

THE FOUNDER OF MANICHAISM

Mani, a third-century preacher, healer and public sage from Sasanian Mesopotamia, lived at a pivotal time and place in the development of the major religions. He frequented the courts of the Persian Empire, debating with rivals from the Judaeo-Christian tradition, philosophers and gnostics, Zoroastrians from Iran and Buddhists from India. The community he founded spread from north Africa to south China and lasted for over a thousand years. Yet the genuine biography of its founder, his life and thought, was in good part lost until a series of spectacular discoveries have begun to transform our knowledge of Mani's crucial role in the spread of religious ideas and practices along the trade routes of Eurasia. This book utilises the latest historical and textual research to examine how Mani was remembered by his followers, caricatured by his opponents, and has been invented and reinvented according to the vagaries of scholarly fashion.

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Rethinking the Life of Mani

The Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion
School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London
30 May–2 June 2016

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108499071

DOI: [10.1017/9781108614962](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108614962)

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First published 2020

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd. Padstow Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Gardner, Iain, author. | BeDuhn, Jason, author.

TITLE: The founder of Manichaeism : rethinking the life of Mani : The Jordan Lectures in
Comparative Religion, School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London,
May 30 – June 2, 2016 / Iain Gardner, University of Sydney, Jason BeDuhn,
Northern Arizona University.

DESCRIPTION: New York : Cambridge University Press, 2019. | Includes bibliographical
references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2019038251 (print) | LCCN 2019038252 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781108499071 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108713115 (paperback) |

ISBN 9781108614962 (epub)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Mani, active 3rd century. | Manichaeism—Biography.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC BT1410 .G367 2019 (print) | LCC BT1410 (ebook) | DDC 299/.932 [B]—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2019038251>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2019038252>

ISBN 978-1-108-49907-1 Hardback

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Foreword

The founders of the great world religions draw our fascination, even as they elude the full grasp of the historian. They invariably are encased in layers of idealization, and rendered into icons. They serve as source and justification of what their religion has come to be, no matter how far it has developed and departed from their original work. Precisely because they serve necessary functions of inspiration and guidance for later adherents, they cannot be left as mere mortals; their story cannot be a disinterested account. The historical biographer will find much easier prey anywhere else than with the founders of religions. Yet the canons of history will not allow such figures to be set apart, or to remain immune to investigative scrutiny. They must yield to the same examination as any human being to be part of history, and to belong to a particular historical moment, so that they can help explain that moment, and so that the moment can help explain them. This historical emplacement is what has been attempted for all of the great figures of religious history, for Zarathustra and Siddhartha and Jesus and Muhammad and many more. Mani, the founder of Manichaeism, is no more or less elusive than these figures, yet has been the subject of far fewer studies, no doubt because alone of this company his religion is now extinct. Yet, for more than a thousand years it played a major role in religious history, interacted and competed with the religions of those other figures, and in key ways helped to define what a 'religion' is.

Ancient promoters and detractors of Manichaeism, as well as modern scholars, credit Mani as a genius and renaissance man: consummate artist and art-education innovator, musician and musical instrument inventor, visionary and organizer, and above all else creator of a new religion – Jesus and Paul rolled into one. Even a hostile source such as the *Acts of Archelaus* depicts Mani as a clever and astute propagandist, acquiring Christian texts, studying them, and ingeniously integrating their ideas into his own to make the latter more acceptable to potential Christian converts. It portrays him as a master showman, complete with exotic (if not bizarre) costuming.

Sources from the Islamic world, such as the *Shahnameh*, describe him as a wonder-worker, whether through magical powers or chicanery. A tale related by Marwazī portrays Mani plotting his own fake heavenly ascent, choosing a suitably cavernous hideout and laying up stores for a year, returning with the books supposedly revealed to him during his heavenly sojourn. With even polemical sources ready to credit Mani with rare genius, it comes as no surprise that Manichaean hagiography laces his story with even more of the astounding, from acts of levitation to encyclopedic knowledge of every subject, no matter how obscure. Starved for sources, modern scholarship has sifted such material, sheered away the miraculous, but retained much that can be no more than legendary, built-up depictions of a saintly or villainous superman. A brilliant man who invented his own religion.

This is a general problem that has always beset the historical study of religious figures. The lack of sources tempts researchers to grasp at any information at all for their reconstructions, juxtaposing hagiographical and polemical accounts into a plausible synthesis, rather than critically deconstructing the rhetorical strategies behind them. Historical methodology might dismiss the more fanciful and miraculous elements, and call out more obviously exaggerated or stereotypical drama, but still rely on data embedded in the same narrative, as if such accounts must hew close to real history as a basis for their fantasies. One very common cliché in such studies is that a polemical source could not just make up complete fiction about its target, because that would be obvious to informed contemporaries and hence unpersuasive. But this view is naïve on two counts. First, it misidentifies the audience of polemic, which is rarely the informed adherents of the targeted individual, but rather the author's own community without direct access to reliable information about the subject. Its aim is not to persuade and convert informed adherents, but to reinforce the polemicist's own community in its hostility to the heretical other. Second, direct experience of modern religious debate and contemporary politics makes it all too plain that there is no restraint of facts on the rhetorical claims made in such contexts. Literally anything goes. An attempt to get at what is truly historical about a figure, therefore, must employ very vigorous standards of skepticism and proof.

Just as the quest for the historical Jesus, Siddhartha, and Muhammad require a caustic treatment of fanciful sources, and a fresh start from the few historical nuggets that survive such an acid test, so Mani must have his turn at strict historical examination. But the dilemma in all these cases is the same: not a single shard of historical evidence exists unfiltered by strong ideological sentiments. Mani himself pointed to this dilemma. His predecessors failed to write down their own ideas, and entrusted them

instead to the vicissitudes of oral transmission. Everything one could know of them had been filtered already by the misunderstandings and agendas of their followers over multiple generations. Mani could overcome this obstacle only by direct revelation from heaven. The modern historian of religion has no such tool.

It is ironic, therefore, that Mani sought to preserve his own voice and identity against the vicissitudes and corruptions of time through composing his own books, only to have them lost through the persecution and ultimate demise of the religion he founded. The vast mass of preserved Manichaean literature belongs to later scholastic and liturgical texts, rather than Mani's own books. This has left Mani open to speculation he would be otherwise spared. Even with the recovery of a large trove of primary Manichaean sources in the twentieth century, therefore, the question remains whether a layer of Manichaean scholasticism stands between us and the historical Mani. We rely heavily on such material, which predominates in the recovered literature, while Mani's own compositions continue largely to elude us. The material we have seems hopelessly inconsistent on whether Mani spent his whole life thinking of himself as 'the apostle of Jesus Messiah', as he dubbed himself in his letters, or came to regard himself as a new and better messenger of God, with a religious institution superior to those established by his predecessors, including Jesus. It would be helpful if we could assign the latter to an elevation of Mani by church leaders following his death as they busied themselves shoring up the identity of an independent Manichaeism, and pinpoint a historical Mani who saw himself merely as a Christian reformer. But reaching secure conclusions in that direction remains difficult.

Any day, this might dramatically change. Iain Gardner notes the surviving fragments of Mani's own *Epistles*. His fellow Coptic scholar Wolf-Peter Funk has announced that the *Synaxeis* codex from Medinet Madi appears to contain the highly fragmentary remains of Mani's *Gospel*. When the laborious work of editing and translating these remains is complete, they will offer an important if only partial check on speculative debates regarding what aspects of Manichaean teaching can be ascribed to Mani himself. But it will probably leave unanswered many of the questions examined by Gardner in the pages that follow. It may tell us nothing of Mani's human origins and parentage, of the timing and locales of his various travels, of the evolution of his thought. Without the ability to place the *Epistles* and *Gospel* in Mani's thirty-five-year public career, we will remain unable to reach certainty on the stages of Mani's intellectual and spiritual development, and of the formation of his church institutions. It

may very likely still leave us in the dark on something as basic as Mani's given name. There is no magic cure for the historian's dilemma, therefore. Even with Mani's *Gospel* in hand, no other source can be dismissed completely as a possible resource of information, and no source can be relied upon to give the full and historically accurate facts.

Dealing as we must, then, with an historical figure mediated by a faith community, we can start there, with the Mani of faith, the 'Apostle of Jesus Christ', the 'Doctor from Babylon', the 'Illuminator', the 'Great Interpreter'. The Mani available to modern history is very much the Mani imagined by the subsequent Manichaean church. A large portion of the surviving Manichaean literature is devoted to stories of Mani's life, and accounts of how he created Manichaeism convert by convert, town by town, teaching by teaching. The errors that crept into the teachings of the Buddha, Zarathustra, and Jesus as they were transmitted from one generation to the next were the result of the fact that these prophets spoke metaphorically and figuratively, and that they trusted their words to the oral medium. These circumstances left it to Mani to reform world religion by rendering its truths in precise, plain, literal language, and to commit this language to the written page. In one of the *Bema Psalms*, the members of the community declare,

All the [teachings] which the ancients proclaimed in their scriptures, we were thinking of them [as] fables before thou didst come forth and didst fill our souls, the wisdom of our heart.¹

Mani's instruction renders the teachings of the past fully comprehensible for the first time.

In the Manichaean tradition, Mani is the 'good interpreter' who explains all that is ambiguous in his predecessors. He does so not only by avoiding figurative speech, but also by placing isolated aphorisms and instructions into a complete system that provides context and relationship. In praise of Mani, it is said:

The beloved son, Jesus Christ, sets a garland on thy head in great joy, because his building that was destroyed thou didst build it, his way which was hidden thou didst illumine it, his scriptures which were confused thou didst set them in order again, his wisdom which was hidden thou didst interpret it.²

¹ C. R. C. Allberry, ed., *A Manichaean Psalm-Book: Part II* (W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 1938), 13.6–13.

² *Ibid.*, 12.26–33.

Mani was a zealous systematizer, who followed Paul's dictum to take possession of all that was good in human wisdom.

The writings, wisdom, apocalypses, parables and psalms of all the earlier churches are gathered from every place and come to my church and are added to the wisdom that I have revealed to you. As a river is added to another river to form a powerful current, so also are the ancient books added to my writings; and they make a great wisdom, such as has not been uttered in all preceding generations.³

But by putting this great body of wisdom into his own system, he saw to it that its meaning was 'altered to the flavor' of the system as a whole.⁴

The Manichaean tradition portrays Mani as the founder of the institutions of the Manichaean church, as successor to those of his predecessors. Mani is the initiator of the order of the elect and their instructor in the ritual actions that form the core of Manichaean practice. Mani also gathers the larger community of auditors to support the elect in their work. He inculcates the combination of the auditor's alms-service with the elect's ritual meal, by which the fragments of Light scattered throughout the world attain their liberation. This work of religion necessarily entails reform of prior ritual error. Baptism of the body is useless, he argues against the Elchasaites in the *Cologne Mani Codex*. Such external purifications must be replaced by an internal realignment of the body's functioning. Only in the latter way can the body be made ritually fit. There follows from the reform of ritual qualification a reform of the central ritual itself, the sacred meal. In the *Kephalaia*, Mani critiques systems of sacrificial offering as misdirected and ineffective, and offers the ritual meal of the elect as the only true means of ritual practice.⁵

As the 'interpreter from the land of Babylon' who made all things plain and understandable, Mani used every means at his disposal to reach out and to inform. The Manichaean tradition is a religion of the book because Mani himself was a writer of books, something the Buddha and Jesus never did:

For all the apostles, my brothers, that came before me, [they did not write] their wisdom in books, as I have written it down; [nor did] they depict their wisdom in the picture, as [I have painted] it.⁶

³ W.-P. Funk, *Kephalaia I, Zweite Hälfte* (Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 2000), 372.11–19.

⁴ W. Sundermann, *Ein manichäisch-sogdisches Parabelbuch*, Berliner Turfantexte XV (Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 1985), text B, lines 58–68.

⁵ I. Gardner, *The Kephalaia of the Teacher* (Brill, Leiden, New York and Köln, 1995), 224–226 (kephalaion 87).

⁶ Funk, *Kephalaia I*, 371.25–29.

Although Mani was believed to have a lasting presence and influence upon the Manichaean community in his own person, it was primarily through his books that he was encountered from one generation to the next. These books are celebrated as his great gift to the world, and formed a kind of canon, which is enumerated (with minor variations) in Manichaean texts from the Roman West to the Chinese East.

Mani's religious revolution from the oral to the written medium was not his only didactic innovation. The Manichaean tradition also celebrated him as an artist. Mani tried to convey his teachings in a visual medium, especially for those who were illiterate or who needed visual aids to grasp the concepts. Ephrem Syrus quotes a Manichaean tradition that has Mani say,

I have written them in books and illustrated them with colors. Let the one who hears about them verbally also see them in visual form, and the one who is unable to learn them from [words] learn them from picture(s).⁷

Of course, just as he was the definitive writer, so Mani was the most masterful artist, and his reputation in this respect seems to have grown over the centuries. But Mani did not just paint individual pictures; he compiled a picture book that came to be treated as part of Mani's canon of scriptures. This book was justly famous as something of a media revolution in religious proselytization. Mani was careful to send it along with his missionaries, and its existence fostered and legitimated the Manichaean artistic tradition.⁸

Mani is the 'doctor from Babylon', and the association of medical imagery with his speech and deeds is more than a metaphor. Mani's hagiography portrays him as a healer of bodies as well as of souls. Mani's cures of the sick were key moments in the initial success of his religion, reported in Iranian sources and in the Greek *Cologne Mani Codex*. Alongside of the revelation Mani received from heaven, he has been endowed with the gift of 'the laying-on of hands' (*cheirothesia*) as a healing technique, as well as an act of ordination. The polemical tradition also connects Mani to healing activity, although in this context he is a charlatan who predictably fails. The discourse of healing is so pervasive in treatment of Mani throughout the Manichaean world that we are led to assume it has some basis in Mani's own self-presentation.

⁷ Ephrem Syrus, *Hypatius* 127, quoted in J. C. Reeves, 'Manichaean Citations from the *Prose Refutations* of Ephrem', in *Emerging from Darkness: Studies in the Recovery of Manichaean Sources*, eds P. Mirecki and J. BeDuhn (Brill, Leiden, 1997), 262–263.

⁸ On this topic, see Z. Gulácsi, *Mani's Pictures: The Didactic Images of the Manichaeans from Sasanian Mesopotamia to Uygur Central Asia and Tang-Ming China* (Brill, Leiden, 2015).

Despite the real medical connections at the basis of Mani's image as 'the great physician',⁹ Manichaean hymnody extended the idea into the realm of metaphor and simile. Mani's writings become the tools of the doctor:

He has the antidote that is good for every affection. There are two and twenty compounds in his antidote: his great *Gospel*, the good tidings of all them that are of the light. His water-pot is the *Thesaurus*, the treasure of life. In it there is hot water; there is some cold water also mixed with it. His soft sponge that wipes away bruises is the *Pragmateia*. His knife for cutting is the *Book of the Mysteries*. His excellent swabs are the *Book of the Giants*. The narthex of every cure is the book of his *Letters*.¹⁰

What may have been Mani's actual healing ability is built up in hagiography into the miraculous. Even at a distance, or after his death, Mani can be invoked for the purposes of healing. Thus Mani appears in Palmyra in response to the prayer of his representative there, Addā, and heals the sister of 'Queen Tādī', who is most likely the famous Zenobia.¹¹ Apparently, this trend towards ascribing miracles to Mani met with resistance in some circles, and the debate over whether Mani in fact worked any miracles added to the issues dividing factions of Manichaeism in the Islamic period. Nevertheless, the numerous prayers to Mani concerning the well-being of both body and soul show that his power in this regard continued to strongly attract the interest of his followers.

As in Christianity, the tragic death of the founder is incorporated into the ideology of the Manichaean community, and commemorated in its practice. We find religious literature devoted to the subject of Mani's martyrdom, both poetic and prose, in both Western and Eastern Manichaeism. The details of Mani's last days are meticulously recorded: his journey to the Persian court, his audience with the shah Bahram, his imprisonment and suffering, the final visits of his disciples, the moment of his death, and its immediate aftermath. In its description of these events, the Manichaean tradition itself draws parallels to the death of Jesus. It likens the Zoroastrian priests to the Jewish leaders, Bahram to Pilate or Herod, Mani's death to Jesus' crucifixion, and Mani's apotheosis to Jesus' ascent. The whole scenario comes across as a momentous clash of good and evil, and highlights the tragedy of evil's great earthly power.

He sounded with his trumpet in the worlds that are far, that are near, he roused them. . . The ruler of the earth rose up against him and persecuted

⁹ Allberry, *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*, 46.1. ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 46.19–32.

¹¹ H.-J. Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road* (HarperCollins, San Francisco, 1993), 209 (M566 I).

him in his cities. . . He assumed the heart of his judges that they might condemn him like the impious. . . They shut him up in their prisons and loaded his limbs with iron. . . They counseled against him in their evil counsels that they might cast a slur on him daily.¹²

Yet Mani's martyrdom is ultimately a triumph and a liberation, just as Jesus' resurrection is a victory over death. Mani achieves one more little victory in the long, painful struggle with evil. Nearly crushed by his iron chains, the sixty-year-old apostle of light prays to God for a much-earned release from his battles, and departs his body precisely at sunset after twenty-six days of imprisonment.

On the second day of the week, thou didst receive the glory of victory, thou didst bind the diadem upon thee, for thou didst kill the race of darkness, in the month of Phamenoth, on the fourth day, Monday, thou didst receive thy garland.¹³

In Manichaean belief, the moment of death is the time when the ultimate triumph of light over darkness may be made manifest. For those who have freed and 'collected' their soul, death holds no power and has no sting. The liberated soul of the dead ascends into the realm of light, welcomed by an angelic entourage. Mani's death quite naturally offers the prototypical illustration of this belief. Mani accomplishes his physical death voluntarily, and in it displays his victory over evil.

The culmination of martyrdom in triumphant ascent is captured in the Parthian *Parinirvana Hymns*, which in comparison to the Coptic *Bema Psalms* show how consistent were the traditions of Mani's end. The term *parinirvana* is used here mostly to convey a strong contrast with the contention and difficulty of the world. Mani had earned a rest from his trials, and the heavenly world to which he ascended is a land of pure good, where no evil can touch him. Nevertheless, we must not confuse Mani's *parinirvana* with that of the Buddha. Mani remains in the universe and actively engaged in its affairs.

Mani's continued proximity to his beloved flock of followers is conveyed in the idea that he abides in the moon, and from there looks down upon the works and sufferings of his church. According to this tradition, 'the Parinirvana of the Apostle' was 'when he was raised up into the chariot of the Moon and found peace with the Father, the God Ohrmizd'.¹⁴ Mani's presence in the moon was a powerful symbol of his lasting care and watchful

¹² Allberry, *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*, 23.20–29. ¹³ *Ibid.*, 17.21–28.

¹⁴ Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road*, 87 (M817I.V.II).

gaze. The idea provided comfort to the Manichaean community in its travails, offered a sense of Mani's accessibility, and held out hope of his future return by what must have appeared to be a rather short and easy descent. Mani's location in the moon meant that every Manichaean would face him in night-time prayers, which were directed to the moon. In this way, Mani was the object of a daily practice of veneration and prayer.

The Manichaean liturgical year culminated in the annual *Bema* ceremony, held on the anniversary of Mani's apotheosis. With Mani's ascent as an impressive sign of light's triumph over darkness, its commemoration served as a celebration of the hope and promise of the Manichaean faith. In part, the hymns and sermons performed at this time called to mind the career of the historical Mani. Indeed, much of what we know of Mani's life, and much of the material we have about the Manichaean view of Mani, comes from literature produced for use at the *Bema*. But the ceremony itself also invoked the living Mani, the continued presence of the Apostle of Light in the moon. Mani had promised to remain close at hand, and the annual *Bema* was the moment when that proximity was drawn even closer by the invocation of Mani's presence into the community during the festival. The *Bema* takes its name from the judgment seat set up for the ceremony, which was to be occupied only by Mani himself. During the proceedings, Mani was brought down to the seat, and the community interacted with the seat as if he were truly present. He was addressed directly, and his all-seeing gaze was acknowledged in the community's confession of sin.

The great exalted king is seated upon his Bema, he sees the deeds of each one of us. . . Our Lord the Paraclete has come, he has sat down upon his Bema; let us all pray, my brethren, that he may forgive us our sins.¹⁵

In thus invoking and celebrating the presence of Mani, the members of the Manichaean community annually reaffirmed their commitment to Mani's religion, and to the obligations that it entailed. The *Parinirvana Hymns* convey a sense of heightened expectation at the *Bema*, as if this moment held portent each year as the potential finale of the Manichaean mission. These hymns bear the unusual feature of being dated according to the number of years that had transpired since Mani's departure. The Manichaeans were counting the years until their prophet returned and brought an end to their earthly struggles in a glorious triumph. At that time, Mani's descent onto the *Bema* would simply be prelude to his surrendering of authority to the true judge, Jesus.

¹⁵ Allberry, *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*, 21.27–32; 22.28–30.

The numerous accomplishments and roles of Mani pertinent to Manichaeism provided the impetus and content of a vast body of poetry and prose used in the worship of the Manichaean church. This literature recounts and celebrates Mani's teaching and guidance, both in person during his earthly career and less directly through his writings or supernatural influence after his ascent. In reciting his work as interpreter and reformer, author and illuminator, healer and ritual authority, as well as guardian and judge of his religious community, this literature makes a case for Mani as a savior figure who has fundamentally changed the world and made salvation possible.

The Coptic *Bema Psalms* supply many epithets of praise for Mani. He is 'the Spirit of Truth', 'the merciful one', 'the holy one, the giver of good tidings', 'the glorious one, [the great] god, the savior', 'the envoy of them that are on high', 'the great conqueror, our lord, our light, who has given victory to his loved ones', 'the beloved', 'the blessed', 'the new sun of the souls', 'the judge of this universe'; he is a victor, an angel, a shepherd, a sage, and a god. As the founder and focal point of the Manichaean tradition, Mani receives a thesaurus of honorific titles. Yet, in a more systematic way, Manichaeism attempts to state precisely what Mani accomplished, what he has made possible for those who adhere to his teachings. Mani brought truth and awareness:

Thou didst preach to all of us thy wisdom, thou didst teach us the things that used to be, that are and that shall be, thou didst save us from the darkness. . . the mixture of the dark and the light which is within.¹⁶

He created the institutions of the Manichaean church:

Thou didst appoint the twelve Teachers and the seventy-two Bishops. Thou didst make Sisinnios leader over thy children.¹⁷

He started a mission that reaches all people:

Lo, thy holy churches have spread out to the four corners of the world. Lo, thy vine-trees have filled every place. Lo, thy sons have become famous in all lands. Lo, thy Bema has been firmly established in every place [like a] river now that flows in the whole earth.¹⁸

In short, all that Manichaeism is and does derives from Mani, and its accomplishments are to his glory.

¹⁶ Ibid., 13.6–13. ¹⁷ Ibid., 44.8–10. ¹⁸ Ibid., 13.20–24.

Perhaps the best example of this kind of liturgical and literary commemoration of Mani is the Turkic *Great Hymn to Mani*.¹⁹ Here Mani is again the spiritual healer who cures the madness of ordinary mortals and brings them clarity and insight. He is the guide who leads people across the sea of suffering and samsara to nirvana. Mani himself is envisioned traversing all lands and rescuing those mired in delusion, passion, and ignorance. His Gospel teaches ‘the roads of escape and salvation’. His commandments provide the rules of conduct that restrain evil deeds and make the Manichaean community possible as a way of life. His instruction organizes the ‘collection’, the ritual process by which humans contribute to the cause of universal salvation. Finally, in his deified and celestial position, he is called upon to do even more, to bless and give absolution for human failings in emulating his model. The totality of Manichaeism – its doctrines, code of behavior, ritual practices, and highest aspirations and hopes – is encapsulated in the *Great Hymn to Mani* and placed at the apostle’s feet, where the hymn’s reciters ‘venture to bow and worship with profound respect’.

This is the Mani of faith, presenting as daunting an edifice to the historian as any King Arthur or Lao Tzu. Yet try we must to find historical nuggets embedded in it. Scholars, who had accepted as historical far more than they ever should from the anti-Manichaean sources available to them in the nineteenth century, were just as quick to embrace the traditions contained in newly discovered Manichaean sources in the twentieth century. Whether it was the enticing tale of the visionary boy in the *Cologne Mani Codex* or the exacting itinerary of ‘Mani’s Last Journey’, too many scholars decided that history lay just below the surface of these texts, overlooking signs that these narratives obeyed formulas and tropes of hagiography. Literally nothing guarded them from being made up whole cloth by the Manichaean church to meet its needs and unfolding identity.

Iain Gardner offers here a detailed case for a more critical historiography of the origins of Manichaeism, based in part on skepticism regarding the previously known sources, and in part on newly available sources (such as Mani’s *Epistles* and the Chester Beatty *Kephalaia*). Based on a deep knowledge of the relevant sources in their original languages and contexts, Gardner exposes the rhetorical strategies and hagiographical tropes that may not be simply putting a gloss on historical reality, but inventing that reality whole cloth. This is patient, show-your-work scholarship, as a masterful historian leads readers through complicated evidence and makes detailed arguments based on it. Gardner equips the reader to see through

¹⁹ L. Clark, *Uyghur Manichaean Texts, Volume II: Liturgical Texts* (Brepols, Turnhout, 2013), 137–177.

the myriad fragmented and slanted sources to the true identity of a founding figure.

By reading against the grain of some of the sources well known to scholars, and overturning our assumptions of how to read them, Iain Gardner argues that we can come closer to the historical Mani. Those of us laboring in the study of Manichaeism have until now assumed we knew at least a little bit about Mani's parentage and heritage. Gardner shows that the identification of Mani's father as Patīg (and the Parthian and even royal ancestry that goes with it) appears quite late in the tradition, attested first in the eighth century Chinese *Compendium* already deeply embedded in a birth legend borrowing heavily from the life of the Buddha, and in a less obviously fantastic tenth-century version historians have tended to prefer in Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*. Gardner argues that earlier references to Patīg depict him rather as Mani's spiritual and administrative 'father' within the sectarian community in which he was raised, and fail to say anything that would confirm actual parentage. We have until now felt reasonably confident that Mani was the founder's personal name, despite the plethora of titles that he is accorded. Gardner points out signs that this name, too, may have been simply his most proper title, much like 'Christ' is for Jesus, and his personal identity is forever obscured behind it.

The use of specific dates and correlation with known historical events gives Manichaean narratives a semblance of historicity, and researchers have taken these details as the few points of terra firma around which a life of Mani can be built. But, as Gardner demonstrates, Manichaean political self-promotion and passion for numerological niceties may have supplied such reference points, independently of actual events. Mani may not have achieved immediate contact with the Sasanian court, especially in light of the convoluted (if not contradictory) set of accounts of Mani gaining access to it found in the Chester Beatty *Kephalaia*. Even scholars fall prey to good drama, and the *Cologne Mani Codex* has enthralled them for that reason in the half-century since its discovery. Gardner provides the necessary corrective, pointing out its hindsight construction of a dramatic break of Mani with the baptist community of his youth and the immediate launching of his new religion, counter to numerous clues in the content of the codex itself that Mani operated more as a reformer and schismatic at first, and the emergence of 'Manichaeism' occurred more gradually.

When it came to the last months of Mani's life and his martyrdom, it is only to be expected that these events would be stylized into something of a 'stations of the cross'. Indeed, explicit comparison to the death of Jesus deeply penetrated commemorations of Mani's demise. Yet, scholars have

confidently spoken of the itineraries of his last travels as historical and established. Gardner breaks this reconstruction down into its constituent parts, rearranges it according to new sources and fresh readings of older sources, and comes to novel conclusions about where Mani was coming from, and under what conditions, in the final period of his life. Even the correlation of the twenty-six days of the annual Manichaean fast with the actual time of Mani's trial and imprisonment runs into difficulties, as Gardner demonstrates how this term does not correspond with expected key events in the narrative dramas and poetry concerning these events. Gardner also finds the quite regal conditions reported for Mani's death, in the company of key disciples, and providing instructions for carrying on to the community, implausibly convenient, despite their specificity and verisimilitude.

The sort of critical analysis Gardner offers in the following pages is not completely without precedent, of course. A number of scholars have chipped away at the legendary edifice, pointing out parallels in the saintly lives of other figures, exposing the formulaic nature of key narratives. But I think it fair to say that no one has gone so far as Gardner in questioning even basic elements of what we have accepted as established fact about Mani. Very few if any have worked with such a wide range of sources. A reader is well served by the careful surveying of issues and evidence that Gardner offers, and will get up to speed on all of the pertinent sources far more quickly and thoroughly than from any other monograph or article on this subject. Gardner applies his caustic to the legendary edifice and describes much of it melting away. What survives may or may not be purely historical, but freed from its legendary matrix it has a good chance of supplying the relatively secure points in the historical life of Mani. Since that life will forever remain fragmentary, this book – with its cautious suggestions and eschewal of neatly harmonized accounts – may be as close to the historical Mani as we will ever get.

Jason BeDuhn
Northern Arizona University

Preface

When I first became interested in Manichaeism and started to study it my approach was through ‘gnosticism’ and what I had been taught were the wilder fringes of early Christian literature. My focus was on texts and teachings, especially the fantastical worlds of gods and demons; and it took time before I began to think about practice, ethics and the social context. Only much later did I turn to historiography; then finally and quite recently to the Mani-biography. When Erica Hunter approached me in 2014 regarding the Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion of 2016, in her role as Head of the Department of Religions and Philosophies at SOAS, I was excited. This seemed an ideal opportunity to follow up a new enthusiasm, and one very relevant to the series’ rubric of ‘Comparative Religion’. In his life Mani travelled through Mesopotamia, Persia and even to India; he interacted with the sages and religious communities of the early Sasanian empire; he played a crucial role in the development of the actual idea of world religions and to attitudes about their multiplicity in human society and history. This book will explain something of this, of my own fascination and the path I have taken to arrive here. It is my belief that certain fundamental issues in our modern understanding of the life of Mani, taken commonly to be true, need to be rethought and on occasion rejected. My purpose is to bring together a good number of themes and topics on which I have been working in recent years, in the hope that they be found fruitful for future scholarly research.

The four chapters of this book are lightly revised and expanded versions of the lectures I gave in London during the week of 30 May to 2 June 2016. The three appendices are there to fill out some topics of interest subsidiary to the principal theme. The lectures were mostly prepared during March and April of that year, firstly in Fowey (Cornwall) where I was distracted by spring weather and glorious walks along the coastline; and then in Kirkwall (Orkney) where it seemed I was plunged back into winter storms, snow and rain. I dedicate the book to my closest friend and partner Jay Johnston, who encouraged me in the writing and shared both

the daffodils and the wild winds. The width of her knowledge and the generosity of her scholarship are inspirational. The book itself was put together a year later in Thirroul (New South Wales), in the midst of teaching at the University of Sydney and with the resources of work and home to hand. Final revisions pre-publication have been made while on sabbatical in 2019 hosted by the Institute of Iranian Studies at St Andrews University, a time of calm and reflection and good company.

The contents of the book cross over multiple areas on which I am currently researching and writing, and borrow from a number of discrete but related projects that reflect my interests at this time. Consequently, certain sections overlap with material I have presented elsewhere, some published or soon to be published in other formats. These include near-duplicate paragraphs here and there, with occasional longer passages that may paraphrase or intersect with a course of argument over several pages. The more obvious of these should be acknowledged, but note that similar wording will also have been utilised elsewhere in my own writing from time to time. For comments on Mani's background and especially his supposed father Patticius (in Chapter 2), see I. Gardner and L. Rasouli-Narimani, 'Paṭīg and Pattikios in the Manichaean Sources', in *Manichaeism East and West*, eds S. N. C. Lieu, E. C. D. Hunter, E. Morano and N. A. Pedersen, *Analecta Manichaica I* (Brepols, Turnhout, 2017), 82–100. My especial thanks to Leyla Rasouli-Narimani for our many enjoyable discussions and detailed co-readings of those Middle Iranian fragments of Manichaean church history that have informed much of my recent research, the influence of which can be found across this book. For Mani's audiences with King Shapur (Chapter 2), see I. Gardner, 'The Final Ten Chapters', in I. Gardner, J. BeDuhn and P. Dilley, *Mani at the Court of the Persian Kings. Studies on the Chester Beatty Kephalaia Codex* (Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2015), 75–97. For work on the Apostle's last days, the sources and his journeys (Chapter 4), see I. Gardner, 'Mani's Last Days', in *Mani at the Court of the Persian Kings*, 159–208. I returned to some of the same material in I. Gardner, 'Did Mani Travel to Armenia?', a paper read at the *Iran and the Caucasus* Conference held to celebrate its 20-year anniversary in Aghveran, in October 2016 and now published in *Iran and the Caucasus*, 22 (2018): 341–352; my expenses were funded by a Kerkyasharian and Kayikian Fund for Armenian Studies grant. For the question of dualism (Appendix A), see I. Gardner, 'Dualism in Mani and Manichaeism', in *Dualismes. Doctrines religieuses et traditions philosophiques*, eds F. Jourdan and A. Vasiliu, *Chōra. Revue d'études anciennes et médiévales* (Editura Polirom, Paris, 2015), 417–436; it was first read as a paper in Paris, in November 2013, with my thanks to Fabienne Jourdan

for the invitation to join the LABEX RESMed research seminar at the Sorbonne. For the arrival of Manichaeism in Egypt (Chapter 2) and the community at ancient Kellis (Appendix B), see I. Gardner, 'The Manichaean Mission in Egypt', research first presented in Göttingen, in December 2014; my thanks to Bernhard Neuschäfer for the invitation to join the SAPERE colloquium on Alexander of Lycopolis; the paper is to be published in German in the forthcoming volume devoted to the philosopher's important account of the religion. Parts of the above and related research on the Mani-biography were also presented in Paris, in June 2015, at the workshop on religious controversy organised by M. Timuş and F. Ruani; with forthcoming publication of a version of the same paper in English. For the Chester Beatty *Kephalaia* and the 'Jesus-book' (Appendix C), a paper on this topic was first read at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in San Antonio, November 2016; my thanks to Dylan Burns for the invitation to speak at the session on Manichaeism organised for the Nag Hammadi and Gnosticism programme.

The broader concerns and direction of my research as represented in this book make me indebted to many friends and colleagues. I will not attempt any exhaustive list, which would cover a large number of persons working across Manichaean studies and related areas, papyrology, Coptic, the Dakhleh Oasis Project and so on. Please be assured that I know well how much I owe to you all. However, it would be remiss of me not to mention by name Jason BeDuhn and Paul Dilley, for our close work and companionship on the Chester Beatty *Kephalaia* project that has so informed much of my recent research; Zsuzsanna Gulácsi, for her generous lending of many of the wonderful slides and images I used to illustrate my Jordan lectures in 2016; Erica Hunter, all at SOAS and the audience in London, who made the event such a pleasure. I am truly grateful to you all.

I am also pleased to acknowledge my Department of Studies in Religion, the School of Literature, Art and Media and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Sydney for their support, time-release and the use of resources necessary for the preparation of this book. Many thanks to Giselle Bader for assistance with formatting and proofreading. Funding from the Australian Research Council has greatly aided my work over many years. The professionalism of Michael Sharp and his colleagues at Cambridge University Press has been much appreciated.

Iain Gardner

Thirroul, May 2017–Anstruther, February 2019

CHAPTER I

Introduction to the Many Lives of Mani Inter-Religious Polemic and Scholarly Controversy

Mani, a third-century C.E. preacher, healer and public sage, lived at a pivotal point as regards both time and place for the development of many of the major religious traditions of the ancient world. In his life he interacted and debated with leaders of the rapidly developing Judaeo-Christian tradition, the varied gnostic sects, with Iranian religions such as Mazdayasnianism and those of India including Buddhism. The religion he founded spread from north Africa to south China and lasted for over a thousand years. Yet Manichaeism may be claimed as the only major worldwide religion to have completely died out. The memory of its founder, its teachings and rituals, was in good part lost until a spectacular series of discoveries over the last century began to transform our knowledge of the community, and its crucial role as a conduit for the spread of religious traditions along the trade routes of Eurasia.

The third-century teacher known as Mani has been praised, worshipped, caricatured, vilified, invented and reinvented. For his followers he was Lord Mani, the Apostle of Light, the Spirit of Truth, our God; for his opponents, he was that maniac, the arch-heretic and the vessel of evil. Each of these terms could easily be the subject of an elaborate disquisition: The meaning of apostleship; the recurring theme of the coming of the 'paraclete' in world religions; the complex etymologies and elaborate punning upon Mani's name across languages from Greek to Chinese. I will expand on many of these points in the chapters that follow; but the heat of religious polemic is only a starting-point. What I am really interested to explore here is the continuing subjective character of this historiography; how we as scholars not only inherit the discourse about truth and error but have tried to write our biographies of Mani when driven by chance discoveries and the fashion of the time, even as mediated through research funding and publication contracts and our precious academic employment opportunities. The search for Mani has been an obsession of mine ever since I first discovered the joy of research as a young graduate student now

almost forty years ago; and, since subjectivity is my theme, let me introduce the topic with something of my personal story.

Manichaean Studies is a rather small company of specialists. There is no obvious career-path or advantage in this work, for the topic falls between or to the side of established subjects of research. The required training is difficult and substantial, yet the details are often labelled esoteric. One needs to be charmed and invested. Yes, one can make a case for the religion's pivotal role between east and west, its passage along the trade routes of Eurasia and as a conduit for the spread of religious concepts, symbols and tales. We can argue that it was the Manichaean elect who brought the story of the Buddha to Europe; perhaps it was they who first took the worship of Jesus to China. It may be that Manichaeism is the vital link that in its emphasis upon the apostle and the book and the heavenly messenger leads from Judaism and Christianity to Islam. What I can say is that these themes of cross-fertilisation and influence have always fascinated me, and in them I can justifiably be placed as a person of my own time and romantic imagining: This is a field where you can traverse from ancient Alexandria to early modern Fujian, detour into Indian religions, follow byways of spirituality and vegetarianism, research a plethora of exotic gods, heavens, mountain sages and desert monasteries.

In truth, Manichaean studies has become dominated by textual work and there is much technical research in philology, papyrology and codicology. The reasons are clear: Advances in the topic have been driven for the past century (and earlier) by remarkable finds of new manuscripts, and many of these have pushed the boundaries of the knowledge of the time. There have been almost unknown languages and scripts, new dialects, some of the largest papyrus codices ever recovered and also the very smallest. In their way the discoveries have been spectacular, but their value not always easy to convey. Much of the work has been taken up with reconstructing, editing, just trying to read and understand writings that have frequently been unexpected and outside of the norm in one way or another. Here lies some of the fascination, but also the challenge. To work seriously across the subject you have to deal as well as you can with a bewildering array of languages, fragmentary remnants of otherwise unknown compositions, and a great deal of rather technical detail that is not always well-explained to those not specifically trained in the relevant expertise. Despite the manuscript finds and decades of serious study, many of the fundamental works required for a knowledge of the religion, including almost all of the actual canonical scriptures of Mani himself, remain lost or reduced to tattered fragments. Basic questions remain

unanswered. I must admit that this too is all part of what drives my own obsession: This is a discipline where new things can be learnt, where careful research can bring the most unexpected illumination, where there is a real sense of being the first person to read something for a thousand years.

Academic historiography in this field (that is, Manichaean Studies in the Western world) was born out of the confessional polemics of the Reformation. Catholic apologists accused the reformers of being the direct intellectual and spiritual heirs of medieval heresies such as the Waldensians and the Cathars. The latter group were themselves perceived to have a direct genealogy from the Manichaeism of the early church, very familiar to all sides of the struggle through the writings of Augustine of Hippo. In the famous words of the *Confessions*¹ he had told how he himself

... fell among men mad with pride, extremely carnal and talkative, in whose mouths were the snares of the devil, smeared with a sticky mixture of the syllables of your name and that of our lord Jesus Christ and of the paraclete our comforter, the holy spirit. These names never left their lips, but were no more than empty sound and the rattling of the tongue as their hearts were devoid of any truth whatsoever. They kept saying: 'Truth, truth'; and they had a lot to tell me about it, but truth was never in them.

Claim and counter-claim to the meaning of the gospel, and the familiar tropes of heresy, dualism, the dangers of pride and the evil of this world; this could all be replayed in the contemporary arena with the strident preacher taking shape as Mani himself renewed (*Manichaius redivivus*).

The father of early modern Manichaean studies was Isaac de Beausobre.² Born into a reformed family in 1659, he fled France in 1685 and went first to the Netherlands and then to Berlin. In Brandenburg he became prominent both within and without the Huguenot population, and a year after he died in 1738 the second volume of his remarkable research on Mani and Manichaeism was published in French in

¹ Augustine, *Confessiones* III, 6.10; translation adapted from I. Gardner and S. N. C. Lieu, *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004), 130–131.

² See G. G. Stroumsa, 'The Birth of Manichaean Studies', in *A New Science: The Discovery of Religion in the Age of Reason* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA and London, 2010), 113–123; *ibid.*, 'Isaac de Beausobre Revisited: The Birth of Manichaean Studies', in *Studia Manichaica. IV. Internationaler Kongress zum Manichäismus, Berlin, 14.–18. Juli 1997*, eds R. E. Emmerick, W. Sundermann and P. Zieme (Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 2000), 601–612; also see J. Ries, 'Introduction aux études manichéennes. Quatre siècles de recherches', *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, 33 (1957): 453–482.

Amsterdam.³ The study of ancient heresies became one of the stalwarts of Protestant historiography. The first monograph on Manichaeism had actually appeared in 1578 by the Lutheran Cyriacus Spangenberg. At the turn of the seventeenth century the importance of the *Acts of Archelaus*, a fictionalised debate between Mani and a Christian bishop at the borders of the Roman empire, a text to which we will return repeatedly, had been discovered and demonstrated by Caesar Baronius.⁴ Other anti-Manichaean writings followed, often late-antique sources from Egypt and Syria, such as by Serapion of Thmuis and Titus of Bostra (published 1608).⁵

De Beausobre's work was in many ways still framed as an apology for Protestantism. He comments that he had been led to the study of Manichaeism though his own interest in the origins of the Reformation, antecedents of which he had identified in those medieval sectarians who had themselves once been accused of the ancient heresy. He was therefore anxious to free the Manichaeans of false accusations and to understand their beliefs and motivations. The principal thrust of his argument, on which much of its value lies, was to present Mani as an original thinker who sought the worship of the one God within the context of those religious traditions to which he was heir. Although Manichaeism remained a Christian heresy, this was a new approach to the extent that it rested on a rational and in its own way critical and exhaustive examination of the data available.

Guy Stroumsa has argued that the dramatic step forward marked by de Beausobre's research was prepared by two concurrent developments at the very start of the eighteenth century. The first was the new Protestant interest in apocryphal literature, exemplified by the pietist Gottfried Arnold who translated the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitiones* and saw the early 'heretics' as witnesses to a purer and primitive Christianity fighting the process of Catholic corruption.⁶ The second was 'Orientalism', especially the birth of the modern study of the religions of ancient Iran that was attendant upon the learning and publications of Thomas Hyde.⁷ The trajectory of study represented here can then be traced through the church

³ I. de Beausobre, *Histoire critique de Manichée et du manichéisme, Tome second* (J. Frederic Bernard, Amsterdam, 1739).

⁴ Caesar Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, II (Rome, 1590).

⁵ Henricus Canisius, *Antiquae Lectiones*, V (Ingolstadt, 1608, with Latin translation by the Spanish Jesuit Franz de Torres); see R. P. Casey, 'The Text of the Anti-Manichaean Writings of Titus of Bostra and Serapion of Thmuis', *Harvard Theological Review*, 21 (1928): 97–111.

⁶ G. Arnold, *Unparteyische Kirchen- und Ketzer-Historie* (Thomas Fritsch, Franckfurt am Mayn, 1698–1700).

⁷ T. Hyde, *Historia Religionis Veterum Persarum* (Oxford, 1700).

historian Johann Lorenz von Mosheim, who finally detached the study of Manichaeism from the conflict between Catholics and Protestants,⁸ to the great work of Ferdinand Christian Baur in 1831 that (to quote Nils Arne Pedersen) is ‘generally regarded as the second and real basis of modern scholarship on Manichaeism’.⁹ It was the tendency towards emphasising the non-Christian elements that was progressed by Baur, who now proposed Buddhism and Iranian religion as the main sources for Mani’s inspiration. The way was open for Manichaeism to be freed from the category of heresy and presented as a major religion in its own right.

It was progress across multiple fronts in textual studies and philology that continued to drive the further development of Manichaeology. Through the twentieth century repeated new and unexpected manuscript discoveries enabled us to hear the voices of Mani’s followers themselves from locations as diverse as a Romano-Byzantine village in the Dakhleh Oasis, monasteries of medieval Central Asia and temples on the south China coast of Fujian. The latest discoveries include a large hanging scroll with an intricate depiction of the multi-layered universe, paint and gold on silk belonging to an anonymous collector in Japan.¹⁰ What was once categorised within the doctrinal controversies of the early Christian church has been revealed to have had a rich and long-lasting history across the trade routes of Eurasia, with a pivotal role in the transmission of religious ideas between east and west. It is now more of a ‘Silk Road’ religion than an early Christian heresy. The complexity and breadth of the manuscript tradition is itself a kind of curious reflection of the teachings of the religion. Mani stressed that this revelation must be made known in all languages, among all cultures and to all peoples. There was a conscious effort not just to translate but to engage with a multiplicity of conceptual worlds.

It has been discovered that the Manichaean community developed its own rich historiographical tradition, seeking to preserve a record of divine guidance and protection as illustrated in the life of the Apostle, the grateful acceptance of his message and the wonderful growth of the

⁸ J. L. von Mosheim, *De Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum Magnum Commentarii* (C. F. Weygand, Helmstadii, 1753).

⁹ F. C. Baur, *Das Manichäische Religionssystem nach den Quellen neu untersucht und entwickelt* (C. F. Oslander, Tübingen, 1831); following here N. A. Pedersen, *Demonstrative Proof in Defence of God. A Study of Titus of Bostra’s Contra Manichaeos. The Work’s Sources, Aims, and Relation to Its Contemporary Theology* (Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2004), 69–78.

¹⁰ Z. Gulácsi and J. BeDuhn, ‘Picturing Mani’s Cosmology: An Analysis of Doctrinal Iconography on a Manichaean Hanging Scroll from 13th/14th-Century Southern China’, *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, 25, 2011 (2015): 55–105.

religion despite the many onslaughts of evil. Not only was the revelation of truth safeguarded in Mani's writings but instances of especial favour (demonstrated in miracles, visions and sudden conversions) were given credence by the quoting of sacred scriptures and the words or example of prior apostles in support of their veracity. The testimony of tradents was carefully noted down and provided to authenticate important episodes and events.

Mani was brought up within the Aramaic-speaking population of early Sasanian Mesopotamia. He must have been born a few years prior to the establishment of this new Persian dynasty by Ardashir I in 224 CE, consequent to the decline of the Parthian empire and overthrow of the Arsacid royal house. Mani's maturity coincided with the accession to the throne of Shapur I ca. 240 CE and the years of his apostolate came to be aligned in the memory of the community with that great king's long reign. The story of his martyrdom was played out in the courts of Shapur's successors, Hormizd I and Bahrām I, in the 270s CE. In the three following chapters we will take a close look firstly at Mani's background and early life; then at the years of his maturity and mission in the world; finally at his last days, trial, imprisonment and death. Each of these stages were consciously patterned as occurring before, during and after the rule of Shapur, so that the fortunes of king and apostle came to proceed in tandem. Our approach will also be historiographical, but without theological or evangelical intent such devices will require constant careful interrogation.

In this first and preliminary chapter it is helpful to take an overview of the subject. I want to think about what I have called 'the many lives of Mani', the multiple ways in which he has been depicted, imagined, presented and indeed utilised for the secondary purposes of others. What did he look like? This may seem an odd question as regards a figure from late antiquity, but there is a famous description in the polemical *Acts of Archelaus*. The setting is this: Mani has heard of the reputation of the pious Marcellus, a rich and distinguished Christian citizen of the city of Karchar in Roman Mesopotamia. He himself is 'on the run' having escaped from imprisonment by the King of Persia, and sees an opportunity whereby if he can convert Marcellus he can through the latter's standing and fame seize the entire province for his teaching. He therefore sends first a disciple of his own, with an introductory letter, and then crosses the border accompanied by twenty-two young men and women of his elect:¹¹

¹¹ *Acts of Archelaus* XIV, 3; Hegemonius, *Acta Archelai (Acts of Archelaus)*, M. Vermes, trans., S. N. C. Lieu, intro. and comm. (Brepols, Turnhout, 2001), 58.

When he saw Manes, Marcellus was first astonished at the garments he was wearing. For he wore a kind of shoe which is generally known commonly as the 'trisolium' [i.e. a platform-shoe], and a multi-coloured cloak, of a somewhat ethereal appearance, while in his hand he held a very strong staff made of ebony-wood. He carried a Babylonian book under his left arm, and he had covered his legs with trousers of different colours, one of them scarlet, the other coloured leek-green. His appearance was like that of an old Persian magician or warlord.

There are obvious features here: Mani as the charlatan, as the maverick, as the outsider, as the object of ridicule. He is depicted as a Persian magus¹² and a striking contrast both to the pious Marcellus and the steadfast bishop Archelaus.

When four distinguished men of the city of Karchar are appointed to be judges in the ensuing debate there is no doubt where the final decision will fall. But the *Acts of Archelaus* is a fascinating work because it always conveys more information than one would suppose. Authentic details are cleverly woven into the fabric of the text at every stage. Mani is allowed to introduce himself as the chosen Apostle, the paraclete foretold by Jesus who will convict the world of its sin (John 16:8). Why this surprising discussion of his shoes? The one thing we do hear from other sources about his physical body is that he was in some way crippled, or at least with a deformity of the foot. Ibn al-Nadīm recounts this tradition twice and notes earlier authorities.¹³ It would be easy to dismiss this as an obvious slur. John Reeves cites a Jewish polemical motif that branded false prophets with lameness or orthopaedic deformity. However, I am not so sure.

There is an unusual episode in the sub-canonical text known as the *Kephalaia*, entitled *Concerning the Man who is Ugly in his Body but Beautiful [in his Soul]*.¹⁴ The settings for many of the chapters in this work have a formulaic character; but on occasion there is something different, a reminiscence of a person or event that suggests an authentic tradition. This time we find Mani, 'the Apostle' (the fact that he is very rarely named is something I will return to later), in the midst of a congregation of his leading disciples and prominent citizens. One of the elect

¹² The description recalls known images of the priests of Mithras, e.g. H.-C. Puech, *Le Manichéisme. Son fondateur – Sa doctrine*, Civilisations du Sud (S. A. E. P., Paris, 1949), 22. The depiction of Mani as heresiarch throughout the *Acta* is also influenced by tropes associated with Simon Magus.

¹³ The texts are cited with further references and discussion by J. C. Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism* (Equinox, Sheffield, 2011), 36–37 (n. 115) and 39 (n. 134).

¹⁴ Chapter 83 in H. J. Polotsky and A. Böhlig, eds, *Kephalaia (I): 1. Hälfte* (W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 1940), 200, 9–204, 23. This is the first volume of the work in its only extant redaction, i.e. the Coptic codex from Medinet Madi entitled *The Chapters of the Teacher*.

enters, ugly and deformed, and everyone laughs in ridicule; but Mani takes him to himself, gives him the kiss of greeting and makes him to sit beside him. Why do you laugh about this man in whom the light mind and faith dwells?

This is a very Manichaean theme. In letters between believers they talk of their most luminous souls.¹⁵ It is the essence of a most extraordinary vision of hell on earth (the dualistic basis is elaborated in Appendix A). All the animals of the world around us are themselves ultimate products of five demonic realms that have existed from before the beginning of time, namely, bipeds, quadrupeds, creatures of the air and of water, reptiles or crawling beasts. This world is fighting, snarling, scratching, biting, tearing flesh and sinew and bone. These are creatures of darkness, just as we are ourselves (the humans or bipeds) sexually generated from a cannibalistic orgy led by the chief archons and which brought forth Adam and Eve. And all these beasts are male and female, so that their lust and coupling and endless giving birth is itself the very nature of evil. It is no wonder that the Manichaeans prized above all plant life, especially the sweet and scented fruits and flowers where the entangled divine has its greatest concentration in our world. These are not just symbols of purity, they are in very truth the stuff of god hanging on every tree, weeping, being gnashed and torn by the teeth of those demonic creatures that roam this world, guzzled down these gaping throats. The suffering, living divine light in fruits and vegetables is the very same as our own most luminous souls. It is by prayerful partaking of the former that we grow the latter in ourselves, become more ethereal, and discard the stink and flesh from our hateful bodies.

I do not know if Mani was himself crippled; but one of the major projects I have been working on for several years is to try and recover as much as possible of Mani's own letters. We know that these were collected by the community and formed one book of the canonical scriptures, that is *The Epistles*. Fragments and quotations survive in a wide variety of languages, ranging from Latin and Greek through Coptic, Arabic, various Middle Iranian languages including Parthian and Sogdian, even Uighur and Chinese. Some of these may be apocryphal or pseudepigraphic, but there is genuine content here and a characteristic tone that one can come to recognise (and of course also imitate).

These survivals demonstrate the widespread and continuing use of the literature, as later believers preserved these writings not just as models for their own communication (i.e. by borrowing elements of epistolary style,

¹⁵ P. Kellis I Gr. 63, 26–27.

salutations, commendations and so on in their letters to each other) but as something on which to build their lives and social relations.¹⁶ Nevertheless, it is a substantial task to try and collect and sort all this material together, especially as much of it has never been edited (notably the Coptic *Epistles* codex from the Medinet Madi library, only remnants of which now survive in Berlin and Warsaw). There is the added problem of the use of letters ascribed to Mani in the religious polemic of the fourth and fifth centuries. For example, in the *Acts of Archelaus* we have already seen how Mani announced his arrival in Karchar by first sending a letter to Marcellus. The text is provided in the *Acta* but has long been supposed to be spurious. However, it can be demonstrated that it in fact utilises authentic elements of Mani's epistolary style.¹⁷

At Ismant el-Kharab in the Dakhleh oasis of the eastern Sahara, an Australian-led archaeological team recovered in the early 1990s a large cache of papyrus documents in Greek and Coptic from the fourth century CE. This was the site of ancient Kellis, and it came as a total surprise to all concerned to find that a good number of the texts showed evidence of having been written by both Manichaean elect and catechumens. Most of the latter were personal and business letters representing the daily lives of the villagers, many involved in small-scale trade, textile manufacture and transport to the Nile valley (the details are explained and discussed further in Appendix B). What was remarkable was the first opportunity to contextualise Manichaean life and practice from late antiquity in its social, cultural, economic and even material setting. The houses of the villagers could be excavated, their possessions examined, the fabric of relations between different communities reconstructed. The same streets could be walked. Details of garments and pots provided in the household accounts, juxtaposed to discussion of the copying of psalms or the sharing of books in the letters, were made tangible by the presence of the very same categories of items found in the mud-brick buildings. Although the actual mass of Manichaean literature in the strict sense recovered was not itself great, what was more valuable in these circumstances was the way that the religion could be observed integrated (and sometimes hardly visible) within the most everyday of events, matters of health and family, squabbles and gossip, legal contracts, loans and the minutiae of village life.

¹⁶ See I. Gardner, 'Once More on Mani's *Epistles* and Manichaean Letter-Writing', *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum*, 17 (2013): 291–314.

¹⁷ I. Gardner, 'Mani's Letter to Marcellus: Fact and Fiction in the *Acta Archelai* Revisited', in J. BeDuhn and P. Mirecki, eds, *Frontiers of Faith: Encounters between Christianity and Manichaeism in the Acts of Archelaus* (Brill, Leiden, 2007), 33–58.

As regards Mani's *Epistles*: firstly, remnants recovered from different productions (i.e. codices) evidence their widespread utility in this context; secondly, in the personal letters we can read direct reference by named individuals to their personal use of *The Epistles*; thirdly, and in some ways most interestingly, in these individuals' letters we see how the thread of Mani's words and phrasing has been internalised by the believers and replicated in their own productions. This has opened up a new area of study, in that now we as scholars have the tools to begin to identify and correctly categorise other letters written by members of the community in Romano-Byzantine Egypt. Many thousands of papyrus letters survive from sites such as Oxyrhynchus, but prior to the Dakhleh discoveries there was hardly the means to identify any Manichaean authorship if it existed. This is because it is often betrayed in rather slight turns of phrase and terminology that largely overlaps with the broader Christian transformation of society that occurred at the same time as the Manichaean mission and success in the Mediterranean world. It has become possible to reassign previously known letters, categorised as Christian by their first editors but sometimes with features that had caused substantial scholarly debate in the past. Now these problematic features can be understood and explained; further, our understanding of the place and practice of the religion in the cities and countryside of late-antique Egypt has been considerably broadened and this remains an ongoing task. Rather similarly, a fragment of a religious hymn in Greek from Oxyrhynchus, long ascribed to Melito of Sardis' otherwise lost treatise *On Truth*, has been convincingly identified as a Greek Manichaean hymn and joins an expanding corpus of such literature in an increasing variety of formats and productions.¹⁸ There is still more to be achieved until the presence of the community becomes fully visible in the built environment as preserved, its members coloured within the fullness of their social and cultural lives, and identifiable even in the cemeteries.

The newly found or recognised documents give a clear picture of the movement of groups of elect up and down the Nile valley. There was a network of local believers or catechumens to house and support them. In both the archive from ancient Kellis, and letters of recommendation from Oxyrhynchus, we read the names of some of these bands and their leaders, and the localities where they were. Thus in P. Oxy. XXXI 2603 Paul writes (lines 25–28):¹⁹

¹⁸ G. S. Smith, 'A Manichaean Hymn at Oxyrhynchus: A Reevaluation of P. Oxy. 2074', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 24 (2016): 81–97.

¹⁹ The translation follows that of J. H. Harrop, 'A Christian Letter of Commendation', *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 48 (1962): 134; see his notes at 135–136 on the text of lines 27f. and the difficulty of translating here the term *idloi*.

Receive them therefore in love, as friends, for they are not catechumens but belong to the company of Ision and Nikolaos . . .

The Greek expression utilised here has an interesting parallel in one of the Coptic letters, and may suggest a characteristic usage of the Manichaean community. In this instance, greetings are sent ‘from those of Apa L (ysimachos) . . .’.²⁰ I think that the implications of this are clarified by a statement in another letter about the young boy Piene who is sent to join the leader of the church in Egypt, the Teacher: ‘Their body is set up . . .’. Each band of elect forms a spiritual *sōma* or ‘body’ with their leader at its head, a microcosm of Mani and his church. When Piene is selected to ‘follow after’ the Teacher he has taken the first steps to join that new way of being in, but not of, the world.

This raises an interesting question. The impression given is of constant travel, devoted entirely to religious work. The elect could not prepare their own food, let alone engage in farming or commerce of any kind. The lifestyle, focused solely on the world above as their true home, is made clear in Mani’s *Letter to Mesene on the Two Bodies* where he says:²¹

We and you [pl.] remember and desire to go to our own place. (Because) you have accepted this wisdom, truly you will stay (only) one lifetime; with clothes for one year, and breaking-fast and a meal for (only) one day, and with only (brief?) rest, with . . .

It is through *The Epistles* that we come closest to the essence of the Manichaean community as a living practice, and I suspect that they are more important for an understanding of this than Mani’s other religious scriptures with their often abstruse details of the divine powers and the macro-history of the cosmos. I reiterate that most of his scriptures are lost. Not one of them survives in its entirety, and so in good part we have to hypothesise about content or follow a difficult trail of clues. But from what we do know and where we have evidence, the fascination of *The Epistles* is to read the Apostle at his most personal, instructive, practical; it is here that he is organising and encouraging and admonishing behaviour. He draws repeatedly on his personal experience, and we find him returning to the physical pains of his body:²²

²⁰ P. Kellis VII Copt. 72, l. 35.

²¹ Cited in the Middle Persian text M73 1r; see M. Boyce, *A Reader in Manichaean Middle Persian and Parthian* (Brill, Leiden, 1975), text dp (4).

²² Two passages from P. Kellis VI Copt. 53, a small-format codex containing a selection from Mani’s *Epistles*. The second comes from the end of the letter *On the Ten Words*, but it is not known whether the first belongs to the same composition or to another.

[. . . I was] very sick in my body. I did not find the way to spend a single hour to sit and hear it; nor also was I able to straighten out [?], because I was greatly pained. Indeed, even when I was listening to the words that you [sg.] wrote for me in that letter all my limbs were slack. The (words) were made more painful for me by the anguish of my body.

Indeed, my loved one, I was obliged to write a mass of words for you at that time; but it is God himself who knows that these little ones, whom you sent, came and found me in what pain! For I was sick in my body, and in want to come forth from it, as I had no ease in it at all. For all of thirty years to the day I was never sick like this occasion.

While *The Epistles* display the human Mani, possibly even providing evidence of a physical affliction that could confirm later reports of a deformity, it is no surprise that devotion also elevated his person and appearance with miraculous and even divine qualities. The community treasured his status and developed a sub-genre of traditions concerning his appearances at the Sasanian courts and his dialogues with the kings of the realm. These stories became popular in the community and multiplied, with wondrous tales of visions, levitations and healings.

Ibn al-Nadīm tells how Shapur had originally planned to execute Mani, but was overcome by awe when he met the Apostle for there were on his shoulders what seemed like two lamps shedding light. I have recently recovered what I suppose to be a parallel tradition from the Dublin *Kephalaia* codex concerning his first appearance at the court of Shapur I.²³ The setting is a debate to determine who is the wisest in the empire. When Mani is introduced to challenge him, the great sage Iodasphes asks: ‘Who is this person with such a glorious likeness? Everyone drinks, but he does not drink with them.’ He is told: ‘It is the righteous Manichaios, the Apostle of God, to whom the all has been revealed.’ His face is beautiful, it is ‘transformed’. These are classic docetic traits that serve to heighten the otherworldliness of the holy one from the murk around them.

This codex is entitled *The Chapters of the Wisdom of My Lord Manichaios*. It is the second volume of the only extant redaction of this massive work, approximately a thousand pages in a Coptic edition written ca. 400 CE. The codex has never been edited or published until now,²⁴

²³ From chapter 338. There is some background to this passage provided in I. Gardner, ‘The Final Ten Chapters’, in I. Gardner, J. BeDuhn and P. C. Dilley, *Mani at the Court of the Persian Kings. Studies on the Chester Beatty Kephalaia Codex* (Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2015), 75–97.

²⁴ The first fascicle of the *editio princeps* has been published just as the present book was being finalised, with more to follow shortly; see I. Gardner, J. BeDuhn and P. C. Dilley, *The Chapters of the Wisdom of My Lord Mani. Part III: Pages 342–442 (Chapters 321–347)* (Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2018).

although it was sold to the Irish-American collector A. Chester Beatty over eighty-five years ago. This is because the condition of the work is truly challenging: A mass of fibres, broken papyrus and faded or smeared text. This is the second major project I am currently engaged in, together with two American colleagues Jason BeDuhn and Paul Dilley.

The volume contains a great deal of entirely new material. Its forthcoming edition and translation will mark a major step forward for the discipline. Where there are parallels to episodes in the codex they are in good part to be found among the text fragments in Middle Iranian languages recovered from Central Asia in the early twentieth century. One thing that is transformative about this is that, until very recently, the understanding of Manichaean expansion and the traditions of the church in the west has proceeded in a certain isolation from its spread and success along the Silk Road to the east.

It is worth considering the reasons for this for a moment. In the first place, European scholarship in the field was built upon the framework of church history, heresiology and church polemics from the early period to the Reformation. Mani and Manichaeism were understood primarily as a Christian heresy and one that belonged to the Patristic period. The recovery of the medieval history of the religion became apparent through those Islamicate authors that were made accessible to Western scholars in the nineteenth century; then followed a knowledge of its success in Central and East Asia that was only gradually uncovered in the twentieth century. These developments were in many ways totally unexpected.

Secondly, there is a disciplinary barrier. Even to the present day it is difficult for scholars to traverse from classical languages (Greek and Latin), to those of the eastern church vernaculars and Islam (Coptic, Syriac and Arabic), then to Iranian studies, to Uighur, and finally to Chinese. Most Manichaeologists are specialists in one or two of these areas.

Thirdly, although Manichaeism originated in Mesopotamia, and the Sasanian empire was both its birthplace and the church's seat of authority for centuries, the great majority of what has been learnt about the religion belongs either to expansion to the west or to the east. These developed in different cultural worlds. The core texts of the religion, especially Mani's own writings, remain largely lost. Consequently, it has become easy to treat (for example) the Coptic Manichaean psalms with their Christian cultural presentation in virtual isolation from the Chinese hymns with a Buddhist framework.

This separation of the two 'wings' of the religion has been a major problem; but it is now beginning to break down. Careful scholarship is

starting to recover a core heritage of texts and practices, such as the remnants of *The Epistles* and the recent recovery of the text of the daily prayers in both Greek and various Middle Iranian languages. The Dublin *Kephalaia* codex is a remarkable further example of this process. It has become apparent that the growth of the Coptic *Kephalaia* was an evolving literary process where we can see that separate bodies of material, different ‘books’ as it were, have been added one after another and only superficially made to conform to the constraints of the genre. This stratigraphy of the text can be traced through both codices of the Coptic redaction. It is not the case that the second volume (the Chester Beatty or Dublin codex) belongs to a different production to the first (the Berlin codex), as has generally been supposed on the basis of their different titles. Rather, the redactional joins between the separate bodies of material can be identified within each volume. The penultimate ‘book’ in the Dublin codex is itself very interesting as it is a kind of gospel, where the material has been deliberately arranged to cover the life of Jesus from his advent to the open tomb (see further Appendix C).

However, by very good fortune and relevant to our present purposes, the last ‘book’ added to the collection in this Coptic redaction was a collection of traditions that had circulated in the heartland or even the east of the Sasanian empire. The cultural framework is Mazdayasnian and Buddhist rather than Judaeo-Christian. Place-names, persons, officials and festivals belong to this world, and yet – and this is absolutely astonishing – it was translated almost free of adaptation into Coptic and then circulated in the Manichaean communities of Romano-Byzantine Egypt. Now we can see that any idea of two separate wings of the community developing in isolation is an illusion. An example is the story of Mani’s audience with the King of Turan.²⁵

The first evidence for this episode was made known at the start of the twentieth century, as the Parthian text M48 was one of the first Manichaean documents from Turfan published by F. W. K. Müller. When a clear account of Mani’s journey to India was made available from the first volume of the Coptic *Kephalaia* in the 1930s (chapter 76) it was Walter Henning who sought to connect the Apostle’s travels to the east with the regions controlled by the Sasanians at the time.²⁶ Turan was a small

²⁵ I follow here (and see for further details and references) J. BeDuhn, ‘Parallels between Coptic and Iranian Kephalaia: Goundesh and the King of Touran’, in *Mani at the Court of the Persian Kings*, 52–74.

²⁶ W. B. Henning, ‘Neue Materialien zur Geschichte des Manichäismus’, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 90 (1936): 6–7.

kingdom in what is now Baluchistan, and is reported by al-Tabarī to have submitted to Ardashir, the first Sasanid king of kings. Subsequently, Werner Sundermann reconstructed the entire surviving Parthian account from two manuscripts and also used various sources to attempt to trace the Apostle's journey, first by sea from the Persian Gulf to Dēb at the mouth of the Indus and then returning via Turan. This has formed the basis of all later discussions as gradually more evidence has appeared for what was clearly a central episode in the Mani-biography. Now the new Coptic source from the Dublin *Kephalaia* codex demonstrates how the story was also known and circulated in the Manichaean communities of the Roman empire. It follows the known eastern accounts closely in details, to the extent (for example) that one can understand and even in part reconstruct the extremely fragmentary lower half of the page that recounts the famous ascent narrative. This is where a 'righteous one' is raised to the heights by progressive stages, at each of which something greater is revealed: The earth, the sun and the moon, the sphere. Further, the Coptic account preserves the crucial acknowledgement of Mani's authority and status made by the King of Turan, 'You are blessed Buddha'; although here it is combined with a more (if you want) monotheistic statement, 'You are the Apostle of God.'

What is remarkable about this account is not just the circulation of such traditions in Egypt already in the fourth century, although there are some astonishing details about what may loosely be termed Indian religions in this compilation; but the way in which the entire Mani-narrative (if I can call it that) is here presented within an east Iranian framework. In this new kephalaia-book we find the framing sequence that is known as *The Advent of the Apostle*, together with stories from prehistory and earlier cycles of apostles, presented not in a Judaeo-Christian framework of Biblical and antediluvian patriarchs such as Seth and Enosh but rather in terms of Iranian epic traditions and the successive cycles of buddhas and arhants. And then, when we come to the lifetime and travels of Mani, he is journeying through the cities and courts of the Sasanian empire, meeting its judges and princes and commenting on the festivals of a Mazdayasnian society that looks as much east to Kushan and India as west to Palmyra and Rome.

Thus, and just for example, the story of the Apostle's audience with the King of Turan occurs in chapter 323, with the ascent to the heavens and the king's declaration of Mani as the Buddha. Gathered together with this (chapters 324–325) are two short pieces that seem to have been attached to the dominant narrative during the redaction history by association; in

chapter 325 the setting is again the land of Turan. This process is very typical of the kephalaia-genre. But we can learn something about the place of the Turan narratives in the tradition of the community by looking at their wider setting in the work. Thus, preceding this sub-group at chapter 322 we find Mani in Ctesiphon during a festival, where he meets and debates with a certain Thirousak, the commander (*stratēlatēs*, an army general) of the king. The celebration is specifically said to belong to the Persians (i.e. it is what we can term Mazdayasnian) and involved the killing of a wolf. The Apostle leads the discussion about the nature of sin, killing and punishment. This may be the same festival discussed by a number of classical and Islamic sources, such as Agathias in *The Histories*²⁷ who calls it that ‘of the slaying of the evil ones’. It took place in the last month of the year at the time of lambing and focused on the killing of evil creatures (those associated with Ahriman) such as wolves.

After this chapter follows the Turan sub-group, and then at number 326 there is another lengthy narrative that we can contextualise again as Mazdayasnian. Mani is in a city where he debates this time with Adourbat or Adournabat the Judge. The name is thoroughly Iranian (Middle Persian and Parthian *ādur* ‘fire’) and the setting is specifically given as the fire-temple. The discussion will be fascinating for scholars of Zoroastrian studies as it covers priestly ritual in some considerable detail, including (for example) the numbers used of what our text calls *klados* (Greek, ‘branch’ or ‘twig’), which is clearly the *barsom* or sacred twigs. In Zoroastrianism as in Brahmanism the number varies according to ceremony, and so here again we have an instance of specific knowledge about religious practice from early Sasanian Iran preserved in a Manichaean text circulated in Coptic in fourth-to-fifth-century Egypt.

This final ‘Iranian’ kephalaia-book is a very necessary correction both to the tendency to treat the eastern and western developments of the Manichaean community in isolation, and also to privilege the Mani of Judaeo-Christian heritage in a way that makes him appear a stranger within Sasanian society. It has become common to recount how he wrote his scriptures in Aramaic and then also presented one to King Shapur in Middle Persian. We must beware of this tendency towards otherness. Some of Mani’s disciples had Iranian names, some of them had Mazdayasnian heritage and presumably some had a Buddhist background. The discovery of the Greek *Mani-Codex*, which I will discuss at more length

²⁷ Agathias, *The Histories* 2.24.10, translation by J. D. Frendo (Walter De Gruyter, Berlin and New York, 1975), 58–59.

in the next chapter, has focused attention on the Apostle's upbringing in a baptist community, often identified or at least linked to the Elchasaites, a heterodox Jewish–Christian sect.²⁸ But, just as recent studies of the 'Iranian Talmud' have reversed the long-standing idea of rabbinic isolation in Sasanian Babylonia, so we may well need to reintegrate Mani into the living context and traditions of his culture. In Chapter 4 I will discuss the prophet's last days, his trial, imprisonment and death before Bahram I at Gondēšāpūr. The passion narrative was played out at court before the princes and the elite, the chief *mōbed* and the clerics of Sasanian imperial society. We will see how the crucial question was Mani's betrayal of the law of Zarades, i.e. of Zarathushtra and a Mazdayasnian polity.

At the start of this discussion I related the account of the *Acts of Archelaus* where Mani, having escaped from the Persian king and crossed over into the Roman empire, entered the city of Karchar and presented his teaching before the leading citizens, judges and Bishop Archelaus himself. I think that this (in a certain reading) is a transposition of the defence and trial sequence at Gondēšāpūr where Archelaus has taken the place of Kartīr the chief *mōbed*. Mani is condemned by a Christian bishop and his teaching is judged according to the standards and the traditions of the church and of Roman society. It has always been a temptation in historiography to read Mani's biography in the light of one's own heritage, whether it be Christian or Chinese. But we must not forget that he appears to us with a Babylonian book under one arm, wearing scarlet and leek-green trousers.

²⁸ For a devastating critique of much recent work on Mani and the supposed Elchasaites, and a call to give proper weight to the Iranian context, see A. de Jong, 'A Quodam Persa Exstiterunt: Re-Orienting Manichaean Origins', in *Empsychoi Logoi – Religious Innovations in Antiquity: Studies in Honour of Pieter Willem van der Horst*, eds. A. Houtman, A. de Jong and M. Misset-Van de Weg (Brill, Leiden, 2008), 81–106.

Mani's Background and Early Life
Who Was He and What Did He Think He Was Doing?

The Christian tradition has regarded Mani as the arch-heretic and seducer of the faithful. His memory has been profoundly shaped by a fascinating counter-biography known as the *Acts of Archelaus*; this circulated from ca. 340 CE and dominated Western knowledge until the reading of new sources from the Islamicate world in the nineteenth century and then the recovery of texts written by the Manichaean community in the twentieth century. The most remarkable of these has been the miniature Mani-Codex written in Greek that preserves an entirely different narrative of Mani's youth and upbringing in a sectarian Jewish-Christian community of southern Mesopotamia. In this chapter I will discuss and compare these varied pictures of Mani, including topics such as his origins, name and the religious experiences that he claimed.

'Who was Mani and what did he think he was doing?' The shorthand answer is that he was an Aramaic-speaking visionary, a healer and a preacher, who lived in Sasanian Mesopotamia ca. 216–277 CE. He came from a broadly Judaeo-Christian heritage and founded the religion known as Manichaeism. In one of his best-known teachings, which survives in both Coptic and Middle Persian,¹ he explains the ten reasons why his religion is better than all others. Notable among these claimed advantages is the emphasis upon universality, that it has spread to every country and in all languages; and that its truth is fixed in divinely revealed books that Mani himself has written down, and through which the truth of all things can be learnt and will never be lost.

There are a number of problems immediately apparent with even such a summary statement. We can list some of them: Did Mani intend to found a religion? This very book is entitled 'The Founder of Manichaeism', and as a statement of what happened it is allowable; but it may very well not

¹ Thus kephalaion 151 (Coptic) and M5794 I + M5761 (Middle Persian); English translations are most easily available in Gardner and Lieu, *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire*, 109, 265–268.

have been his objective. The best-attested of all his self-designations is 'Apostle of Jesus Christ', the phrase by which he introduced himself in his many letters and also in what may be regarded as the fundamental expression of his message, the *Living Gospel*. It appears that he took Paul as his model, as one who had been directly if untimely called by the saviour Jesus. The significance of this as a starting-point should not be underplayed. Is the idea of Manichaeism as separate and superior to all other religions, including Christianity, something that developed after Mani's death as the community placed its own leader centre-stage? Now it is he who has become the saviour, lord, even 'our God'; whereas the historical man had looked to Jesus. If so, the tradition cited above about this being the best religion already bears the impress of such a reorientation. However, did Mani's self-understanding develop during his long career, so that the process was already begun? One must suppose that it did; but do we have the means to excavate his religious experience or trace the course of its trajectory? Can we really distinguish what he himself wrote from what his followers believed and taught? And what role was played by those other religious and cultural traditions, such as the Iranian and Indian, that seem to have contributed core elements to what we know as Manichaeism? I am beginning to think about a hypothesis where it is the encounter with such, and the integration of disciples from outside of a Judaeo-Christian and Aramaic-speaking environment into Mani's immediate circle, that drove the development of his thought and the community already within his lifetime. This would provide at least one necessary key to unlocking the dynamic transformation evident in the tradition.

We can begin by questioning some of the fundamental facts commonly recounted about this self-declared apostle who we know as Mani. The single most remarkable discovery of the last fifty years has been the conservation and reading of the so-called Cologne Mani-Codex, a biography of the Apostle written in Greek that bears the title *Concerning the Birth of his Body*. The recovery of this unique work has been so influential upon scholarship in the field that it redirected research into entirely new areas, and appeared to make most prior work on Mani's youth and upbringing redundant. In Chapter 4 I will argue that this shift in focus has been detrimental to sustained enquiry on the vital topic of the Apostle's last days and martyrdom. Here I will maintain that the relegation of previously held traditions about his origins to the category of fiction or polemic, contrasted to what is universally held to be a better and more historical account, is also in need of serious reconsideration.

Before the recovery of this Mani-Codex information on the Apostle's early life was relatively scant. It is true that the incorporation of Islamicate-period sources into biographical studies during the nineteenth century, especially those from Syriac and Arabic writers (and most notably the account of Ibn al-Nadīm), had provided important new material. However, it was not always clear what to make of some of these details as the framework for Western scholarship about Mani had been built upon the Christian polemical tradition represented by the *Acts of Archelaus*. This work was ascribed to a certain Hegemonius and can be dated to ca. 330–340 CE, but the author is otherwise unknown and the validity of the ascription is doubtful. It had been widely circulated in the Patristic and Byzantine period, translated into languages such as Coptic, and utilised by writers including Cyril of Jerusalem, Epiphanius and many others.² Although it had probably been originally composed in Greek, the text now survives complete only in a Latin version. Augustine of Hippo, the major authority in the west for the knowledge of Manichaeism, owing to his own personal experience of the community in the later fourth and early fifth centuries, shows no familiarity with this tradition.³ As he provides minimal information about the actual life of Mani, the *Acta* and its derivatives came to dominate biographical accounts of the arch-heretic.

The Protestant Reformation brought a new interest to the study of Manichaeism, as discussed in the introductory chapter, and an awareness of the importance of the *Acts of Archelaus* for ecclesiastical history can be tracked back to Caesar Baronius at the turn of the seventeenth century. The work itself is principally taken up with rather artificially constructed debates between Mani and the good bishop Archelaus, utilised as means to demolish and ridicule the former's teachings. However, it also provides a kind of counter-biography for Mani as a frame for the debates, in which both fact and fiction are cleverly intertwined. The bones of this narrative, with sometimes slightly varying forms of the names and occasional additional details, can be tracked through a vast range of sources.

According to this account, the heretical teachings were originally derived from those of a certain Scythianus, a Saracen who married a woman from the upper Thebaid and lived with her in Egypt. In the longer version

² Vermes, trans., *Acta Archelai*; also the studies in BeDuhn and Mirecki, *Frontiers of Faith*. The publication of the first modern critical edition was by L. A. Zacagni, *Collectanea Monumentorum Veterum Ecclesiae Graecae ac Latinae* (Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, Rome, 1698).

³ Some manuscripts record the name Urbicus for Mani at *De Haeresibus* 46. 1; but this is derived from Epiphanius (i.e. a corruption of Cubricus) and the reading is rejected by modern critical editions.

provided by Epiphanius we hear that he was a merchant engaged on the Red Sea trade routes and a frequent visitor to India. This Scythianus had a disciple named Terebinthus, who wrote four books for his master entitled the *Mysteries*, the *Chapters*, the *Gospel* and the *Treasure*. Three of these correspond to major scriptures authored by Mani himself, whereas the *Chapters* equates to the collection of his purported oral teachings that is nowadays best known as the *Kephalaia* (this being the same title in Greek). The story introduces a somewhat redundant comment about Scythianus being determined to travel to Judaea to consult the learned men there; but, when he died suddenly, Terebinthus left Egypt for Babylonia where he sought to rename himself as Buddha. There, vilified for his various claims, he subsequently went to reside with a solitary old woman who was his only accomplice, taking the four books with him. However, he too was struck down by God and died, leaving to her all that he brought with him.

This widow had obtained a young slave of about seven years of age named Corbicius, who she freed and taught to read and write. He inherited these books at twelve years old when she also died; whereupon he went to live in the capital city of the Persian king and changed his name to Manes. He studied the works and attached his own name to them as author; so that by the time he was almost sixty he had become learned and acquired three disciples of his own, who he sent out to different regions in order to obtain further followers. Afterwards, the king's son was taken ill; whereupon Manes offered to cure the boy. However, the latter died and Manes was thrown into prison and chained up, from where he later escaped by bribery and went to a place named as the fortress of Arabion (*Castellum Arabionis*).

The events purportedly recorded in the *Acts of Archelaus*, specifically the various debates with the Christian bishop Archelaus, are contextualised as taking place after these events. Manes now hears about the good reputation of a prominent citizen called Marcellus in a city named Karchar, and hopes to win him for his own teachings. He sends first a disciple, Turbo, carrying a letter of introduction ('Manichaeus, Apostle of Jesus Christ and all the saints and virgins with me, to Marcellus . . .'); before he himself crosses over into Roman territory in this attempt to gain more followers. Later, having been thoroughly defeated in public argument and chased by the crowd furious at his many infamies, he has to flee back in disgrace to the fortress of Arabion. There he was arrested and brought before the Persian king, to be flayed and hung up at the city gates, his skin inflated and his flesh given to the birds.

It is easy to dismiss this story for its all too obvious artifice and fictional devices. However, detailed research into the *Acta* repeatedly demonstrates the value of the information it contains. For example, the letter that Mani sends to Marcellus was certainly based upon authentic epistles of the Apostle as it can be shown to contain characteristic phraseology and unique, genuine content.⁴ Similarly, the ages provided for significant moments in Mani's life (notably twelve and sixty) underpin the Apostle's biography in the community's own sources. There have been various attempts to explain the names found in the narrative. In the core account of origins we find in summary: Scythianus had a disciple Terebinthus, who was renamed Buddha and had a disciple of a solitary old woman, who had a young servant-boy Corbicius who was renamed Manes. The books are passed down this lineage, and we can also note that the various persons are identified with different countries including India, Egypt, Judaea and Babylonia.

The clue to what lies behind this can be found in the one widely recognisable name of Buddha. In the textual tradition of the Manichaean community, and reflected in accounts by its opponents, there is repeatedly to be found a kind of genealogy of apostleship, something Michel Tardieu has termed a prophetology with its obvious similarity to the Islamic concept.⁵ However, although the fundamental structure of this idea can be derived from Mani's Judaeo-Christian heritage, of a God who speaks and acts periodically within linear history, a unique and highly characteristic aspect of his teaching is its universalist expansion. In its core expression, and the seed of this certainly derives from Mani's own writings, Jesus was sent to the west, Buddha to the east, Zarathushtra to Iran (the centre); but he himself to the whole world. His teaching, it is repeatedly emphasised, has become manifest in every country and all languages. It is in this that its superiority is clearly demonstrated.

The genealogy of apostleship was so fundamental to the tradition that it became a mark of community identity manifested through its literature. If one undertakes analysis of the vast work known as the *Kephalaia*, now recovered in two volumes in its Coptic redaction ca. 400 CE and comprising approximately one thousand pages, one can see that it is made up of a series of separate 'books' that have been brought together and arranged into (in this version) 347 chapters. But the original books are still

⁴ Gardner, 'Mani's Letter to Marcellus'.

⁵ M. Tardieu, *Manichaeism*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 2008), 13–19.

apparent because each of them starts with a version of the text known as *On the Coming of the Apostle*. Thus in chapter 1, the start of the first book, the succession of apostles and churches is compared to the continuous cycle of seedtime and harvest. Each apostle is like a farmer. First they release the spiritual forms of their church in the heavenly world, and are then sent to earth to sow the seed of that election at the very moment when the previous church finally ripens to harvest and ascends. Thus, there is no moment when the world is bereft of the means of salvation. There is no time when the tree is bare of fruit. The apostles are listed: From Seth up until Enosh and Enoch, to the time of Shem, the Buddha and Aurentes to the east, Zarathushtra to Persia, until the advent of Jesus the Christ; finally, when the church of the saviour was raised to the heights (Mani says) 'my apostolate began'.

A similar genealogy occurs in chapter 342, but this time with more emphasis on India and the east, including a figure named Kebellos along with Buddha and Aurentes; and probably Elchasai to Parthia. The antediluvian figures, concluding with Noah and Shem, are relegated to a secondary and summary listing that follows the primary series of Zarathushtra (Persia); Buddha (India and Kushan); Aurentes and Kebellos (the east); Elchasai (Parthia); Jesus the Christ (the west).

A third version occurs in what may be chapter 305. Here there is no trace of the Biblical figures in the surviving text, and the focus is very much on the succession now of seven Buddhas, twelve Arhants and twenty-four Kevalins; although the genealogy also concludes with Zarathushtra and Jesus. There is then introduced (chapter 306?) a very interesting set of stories that begin with Anacharsis and weave into the narrative figures from Iranian epic tradition such as Chasro before reaching the advent of Zarathushtra to Persia. The kephalaic 'book' that follows contains a set of community traditions about Mani that are linked through the context of his interactions with the Sasanian courts and elite. In this instance it is convincing to understand the material introduced and starting with Anacharsis as an attempt to frame Mani's life within a specifically Iranian genealogy, and this provides a striking contrast to more familiar constructions that place the Apostle within a Judaeo-Christian lineage.

By comparing these accounts we see a number of important points. Firstly, how this idea of the coming of the apostle has become entrenched in the literary tradition so that variations on the theme are repeatedly utilised to introduce new groupings of textual material. It has become a kind of device, but also a marker of identity, to frame a Manichaean perspective. If you want to tell the community's story then you must

begin with the lineage that leads ultimately to the advent of the one specially chosen by God. Secondly, the comparison of versions evidences how the sequence could be tailored for different cultural environments. In some contexts it might be important to lead with Seth, in another to begin with Buddha. Thirdly, we can also see a tendency for titles to become transformed into personal names. Aurentes is derived from *arhant*, a Sanskrit term originally meaning a ‘righteous one’ – just as Buddha means one who is enlightened; and the name Kebellos derives from a term utilised by the Jains for one who is omniscient, and applied to Mahavira and the other *tirthankaras* of that religion. An awareness of these original usages was retained in chapter 305 of the Coptic *Kephalaia* with its succession of seven Buddhas and so on; but in chapter 1, where this content derived from Indian religions has been reduced to a remnant, Aurentes reads as the name of another apostle (and one imagines the true meaning was in rapid process of being lost for the audience).

After this excursus let us now return to the *Acts of Archelaus*. What we have there in its account of Mani’s origins is derived from this authentic Manichaean literary trope, even if the details have been twisted, misunderstood and parodied. As each of the apostles in turn appears they bring the teaching of truth inscribed in their books, which are fulfilled in the scriptures offered to the world by Mani himself. Thus the story about Scythianus who has a disciple named Terebinthus, who then changes his name to Buddha; this is a version of the coming of the apostle narrative. One can even faintly discern the detail of the different regions associated with each of the prior apostles in the references to India, Egypt and Babylonia. I suspect that the rather odd truncated pericope about Scythianus wanting to go to Judaea is in fact a remnant from the introduction of Jesus into the lineage, the apostle to Judaea. Epiphanius provides an extended version of the episode where Scythianus spends several years in Jerusalem about the time of the apostles, but was refuted by the elders who lived according to the teaching of – we note – ‘every prophet’. It is obvious that the author (if we can use such a term) of the *Acta* has sought to remove from the genealogy any figures from Biblical tradition. They would undermine the purpose of the parody, which was to emphasise the otherness of Mani and his teachings.

The material at the start of what I have termed an Iranian kephalaia-book, where Anarchasis is introduced, has not yet been published. It belongs to that second volume of the Coptic *Kephalaia* now housed in the Chester Beatty library in Dublin, and my comments are based on the current project to edit the text that is very much in process as

I write.⁶ I wanted to introduce them here as this provides the best explanation for the name Scythianus in the *Acts of Archelaus*. There has been substantial discussion of the various names and persons found in the *Acta* genealogy but no really satisfactory resolution to the problems.⁷ I hope that here I can advance the research, if not entirely solve all the issues. Anacharsis was a renowned figure in classical tradition from the time of Herodotus: A traveller, a philosopher and known so commonly as a Scythian that his origin became part of his identity.⁸ The path by which this figure has become incorporated into the Manichaean apostolic lineage demands careful research. I have not undertaken that task here, although one could begin with the many references to him in Patristic sources.⁹ What is interesting is that the focus of the tales about him now read in the Coptic *Kephalaia* codex is ascetic practice: no meat, no wine and especially a fierce aversion to women and sex. It is tempting to regard the emphasis in the *Acta* upon the woman who persuades Scythianus to live with her in the Thebaid as a deliberate subversion of this tradition. In Epiphanius' longer version it is made clear that she was a prostitute; although this may have been influenced by the similar story told of Simon Magus. One can see the effect of that other famous genealogy of heresy across a number of the stories in the *Acta* and its derivatives, and for the most part I have omitted the more obvious duplicates as adding nothing of value to our purposes.

The meaning of the name Terebinthus remains difficult and speculative. Various etymologies have been suggested, most commonly from the Aramaic *tarbīta* (disciple) or as an epithet of the Buddha. Certainly the story recounts how he changed his name to the latter, and it is most reasonable to suppose that Terebinthus somehow conceals one or other of those figures from 'the east' that were incorporated into the Manichaean

⁶ For a succinct account of the project, see I. Gardner, 'An Introduction to the Chester Beatty *Kephalaia* Codex', in *Mani at the Court of the Persian Kings*, 1–12.

⁷ E.g. see the summary of discussion by W. Klein, 'The Epic *Buddhacarita* by Āsvaghoṣa and Its Significance for the "Life of Mani"', in *Il Manicheismo. Nuove Prospettive della Ricerca. Quinto Congresso Internazionale di Studi sul Manicheismo*, eds. A. van Tongerloo and L. Cirillo, Manichaean Studies 5 (Brepols, Lovanii and Neapoli, 2005), 224. He cites Smagina and earlier authors who identify Scythianus as Zarathustra following a Graeco-Roman tradition that the latter was King of the Scythians in Bactria; Terebinthus is Buddha and Kubrikus/Corbicius is Mani. A derivation of the name Scythianus from the Arabic *šayk* (master) does not convince; thus M. Tardieu, 'Archelaus', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, updated 11 August 2011, available at www.iranicaonline.org/articles/archelaus-author (accessed on 26 April 2017).

⁸ E.g. see the material collected by A. M. Armstrong, 'Anacharsis the Scythian', *Greece & Rome*, 17 (1948): 18–23.

⁹ There is an interesting first attempt to deal with some of these issues by T. Pettipiece, 'The Buddha in Early Christian Literature', *Millennium*, 6 (2009): 133–144.

apostolic lineage (perhaps Aurentes, the *arhants* being commonly regarded as the disciples of the Buddha, although the term has wide currency through a number of Indian religions). Alternatively, one would really expect to find Zarathushtra somewhere in the narrative.¹⁰

In order to discuss the other persons in the genealogy provided by the *Acts of Archelaus*, that is, the widow with the young servant Corbicius who becomes Mani, we need to explore the traditions about the Apostle's birth and upbringing. Prior to the recovery of the Greek Mani-Codex the most important of these were found in the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm, part of which can be quoted:¹¹

Māni b. Fatiq Bābak b. Abū Barzām was from the Ḥaskāniya. The name of his mother was Mays, but some say Utākīm and some say Mar Maryam, a descendant of the Ašgāniya. . . .

And it has been said that his father's origin was from Hamadān. He moved to Babylon and resided in al-Madā'in at the place named Ctesiphon. There was there a house of idols which Fatiq would attend as the other people did. But one day a voice called to him from the sanctuary of the house of idols: 'O Fatiq! Do not eat meat, drink no wine and do not have sex with any person!' This was repeated to him time after time for three days. When Fatiq saw that, he joined a community resident in the region of Dast-i Maysān and called the Muḡtasila (i.e. 'those who wash themselves'). That community's home was in the marshlands, and the remainder of them are still there in our time. The community practised the religious law to which Fatiq had been ordered to adhere whilst his wife was pregnant with Mani.

When she gave birth to him . . . his father sent somebody and brought him (i.e. Mani) to the place where he was living; and he grew up with him and was instructed in accordance with the religion.

This story purports to provide careful details of Mani's parentage and an account of his birth. Many scholars have accorded it historical value, and there have been learned discussions about (for instance) the temple Fatiq is

¹⁰ The *Acta* (LXIII, 2) comments that Terebinthus pretended he had been born from a virgin and nurtured by an angel on the mountains. If this is taken as a remnant of the original source-tradition, rather than purely a familiar literary trope, it might correlate better with legends preserved about Zarathushtra's birth and childhood, e.g. the curious tale concerning Zoroaster on the mountain preserved by Dio Chrysostom, *Oratio* 36 (*The Borysthenitic Discourse*).

¹¹ The translation of this passage is taken from I. Gardner and L. Rasouli-Narimani, 'Patīg and Pattikios in the Manichaean Sources', in *Manichaeism East and West*, eds. S. N. C. Lieu, E. C. D. Hunter, E. Morano and N. A. Pedersen, *Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum – Analecta Manichaica I* (Brepols, Turnhout, 2017), 82–100. In that research article will also be found further details and references, together with a discussion of some of the same topics upon which I have drawn here.

said to have attended in order to discern something of his religious background prior to joining the baptising community of the Muḡtasila.¹² However, I am very sceptical about this. If we interrogate the text we can easily see not only the rather obvious legendary features, but a very clear rationale for its creation. Interestingly, the words spoken from the sanctuary are the same as those that Anacharsis hears in the Dublin *Kephalalaia* passage we have earlier discussed, a passage that also features a miraculous voice. This was a stock motif, and the story about Fatiq has been shaped by the famous account of Zechariah and the angel in the temple of the Lord with which the Gospel of Luke opens. It is of particular importance to think about what drives the narrative. A number of points stand out and can be supplemented by other accounts of the Apostle's parentage in ancient sources. Firstly, there are a bewildering number of names provided for his mother, some of which (like Mar Maryam) are obvious fabrications; but others are intended to provide a royal lineage so that through his mother Mani was related to the Parthian royal dynasty of the Arsacids. Secondly, the desire to elevate the boy's status is apparent also with his father, so that in Manichaean sources preserved in China he is said to have been born in the royal palace of Badi, his father the king. This tradition has been assimilated to that of the Buddha Shakyamuni; but even the earlier accounts show, as we have seen, the impress of gospel accounts that had similarly sought to provide Jesus with a royal lineage. Given these obvious parallels it is rather surprising how many scholars have taken the data provided by such texts at face value. Further, the entire purpose for this story is to explain how Fatiq, a member of a celibate religious community, obtained a son to be brought up by him under that same religious instruction.

In the *Acts of Archelaus* the solitary old woman, notably unnamed, obtains the young servant-boy Corbicius and teaches him to read and write. This widow stands for Fatiq, or Pattikios as he is better known from the Greek tradition. Surprisingly, some scholars have asserted that the slur of slavery or servitude for Mani's origins was an attempt to counter his royal lineage, whereas I think the reverse is more probable.¹³ While obviously there was a slur intended by polemical sources such as the *Acta*, the drive to elevate the Apostle's status would be an imperative for the community unsure of his true background. An accusation of slave origins would carry no weight if the boy's royal status was widely known; or, to

¹² E.g. Tardieu, *Manichaeism*, 3–4.

¹³ See further the interesting discussion in Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism*, 70–72.

put it more directly, if Mani's parentage was beyond doubt this parody would miss the mark. To explain why this was the crucial issue we need to turn to the Greek Mani-Codex, where we will find that Pattikios is described as the 'old man' and that he is never directly named as the Apostle's genetic father. Usage of terms like 'son' are here entirely explicable within a religious community setting. These points have not generally been explored by scholars, even though they are entirely apparent and undisputed. They should be used both to explain the polemic in the Christian tradition that is best known from the *Acta* and its derivatives, and to undermine the historicity so often accorded to stories of Mani's origins such as found in Ibn al-Nadīm.

The 1969 announcement of the discovery of this miniature codex caused a sensation. The work, properly entitled *Concerning the Birth of his Body*, provides unique and detailed information about the Apostle's sectarian upbringing and the generation of the new church. The 'body' or *sōma* of the title is to be understood primarily in this sense, as the incarnation of the divine in the life of the church rather than the physical body of Mani. Although the Greek text is poorly preserved in its latter part, as it progresses through the public mission of the Apostle after he has separated from the sect in which had been brought up, there are substantial and truly remarkable passages extant that relate to his youth among the baptists and eventual split with their leaders. The standard concordance lists no fewer than eighteen references in the edited text to Pattikios, although these include restorations.¹⁴ It is widely accepted by scholars that this is the same person as the Fatiq of Ibn al-Nadīm's source material, and equally that the baptists of the Greek text are the same sect referred to as the Muḡtasila in the Arabic. The very first pages of the codex are mostly destroyed, and no clear account remains in that work to explain how Mani came to be in the sect, although we read that he was there from the age of four protected by the angels and holy powers. Consequently, it is commonplace to precede the narrative in *Concerning the Birth of his Body* with the information and story as provided in the *Fihrist* (quoted above), since it appears most usefully to supplement and introduce what is extant in the Greek. We must beware not to read what is explicit in one (the fatherhood of Fatiq) into the other (the nature of Pattikios' relationship to Mani), for the status of the traditions recounted in the two works may be entirely different.

¹⁴ L. Cirillo, *Concordanze del Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis* (Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna, 2001). The standard text edition is L. Koenen and C. Römer, *Der Kölner Mani-Kodex. Über das Werden seines Leibes. Kritische Edition*, Papyrologica Coloniensia XIV (Westdeutscher Verlag, Opladen, 1988).

The relevant information in the Greek codex about Pattikios can be summarised in brief. When Mani denounces the practices of the sect, especially as regards ritual washing and the categories of pure and impure foods, Sita the presbyter and other elders of the community accuse him and order him to appear before their assembly. They also summon the house-master Pattikios and say to him: 'Your son has turned aside from our law and wishes to go into the world . . .'. Mani defends himself by recalling a number of revelations and visions received by Alchasaïos the leader (*archegos*) of the rule and other famous fellow-baptists, and asserts that his own practice is what he has learned from them. His accusers become angry at this and physically assault him until Pattikios intervenes and Mani is released. In this famous sequence, which forms much of the core of the best-preserved part of the work, we learn that Pattikios is a house-master (*oikodespotēs*) in the community, a position of seniority with especial responsibility for the young Mani. It is entirely possible to read the references to 'your son' and 'your father' within this text, in a communal or quasi-monastic setting, as standard assertions of spiritual authority and nothing to do with actual parentage. For instance, elsewhere it is recorded how Sita (Sitaïos) had himself formerly loved Mani greatly and considered him a beloved son. I suggest that the artifice of the story, the narrative mechanism in the *Fihrist*, is apparent in the way it has attempted to explain how the figure of Fatiq (Pattikios), as a leading member of such a celibate group, could have come to have had a son with him there. In these religious communities (and this was certainly characteristic of the Manichaean church itself) it was a common practice for a child to be given to a monk or an elect and brought up as an acolyte or helper for that senior figure. It is on this fundamental misunderstanding that the legend of Mani's father developed, and we should pay more attention to the *Acts of Archelaus* and the way that it has attempted to subvert the narrative.

This interpretation is supported if we continue to trace the role ascribed to Pattikios in the Greek biography. After the attack Mani is encouraged by his spiritual companion or 'Twin', the *Syzygos*. This mysterious figure had chosen him and revealed his true nature and mission in the world; had encouraged and reassured him through his many trials. Now, when he expresses his concern that Pattikios has become an old man and frail, the Twin tells him to leave the community and begin his public mission wherein '... Pattikios will become the first of your election and follow you'. Nevertheless, Mani leaves the community without saying anything, whereupon Pattikios is upset and searches for him. He is comforted by his fellow baptists; but when he hears news of Mani he sets out again and

eventually finds him in a village called Nasēr. There they have an emotional reunion and Pattikios says:

‘... I had hoped to have you as administrator of everything now in my old age, for who can I trust more than you? But I see that you will not be with me. I have prayed to God that he will not destroy you ...’. Then (Mani) said to him: ‘Do not cry ... For you yourself will be with me ...’.

Pattikios fears for what Mani has done; but is reassured that his upbringing among the baptist community was a vehicle to bring about the divine will, even if he no longer follows that law. He is amazed by Mani’s speech and teaching, and comes to recognise that God is with him. There follow a number of stories, the purpose of which is to demonstrate the spiritual protection that the young visionary receives and that what has happened is under divine authority. Finally, as regards the preserved text, Mani and Pattikios the house-master come to the port of Pharat, where the Apostle preaches to an assembly of baptists. The latter are confused by his words and actions. Nevertheless, one of them admits to Pattikios the wisdom of ‘your son’ and the contrast to their own elders and teachers.

In all of this a close reading of the text suggests a strong hagiographical imperative to demonstrate Pattikios’ adherence to Mani’s calling. Indeed, there is a more general question about the split from the baptists. It is not surprising that the Manichaean sources stress a complete break from the past and the start of something new, and their chronology is built upon this idea of a public pronouncement of the good news where Mani’s age (twenty-four) and the coronation of Shapur I are aligned. Again, this needs a critical appraisal, as the stories in the Greek Codex continue to place the Apostle with Pattikios and the baptists even after his separation from them and the start of his public mission. I will return to this question in the next chapter.

In sum, a careful study of *Concerning the Birth of his Body* casts doubt upon the identification of Pattikios as Mani’s father. Leyla Rasouli-Narimani and myself have recently published a detailed collation of references to this person or persons of this name (Patīg in Middle Persian and Parthian, Fatiq in Arabic) through all the relevant sources.¹⁵ We noted that there is no explicit reference to parentage in any of the primary Manichaean sources prior to that tradition quoted by Ibn al-Nadīm (late tenth century), i.e. other than the Chinese *Compendium of the Teachings and Rules of Mani the Buddha of Light* (731 CE), where it is clearly

¹⁵ Gardner and Rasouli-Narimani, ‘Patīg and Pattikios in the Manichaean Sources’.

influenced by the birth legend of Shakyamuni Buddha and its associated miracles. It does not occur in any of the Latin, Greek or Coptic texts authored by the community, nor in the many fragments surviving in Middle Persian, Parthian, Sogdian or Uighur. Where parentage is found it is in the Byzantine anti-Manichaean abjuration formulae; in a number of Islamicate period historians in Syriac, Arabic and Persian; and finally in the Chinese Manichaean tradition. We concluded that the only explicit references to Pattikios as Mani's father known to scholarship occur in anti-Manichaean, late or otherwise secondarily influenced material.

If we do not know anything for certain about Mani's parents, let us now consider his name.¹⁶ In the *Acts of Archelaus* he is described as a servant-boy called Corbicius (Greek Koubrikos). This designation is attested in a great many authors into the Islamicate period, derived from the same tradition and exhibiting a variety of spellings that are due to errors in transmission or changes undergone through translation. For example, Theodore bar Konai in Syriac gives Qūrqaḅyōs. Some scholars have argued that this was Mani's proper name and derived it from the Middle Persian *kirbag* 'pious'; or otherwise, following Kessler, cited known personal names such as the Arabic Shuraik (Schuraich). However, the fact that this designation occurs only in those anti-Manichaean sources that are dependent on the *Acta* makes either of these solutions improbable. The better solution had already been suggested in the 1940s by Henri-Charles Puech,¹⁷ who showed that it originated from an honorific title frequently applied to Mani in the community's own literature and with the same etymology as *kirbag*, i.e. *kirbakkar*, meaning 'the beneficent one'. To cite an example, the Parthian text M8286 recounts an encounter between Mani and the King of Turan where we read:¹⁸

And when the Turan-shah saw that the beneficent one (*qyrbkr*) had risen, then he got to his knees at a distance. He entreated him, speaking to the beneficent one and saying: 'Do not come here before us.' But the beneficent one came there.

¹⁶ Among the extensive discussions of this issue (which should be consulted for many detailed references and terminology in the various languages and scripts), see J. Tubach and M. Zakeri, 'Mani's Name', in *Augustine and Manichaeism in the Latin West*, eds. J. van Oort, O. Wermelinger and G. Wurst (Brill, Leiden, 2001), 272–286; W. Sundermann, 'Mani', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, updated 20 July 2009, available at www.iranicaonline.org/articles/mani-founder-manichaeism (accessed on 19 March 2016); and D. Durkin-Meisterernst, 'Eznik on Manichaeism', *Iran and the Caucasus*, 16 (2012): 1–11.

¹⁷ Puech, *Le Manichéisme*, 25.

¹⁸ Translation by BeDuhn in his 'Parallels between Coptic and Iranian Kephalaia'.

This passage illustrates the repeated use of the title, here three times in quick succession. It is easy to see how the text could be read in terms of a meeting and dialogue between the king and a person named Kirbakkar (or similar). Interestingly, the same passage has now been identified in its Coptic version in the Dublin *Kephalaia* codex, in chapter 323. Here Mani, again not named, is repeatedly termed 'the Apostle'. If this explanation of Corbicius is accepted, as I think it should be, it raises very interesting questions about the first contact between the tradition represented by the *Acts of Archelaus* and the Manichaeans. If I am correct that the Scythianus of the *Acta* is the Anacharsis now known from the apostolic genealogy that precedes the same Iranian kephalaia-book, and fortuitously preserved for us in the Chester Beatty codex, then it suggests that this contact took place at a point where Manichaean biographical traditions had not been translated for a Western, broadly Judaeo-Christian conceptual world. The implications could be revolutionary. Perhaps the tenor of this latter framework that is commonly taken to betray the most basic orientation of the tradition is already distorted by the lens through which it chose to present itself, the face it turned to the west?

Let us continue this archaeology of the sources with a discussion of the name that Corbicius is said to adopt, Manes in the Latin of the *Acta* or Augustine, and its various forms. There are numerous problems that have never been completely solved, and are generally glossed over with the almost universal use of the form 'Mani'. Usually this is taken to have been the Apostle's true name, even though there are obvious arguments to be made that it was in fact a given religious appellation or a title. In brief, there are clearly two forms used across a range of ancient sources, one shorter and the other longer, although the distinction is not always maintained by modern translators even where the same text uses both. The shorter form was certainly *m'ny* in what is usually supposed to be its original Aramaic form (but also in Middle Iranian), which can be vocalised in various ways: Māni or Mānī, or even Māne or Mānē. The longer form is Manichaios in Greek and Coptic, Manichaeus in Latin, *m'ny'xyws* in Middle Persian. The question arises whether the short form is simply an abbreviation, or whether the longer represents an additional element utilised in certain circumstances.

Various etymologies have been suggested. One is the proper name Mānēs, often given to slaves and well-attested in Asia Minor. This would support the servile origins of the boy according to the *Acts of Archelaus*; but it is difficult to argue from this to the form Mani, and the suggestion has not been widely adopted. Equally, the etymology favoured by Augustine

and common throughout the polemical tradition, from the Greek word to be 'mad', provided great scope for ridicule but cannot be taken seriously. Because it was an effective and rather obvious reading of the Apostle's name it could explain why some community sources duplicated the /n/ to read Mannichaios or Mannichaeus, providing a more attractive meaning as the one who pours out *manna* (utilising the Greek verb *cheō* 'to pour out'). At least this is what Augustine states.¹⁹ However, it is difficult to suppose that the longer form of the name was itself chosen solely to avoid the slur of madness; and this explanation by means of Greek cannot convince given the widespread use in early sources that had been first written in Aramaic. There is the interesting possibility that the duplicated /n/ conceals some important clue that we do not yet understand. Further etymologies such as from the Sanskrit *mani* meaning 'jewel', or the common Hebrew name Menaḥem or Menachem meaning 'comforter' (perhaps as a synonym for 'paraclete'), are superficially appealing but have not been favoured by recent research, although they were quite widespread among an earlier generation of scholars.

The great majority of contemporary scholars, especially since the recovery of the Cologne miniature codex with its narrative of Mani's upbringing among a Jewish-Christian baptist sect, have placed his origins firmly in the Aramaic-speaking population of Sasanian Mesopotamia. There is substantial evidence that eastern Aramaic was his native language and the one in which he wrote the majority of his writings, drawing on a religious culture closely related to early Christian Syriac, Mandaic and Jewish Babylonian sources. There still remain important questions about the role of Iranian-speaking disciples in the formative Manichaean community and the influence of Mazdayasnianism, especially given Mani's associations with the Sasanian courts and elite, which I will explore in the next chapter. Nevertheless, the consensus now is that the etymology of his name should be sought in the word *mānā* meaning 'vessel' or 'garment', a term with very wide utility in the relevant religious literatures and especially in Mandaean texts where it developed a fundamental technical terminology regarding the world of light. It is notable that Christian opponents writing in Syriac alternated their use of the Greek-derived slur 'mad' with insults based on this Aramaic term, such as 'vessel of wickedness' or 'vessel of the evil one'. The same probably lies behind the 'vessel of the antichrist' found in Latin form in the *Acts of Archelaus*. It can be noted that Ephraem indulges in

¹⁹ Augustine, *De Haeresibus* 46. 1.

what appears to be a deliberate word-play when he states: ‘Mani (*Mny*) has become a garment (*mānā*) that destroys those who wear it.’²⁰

In the 1920s H. H. Schaeder first suggested that the longer form of the name, Greek Manichaios, should be derived from the Aramaic *Mānī ḥayyā* meaning ‘the living Mani’.²¹ This has become the most commonly cited etymology, although it was in fact later scholars such as Alfred Adam in the 1960s who extended the derivation to mean ‘living vessel’ (*mānā ḥayyā*) and suggested that the whole form might be understood as a religious title. However, the difficult final /y/ rather than /a/ of *m’ny* remained unexplained. More recently Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst²² has sought to explain this as the first person singular possessive suffix, thus ‘my vessel’; and drawn attention to Acts 9:15 referring to Paul before his conversion: ‘... he is the vessel of my choice’. Given Mani’s known imitation of Paul as an Apostle of Jesus Christ, he argues that the longer form of the name Manichaios will mean ‘my vessel, life’ or ‘my living vessel’; and thus makes a particularly direct statement about divine election.

This etymology is attractive, and it is certainly true that Mandaic literature in particular, but with many echoes elsewhere in the relevant religious cultures, makes frequent usage of such terminology. To take one example, in the *Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans* the light-being Hibil declares himself: ‘I am a *mana* of the Great Life.’²³ However, Tubach and Zakeri have pointed out that the Aramaic or Syriac letter *ḥeṭ* is not normally equivalent to the Greek letter *chi*, which should rather be transliterated by *kāf*.²⁴ According to well-attested practice the longer form of the name Manichaios cannot, they argue, be derived from *Mānī ḥayyā* but must rather have been in Aramaic *Manikay*. Their solution to this problem is that this was a shortened form for the term *mānā kasyā* meaning ‘hidden vessel’, which indeed often occurs as such in Mandaic literature. Although Tubach and Zakeri’s point is true, and their solution is in itself a very interesting suggestion in terms of Mani’s self-understanding, it has not received general approval. The fact is that there are examples that contravene their rule and would allow for the transliteration *Mānī ḥayyā*,²⁵

²⁰ Ephraem Syrus, *Contra Haereses*, hym. 2. 1; many such texts are collected and cited in Tubach and Zakeri, ‘Mani’s Name’, 276–277, which should be consulted for references and further detail.

²¹ H. H. Schaeder, ‘Urform und Fortbildungen des manichäischen Systems’, in *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg, Vorträge 1924/25*, ed. F. Saxl (Teubner, Leipzig and Berlin, 1927), 88, n. 1. He cites it as Syriac *Mānī ḥaijā*.

²² Durkin-Meisterernst, ‘Eznik on Manichaeism’, 2–3.

²³ *The Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans*, ed. E. S. Drower (Brill, Leiden, 1959), 182, no. 213.

²⁴ See Tubach and Zakeri, ‘Mani’s Name’, 281–283. ²⁵ See Sundermann, ‘Mani’.

and that by trying to remove one problem they have introduced another. The name Elchasai (compare the Alchasaïos of the Greek Mani-Codex), which was of fundamental importance for the Manichaean community, has itself the same derivation in the second element to mean 'hidden power' or possibly 'hidden God'.²⁶ While this striking parallel might seem to support the derivation of Mani's own name as 'hidden vessel', the fact that the latter relies on an abbreviated form absent from the former undermines the argument.

I have dwelt on this protracted and still open debate at some length because there is another factor that, although not entirely unnoticed by scholars, has never received the attention it deserves. In the Coptic sources, which are derived from very early community traditions in eastern Aramaic dating back to Mani's own lifetime (his scriptures) or the oral tradition of the first generations (such as in the *Homilies* and the *Acts*), his name rarely appears except in certain specific and formulaic contexts. Such include the incipits to the *Epistles*, the doxologies of the psalms or the title of the second *Kephalaia* codex. Much more commonly an honorific or title is used, such as 'Apostle' or 'enlightener'. In the documents from ancient Kellis he appears simply as 'the paraclete'. When the name is given it is provided with the definite article, usually preceded by 'Lord', and often abbreviated to a *nomen sacrum*; in all these features it recalls the rendering of Jesus 'the Christ'. When it is actually spelt out it is frequently (in the *Homilies* and the *Kephalaia*) written with a doubling of the /n/. Thus, notably, when according to chapter 338 he is first introduced to King Shapur it is as 'this Mannichaios'.

Exceptions to these general principles are worth careful examination. In chapter 76 are found a series of those references to Mani by name that are really rather rare in the *Kephalaia* codices; each time here as a *nomen sacrum*. Six times he self-references as 'I, a single Man(n)ichaios'; and once as 'this single Man(n)ichaios'. He also asks rhetorically how could the world have coped if two Manis had come to it. The same phrase occurs in chapter 38: 'I am a single Man(n)ichaios and I came to the world alone ...'. These instances read very much like the vestiges of early tradition and self-appellation, and I am strongly inclined to read the term

²⁶ See G. P. Luttikhuisen, *The Revelation of Elchasai: Investigations into the Evidence for a Mesopotamian Jewish Apocalypse of the Second Century and Its Reception by Judeo-Christian Propagandists* (Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 1985), 181–182. For a strenuous, and partly convincing, attempt to distance the Alchasaïos of *Concerning the Birth of his Body* and the community of Mani's upbringing from the Elchasai of Patristic sources, see *ibid.*, *Gnostic Revisions of Genesis Stories and Jesus Traditions* (Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2006) (Appendix: 'The Baptists of Mani's Youth and the Elchasaïtes').

as a religious title carrying the sense of singular divine election, not a birth name.

In sum, the *Acts of Archelaus*, though confused about the name Corbicius and highly polemical in its account of the solitary old woman and her servant-boy, retains in its narrative a crucially important truth. I do not think that the old man Pattikios was Mani's father. It is doubtful that we can know anything about his parentage of historical value,²⁷ nor what the boy was first called. He was given this religious appellation, probably meaning 'my living vessel', and it retained a special significance in the early community, rarely being utilised. Most commonly he was termed master, father, beneficent one, Apostle and so on. The implications of this will be worth reflecting upon. It is quite possible that it was the reaction to Manichaean mission, with the widespread adoption of the term Mani by their opponents, that actually drove the increased use of this and its transformation into what in time came to be taken as a personal name. Similarly, the term Manichaean was determined by their opponents and not by the community itself.

²⁷ There are occasional references in Islamicate historians purporting to give the Apostle's place of birth, but they are contradictory and it is not always clear what sources they were utilising. The most important statement is by Bīrūnī that, according to Mani's own testimony in the *Šābuhragān*, he was born in a village named Mardīnū in Babylonia and near the upper canal of Kūtha. If this is correct then it would be of great value; but it cannot be corroborated. Theodore bar Konai says that the place was named 'Abrūmya. For these sources and further references, see Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism*, 28–29. The common chronology for the Apostle's birth (216 CE) will be equally dubious although I have not discussed that here.

CHAPTER 3

Mani's Career as the 'Apostle of Jesus Christ' His Missions and the Community He Founded

It appears clear that Mani embarked on a public career as a preacher, healer and wise man, debating with leading sages of the time and gaining adherents from the varied religious communities that he encountered. He travelled widely within Iran and Mesopotamia and even beyond to India, and he sought to convert kings and members of the aristocracy at the courts of the Sasanian empire. In this chapter I will examine Mani's missions and the community he founded within the context of the many intellectual, spiritual and doctrinal traditions with which he interacted. These include both Mazdayasnianism and Buddhism, as well as the scientific lore of the time.

Mani and the community that he founded saw significance in the patterns of numbers, especially fives, sevens, twelves and combinations of the same. In part we can ascribe good pedagogic, mnemonic and taxonomic reasons for this; but it was more important than classification, ease of remembering and utility in teaching. They perceived these same numbers embedded in the workings of the universe; the divine and demonic orders of reality; the very structure of things such as time, the stars and the elements. When they remembered Mani's life they gave thanks for a divinely ordained mission, a chosen and protected Apostle of God. Thus, in the sources, we can identify the imposition of a certain stylisation and patterning upon the outline of his biography: A first revelation by his Twin-Spirit at the age of twelve; a second, definitive revelation and the announcement of his public mission at twenty-four; death at sixty.

In the following discussion we will take as our subject Mani's career as an 'Apostle of Jesus Christ'. In the previous chapter we examined his origins and youth. What can we know about who he was, where he came from and the significance that was ascribed to his advent? In the next chapter we will conclude with consideration of his last days and death; the tragedy that became the defining moment for the community, memorialised in its major annual festival of the *Bēma*. However, what can be known about the

decades of the Apostle's maturity? Mani appears to us as many things: A preacher and visionary, a doer of miracles, a debater and public wise man in the courts of the empire. Is it possible to understand anything about the evolution of his religious experience? If the break from the baptists occurred at twenty-four years old (usually dated to 240 CE), and his death at sixty (most probably 26 February 277 CE), what details can we determine about his journeys and the events of his life in between, during the years of his mission to the world?

In my discussion throughout I have emphasised two major themes. The first is to be aware of the obvious hagiographic or polemic impress in the sources, together with more subtle matters of literary and devotional stylisation, and to give proper allowance for such. The second is a concern that modern research has itself followed scholarly fashion and institutional demands, conceding to cultural, economic and political imperatives whether mediated through society or the academy. As Manichaeologists we have not been critical enough. We have allowed ourselves to be dictated to by the authors of our sources and the accidents of discovery. Reflection upon the biography of Mani will illustrate these problems.

In the memory of the church the revelation of apostolic truth, breaking into history according to divine purpose and election, came to mark a decisive moment that completed what came before and inaugurated a new order. This was fixed as the time of proclamation when *everything that is and all that was and all that will be* was made known. The event was tied to the most momentous event of the era, the coronation of King Shapur I, as is made very clear in the text entitled *Concerning the Birth of His Body*:¹

... When] I was twenty-[four] years old, in the year in which Dariadaxar (i.e. Ardashir) the King of Persia conquered the city of Hatra, and in which his son King Sapore assumed the mighty diadem, in the month Pharamouthi on the eighth day according to the moon, the most blessed lord had compassion on me and called me to his grace and sent to me my Twin (*syzygos*) who in great [glory ...

The marvellous synchronicity between the divine revelation, the start of Mani's public mission and the crowning of King Shapur was confirmation of the Apostle's election and status. A careful analysis of the texts will show how these events were drawn ever closer together so that, in the source utilised by Ibn al-Nadīm for his *Fihrist*, Mani revealed himself on the very day that Shapur became king. It was a Sunday, the first of Nīsān, and the

¹ 'Cologne' *Mani-Codex*, 18, translation cited (slightly adapted) from Gardner and Lieu, *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire*, 50.

sun was in Aries (probably April 240 CE). This is all very understandable and wonderful, and its truth belongs to an order of things beyond strict historical determination. However, there was a further level of tradition placed upon this that came to tie these events to Mani's first audience with the new king, to Shapur's granting of approval and thus a relationship between the era of the apostolate and that of the great ruler himself. This demands close examination because modern academic scholarship has here participated in what is essentially a theologically driven construct.

In chapter 1 of the *Kephalaia*, which sets the scene at the very start with the advent of the Apostle, it is stated that in the year Ardashir (Ardašīr) died his son Shapur became king. Mani returned from the land of India to Persia, and came to Babylon, Mesene and Susiana.

I appeared before Shapur the king. He received me with great honour. He gave me permission to journey in . . . preaching the word of life. I even spent some years . . . him in the retinue; many years in Persia, in the country of the Parthians, up to Adiabene, and the borders of the provinces of the kingdom of the Romans.

This is the first point to interrogate. It is remarkable how scholars routinely, and right to the present day, accept this as the basic starting-point; even though the most obvious hagiographic impulses can be seen to be at work in the idea that Mani's break with the baptists and open proclamation of his message somehow coincided with Shapur's coronation and his granting of favour to the young Apostle. The standard reconstruction of the start of his public mission can be abbreviated as follows. Instructed by his spiritual companion, the Twin, to go out into the world so that all peoples should know this revelation of truth, Mani left the baptists and travelled by sea to India from the port of Pharat at the head of the Persian Gulf. On his way back he visits the King of Turan (see *kephalaion* 323 and parallels), where the famous levitation takes place together with recognition of his status and authority: 'You are blessed Buddha, you are the Apostle of God.' After his return to Persia he has an audience with Shapur, himself newly crowned, to whom he presents a summary of his teaching in Middle Persian (the *Šābuhragān*) and receives permission to preach throughout the kingdom. Scholars discuss the implications for Shapur's religious policy. We need, very carefully, to unpick and examine the various elements of this convenient narrative.²

² This is only the briefest of summaries covering a great deal of complex material and discussion. The major scholar of Manichaean historiography in the last generation was W. Sundermann. His mature conclusions can be conveniently accessed in the relevant articles for the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online

A cautious reading of the Greek codex suggests that Mani's break with the community of his youth may have been much more gradual than has come to be supposed, and as later Manichaean tradition would wish to indicate. As we have seen in the previous chapter, according to this account he had been summoned to an assembly of elders, where he defended his practices but was physically assaulted until the intervention of Pattikios the house-master. Despondent and alone, Mani is reassured by the Twin and charged with his mission to the world. Two of the baptists depart with him, Symeon and Abizachias; and they are later sought out and joined by Pattikios himself. There follow a number of rather miraculous stories that demonstrate the Apostle's supernatural qualities and confirm the divine choice and protection. Unfortunately, it is at this stage that the condition of the codex begins to deteriorate, and it becomes increasingly difficult to understand and relate these events to the equally fragmentary remains of historiographic and hagiographic traditions preserved mainly in the Middle Iranian texts. There is also relevant material in Coptic, especially in kephalaion 76 entitled *Concerning Lord Manichaios: How He Journeyed*, but although this version is quite coherent it is highly abbreviated.

It is important to note that in the Greek version, when Mani arrives at Pharat together with Pattikios, he preaches to a group of the baptists resident there. Although their confusion and shock at his words and actions mirrors that recounted earlier, it could indicate that the Apostle's break with his community had not yet been complete. This is supported by a very interesting text in Parthian, a homily with historical content entitled *On the Religion*:³

... when our father returned from India and came to the city of Rēw-Ardašīr, then he sent Patīg the elder with the brother Hannī to India, to Dēb.

In this passage the significance of the title used for Patīg is crucial. The Parthian word is a comparative, meaning 'greater' or 'older'; and generally taken to be synonymous with the term for 'head of the house' and the Middle Persian for 'elder' and 'presbyter'. It is this lexical web of meanings that has drawn scholars' attention to the apparent parallel in the Greek *oikodespotēs* 'house-master', the title for Pattikios used in the Mani-Codex.

edition: 'Mani', available at www.iranicaonline.org/articles/mani-founder-manicheism; 'Missionary Activity and Technique', available at www.iranicaonline.org/articles/manicheism-iv-missionary-activity-and-technique (both updated 20 July 2009, accessed on 6 March 2016).

³ M4575. The following comments and translation are abbreviated from Gardner and Rasouli-Narimani, 'Patīg and Pattikios in the Manichaean Sources'.

Support for this identification may be drawn from the reference to 'the baptists' that follows this episode at the start of the first column on the verso of the Parthian homily. Here the Apostle receives gifts from them. If we compare the Greek codex, Mani and Pattikios come to Pharat, where the Apostle preaches to an assembly of baptists. One has the clear impression that, despite the apparent acrimony of the split with the sect of his youth, they in fact provided a network of contacts and even support for him in his early public career. It is not necessary that these two episodes are the same, though Pharat was the port of Mesene (Mēšūn) from which merchants sailed to India as is stated explicitly in the very next episode of the Greek codex.

This raises the fascinating but difficult question of why Mani went to India. The historicity of this journey is generally accepted, and placed at the start of the Apostle's mission ca. 240–242 CE. The general consensus is that he sailed to Dēb at the mouth of the Indus, usually identified with Daibul or modern Banbhore in Sindh west of Karachi and the site of an important port in late antiquity. Also that, despite his claim in kephalaion 76 to have 'stirred the whole land of India', his travels were no doubt restricted to the far north-west of the subcontinent.⁴ On his return, having established a mission, he sent Paṭīg and Hannī back there to continue his work. Further evidence of this can be drawn from the fact that *The Great Letter to India* was preserved by the church among the Apostle's *Epistles*. Nevertheless, it remains a problem to try and decide why he might have begun his public life with such a journey. The idea of spiritual tourism is probably anachronistic in this context, and we must be wary of imposing modern conceptions of India as a locale for enlightenment – though there are many accounts from antiquity of a search for truth in distant places, famously including the wanderings of Apollonius of Tyana and Plotinus' desire to learn more of the wisdom of the Persians and the Indians. What other reason might we suppose? Manichaean texts are replete with mercantile imagery, and the religion's spread was closely linked to that of trade, but there is little to suggest that the Apostle himself was a merchant. Alternatively, a number of Islamicate sources including Bīrūnī state that Mani was exiled to India, but these are connected to his falling out of

⁴ For more detailed discussion of the issues, see M. Deeg and I. Gardner, 'Indian Influence on Mani Reconsidered. The Case of Jainism', *International Journal of Jaina Studies*, 5 (2011): 158–186. I have also used here my own previous comments in M. Franzmann, I. Gardner and K. Parry, 'The Indian Background: Connections and Comparisons', in *Medieval Christian and Manichaean Remains from Quanzhou (Zayton)*, ed. S. N. C. Lieu, *Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum* (Brepols, Turnhout, 2012), 226–230.

favour with the Sasanian kings, and such a banishment would be difficult to maintain at this early stage of his career.

There is the further question of what Mani may have learnt of and from Indian religions while there. It is obvious that certain aspects of his teachings (such as rebirth), of Manichaean practice (such as non-violence to all forms of life) and of the organisation of the community (such as its two-tier structure and symbiotic relationship between the elect and the catechumens) could easily be supposed to have such origins or models. Bīrūnī explicitly states that the doctrine of metempsychosis was learnt from the Hindus; and Mani certainly included the Buddha and other Indian teachers among his forerunners. In general, it has been supposed that Buddhism exerted the greatest influence, but recent research has begun to point to contact with Jain practices and ideas. The situation is more complicated than to suppose that Mani necessarily learnt these things in India in the early 240s. For instance, his predecessor Bardaisan of Edessa relayed detailed information on Indian religions, and the Apostle may have learnt much from such written sources or even from travelling informants such as merchants while still in his homeland.

One of the best-recorded episodes in Mani's biography is his meeting with the King of Turan, preserved in both Parthian and Coptic.⁵ The story features the heavenly ascent and the king's confession discussed above. This kingdom is usually understood literally as referring to a vassal-state of the Sasanians in the north-east of what is now modern Baluchistan, a location that has caused it to be conveniently incorporated into the supposed itinerary of the Apostle at this point. Al-Tabarī tells us that Turan had submitted to Ardashir I, and it is included in the catalogue of the Sasanian territories found in the inscription of Shapur I at Naqš-e Rostam. It should be noted that Turan also had levels of symbolic significance where it played a prominent role in Iranian apocalypticism as a more mythical realm, as well as in epic traditions being the adversary of Iran, and it is conceivable that it carries something of that in this instance. In *Concerning the Birth of His Body* there is an account of the conversion of a king that shares similar features to the story of the King of Turan, and Sundermann has speculated that it contains a less legendary version of the same episode. In the Greek codex this occurs prior to Mani and Pattikios reaching Pharat, whereas in the standard reconstruction of events it is argued that the Apostle passed through Turan on his return from India.

⁵ See further BeDuhn, 'Parallels between Coptic and Iranian Kephalaia'.

The Coptic version in kephalaion 323 adds an extremely interesting element to the narrative when it states that 'The Apostle went to the gate of Shapur, the [king of] Turan', the same name as that of the Sasanian king of kings. This will be one of the sons of Shapur I, who in the Naqš-e Rostam inscription of the 260s appears as Shapur, King of Mesene. The identification is consistent with the dynastic practice of the time, where each of the sub-kingdoms was ruled by a member of the imperial family, who might then progress from one status to another. Thus we know, for example, that Narseh (another son of Shapur's) was King of the Sakas, then King of Armenia, and finally the Sasanian emperor. While this is entirely coherent, it does raise the possibility of confusion in the later tradition.

In addition to the account of Mani and the King of Turan extant in Coptic and Parthian texts, and the similar episode in the Greek biography, *Bīrūnī* records a story with very much the same elements:⁶

... king Sābūr came to believe in him the time when he (Mani) raised him with himself to heaven and they both stood in the air between heaven and earth. He displayed marvels to him during this (feat).

It is clear here that the king in question has been understood to be Shapur I, but no other source records the miracle in that context, and it is reasonable to suppose that it has been transposed from the ascent in the narrative of the conversion of the King of Turan to a story regarding his father of the same name. There is also an evident slide from what was at first a didactic tale about an ascent to an absolute wonder in this derived version. This is important because a careful sifting of the evidence reveals through the texts a multiplicity of narratives about Mani's various supposed audiences with Shapur, and similar forms of slippage.

The extent to which the Apostle's biography has been shaped not just by devotional imperatives (hagiography) but is itself a kind of bricolage drawing upon the tropes of ancient narrative and romance is only now beginning to become apparent. Let me be clear. The ideal goal of an historical reconstruction of the life of Mani might be to establish his sojourn in the kingdom of Turan at a precise date and point in his travels, but it will be profitable to give due consideration to the artifice of the story and its literary parallels before determining the extent to which that could be possible. A brief excursus is illuminating. The cycle of stories regarding

⁶ Translation cited from Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism*, 182.

Mani and Goundesh⁷ in the Chester Beatty *Kephalaia* provides remarkable instances of the utilisation of *andarz* literature and traditional folk-tales known otherwise from Pahlavi and Arabic texts, such as the classic *Katīla wa Demna* (known in the west as *The Fables of Bidpai*).⁸ Here their circulation in early Sasanian Iran, often supposed but not evidenced, can be demonstrated. Typical examples of how these have been incorporated into the debates between the two sages, with minimal attempt at any convincing frame-narrative, include fables such as the vanity of the peacock or the lion and the fox (attached at the ends of chapters 331 and 335). Elsewhere in the Dublin codex the ongoing editorial work continues to demonstrate intertextuality, so that in chapter 293 a version of the parable of the pearl-borer forms the basis of a dialogue between the Apostle and one of the catechumens. The tale is recounted in Burzōy's preface to *Katīla wa Demna* and is thus probably of Persian rather than Indian origin. While it has previously been identified in Manichaean literature, this new instance will help to explicate the dynamic inventiveness and fluidity of the community's compositions.⁹

What is even more striking, though, is the way in which episodes in the life-narrative of the Apostle have themselves been woven out of the fabric of literature. In chapter 337 Goundesh sends word to him, whereupon he arrives to find the former with his teacher Masoukeos engaged at the gaming-table (*tabla*). Mani utilises the opportunity to discourse on the vagaries of cosmological fate. The passage has a counterpart in the Middle Persian text *The Explanation of Chess and the Invention of Backgammon*, commonly dated to the sixth century CE and the reign of Kōsrow I. That work describes a contest between the Persian and the Indian kings who are represented by their leading wise men. The famous sage Wuzurgmihr not

⁷ For background, see BeDuhn, 'Parallels between Coptic and Iranian Kephalaia'. The relevant chapters from the Chester Beatty codex (nos. 327–340) are now available in the published edition of *The Chapters of the Wisdom of My Lord Mani*, but the exploration of the literary networks and traditions apparent there has hardly been begun.

⁸ See the detailed study of the frame-story by F. de Blois, *Burzōy's Voyage to India and the Origin of the Book of Kalīlah wa Dimnah* (Royal Asiatic Society, London, 1990). He argues that a lost Middle Persian version was the basis of those later circulated in Iran and the west, distinct from the Sanskrit *Pañcatantra*. Studies of ancient narrative have flourished in recent years, with a turn away from diffusionist models of transmission to the concept of text networks that 'remain fundamentally decentered'; and where 'sequential religious recastings . . . cumulate rhizomatically around a narrative core'. Thus D. L. Selden, 'Mapping the Alexander Romance', in *The Alexander Romance in Persia and the East*, eds. R. Stoneman, K. Erickson and I. Netton (Barkhuis Publishing and Groningen University Library, Groningen, 2012), 42.

⁹ See W. B. Henning, 'Sogdian Tales', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 11 (1945): 465–487.

only defeats his Indian counterpart at chess but he invents the game of backgammon, the board being given cosmological significance and the turning of the counters according to the roll of the die corresponding to the nature of fate.¹⁰

A further example is the conversion legend of Mihrshāh the king of Mesene, embedded according to the Parthian text M47 into the traditional biography of Mani, where it is placed near the start of the itinerary of his final travels. This prince is introduced as the brother of Shapur the king of kings, seated at a feast in his garden when the Apostle enters. When he asks whether there was ever such a garden as this, Mani shows him a vision of the paradise of light. The historicity of this episode, so replete with folkloric elements, has long been doubted. Geoffrey Herman¹¹ has now argued that it is to be read against the story in the Babylonian Talmud (*Avodah Zarah* 65A) where Rava, a disciple of Rabbi Nahman, brings a gift to the Persian official Bar Sheshakh. The latter is in his rose-garden surrounded by naked courtesans, where he asks the same question of the holy man.

Let us return to the defining issue in the construction of Mani's public life, his relationship to Shapur I. Again, new evidence can be drawn from the recent editorial work on the second volume of the Coptic Manichaean *Kephalaia* housed in Dublin.¹² It is very curious that near the end of this vast work, at chapter 338, there would appear to be a new beginning, where it recounts Mani's presentation at the court of King Shapur by a certain Kardel son of Artaban. This is Kirdīr Ardavān, a high-ranking noble known also from the famous inscription at Naqš-e Rostam (ca. 262 CE) and the Middle Persian Manichaean text M3. The chapter recounts a kind of contest in the form of a public debate between Mani and Iodasphes, a wise man from the east. This sage appears before Shapur and praises him as the greatest of kings and lord of a multitude of countries. There is no other kingdom that is its equal; yet, he lacks one thing, that there is nobody in his kingdom who is able to defeat Iodasphes

¹⁰ I explore this further in a paper at present under preparation: I. Gardner, 'Backgammon and Cosmology at the Sasanian Court'. For background, see T. Daryaee, 'Mind, Body, and the Cosmos: Chess and Backgammon in Ancient Persia', *Iranian Studies*, 35 (2002): 281–312.

¹¹ G. Herman, 'The Talmud in its Babylonian Context: Rava and Bar-Sheshakh; Mani and Mihrshah', in *Between Babylonia and the Land of Israel: Studies in Honor of Isaiah M. Gafni*, eds. G. Herman, M. Ben Shahr and A. Oppenheimer (The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, Jerusalem, 2016), 79–96 [Hebrew, not read]. The exact wording and meaning of the passage in the Bavli concerning the 'rose-garden' has been much debated but need not concern us here.

¹² Parts of the following discussion, with further details and references, are to be found in Gardner, 'The Final Ten Chapters'.

in debate. Then Kirdīr is introduced. He tells Shapur that there is one person who could triumph, that is ‘the righteous Manichaios’. Consequently, the king asks for the debate to be held and promises ‘whatever you want’ as the reward if Mani is victorious. When Iodasphes admits defeat the victor is presented to Shapur. This gives the Apostle the opportunity to proclaim all that he would do in the kingdom and the good that can come about for the king through God. He is given authorisation to proceed. In this chapter, although it has been reframed as the climax of the series of debates that Mani holds and wins against rival sages (beginning with Goundesh), there is embedded yet another classic version of what was a crucial moment and archetypal motif in the church’s tradition: Mani’s audience with Shapur, his reception with honour and the granting of permission.

What is so odd is to find the Apostle’s introduction to the court at such a late point in the *Kephalaia* because, of course, he has been there before. We have already seen how in chapter 1, at the start of the first volume, he is said to have returned from the land of India to Persia, and to have appeared before Shapur the king. That is the fixed-point upon which the entire standard reconstruction of the biography is based. Mani breaks with the baptists, goes to India and returns via Turan in time for his first audience with Shapur I; the entire chronology is tied to the coronation of the king of kings.

There follows from kephalaion 2 onwards a long series of chapters that are primarily cosmological and theogonic in content, or at least in a broad sense doctrinal and concerned with what is often termed the Manichaean ‘myth’. Especially in the earlier parts of this there are clear signs of coherent structure and sequencing. This block of material continues until a new sequence, more concerned with ethics and praxis, is introduced in kephalaion 76. Now Mani is explicitly placed in Ctesiphon, where Shapur keeps asking for him and the Apostle must go back and forth between the demands of the king at court and his own community in the city. This vignette leads him to recount his past travels to India, then back to Persia, Mesene, Babylon and so on. It provides a new framing sequence for what follows, and is one of the clearest examples of a redactional join in the work between one book and another; each is introduced by an account of the advent of the apostle as I have discussed in the previous chapter.

Mani’s relationship to the king was an abiding theme not only in the community’s own historiographic record but also in other ancient accounts of the religion whether polemical or otherwise. It was inevitably associated with issues of legitimacy; and the account in kephalaion 1,

which directly states that Mani was given authorisation by Shapur to travel and preach throughout the empire from the start of his rule, must be compared to that in Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*. Again, the timing of the start of the mission in Iran is linked to the king's coronation; but then a tradition is cited that Mani travelled the land for about forty years before meeting Shapur. Finally he was taken into the latter's presence by the king's brother Fīrūz (Pērōz), whereupon:¹³

... when (Mānī) came into his presence, there were on his shoulders two lights resembling lamps. And when (Sābūr) saw him he was impressed and (Mānī) grew in his estimation. (Indeed) he had been resolved to having (Mānī) slain, yet when he met him he was overcome by admiration and delight ... So Mānī made a number of requests ...

These requests were granted, and Ibn al-Nadīm says he spread his message in India, China and Khorasan.

The tradition about forty years of travel prior to meeting King Shapur has commonly been rejected by scholars as some kind of textual corruption, perhaps for four years or forty months. Indeed, Shapur I reigned for only a little more than thirty years; but the principal reason for the rejection is the fundamental connection understood to exist between Mani's first audience and the elevation of the new king. One way of attempting to reconcile the information has been to distinguish between the king's coronation, probably in 240 CE, and then his sole rulership from 242 CE after Ardashir's death and a period of co-regency. Mani's journey to India would be placed between these dates (i.e. from 240 to 242 CE), and the crucial audience with the king would come after it and some time later than Shapur's actual accession to the throne. Sources that appear to compress the events could then be understood as abbreviated.

Ibn al-Nadīm's information is usually very reliable, and I have become increasingly uncomfortable about such an outright rejection of his clear statement that Mani had travelled the land for about forty years before meeting Shapur. The *Acts of Archelaus* also speaks of him being almost sixty years old before he had become learned, acquired disciples and then presented himself before the king. While it might be easy to doubt the reliability of that account, in *kephalaion* 338 we again have something rather similar. The striking first description of Mani in this new Coptic source, where 'his face is beautiful (and) transformed', recalls details in the *Fihrist* (as well as

¹³ This translation is adapted from that by Laffan in Gardner and Lieu, *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire*, 75–76; also in Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism*, 38.

demonstrating again the obvious artifice of these traditions). If we consider the possibility of confusion between the story of the conversion of Shapur the King of Turan, and the impulse to credit the Apostle with the approval of the Shapur I himself and thus to elevate his standing, then we cast doubt on the narrative that ties the start of Mani's public mission to his audience with the king of kings. This does not mean that we have to reject a certain synchronicity with the coronation. Rather, it suggests an elision between the account of the meeting with the King of Turan, and the timing of the crowning of the new king, to form a most convenient rendering of events whereby Mani is granted audience and approval right at the start of his apostolate. This then frames all of the subsequent decades. However, if we categorise this as a feature of the hagiographic stylisation of the biography, then the supposed facts that drive the standard reconstruction disappear.

An example can be given. We have seen how, in the Greek codex, and after Mani has left the community of the baptists, a series of stories follow before the account of the conversion of the king that precedes the arrival at Pharat. Werner Sundermann has been the most influential scholar on Mani's biography in recent times. He has argued that this conversion vignette is a duplicate of the King of Turan episode, which in his reconstruction must have occurred at the start of the Apostle's mission during his return journey to Persia from India and before his audience with Shapur I. Consequently, it has to be placed in the period 240–242 CE. As a result, Sundermann necessarily speculates whether the opening stories in the Mani-Codex, which appear to have happened in the west of the Sasanian empire, were in fact later events that have been transferred to an early date.¹⁴ The problem is an obvious one. If the journey to India is driven to the very start of the 240s, then there is no time available for these other travels. However, when the link between Mani's audience with Shapur and the king's coronation is removed, then the chronological imperative evaporates. The sequence of journeys can be changed and, if we now know less about what exactly happened and when, at least we can re-evaluate the reliability of our sources.

There is a further consequence. Scholars seem generally to have assumed that the young Mani had developed his teachings and practices, even the structure of the church, already at the start of his public life.¹⁵ I am not sure why this is the case. In part it may be a consequence of the idea of his

¹⁴ W. Sundermann, 'Manicheism v. Missionary Activity and Technique', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online edition, updated 20 July 2009, available at www.iranicaonline.org/articles/manicheism-iv-missionary-activity-and-technique (accessed on 19 March 2016).

¹⁵ E.g. Sundermann, 'Mani': 'When Mani broke with the Elkhasaite community of his childhood . . . he had obviously thought out a completely developed, complicated theological and cosmological

first audience with Shapur by 242 CE and the presentation to him of the *Šābuhragān*; in part it may be a legacy of the rhetoric about complete knowledge of all things imparted by revelation from the Twin. There has been insufficient attempt to try and sketch out an evolution of his religious experience or to trace the development of doctrine and praxis. Do we take seriously an upbringing in a closed religious community of Jewish–Christian and Aramaic heritage, then the development of a deep knowledge of Paul and contact with earlier thinkers such as Marcion and Bardaisan as apparent throughout his teachings and writings, travels to India and contact with Buddhist and Jain ideas, the systematisation of these ideas and their translation into a Middle Persian and Mazdayasnian context? In whatever way we try to order and understand these very varied cultural influences, not to mention the practicalities of the gathering of disciples and establishment of a community, extensive travel in the mid-third century and so on, it seems incredibly difficult to compress all this into a short period of time. Mani may have been a religious genius, but there is a great deal of time, effort and work involved; and then there is the question of how might he have gained access to the courts and kings of the empire, let alone to Shapur himself?

The theological and devotional imperatives that created this highly stylised hagiography are clear to see. The *topos* of the prophet and the king speaks directly to Zarathushtra and Vishtaspa.¹⁶ As scholars it is our duty to unpick the threads in search of a more realistic biography. It is preferable to take the clues that are present in the sources and try to understand the development of a man's life and a career. As a basic principle we should begin, unless proved otherwise, by supposing a progression from the periphery to the centre, from the lesser to the greater. A reputation has to be built. Contacts must be developed and deepened. Ideas start with an outline and gain detail or undergo refinement. One of the major problems is the loss of Mani's own writings. With certain exceptions, and these too are rather fragmentary, our knowledge of his scriptures ranges from partial to almost non-existent. There is no means, for instance, to place the books in a sequence as regards composition.

Nevertheless, a clear and dynamic trajectory can be posited from Mani's first acceptance of a calling, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, to the community's

doctrine, the rules of a system of distinct morals for the perfect and the lay people respectively, clear ideas about the organization of his followers . . . (etc.).'

¹⁶ A. de Jong, 'The Cologne Mani-Codex and the Life of Zarathushtra', in *Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians: Religious Dynamics in a Sasanian Context*, ed. G. Herman (Gorgias Press, Piscataway, 2014), 140–147.

teaching that he embodied the final and complete revelation of all truth that superseded everything that had gone before. In order to make sense of this we need to utilise the decades from the 240s into the 260s, and the generations from the life of the Apostle himself into the memory of the church.

One way I have tried to explicate the process, as I have begun to think it through, is by adapting the idea of a scholastic tradition. What I mean by this is an increasing demand for consistency in terminology, a focus on classification, an erasing of redundant or contradictory ideas. The social context would have been the scribal practice of the elect, and the process is most obvious to us (given the nature of texts available) in the gathering together of diverse material into the Coptic *Kephalaia*. The particular value of this work, owing both to its size (approximately one thousand pages) and the rather obvious redactional activity employed to deal with duplicates and traditions drawn from diverse origins, is that we can see it caught at a moment of evolution that has begun but is not yet complete. For instance, I made a particular study of the idea of the Holy Spirit in Manichaean literature, and in certain passages you can see what is an increasingly redundant concept actually being written out of the text and being replaced by those expressions of the divine in accord with the new orthodoxy.¹⁷ Another example would be to study terminology used for the members and levels of the church. Particular titles such as ‘leader’ or ‘teacher’ came to develop a fixed, institutional meaning that it is apparent they did not have at the start. Other titles such as ‘disciple’ ceased to have ongoing utility as they were replaced by specific named categories and offices within the organisation. As the stories about Mani and the records of his oral teachings became shaped and styled into the evolving kephalaiaic corpus then one can trace how the terms were used or changed, and this enables one to undertake a certain archaeology of the text. One can attempt a stratigraphy according to a classification of types.

This work is difficult and its conclusions are open to argument; but progress can be made. The goal, in terms of the biography of Mani himself, is to see whether it is possible to determine the pre-scholastic stratum. Further, is it too ambitious to conceive of an evolution in the religious experience of the Apostle himself? This idea is actually embedded in the primary sources, in (for instance) the very famous statement by his accusers among the baptists: ‘Does he intend to go over to the Greeks?’¹⁸

¹⁷ See I. Gardner, ‘Towards an Understanding of Mani’s Religious Development and the Archaeology of Manichaean Identity’, in *Religion and Retributive Logic: Essays in Honour of Professor Garry W. Trompf*, eds. C. M. Cusack and C. Hartney (Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2010), 147–158.

¹⁸ ‘Cologne’ *Mani-Codex*, 80.

This striking comment has generally been understood in terms of Mani's adoption of ideas and practices associated with Pauline Christianity, perhaps as mediated through Marcion. The influence of the latter is apparent in a number of striking ways such as critique of the Jewish law, a particular exegesis of gospel sayings that pitted this bright news of salvation against the world, the very idea of the apostle as one directly sent to renew the church. Already by the mid-second century Marcion's characteristic reading of Paul had gained followers, and their churches had become established in the Aramaic-speaking eastern regions of the Christian world, as is apparent in the refutations of Ephraem Syrus who directly associated Mani with Marcion and a scholar philosopher from Edessa, Bardaisan. If one thinks about this in terms of biography and hagiography in the text of *Concerning the Birth of his Body*, the question is whether the Apostle's intellectual development after he had left the community has here been transposed to make a cause for his break with the baptists. After all, how might the young man have taken to reading the *Epistle to the Romans* or *Galatians* within a closed Jewish-Christian sect? Would he have had access to the sorts of works commonly classed as gnostic within such a context? If this is thought too fanciful a discussion, let us look at another rather interesting example.

Chapter 341, in the second volume of the Coptic *Kephalaia*, begins with a question posed by a catechumen named as Pabakos the son of Artashahar (?) the son of Mousar. His name is clearly Iranian, the same as that of the father (Pāpak, Pābag) of Ardashir, the first Sasanian king. The reading of the patronymic is not entirely certain, but must itself be supposed to represent Ardashir; although we should not suppose royal heritage for this catechumen, but rather a commonality of names. Pabakos the catechumen was presumably a Mazdayasnian convert (for want of a better term) to Mani's teachings, as he begins his question by quoting three sayings said to be written in *The Law of Zarades*:¹⁹

... I am asking you (about what) is written in *The Law of Zarades* like this: 'Anyone who says that this law is not true [will be excluded (?)] from the light.' And again, it is revealed in *The Law of Zarades*: 'Whoever says that the land of light does not exist, he is one who will not see the land of light.' And again he says: 'Whoever says that no end will come about, that is the one whom no end will befall.' So, these three sayings Zarades has proclaimed in *The Law*.

¹⁹ This translation and discussion is taken (but updated) from Gardner, 'The Final Ten Chapters'. It is arguable whether or not one should treat *The Law of Zarades* (or just *The Law*?) as a title.

Pabakos then continues: ‘I have heard your children saying ...’; and proceeds to quote a series of logia ascribed to Jesus.

This scenario provides a fascinating insight into a situation that must be supposed crucial to the development of the Manichaean community and is here placed within the biography of Mani himself. That is, if one takes seriously his self-identification as ‘an Apostle of Jesus Christ’, then one must place the impetus for his mission within the broad Judaeo-Christian orbit. He and his first disciples were Aramaic speakers, and many of them (but by no means all) had names that demonstrate this religio-cultural heritage.²⁰ However, Mani’s life situation within the religiously diverse early Sasanian empire, and his openness to a universal proclamation of the truth as mediated through prior apostles east and west, clearly attracted hearers from both the Buddhist and Mazdayasnian communities. This is demonstrated by a number of the stories in *The Chapters of the Wisdom of My Lord Manichaios*. It was this process that drove the trajectory of Manichaean development to become something very different from the Christianity that was already cohering into recognisable forms within the Roman empire.

Before we return to Mani’s travels I want to look at another telling example of what I have categorised as his pre-scholastic teaching and practice. Some years ago the text of the Manichaean daily prayers was recovered.²¹ In the *Fihrist* Ibn al-Nadīm had preserved an account of this practice and the wording of what he terms the first six prostrations, but this did not receive from scholars the detailed attention it deserved. This may have been because it was not evident whether what he recounted was the uniform practice of all believers everywhere, or somehow specific to the community in the Abbasid period and under the influence of the comparable Muslim daily prayers. Then in the early 1990s a fourth-century Greek text entitled *The Prayer of the Emanations*, beautifully written and complete on a wooden board, was recovered by the archaeological excavations at Ismant el-Kharab in the Dakhleh Oasis directed by Colin Hope. Although a Manichaean context was known from the start, and some characteristic terminology readily apparent, what is remarkable is that a scholarly discussion ensued as to whether this newly discovered piece was in fact of Manichaean authorship. This debate was not ended until,

²⁰ See e.g. J. Tubach, ‘Die Namen von Manis Jüngern und ihre Herkunft’, in *Manicheismo e Oriente Cristiano Antico. Atti del Terzo Congresso Internazionale*, eds. L. Cirillo and A. van Tongerloo, *Manichaean Studies* 3 (Brepols, Lovanii, 1997), 375–393.

²¹ See I. Gardner, ‘“With a Pure Heart and a Truthful Tongue”: The Recovery of the Text of the Manichaean Daily Prayers’, *Journal of Late Antiquity*, 4 (2011): 79–99.

quite fortuitously, I realised that it contained a complete version of the same material partially preserved in Arabic by Ibn al-Nadīm. Subsequently, parallels were identified in Middle Iranian fragments, and it became apparent that the text of the daily prayers had been recovered, a fundamental building-block for the liturgical practice of the community and one maintained by believers for centuries across a vast swathe of Eurasia and North Africa. I have argued that the prayers were originally composed in Aramaic and by the Apostle himself.

The situation is therefore somewhat similar to the opening of the *Living Gospel*, often discussed as regards Mani's dualism. Some scholars have been struck by its emphasis on the will of God the Father, who exists before everything and through whose power all that was and will be occurs. Is this a contradiction to what they understand to be the classic Manichaean doctrine of two co-eternal and opposed principles? Consequently, they have attempted to develop arguments to explain this difference. As regards *The Prayer of the Emanations*, the Manichaean identity of the text itself was in question.

What does this tell us about the evolution of doctrine and practice in the community? A major reason why Manichaean authorship could be questioned is that many of the familiar 'great gods' of the tradition are not named in the daily prayers; there is no Living Spirit, nor Primal Man nor Mother of Life. Terminology is looser, and devotion is focused on the living God, 'the basis of every grace and life and truth'. A deep awareness of evil is there, but the worshipper's attention is directed to the divine powers, their oversight of creation and subjugation of the darkness. The lengthy fourth prayer, drastically foreshortened in the version preserved by Ibn al-Nadīm, is devoted to 'the shining mind, king, Christ', he who has come and revealed the mysteries, the way of truth, and is the redeemer.

Let me be clear here: I do not think that the Manichaean gods were the creation of a second generation of the church. They are there in the Apostle's own writings, as far as the available evidence allows us to see. The ongoing editorial project by Wolf-Peter Funk on the Coptic *Synaxeis* codex, as yet unpublished but the working drafts made available to specialists, is vital in this regard. This fascinating text gives access to remnants of the discourses of the *Living Gospel* and confirms (to my mind) the thesis of a pre-scholastic tradition. The language is much looser and poetic. It relies more on allusion and story, less on categories and doctrine.

Thus, in the trajectory of Manichaean development there was inevitably a penalty as well as profit. Some of the Christian inheritance no longer had value (references to the Holy Spirit become incoherent remnants in later

Manichaean texts); and some of it (such as the Pauline image of the 'Perfect Man' from Ephesians 4:13) was so stripped of its first context, meaningless to new followers without a biblical framework, that it came to be developed in new directions and rendered almost unrecognisable. If we look carefully at the daily prayers we can perceive that their foundation is in the gospel promise, 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God' (Matthew 5:8); but this deep hope and aspiration has been so overlaid that it has become obscure.

The process of evolution must have begun in the life and experience of the Apostle himself, as he journeyed from the closed community of the baptists to the courts of the Sasanian empire. One of the core claims made, as to why this new church is superior to all those that have gone before, was that it had spread to all points of the compass:²²

. . . my hope, mine: It is provided for it to go to the west and also for it to go to the east; and in every language they hear the voice of its proclamation, and it is proclaimed in all cities. In this first matter my church surpasses the first churches: Because the first churches were chosen according to place, according to city. My church, mine: It is provided for it to go out from all cities, and its good news attains every country.

This was not just an aspiration. It was, as so often with Mani's teaching, intended as something that could be demonstrated to the eye.

Ibn al-Nadīm preserves in his *Fihrist* a list of the titles of the Apostle's *Epistles*, where we find letters to India, Armenia, Edessa and Hatta on the east Arabian coast. In *Concerning the Birth of his Body* we find Mani in Azerbaijan. There are terrible journeys through the mountains and storms. In the enigmatic text *Salmaios' Lament*, which I think contains some very early material, there is a strange travellers' tale about a sea-voyage and a whale that implores mercy. A Sogdian fragment of the mission-history recounts the conversion of a king at Erevan by Mār Gabryab. There are reports of how Mār Addā converted the queen of Tadmōr (i.e. Palmyra). A famous legend tells of how Mār Ammō confronted and passed by the spirit of the border to the east and entered Kushan. These were leading members of Mani's innermost circle. In kephalaion 77 it is astonishing to find Axum listed among the four great kingdoms of the world.

²² From kephalaion 151; similarly in the first chapter: 'I have sown the seed of life. . . from east to west. As you yourselves are seeing, my hope has gone toward the sunrise of the world, and every inhabited part; to the clime of the north, and the . . . Not one among the apostles did ever do these things . . .'. Translations cited from Gardner and Lieu, *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire*, 264, 266.

It is difficult to place Mani's journeys in any kind of chronological sequence, and to disentangle the strictly historical from the fabulous; but his own life and those of the first generation of disciples were characterised by remarkable travel and missionary endeavour. Progress was rapid. It must have seemed that this revelation had spread to every country. Again, the *Acts of Archelaus* provides valuable information. Despite its fierce polemical stance we find here authentic elements of the process. In the background to the frame-narrative is the account of how Mani, having heard of the illness of the king's son, presented himself as the one who could cure the boy. Both before and after this event, the text stresses how he had sent disciples out to various regions of the world. Now the story begins with his hearing of the virtuous reputation and fame of Marcellus, a rich and leading citizen of Karchar across the border in the Roman empire. He hopes, we note, to seize the entire province if he can win over this one man. Thus Mani writes a letter to him, as an Apostle of Jesus Christ, and sends it in advance of his own arrival via a disciple of Addas named Turbo. When he arrives there are a series of public debates with bishop Archelaus.

We have already seen how the *Acta* is a carefully crafted work. We find all the relevant details: Mani's presentation of himself as a physician; the mission-focus on the local king (Marcellus takes this role); the writing of letters and sending of disciples; the contests with rival wise men and religious leaders (here it is Archelaus); even the crossing of borders and the mapping of new territory. Let us now compare the community's own record of the mission to the west.

By a remarkable fortune, important details relating to this are preserved in the remnants of Manichaean church history that were recovered from Central Asia in the early twentieth century. The Middle Persian text M2 belongs to a work entitled *The Coming of the Apostle into the Countries*. It begins:²³

... They (i.e. Addā and Patīg) went to Rome (i.e. the Roman empire) and observed many doctrinal disputes between the religions. Numerous elect and hearers were chosen. Patīg was there for one year, then returned to the presence of the Apostle. Afterwards the lord sent three scribes, the *Gospel* and another two books to Addā. He ordered: 'Come no nearer, but remain there like a merchant who collects treasure!' Addā laboured hard in these districts; he founded many monasteries and chose numerous elect and

²³ This translation and the following quotations, together with much of the subsequent discussion, is taken from I. Gardner, 'The Manichaean Mission in Egypt'; see further the comments and acknowledgement in the Preface. Additional material from that source is provided in Appendix B.

hearers. He composed writings and made wisdom his weapon. He opposed the sects with these (writings), and in everything acquitted himself well. He subdued and defeated the sects. He came as far as Alexandria. He chose Nafšā for the religion. Numerous wonders and miracles were worked in those districts; the religion of the Apostle was advanced in Rome.

There are formulaic passages here, and Addā's success is no doubt exaggerated; but scholars have generally regarded this important testimony as historically grounded. Alexandria is named as the end-point of the western mission, and is followed by the reference to a certain Nafšā. If we compare the Parthian version of the same episode there are further details: It was Mani, in Wēh-Ardašīr (i.e. Seleucia near Ctesiphon), who sent the mission consisting of '[Patīg] the teacher, Addā the bishop, and Mānī the scribe'. Further, according to the Sogdian account, these three went 'with other brothers' to the west.

Despite some minor differences between the various texts, they are consistent in the main features. Patīg as a teacher (the highest grade of the hierarchy below Mani himself or his successor) was the senior figure; but he returned to the Apostle in Mesopotamia and it was Addā who carried the mission through, assisted by junior elect. Who was Nafšā? The answer appears to lie in another Sogdian text, a miracle story of healing and visions. Here Nafšā prays to Jesus for help and Mani himself appears in her presence to heal her. Everyone is astonished at the wondrous event and accept the truth of the Apostle's teaching. The context for the miracle must be Mār Addā's mission to the west, as not only is he named as the central figure in the narrative, but Queen Tadī, the wife of the caesar, is introduced as Nafšā's sister. This will be Zenobia of Palmyra, wife of Septimius Odaenathus, and the date of this event is presumably before her husband's assassination in 267 CE. The identification of the name Tadī with Zenobia is made by scholars by reference to the Aramaic name of Palmyra, i.e. Tadmōr. Notably, in the Coptic *Acts* codex, she appears as Queen Thadamōr.

If this argument is accepted, then one can reason with some confidence that Addā's mission reached Alexandria in the 260s, having travelled by the trade road from Bēt Aramayē through Tadmōr and into Syria. Palmyra would have been a logical bridgehead for entry into the Roman empire, for reasons of travel, culture and politics. Perhaps they then turned south through Palestine to follow the Mediterranean coast from Gaza across the north of Sinai to reach Alexandria; but other routes were possible such as via the Gulf of Aqaba, and then by sea to the coast of southern Egypt and finally north to Alexandria along the Nile. There has been extensive

discussion of the information summarised here,²⁴ with various dates proposed from the early 240s onwards, and different scenarios envisaged such as multiple journeys by Addā. I am not inclined to place the mission to the west too early in Mani's public career owing to the suspicion that the community rewrote its history to provide a cleaner start to the church, the Apostle's break with the baptist community and the ensuing success of his preaching. It seems probable that these events would have taken longer than indicated; and a careful reading of relevant sources does suggest this. Consequently, it is difficult to envisage a mission to Egypt by members of the church hierarchy so immediately upon Mani's first declaration of his calling ca. 240 CE. Still, there are reasonable arguments to make that the conversion of Nafšā and Manichaean penetration of the court at Palmyra may have occurred after Addā's journey to Alexandria. The sequencing of events in M2 might indicate this, and it could be that the text has collapsed different occasions into a single narrative.

The importance of Addā is apparent from a variety of sources, as references to this disciple and his legacy are found in both Manichaean and anti-Manichaean texts; and this is especially true if you accept his identity with that of Adimantus, about whose activity we learn a considerable amount from Augustine. We know from secondary sources that Addā did indeed 'compose writings', which were widely used by that community in its mission to the west and were certainly circulated in Latin. His critique of the Christian church as he found it, especially its use of the Prophets and the contradictions he sought to demonstrate between the Law and the Gospel, remained a subject of heated debate in Roman North Africa over a century later. It is intriguing that in the *Acts of Archelaus* Mani prepares for his foray into the Roman empire by sending before him a disciple of Addas with his letter to Marcellus in Karchar. This account is not exactly a duplicate of the community's own history of the mission to Alexandria, although in both texts the journey is preceded (as it were) by a story about the healing of the monarch's relative. What the parallel does demonstrate is the accuracy of the sources used by the *Acta*, however twisted their usage in service of the latter's message.

In sum, it is possible to learn a considerable amount about the method and memory of Mani's apostolate; but the dating and sequencing of events is far more problematic. I would like to conclude with a number

²⁴ See the authoritative summary of the literature in Sundermann, 'Missionary Activity and Technique'; and, for detailed background, U. Hartmann, *Das palmyrenische Teilreich* (Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart, 2001), 308–314.

of suggestions. These are not exactly facts, which are hard to come by in this study, but they seem to me to be probabilities, based on a careful and extensive reading of the sources.

1. The apparent synchronicity between the start of the Apostle's public mission, the coronation of Shapur I and indeed his entire reign, was something that gained in detail and fixity in the memory of the community. As we will see in the next chapter, the record of the apostolate became aligned with the rule of the king, and the narrative of the 'last days' specifically begins with the accession of Hormizd I. Much of this is due to hagiographic styling and should be distrusted.
2. The break with the baptists and the growth of Mani's self-assurance were likely to have been gradual matters, and the idea that he had a complete and coherent system at the start of the 240s is inherently improbable. The development of the teachings and practices occurred both over the course of his life and into the subsequent generations of the church. Much more attention should be given to establishing a stratigraphy for these events that is both coherent and credible.
3. The records of Mani's audience with Shapur are heavily mythologised and evidence an overlay of various traditions, including confusion with the story of the King of Turan. If and when this event occurred at all it was probably much later in the Apostle's career, as indicated by a number of sources that have mostly been ignored; and any idea of imperial patronage or time spent in the entourage or at court should be subject to critical scepticism. The drive to elevate his standing is obvious to see.²⁵
4. The chronology of Mani's life and travels, especially during the 240s and 250s, is impossible to reconstruct on present evidence. As a general principle events probably occurred rather later than is often supposed, and it is difficult to imagine an organised community with extensive missions and the scriptures being in place much before the 260s. The mission to Alexandria via Palmyra in this decade represents the first, relatively secure event of which we have substantial evidence.

²⁵ For a very recent critique of the entire literary *topos* across different communities, see G. Herman, '“In Honor of the House of Caesar”: Attitudes to the Kingdom in the Aggada of the Babylonian Talmud and other Sasanian Sources', in *The Aggada of the Bavli and Its Cultural World*, eds. G. Herman and J. L. Rubenstein, Brown Judaic Studies (Providence, 2018), 103–124.

CHAPTER 4

Mani's Death

Inter-Religious Conflict in Early Sasanian Iran and the Memory of the Apostle

The ascendancy of the Mazdayasnian priesthood at the court of the Persian king of kings led ultimately to Mani's trial, imprisonment and death at Gondeshapur (Gondēšāpūr/Bēlapat) under King Bahram I. This was commemorated by the community as his crucifixion and compared to the sufferings of all previous righteous messengers of God. The inter-religious conflict and the dramatic events of Mani's last days and martyrdom were uniquely significant for the development of religion in Sasanian Iran. In this chapter I will examine the various available sources, and question the factual and counter-factual memory of the Apostle preserved into the medieval and modern world.

The final trials, suffering and death of Mani at approximately sixty years of age (most probably 277 CE) were memorialised at the most important annual festival of the church, that of the *Bēma*. This event was at once a commemoration of the Apostle's martyrdom, termed his 'crucifixion'; a liturgy of repentance and renewal for the community; and an anticipation of the glorious return and judgement by Jesus (thus *bēma* 'judgement seat') that heralded the final victory of good over evil. As Augustine commented from his own experience, as a witness to the practice of the community in North Africa about a century later:¹

When I was a hearer among you, I frequently asked why it was that the paschal feast of our lord (i.e. Easter) was celebrated with little or no interest, though sometimes there were a few half-hearted worshippers, but no special fast was prescribed for the hearers, – in short, no solemn ceremony, – while great honour is paid to your (feast of the) *bema*, that is, the day on which Manichaeus was martyred, when you erect a platform with five steps, covered with precious cloth, placed conspicuously so as to face the worshippers.

¹ Augustine, *c. Epist. Fund.* 8 (cited from Gardner and Lieu, *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire*, 237).

Here we see encapsulated the basic shift that occurred in the development of Manichaeism as a religion. At first, Mani's role and his teachings and the events of his life had been evaluated in relation to Jesus whom he had termed 'my good saviour'. When he himself died at Bēlapat (i.e. Bēt Lapaṭ, the Aramaic name for the Sasanian imperial city of Gondēšāpūr where Bahrām I had his court) that too was understood as a crucifixion, and the narrative of his last days came to be shaped after the pattern established in the gospels: The final journeys with their intimations of coming tragedy; the entrance into the city (Jerusalem or Bēlapat); the machinations of the evil priesthood (Jews or Mazdayasnians); the trial and false accusations; the terrible pains suffered and the ministering women; the witness to the final release and triumph over evil. Now, as we see through Augustine's eyes, it is Mani himself who is central and Jesus has been relegated to a role within a series of messengers who culminate and are – we might say – only 'perfected' or 'sealed' in the advent of the final apostle of light. All messengers of truth suffer, but the event by which all are measured is the martyrdom of Mani. The core ambivalence between the figures in the tradition is neatly illustrated in the *bēma* itself: The return of Jesus in glory was so embedded in the tradition that Mani can only occupy the seat of judgement over the community as proxy until that future inauguration of the end-times.

In this final chapter I will discuss the ongoing research to recover the *Discourse (or Narrative) about the Crucifixion*. This actual title² is used in the extant remnants of Manichaean literature but has continued to confuse scholars. As we have just learnt, the passion-narrative is Mani's, not Jesus'; and in this text the latter's death was recounted in order to be brought into relation with the former's. Mani's martyrdom was the fundamental and defining historical event for the new community, through which it had been born and at the heart of the ritual year. The records of the hours and the days of his suffering structured consciousness and praxis; in fact the literary cycle known as the *Discourse about the Crucifixion* was itself built upon a core stratum of preserved material known as the *Apomnēmoneumata* ('memorials'). This was one of the great religious passions, comparable to those of the Shi'a and the Christian churches. But it is remarkable

² Thus the Middle Iranian fragment M4570 and associated pieces; similarly the Coptic version of the cycle preserved in the *Homilies* codex. For detailed discussion of these texts, and further background to much of the research used in the earlier part of this chapter, see I. Gardner, 'Mani's Last Days', in *Mani at the Court of the Persian Kings*, 159–208.

how much basic work still needs to be done, and how much progress can be made to understand this subject.

Before the recovery of primary Manichaean texts in the first half of the twentieth century, Western scholarship was reliant on the highly distorted polemical accounts of those opposed to the religion who sought to caricature Mani and ridicule his mission. As we have seen, the most influential (anti-) biography was that contained in the *Acts of Archelaus* ascribed to Hegemonius. The work must be dated ca. 340 CE, and heavily influenced almost all subsequent Christian accounts of the events; and by extension the development of early modern European scholarship on the topic. The basic elements of the story regarding Mani's 'Last Days' can be summarised.

Mani, through avarice for the large reward, had offered to cure the son of the king of the Persians from an illness; but the boy had died under his care and he was thrown into prison, bound with heavy irons. From there he sent out disciples to proclaim his falsehoods and deceits. When the king learnt about this, he prepared to punish him. Mani was warned of the king's intentions in a dream and made his escape by bribing the guards with a large sum of gold. He went to the fortress of Arabion (*Castellum Arabionis*) from where he sent via a certain Turbo a letter to Marcellus indicating his intention of visiting Karchar (or Kaschar, variously named in the manuscript tradition). This place is the scene of the subsequent dispute with Archelaus who was bishop there, and said to be five days' journey away across the river Stranga and in Roman territory. Mani arrives and the dispute takes place, forming the core section of the *Acta* and an opportunity to refute his teachings at length. The text also contains a second 'duplicate' narrative of debate and defeat for Mani set at a nearby village of Diodoris.

Meanwhile, the keeper of the prison was punished and the king gave orders to seek out and apprehend Mani. When the latter again takes flight, after losing his public disputations with bishop Archelaus and earning the wrath of the local population, he returns to the fortress of Arabion where he is subsequently apprehended. He is brought before the king who, inflamed with anger and desiring to avenge the deaths both of his own son and of the prison warden, gave orders that Mani be flayed and hung before the gate of the city, his skin dipped in certain medicaments and inflated, and his flesh given to the birds.

A second, more diverse, stream of tradition survived in the Islamic world. Here the historians did not create an overarching 'alternative' history in the manner of the *Acta*, and a number of the better sources retain authentic details about Mani's trial and the accusations made against him. Some of them identify correctly the Sasanian king under whom Mani

was imprisoned and died as Bahrām I. There was a greater awareness of the realities of the context, such as the structure of the Sasanian court and the role of the king's advisors and even that of the Mazdayasnian priesthood. A good example is the account by Tha'ālibī,³ which purports to quote the questioning of Mani before King Bahrām and an assembly of *mōbeds*. The *Acta* is notably unconcerned or uninformed about such things. In the latter Mani's humiliation is at the hands of a Christian bishop, and he is forced to flee before the righteous fury of the good people of Karchar; any authentic Iranian context or Mazdayasnian critique has been entirely suppressed in favour of a Roman and Christian setting.

Modern Western scholarship on the subject began to free itself from the dominant influence of the *Acts of Archelaus* first through a more critical attitude to historical and textual studies, and then by increased access to the traditions preserved in sources beyond the standard Greek and Latin curriculum (such as those in Syriac, Arabic and Persian). But it was through the decades of the first half of the twentieth century, with the recovery of primary Manichaean sources from Central Asia and from Egypt, that the understanding of Mani's last days was transformed. The single most important text was certainly *The Section of the Narrative about the Crucifixion*, first published by H. J. Polotsky in his 1934 edition of a codex from Medinet Madi.⁴ It was the cross-fertilisation of information from this extensive new source in Coptic with details read in the fragments in Middle Iranian languages that led to a number of ground-breaking studies; and the result was a new and apparently firmly grounded historical sequence of events that has become broadly accepted by all.

The basic structure of the literary cycle as it is now understood by scholars can be summarised as follows:

- A. The favour shown to Mani by King Hormizd I.
- B. Mani's final journeys as his enemies begin to gather against him.
- C. His relationship with the 'vassal-king' Baat.
- D. His entry into Bēlapat.

³ Quoted in Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism*, 41–42. The relevant testimonia are conveniently collected by Reeves in his 'Authentic Biographical Trajectories' (29–48), where they can be compared with the following section 'The *Acta Archelai* and Its Satellites' (48–63).

⁴ H. J. Polotsky, ed., *Manichäische Homilien* (W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, 1934), 42, 9–85, 34 (= *Homs.*). Also of substantial importance was the publication of the *Bēma* psalms (especially nos. 225 and 226) in another of the Medinet Madi codices, Allberry, *A Manichaean Psalm-Book: Part II*. These provided evidence for the role of the passion narrative in the ritual life of the community, which itself could now begin to be reconstructed with the further recovery of fragments of prayer-books and liturgical texts from Central Asia.

- E. The accusations made against him by Kartīr the chief *mōbed* and other leading persons at court.
- F. The enmity of the king, Mani's interview with Bahrām I and apologia.
- G. Details of the charges, the shackling and imprisonment.
- H. Mani's farewell speeches to members of his community.
 - I. The giving of his final writing (the *Seal Letter*) and other insignia such as his robe.
- J. Mani's death, the dispersal of his body and the journey of his soul.
- K. Comparison to the crucifixion of Jesus and other righteous apostles.

A series of classic and foundational studies were written approximately in a single generation from the 1930s to the 1960s, and what is striking is how little the topic has advanced over the last fifty years at a conceptual level. Certainly there has been the continuing publication of fragments in Iranian languages, and a number of important and very technical studies especially by Werner Sundermann on Mani's biography. However, the broad understanding of the architecture of the 'Last Days' cycle remains much as it was established in the mid-twentieth century. One reason for this has been the dominant influence in Manichaean studies of the 'Cologne' *Mani-Codex* (in Greek), which was first deciphered in 1969; to this should be added the stalling of any new work on the other Medinet Madi codices in Coptic due to a whole series of unfortunate events, despite the fact that two other versions of the 'Last Days' cycle were preserved in the Chester Beatty *Kephalaia* and *Acts* codices. Due to the vagaries of its preservation, the most coherent part of the *Mani-Codex* concerned Mani's youth and upbringing among the 'baptists', and this astonishing new material caused much scholarly attention to turn away from the Apostle's death to his youth and the formative influences upon his development.

Although there is a danger of over-generalisation, we might say that a whole generation of scholars of Manichaeism have accepted a particular understanding of events, have acquiesced in a consensus of interpretation, and failed to give enough critical thought to the many problems that remain concerning Mani's 'Last Days' and which are evident enough in the standard rendition of the cycle, for instance, the nature and course of the Apostle's relationship with the mysterious Baat. These vagaries of scholarship in the discipline, the trajectory of Manichaeology, have been discussed already. In this final chapter I will attempt to chart a way forward, building on my ongoing research project on the Mani-biography. I utilise those versions of the cycle that have not previously been available, especially drawing from my editorial work on the codex *The Chapters of the*

Wisdom of My Lord Mani (i.e. the Chester Beatty *Kephalaia*) as well as a re-evaluation of published texts. I am particularly concerned to try to understand the relationship between traditions preserved by the community and the accounts circulated by their opponents, whether those are highly polemical (as with the *Acts of Archelaus*) or more measured (as with some sources from the Islamicate period).

The first, obvious difference is that in the *Acta Mani* is in prison, from where he escapes, flees to the fortress of Arabion and thence to his debates with Archelaus in Karchar. Only later, and the actual time elapsed is not indicated, is he recaptured and put to death. In contrast, we see in the community's own traditions what appears to be a consistent tendency to paint Mani's relationships to the various Sasanian kings in a positive light of support and patronage, until the time of Bahrām I and the dreadful events of the trial, imprisonment and death. At least, this is how modern scholarship has understood it. There has been such a telescoping of events that it is routine to depict King Shapur (Šābūr) as something of a benefactor, with it always recounted how Mani spent time in his entourage; this positive relationship then maintained through the short reign of Hormizd I; and even to suppose Mani's freedom of movement so that his final entrance into Bēlapat, with its intimations of Palm Sunday, can be portrayed as the start of the passion sequence itself. While I agree that this trajectory can be traced in the Manichaean textual and liturgical practice,⁵ what is astonishing is the extent to which contemporary secular scholarship has acquiesced in what are rather obvious apologetic devices and even magnified them. The task of the historian is to unpick the strands of both apologetic and polemic and attempt to arrive at a reasonable reading of the evidence on the basis of the data available.

It is interesting, though surprisingly unremarked, how the architecture of the 'Last Days' narrative begins with the accession of Hormizd. Shapur sickens and dies, the new king is crowned and Mani goes in for audience.⁶ Here is found another example where the relationship between the Apostle and the king is artificially constructed and scholars have not interrogated it. Mani's apostolic mission has been aligned with the long reign of Shapur. In the Dublin *Kephalaia* codex the final three chapters all feature this king, as if deliberately reinforcing the association (chapters 345–347).

⁵ E.g. *Bēma* psalm 241 according to which Shapur 'honoured you, Hormizd received your truth' (*PsBk2* 43, 7–8); but then follow Bahrām and the Magians, compared to Herod and the Jews.

⁶ Thus the very start of *The Section of the Narrative about the Crucifixion* (*Homs.* 42, 11–17 and following).

The manuscript then leaves a visual blank space before the passion begins as a kind of epilogue or frame, separated from the work that has now been completed with a literal 'amen' in its final line. The body of the whole vast text had started (chapter 1, *About the Advent of the Apostle*) with Mani's growth to maturity under Ardashir (Ardašīr I), the descent of the living Paraclete and revelation of the hidden mysteries, culminating with his supposed first appearance before Shapur. Now, the crucifixion narrative begins, but apart and in the years after, during the reign of Hormizd.

The redactional interventions are frequently awkward in the Manichaean texts, and there are a number of clear indications that should cause the attentive reader to be cautious. I will talk briefly about three examples. Firstly, scattered through the extant remains of the community's literature, and the point is explicitly made by a number of the historians of the Islamicate period, are blatant references to the Apostle's trials during the reign of Shapur himself:⁷

[From] the day of the great persecution to the day of the cross there are six years: I spent them walking in the midst of the world like captives in the midst of strangers.

Bahrām's reign was three years, with Mani's imprisonment and death occurring near the end.⁸ Hormizd's reign was very short, usually reckoned at one year. The six years of the text cited above must have started within the reign of Shapur, and for confirmation one can adduce various pieces of evidence, including Bīrūnī's explicit statement that Mani was banned from the Sasanian realm by that king (this providing a pretext for Bahrām to arrest and kill him when he returned).

Secondly, the common assumption that the supposed good favour shown by Shapur continued under his successor Hormizd is again too selective a reading of the actual texts. Although the account of Mani's audience with the new king endeavours to present his response as beneficent, and he is necessarily reverential towards the Apostle, it is clear that the latter's freedom of action is curtailed as a result. Mani is permitted to

⁷ *PsBk2* 19, 12–15 (from *Bēma* psalm 226).

⁸ *Homs.* 46, 12–13 and 85, 7–8; this according to the traditions of the community itself, though the regnal period is confirmed by other ancient sources (e.g. Ṭabarī records three years, three months and three days) and accepted by modern scholars. The dating of the early Sasanian kings has been much discussed and I do not wish to enter that complicated debate here. I prefer the so-called late dating due to the evidence of the Manichaean sources, which will place Bahrām's reign between 274 and 277, with Mani's death on 26 February in 277 CE. The alternative early dating is three years before (i.e. 271–274) and is used by many authorities; but this makes it difficult to reconcile Mani's death (now 2 March in 274) during the reign of this king with other data.

travel to the Assyrians (Bēt Āramayē/Babylonia) where he will be free from oppression, and a person named Thirusak (?)⁹ is to play a role in this (the text becomes very fragmentary at this point); but my inclination is to read the passage in terms of restriction and control rather than the granting of liberty. It is preferable to govern our interpretation of this episode by the previously discussed statement concerning the six years of wandering like a captive.

In my third example we can look at what is one of the most evocative and frequently cited of all surviving texts regarding Mani's persecution. This is the Middle Persian text M₃, presented as an eye-witness account by Nūhẓādag (Mani's interpreter?), Kuštai (his personal scribe) and a certain Abzakhyā the Persian. The narrative opens with the king at dinner, when the courtiers enter to say that Mani has come and is waiting at the door. The Apostle is made to wait. Then:¹⁰

And (the king) stood up from his meal; and, putting one arm around the Queen of the Sakas and the other round Kirdīr the son of Ardavān, he came towards the lord. And his first words to the lord were: 'You are not welcome!' The lord replied: 'Why? What wrong have I done'. The king said: 'I have sworn an oath not to let you come to this land.' And in anger he spoke thus to the lord: 'Ah, what need of you as you go neither fighting nor hunting . . .'

One necessarily observes that the king is nowhere named in the text. The first editors presumed him to be Shapur; it was W. B. Henning in 1936 who identified him with Bahrām, and this has become standard in scholarship ever since. However, one can hardly fail to note the king's intimate relationship with the Queen of the Sakas. This person is Shapurduxt, daughter to Shapur, and thus sister to his sons including Hormizd, Bahrām and Narseh. In the complicated dynastic relationships of the early Sasanians, all three princes would succeed to the supreme throne in due course; but before they became 'king of kings' each had roles as lords of the

⁹ The name, following Polotsky's *ed. princ.*, has always been read as Mousak, but I have recently reconsidered this; see I. Gardner, 'New Readings in the Coptic Manichaean *Homilies* Codex', *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 205 (2018): 119–120. It is very interesting that a commander (*stratēlatēs*) of the king in Ctesiphon, bearing the same name, features in chapter 322 of the Chester Beatty *Kephalaia* codex. In that instance the king is presumably Shapur I (unless the narrative of the chapter has been displaced), but it is tempting to suppose that under Hormizd the Apostle is now placed in his guard.

¹⁰ From M₃, text and translation (adapted) in W. B. Henning, 'Mani's Last Journey', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 10 (1942): 949–950. For the argument and further discussion of this passage, abbreviated here, see Gardner, 'Mani's Last Days'.

various sub-kingdoms that were within the empire such as Armenia, Gilān, Mesene, Sakastān and Turān.

The 'Last Days' cycle in the Dublin *Kephalaia* suggests an alternate setting for this famous story. The narrative begins with an episode set at the summer palace of Hamadān during the reign of Hormizd. Here it is recounted how Mani and his companions made to approach the king, who was staying there with his court. Then follows an elaborate sequence of greetings between the Apostle and King Hormizd, which are passed through a series of intermediaries, both Mani's own disciples and members of the king's circle of dignitaries. Various persons are named, but the crucial point occurs when Bahrām the king of Gilān does not accept the greeting from Mani. This is presented as a calculated rebuff or snub by the future King Bahrām I, who will soon come to succeed his brother Hormizd to the Sasanian throne, and who will be responsible ultimately for the death of the Apostle. The episode concludes with a dialogue between Mani and his disciples about these events, which leads to a direct comparison to the life of Jesus, presumably on the theme of betrayal. Finally Mani demands silence about these matters, for what is ordained to happen will happen. During this excursus to the narrative it is again made apparent that the Apostle was not always treated well by King Shapur; but of especial interest is an explicit reference to earlier persecution of the Apostle by the latter's son Narseh, who at this stage was King of the Sakas and husband to Shapurduxt. He is said to have bound Mani in fetters and forced him to drink wine, though the Apostle did not die on that occasion. This new evidence provides a better setting for the text M₃, where the king rises from his dinner and puts his arm around the Queen of the Sakas; he is not named directly because the identification is implied by what follows. The king is Narseh.

The purpose of the above discussion has been to attempt to reverse some of the assumptions of modern scholarship, built upon a too-ready acceptance of apologetic trajectories that can be identified within the community's own traditions. Mani's problems with the Sasanian dynasty began already during the reign of King Shapur, and there is good reason to think that he was subject to various impositions upon his movement and his mission for several years before his final fateful arrest. We have read explicit evidence of direct physical persecution by Narseh. The telescoping of events into a single fateful journey that brought Mani to his climactic final ordeal before the king needs to be very carefully reconsidered, especially in view of the rather obvious imperatives of liturgical commemoration and the parallels drawn with the Christian passion week. Before we

come to the events of the trial and imprisonment in Bēlapat we need to examine what can be known of Mani's prior travels. I have discussed this in detail elsewhere and here will simply summarise my conclusions.¹¹

The idea that there was one single 'last journey' by which the Apostle arrived at the imperial city should be resisted. This was Henning's phrase, and affecting though it is there are good reasons to reject his reconstruction, which has unduly influenced all later discussions of the topic. The ground-breaking research paper, published in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* in 1942, was based on an attempt to reconcile the itinerary related in *The Section of the Narrative about the Crucifixion* (the Coptic text first published by Hans Jakob Polotsky in 1934) and Middle Iranian fragments of the 'Last Days' cycle upon which Henning himself was working.¹² In brief, a route is traced whereby Mani travelled north up the Tigris from Hormizd-Ardašīr (Ahwāz) and Mesene to Ctesiphon, before circling round to the north-east and then south again to enter Bēlapat in Susiana. One can readily imagine the excitement with which this new material would have been greeted, and of course there was also a web of personal relationships that link all this to London. Henning had become engaged to Maria Polotsky in Berlin in 1936, and the events in Germany that would drive his friend and her brother Hans Jakob to settle in the Palestinian Mandate (and ultimately to a Chair at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem) also encouraged him to accept the Lectureship in Iranian Studies previously held by Bailey at the School of Oriental Studies. Walter Henning and Maria Polotsky were married in London in 1937. By the time 'Mani's Last Journey' was published he was in Cambridge where the newly created SOAS had been temporarily relocated.

Both Henning and Polotsky were remarkable scholars and formidable philologists. Nevertheless, it is possible to make improvements to their editions, and the passing of time with the recovery of new texts makes it opportune to reconsider our understanding of these events. My argument has two main features: temporal and geographic. As regards the first, it makes better sense of the sources to suppose that Mani's travels took place over a longer period of time than implied by the thesis of the 'last journey'. I have quoted from *Bēma* psalm 226 where the Apostle himself is given to say that he spent six years wandering like a captive before the day of the cross; further, in the final confrontation with Bahrām as recorded in

¹¹ See Gardner, 'Mani's Last Days'; where a map is also provided.

¹² In particular the travels recounted in Coptic *Homs.* 44, 10–45, 9 and in the Parthian fragments M6031 and 6033 (known to Henning as T ii D 163).

Polotsky's edition of the Coptic text, the king specifically refers to three years that Mani has travelled in the company of Baat. That will be the entirety of the new king's reign, before which there was the sojourn among the Assyrians to which Hormizd had sentenced him with Thirousak. In brief, I suggest that Mani's voyage up the Tigris from Mesene to Ctesiphon¹³ occurred at around the start of Bahrām's reign (or just before) and preceded the three years he spent with Baat whom he seems to have joined at or after he left the Twin-Cities travelling north.

My geographical reconstruction is more controversial. The Coptic texts repeatedly link Mani and Baat together and with travel to a place or occasion given as *t-hermen(e)ia* – apparently the same as the Graeco-Coptic word meaning 'interpretation'. This has occasioned substantial discussion, but I have recently argued in detail that we have no sensible alternative other than to read this as a rendering of the toponym Armenia. Further, I have suggested that this reorientation to the north of Mani's travels during Bahrām's reign provides an opportunity to reconcile the evidence of the Coptic sources as preserved by the community itself with the parody presented in the *Acts of Archelaus*. In the latter text Mani, having escaped from prison, fled to the fortress of Arabion; and it was common for scholars prior to the mid-twentieth century to locate this refuge in Armenia. The change occurred with the publication of the new texts in Coptic and Parthian, and especially due to Henning's reconstruction of a 'last journey' that took Mani from Ctesiphon north-east to Artemita (Kholassar), then south to Bēlapat across the plain at the foot of the hills (i.e. rather than returning to the Tigris and south along the river) via Gaukhai in Bēt Darayē. However, with a longer time-frame and a careful rereading of the texts, I argue that the evidence supports a three-year sojourn north of Mesopotamia when Mani was placed under the protection of the vassal-king Baat. The latter would presumably have been subject to Narseh, who with the accession of Bahrām to the supreme throne had now been invested as King of Sasanian Armenia. Nevertheless, the Apostle was able to turn this difficult situation to some advantage, because at his subsequent trial in Bēlapat we read:¹⁴

As soon as the king (Bahrām) saw (Mani), [his face] convulsed with angry laughter. He spoke to him (a torrent) of words: 'Look, for three [whole] years [you] have been travelling with Baat. What law is it that you have [taught] him, so that he has left our (law) behind him and taken up yours for his own? He (returned?) to Armenia: Why did you not go with

¹³ *Homs.* 44, 15–16.

¹⁴ *Homs.* 46, 10–18.

[him] – as I ordered you to go with [him] – nor again come with him?’ My [lord (Mani)] understood immediately that the matter was being stretched for an excuse . . .

In this pivotal passage it is made clear that Mani was able to convert Baat to his own teaching away from the Mazdayasnian tradition of the court, and that at a certain point he had managed to separate himself from Baat’s guardianship.

There are a number of plausible locations for the fortress of Arabion. These include a site that played a crucial role in the Armenian Bartholomew legend, variously named Arebanos, Albanopolis, Urbanopolis and so on. Intriguingly, there are curious intersections between this legend and the narrative of Mani’s martyrdom, especially in the gruesome details of the deaths of the two apostles. Arebanos has been variously located, including the St Bartholomew monastery high on the greater Zab river near the modern town of Başkale. An alternative location is suggested by an account found in a Manichaean historical text that preserves a tradition of a mission by Mani’s disciple Mar Gabryab to Revān (*ryβʿn*) in Armenia. This place-name is discussed by Sundermann, who identifies it as modern (Y)erevan, known already to Islamic authors as Rewān.¹⁵ Both the site and the etymology are to be derived from the ancient Urartian fortress (eighth century BCE) of Erebuni. We know that Mani himself wrote a *Letter to Armenia*, and one might speculate that prior Manichaean success in this region gave the Apostle hope of support there.

The details of Mani’s final years in Armenia are frustratingly elusive, with the relevant passages in the Coptic versions of the ‘Last Days’ cycle all very poorly preserved, and the parody that is the *Acts of Archelaus* extremely difficult to interpret. Whether there is any truth in the supposed mission into Roman territory that forms the core of that work I would not like to say; but it may more probably be a deliberate translocation into the familiar landscape of the audience. We also do not know why exactly Mani turned south again into Mesopotamia. The *Acta* asserts his eventual arrest at the fortress of Arabion, but this fragmentary section in the Dublin *Kephalaia* codex seems to recount how the Apostle journeyed through Susiana (Bēt Huzayē) in the company of his own disciples, and that it was only at the edge of the city of Susa itself that he was detained and summonsed before Bahrām in Bēlapat.

¹⁵ Sogdian text 18224; see W. Sundermann, *Mitteliranische manichäische Texte kirchengeschichtlichen Inhalts*, Berliner Turfantexte 11 (Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 1981), 45–46.

Let us now turn to the heart of *The Discourse about the Crucifixion*: The trial, imprisonment and passion. It is notable that in the *Acts of Archelaus* no detail is given of the Persian setting for its tale. Neither the king nor his son are named,¹⁶ nor the city where Mani is put to death. The trial (i.e. as the public presentation and rejection of the Apostle's teachings) – which actually took place at the Sasanian court and in the presence of the leading Mazdayasnian priesthood – has there been transposed into the setting of the Roman empire and occurs before a Christian bishop and populace. The pious Archelaus has taken the place of Kartīr the chief *mōbed*.

As we have seen, the dominant place of the Christian polemical counter-biography began to break down in the latter nineteenth century with the first scholarly editions and translations into modern European languages of sources that circulated in the Islamicate world, including those by eastern Christian, Jewish and Mazdayasnian authors of the medieval period as well as Muslim writers. These texts were primarily composed in Arabic, Syriac and Persian; and included works by such as the tenth-century encyclopaedist Ibn al-Nadīm (edited by Gustav Flügel in 1862); the eighth-century Nestorian bishop Theodore bar Kōnai (Henri Pognon, 1898); and the great eleventh-century historian Bīrūnī (Edward Sachau, 1879). These three authors had direct access to genuine Manichaean writings available at their time of writing when living communities were still present in the Abbasid empire, or to an even later time in Central Asia and China. Of especial importance was the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm, who states explicitly that Mani was imprisoned and put to death during the reign of Bahrām I (Bahrām son of Shapur), with his body segmented and displayed over the gates of the city of Gondēšāpūr. Also vital were the quotations and paraphrases from Mani's scriptures recorded by Bīrūnī. He is a witness to the 'Last Days' cycle as a distinct literary production when he cites Jibrā'īl b. Nūḥ, a ninth-century Christian writer whose work against Manichaeism was available to him (though is now lost). We learn that this author knew that a disciple of Mani had a book that informed about the Apostle's fate, where:¹⁷

(It said) that (Mani) was imprisoned because of a relative of the king who was convinced that he was possessed by a demon. He promised to cure him,

¹⁶ Note the treatise of the pagan philosopher Alexander of Lycopolis (*De placitis Manichaeorum*), commonly dated to ca. 300 CE, and which preserves an independent account of the early Manichaean mission to Egypt. This author also knows of the death of Mani, which he ascribes to the reign of the Sasanian king Shapur I, stating that he was put to death for having offended the latter in some way.

¹⁷ From Bīrūnī, *Āthār*; translation in Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism*, 43.

but when he could not do it, both his feet and hands were placed in chains until he died in prison. His head was set up at the entrance of the pavilion, and his corpse was flung into the street in order for it to be a warning and lesson . . .

Further, in writers such as Ya‘qūbī (edited by Houtsma, 1883) and Tha‘ālibī (ed. Zotenberg, 1890) there are found the first explicit accounts – for Western scholarship – of public disputes between Mani and Mazdayasnian priests at the Persian court. The more important details of all this material can be summarised in brief:¹⁸

- Bahrām questions Mani regarding his teachings and then arranges a meeting between him and a certain *mōbed* who had previously prevailed over him in debate during the time of Shapur (causing the king to revert from ten years as a dualist); Mani refuses a trial by physical ordeal and is consequently fettered and flayed (Ya‘qūbī).
- Bahrām captures Mani, who has been in hiding for two years, and convokes an assembly of scholars who defeat him in argument (Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī).
- Bahrām orders an assembly of *mōbeds*, the chief of whom questions Mani about his teaching; the debate is focused on the renunciation of sexual relations and the generation of evil material bodies through conception (Tha‘ālibī).
- The dispute between Mani and the chief *mōbed* was focused on the issue of the prohibition of sexual relations in order to hasten the end of the world (Ibn Ḥazm).
- Bahram searches for Mani and puts him to death on the grounds that he wants ‘to destroy the world’ (Bīrūnī).
- Mani was imprisoned and chained because he failed to cure a relative of the king who was possessed by a demon (this is the tradition ascribed to a Manichaean written source as cited by Bīrūnī).
- Mani was killed because he broke the conditions of his banishment from the kingdom – this dated to the reign of Shapur I – by returning to Persia from exile in India, China and Tibet (another tradition cited by Bīrūnī and recorded also by various authors).

In sum: There are found in these sources three separate themes. The first are traditions about Mani’s banishment from the empire, or

¹⁸ For the texts, see Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism*. Some of the authors name the king as Bahrām son of Hormizd (i.e. as if Shapur’s grandson) or Bahrām son of Bahrām (i.e. Bahrām II who succeeded his father).

occasionally his being in hiding; the second concerns his failure to heal a relative of the king; and the third relates to the conflict between Manichaean and Mazdayasnian views concerning the sex and the body (summarised in the idea that Mani wanted to destroy the world), made evident in public debate between the Apostle and the *mōbeds* before the king. All three of these themes are also to be found in the *Acta Archelai*, though transposed to somewhat different settings and the theme of the public debate used to attack the entirety of Mani's system. To explore them further we need to turn to the surviving versions of the 'Last Days' cycle.

We must begin with the problem of dating Mani's passion. This event, naturally, was core to the community's liturgical life and at the heart of the emotional response made by believers. In the pattern established by the events (entrance to Bēlapat; trial before Bahrām and the antagonism of Kartīr; the Apostle's imprisonment, death and ascent) we can see clearly a kind of 'holy week' and a 'holy month', with very obvious similarities to narratives dear to other religious communities. The Manichaeans were explicitly conscious of the parallels with Jesus, Jerusalem, the Jews and their priests, Pilate and the Roman authorities, the agony of the cross. Thus the recollection of the hours and days established a framework for remembrance and ritual life, just as in the gospels we read 'it was the third hour' (Mark 15:25) or 'on the first day of the week' (Luke 24:1).

Textual evidence for these 'memorials', which must belong to the earliest strata of the cycle, are to be found embedded in various of the sources. Here is the fullest example:¹⁹

This is the memorial from [the day of] his crucifixion until the hour when he came forth: [On the] Lord's Day he entered Bēlapat; on the second day (i.e. Monday) he [was] accused; on the third they . . . he fortified his church [until the] Sabbath. They searched for him and bound him. [Afterwards . . .] all his enemies. On the [Sabbath they] sealed his chains; they took [him in to the prison]. They bound him on the eighth day of [Meshir. Until] the day when he went to the heights shall make twenty-[six] days he was bound in chains of iron. At the eleventh [hour] of the day he rose from [the body] up to the dwelling-places of his greatness [in] the heights. He met his Form . . . of the lights. He came forth and leapt to the heights [with (?)] the power who had come for him.

¹⁹ *Homs.* 60, 1–17; see also 45, 19–22. Sundermann utilised the Greek term *Apomnēmoneumata* for these traditions, extant in those Coptic and Parthian sources recovered during the twentieth century, owing to the anti-Manichaean 'abjuration formulae' where he noted the title of a book with this name.

A new detail is added in the Dublin *Kephalalaia* codex where it is stated explicitly that Mani entered Bēlapat on the Lord's Day (i.e. a Sunday) in the month of Tōbe, which is the fifth Egyptian month of the year. What can we conclude from this, and does it help with any of the much-discussed problems concerning the chronology of Mani's life?

The dates of Mani's passion were of vital interest to his community as they underpinned the liturgical calendar, with his death at the eleventh hour of the fourth day of the Aramaic month of Adar widely attested from diverse sources. This was recorded as a Monday, which helps us but does not entirely solve the question of the year of his death (most likely 2 March 274 or 26 February 277 CE). Prior to the death the community commemorated twenty-six days of his torment. In the Coptic tradition the month of Adar was glossed as the Egyptian Paremhatēp (Phamenoth), the seventh month of the year. Since Mani's death occurred on a Monday, the date of his 'chaining' – from which would be calculated the twenty-six days of his passion – would have to be reckoned as the 8th of Meshir; and indeed this date is to be found in *The Section of the Narrative about the Crucifixion* (cited above). This was then a Wednesday; but that fact is problematic as the sources all speak of Mani entering Bēlapat on the Sunday, and then being accused, tried and chained at the end of one week, i.e. the following Saturday/Sunday. How does one arrive at the following Wednesday?

The new information that Mani arrived on a Sunday in Bēlapat in the month of Tōbe does one important thing. It means that the twenty-six days simply cannot be calculated from Mani's chaining on the following Saturday or Sunday after he entered Bēlapat – because, if so, Mani would have arrived there already in Meshir (as the days are dated from the 8th). This provides vital support for the supposition that those twenty-six days must be calculated from the following Wednesday, although it remains unclear what exactly was the significance of the Wednesday rather than the previous Saturday or Sunday. Böhlig tried to answer this question by suggesting that the first 'chaining' on Saturday/Sunday was only a kind of civil confinement and that the real punishment began on the following Wednesday; and something like this now seems to be the only possible solution.²⁰ Thus:

²⁰ For further detailed discussion of the available sources, see W. Sundermann, 'Studien zur kirchengeschichtlichen Literatur der iranischen Manichäer III', *Altorientalische Forschung*, 14 (1987), 76–77. There will be found the conclusion that Mani's period in Bēlapat to his death must have totalled thirty-seven days. Our new textual confirmation that he entered Bēlapat already in the month of Tōbe corresponds to this calculation.

- A. Entrance to Bēlapat Sunday (28th Tōbe in the Egyptian calendar).
- B. Accused on the Monday.
- C. 'Strengthened his church' until the Saturday.
- D. Condemned and chained on the Saturday/Sunday (both days are recorded).
- E. Dates of the 26 days begin on Wednesday (8th Meshir).
- F. Died on Monday (4th of Paremhatēp = 4th Adar).

We can now return to the three themes identified earlier, and which appear repeatedly in all sources (Christian, Islamicate and Manichaean) as basic to the issue of Mani's trial, chaining and subsequent death in prison. I will abbreviate these three as the themes of exile; the king's relative; and debate or conflict with the *mōbeds*. The first point to note is that, whereas the passion-narrative focuses events in a tight sequence of days and hours, each of these three themes has a wider compass. Mani's problems with the king, court and clergy were necessarily more long-standing than his sojourn in Bēlapat. This is an obvious point, but again it is one that has not been explored to the extent that it deserves despite a wide array of relevant evidence. It is notable that in the new version of the cycle recovered from the Dublin *Kephalaia* the accusations made by Kartīr and the Magians start long before Mani enters Bēlapat (in contrast to the better-known account in the *Homilies* codex). In fact they begin before the first mention of Baat and Armenia. In the *Acts of Archelaus* Mani was first imprisoned, then escaped to the fortress of Arabion and was finally recaptured and put to death. There the events concerning the king's relative stand at the very start of this process and at a distance from the actual martyrdom. It is frustratingly difficult to know how these three themes relate to each other and to the causes for Mani's final trial and imprisonment, and probably impossible to determine a satisfactory hypothesis without a better understanding of the time-frame involved. What I have identified is a tendency to conflate events and thus to overlay causes and processes that may originally have been separate or have occurred in sequence. If we were to follow the *Acta* we might suppose that the problem concerning the king's relative happened first, followed by the exile and then the conflict with the *mōbeds* at the end, the whole sequence taking several years. However, this is too much weight to put on what is rather flimsy evidence and has no support in the community traditions available to us. In any case, let us outline what we do know about the three themes in turn.

My hypothesis is that the story in the *Acta* of Mani's escape and refuge at the fortress of Arabion is that text's version of the theme of exile.

We have seen previously that the *Acta* does not simply invent things, rather it twists and parodies those matters that were important to the community itself. One should expect nothing else; it is the resemblance to the truth that will make a caricature effective. According to the text we have repeatedly cited here, Mani spent his last six years wandering in the world like a captive among strangers. The remnants of the 'Last Days' cycle have enabled us to identify some of his itinerary, including a significant time in Armenia during the reign of Bahrām. In Bīrūnī and other Islamicate sources we read of exile from the time of Shapur to India, China and Tibet. It is difficult to know exactly what to make of this, and whether or how these destinations have replaced Armenia. A number of the same authors state explicitly that those were the regions where the Manichaean community was still numerous at their time of writing, and this may help to explain the development of an idea of exile to the east, perhaps combined with the accounts that Mani travelled to India earlier in his career. But it may also be worth noting that *The Section of the Narrative about the Crucifixion* does explicitly state that Mani had first wished to travel to Kushan; but, on being turned back, he travelled up the Tigris to Babylonia and then north to Armenia. Since we are dealing with several years of wanderings here, the idea that Mani may have also gone to the east cannot be automatically discounted as without foundation.²¹

I now turn briefly to the second theme, which is Mani's failure to heal the king's relative. This is a feature of both the *Acts of Archelaus* and some sources from the Islamicate period, and sits oddly alongside the idea that Mani was imprisoned because he had in some way broken the terms of his banishment or otherwise hidden from the king's authority. In general, the texts make reference to a son²² or a relative of the reigning king; whereas the community traditions preserved in Coptic make it clear that the person involved was the king's sister. She may again have been Shapurduxt, the daughter of Shapur I, wife to Narseh and sister to Bahram I.²³ This sister, although unnamed, appears in both *The Section of the Narrative about the*

²¹ One should also consider the rather loose or expansive reference for regions such as 'India' in ancient geography, and note for example how Bartholomew is associated with both there and Armenia.

²² C. H. Beeson, ed., *Hegemonius. Acta Archelai*, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte [GCS], 16 (Leipzig, 1906), 7–8: '... regis filius aegritudine quadam adreptus est ... mortuus est puer in manibus eius ...'. It would be of interest to examine carefully the actual terms utilised in the various sources as regards gender and kin-relations.

²³ It was O. Klíma who first identified her as the same Queen of the Sakas referred to in the Middle Persian text M₃, the wife and sister of Narseh. See his 'Iranische Miscellen II.3: *Sagān bānbišn*, M 3', *Archiv orientální*, 28 (1960): 464–465.

Crucifixion and in the version of the 'Last Days' cycle appended to *The Chapters of the Wisdom of My Lord Mani*. While her death and the king's grief are recorded, not surprisingly neither of these sources indicate that Mani was in any way responsible for this misfortune. Instead, we find a dialogue between the king and the Apostle where the former is anxious to know to what place the dead queen has gone. This section seems then to switch to the question of the end of the world, a topic that recurs in the Islamicate sources about Mani's trial.²⁴

However, there is another version of the 'Last Days' cycle preserved among the texts of the Medinet Madi collection. This is found in the *Acts* codex. It has never been published,²⁵ but from what I have seen of the text it may help us to understand a little more about these events. I particularly note a passage where it appears that the Magians have told the king that Mani is to blame for misfortunes that have occurred. There is no direct reference to the sister as extant, but nevertheless this might begin to suggest a coherent pattern to be derived from the fragmentary remnants of the narrative. In the Dublin *Kephalaia* version the first and clearest notice of the king's grief for his sister is followed in the very next lines by explicit reference to accusations made by Kartīr and the Magians. It would seem reasonable to suppose that in a situation such as the Sasanian court, where a tragedy has occurred and the king seeks a cause for it from his religious advisors, that the blame might be directed squarely at an outsider figure such as Mani. This would provide a basis for the story developed in the *Acts of Archelaus*, that the king's son was taken ill, Mani failed to cure him and was then shackled and imprisoned.

In the third theme the conflict with the Mazdayasnian clergy takes centre-stage. According to a series of sources from the Islamicate period a debate took place between Mani and the chief *mōbed*. In some of the accounts we hear about an assembly of the priests, as if the Apostle was brought before a religious convocation. In Ya'qūbī we even read about a kind of physical trial by ordeal. In the *Acts of Archelaus* the whole episode has been transposed to Karchar in the Roman empire, where bishop Archelaus takes the place of the chief *mōbed*. The disputation is formalised in front of four supposedly impartial judges, but of course the story is

²⁴ See *Homs*. 48, 25–49, 31 (?); also 46, 24–26.

²⁵ Editorial work has been ongoing for some years. Wolf-Peter Funk, who leads the project, circulated to interested scholars a very provisional text marked: 'For personal study and research only. No publication' (*A Work Concordance to Unedited Coptic Manichaean Historical Texts*, Quebec City, 1993). Updated Coptic text for the project can be accessed through Funk's digital concordance files, to which a number of scholars have access (including myself).

turned into a public humiliation for the Apostle before the assembled crowd. We must compare the community sources as preserved. Here are found a series of references to accusations made by Kartīr and the Magians.²⁶ However, the trial takes place before the king. Importantly, there is no dialogue in the extant texts directly between Mani and Kartīr.²⁷ In view of the previous two themes of exile and the king's sister, the question of any specifically religious dimension to these events needs to be carefully examined.

This is an important issue. In the version of the 'Last Days' cycle preserved in the Dublin *Kephalaia* codex the primary accusation against Mani is framed in terms of the authority of the king and the fabric of society:²⁸

The Manichaios is the one who has led astray the entire world. He took the men and the women [and they] followed after him. He says to the people: 'Do not [do the] works of king.'

The passage continues with how Mani was opposed to military prowess and warfare. This corresponds to the accusations found in the Middle Persian text M3, that the Apostle goes neither fighting nor hunting; and it is much the same theme that is recalled in the Islamic sources that repeatedly state how he wanted to 'destroy' the world through the renunciation of sexual relations. However, when we turn to the liturgical tradition of the Manichaean community as represented in the Coptic *Bēma* psalm number 225 the context of the accusation has been subtly changed. The Magians are named as the 'brothers of the Jews, the murderers of Christ'. It is they who make the accusation to Bahrām to destroy Mani:²⁹

We implore you with one accord, O king, do away with him, for he is a teacher who leads mankind astray.

Thus the Apostle was fettered in order to please the Magians. The crucial phrase, 'to lead mankind astray', is here directed into a more overtly

²⁶ Notably at *Homs*. 45, 11–19; but also in the appendix to the Dublin *Kephalaia* codex and in the Parthian account represented by M6031 + 6033. For a summary of fragments of the cycle in Middle Iranian texts, see Gardner, 'Mani's Last Days', 166–170.

²⁷ There is a dialogue between Mani and a magus preserved in Sogdian, although the placing of this episode in the Apostle's biography or hagiography is uncertain. Nicholas Sims-Williams proposes that it relates to the reign of Hormizd I. See further his 'The Sogdian Fragments of Leningrad', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 44 (1981): 231–240; *ibid.*, 'The Sogdian Fragments of Leningrad II: Mani at the Court of the Shahanshah', *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, 4 (1990): 281–288.

²⁸ For these quotations from the Dublin text and further details, see Gardner, 'Mani's Last Days'.

²⁹ *P3Bk2* 15, 25–26.

religious track. The relationship between Mani, the priests and the king was certainly compared to the passion of Christ, and one has to consider the extent to which the sequence of events was brought into conformity with that other archetypal crucifixion-narrative. We may see here some reflection of the tendency to excuse Pilate for the death of Jesus and to place the blame squarely on the Jews, a feature the Manichaean community had inherited and which is apparent in its gospel traditions. This could help to explain the heightened role of the Mazdayasnian priests in the Islamicate sources.

The clash of traditions was framed in terms of 'law' (*nomos*). This is explicit in *The Section of the Narrative about the Crucifixion* when Bahrām says to Mani:

'What law is it that you have [taught] (Baat), so that he has left our (law) behind him and taken up yours for his own?'

The same theme is evident in the Dublin *Kephalaia* text:

Do not [renounce] the law of Zarades . . . he gave it that you would not [come (?) and] change the entire world.

As the debate continues it is clear that this is all to do with authority. Mani claims that his is from God. The king states that he is master of the earth. The Apostle replies that God reveals 'to whomever he pleases'. Such are the characteristic terms that come again and again in the various versions of the cycle,³⁰ throughout the Coptic sources, but distantly reflected in the Islamicate texts as well. The result of this dispute is the shackling of the Apostle.

Does this all mean that there was no climactic confrontation between Mani and Kartīr? Both the Dublin *Kephalaia* and the *Acts* codices may indicate some final scene of this sort after the sealing of the fetters. The chaining was memorialised as occurring on the Saturday,³¹ but there is the well-known problem with the recording of the dates of Mani's passion (discussed above), for the twenty-six days that ended with his death on the 4th Adar must be counted from the following Wednesday. The question is what terrible event occurred that caused the community to choose the

³⁰ Thus compare *PsBk2* 16, 14–15 ('. . . God teaches whom he pleases') for another example of how the phrases embedded in the *Discourse about the Crucifixion* are replayed in the liturgical context. Another telling example of the fixed nature of the narrative is Mani's final appeal to the sun ('Oh sun!') as his witness. This occurs just before the chains are placed upon him, and is found in both the *Homilies* and the Dublin *Kephalaia*.

³¹ See *Homs.* 60, 8–10; it is also found in the *Acts* codex.

latter day as its starting-point? A careful reading of the relevant passages suggests the introduction of an episode where Kartīr and the king now speak. Bahrām is fiercely angry and swears to kill the Apostle. The topic in both texts is that Mani be instructed in ‘our law’. My solution is speculative, but I wonder whether the real theme of Mani’s passion in prison was his torture to death, a bodily instruction indeed in the law of Zarades. Such a suggestion may help to make better sense of those sources that emphasise how he was flayed, and even provide an explanation for the tradition of a physical ordeal imposed upon him.

The details of Mani’s death are so overlaid with piety, rhetoric and standard tropes that it is difficult, probably impossible, to discern what actually happened. What do we know? The tradition of chaining is deeply embedded in all the texts, and the community traditions are very specific about different kinds and numbers of fetters on the various parts of the body, and the date on which they were sealed; so that this seems to be at the heart of the matter. The Apostle was chained by his hands, feet and neck.³² Most probably this is how he died, and a residual uncertainty about the exact manner of his death is reflected in the sources that debate whether he died a natural death in prison (presumably one without a specific moment of inflicted violence), or whether he was dead at all.³³ Thus in *Bēma* psalm 225 it is imagined how the king commanded his physicians to examine the body to ensure that death had not been feigned, although this may have been influenced by traditions about the death and resurrection of Jesus. In any case, the dismemberment of the body seems to have occurred after death, although in a few sources the flaying of the skin is transposed to the torture of the living Mani. What does seem certain is that the body was beheaded and the head displayed in public.³⁴ According to Bīrūnī and other authors the body was stuffed with straw and suspended over one of the city-gates; whereas Ibn al-Nadīm has an account of the two sections of the body hung over two separate gates. Apparently these sites were then designated as the lower and upper parts of the Lord.

Given the gruesome facts of Mani’s death, we are entitled to be sceptical about the historicity of the accounts of his final days in prison as found in the extant versions of the *Discourse about the Crucifixion*. Lengthy verbatim prayers ascribed to him, speeches of encouragement to his disciples,

³² See *Homs*. 48, 20–22, 60, 7–12 and 93, 32–33; *PsBk2* 19, 6–7 and 43, 26–31.

³³ It is interesting to read through the Islamic sources collected by Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamate Manichaeism*, 29–48.

³⁴ *PsBk2* 19, 29–31. Similar traditions about beheading and flaying are found regarding the martyrdom of Bartholomew in the Armenian tradition.

touching details of the last moments and what seems to have been the development of an extensive literature concerning his ascension – these all belong to the genres of religious piety and hagiography. It is notable that *Bēma* psalm 226 records that the authorities did not allow Mani to see his disciples.³⁵

There are some more specific traditions that require examination. The first and most important is regarding the Apostle's investiture of Sisinnios as his successor, together with the handing over of the *Seal Letter* and various insignia of authority. This is a key scene in the 'Last Days' cycle, and it is difficult to know what weight can be given to it. On the one hand, there is an obvious religious and institutional imperative to create an episode of this sort; but, on the other, the best-preserved version (found in the not yet published Dublin *Kephalaia* codex) provides a set of named witnesses led by Mar Ammo. This person is well-attested as one of Mani's most prominent disciples, and it is notable that the *Seal Letter*, addressed to the whole community, was sent jointly by the Apostle and Ammo 'my most loved son'.³⁶ The letter was treasured and read in liturgical contexts, standing as a kind of last testimony and exhortation to the believers. However, whether one can really imagine it to have been written or even dictated to Ammo once his master had been chained up in prison remains difficult.

Some of the same issues occur with the naming of other figures associated with Mani's imprisonment and death. The three female catechumens who are said to have wept over the body and closed his eyes are presumably modelled after the women of the gospel tradition. There are also recurrent traditions about a certain Uzzi who is supposed to have been allowed to remain with him until his death, and to whom are ascribed various testimonies about the Apostle's final hours and actions. It is difficult to think how any of this could have taken place.

It is not surprising that the account of Mani's last days came to be overlaid with reverence and symbolism. There may have developed a cult of relics, as suggested by some rather fragmentary passages in the Coptic *Homilies* codex. One of the most interesting of recent discussions is whether the rock-crystal sealstone, now held by the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, was in fact the personal possession of the Apostle preserved since

³⁵ *PsBk2* 19, 9–11.

³⁶ On the letter, see C. Reck, 'A Sogdian Version of Mani's Letter of the Seal', in *New Light on Manichaeism. Papers from the Sixth International Congress on Manichaeism*, ed. J. BeDuhn (Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2009), 225–239; also the appended comments at the conclusion of Gardner, 'Once More on Mani's *Epistles* and Manichaean Letter-Writing'.

his death as a relic. A seal does not appear as such among the extant lists of insignia of authority, which include Mani's *Gospel* and his *Picture-Book* together with his robe; but there is a curious reference to Mani's 'hand' in the Parthian folio fragment M5569, which the original editor Henning took literally (i.e. as a physical relic of the body) and Sundermann suggested might be his staff. Gulácsi has contemplated whether it could have been this actual object that survives to the present day.³⁷

It is most probable that the preservation of such items (if it occurred) was something that took place after the martyrdom rather than during it; and in fact this is stated in the Parthian version, whereas in the Coptic accounts the handing-over of these objects has become associated with the investiture of Sisinnios and ascribed to the action of the Apostle himself. Despite the very human hope for a fitting, holy and divinely ordained ending, there is every probability that Mani's death occurred to the bewilderment and despair of his followers. Much of what we read here must be their attempts to make sense of the inexplicable tragedy that had come about, and to reconcile it with the Apostle's divinely ordained mission, his holy status and the will of God.

³⁷ See Z. Gulácsi, 'The Prophet's Seal: A Contextualized Look at the Crystal Sealstone of Mani (216–276 CE) in the Bibliothèque nationale de France', *Bulletin of the Asia Institute*, 24, 2010 (2014): 161–185.

The Dualistic Basis of Mani's Thought

There is not opportunity here to research and discuss all aspects of Mani's teaching. However, the anti-biography of the *Acts of Archelaus* focuses attention on dualism as the governing principle. In the genealogy of the heresy it is recorded that others, such as Pythagoras, had taught this; but no one before had advanced it so brashly as Scythianus, and thus he is taken to be the originator and founder of the sect. Of course, the use and abuse of the term 'Manichaean dualism' has nowadays attained a currency in popular culture far removed from any meaningful connection to the teachings of Mani. It has become a byword for almost any absolute polarity, two opinions or stances that are completely opposite; and where, most commonly, one is conceived as positive and the other as negative.

What did Mani himself teach?¹ The opening of his *Living Gospel* is preserved in both Greek and Middle Persian. According to the former version:²

I, Mannichaeus, Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God the Father of truth, from whom I also came into being. He lives and remains for ever and ever, existing before all things and remaining after all things. Everything that has happened and will happen is established through his power. For from him I have my being, and I exist also according to his will. And from him all that is true was revealed to me . . .

The assertions contained in this passage must be accorded the highest status. The *Living Gospel* was regularly placed at the head of the corpus of scriptures by the church itself, and here we have Mani's powerful avowal of his calling. Accordingly, this passage has attracted considerable discussion

¹ The following section follows closely a more extended treatment of the topic in I. Gardner, 'Dualism in Mani and Manichaeism', in *Dualismes*, ed. F. Jourdan (Editura Polirom, Iași, 2016), 417–436. This should be consulted for further details and references.

² *Mani-Codex* 66, 4–20. Translations of both versions are easily accessible in Gardner and Lieu, *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire*.

on the grounds that it appears to contradict the co-eternality of the God of truth with the principle of darkness, and also that much of the universe around us is a product of evil matter and not of God. Various solutions have been suggested to this apparent dilemma, such as that Mani's own thought and that of the later community followed a trajectory from an initial Judaeo-Christian monotheism and purely ethical dualism to the systematisation of a radical and uncompromising ontological dualism, perhaps under the secondary influence of Mazdayasnian thought. Ludwig Koenen has discussed this in detail with a particular focus on the *Mani-Codex*, and has dismissed any idea that the Apostle's dualism was not ontological from the start.³ His conclusion is that Mani did not hesitate to appropriate phrases from the Christian tradition even at the expense of logical contradiction.

There are a number of points that will occur immediately to the attentive reader. One is the question of time and eternity. Can one hold that God exists before all the things that happen in time, which in Manichaeism is the history of conflict and mixture between light and darkness, without contradicting the separate existence of matter from all eternity? Is God's priority an issue of temporality or of being? Another point is the assertion that all things may happen by God's will and power, which may not be the same as to say that he is the cause and origin of evil.

However, given the words quoted from the *Living Gospel* above, are there scriptural statements by the Apostle himself that would seem to authorise the teaching of ontological dualism within the later Manichaean community? We can turn to his *Epistles*, the standard openings of which correspond to the format and apostolic claim apparent in the *Gospel*. Substantial sections of the *Foundation Letter* are preserved in Latin from the writings of Augustine and his circle. The most relevant passages are as follows:⁴

. . . hear first what happened before the construction of the world and how the conflict was begun, so that you are able to distinguish the nature of the light and of the darkness. . . .

³ See L. Koenen, 'How Dualistic Is Mani's Dualism?', in *Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis. Atti del Secondo Simposio Internazionale*, ed. L. Cirillo, Studi e Ricerche 5 (Marra Editore, Cosenza, 1990), 1–34. He begins his argument with a critique of the position taken by G. G. Stroumsa, 'König und Schwein: Zur Struktur des manichäischen Dualismus', in *Gnosis und Politik*, ed. J. Taubes (Wilhelm Fink Verlag, München, 1984), 141–153.

⁴ Augustine, *Contra Epistulam Manichaei quam vocant fundamenti*, 208, 23–26 and 209, 11–14.

For these two substances were divided from each other in the beginning; and indeed God the Father ruled over the light, eternal in his holy origin . . .

There follows an extended description of the Father and the immeasurable treasures of his kingdom. We then come to the introduction of the enemy power:⁵

Near one part and side of that bright and holy land was the land of darkness, deep and immense in magnitude, . . . an infinite and incalculable darkness flowing from the same nature, with its own progeny; . . .

The *Foundation Letter* makes a number of points that must be regarded as basic to Manichaean dualism. Firstly, that one must distinguish clearly between the light and the darkness, and that these two are separate from the beginning. Secondly, we learn that these are two substances; and that the two realms with their multitudinous members (riches or aeons in the light and vile creatures in the darkness) are each entirely consubstantial with their own nature. Thirdly, that God the Father is the ruler of the light in all its beauty and harmony; but among the other terrifying and violent progeny:⁶

. . . loitered the horrible ruler and commander of them all, having surrounded himself with innumerable princes of whom he himself was the heart and origin of all; . . .

This passage is especially important, because it makes clear that each realm has its own unitary source and ruler. One, we may say, is the King of light; and the other is the King of darkness. These terms are found in later Manichaean texts such as the *Kephalaia*, although the preferred titles for the first supreme power are variations on 'God (of Truth)' or 'Father (of Greatness)' rather than 'King (of Light)'. The question arises as to whether Mani himself taught a doctrine of two equal if opposed figures that we can gloss as competing gods. Remarkably, there survives an explicit discussion of this vital matter. Severus of Antioch, writing in the sixth century, provides a number of citations and paraphrases from an otherwise lost work with a specific discussion of the two principles:⁷

(Mani) says: 'Each one of them is uncreated and without beginning: Both the good, which is light; and the evil, which is darkness and matter. And there is no contact between them.' . . .

The good, which they have called light and the tree of life, occupies the regions in the east, west and north; but the tree of death which they also

⁵ Augustine, *ibid.*, 212, 9–11 and 12–14. ⁶ Augustine, *ibid.*, 228, 25–229, 1.

⁷ From Severus of Antioch, *Hom.* 123, citing 150, 8–10; 152, 14–16; 152, 20–23.

called matter, being very wicked and uncreated, occupies the regions towards the south and the meridian. . . .

The difference and gulf between the two principles are as great as that between a king and a pig. The one moves in a royal palace in chambers fitting for him; the other wallows like a pig in filth, feeds on its foul stench and takes pleasure in it; or is like a snake coiled inside its den. . . .

This vivid image of the pig is not otherwise known from surviving Manichaean texts, but the purpose is clear: God and matter are entirely unlike each other. Severus' account continues with an extended description of the two trees, the latter tree of death being at constant warfare and divided against itself. This disunity and conflict has within it the cause of matter's own eventual destruction, so that at the end God will be in all and over all.

As we can see, Mani employed various strategies to describe his two principles. They are opposed substances of light and darkness, regions of harmony or bitter division and conflict, kingdoms with princes and armies, God the Father or matter and desire, and so on. The scriptures were not philosophical treatises, and the Apostle fashioned his language according to the occasion and the audience. He was a preacher and a debater; but also a visionary, an artist and a healer. The language of the 'two trees', with the associated imagery of 'roots' and 'branches' and 'fruits' and so on, was one of the most distinctive and creative features of Manichaean textual and visual production. It was utilised by the Apostle himself and was also developed in treatises and artworks across the Manichaean world.

The ultimate origin of this teaching about the two trees, however much it was developed in later tradition and accumulated influences and levels of meaning, must be traced to the gospel saying (Matthew 7:17–20 and parallels) about the good tree that bears good fruit and the evil one that bears evil fruit. This was a basic proof-text for dualism (thus 'by their fruits you shall know them') that was already utilised by Marcion and inherited by Mani and his followers from their forerunners. This debt to the teaching of Jesus is confirmed by a fourth source that can be ascribed to the Apostle. We have considered quotations from the *Living Gospel*, the *Foundation Letter* and the unknown work cited by Severus of Antioch. However, scholarship has recently recovered the text of the Manichaean daily prayers, the basic building-block of the community's practice, and it is highly probable that these too should be ascribed to the founder.⁸ Here, as in the extant remains of Mani's *Epistles* and other scriptural works, there

⁸ For further details, and the argument that the authorship should be ascribed to Mani, see Gardner, 'With a Pure Heart and a Truthful Tongue'.

is found a kind of pre-scholastic teaching that notably contrasts to some of the terminology and systematisation characteristic of later works such as the *Kephalaia*. In the daily prayers the community worshipped God ('the basis of every grace and life and truth') and his emanations. Although there is clear reference to the darkness and its arrogant powers that desired to make war, it is clear that the Father is 'the one who is first of all'. Such statements, with their apparently monotheistic flavour and the lack of any radical ontological dualism, have attracted comment and argument that the text somehow fails to be authentically Manichaean; or might predate the development of a full-blown dualism supposedly characteristic of the religion. This is similar to the arguments made about the opening of the *Living Gospel*. The idea is misconceived. Even in a scholastic Manichaean text such as the *Kephalaia* there are repeated affirmations of the Father as 'The Lord of all' and 'The first established one'. But the point I want to make here concerns the description of Christ in the daily prayers as the one who has:

... without concealment interpreted his wisdom and secret mysteries to people on earth; and set forth the way of truth to the whole world, and explained in every language, and distinguished the truth from the lie, and light from darkness, and good from evil, and the righteous from the wicked.

We are now in a position to summarise those points that I regard as characteristic of Mani's own preaching. This summary is based on the texts that I have quoted and regard as authentic expressions of the Apostle's teachings.

1. The Father is the God of Truth, existing without beginning or end; he is to be praised and worshipped as the first of all.
2. This eternal God lives forever in his realm of light, and this kingdom with its qualities and all powers is consubstantial with him. It stretches immeasurably upwards, to the north and west and east.
3. There exists, however, without beginning, an incalculable evil with its own ruler and progeny. It is wedged below and to the south of the realm of light.
4. The realm of darkness is entirely unlike the light, in every way. Its substance is matter and its character is conflict and a blind grasping desire. In its own nature there is present the worm of its own destruction.
5. The primary image (although others are also used) for these two realms is that of the tree of life and the tree of death. One flourishes and is beautiful, the other decays and has a bitter fruit.

6. God exists before all that happens in the cosmos; time and the universe are but the narrative and arena for the conflict between good and evil that occurs when the forces of darkness come to perceive the light. This history is entirely under the will of the Father who is Lord over all, so that it is governed by the divine plan and foresight that will lead to the victory of the good and eternal defeat of evil.
7. The true knowledge and practice to which all are called is to recognise and distinguish between these two natures. This was the fundamental teaching of the saviour Jesus Christ, revealed in every place and language and now proclaimed by his apostle Mani.

To this point I have emphasised the background of this dualism in the (broadly) Christian world; but the source of Mani's teaching here is often sought or assumed to have been in the Iranian context. The language of 'light and darkness', and particularly 'truth and the lie', may very well seem to have a Mazdayasnian heritage. It has been argued that the basic architecture of Manichaean doctrine, as the religion 'of the two principles and the three times', was inherently Iranian. Prods Oktor Skjaervø has taken issue with this, regarding the tripartite structure of time as 'very general and quite natural', and not a distinctive feature of the Pahlavi literature;⁹ but it was Werner Sundermann who attempted to answer directly the question as to how Zoroastrian was Mani's dualism. He pointed out that one should not presume that either the dualism of the *Gathas*, or that of the ninth-century sources, pertained at the time of Mani in the third century. Rather, the evidence regarding the early Sasanian era points to a kind of 'mitigated dualism . . . which subordinated the duality of god and devil to the monism of Zurvanism'.¹⁰ The Manichaeans knew these stories of Ohrmazd and Ahriman as twin brothers, and they criticised them. The true teaching of Zarathushtra must accord with that of Jesus and Mani.

The crucial point about this is that it demonstrates that Mani had a preconceived idea about what dualism was, before he came to take sides in the controversy over Zurvanite teachings. Sundermann's conclusion is an important one. He argues that while Mazdayasnian influence is most

⁹ P. O. Skjaervø, 'Iranian Elements in Manichaeism. A Comparative Contrastive Approach. Irano-Manichaica I', in *Au carrefour des religions. Hommages à Philippe Gignoux*, ed. R. Gyselen (Groupe pour l'Étude de la Civilisation du Moyen-Orient, Bures-sur-Yvette, Res Orientales 7, Paris, 1995), 273.

¹⁰ W. Sundermann, 'How Zoroastrian is Mani's Dualism?', in *Manicheismo e Oriente Cristiano Antico. Atti del Terzo Congresso Internazionale*, eds. L. Cirillo and A. van Tongerloo, Manichaean Studies 3 (Brepols, Lovanii, 1997), 348.

probable, it added details to a world-view that had already been developed by the Apostle upon what we can term broadly as his Judaeo-Christian heritage. For this added Iranian content Sundermann seems to focus upon the structure of the relationship in Mani's teaching between the two opposing powers, where the demoniac attacks the divine, this leading to the creation of the world and ultimately ending with the victory of God. It may be this idea of creation as a counterstroke made by the good in order to thwart the antagonism of evil, and thus an emphasis on the superior wisdom of God, that most clearly reveals the impress of Iranian thought upon Manichaeism. For Mani evil is by its nature unknowing, and although unrestrained in its violence and depravity it simply cannot plan ahead, foresee or understand the consequences its actions and events.

We know that Mani in his own lifetime debated and conflicted with the Magi, and also that his community within an Iranian cultural context had no problem with expressing its teachings and practices in language that would be familiar to worshippers from such a background. This policy was already adopted by the Apostle himself in the writing he presented to King Shapur I, i.e. the *Šābuhragān*,¹¹ but there is a crucial difference in Mani's dualism. In traditional Mazdayasnianism the world as God's material creation is essentially good, and the work of Ahriman is a 'parasitic corruption' of it.¹² This is very distinctly different from Mani's teaching that matter is an active evil substance in its own right. Is it possible to suggest the origin of this idea that is so crucial to his teaching?

Here we must consider Manichaean science, including those disciplines that we would nowadays refer to as physics, chemistry, geology, biology and astronomy. The knowledge of Mani was presented as all-encompassing; there did not exist the modern fracture between theology, cosmology and the natural sciences. While in a general way this may be true across the ancient world, Mani held a notable interest in all aspects of the world around: the genera of living creatures, meteorology, physiology and so on. Certainly this is how he is presented in the *Kephalaia*, and I think it is an authentic representation of the Apostle's teaching even if specific details have been added by the expanding scholastic tradition of the church. Thus, for example, there is chapter 95 entitled: *The Apostle asks his Disciples: What is Cloud?* The subject of Manichaean science has been

¹¹ D. N. MacKenzie, 'Mani's Šābuhragān' (I/II), *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 42 (1979): 500–534 and 43 (1980): 288–310.

¹² Thus Sundermann, 'How Zoroastrian Is Mani's Dualism?', 355 and referencing S. Shaked, 'The Notions *mēnōg* and *gētīg* in the Pahlavi Texts and their Relation to Eschatology', *Acta Orientalia*, 33 (1971): 71–72.

understudied. We know that Mani debated with wise men at the court of Shapur I, and it seems that he had knowledge of the intellectual traditions of both India and the Hellenistic world as well as Iran.

This subject is vital for an understanding of Manichaean dualism. The two principles, that is God and matter or light and darkness, are not just two natures (Greek *physis*); they are two substances, Greek *ousia* or Latin *substantia*. What did Mani mean by this? It is clear that both can be seen, touched and even smelt. They can both be measured. This is crucially important. Time and the cosmos is the arena in which the two substances are mixed. The Manichaeans used a number of terms, which we can variously translate as ‘conjoined’, ‘entangled’ and so on. The scientific language by which they tried to express what they meant is that of ‘the five light elements’ and ‘the five dark elements’, Greek *stoicheion*. These were the living air, wind, light, water and fire; and their dark counterparts of smoke, wind, darkness, water and fire. The five worlds of darkness are these five dark elements with all their rampaging demonic progeny. They are the products of matter, which is conceived actively as grasping and devouring and brutal. But the light is also a substance. The universe is constructed out of a mixture of both, although in unequal proportions from place to place; and thus the light elements are visible and tangible where they are found through what is translucent, shining and sweet-smelling. Matter is foul, putrid and carnal.

It is not at all clear from where Mani derived his understanding of matter. She is imagined as female, ‘the thought of death’, the blind lust that produces and inflames and drives the forces of darkness. The relationship of matter to the land of darkness and to the King of Darkness is rather difficult to establish precisely, and I will return to this at the end of the argument. I think Mani used diverse orders of language at different times. She both shapes and gives birth to what is evil; she is the one who fashions and she is its ‘mother’. However, when the products of evil become separated and deprived of her they are rendered inactive and devastated, unable to do anything.

As regards Mani’s notion of the mixing of the elements, it is clear that one should consider the cosmological speculations of Bardaisan of Edessa (ca. 154–222 CE). The Apostle certainly knew the teachings of his predecessor, whose many interests in topics such as astrology and Indian philosophy prefigured his own. Mani discussed and debated Bardaisanite views in at least three chapters of his lost work, the *Book of Mysteries*. This predecessor appears to have taught that originally there were four pure elements at each of the cardinal points: Light, wind, fire

and water.¹³ Below them was darkness. By chance these all came into contact and mingled with one another, whereupon God's Word came and created this world out of the mixture. Similarly, the microcosm of the body consists of a mixing of the pure elements with the darkness.

In this account we find many similarities to Mani's teaching, although there are important differences. According to the latter, the cosmos was created out of the mixture of the five light elements with the five dark ones. Another crucial difference is that for Bardaisan darkness is dead and without activity. This led him to take a more optimistic view compared to Mani, for whom the forces of evil are very real and active in their aggression, albeit without forethought or a coherent plan in their ravenous devouring of the light. In Manichaeism this is a world of pain and suffering for the divine, where sex and the relentless generation of new carnal bodies is a constant degradation for the light compounded in matter. Bardaisan appears to have taken the opposite view, that sexual generation dilutes the amount of darkness in the world.

Despite these differences, it does seem that Mani's conceptual understanding of the elements, of mixture and the creation of both the micro and macrocosmos, can potentially be contextualised and understood within this cultural environment that he inhabited. That is, if we knew more about the details of the debates between groups such as the Bardaisanites and the Marcionites of third-century Mesopotamia, then Mani's teaching about these matters would be readily comprehended. What is more difficult to unravel is the peculiar and astonishing vision of evil in its sheer malevolence and vicious fury. His King of Darkness is really very different from Marcion's God of the Law, despite occasional attempts that are apparent in the texts to associate him with the Old Testament figure. It is remarkable that in Manichaeism this universe is designed, constructed and held in place by the gods of the second emanation. Principally, we may say that the demiurge is the Living Spirit, also named the Father of Life. As Augustine's friend Evodius so clearly states:¹⁴

Mani said there are two natures, one good and the other evil. It is the good that made the world, but the world is made from the evil.

What then can we conclude from this description of the King of Darkness, about matter and her seething progeny? The most extensive

¹³ The various sources for Bardaisan's teaching are surveyed and discussed in detail by Drijvers. I here follow the concluding summary in his *Bardaisan of Edessa* (Koninklijke Van Gorcum, Assen, 1966), 219–220. See also pages 225–226 for specific comparison and contrast to the Manichaean doctrine.

¹⁴ Evodius, *De Fide contra Manichaeos*, ed. J. Zycha, CSEL XXVI 2, 974, 22–24.

study is that of Henri-Charles Puech. He begins by pointing out that the Manichaean system ‘can be formulated in two different sets of terms, the first conceptual and abstract, the second mythological’.¹⁵ I am uncomfortable with the term ‘mythological’, because Mani’s teaching is presented as literally true. It is not intended as a story, as symbolic or allegorical. Nevertheless, what I think Puech is highlighting are the different modes of presentation. On the one hand there is discussion of two principles or sets of elements. On the other there is what may appear to us as a fantastical story of demonic armies and warfare. The realms of darkness are described as full of fissures and smoky vents, putrid smells and fogs. The King of Darkness appears as a kind of giant monstrous spider. Most interesting is that all the creatures of this present world including ourselves are products of the five demonic realms, i.e. bipeds, quadrupeds, creatures of the air, of water, and reptiles. All are male and female, so that their lust and endless giving birth is itself the very nature of evil. This is an amazing vision of hell on earth, and so the Manichaeans prized above all else plant life, especially the sweet fruits and flowers where the entangled divine has its greatest concentration in our world of mixture. These are the stuff of god hanging on every tree, but weeping, being gnashed and torn by the teeth of the demonic creatures that roam this earth, guzzled down their gaping throats.

In contrast to this extraordinary vision, where it is so easy to visualise and hear and smell the shrieks and stinks of evilness, it is not surprising that Mani found it more difficult to conjure up an image of the world of light. Yes, everything there is wise and joyous and beautiful. But it is calm and serene, and that is not so easy to describe. It is a land of tranquillity and peace, the place of rest. Nevertheless, there are certain ideas that are distinctive about his understanding of God and the kingdom of light.

Firstly, the Father is ‘four-faced’, possessing the attributes of divinity, light, power and wisdom. Secondly, he is a ‘hidden’ God, in that he remains outside of time and the universe for the entire duration of the conflict between the forces of light and darkness. This is particularly characteristic, so that the anticipation of the final drawing back at the last of those veils that withhold the Father from us is a notable trope in the eschatological texts. Importantly, in the Iranian cultural context the Father of Greatness was identified with Zurvan. It is the two great figures of the war between good and evil that were named as Ohrmazd and Ahriman,

¹⁵ H.-C. Puech, ‘Le Prince des Ténèbres en son royaume’, in *Satan*, ed. Bruno de Jesus-Marie (Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1948), 127.

that is, the First Man who descends into the abyss as a warrior and his opponent the King of Darkness. This point should be remembered when I return at the conclusion to discuss the superiority and priority of God the Father. A further consequence of the hiddenness of God is that the divine light redeemed from mixture, and all the gods who must fight against the darkness, are necessarily excluded from the Father's presence and his kingdom until after the final defeat of death. For this reason there must be created a 'new aeon' where the light that has been saved can be at peace, and the First Man can rule, until at last the Father will reveal his image and take the fighters once again into the treasury of light.

What will happen to the forces of darkness at the end? The universe is not only constructed by the divine powers as a means for achieving redemption, and a kind of machine for refining the light out of matter; but in fact the whole elaborate construction is held in place and governed by them. The gods known collectively as the 'five sons of the Living Spirit' are distributed to different stations throughout the cosmos. They control their appointed regions, ensuring that the cogs of the machinery work and at the same time putting down various insurrections attempted by the demonic forces under their guard. When all the light that can be extracted by this means has been recovered, they will leave their posts so that the entire building, with its various heavens and earths, will collapse in upon itself and sink to the depths. A final great fire will achieve further purification of light from the dregs of matter, and the victory will be complete.

What is important, for our purposes here, is that the whole process was regarded as under divine control. The light achieves the best result that is possible in the circumstances. By this means darkness will be rendered sterile and the future reign of God in glory can never again be challenged. However, although there are Manichaean texts that talk about the destruction of evil, in strict fact matter cannot be completely obliterated and vanish. The teachings are constrained by their own logic. Matter is a substance, and it needs to be put somewhere. Thus the enemy must be rolled up in a great lump of evil, enchained and buried in a tomb. Especially the male and female will have to be separated so that there is no possibility of evil escaping or multiplying again.

With this brief survey of the system we are now in a position to make some final comments about the essential character of Mani's teachings. God is first and foremost. The Apostle did not teach ditheism, although he was sometimes accused of such as in the *Acts of Archelaus*. Matter is also without origin, that is true; but its nature is entirely unlike that of the Father. Indeed, and this is an important point, the King of Darkness

(sometimes presented as Satan or Ahriman) is himself a product of matter. He is engendered by her, the mother of the demons, and thus is not co-eternal with the Father. Ibn al-Nadīm makes this point explicit in the valuable description of Mani and his teachings provided in the *Fihrist*.¹⁶

Mani said: ‘Satan came into being out of that dark land. He himself is not eternal; but instead the substances of his constituent elements were eternal. These substances of his elements combined and gave birth to Satan.’

This monstrous excrescence of evil is not in any way equal to the Father. He has a beginning and an end. It is from this perspective that we can properly understand the opening of the *Living Gospel*, and that it is true to Mani’s fundamental perspective. All things happen by the will of the Father. The forces of darkness do not in fact intrude upon the kingdom of light. This is never said in the texts. Rather, it is God who is first cognisant of their evil and who acts to ensure their subjection, to render the darkness powerless by the failure of its own desire. It is he who can anticipate the consequences of this lust and formulate the means to ensure that it will be held sterile. But at all times the Father and the kingdom retain their purity. The battle is taken to the enemy, the arena is below and separate; everything that has happened and will happen is planned by God in his supreme wisdom and omniscience.

¹⁶ I cite here the translation (somewhat adapted) by Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism*, 193.

*The Community in Late-Antique Egypt
and the Village of Kellis*

A considerable amount of new information has become available in recent decades, much of it deriving from the excavations at Ismant el-Kharab (ancient Kellis). This can be used to build upon what was previously known in order to sketch a fuller and more accurate depiction of the Manichaean community in late-antique Egypt, its organisation and its practice, than was possible before. This research has taken some unexpected turns, and directs attention back to the foremost role of Alexandria, to organisational strength and to ongoing contacts among co-religionists across the ancient world.

The new textual discoveries from Ismant el-Kharab have been gradually published since the early 1990s as a series of *P. Kellis* volumes. These conform as text-editions to the standard protocols of papyrology, and the broader significance of the often poorly preserved fragments and documents can be difficult to perceive for the non-specialist in this format. It is vital to note that many of personal and business letters found there in the Dakhleh oasis were actually written in the Nile valley and have broader value for an understanding of Manichaeism throughout Egypt. Further, analysis of the documents from within the Kellis archive has enabled scholars to identify other productions of the same background in the wider papyrological record. The total collection of documentary texts that in some way betray Manichaean faith or practice is now substantial,¹ and represents the best standpoint for an understanding of the religion (or church) as it was lived and functioned in late antiquity.

This information can be introduced according to what it tells us about the roles and activities of different members of the hierarchy, and the

¹ This discussion is drawn from my study on ‘The Manichaean Mission in Egypt’ (forthcoming, see Preface). Lists of documents, references and technical details will be provided there but are not repeated here, as the style is intentionally more summary in nature. Translations of texts from ancient Kellis are my own and follow (sometimes adapted) those in the *P. Kellis* publications.

broad mass of adherents, within the community in Egypt ca. 350–400 CE. To start at the head, as it were, it is remarkable that we now have a series of letters that refer to the figure of the Teacher. It is well known that below the Leader (*archēgos*), the successor to Mani himself who at this time had his seat in Sasanian Mesopotamia, there were twelve Teachers who presided over the worldwide church. Whether this ideal number, based on the twelve disciples of Jesus, was always maintained in practice cannot be ascertained. Nor do we have the sort of evidence one would like about the regions or special roles assigned to the Teachers. Nevertheless, it is a reasonable supposition to make that in the fourth century the Teacher, referred to simply as such in these letters, was the sole head of the Manichaean community throughout Egypt.

The documents fall into three groups. We cannot know whether the Teacher in each is the same or a different candidate holding the office (i.e. across a number of decades) because, remarkably, the person is never named. Presumably this anonymity was deliberate, as it is highly unusual in letters of the period. Firstly, there is a letter from the Teacher himself, P. Kellis VII Copt. 61, recovered from House Three in Ismant el-Kharab and thus (one must suppose) sent to the community in Kellis and its environs from somewhere in the Nile valley or even Alexandria itself. It begins:

The Teacher, and the brothers who are with me: To all the presbyters, my children, my loved ones; Ploutogenios and Pebo and all the others . . . according to their names; in the Lord, – greetings.

[Now, every] time I am afar (it is) as if I am near. [I remember] the gentleness of your (pl.) sonship and the strength of your faith. I pray always to Jesus Christ: That he will guard you for me with this fragrance; as you are [honoured] by everyone corresponding to [your] conduct . . .

While the emphasis on Jesus Christ is immediately striking, presenting a deliberately Christian character to the message, it is apparent that the letter bears the impress of Mani's own epistolary style. For instance, the incipit differs markedly from the standard conventions of fourth-century letters, while there are stock phrases and terms that evidence the conscious development of community identity and mores based upon the Apostle's own *Epistles*, passed down here via the Teacher to the community at large.² By the remarkable happenstance of the discoveries at Ismant el-Kharab we can actually observe this process at work and its effect upon the faithful in

² The process is discussed in Gardner, 'Once More on Mani's *Epistles* and Manichaean Letter-Writing' (especially 299–301).

the personal letters recovered there. Compare the letter above with the following remarks by Makarios to his son Matheos in P. Kellis V Copt. 19:

I remember your gentleness and your calm . . . Now, be in worthy matters; just as the Paraclete has said: ‘The disciple of righteousness should be found with the fear of his teacher upon him even if he is far from him.’

The latter part of the Teacher’s letter is lost, and it is not clear whether the document was a formulaic attempt at spiritual encouragement, repeated to many different groups of believers and utilised to bolster the sense of identity and solidarity; or whether it had an especial purpose related to the community at Kellis. My sense is that it may have been a standard piece sent out in the name of the Teacher rather than an exclusive and unique creation penned by this exalted figure himself. Nevertheless, it would have held great value for the local community, and we can see how Makarios has modelled his style on this or a similar exemplar.

The second document to consider is P. Oxy. LXXIII 4965, a letter in Greek sent by Ammonius and his brothers to a certain Philadelphus. The editor (Cornelia Römer) proposed Manichaean authorship on the basis of characteristic terms, such as reference to the elect and the catechumens. The piece is a letter of recommendation, and as such it can be compared to P. Oxy. XXXI 2603, both documents illustrating the process of communication between localised Manichaean groups along the Nile valley. The reference to the Teacher occurs in the poorly preserved latter section, and is restored by the editor to read: ‘Tell us about the Teacher, if he was . . .’. Despite the broken text, this piece provides valuable background, and corroboration from a different context, to a third and more extensive correspondence that in this instance was written between members of an extended family closely associated with House Three at Ismant el-Kharab.

Here are found a series of direct references to the Teacher in letters belonging to that same Makarios whom we have already met, especially as regards two of his sons named Matheos/Matthaios and Piene. We owe the good fortune of this archive to the fact that the males, while living or travelling in Egypt, would write home to Maria (their wife or mother) and other family members who were resident at Kellis in the oasis. It was there that the documents were preserved until discovered in the early 1990s; but it is important to emphasise that they frequently refer to what is happening elsewhere, in the cities along the Nile valley where they were written. The information pertaining to the Teacher can be summarised in brief, attempting to place the events in sequence:

1. (P. Kellis V Copt. 19) Makarios writes a letter full of pious phrases and religious instructions to Matheos in Kellis. He tells Maria to find the fare for the boy, who is to bring various Manichaean books with him when he comes to join him.
2. (P. Kellis V Copt. 20) Makarios writes to Maria and asks for various items for Mathaios. It is not entirely clear what has happened to him; but as for Piene:

The great Teacher let him travel with him, so that he might learn Latin. He teaches him well. Their body is set up and they are thoroughly worthy.
3. (P. Kellis V Copt. 29) Piene writes to Maria, reassuring her that he is doing well 'following the Teacher'. He will go to Alexandria with him. Later he expects to stay with Apa Lysimachos; if so, he can write again. The latter person was a member of the Manichaean elect with close connections to the Kellis community. In P. Kellis V Copt. 21 he is placed in Antinoopolis, which may be why Matthaïos is left there in P. Kellis V Copt. 25, 42.
4. (P. Kellis V Copt. 24) Makarios writes to Maria that some of the brothers have come from Alexandria recently and report that Piene is doing very well. He has sent a letter by them (possibly the same as the previous document). He refers to a previous visit by the Teacher.
5. (P. Kellis V Copt. 25) Matthaïos writes to Maria (ll. 42–50):

... the Teacher left me in Antinoou, but my brother he took to follow after him. I am thinking that perhaps he will come from the north and leave him (i.e. Piene) some place ... For he (i.e. the Teacher) loves him very much, and makes him read in church. Now, if he depends (?) on him, and the child is content following him, it will be his glory! Thus, I have been here in Antinoou since the day when the Teacher came south; and I have been unable to find a way to go to ... , nor to visit my father, ...

What is fascinating about this collection of material is that we gain a substantial insight into the activities of the Teacher, the processes of communication and socialisation within the Manichaean community, and even details of the life-stories of these two boys. In *The Chapter on the Commandments of Righteousness* (kephalaion 80) it is stated that the second work of the catechumenate is to give a child or a member of the household, or otherwise redeem a slave, and give them to the church. Here we see how Makarios' two sons are both, in turn, trained by the Teacher for religious duties, and travel in his entourage. The newly found or identified documents give a clear impression of the movement of groups

of elect up and down the Nile valley, where there was a network of local believers to house and support them. In both the archive from ancient Kellis, and letters of recommendation from Oxyrhynchus, we read the names of some of these bands and their leaders and the localities where they were. The impression given is of constant travel, devoted entirely to religious work. The elect could not prepare their own food, let alone engage in farming or commerce of any kind.

Nevertheless, it was surely inevitable that fixed centres of Manichaean life developed. The issue of the institutional, material buildings developed by the community in fourth-century Egypt is highly problematical and has been much discussed. Some scholars have argued strongly that fixed structures were not required.³ However, we have seen above how, under the Teacher's tutelage, Piene was trained to read in church (*kata ekklesiān*). He was also learning Latin, perhaps for missionary work. In P. Kellis I Gr. 67 we hear about a certain Ision, who has 'become a user of Greek and a Syriac reader'. As well as the offices of Teacher and *anagnōstēs*, elsewhere in the Kellis archive and with clear Manichaean contexts we hear of bishops, presbyters and a deacon. Although it is certain that the higher offices were drawn from the ranks of the elect, one must imagine that bishops and priests had some kind of local base and area of responsibility. Equally the Teacher: Even if his own sphere of activity covered the whole of Roman Egypt, did he nevertheless have a seat, a *kathedra* as it were?

In Mani's own *Epistles* we find that the Apostle could conclude a letter by bestowing his 'peace' upon his recipients, upon the churches in which they are and the place in which they will read it.⁴ In the *Kephalaia* literature Mani's teaching is often contextualised with him in the midst of his community. A typical example would be the start of chapter 81:

Once again, it happened one time while the Apostle was sitting down among the congregation. One of the disciples stood up in front of him. He says . . .

The content of the disciple's question is of especial interest when he states that there were fifty people with him 'in the church over which I became the head'. He then asks about the religious work achieved by the fasting of

³ E.g. S. G. Richter, 'Manichaeism and Gnosticism in the Panopolitan Region between Lykopolis and Nag Hammadi', in *Christianity and Monasticism in Upper Egypt*, 1, eds. G. Gabra and H. N. Takla (American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 2008), 128.

⁴ From Berlin P. 15998, f. 13 (utilising the unpublished draft transcript by Funk and Gardner).

these fifty over three successive lord's days, and thus again one must wonder what exactly is meant here by an *ekklēsia*.

Michel Tardieu has suggested that the Manichaeans established a new centre in the south at Asyūt when they were driven to leave Alexandria following persecution under Diocletian.⁵ However, we can discount much of the proposed evidence for a base in the vicinity of Lycopolis, and the idea that the community was forced to the south is pure supposition. One might note, for example, that the *archegos* maintained his seat for centuries in the environs of Ctesiphon, despite heavy persecution from the Sassanid into the Abbasid era. I suggest that the references to the Teacher and Alexandria in the Makarios family letters should make scholars reconsider what would be – *prima facie* – the more obvious solution to this question. Addā's original mission to Egypt was associated with Alexandria. Alexander of Lycopolis' philosophical school was surely also in that city (*contra* the rather odd insistence of many scholars to place it in the south). The Papos that the latter names as an expounder (*exēgētēs*) of the opinions of Mani could himself have been Addā; but, in my opinion, is as likely to have been another unnamed 'Father' and leader of the Manichaean community there.⁶ The edict of Diocletian against them was given at Alexandria around the turn of the fourth century, noting how they had advanced from Persia to perpetrate their evil deeds. P. Rylands 469,⁷ a letter against the Manichaeans citing the famous 'Apologia to the Bread', a form of words recited by the elect before eating in order to disavow any guilt for the sin necessarily incurred in the preparation of their food, was probably drawn up in the chancery of the bishop of Alexandria at about the same time. Then, half a century later or more, the boy Piene states how he will be going there (i.e. to Rakote) with the Teacher. While the Manichaean elect were engaged in a life of mission, it remains most plausible to suppose that the Teacher maintained his seat in Alexandria from where communication was easily maintained to the *chora*, to the communities of North Africa (known from Augustine's time among them in the 370s and after), to the *archegos* and the homeland in the east, and across the sea.

⁵ M. Tardieu, 'Les manichéens en Égypte', *Bulletin de la Société Française d'Égyptologie*, 94 (1982): 5–19.

⁶ We have seen how the Teacher is unnamed in both Greek and Coptic documents from the period, but the practice of anonymity was more widespread in the community. Note especially P. Kellis V Copt. 31, 7–8, where the author writing the letter says simply: 'I am your father who is in Egypt.'

⁷ P. Rylands 469, C. H. Roberts, *Catalogue of the Greek and Latin Papyri in the John Rylands Library*, III (Manchester, 1938), 38–46.

While the newly discovered documents enable a much clearer understanding of the workings of the Manichaean mission in the Nile valley, as led by the elect, the archive from ancient Kellis reveals something even more remarkable – the life of catechumens within the social and economic context of a fourth-century village. Further, since this material was recovered as part of a scientific and holistic archaeological project in the Dakhleh oasis, one can actually place the Manichaean believers (and even named individuals) in a built environment, and begin to contextualise the community and its role among the processes of religious and cultural change (including matters of language, gender and so on) over a longer time-span. The following comments are only a brief introduction to some of the more striking features.

We cannot know when Manichaeism first reached the oasis. I have previously argued that we might suppose the new faith to have become established in Kellis by circa the 320s CE, and plausibly even some decades earlier. It would have spread along the trade routes from the Nile valley, potentially at any time from the latter third century. The presence of the community is most obvious in the Coptic documents and religious texts that are to be dated after 350 CE; but these suggest a population that had become established and was of some substance and size. Consequently, it is attractive to argue that its arrival in ancient Kellis must have been one or two generations earlier, and there is potential evidence for this in the letter P. Kellis I Gr. 63. This important piece was written by an unknown author to Pausanias and Pisistratos, who are addressed in terms redolent of Manichaean belief. It seems that these persons were catechumens – or otherwise known to be receptive to the new teachings – for they are here praised for their piety and thanked with elaborate phrases for the support (alms?) they had given. The editor, K. A. Worp, suggested that the first recipient was the same person as a Pausanias named in dated Greek contracts from the early 330s. In a more recently published document (P. Gascou 69), a petition by an Aurelia Sozomene, it may well be this man who is addressed as a ‘*strategus/exactor* and *riparius* of the Great Oasis’.⁸ These were significant offices, with broad responsibilities for taxation and security, and he would have had the wealth and status to be an influential patron for the community. The dating of this is suggestive and makes for an attractive hypothesis. If the Manichaean mission succeeded in gaining

⁸ K. A. Worp, ‘67–88. Miscellaneous New Greek Papyri from Kellis’, in *Mélanges Jean Gascou. Textes et études papyrologiques* (P. Gascou), eds. J.-L. Fournet and A. Papaconstantinou (Association des Amis du Centre d’Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, Paris, 2016), 435–483.

the support and enthusiasm of leading members of oasis society at this time, it was probably just early enough in terms of the broader advance of Christianity in Egypt for the community to establish itself in the locality. The course of its ensuing role there across the remainder of the fourth century, and potential decline in the final decades, can be read against the trajectory of social and religious change, and the strengthening of ties between government and the institutional church, well known from the historical record.

The giving of alms formed the core of the relationship between the catechumens and the elect. In principle, the latter were entirely reliant on the former for food and the necessities of life, while the lay members of the community gained merit by their actions to obviate the many sins occasioned by being in the world, as well as instruction, religious leadership and spiritual nourishment. The process is made very clear in a letter such as P. Kellis V Copt. 32. This piece was written by 'your father' (i.e. an elect) to a 'catechumen of the faith' named Eirene. She is praised for her deeds by which she has gained imperishable riches. These are stored in the sun and the moon; that is, according to Manichaean belief, the vessels and ships that transport the divine soul to the land of light. It was this refinement of the light-elements ('the living soul') out of dark matter that was the essential work of the religion, achieved primarily by the elect through their ingesting of light-filled food that would be purified by the processes of bodily digestion. What is made clear here is that Eirene has gained a store of merit through her alms-giving and essential contributions to this work, which will itself count to her own salvation. Consequently, the letter continues with a request for more oil and wheat to be given, and a promise by the elect father that they will later meet and 'settle our account'. Although this sounds like a financial transaction, I believe that it rather refers to the process of spiritual exchange between the elect and the catechumen. The riches that Eirene acquires are not material.

The same processes are at work in P. Kellis V Copt. 31. Here an unnamed father in the Nile valley writes to a group of female catechumens as 'members of the holy church', offering his prayers and praising them as 'patrons' and 'helpers' upon whom the elect rely. Again, the direct purpose of the letter is a request for oil, but the phrasing of the letter is also coloured by intimations of danger, need and difficulty. It is difficult to know what weight to put on this. Is the notable anonymity of the letter some reflection of the need for secrecy, or is the document a kind of circular sent out to benefactors of the church who may not have been personally known to the sender?

While some of these relationships between the elect and the catechumens may be read in gendered and patriarchal terms (the usage of ‘father’, ‘child’, ‘daughter’ is striking), it is known that there were female elect in Egypt.⁹ We can also identify a good number of male catechumens in the Kellis archive, such as Makarios and the Pausanias already mentioned. Of particular interest are a group of documents by Orion, where are found direct references to the use of such oil donated to the elect. In three of these letters he writes to a certain Hor(os). The context is Kellis and its vicinity (i.e. the oasis rather than the Nile valley), and it appears that both of them are catechumens who are involved in the obtaining and administration of this oil, and indeed also wheat. One must remember that, although consumption of the light-filled food was the central religious work of the elect, they themselves could not farm or cook or prepare the ritual meal itself. Orion calls this process the *agape*:

... we take in much oil for the *agape*, in that we are many, and they consume much oil.

In this usage the term applies to the giving of alms; but also, I think, by extension it refers to the meal itself. Notably, Orion says that ‘*we* are many’, but ‘*they* consume’. The catechumens provide, but it is the elect who must enact the divine work.

There is also a second feature of Orion’s letters, and one that appears frequently throughout the letters of the catechumen families from ancient Kellis, i.e. weaving, tailoring and the textile trade.¹⁰ This was one of the principal local activities, but there is an interesting question as to whether it related in any way to this community’s religious practice. Mostly, these people seem to have been employed in straightforward and small-scale business activity, where the families manufactured, sold or sometimes bartered items. Terminology that might be thought suggestive of a religious or even monastic setting (such as ‘cowl’, ‘cell’ or ‘father’) probably had an entirely secular meaning in most instances. For instance, the term for ‘cell’ (*ri*), often used in Coptic for a hermit’s dwelling and similar, in these texts probably simply means ‘store-room’. However, there may be

⁹ This is explicitly stated (though with rather polemical intent) in P. Rylands 469, l. 32. One might also, for example, read the description of the visit of Julia to Gaza ca. 400 CE as recounted by Mark the Deacon, *Vita Porphyrii Gazensis* 85–91; the *electa* was accompanied by both young men and young women, all ‘very pale’ (presumably from their rigid diet and religious exercises).

¹⁰ In P. Kellis V Copt. 17 Orion discusses both the *agape* and some details of the textile business. In P. Kellis V Copt. 18 and VII Copt. 58 he engages in detailed discussions of fabrics, weaving, prices and the transport of goods. See further, in particular, the business accounts P. Kellis V Copt. 44–48.

exceptions to the secular setting, such as the discussion at the start of P. Kellis VII Copt. 58. Here, if the editors have understood it correctly, Orion appears to suggest that he has given a good cowl as a gift of alms to the 'brothers'. This may mean some local elect.

There is one activity referred to in these documents that has a definite religious meaning, and that is the copying of scripture. These families at Kellis were notably literate compared to what one might expect of a fourth-century village. Large numbers of letters (especially in Coptic) survive that were written by or to women. This is not the external world of government administration or law, but of basic familial relationships. One wonders whether there are connections to be found between matters of religious community, education, literacy, language use, gender and so on. In P. Kellis V Copt. 33 we read: '[Write to (?)] us, whether the little one has completed the gospel'. Similarly, in P. Kellis V Copt. 34: '... when your son has finished writing the book'.¹¹ Such instances certainly seem to refer to the catechumens rather than the elect. Makarios mentions the term 'book' no fewer than five times in his letters, together with related items such as ink scrapers.

These documents, especially about the references to administration of the *agape*, indicate that there were elect present in the vicinity of Kellis on a regular basis. While residency is a problematic concept for an inherently transitory occupation, it appears that elect were located somewhere in the oasis at least some of the time, and that the catechumens had greater contact beyond occasional travelling groups who visited from the Nile valley. Nevertheless, it is difficult to identify these figures in the documentary record. In P. Kellis VII Copt. 61, the Teacher named two presbyters (Ploutogenios and Pebo). There are also a number of persons whose status in the correspondence is unclear. Perhaps the most interesting cases are the various references to Petros and Timotheos. These names appear quite frequently, and of course it may very well be that there were multiple characters of the same name. However, in the *Kellis Agricultural Account Book* (P. Kellis IV) we find a *top(os) Mani* listed as a tenant of the estate, which the editor R. S. Bagnall argued should be understood as a monastery. This appears to be confirmed when Petros the *monachos* pays on its behalf amounts of dates and olives; and elsewhere we also read of another *monachos* Timotheos. The account book is to be dated to either 361–362 or 376–377 CE. Both dates are contemporary with the Coptic documents

¹¹ The most expansive example is P. Kellis V Copt. 19, a letter full of instructions by Makarios to his son Matheos about studying and writing books.

from Kellis, and it reasonable to hypothesise whether any of this data is reflected in that material as well. There is a monastery mentioned twice in letters written between a certain Tithoes (Coptic Titoue) and his son Samoun (Shamoun).¹² It is stated directly that linen-weaving was taught there. Interestingly, among the various people named in this same correspondence are found the couple Pshemnoute and Kyria, who were close associates and near-relatives to Makarios and his family. It is almost certain that this Kyria was herself a practising catechumen.¹³

Further evidence of this institution from the documents is speculative. There are a set of documents (P. Kellis V Copt. 38–41) that refer repeatedly to a brother Petros and a brother Timotheos, these two figures said to come and go bringing news and letters. Their association together, and their role as communicators and messengers, may indicate that they are the same persons as the monks named in the account book. There are also the two letters by Ouales (P. Kellis V. Copt. 35–36) who was himself a professional scribe and a Manichaean. In the first of these we find him discussing the writing of various texts and commenting on their utility. It is tempting to situate his activity in a scriptorium, although this terminology is quite possibly anachronistic and could be somewhat misleading. His comment about texts being sent to him via ‘a blessed one’ may well indicate that he himself was not an elect.

In sum, it is rather difficult to determine what exactly would have been meant by a Manichaean ‘monastery’ in fourth-century Egypt. It is notable that neither this term nor *monachos* is generally used in the extant Greek and Coptic Manichaean literature from Egypt. Thus, even if it is correct to understand the references as argued above, we must beware of imposing preconceptions on the information. In particular, one should note that the account book was not itself written by a member of that community, nor do we know all the religious affiliations coded in the correspondence between Tithoes and Samoun where the term is directly used. One can hope that further archaeological excavations and discoveries in the Dakhleh oasis will bring more clarity; but we already know a great deal more due to this project than we did before.

¹² P. Kellis I Gr. 12 and P. Kellis V Copt. 12.

¹³ Thus P. Kellis V. Copt. 19 where she is to give Matheos a book of Mani’s *Epistles*. If Makarios’ comments in P. Kellis V. Copt 22 at l. 61 are directed to her, then he explicitly names her as such: ‘Are you (not) yourself a catechumen?’

*Some Comments on the Manichaean Kephalaia
and the 'Jesus-Book' in the Chester Beatty Codex*

Two very large codices, written in Coptic on papyrus, belong to the so-called Medinet Madi library of Manichaean writings; they were first sighted on the Cairo antiquities market in 1929. One is entitled *The Chapters of the Teacher* and is now primarily preserved in Berlin (this is 1Ke). The second is *The Chapters of the Wisdom of my Lord Manichaios* and was purchased by Alfred Chester Beatty; it is preserved primarily in Dublin (this is 2Ke). They may both be dated to ca. 400 CE or the early decades of the fifth century, and contain traditions that purport to go back to the lifetime of the Apostle himself in the mid-third century, i.e. Mani or Manichaios, rarely named as such but frequently represented as 'master' and 'enlightener'. Here I will discuss briefly the relationship between the two codices, something about their redaction-history, and introduce a substantial section from the second codex held in the Chester Beatty Library that I have dubbed 'the Jesus-Book'. This latter material is previously unknown to scholarship.¹

In 1995 I published with Brill an English translation of the then edited portions of the Berlin codex, which at that time finished at chapter 122.² This has become the standard work by which students and scholars in the anglophone world are introduced to the Manichaean kephalaic corpus. Although my understanding of the material has developed substantially since then, I did remark at that time that '... chapter 76, concerning the missions of Mani, has some indications of being a new beginning'.³ It is

¹ This appendix reproduces with minimal change a paper read at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in San Antonio, November 2016 (see comments in the Preface). It is included here as it provides background to a topic frequently referred to in this book (i.e. the *Kephalaia* corpus) together with a first account of new material otherwise unknown. The publication of the edited text belonging to this 'Jesus-Book' will occur within the second fascicle of the Dublin codex, due to appear in 2020 (I. Gardner, J. BeDuhn and P. C. Dille, *The Chapters of the Wisdom of My Lord Mani. Part II* [Brill, Leiden and Boston]).

² Gardner, *The Kephalaia of the Teacher*. ³ Gardner, *ibid.*, xxxiii.

obvious that the corpus has been redacted from multiple sources and has been ordered according to a number of schema that it is possible to elaborate upon. In various places over the years I have made comments about a methodological approach that I gloss as the study of the archaeology of the text. By this I mean evidence of stratification in the materials collected (i.e. different strata of tradition made apparent through terminological diversity, focus of concern, etc.); and of a corresponding ongoing evolution of the text in the redactional process (e.g. through attempts to enforce consistency upon content and expression, or to accord with developments in doctrine or practice or organisation). Further, it is possible to identify the imposition of meta-ordering systems upon the floating text-units. In brief, a close reading will show how text-units of the tradition have been brought together and shaped according to the requirements of the genre (i.e. each chapter has a predictable format and stock expressions); chapters themselves have been grouped according to subject-matter and certain catch-phrases; and the entire corpus has been layered as a series of separate books conforming to a certain pattern. The most important feature of this pattern is that each book starts by recounting the narrative of the advent of the Apostle. This is a kind of genealogy of the Apostle: How did he pass through space and time, journey here and there, before becoming manifest at this particular point of history to offer this wisdom and revelation?

These genealogies seem to have been a particular Manichaean literary form and can be found throughout their textual productions, although, of course, they have parallels in other traditions such as the gospel-format. A study of the variant details of each example can tell you important things about the community who produced that particular perspective; I have made comments about this in my earlier discussion of the various 'prophetologies' embedded in the sources (Chapter 2).

So, to summarise: The first book starts at chapter 1 of the Berlin codex, which is explicitly entitled *Concerning the Advent of the Apostle*. This first book is concerned with the fundamental dualistic framework, cosmic time, theogonies and the creation of the multi-layered universe – in other words with the overarching narrative of Manichaean teaching within which everything else is held. The second book then starts at chapter 76 entitled *Concerning Lord Manichaios: How He Journeyed*. We have now entered into history, and the book is concerned with the community, its life and rituals, and the spiritual work of the individual. Within each book one can identify further groupings and ordering mechanisms, such as according to topic, catch-phrase and so on; but in the Medinet Madi Coptic translation

and redaction (which is the only one that is extant) the process is observed at a stage that is only partially achieved, so that there remain floating units and duplicates and considerable inconsistencies.

Now, when I published my English translation the second Dublin codex was almost entirely unknown, although things had just begun to change as I completed my work in the early 1990s. In 1986 Søren Giversen had published his facsimile edition of the plates in the Chester Beatty Library, and this gave an opportunity for scholars to pore over the photographs and gain some idea of the contents. Most of the reconstructed order in Giversen's facsimile is now proved to be wrong or misleading in various ways, but he had provided a great service in that a work that had languished almost forgotten for over fifty years could now in good part be viewed. A small number of articles subsequently appeared, including Funk's important review of the facsimile edition in *Orientalia*, and other pieces by Böhlig, Gnoli, Sundermann, Tardieu and indeed myself.⁴ A particular question was the relationship of this second codex to the much better-known first one from Berlin. People noted the different titles (*The Chapters of the Teacher* versus *The Chapters of the Wisdom of My Lord Manichaios*), and a thesis developed in various forms that the second codex represented an eastern or Iranian tradition of the oral teaching of Mani, perhaps associated with his disciple Mar Ammo, whereas the Berlin codex was supposedly more western and associated with Mar Addā, the famous disciple to the Roman empire.

This thesis is incorrect, at least so far as distinguishing the two codices. I admit that I do not know why the two codices have different titles, and one could spend much time speculating on that; but I regard the matter as of secondary importance. Since 2008 I, together with Jason BeDuhn and Paul Dilley, have been engaged in an intense project to bring an edition of the Dublin codex to publication. The first fascicle has appeared (2018), and so we have made great progress. What is apparent is that the Dublin codex is a straight continuation of the Berlin codex. Here I must thank Wolf-Peter Funk with whom I have been in close communication for his many comments and much advice over the years. As we have worked on the second codex he has equally been working on bringing the edition of the first codex to completion after eighty years of work by some of the finest Coptologists of modern times. In this instance also 2018 has been an important milestone, for the final fascicle of that codex has now been published by Kohlhammer.

⁴ See Gardner, 'An Introduction to the Chester Beatty *Kephalaia* Codex', 5–6.

Unfortunately the final quires of the Berlin codex and the first quires of the Dublin codex are the worst-preserved parts of the whole giant work, which would have totalled approximately two volumes of 500 pages each. But Funk calculates that the Berlin codex most probably concluded somewhere between chapters 205 and 210. The first readable chapter number in the Dublin codex is 220. The final one in this redaction is chapter 347, which is then followed by an extensive version of the 'Last Days' cycle (i.e. the passion-narrative), which I have discussed above in Chapter 4 of this book. In fact the best-preserved parts of the Dublin codex belong to the final chapters, and it was these pages that attracted the attention of scholars such as Tardieu once Giversen's facsimile edition became available. What they have thought to be characteristic of the distinctive style of this Chester Beatty codex actually belongs only to the final kephalaic book in the whole collection, i.e. the last chapters numbered in the 300s and only coincidentally the best-preserved portion of the second volume.

The final kephalaic book can be dubbed 'the Iranian kephalaia-book'. It begins as it must with an account of the advent of the Apostle, which in part duplicates that in chapter 1 (found in the Berlin codex) but equally represents a distinct variation on the theme. This starts probably at chapter 305 and is an entirely fascinating work. Prior to this, as the penultimate book in the corpus, is that section that I here term 'the Jesus-Book'. This starts at chapter 295 and concludes probably at number 304. It is a relatively extensive unit extending through several quires and for over fifty pages of text. It is also extremely poorly preserved. All the comments here are provisional and subject to revision as I prepare the final draft of the Coptic text.

It is noticeable that in the title I have chosen there is a deliberate avoidance of the term 'gospel', and the reasons will be apparent from what follows. Nevertheless, what we find arranged here are the basic elements according to the familiar pattern. Chapter 295 speaks 'about Jesus the Christ our lord, the son of God: How his advent to this world occurred and in what way did he walk in this creation'. The expected core items of the framing sequence are discussed including his appearance among the sect of the Jews, the birth to Mary, the baptism in the river by John. As this 'Jesus-Book' develops we find reference to the miracle stories and quotation of logia of the Lord, including a series of 'I am' statements. In the latter parts there are extensive accounts of the cross and then the open tomb. The final chapter 304 is almost entirely destroyed but may very well have concerned the ascension. The broad narrative arc from advent to ascent is made clear.

Why have I avoided the term ‘gospel’? A number of points need to be stated. Firstly, the material is conformed to the pattern of the kephalaic genre, i.e. it is reproduced through a sequence of chapters each of which is presented as a discrete teaching by the Apostle (i.e. by Mani to his own disciples). Secondly, and further to that, we do not have the story of the life of Jesus but rather the Manichaean interpretation of the elements of that life presented in succession as discourses by the master. Let me give an interesting example. Chapter 296 is concerned with the five loaves and the two fish that Christ blessed, the familiar story of the feeding of the five thousand from Matthew 14 and its parallels. However, the point is not to recount the story of the miracle but, rather, to provide an opportunity for Mani to discourse on his own teaching, in this instance on what he calls ‘the mystery of the First Man’ (i.e. the Primal Man and his five sons who descended into battle with the forces of darkness before the creation of this universe). Ever since Charles Allberry published the second part of the Coptic Manichaean *Psalm-Book* in 1938, few readers will have made more than a passing note of a curious allusion in one of the Psalms of Heracleides:⁵

Lo, we have laid waste the land of darkness: We are waiting for thee with the garland. Take the news.

We have bought the dens of the hungry ones, we took their land for *five loaves*. Take the news.

Now the allusion becomes clear, an important illustration of intertextuality between different Manichaean literatures within the so-called Medinet Madi library. Christ blesses the five loaves that are fed to the hungry horde, and the forces of light overcome those of darkness through the sacrifice of the five sons of the First Man, that is the devouring of the Living Soul and its entanglement in matter that will bring eventual victory to the good.

Thus, in this ‘Jesus-Book’ what we have is a repository of teachings that can show us how the community utilised the gospel traditions. *Inter alia* I believe it is possible to find evidence here of those streams of tradition to which the Manichaeans were heir, and that will be of great interest to people working on ‘gnosticism’ and suchlike material. Another example: What was the Manichaean teaching about the crucifixion, and how did it relate to prior gnostic traditions? Did Jesus die upon the cross, or was another crucified in his place? The text is very poorly

⁵ Allberry, *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*, 201, 23–26 (slightly adapted and italics added).

preserved and nothing about this is easy; but, yes, there are short passages that can be recovered from the terrible mass of destroyed fibres and smeared ink that has come down to us. We hear of Jesus' laughter; his multiplicity; the way that he changed himself upon the cross. For those willing to pay concentrated attention there is much of interest to illuminate us.

Was this 'Jesus-Book' incorporated entire into the Coptic kephalaic corpus from elsewhere? It is certainly my opinion that the *Kephalaia* was an evolving body of material. I believe that if we had multiple versions of the whole work from say 350, 400 and then 450 CE we would see how new 'books' had been added to the corpus. This raises an interesting question regarding any search for an author to the *Kephalaia*, as has sometimes been discussed. Perhaps in itself the *Kephalaia* was originally the core of what I have termed the first book, i.e. the cosmological and theogonic framework of teachings preserved in the Berlin codex up to the first 'new start' evident at chapter 76. The success and the utility of the genre then encouraged the incorporation of new kephalaic books, i.e. bodies of material that originally circulated independently but were now brought into conformity with a successful literary format. I think there are good arguments to be made for such a thesis, especially obvious as regards those sections within the final Iranian kephalaia-book with which the Chester Beatty codex ends: I mean the King of Turan episodes and the Goundesh cycle, the independent existence of which we can evidence from Middle Iranian parallels. But did the 'Jesus-Book' exist independently? I suspect that the question may be misphrased. A redactional process has gathered together bodies of Manichaean tradition and arranged them according to a deliberate sequence; but whether there was ever an independent version of the entire 'Jesus-Book' as we now find it I somehow doubt. The material is too disparate. But this is not intended as a definitive conclusion to the question, more of a comment at an early stage of research.

I will conclude with a provisional translation of the very opening section from chapter 295, which sets out some of the parameters of what we are dealing with here. The format of the 'Jesus-Book' is not that of a narrative of the life of Jesus; it is a repository of Manichaean traditions and teachings arranged across the arc of the life from Christ's advent to his ascension, and all put into the mouth of Mani as the ultimate authority. In this passage the fascination lies not only in the formatting and presentation of this source-material; but also with the content that promises insight into the competing communities and understandings of the meaning of the gospel

as they co-existed in early Sasanian Mesopotamia. That is something truly remarkable.⁶

Once again, while the Apostle is sitting in the congregation (with) the disciples who are stood before him. They stayed entreating and beseeching him. They say to him: We entreat you, our master, proclaim to us about Jesus the Christ our Lord, the son of God. How did his advent to this world occur? In what manner did he walk in this creation? For, as we have heard from you: He walked in this world in diverse forms, in various mysteries.

However, there are some among the sects and the teachers who say about him that he was begotten by Mary; he was revealed in the flesh of humanity like a man, according to the law of the Jews. They say: They circumcised him with that circumcision (by which) the Jews are circumcised. Again, there are others who say about him that he was promised through the Holy Spirit. There is one who says about him what has been preached . . . However, (there are others) who have blessed (Mary?), in that she has begotten . . . (These are the opinions), the ones that they proclaim about him in the (sects), law by law.

(We entreat you by) your great Spirit that is the living Paraclete . . . tell of the manner of the advent of Jesus (the Christ), the son (of God), the time when he came to the world . . .

⁶ Provisional and loose translation by I. Gardner from editorial work on the Coptic text (in process); corresponding to plate 191 in S. Giversen, *The Manichaean Coptic Papyri in the Chester Beatty Library, I. Kephalaia* (Patrick Cramer Éditeur, Genève, 1986).

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