

Abstract

During the later decades of the fourth century St. Augustine (354-430 CE) was embroiled in a polemic battle with the North African Manichaeans. One of their leading figures, Faustus of Milev had launched a powerful Manichaean assault on Catholic Christianity in the form of his *Capitula*. In it Faustus sought to defend the Manichaean New Testament hermeneutic. Fundamentally connected with this defence was his critique of the Old Testament scriptures. Faustus focused this attack on three points: the Old Testament was unsuitable for Christians, the two Testaments and two religions were fundamental incompatible, and ultimately, the Catholics were unable to appropriate fully the Old Testament in deed and not merely doctrine. In response, Augustine used his extensive understanding of *signa*, recently developed in *De doctrina christiana*, to explain how the entire Old Testament was rightly revered as sacred scripture by Catholic Christians. It was this defence, and the semiotics which undergirded it, which enabled Augustine to defend the Catholic appropriation of the Old Testament, the continuity between Judaism and Christianity, and the divine plan which guided history. It will be argued that Augustine was able to accomplish all of this in his *Contra Faustum* because of his doctrine of the sign and its corollary *frui/uti* distinction.