol, bishop Martin of Tours:

»And my feeling indeed is, that the accusers were as distasteful as the accused. I certainly hold that Ithacius had no worth or holiness about him. For he was a bold, loquacious, impudent, and extravagant man; excessively devoted to the pleasures of sensuality⁵⁷. [...] And now all things were seen to be disturbed and confused by the discord, especially of the bishops, while everything was corrupted by them through their hatred, partiality, fear, faithlessness, envy, factiousness, lust, avarice, pride, sleepiness, and inactivity. In a word, a large number were striving with insane plans and obstinate inclinations against a few giving wise counsel⁵⁸.«

Ithacius is probably the representative of orthodoxy that was attacked most fiercely by the Priscillianists. After regaining their sees by bribing an imperial official, the Priscillianists turned against Ithacius and accused him of having disturbed ecclesiastical peace. Alarmed, Ithacius fled to Gaul and sought the help of the prefect Gregorius who reported the whole issue to the emperor in order to forestall the Priscillianists' attempt to gain imperial favour by the means of flattery or bribery⁵⁹. When

nibus haeretici urbibus pellerentur. Igitur post multa et foeda certamina Ydacio supplicante elicitur a Gratiano tum imperatore rescriptum, quo uniuersi haeretici excedere non ecclesiis tantum aut urbibus, sed extra omnes terras propelli iubebantur; transl. A. ROBERTS, in: SCHAFF, WACE, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers XI (as in n. 50), p. 120; cf. BURRUS, Heretic (as in n. 44), p. 49, 51, 54, 76–78; CHADWICK, Priscillian (as in n. 2), p. 31–32, 35.

55 CHADWICK, Priscillian, p. 149.

56 Ibid., p. 149; commenting on: Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* II,50,1 (as in n. 44), p. 340–342.

57 Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* II,50,1 (as in n. 44), p. 340–342: *Ac mea quidem sententia est, mihi tam reos quam accusatores displicere, certe Ithacium nihil pensi, nihil sancti habuisse definio: fuit enim audax, loquax, impudens, sumptuosus, uentri et gulae plurimum impertiens. Hic stultitiae eo usque processerat, ut omnes etiam sanctos uiros, quibus aut studium inerat lectionis aut propositum erat certare ieiuniis, tamquam Priscilliani socios aut discipulos in crimen accesseret; transl. A. ROBERTS, in: SCHAFF, WACE, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers XI (as in n. 50), p. 121.*

58 Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* II,51,5 (as in n. 44), p. 346: *Et nunc, cum maxime discordiis episcoporum omnia turbari et misceri cernerentur cunctaque per eos odio aut gratia, metu, inconstantia, inuidia, factione, libidine, auaritia, arrogantia, somno, desidia deprauata, postremo plures aduersum paucos bene consulentes insanis consiliis et pertinacibus studiis certabant; transl. A. ROBERTS, in: SCHAFF, WACE, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers XI (as in n. 50), p. 122.*

59 Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* II,49,1 (as in n. 44), p. 338: *Quin etiam Ithacius ab his quasi perturbator ecclesiarum reus postulatus, iususque per atrocem executionem deduci trepidus profugit ad Gallias: ibi Gregorium praefectum adiit. Qui compertis quae gesta erant, rapi ad se barbarum auctores iubet ac de omnibus ad imperatorem refert, ut haereticis uiam ambiendi praecluderet; transl. A. ROBERTS, in: SCHAFF, WACE, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers XI (as in n. 50), p. 120.*

his attempt at securing imperial support against the Priscillianists failed because the Priscillianists allegedly managed to bribe another imperial officer, Ithacius took refuge in Trier, where he was protected by the bishop Britannius. Hearing that the general Maximus had usurped imperial power in Britain and would shortly arrive in Gaul, Ithacius decided to await the arrival of the new emperor. As soon as Maximus arrived in Trier, Ithacius influenced the newly installed emperor to take sides in his favour⁶⁰. Cornered by the Priscillianists and their imperial allies, it is no wonder that Ithacius regarded further accusations against the Priscillianists as the only way to regain his freedom of movement. Ithacius became unable to retreat in the final phase of the conflict and hysterically clung to his accusations and his own righteousness while confronted with criticism from more moderate bishops such as Martin of Tours. Ithacius, obviously conscious of the fact, that the situation might get out of control, began to use the accusation of heresy as a universal weapon against everyone who dared to reproach him:

»He proceeded even to such a pitch of folly as to charge all those men, however holy, who either took delight in reading, or made it their object to vie with each other in the practice of fasting, with being friends or disciples of Priscillian. The miserable wretch even ventured publicly to bring forward a disgraceful charge of heresy against Martin, who was at that time a bishop, and a man clearly worthy of being compared to the apostles. For Martin, being then settled at Treves, did not cease to importune Ithacius that he should give up his accusations, or to implore Maximus that he should not shed the blood of the unhappy persons in question⁶¹.«

It is quite evident that a number of orthodox bishops felt threatened by the Priscillianists' actions – personally and as representatives of the episcopal establishment: Priscillian himself suggests in his treatises that personal enmity might have played an important role. He describes his opponents as ›schismatics‹ who pursue domestic enmities under the name of religion, and presents himself as an authoritative Christian teacher and interpreter of scripture who has been unjustly assailed by uneducated and contentious bishops⁶². But concerns about ascetic rivals were not only voiced by

60 Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* II,49,2 (as in n. 44), p. 338: *qui Ithacium tum in Treueris agentem ad Hispanias retraherent. Quos ille callide frustratus, ac postea per Britannium episcopum defensum illudit. Iam tum rumor incesserat clemens, Maximum intra Britannias sumpsisse imperium ac breui in Gallias erupturum. Ita tum Ithacius statuit, licet rebus dubiis, noui imperatoris aduentum expectare, interim sibi nihil agitandum. Igitur ubi Maximus oppidum Treuerorum uictor ingressus est, ingerit preces plenas in Priscillianum ac socios eius inuidiae atque criminum. Quibus permotus imperator [...]*; transl. A. ROBERTS, in: SCHAFF, WACE, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers XI* (as in n. 50), p. 121.

61 Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* II,50,1–2 (as in n. 44), p. 342: *Hic stultitiae eo usque processerat, ut omnes etiam sanctos uiros, quibus aut studium inerat lectionis aut propositum erat certare ieiuniis, tamquam Priscilliani socios aut discipulos in crimen arcesseret. Ausus etiam miser est ea tempestate Martino episcopo, uiro plane Apostolis conferendo, palam obiectare haeresis infamiam. Namque tum Martinus apud Treueros constitutus non desinebat increpare Ithacium, ut ab accusatione desisteret, Maximum orare, ut sanguine infelicium abstineret*; transl. A. ROBERTS, in: SCHAFF, WACE, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers XI* (as in n. 50), p. 121.

62 Cf. Priscillianus, *Tractatus* I,10 (as in n. 2), p.10–11; I,26, p. 22,10–12; I,27, p. 23,9–19; I,27–28,

individual orthodox bishops: A great number of orthodox bishops seem to have had the same fear of having their authority undermined by the Priscillianists and other heretic ascetic groups. Their motive of securing the position of the established Church and to contain ambitious, successful ascetic movements critical of the establishment cannot only be deduced from the canons of the Council of Zaragoza, mentioned above. It also seems to lie at the heart of the bishops' decision at Trier in 385, to convince Maximus of sending imperial delegates to Spain to find and punish ›the heretics‹. According to Sulpicius Severus, non-heretical ascetics were also in danger of becoming victims, since in his time, nobody distinguished between heretical and orthodox ascetics⁶³. Some bishops obviously regarded Priscillian and his followers as a threat to their position in their respective community and were not prepared to take any risks by appearing to associate with the Priscillianists. Thus, the latter received little support, when they crossed the territory of bishop Delphinus of Bordeaux on their way to Rome and Milan where they tried to appeal for help.

»Driven forth from Bordeaux by Delfinus, yet lingering for a little while in the territory of Euchrotia, they infected some with their errors. [...] When they reached Rome with the wish of clearing themselves before Damasus, they were not even admitted to his presence. Returning to Milan, they found that Ambrose was equally opposed to them⁶⁴.«

Delphinus probably perceived the presence of the Spanish bishops in Bordeaux as a threat to the unity of his Christian community and his own authority. He obviously needed to intimidate ›infected‹ factions who sympathised with the Priscillianist movement⁶⁵. The motives of Pope Damasus and bishop Ambrose can only be determined by taking their position within their communities into account: Pope Damasus had only recently established himself in Rome as the winner of a papal schism. During this schism, Damasus, like Priscillian, had been accused of sexual promiscuity by his rival Ursinus in 368 and had only managed to retain his position as bishop of Rome because the prefect of Rome had decided to support him. Charges of adultery had resurfaced as late as 378, leaving Damasus in a precarious position and therefore

p. 23,22–24,16; I,33, p. 27,26–29; II,41, p. 34,7–8; II,43–44, p. 35,19–36,47; II,46–47, p. 38,7–39,16; II,48–51, p. 40,1–41,16; II,49–55, p. 41,10–43,15; cf. BURRUS, Heretic (as in n. 44), p. 100.

63 Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi* III,11,4–6, ed. Carolus HALM, Vienna 1866 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 1), p. 208–209: *et iam pridie imperator ex eorum sententia decreuerat, tribunos summa potestate armatos ad Hispanias mittere, qui haereticos inquirerent, deprehensis uitam et bona adimerent. nec dubium erat, quin sanctorum etiam magnam turbam tempestas ista depolatura esset, paruo discrimine inter hominum genera: etenim tum solis oculis indicabatur, ut quis pallore potius aut ueste quam fide haereticus aestimaretur. haec nequaquam placitura Martino episcopi sentiebant [...]*.

64 Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* II,48,1–2 (as in n. 44), p. 338: *A Burdigala per Delfinum repulsi, tamen in agro Euchrotiae aliquantisper morati, infecere nonnullos suis erroribus. [...] Hi ubi Romam peruenere, Damaso se purgare cupientes, ne in conspectum quidem eius admissi sunt. Regressi Mediolanum aequae aduersantem sibi Ambrosium repperunt;* transl. A. ROBERTS, in: SCHAFF, WACE, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* XI (as in n. 50), p. 120.

65 BURRUS, Heretic (as in n. 44), p. 81, 99.

unable to risk the association with a Spaniard accused of heresy. The same can be said of Ambrose who struggled with Arian factions within his city. Delphinus, Damasus, and Ambrose all seemed to struggle to maintain their authority over a diverse and factious Christian community. According to Virginia Burrus, they »responded negatively to Priscillian at least partly out of awareness of their own vulnerability to similar charges and their own strong – and ultimately successful – personal interests in consolidating an episcopacy that would subsume the authority of the ascetic and learned teacher under a publicly defined authority of office⁶⁶.«

As in most human affairs, money seems to have played an important role in the Priscillianist affair. Sulpicius Severus informs us that the Priscillianists used bribes to gain an advantageous standing with imperial officials on several occasions. If it paid well, at least some officials of the time were willing to cast aside theological concerns, to disregard the interests of the orthodox establishment, and to support religious movements classified as heretic:

»Then they [the Priscillianists] changed their plans, with the view that [...] they might, by bribery and flattery, obtain what they desired from the emperor. Accordingly, having won over Macedonius, who was the master of public services, they procured a rescript, by which, those decrees which had formerly been made being trampled under foot, they were ordered to be restored to their churches⁶⁷. [...]

[...] for the heretics had won over by bribes Voluentius, the proconsul, and thus consolidated their own power⁶⁸. [...]

Accordingly, the heretics by their artifices, having presented Macedonius with a large sum of money, secured that, by the imperial authority, the hearing of the trial was taken from the prefect, and transferred to the lieutenant in Spain⁶⁹.«

Sulpicius Severus accuses the usurper Maximus himself of having decided to persecute the heretics with the aim of receiving a financial boost through confiscations, necessary to him in his precarious position of recently acquired imperial power. Sulpicius Severus draws a connection between the emperor's unwillingness to receive the bishop Martin of Tours with the latter's criticism of the persecution of the Priscillianists⁷⁰:

66 Ibid., p. 99–100, cf. p. 88–92; CHADWICK, Priscillian (as in n. 2), p. 128; cf. Stefan REBENICH, Hieronymus und sein Kreis. Prosopographische und sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen, Stuttgart 1992 (Historia Einzelschriften, 72), p. 160.

67 Sulpicius Severus, Chronica II,48,1–2 (as in n. 44), p. 338: *largiendo et ambiendo ab imperatore cupita extorquerent. Ita corrupto Macedonio, tum magistro officiorum, rescriptum eliciunt, quo calcatis, quae prius decreta erant, restitui ecclesiis iubebantur*; transl. A. ROBERTS, in: SCHAFF, WACE, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers XI (as in n. 50), p. 120.

68 Sulpicius Severus, Chronica II,49,1, p. 338: *quia haeretici corrupto Voluentio proconsule vires suas confirmauerunt*; transl. A. ROBERTS, in: SCHAFF, WACE, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers XI, p. 120.

69 Sulpicius Severus, Chronica II,49,2, p. 338: *grandi pecunia Macedonio data, optinent, ut imperiali auctoritate, praefecto erepta cognitio Hispaniarum uicario [...]*; transl. A. ROBERTS, in: SCHAFF, WACE, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers XI, p. 120.

70 LIEU, Manichaeism (as in n. 8), p. 149–150; CHADWICK, Priscillian (as in n. 2), p. 144.

»But on the first and second day the wily emperor kept the holy man in suspense, whether that he might impress on him the importance of the affair, or because, being obnoxious to the bishops, he could not be reconciled to them, or because, as most people thought at the time, the emperor opposed his wishes from avarice, having cast a longing eye on the property of the persons in question. For we are told that he was really a man distinguished by many excellent actions, but that he was not successful in contending against avarice. This may, however, have been due to the necessities of the empire at the time, for the treasury of the state had been exhausted by former rulers; and he, being almost constantly in the expectation of civil wars, or in a state of preparation for them, may easily be excused for having, by all sorts of expedients, sought resources for the defense of the empire⁷¹.«

Considering the motives analysed above, it seems very likely that charges of sorcery and magical practices against Priscillian and his followers were not necessarily based on facts, but were rather used as a pretext to outlaw and even eliminate the disturbing Priscillianist movement. Nevertheless, it has to be taken into account that accusations of immoral behavior and magic may have motivated anti-Priscillianist actions from people who were not directly involved in the conflict. People who did not have sufficient information or theological knowledge to form a judgement about the Priscillianist movement may have readily believed the rumors circulated about it and would have taken reports such as the one by Sulpicius Severus at face value:

»They then pursued the journey on which they had entered, attended by a base and shameful company, among whom were their wives and even strange women. In the number of these was Euchrotia and her daughter Procula, of the latter of whom there was a common report that, when pregnant through adultery with Priscillian, she procured abortion by the use of certain plants⁷².«

In consequence, we can assume that Priscillianist doctrine and practices may actually have appeared immoral and related to magic to fourth-century observers⁷³. That magic, always associated with secrecy and obscene practices, was deeply feared in

71 Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi* III,11,10–11 (as in n. 63), p. 209–210: *uerum primo die adque altero suspendit hominem callidus imperator, siue ut rei pondus inponeret, siue quia obnoxius episcopis implacabilis erat, seu quia, ut plerique tum arbitrabantur, auaritia repugnabat, siquidem in bona eorum inhiauerat. fertur enim ille uir multis bonisque actibus praeditus aduersus auaritiam parum consuluisse, nisi regni necessitate, quippe exhausto a superioribus principibus reipublicae aerario, paene semper in expectatione adque procinctu bellorum ciuiliu constitutus facile excusabitur quibuslibet occasionibus subsidia imperio parauisse*; transl. A. ROBERTS, in: SCHAFF, WACE, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* XI (as in n. 50), p. 51.

72 Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* II,48,1–2 (as in n. 44), p. 338: *Inde iter coeptum ingressi, turpi sane pudibundoque comitate, cum uxoribus atque alienis etiam feminis in quis erat Euchrotia ac filia eius Procula, de qua fuit in sermone hominum Priscilliani stupro grauidam partum sibi gramminibus abegisse*; transl. A. ROBERTS, in: SCHAFF, WACE, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* XI, p. 120; cf. Priscillianus, *Tractatus* II,43 (as in n. 2), p. 35,26; II,47, p. 39,8–11, where Priscillian refutes charges of magic, Manichaeism as well as teaching wicked morals and indecency.

73 BREYFOGLE, *Magic* (as in n. 45), p. 450–453; LIEU, *Manichaeism* (as in n. 8), p. 149–150.

antiquity, can be deduced from the many references and severe punishment in the laws of the 4th century as documented in the *Codex Theodosianus*⁷⁴. The stoning of one of Priscillian's female followers, Urbica, by a mob in Bordeaux after the execution of Priscillian, which was – according to Prosper of Aquitaine – justified with Urbica's insistence on the truth of Priscillian's teachings (*ob impietatis pertinaciam*), may also have been motivated by such fear of magic as well as indignation about the seemingly immoral behavior of males and females belonging to a religious movement in which the sexes mingled too freely⁷⁵.

The emperor Maximus is connected with the final decision to execute Priscillian: An usurper responsible for the orthodox emperor's fall and murder, Maximus could not afford to be regarded as a ruler prone to support heretics accused of Manichaean and magical practices. His authority not being recognized either by the emperor Theodosius in the East nor by the infant emperor Valentinian II in Milan, Maximus felt compelled to write to Pope Siricius after the execution of Priscillian, justifying his action by the desire to see the Catholic faith unimpaired. He obviously felt he needed the support of the orthodox clergy to stay in power⁷⁶. Support for the Priscillianist cause could not be expected under these circumstances: In contrast, eliminating a seemingly dangerous heresy that had surfaced and not been efficiently dealt with in the reign of his predecessor Gratian rather would have helped Maximus to consolidate his position. We can also imagine that Maximus probably had more acute issues to deal with than a number of heretics which the Church had been unable to control. A small number of executions therefore must have seemed fairly easier to digest than a continuous ecclesiastical quarrel causing instability and factionism in the regions under his feeble and much contested jurisdiction⁷⁷.

The analysis has shown that a number of motives gave rise to the persecution of Priscillian and his followers in the last quarter of the 4th century. Differing from orthodox theology in a number of points, the ascetic movement was regarded as a rival to the established Church by individual bishops whose non-conformity to the ascetic demands of their office made them particularly vulnerable to the accusations of the Priscillianists. Personal enmity also played a role in the conflict. But not only individual bishops, the orthodox establishment in general seems to have felt threatened by Priscillianism because of its emphasis on spiritual rather than official author-

74 Cod. Theod. (as in n. 17), IX,16,4, Jan. 357, Constantius to the people, Milan; Cod. Theod. IX,16,6, July 357/58, Constantius to Taurus, Pretorian Prefect, Ariminum; Cod. Theod. IX,16,7, Sept. 364, Valentinian and Valens to Secundus, Pretorian Prefect; Cod. Theod. IX,16,11, August 389, Valentinian, Theodosius, Arcadius to Albinus, Prefect of the city, Rome; CHADWICK, Priscillian (as in n. 2), p. 53, 141.

75 Prosper Tiro Aquitanus, *Epitoma de Chronicon* a. 385, 1187, ed. Theodor MOMMSEN, Berlin 1892 (MGH AA, 9), p. 462: *Priscillianus in synodo Burdigalensi damnandum se intellegens ad imperatorem [Maximum] provocavit, auditusque Treveris ab Euodio praefecto praetorio Maximi gladio addictus est cum Euchrotia Delfidi rhetoris coniuge et Latroniano aliisque erroris consortibus. Burdigalae quaedam Priscilliani discipula nomine Urbica ob impietatis pertinaciam per seditionem vulgi lapidibus extincta est.*

76 *Collectio Avellana*, ep. 40,3–4, ed. Otto GUENTHER, Vienna 1895 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 35,1), p. 91,14–27; cf. LIEU, *Manichaeism* (as in n. 8), p. 148.

77 CHADWICK, Priscillian (as in n. 2), p. 111–121; LIEU, *Manichaeism*, p. 148–150.

ity which, given free lead, would have undermined episcopal authority. As soon as the Priscillianists were successfully labelled as heretics and Manichaeans it became difficult for established bishops to associate with or to protect them without endangering their own precarious position within their community. As in many conflicts, money played an important part: Theological differences were of secondary importance to some representatives of the imperial administration. Bribes and the possibility of adding confiscated property to the treasury motivated several imperial actions at least partly. As soon as the accusations of sorcery, magic and Manichaean practices had been firmly established, we can assume that fear motivated a number of people not directly involved in the actual conflict to take a stand against Priscillianism. Finally, the precarious political standing of the usurper Maximus is of vital importance: Charged with the murder of Gratian, not accepted by the other emperors, Maximus could not afford to sympathise with the Priscillianist cause. By eliminating Priscillian and his followers, Maximus grasped at the chance to present himself as a champion of orthodoxy and to acquire financial means through confiscations extremely necessary to consolidate his precarious political position.

Sulpicius Severus and Jerome both reported on the Priscillianist issue but were not directly involved in the confrontation with Priscillian and his followers. Sulpicius Severus held a negative view of the movement from the beginning. Whereas Jerome judged Priscillian's teaching quite neutrally when writing his biographical work *De viris illustribus*, he later condemned the Priscillianist movement and its founder in several letters⁷⁸. Virginia Burrus dedicated a part of her study on Priscillianism to the motives of both historiographers to portray Priscillian as a disorderly and traitorous gnostic seducer involved in immoral relations with women. Burrus highlights the following points: Both Severus and Jerome promoted the ascetic ideal in their writings and their daily life and criticized others for not adhering to its principles. At the same time, both historiographers counted a number of females to their inner social circle: Sulpicius Severus, on the one hand, had very friendly relations with his mother-in-law, Bassula. Furthermore, his idol Martin of Tours even received a number of female ascetics. Jerome, on the other hand, had very good relations with a number of Roman aristocratic women. Later, he even emigrated to Bethlehem in the company of the aristocratic widow Paula and her daughter Eustochium. Both historiographers and their ascetic ideals were repeatedly attacked during their lifetime: Sulpicius Severus wrote his *Vita Martini* and the *Dialogi* in part to prove the superiority of the much contested ascetic to the surrounding episcopal establishment. As secretary to Pope Damasus, Jerome got involved in a number of controversies in which he uncompromisingly advocated the ascetic ideal and uncautiously criticized a number of clerics. After Damasus' death in 384, Jerome was driven out of town facing official charges of sexual immorality. The parallels to Priscillian can easily be drawn. To Burrus, it is obvious why both historiographers vehemently distanced themselves from Priscillianism⁷⁹:

78 Hieronymus, *De viris illustribus* 121–122, ed. Carl BERNOULLI, Freiburg i. B. 1895, p. 53; Hieronymus, ep. 75,3, ed. Isidor HILBERG, Vienna 1912 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 55), p. 32–33; cf. CHADWICK, Priscillian, p. 204–205.

79 BURRUS, Heretic (as in n. 44), p. 128, 147–158.

»Severus' portrait of Priscillian is strongly shaped by an awareness of his own susceptibility to the attacks of opponents like Vigilantius, who perceive him as a threat to the authority of the ecclesial hierarchy and the stability of episcopally led communities. Jerome likewise develops his portrait of Priscillian in the aftermath of charges of illicit sexual relations with Paula brought forward against him by a jealous and resentful Roman clergy. Both men constructed their portraits of Priscillian in order to dissociate themselves from them. The gnostic seducer is the heretic against whom their particular orthodoxies must be defined⁸⁰.«

The Acts of the first Council of Toledo, convened in the year 400, about fifteen years after Priscillian's execution, show that the Priscillianist threat had not abated yet. On the contrary, the movement had established itself firmly in the Roman province of Gallaecia, in the Northwestern corner of the Iberian Peninsula. After Priscillian's death, his followers bestowed upon him the honour of a martyr and even tried to establish bishops with Priscillianist sympathies. The Council of Toledo was convened to prevent the impending schism in the Spanish Church. It is evident from the acts of the council that the established Church wished to impose a certain degree of dogmatical and liturgical uniformity upon the clergy of the Iberian Peninsula of which a number obviously sympathised with the Priscillianist movement, as the *exemplaria professionum in concilio toletano contra sectam Priscilliani*⁸¹ as well as the following anathema show: »If someone follows the sect of Priscillian in these errors or professes them, so that while baptizing he does something in opposition to the see of St. Peter, he shall be anathema⁸².«

However, the invasions of the Vandals, the Alans, and the Sueves in 409 severely hampered the promulgation of anti-heretical laws of imperial and ecclesiastical origin. The imperial administration lost control of its provinces, the Church fought to regain control. Thus, the orthodox battle against Priscillianism took on a new political dimension: One source to inform us about the situation in Northwestern Spain is a report sent by the cleric Orosius of Braga, a town in Gallaecia, to Augustine, meanwhile bishop of Hippo. Orosius got in touch with Augustine around the year 414 after he had fled the unbearable conditions in Spain. He entered into a theological dialogue with Augustine concerning Priscillian's doctrines to search a cure for the confusion and plague which had infested his homeland⁸³. According to Henry Chadwick, »it seems clear from Orosius' account that the only serious theology available in Galicia was under Priscillianist influence, so that those who wanted an alternative had to go elsewhere to find it⁸⁴.« Another source which informs us about the com-

80 Ibid., p. 158.

81 Concilium Toletanum I, *exemplaria professionum in concilio Toletano contra sectam Priscilliani*, in: *Concilios visigóticos* (as in n. 44), p. 28–30.

82 Concilium Toletanum I, anatema XVIII, *ibid.*, p. 25: *Si quis in his erroribus Priscilliani secta sequitur vel profitetur, ut aliud in salutare bap̄tismi contra sedem sancti Petri faciat, anathema sit*; CHADWICK, Priscillian (as in n. 2), p. 172–173; BURRUS, Heretic (as in n. 44), p. 103, 107–111.

83 Orosius, *Consultatio sive commonitorium ad Augustinum de errore Priscillianistarum et Origenistarum*, ch. 2 and 4, ed. Georg SCHEPSS, Vienna 1889 (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 18), p. 153–155, 157.

84 CHADWICK, Priscillian (as in n. 2), p. 191.

petition between Priscillianism and orthodoxy in Galicia is the chronicle of Hydatius: At the beginning of his chronicle Hydatius complains about the current situation of the Church in Gallaecia which he describes as being governed by confrontations between clerics, a lack of liberty and the degeneration of religion⁸⁵. On several occasions he mentions tensions within the church, probably connected in one way or another with Priscillianism: He reports that in the year 400 the catholic bishop Ortygius of Celenis was chased from his position by the Priscillianists⁸⁶. In 433 Agrestus, bishop of Lugo, showed dissatisfaction with the ordination of Syagrius and Pastor, both of them authors of anti-heretical writings⁸⁷. In 438 Hydatius informs us that only a part of the Galician population signed a peace treaty with the Sueves, maybe implying that a Priscillianist faction had allied with them. Chadwick and Tranoy suggest that the Sueves may have seen an advantage in fostering religious dissent to mark off their domain from other provinces. It seems more likely, though, that religious dissent and factious fighting just weakened resistance and made it easier for the Sueves to control the newly acquired province⁸⁸. Hydatius also reports that the bishop of Mérida, Antoninus, was informed in 445 that Manichaeans had been detected and interrogated by ecclesiastical authorities in Astorga⁸⁹. In a letter to Hydatius and his colleague Ceponius, Turribius, the bishop of Astorga, states his shock about the discovery that the number of Priscillianists had not decreased during his long absence from the province and that the Priscillianists were still holding ecclesiastical positions in Gallaecia. Turribius also comments on the advantage of one and the same profession of faith in all churches as opposed to »a multitude of tiny tributaries which transform the level places of the country-side into muddy whirlpools which impede the right course of faith⁹⁰«. He feels especially repelled by the fact that Priscillianists and orthodox Christians receive communion side by side:

»Having returned to my homeland after many long years, it is rather hard for me to discover that the influence of [those] traditions, which the Catholic Church has long condemned (and which I believed had already been abolished), is in no way diminished. I even see that a depraved doctrine, by virtue of

85 Hydatius, *Chronicon*, praef. 7, ed./transl. Alain TRANOY, Paris 1975 (*Sources Chrétiennes*, 218), p. 100; cf. *ibid.* (introduction), p. 43: »Nous pensons qu'elles furent le reflet de la division du clergé à la suite du développement du priscillianisme en Galice.«

86 Hydatius, *Chronicon* § 32 (a. 400) (as in n. 85), p. 112: *in eodem concilio, Ortygio episcopo, qui Celenis fuerat ordinatus, sed agentibus Priscillianistis pro fide catholica pulsus factionibus exulabat*; Conc. Toletanum I, *exemplaria professionum in concilio toletano contra sectam priscillianian*, in: *Concilios visigóticos* (as in n. 44), p. 31–33.

87 Hydatius, *Chronicon* § 102 (a. 433) (as in n. 85), p. 132; cf. *ibid.* (introduction), p. 43.

88 Hydatius, *Chronicon* § 113 (a. 438) (as in n. 85), p. 134: *Sueui, cum parte plebis Gallaecia cui aduersabantur, pacis iura confirmant*; *ibid.* (introduction), p. 44; CHADWICK, *Priscillian* (as in n. 2), p. 189, 191, 209.

89 Hydatius, *Chronicon* § 130 (a. 445) (as in n. 85), p. 140.

90 Turribius, ep. 15a,1, MIGNE PL 54, col. 693: *Quod mihi usu venit qui diversas provincias adeundo in omnibus ecclesiis quae in unitatis communione consistunt condemnatis omnibus errorum sectis, reperi unum atque eundem catholicae fidei sensum teneri ex purissimo veritatis fonte venientem; qui in nulla divortia multifidivis rivulis scissus camporum plana in coenosos voragines solvat, quae rectum fidei iter impediunt*; transl. SCHIPPER, VAN OORT (ed.), St. Leo (as in n. 3), p. 79.

the willing endeavour of everybody, is putting forth heads as if it were a water-snake. Although some may have added their blasphemies to an ancient error, others may have retained it intact unto this very moment. [...] Because of the evils of the time in which we live, when the synodal assemblies and decrees have fallen into disuse, this [evil] has prospered all the more freely; and, most impious of all (because it is worst of all), people are resorting to one altar with totally different religious sentiments⁹¹.«

Turribius, afraid of the consequences of anti-Priscillianist action, did not seem quite sure about how to deal with the situation: »Whether it is better for me to speak out or hold my peace, I know not; because I fear both⁹².« Probably as a result of this insecurity, Turribius decided to write to Pope Leo I who, according to Hydatius, had initiated a campaign against the Manichaeans in the provinces in 445⁹³. In 447 Pervincus, Turribius' deacon, brought an anti-Priscillianist treatise and a letter written by Pope Leo, to Astorga⁹⁴. The treatise contains several articles condemning the Manichaean and Priscillianist heresies, regarded by Leo as one and the same. In his letter Leo deplores that communications have deteriorated so much since the invasions, giving the heretics the opportunity to spread further so that even a large number of priests now followed the Priscillianist lead. He therefore calls for a Spanish general council or at least a local synod:

»But since the hostile eruption has occupied many provinces and the storms of the wars have prevented the execution of the laws, and since contact between the priests of God has become difficult and their meetings are infrequent, the secret perfidy has found liberty because of the public disorder, and it has been incited to the subversion of many minds by those very ills by which it ought to have been corrected. So which of the peoples and what part of them is safe from this pestilence, where, as your beloved person indicates, even the hearts of some of the priests have been corrupted by the deadly disease? And those persons who were believed to suppress falsity and to defend truth, by these same persons the Gospel of Christ is subordinated to the doctrine of Priscillian⁹⁵.«

91 Turribius, ep. 15a,2, col. 693: *Quapropter mihi, post longas annorum metas ad patriam reverso, satis durum videtur quod ex illis traditionibus quas olim catholica damnavit ecclesia quasque iam dudum abolitas esse credebam, nihil penitus imminutum esse reperio. Immo etiam pro uniuscuiusque studio et voluntate prava dogmata velut quibusdam hydrinis capitibus pullulare cognosco. Cum alii veteri errori blasphemiarum suarum augmenta contulerint, alii integrum eum usque ad hoc retentent. [...] Quod quidem per mala temporis nostri synodorum conventibus decretisque cessantibus liberius crevit; et impiissime (quod est cunctis deterius) ad unum altare diversis fidei sensibus convenitur;* transl. SCHIPPER, VAN OORT (ed.), St. Leo (as in n. 3), p. 79.

92 Turribius, ep. 15a,3, col. 693: *Loquarne ergo an taceam nescio, quia utrumque formido;* transl. SCHIPPER, VAN OORT (ed.), St. Leo, p. 81; cf. CHADWICK, Priscillian (as in n. 2), p. 209.

93 Hydatius, Chronicon § 133 (a. 445) (as in n. 85), p. 140.

94 Ibid., § 135 (a. 447), p. 140.

95 Leo Magnus, ep. 15 (salutatio), Migne PL 54, col. 680; transl. SCHIPPER, VAN OORT (ed.), St. Leo (as in n. 3), p. 55.

Leo's initiative to extend his anti-Manichaean activity, initially restricted to Rome, to the provinces, seems to have given a moral boost to provincial representatives of orthodoxy, which so far had been unable or had failed to deal with the problem of heresy. In spite of severed communications, the exchange of information between the Holy See and bishop Turribius of Astorga prepared the provincial bishops for dealing with Manichaean refugees who had been expelled from Rome by the authorities. Hydatius reports that, in 448, bishop Antoninus of Mérida arrested a Manichaean refugee from Rome and exiled him from the province of Lusitania after an interrogation⁹⁶.

In the eyes of the orthodox bishops of Gallaecia under the rule of the Sueves, the Priscillianist movement constituted a powerful religious force that had to be dealt with daily and wasn't crushed easily. Religious strife which may have rather been supported than fought by the Sueves, aggravated a complicated and instable political situation. Consequently, the Priscillianists had to be tolerated. Considering these circumstances, it is understandable that the urge for fighting heresy only became strong when Rome offered sufficient ideological backing.

5. Pope Leo I and the Manichaeans in Rome

Between the years 443 and 445, Pope Leo successfully campaigned against the Manichaeans in Rome. In his *Sermo* 9, probably held before the end of 443, Leo called on his congregation to disclose the hiding places of Manichaeans in the city⁹⁷. In *Sermo* 16, dated Advent 443, Leo informed his congregation of investigations of secular and ecclesiastical authorities under his leadership which had uncovered a sexual scandal in the Manichaean community of Rome: A number of Manichaean ›Elect‹ had been summoned and interrogated, possibly under torture. According to Leo's sermon and the *Constitutio Valentiniiana* issued in 445, two ladies and a Manichaean ›bishop‹ had staged a ritual violation of a girl not older than ten. In his sermon, Leo states:

»When the bishops and presbyters were sitting with me and, in the same assembly, Christian men and noble persons were gathered together, we summoned their Electi and Electae to present themselves. Who, when they had disclosed many things about the perversity of their doctrine and the customary practice of their festivities, also brought to light that wicked action which is shameful to utter. With so much diligence has this criminal act been investigated, that neither those who were less inclined to believe, nor those who were disparagers, were left in doubt. For there were present all those persons who had been involved in perpetrating the unspeakable deed: namely a girl of at most ten years, and the two women who had fostered her and made the preparations for

⁹⁶ Hydatius, *Chronicon* § 137 (a. 448) (as in n. 85), p. 142.

⁹⁷ Leo Magnus, *Tractatus* 9,4, ed. Antoine CHAVASSE, Turnhout 1973 (*Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina, 138), p. 37: *Ut autem in omnibus, dilectissimi, placeat Domino vestra devotio, etiam ad hanc vos hortamur industriam, ut Manicheos ubicumque latentes vestris presbyteris publicetis. Magna enim est pietas proderere latebras impiorum et ipsum in eis cui serviunt, diabolum debellare.*

the impious action. Also present was the adolescent who violated the girl and their bishop who arranged the detestable crime. From all of those persons, the confession was one and the same, and that execrable abomination was reported which our ears could scarcely bear. Lest we offend chaste listeners by talking more openly about this, the documents of the proceedings suffice, in which it is abundantly demonstrated that, in that sect, nothing which is modest, nothing which is virtuous, absolutely nothing which is chaste can be found: but mendacity is its law; the devil is its religion; and turpitude is its sacrifice⁹⁸.«

Following these events, Leo took action: In a letter, dated February 444, he informed the Italian bishops of the recent scandal, warning them about the Manichaean plague and urging them to hunt down Manichaeans hiding in their community and to separate them from their flock⁹⁹. As an example to be followed, Leo reports how he tracked down the Manichaeans with the help of the secular authorities, and compelled a number of them to condemn Mani and his teachings by a public confession in church and a handwritten document. Those Manichaeans who were so deeply entrenched in their false belief that they were unable to repent, were punished with perpetual exile by the public judges in accordance with the laws promulgated by the Christian princes¹⁰⁰.

98 Leo Magnus, Tractatus 16,4 (as in n. 97), p. 64–65: *Residentibus itaque mecum episcopis atque presbyteris et in eundem concessum christianis viris et nobilibus congregatis, Electos et Electas eorum iussimus praesentari. Qui cum de perversitate dogmatis sui et de festivitatum suarum consuetudine multa reserassent, illud quoque scelus, quod eloqui verecundum est, prodiderunt, quod tanta diligentia investigatum est, ut nihil minus credulis, nihil obtrectatoribus relinqueretur ambiguum. Aderant enim omnes personae per quas infandum facinus fuerat perpetratum, puella scilicet ut multum decennis, et duae mulieres quae ipsam nutrierant et huic sceleri praepararant. Praesto erat etiam adollescens vitiator puellae et episcopus ipsorum detestandi criminis ordinator. Omnium horum par fuit et una confessio et patefactum est execrumentum quod aures nostrae vic perferre potuerunt. De quo ne apertius loquentes castos offendamus auditus, gestorum documenta sufficiunt, quibus plenissime docetur nullam in hac sectam pudicitiam, nullam honestatem, nulla, reperiri penitus castitatem, in qua lex est mendacium, diabolus religio, sacrificium turpitudine; transl. SCHIPPER, VAN OORT (ed.), St. Leo (as in n. 3), p. 27.*

99 Leo Magnus, ep. 7,2, MIGNE PL 54, col. 621–622: *Et quia aliquantos de his quos hic ne se absoluerent arctior reatus involverat, cognovimus aufugisse, hanc ad dilectionem vestram epistulam misimus per acolythum nostrum; ut effecta vertior sanctitas vestra, fratres charissimi, sollicitius agere dignetur et cautius necubi Manichaeae perversitatis homines plebes vestras facultatem laedendi et huius sacrilegii possint invenire doctores. Aliter enim nobis commissos regere non possumus nisi hos qui sunt perditores et perdit, zelo fidei dominicae persequamur et a sanis mentibus, ne pestis haec latius divulgetur, severitate qua possumus abscondamus. Unde hortor dilectionem vestram, obtestor et moneo, ut qua debetis et potestis sollicitudine vigiletis ad investigandos eos necubi occultandi se reperiant facultatem.*

100 Ibid., ep. 7,1, col. 620–621: *quos potuimus emendare, correximus et ut damnarent Manichaeum cum praedicationibus et disciplinis suis publica in ecclesia professione et manus suae subscriptione, compulimus et ita de voragine impietatis suae confessos poenitentiam concedendo levavimus. Aliquantum vero, qui ita se demerserant ut nullum his auxiliantis posset remedium subvenire, subditi legibus secundum christianorum principum constituta, ne sacrum gregem sua contagione polluerent, per publicos indices perpetuo sunt exsilio relegati; cf. Leo Magnus, Tractatus 34,5 (as in n. 97), p. 186–187: quod multi ipsorum, Domino miserante, detecti sunt, et in quibus sacrilegii viverent, eorumdem confessione patefactum est.*

In this context it is not clear whether Leo refers to earlier edicts against the Manichaeans or to the *Constitutio Valentiniana*¹⁰¹. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the *Constitutio* was strongly influenced by the Pope: It refers to the sexual scandal brought to the open by Leo's initiative and makes it clear that imperial action deemed necessary. The Manichaeans are defined as »inimical to public discipline and hostile to the Christian faith«. To the imperial court »it is not without danger for Us to neglect so detestable an injury to the Godhead and to leave unpunished a crime by which not only the bodies of those who are deceived but also their souls are polluted without the possibility of expiation. [...] For nothing seems to be too severe to be decreed against those persons whose incestuous perversity in the name of religion commits deeds that are unknown and shameful even in brothels¹⁰².«

Whereas the imperial motives for acting against the Manichaeans are spelled out in this quotation as well as in the imperial edicts dealt with above, Leo's motives for initiating action have to be deduced from other sources as well: Around the year 440 a cleric named Prosper of Aquitaine entered the service of Pope Leo and wrote a treatise under the title *De vocatione omnium gentium* (»Of the Calling of All Peoples«) under Leo's tutelage. The treatise contains ideas that stem from the inner circle around the Pope: Prosper states that it is God's wish, as layed down in the Holy Scriptures, that everyone might be saved. For Christ has died for everyone, especially for the unbelievers and the sinners and, by his death, has turned God's wrath away from mankind. According to Prosper, conversion to Christianity is achieved by preaching but also by fear¹⁰³. Similar ideas are found in Leo's writings: In several sermons, Leo prays for the salvation of Jews, pagans and Manichaeans. The universal Church (*ecclesia universalis*), a term Leo uses regularly, is the place where everyone should come together¹⁰⁴. Based on his strong conviction of the Church's universal mission, one of Leo's primary concerns is to preserve the unity of the Church. If this unity is endangered, it is, in the Pope's view, the ruler's responsibility to take arms against those who disturb ecclesiastical peace and to treat them like enemies of the state. In a letter dealing with monophysite rebellions in Palestine Leo writes to Julian of Cos:

»But if some are so blinded in their obstinacy that the ruthless have reached a state of madness, preferring to rage rather than to be cured, then it is proper that the disturbers of ecclesiastical peace are vigorously suppressed by the imperial

101 Cf. Wilhelm ENSSLIN, Valentinians II. Novellen 445, in: Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Rom. Abt. 57 (1937), p. 367–374.

102 *Constitutio/Novella Valentiniana* (as in n. 17), XVIII, Theodosius, Valentinian to Albinus, Praetorian Prefect for the second time, Rome, June 445; transl. SCHIPPER, VAN OORT (ed.), St. Leo (as in n. 3), p. 49–51.

103 Prosper Tiro Aquitanus, *De Vocatione Omnium Gentium* II,17, MIGNE PL 51, col. 712: *Hunc autem consensum non solum cohortatio praedicantium et incitamenta doctrinae, sed etiam metus gignit.*

104 Leo Magnus, *Tractatus* 34,5 (as in n. 97), p. 186–187 (Prayer for the conversion of Manichaeans); *Tractatus* 35,3, p. 191–192 (Prayer for the conversion of Jews); cf. Leo Magnus, *Sermones*, ed./transl. Jean LECLERCQ, René DOLLE (introduction), Paris 1964 (*Sources Chrétiennes*, 22), p. 29, 37; STOCKMEIER, Leo (as in n. 43), p. 178–180.

power as enemies of a polity, that takes pride in its Christian emperors with good reason¹⁰⁵.«

The use of imperial authority and executive power therefore is, in Leo's eyes, a legitimate way of achieving ecclesiastical unity and thereby realising the ideal of the universal Church. The emperor is responsible, as a Christian and as the representative of a Christian polity, to take measures against schismatics and heretics. As Leo explains in a letter to Theodosius, the Empire will be in its best form when the One God is venerated in the holy Trinity by all¹⁰⁶. Because of this, the execution of Priscillian – condemned by contemporaries such as Martin of Tours to have been too harsh a punishment –, is defended by Leo as the adequate way of dealing with the founder of a heresy. He maintains the conviction that fear of punishment has often proven to be conducive in bringing heretics back to the true faith. Leo states in his letter to bishop Turribius of Astorga¹⁰⁷:

»Our fathers, in whose times this abominable heresy [Priscillianism] erupted, were right to take firm action throughout the whole world in order that this impious fury might be expelled from the universal Church; at which time, the leaders of the world likewise began to detest this sacrilegious madness: to such an extent that they struck down its originator with the sword of the public laws together with a great number of his disciples. For they saw that all care for honesty would be taken away and every conjugal bond would be untied and that, at the same time, divine and human law would be subverted, if people of this kind were allowed to live anywhere under the terms of such a profession. This severity was for long conducive to ecclesiastical lenience, which, though it avoids bloody revenges, content as it is with priestly judgement, is aided by the severe constitutions of Christian rulers: not rarely do those who fear corporeal punishment take recourse to spiritual remedy¹⁰⁸.«

105 Leo Magnus, ep. 64 (118), ed. Eduard SCHWARTZ, in: *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, vol. II,4, Berlin 1932, p. 72,7–11, to Julian: *si qui autem sua obduratione caecati ita in reprobi sensus amentiam transierunt, ut malint furere quam sanari, ad imperialem pertinet potestatem ut perturbatores ecclesiasticae pacis et rei publicae, quae Christianis principibus merito gloriatur, inimici sollicitus comprimantur*; Leo Magnus, ep. 95(155), *ibid.*, p. 100; STOCKMEIER, Leo, p. 82, 87, 113.

106 Leo Magnus, ep. 24,1, MIGNE PL 54, col. 735: *Siquidem praeter imperiales et publicas curas piissimam sollicitudinem Christianae religionis habetis, ne scilicet in populo Dei aut schismata aut haereses, aut ulla scandala conualescant: quia tunc est optimus regni vestri status, quando sempiternae et incommutabili Trinitati in unius Divinitatis confessione servitur*; STOCKMEIER, Leo, p. 82, 87, 116–118, 121, 121 n. 179, 185–196; cf. Leo Magnus, ep. 18(44) to Theodosius, in: *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* II,4 (as in n. 107), p. 21: *cum enim ecclesiae causas, tum regni vestri agimus et salutis, ut provinciarum vestrarum quieto iure potiamini*.

107 CHADWICK, Priscillian (as in n. 2), p. 129–130; STOCKMEIER, Leo, p. 120.

108 Leo Magnus, ep. 15 (salutatio), MIGNE PL 54, col. 679–680: *Merito patres nostri sub quorum temporibus heresis haec nefanda prorupit, per totum mundum instanter egerunt ut impius furor ab universa ecclesia pelleretur; quando etiam mundi principes ita hanc sacrilegam amentiam detestati sunt ut auctorem eius cum plerisque discipulis legum publicarum ense prosternerent. Videbant enim omnem curam honestatis auferri omnemque coniugiorum copulam solvi simulque divinum ius humanumque subverti, si huiusmodi hominibus usquam vivere cum tali professione*

There is no doubt that, in Leo's view, it was clearly the Church's responsibility to define and identify heresy, whereas dealing with and punishing the heretics was the task of imperial administrators. It is important to note that, by defining and identifying heresy the Church wielded considerable power¹⁰⁹. Considering Leo's ideological background, it does not seem surprising that he took the initiative to extirpate the Manichaeans from Rome and to press for anti-Manichaean action in the provinces. The question why Leo began his anti-Manichaean campaign at the beginning of the 440s can only be answered, though, by taking the historical background into account. In this decade the number of Manichaeans residing in Rome increased considerably due to the Vandal invasion of North Africa which had always been a stronghold of Manichaeism. Manichaeans refugees, »whom disturbance in other places has brought upon us in great numbers«¹¹⁰, obviously tried to hide within the Christian community and even attended mass. In his *Sermo* 9, Leo urges his congregation to disclose the hiding places of Manichaeans to the ecclesiastical officials. In other sermons he states that Manichaeans attending mass can be identified because they only take the bread but refuse the wine when receiving communion¹¹¹.

Another reason for Leo's enmity towards the Manichaeans can be found in their rejection of crucial orthodox dogmas. In several sermons aimed at informing and teaching the congregation about Manichaean errors, Leo lashes out against the Manichaean disbelief in the corporeality of Christ, their veneration of the sun and the moon, their identification of Mani with the Holy Spirit, their dualistic rejection of the material world as a creation of the devil as well as the practice of fasting on Sundays and Mondays. It becomes evident from these sermons as well that Leo fears Manichaeism as a rival to orthodox Christianity: The Manichaeans are portrayed as seducers that play games with simple souls with the intention of leading away those who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ from the commandments of God. He describes Manichaeism as a stronghold of the devil and accuses the Manichaeans of crimes and immoral behavior, error and impiety, heathen profanity, »Jewish« blindness, magical practices, obscene sacred rites, sacrilege, and blasphemy¹¹².

licuisset. Profuit diu ista districtio ecclesiasticae lenitati, quae etsi sacerdotali contenta iudicio cruentas refugit ultiones, severis tamen Christianorum principum constitutionis adiuvatur, dum ad spiritale nonnumquam recurrit remedium qui timent corporale supplicium; transl. SCHIPPER, VAN OORT (ed.), St. Leo (as in n. 3), p. 53–55; cf. Leo Magnus, ep. 63(117), in: *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* II,4 (as in n. 107), p. 69,36–37, to Julian: *si non intellegunt docentium praedicationem, saltem uindicantium timeant potestatem*; STOCKMEIER, Leo (as in n. 43), p. 125.

109 BROWN, *Diffusion* (as in n. 9), p. 111.

110 Leo Magnus, *Tractatus* 16,5 (as in n. 97), p. 65: *quos aliarum regionum perturbatio nobis intulit crebriores*; transl. SCHIPPER, VAN OORT (ed.), St. Leo (as in n. 3), p. 27.

111 Leo Magnus, *Tractatus* 9,4 (as in n. 97), p. 37–38; Leo Magnus, *Tractatus* 42,4–6, ed. Antoine CHAVASSE, Turnhout 1973 (*Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*, 138a), p. 244–248.

112 Leo Magnus, *Tractatus* 9,4 (as in n. 97), p. 37–38; 16,4–6, *ibid.*, p. 64–65; *Tractatus* 24,4, *ibid.*, p. 113; *Tractatus* 34,4–5, *ibid.*, p. 183–187; *Tractatus* 42,4–6 (as in n. 112), p. 244–250; *Tractatus* XLVII,2, *ibid.*, p. 276; *Tractatus* 72,7, *ibid.*, p. 448; Artur Paul LANG, *Leo der Große und die Texte des Altgelaasianums, mit Berücksichtigung des Sacramentarium Leonianum und des Sacramentarium Gregorianum*, Steyl 1956, p. 54, 76–77; for a collection of all sermons dealing with the Manichaeans, cf. SCHIPPER, VAN OORT (ed.), St. Leo (as in n. 3).

Despite all his efforts to banish the Manichaeans from Rome, Pope Leo did not succeed in wiping out their traces. According to the *Liber Pontificalis*, a number of popes in the late 5th and early 6th century sent Manichaeans into exile and burned their *codices*. The stereotype wording used in the source may suggest, though, that we are only dealing with *topoi* here¹¹³. In the Western provinces, Manichaeism/Priscillianism only seems to have continued to play a role in Northwestern Spain where Priscillianism had been able to establish itself due to the chaos which had resulted from the barbarian invasions. In the 6th century, when the political situation had stabilized, Church administrators convened again to enforce religious conformity. Two Spanish councils dealt with Priscillianism – the second Council of Toledo (527) which commemorates the late Turribius and his campaign against Priscillianism in the middle of the 5th century¹¹⁴, as well as the first Council of Braga (561) that mentions the sect for the last time¹¹⁵. Obviously an anti-Priscillianist campaign was carried out successfully within the next eleven years: The acts of the second Council of Braga (572) do not mention Priscillianism anymore and mainly concentrate on pagan relics¹¹⁶. Martin of Braga's famous model sermon *De correctione rusticorum*, written about 572 and addressed to the recently baptized, does not deal with Priscillianism either. The sermon expounds catholic doctrine in a simple way, thereby making it understandable to an uneducated rural population. Criticism of pagan practices and beliefs dominates the sermon. Only the fact that Martin emphasizes that the devil is a creature of God who later decides to rebel against his maker, may be a reminder of the dualistic tendencies attributed to both Priscillianism and Manichaeism¹¹⁷. Priscillianism and Manichaeism seem to have subsided: In the sources they are not referred to anymore. This may allow the conclusion that both religious movements had lost all ground as a result of orthodox action. One reason for this development can be stated as follows in the words of Peter Brown:

»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

113 *Liber pontificalis* LI,1 (Gelasius, sed. 492–96) (as in n. 27), p. 255: *Huius temporibus inventi sunt Manichei in urbe Roma quos exilio deportari praecepit, quorum codices ante fores basilicae sanctae Mariae incendio concremavit*; LIII,5 (Symmachus, sed. 498–514), p. 261: *Post haec omnia beatus Symmachus invenit Manicheos in urbe Roma, quorum omnia simulacra vel codices ante fores basilicae Constantinianae incendio concremavit et eos ipsos exilio religavit*; LIV,9 (Hormisdas, sed. 514–523), p. 270–271: *Hic invenit Manicheos, quos etiam discussit cum examinatione plagarum, exilio deportavit; quorum codices ante fores basilicae Constantinianae incendio concremavit*; cf. LIEU, *Manichaeism* (as in n. 8), p. 207; Bruno DUMÉZIL: *Les racines chrétiennes de l'Europe. Conversion et liberté dans les royaumes barbares, V^e-VIII^e siècles*, Paris 2006, p. 327.

114 Conc. Toletanum II (a. 527), in: *Concilios visigóticos* (as in n. 44), p. 49.

115 Conc. Bracarense I, *ibid.*, p. 67–69.

116 Conc. Bracarense II, *ibid.*, p. 78–106.

117 *Martinus Bracarenensis, De correctione rusticorum*, ed. Charles BARLOW, New Haven 1950, p. 183–203, esp. cap. 3, p. 184–185.

›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 orientated¹¹⁸.«

6. Evaluation

The analysis of several campaigns against Manichaeans and Priscillianists between the 4th and the 6th century has revealed a number of motives for taking action against these two religious movements that shall be re-examined in the following passages: A traditionalist religious attitude and the wish to preserve ›the Roman way of life‹, anti-Persian xenophobia, belief in the connection of religious and political loyalty, fear of seeing imperial power undermined, as well as fear of social unrest created by proselytizing, motivated a pagan emperor such as Diocletian to take action against the Manichaeans. The Church's verbal attack commenced shortly after the persecutions stopped and increased the more serious rivals such as the Arian heresy lost ground. Thus it seems as if it was founded in a feeling of rivalry that became alive as soon as Church leaders had become aware of the possibilities offered by imperial protection. Imperial legislation against Manichaeism at the end of the 4th century was initially motivated by suspicion of its secretive character. Soon anti-Manichaean action was justified by stating that failure to implement orthodox Christianity throughout the Empire would provoke divine wrath, social and political instability as well as the moral degeneration of society. The attack against Priscillian and his movement was initially motivated by the fear of a number of bishops who felt threatened by an ascetic movement, that undermined episcopal authority and thereby endangered the unity of episcopal communities. These bishops felt threatened as well because they themselves did not conform to the ascetic demands increasingly expected from episcopal officeholders. As a result of their individual and institutional counteraction, defending a movement slanderously accused of practicing Manichaeism, sorcery and immoral acts entailed the risk of being associated with it. Thus, clerics and laymen in danger of being charged with similar offences chose to keep their distance. The belief that Priscillianists were immoral and practiced Manichaeism as well as sorcery was greatly stabilized the more the conflict took on dimensions that went beyond the initial region of conflict: Those who were not directly involved and therefore prone to believe slanderous rumours, those who lacked learning or felt responsible for the security of others may have regarded Priscillianism as a dangerous phenomenon. Politicians and administrators had other motives as well: Some seem to have been led by the possibility of financial gain either through bribery or the confiscation of heretical property. The latter is valid for the usurper Maximus who also desperately needed the backing of orthodox bishops and therefore was willing to sacrifice a spiritual leader regarded by the Church as a trouble-maker. Later measures against Priscillianists and Manichaeans by the Church were inspired by the wish to protect orthodox communities and the Church as a whole: The existence of differing religious interpretations was regarded as a danger to the unity and spiritual safety of

118 BROWN, *Diffusion* (as in n. 9), p. 117.

congregations as well as to the position and influence of the orthodox clergy within these communities. Under the effects of the chaos caused by the migrations, bishops in Galicia as well as Pope Leo had experienced related problems. Leo's concept of the universal Church furthermore justified using force to fight heresy and schism. Thus, with different degrees of success, orthodox clerics in North-Western Spain and Italy tried to regain control over Christian communities infiltrated by Priscillianist or Manichaean elements that had already endangered, or would endanger their authority in the long run. Leo at least was supported by the imperial administration that described Manichaeism as a superstition inimical to public discipline, thereby emphasizing its destructive social potential. Finally, when the situation stabilized in the 6th century, the fight against heresy took on the character of a ›mopping-up-operation‹. The remnants of Manichaeism and Priscillianism were successfully eliminated within each bishop's jurisdiction, religious conformity successfully enforced.

Thus, two categories of motives for enforcing religious conformity can be distinguished: First of all it becomes obvious that ›fear of the other‹ in an age of transition seems to have been a basic motive for taking the initiative to enforce religious conformity: The conviction that society, social stability, existing norms, morals, religious traditions or ›the true faith‹ had to be defended against alien intrusion and destabilizing factors must be regarded as an important motive to take measures against deviant religious groups. The case of Diocletian (and of other pagan emperors who persecuted Christians but who are not dealt with here) shows that the wish to control religious environments and to establish a certain degree of religious conformity was already alive before Christianity's accession to imperial circles and thus to power in the reign of Constantine¹¹⁹. Why religious diversity – which had not only been tolerated but even fostered throughout the times of the pagan Roman Empire, e. g. by introducing new gods or by finding an equivalent to the gods of subjected peoples within the Roman pantheon by means of the *interpretatio romana*¹²⁰ – had lost its appeal and was regarded more and more as a threat, is a question that still has to be answered yet, the more so as the growing tendency to establish and enforce religious conformity probably constitutes one of the most important and consequential shifts of mentality to be witnessed in the period of Late Antiquity: Did this shift take place in reaction to the image of a jealous God, intolerant to other expressions of the divine, that was propagated with increasing success, first by Jews, then by Christians? Or had Christians ›learned‹ from the persecutors as the references to Diocletian's edict in ecclesiastical writings suggest¹²¹? Had the Empire grown too diverse and heterogeneous so that people of the age lived with the fear that the world known to them would not last, thus either looking for spiritually comforting world views such as Christianity¹²² or clinging to what was known to them as in the case of

119 Cf. VOGT, Religiosität der Christenverfolger im Römischen Reich (as in n. 11).

120 Cf. Ramsay MACMULLEN, Paganism in the Roman Empire, New Haven 1981.

121 Cf. Harold Allen DRAKE, Constantine and the Bishops. The Politics of Intolerance, Baltimore 2000, p. 85: »Persecution had an important and rarely appreciated effect on the development of the church. It is conceivable that, without persecution, the power of the bishop would never have developed so rapidly or become so extensive. Even more important, scars on the Christian psyche which play an important role in the question of intolerance might never have developed.«

122 As E. R. DODDS, Pagans and Christians in an Age of Anxiety. Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine, Cambridge 1965, p. 3, implies.

Diocletian? Had the Roman effort of introducing military, political, economic and cultural standards in the Mediterranean and its periphery been too feeble? Or can the will to establish and enforce religious conformity be seen as a simple continuation of previous Roman efforts at standardization in the religious sphere, e. g. by means of the *interpretatio romana*? These questions are too comprehensive as to be answered within the scope of an article.

As regards the second category of motives, it is important to note that efforts to standardize the religious environment of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages were not only based on the conviction that this approach to dealing with the phenomena ›religion‹ and ›society‹ was appropriate, ›right‹ or even ›necessary‹. Often this ›conviction‹ was used as a justification to cover up other motives of a more profane nature: As could be shown, greed, rivalry, personal enmity, the wish to gain power and to secure one's own threatened position played a part in the very complex constellation of motives that formed part of the process of enforcing religious conformity. As soon as the religious deviation to be eliminated had been marked by the establishment, a number of people sided with the stronger party as not to endanger themselves. Thus, while in the sphere of socio-religious convictions an important aspect of mentality changed, others remained the same: Humans may think differently about the ideal form of their society and may be prepared to use different degrees of violence to implement their visions thereof throughout the ages. Nevertheless, as long as they are humans, they will probably never abstain from protecting, enriching and empowering themselves.