

## Another Case of Human Semen Eucharist Among the Manichaeans? Notes on the ‘Ceremony of the Fig’ in Cyril of Jerusalem’s *Catechesis* VI

Johannes van Oort\*  
University of Pretoria  
[j.van.oort@planet.nl](mailto:j.van.oort@planet.nl)

### Summary

The article focuses on a neglected passage in Cyril of Jerusalem’s *Catechesis* VI in which he speaks of the curious Manichaean ‘ceremony of the fig’. After providing the Greek text and a fresh translation of *Cat.* VI,33, an analysis is given of its contents. Noting that Cyril seems to have been well acquainted with those books of the Manichaeans (in all likelihood Mani’s *Treasure*) in which the myth of the Seduction of the Archons was told, I provide an overview and analysis of his description of the Manichaean ‘ceremony of the fig’. Cyril’s account seems to be corroborated by one or even two of the miniatures from Central Asia in which figs appear to be central in Manichaean sacred meals.

### Keywords

Cyril of Jerusalem – Manichaeism – human semen eucharist – Manichaean art – sexual symbolism of the fig

Cyril of Jerusalem’s Sixth *Catechesis* contains a curious passage. Because of its offensive character, older translations do not render the passage, but either omit it or reproduce its original Greek.<sup>1</sup> As a rule such a manner of dealing with a subject gives rise to extra curiosity. Until now, however, no solution has been offered to the puzzling statements it contains. The following notes, written as a follow-up to a previous study on human semen eucharist among the Manichaeans according to Augustine,<sup>2</sup> attempt to solve this problem, while at the same time searching for the wider context of Cyril’s assertions. The present writer may be excused of the rather indecent subject matter.

The passage in question belongs to § 33 of Cyril’s *Catechesis* VI. Dealing with the subject of the unity of God, Cyril extensively treats those heretics who, in his opinion, endanger this unity and even explicitly deny God’s monarchy. From § 20 onwards, his focus is on the Manichaeans and, based mainly on the so-called *Acta Archelai*, he first tells the (legendary) story of the descent of Mani.

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<sup>1</sup> E.g. *The Catechetical Lectures of S. Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem*, with a revised translation, introduction, notes, and indices, by E. H. Gifford (...), Edinburgh 1893, repr. in *NPNF*, 2, 7, 42-43; *Des heiligen Cyrillus Bischofs von Jerusalem Katechesen*. Aus dem Griechischen übersetzt und mit einer Einleitung versehen von Ph. Haeuser, München-Kempten 1922, 117. A complete and useful English translation (but without commentary) is provided by Leo McCauley in: *The Works of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem*, Vol. 1, translated by L.P. McCauley and A.A. Stephenson, Washington 1969, 167-168.

<sup>2</sup> “‘Human Semen Eucharist’ Among the Manichaeans? The Testimony of Augustine Reconsidered in Context”, *V/C* 69 (2015) 1-15

After that (§ 31 sqq.) he deals with the teachings of the Manichaeans. It is in this context that he also describes their ‘eucharist’ (my term). The whole § 33 runs as follows (the sentences fully or partly omitted in previous translations are in italic):

Μεγάλα μὲν κακὰ καὶ ταῦτα, ἀλλ’ ἔτι μικρὰ πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα. Οὐ τολμῶ ἐπὶ ἀνδρῶν καὶ γυναικῶν τὸ λουτρὸν αὐτῶν διηγήσασθαι. Οὐ τολμῶ εἰπεῖν, τίνι ἐμβάπτοντες τὴν ἰσχάδα, διδῶσι τοῖς ἀθλίσις. Διὰ συσσήμων δὲ μόνον δηλούσθω. Ἄνδρες γὰρ τὰ ἐν τοῖς ἐνυπνιασμοῖς ἐνθυμείσθωσαν, καὶ γυναῖκες τὰ ἐν ἀφέδροις. Μιαίνομεν ἀληθῶς καὶ τὸ στόμα, ταῦτα λέγοντες. Μὴ Ἑλληνας τούτων μυσαρῶτεροι; μὴ Σαμαρεῖται τούτων ἀθεώτεροι; μὴ Ἰουδαῖοι τούτων ἀσεβέστεροι; μὴ οἱ πορνεύοντες τούτων ἀκαθαρότεροι; Ὁ μὲν γὰρ πορνεύσας, πρὸς μίαν ὥραν δι’ ἐπιθυμίαν τελεῖ τὴν πρᾶξιν· καταγινώσκων δὲ τῆς πράξεως, ὡς μιανθεῖς οἶδε λουτρῶν ἐπιδεδόμενος, καὶ γινώσκει τῆς πράξεως τὸ μυσαρὸν. Ὁ δὲ Μανιχαῖος θυσιαστηρίου μέσον, οὗ νομίζει, τίθησι ταῦτα, καὶ μιαίνει καὶ τὸ στόμα καὶ τὴν γλῶσσαν. Παρὰ τοιοῦτου στόματος, ἄνθρωπε, δέχη διδασκαλίαν; Τοῦτον ὅλως ἀπαντήσας ἀσπάζη φιλήματι; Ἄρα χωρὶς τῆς λοιπῆς ἀσεβείας οὐ φεύγεις τὸ μεμολυσμένον, καὶ τοὺς ἀκολάστων χείρονας, τοὺς πάσης προεστῶσης μυσαρῶτερου;<sup>3</sup>

These [sc. the Manichaeans’ manner in taking food] are great evils, but still small in comparison with the other. I dare not deal with their baptism before men and women; *I do not dare say in what they dip the fig they give to their wretched. I can indicate it only indirectly. Let men think of the delusive dreams of the night and women of the menses.* Truly, we pollute our mouth in speaking of these things. Are the gentiles more detestable than these? Are the Samaritans more impious? Are the Jews more profane? Are the fornicators more impure? For the fornicator satisfies his lust in an hour, but soon condemns his deeds, realizing that, as a defiled, he is in need of washing, and he acknowledges the foulness of his action. But the Manichaean sets these things<sup>4</sup> in the middle of the “altar”, and defiles both his lips and his tongue. Would you, human being, receive instruction from such lips? Would you, altogether, greet him with a kiss? Quite apart from the impiety that this would involve, do you not shun the defilement, and people worse than the dissolute, more detestable than any prostitute?

Cyril is speaking of some sort of eucharist among the Manichaeans. In previous research the passage is regarded either as mere slander,<sup>5</sup> or simply as not worth mentioning.<sup>6</sup> In view of the presently available Manichaean texts and an important artefact, however, and supported by striking parallels in

<sup>3</sup> *S. Patris nostri Cyrilli Hierosolymorum archiepiscopi opera quae supersunt omnia*, II, ed. J. Rupp, Monaci 1860 (repr. Hildesheim 1967), 202.

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps one might read ταυτά instead of ταῦτα and translate: ‘the very/same things’, although ταῦτα seems to better express Cyril’s contempt of ‘these (horrible) things’. The older edition by the Benedictine A.A. Touttaeus (= Touttée), which is reprinted by J.-P. Migne, also reads ταῦτα and translates with ‘isthaec’. See *MPG* 33, 599-600.

<sup>5</sup> E.g. I. de Beausobre, *Histoire (Critique) de Maniché et du Manichéisme*, II, Amsterdam 1739, 387: ‘ridicule’; P. Alfarié, *L’évolution intellectuelle de saint Augustin*, I: *Du manichéisme au néoplatonisme*, Paris 1918, 165 n. 1: ‘Leur Eucharistie aspergée de semence humaine semble aussi légendaire que le meurtre rituel si souvent imputée aux Chrétiens pendant les premiers siècles’.

<sup>6</sup> Particularly important here is that already A. Adam, *Texte zum Manichäismus*, Berlin 1969<sup>2</sup>, 58-59, printed selections from *Cat. VI*, but omitted the whole § 33. Also, there is no mention of *Cat. VI*, 33 in, e.g., A. Böhlig, *Die Gnosis*, III, *Der Manichäismus*, Zürich-München 1980 (although he briefly deals with Cyril on pp. 7 and 303 n. 9); S.N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China*, Tübingen 1992<sup>2</sup> (although on pp. 131-132 he deals with Cyril and his *Cat. VI*); the various leading articles on Manichaeism by W. Sundermann in *EI* (online, last retrieved Jan. 2015). Curiously, also J.W. Drijvers, *Cyril of Jerusalem: Bishop and City*, Leiden-Boston 2004, though extensively discussing *Cat. VI* (102-109) and its dealing with the Manichaeans (107-109), completely passes over *Cat. VI*, 33-36.

Augustine's writings, I propose to re-examine the passage and see whether it may be based on real facts.

Let us first briefly consider Cyril's knowledge of Manichaeism. From the *Catechesis* under discussion it becomes clear that he partly bases himself on the *Acta Archelai*, the well-known source book on Manichaeism among his Catholic contemporaries. In these *Acts* fact and fiction are intertwined,<sup>7</sup> as is consequently also the case in Cyril's account (*Cat.* VI, 22-30). A puzzling problem that needs not engage us here is that he seems to have been able to adduce more info from these *Acts* than the other Catholic sources and the 'official' edition<sup>8</sup> of these *Acts* contain. Important is, first, that Cyril indicates that he is relying on inside information gained from converts from Manichaeism<sup>9</sup> and, secondly, that he claims that certain things 'are written in the books of the Manichaeans',<sup>10</sup> which he himself has read 'not believing those who told us of them'.<sup>11</sup> Cyril, in other words, has carefully checked his sources, as he additionally states in the subsequent sentence: 'for your safety, we have made a thorough examination of their pernicious doctrines'.<sup>12</sup>

The context of the just quoted remarks requires extra attention, for it seems to contain a clue to the question of *which* Manichaean books Cyril may have read—either those obtained through the intermediary of the converts just mentioned, or through another initiative of his own. In *Cat.* VI, 34 he relates that 'they [sc. the Manichaeans] say that the rains arise from erotic passion; and they dare to say that there is a beautiful maiden with a beautiful youth in heaven; and in the way of the camel and the wolf, they have seasons of base desire, so that, in the winter time, the youth rushes furiously after the maiden, while she flees; he pursues her and, in pursuing her, sweats, and from his sweat comes the rain'.<sup>13</sup> After having said this, Cyril makes his just quoted reference to the books of the Manichaeans as his sources.

The present state of Manichaean research allows for the following first note. Cyril is making reference to the so-called 'Seduction of the Archons', a well-known passage in the Manichaean myth particularly dealt with by Mani in his *Treasure*. From the writings of Augustine, his pupil Evodius, and also the 11<sup>th</sup> c. Muslim writer al-Biruni, we have long quotes from the *Treasure* in which this 'seduction' is central.<sup>14</sup> Although the same Seduction myth (in all likelihood in various versions) seems to have been dealt with in other writings of Mani as well,<sup>15</sup> the foundational and most extensive discussion is in his *Treasure*. It was this writing which, in all probability, figured prominently among Cyril's readings.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>7</sup> E.g. S.N.C. Lieu, 'Fact and Fiction in the Acta Archelai' (1988), repr. in *idem*, *Manichaeism in Mesopotamia and the Roman East*, Leiden-Boston 1994, 132-152; J. BeDuhn & P. Mirecki (eds.), *Frontiers of Faith. The Christian Encounter with Manichaeism in the Acts of Archelais*, Leiden-Boston 2007.

<sup>8</sup> C.H. Beeson (ed.), *Hegemonius, Acta Archelai* (GCS 16), Leipzig 1906.

<sup>9</sup> *Cat.* VI, 32: '... as converts from the sect have confessed ...: ὡς οἱ ἐξ αὐτῶν μετανοήσαντες ἐξωμολογήσαντο'. Cf. e.g. *Cat.* XV, 3 where 'converts from the Manichaeans' are being addressed.

<sup>10</sup> *Cat.* VI, 34: 'Ταῦτα γέγραπται ἐν ταῖς τῶν Μανιχαίων βίβλοις'.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*: 'Ταῦτα ἡμεῖς ἀνεγνώκαμεν, ἀπιστοῦντες τοῖς λέγουσιν'.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*: 'Υπὲρ γὰρ τῆς ὑμετέρας ἀσφαλείας, τὴν ἐκείνων ἀπόλειαν ἐπολυπραγμονήσαμεν'.

<sup>13</sup> *Ib.*: 'κἀκεῖνοι λέγουσιν, ὅτι οἱ ὑετοὶ ἐξ ἐρωτικῆς μανίας γίνονται· καὶ τολμῶσι λέγειν, ὅτι ἐστὶ τις παρθένος ἐν οὐρανῷ εὐειδῆς μετὰ νεανίσκου εὐειδοῦς· καὶ κατὰ τὸν τῶν καμήλων ἢ λύκων καιρὸν, τοὺς τῆς αἰσχροῦς ἐπιθυμίας καιροὺς ἔχειν· καὶ κατὰ τὸν τῶν χειμῶνων καιρὸν, μανιωδῶς αὐτὸν ἐπιτρέχειν τῇ παρθένῳ, καὶ τὴν μὲν φεύγειν φασί, τὸν δὲ ἐπιτρέχειν· εἶτα ἐπιτρέχοντα ἰδρῶν· ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν ἰδρωτῶν αὐτοῦ εἶναι τὸν ὑετόν'.

<sup>14</sup> Conveniently in Adam, *Texte*, 2-5.

<sup>15</sup> See e.g. the extensive quotes from Mani's writings (or writing?, perhaps his *Pragmateia*) in Theodor bar Konai's *Liber scholiorum*, cf. Adam, *Texte*, 15-23.

<sup>16</sup> Although it might be that he read also other 'books of the Manichaeans', the plural ('books') fits well as a reference to only Mani's *Treasure of Life*, which according to Augustine and Evodius contained at least *seven* books. That it was the *Treasure* indeed, may be corroborated by Cyril's remark in *Cat.* VI, 22 that Scythianus composed four books: the *Gospel*,

Cyril first states that he does not dare to speak of the ‘baptism’ of the Manichaeans. The sentence is puzzling in that the Manichaeans did not—like the other Christians—practice any baptism in water.<sup>17</sup> All we know is that some Manichaean texts speak of a spiritual baptism in the Column of Glory, i.e. when the human spirit, released from the bodily bonds, through the Galaxy ascends to the heavenly Kingdom. Perhaps such a doctrine was so awful to Cyril that he does not dare to speak of it. Another possibility might be that Jerusalem’s bishop is exaggerating his case and, when coming to the subject of the Manichaeans’ sacraments, simply supposes that these heretics, like the orthodox Christians, performed some baptismal rite which—*qualitate qua*, while performed by heretics—should be considered horrible. It seems to be more likely, however, to read both sentences starting with ‘I dare not’ as being rhetorically parallel.<sup>18</sup> Considered in this way, the awful ‘baptism’ or ‘washing’ (λουτρόν) is the same as the dipping (ἐμβάπτω) of the fig mentioned in the next clause.

This next sentence and its ensuing ‘explication’ constitutes the most strange and, at the same time, the most puzzling part of our *Catechesis*. Cyril claims that the Manichaeans ‘dipped’ or ‘baptized’ (ἐμβάπτω) a fig (ἰσχάς) in some substance, which he indicates ‘only indirectly’ (διὰ συσσήμων) as a product of men’s ‘delusive dreams of the night’ and women’s ‘menses’. In other words, some (dried) fig (ἰσχάς) is dipped in male sperma and female menstruation fluid. This fig is then given to their ‘wretched’. These ‘wretched’ are no other persons than the Manichaean communicants, because later Cyril relates that ‘the Manichaean sets these things (ταῦτα, i.e., this offering) in the middle of *the altar* (θυσιαστήριον) and defiles both his lips and his tongue’.

The first question which arises is: why a fig? For the Manichaeans, like for so many people in Antiquity and later times, the fig may have been a sexual symbol.<sup>19</sup> From the writings of the ex-Manichaean Augustine, it becomes clear which importance the fig must have had as a fruit containing much divine Light: God dwells more in a fig than in a liver;<sup>20</sup> a ‘soft green fig’ (*mitem ac viridem ficum*) has a particular smell;<sup>21</sup> when seeing a raven on the point of eating a fig, the true Manichaean will pluck the fig and eat it in order to release the light elements.<sup>22</sup> These statements bring to mind, firstly, Augustine’s remarks in *conf.* 3, 18 that—when he was a Manichaean—he believed that a fig weeps when it is picked and that its mother, the fig tree, sheds milky tears.<sup>23</sup> ‘Milky’ here refers to the divine Light element.<sup>24</sup> But very indicative in this context is that Augustine continues by stating: ‘Yet if some saint (i.e., a Manichaean Elect) ate the fig—plucked, of course, not by any sin on his part but by some other’s—then he would digest it in his stomach and breathe out angels, yes indeed particles of God when he groaned in prayer and even belched. These particles of

the *Kephalaia*, the *Mysteries*, ‘and a fourth still being hawked about, the *Treasure*: καὶ τετάρτην, ἣν νῦν περιφέρουσι, θησαυρόν’. Whether Cyril renders his Manichaean source(s) either faithfully or in a deliberately distorted way, must remain here (as in the case of the *Acta Archelai*) an open question.

<sup>17</sup> See now G. Wurst, ‘Initiationsriten im Manichäismus’, in: D. Hellholm a.o. (eds.), *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism. Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity*, I, Berlin-Boston 2011, 145-154.

<sup>18</sup> As it is in the older edition reprinted in Migne, *PG* 33, 597, where the two sentences are combined by a semicolon.

<sup>19</sup> On its sexual symbolism, see V. Reichmann, ‘Feige I (Ficus carica)’, *RAC* 7 (1969) 640-682 (esp. 650-652); V. Buchheit, ‘Feigensymbolik im antiken Epigramm’, *RhMus* 103 (1961) 201-229, and in particular *idem*, ‘Augustinus unter dem Feigenbaum (zu Conf. VIII)’, *VC* 22 (1968) 257-271.

<sup>20</sup> *Mor.* 2, 40: ‘Quod si saporem opus est attestari, ut cognoscamus habitare in corpore aliquid Dei, magis habitat in ... fico quam in ficato, ecce concedo’.

<sup>21</sup> *Mor.* 2, 41: ‘... odore solo assa offella superat mitem ac uiridem ficum...’. The words are highly polemical, but in his anti-Manichaean argument Augustine will not have mentioned this example by chance.

<sup>22</sup> *Mor.* 2, 57: ‘...si fico uideris coruum imminentem, quid facies? Nonne ex opinione tua ficus ipsa tecum loqui et deprecari miserabiliter uidetur, ut eam ipse decerpas et sancto uentre purificandam resuscitandamque sepelias potius, quam coruus ille deuratam funesto corpori misceat atque in alias formas illigandam cruciandamque transmittat?’

<sup>23</sup> *Conf.* 3, 18: ‘perductus ad eas nugas, ut crederem ficum plorare, cum decerpitur, et matrem eius arborem lacrimis lacteis?’

<sup>24</sup> Cf. e.g. C.R.C. Allberry (ed. transl.), *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*, Part II, Stuttgart 1938, 54 and 155.

the most high and true God would have remained bound in that fruit, if they had not been liberated by the tooth and belly of that elect saint'.<sup>25</sup> No doubt, here we have a surprising description of the Manichaeans' sacred meal, in which—equally surprising—the fig is considered to be the central element. One can hardly evaluate these and other examples from Augustine's *œuvre* in which figs feature (either the tree or the fruit) as pure chance.<sup>26</sup> It is perhaps also not by chance that the disputations of a certain Carthaginian Elect are said to have taken place in the quarter of the fig sellers.<sup>27</sup>

From Augustine we also learn about the special place human seed may have had in the Manichaean eucharist. In *haer.* 46, 9-10 he tells the story of some Manichaeans (so-called 'Catharistae') who consumed human seed 'in order that they purge a part of their God, which they really believe is held polluted just as much in human seed as it is in all celestial and terrestrial bodies, and in the seeds of all things'.<sup>28</sup> According to Augustine, the conclusive proof for such a rite to be considered truly Manichaean is the Seduction-myth from Mani's *Thesaurus*.<sup>29</sup> In my previous study I extensively argued that Augustine's opinion in all likelihood is based on real historical data, which apart from the story told in *haer.* and plausibly illustrated from Mani's writings also seems to be sustained by 'Episcopal Acts' concerning a similar event which the Cathaginian deacon Quodvultdeus sent him.<sup>30</sup>

There is no evidence that Augustine may have read Cyril's Sixth *Catechesis* (usually dated c. 350, most probable 351)<sup>31</sup> or that Cyril—apart from the *Acta Archelai*—may have been influenced by some secondary anti-Manichaean writings.<sup>32</sup> As indicated above, Cyril states that, in matters Manichaean, he relies on both the testimonies of former Manichaeans among his flock and his subsequent personal study of Manichaean writings. Curiously, already in § 23 of his Sixth *Catechesis* he refers to their 'abominable (ceremony of the) fig', while indicating that during this ceremony they invoke 'the demons of the air',<sup>33</sup> i.e. certain Manichaean deities. This last indication can be easily confirmed by testimonies from Augustine's and Manichaean writings as well.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, an outstanding testimony for the special place of the fig in Manichaean eucharistic meals appears to be one of the Manichaean miniatures found in the ruins of Central Asian Kotcho.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Conf.* 3, 18: "quam tamen ficum si comedisset aliquis sanctus, alieno sane, non suo scelere decerptam, misceret visceribus, et anhelaret de illa angelos, immo vero particulas dei, gemendo in oratione atque ructando: quae particulae summi et veri dei ligatae fuissent in illo pomo, nisi electi sancti dente ac ventre solverentur".

<sup>26</sup> I believe that we may interpret the *ficus* of A.'s conversion story in *conf.* 8 from this (Manichaean/anti-Manichaean) perspective as well.

<sup>27</sup> *Mor.* 2, 72: 'An uero illius etiam sancti, ad cuius disputationes in ficariorum uicum uentitabamus ...?'

<sup>28</sup> *Haer.* 46, 10: '... ut purgent Dei sui partem; quam profecto, sicut in omnibus corporibus caelestibus et terrestribus atque in omnium rerum seminibus, ita et in hominis semine teneri existimant inquinatam.'

<sup>29</sup> *Haer.* 46, 8-9. Cf. e.g. *nat. b.* 44-47.

<sup>30</sup> "Human Semen Eucharist" Among the Manichaeans? (n. 2), \*-\*.

<sup>31</sup> See e.g. the various studies by B. Altaner collected in his *Kleine patristische Schriften*, Berlin 1967 and G.J.M. Bartelink, 'Die Beeinflussung Augustins durch die griechischen Patres', in: J. den Boeft & J. van Oort (eds.), *Augustiniana Traiectina. Communications présentées au Colloque International d'Utrecht, 13-14 novembre 1986*, Paris 1987, 9-24. For the date of Cyril's *Catecheses*, see e.g. A. Doval, 'The Date of Cyril of Jerusalem's Catecheses', *JTS* 48 (1997) 129-132; Drijvers, *Cyril of Jerusalem* (n. 6), 56-58.

<sup>32</sup> Such as, e.g., Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 66.

<sup>33</sup> Cyril, *Cat.* VI, 23: '... και προσκαλεσάμενος τοὺς ἀερίους δαίμονας, οὓς οἱ Μανιχαῖοι μέχρι σήμερον ἐπὶ τῆς μυσαρᾶς αὐτῶν ἰσχάδος ἐπικαλοῦνται ...'.

<sup>34</sup> E.g. *conf.* 3, 18 (see above). For Manichaean texts on the invocation of deities during sacred meals, see e.g. H.-J. Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road: Gnostic Texts from Central Asia*, San Francisco 1993, *passim*.

<sup>35</sup> See e.g. A. von Le Coq, *Die buddhistische Spätantike in Mittelasien, II: Die manichäischen Miniaturen*, Berlin 1923 (repr. Graz 1973), Taf. 7a (discussion 46-48); H.-J. Klimkeit, *Manichaean Art and Calligraphy*, Leiden 1982, Plate XVII, Ill. 28



According to specialist opinion, the scene on the recto of one of the book paintings found there (h. 6.6 cm, w. 6.1 cm) is a ‘work of the religion scene’, i.e. an image depicting the alms giving by Manichaean Auditors to Elect in order that the light elements in it may be released.<sup>36</sup> The most recent description and most detailed analysis of the fragment is provided by Zsuzsanna Gulácsi in a recent study completely devoted to this ‘work of the religion scene’.<sup>37</sup> Gulácsi conclusively identifies the fruit in the golden bowl at the miniature’s forefront as being figs. I quote the passages most important in this context in full:

In its digitally reconstructed condition, this portion of the painting [i.e., ‘Section 1: Footed Bowl with Figs’] captures a familiar element of iconography and painting style (Fig. 4c). It shows a gold *repoussé* bowl with a fluted body, narrow rim, and three short legs. The bowl is piled high with figs that are arranged on top of one another with their pointed tips upwards. Familiar features of the *Fully Painted West Asian Painting Style of Turfan Manichaean Art* are reflected on the restored bowl and its fruit. On the surface of the gold leaf, the details of the metalwork are defined by the red contours. The fruit is fully painted in violet and red, and its form is further articulated in black contours.

What mainly matters here is, of course, the proven place of figs as being central to this sacred Manichaean meal. As far as I am aware, the accusation that Manichaeans added human seed to them is not visualised.<sup>38</sup> One may call to mind Augustine’s information that, according to the Manichaeans, only a certain branch of them (the ‘Catharists’) could be charged of the incriminated ritual.<sup>39</sup> In the discussed Sixth *Catechesis*, Cyril—either because of the highly cautionary character of his lecture, or simply because he really believes it—extends his charge to all Manichaeans.<sup>40</sup>

Another case of a fig being at the center of a pictured Manichaean eucharist might be the well-known Bema miniature from Kotcho. The scene is on the verso of one of the largest book paintings found there (h. 12.4 cm; w. 25.2 cm).<sup>41</sup> In this case as well the most detailed description is provided by Gulácsi. From her just mentioned book *Manichaean Art in Berlin Collections*, I quote the passage most important in this context:

In the very center of the scene, untouched piles of food suggest that the sacred meal has not taken place yet. On both sides of the red table gilded vessels are tracable. As indicated by its surviving upper part, the vessel on the left is a tall-necked carafe or ewer. On the right the

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(discussion 39-40) ; Zs. Gulácsi, *Manichaean Art in Berlin Collections*, Turnhout 2001, 70-75. The usual signature of the fragment of the folio now is: MIK III 4974 recto.

<sup>36</sup> J.B. BeDuhn, *The Manichaean Body: In Discipline and Ritual*, Baltimore & London 2000, 140-141; Gulácsi, *Manichaean Art* (n. 33), 83-86.

<sup>37</sup> Zs. Gulácsi, ‘An Experiment in Digital Reconstruction with a Manichaean Book Painting: *The Work of the Religion Scene* (MIK III 4974 recto)’, in: J.D. BeDuhn (ed.), *New Light on Manichaeism. Papers from the Sixth International Congress on Manichaeism*, Leiden-Boston 2009, 145-168 + 1 Plate and 10 Figures.

<sup>38</sup> The curious ‘red’ on top of the violet figs, which is described by Gulácsi as ‘red pigments’ (Gulácsi, ‘Experiment’, 152: ‘These pointed pieces of fruit resemble figs captured in pale violet and red pigments contoured in thin black lines’) does not indicate blood, but belongs to the particular West Asian style of Manichaean art.

<sup>39</sup> *Haer.* 46, 10: ‘Quorum unus nomine Viator eos qui ista faciunt proprie Catharistas uocari dicens ...’. Etc. See further ‘“Human Semen Eucharist” Among the Manichaeans?’, 5\* (full text) and n. 20\*.

<sup>40</sup> As, in actual fact, Augustine did in *haer.* 46, 10: on the basis of ‘their books’ the Manichaeans are obliged (*debeant*) to the incriminated ritual. Cf. e.g. his charges made already in *nat. b.* 45-47: *digne, necessitas, coguntur*.

<sup>41</sup> E.g. Le Coq, *Miniaturen*, Taf. 8b: a (discussion 54); Klimkeit, *Manichaean Art*, Plate XIV, Ill. 21 (discussion 33-34); Gulácsi, *Manichaean Art*, 70-75. The miniature nearly always figures in general overviews of Manichaean art and, for instance, in the well-known book of Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis*, San Francisco 1987, Plate 23. See also BeDuhn, *Manichaean Body*, Plate 3 (discussion 156-157). The usual signature of the fragment of the folio now is: MIK III 4979 verso.

legged plate contains pale orange-red balls that resemble apricots. The red table holds round, flat breads with braided raised edges, except the top one, whose plain edge is adorned with three pomegranate seeds. Behind the bread table, melons and grapes are heaped upon a metallic vessel with three short legs. Crowning this pile is a small rounded, green fruit or vegetable that remains unidentified. The conical-shaped piles of bread and fruit point toward the upper center of the composition where the lower area of a dais construction remains visible.<sup>42</sup>

Here, of course, the metallic vessel on which melons, grapes and, on top, an unidentified small(er) ‘green fruit or vegetable’ are heaped, merits particular notice. In my opinion the last mentioned item might be a fig.<sup>43</sup> Both its shape and size (in comparison to the pictured melons and grapes), and also its green<sup>44</sup> color, may possibly indicate that this miniature displays the *figus carica* as well.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Gulácsi, *Manichaean Art*, 74.

<sup>43</sup> The only other person who, as far as I can see, tried to identify Gulácsi’s ‘green fruit or vegetable’ is BeDuhn. In *Manichaean Body*, 156 he states: ‘... a gilded, tripod bowl contains three layers of garden products arranged in a pyramid, with three cantaloupes visible at the bottom, a layer of what appear to be grapes resting on the cantaloupes, and a green gourd protruding above the grapes’.

<sup>44</sup> From Augustine’s *mor.* 2, 43 we may deduce that the Manichaeans preferred *green* ones, because according to their opinion vegetables and fruits such as figs (*figus*) ‘become more destitute of the good the longer they are kept after being separated from the earth as though from their mother: ... tanto desertoria bono fierent, quanto diuturnius reponuntur, postquam a terra quasi a matre separata sunt’.

<sup>45</sup> On its form, size (3-5 cm long), colour (from green going to purple and brown, even black) and geographical distribution (native to the Mediterranean, Middle East and western Asia) see e.g. the Wikipedia entry ‘Common fig’ (last retrieved 28 Jan. 2015). In regard to Cyril of Jerusalem, Reichmann, ‘Feige’, 677 only—and rather infelicitously—remarks: ‘Von den Manichäern berichtet Cyrill von Jerusalem (cat. 6, 23 [PG 33, 580]) Verwendung der F. bei Dämonenanrufen’, thus omitting the pivotal fig passage in *Cat.* 6, 33.—With thanks to Iain Gardner, I note that among the newly discovered Manichaean texts from Kellis there is an interesting reference to figs used in the Passah liturgy. The passage (*P. Kellis Copt.* V 22, 14-18) runs as follows: ‘Perhaps he may give a *maje* [a kind of dry measure] of jubes and figs ... another one ... You have added a (?) *maje* of grapes ... *maje* ... olives and ... and ... for the Passah.’ See I. Gardner, A. Alcock and W.-P. Funk, *Coptic Documentary Texts from Kellis*, volume 1, Oxford, 1999 (Coptic text on p. 175, English transl. p. 178). Figs also appear elsewhere in the Kellis texts, e.g. at *P. Kellis Copt.* VII 120, 8 (‘5 *maje* of figs’) and 125, 24 (‘dried figs’).