

AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*

In Latin, manuscript on parchment

France (Southern?), c. 1130-1160

148 leaves, complete (collation i-xi⁸, xii⁴, xiii-xix⁸), catchwords at the end of each quire, centered, blind ruled, picking visible in the margins, including double pricking where the preparer made an error, capitals in text in brown, 20-line capitals in red at the beginning of the books, including a large 105 mm. initial "F" at opening with white curvilinear tracery in the bars, very neatly written in a upright Caroline miniscule, proto-gothic script with many abbreviations (justification c. 158 x 85 mm.), some marginal notes, mostly contemporary, in several hands, a few mould spots throughout, more pronounced at the end, but a very clean and well preserved manuscript with generous original margins. Bound in late 19th or early 20th century full vellum over card, horizontal title in gilt majuscules on the spine "S. Augustini Opus Contra Faustum Manichaeum / Codex," gold and brown floral patterned pastedowns and flyleaf, gilt turndowns with floral design. Dimensions 220 x 140 mm.

Rare 12th-century copy of Bishop Augustine of Hippo's response to Faustus's work on the Manichaean religion. Written in a fine Caroline miniscule approaching gothic script by several hands and simply ornamented with beautiful red initials, this copy survives as a classic example of Romanesque monastic manuscript production. Its likely origin in France and possible Cistercian provenance may be viewed as a response to the heresies prevalent in that region and battled by the Cistercians. The Schoenberg Database records no copy of this work at auction for 150 years.

PROVENANCE

1. Based on the script and the decoration, the manuscript was written in Central or more likely Southern France in the latter half of the twelfth century, monastery so far unidentified pending further research.
2. Perhaps from the library of Giuseppe Martini (1870-1944), Milan, a bookseller who formed over thirty years a collection that was considered in the mid-40s to be the richest private collection of Italian literature.
3. Private Collection, Switzerland.

TEXT

f. 1, rubric, Incipit liber aurelii Augustini episcopo contra faustum manicheum; incipit [Book I], "Faustus quidam fuit gente Afer, civitate Milevitanus, eloquio suavis, ingenio callidus" ... ; explicit [Book XXXIII] ... Dei naturam atque substantiam incommutabilem omnino, omnino incorruptibilem cogitate, vel credite, et manichaei continuo non eritis, ut aliquando et catholici esse possitis. Amen." (see *PL*, vol. 42).

The thirty-three books of Augustine's *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* ("Answer to Faustus, a Manichean") were probably written between 408 and 410 as a reply to a work by Faustus entitled *Capitula* ("The Chapters"). Faustus wrote this work most likely between 386 and 390, and it survives, perhaps in its entirety, in Augustine's reply.

Faustus was born, as Augustine tells us, in Milevis, a town in Numidia about 100 miles to the west of Thagaste. He was probably a convert to Manichaeism, and by 382 he had become a Manichean bishop. His reputation had led Augustine to expect that he would be able solve all his problems with the Manichean religion. When Faustus eventually came to Carthage, however, where Augustine encountered him, he found him to be eloquent and charming but not sufficiently learned to be able to answer his questions about Manichaeism. This meeting between the two men was a major factor in Augustine's growing disillusionment with the Manichean version of Christianity, which had professed to teach an all-encompassing knowledge of reality without the burden of faith.

Faustus was undoubtedly the acutest, most determined and most unscrupulous opponent of orthodox Christianity in the age of Augustine. Faustus seems to have followed in the footsteps of Adimantus, against whom Augustine had written some years before, but to have gone considerably beyond Adimantus in the recklessness of his statements. The incarnation of Christ, involving his birth from a woman, is one of the main points of attack. He makes the variations in the genealogical records of the Gospels a ground for rejecting the whole as spurious. He supposed the Gospels, in their present form, to be not the works of the Apostles, but rather of later Judaizing falsifiers. The entire Old Testament system he treats with the utmost contempt, blaspheming the Patriarchs, Moses, the Prophets, etc., on the ground of their private lives and their teachings. Most of the objections to the morality of the Old Testament that are now current were already familiarly used in the time of Augustine.

Augustine's answers are only partially satisfactory, owing to his imperfect view of the relation of the old dispensation to the new; but in the age in which they were written they were doubtless very effective. The writing is interesting from the point of view of Biblical criticism, as well as from that of polemics against Manichaeism. Manichaeism was one Gnostic religion (heresy) founded by Mani (215-277) and based primarily on a sharp dualism of light / dark, good / evil. Originally spread to Persia and the Middle East, Manichaeism also reached the West, Rome, North Africa and even India and China, opposed by the governments in the West disappeared in the fifth century, and lasted longer in the East.

Augustine develops here, perhaps for the first time, the concept of "holy war" (Book XXII, chapters 75 and 76). If the war, in fact, is conducted in the name of God and to defend religious precepts, it is not inconsistent with the literal message of the Gospel: "A great deal depends on the

causes for which men undertake wars, and on the authority they have for doing so; for the natural order which seeks the peace of mankind, ordains that the monarch should have the power of undertaking war if he thinks it advisable, and that the soldiers should perform their military duties in behalf of the peace and safety of the community. When war is undertaken in obedience to God, who would rebuke, or humble, or crush the pride of man, it must be allowed to be a righteous war; for even the wars which arise from human passion cannot harm the eternal well-being of God, nor even hurt His saints; for in the trial of their patience, and the chastening of their spirit, and in bearing fatherly correction, they are rather benefited than injured. No one can have any power against them but what is given him from above. For there is no power but of God [Romans 13:1] who either orders or permits."

The popularity of *Contra Faustum* in France in the Middle Ages may, in fact, be due to the emergence of several movements collectively described as "Manichaeism" by the Catholic Church, and persecuted as Christian heresies through the establishment, in 1184, of the Inquisition. They included the Cathar and Albigensian churches of Western Europe. This is an argument in favor of the localization of the present manuscript in southern France.

The principal manuscripts through which we know Augustine's text date back to the eighth through the ninth century. Here is a brief list: *Codex Lugdunensis* 526 (VIII-IX c.); *Codex Carnutensis* 18 (X c.); *Codex Sangallensis* 173 (IX c.); *Codex Sangallensis* 172 (X c.); *Codex Monacensis* 1339 (X c.); *Codex Palatinus* 201 (IX c.). There is evidently no modern census of manuscripts of this text insofar as there is not yet a critical edition. The edition announced by the Bibliothèque Augustinienne has not yet appeared. Compare the present copy to one of the same text in Cambridge, Harvard University Library, Richardson MS 14, of the same date and with similar decoration, but thought to be perhaps from Pontigny (cf., Light, 1988, p. 64, no. 25). Like the present manuscript, Richardson 14 is thought to be Cistercian and it preserves simple though attractive red initials with geometric tracery designs.

Manuscripts at auction of Augustine's *Contra Faustum* are surprisingly rare. The Schoenberg Database does not record a single copy sold during the last century. The last recorded manuscript to change hands was in 1850.

LITERATURE

Augustinus. *De utilitate credendi, De duabus animabus, Contra Fortunatum Manichaeum, Contra Adimantum, Contra epistulam fundamenti, Contra Faustum Manichaeum, Contra Felicem Manichaeum, De natura boni, Epistula Secundini, Contra Secundinum Manichaeum*, [Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum](#) [CSEL], vol 25, ed. J. Zycha 1891/92.

Decret, F. *Aspects du manichéisme dans l'Afrique romaine, les controverses de Fortunatus, Faustus et Félix avec St Augustin*, Paris, 1970.

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Light, Laura. *The Bible in the Twelfth Century. An Exhibition of Manuscripts at the Houghton Library*, Cambridge, Mass., The Harvard College Library, 1988.

Teske, R. and B. Ramsey, ed. *Answer to Faustus, a Manichean*, Augustinian Heritage Institute, 20, New City Press, New York, 2007.

Van Oort, Johannes, Otto Wermelinger and Gregor Wurst. *Augustine and Manichaeism in the Latin West. Proceedings of the Fribourg-Utrecht Symposium of the International Symposium Association of Manichaeic Studies (IAMS)*, Nag Hammadi and Manichaeic Studies, 49, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 2001.

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ONLINE RESOURCES

Contra Faustum English Translation

<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/140601.htm>

Contra Faustum in Latin

http://www.augustinus.it/latino/contro_faustus/libro_20_testo.htm

Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Library, Richardson MS 14 (Contra Faustum)

[http://app.cul.columbia.edu:8080/exist/scriptorium/individual/MH-H-289.xml??
querytype=basic&term1=contra
+faustum&field1=any&stringtype1=all&Submit=Search&howmany=30](http://app.cul.columbia.edu:8080/exist/scriptorium/individual/MH-H-289.xml??querytype=basic&term1=contra+faustum&field1=any&stringtype1=all&Submit=Search&howmany=30)