

**‘*Misisti manum tuam ex alto*’:  
Manichaean Imagery of Christ as God’s Hand in Augustine’s *Confessions*?’\***

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## Abstract

The article first explores Augustine’s conspicuous references to ‘God’s Hand’ in his *Confessions* by presenting a fresh translation and brief commentary of the relevant texts. In the commentary special attention is given to the possible signifi- cance of these texts to (former) Manichaean readers. It is concluded that Augustine’s eye-catching imagery is not only inspired by biblical language and—in all likelihood—by predecessors in the Christian tradition such as Irenaeus and especially Ambrose, but also strikingly coincides with an essential metaphor of the Manichaeans. This feature once again underlines the importance of the Manichaean element in Augustine’s *Confessions*.

## Keywords

Augustine – *Confessions* – Manichaeism – Imagery – Metaphorical Language – Christ – Hand of God – Ambrose

### 1. Introduction

The past years have seen a remarkable focus on the Manichaean element in Augustine’s *Confessions*. Although this feature did not escape the attention of leading scholars such as Erich Feldmann and James O’Donnell,<sup>1</sup> it has become the

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<sup>1</sup> E. Feldmann, *Der Einfluss des Hortensius und des Manichäismus auf das Denken des jungen Augustinus von 373*, I-II, Dissertation Münster 1974; *idem*, ‘Confessiones’, *Augustinus-Lexikon*, vol. 1, Basel: Schwabe 1986-1994, 1134-1193; *idem*, ‘Literarische und theologische Probleme der Confessiones’, in: *Internationales Symposium über den Stand der Augustinus-Forschung*, Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag 1989, 27-45; J.J. O’Donnell, *Augustine: Confessions*, 3 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press 1992.

subject of special investigation in a number of recent studies.<sup>2</sup> The present article may be considered as a contribution to this new trend. Its aim is to examine Augustine's conspicuous reference to 'God's Hand' in his *Confessions* by analysing the relevant passages. It will be concluded that Augustine's eye-catching imagery is not only inspired by biblical language and—in all likelihood—by predecessors in the Christian tradition such as Irenaeus and Ambrose, but also strikingly coincides with an essential concept present in the texts of the Manichaeans and (perhaps) their art.

## 2. *An Overview of Texts from Augustine's Confessions, with brief Interpretation*

The *Confessions* contain a considerable number of passages in which Augustine makes mention of God's Hand.<sup>3</sup> I provide here a survey (with translation and brief

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<sup>2</sup> J. van Oort, 'Augustine's Criticism of Manichaeism: The Case of *Confessions* III,6,10 and Its Implications', in: P.W. van der Horst (ed.), *Aspects of Religious Contact and Conflict in the Ancient World*, Utrecht: Faculty of Theology, University of Utrecht 1995, 57-68; *idem*, 'Manichaeism and anti-Manichaeism in Augustine's *Confessions*', in: L. Cirillo & A. Van Tongerloo (eds.), *Atti del Terzo Congresso Internazionale di Studi Manicheismo e Oriente Cristiano Antico*, Turnhout: Brepols 1997, 235-248; *idem*, *Augustinus' Confessiones. Gnostische en christelijke spiritualiteit in een diepzinnig document*, Turnhout: Brepols 2002; A. Kotzé, 'Reading Psalm 4 to the Manichaeans', *VC* 55 (2001) 119-136; *eadem*, *Augustine's Confessions. Communicative Purpose and Audience*, Leiden-Boston: Brill 2004; *eadem*, 'The Puzzle of the Last Four Books of Augustine's *Confessions*: An Illegitimate Issue?', *VC* 60 (2006) 65-79; *eadem*, 'The "Anti-Manichaean" Passage in *Confessions* 3 and its "Manichaean Audience"', *VC* 62 (2008) 187-200; *eadem*, 'Protreptic, Paraenetic and Augustine's *Confessions*', in: J.A. van den Berg a.o. (eds.), *In Search of Truth: Augustine, Manichaeism and Other Gnosticism. Studies for Johannes van Oort at Sixty*, Leiden-Boston: Brill 2011 (repr. 2017), 3-23; *eadem*, 'A Protreptic to a Liminal Manichaean at the Centre of Augustine's *Confessions* 4', in: J. van Oort (ed.), *Augustine and Manichaean Christianity*, Leiden-Boston: Brill 2013, 107-135; J. van Oort, 'God, Memory and Beauty: A "Manichaean" Analysis of Augustine's *Confessions*, Book 10,1-38', in: *idem* (ed.), *Augustine and Manichaean Christianity*, 155-175. See also several passages in the major new 'biography' by R.L. Fox, *Augustine. Conversions and Confessions*, London etc.: Penguin Books 2015, the many pertinent remarks in C. Conybeare, *The Routledge Guidebook to Augustine's Confessions*, London-New York: Routledge 2016 and, not least, the two volumes by J.D. BeDuhn, *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma, 1: Conversion and Apostasy, 373-388 C.E.*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2010 and *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma, 2: Making a 'Catholic' Self, 388-401 C.E.*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2013 (on which books see, for instance, J. van Oort, 'Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma in Context', *VC* 65 (2011) 543-567 and *idem*, 'One Again: Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma', *Aug(L)* 66 (2016) 233-245).

<sup>3</sup> Or, as we will see in three cases, of 'Hands'. It may be remarked from the outset that A., although aware of the fact that several biblical texts speak of God's Hands, in his interpretation reduces the metaphor to relate in essence to one Hand, i.e. Christ as God's (Right) Hand. Apart from the references given below in the main text and in n. 30, special mention may be made of his remarks on *manus* [pl.] *Dei* in *en. in Ps. 118*, s. 18,1 (CCL 40,1723): '*Manus ergo Dei sunt potestas Dei. Aut si pluralis numerus eos mouet, quia non dictum est, manus tua, sed, manus tuae, accipiant manus Dei, uirtutem et sapientiam Dei, quod utrumque unus dictus est Christus* [cf. 1 Cor. 1:24]: *qui etiam*

commentary) of those texts in which Augustine either explicitly speaks of ‘Your Hand’, or more specifically mentions ‘Your Right Hand’. My overview follows the sequence of the *Confessions*, while in the translation and brief commentary the focus falls on those passages which may be considered as typical of Augustine’s wording.

Texts which explicitly make mention of God’s (Right) Hand comprise the following ones:

i. *Conf.* 1,24 (CCL 27,13): *Exaudi, domine, deprecationem meam, ne deficiat anima mea sub disciplina tua neque deficiam in confitendo tibi miserationes tuas, quibus eruisti me ab omnibus uis meis pessimis, ut dulcescas mihi super omnes seductiones, quas sequebar, et amem te ualidissime et amplexer manum tuam totis praecordiis meis et eruas me ab omni temptatione usque in finem.*

*Transl.:* Hear, Lord, my entreaty (Ps. 60:2), that my soul may not faint under Your discipline (Ps. 83:3; 118:81), nor let me faint in confessing to You all Your mercies (Ps. 106:8.14.21.31) by which You rescued me from all my evil ways (e.g. 4 Reg. 17:13), that You may become more sweet to me than all the seductions I was pursuing, and that I may most strongly love You, and grasp *Your Hand* with all my heart, and You may rescue me from every temptation (Ps. 17:30) until the end (e.g. Ps. 15:11; 37:7).

*Comm.:* As a matter of fact, commentators have detected in this passage several reminiscences and even literal quotes of biblical texts.<sup>4</sup> In this context, it may be specified that Augustine not only uses the (at first hearing: only biblical) metaphor for God’s Hand, but also stresses that God rescues (‘eruisti *me ab omnibus uis meis pessimis*’; ‘eruas *me ab omni temptatione usque in finem*’). He also speaks

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*intellegitur brachium Domini, ubi legitur: Et brachium Domini cui reuelatum est? [Isa. 53:1]. Aut accipiant manus Dei, Filium et Spiritum sanctum ... Liberum est igitur quomodo intellegantur manus Dei: dum tamen nec ea quae facit manibus, Verbo facere negetur.’* From the passage and its context, it is not clear whose opinion A. had in view. The accepted metaphor of Christ and the Spirit as the two hands of God had been well known since Irenaeus (*haer.* 5,28,4). Important as well for the view of the later A. is his discussion in *en. in Ps.* 118, s. 32,5 on Ps. 118:173 [CCL 40,1774-1775]: ‘*Potest sic accipi, Fiat manus tua, ut manus Dei Christus intelligatur; iuxta illud Isaiae: Et brachium Domini cui reuelatum est? [Isa. 53:1]. Non enim erat factus Unigenitus, cum per eum facta sint omnia [cf. Ioh. 1:3]; sed factus est ex semine David [cf. Rom. 1:3] ut esset Iesus, id est Saluator, qui iam erat Creator. Sed cum familiare sit scripturae: Fiat manus tua et: Facta est manus Domini [e.g. Ez. 1:3], nescio utrum possit hic sensus in eis locis omnibus obtineri. Sane ubi audimus quod sequitur: Concupiui salutare tuum, Domine [Ps. 118:74]; etiam nolentibus omnibus inimicis, salutare Dei nobis Christus occurrat ...’.*—It may also be noted here that in the *conf.*, apart from *dextera*, ‘brachium’, ‘palma’, or other synonyms for ‘manus’ do not occur.

<sup>4</sup> As indicated in the translation. It should be noticed that A. often associatively alludes to biblical texts without quoting them literally, and also that he rather freely combines such texts. With regard to the Psalms, these and other features have been thoroughly studied by G.N. Knauer, *Psalmenzitate in Augustins Konfessionen*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1955. It is on his analyses that many of my references in this and the following translations are based.

of his own activity: in order to be rescued, he may grasp (*amplexor*: ‘to grasp’, ‘clasp’, ‘embrace’) God’s Hand. As we will see later more clearly from his *conf.*, in this work God’s Hand often turns out to be a metaphor for Christ.

ii. *Conf.* 2,3 (CCL 27,18-19): ... *domine, qui formas etiam propaginem mortis nostrae, potens imponere lenem manum ad temperamentum spinarum a paradiso tuo seclularum?*

*Transl.*: ... o Lord, You who shape the propagation of our mortal race, imposing *Your gentle Hand* to soften the thorns which have no place in Your paradise?

*Comm.*: God’s gentle Hand later returns as God’s *manus mitissima et misericordiae* (*conf.* 6,7), which also has a close parallel in 6,13: ‘*manu ualidissima et misericordissima eruisti eum tu*’. As in these later texts, we may be entitled to understand God’s gentle Hand to be (a symbol of) Christ.

iii. *Conf.* 3,19 (CCL 27,37): *Et misisti manum tuam ex alto et de hac profunda caligine eruisti animam meam, cum pro me fleret ad te mea mater, fidelis tua, amplius quam flent matres corporea funera.*

*Transl.*: And You put forth *Your Hand* from above (Ps. 143:7), and You rescued my soul (Ps. 85:13) out of this deep fog, because my mother, Your faithful one, wept for me before You, more than mothers weep for the bodily death of their children.

*Comm.*: The two evidently biblical quotes come from the Psalms and, once again, the verb *eruo* (‘rescue’) is being used. For instance, it is clear from *en. in Ps.* 143,14 that, for Augustine, ‘Your Hand’ is a metaphor for Christ.<sup>5</sup> The noun *caligo* (‘fog’, ‘mist’, ‘smog’, ‘darkness’) here and in the following paragraph (3,20: *adhuc uolui et inuolui illa caligine*) in a subtle way seems to refer to Manichaeism, being indicative of the race of darkness in the Latin version of Mani’s *Epistula fundamenti* (as quoted by Augustine, *c. ep. fund.* 19: *gens caliginis ac fumi plena*). Furthermore, to identify the weeping of Augustine’s mother as bringing salvation may recall the Manichaeans’ opinion on salvational ‘weeping’, which went far beyond mourning the dead;<sup>6</sup> the introducing *cum* is a ‘cum causale’, not a ‘cum historicum’.

iv. *Conf.* 5,1 (CCL 27,57): *Accipe sacrificium confessionum mearum de manu linguae meae, quam formasti et excitasti, ut confiteatur nomini tuo, et sana omnia ossa mea, et dicant: domine, quis similis tibi? Neque enim docet te, quid in se agatur, qui tibi confitetur, quia oculum tuum*

<sup>5</sup> *En. in Ps.* 143,14 (CCL 40,2083): ‘Emitte manum tuam ex alto. *Quid postea? quid in fine? Quomodo uincit corpus Christi? Caelesti adiutorio. Veniet enim ipse Dominus in uoce archangeli, et in tuba Dei descendit de caelo* [1 Thess. 4:15]; *ipse Saluator corporis, manus Dei*’.

<sup>6</sup> A number of Manichaean texts (and rites) imply salvational weeping; see further my ‘*Filius istarum lacrimarum*’ (forthcoming).

*non excludit cor clausum nec manum tuam repellit duritia hominum, sed soluis eam, cum uoles, aut miserans aut uindicans, et non est qui se abscondat a calore tuo.*

*Transl.:* Accept the sacrifice (Ps. 50:21) of my confessions from the hand of my tongue, which You have formed and stirred up to confess Your name (Ps. 53:8), and heal all my bones and let them say: Lord, who is like You (Ps. 6:3; 34:10)? And yet he who makes confession to You is not instructing You of what is happening within him, for a closed heart does not exclude Your eye nor does man's hardness of heart repel *Your Hand*, but You melt it when You will, either in mercy or in punishment, and there is none who can hide himself from Your heat (Ps. 18:7).

*Comm.:* This 'most formal preface since Bk. I'<sup>7</sup> is full of quotations from the Psalms, while the wording 'hand of my tongue' is perhaps reminiscent of Prov. 18:21 ('*mors et vita in manibus linguae*').<sup>8</sup> However, one may wonder why Augustine uses the word 'hand' here, as he does in the curious expressions 'hand of my heart' (*manus cordis*) in 10,12 and 'hand of my mouth' (*manus oris mei*) in 11,13. As we will see in the course of our analysis, it might be that he is also using the metaphor of the hand in reminiscence of its special significance in Manichaean belief and practice. Although the wording 'Your Hand' may firstly be interpreted as being a biblical reminiscence, its association with Augustine's offering of his 'sacrifice'<sup>9</sup> may reveal the explicit Manichaean link between a person's offering and God's Hand.

A similar Manichaean context seems to be evoked by the enigmatic (and, up to the present, passed over in commentaries and thus unexplained) statement: 'And yet he who makes confession to You is not instructing You of what is happening within him'. Manichaean confession (be it by the Auditors or the Elect) directly effects both men's *and* God's existence, because God and the human soul as *pars Dei* are of the same light substance. The statement that immediately follows ('for a closed heart does not exclude Your eye nor does man's hardness of heart repel Your Hand') may function as an explicit warning against this Manichaean view.

v. *Conf.* 5,13 (CCL 27,64): *Manus enim tuae, deus meus, in abdito providentiae tuae, non deserebant animam meam, et de sanguine cordis matris meae per lacrimas eius diebus et noctibus pro me sacrificabatur tibi, et egisti mecum miris modis. Tu illud egisti, deus meus. Nam a domino gressus hominis diriguntur, et uiam eius uolet. Aut quae procuratio salutis praeter manum tuam reficientem quae fecisti?*

<sup>7</sup> O'Donnell, *Confessions*, II, 281.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Knauer, *Psalmenzitate*, 72 and esp. 150-151. Cf. e.g. *en. in Ps.* 72,30: 'Why, then, does Scripture speak of "the hands of the tongue"? It means, in the power of the tongue, for "out of your mouth you will be justified, and out of your mouth you will be condemned (Mt. 12:37)".'

<sup>9</sup> On the *conf.* as 'sacrifice', see already M. Zepf, *Augustins Confessiones*, Tübingen: Mohr 1926, 9.



*Transl.:* For *Your Hands*, my God, in Your hidden providence, did not desert my soul, and out of the blood of my mother's heart, through her tears that she poured out by day and by night, was a sacrifice offered for me to You, and You dealt with me in wondrous manners. You, my God, did it. For by the Lord the steps of man are directed, and He chooses his way. Or what other provision is there for our salvation except through *Your Hand* remaking what You have made?

*Comm.:* These sentences conclude the story of Augustine's meeting with Faustus and his ensuing estrangement from the Manichaeans. The role of God's Hand(s)<sup>10</sup> in this whole event is stressed. Remarkable as well is the sacrificial role which (once again, cf. 3,19) is assigned to his mother's tears.

vi. *Conf.* 6,6 (CCL 27,77): ... *resistens* manibus tuis, *qui medicamenta fidei confecisti et sparsisti super morbos orbis terrarum et tantam illis auctoritatem tribuisti.*

*Transl.:* ... resisting *the Hands of You*, who has prepared the medicines of faith, and has spread them over the diseases of the whole world, and has given them such great authority.

*Comm.:* With reference to Ps. 16:8 ('*resistentibus dexteræ tuæ custodi me*'), Knauer considers the *manus tuæ* to be a metaphor for Christ.<sup>11</sup> This seems to be confirmed by Augustine's speaking of the 'medicines of faith': Christ as *medicus* with his *medicina* is a well-known figure of speech in his writings,<sup>12</sup> for instance in *conf.* 9,35 (see below). Similarly, it was a well-known metaphor among the Manichaeans, for instance in their Psalms.<sup>13</sup>

vii. *Conf.* 6,7 (CCL 27,78): *Deinde paulatim tu, domine, manu mitissima et misericordissima pertractans et componens cor meum ...*

*Transl.:* Then, little by little, You Lord, with *Your most gentle and most merciful Hand*, touched and calmed my heart ...

*Comm.:* Here the Hands of the previous lines of *conf.* 6,6 may—again, cf. 5,13—be considered to be one Hand, i.e., Christ.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the plural 'Your Hands' in 13,1 and 20. Although A. accepts the possibility to see the plural as referring to Christ and the Spirit, in essence he considers it to be a metaphor for Christ. Cf. n. 3 above and the commentary on 13,1 and 13,20. The same context of creation (and recreation) through Christ is evoked by the concluding sentence of our passage: '*Aut quæ procuratio salutis præter manum tuam reficientem quæ fecisti?*'

<sup>11</sup> Knauer, *Psalmenzitate*, 121-122 n. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. e.g. R. Arbesmann, 'Christ the *medicus humilis* in St. Augustine', *Augustinus Magister*, II, Paris: Études Augustiniennes 1954, 623-629; *idem*, 'The Concept of *Christus medicus* in St. Augustine', *Traditio* 10 (1954) 1-28; P.C.J. Eijkenboom, *Het Christus-medicusmotief in de preken van Sint Augustinus*, Assen: Van Gorcum 1960.

<sup>13</sup> See the quotes from the Coptic Manichaean Psalter in 'Manichaean Imagery of Christ as God's Hand', section A 2, iii.

viii. *Conf.* 6,13 (CCL 27,83): *Et inde tamen manu ualidissima et misericordissima eruisi eum tu ...*

*Transl.:* Nevertheless, from this You rescued him by *Your most mighty and most merciful Hand* ...

*Comm.:* The most merciful Hand of *conf.* 6,7 here returns in the case of Alypius' salvation, now also characterized as being 'most mighty'.

ix. *Conf.* 6,21 (CCL 27,88): *... et deligatus morbo carnis mortifera suauitate trahebam catenam meam solui timens et quasi concusso uulnere repellens uerba bene suadentis tamquam manum soluentis.*

*Transl.:* ... and fettered by the disease of the flesh and its deadly sweetness, I dragged my chain, fearing to be loosed; and, as if it struck my wound, I pushed aside the words of good advice, as it were *the Hand* that would set me free.

*Comm.:* The passage refers to Alypius' advice on abstinence from marrying a wife, which advice Augustine was unable to follow due to his being fettered by the bonds of carnal lust. The good advice is compared with God's Hand which would set Augustine free; cf. e.g. the beginning of 9,1: '*Dirupisti uincula mea*' (= Ps. 115:16).

x. *Conf.* 6,24 (CCL 27,90): *Ex quo consilio deridebas nostra et tua praeparabas nobis daturus escam in oportunitate et aperturus manum atque impleturus animas nostras benedictione.*

*Transl.:* Out of that council (Prov. 19:21; Ps. 32:11) You laughed at our plans and prepared Your own, to give us food in due time and to open *Your Hand* and fill our souls with blessing (Ps. 144:15-16).

*Comm.:* The plan of Augustine and his friends for an ideal community fell through. As in 6,17 where Alypius, Nebridius and Augustine were looking to God 'to give them their food (*escam*) in due time' (Ps. 114:15; 103:27), so here the same metaphor appears, now with the mentioning of God's Hand. In wondering why, in his *conf.*, Augustine so often uses alimentary metaphors, one may find a likely explanation in his anti-Manichaean stance.<sup>14</sup> The real food he (and others) will discover is Christ (cf. e.g. 7,24; 13,23; 13,32); accordingly, there seems to be good reason to interpret God's Hand here also as referring to Christ.

xi. *Conf.* 6,26 (CCL 27,90): *Tibi laus, tibi gloria, fons misericordiarum! Ego fiebam miserior et tu propinquior. Aderat iam iamque dextera tua raptura me de caeno et ablutura,<sup>15</sup> et ignorabam.*

<sup>14</sup> L.C. Ferrari, 'The "Food of Truth" in Augustine's Confessions', *AS* 9 (1978) 1-14; BeDuhn, *Augustine's Manichaean Dilemma*, 2, 331-332.

<sup>15</sup> A considerable number of MSS read *ablutura*: 'to wash me clean', i.e., by baptism.

*Transl.*: Praise to You, glory to You, fountain of all mercies! I was more miserable and You nearer. Already *Your Right Hand* drew nearer to seize me and pull me out of the dirt, and I did not know it.

*Comm.*: Manichaean texts frequently speak of the Right Hand which saves from the misery of this worldly existence.<sup>16</sup> Already Mani used the metaphor: ‘*Sed et dextera luminis tueatur et eripiat uos ab omni incursione maligna et a laqueis mundi*’: ‘And may indeed the Right Hand of the Light protect and rescue you from every evil incursion and from the snares of the world’ (*c. ep. fund.* 11, CSEL 25,207; cf. *c. Fel.* 1,16, CSEL 25,819). Moreover, it may seem to be depicted in Manichaean art.<sup>17</sup> Augustine, like Mani and his followers, often explicitly considered the Right Hand to be Christ. With Knauer, we may see ‘*iam iamque*’ as an expression of ‘steigend[er] Erwartung’;<sup>18</sup> this rising expectation will be fulfilled in Augustine’s conversion as described in *conf.* 8.<sup>19</sup>

xii. *Conf.* 7,12 (CCL 27,101): *Et residebat tumor meus ex occulta manu medicinae tuae, aciesque conturbata et contenebrata mentis meae acri collyrio salubrium dolorum de die in diem sanabatur.*

*Transl.*: And my swollen pride subsided through *the secret Hand of Your medicine*, and the troubled and darkened eye of my mind was healed by the sharp eye-salve of salutary sorrows from day to day.

*Comm.*: For Augustine, both the Hand of Your medicine (cf. *conf.* 9,35 and 10,69 below) and the eye-salve (*collyrium*; cf. Apoc. 3:18 and e.g. *Io. eu. tr.* 2,16) refer to Christ.<sup>20</sup> Manichaean texts abundantly testify to the Manichaeans’ speaking of Christ as being both men’s physician and medicine.<sup>21</sup> The curious expression ‘salutary sorrows’ might be understood in line with the typical Manichaean thinking of ‘salutary tears’ in *conf.* 3,19 and 5,13. The whole paragraph 7,12 functions as a pivot at which juncture Augustine summarizes the preceding (i.e., mainly Manichaean) phase of his life before he starts his description of a new development, i.e., his becoming acquainted with ‘some books of the Platonists’.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. ‘Manichaean Imagery of Christ as God’s Hand’, nearly *passim*.

<sup>17</sup> See ‘Manichaean Imagery’, section 2 B: Testimonies from Manichaean Art?

<sup>18</sup> Knauer, *Psalmenzitate*, 42 n. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Or perhaps, if we follow the reading *ablutura* (as O’Donnell has most recently done in his *Confessions*, I, 71; cf. II, 386), in A.’s baptism which is briefly mentioned in *conf.* 9. However, I deem this reading less likely: see the phrase ‘*dextera tua suscepit me et inde ablatum*’ in 8,2 (text xv below).

<sup>20</sup> Cf. his ‘*sanare tumorem*’ in 7,24: ‘*uerbum enim tuum, aeterna ueritas ... sanans tumorem et nutriens amorem*’.

<sup>21</sup> See ‘Manichaean Imagery’, in particular the quotes from the Coptic Manichaean Psalmbook in section A 2, iii.



xiii. *Conf.* 7,21 (CCL 27,106): *Et respexi alia et uidi tibi debere quia sunt et in te cuncta finita, sed aliter, non quasi in loco, sed quia tu es omnitenens manu ueritate ...*

*Transl.:* And I reflected upon other things and saw that to You they owe their being and that in You all things are finite, but in another way, not as though contained in a place, but because You hold all things in Your *Hand* of Truth ...

*Comm.:* ‘*Manu ueritate*’ may also be translated as ‘in/by Your Hand, in/by Your Truth’, but translating ‘*ueritate*’ as an appositional genitive seems preferable. Either way, Your Hand here appears to denote Christ, who is also the Truth (among the many instances in Augustine’s œuvre, see e.g. *en. in Ps.* 39,18: ‘*Vnde ueritas Christus? ego sum ueritas*’; *en. in Ps.* 103, s. 3,14: ‘*ueritas est, ueritas Christus est*’; *Io. eu. tr.* 46,4: ‘*quid est Christus? ueritas*’; *ep. Io. tr., tr.* 3: ‘*quis est Christus? ueritas*’).

xiv. *Conf.* 7,27 (CCL 27,111): *Et grauata est super nos manus tua ...*

*Transl.:* And *Your Hand* has grown heavy upon us (cf. Ps. 31:4) ...

*Comm.:* Your Hand here might denote Christ. In his *conf.*, Augustine sometimes speaks of humiliation and other chastisements as God’s manner to correct (cf. e.g. the passage 2,4: ... *et excessi omnia legitima tua nec euasi flagella tua ...* etc. and his speaking of *amaritudo* in 6,17: *Et in omni amaritudine, quae nostros saeculares actus de misericordia tua sequebatur ...*). Besides, he terms Christ as *uirga tui* in 9,17.

xv. *Conf.* 8,2 (CCL 27,114): ... *et dextera tua suscepit me et inde ablatum posuisti, ubi conualescerem ...*

*Transl.:* ... but *Your Right Hand* upheld me (Ps. 17:36; cf. 62:9) and took me thence and placed me where I could recover ...

*Comm.:* Early in the pivotal book telling Augustine’s conversion to Catholic Christianity, God’s Right Hand seems once again to denote Christ, while the text also resonates his rescuing<sup>22</sup> and being a physician. Manichaeans spoke of Christ in the same way.

xvi. *Conf.* 9,1 (CCL 27,133): *Tu autem, domine, bonus et misericors et dextera tua respiciens profunditatem mortis meae et a fundo cordis mei exhauriens abyssum corruptionis.*

*Transl.:* But You, Lord, are good and merciful (Ps. 85:12; 102:8), and *Your Right Hand* took notice of the profundity of my death, and removed even from the bottom of my heart that abyss of corruption.

*Comm.:* At the beginning of the book relating his baptism, Augustine once more appears to speak of Christ in the metaphor of God’s Right Hand. Many

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<sup>22</sup> *Suscipio* also means ‘to take up’ and ‘adopt’; cf. e.g. Vergilius’ use. Perhaps the full quote resounds the Roman custom to take up a new-born child from the ground, signifying its rescue and acknowledgement.

Manichaean texts not only contain this metaphor, but they also typically refer to this material world and —not least—the material body as ‘the abyss’.<sup>23</sup>

xvii. *Conf.* 9,9 (CCL 27,138): *Et tu, domine, iam magnificaueras sanctum tuum, suscitans eum a mortuis et collocans ad dexteram tuam, unde mitteret ex alto promissionem suam, paracletum, spiritum ueritatis. Et miserat eum iam, sed ego nesciebam.*

*Transl.:* And You, Lord, had already magnified Your holy one (Ps. 4:4), raising him from the dead and placing him at *Your Right Hand* (Eph. 1:20), whence from on high he would send his promise (Lk. 24:49), the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth (John 14:16-17). And He had sent him already (cf. Acts 2:1-4), but I did not know it.

*Comm.:* ‘Your Right Hand’ here means the place, but at the same time seems to denote the person sitting there, i.e. Christ. The Manichaeans spoke of Christ in the same manner, but greatly differed in their view of the Holy Spirit. The whole paragraph and its context, having a strong anti-Manichaean focus and being dispersed with biblical quotes,<sup>24</sup> opposes their opinion on Mani as being the Paraclete and Spirit of Truth, a view Augustine—in his ignorance—once shared.

xviii. *Conf.* 9,35 (CCL 27, 153): ... *exaudi me per medicinam uulnerum nostrorum, quae pependit in ligno et sedens ad dexteram tuam te interpellat pro nobis.*

*Transl.:* Hear me (e.g. Ps. 142:11) through the medicine of our wounds, who hung upon the wood (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13) and who, sitting at *Your Right Hand* (Ps. 109:1), makes intercession to You for us (Rom. 8:34).

*Comm.:* Again we encounter Christ at God’s Right Hand, a biblical image well known to both Augustine and the Manichaeans. The same is not true, however, for the metaphor of Christ as medicine: strictly speaking it is not biblical, but obviously shared by both Augustine<sup>25</sup> and his former coreligionists.<sup>26</sup>

xix. *Conf.* 10,5 (CCL 27,157): *Animus ille hoc faciat fraternus, non extraneus, non filiorum alienorum, quorum os locutum est uanitatem, et dextera eorum dextera iniquitatis ...*

<sup>23</sup> For ‘abyss’ in the Coptic *Kephalaia* (ed. & transl. H.J. Polotsky, A. Böhlig & W.-P. Funk, *Kephalaia*, Band I, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1940-2000), see for instance *Keph.* 29,29; 40,2; 41,19; etc. Cf. I. Gardner, *The Kephalaia of the Teacher. The Edited Coptic Manichaean Texts in Translation with Commentary*, Leiden-New York-Köln: E.J. Brill 1995 (repr. Leiden-Boston: Brill 2016), 33; 45; 46; etc. The Coptic Manichaean Psalmbook (ed. & transl. C.R.C. Allberry, *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*, Part II, *Manichaean Manuscripts of the Chester Beatty Collection II*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1938) speaks of ‘the abyss’ on nearly each page.

<sup>24</sup> See e.g. Kotzé, ‘Psalm 4’ (n. 2).

<sup>25</sup> See in the *conf.*, among many other texts, the passages quoted from 7,12 above and 10,69 (as well as 10,42 and 10,44!) below. Cf. e.g. *ep.* 63,2: ‘... *sub illius medicinalem dexteram confugiendo sanaremur*’.

<sup>26</sup> See the many texts quoted in ‘Manichaean Imagery’.

*Transl.*: Let it be a brotherly mind that does this,<sup>27</sup> not the mind of a stranger nor that of the sons of strangers, whose mouth speaks vanity, and their *right hand* is a *right hand* of iniquity (Ps. 143:7-8).

*Comm.*: Although in its second part a ‘simple’ quote from Ps. 143, this sentence might be a direct stab at the Manichaeans’ concept of the Right Hand, as may be evidenced both by the context and the quotes from the same Psalm directed against the Manichaeans elsewhere in the *conf.*<sup>28</sup> The whole paragraph 5 is a plea for true Christian brotherhood and may be read in contrasting parallel with Augustine’s former Manichaean brotherhood as, for instance, described in *conf.* 4,13.

xx. *Conf.* 10,42 (CCL 27,177): *Numquid non potens est manus tua, deus omnipotens, sanare omnes languores animae meae atque abundantiore gratia tua lasciuos motus etiam mei soporis extinguere?*

*Transl.*: Is not *Your Hand* able (Num. 11:23), almighty God, to heal all the diseases (Ps. 102:3; Mt. 4:23) of my soul and by *Your* more abundant grace to extinguish even the lascivious stirrings of my sleep?

*Comm.*: The passage apparently interweaves Num. 11:23 (*‘Numquid ... manus tua’*) and Ps. 102:3 (*‘sanare omnes languores’*). Again, the Hand of God, which heals all ills (cf. Mt. 4:23), seems to denote Christ.

xxi. *Conf.* 10,44 (CCL 27,178): *His temptationibus cotidie conor resistere et inuoco dexteram tuam et ad te refero aestus meos, quia consilium mihi de hac re nondum stat.*

*Transl.*: Every day I try to resist these temptations, and I invoke *Your Right Hand* and I bring my impulses before *You*, because in this matter I have not yet achieved a resolution.

*Comm.*: As in the just quoted case of his sexual impulses, Augustine here invokes God’s Right Hand—i.e., in all likelihood, Christ—to cure his temptations in the matter of eating and drinking.

xxii. *Conf.* 10,66 (CCL 27,191): *Ideoque consideravi languores peccatorum meorum in cupiditate triplici et dexteram tuam inuocaui ad salutem meam.*

*Transl.*: So, then, have I considered the diseases of my sins in that threefold concupiscence (cf. 1 Jn. 2:16) and invoked *Your Right Hand* to my salvation.

*Comm.*: Again the invocation of God’s Right Hand, which seems to refer to Christ as the physician who cures.

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<sup>27</sup> Sc. ‘love in me what *You* teach us to be worthy of love, and deplore in me what *You* teach us to be deplorable’.

<sup>28</sup> E.g. *conf.* 3,19 (above); 11,40 (*‘Videant itaque nullum tempus esse posse creatura et desinant istam uanitatem loqui’*; cf. Ps. 143:8).

xxiii. *Conf.* 10,69 (CCL 27, 193): *Merito mihi spes ualida in illo est, quod sanabis omnes languores meos per eum, qui sedet ad dexteram tuam et te interpellat pro nobis: alioquin desperarem. Multi enim et magni sunt idem languores, multi sunt et magni; sed amplior est medicina tua.*

*Transl.:* With good reason is my hope fixed on him, because You will heal all my diseases (Ps. 102:3; Mt. 4:23) through him, who sits at *Your Right Hand* (Ps. 109:5) and intercedes with You for us (Rom. 8:34); otherwise, I would despair. Many and great are those diseases, many and great indeed; but wider-reaching is Your medicine.

*Comm.:* Near the end of the book in which Augustine reflects on his present state, he once again evokes the image of Christ at God's Right Hand<sup>29</sup> and stresses that Christ is God's medicine.

xxiv. *Conf.* 11,4 (CCL 27,196): *Obsecro per dominum nostrum Iesum Christum filium tuum, uirum dexteræ tuæ, filium hominis, quem confirmasti tibi mediatorem tuum et nostrum, per quem nos quaesisti non quaerentes te ... per eum te obsecro, qui sedet ad dexteram tuam et te interpellat pro nobis, in quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae et scientiae absconditi.*

*Transl.:* I beseech through our Lord Jesus Christ Your son, the man of *Your Right Hand*, the son of man, whom You have established for Yourself (Ps. 79:18) as Your mediator and ours (1 Tim. 2:5), through whom You sought us when we were not seeking You (Rom. 10:20; cf. Isa. 65:1) ... I beseech You through him, who sits at *Your Right Hand* and intercedes to You for us (Rom. 8:34), in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3).

*Comm.:* Christ is both the man of God's Right Hand and He who sits at God's Right Hand. The words 'in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' (Col. 2:3) may be appreciated by (former) Manichaeans in particular.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> And, at the same time, being God's Right Hand; cf. e.g. the quoted passages from Book 10 above. As in the NT and—as we saw in the preceding article, 'Manichaean Imagery'—in Manichaean parlance, Christ is described both as sitting at God's Right Hand and being God's Right Hand. For the NT manner of speaking, see e.g. L. Hurtado, 'Two Case Studies in Earliest Christological Readings of Biblical Texts', in: M.R. Malcolm & M. Keynes (eds.), *All that the Prophets Have Declared: The Appropriation of Scripture in the Emergence of Christianity*, Carlisle: Paternoster Press 2015, 3-23.

<sup>30</sup> For A.'s knowledge of Manichaean references to Col., see e.g. *c. Adim.* 1. Cf. J.A. van den Berg, *Biblical Argument in Manichaean Missionary Practice. The Case of Adimantus and Augustine*, Leiden-Boston: Brill 2010, e.g. 63 and 133ff. For the Manichaean Secundinus' rather frequent references to Col., see J. van Oort, '*Secundini Manichaei Epistula*: Roman Manichaean Biblical Argument in the Age of Augustine', in: J. van Oort a.o. (eds.), *Augustine and Manichaeism in the Latin West*, Leiden–Boston–Köln: Brill 2001 (repr. Leiden-Boston: Brill 2012), 161-173.

xxv. *Conf.* 11,39 (CCL 27,214): *Sed quoniam melior est misericordia tua super uitas, ecce distentio est uita mea, et me suscepit dextera tua in domino meo, mediatore filio hominis inter te unum et nos multos ...*

*Transl.:* But ‘because Your mercy is more than lives’ (Ps. 62:4), see how my life is but a distraction, and *Your Right Hand* upheld me (Ps. 17:36; 62:9) in the person of my Lord, the son of man who is mediator between You, the One, and us, the many (1 Tim. 2:5) ...

*Comm.:* The Plotinian (but also Manichaeic<sup>31</sup>) language of *distentio* is surrounded by quotations from the Psalms, including a final one on ‘God’s Right Hand’, which denotes—without a doubt—Christ.

xxvi. *Conf.* 13,1 (CCL 27, 242): *... et praeuenisti omnia bona merita mea, et retribueris manibus tuis, quibus me fecisti ...*

*Transl.:* ... and You have anticipated all my good merits, rewarding the work of *Your Hands* by which You made me (Ps. 118:73) ...

*Comm.:* As already seen above (n. 3), according to *en. in Ps.* 118, s. 18,1, it may be accepted that the image of God’s Hands refers both to Christ and the Spirit. However, it is imperative to see that, in terms of God’s act of creation, it is Christ who is in view: ‘*Liberum est igitur quomodo intellegantur manus Dei: dum tamen nec ea quae facit manibus, Verbo facere negetur*’.

xxvii. *Conf.* 13,20 (CCL 27,253): *Quoniam tuum est et mare, et tu fecisti illud, et aridam terram manus tuae formauerunt.*

*Transl.:* For also the sea is Yours and You made it, and the dry land *Your Hands* have formed (Ps. 94:5).

*Comm.:* Yet again on God’s Hands in His work of creation. Augustine’s identification of God’s Hands which formed the dry land with *Christus Verbum* is explicit in *Gn. litt.* 6,12: ‘*Certe enim caelum uerbo fecit, quia dixit et factum est; scriptum est tamen: et opera manuum sunt caeli* [Ps. 101:26]. *Et de hoc imo quasi fundo mundi scriptum est: quoniam ipsius est mare, et ipse fecit illud, et aridam terram manus eius finxerunt* [Ps. 94:5]’.

### 3. Summary and Preliminary Conclusion

From the above overview we see that, in his *Confessions*, Augustine speaks ten times of God’s *dextera* (6,26; 8,2; 9,1; 9,9; 9,35; 10,44; 10,66; 10,69; 11,4; 11,39, to which might be added 10,5 as the eleventh instance). Although it does not become evident from the first instances, while also in a number of cases *dextera Dei* refers to the place at God’s right side, in 11,39 (but see already 11,4: *Iesum Christum filium*

<sup>31</sup> Cf. e.g. BeDuhn, *Augustine’s Manichaeic Dilemma*, 2, 330-331.



*tuum, uirum dexteræ tuæ*) Augustine most explicitly states that he understands God's Right Hand to be Christ. It is difficult to suppose that a top rhetor such as Augustine, who moreover addresses a reading public which as a rule is very well acquainted with rhetorical devices, uses a metaphor purporting a different meaning at different times. There seems to be good reason to suppose that in most or even in (nearly) all cases in his *Confessions* in which he speaks of 'God's Right Hand', he means Christ.

We may discover the same denotation in his reference to *manus tua*. Augustine uses this expression, either literally or in an equivalent sense (e.g. *lenem manum; manus mitissima et misericordiae; manu ualidissima et misericordissima*), as well as ten times in his *conf.*, i.e. in 1,24; 2,3; 3,19; 5,1; 5,13; 6,7; 6,13; 7,12; 7,27 and 10,42. Rereading all these passages from the perspective that God's *dextera* often seems to denote Christ, the same can be said of *manus tua*. This means, for instance, that 'Your Hand' in 3,19 (*Misisti manum tuam ex alto*: 'You put forth Your Hand from above') is a metaphor of Christ.

The three instances in which Augustine only speaks of 'Hand' (6,21; 6,24; 7,21) can possibly be read from the same perspective, namely that the 'Hand' [sc. of God] denotes Christ. Perhaps this even applies to those four passages (5,13; 6,6; 13,1; 13,20) in which Augustine uses the plural 'Hands': as it has become evident from the just mentioned passages, and also from remarks of Augustine made elsewhere,<sup>32</sup> he understands God's Hands (*manus*, pl.) as essentially denoting Christ.

The main results of our overview of the texts may be summarized as follows:  
 — in his *Confessions*, Augustine frequently speaks of God's '(Right) Hand' in an emphatic way;  
 — in many of these cases,<sup>33</sup> God's '(Right) Hand' turns out to a metaphor for Christ;  
 — again and again, God's '(Right) Hand' is characterized by its rescuing,<sup>34</sup> protecting<sup>35</sup> and healing<sup>36</sup> function.

<sup>32</sup> As a matter of fact, the metaphor is also present in other writings of A. See, e.g., his *en. in Ps.* 108,29 ('Et sciant quoniam manus tua haec, et tu, Domine, fecisti eam [Ps. 108:27]? *Intelligamus itaque manum Dei esse Christum; unde alibi dicitur*. Et brachium Domini cui reuelatum est? [Isa. 53:1]. *Haec manus et erat, et fecit eam, quia in principio erat Verbum, et Verbum caro factum est* [Ioh. 1:1.14) ...?; *adu. Ind.* 7: 'et perforce eam quam plantauit dextera tua et super filium hominis, quem confirmasti tibi [Ps. 79:16]. ... *Non enim Christus aliam plantauit ... Fiat manus tua super uirum dexteræ tuæ, et super filium hominis, quem confirmasti tibi* [Ps. 79:18]. *Per hunc filium hominis, id est Christum Iesum ...?; c. s. Arrian.* 19, with reference to Isa. 48:12-16; s. 20,1: '*dei medicinalem dexteram*'; etc. See also n. 3 above.

<sup>33</sup> The passage from *conf.* 10,5 (text xix above) may only be included when it is a direct stab at the Manichaeans' concept of God's Right Hand.

<sup>34</sup> *Conf.* 1,24: *eruisti, eruas*; 3,19: *eruisti*; 6,13: *eruisti*; 8,2: *suscepit*; 11,39: *suscepit*; cf. 6,26: *raptura*; 9,1: *respiciens*; 10,44: *inuoco*; 10,66: *inuocauit*. On the interchange of *eruere* with *eripere* in the Latin Bible

All this strikingly coincides with the Manichaean parlance of Christ as God's (Right) Hand. However, the metaphor not only occurs in Augustine and in Manichaeism, but also has its place in the writings of some of Augustine's predecessors. A few brief remarks on this phenomenon are in order.

#### 4. *Remarks on God's Hand in the pre-Augustinian Tradition*

In searching the writings of Augustine's predecessors in the mainstream Christian tradition, one finds the first clear use of the metaphor in Irenaeus.<sup>37</sup> I already mentioned his *haer.* 5,28,4, where he speaks of Christ and the Holy Spirit as the two Hands of God.<sup>38</sup> Several other texts of Irenaeus, most of which occur in his *Haereses* and one in his *Demonstratio*, state the same.<sup>39</sup> Sometimes he speaks of only one Hand, which at least in one case (and for several OT instances!) is identified as the Son of God.<sup>40</sup> More or less clear identifications occur already in Justin Martyr<sup>41</sup> as well as, for instance, in Tertullian, Hippolytus, Cyprian, Athanasius, Cyrill of

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MSS, Knauer, *Psalmenzitate*, 64 n. 1 remarks: 'α [= Veronensis, s. VI-VII] hat statt "eripio" fast immer "eruo": Ps. 6,5. 16,13. 17,44. 24,20 usw. ...', which turns out to have become the predominant verb used in the MSS of A.'s *conf.* Curiously, the Latin Manichaean texts (cf. 'Manichaean Imagery', section A 1,i-ii) always have the verb *eripere*.

<sup>35</sup> In the just mentioned texts speaking of *erueri* or *suscipere*, the rescuing and protecting function partly overlap. Protection may be especially heard in 5,13 (*procuratio*, cf. n. 10) and in 10,44: *inuoco dexteram tuam* (sc. to protect against temptations).

<sup>36</sup> *Conf.* 7,12: *medicinae tuae ... sanabatur*; 10,42: *sanare*; 10,66: *ad salutem meam*; 10,69: *sanabis omnes languores ... idem languores ... medicina tua*; cf. 5,13: *reficientem*; 8,2: *conualescerem*.

<sup>37</sup> On Irenaeus and Augustine, the best study still is: B. Altaner, 'Augustinus und Irenaeus' (1949), in Altaner, *Kleine patristische Schriften* (hrsg. von G. Glockmann), Berlin: Akademie-Verlag 1967, 194-203, who concludes that in several cases Augustine was influenced by the bishop of Lyon. Cf. e.g. G.J.M. Bartelink, 'Die Beeinflussung Augustins durch die griechischen Patres', in: J. den Boeft & J. van Oort (éd.), *Augustiniana Traiectina. Communications présentées au Colloque International d'Utrecht, 13-14 novembre 1986*, Paris: Éditions Augustiniennes 1987, 14.

<sup>38</sup> See n. 3.

<sup>39</sup> See the fine summary already in J. Lebreton, *Histoire du dogme de la Trinité*, II, Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne 1928, 579-581 (overview of texts 579-580 n. 1, with reference to J.A. Robinson, *St. Irenaeus, The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching, translated from the Armenian*, London, SPCK & New York: Macmillan 1920, 51-53) and, for a more elaborated study: J. Mambrino, "Les Deux Mains de Dieu" dans l'œuvre de saint Irénée', *NRTb* 79(1957)355-370.

<sup>40</sup> *Haer.* 5,5,2 (SC 153, 66-68): '*Quae igitur illis [cf. e.g. the three young men of Dan. 3] adfuit manus Dei et inopinata et impossibilia naturae hominum in eis perficiens, quid mirum si in his qui translati sunt effecit aliquid inopinatum, deserviens voluntati Patris? Hic autem est Filius Dei ...*'.

<sup>41</sup> Justin, *Dial.* 49,8 (quoting Ex. 17:16 LXX, see e.g. E.J. Goodspeed, ed., *Die ältesten Apologeten. Texte mit kurzen Einleitungen*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1914, 149); cf. Mambrino, 'Deux Mains', 356, who translates: '*La main secrète est la puissance cachée du Verbe en Jésus*'.

Alexandria, and Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>42</sup> While one could expect the identification of God's (Right) Hand with Christ to have been a leading motif of early Christian theology and biblical interpretation, as far as I can see<sup>43</sup> the testimonies are relatively scarce and less manifest than one might suppose.

An evident exception, however, turns out to be Ambrose, in whose writings the metaphor abounds. Following the sequence of his works as presented in Brepols' *Library of Latin Texts*,<sup>44</sup> one first encounters the identification of Christ with God's Right Hand in Ambrose's *Exameron*<sup>45</sup> and *De Isaac uel anima*.<sup>46</sup> We find the same identification in his *Explanatio Psalmorum XII*<sup>47</sup>, and also several times in his *Expositio Psalmi CXVIII*. In the last mentioned exposition the author not only depicts Christ as God's *dextera*,<sup>48</sup> but also identifies God's Hand with the Hand of

<sup>42</sup> Tert., *adv. Herm* 45,2 (CCL 1,434; SC 439,198 with commentary by F. Chapot on p. 428-429); Hipp., *Dan.* 2,33,2 (GCS Hippol. 1,107); Cyr., *ad Quir.* 2,4 (CCL 3,22); Ath., *decr. Nic. Syn.* 7,4 (cf. G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1961, 1521 11 i: 'theol. of Logos or Son as hand of God', who here and also sub 12 mentions some other instances); Cyr. Alex., *in Ps.* 97 (PG 69,1253 BC); Gr. Nyss., *vit. Moys.* 2 (7,1,41f. Jaeger/Musorillo) re Ex. 4:6. Cf. e.g. K. Groß, *Menschenhand und Gottesband in Antike und Christentum*, Stuttgart: Hiersemann 1985, 431-432 and 446.

<sup>43</sup> Curiously, there is still no in-depth study of the theme. The usually thorough *RAC* and its 'Nachträge' in *JbAC* do not contain a separate lemma on the theme of Christ as (God's) Hand (although such a one was promised in the lemma on 'Christusepitheta', *RAC* 3, 1957, 26, while sub 'Hand I', *RAC*, 13, 1986, 402 it runs: 's. die Nachträge'). Lemmata such as 'Finger' (*RAC* 7, 1969, 909-946, 'Jesus, II-III' (*RAC* 17, 1996, 821-837; 837-878) or 'Dextrarum iunctio' (*RAC* 3, 1957, 881-888) are of little help. A very extensive treatment of the subject of God's Hand has, however, been provided by Karl Groß in his just mentioned book *Menschenband und Gottesband*. Also here I would like to express my sincere thanks to Prof. Dr. Georg Schöllgen, Director of the Franz Joseph Dölger-Institut at Bonn and editor-in-chief of the *RAC*, for his reference (email 9-8-2017) to the 537 paged book of Groß, who originally was commissioned to write the lemmata 'Hand' and 'Handauflegung' (cf. 'Vorwort' by Wolfgang Speyer to Groß' book, p. VII). Yet even Groß only deals with the metaphor of Christ as God's (Right) Hand in passing.

<sup>44</sup> See <http://www.brepolis.net> (last consulted 2017-07-20).

<sup>45</sup> *Exam.* 2,1,3 (CSEL 32,43) 'unde et ipse [sc. Moses] ait: dextera manus tua, domine, glorificata est in uirtute, dextera manus tua, domine, confregit inimicos [= Ex. 15:6] (from the wider context as well as Ambrose's explanations elsewhere—see the next one and further below—it is evident that, according to him, Christ is God's Right Hand); 6,9,69 (CSEL 32,257): '... manus ... cuius uocabulo non dedignatus est se dei filius declarare dicente David: dextera domini fecit uirtutem, dextera domini exaltauit me [= Ps. 117:16]'. Etc.

<sup>46</sup> *Isaac* 8,75 (CSEL 32,694): 'Christus ... ipse dextera, per quem patri deo nostrum sacrificium deferamus'.

<sup>47</sup> See *expl. Ps. XII*, *expl. Ps. 43*, 12 (CSEL 64,270): 'sed dextera dei credat se esse protectum dicens: dextera domini fecit uirtutem, dextera domini exaltauit me [= Ps. 117,16] ... in quibus omnibus Christus est protector, dextera, defensor et gladius' and *expl. Ps. 47*, 18 (CSEL 64,357-358).

<sup>48</sup> E.g. *Exp. Ps. 118*, 11,4 (CSEL 62,235): 'sitiuit in te anima mea subiecit infra: adhaesit post te anima mea, me suscepit dextera tua [Ps. 62,2; 62:9]. (...) suscipiens ergo dextera [tua] animam meam et de sua uirtute mihi impertiens facit eam esse quod non erat, ut dicat: uiuo autem iam non ego, uiuit autem in me Christus [Gal. 2:20]'; *Exp. Ps. 118*, 22,22 (CSEL 62,499):

the Son and, with reference to *Cant.* 2:6, repeatedly speaks of Christ's own *dextera* and *laeva*.<sup>49</sup> One may suppose that this interpretation has been influenced by Origen's exegesis, according to which the Left Hand is seen as referring to the temporal benefits of richness and honour brought about by Christ, while the Right Hand is described as providing the eternal reward of 'length of life'.<sup>50</sup> In Ambrose's *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam*, the metaphor of Christ as *dextera Dei* is also clearly present,<sup>51</sup> as well as in his *De officiis*<sup>52</sup> and, for instance, *De spiritu sancto*.<sup>53</sup>

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'*Sequitur uersus quintus: fiat manus tua saluum facere me, quoniam mandata tua elegi [Ps. 118:173]. aduentum domini uidetur orare, quia manus dei Christus est. ipsum legimus dexteram dei, de quo supra ait: dextera domini fecit uirtutem, dextera domini exaltauit me [Ps. 117:16]*'.

<sup>49</sup> E.g. *Exp. Ps. 118,14,29-31* (CSEL 62,318-319): '[29] *Sed quis iudicia dei doceri potest nisi qui animam suam intenderit semper ad dominum, qui potest dicere: anima mea in manibus tuis semper, et legem tuam non sum oblitus [Ps. 118:109]? ... [30] Scit propheta, scit ubi animae suae praesidium locet, unde opem speret. in manibus dei consituere uult animam suam, quia cor regis in manu dei [Prov. 21:1]. ... nec quisquam rapit eam de manu patris omnipotentis aut filii. manus enim dei, quae solidauit caelum, quos tenuerit non amittit. [31] Quae sint igitur istae manus, consideremus. in Canticis habes: laeua eius sub caput meum et dextera eius complectetur me [Cant. 2:6]. hoc loquitur sponsa de Christo, anima de uerbo dei; Christus autem idem est uerbum dei atque sapientia [cf. 1 Cor. 1:24]. beata ergo anima quam complectitur sapientia. magna est sapientiae manus, magna dextera totam complectitur animam*'. Etc. Cf. e.g. *Exp. Ps. 118,22,22* (CSEL 62,499-500).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. e.g. Origenes, *Cant.* 3,9,1-8 (sec. transl. Rufini) (SC 376, 582-586): '*... quae sit Verbi Dei laeva, quae sit dextera ... Ipsa est enim sponsi dextera et laeva, quae in Proverbiis de sapientia dicitur, ubi ait: Longitudo enim vitae in dextera eius, in sinistra uero eius diuitiae et gloria [Prov. 3:16]. ... Illa pars Verbi Dei quae ante assumptionem carnis in dispensationibus peracta est dextera potest uideri, haec uero, quae per incarnationem sinistra appellari. Unde et in sinistra diuitias et gloriam habere dicitur; per incarnationem namque diuitias et gloriam quaesivit, omnium scilicet gentium salutem. In dextera autem longitudo vitae esse dicitur, per quod sine dubio illa eius, qua in principio apud Deum Deus erat Verbum [Ioh. 1:1], sempiternitas indicatur*'. Cf. e.g. Origenes, *Der Kommentar zum Hohelied*. Eingeleitet und übersetzt von Alfons Fürst und Holger Strutwolf, Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter/Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Herder 2016, 338-340. Cf. Ambrose, *Exp. Ps. 118,14,31* (CSEL 62,319): '*... in dextera eius longitudo uitae est, in sinistra autem diuitiae et gloria*' and *ibidem* 33 (CSEL 62,320).

<sup>51</sup> *Exp. Luc.* VII, 92 (CCL 14,245): '*... cum Christus dei dextera sit ...; cum dextera dei dicat: ego et pater unum sumus [Ioh. 10:30]*'.

<sup>52</sup> *De off.* 3,15,95 (CCL 15,189) with reference to Ex. 4:6f.: '*Merito manum misit quia dextera Dei Christus est ...*'.

<sup>53</sup> *De spir.s.* 2,7,69 (CSEL 79, 114): '*Ideo igitur et filius patris dextera nuncupatur, sicut lectum est [sc. Ps. 117:16] ...*'; 3,3,11 (CSEL 79, 155): '*Nam sicut filium dei scriptura dexteram dei dixit, sicut lectum est: Dextera tua, domine, glorificata est in uirtute, dextera manus tua, domine, confregit inimicos [Ex. 15:6] ...*'; 3,4,17 (CSEL 79, 158): '*... filio dei, quia dextera dei dicitur*'; 3,4,18 (CSEL 79, 158): '*Sed filius et dextera et uirtus dicitur*'; 3,4,20 (CSEL 79, 159): '*Habes quia et filium sit confessus et patrem [sc. in Ex.15:6], cuius est dextera*'.

There seems to be clear evidence that Augustine, during his time in Milan in 387, heard sermons of Ambrose on the Gospel of Luke which, moreover, not infrequently targeted the Manichaeans.<sup>54</sup> The same goes for the Exameron sermons, which even appear to date from the Holy Week of 386, i.e. the time of Augustine's baptism and its preceding instruction.<sup>55</sup> As regards Ambrose's *De spiritu sancto* and his explanations of the Psalms (respectively dating from before and shortly after Augustine's arrival in Milan<sup>56</sup>), one can safely assume Augustine's familiarity with them, as with so many of Ambrose's other works.<sup>57</sup> With Antoon Bastiaensen one may conclude: 'influence d'Ambroise a été décisive et permanente'.<sup>58</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

The specific place of the metaphor of Christ as God's '(Right) Hand', both in Augustine's *Confessions* as well as in Manichaeism and a predecessor like Ambrose, gives rise to the following conclusions. The first one is that, by emphatically using a well-known metaphor, Augustine is able to address his Christian 'brothers' who appear to have been his first readers.<sup>59</sup> Many of them will have been acquainted with Ambrose's writings, or even belonged to his Milanese circle. The second one is that Manichaeism seems to have primed Augustine to gravitate to the image of the Right Hand. Via this metaphor he was able to subtly appeal to the Manichaeans.<sup>60</sup> It may be recalled that Augustine creates a strong impression of having already obtained a thorough knowledge of their writings after becoming a Manichaean *auditor*.<sup>61</sup> As we have seen, in their texts (and maybe their art) the figure of Christ as God's Right Hand had a prominent place. By employing this metaphor, the 'protreptic-paraenetic purpose'<sup>62</sup> of the *Confessions* with regard to the Manichaeans excellently comes to the fore. In the preceding article on the imagery of God's Hand in the Manichaean texts, I also indicated that the Roman Manichaean Secundinus already stressed the central role of Christ as 'the Right

<sup>54</sup> See e.g. Courcelle, *Recherches*, 97-98.

<sup>55</sup> Courcelle, *Recherches*, 98-102.

<sup>56</sup> Courcelle, *Recherches*, 98 n. 4. Cf. M. Petschenig, 'Praefatio', *CSEL* 62, VI, who dates the *Expositio Psalmi CXVIII* to 386-388 and the *Explanatio Psalmorum XII* to 388-397.

<sup>57</sup> See e.g. A. Bastiaensen, 'Augustin et ses prédécesseurs latins chrétiens', in: den Boeft & van Oort (éd.), *Augustiniana Traiectina* (n. 37), 30-34.

<sup>58</sup> Bastiaensen, 'Augustin et ses prédécesseurs', 34.

<sup>59</sup> For those Christian (i.e., Catholic) '*fratres*', see e.g. *conf.* 10,4-5 and *retr.* 2,6.

<sup>60</sup> Who in *conf.* 9,9 are even directly addressed, while in the context (see text xvii above) Augustine speaks of God's *dextera*.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. e.g. J. van Oort, 'Young Augustine's Knowledge of Manichaeism. An Analysis of the *Confessiones* and Some Other Relevant Texts', *VC* 62 (2008) 441-466.

<sup>62</sup> See e.g. Kotzé, *Augustine's Confessions. Communicative Purpose and Audience* (n. 2), *passim*.



Hand of the truth'. From his letter to Augustine, we know how much he was incited to address his former co-religionist after reading his *Confessions*.<sup>63</sup>

An essential aspect of Augustine's *Confessions* may thus be read in a new way. In light of the previous analyses one could also infer, as a likely probability, that it is not by chance that Augustine so often characterizes his *conf.* as a *sacrificium* or *hostia*.<sup>64</sup> It brings to mind an imagery which may have been co-inspired and excellently understood by the Manichaeans as well.

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<sup>63</sup> E.g. Courcelle, *Recherches*, 236-238.

<sup>64</sup> E.g. *conf.* 4,1; 5,1; 8,1; 9,1; 11,3; 12,33. But also see, for instance, *conf.* 9,17: '*Accipe confessiones meas et gratiarum actiones ...*'.