

RESISTANCE TO THE VIRGINAL IDEAL IN LATE-FOURTH-CENTURY ROME: THE CASE OF JOVINIAN

DAVID G. HUNTER

College of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minn.

OUR RELIGION has invented a new dogma against nature," wrote the monk Jovinian, thus characterizing the exaltation of virginity and asceticism in the fourth-century Church.¹ Condemned in the early 390s by a synod at Rome under Pope Siricius, then later at Milan under Ambrose, Jovinian's primary offense was to equate the merits of virgins, widows, and married persons and to oppose the value of ascetical fasting.² He is also said to have taught that baptized Christians could not be overthrown by the devil and that Mary lost her virginity in the process of giving birth.³ Jovinian's views called forth a lengthy refutation by Jerome sometime before the Roman condemnation; later, Augustine also found it necessary to meet the spread of Jovinian's ideas and so composed his *De bono coniugali* in 401.⁴

Jovinian deserves to be re-examined for both historical and theological reasons. Historically, Jovinian represents a reaction against the wave of ascetic enthusiasm which spread throughout the Church in the fourth century. Various kinds of objections to virginity and asceticism can be found in fourth-century sources: parents objected to losing their children to the monastic life; emperors opposed the flight of citizens who were

¹ Cited in Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.41 (PL 23, 282).

² This is the charge stated by the earliest source, Siricius, *Ep. 7, Ad diversos episcopos* (PL 13, 1168–72). A collection of most of the primary sources on Jovinian's life and doctrine can be found in W. Haller, *Jovinianus: Die Fragmente seiner Schriften, die Quellen zu seiner Geschichte, sein Leben und seine Lehre* (TU 17/2; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1897). The precise date of the synods is not known, but the range of possibilities is 390–93. See the brief discussion in J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life and Controversies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975) 182, who favors the later date.

³ The former position is among the four propositions listed in Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.3; the latter is first mentioned by Ambrose, *Rescriptum ad Siricium papam*, *Ep. 42.4*, and confirmed in several places by Augustine.

⁴ In Bethlehem Jerome had received copies of certain pamphlets by Jovinian from friends at Rome; cf. *Adv. Jovin.* 1.1. Jerome's treatise remains the most extensive source for Jovinian's views. Augustine does not mention Jovinian by name in *De bono coniugali*, but in *Retractationes* 2.22 (48) he gives the spread of Jovinian's ideas as the reason for composing this treatise.

escaping curial duties; even slaves objected to their masters' ascetic renunciation for fear of being sold on the open market.⁵ Unique to Jovinian, however, is the *theological* character of his opposition. Jovinian challenged the exaltation of virginity and asceticism on grounds that were primarily theological, that is, on the basis of the character of Christian baptism and with the support of Christian Scripture.⁶ In this study I will attempt to further the understanding of Jovinian's views by calling attention to a neglected aspect of the context in which he wrote. I will argue that Jovinian is best understood not as an opponent of Christian virginity or asceticism per se, but rather as an opponent of Manicheism and of what he saw as Manichean tendencies among the Christian ascetics at Rome.

Another reason to re-examine Jovinian's thought lies in the peculiar place which Jovinian has held in modern *Dogmengeschichte*. Alternately praised by Protestants as a forerunner of the Reformation and condemned by Catholics as an antiascetic heretic, Jovinian has been the subject of quite conflicting theological evaluations. By calling attention to the anti-Manichean intention of Jovinian's positions, I hope to provide a way out of this impasse.

I will proceed in three steps. First, I will examine briefly the two major studies of Jovinian which have appeared, one from the Protestant side and one from the Catholic side, and note the shortcomings of each. Second, I will examine each of Jovinian's positions as they are reported by Ambrose, Jerome, and others. I will show that each position can best be understood as directed against Manichean ascetic propaganda as it was diffused in Rome in the late 380s and early 390s. A possible connection between Jovinian's opponents and the Priscillianist heresy will also be suggested. Third, a brief inquiry into the reception of Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* at Rome will conclude my discussion. The widespread rejection of Jerome's treatise, I suggest, provides a further indication that Manicheism among ascetics was considered a genuine threat

⁵ See, e.g., John Chrysostom, *Adversus oppugnatores vitae monasticae* 3.16-18; *Codex Theodosianus* 12.1.63, a decree of Valentinian and Valens, dated Jan. 1, 370; *Vita Melaniae iunioris* 10.

⁶ The first to recognize baptism as the central category of Jovinian's thought was F. Valli, *Gioviniano: Esame delle fonti e dei frammenti* (Urbino: Università di Urbino, 1953). Cf. the comment of Kelly, *Jerome* 181: "Although Jerome fails to bring it out, what gave a theological basis and inner cohesion to these propositions was Jovinian's stress on the element of faith in baptism, and his conviction that the transformation effected by it not only rescued a man from the power of sin but created a unified, holy people in which considerations of merit were irrelevant."

at Rome and one which Jerome, in the eyes of his contemporaries, did not altogether avoid.

SECONDARY STUDIES OF JOVINIAN

In the past one hundred years only two monographs have appeared which treat the positions of Jovinian in detail, and these studies have aligned themselves on rather clear denominational lines. Protestants have tended to look favorably on Jovinian, and Catholics have taken the opposite view. In 1897 Wilhelm Haller published the first major study of Jovinian.⁷ Haller was a student of Harnack and he followed Harnack's view that Jovinian was the "first Protestant." In his examination of Jovinian's views Haller argued that Jovinian's equation of married people and virgins, as well as his rejection of ascetical fasting, was a declaration of the priority of faith and grace over any form of works-righteousness. Haller concluded his study of Jovinian with this quotation from Harnack: "In the entire history of Paulinism in the ancient Church, no one has restored to grace and faith their rightful place as has Jovinian." In his opposition to all righteousness based on works and in his assertion of the priority of faith, Harnack wrote, Jovinian was a "Protestant of his time" and a "witness of truth in antiquity" (*einen Wahrheitszeugen des Altertums*).⁸

Haller's study was answered from the Catholic side in 1953 by Francesco Valli.⁹ Valli saw correctly that the Protestantizing interpretation of Jovinian really did not do justice to the categories of Jovinian's own thought. Faith and grace, as opposed to works, are not the focus of Jovinian's arguments. Rather, Valli showed, it is Christian *baptism* and the consequent equality of all Christians within the Body of Christ which is the starting point and determinative category in Jovinian's thought. The opposition between faith and works-righteousness is simply not the primary issue.¹⁰

Valli's critique of the Protestant view is certainly correct. The efficacy of baptism was central to Jovinian's argument. Baptism is mentioned explicitly in three out of the four "propositions" of Jovinian treated by Jerome. Valli's study, however, is flawed in several ways. First, his attitude toward Jovinian is essentially polemical. While Valli does not develop a lengthy critique of Jovinian's ideas, he displays his antipathy

⁷ See n. 2 above.

⁸ Quoted in Haller, *Jovinianus* 159.

⁹ See n. 6 above.

¹⁰ Valli also noted correctly that Haller's treatment of the four "propositions" of Jovinian took the sentences out of their proper order and thereby distorted the inner logic of Jovinian's argument; see *Gioviniano* 95.

to Jovinian by simply referring to him throughout as “the heretic” (*l’eretico*). He notes consistently that Jerome’s arguments were valid and in harmony with the Church of his day and that Jovinian’s ideas were not. As a result, Valli fails to acknowledge that Jovinian’s positions may have had any validity at all.

Second, because of his hostility to Jovinian, Valli is forced to minimize his influence and popularity, attributing it merely to sympathy on the part of “that amorphous mass of Christians who had lost their primitive fervor and to certain malcontents who had despised Roman monasticism.”¹¹ If any moral people were attracted to Jovinian, Valli writes, it was because they were “simple souls who had been seduced by Jovinian’s syllogisms.”¹² But, Valli asserts, echoing Augustine, the clergy of Rome were not deceived, and when summoned by Siricius to synod, they quickly “condemned the heresy which had led so many little sheep away from the flock.”¹³

Valli’s hostility to Jovinian and his views leads, I believe, to certain distortions which require correction. The sources are nearly unanimous in declaring that Jovinian’s teaching aroused a considerable following in Rome and later in Milan, where Jovinian fled after his condemnation in Rome, probably to appeal to the emperor. This popularity is first mentioned by Siricius, then later by Jerome and Augustine.¹⁴ Augustine, in fact, tells us that a decade after his condemnation Jovinian’s ideas continued to be popular and to be propagated secretly.¹⁵ We have no reason to assume that Jovinian’s followers were all laxists, as Valli (following Ambrose and Jerome) implies.¹⁶ Jerome explicitly says that

¹¹ *Gioviniano* 26-27.

¹² *Ibid.* 27.

¹³ *Ibid.* 28. Besides Siricius, Valli cites the witness of Augustine, *De haeresibus* 82 (Haller 96). However, in *Ep.* 49.2, to Pammachius (CSEL 54, 352), in which he defends his treatise against Jovinian, Jerome does mention that “clergymen and monks—who both live celibate lives—refrain from praising what they constantly practice. They cut themselves off from their wives to imitate the chastity of virgins, and yet they will have it that married women are as good as these.” Clearly implied in Jerome’s remark is that Jovinian did have support from clergy who were themselves continent. A similar point is made in *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.34. This clerical and monastic support, along with Jovinian’s own celibacy, was infuriating and probably genuinely incomprehensible to Jerome. For the clerical and episcopal support of Vigilantius, who espoused views similar to those of Jovinian, see Jerome’s *Contra Vigilantium* 1, 2, and 17.

¹⁴ Siricius, *Ep.* 2.2.3 (Haller 69-71); Jerome, *Adv. Jovin.* 2.36 (Haller 40-41); Augustine, *De peccatorum meritis et remissione* 3.13 (Haller 88).

¹⁵ *Retract.* 2.22 (48) (Haller 92).

¹⁶ Indeed, Siricius witnesses to at least a show of piety by Jovinian and his followers: “They subtly boast that they are Christians so that approaching under the cover of a pious

there are monks and clergy at Rome who remain celibate and yet support the view of Jovinian that the married and the virginal states are equal.¹⁷ Moreover, Jovinian himself seems to have remained a monk, for none of the sources accuses him of renouncing his own celibacy, and Jerome tries to convict Jovinian of inconsistency for this.

Jovinian also appears to have made a persuasive use of the Bible to ground his arguments: most of Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* consists of the passages from both Testaments which Jovinian had cited in favor of marriage.¹⁸ In his *Retractationes* Augustine says that Jovinian convinced consecrated virgins at Rome to renounce their vows by citing the example of Old Testament saints who were married. Jovinian had urged them saying: "Are you better than Sarah, better than Suzanna or Anna?" Likewise, Augustine says, Jovinian shattered the celibacy of holy men by comparing them with fathers and husbands in Scripture.¹⁹ Jovinian's arguments may very well have been persuasive not only to lax Christians but also to those concerned about excessively dualistic ascetic ideas such as those taught by the Manichees. Augustine implies this when he says that disciples of Jovinian boasted that "Jovinian could not be answered by praising marriage but only by condemning it."²⁰ In other words, according to Augustine, Jovinian (or his followers) maintained that any assertion of the superiority of virginity over marriage entailed an implicit condemnation of marriage, and this was Manicheism.

This brings me to the central argument of my paper. Valli's interpretation failed to appreciate sufficiently the impact of Jovinian's arguments in their context, and therefore the condemnation of Jovinian by the bishops Siricius and Ambrose appears to be merely the logical response of the hierarchy to an opponent of asceticism. In the remainder of this paper I will argue that each of Jovinian's positions can be seen as directed against distinctively Manichean ideas: a Manichean Docetic Christology, an exaltation of virginity and fasting which implied the denigration of the Old Testament and married Christians, and a Manichean view of the authority of the devil in the created world and denial of the efficacy of baptism. Jovinian is best understood, I suggest, when he is seen not as

name, after entering the house of prayer, they may pour out the speech of a serpentine discourse" (*Ep.* 2.2.3 [Haller 70]).

¹⁷ See n. 13 above.

¹⁸ See also Siricius, *Ep.* 2.2.3 (Haller 70): "... novi ac veteris testamenti (ut dixi) continentiam pervertentes, ac spiritu diabolico interpretantes." Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitorium* 35 (Haller 111-12), lists Jovinian among the heretics who used Scripture most profusely. Others include Paul of Samosata, Priscillian, and Eunomius.

¹⁹ *Retract.* 2.22 (48) (CCL 57, 107-8).

²⁰ *Ibid.* Augustine's own treatises *De bono coniugali* and *De sancta virginitate* were an attempt to steer a course somewhere between Jovinian's equation of marriage and virginity and the Manichean condemnation of marriage.

the opponent of monasticism or asceticism *per se*, but rather as a kind of ecclesiastical watchdog wary of the influence of extreme dualistic views on the community at Rome. His primary concern is not to attack virginity or abstinence as legitimate Christian practices, but to reject the view that asceticism was a higher and truer form of the Christian life, a view which he believed led inevitably to Manicheism.

Jovinian's "failure," if I may call it that, was his inability to distinguish between the exaltation of virginity espoused by the Church's hierarchy and the Manichean rejection of marriage. His tactical error was to accuse as Manichees all defenders of the superiority of virginity over marriage, notably the Roman bishop Siricius and Ambrose. That this tactical error took place in the same decade which witnessed three imperial edicts against the Manichees and the execution of Priscillian on charges of sorcery and suspicions of Manicheism made Jovinian's views all the more persuasive to some and all the more abhorrent to others.²¹

THE ANTI-MANICHEAN POLEMIC OF JOVINIAN

We know with certainty that Jovinian accused those who defended the superiority of virginity of being Manichees. The point is mentioned several times by Augustine, and Jerome answers the charge directly in *Adversus Jovinianum*. At the beginning of his refutation of Jovinian, Jerome disclaims the charge that the defense of the superiority of virginity entails a Manichean condemnation of marriage: "We do not follow the teachings of Marcion and Manicheus and disparage marriage; nor, deceived by the error of Tatian, the leader of the Encratites, do we consider all intercourse impure."²² Later, after listing the many texts which Jovinian cited in favor of marriage, Jerome quotes the following words of Jovinian: "All this makes it clear that, in forbidding to marry and to eat food which God has created for use, you have consciences seared as with a hot iron and are followers of the Manichees."²³ Jerome's evidence explicitly indicates that Jovinian attacked the Catholic defenders of virginity for being Manichees.

The same point is also explicitly affirmed by Augustine. In his first work against Julian of Eclanum, *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*, as well as in later works, Augustine noted that Julian's attack on Augustine for

²¹ For the legal persecution of the Manichees in the 380s, see *Codex Theodosianus* 16.5.7 (381), 9 (382), 18 (389). On the trial of Priscillian and the taint of Manicheism, see Henry Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila: The Occult and the Charismatic in the Early Church* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976) 143–44.

²² *Adv. Jovin.* 1.9 (PL 23, 223).

²³ *Ibid.* 1.5 (Haller 12–13).

Manicheism had been attempted earlier by Jovinian against Ambrose.²⁴ Like Jerome, Augustine was well aware of Jovinian's anti-Manichean interests. Such explicit denunciations of the virginal enthusiasts as Manicheans were, of course, known to both Haller and Valli. But neither one argued that such an anti-Manichean effort may have lain behind all of Jovinian's positions. This is the argument I will try to sustain.²⁵

The main points of Jovinian's positions are fairly easy to summarize, because Jerome lists four propositions at the beginning of his *Adversus Jovinianum* which he tells us are given in the same order as they are found in Jovinian's work. The propositions are: (1) Virgins, widows, and married women who have once been washed in Christ, if they do not differ in other works, are of the same merit. (2) Those who have been born again in baptism with full faith cannot be overthrown by the devil. (3) There is no difference between abstinence from food and receiving it with thanksgiving. (4) There is one reward in the kingdom of heaven for all who have preserved their baptism.²⁶

These are the four propositions listed by Jerome. However, there is a fifth position, not mentioned by Jerome, but expounded in Ambrose's letter to Siricius recounting the condemnation of Jovinian by the synod at Milan. According to Ambrose, Jovinian also held that "Christ could not have been born of a virgin." Ambrose quotes the Jovinianist dictum "Virgo concepit, sed non virgo generavit."²⁷ Jovinian's position is that Mary was a virgin at the moment of Jesus' conception, but that she lost her physical virginity in the process of giving birth. Nowhere is Jovinian accused of denying the virginal conception of Jesus; nor does he ever suggest, as Helvidius before him had done, that Mary produced other

²⁴ *De nupt. et concup.* 2.15 (Haller 89-90); see also *Opus imperf. c. Julianum* 1.96 (Haller 97) and 4.121 (Haller 101-2).

²⁵ On the first page of his book Valli mentions that the presence of Manichees and Priscillianists is enough to explain Jovinian historically. But at no point does the existence of these groups affect Valli's account of Jovinian's ideas. The reluctance of commentators to pay attention to the anti-Manichean intent of Jovinian's polemic may be owed to the fact that neither Siricius nor Ambrose explicitly mentions that Jovinian had raised the charge of Manicheism. Commentators such as Haller and Valli have been inclined to rely on the testimony of Ambrose and Siricius rather than on that of Jerome and Augustine because the latter two were further removed from the controversy. However, it is precisely because Siricius and Ambrose are closely involved in the struggle against Jovinian that their testimony must be taken with a grain of salt. Siricius and Ambrose would not be inclined to mention any positive aspects of Jovinian's positions, such as the anti-Manichean polemic, especially when they were the ones being charged with Manicheism. Augustine and Jerome, on the other hand, because of their distance from the controversy, do not hesitate to reveal that Jovinian's intentions were anti-Manichean.

²⁶ *Adv. Jovin.* 1.3 (PL 23, 224).

²⁷ Ambrose, *Ep.* 42, *Rescriptum ad Siricium papam* 4 (Haller 75).

children with Joseph after the birth of Jesus. It is not Mary's abstention from sex that is the target of Jovinian's attack, but rather her physical virginity *in partu*, and to this point Ambrose directs a good portion of his response.²⁸

To take this last proposition first, I suggest that it shows quite clearly the anti-Manichean character of Jovinian's position, rather than its strictly antiascetical character. Jovinian rejected Mary's *virginitas in partu* because it implied a Docetic Christology which was Manichean. Augustine in the *Confessions* tells us that when he was a Manichee he held that "such a nature as [Christ's] could never have been born of the Virgin Mary without becoming intermingled in the flesh."²⁹ In his *Contra Julianum* Augustine notes that Jovinian, like Julian of Eclanum, charged the Catholics with Manicheism "by denying that the virginity of Mary, which had existed when she conceived, had remained while she was giving birth, as if we believed with the Manichees that Christ is a phantom if we say that he was born while the virginity of the mother remained uncorrupted."³⁰ Augustine calls this argument of Jovinian's "most acute." Augustine saw clearly that Jovinian's rejection of Mary's virginity *in partu* was directed against the Manichean view that Christ's human birth was not real because Christ could not have entered the material world. For the Manichees, Jesus could not have been born of a virgin because he simply could not have been physically born. Jovinian, on the other hand, insists on the reality of Christ's physical birth and all that it implies.³¹

When we keep in mind the anti-Manichean aspect of Jovinian's view of Mary, light is shed on Ambrose's reply to it. After asserting the miraculous character of Jesus' birth from a virgin, Ambrose turns the tables on Jovinian, thoroughly distorts his meaning, and accuses Jovinian of Manicheism. If Jovinian denies that Jesus was born of a virgin, Ambrose argues, then he denies that he was born in the flesh at all. If he did not assume flesh, then he appeared as a phantom and was crucified

²⁸ It is remarkable that Jerome fails to mention this proposition of Jovinian's. Haller (127) supposes that this is because such a denial was not among the works of Jovinian which had been sent to Jerome at Bethlehem. Kelly, however, suggests that Jerome may not have responded to this proposition because he himself shared the view that Mary had experienced all the normal pains of childbirth; see his *Jerome* 185-86.

²⁹ *Conf.* 5.10.20 (CCL 27, 69); cf. *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 30.6.

³⁰ *Contra Julianum* 1.4 (Haller 92); cf. *Contra duas epistulas Pelagianorum* 1.4 (Haller 91).

³¹ The anti-Manichean aspect of this proposition of Jovinian's was noted in passing by D. Callam, "Clerical Continence in the Fourth Century: Three Papal Decretals," *TS* 41 (1980) 11 and 15. Callam, however, did not develop the notion that all of Jovinian's positions were anti-Manichean; he saw Jovinian primarily as an antiascetic heretic.

as a phantom. This denial of Jesus' flesh is Manichean, Ambrose argues, and he notes that the impiety of the Manichees has been condemned by the emperor Theodosius.³² Ambrose even implies that Jovinian's flight to Milan was a result of the expulsion of the Manichees from Rome; this, of course, was untrue.

Ambrose's treatment of Jovinian's denial of the *virginitas in partu* appears to be an intentional distortion of Jovinian's position. He takes Jovinian's anti-Manichean position and tries to reverse it, turning the charge against Jovinian. Ambrose's error is explainable only when it is acknowledged that Jovinian had first charged Ambrose with Manicheism. This is what Augustine tells us in several places.³³ Ambrose, significantly, omitted mentioning Jovinian's charge, no doubt because it cast suspicion on his own orthodoxy.

When we turn to the four propositions of Jovinian treated by Jerome, the anti-Manichean thrust of Jovinian's views is also evident. His first thesis, it will be recalled, stressed the equality of all baptized Christians, whether virgin, widowed, or married; similarly, the third proposition asserted that fasting did not gain for Christians any greater reward in heaven. Jovinian's fourth proposition maintained that there would be one reward in heaven for all who preserved their baptism. Each of these assertions finds its opposite in Manichean teaching, as well as in Priscillianism. The presence of these heretical alternatives, I suggest, lay behind Jovinian's propositions and shaped his view that the sacrament of baptism, and not ascetical merit, determined one's reward in heaven.

The Manichean enthusiasm for asceticism, expressed in both celibacy and abstinence from food, is well known. In the *Confessions*, for example, Augustine speaks of the strong attraction exerted upon his friend Alypius by the Manichees' show of continence.³⁴ Furthermore, Augustine tells us in the *Retractationes* that it was the prominence of continence and fasting among the Manichees at Rome which caused him to begin the two books *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae* and *De moribus Manichaeorum*. The passage is worth quoting:

After my baptism but while I was in Rome, unable to endure in silence the

³² *Rescriptum* 8 (Haller 79). Ambrose refers to the decree of Theodosius, *CT* 16.5.18, dated June 17, 389, which expelled the Manichees from Rome.

³³ As noted above, Augustine first mentions Jovinian's charge against Ambrose in 420 in *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* 2.15.

³⁴ *Conf.* 6.7.12 (CCL 27, 82): "He loved the Manichean show of continence, which he thought to be true and genuine. However, it was a foolish and seductive thing that it captured precious souls as yet unable to touch the heights of virtue, and easy to deceive with the mere surface of a shadowy and bogus virtue" (tr. J. K. Ryan, *The Confessions of St. Augustine* [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1960] 143-44).

boasting of the Manicheans about their false and fallacious continence because of which, in order to deceive the unlearned, they consider themselves superior to true Christians with whom they are not to be compared, I wrote two books: One, *On the Way of Life of the Catholic Church*, and the other, *On the Way of Life of the Manicheans*.³⁵

This passage is directly relevant to our discussion of Jovinian and the Manichees. Augustine is referring to the winter of 387–88, just after the death of Monica, when he is returning to North Africa from Milan. His winter sojourn in Rome corresponds exactly with the period of Jovinian's activity there.³⁶ If Augustine's statement accurately reflects conditions in Rome in the late 380s, then we are apprised of a rather vigorous campaign by the Roman Manichees to use their ascetical practices as an argument for the superiority of their beliefs. This would be the context in which Jovinian's opposition to asceticism was expressed. Jovinian's concern would have been exactly the same as Augustine's in the treatises *De moribus*, that is, to undermine the Manichean claim to superiority based on virginity and ascetic merit. Their strategies, however, would have been quite different. While Augustine stresses the difference in character between Manichean and orthodox Christian asceticism, Jovinian tries to undercut the appeal to asceticism altogether.

Further evidence regarding the views of Manichees at Rome is found in the letter of Secundinus to Augustine, which was composed no later than the early 400s and possibly in the late 390s.³⁷ Secundinus was a Roman Manichean "hearer" who wrote to Augustine rebuking him for his disloyalty to the Manichees and for his literary efforts against the sect. Although Augustine says in the *Retractationes* that he had never met Secundinus face to face, it is quite possible that Secundinus had known Augustine during his first stay in Rome in 383–84.³⁸ Whatever their relations were, Secundinus is an accurate witness to the views of

³⁵ *Retract.* 1.7 (6) (CCL 57, 18; tr. M. I. Bogan, *Fathers of the Church* 60 [Washington: Catholic Univ. of America, 1968] 23). It makes no difference to the substance of my argument whether the two books *De moribus* were also completed in Rome or whether they were only begun there and completed several years later in North Africa. The latter has been argued by J. K. Coyle, *Augustine's "De moribus ecclesiae catholicae": A Study of the Work, Its Composition and Its Sources* (Fribourg: University Press, 1978) 66–75.

³⁶ Jovinian began his preaching sometime after Jerome's departure from Rome in 385; see Jerome, *Dialogus adv. Pelagianos*, Prol. 2. Whether his condemnation took place in 390 (Haller) or in 392 (Valli), it is very likely that he was present in Rome during Augustine's second visit.

³⁷ On the date of Augustine's *Contra Secundinum*, see F. Decret, *L'Afrique manichéenne (IVe-Ve siècles): Etude historique et doctrinale* 1 (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1978) 141. He places it between the years 404–11.

³⁸ So believes Decret, *L'Afrique manichéenne* 142; cf. *Retract.* 2.10 (36) (CCL 57, 98).

Roman Manichees in the era of Jovinian.

What is significant about Secundinus' letter is that he picks out for criticism some of the same biblical texts which Jovinian had adopted in his defense of the goodness of marriage. After ridiculing Augustine for abandoning the Manichean life of chastity and poverty in favor of the fables of the Jews, "a nation of barbarous morals" (*Judaeorum gentes barbaras moribus*), Secundinus cites several Old Testament texts which the Manichees found particularly offensive, including "Kill and eat" and "Increase and multiply."³⁹ The latter was among the texts which (Jerome tells us) were the starting point of Jovinian's argument.⁴⁰ Secundinus goes on to ridicule Hosea, Abraham and Sarah, Jacob, and Noah, all of whom Jovinian had appealed to as evidence of the sanctity of married persons. Like the African Manichee Faustus, whom Augustine had attacked in the *Contra Faustum* for similar views, Secundinus the Roman Manichee attacked the sexual morality of the Old Testament patriarchs and tried to use this as an argument against the validity of the Hebrew Scriptures.⁴¹

The Manichean rejection of the Old Testament and its married saints, I suggest, formed the background to Jovinian's defense of marriage. His reliance on Scripture, especially the example of its married persons, appears in this perspective not as the rejection of virginity by an antiascetical heretic, but rather as an affirmation of the virtue of those in the Hebrew dispensation. Jovinian seems to have viewed any attempt to denigrate the morality of the Old Testament patriarchs as a lapse into Manicheism. The contemporary Christian exaltation of virginity, Jovinian believed, implied such a denigration of the Old Testament.⁴²

Another aspect of Manichean asceticism deserves mention: the full adoption of celibacy and abstinence from meat and wine were required only of the "elect" and not of those in the grade of "hearers." Augustine says in the *Contra Faustum* that Manichean followers are not entirely forbidden to have sex (although procreation is to be avoided because it involves the perpetuation of the enslavement of light in matter).⁴³ This distinction between two levels of believers is then translated into the next life: at death the souls of the elect ascend into paradise, whereas

³⁹ *Ep. Secundini* (CSEL 25, 896).

⁴⁰ *Adv. Jovin.* 1.5. This is also the first text Augustine treats in *De bono coniugali*.

⁴¹ On the Manichean critique of the OT in the work of Faustus, see F. Decret, *Aspects du manichéisme dans l'Afrique romaine* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1970) 67-68, 146-49.

⁴² See, e.g., Augustine's comment that Jovinian convinced consecrated virgins at Rome to renounce their vows by citing the example of the OT saints; see *Retract.* 2.22 (48).

⁴³ *C. Faustum* 30.6.

the souls of the hearers must return to matter to be reincarnated once more. The souls of sinners, or non-Manichees, of course, are to be condemned to hell or death.⁴⁴

Such teaching, I suggest, may also have contributed to Jovinian's attack on the notion that celibacy or virginity merited for the Christian a superior form of salvation in the next life. Jovinian's fourth proposition, it will be recalled, maintained that there would be one reward in heaven for all the baptized. Jovinian emphasized strongly that there are only two classes of people, the good and the wicked, the sheep and the goats.⁴⁵ He appealed to such biblical texts as the high-priestly prayer of Jesus in John 17:20-23, in which Jesus prays that all believers might be one as the Father and Son are one.⁴⁶ Jovinian also appealed to Christ's indwelling the faithful through the Eucharist as expressed in John 6:56 and argued: "As, then, there are not varying degrees of Christ's presence in us, so neither are there degrees of our abiding in Christ." Finally, appealing to Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19, "Do you not know that your bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit?", Jovinian claimed that the word "temple" appears in the singular, not the plural, "in order to show that God dwells in all alike."⁴⁷

Jovinian's stress on the oneness of all baptized Christians within the one Body of Christ is directed against those Christian ascetics who claimed that virginity was a higher mode of the Christian life and therefore merited a greater reward. The similarity between this ascetic view and the Manichean doctrine of the distinction between the elect and the hearers may have been too much for Jovinian to bear.⁴⁸

A further point must be developed regarding Jovinian's defense of the equality of all baptized Christians. Jovinian's arguments were clearly based on a wide reading of Scripture. As I noted above, it was the biblical grounding of his views which seems to have accounted for much of their

⁴⁴ On the Manichean eschatology, see Coyle, *Augustine's "De moribus"* 47-50. Coyle defends the view, taught by Augustine, that the Manicheans believed in a doctrine of metempsychosis in the Buddhist or Brahman sense.

⁴⁵ *Adv. Jovin.* 2.18.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 2.19.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 2.19.

⁴⁸ This may account for a rather curious detail in Siricius' letter to the church of Milan announcing the condemnation of Jovinian. Siricius noted that Jovinian and his followers, "by wounding Catholics, perverting the continence of the New and Old Testament, and interpreting it in a diabolic sense, began to destroy a number of Christians." Siricius then referred to Jovinian and his followers as *illecti*, i.e., those who are led astray (Haller 70-71). However, if Siricius knew that Jovinian's polemic was directed against what he saw as Manichean tendencies among the Roman ascetics, then *illecti* may be a pun on *electi*, a reference to his anti-Manichean polemic.

persuasiveness. In a number of places his exegesis can be contrasted with that of an extreme ascetic interpretation of Scripture espoused by the Priscillianists. If Priscillianist exegesis was characteristic of extreme ascetic groups in the West, then such views may shed light on the context in which Jovinian wrote.

There are several reasons for considering Priscillianist views as part of the context of Jovinian's work. First, Priscillian and several fellow bishops visited Rome shortly before their trial and execution at Trier.⁴⁹ Although Priscillian was rebuffed first by Damasus, then by Ambrose, there was ample opportunity to disseminate his views in ascetical circles at Rome and Milan. Second, although Priscillian was tried and executed in 386 on charges of sorcery and was suspected of Manicheism, he was treated with deference by many Christians after his death and even honored as a martyr in his native Spain.⁵⁰ Even those who did not hold all of his views sympathized with him in the condition of his death: Priscillian's execution was condemned by Martin of Tours, Siricius, and Ambrose. Their point, of course, was not to defend Priscillian's theology, but rather to protest against the treatment of heresy as a capital offense.⁵¹

In the case of Jerome, however, we find a certain tolerance for Priscillian's thought which is surprising. In his *De viris illustribus*, which was composed in 392 or 393 and is therefore contemporary with the *Adversus Jovinianum*, Jerome devotes a brief notice to Priscillian. He mentions that Priscillian is the author of certain tracts which have reached him in Bethlehem. Jerome says that some accuse Priscillian of being "tainted with Gnosticism"; others, he says, defend Priscillian and claim that he was not a Gnostic at all.⁵² Jerome declines to take sides in the controversy. As Chadwick has noted, Jerome has given "a remarkably neutral notice" on Priscillian.⁵³ Jerome implies that he found nothing offensive in the tracts of Priscillian which he had read in Bethlehem.

A considerably different view of Priscillian is conveyed by Augustine. In *Letter 166*, addressed to Jerome in 415, Augustine remarks that at the time he was writing *De libero arbitrio* (388-95) he had not yet heard of the Priscillianists, "who babble blasphemies not much different from the

⁴⁹ Priscillian's second tractate is an apology to Pope Damasus; cf. Chadwick, *Priscillian* 36-40.

⁵⁰ Cf. Chadwick, *Priscillian* 147-52.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* Chadwick (150) cites a panegyric delivered in the Roman Senate in 389-90 before the emperor Theodosius which refers to the execution of Priscillian and evidences sympathy for him. He also cites a letter of Ambrose which compares Priscillian's accusers to the Jewish high priests handing Jesus over for execution to Pilate.

⁵² *De vir. illus.* 121 (PL 23, 750).

⁵³ Chadwick, *Priscillian* 152.

Manichees.⁵⁴ However, ten years earlier in his anti-Manichean treatise *De natura boni*, composed around the year 405, Augustine refers to the existence of "Manichees" in Gaul who confessed under torture to deviant sexual practices.⁵⁵ Augustine claims to have heard the story from "a certain Catholic Christian at Rome." It is generally agreed that the "Manichees" to whom Augustine refers are actually Priscillian and his company and that the trial at Trier is meant.

Augustine's comment, therefore, reveals that among some Christians at Rome Priscillian's views were not distinguished from those of the Manichees. Augustine himself, whom we should expect to be well informed about Roman Manicheism, appears to share the opinion of his source. The comments of both Jerome and Augustine reveal how fine could be the dividing line between orthodoxy and heresy in the fourth century, especially on the question of asceticism. The ambiguity deepened when both heretical and orthodox ascetics interpreted the Scriptures in a similar fashion. In the following paragraphs I will present several passages from Priscillianist works which treat some of the same biblical texts as Jovinian. The Priscillianist works usually adopt the same exegesis as Jerome and therefore represent that kind of ascetically-oriented exegesis which inspired suspicion in Jovinian.

Among the Priscillianist canons on the Pauline epistles, a work emended by a Priscillianist bishop Peregrinus to conform to Catholic doctrine, but which retains a clear Priscillianist tendency, we find the following sentence: "The bodies of the saints are temples of God or of the Holy Spirit and members of Christ and therefore they should always be living, pleasing sacrifices and ought to abstain from every work of the flesh and from gossip and vain speech and other sins, and they should remain virgins according to the counsel of the apostles."⁵⁶ The contrast between this Priscillianist interpretation of the "temple of the Holy Spirit" passage and Jovinian's interpretation of the same passage cited above is clear: the Priscillianist uses the Pauline expression to endorse virginity and asceticism; Jovinian, on the other hand, uses the text to argue for the equality of all baptized Christians regardless of ascetic merit.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ *Ep.* 166.7.

⁵⁵ *De nat. boni* 47 (CSEL 25, 887).

⁵⁶ *Canones in Pauli apostoli epistulas* 33 (PLS 2, 1399). On the Priscillianist character of these canons, see Chadwick, *Priscillian* 58-62.

⁵⁷ Other canons go on to recommend abstention from meat and wine (35 and 36), voluntary poverty (37), and the "diverse brightness of merits" which will be bestowed on Christians at the general resurrection (82). Further exhortations to continence are present in the Priscillianist tractates; see Chadwick, *Priscillian* 71.

Another example: the Priscillianists maintained various degrees of reward in heaven based on the words of Jesus "In my Father's house there are many mansions" (Jn 14:2).⁵⁸ Jovinian referred to the same text, claiming that it referred to the great number of churches spread throughout the world.⁵⁹ Jerome naturally follows the Priscillianist view. Another example: throughout his works Jovinian appealed to the married saints of the Old Testament to vindicate the goodness of marriage; Priscillian and Jerome emphasize the supersession of the Old Covenant by the New.⁶⁰ The difficulty Jovinian appears to have had with any denigration of the Old Testament saints has been noted above.

But perhaps the most striking instance of Jovinian's concern with a Priscillianist proof-text is his appeal to the apostle John as a married man and his argument that the wedding feast at Cana proves that Jesus did not despise marriage.⁶¹ Priscillianists also appealed to the wedding feast at Cana, but to endorse virginity, not marriage, and to claim that the apostle John was a virgin. This teaching is found in the Monarchian prologue to the Gospel of John, long recognized as a Priscillianist work.⁶² According to the Priscillianist interpretation (and here they relied on the apocryphal *Acts of John*), the apostle John was the bridegroom at the Cana wedding whom Jesus called away from marriage to virginity.⁶³ His virginity, the prologue states, is demonstrated in the Gospel, both by the fact that Jesus loved him more than the others and by the fact that Jesus on the cross entrusted his mother to John: "ut virginem virgo servaret."⁶⁴ In his effort to counteract Jovinian's propaganda, Jerome, significantly, accepts the Priscillianist view, at least in respect to John's virginity.⁶⁵

⁵⁸ Tractate 2, p. 36, 1 ff.; cf. Chadwick, *Priscillian* 72.

⁵⁹ *Adv. Jovin.* 2.19.

⁶⁰ *Canones* 65–70; cf. Chadwick, *Priscillian* 71, and the passages from the *Tractates* cited there. For Jerome's argument see *Adv. Jovin.* 1.19–20.

⁶¹ On the former point, see *Adv. Jovin.* 1.26; on the latter, *ibid.* 1.40.

⁶² On the Priscillianist character of the Monarchian prologues, see Chadwick, *Priscillian* 102–9, and 105–6 on the Johannine prologue specifically.

⁶³ Cf. *Praefatio Johannis*: "... qui virgo electus a deo est, quem de nuptiis volentem nubere vocavit deus" (text in K. Aland, *Synopsis quattuor evangeliorum* [7th ed.; Stuttgart: Wurttembergische Bibelanstalt, 1971] 548).

⁶⁴ The prologue goes on to state that the failure of the wine at Jesus' arrival signifies that where Christ is invited the wine of marriage ought to end, so that all the new things instituted by Christ might become apparent.

⁶⁵ However, Jerome does not follow the Priscillianist view that Jesus canceled the wedding at Cana on his arrival. Jerome agrees with Jovinian that Jesus' presence at the wedding showed his approval of marriage, at least of first marriages; see *Adv. Jovin.* 1.40 and *Ep.* 49.11 to Pammachius. It may be significant that in his apologetic letter to Pammachius Jerome singles out this interpretation of the Cana wedding as a sign of his orthodoxy.

The story of the wedding feast at Cana was a significant text for patristic commentators, especially those engaged in anti-Manichean polemic. Jesus' presence at the wedding feast and the miracle of the wine could be used to combat the extreme ascetic rejection of marriage and wine-drinking. Augustine, for example, interprets the story in this way explicitly to oppose the Manichees.⁶⁶ Jovinian shared Augustine's use of the text. The Priscillianists, on the other hand, interpreted the passage in a manner that lent support to the Manichean view of marriage. When we see how close the Priscillianist interpretation of Scripture is to that of Jerome and, we must assume, to that of certain Roman ascetics, the aim of Jovinian's exegesis is illumined. Seeing the same ascetic interpretation of Scripture among such suspect groups as the Priscillianists as well as among the ascetics at Rome, Jovinian's worst suspicions about the latter must have been confirmed.

There is only one position of Jovinian which has not yet been treated. His second proposition, as stated by Jerome, was that "those who have been born again in baptism with full faith cannot be overthrown by the devil."⁶⁷ This proposition contains no reference to Christian ascetical practices. It is, rather, an affirmation of the efficacy of Christian baptism, which when accompanied by "full faith" ensures that the baptized Christian will not ultimately fall under the sway of the devil. Here again, it can be demonstrated that Jovinian's intent was not primarily to attack Christian asceticism, but rather to guard against Manichean pessimism.

The Manichees' denial of the power of baptism, as well as their affirmation of the power of the forces of darkness, is well known. In *De haeresibus*, for example, Augustine notes that the Manichees ascribe no saving value to baptism: "They allow baptism in water to convey no salvation to anyone, nor do they think that any of those whom they deceive ought to be baptized."⁶⁸ Conversely, the Manichees strongly emphasized the power of the forces of evil, especially over the material world. The creation of the world itself is owed to the invasion of the kingdom of light by the principle of evil accompanied by the five dark

⁶⁶ *Tractatus in Johannis evangelium* 8.4, 8.8, and 9.2.

⁶⁷ *Adv. Jovin.* 1.3.

⁶⁸ *De haer.* 46.17 (CCL 46, 319). See also *C. duas epis. Pelag.* 2.2.2 and 4.4.5. It has been disputed whether the Manichees themselves had a rite of baptism. See the discussions by Coyle, *Augustine's "De moribus"* 428-30, and by Decret, *Aspects du manichéisme* 295-96. Baptismal terminology is abundant in Manichean literature (e.g., the Coptic psalms), but it is not clear to what extent such language was figurative and whether the element of water was used. Besides the literature cited by Coyle, see also *The Cologne Mani Codex*, ed. and tr. by R. Cameron and A. J. Dewey (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1979) 66-67.

elements.⁶⁹ In the Manichean view the forces of good were "singularly passive and ineffective" before the onslaught of evil.⁷⁰ Asceticism, on the other hand, replaced baptism for the Manichees as the means by which the elements of light were gradually freed from bondage to the material elements of the body. Avoidance of sex and abstinence from meat were believed to facilitate the escape of light from matter.⁷¹

When Jovinian's second proposition is seen in the light of the Manichean affirmation of the power of evil and denial of the efficacy of baptism, the intention of his polemic is illumined. Jovinian's stress on baptismal regeneration as the source of redemption and his refusal to allow celibacy or other forms of asceticism to determine the ultimate condition of Christian salvation should both be understood as inspired by an anti-Manichean polemic.⁷² In Jovinian's eyes, to grant any role in salvation to ascetical practices was to concede to the Manichees both that baptism was ineffective and that the soul still needed to be redeemed from the material world through asceticism. In his second proposition Jovinian maintained the utter sovereignty of Christian baptism over the forces of evil; his other three propositions, as I have already argued, denied to asceticism any ultimately determinative role in salvation.

THE RECEPTION OF JEROME'S *ADVERSUS JOVINIANUM*

At this point I wish to add one further piece of evidence to support my contention that Jovinian was writing in a situation where Manicheism was considered to be a genuine danger among Christian ascetics. The hostile reception which Jerome's treatise against Jovinian received at Rome indicates that many Roman Christians, even ascetically-minded ones, felt that such a danger was real and that Jerome himself might have fallen prey to it.

In 393 and 394 Jerome composed several letters to friends at Rome which reveal that his attack on Jovinian had not been well received. The aristocrat Pammachius, who (Jerome tells us) had been instrumental in the condemnation of Jovinian, had found Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* so offensive that he tried to take it out of circulation.⁷³ Jerome indicates that his defense of the superiority of virginity over marriage was being widely interpreted as a Manichean attack on marriage: "While I close

⁶⁹ A fuller description of the Manichean cosmogony can be found in Coyle, *Augustine's "De moribus"* 32-47.

⁷⁰ The phrase is P. Brown's in *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley: Univ. of California, 1969) 52.

⁷¹ Cf. Augustine, *De mor. eccl. Manich.* 2.15.36-37.

⁷² Augustine made a similar point on baptismal regeneration in *De mor. eccl. cath.* 1.35.80.

⁷³ *Ep.* 48.2.

with Jovinian in hand-to-hand combat," he writes, "Manicheus stabs me in the back."⁷⁴

Jerome had been accused of Manicheism, even by clerics and monks who themselves observed celibacy. He tries to explain to Pammachius that his views did not entail a condemnation of marriage.⁷⁵ Besides, Jerome writes, his learned opponents ought to know that there are different modes of speech, and that in *Adversus Jovinianum* he was speaking *gymnastikōs* and not *dogmatikōs*, that is, with an aim to confute, not to instruct.⁷⁶ It is difficult to imagine that Jerome's treatise would have found such a hostile reception at Rome, had there not been a genuine threat of Manicheism and therefore some validity in Jovinian's intentions, if not in all of his arguments.⁷⁷

The same conclusion results from an examination of Jerome's *Letter* 50 to his Roman friend Domnio. Domnio had sent excerpts of the most offensive passages of the *Adversus Jovinianum* to Jerome for clarification. Domnio had also told Jerome about a young monk at Rome, apparently a popular teacher in ascetic circles, who had opposed both the teachings of Jovinian and those of Jerome.⁷⁸ This monk, who is frequently identified as Pelagius, apparently opposed Jovinian's equation of virginity and marriage, and yet attacked Jerome's views as Manichean.⁷⁹ This letter of Domnio shows that there was a genuine effort among ascetics in the Roman church to maintain the value, even the preferability, of virginity without lapsing into the Manichean error. The reception of Jerome's work shows that the latter was considered a genuine danger which Jerome, in the eyes of his contemporaries, did not altogether avoid.

⁷⁴ *Ep.* 49.2. Cf. *Ep.* 49.3: here Jerome refers to *Adv. Jovin.* 1.4, where he had asked the prayers of virgins, continent, married, and twice-married, and comments: "Jovinian is the foe of all indiscriminately, but can I condemn as Manichean heretics persons whose prayers I need and whose assistance I entreat to help me in my work?"

⁷⁵ In *Ep.* 49.8 Jerome maintains that his position is a mean between Jewish and pagan license to marry and Manichean rejection of it.

⁷⁶ *Ep.* 49.13 (Haller 50).

⁷⁷ Haller 50, n. 2, takes the opposition to Jerome and support of Jovinian as a sign that Jovinian had been condemned by a fanatical ascetic minority at Rome in opposition to the will of the people. While this is probably an overstatement, it is clear that Jovinian's support in Rome was widespread and did not cease with his condemnation. See *Ep.* 49.14.

⁷⁸ *Ep.* 50.2.

⁷⁹ *Ep.* 50.5. The identification of this monk as Pelagius, originally suggested by de Plinval, is most strongly argued by R. F. Evans, *Pelagius: Inquiries and Reappraisals* (New York: Seabury, 1968) 26-42. Although widely accepted, this view has recently been challenged by Y. M. Duval, "Pélage est-il le censeur inconnu de l'*adversus Jovinianum* à Rome en 393? ou: du 'portrait-robot' de l'hérétique chez Jerome," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 75 (1980) 525-57.

CONCLUSION

In this article I have argued that the monk Jovinian, generally considered to be an antiascetical heretic, may have had more orthodox aims. All of the positions which Jovinian articulated can be interpreted as rejections of extreme ascetic and dualistic ideas such as those espoused by the Manichees and Priscillianists. I have presented evidence which indicates that such views were widespread in Rome at the time of Jovinian's activity there. Although there is no doubt that Jovinian's equation of marriage and celibacy was out of step with the orthodoxy of his day, there is equally no doubt that the danger of Manicheism was also prevalent and acknowledged by many of his contemporaries. Jovinian's popularity and following also show that many Christians must have recognized his anti-Manichean intentions and acted accordingly.

Why, then, were Jovinian's views so quickly condemned by Siricius and Ambrose? Several factors have to be taken into account. The increasing emphasis given to celibacy among the higher clergy must have been a factor. Siricius is the first Roman bishop to speak of the celibacy requirement. In a letter to the Spanish bishop Himerius, Siricius notes that certain bishops and priests who oppose the imposition of celibacy cite the example of the Old Testament priests who remained married and bore children.⁸⁰ The same argument in defense of marriage is found in Jovinian's works. Although Jovinian does not seem to have opposed the practice of clerical celibacy itself, his arguments would certainly have undermined the papal claims for requiring it.

Another reason for the condemnations would no doubt have been Jovinian's lack of discretion in calling Siricius and Ambrose Manichees. In this case it would have been the style rather than the substance of Jovinian's polemic which called forth condemnation. The charge of Manicheism was no trivial matter in the late fourth century. Such charges were instrumental in the execution of the bishop Priscillian; his death revealed that even bishops could not always resist imperial authority. The force of many of Jovinian's arguments may have been the very factor which impelled the ecclesiastical authorities to attempt to silence the troublesome monk.

Finally, we might look to the need for a refutation of Manicheism itself as a reason for condemnation. One way to combat Manichean claims based on asceticism was to counter them with orthodox Christian ascet-

⁸⁰ *Ep. 1, Ad Himerium episcopum Tarraconensem* 7.8 (PL 13, 1138). A similar objection to clerical celibacy is recorded by Ambrose, *De officiis* 50.258. Himerius himself may have been associated with Priscillian in some way; see Callam, "Clerical Continence in the Fourth Century" 25-26.

icism. This was Augustine's aim in *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae*. Jovinian's approach—to reject altogether the claims of ascetics to superiority—may have appeared to some to be rejection of the very grounds on which the Manichees could be refuted. In the late fourth century, asceticism, and especially virginity, possessed the status of evidence for the value of a religious tradition. What Christians needed was a view of marriage and virginity which could both articulate the goodness of marriage against the Manichees and at the same time assert the superiority of virginity. Jovinian failed in the latter task in the eyes of church officials; Jerome failed in the former in the eyes of other contemporaries. It took a greater intellect, in the person of Augustine of Hippo, to express intelligibly both the *bonum* of marriage and the *sanctitas* of virginity.