One of the basic features of Manichaean eschatology was a belief that all evil would eventually be imprisoned within a globular mass (Gr. βόλος; Lat. globus) and that the souls of those who had refused to accept the Religion of Light would be affixed to this globular mass forever. Criticism of this curious belief became one of the foundations of Augustine’s anti-Manichaean polemic. 1 This paper will examine Augustine’s reception and polemical transformation of this Manichaean doctrine. The doctrine will first be reconstructed from the extant sources and its functions and significance will be discussed. 2 It will be seen that there are certain


2 The anti-Manichaean works of Augustine and Evodius will be cited according to the edition of J. Zycha (CSEL 25.6.1–2, Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1891–1892), Augustine’s Confessions according to the edition of P. Knöll (CSEL 33.1.1, Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1896), and Augustine’s De haeresibus according to the edition of L.G. Müller, The De haeresibus of Saint Augustine (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1956). Citations from the Coptic Manichaean Kephalaia refer to the edition of H.J. Polotsky and A. Böhlig, Kephalaia. Band I. 1 Hälftte: Lieferung 1–10 (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1940);
ambiguities and tensions in the doctrine. The ways in which these ambiguities and tensions were exploited by Augustine and used to support his broader anti-Manichaean polemic will then be examined and discussed.

According to Manichaean teaching, the existence of evil in the world was the result of a primordial invasion of the realm of Light by the forces of Darkness. In this invasion a portion of the Light was seized and swallowed up by the Darkness. This seizure necessitated the formation of the present world as an arena in which the forces of Darkness were to be subdued and the good Light particles liberated from the evil Matter in which they had become entrapped. This liberation was effected at the microcosmic level by the prayers and devotional practices of the elect and at the macrocosmic level by a cosmic purifying apparatus.

This process of purification and liberation was nonetheless limited both in time and scope. When all the Light that could be liberated by the cosmic purifying apparatus had been freed, the cosmos would be consumed by a fire that would burn for 1468 years, releasing a small portion of additional Light.

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