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Published in:

The Challenge of the mosaic Torah in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

DOI:

[10.1163/9789004441996_009](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004441996_009)

Published: 08/10/2020

Document Version

Accepted author manuscript

Document License

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Please cite the original version:

Laato, A. M. (2020). Faustus and Augustine: A Manichaeic-Catholic Debate on the Mosaic Torah. In A. Laato (Ed.), *The Challenge of the mosaic Torah in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (pp. 169–187). (Studies on the Children of Abraham; Vol. 7). Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004441996_009

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Faustus and Augustine: a Manichaean-Catholic debate on the Mosaic Torah

Anni Maria Laato

Introduction

“There was a certain Faustus, an African by race, a citizen of Milevis, charming by his speech, clever of mind, a Manichaean by sect, and for this reason perverse by reason of his wicked error”. So Augustine begins his extensive work *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* (*Against Faustus, a Manichean*) where he intends to refute Faustus’ views on some important matters, of which the Mosaic Torah is amongst the most central.¹

The *Capitula* (Chapters) of the Manichaean bishop Faustus of Milevis (born c. 340, died before 390) and Augustine’s (354-430) response to it, are important documents on how the views of the Manicheans and Catholic Christians differed from each other concerning the character and validity of the Mosaic Torah and the whole Old Testament. Faustus rejects the Old Testament categorically, and levels different kinds of arguments against its contents and its use by the Christians, whereas Augustine defends the Catholic view and intends to prove Faustus’ views as false. What makes these texts particularly interesting is that these authors had actually met and discussed with each other for a period of time while Augustine was still an *auditor* in the Manichaean community.

Faustus’ *Capitula* is not preserved as an independent work, but quoted, perhaps in its entirety, in Augustine’s *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*.² In this treatise, Augustine’s method is to cite Faustus’ *Capitula* in the beginning of each of its 33 books, and then dismantle his arguments. This work allows modern readers to see how a Manichaean bishop argued for his views and practices against those of the Catholic Christians, and how a former Manichaean, now a Catholic bishop, countered them.³

Faustus’ views on the Old Testament and the Mosaic precepts have

1 In *Retractationes* II.7 Augustine summarizes Faustus’ aims in *Capitula* in three points: he “blasphemed the law and the prophets, the incarnation of Christ, and claimed that the scriptures of the New Testament are falsified”.

2 *Contra Faustum Manichaeum libri triginta tres*. CSEL 25.1; PL 42. Engl. translation: *Answer to Faustus, A Manichean: Introduction, translation and notes* by Roland Teske, SJ. (The Works of Saint Augustine. A Translation for the 21st Century 1/20. New York: New City Press, 2007).

3 Another work where Augustine deals with similar questions is *Contra Adimantum Manichaei discipulum liber unus*, written c. 394. CSEL 25.1.

been studied especially in context of Manichaean-Catholic polemics. The current state of scholarship on Faustus is presented in van Oort 2011 and van Gaans 2013.⁴ BeDuhn has discussed the Manichaean views on the Mosaic Torah in *Ad Adimantum* and in some of Augustine's sermons.⁵

In this paper, I shall describe and clarify the arguments of both bishops concerning the character and validity of the precepts of Mosaic Torah as presented in *Capitula* and *Contra Faustum*. Augustine also deals with the Manichaean view on the Mosaic Torah elsewhere, but as this is one of the main topics in *Contra Faustum*, limiting the focus to this text is warranted.

Faustus and his Capitula

We mainly know Faustus of Milevis from three sources, all related to Augustine. First, Augustine tells in his *Confessions* how he met Faustus and discussed with him in Carthage over a period of some months in the year 382/383, and how this meeting influenced his leaving Manicheism (Conf. 5.3-7). The second source is the above-mentioned work of Faustus, *Capitula*, which survives because Augustine quotes it in his *Contra Faustum*. Thirdly, Augustine's *Contra Faustum*, written after the death of Faustus, contains some additional information about him.⁶ Even though Augustine does not mention Faustus by name in his other anti-Manichean writings, it is almost certain that he is referred to in some of them, in particular *De moribus Manichaeorum* (*The Morals of the Manicheans*).⁷

Faustus' diocese consisted of much larger area than the Catholic dioceses, most likely both Africas, Numidia and Mauretania. Augustine describes him as a clever and eloquent man, having a pleasing character and an interest in literature (c. Faust. 1; Conf. 5). Faustus also had a

4 J. van Oort, "Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma in Context," *Vig Chr* 65 (2011): 543-567; G. M. van Gaans, 'The State of Research on the Manichaean Bishop Faustus', *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 69.1 (2013): 1-11.

5 J. D. BeDuhn, *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma, 2. Making a "Catholic" Self 388-401 C.E.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 179-186.

6 Teske (*Answer to Faustus*, 9) dates *Contra Faustum* between 408-410, Coyle between 398-400. See J. Kevin Coyle, "Faustum Manicheum, Contra", in A. Fitzgerald, ed., *Augustine through the Ages* (Grand Rapids, Michigan & Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1999), 355-356.

7 J. D. BeDuhn, *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma, 1. Conversion and Apostasy 373-388 C.E.* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2010), 106, 109.

reputation among the Manicheans as being an expert in their belief system, and the young Augustine, while still an *auditor* in the Manichaean community in Carthage, eagerly anticipated meeting him to get answers to his questions on cosmology and other topics in the Manichaean system. When they finally met in Carthage in the year 382/383, Faustus turned out to be a disappointment for Augustine because of his unwillingness to answer him and the deficiencies in his learning, and, according to *Confessiones*, this meeting was one of the reasons that eventually led Augustine away from Manichaeism (Conf. 5.6–5.7.).

Faustus had converted to Manichaeism from paganism, and thus had not grown up inside a community where Old Testament was used and appreciated (Conf. 5.1; C. Faust. 12.1; 15.1; 18.1; 19.5; 23.2). He states, however, that he had been interested in the Jewish faith and had almost converted to it because he had first believed that one had to be “an Israelite” in order to become a Christian (*solus mihi videbatur Israelita posse Christianus fieri*) and thus first observe the Jewish commandments so that Christ could fulfil the rest (c. Faust. 19.5).⁸ Subsequently, however, the faith of Mani rescued him. Thus, the Jews and their customs remained somewhat alien to him, and he claims that for the gentiles, pagan poetry is a better introduction to Christianity than the Old Testament (c. Faust. 13). The gentiles and the Manicheans have their own prophets (c. Faust. 19.2). In *Capitula*, however, he shows rather a good knowledge of the contents of the Mosaic Torah, the Old Testament prophets, and the history of the Jews. His opinions on the Mosaic Torah and the Old Testament were learned from the Manichaean tradition. He mentions Adimantus and Mani at the beginning of his work as his authority in this topic, but does not name any of their books.

The scholarly view on Faustus and his text have changed over the years. Until the finding of some authentic Manichaean texts in 1929 in Medinet Madi, Egypt, Augustine’s works were the main source for Manichaeism in the West, which caused some scholars, for example A. Bruckner, to interpret Faustus’ exegesis more as Manichaean anti-Catholic propaganda than presenting authentic Manichaean views. Bruckner considered Manichaeism as a non-Christian religion and, moreover, that Christian elements in *Capitula* were merely a rhetorical means to convince Catholics. Later findings of original texts, however,

8 P. Fredriksen (*Augustine and the Jews: A Christian Defense of Jews and Judaism* [Yale: Yale University Press, 2010], 296-297) notes that Jerome later employs similar arguments and rhetoric against Jewish Christians.

suggest that the biblical references, concepts and language in Faustus' text do reflect his own Manichaean theology, and *Capitula* can be seen as a reliable source for Manichaeism in the West during the 4th century.⁹

Augustine's picture of Faustus serves, of course, polemical purposes, but as his intention was to convince contemporary readers who had access to *Capitula* and knew Manichaeism, possibly even Faustus himself, it can be assumed that his quotations are correct and the views he presents as Faustus' views, reflect the reality.¹⁰ Augustine himself had, after all, been an *auditor* for at least nine years, and at that time had lived according to Manichaean way of living and tried to understand the world through Manichaean eyes.

Whether Faustus can be seen as a typical exponent of North African Manichaeism has recently been questioned by BeDuhn, who, to begin with, says that Faustus "maintained an idiosyncratic posture in relation to the Manichaean creed".¹¹ He builds his interpretation on Faustus on some notions that can connect him to Ciceronian scepticism.¹² According to him, Faustus, on the basis of this scepticism, formed his own, personal synthesis of Manichaeism; one which was very liberal and concerned only practices. Van Oort evaluates BeDuhn's description of Faustus as highly speculative.¹³ After checking BeDuhn's references, he states: "I do not see any valid textual basis for this portrayal" and adds that the few sources we have do not give evidence for *Faustus scepticus*.¹⁴ Augustine refers to Faustus as modest and cautious, and is surprised by his lack of schooling, a fact that speaks against deep influence from sceptic philosophy. Van Oort accepts BeDuhn's notion that Faustus emphasized praxis over doctrine, but sees it as a mistake to think that doctrine was unimportant for him.¹⁵ In my view, van Oort's criticism is correct. Reading the fifth chapter of *Confessions* where Augustine tells about his meeting with Faustus, one gets the impression that it is Augustine, not Faustus, who is inspired by Cicero and other philosophers. Faustus' reason for not answering Augustine's questions about astrology and cosmology is not

9 van Gaans, "State of Research," 11.

10 In the beginning of *Contra Faustum* Augustine explains that his reason for writing this text is that some "brothers" had read *Capitula* and wanted Augustine to comment it.

11 BeDuhn, *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma*, 1, 111.

12 BeDuhn, *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma*, 1, 108–113.

13 van Oort, "Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma in Context," 559.

14 van Oort, "Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma in Context," 559.

15 van Oort, "Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma in Context," 560–561.

that he wants to follow Cicero's advice of remaining silent, as BeDuhn suggests, but rather that he was unable to discuss these questions with his younger, but better-educated pupil. Another point made by BeDuhn is that Faustus's opposition to the Old Testament comes from Adimantus who is influenced by Marcionite theology.¹⁶

Faustus wrote *Capitula* between the years 386-390 after he had been exiled from Africa.¹⁷ His purpose was to show that Manichaeism was the pure and correct form of Christianity. This work gives an impression of hard polemics; the author ridicules and vituperates both Jews and Catholic Christians. When compared to Augustine's characterization of him as mild and pleasant, the tone is quite striking. It may be that in debate with adversaries Faustus showed qualities that differed from those within his own inside group, or it is possible he simply followed the rhetorical conventions of his time, according to which slander had its place in debates. Nonetheless, in this work, he rejected the Old Testament and its precepts in particular, and argued that this would be proper for all Christians to do. He saw Manichaeism as the true form of Christianity, while he called Catholics "semi-Christians" (c. Faust. 1; 15.1).

It cannot be said with certainty whether *Capitula* is preserved in its entirety, or in the original order of chapters, even if both are possible.¹⁸ It consists, according to Faustus, of "brief and polished replies (*responsa*) on account of the clever and cunning statements (*propositiones*) of those debating with us" (c. Faust. 1.2). Those "debating with us" may refer to Augustine himself, because he was the most well-known convert from Manichaeism to the Catholic Church, but could as well be summaries of the Catholic views in general.¹⁹ *Capitula* does not present a Manichean systematic theology, but rather contains model answers to questions (*quaestiunculae*) from the Catholic opponents.²⁰ This kind of literary genre, *quaestiones et responsiones*, or *erotapokriseis*, does not demand a logical development in its structure.²¹ It may well have served as a Manichean

16 BeDuhn, *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma*, 1, 111-112.

17 Coyle, "Faustum Manicheum," 355.

18 For the question of completeness and structure of Faustus' text, see Coyle, "Faustum Manicheum," 355-356.

19 Teske, *Answer to Faustus*, 9.

20 van Oort, "Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma in Context," 562.

21 Teske *Answer to Faustus*, 9; G. Wurst, "Der Capitula des Faustus von Mileve", in J. van Oort, O. Wermelinger, G. Wurst, eds., *Augustus and Manichaeism in the Latin West: Proceedings of the Fribourg-Utrecht*

polemical manual.²²

Faustus' *Capitula* is the most extensive Manichaean text preserved in which criticism is directed towards the Old Testament, its character as an inspired sacred text, its creator God, its precepts and rituals, and the moral character of Moses and the prophets.²³ Apart from these themes, the incarnation, the nature of God, the trinity, and other doctrinal issues are also debated, and the special doctrines of the Manichaeans can be detected even if they are not thoroughly displayed. Faustus does not really go into Manichaean mythology in this work.

Faustus' method in each *capitulum* was to first present Catholic objections to some point of Manichean exegesis or doctrine, and then give a defence, whereas Augustine's method in *Contra Faustum* is to quote Faustus in full and then proceed with his own answer. Augustine answers each question, defends Catholic views and attacks Manichaean cultic practices, doctrines and literature. Augustine discussed all Faustus' claims and the biblical texts he had quoted.

In the following, I shall deal with two topics that are central and characteristic for Faustus when dealing with the topic of Mosaic Torah: observance of the precepts of the Mosaic Torah, and the question of witnesses and testimonies. I shall first describe Faustus' views, and then more shortly Augustine's answer. It is not possible to deal with all the biblical passages they discuss, but some examples will be given.

Observance of the Precepts of the Mosaic Torah: Faustus' View

Faustus rejected the Old Testament in general and Mosaic Torah in particular.²⁴ One of his main questions was to whom the Old Testament belongs and whose inheritance it is. Book four starts with Faustus' claim: "If it (the Old Testament) contains my heritage, I accept it; if it does not, I do not accept it" (c. Faust. 4.1). Then he makes two assertions: both the promises and the precepts of the Old Testament belong only to the Jews.

Faustus starts with the character of promises and precepts. His idea is that the promises in the Old and New Testaments are different. The

Symposium of the International Symposium Association of Manichaean Studies (Nag Hammadi and Manichean Studies 46; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 321.

²² van Gaans, "State of Research," 11.

²³ Coyle, "Faustum Manicheum," 356.

²⁴ In his rejection of the Old Testament, he joined earlier anti-Jewish traditions of Marcion and the Manicheans. See Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 215.

promises in the Old Testament are given only to the circumcised and deal with earthly things, first and foremost the Land of Canaan; Christians, on the other hand, are not interested in earthly matters but in the salvation of the soul. Therefore, the Old Testament is poor and carnal, and has no worth for Christians (c. Faust. 4.1; 10.1).

The same difference is evident when it comes to the character of the precepts and the Mosaic Law. The Law of Christ and the Law of Moses are not given by the same God. Christ set an example of the correct approach by acting against the Mosaic Law, and he gave his own commandments, which, in fact, are the essential contents of the Gospel: “The Gospel is nothing else than preaching and commandment of Christ (*mandatum Christi*)” (c. Faust. 5.1).²⁵ The Sermon of the Mount is central for Faustus; he quotes several biblical passages from it to prove that Christ did not command people to believe certain doctrines, but rather called them to live according to the beatitudes (c. Faust 5.1-3).

Faustus subsequently turns to discuss the observance of the Mosaic Law.²⁶ He emphasizes several times that religion is defined by practice. To believe is to do (c. Faust. 5.1). This principle does not exclude that a religion has doctrines – in his *Capitula*, Faustus points out several ideas in Manichaean belief system, for example their view on Christ – but he stresses that a religion must affect one’s life.²⁷ As a logical consequence of this principle, Faustus sees that the Old Testament belongs only to those who observe its precepts, i.e. are circumcised, offer sacrifice, abstain from swine’s flesh, and from the other animals that Moses pronounced unclean, observe Sabbaths and the feast of unleavened bread, and other things, i.e., it belongs only to the Jews (c. Faust. 4-5). Because Christians (as he defines them) do not observe these, the question is why they should keep the Mosaic precepts in high esteem or use the Old Testament at all. Faustus claims that because of the command “you shall not covet others’ property” Christians are not allowed to accept the precepts of the Mosaic Law; they belong to the Jews (c. Faust. 10).

Faustus claims that even the Catholics reject the precepts of Mosaic Law, too, and argues that the only difference between them and the Manicheans is that the Manicheans are honest, but the Catholics are

25 See BeDuhn, *Augustine’s Manichaean Dilemma* 2, 181-182.

26 For Torah, Faustus uses the expression *lex Moysis* or describes it in different ways.

27 van Oort criticizes BeDuhn for stressing too much Faustus’ concentration in praxis. van Oort, “Augustine’s Manichean Dilemma in Context,” 560-561.

deceitful as they say one thing and mean another. As an answer to the question from the Catholics, “Do you accept the Old Testament?”, he writes:²⁸

How do I, since I do not keep its commandments? In fact, I think that you do not either. For I despise circumcision as shameful, and, if I am not mistaken, you do too. I regard the Sabbath rest as needless; I believe that you do too. I have no doubt that you too regard the sacrifices as idolatry. Certainly I do not abstain from pork alone; you likewise do not eat it alone. Of course I do this because I regard all meat as unclean, but you because you regard nothing as unclean, and for both reasons the two of us destroy the Old Testament. Each of us scorns as useless and vain the week of eating unleavened bread and the feast of tabernacles. Each of us scorns the commandments about not patching linen with purple, about considering it adultery to make a garment of linen and wool, about counting it a sacrilege to yoke together an ox and an ass if it is necessary, about not making a bald man or a man with unruly hair or someone with a similar mar a priest, because such men are unclean in God’s eyes. We have laughed at these commandments, and we have not held them as either first or second in importance, though they are all ordinances of the Old Testament. What you object to, therefore, is something that you and I have in common, whether it should be considered a sin or a good act, for both of us reject the Old Testament. If, then, you ask what the difference is between your faith and mine, it is that you choose to lie and to act like a slave by praising in words what you hate in your mind. I have not learned to lie; I say what I think; I admit that I hate those who command such shameful things as much as the commands themselves (c. Faust. 6).

Faustus insists that the Catholics do not observe the New Testament precepts, either, but the Manicheans do (c. Faust. 5). He says that he himself has left his wife and children, does not own anything, and follows the Beatitudes (cf. Mt 19:29; Mt 10:9-10; 6:25-34; Mt 5:3-11) in every way. Faustus gives several examples from the New Testament to show that Jesus did not command his disciples to believe certain doctrines, such as the incarnation, but called them to observe his precepts (Mt 7:21; Mt 28:19-20; John 15:14; John 15:10; Mt 5:3-10; Mt 25:35; Mt 25:34; Mt

28 Transl. Teske, *Answer to Faustus*.

10:21). It is practice that matters, not beliefs.

In books 8-9 Faustus presents his next argument: Christian newness should not be mixed with Hebrew oldness. After the new liberty has come, the old bondage has to be rejected. Christians should not take on old precepts. Those Christians who are born Jews are free from the Old Testament commandments, as are those who are born as gentiles. Faustus writes:

Even if I were born a Jew, as the apostles were, it would be right for me to repudiate the Old Testament once I had accepted the New, as the apostles did. But now, since by the benefit of birth I have obtained not to be born under the yoke of servitude, and since Christ came to me at once with the complete gift of freedom, how wretched and foolish and also ungrateful I will be if I hand myself over to servitude again! (c. Faust 8.1)

If the apostles who were born under it were permitted to abandon it, why am I who was not born under it not permitted to leave it alone? (c. Faust. 9)

In books 17-19 Faustus' theme are Jesus' words in Matthew 5:17: "I have not come to destroy the law but to fulfil them". Faustus is critical of the authenticity of this quote. Why is it not John, who was there when Jesus is supposed to have said it, who renders this sentence, but only Matthew, who was not there and who only later became a follower of Jesus? Faustus questions whether Matthew even wrote it, arguing that someone must have added it later using his name. For him the sentence could not have come from Jesus, who in fact came to destroy the Law and the prophets.

As before, Faustus claims that even the Catholics take it for granted that Christ came to destroy the Law and the prophets (c. Faust. 17.1). Moreover, even if the Catholics would not admit this, according to him, in practice they show it. Faustus asks whether the Catholics really want to be subjected to the precepts of Mosaic Law, to be circumcised, observe the Sabbath, slaughter animals and observe food regulations. Christ himself in fact set an example for his followers: He did not observe the Sabbath and never commanded it to be observed, and he taught that God wants mercy, not sacrifices (c. Faust. 18.2). Faustus argues that it must be so that either Christ did not say the quoted verse or that he meant something else by it (c. Faust. 17.2). Faustus tells how his Manichean belief has helped him with this difficulty: it has taught him not to believe

that all things that are read about Christ are true, sound, or incorrupt. He is permitted to test where those words come from and label them as spurious. Reason and logic are gifts from God (c. Faust. 18).

Lastly, Faustus discusses the verse as if it really did come from Christ. If one accepts that, then one must ask why Christ said it. Surely, he did not mean to subjugate people under the Law and prophets of the Hebrews (c. Faust. 19.1-6). Faustus' answer is that there are three kinds of Law: the Law of the Hebrews (which Paul calls "the law of sin and death"), the Law of the gentiles (the antediluvian laws, which Paul calls "the natural law"), and the third Law (which Paul calls "the truth"). Which of these was Christ talking about? Faustus explains that, in the context, Jesus talks about the commandments pertaining to killing, adultery, and false swearing, all of which antedate the Law of Moses. Christ fulfilled these but those he did not mention the specific Mosaic Laws he abolished.

Faustus is thus willing to accept "the truth", i.e. commands such as "you shall not kill" (Ex 20:13), "you shall not commit adultery" (Ex 20:14) and "you shall not swear falsely" (Lev 19:12), which have spread among the human beings from the beginning. Jewish commandments are, according to him, not really the law, but "stains and stabs on the law", and Faustus condemns them. Faustus thus makes a distinction between Jewish institutions and the Law (c. Faust. 22).

Jewish Christians (which Faustus calls Nazareans while acknowledging that others call them Symmachians) are a special case according to Faustus (c. Faust.19.4). They do practice circumcision, observe the Sabbath and so on. Faustus says he would have some difficulties to answer them, but has no trouble refuting the Catholics who do not follow any of these precepts. It is thus understandable that the Jews observe a law that is given for them, and it is possible that even Jewish Christians do so, but for him it is not acceptable for others to do so.

Augustine's Answer to Faustus

Contra Faustum is, among other things, Augustine's defence of the Old Testament as a Christian book. The polemics against Faustus, and Manicheans in general, inspired him to formulate his view on the Old Testament and the Mosaic Law very clearly. In both matters, his view differed radically from that of his opponent. When Faustus claims that the Old Testament and its promises and precepts belong only to the Jews, Augustine gives a thorough answer where he engages with Faustus' arguments in detail.

Augustine states that both the Old and the New Testament come from the same God; the God of the Hebrews and the God of the New Testament is one and the same (c. Faust. 15.2). The Old and the New Testament form a unity, and there is continuity between them. Against the claims of Faustus he states that the text of both Testaments is reliable, and possible contradictions between these two do not imply falsifications, but can be explained in other ways. The Manichaean religious books, on the contrary, are novelties; they cannot show succession or ancientness (c. Faust. 11.2).

For Augustine, the hermeneutical key to right understanding of the Old Testament and its promises and precepts is Christ. Both authors agree that the Manicheans do not find Christ in the Old Testament (*Manichaei non intellegunt in illis libris Christum*, c. Faust. 12.34), but the Catholics do. Thus, Augustine argues, the Old Testament should not be abandoned as Faustus wanted, but it should be used in the light of the New Testament.

When it comes to promises in the Old Testament, Augustine admits that there are promises of temporal realities, such as the Land of Canaan. The Christians, however, understand them as symbols of things to come (1 Cor 10:11). Earthly land and the kingdom are images of eternal life and the kingdom of heaven. Already the patriarchs and the prophets understood that these promises signified things to come (c. Faust. 4.2).

Faustus stressed that to believe is to do, and gave himself as an example of one who lives according to the Beatitudes. Augustine has a lot to say to this. Most important, according to him, is to believe in the true Christ, who promises eternal life to all who believe in him, the one preached by the apostles, and not in another Christ. Manicheans boast of the supposed perfection of the commands of Christ, but they lack love, and true love arises from faith. Manicheans come up with all kinds of new commandments, such as not picking vegetables or abandoning one's wife and children, but at the same time they live in luxury when there are people who are poor, who are hungering and thirsty. This kind of life is useless and sacrilegious. In the Catholic Church, says Augustine, the Lord blesses both little ones and those who are great, because they observe the commandments of the gospel in accord with their positions and have hope in the promises of the gospel (c. Faust. 5.4-11).

Augustine answers Faustus' interpretation of Matthew's words that Christ did not come to destroy but to fulfil is Mosaic Law thoroughly. First he states that the text in Matthew is reliable (c. Faust. 17). Then he explains that to fulfil the Law means that Christ brought to reality what

the Law symbolized, and therefore the precepts no longer needed to be observed (c. Faust. 18). The Apostle Paul, he writes, shows that Jewish observances were promises that have now been fulfilled in Christ (John 1:17; Lk 16:16; 1 Cor 10:6). Christians are, for example, not circumcised because Christ fulfilled what circumcision symbolized. The sacraments of Christ are proofs of the fulfilment of the old sacraments (c. Faust. 19). Augustine also comments briefly on Faustus' mention of the Symmachians or Nazareans, as he calls some Jewish Christians. He states that they still exist as a small group, and repeats the traditional idea that those Jews who had started to observe Mosaic commandments are allowed to continue to do so even although it is not necessary, but they cannot force gentiles to do so (c. Faust. 19.17).²⁹ There was a time when it was right to observe Mosaic commandments, and Jesus himself did so, but it has gradually ceased.³⁰

One of Faustus' main charges is that because the Catholics do not observe all of the Mosaic precepts, the Old Testament does not belong to them. Augustine answers Faustus and makes a distinction between moral and symbolic precepts, which he claims that Faustus fails to do (c. Faust. 6.2). According to him, moral precepts are still to be observed, while there is no longer any need to observe the symbolic ones (e.g. c. Faust. 15.5-7). In the Old Testament times, it was good to observe the whole Mosaic Law, but now it is no longer needed because a new time has come with Christ.

To Faustus' idea that if one does not observe a precept, one should abandon it, Augustine replies that even if the Catholics do not follow the symbolic precepts, it is still good to study them and they should be venerated because they have written for "us". As proof he quotes the Apostle who says that the Old Testament feasts and precepts "... are shadows of things to come" and "All these things happened to them as an example and were written for our learning" (1 Cor 10:6). He explains that when the things themselves are revealed, prefigurations are no longer needed. Augustine gives several examples. For example, the Catholics see that the Old Testament sacrifices are no longer needed, but they recognize them as a part of mysteries of revelation by which the sacrifice of Christ was foreshadowed (c. Faust. 6.5). The same Scripture that earlier required symbolic actions now testifies to the things signified, and it would be

29 On Augustine's discussion with Jerome on Jewish Christian groups, see Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 296-298.

30 Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 300-301.

blasphemy to discard these books (c. Faust.6.9; 19.9-10).

Augustine points out that Manicheans who mock the Mosaic precepts that have symbolic value come with their own silly precepts that have no value at all, for example their food regulations. Augustine ridicules Manichean ideas of vegetables and fruit that suffer when they are pulled out from a tree or cooked, and the idea that the Manichean followers must prepare the food for the Elect who cannot do it (c. Faust. 6.4-6). For the Catholics, no flesh is unclean, because every creature of God is good (Titus 1:15; Matthew 16:11).

Witnesses and Testimonies: Faustus' view

In Faustus' argumentation against the Catholics and the Jews, witnesses and testimony are important concepts. When it comes to deciding questions in theology, such as Christology and the doctrine of God, for him the question of witnesses is essential. Why do people need witnesses at all? What kinds of witnesses are reliable? In relation to witnesses and testimonies, Faustus tells us what he thinks about the Old Testament, its prophets and the Mosaic Law, and produces three arguments against them. He states first that Moses and the Hebrew prophets did not prophesy about Christ; second, that the Christians do not need their testimony; and third, that the lives of the prophets make them bad witnesses. We shall now look more closely at these claims.

Faustus begins his dealing with this question with his usual criticism: passages in the New Testament that bind it with the Old Testament (such as that Christ is a descendant of David) and therefore, according to him, are self-contradictory, must be falsifications, later interpolations, or, for example, reflect Paul's earlier views (c. Faust. 11.1-2).

Book twelve begins with Faustus' notion that the Catholics refer to prophetic testimonies about Christ. He declares that even though he has tried to find prophecies about Christ in the Old Testament, he has found none,³¹ and that this had already been proven in the writings of earlier Manichaean authors. He then broadens the argument to discuss testimonies in general. Faustus asks why the Catholics need the Old Testament and Jewish proofs for their belief questioning whether that is actually a mark of weak faith. Faustus then quotes Matthew 3:17, Luke 9:35, John 8:13-18, John 16:28 and John 10:38 in order to show that God and his Son are the only witnesses needed. Faustus underlines that Jesus

31 The same claim is found in c. Faust. 16.1-2).

takes up the Mosaic Law in his discussion with the Jews about witnesses: “For in your law it is written: The testimony of two persons is true. I bear witness concerning myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness concerning me.” (John 8: 13-18). His claim is that Old Testament prophets, therefore, are not needed as witnesses to the Gospel in universal and outside history; what matters are the deeds of Christ.

Moreover, according to Faustus, the vicious lives of the Old Testament prophets make them bad witnesses. He concludes, “Hence, we need no testimonies concerning our saviour. We look only for examples of a morally good life and for wisdom and virtue in the prophets, and I feel that it has not escaped your notice that none of these existed in the seers (*vates*) of the Jews” (c. Faust.12.1).

This idea is developed in the next book. Even if the Hebrew prophets had said something about Christ, it would have had importance only for the Jews. Most Christians were gentiles by birth, and for them, according to Faustus, gentile poets were better witnesses than the Hebrew prophets. He summarizes:

And so, as I said, the testimonies of the Hebrews contribute nothing to the Christian Church, which is composed more of Gentiles than the Jews. Surely, if there are, as rumour has it, some prophecies about Christ from the Sibyl or from the Hermes, whom they call Trismegistos, or from Orpheus and from any other seers (*vates*) in the gentile world, these could come to some extent help those of us who become Christians from gentiles to accept the faith. But even if the testimonies of the Hebrews should be true, they are useless to us before we have the faith, and are superfluous for us after we have the faith, because we are unable to believe them before, and now it is superfluous to believe them “ (c. Faust. 13.1).

Books 14 and 16 are dedicated to questions concerning Moses and the Law. Faustus quotes John 5:46 where Christ said, “Moses wrote about me. If you believed Moses, you would also have believed in me”, a passage that would seem to contradict Faustus’ rejection of Moses and the Law (c. Faust 16.1). He states that he has nothing against the idea that Moses, like any other, could have testified about Christ, but he has not found any such testimonies. Therefore, he suspects that even this passage is spurious; an argument typical for Faustus’s view against the Old Testament (and even the New Testament used by the Catholics) is that their scriptures are corrupted.

Faustus gives some examples of passages in the Mosaic Torah that do not prove what the Catholics say they do. According to him, the Catholics offer Deuteronomy 18:18 “I will raise up for them from among their prophet like you”, saying that this prophetic testimony is about Christ. He refutes this by saying one can answer that Christ is not a prophet and is not like Moses; the former is a god, the latter a man. If one offers Deuteronomy 28:66 (according to LXX) “They will see their own life hanging (from a tree) and will not believe”, one can say that the words “from a tree” were not there in the original text.³² Faustus returns to Deuteronomy 21:23 “Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree” which he has discussed already in chapter 14. This verse, according to him, proves that Moses is not a prophet; a true prophet would not curse Christ and many martyrs. Applying Deuteronomy 25:5-10 “Cursed is every one that raises not up a seed in Israel” to Christ or Christians is similarly abhorrent; it curses Christ alongside many contemporary ascetic Christians. Moses taught many things not practised by Christians, such as observing the Sabbath, circumcision, food regulations and so on (c. Faust. 16.6). Moses’s teachings are therefore completely different from those of Christ.

True prophets can be recognized by their life and by their message. Moses is an unreliable witness because of his character too. He committed murder, robbed the Egyptians, waged war, commanded cruel acts, and was not content with one marriage (c. Faust 22).

Augustine’s View

Faustus refuses the Old Testament prophets as witnesses and produces three arguments to support his view, which Augustine answers using a similar three-part argument. In doing so, he draws Jews and Christians together on one side and places the Manicheans on the opposite side. First, he states that Moses and the Hebrew prophets did prophecy about Christ; second, he explains that Christians are helped by the Hebrew testimony; and third, he says that the Old Testament prophets indeed lived in a manner suitable and appropriate to their prophecies (c. Faust 12.2).

In order to prove the first and second points, Augustine gives a host of examples of Old Testament prophecies and types of Christ (c. Faust

32 For this interpolation, see AM Laato, *Jews and Christians in De duobus montibus Sina et Sion: An Approach to Early Latin Adversus Iudaeos Literature* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 1998), 51-52.

12). He claims that the Manicheans are not logical when they claim to accept the apostles, especially Paul, but fail to see that Paul and the other apostles actually accept Moses and the prophets (c. Faust. 12.2). Christ is Christ of the Hebrew prophets, and the Manicheans preach another, false Christ (c. Faust.12.4). Manicheans do not accept the testimony of Moses and the prophets, but of Mani, “who tells a long and foolish myth opposed to Paul”. When it comes to the third point, the lives of the prophets, Augustine asks how the Manicheans know that they did not live well (c. Faust. 12.47). He says that people “whose justice consists in giving relief to an inanimate melon by eating it, instead of giving food to the starving beggar” do not qualify as judges for the lives of others (c. Faust. 12.47). For the Catholics it is enough that the Scripture says that Abraham is righteous.

A special case among the witnesses is Moses, because Christ said of himself: “Moses wrote about me, and if you believed Moses, you would also have believed me (John 5:46). Augustine dedicates chapter 16 to refute Faustus’ views on Moses. He starts:

You cleverly say that, if you find any prophecies about Christ in the books of Moses, you are ready to accept them just as you would accept a fish from the sea, while you would reject the water from which the fish is taken. But because everything that Moses wrote is about Christ, that is, pertains completely to Christ, whether because it foretells him in figurative events or words or because it commends his grace and glory, you who have believed in a lying and deceitful Christ from the writings of Mani, do not want to believe these writings of Moses, just as you do not want to eat the fish” (c. Faust. 16.9).

When Faustus claims that the passage where God said to Moses: “I will raise up for them among their brothers a prophet like you” does not speak about Christ, Augustine says it does; for him, in order to be a typos one does not have to be alike in every respect (c. Faust. 16.15). Christ is like Moses in some respects, but not others. Moreover, when it comes to finding Christ in Deuteronomy 28:66 “you shall see your life hanging” – Christ himself says that he is life (John 14:16) and he hung in a tree.

For Augustine even the precepts of the Mosaic Law are witnesses or testimonies. Those symbolic precepts that are no longer observed are still a testimony for the things they prefigured (c. Faust. 10.2). Augustine summarizes:

Christians observe from those books the commandments that regulate life, but the commandments that symbolize life were rightly observed when things were foretold that have now been revealed. Hence, while I do not observe these latter commandments as a matter of religion, yet I hold onto them for their testimony. For example, there are the fleshly promises contained there, because of which it is properly called the Old Testament. For, though the eternal realities to be hoped for have been revealed to me, I still read of those events as bearing witness for them, since *they happened to them in figures, but they were written down for the sake of us upon whom the end of the ages has come* (1 Cor 10:11) (c. Faust. 10.2).

The theme of witnesses is central for Augustine, and the witness argument or witness doctrine is a distinctive part of Augustine's theology on the Jews.³³ He formulated it as an explanation for the continuing existence of the Jewish faith even after Christ, and as an instruction of how Catholic Christians should behave towards the Jews. A third motive for developing this theory is what he *expressis verbis* says: it works as a counter-argument for those outsiders who might claim that the Christians have falsified the old prophecies to their advantage. Several ideas of Augustine's witness-argument are found already in *Contra Faustum*, even if he further developed it later. It is possible that the argumentation against Faustus and other Manicheans was an important factor in Augustine developing this argument.

This argument can be summarized as follows. According to it, the Jews are witnesses (*testes*) for the Christian truth in several ways (1) As they preserve the Hebrew text of the Old Testament, they witness for its unchanged form,³⁴ (2) As they continuously keep the Mosaic precepts and are steadfast in their religious identity, they witness against the Gentiles, (3) The continuing refutation of Christendom by the Jews witnesses what

33 For Augustine's idea of Jews as witnesses, see M. Signer, "Jews and Judaism" in A.D. Fitzgerald, ed., *Augustine through the Ages* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 472; AM Laato, "Divided by a Common Ground. The Prophecy of Jacob and Esau (Gen 25:19-26) in Patristic Texts up to Augustine with respect to Modern Inter-Faith Dialogue", in L. Bormann, ed., *Abraham's Family: A Network of Meaning in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (WUNT 415; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 370-371; Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 321.

34 Augustine himself used *Vetus Latina* -translations which were based on the Septuagint, not the Hebrew text.

Paul said in Romans 11:26 that they will convert in the end, (4) The existence of the Jews scattered in exile testifies to their punishment for rejecting Jesus, (5) Their blindness and disbelief fulfil biblical predictions.

In this article, it is not possible to discuss thoroughly Augustine's understanding of the situation of the contemporary Jews as he presents it in *Contra Faustum*, but it should be noted that that *Contra Faustum* can be called "an utterly novel defence of the religious legitimacy of Judaism" as Paula Fredriksen has formulated.³⁵ It is not difficult to find anti-Jewish statements in Augustine's texts, but he also formulated ideas that protected the Jews in future centuries.³⁶ Most important of these is his interpretation of the fate of Cain.

In *Contra Faustum*, Augustine says that the Jews should convert to Christ, but even if they do not, they have a special role in the world. According to the image of Cain, God both scatters them around the world but also protects them as he protected Cain. Cain is both cursed and protected, and so are the Jews:

And the Lord placed a sign on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him (Gen 4:15). It is truly remarkable how all nations that the Romans subjugated crossed over to the religious practices of the Romans and took up the observance and celebration of those sacrilegious rites but the Jewish people, whether under pagan kings or under Christian ones, did not lose the sign of its law, by which it is distinguished from the other nations and peoples. And every emperor or king who finds Jews in his realm finds them with this sign and does not kill them, that is, does not make them cease to be Jews, who are set apart from the community of the other nations by a certain distinct and proper sign of their own observance, unless any of them crosses over to Christ so that Cain may no longer be found. (c. Faust. 12.13).

According to Augustine "killing" in this passage denotes forcing the Jews to cease to be Jews and to abandon their observances, not to kill physically. In the historical context, the Jews were not physically threatened.³⁷

35 Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 196.

36 Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, XII; 275-276.

37 Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, 274-275.

Conclusions

The extent of Augustine's answer to Faustus in *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* (in *Retractationes* 2.7 he himself calls it *opus grande*) proves that he regarded Faustus' objections against Old Testament and specifically the Mosaic commandments as important questions. Having been a Manichean himself, he had worked himself towards a differing view from his former teacher.

Faustus underlines several times that gentile poets and prophets are a better introduction to Christianity for people of gentile origin than the Hebrew prophets are. He levels different kinds of arguments against the Old Testament, its prophets, and commandments. Augustine, on the contrary, sees Christ already in the Old Testament, and emphasizes a hermeneutics of continuity between the two Testaments. Both Testaments come from the same good God, and therefore, the Old Testament cannot be separated from the New Testament.

In their relation to the Mosaic Law and its commandments, Faustus and Augustine take completely different views. Faustus applies anti-Jewish devices even to Catholic Christians who have the Old Testament as Scripture. He describes several Old Testament commandments as carnal, disgusting or superfluous. Augustine, on the contrary, defends the Old Testament precepts and says that they must be held in esteem. He introduces the idea of time: the Mosaic Law was good in its time, but with Christ a new time had come. He argues that there is a difference between moral and symbolic precepts: The moral precepts are to be observed, while symbolic precepts prefigure things that have now been revealed, they were "shadows of things to come." Even if the Catholics do not observe the symbolic precepts, these are still good to study.

Faustus intended to solve the contradictions he saw between passages in the Scripture by claiming that problematic passages are later interpolations or falsifications. Conversely, Augustine insisted that both parts of the Scripture must be kept as they are (e.g. c. Faust. 33.3;7). The whole Scripture must be understood Christologically and the difficult passages must be explained carefully. It is important to notice that despite their differing views on the Scripture, in both *Capitula* and *Contra Faustum* the authors use scriptural proof-texts throughout their argumentation. To refute Faustus' claims, Augustine discussed the interpretation of all biblical texts produced by Faustus.

Apart from the role of the commandments of the Mosaic Torah, another central topic in both works is the need for and the character of

witnesses and testimonies. According to Faustus, the Old Testament or Moses do not witness about Christ, nor is any such witness needed. The Hebrew prophets did not foretell anything about Christ, and if they did, their testimony is false, because their lives were not good. Again, Augustine has a completely different view. Moses and the other prophets are reliable witnesses of Christ. The Manicheans are not logical in their argumentation: they claim to accept the apostles, especially Paul, but Paul and other apostles do accept Moses and the prophets, and so does Christ (c. Faust. 12).

In *Contra Faustum*, Augustine has already begun to develop his doctrine of Jews as witnesses. According to him, even those Jews who have not converted to Christ are marked with the sign of Cain and thus protected by God. They are allowed to observe the Mosaic Law wherever they live.

Augustine's *Contra Faustum Manicheum* reveals in a clear way two completely different approaches to the Mosaic Torah. Both Augustine and Faustus developed their views not only inside their respective communities, but also in relation to Jews and the gentiles.