

# The Medinet Madi Library of Manichaean Codices at 90

*Papers from the Symposium at the  
Chester Beatty Library in Dublin,  
18–19 October 2019*

*Edited by*

**Jason BeDuhn, Paul Dilley  
and Iain Gardner**

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# Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies

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# Abbreviations

## Bible

|       |               |
|-------|---------------|
| Gen   | Genesis       |
| Isa   | Isaiah        |
| 1 Cor | 1 Corinthians |
| 2 Cor | 2 Corinthians |
| Eph   | Ephesians     |
| Col   | Colossians    |
| 2 Tim | 2 Timothy     |
| Diat. | Diatessaron   |

## Apostolic Fathers

|        |           |
|--------|-----------|
| 1 Clem | 1 Clement |
|--------|-----------|

## Apocrypha/Pseudepigrapha

|           |                      |
|-----------|----------------------|
| 1 En.     | 1 Enoch              |
| Sir.      | Sirach               |
| T. Naph.  | Testamentum Naphtali |
| Pss. Sol. | Psalms of Solomon    |

## Medinet Madi

|            |                                 |
|------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>1Ke</i> | Berlin <i>Kephalaia</i>         |
| <i>2Ke</i> | Chester Beatty <i>Kephalaia</i> |
| <i>2Ps</i> | <i>Psalmbook</i> Part II        |
| <i>Hom</i> | <i>Homilies</i>                 |

## Nag Hammadi

|                   |                            |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Ap. John</i>   | <i>Apocryphon of John</i>  |
| <i>Tri. Trac.</i> | <i>Tripartite Tractate</i> |
| <i>Gos. Truth</i> | <i>Gospel of Truth</i>     |

|                    |                                   |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Nat. Rul.</i>   | <i>The Nature of the Rulers</i>   |
| <i>Orig. World</i> | <i>On the Origin of the World</i> |
| <i>Par. Shem</i>   | <i>Paraphrase of Shem</i>         |
| <i>Corp. Herm.</i> | <i>Corpus Hermeticum</i>          |
| CMC                | Cologne Mani Codex                |

## Philosophy

|                                |                                                      |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Alc., Epit.</i>             | Alcinous, <i>Epitome doctrinae platonicae</i>        |
| <i>Apul., Plat.</i>            | Apuleius, <i>In Platonem</i>                         |
| <i>Apul., Metam.</i>           | Apuleius, <i>Metamorphoses</i>                       |
| <i>Arist., Anim.</i>           | Aristotle, <i>De anima</i>                           |
| <i>Arist., Mem.</i>            | Aristotle <i>De memoria</i>                          |
| <i>Arist., De Mem. et rem.</i> | Aristotle <i>On Memory and Recollection</i>          |
| <i>Atticus, Frag.</i>          | Atticus, <i>Fragmenta</i>                            |
| <i>Cic., Nat. d.</i>           | Cicero, <i>De natura deorum</i>                      |
| <i>Cic., De Orat.</i>          | Cicero, <i>De Oratore</i>                            |
| <i>Ad Her.</i>                 | <i>Rhetorica ad Herennium</i>                        |
| <i>Marc. Aur.</i>              | Marcus Aurelius, <i>Ta eis heauton (Meditations)</i> |
| <i>Plut., Stoic. Rep.</i>      | Plutarch, <i>De Stoicorum repugnantiis</i>           |
| <i>Plat., Gorg.</i>            | Plato, <i>Gorgias</i>                                |
| <i>Plat., Leg.</i>             | Plato, <i>De legibus</i>                             |
| <i>Plat., Tim.</i>             | Plato, <i>Timaeus</i>                                |
| <i>Plat., Theaet.</i>          | Plato, <i>Theaetetus</i>                             |
| <i>Philo, Conf.</i>            | Philo, <i>De confusione linguarum</i>                |
| <i>Philo, Fug.</i>             | Philo, <i>De fuga et inventione</i>                  |
| <i>Philo, Mut.</i>             | Philo, <i>De mutatione nominum</i>                   |
| <i>Philo, Opif.</i>            | Philo, <i>De opificio mundi</i>                      |
| <i>Philo, Praem.</i>           | Philo, <i>De praemiis et poenis</i>                  |
| <i>Philo, Prov.</i>            | Philo, <i>De providentia</i>                         |
| <i>Plut., [Fat.]</i>           | Ps.-Plutarch, <i>De fato</i>                         |
| <i>Calc., Comm. Tim.</i>       | Calcidius, <i>Commentarius in Timaeum</i>            |
| <i>Quint., Inst.</i>           | Quintilian, <i>Institutio oratoria</i>               |

## Patristic

|                          |                                           |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <i>Aug., C. Faust.</i>   | Augustine, <i>Contra Faustum</i>          |
| <i>Aug., C. Adimant.</i> | Augustine, <i>Contra Adimantium</i>       |
| <i>Aug., Mor.</i>        | Augustine, <i>De moribus Manichaeorum</i> |

|                              |                                                     |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Aug., <i>De nat. boni</i>    | Augustine, <i>De natura boni</i>                    |
| Aug., <i>Cont. Fund.</i>     | Augustine, <i>Contra epistulam fundamenti</i>       |
| Ir., <i>Haer.</i>            | Irenaeus, <i>Adversus haereses</i>                  |
| Clem. Al., <i>Strom.</i>     | Clement of Alexandria, <i>Stromata</i>              |
| Clem. Al., <i>Paed.</i>      | Clement of Alexandria, <i>Paedagogus</i>            |
| Epiph., <i>Pan.</i>          | Epiphanius, <i>Panarion</i>                         |
| Eus., <i>Hist.</i>           | Eusebius, <i>Historia ecclesiastica</i>             |
| Hipp., <i>Ref.</i>           | Hippolytus, <i>Refutatio omnium haeresium</i>       |
| Theodoret, <i>Haer. Fab.</i> | Theodoret, <i>Haereticarum fabularum compendium</i> |
| Just. Mart., <i>1Apol.</i>   | Justin Martyr, <i>Apologia prima</i>                |
| Orig., <i>Princ.</i>         | Origen, <i>De principiis</i>                        |
| Orig., <i>Philoc.</i>        | Origen, <i>Philocalia</i>                           |
| Tat., <i>Or. Graec.</i>      | Tatian, <i>Oratio ad Graecos</i>                    |
| Ter., <i>Marc.</i>           | Tertullian, <i>Adversus Marcionem</i>               |
| Tit. Bost., <i>C. Man.</i>   | Titus of Bostra, <i>Contra Manichaeos</i>           |
| Chrys., <i>Serm. Gen.</i>    | John Chrysostom, <i>Sermons on Genesis</i>          |

### Iranian

|     |                                      |
|-----|--------------------------------------|
| Bd  | <i>Bundahišn</i>                     |
| Dk  | <i>Dēnkard</i>                       |
| KPT | <i>Kosmogoische und Parabeltexte</i> |
| Mkh | <i>Mēnōg ī khrad</i>                 |
| wz  | <i>Wizidāgīhā ī Zādspram</i>         |
| SLN | <i>Sermon of the Licht-Nous</i>      |
| ŠGW | <i>Škand Gumānīg Wizār</i>           |

# Introduction

*Jason BeDuhn, Paul Dilley and Iain Gardner*

The Medinet Madi Library of Coptic Manichaean Codices was one of the most significant manuscript discoveries of the twentieth century for the study of Manichaeism, but also for modern scholarship on ancient religions more broadly. For its potential to illuminate the early Jewish and Christian traditions, it ranks alongside the more famous Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) and the Nag Hammadi Library (NHL), both of which were recovered in the mid to late 1940s. The seven Manichaean codices had appeared on the antiquities market more than a decade earlier in 1929, and the dealers in Egypt recounted how they had been found at Medinet Madi in the Fayyum. Bought in somewhat equal portions by Chester Beatty for his private manuscript collection and by Carl Schmidt on behalf of the Staatliche Museen Berlin, they found their way to an ironic, temporary reunion in the Berlin workshop of conservator Hugo Ibscher. However, despite some remarkable and rapid progress in the 1930s for conservation and editing, the events of the Second World War and its aftermath brought various tragedies to the principal scholars involved and to the artefacts themselves.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, there followed a half century when very little new was achieved, before substantial work began again in recent decades.

Thus the greater part of the find remained unpublished at the 90th anniversary of the discovery in 2019, in sharp contrast to those more widely known texts from Qumran and Nag Hammadi. In order to mark this occasion, and to take stock of the current state of editorial projects for the Medinet Madi Library now housed primarily in Dublin and Berlin, as well as the broader significance of the find, the editors convened a symposium hosted by the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin from 18th–19th October under the auspices of the International Association for Manichaean Studies (IAMS).<sup>2</sup>

The texts of the Medinet Madi codices are more uniform in their language and background than the DSS and NHL. They all are written in the same dialect of Coptic known as Lycopolitan (specifically *L4*); they are all representative of the Manichaean religion as it developed and spread through a particular cultural context; they represent, for the most part, texts that had first been

---

1 The bulk of the *Epistles* and *Acts* codices were lost from their depository in Berlin during the final months of the Second World War.

2 The conference also coincided with the “Mystery of Mani” public exhibition at the Chester Beatty Library, curated by Paul Dilley and Jill Unkel, which ran from 6/21/2019–1/19/2020.

composed in Syriac before being brought to Egypt and translated; and, although of varied genres (doctrinal, narrative, and liturgical), these must all be dated to the time of Mani himself or that of the first generations of disciples and believers who had flourished in Sasanian Mesopotamia. The artefacts themselves also share many common characteristics in terms of their extraordinary size, quality of manufacture, production and date.<sup>3</sup> However, the problematic editorial process and apparent loss of substantial parts of the original find, together with on-going deterioration of the remains, leaves a great number of questions unanswered.

No single codex was completely published until Wolf-Peter Funk finished the final fascicles of the Berlin *Kephalaia* (P.15996) in 2018.<sup>4</sup> This collection of papers is dedicated to him as the leading scholar in the field for the last thirty years. Funk's passing in February 2021 is another significant milestone for Medinet Madi studies that is marked by this present volume. The earliest publication was in fact one of Chester Beatty's codices, the *Homilies* by Hans Jakob Polotsky in 1934; but it must be noted that this only comprised the conserved portion of the original artefact.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, while several large hymn collections incorporated into the latter part of the *Psalm Book* were already published by Charles Allberry in 1938, the remainder of the same codex is not yet made available. The ongoing editorial process for the more damaged first half is discussed by the contributions of Siegfried Richter and Nils Arne Pedersen in this volume.

Other codices are to the present day completely unpublished, some parts with only the most rudimentary information available.<sup>6</sup> The many difficulties of the editorial task, together with the challenging state of conservation, has either greatly delayed or in truth largely prevented their publication. Happily, there has recently been major progress towards the *editio princeps* of three

3 The library has been dated from samples taken from multiple codices; see BeDuhn and Hodgins 2017.

4 One notes that this single codex was edited by successive generations of scholars (primarily Polotsky, Böhlig and Funk) across 18 fascicles starting in the 1930s. It is unfortunate that Funk's massive volume of Addenda & Corrigenda, as well as the much needed indices to the edition, remained unpublished at his death.

5 Polotsky 1934. See also the new edition of Pedersen 2006; additional readings by Gardner 2018.

6 The most substantial single account regarding the finding of the Medinet Madi codices, their purchase, conservation, loss and ongoing publication is that of Robinson 2013. This brings together a number of important archival sources and earlier accounts dating back to the 1930s, but needs to be treated with caution. It is essentially a collection of information that is only partially digested, with many repetitions, inconsistencies and indeed inaccuracies included.

further codices from the Medinet Madi Library. The scant remains of the *Epistles* codex, now in Berlin and Warsaw, are the subject of Iain Gardner's contribution in this volume. The project to edit the Chester Beatty *Kephalaia*, a second large codex of the set to which the one in Berlin also belongs, has been in process since 2008 as a collaborative endeavor by Iain Gardner, Jason BeDuhn and Paul Dilley. This has already resulted in a set of preliminary studies and the first fascicle of the *editio princeps*; the ongoing efforts and plans for publication of the remaining fascicles are the subject of Dilley's contribution to this volume. The *Synaxeis* codex is discussed in the contribution by Wolf-Peter Funk, who had achieved a partial preliminary text and translation circulated to various scholars but unpublished; and also in that of Paul Mirecki, who has made a particular study of its codicology. The *Synaxeis* codex will now be the subject of a new collaborative editorial project by Dilley, BeDuhn and Gardner, utilising new multispectral imaging of the conserved pages.

Given the poor state of preservation of many of the leaves, which are often fragmentary, lacunose, and with faded ink, photographs have become particularly important in the editing process. Recent advances in technology are proving very beneficial. The greyscale images taken for Søren Giversen's photographic facsimile editions of the codex remains in Dublin (1986 and 1988) are generally not clear enough to support a full transcription, especially of the more difficult pages which were unedited at that time.<sup>7</sup> Work on the first part of the *Psalmsbook* has been supported through digital images, and Bruce and Kenneth Zuckerman also took fine photographs of the Medinet Madi leaves under glass in the collection of the Berlin Museums.<sup>8</sup> Pedersen's discovery in the Thompson archive at Cambridge of photos from the first part of the *Psalmsbook*, made around the time of their conservation, have greatly facilitated their transcription. They also demonstrate how quickly the condition of the leaves has deteriorated. But the most startling development has been the multispectral imaging of selections from the Medinet Madi corpus, begun in 2019 by Ivan Shevchuk and his team, firstly at the request of Dilley and with the support of the University of Hamburg's Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures. This has greatly facilitated the reading of many pages in the Chester Beatty *Kephalaia* and now the *Epistles* codex, and will ultimately lead to substantially more text in future editions than could be achieved otherwise. Further progress in the study of Manichaeism, and the religions of Late Antiquity more generally, will owe much to their scientific intervention.

7 Although the digitized negatives, which, unlike the printed volumes, offer the possibility of enlargement, can be useful as a complement to the more recent images.

8 See the contributions of Richter and Funk in this volume.

Of course, besides insights into codicology and the Manichaean arts of the book, the painstaking work of reconstructing, editing, and translating the Medinet Madi Library bears fruit in analyzing the content of these codices and reaching new understandings of the Manichaean religion and the world of which it was a part. Accordingly, this volume includes, alongside of the codex project reports, a set of new studies based in the content of these codices in relation to other Manichaean text find sites. As a group, they provide new insights into doctrine, practice, and history, and situate Manichaean communities within the religious and cultural worlds of a global Late Antiquity. In these complementary ways, the contributions within this volume offer a cross-section of the ongoing work to give Manichaeism its due place as a major force and catalyst in the history of religions.

To that end, it seemed fitting at this anniversary of the find to call greater attention to the fact that these codices constitute an intentional collection, brought together by some institution or individual as a set of material through which the Manichaean religion could be studied and practiced, and deposited deliberately for preservation. In short, they bear the hallmarks of a library, and hereafter should be so designated as the Medinet Madi Library (MML), taking its fitting place as one of the great literary legacies of late antiquity – one from which many further discoveries can be expected in the coming years.

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**PART 1**

*Reports on Editorial Work on the  
Medinet Madi Library*





# Towards an Edition of the Coptic Manichaean *Synaxeis* Codex: Another Progress Report

*Wolf-Peter Funk*<sup>†</sup>

Nearly forty years have passed since the last time someone presented a paper called “progress report” on this subject matter. This was Karen King’s report to the 4th International Congress of Coptic Studies held at Louvain-la-Neuve in September 1988 (see King 1992). Not surprisingly, a great deal of work has been done in the meantime, new insights have been gained and the general perspective on the *Synaxeis* codex has been enhanced in countless details. But the situation of the late 1980s and the initial work done by several persons around the time of King’s report proved to be seminal for all further efforts.

To summarize briefly: In 1985 James M. Robinson had begun cataloguing the various boxes of conserved folios kept in the Egyptian Museum in West Berlin (Charlottenburg)<sup>1</sup> and had subsequently sent two of his young students, Karen King and Stephen Patterson, to Berlin to complete this task and attempt transcribing as much as possible from those folios; and he had prompted Gesine Schenke Robinson to do the same with the other holdings of the codex kept at that time in the storerooms of the Pergamon Museum in East Berlin.<sup>2</sup> Whereas the efforts on the eastern side (with quite a few half-readable pages) resulted in a complete provisional transcription of all sixty-two extant pages by G. Schenke Robinson (and in a parallel effort a few of them by myself), the vast bulk of hardly readable material on the western side was completely

---

1 These folios, brought under glass during the 1950s and still filling up a whole cupboard in the attic of the Charlottenburg museum through the 1990s, were well known to be the main bulk of the Chester Beatty acquisition since around 1960, notably after several of Alexander Böhlig’s pronouncements since 1957 (see Robinson 2013: 289–291), though they were claimed by Dublin only in 1999. They had all been conserved by Rolf Ibscher between 1951 and 1957, when the substantial book block, erroneously thought by Ibscher to be part of another Berlin acquisition (the *Epistles* codex), had been transferred from Bavaria to Göttingen before the “Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz” was founded in West Berlin in the 1960s. That is where Carsten Colpe was the first to see the leaves as they were being put under glass (thus sometimes referred to as the “Göttingen codex”) and where he made his preliminary transcripts, a valuable primary source for a number of problematic readings and at least one leaf which is no longer extant.

2 Call number P. 15995 (now located in the new building of the Berlin papyrus collection).

catalogued<sup>3</sup> but, in terms of transcription, yielded only the meagre result of a few lines or even words here and there, not much more than what was published in English translation by King (1992: 286f.). The amount of such fragmentary scraps of text was slightly enlarged by some bits and pieces when the Berlin custodian, William Brashear, generously permitted Karen King twice (between 1986 and 1989) to take ten glass frames temporarily to California, where they were consulted by a further number of scholars<sup>4</sup> including myself; but the overall context of these fragmentary folios remained a complete mystery.<sup>5</sup> In addition, I had the opportunity in 1990 to collate those folios of the Chester Beatty part that were not held in Berlin – the thirteen leaves conserved by Hugo Ibscher and sent to London already in the 1930s,<sup>6</sup> which for a few years happened to be exiled from Dublin to the Royal Library at Copenhagen.<sup>7</sup>

The mystery, quite apart from an elucidation of the actual contents of the codex, mainly resided in the unknown structure and original page-order of the book. In this respect, the work of Paul A. Mirecki, who had shown a strong interest in this codex since the late 1980s (independently from the Robinson effort), proved to be most fruitful. Having access to both the eastern and western places of holdings, Mirecki established the first preliminary catalogue of a great number of chapter titles and thus enabled, for the first time, the development of a more solidly based (albeit vague and incomplete) idea of the overall structuring of the textual contents.<sup>8</sup> Most notably, as King was already able to state, the cataloguing of these chapter titles showed the approximate place of the Berlin holdings between different batches of the Chester Beatty part and

3 In the only published version of this catalogue (Robinson 2013: 294–8), unfortunately, the folios are solely identified by their box numbers (irrelevant for codicological purposes); leaving aside the conservation labels, which are of crucial importance for any codicological work.

4 For more details, see Robinson 2013: 301f.

5 Although these frames were deemed to be some of the best-preserved folios of the West Berlin bulk, they yielded only unsatisfactory readings. Most importantly, at this stage no chapter titles had been discovered on the pages examined.

6 Published in facsimile in Giversen 1988, plates 101–126. For the definitive assignment of these thirteen leaves (Ibscher's "Codex B") to the *Synaxeis* codex see Funk 1990: 539f.; Robinson 2013: 300.

7 During my visit to Copenhagen I also dedicated one day, accompanied by Nils Arne Pedersen, to an attempt at determining conjugate leaves among these thirteen in order to shed some light on the puzzling divergence between Hugo Ibscher and Giversen in postulated quire structure – with no convincing results. It was only very recently through a note made by Rolf Ibscher in December 1955 (today kept in the Thompson archive at Cambridge) about his father's quire ordering of these leaves that I was able to learn of Hugo Ibscher's true opinion in this matter (misrepresented in Giversen 1986: ix–x).

8 Cf. Mirecki 1988 (14 chapter titles); later enlarged by another 4 titles in Mirecki 1994.

thus proved to be a basic element for any further attempts at codicological ordering.

While more transcription work continued to be pursued by Mirecki and myself at a large scale in the late 1980s and early 1990s, our mutual correspondence focused on the difficult task of codicological order. Numerous exposés were exchanged over the years between the two of us, resulting in partial approximations<sup>9</sup> but no real solution. Meanwhile, a major step forward was achieved when James M. Robinson organised, in 1991, a photographing campaign in the papyrus collections of the Berlin museums (east and west), which included, among other things, nearly all extant folios of Manichaean codices. The photography was done by Bruce and Kenneth Zuckerman from the University of Southern California, using a sophisticated choice of filters.<sup>10</sup> When prints of these photographs were finally produced in the following years, Robinson made sure that one entire series of the Manichaean material was made available to me (another one was kept in the Manichaean archives of his institute at Claremont Graduate University) in the hope that one day I might be able to prepare an edition. In fact, these photographic prints, and the possibilities of manipulating xerox copies made from them in several kinds of ways, proved to be of greatest value for the establishment of ‘real page’ transcripts, complete with a solid arrangement of text columns, page headers and margins<sup>11</sup> – things that are virtually impossible to ascertain with the brittle and brown-in-brown originals, where the colour of ink traces is hard to distinguish from that of the papyrus. Equipped with the newly formatted (preliminary but ‘full-page’) transcripts I was able to use some time during my repeated *Kephalaia* collation periods in Berlin in the 1990s to go back to the papyrus for checking numerous unclear details.

With all the arduous efforts of several persons over one and a half decades, plenty of preliminary transcripts of isolated pages were at hand by the end of

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9 Some of which can be found published in Mirecki 1994 (which, in spite of the ambitious title of the article, I rather tend to consider a document of frustration). After that date, Mirecki was not seen to present any further work on the codex.

10 With a view to testing filters, Bruce Zuckerman had already participated in the Californian work session on the loan leaves in 1988.

11 In other words, the preliminary estimates of “34 pages graded at 4” (i.e. “some sentences but probably less than half the page is legible”) and “1 page graded at 5” (i.e. “probably more than half the page is legible”) as given in King 1992: 282 (cf. also Robinson 2013: 298) could be considerably increased on the basis of the photographs. Moreover, their usefulness is unmatched when it comes to determining column margins and thus safe line-breaks.

the 20th century and waiting to be refined into viable Coptic text;<sup>12</sup> however, no extensive records that could be deemed publishable had been accomplished so far. Indeed, some of those involved thought that an 'edition' of the codex in the usual format was impossible – an opinion that I personally never shared. To my mind, the apparent 'impossibility' was not so much grounded in the extreme difficulty of reading as in the complete lack of a well-founded codicological ordering. The bad shape of almost all conserved folios (usually petering out in mere fibres in the bottom half) made it impossible to establish any textual continuation from one leaf to another, which meant that a reasonable page order could only be established on strictly codicological grounds. But our attempts (Mirecki's and mine) had always been seriously hampered by the apparent necessity of assuming numerous missing leaves (*a priori* less than likely, given the continuous series of conservation) as well as constant re-ordering in comparison to the conservation numbers (without much conviction), in order to arrive at something that resembled the codicological rationale known to us from the structure of other, relatively well-preserved, Coptic Manichaean codices, notably the *Psalm Book* and the two volumes of *Kephalaia*. Again and again, it proved to be impossible to identify a greater number of (supposedly) adjacent leaves with a 'like-facing-like' fibre pattern, or even horizontal-fibre conjugates as potential central sheets of quires, and we were not yet ready to abandon that conventional wisdom. Without a well-founded page-order, the utterly fragmented folios were of little practical value as they could not be used to establish anything close to a running 'text', and thus the whole work progress stagnated for several years.

The decisive breakthrough, as I see it, came in the early 2000s when during another one of my futile spreading-out of xeroxes of all pictures of horizontal-fibre sides on the carpet, I noticed that there was in fact a certain pattern. With the relevant Berlin folios placed where they most probably belonged and going straight along the conservation numbers in reverse order from the 1957 series back to 1954 (and from there to the 1951 series), it appeared that the most obvious conjugate leaves were to be found in intervals of precisely twelve folios. This could hardly be a coincidence. Assuming that these leaves represented in fact the centre (or top) sheets of quires, the leaves surrounding them had to be checked for their conjugateness in the consequential sheet order of each quire – with the result that this was indeed the case. That is to say, regarding the unique fibre patterns of the papyrus, most of the relevant pairs of folios could be found to be conjugate with high probability and, given the poor shape

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12 A resource from which colleagues were enabled to quote occasionally; thus the first-ever published passage (apart from Mirecki's chapter titles) appeared in Poirier 1995: 134.

of many of them, the rest were at least possibly conjugate. Thus it became clear that a solid codicological order could be established on the basis of the conservation numbers, without any greater changes in their numerical sequence and with hardly any missing leaves to be assumed. At the same time, it became clear that this codex joined the *Psalm Book* and the Berlin *Kephalaia* in being built up in *seniones*. But this solution came at a price: a ‘like-facing-like’ pattern – as we would expect it in a multiple-quire codex – occurred only in random distribution in about half the cases of adjacent left-hand and right-hand pages (with the others displaying hor.-vert. or vert.-hor. openings); and vertical-fibre pages came to be found at the top of some quires, at least in the cases of quires 3, 5, 6 and 8. Thus the codex proved to be, in comparison with the other Mani codices (and the majority of multiple-quire codices in general), of a relatively ‘primitive’ or slightly irregular construction.<sup>13</sup> Regarding the textual contents, this order was entirely consistent with what could be ascertained in terms of chapter numbering and occasional continuation of topics and style, even though the resulting *synaxis* units proved to be of strikingly unequal length; but this circumstance is only one of several evident inadequacies of this codex in relation to Mani’s *Living Gospel* as a whole.<sup>14</sup>

On the basis of this codicological ordering, which in my view is absolutely convincing, I was able to produce a first English translation<sup>15</sup> of the entire material readable from those conservation series that actually provide *synaxeis* (or “meetings”) relating to chapters (“discourses”) of the *Living Gospel*; presumably composed for reading and thus ‘liturgical’ purposes.<sup>16</sup> Such purposes are also reflected in the make-up of the Manichaean *Psalm Book*, where one of the foremost divisions (probably the third group of psalms) is titled “[Psalms of] Synax[eis],”<sup>17</sup> with two of these psalms (nos. 41 and 42) composed of strophes according to the twenty-two chapters of the *Living Gospel*.<sup>18</sup> Thus we are not dealing with a strictly ‘literary’ manuscript of Mani’s *Gospel*. The readings

13 As I was able to see only recently (see above, note 7), Hugo Ibscher had already arranged the first part of his batch of earliest conservation (the 13 folios) as a *senio*, with the vertical-fibre pages 52 and 53 as upper sides of the central sheet (*pace* Giversen 1986: ix).

14 To mention only the most striking feature of irregularity: in the sequence of chapters of the *Living Gospel* there is no record here to be found of Chapters (or Discourses) Seven and Eight. Whether by design or error, the scribe visibly managed to leap from the end of the 2nd *synaxis* of Discourse Six to the beginning of a *synaxis* of Discourse Nine on one and the same page.

15 See Funk 2020 (2014ff.) in the bibliography.

16 As already indicated at several occasions, following the first tentative suggestion in this sense by King (1992: 286).

17 See Allberry 1938: 229 (col. b).

18 See now Richter 2021.

as found in the written record of the *Synaxeis* codex may or may not have been enhanced (beyond pure *Gospel* text) by additional rhetorical elements, especially at the beginnings and ends of the reading sections, and/or hymns and litanies, whilst they also fall short of representing *all* of the twenty-two discourses of the *Gospel*.<sup>19</sup>

There can be no doubt that these chapters formed the major central part of the manuscript that we have become accustomed to calling, *pars pro toto*, the *Synaxeis* codex. Nevertheless, this codex also contained other (less extensive) parts, the particular character of which is more difficult to determine, although it is clear that they do not represent *synaxeis*.<sup>20</sup> These other parts may roughly be identified in terms of conservation series by what are labelled the 1952 and 1953 series, the one called “Zwischenlagepacken”<sup>21</sup> and the last six leaves of the Berlin holdings, as well as within the unconserved book block<sup>22</sup> which hides the beginning of the codex as a whole. This diversity will be taken into account for the planned publication of the manuscript which is envisaged to be divided into two partial volumes, one for the actual *synaxeis* and another for the non-synaxis parts.

On Jason BeDuhn’s initiative, radiocarbon tests were carried out in 2013 by experts from the University of Belfast and the University of Arizona, Tucson, to determine with greater certainty the date of production of the Medinet Madi codices. Besides some fragmentary scraps conserved in the early 1990s and supposed to belong to the *Psalm Book*, also pieces of papyrus from the unconserved book block of the *Synaxeis* codex were used as test samples. These two sources were chosen on account of the fact that they represented the rare case of material from the Medinet Madi find still extant today which had never been subjected to any chemical treatment that would severely hamper the test. The results of these tests<sup>23</sup> centered more or less clearly around AD 400, with some slight chances that the *Synaxeis* codex may have been produced as early as the last decade of the 4th century.

19 As noted above, the text of this manuscript jumps from Discourse Six directly to Discourse Nine, thus lacking any reading from Discourses Seven and Eight (see Funk 2020).

20 Examples of non-synaxis chapter titles were already found a long time ago by Paul Mirecki, although he did not include them in his published catalogue because of some serious uncertainties of reading.

21 For this particular phenomenon cf. my remarks in Funk 2017, especially p. 166f.

22 Only the very last (uppermost) pages of the unconserved book block can be assumed to be directly related to *synaxeis* pertaining to the *Living Gospel*, that is to say, with the beginning of the 1st *synaxis* of Chapter One of the gospel (for more details see Funk 2009: 116), whilst the bulk of it must contain other material.

23 Jason BeDuhn kindly provided me with copies of the official certificates as issued by the two institutions.

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## Comments on a Possible Second Text in the Coptic Manichaean *Synaxeis Codex*

*Paul Mirecki*

The primary evidence that the *Synaxeis Codex* contains more than one text is that the first “logos” (chapter or discourse) begins in the middle of the codex. Papyrus leaves chronologically removed from the back of the originally unpaginated codex by Rolf Ibscher from 1951 to 1957 have descending logos ordinal numbers from the 21st logos to the 1st logos of the *Synaxeis* text. Leaves originally situated immediately before the 1st logos (containing a supposed prior text) have not yet been removed and remain in the book-block. When R. Ibscher and his then assistant Carsten Colpe stopped removing leaves in 1957 due to the deteriorating condition of the papyrus material, they were at the currently upper-facing page of the book-block that has a damaged page-header in the upper margin referring to the 1st synaxis of the 1st logos. The chronological removal of leaves in relation to the scribe’s ordinal numbering system indicates they were removing leaves from the back of the codex, working from the 22nd logos near the back of the book to the 1st logos. This 1st logos was clearly situated in the middle of the book, indicating it is apparently the second of at least two texts in the codex.

The scribe designed the book so that the two sides of each leaf had the ordinal numbering system of logoi written in the page-headers of the upper margins and, in a few cases in ordinal number chapter titles situated within the text columns themselves. So far, there are 15 extant chapter titles and 22 extant page-headers, all heavily damaged. Having examined in detail the book-block and each of the ca. 125 glassed leaves more than once, I consider it highly doubtful that more page-headers or titles are still to be found in the leaves that have been removed. The title and page-headers of the final 22nd logos are not extant, although leaves with partial and unidentified text of the 22nd logos might survive among the glassed leaves removed from the back of the book-block in 1951.

The relation between the chronology of the removal of leaves from the codex and the ordinal numbering system of logoi can be seen in the data in various notes left by R. Ibscher, Carsten Colpe, Alexander Böhlig, James M. Robinson, Karen King and others. The leaves R. Ibscher removed and conserved in 1951

from the codex evidence logoi titles from the 21st and 19th logoi, in 1954 from the 18th and 16th logoi, in 1955 from the 14th, 13th and 10th logoi, and in 1957 from the 9th, 6th, 5th, 2nd and 1st logoi. The 13 *Synaxeis* leaves currently in Berlin (P. 15995) evidence titles of the 8th and 3rd logoi, indicating that those leaves were out of their original codicological order, having been removed by the discoverers and/or early middlemen.

It is now generally presumed that the codex was not intact when Beatty acquired it in 1930. Various damaged leaves and groups of leaves<sup>1</sup> were removed from the front and back by the discoverers and/or middlemen who carelessly handled the manuscript and haphazardly removed and then replaced leaves (some were replaced up-side down) before Beatty's acquisition.<sup>2</sup> The leaves acquired by Schmidt (P. 15995) were not returned to the codex by these early handlers but kept separately and later sold to Schmidt in 1931. The codex book-block (ca. 1 cm thick), once situated front-side down on a glass plate in its storage box, is now conserved in a vacuum-sealed wrap following its imaging through X-ray tomography at the Diamond Light Source particle accelerator in Oxfordshire, UK.<sup>3</sup>

One of the most important indicators for the reconstruction of the codex is a heavily damaged chapter title that I have identified in what I call Set C.2 on leaf 52.3c=10 (conserved by Ibscher in 1952). One indication that there is a chapter title on the page is the presence of the scribe's line-dot decoration that frames the text of the title. For all synaxis chapter titles in this codex, the texts of the titles are framed with two lines of line-dot decoration above and one line of line-dot decoration below. For the upper-margin page-headers, the titles are usually abbreviated and always framed with a single line of line-dot decoration both above and below. This chapter title on leaf 52.3c=10 is unusual with only single lines of line-dot decoration above and below, departing from the style of all other extant chapter titles in the codex and oddly similar to the style of page-header decorations elsewhere in the codex. This title is also found within the text column, as are all chapter titles, and so is not a page-header in the upper margin. It should be noted here that the upper part of the leaf is

1 Such as the "Zwischenlagepacken" series of 1957 and the leaves of P. 15995.

2 James M. Robinson describes the *Synaxeis* Codex as having the appearance in 1930 of "a few unimpressive piles ... a stock of papyrus pads without clear distinction ... an amorphous stack of papyri" (Robinson 2013: 4–5).

3 This work was carried out by Paul Dilley, Chester Beatty Library conservator Kristine Rose-Beers, and Brent Seales' Digital Restoration Initiative at the University of Kentucky, at the Diamond Light Source particle accelerator in Oxfordshire, UK, with funding from Dumbarton Oaks: Dilley, Rose-Beers, and the Digital Restoration Initiative 2020.

broken off and lost and with it any page header with its abbreviated title that might have been written in the upper margin.

The chapter title itself is a two-line title, common enough in these texts. For all synaxis chapter titles and page-headers, the process of reconstructive transcription has been aided by the Manichaean scribe's formulaic pattern of technical terms. My typology of chapter titles used in the *Synaxeis* codex identifies titles made of one-line, two-lines and (one example of) three-lines of text. The full form of the scribe's formulaic pattern for titles throughout the *Synaxeis* text is (1) Coptic ordinal-prefix and number, (2) the word "Synaxis", (3) Coptic ordinal-prefix and number, (4) the word "Logos", (5) the word "Gospel", (6) the word "Living" (for example, "The Third Synaxis of the First Logos of the Living Gospel").<sup>4</sup> The papyrus and ink for this title are heavily damaged and the few traces of letters are confused with accidental black smudges and loose ink flakes, making the reading of texts difficult and often impossible. My 1987 transcription suggests one can possibly reconstruct in line 1 the word "outpouring" and in line 2 the plural word "the poor."<sup>5</sup> Although heavily abraded, the few traceable letters do not allow any of the formulaic terms used in the other titles to be identified.

In Carsten Colpe's large format conservation notebook still in the Berlin museum,<sup>6</sup> he records that this leaf and surrounding leaves were taken from the backside of the book-block with such comments as "Verbunden mit Oberste Lage rückwärts"<sup>7</sup> and "Oberste Lage von hinten".<sup>8</sup> Since the block was usually front-side down as they were removing leaves from the back, the supposed "back" of the block as noted in these comments would be the actual front side with logoi preceding the 1st logos of the *Synaxeis* text.

A further observation can be made concerning the nature of the text preceding this damaged title. Above the title one can observe the conclusion of the preceding text and note that it ends with the same liturgical formula as many of the texts in the Coptic Manichaean codices: "... forever and ever. Amen." This indicates the liturgical nature of the preceding text's genre.

In summary, (1) with the title of the 1st logos of the *Synaxeis* text in the middle of the book-block, this chapter title is on a leaf removed from the section of the codex that preceded the *Synaxeis* text, (2) the scribe's line-dot decoration

4 Some titles are in various short forms, such as: (1) the word "Synaxis", (2) Coptic ordinal-prefix and number, (3) the word "Logos" (for example, "The Synaxis of the Fifth Logos").

5 A possible text might be "outpouring on widows, orphans and the poor"

6 I donated my own photocopy of Colpe's notebook to the Chester Beatty Library during my visit in June 2019.

7 Leaf identified as Set C.1. 52.2=5.

8 Leaf identified as Set C.1. 52.3a=8.

surrounding this title does not conform to the line-dot decorations used for all other extant *Synaxeis* logos titles, and (3) this title contains text that does not conform to the standard formulaic texts found in all other extant *Synaxeis* logos titles.

I made these observations on a probable second text in the codex in the summer of 1987. I then initiated conversations on this and other textual and codicological issues with Alexander Böhlig at “The First International Conference on Manichaeism” in Lund in 1987 and at the “Zweiter Internationaler Kongreß zum Manichäismus” in Bonn in 1991 and in a phone call from him to me at the museum in 1993, with Wolf-Peter Funk at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting in Chicago in 1988, with Carsten Colpe at his home in Berlin in 1989 and at “The International Symposium on the Manichaean Nous” in Leuven in 1991, and with Hans-Martin Schenke at his home in Berlin in 1989. A broad consensus was reached that the manuscript evidences the possibility, and for some the probability of a non-*Synaxeis* title preceding the first logos of the *Synaxeis* text. We can postulate that the first half contains a liturgical text related to the *Synaxeis* text, or an independent and as yet unidentified Manichaean liturgical text.<sup>9</sup> Occasional discussions were held in the late 1980s with Funk, Karen King and Stephen J. Patterson about the nature of the possible first text. Although very speculative, suggestions were made that the preceding text is the *Living Gospel* itself, so that the following *Synaxeis* text is a sort of commentary or series of instructional discourses on that gospel. Another suggestion was that the *Synaxeis* text is the *Living Gospel* itself and that the preceding text is a sort of extended introduction.

## 1      **Comments Elaborating on Wolf-Peter Funk’s Report on the Synaxeis Codex in the Present Volume**

One can compare Wolf-Peter Funk’s excellent progress report in the present volume with the complementary and more comprehensive discussions by James M. Robinson.<sup>10</sup> Having worked on the codex for several years beginning in 1987, I wish to add a few comments for clarification.

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9      The remaining book-block contains an estimated 100 leaves, indicating a text of about 200 pages in length. See also the discussion in my article, Mirecki 1994.

10     Robinson 2013. See also King 1992.

### 1.1 *Funk's Comments Related to the Non-synaxis Title*<sup>11</sup>

Wolf-Peter and I had engaged in conversations in person at the 1988 Chicago conference referenced above and in later contexts over several years, that some damaged text portions identified by me in Berlin might indicate titles that are unrelated to the *Synaxeis* text. I had in fact concluded over time that only one such text (on leaf 52.3c=10) can possibly be a non-synaxis title. I communicated this information to Prof. Robinson in March 1989 during a conversation at the Coptic Seminar of the Claremont Graduate University where I presented my research on Coptic amulets. I twice again studied this text portion in detail in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin in September 2009 (during “The Seventh International Conference on Manichaean Studies”) and in June 2019 (during “The Fifth Papyrus Curatorial and Conservation Meeting”) but in these later autopsies I was unable to identify extended text portions, the manuscript having deteriorated further since my readings in the late 1980s.

### 1.2 *Funk's Discussion on Synaxeis Leaves in (Then East) Berlin*<sup>12</sup>

The 31 *Synaxeis* leaves of P. 15995 now in the new building of the Berlin papyrus collection were also studied by me in 1987 under the direction of Drs. Wolfgang Müller and Günther Poethke. I recorded leaf dimensions, leaf profiles, lacunae patterns and fiber directions. Using the museum's large Zeiss Icon microscope, I made my own transcriptions of extant titles and select text portions. I then forwarded my report to Prof. Robinson.

### 1.3 *Funk's Discussion on Synaxeis Leaves in the United States*<sup>13</sup>

The ten glass frames, each containing a papyrus leaf, that were earlier entrusted in Berlin to Prof. Karen King to take with her to the United States, were given to me by King at the 1988 annual conference of the Society of Biblical Literature in Chicago. I then deposited those leaves in the papyrus collection of the University of Michigan for temporary safe-keeping in agreement with Prof. Ludwig Koenen. I also transcribed those leaves and returned them to the (then West) Berlin collection in the summer of 1989.<sup>14</sup>

11 See Funk's footnotes 9 and 20.

12 See Funk's footnote 2.

13 See Funk's footnote 4.

14 Robinson, 2013, 20–21. Robinson's comment that the glassed leaves were returned to Berlin “in 1988” actually refers to the transferal of the leaves from King to me in Chicago in 1988, as they were eventually returned to Berlin by me in 1989.

#### 1.4 *Funk's Discussion on the Photography of Berlin Synaxeis Leaves*<sup>15</sup>

In the summer of 1991, in the Berlin museum, at the suggestion of Dr. William Brashear (curator of manuscripts in West Berlin), Bruce and Ken Zuckerman, photographers of West Semitic Research, requested my assistance in various activities related to the photography of the *Synaxeis* leaves and the remaining book-block, as they were unfamiliar with the manuscripts, the notations on the storage boxes, the inconsistent and idiosyncratic notations (including abbreviations and symbols) on diverse types of labels attached to the glass frames by researchers over the decades, and the manuscript's awkward storage situations in the top floor of the museum. Also, apart from the resulting complete sets of *Synaxeis* photographs that Funk states Robinson gave to him and to the Manichaean archive at Claremont Graduate University, Robinson generously provided me in January 1994 with a third complete set in three boxes from which I created a complete set of copies, returning the original set to him as a courtesy. Thorough and definitive transcriptions cannot be made using the photographs due to the heavily damaged papyrus material and abrasion of ink. Robinson notes that the Zuckermans recently employed computer enhanced technology using a microdensitometer, though "still prohibitively expensive."<sup>16</sup> The manuscript lab of the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at the University of Hamburg has recently begun the process of imaging the *Synaxeis* pages under glass, in coordination with Dr. Paul Dilley.<sup>17</sup>

#### 1.5 *Funk's Discussion on the Quest for Codicological Order*<sup>18</sup>

Wolf-Peter states that "a solid codicological order could be established on the basis of conservation numbers [...] with hardly any missing leaves to be assumed." The conservation numbers (recorded on labels attached to the glass frames, on cards within the storage boxes, and in Colpe's notebook) are no doubt crucial to recovering the original codicological order, but are just one of many data points that must be incorporated into the larger model. I should here put into play my theory that there are at least three distinct codicological orders that must be considered separately and in relation to each other for this particular codex: (1) the original order of leaves, unavailable to us and known only to the scribe; (2) the secondary and confused order of leaves when Beatty acquired the previously mishandled codex and before R. Ibscher began conservation; (3) a third codicological order representing the current order of leaves

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15 See Funk's footnote 10.

16 Robinson 2013: 21.

17 See the introduction to this volume.

18 See Funk's footnote 13.

that Ibscher newly created. The second and third orders must be dealt with before the first original order can be uncovered. From the start, my concern had been to understand the data available to me, that is the current order of leaves R. Ibscher newly created during his conservation process. My method was then to deduce the order of leaves when Beatty first acquired the codex and before Ibscher began his work. Finally, I worked to deduce, when possible, the original codicological order known to the scribe. Of special interest are leaves removed from various places in the codex as it was deteriorating during the conservation process, this is clear from the “Zwischenlagepacken”<sup>19</sup> series of 1957 and occasional comments associated with leaves like “Oberste Lage von hinten” and “Verbunden mit Oberste Lage rückwärts.”<sup>20</sup> The primary evidence is the leaves themselves, but also the complex notes on the labels of most glass plates, comments in Colpe’s notebook, and published statements by early researchers. All of this evidence is subject to interpretation as it does not comprise a single coherent, description and objective data base. Recognizing and taking into account these three codicological orders for understanding the available data has been a basic problem that scholars have encountered concerning *Synaxeis* codicology.

#### 1.6 *Funk’s Discussion on the Question of Missing Leaves*<sup>21</sup>

Wolf-Peter states that “a solid codicological order could be established [...] with hardly any missing leaves to be assumed.” On the contrary, there are leaves that are missing and out of place. This is evidenced many times by the absence of shared fiber directions between leaves conserved together on the same day and given *seriatim* conservation numbers by Ibscher. Such leaves were not originally contiguous. In addition, the evidence for at least eight missing leaves is clear by the absence of leaves with chapter titles for logoi 22, 20, 17, 15, 12, 11, 7 and 4. Wolf-Peter’s position results from an incorrect assumption that “the codex proved to be [...] of a relatively ‘primitive’ or slightly irregular construction” when compared with the other Medinet Madi Manichaean books and the majority of extant multiple quire codices. On the contrary, the irregularities are not a result of a codex of irregular construction, but rather of a codex of regular construction that had been mishandled in various ways by its discoverers and/or early middlemen before it was conserved. A more problematic

19 “Zwischenlagepacken” is not a standard technical term in papyrology or codicology. Colpe, in a private conversation in Leuven in 1991, was unaware of its precise meaning in relation to the conservation process.

20 That Ibscher was removing leaves from the front and back of the book-block as it was deteriorating was confirmed in private discussion with Colpe in 1991.

21 See Funk’s footnote 13.

question is whether fragile leaves were damaged and discarded during the difficult conservation process.<sup>22</sup>

1.7 *Funk's Discussion on the Question of Textual Irregularity and His Claim of the Original Scribe's Absence of the Seventh and Eighth Logoi*<sup>23</sup>

Wolf-Peter states in his footnote 14 that in the sequence of logoi in the codex, there is no evidence that the codex had logoi 7 and 8: "Whether by design or error, the scribe visibly managed to leap from the end of the 2nd synaxis of Discourse Six to the beginning of Discourse Nine on one and the same page." On the contrary, clear evidence of logos 8 is found in a chapter title in leaf #14 of Carl Schmidt's P. 15995 still in Berlin: "The Third Synaxis of the Eighth Logos of the Living Gospel." Also, Wolf-Peter's argument that logoi 7 and 8 were not in the codex does not take into account the fact that there is also no clear evidence of chapter titles for logoi 22, 20, 17, 15, 12, 11, 7 and 4 as noted in my preceding paragraph, but he makes no suggestion that those logoi (except 7) were not in the codex. Wolf-Peter elsewhere states that the leap from logoi 6 to 9, resulting in the absence of logoi 7 and 8 "must be accepted as a given in the text of this codex: it is not in any way due to material defect or disorder of pages."<sup>24</sup> As I have stated in the preceding paragraph, such irregularities are not a result of a codex of irregular construction or irregular text, but rather of a codex of regular construction and regular text that had been mishandled in various ways by its discoverers and/or early middlemen before it was conserved. Wolf-Peter also bases his argument on an extremely damaged and doubtful page-header text in the upper margin of the leaf containing the chapter title of logos 9 and argues that there is only enough space for the three letters of the number 9 and not the five letters of the number 8. Considering the heavily damaged nature of the papyrus material, arguments from admittedly nearly illegible text due to malformed papyrus and abraded ink are unconvincing, as is Funk's statement that although "the reading of each letter [...] is uncertain [...] there can be no doubt about the number."<sup>25</sup>

22 R. Ibscher admitted "atomizing" a leaf of the Coptic Manichaean *Kephalaia Codex* with a sneeze (Ibscher 1965: 52).

23 See Funk's footnote 14.

24 Funk 2014: 48, n. 166.

25 Funk 2014: 48, n. 166.

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## The Chester Beatty *Kephalaia*: Report on Work in Progress

*Paul Dilley*

The Chester Beatty *Kephalaia*, also known as the Dublin *Kephalaia*, one of the seven Medinet Madi manuscripts, is a large papyrus codex, likely consisting originally of 496 pages in 31 quires, which holds a great deal of new and fascinating information for the history of religions in the Late Antique Mediterranean and Iranian regions.<sup>1</sup> It was a challenge to conserve, and has been an ongoing challenge to edit, but the rewards are high. Since 2008, Iain Gardner, Jason BeDuhn, and myself have been at work on the *editio princeps*, translation, commentary, and index of the Coptic text. This chapter provides a brief report on what we have accomplished thus far, and an assessment of the remaining work to be done.

### 1 Project Timeline

The transcription and translation began in 2008, based on an initial set of digital images and regular trips to the Chester Beatty Library, at least once per year, to examine difficult passages autoptically. In 2012, Daniel Boone and Ryan Belnap of the Northern Arizona University IDEALab completed multispectral imaging (MSI) for all of the leaves in the *Kephalaia* codex, which formed the basis for our subsequent editorial work. Each of us had responsibility for the preliminary transcription of a section of the codex: I had the quires which correspond approximately to the first third, BeDuhn the second, and Gardner the third. Our transcriptions were then circulated to the other two editors, who collated them with the images, and suggested revisions. In 2014, we published a collection of studies, *Mani at the Court of the Persian Kings*,

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1 The manuscript has a varied nomenclature to accompany its complicated history: it is usually described as “Codex C” in the scholarly literature on Medinet Madi, but more recently the Chester Beatty Library has assigned it the shelf mark “Pma 1.” It is also abbreviated 2Ke, especially in reference to individual passages.

based on this initial work.<sup>2</sup> In 2015, Gardner completed a revision of the entire codex, and established the final editorial protocols; the subsequent three years involved recirculation of the text of the first fascicle among the three editors for final comments, in preparation for the edition, as well as consultation of Wolf-Peter Funk's earlier transcriptions, as reconstructed through his Medinet Madi Concordance, which he kindly shared with us. In 2018, a first fascicle was published, which was in fact the third quarter of the codex, with edition and translation of pages 343–442 (chapters 321–347).<sup>3</sup> Since then, our schedule has changed significantly after another round of multispectral photography was carried out at my request in March 2019 by the mobile lab at the University of Hamburg's Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC). The processed images have dramatically improved the legibility of most pages, and so a second round to complete the imaging of the codex is now scheduled for November 2021. This new set of MSI images will be utilized for the remaining three fascicles (of which Part 2 will be published next), as well as a revised edition of the first, already begun by Gardner. A codicological description will accompany the publication of the complete codex; together with a full grammatical and lexical index, which I am currently preparing in tandem with the editorial work.

## 2 Reconstructing the Conservation Process

The second volume of the *Kephalaia*, described in the running headers as “The Kephalaia of the Wisdom | of My Lord Mani,” was acquired by Chester Beatty on the antiquities market in Cairo around 1930.<sup>4</sup> Beatty arranged for the manuscript to be conserved in Berlin, under the talented hands of the renowned Hugo Ibscher, who was working on other codices from the Medinet Madi corpus. Conservation began in 1936, and approximately 60 pages were separated before World War II (designated Quires B–F), and placed between glass. Beatty hired Hugo's son, Rolf Ibscher, to continue his father's work in London, at the British Museum, during the 1950s; he separated Quires I–X, placing them mostly between PMMA (popularly known as plexiglass, tradename Perspex) plates.<sup>5</sup> The plates contain stickers known as “Ibscher numbers,” but these do

<sup>2</sup> Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dilley 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dilley 2018. See pp. 1–3 for more details on the editorial process.

<sup>4</sup> Robinson 2013, 22.

<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, within the correspondence related to conservation preserved in the CBL archives, the use of glass or Perspex plates was considered and changed several times; at one

not necessarily correspond to the original order of pages in the manuscript, or, for that matter, the order in which they were removed. While the conservators may have correctly identified individual quires, their internal page structure as suggested by the Ibscher numbers is not always accurate. Much of the codicological work has been to determine the order of the quires, on the one hand, and of the pages within them, on the other.

During the work of conservation, the papyrus leaves had to be painstakingly removed without damaging their fragile structure, a challenging task without which the text would never have been made available for study. The Chester Beatty Library has an archive of correspondence related to Rolf Ibscher's conservation work at the British Museum which is relevant for understanding the current deteriorated state of many pages in the *Kephalaia* volume, and presumably other Medinet Madi codices as well.<sup>6</sup> In early correspondence, R. Ibscher mentions that he has invented a "new method" for removing the individual papyrus sheets from the book blocks, which he calls "dissolving."<sup>7</sup> The name suggests the application of a solvent before the removal, but unfortunately he does not give specifics about the technique. R. Ibscher does provide more detail about another chemical treatment used by his father Hugo to strengthen the papyrus sheets *after* their removal. In particular, he states his desire to see whether his father's lacquer, which he applied to papyrus pages after removing them, had led to further deterioration twenty years on, or whether "the deadly illness of the Manichaean papyri like consumption of a human body has been brought to a standstill for all time."<sup>8</sup> Presumably Ibscher judged the lacquer to have been successful, as another letter, one year later, warns that he must apply it as soon as possible to the 200 pages he has recently dissolved from the book blocks.<sup>9</sup>

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point, T. C. Skeat suggested that reading with UV light is possible through Perspex, but not glass; as discussed below, MSI has been successfully applied to both.

- 6 I thank Jason BeDuhn for sharing his notes on the archival letters, on which the following is based. Other archival letters relating to Rolf Ibscher's conservation efforts in London are quoted in Robinson 2013, 182–188, but with no discussion of the chemical treatments.
- 7 CBL K390 (2), letter of Rolf Ibscher to Chester Beatty, dated November 27, 1951. In an unpublished typescript of R. Ibscher's report to the 8th International Congress of Papyrologists in Vienna in 1955, Rolf reports that he was able to remove pages from the *Kephalaia* book block deemed inseparable by his father, and also from the *Psalms* codex, by "impregnating" (imprägnieren, used twice) them, but he does not provide details (Robinson 2013, 185).
- 8 CBL K390 (3), letter of Rolf Ibscher to J. V. S. Wilkinson, the Dublin-based librarian for Chester Beatty, dated July 30, 1952.
- 9 CBL K390 (3), letter of Rolf Ibscher to Chester Beatty and to J. V. S. Wilkinson, dated July 14, 1953. As 200 sheets is too many to have been from the *Kephalaia* book block alone, he may also be referring here to conservation work on the Synaxeis and/or Psalm Book book blocks.

Another letter from the following summer affirms that the British Museum had given R. Ibscher the lacquer based on the formula he had provided.<sup>10</sup> However, it does not seem to have worked as well this time, as revealed in a letter dated September 24, 1954 from T. C. Skeat, the well-known papyrologist and then Deputy Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Museum, to J. V. S. Wilkinson: “He [Rolf Ibscher] tells me that he has only about 20 more sheets to ‘preserve’ which means spraying with some fixative supplied by Plenderleith (British Museum lab), to strengthen the texture of the papyrus. A source of some difficulty has been that in the strength originally supplied by Plenderleith, the solution darkened some of the leaves, so rendering the writing less visible. He proposes to respray these with toluene, which is one of the solvents, to make the colour lighter, but I gather he will not actually do this until his next visit. Plenderleith has since supplied a weaker solution, which seems to be satisfactory.”<sup>11</sup> R. Ibscher attempted to explain why the lacquer had this effect on the leaves which he treated, but not those treated by his father, by suggesting that “soot ink” [i.e. carbon-based ink] responds well to the treatment, but “ferruginous” [i.e. iron gall] ink does not.<sup>12</sup> But the only Medinet Madi codex that has undergone ink analysis, the *Synaxeis* codex (Pma 5), is written in iron-gall ink;<sup>13</sup> carbon ink is atypical for Late Antique papyri, although carbon is sometimes found in small quantities within iron gall inks.

From this point, it appears that R. Ibscher lost control of the process. The next year, he is reported to have separated a small strip of papyrus to conduct tests on how its writing responded to various chemicals,<sup>14</sup> including bleaching.<sup>15</sup> By December, he settled on a chemical that made the problem worse, as suggested by a letter from a certain Merton (apparently an employee at the British Museum) to Skeat, criticizing Rolf Ibscher’s methods. In particular, he was using a fixative that caused writing to disappear: “The leaves were neutralized by a chemical, and Ibscher wants to use [the] same technique on all leaves.”<sup>16</sup> There is much that remains uncertain about the various chemical treatments used in the conservation of the Chester Beatty *Kephalaia* and other Medinet Madi codices: Why was Rolf’s lacquer less effective than his father Hugo’s? Was it a difference in inks on the respective pages? Or did he change the formula? Have there been similar effects on ink legibility in the pages

10 CBL K390 (4), letter of Rolf Ibscher to J. V. S. Wilkinson, dated July 23, 1954.

11 CBL K390 (4), letter of T. C. Skeat to J. V. S. Wilkinson, dated September 24, 1954.

12 CBL K390 (4), letter of T. C. Skeat to J. V. S. Wilkinson, dated September 26, 1954.

13 See Dilley, Rogers, and Shevchuk (in progress).

14 CBL K390 (4), letter of T. C. Skeat to J. V. S. Wilkinson, dated October 13, 1955.

15 CBL K390 (4), letter of T. C. Skeat to J. V. S. Wilkinson, dated October 17, 1955.

16 CBL K915, letter of Merton to T. C. Skeat, dated December 12, 1955.

treated by Hugo? What was Rolf's "dissolving" process for removing pages from book blocks, and did it also involve a chemical treatment? And what chemicals did he apply later, after the lacquer had rendered the ink more difficult to read? It should be stressed that, by reviewing this correspondence, I do not intend to condemn Rolf Ibscher, who undertook an extremely challenging conservation job. But the difficulties he encountered and the ensuing damage to the text are sobering, and confirm the wisdom of the Chester Beatty Library's decision not to try to remove pages from the sole remaining Medinet Madi book block, the *Synaxeis*, and instead to pursue non-invasive methods for reading the text within it.<sup>17</sup>

In conclusion, the various chemical treatments involved in the conservation process surely help to explain the many pages in the Chester Beatty *Kephalaia* codex which are largely illegible, not because of lacunae, but because the ink is faded to the point of being effectively invisible to the naked eye, even with the aid of non-enhanced digital images. This phenomenon of illegible ink is especially widespread in the first part of the codex, which are among the quires separated by Rolf Ibscher.

### 3 MSI Imaging

The initial round of multispectral imaging by Boone and Belnap provided a basis for our initial editing process. Many sections of pages, especially at the beginning of the manuscript, remained illegible, and so in 2018 I approached Michael Friedrich, director of the University of Hamburg's Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, to request that their lab conduct a new set of multispectral images of the manuscript, using the best practices that had developed over the past decade; Friedrich and the board graciously approved my request.<sup>18</sup> In March 2019 a team consisting of Olivier Bonnerot, Ira Rabin, and

17 See my project with Computer Scientist Brent Seales and his team at the Digital Restoration Initiative to conduct an x-ray micro-CT of the *Synaxeis* book block at the Diamond Light Source Synchrotron (Oxfordshire, UK) in September 2019, funded by a Dumbarton Oaks Project Grant: <https://www.doaks.org/research/fellowships-and-awards/project-grants>. For the crucial preparatory work of securing the book block, see the presentation by CBL Head of Conservation Kristine Rose-Beers, ACR, at the 2020 conference on enhanced imaging at the University of Iowa: "Into the Light: Conserving a Late Antique Manichaean Papyrus Manuscript for Synchrotron Light Analysis," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=50zhlg7SGqM&t=10s>.

18 I wish to thank the director of the CSMC, Michael Friedrich, the board, and the members of the lab for their extraordinary generosity in this effort. For a full report on the imaging, see Dilley, Rogers, and Shevchuk, in progress.

Ivan Shevchuk spent two weeks at the Chester Beatty Library working with the digitization and curatorial staff there to capture multispectral images of a selection of Medinet Madi codices, to determine the feasibility of recovering text.<sup>19</sup> The imaging efforts began with the pages that had been preserved between glass plates, because this material typically produces better results with MSI than do pages between plexiglass. Medinet Madi pages under glass at the CBL include 39 folios (78 pages) of the *Kephalaia* codex; the *Synaxeis* codex, of which 25 folios (50 pages) were imaged; and 3 folios/6 pages each of the *Homilies* and *Psalms Book* 11. Ivan Shevchuk also imaged and undertook preliminary processing work on a folio of the *Kephalaia* codex between plexiglass (Pma 1 17r), and sent it to me; we determined that MSI would still work on such folios, and so a sequence from the beginning of the codex, Pma 1 1r–19v, was completed during the final week of the visit. The results were spectacular; for the pages on which the ink fading is most substantial, anywhere between 200% to 400% percent more text is now legible. Although the difference in legibility is less drastic for the better-preserved section of the codex we have already published, the images have made possible many significant new readings there as well.

The success of the new MSI round has altered the workflow and timeline of our project. We have temporarily stopped our work on Part 2 (in the middle of the codex), because the page range it will cover has not yet been imaged. The CSMC lab will capture the remainder of the Chester Beatty *Kephalaia* in a second visit, which has been rescheduled several times due to COVID-19, currently for November 2021. In the meantime, we have been re-editing the first part of the codex, which will be published last, for which we currently have MSI images of 38 pages; this section, for which I was originally responsible, contains the highest percentage of illegible ink, and many new readings have been achieved. I have been making the initial page transcriptions, followed by suggested revisions from BeDuhn and then finalized by Gardner. Concurrently, Gardner is working through the MSI images of the pages edited in our first published fascicle, which will be followed by suggested revisions by BeDuhn and myself, and my adjustments to the grammatical and lexical index.

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19 The multispectral imaging would not have been possible without the support of many people at the Chester Beatty Library, including facilitation and planning from Jessica Baldwin (Head of Collections), Kristine Rose Beers, ACR (Head of Conservation), Dr Jill Unkel (Curator of Western Collections), Sinead Ward (Digital Curator), and Justin Rovira Kearney (Facilities & Security Manager); and support in the studio during photography from Jon Riordan (Digital Photographer), Orla Keeshan (Digital Photographer), Adam Macklin (Heritage Council Conservation Intern), and Dr. Jill Unkel.

#### 4 Current Codicological Reconstruction

Although many questions remain, our initial codicological analysis, which has made substantial advances on Wolf-Peter Funk's earlier reconstruction, has uncovered some key features of the Chester Beatty *Kephalaia*'s structure.<sup>20</sup> It is possible, but uncertain, that the manuscript was bound with the wooden boards purchased with the manuscript.<sup>21</sup> The quires are uniform, consisting entirely of quaternions: that is, four stacked bifolia folded once at the center, to producing eight leaves, each with recto and verso sides, for a total of sixteen pages. Like the other manuscripts in the Medinet Madi corpus, but in contrast to most manuscripts in the Nag Hammadi Library, there is no pagination. However, we have thus far identified two extant quire numbers: κβ (22), on the upper right of the last page of that quire; and λ (30), on the upper left of the first page of the quire. Other quire numbers are presumably lost because of damage to the page margins throughout the codex. Still, the surviving two have been a major aid in reconstructing the codex, especially the latter parts, suggesting a probable original size of 31 quaternions, or 496 pages. The sizeable number of lost pages appear to have come from the early parts of the codex, including the beginning, as well as between parts 2 and 3. Its latter part is largely intact. The final page, which had originally been associated with the first volume in Berlin, contains a colophon in a large, ornamental script, which we are in the process of deciphering. As mentioned in the discussion of conservation above, the "Ibscher numbers" do not necessarily correspond to the order of pages; to reconstruct page order within and between quires, we have relied on clues such as chapter numbers, running headers, fibre direction, and the identification of conjugate leaves. Continuity in content from one leaf to another is also an important clue; the increased legibility from the recent multispectral imaging promises to bring more security to the order of pages in the codex, especially in the first part, where it has been more difficult to establish.

Several technical studies have provided further codicological information. An analysis in March 2019 of the writing on the top page of the *Synaxeis* book block (Pma 5), confirmed that it was written in iron-gall ink, which is typical for Late Antique Egyptian texts, and almost certainly for the Chester Beatty *Kephalaia* as well.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, based on radiocarbon testing, the *Synaxeis*

20 See already Funk 1990, making improvements on the order in Giversen 1988. We thank Wolf-Peter Funk for sharing his current reconstruction with us at the outset of our work.

21 One pair survives (34 × 19.8 cm), along with a third, slightly damaged board (33 × 14.4 cm): Robinson 2013, 280.

22 The analysis was carried out onsite in April, 2019, by Oliver Bonnerot, Ivan Shevchuk, and Ira Rabin, by X-Ray Fluorescence, using with Bruker XGLab ELIO in combination with the MegaVision MS1 imaging station. See Dilley, Rogers, and Shevchuk (in progress).

codex can be dated between 385 and 535 at 95.4% probability, and the *Psalm Book* between 350 and 534 at 94.5%;<sup>23</sup> the Kephalaia volumes, as part of the same find, likely fall within this range as well. A paleographical study, which I am beginning on the basis of the new MSI images, will provide a further complement to the carbon dating; I am currently using the digital paleography capabilities in the Research Environment for Ancient Documents (READ: <https://github.com/readsoftware/read>), and will collaborate with the project D-scribes (<https://d-scribes.philhist.unibas.ch/en/>) on potential automated writer identification.

## 5 Sample of Content

It is by now clear that the Berlin and Chester Beatty *Kephalaia* are the first and second volumes of a single work, above all because of their continuous chapter structure: the Berlin *Kephalaia* chapter numbers reach approximately K 203;<sup>24</sup> the earliest extant chapter number in the Dublin *Kephalaia*, which probably lacks a number of pages at the beginning, is K 220. On the other hand, each manuscript has a different title, suggesting that they may have different emphases in their respective content: “The Kephalaia of the Teacher” forms the running header of the Berlin volume, and “The Kephalaia of the Wisdom of My Lord Mannichaios,” of the Dublin volume. While there is still much to learn about the initial chapters in the second volume, they appear to be doctrinal, broadly speaking; highlights include a passage about the selection of a disciple to replace Judas Iscariot (K 219); and another about the fourteen wounds of the Living Soul (K 221), with parallels to Iranian materials.<sup>25</sup> At the conclusion of the doctrinal section is a series of chapters on traditions about Jesus (K 295–304).<sup>26</sup>

In the middle of the codex, around K 305, Iranian themes become prominent, for example the story of Chasro the Blessed’s abdication and ascent to heaven. Chapter K 323 takes place at the court of Shapur, king of Turan, followed by various scenes at different locations within the Sasanian Empire, including a number of chapters featuring Mani’s discussions at the court of

23 BeDuhn and Hodgins 2017, 21. For a later date range resulting from a new calibration curve, see Nongbri 2020.

24 Funk 2018, xix. It is likely that several more chapters, which have been lost or are too fragmentary to identify, were part of the first volume: see Gardner 2018, who suggests that it probably reached between K205–210.

25 Sundermann 1985.

26 Gardner 2020, 106–112.

Shapur I with the sage Goundesh, which end at chapter K 339.<sup>27</sup> At chapter K 338, the sage Iodasphes appears at the court of the emperor Shapur I, whom Mani defeats in debate, at the behest of Kartir son of Artaban. Mani is subsequently awarded an audience with Shapur, and much of the material through chapter K 345 seems to take place at his court or at least within his circle, including discussions with an Iranian catechumen, Pabakos, and several references to the “law of Zarades.” The final chapter, K 347, is fragmentary, and the surviving text does not offer an obvious closure. On the same page, the scribe begins a new section, with no title or change in the running headers, which seems to be a kind of epilogue, detailing Mani’s final journey, audience with Bahram I, and imprisonment.<sup>28</sup>

Mani’s debates with various wise men, such as Adourbat, Goundesh, Iodasphes, and Masoukeos, resonate closely with the importance of authoritative “wisdom” in the second volume, as reflected in its very title. And this wisdom is striking for its interweaving of multiple cultural elements: Jewish and Christian, to be sure, but also Iranian, and even Buddhist. The Chester Beatty *Kephalaia* provide striking new evidence for Iranian traditions, in particular. Thus, for example, the catechumen Pabakos questions Mani about what is “written in the Law of Zarades,” quoting three sayings which reflect Middle Persian Zand content.<sup>29</sup> The debate concerns questions of post-mortem death and punishment, the subject of another extensive passage in which Mani relates the visionary journeys to heaven and hell taken by Buddha, Zoroaster, and other apostles of light, including himself; this passage uses language that is reflected in Kartir’s presentation of his own otherworldly journey in his inscriptions, further suggesting that both drew upon a common strategies of claims to authority and made competing claims, perhaps reflecting a struggle for patronage.<sup>30</sup> The volume also contains the earliest written evidence of a Shahnameh tradition, namely the episode of Kay Kosrow, or Chasro in Coptic.<sup>31</sup>

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27 BeDuhn 2014b, which demonstrates connections between the Coptic accounts and several fragmentary narratives about Goundesh in Parthian, with Buddhist overtones present in both linguistic traditions.

28 Gardner 2014a.

29 Dilley 2014a and Dilley 2020.

30 Dilley, 2014b and Dilley 2020.

31 BeDuhn 2014a.

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## Report on the Manichaean Codices of Medinet Madi: The *Epistles* (P. Berol. Inv. 15998)

*Iain Gardner*

The portrayal of Mani as a letter-writer was established at an early stage in ancient sources and forms a core element in our understanding of the man and his mission.\* For example, it is already depicted as a characteristic feature of his method in the *Acts of Archelaus* (ca. 330s CE);<sup>1</sup> letters of his authorship were well-known to Augustine and his circle (late fourth to early fifth century);<sup>2</sup> and a lengthy list of titles has been preserved by Ibn al-Nadīm in his account of the religion (late tenth century).<sup>3</sup> From such sources it was possible to establish a standard model of Mani's distinctive style: The presentation of himself as "Apostle of Jesus Christ"; the bestowal of grace and peace upon his recipients; the assertion of a unique ethic and teaching from a position of divinely-given authority. These tropes have been a mainstay of the discipline ever since antiquity, even the basis for parody and (quite possibly) for the forging of documents.

When genuine Manichaean writings were discovered from Central Asia and Egypt in the twentieth century, they contained a variety of references of relevance: The collected *Epistles* were regularly named in lists of Mani's canon; citations of named and unnamed letters appeared in diverse contexts; even a chapter (no. 333) in the Coptic *Kephalaia* begins with a description of scribes sitting in front of the Apostle as they write to different places. Correspondence preserved from succeeding generations of the Manichaean community, whether letters of recommendation or encouragement or instruction, carry

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\* The version of this paper delivered at the Dublin Symposium on 18th October 2019 has been lightly revised to take account of the substantial advances in research achieved during 2020, as explained below. However, further major developments through 2021, especially the reorganisation of the project subsequent to the death of my friend Wolf-Peter Funk early in that year, have not been included here. N.b. The critical edition of Berlin P. 15998 has now been published: Iain Gardner, *Mani's Epistles*, W. Kohlhammer, Stuttgart 2022. A fully updated account of the process of research and its conclusions can be found there.

1 See Gardner 2007: 33–58.

2 Thus Augustine states that the *Letter of the Foundation* was read aloud to him and others when he was a catechumen in the community, whilst a *Letter to Menoch* was utilised by Julian of Eclanum in his dispute with the former; see e.g. Stein 1998 and Stein 2002.

3 Dodge 1970: 799–801.

the impress of the style of their master; thus demonstrating the continued utilisation of these carefully-preserved texts as models for correct behaviour and human interaction.<sup>4</sup> However, the most spectacular (but also now tragic) find was a major collection of complete letters by Mani that had been translated into Coptic and preserved in a papyrus codex, dating probably from about the start of the fifth century CE.

This work was one among those seven codices commonly supposed to have been recovered all together from a site at Medinet Madi in the Fayum. The first known record of the find on the Cairo antiquities market dates to November 1929, before they were purchased and brought to Europe in separate lots. The famous discovery was announced in 1933,<sup>5</sup> and the artefacts are now mostly housed in Dublin and Berlin.<sup>6</sup> In that first published account the character of the *Epistles* codex was described in brief, this based on four leaves stated to have been lifted and conserved under glass (“4 Blätter von dem Haufen abgehoben und unter Glas gebracht worden”), together with a summary discussion of what was then known about the topic in general. These first four leaves belonged to a section that preserved in sequence a *2nd Letter to Sisinnios* and a *3rd Letter to Sisinnios*, the title being given both in the form of a running header (partially visible here) as well as at the start of each new letter. Nevertheless, relatively little attention was paid to the codex in the ensuing first decades of Medinet Madi research, and until now there has been no published edition of the texts nor any facsimile of the pages publicly available.

It is apparent that further leaves were conserved prior to the Second World War, as a number of these survive to the present day; but in the final stages of the conflict or its immediate aftermath much of the original codex, having been recovered from Egypt, was lost and presumed destroyed in Europe. To my knowledge no authoritative record or accounts survive regarding the codex as it had been brought to Germany (or indeed what might already have been done to it during prior trading), the precise details of what was conserved in relation to the original book-block, or what exactly happened to cause this loss during the tumultuous events of the time. In what follows I will summarise what we know of the remains that are extant and what may be expected regarding the publication of the preserved text.

4 I have for many years collected files with all the relevant information for a projected and comprehensive monograph about the topic; for the moment see the discussion with further references in Gardner 2013: 291–314.

5 Schmidt & Polotsky 1933; for details on the *Epistles* codex see pp. 23–26.

6 For the complicated history of the find and the codices see Robinson 2013. His account of the *Epistles* codex (principally pp. xiv–xv, 41–43 and 248–267) is difficult to follow and inconclusive; but it does collate a number of archival records and reports from the time of acquisition onwards.

First, I must make an apology for the lengthy process of editing. Already in 1996 I read a paper to the 'Manichaean Studies Group' of the SBL Annual Meeting in New Orleans about this same topic.<sup>7</sup> There I related how, having identified remnants of two other papyrus codices containing selected letters of Mani, translated into Coptic and of fourth century date, I had made an agreement with Wolf-Peter Funk to co-publish all of this *Epistles* material. These other two codices derived from archaeological excavations at Ismant el-Kharab (ancient Kellis) in the early 1990s, and I held editorial responsibility for them; whereas Funk was working on the unpublished Medinet Madi papyri in Berlin. Given the close connections in terms of content, language and date between these various artefacts, it was sensible to combine our efforts.

Thus, during 1995 Funk and myself worked on a complete draft of the text we had identified as belonging to P. Berol. inv. 15998 (henceforth simply P. 15998). For some weeks starting in April I had the opportunity to autopsy those leaves available in glass plates in Berlin; and then for a week in August, with Funk at his home in Québec City, we were able to use photographs to survey and combine our readings. However, it must be admitted frankly that this work was put largely to one side after this first effort, whilst we focused on other projects, and much too long a time has passed since then. In the following years I worked on the Ismant el-Kharab discoveries, of which the relevant *Epistles* material was published in 2007<sup>8</sup> in one of the four P. Kellis volumes for which I had prime responsibility. Some improvements to the Medinet Madi codex draft have on occasion been made by each of us over the years. Notably, in 2013 I was able to autopsy three leaves known to be held by the National Museum in Warsaw, and also to obtain much better photographs of the same. For his part, Wolf-Peter Funk determined to complete his edition of the Berlin *Kephalaia* before turning to the other Manichaean codices (including the *Epistles*) held there. In recent years I have been much occupied with the Dublin *Kephalaia* edition.

The good news is that events and progress in other projects have recently enabled us to return to our research. In August 2019 I went again to work with Funk in Québec and the two of us determined to bring our long-delayed edition to a rapid conclusion. We began immediately to set up the text and translation in camera-ready format, with the intention to submit the complete volume to Kohlhammer as soon as possible. Indeed, we might have done so in 2020 if it were not for a remarkable development that occurred after that Dublin symposium for which this present paper was first prepared and then delivered. On

7 Gardner 2001: 93–104. Note that some of the comments made there about the text of Berlin P. 15998 have now been superseded and should not be relied upon.

8 Gardner 2007a; the remnants of the codices containing letters by Mani are P. Kellis vi Copt. 53 and 54.

the 1st November 2019 multispectral imaging (MSI) was undertaken in Berlin of all the extant leaves identified as belonging to this codex. The processed files began to be made available from January of 2020.<sup>9</sup>

There is no doubt that MSI constitutes the greatest single advance for the editing of these remains since they were first found and conserved. It has been astonishing to see such a substantial increase in the total amount of readable text, which might approximate to an additional fifty per cent beyond our established draft edition from 1995. Further, the new readings (especially the title of one of Mani's letters as discussed below) have enabled an improved understanding of the sequence of pages; and this has provided a necessary if partial key to the codicology of P. 15998, which had been highly-problematic previously. It must be noted that the remains of the codex, subsequent to the losses in the aftermath of the Second World War, are very poor; as I will explain further below. It is fair to say that a general dissatisfaction with what we had been able to achieve before MSI may help to explain our delay in publication. Whilst one can only work with what is extant, the results are now clearer and the benefits to scholarship stronger. A basic theory about this collection of letters, even if necessarily rather general and hypothetical, has begun to emerge. So, there is at least that profit to this long process.

We are now in the process of reorganising our draft edition on the basis of the improved data. Previously it had been built on arbitrary page numbers, with only a limited sense of how sections of preserved text might relate to each other within the overall construction of a work that was mostly lost. In order to explain these difficulties and our method, it is necessary to reiterate the lack of any true information or records about the original codex as it had been discovered, traded on the antiquities market, purchased and taken to Berlin; and, in particular, about the course of conservation undertaken from the 1930s onwards. What is now to be found is an assortment of leaves in glass plates listed under the inventory number P. 15998, mostly rather poorly preserved and evidencing a variety of record systems (i.e. plate numbers in different formats); together with a few others from the Medinet Madi collection that there is reason to believe once belonged to the same artefact. Further, there are the three leaves in the National Museum in Warsaw, plus one other once

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9 My thanks to the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at the University of Hamburg, and its Director Michael Friedrich, for approving my request for this work; to Ivan Shevchuk and Kyle Huskin for their skill in MSI capture and processing; and to Myriam Krutzsch for facilitating the work in Berlin. It is hoped that the leaves in Warsaw can also be given the same treatment, but the 2020 pandemic has delayed the project there. For the record, it was on the very same day I delivered this report in its original form to the IAMS Symposium at the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin that I received confirmation that MSI would be conducted on the extant *Epistles* leaves held in Berlin (eMail of 18 October 2019 from Ivan Shevchuk).

held in private hands in that city but later acquired. The presence of material there must be related to the fate of the codex at the end of the Second World War, when artefacts from Berlin were taken by train and transported through Poland to the Soviet Union; but the exact details of what happened at that time and the apparent loss of the great majority of what we now know as P. 15998 is not known.

These surviving remnants are so limited, disordered and haphazard that it has been difficult to determine the quire structure; (the Medinet Madi codices are constructed either from quaterniones or seniones). No pagination or quire numbers have been identified on any of the extant material. Pages contain approximately 35 lines of text. In general terms the physical folios and scribal-work resemble those of other artefacts in the collection so that one may presume that this book was of similar manufacture; date, perhaps early fifth-century CE; and, to speculate here, length. For comparison, the two *Kephalaia* codices were each of about 500 pages. A work of such a size would rank as a major collection of Mani's letters.

The process of reconstruction, however limited it may be, must begin from the format and sequencing of those plate records that survive. We assume that the three main sets of such records correspond to three periods of conservation activity, which can be listed as the original, the folio and the 'B' series. The majority of plates (not all) bear labels according to one of these three types, on which see further below; but it must be emphasised that in no instance do we know the total number of leaves that were conserved in that sequence. The four plates now found in Warsaw all belong to the original series. In Berlin the majority of surviving plates have been labelled 'f.' for folio, merely to distinguish them from those that are listed with a 'B'; but which set of these was first is not easy to resolve. One might suppose that if the original series represented provisional or trial lifting of leaves undertaken by Hugo Ibscher shortly after purchase in the early 1930s, then what we now term the folio series would be the major conservation effort and that the 'B' series some kind of renewed or subsequent undertaking. However, it may rather be the reverse, i.e. that the 'B' series followed the original set, and that what are now the folio plates are Rolf Ibscher's later attempt at completing the work from what remained before him. It is not a straightforward matter to demonstrate or reconcile all aspects of the available evidence.<sup>10</sup>

10 The complexity and problems regarding this issue are made apparent by the reports collected in Robinson 2013, notably that by Böhlig from 1960 cited pp. 250–251 and in the following discussion. Here the 6 leaves referred to as put under glass already in the pre-war period might well be identified with the 'B' series on the basis of the numbers cited by Böhlig and his reading of the title of the 7th *Letter to Ctesiphon* that occurs on B.24; thus Robinson pp. 259 and 263. The others that were only partly conserved at that

1        The Original Series

It will be recalled that in the 1933 announcement of the Medinet Madi find of Coptic Manichaean codices it was stated that only four leaves had been conserved, and that these contained running headers with the titles of a *2nd Letter to Sisinnios* and a *3rd Letter to Sisinnios*. A translation of the opening of the third letter was also published.<sup>11</sup> Now, in the National Museum in Warsaw there are extant three leaves (200611, 140160a/b), on two of which such running headers are at least in part preserved and the third certainly belongs with the same group. However, the leaf with the title and introduction to the third letter is not amongst these. There is also another leaf once in private hands but later acquired in very poor condition (237630), on the original photograph of which traces corresponding to the same format of the header can be read. Further, on these four plates a sequence of plate numbers are visible, all of the same consistent style and design and always on the side with horizontal fibres. We term this the original series. The materials can be arranged as follows:

| Plate label | Location       | Fibre | Epistle                                    |
|-------------|----------------|-------|--------------------------------------------|
|             | Warsaw 237630  | ^     | <i>2nd Letter to Sisinnios</i>             |
| 5           | Warsaw 237630  | >     | <i>2nd Letter to Sisinnios</i>             |
| 4           | Warsaw 140160b | >     | <i>2nd Letter to Sisinnios</i>             |
|             | Warsaw 140160b | ^     | <i>2nd Letter to Sisinnios</i>             |
|             | Warsaw 200611  | ^     | <i>2nd Letter to Sisinnios</i>             |
| 3           | Warsaw 200611  | >     | <i>2nd Letter to Sisinnios</i>             |
| (2)         | (lost)         | (>)   | (Start of <i>3rd Letter to Sisinnios</i> ) |
|             | (lost)         | (^)   |                                            |
|             | Warsaw 140160a | ^     | <i>3rd Letter to Sisinnios</i>             |
| 1           | Warsaw 140160a | >     | <i>3rd Letter to Sisinnios</i>             |

time (“ungefähr 22 Blätter in halbkonserviertem Zustand”) would correspond to the folio series. However, this straightforward explanation and clear distinction between the two groups as maintained by Robinson 2013 (see pp. 258–259) falls apart when one tracks the individual leaves in terms of their content and attempts quire reconstruction; and thus the matter is left unresolved here as subject to conclusion in the final edition. Further, the meaning of the ‘B’ is open to question (one imagines a second sequence but note the speculative comments in Robinson 2013, especially pp. 263–264).

11 Schmidt & Polotsky 1933: 23. An early transcription by Polotsky of the title and opening lines in Coptic is preserved in the archives of the Berlin academy.

The following points should be noted:

1. One necessarily reads from plate 5 to 1, i.e. leaves were lifted and conserved from the back of the block.
2. As these were the first leaves conserved from the remains, and they begin within the *3rd Letter to Sisinnios*, the state of the codex at the start of this process is open to question; i.e., although one might suppose that a set of Sisinnios letters were recorded towards the end of the original codex, this may not have been the case at all if e.g. the artefact had already been broken into different lots before its purchase.
3. At least one leaf in this sequence (number '5') was conserved after the writing of the first announcement published in 1933, where a total of four was specified; and potentially there may have been others as well.

## 2 The F(olio) Series

This contains the largest number of plates, but many of the leaves are very poorly preserved. In general those from the other series are better. Since the reconstruction is still in process I will not provide a chart, but rather make a few summary comments:

1. This series of plates, as currently extant, extends from f.8 to f.14 and contains pairs of both f.8 and f.9; i.e. double leaves ("Zwillingsblatt") – or more – that have subsequently been separated and glassed individually. The problematic conservation of some of this material is especially apparent in the new MS1 files, and this all complicates quire reconstruction.
2. At f.8(>) is read the title of a *3rd Letter to Ctesiphon*;<sup>12</sup> and at f.13(>) the title of a *5th Letter to the Churches*. The first of these is a new reading and crucial to an understanding of the remains of this codex. It means that the folio series can be placed in relation to the 'B' series (see below) where the title of a *7th Letter to Ctesiphon* is found.
3. Further to the above: If the *5th Letter to the Churches* is understood to be part of the same sequence, despite the difference in the title<sup>13</sup> but noting the regularity of numbers, it would demonstrate that this series of leaves

<sup>12</sup> This important reading only became apparent with the benefit of MS1. Previously (notably Gardner 2001: 99) it was read otherwise; information that should now be disregarded.

<sup>13</sup> It may be noted that Mani was probably based for much of his life in the greater urban district of "The Cities"; for example the Parthian version of the church history (M2616c + M1750, r9–12) places him in Weh-Ardashir, i.e. Coche. In the opening to the *7th Letter to Ctesiphon* Mani greets those "who are in ... Ctesiphon, Choche and Seleucia". A letter "to the churches" without specifying any toponym might well be understood in this way.

were lifted from the front of the book block and that one must read from f.8 to f.9 and so on. This would also give a – very approximate – indication of the length of these letters, and thus of the distance between the folio and ‘B’ pages in the original codex.

3        The ‘B’ Series

Among the leaves assigned to P. 15998 there remain four that have been given a ‘B’ number. This ‘B’ is recorded on the plate in which the papyrus leaf is glassed.<sup>14</sup> The four leaves correspond to eight pages, which can be arranged as follows:

| Plate label | Fibre | Epistle                    |
|-------------|-------|----------------------------|
| B.25        | ^     | (6th Letter to Ctesiphon?) |
| B.25        | >     | (6th Letter to Ctesiphon?) |
| B.24        | >     | (line 8 start)             |
|             |       | 7th Letter to Ctesiphon    |
| B.24        | ^     | 7th Letter to Ctesiphon    |
|             |       |                            |
| B.23        | >     | (7th Letter to Ctesiphon?) |
| B.23        | ^     | (7th Letter to Ctesiphon?) |
|             |       |                            |
|             |       |                            |
|             |       |                            |
|             |       |                            |
| B.12        | >     | (unknown letter)           |
| B.12        | ^     | (the same unknown letter)  |

14    The current labels may occur on both sides of the plate, but these are replacements; note Robinson’s account and description of “brown labels” when viewed in the mid-1980s (Robinson 2013: 258–259).

The following points should be noted:

1. The four 'B' numbered plates are B.25, B.24, B.23 and B.12. Although we do not know the reason for the 'B' we presume that here are remnants from a sequence of conserved pages of which the majority are now lost, leaving these four from an unknown total.
2. The leaves have been lifted from the back of the block, as one can read from B.25 to B.24 (through the conclusion of what must be presumed the *6th Letter to Ctesiphon*).
3. In standard quire construction leaves were arranged to ensure that the fibre direction would be mirrored on any two facing pages, and this is evident in the original series. Thus there must be a leaf missing between B.24 and B.23.
4. B.12 will be from the same sequence, but at a significant distance from the other leaves (B.23, 24, 25); thus final pagination will reflect the minimum separation that can be calculated assuming standard quire construction.

To turn now to content: On B.24(>) we find the title and start of the *7th Letter to Ctesiphon: That of the Vigils*; and therefore hypothesise that it was preceded in the codex by the latter part of a *6th Letter to Ctesiphon*. Indeed, Mani's final admonitions to his recipients in the previous letter can be understood to commence at line 30 on B.25(>) and continue through to the "Amen" at line 7 of the next page before the new title is read. Further, Mani's blessings at the start of the new letter continue overleaf through B.24, and thus the sequence of these first two leaves is established satisfactorily. There must then be two missing pages, but it is more probable than not that B.23 contains content from the same *7th Letter*; i.e. one doubts that this letter would have been brought to a conclusion and a new one begun on the missing leaf. However, the text preserved on B.12 can be presumed to belong to another letter of unknown title.

There are other extant plates that do not evidence any of the three main types of labels and it is possible that one or more of those also originally belonged to the same series (i.e. that the label itself has been mislaid). In particular, a plate that has at one point been ascribed to the *Kephalaia* codex but lacks a number (the label reads "Kephalaia o. No.")<sup>15</sup> demonstrates a similar profile to the 'B' series and contains content consistent with a letter by Mani to Pattikios. It is therefore probable that the Ctesiphon group was followed (not necessarily immediately) by one or more letters to that person;<sup>16</sup> and that this plate without a number was conserved between B.1 and (say) B.20. It does not have any immediately obvious relationship to B.12.

<sup>15</sup> See Robinson 2013: 258, although his discussion of the matter is problematic.

<sup>16</sup> On the issue of disciple/s with this name see Gardner & Rasouli-Narimani 2017: 82–100.

## 4 Conclusions

The recovery of a large codex of Mani's *Epistles* from such an early date was a marvelous event, and the subsequent loss and presumed destruction of the majority of the same must be counted a real tragedy for the discipline. There remain about twenty leaves or forty pages that can be identified as having belonged to the original artefact, perhaps and very approximately about ten per cent; although none are in excellent condition and a good number are very poorly preserved. MSI has significantly improved readability and the edition will contain substantial passages of coherent text.

These leaves appear at first sight to be a somewhat random scattering of those conserved in a series of separate sequences, and thus corresponding to different sections of what was once housed in Berlin. The exact nature of what was originally recovered and available for conservation is unknown. However, the core of what remains has now been established as a relatively coherent block of material that stretches from the latter part of a presumed *2nd Letter to Ctesiphon*, prior to the title and start of the *3rd* on f.8(>), through to the *7th*, of which a substantial portion survives. These should not be supposed complete letters that can be read coherently from start to finish, being rather fragmentary papyrus leaves on which can be deciphered lines or sections of text that are frequently incomplete; but on occasion a letter's title is fortuitously preserved, whether indented and added to the text by the scribe or given as a running header to the page. Some of the text-units can be identified as belonging to familiar epistolary tropes such as opening greetings, final admonitions and so on; and this does begin to give a sense of the letters as total compositions. Mani's method of argument and purpose becomes clearer when one repeatedly reads the better preserved letters. The renewed editorial work after MSI processing is certainly assisting in this process and has led to exciting developments for the project.

Whilst the understanding and identification of this material in terms of what we know of the *Epistles* from elsewhere is slow and difficult work, an hypothesis begins to emerge. The details provided above suggest a codex where the contents can be arranged as follows:

- (an unknown number of letters) >
- 7 (+?) letters to Ctesiphon >
- (?) letter/s to Pattikios >
- 3 (+?) letters to Sisinnios >
- (an unknown number of letters)

Of course, this is still somewhat speculative. There may e.g. have been a significant section now lost between the letter/s to Pattikios and those to Sisinnios, or one could try to reorder the sequence; but it does suggest a kind of shape or arrangement to the collection. It is evident that the Medinet Madi *Epistles* codex represents a stage in the scholastic tradition of the community where the letters of Mani had been gathered, organised and systematised beyond what is known from other preserved sources. The implications of this are of some interest. One might compare the rather free circulation of individual psalms in diverse formats, as evident from the finds at Ismant el-Kharab; compared to the indexing and collating principles utilised in the Coptic Manichaean *Psalms-Book*. Something of the same is apparent in the two *Kephalaia* codices, where very varied material of different genres and origins has been subjected to the imposition of meta-ordering systems.

We can start by comparison with the usage of Mani's letters in other temporal, social or geographical contexts. The widespread circulation of individual compositions under his name and in epistolary form is evidenced *inter alia* by the distribution of a Latin translation of the *Letter of the Foundation* (written to Patticius) in Roman North Africa, known from Augustine and his circle in the latter fourth century; as well as the fact that Julian of Eclanum in Palestine received a copy of a *Letter to Menoch* that had been obtained in Constantinople ca. 420 CE at the instigation of bishop Florus, presumably there written in Greek.<sup>17</sup> The anti-Manichaean sources also record general knowledge of some form of collected *Epistles* right across Eurasia from the Mediterranean to China.<sup>18</sup> In the literature of the community itself there is found the use of individual letters in liturgy,<sup>19</sup> various examples of citations from named letters,<sup>20</sup> and a practice of employing proof-texts from across Mani's scriptures for purposes of exegesis and instruction.<sup>21</sup> Most importantly, there are preserved (albeit rather poorly) two clear examples of small-scale codices that contained complete selected letters in sequence, apparently without titles, one of which

17 I leave aside here the question of the authenticity and precise nature of these documents; but see Harrison & BeDuhn 2001: 128–172.

18 For the collected *Epistles* referenced in the late antique world see Lieu 2015: 203–296 (at 229–230 and 271); for the *Niwan* or *Ningwan jing* in the Chinese Manichaica (derived from the Middle Persian *dēwān*), see the references in Mikkelsen 2006: s.v.

19 Notably of Mani's final writing and instructions to the church, see Reck 2009: 225–239.

20 E.g. from the *Letter to Edessa* in Greek, recorded in *Concerning the Birth of His Body* (CMC 64, 3–65, 22).

21 Thus M733 in Middle Persian cites the *Letter to the Elders* and the *Letter to Hata* together with Mani's *Gospel* on the topic of good speech; for a translation credited to W. Sundermann see Klimkeit 1993: 258.

is in Coptic<sup>22</sup> and the other in Middle Persian.<sup>23</sup> Their format suggests occasional handbooks of convenient size for easy transportation and reference. The codex from ancient Kellis can certainly be supposed to have been utilised by local catechumens for their own edification and to provide a model for their behaviour, as we find notice of the need for such material explicitly stated in their correspondence as well as examples of usage.<sup>24</sup>

The Medinet Madi *Epistles* codex is a production that is rather different to those above. Due its size one immediately thinks of the list of seventy-six titles provided in Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*, although minimal detail is provided there about the formatting of the collection from which his information must have been derived. It is interesting how the list is given in two parts, but one can only speculate about any difference in status between the first fifty-two titles and the appended (?) twenty-four. A number of those letters best attested from other sources occur early in Ibn al-Nadīm's list, suggesting some degree of importance embedded in the order;<sup>25</sup> although there are also some that are found in the second section and towards the end.<sup>26</sup> It is notable how many of his titles can be corroborated by references found within the community's surviving literature. However, the designations in this great Coptic codex, insofar as they are preserved, appear at first sight to be rather different and to betray a greater degree of systematisation.

This may be something of an illusion created by Ibn al-Nadīm's method of citation and the poor manuscript tradition that has caused so many problems with understanding the Arabic text. A careful examination of his list does show some of the same ordering principles as are evident in the Medinet Madi codex. At numbers 60 and 61 are found a *1st* and a *2nd Letter to Mīnuq (Menoch)*, and she is again an addressee at 63. Of especial interest are a sequence of letters from numbers 22 to 28 that appear to be built around Sisinnios. This is not so immediately obvious in the standard English translation by Bayard Dodge, where is found:<sup>27</sup>

22 I.e. P. Kellis v1 Copt. 53, to be dated ca. 360 CE.

23 See Gardner 2017: 173–180.

24 See P. Kellis 11 Copt. 19.82–84. Further comment in Gardner 2013: 291–314 (especially 294–295 and n. 16).

25 E.g. *Letter to the Elders* (M733 and U47 = no. 2 on this list?); *Great Letter to India* (M1221 = 3); *Letter of the Conducts of Righteousness* (P. Kellis v1 Copt. 53 = 4); *Letter of the Judgement of Righteousness* (S015502 and P. Kellis v1 Copt. 53 = 5); *Letter of the Foundation* / *Letter to Patticius* (various Latin sources = 7?); *Letter to Armenia* (M915, M1524 = 8); *Letter of the Ten Words* (P. Kellis v1 Copt. 53 = 11).

26 E.g. *Letter to Hata* (M733 = 65); *Letter to Menoch* (= 60 or 61?).

27 Dodge 1970: 799.

the double epistle of Sīs; of Bābil, a long epistle; of Sīs and Futtuq, Forms; Garden [of Paradise]; of Sīs, Time; of Sa'yūs, The Tithe; of Sīs, Pledges

However, with some consideration of the text<sup>28</sup> one could rearrange this as follows:

- (22) *Letter to Sisinnios on Duplicity*
- (23) *The great Letter to Babylon*
- (24) *Letter to Sisinnios and Pattikios on Images*
- (25) *Letter on Paradise*
- (26) *Letter to Sisinnios on Time*
- (27) *Letter to Sisinnios on the Tithe*
- (28) *Letter to Sisinnios on Pledges*

Of course, one could easily add numbers (*1st Letter to Sisinnios* etc.); and – to speculate a little – perhaps 23 and 25 here were addressed to the same disciple. This is not to argue that there must have been a single, authoritative or canonical list of Mani's letters, nor that the contents of the Medinet Madi codex were necessarily the same as in that accessed for the *Fihrist*; but it does suggest that there may have been a somewhat established form to the collection. The two versions we have evidence of may well not have been so different as at first appears to be the case. Many of the titles in the Coptic codex are given in two parts, the number and the topic; thus the *7th Letter to Ctesiphon: That of the Vigils*. One can easily suppose that this form of title could vary slightly and with limited significance. It might appear elsewhere as, say, *Letter on Vigils*.

Further, in Ibn al-Nadīm's list, one can discern prior to the Sisinnios group (above) the possibility of a concentrated sequence of letters written to Ctesiphon. The city is named in the titles of numbers 10, 16 and 19. To speculate further, noting that many of the titles most consistently named in other sources occur early in the *Fihrist* listing (as discussed above), one could suggest that the established form of the collection in Manichaean communities might start rather like this:

28 This is part of an ongoing larger project in preparation for my forthcoming monograph on Mani's letters. It is an attempt to comprehend the list in the *Fihrist* both in terms of its corrupted manuscript tradition and in light of all the other information available. For example, the title of number 22 has been variously understood and translated, but the letter is evidently the same as that named in the Sogdian text S015502 as [*Letter*] to *Sisin on the Two Images* (?). See Reck 2006: 172; Sundermann 2009: 259–277 (at 264–266). My project has attempted to relate all the relevant material and determine what seems to be the most probable meaning of the title.

Major general letters by the Apostle >  
 letters to the churches at Ctesiphon >  
 letters to Sisinnios (and Pattikios?) >  
 ...

This is probably as far as one can helpfully take the discussion at this stage; but I hope to have opened a fruitful line of research that can begin to cast light on the topic of Mani's letters, their place amongst the scriptures of the community, and especially the very problematic issue of the Medinet Madi codex.

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## The Publication of *Psalm Book* Part 1, Plates 1 to 128

*Siegfried G. Richter*

The original Coptic Manichaean Psalm Book of Medinet Madi (Codex A in the Chester Beatty Library) consisted of 28 quires and 672 pages.<sup>1</sup> The last 234 pages, which were preserved in relatively good condition, were published by C. R. C. Allberry in his well-known edition “A Manichaean Psalm Book, Part 2” in 1938.<sup>2</sup> Part 2 designates the rear part of the codex; it was preserved in much better condition so an edition of this part was preferred. Allberry, however, started with part 1, but could do little except for some Psalm identifications and some unpublished transcriptions of pages or parts of pages; H. J. Polotsky also made some transcriptions. A sharp decline in research was caused by the beginning of the Second World War, as noted in several reports on the fate of the Manichaean Codices and conservation work.<sup>3</sup> The first steps towards a new start to editing the unpublished part of the Psalm Book were taken not earlier than in the nineteen-eighties, initiated especially by S. Giversen.<sup>4</sup> Since it is logical and common to speak of part 1 and 2 even though this designation of the Psalm Book had nothing to do with the original structure but was based simply on editorial reasons, he also divided the facsimile edition of the Psalm Book into two parts: Part 1 included the unpublished pages and part 2 the published pages.<sup>5</sup> Until now five single Psalms of part 1 have been edited by G. Wurst, J. Kristionat, N. A. Pedersen and myself.<sup>6</sup> In addition, I. Gardner discovered that a wooden codex found in Kellis (T. Kell. Copt. 2) contained psalm 68 of the Psalm Book and published both texts line by line.<sup>7</sup>

In this chapter I want to deliver some information about the development of my edition of 122 pages of Psalm-Book part 1, in the facsimile edition plates 1

1 See the description of the codex in Wurst 1996a: 1–12. According to the facsimile edition of S. Giversen (1988a, 1988b) at least 567 pages (a lot of them very fragmentary) are preserved, in addition there are some single fragments.

2 Allberry 1938.

3 Ibscher 1965, Böhlig 1968, Giversen 1988, Robinson 1992, 2013.

4 Krause 1992.

5 Giversen 1988a and 1988b.

6 Wurst 1996b, Wurst 1999, Richter 2000, Pedersen 2002, Kristionat and Wurst 2013.

7 Gardner 1996: 18–24.

to 128.<sup>8</sup> The work on these pages can be grouped into several phases. It started with transcriptions of the Coptic text in the facsimile edition and the subsequent collation of the original pages in Dublin during several visits. These visits were facilitated by C. Horton, who was the curator at this time. Because of the fragmentary condition of most of the pages, several attempts were needed to get a sense of the Coptic text. An important aid was that N. A. Pedersen made photos available of plates 101 to 128, which were developed directly from the negatives on which the facsimile edition was based. In the printed version of the facsimile the resolution was not high enough to get a sharp view with the magnifier. During this starting phase of the edition, N. A. Pedersen also sent me readings of several pages of part 1 made from the originals, sometimes in cooperation with P. Nagel.

Under these conditions, a first version of the Coptic text and the German translation was finished. But the real milestone in this phase was the reconstruction of the original order of the pages. In the introduction to his facsimile edition, S. Giversen emphasized that an arrangement of the original sequence of pages was only partially possible, but he did not want to delay the publication of the volume. In fact, the publication was planned as a starting point for the real task of editing the texts. It was expected that progress on this point would likely happen during the editorial process. A first step was made by M. Krause. By using the facsimile edition in combination with the Psalm index at the end of the book (which was already published by C. R. C. Allberry), M. Krause was able to deliver shortly thereafter a new overview of the order of Psalm groups in part 1 and identified the beginning and end of a number of Psalms.<sup>9</sup>

Starting with the editorial work, it was not possible to reconstruct the original order of all the pages with certainty based only on the content. Because of the poor fragmentary condition, the first or last lines of a page are often lost. Since the margins are also badly damaged, it is not immediately possible to reconstruct the sequence of pages and the layers of the codex. It was a great help to obtain C. R. C. Allberry's old notes including transcriptions of the index and beginnings of psalms. Some transcriptions of nearly whole pages were made only of other psalm groups of part 1. He worked with photos that were taken directly after or during the restoration process and showed the pages in a better state. N. A. Pedersen obtained these useful notes from the Allberry Archive at the University of Cambridge, Faculty of Oriental Studies Library.

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8 Richter 2021. Cf. my first progress report in Richter 2005. Plates 101, 102, 111, 112, 125 and 126 will be published by N. A. Pedersen.

9 Krause 1991.

A breakthrough was made possible by combining the first version of the edition and the gained original order of the pages with the notes of the conservator on the glass frames of the papyri. Sitting in front of different piles of papyri that were stuck together, the conservator numbered the piles and pages one by one – sometimes from the front and sometimes from the back. While this is not the place to go into the details of procedure, one example should show the progress made with this method: The third group is a group of Synaxis Psalms beginning with Psalm 35 (The first Psalm no. 34 is lost). Up to the end of Psalm 40, nearly in the middle of the group, the original sequence with the plate numbers of the facsimile edition reads as follows: Plate 55, 56, 53, 54, 51, 52, 49, 50, 47, 48, 45, 46, 3, 4, 5, 6. This stage of the work was the basis for continuous improvement.

Because of the financial support of the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*, it was possible to make digital photographs of the whole Psalm Book after the first phase, facilitated by C. Horton at the Chester Beatty Library. This was a major step for the editorial work since the quality of the photos was excellent, enabling many more readings, so that I had to rework the whole edition from the first line to the last. Given the amount of time needed for such a task, it was essentially a new start. The reason for this is that only the minority of strophes are complete; but, with better readings, I saw into the black holes of the remaining gaps, which invited the brain to fill them. In this second phase, W.-P. Funk examined all readings critically and put the Coptic text in the well-known computer software Lemmatiser, which enables the compilation of concordances and indices. In this way W.-P. Funk was able to fill in a lot of gaps which I otherwise would not have filled.

When the end of the editorial work was already in sight, N. A. Pedersen made an important discovery. From the beginning of the project we knew that a set of photos existed that were made during or shortly after the restoration process. Eight of them were found in Berlin, published in the revised edition of the Bema-Psalms by G. Wurst. Pedersen was finally successful in finding them because of a postcard from W. E. Crum to C. R. C. Allberry which referenced photos sent to H. Thompson. He found several materials about Medinet Madi and old photos from the Psalm Book part 1 in Thompson's archive in Cambridge; 76 of these belonged to my part. This was the starting point of the third phase. Line by line the text of these pages had to be revised once again, and new readings were often discovered at other parts. In general, we can say that on the basis of the "new" old photos, some pages showed only a few new readings, but there were also photos that revealed more than twice as much text as is currently visible on the pages.

At the end it was also possible to reconstruct the different quires and postulate which pages have been lost. The very beginning of the Psalm Book is not

extant, but perhaps some pages will be found in the sections of part 1 that have not yet been read. Calculating the different possibilities, we decided that the edition of plates 1 to 128 of the facsimile edition starts at page 51 of the original Psalm Book.

## 1 First Group: (Title Is Missing)

Page 51 contains a part of Psalm 22 of the first group of Psalms. This means that the majority of this first group and also its title is missing. Without missing any pages, the next Psalms of this group follow until Psalm 25, which ends on page 60. The condition of the Coptic text is poor, so it is not possible to characterize the contents very closely, and we found no information about it in the index. However, Psalm 23 addresses the soul, speaks about an epistle and requests to free the soul. Page 55 is the first page that contains more text and also a complete and very poetic strophe (lines 23–29):

Throw away the bitter things – those who come from this earth  
and those, who come from this air, which is full of thieving hawks –  
because the tree is in the middle of the creatures. He  
is glorified because it is higher than all heights and because of  
two shiny nests on his treetop. You, climb up to them and be rescued  
from the violence of your murders.

## 2 Second Group: Sun-Hymns of Herakleides

The preservation of the next group, which stretches from pages 60 to 71 and contains Psalms 26 to 33, is much better. The contents show without doubt that we are dealing with the oldest known sun hymns of Manichaeism. The title of the group tells us that its author is the well-known Lord Herakleides – one of the commentators and expositors of Mani's writings, who is also mentioned in the Psalm Book as πῑχαις ηρακλειδης προϋρπεμεγε "our Lord Herakleides, *der Erinnerungswerte*." No less than five Psalm groups and one single Psalm carry his authorship.<sup>10</sup> Psalm number 27 is already published, but in the new edition the text could be improved in some parts.<sup>11</sup>

10 Richter 1998: 3–5.

11 Richter 2000.

Combined with hymnic invocations, the Psalms tell of the good deeds of the sun and also of the moon. The sun is worshipped with a variety of honorific titles, for instance:

“[I] praise your strength, O man of light” (*1Ps* 60.22)

“Hail, holy one from the light” (*1Ps* 60.24)

“Hail, sun of God” (*1Ps* 62.2)

“Lo, the illuminator, who shines [into the world]” (*1Ps* 62.4)

“Hail, strong light” (*1Ps* 63.9)

“Lo, the messenger of light [has come], light your lamps.” (*1Ps* 66.17)

Beside these hymnic elements, there are numerous descriptive parts like in *1Ps* 63.25–30:

He created holy and beautiful achievements and he determined  
each of them, well-ordered according to five ways of thinking.  
By five elements he has purified her good –  
that of the fire, that of the wind, that of the water, and that of the light  
and the air. He has appointed the fathers of light in them. They are  
the substance in one and the same number and make the strangers quiet.

### 3 Third Group: Synaxis-Psalms

According to the index, the next group, entitled Synaxis-Psalms, consisted originally of 49 Psalms, which were numbered from 34 to 82 by the redactor of the book. The first Psalm of the group is lost; the extant section starts on page 75 with the end of Psalm 35 and the beginning of 36. Up to the end of Psalm 82 only a few leaves of this group are lost. It is a stroke of luck that Thompson's old photos show sometimes much more text than the papyrus today, especially for Psalms 41 and 42. Both Psalms have 22 strophes that refer to the 22 *logoi* of the *Living Gospel* of Mani. Parallels to the *Synaxeis* Codex, which preserves parts of the *Living Gospel*, make it clear that these Psalms allude to this important book of Mani. The first parallel is the heading of the second chapter where you can read in the *Synaxeis* codex:<sup>12</sup>

The Second Synaxis of the Sixth Discourse. The Ambassador

<sup>12</sup> Both citations are provisional translations of W.-P. Funk.

In Psalm 42 (*1Ps* 99.14) one reads:

The Sixth concerning the ... Ambassador

The second parallel was found in the heading of the ninth chapter. In the *Synaxeis* codex you can read:

The Synaxis of the Ninth Discourse of the Living Gospel – On the Coming of Jesus Splendour.

In Psalm 42 (*1Ps* 100.3) strophe 9 starts:

The Ninth concerning the coming of Jesus

Using Thompson's photos, it was for instance possible to read the first strophe of Psalm 41 (*1Ps* 93.30–33) nearly completely:

The [first] logos of the Gospel teaches us beautifully  
of twenty-two *Schriftlogoi* (ἡλoγoς η̅ς̅εῖ) of the alphabet.  
The one about the living Father and the aeons of the Greatness  
and the great amount of all aeons and the ...

The following strophes are not complete but bear enough text to get a colorful image of the Gospel of Mani, which narrates the Manichaean myth that is the inner core of Manichaean belief. Psalm 42 starts with the well-known expression "O Paraclete of our Christ" (*1Ps* 98.11). With help from Thompson's photos much more text was readable also here. Already the beginnings of the first four strophes are suggestive of its content:

"The first concerning the Father of the Lights and the land full of honor"  
(*1Ps* 98.13).

"The second concerning the king of death, the enemy" (*1Ps* 98.20).

"The third logos told us about the fight of the First Man" (*1Ps* 98.27–28)

"[The fourth] concerning the [Liv]ing Spirit and the worlds he [established]" (*1Ps* 99.2).

There is one more treasure in this group, since Psalm 45 bears the title "About the *Treasure* (*thesauros*)" (*1Ps* 107.26), which means a Psalm about another canonical Manichaean book. Unfortunately, the Psalm is transmitted in poor condition. However, in the first strophe its importance is underlined with the

words: “[O] how great is the pureness of this scripture” (1Ps 107.30). It has 14 strophes and some still legible numbers show the same phenomenon of numbering as in the Psalms about the Living Gospel. Readable are for instance: “the second,” “the fourth” or “in the twelfth.” For example, strophe 10 starts: “They questioned you about the tenth and you revealed it to them. They wondered by the word” (1Ps 110.23–24). In his monograph *Manichaei Thesaurus* Markus Stein used the transcription of the psalm and was able to discover one parallel to another source containing information about the *Treasure*.<sup>13</sup>

This third and last group in my edition, which spans to page 180 of the original Psalm Book, comprise a variety of themes. For example, Psalms 48 and 49 are about Adam. Psalm 48 starts: “The things that Adam announced after he ate from the tree: I escaped the bitter error and left the earth (?) ... the gnosis of truth, the one I ate from the fruit” (1Ps 122.28–29). The following pages are not in very good condition, usually with half or more of the text lost, and the train of thought cannot be reconstructed in all strophes. The themes are manifold: Psalm 61 tells us, for instance, in an allegory about the evil tree and the good tree (1Ps 144.28–145.26). We also find a number of poetic expressions of faith like in Psalm 62, a kind of dialogue between the First Man and the soul (1Ps 149.23–27):

- (Soul:) ... the First Man is it, who planted me in the middle of darkness.  
 (First Man:) Because of you, my soul, I have come out of the light. I have left behind my Glory and came in search of your salvation.  
 (Soul:) What can I do, my Savior? Since I [carry] the body of death, the dwelling place of demons.  
 (First Man:) Accept my commandments and fulfil them.

Complaints of the soul and praise of the Father and other light deities are found throughout these pages. Descriptions of the situation of man on earth and of the soul are expressed in beautiful allegories. Psalm 76 bears long strophes each with a different kind of comparison in which a human soul describes its situation.

“I am a fish” (1Ps 167.30), “I am dew” (1Ps 168.23), “I am a sheep” (1Ps 168.29).

Psalm 77 bears an allegory with the theme of shipping (1Ps 169.28–171.32). Among the variety of images in it there is an allusion to *Odyssey* XII and IX: Sirens are mentioned and also a Cyclops living on an island.

<sup>13</sup> Stein 2016: 27, 62–63, 88–89.

I hope I have been able to show how valuable for further research the texts of these three Psalm groups are. Interpretive studies of the Psalms of Herakleides<sup>14</sup> and the Psalms of the Bema<sup>15</sup> – combined with a revised edition of the Psalms of Part II in strophe structure and metric form<sup>16</sup> – have shown the wealth of information within Manichaean poetry. These studies made it possible to reconstruct the ceremony of the Western Manichaean Feast of the Bema and the Manichaean Mass for a Soul<sup>17</sup> to return to the Land of Light. Other parts of Psalm Book Part II and also the new edition of Part I bear much more treasures waiting to be revealed.

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15 Wurst 1995.

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**PART 2**

*Manichaeian Studies Based in the  
Medinet Madi Library*





## Cutting Down the Bitter Tree: A Motif with Biblical Roots in the First Part of the Manichaean *Psalm Book* (IAMS Presidential Address)

Nils Arne Pedersen

While transcribing pages from the Coptic Manichaean *Psalm Book* (Part 1),<sup>1</sup> I came across some lines containing an interesting motif with links to several entries in our *Biblia Manichaica* volumes.<sup>2</sup> This is found in lines 22 and 23 on the page that will be numbered 186 in the forthcoming edition of *Psalm Book* 1, corresponding to plate 132 in Søren Giversen's *Facsimile Edition*.<sup>3</sup> The context of the lines is a psalm that in all probability is Psalm No 85, beginning in lines 3 and 4. This is one of the psalms in the group that all begin with the address, ⲧⲣⲩⲭⲏ, 'oh soul!'. It is also clear that we have the remnants of a ⲧⲣⲩⲭⲏ psalm on this page, since the soul must be the one who is addressed in the second person singular feminine in lines 10, 19, 20, 22 and 24.

The page is not well-preserved. Because the papyrus is cut close to the first letters in the lines on the left side, presumably by Rolf Ibscher in order to save the rest, it cannot be proved for certain that the left margin is preserved in some lines; but it is probable. On the other hand, the right margin is completely lost; but, if my restoration of line 22 is correct, it is possible to more or less estimate the width of the column to the right, that is, the margin, and hence the width of the lacunae at the ends of the lines.

Even if no full sentences are preserved in the first part of the page, it is still possible to determine what it was all about, since all the preserved words in lines 5 to 18 seem to point in one direction: a description of the Father of Greatness and his aeons on the earth of light. The king, ⲡⲓⲣⲱ, in line 5, and the king of the lights, ⲡⲓⲣⲱ ⲛⲓⲛⲟ[ⲩ]ⲁⲓⲛⲉ, in line 11, are surely this Father. His kingdom (ⲛⲧⲩⲙⲛⲧⲓⲣⲱ) is mentioned in line 6, and the earth of light in lines 14

1 I am transcribing one of three parts of *Psalm Book* 1, together with René Falkenberg, as a contribution to the ongoing edition of this codex, where Siegfried Richter and Gregor Wurst will edit the two remaining parts of *Psalm Book* 1. These three editions will appear in the CFM Series (Brepols).

2 Cf. Pedersen, Falkenberg, Larsen, Leurini 2017; 2020.

3 Cf. Giversen 1988.

(π]/καρ ἡπογαῖνε) and 18 (πκαρ ἡπογαῖνε). The aeons are mentioned in lines 8 (ναῖων ἡτε πογαῖν[ε), 13 (ἡαῖων ἡἡ ναῖων), and 19 (ναῖων).

The soul is also addressed, and thereby referred to in this context, in line 10 and line 19. I think the words “while you rejoice together with the aeons” (ερερεωε ἡἡ ναῖων) in line 19 must refer to the state of the soul before it was sent to fight Darkness and became mixed with matter. The lines are in the present tense, but I suppose that the soul’s past could also be described in the present tense as a timeless state. It seems convincing that the page described the soul’s state in heaven and its descent to this world, and it fits this interpretation that the psalm’s continuation on the following page (187) apparently refers to the soul’s subsequent redemption. I do not think that the soul addressed in this psalm is simply an individual soul. It is instead the Living Soul, a collective entity representing all souls, including the souls of those individual Manichaeans in the congregation who used this hymn, even if this distinction should not be exaggerated, since it must have been important for the individual believer to identify himself or herself with the collective soul. Admittedly, in the best-known version of the Manichaean myth, it is not the Living Soul that descends to fight matter, but instead First Man, equipped with his five sons or elements of light. But the version with the soul, seen as the soul of First Man or his virgin, is also found a few times in the Berlin *Kephalaia* (1*Ke* 84.5–85.18) and *Psalm Book* II (2*Ps* 10.6–19; 175.3).

In line 20 we find the turning point in the psalm, that is, evil is introduced, even if the use of the complete ‘not yet’ must mean that the tragedy is still only imminent: ἡ]/πατετωτ ἡἡ πμογ · πμεστογ πχαχε ἡ[ . . . . .], “[y]ou have not yet mixed with death. The hated one, the enemy [---]” (1*Ps* 186.20). τωτ with ἡἡ-, to “mix with,” is attested several times in *Psalm Book* II, for example in combination with “not yet” in 86.9 where the soul similarly describes its past state in heaven, saying to Jesus, “I found you as father and mother and brother, an imperishable g[o]d with whom I was in the [li]ght, before I was mixed with the Darkness” (αῖοντκ’ ἡῖωτ εἰ μεγ εἰ καν ογῡ[ογ]/τε ναττεκο πετε νεῖωοοπ νεμεε εἰ π[ογ]αῖνε εμπατ-τωτ ἡἡ πκεκε, 2*Ps* 86.7–9). “Death” and “Darkness” mean the same in the two psalms.

In line 21 on page 186, the King of Darkness is mentioned by a third name besides “the hated one” and “the enemy,” that is, “the ruler of the abyss”: ἀπαρχων ἡτε πμογν ογωωε ἀρ πβ . . . π[ . . . . .], “the ruler of the abyss wished to make [---]” (1*Ps* 186.21). Lines 22 and 23, which are the real object of interest here, then follow; they have three parallels in *Psalm Book* II, parallels so close that I believe that the lacuna to the right in line 22 may be restored, which also helps to establish the hypothetical width of the column: [. ]ερεεἰ ἡἡ πχαῖἡλαε ἡτρε ἡογκαλαβῖν ἡ[π]ρο [cνεγ ερε]/[ε]ωχε ἡπωην ετσαωε

πεταφρωτ ἡ ἐμῆτε[ . . . . .], “[---] as you come together with the warrior like a [two-]edged axe [and you]/ [c]ut the bitter tree which grew in Hades [---]” (1Ps 186.22–23).

The first parallel is from the ΨΑΛΜΟΙ ΣΑΡΑΚΩΤΩΝ in *Psalm Book* II, where it says, “You are the two-edged axe wherewith / the bitter root was cut,” ΝΤΟ ΠΕ ΠΚΑΛΑΒΙΝ ΕΤΟ ΝΖΟ ΣΝΕΥ ΕΤΑΥΘΩ[ΧΕ] / ΝΖΗΤΥ Ν[Τ]ΝΟΥ[Ν]Ε ΕΤΣΑΩ[Ε] (2Ps 162.31–163.1). The Light Nous is addressed in this psalm, so presumably it is also this deity that is intended in this quotation. The second parallel, also from the ΨΑΛΜΟΙ ΣΑΡΑΚΩΤΩΝ, shares themes with the psalm in the first parallel, also addressed to the Light Nous. It is in *Psalm Book* II at 178 where we read, “[You are the] two-edged axe wherewith the bitter root] was cut,” [ΝΤΟ ΠΕ ΠΚΑΛΑΒ]ΙΝ ΕΤΟ ΝΖΟ ΣΝΕΥ ΠΕΤΑΥΘΩΧΕ ΝΖ[ΗΤΥ] ΝΤΝΟΥΝΕ ΕΤΣΑ]ΩΕ (2Ps 178.7–8). The two passages are so similar that it is clear that Allberry restored them by working on them together. The third parallel is more remote, from the *Psalms of Thomas*, where men harmed the ox Pamoun by cutting down trees: “They took two-edged axes,” ΔΥΒΙ ΝΚΑΛΑΒΙΝ ΝΠΖΟ ΣΝΕΥ (2Ps 226.18–19).

The three parallels have been very helpful for restoring *Psalm Book* I 186.22–23. At the beginning of 186.23 one could also restore [ΟΥ]ΦΧΕ, which also means “to cut”, but I prefer [Σ]ΦΧΕ, because of the parallels. However, it is also worth examining the difference between the first two parallels and *Psalm Book* I 186.22–23. In the two parallels, the two-edged axe is clearly just a good tool for cutting roots, whereas the two edges symbolize two figures in our psalm, that is, the soul and “the warrior.” This warrior is, I think, First Man because he is very often called ΠΧΑΔΙΜΛΑΞ in the *Psalm Book* (2Ps 1.25; 137.14; 163.4; 178.13), and because the soul and First Man are a pair, as just mentioned, and the soul as First Man’s virgin in *Psalm Book* II 10.6–19 follows him into war.

The basis for this passage is undoubtedly Matt. 3:10 (par. Luke 3:9): ἡ δὲ ἐξ ἡ ἀξίνη πρὸς τὴν ρίζαν τῶν δένδρων κεῖται· πᾶν οὖν δένδρον μὴ ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλὸν ἐκκόπτεται καὶ εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται. “Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” The passage is directly quoted in the Berlin *Kephalaia* where it refers specifically to First Man: “[---] he cut and uprooted the root of [the fi]ve [---] root of the bad tree like an axe, [as] the Saviour said: ‘Behold, the axe is put to the roo[t of] the bad tree, so that it does not bear bad fruit from this time on’” ([. . . . .] ρε . αφωωωτ αφωωρκ ἡτνογνε ἡ[πτ]ογ [. ./. . . . .] Ν[Ο]ΥΝΕ ΜΠΩΗΝ ΕΤΣΑΥ ΝΘΕ ΝΟΥΚΑΛΑΒ[ΙΝ] / [ΝΤΡΕ] ΕΤΑ ΠΣΗΡ ΧΟΟΣ ΧΕ ΕΙΣ ΠΚΑΛΑΒΙΝ ΚΑΤ ΖΑ ΤΝΟΥΝ[Ε] / [Μ]ΠΩΗΝ ΕΤΣΑΥ ΧΕ ΝΕΦΤ ΚΑΡΠΟΣ ΕΦΖΑΥ ΧΝ ΜΠΙΝΕΥ) (1Ke 58.16–19). It is evident that here Matt. 3:10 is combined with “the good and bad tree” of Matt. 7:17–20, par. Luke 6:43–44. Such combinations are typical of Manichaean texts. Tree and root belong to a rich cluster of Manichaean ideas



The motif of cutting down the bad tree is also found in eastern Manichaeism, where the axe is allegorized as “the axe of knowledge” in the Chinese *Tractatus* v1, and (as reconstructed by Werner Sundermann) in its Parthian original, the *Sermon on the Light Nous*.<sup>8</sup>

Now, the myth of First Man descending into the abyss and cutting the root of the evil tree is also attested in an-Nadīm’s *Fihrist*, as pointed out in 1925 by Francis Crawford Burkitt in his little monograph *The Religion of the Manichees*.<sup>9</sup> Here I quote from John Reeves’ English translation: “After the five ‘kinds’ of Darkness had contaminated the (five) ‘kinds’ of Light, Primal Man descended to the bottom of the depth(s) and severed the roots of the ‘kinds’ of Darkness in order that it not expand. Then he returned, making ascent to his station on the battlefield.”<sup>10</sup> At that time, no other Manichaean parallels were known,<sup>11</sup> but Burkitt pointed out that “the Roots correspond to the Myth of the Two Trees,” and he suggested that it was “a mythical expansion of Eph. iv 9, 10.” Burkitt may be right that the motif of descent and ascent in the *Fihrist* was inspired by Ephesians 4:9–10 (“In saying, ‘He ascended’, what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.”). Since no axe is mentioned in the *Fihrist*, Burkitt could not recognize the connection to Matt. 3:10, which is probably the core text that gave rise to the Manichaean motif.

Burkitt wrote that “the tale recurs, with characteristic differences, in the *Book of Hierotheos*,” which is true. This *Book of Hierotheos* was probably written by the Syrian mystic Stephen bar Sudhaili, who was born in 480 CE, and has been described as teaching “an extreme form of Evagrian Origenism.”<sup>12</sup> The passage I quote here is from a summary made by Arthur Lincoln Frothingham of the third book of the *Book of Hierotheos*, describing a mystical movement of the mind:

Nevertheless the root of evil and opposition has not yet been eradicated from it, but, gathering its forces, begins to re-appear, and grows into an immense tree, whose wide-spreading branches cast darkness over divine minds and shade them from the perfect light of the Good. In the long

8 Cf. Lieu and Mikkelsen 2017: 14–15; Sundermann 1992: 47; 64.

9 Burkitt 1925: 26.

10 Reeves 2011: 170.

11 It is worth mentioning that the motif also occurs in two other Arabic accounts of Manichaeism, cf. ‘Abd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī* (Reeves 2011: 198) and Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Kitāb al-mu’tamad* (Reeves 2011: 202).

12 Arthur 2008: 15.

and terrible combat which follows, the mind many times cuts down and destroys the branches of the tree, but it ever shoots anew with equal strength from the undestroyed root. Finally by divine illumination the mind sees that it must descend to the lowest regions, where the roots of the tree of evil are planted, and eradicate them. Then begins for the mind a sorrowful return, through the regions by which it had ascended, down below the earth. There it combats with the fierce demons of the North, South, East and West, and, finally, is slain by them. Immediately however Christ, the great mind, is revealed, opens the gates of Sche'ol, and descending brings to life and raises up the mind from the infernal regions. It again swiftly and peacefully makes its second ascent through the regions which it formerly traversed.<sup>13</sup>

This last of Burkitt's observations is certainly astonishing; the similarity to the Manichaean sources is too great to be accidental. The Manichaean sources and the *Book of Hierotheos* share the features that evil and darkness are opposed to the good and light, that evil is a tree with a root in the underworld, and that there is a descent to cut this root. Essentially, here we have the same myth as the one found in Manichaean sources, but whereas the Manichaean myth should probably also be understood as a real cosmogonical event outside the individual, here it seems fully spiritualized, and as referring to inner movements in the human soul. The "mind" and "great mind" in the Stephen bar Sudhaili text reminds us that the Light Nous (mind) is also the hero in some variants of the Manichaean myth. Here, an important question is whether Stephen bar Sudhaili (who believed that all rational beings were consubstantial with the divine) was influenced by the Manichaeans, or both drew the story from a common, unknown source.<sup>14</sup>

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ʿAbd al-Jabbār, *Mughnī*: cf. Reeves 2011.

An-Nadīm, *Fihrist*: cf. Reeves 2011.

13 Frothingham 1886: 100–101. An edition and translation of the text can be found in Marsh 1927.

14 After the completion of this article I have found a new article devoted precisely to the connection between this myth in Manichaeism and in the *Book of Hierotheos*: Cf. Bumazhnov 2021.

- Berlin *Kephalaia*: cf. Polotsky and Böhlig 1940; Böhlig 1966; Funk 1999; 2000; 2017; (forthcoming).
- Ephrem Syrus, *Hypatius 1*: cf. Overbeck 1865; Mitchell 1912.
- Ibn al-Malāḥimī, *Kitāb al-mu'tamad*: cf. Reeves 2011.
- Manichaean Homilies*: cf. Pedersen 2006.
- Psalm Book I*: cf. Giversen 1988.
- Psalm Book II*: cf. Allberry 1938.
- Psalms of Thomas*: cf. *Psalm-Book II*.
- ῥΑΛΜΟΙ ΣΑΡΑΚΩΤΩΝ: cf. *Psalm-Book II*.
- Serapion of Thmuis, *Against the Manichaeans*: cf. Casey 1931.
- Sermon on the Light Nous*: Sundermann 1992.
- Severus of Antioch, *123rd Homily*: cf. Brière 1960.
- Stephen bar Sudhaili, *Book of Hierotheos*: cf. Frothingham 1886. Marsh 1927.
- Theodoret, *Haereticarum fabularum compendium*: cf. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 83.
- Tractatus*: cf. Lieu and Mikkelsen 2017.

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## Devotional and Didactic Pantheons in Manichaeism: Kellis, Medinet Madi, Turfan, Dunhuang

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Most introductions to and descriptions of Manichaeism start with, and give extensive coverage to, matters of doctrine, often to the serious neglect of the religion's practices. That fact might give the initial impression that Manichaean theology has received thorough treatment. The accuracy of that impression depends upon what one means by the term *theology*. If one takes that term in its broad sense of everything said in the religion's discourse about superhuman beings,<sup>1</sup> then no doubt theology occupies a very large place in Manichaean studies. If, however, one distinguishes *mythology* from *theology*, then the lion's share of work has been devoted to the former rather than the latter. Indeed, treatment of Manichaean myth often stands as if offering in itself full consideration of Manichaean theology.<sup>2</sup> Scholars working in the field for the most part derive the Manichaean pantheon from Manichaean myth and delineate its individual characters from their place in myth.<sup>3</sup> The question to be examined in this study is whether such an approach skews our understanding of Manichaean theology as it would have been engaged by Manichaeans as part of their lived religion, in regular acts of devotion. In other words, which entities who appear as characters in Manichaean myth actually *mattered* to Manichaeans as beings whom they regularly invoked in their spiritual practices? As objects of worship, deities and other superhuman beings bring belief

1 Baker-Brian 2011 uses the term even more broadly, to refer to the totality of Manichaean discourse.

2 For example, both Puech 1949: 74–85, and Baker-Brian 2011: 110–118 provide summaries of Manichaean myth but no separate analysis of the pantheon. Likewise, although Klimkeit 1993 contains translations of many of the texts relevant to ascertaining the place of deities in the lived religion of Manichaeans, its introduction offers “The Substance of the Manichaean Myth” in place of any consideration of the pantheon.

3 For example, Tardieu 2008: 75–90, who in a chapter titled “Pantheon” surveys the myth and then derives from it structural principles and relationships that may reflect conceptualizations of the pantheon that functioned apart from myth.

into the realm of practice, and it is at that practical level that I wish to delineate a distinct subset of the larger Manichaean pantheon.

The intellectualist and structuralist approach to the Manichaean pantheon, identifying it as a body of knowledge, taught by the religion's leaders and institutions, and learned and memorized by its followers, neglects the devotional facet of the role of gods in people's lives. In the characterization of William Paden, gods are "instances of a form of religious language and behavior."<sup>4</sup> Researchers in the academic study of religions construct a pantheon from the speech acts of a religious community, as the set of "any superior being that humans religiously engage."<sup>5</sup> But that engagement takes two distinct forms. Gods can be talked *about* and they can be talked *to*. In so far as a god is only talked about, not talked to, it remains a figure in a story, a *mythic being* alongside of other characters confined to a mythic past: heroes, villains, forebears, marvelous and monstrous creatures, etc. But in addressing a god in the present and as present, a person enters into an intersubjective engagement with a god as a living presence in their lives, one that can hear praise, receive the empowerment of people's religious acts, respond to requests, provide assistance, carry out anticipated functions. In this role, a god exists as "a category of social, interactive behavior, experienced in a way that is analogous to the experience of other selves." Unlike the first sort of gods whose existence are confined to stories, as objects of knowledge, this second kind of gods are "constituted by forms of behavior between subjects," in that they are "addressable."<sup>6</sup> Hence, I would like to suggest that a community such as the Manichaeans had a larger pantheon that included beings confined to myth that they learned about didactically, and a smaller pantheon with which they regularly engaged devotionally.

Scholars of comparative religions have discussed the concept of gods in the abstract *ad nauseum*, and for particular religious cultures have analyzed emic groupings of superhuman beings into categories with distinct functions. But neither sort of study has produced much in the way of comparative theories about the way religious cultures operate with larger and smaller pantheons, depending on the context of practice. An important contribution to the latter subject came in a 1975 article by Roberts, Chiao, and Pandey, which introduced the concept of "meaningful god sets."<sup>7</sup> The authors distinguish the full pantheon of a religious culture, "the aggregate of gods found within a system of

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4 Paden 1988: 121.

5 Paden 1988: 122.

6 Paden 1988: 124.

7 Roberts, Chiao, Pandey 1975.

religious belief,” from the pantheon operative for an individual adherent of the religion (the person’s “personal pantheon”), that is, “the collectivity of gods whose names the believer can recall at will, whose characteristics he knows, and whose relationship with other gods he can specify.”<sup>8</sup> The multitude of references to the core myth within Manichaean sources suggests a concerted didactic effort to instill the full pantheon within adherents as their personal pantheon in the sense this phrase is used by the authors; in other words, to make the average Manichaean fully competent in the myth. Yet, Roberts, Chiao, and Pandey delineate a subset of deities important for individual believers, smaller even than the personal, learned pantheon, namely, “the set of gods who are particularly meaningful for the believer in the sense that they have personal significance and salience.”<sup>9</sup> The authors elicited such “meaningful god sets” from individual subjects through systematic instruments of inquiry, however, and therefore their results have an *ad hoc* and individual character that does not reflect a pantheon subset built into a religious system itself, shared by all practitioners within a religious community. Nonetheless, the concept of meaningful god sets can be applied readily to such communally held, smaller, “active” pantheons.

Such an extension of the concept of “meaningful god sets” from individuals to the practices of religious communities has been made more recently by Irene Polinskaya in her study of polytheism in ancient Aigina, Greece.<sup>10</sup> The author distinguishes a “pan-cultural pantheon” of all known deities within a particular civilization from “meaningful god sets” belonging to either specific localities or cultic groupings.<sup>11</sup> “‘Meaningful god sets’ would then be the sets of deities which have common significance and salience for a local community.”<sup>12</sup> Polinskaya notes the smaller size of pantheons referenced in local cult settings compared to the catalog of deities found in Greek literature, and surmises that, “either the process of oral formulaic composition or else the medium of writing are necessary to collect all of the deities together, hence it is likely that all these deities cannot be present in a worshipper’s mind at the same time, and do not constitute ‘active’ pantheons.”<sup>13</sup> While Polinskaya and the scholars she cites tend to speak in terms of these pantheon subsets being determined by cognitive limits, her reference to “active” pantheons points to another key element in her data, namely the particular set of gods relevant to the ritual activities

8 Roberts, Chiao, Pandey 1975: 122–123.

9 Roberts, Chiao, Pandey 1975: 123.

10 Polinskaya 2013.

11 Polinskaya 2013: 91–92.

12 Polinskaya 2013: 92.

13 Polinskaya 2013: 92.

of a particular community. Rather than cognitive limits, social and ritual relevance highlights a smaller set of gods than the larger pantheon known to the community. “Groupings of deities in ritual,” revealed through representational art, inscriptions, and ritual texts, “have a certain potential for revealing the structures of local pantheons.”<sup>14</sup> This ritually engaged and invoked set of deities constitutes a “meaningful” and “active” pantheon of deities that “respond and correspond to the community’s social needs.”<sup>15</sup>

One might make a defense of the focus on mythology rather than theology in Manichaean studies by pointing to the dominant place occupied by the mythic narrative in surviving Manichaean literature. The larger mythic pantheon was taught in earnest, as illustrated by some of the sources discussed below. Regular ritual litanies and hymns rehearsed the larger pantheon in a didactic fashion. Yet these deities are not *addressed* in these texts. They are recited as objects of knowledge, not engaged with in an intersubjective manner. The purpose and function of thinking through the larger pantheon in such ritual settings remains to be determined. Yet, there is a clear difference in rhetorical form between such litanies and prayers and hymns addressed to specific deities. One might compare the vast system of angelic hierarchies of Pseudo-Dionysius, which has only the remotest connection to the devotion Christians of his time had towards a small number of individual figures, such as Michael and Gabriel. In the Manichaean case, the function of some of the divine figures appearing in the larger pantheon is confined to cosmogonical work of the past, and are paused, so to speak, in their function until they become active again in the eschatological myth. Were such figures, with no “active” function, objects of active worship? Or did they merely belong to a mythological existence of past and future, while a much smaller pantheon operated in the present religious life of the layperson? It is this distinction between characters in stories and objects of worship that I seek to delineate with the labels, respectively, of didactic and devotional pantheons.

## 1 Previous Studies on the Manichaean Pantheon

Previous scholars undertook to survey all of the named superhuman or mythological figures in Manichaean texts, regardless of the genre of literature in which they appeared. With regard to Iranian Manichaean literature from Turfan, Werner Sundermann surveyed the “Namen von Göttern, Dämonen

14 Polinskaya 2013: 96.

15 Polinskaya 2013: 100.

und Menschen in iranischen Versionen des manichäischen Mythos.”<sup>16</sup> The author sought to sort out the complexities of different systems of names of the Manichaean deities employed in Parthian, Middle Persian, and Sogdian texts, explore the sources for these names in non-Iranian Manichaean terminology and/or pre-Manichaean religious cultures, and explain why certain names were employed in certain Manichaean communities. For this purpose, he organized the pantheon according to the type of name each figure had (Syriac carried over into Iranian texts, Iranian translation of the Syriac name, name drawn from Mazdayasnian divine figures, or novel Iranian name derived from some definition or description of the figure). Within each of these categories, Sundermann followed the order of the mythic narrative, as each level of the pantheon comes forth in the story.

Chinese Manichaean texts from Dunhuang received similar survey from Peter Bryder, in a chapter on “The Chinese Manichean Pantheon” in his monograph on *The Chinese Transformation of Manichaeism*.<sup>17</sup> Here again, the author’s focus was primarily terminological, identifying the Chinese equivalent expressions for the figures known from other Manichaean literature. The analysis was prefaced by a brief survey of the myth, and structured according to the sequential evocation of deities within the myth.

Paul Van Lindt likewise undertook a study of *The Names of Manichaean Mythological Figures* on the basis of the Coptic texts from Medinet Madi.<sup>18</sup> Although characterized as a terminological study, it went beyond that limited purpose to include passages and summaries detailing many of the attributes and mythological actions of the figures. Yet, Van Lindt, like his predecessors, prefaced his catalog of these figures with the narrative of the myth (in this case drawn from Theodore bar Konai), and organized the catalog for the most part according to the sequential unfolding of that narrative. Since his analysis sought to be comprehensive, it revealed that the amount of material devoted to the respective deities showed wide disparity, as some figures receive much more attention in the Coptic sources than others. Not all figures have equal importance, and their prominence in the myth is not the sole factor in determining that importance.

Studies of subsets of the Manichaean pantheon have typically drawn those subsets from the Manichaean myth, as genealogical groupings, so to speak, of the pantheon unfolding in the cosmic drama.<sup>19</sup> H. H. Schaeder made one of the

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16 Sundermann 1979a.

17 Bryder 1985.

18 Van Lindt 1992.

19 Jackson 1924; Sundermann 1979b.

first attempts to analyze the Manichaean pantheon apart from the form it took in myth, by scrutinizing the emic theologoumenon “God – Light – Power – Wisdom,” seeking to determine whether it represented a reduced pantheon or somehow encompassed the fuller pantheon known from the myth in clusters grouped under each of the four rubrics.<sup>20</sup> Manfred Heusser surveyed some emic scholastic Manichaean groupings of gods in the Coptic *Kephalaia* literature,<sup>21</sup> as did Timothy Pettipiece.<sup>22</sup>

## 2 A New Approach

The approach taken in the present study applies an etic method of simple enumeration (one can scarcely dignify it with the term ‘statistical’) to get at emic preference and emphasis. Rather than revisit the Manichaean myth, I survey Manichaean liturgical literature, consisting of prayers, hymns, and other related texts. These genres represent those forms of speech act that possess the formal characteristic of verbal engagement with the divine, rather than discussion of it. In such forms of speech, we have more direct access to the manner in which a community identifies the “meaningful” set of its deities. Which deities are addressed and invoked in such texts, and which left out? Which gods exhibit greater “popularity” through the number of hymns and prayers addressed to them?

Yet, the distinction I am making is not merely one of pantheons exhibited in poetic versus prose texts. Hymns themselves can be didactic, composed for instructional rather than devotional use. Christian leaders such as Ephrem Syrus wrote quite pedantic didactic hymns, which do not have a devotional function, but – if they were performed at all – were intended to drill performers and audience alike on tenets of the faith. Therefore, while surveying the pantheon of Manichaean liturgical materials in comparison to the religion’s prose literature, we also must be alert to distinctions *within* the liturgical corpus itself. For example, when are gods invoked and when are they merely mentioned? When are gods addressed in second person compared to when they are discussed in third person? When do gods get singled out in hymns or prayers of their own, and when are they merely a name in a list of many gods, recited as a litany? These kinds of distinctions will be important as we proceed.

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20 Schaeder 1924/1925, 135–157.

21 Heusser 1998.

22 Pettipiece 2009.

Of course, one cannot assume the same devotional “meaningful god sets” in Manichaean communities across the globe. While distinctions of significance among the gods might be inherent in certain core Manichaean devotional practices, regional variation is to be expected. Especially through the practice of identifying Manichaean deities with the existing gods of different religious cultures, the conditions existed for the formation of regionally different pantheons made up of local favorites. An interesting case of this phenomenon is the rise in importance of the god Great Builder in Iranian and Turkic Manichaean communities, through what appears – in our current state of knowledge, at least – to have been a phonetic happenstance. For this reason, the survey that follows will not combine data from all Manichaean literature, but proceed systematically through distinct regional, linguistic sets of materials, reaching findings for each set, before comparing these findings for any patterns that hold true for the global Manichaean religion.

### 3 Early, Quasi-canonical Liturgical Texts

In order to determine if Manichaean institutions had an original and inherent devotional pantheon distinct from the larger didactic one, a good starting point is Iain Gardner’s identification of the 4th century so-called *Prayer of the Emanations* (P. Kell. Gr. 98) from Kellis with the daily prayers of the Manichaeans recorded in the 10th century report of an-Nadim.<sup>23</sup> Clearly, this is a text of devotion (“I worship and glorify”/ “I bow down and give praise”), and as a fixed part of daily Manichaean practice would have served to constantly reiterate the primary cast of divine beings with which Manichaeans engaged. The wooden board on which it was written in Kellis would have provided the script for novices, gradually committed to memory through frequent repetition. Yet, it has been noted in previous scholarship how the beings invoked do not track closely with the classic Manichaean pantheon known from other, prose sources. Instead, it employs more vague and ambiguous references to:

1. The Great Father of the Lights
2. All the gods, angels, splendors, enlighteners and powers
3. The great powers, the shining angels
4. The shining mind, king, Christ
5. The living God

23 Gardner 2011a. Although other Manichaean texts refer to four daily prayers of the Auditors, Gardner shows that Parthian parallels with the Greek text confirm that at the time of the prayer’s composition, only three prayers were expected. See also Gardner 2011b.

6. The great light-givers, the sun and moon and the virtuous powers in them
7. The five great lights
8. All the gods, all the angels
9. All the shining angels
10. All the righteous

As Gardner remarks: "A major reason why Manichaean authorship has been questioned in the past is that many of the familiar 'great gods' of the tradition are not named in the text; for instance, there is no Living Spirit, nor Primal Man nor Mother of Life."<sup>24</sup> In fact, the only figures specifically named in the prayer are the Father of Greatness, Christ, "the Living God ... who by his own power raised up all things, what is ordered above and below" (which Gardner suggests might be a reference to the demiurgical Living Spirit), the Sun and Moon, and the Five Lights. Gardner suggests that the prayer is "pre-scholastic," conservatively preserved perhaps as a composition of Mani, and as such resistant to the more fully developed pantheon of less than a century later found in didactic texts such as the *Kephalaia*. A large number of the members of this larger pantheon may be referenced generically in the sixth section of the prayer, to the sun and the moon "and the virtuous powers in them: which by wisdom conquer the antagonists and illuminate the entire order, and of all oversee and judge the world, and conduct the victorious souls into the great aeon of light." Didactic texts give specific details of which gods of the pantheon occupy positions in these two celestial bodies. But the very fact that they can be so vaguely referred to in the prayer suggests that they may not be objects of devotion in their specific identities, much as Christian prayers may refer broadly to angels instead of directing devotion to named individuals among them.

Mani's own devotional hymns provide the next relevant body of material, recently edited by Enrico Morano and Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst: the *Blessings of the Great Ones* and the *Blessings of the Little Ones* contained in multiple manuscripts alongside of other hymns. Gardner identified passages from the *Prayer of the Emanations* in the same manuscripts, typically preceding the *Blessing of the Great Ones*.<sup>25</sup> So these materials belong to the same core devotional literature. Most of the fragments of Mani's hymns collected by Morano and Durkin-Meisterernst are addressed to the Father of Greatness under various titles and the forces with him in the Realm of Light. As with the *Prayer*, there are vague references to "angels" and "lights." Names from the fuller pantheon are practically nonexistent in this material. A segment from

<sup>24</sup> Gardner 2011a: 262.

<sup>25</sup> Durkin-Meisterernst and Morano 2010.

the “Welcome to you” section of the *Blessing of the Little Ones*<sup>26</sup> may have that fuller pantheon in mind, but it uses allusive titles and designations rather than the standard names of the deities, with the exception of “Father,” “Mother,” “Builder,” “Mind,” and “Maiden.”

Mani’s *Blessing of the Great Ones*<sup>27</sup> is better preserved and explicitly identified as a composition of Mani in the manuscripts. In the first canto, the Father of Greatness comes in for praise early in the hymn, along with the Aeons and other generic denizens of the Realm of Light. Interspersed with these are stanzas in praise of an entity referred to variously as “column of glory, perfect man, third greatness which was from the second greatness ... the power which arose from power and the hidden which arose from the hidden ... which arose from the second greatness and from all chosen angels and the mouth(s) of the Elect (dyn’br’n),”<sup>28</sup> “column of light, perfect man,”<sup>29</sup> “brilliant column, perfect man ... of the third form,”<sup>30</sup> and “column of glory, perfect man, judge and interpreter of all creatures.”<sup>31</sup> All of these references appear to be to the same entity, the Column of Glory or Perfect Man, characterized here in Mani’s hymn as an emergent being formed of the released light coming from the world.

In the second canto, the “father” spoken of seems to be the Third Messenger (Pa. Mithra/M. P. Narisaf),<sup>32</sup> with emphasis on his illuminating qualities and presence in the “light-chariots,”<sup>33</sup> and later Jesus Zīwā,<sup>34</sup> who is also characterized as “beloved of the lights,”<sup>35</sup> “who came from the Third Messenger.”<sup>36</sup> We see in these hymns, then, a subset of the full didactic Manichaean pantheon, much more restricted than the latter, consisting of the Father, Third Messenger, Jesus, and Column of Glory. All other members of the pantheon have at best an incidental place.

Two other key ritual texts of a very different sort are associated in the same Iranian manuscripts with the *Prayer of the Emanations* and Mani’s two *Blessing* hymns. These are the litanies known as the *Twelve Sovereignties* (or *Dominions*)

26 Durkin-Meisterernst and Morano 2010: 86–99.

27 Durkin-Meisterernst and Morano 2010: 116–259.

28 Durkin-Meisterernst and Morano 2010: 147.

29 Durkin-Meisterernst and Morano 2010: 165, 171, 173.

30 Durkin-Meisterernst and Morano 2010: 167.

31 Durkin-Meisterernst and Morano 2010: 169.

32 Durkin-Meisterernst and Morano 2010: 181ff.

33 Durkin-Meisterernst and Morano 2010: 189, 201.

34 Durkin-Meisterernst and Morano 2010: 225ff.

35 Durkin-Meisterernst and Morano 2010: 235.

36 Durkin-Meisterernst and Morano 2010: 245.

and the *First* (or *Primeval* or *Original*) *Voice*.<sup>37</sup> They also are associated with one another in the Chinese *Hymnscroll* from Dunhuang, which preserves the hymns for Auditors in the Chinese Manichaean community.<sup>38</sup> They also are found in multiple copies among the Uygur fragments from Turfan.<sup>39</sup> From references in the Iranian, Uygur, and Chinese manuscripts, we know that these litanies were performed in the context of the daily ritual meal (among other possible occasions).<sup>40</sup> Hence, as daily utterances performed before or by both Elect and Auditors, they could be significant in identifying a pantheon with which the community felt itself engaged. These two texts each come in two forms: simpler ones listing various abstract divine qualities or virtues, and elaborated ones in which each of the qualities is identified with a member of the pantheon.<sup>41</sup>

It is only the latter, elaborated forms of these litanies that have relevance for the pantheon. While the twenty-two figures of the elaborated form of the *First Voice* litany come close to covering the full pantheon of Manichaeism known from mythological texts, the twelve deities of the *Twelve Sovereignities* litany represent an abbreviated pantheon. The Chinese *Hymnscroll* attributes the authorship of the simple forms of the litanies to two of Mani's predecessors, the *Twelve Sovereignities* to Narayana Buddha and the *First Voice* to Jesus. Mani appears to be credited in the *Hymnscroll* with supplying the *Twelve Sovereignities* litany with an exegesis in terms of the Manichaean pantheon.

37 Durkin-Meisterernst and Morano 2010: 8–17. In Parthian and Sogdian mss., *Twelve Sovereignities* is referred to as a “list” (Pa. n'mg; So. n'mk), while *First Voice* is captioned in Parthian mss. as a “recital of aspects” (cyhr 'spwryft).

38 Tsui 1943–46: 190–191 (columns 164–183); for the phonetically transcribed Parthian version of the *First Voice* litany in stanzas 176–183, see Morano 1982 and Yoshida 1992: 206–207. Cf. Rault 2019: 158–178.

39 Clark 2013: 219–229.

40 See M259c.V.3–5: “Finished (is) [the list (n'mg) of the] twe[lve Dominions for the reception of the me]al. In the remembra[nce of the] twel[ve God-s]ons” (Morano 1982, 12; cf. the more conservative reading in Durkin-Meisterernst and Morano 2010, 9); *Hymnscroll* 168 and 173: shou shih tan chieh “a gatha for the gathering of the meal”; III 4974: blessing “over the table of Āryāmān Rōšn” (BeDuhn 2001, 228).

41 *Twelve Sovereignities* simple: *Hymnscroll* 164–167 (Chinese), M14 (Parthian), M259c.V (Parthian), M529.R (Parthian), M453c.R (Parthian), M1081.V (Parthian), So 18130.II (Parthian); elaborated: *Hymnscroll* 168–171 (Chinese), M738 (Middle Persian), M798.R (Middle Persian), III 4974 (Middle Persian), PC3049[A] (Uygur), U37+U52.II (Uygur); semi-elaborated: *Hymnscroll* 173–175 (Chinese). *First Voice* simple: *Hymnscroll* 176–183 (Parthian phonetically transcribed), M259c.V (Parthian), M529.V (Parthian), M453c.R-V (Parthian), M1178 (Parthian), M2402 (Parthian), TM351.R.11-V.14 (Sogdian), So 18120.R-V (Parthian-Sogdian bilingual), Otani7117+ (Sogdian); elaborated: PC3049[B] (Uygur), PC 3047 (Uygur), Ch/U6818 (Uygur), U178 (Uygur), Mainz 360a (Uygur).

The *Hymnscroll* contains only the simpler version of *First Voice*, however, giving it in a phonetic rendering of a Parthian original. For the elaborated version of this litany, we must turn to Iranian and Uygur manuscripts, and speculate that Mani was credited with interpreting it in terms of the pantheon, just as he was for the *Twelve Sovereignties*. Whether or not this attribution to Mani is historically accurate, later Iranian, Uygur, and Chinese Manichaeans were reciting these elaborated versions of one or both litanies on a daily basis in connection with the ritual meal, and therefore rehearsing figures of the pantheon in a shorter and longer form. But what about western Manichaeans?

At the Manichaean studies conference in Flagstaff in 2005, Wolf-Peter Funk revealed that Mani's own *Gospel*, preserved in the unpublished *Synaxeis Codex* from Medinet Madi, opened with the *First Voice* litany as an integral part of Mani's composition. The hymn or chant's twenty-two phrases appear to be intrinsically connected to the twenty-two chapter structure of the *Gospel*, both apparently deriving from the twenty-two letters of the Aramaic alphabet, and accordingly it is introduced in Mani's *Gospel* as follows.

This is the new Gospel, the holy [...] of truth, the great revelation of the things of the quality of Greatness, which makes public the great secrets concerning all that happened and concerning all that will happen, from the beginning to [the end] – the one that reveals and instructs about the interpretation [of the] twenty-two *logoi* of the primeval alphabet, from which the worlds borrowed and through which they were sown out.<sup>42</sup>

Wolf-Peter Funk comments: "This place, towards the end of the preamble of Mani's *Gospel* and shortly after proclaiming the mysterious relationship of the work to the primeval alphabet, would appear to be the canonical anchoring of the 'Primeval Voice' hymn with its twenty-two items."<sup>43</sup> Yet the version found there is the simpler one, containing only the twenty-two qualities or virtues, without explicit identification of them with deities of the pantheon.

Moreover, even in its elaborated form containing the names of the gods of the Manichaean didactic pantheon, the *First Voice* litany, just as the *Twelve Sovereignties* litany, is not explicitly addressed to these gods, but merely lists them. In this character, these two litanies are quite similar to Manichaean hymns that appear to have a didactic, rather than devotional function. Such

42 Funk 2009: 117 n6. Cf. the caption in the *Hymnscroll*: ch'u-shéng tsan I-shu tso i-li yu-hsüan i ts'ung i fan "First Voice praise, made by Jesus, meaning is very mysterious, should follow the *fan* (i.e., foreign phonetics)."

43 Funk 2009: 117 n7.

hymns merely list the deities or briefly recount the basic Manichaean myth in which they have a place. In fact, a survey of the Coptic *Psalm Book*, edited Iranian and Turkic hymns, and the Chinese *Hymnscroll* demonstrates that the vast majority of the figures of the full Manichaean pantheon occur primarily or exclusively in such litanies and didactic contexts, as one of many deities mentioned, without being addressed directly or being the subject of hymns or prayers of their own.

The quasi-canonical status of the material examined so far would have given it prime importance in defining the objects of devotion for Manichaean adherents, even if the religion had evolved and developed a more elaborate pantheon in its didactic discourse. The results are mixed. The *Prayer of the Emanations* has a quite limited named pantheon, with vague references to a multitude of unnamed divine entities. The fragments of Mani's two hymns likewise contain a very limited named pantheon. On the other hand, the *Twelve Sovereignities* and *First Voice* litanies, in their fully elaborated form, would have provided a daily rehearsal of (different) larger pantheons, as didactic mnemonic practice. Exactly how such recitations functioned in the daily meal ritual remains obscure, since these litanies do not address the deities, but merely list them. Moreover, these litanies may not have originally had this connection to the larger Manichaean pantheon. They continued to circulate in simpler forms where the association of each term with a specific deity was not explicit, and this may have been their original form, as seems to be true, for instance, with the *First Voice* litany prefacing Mani's *Gospel*.

#### 4 The Major Liturgical Corpora

When we turn from material that can be traced back to Mani and the earliest days of Manichaeism, and look at the liturgical production of the fully developed Manichaean Church, do we see an expansion of devotion beyond the relatively small cast of characters focused upon in the daily prayers and Mani's hymns?

The first source for exploring which figures of the larger pantheon had a place in Manichaean devotional practices is the Coptic *Psalm Book* from Medinet Madi, which can be securely dated to the late fourth or early fifth century CE,<sup>44</sup> earlier than any of the other sets of Manichaean sources in other languages. Only half of the *Psalm Book* has been edited and translated, while the other half is accessible only through a facsimile edition. The first notable

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44 BeDuhn and Hodgins 2017: 10–28.

thing about the *Psalm Book* as a whole is a preponderance of references to the Father of Greatness, Jesus, and the Sun and Moon, just as in the *Prayer of the Emanations*. In contrast to the *Prayer*, however, the Five Lights do not get much attention in the *Psalm Book* (only 7 references); and if the Living Spirit is referenced in the *Prayer*, as Gardner surmises, we do not see a similar prominence in the *Psalm Book* (only 13 references). Instead, the Primal Man, who goes unmentioned in the *Prayer*, becomes a relatively prominent figure in the *Psalm Book*.

There are only a handful of psalms in the published portion of the *Psalm Book* that take cognizance of the full didactic pantheon. It appears in Bema Psalms 219, 235, and 237.<sup>45</sup> The deities are listed without being addressed, and in Psalm 237 it is their praise of Mani that is being reported. The same rhetorical form is used in one of the Psalms of the Wanderers (*σαρακωτων*), where the full pantheon is reported to praise Sethel.<sup>46</sup> The full pantheon occurs only once more in the published portion of the *Psalm Book*, in another of the Psalms of the Wanderers, which praises “the rest of the universe,” in which all the gods are included.<sup>47</sup> Another one of these psalms gives an abbreviated pantheon in an accounting of the “four days” emanating from the Father of Greatness (aligned with the theologoumenon God-Light-Power-Wisdom) as a praise of him.<sup>48</sup> These psalms appear to be chants of the Elect, rather than texts of popular lay devotion, and typically have the character of mnemonic lists, including various abbreviated pantheons.<sup>49</sup> The common factor between the Bema psalms and the Wanderer psalms is their tendency to *report* the actions of many members of the pantheon, notably including their joint participation with the congregants in praise of other, more significant figures. They are not themselves addressed or praised in such reports, but simply remembered, spoken *about*. Perhaps the Bema festival and the ritual occasion at which the Wanderer psalms were recited offered ideal opportunities for didactic exercise of the full pantheon as an object of knowledge, distinct from the daily demographics of the devotional pantheon.<sup>50</sup> Several deities of the full pantheon do

45 Allberry 1938: 1–2, 32–33, 36–38, respectively. Psalm 237 omits the five sons of the Living Spirit.

46 Allberry 1938: 144–146.

47 Allberry 1938: 137–139.

48 Allberry 1938: 133–134. The core figures of this hymn are the Father, Third Messenger, Column of Glory, and Light Mind; but other members of the pantheon are associated with them as the “hours” that constitute each of the four “days” each core figure represents.

49 The next fullest is Allberry 1938: 144–145; 147–148 represents another fragmentary list of successive “I welcome you ...” phrases; 166 relates Jesus to key members of the pantheon.

50 See further below on the Iranian Bema liturgical handbook from Turfan.

not appear at all outside of these rote lists: Beloved of Lights, Splendor Holder, Great King of Honor, King of Glory, Porter, and the Twelve Virgins. Others find very scant mention outside of such lists.

Although the first half of the *Psalm Book* awaits publication, from the facsimile and a few discussions in scholarship, it can be surmised that there is only one similar example of the full didactic pantheon, and that is in Psalm 42, one of the Synaxis Psalms. The psalm in question has a didactic rather than devotional character. That is, it recounts salvation history, and refers to individual members of the pantheon in the course of that account. The deities are not addressed in second person and no praise or request is directed to them. This may be typical of the Synaxis Psalms, which appear to be related in function to the readings on the same subject from Mani's *Gospel*, similarly divided into *synaxeis*, presumably a cycle of readings for performance over the course of a year or other period of time.

In other kinds of psalms, one deity may be addressed, in the course of which portions of the Manichaean myth are recounted, and other deities mentioned incidentally in that context. Bema Psalm 223 offers one such case.<sup>51</sup> It is addressed only to Mani and Jesus ("Let us worship the Spirit of the Paraclete. Let us bless our Lord Jesus who has sent to us the Spirit of Truth."), before relating an outline of salvation history as taught by Mani that includes references to the Father, Primal Man, Great Builder, Living Spirit, the Sun and Moon, and the Last Statue. Similarly, one of the Psalms of Heracleides,<sup>52</sup> beginning "Gather and come," presents a dramatic account of the rescue of the Primal Man, and so recounts a portion of the myth, in which Primal Man is directly addressed at the center of the drama; otherwise it only turns to the rhetoric of worship in its closing coda, stating "Glory to the First Man, honour to the Living Spirit, and their busy deeds which they have done."<sup>53</sup> Incidental mention of other figures in this psalm, therefore, does not constitute acts of worship of them. It is much the same with one of the Psalms of the Wanderers expressly directed to Jesus,<sup>54</sup> in which he is systematically identified as an attribute associated with various spiritual forces, places, and entities, including many members of the pantheon: it is Jesus who is being worshipped rather than any of the other mentioned things.

The real test of the devotional pantheon, then, is not whether such rote lists of the didactic pantheon turn in hymnic material, as they well might

51 Allberry 1938: 9–11.

52 Allberry 1938: 197–202.

53 Allberry 1938: 202.24–25.

54 Allberry 1938: 166–167.

through the offices of church leaders who wish to use hymns to convey didactic content, but whether any of these deities are addressed in hymns of their own. That is, are they *individually* objects of devotion? By that standard, our devotional pantheon shrinks dramatically.

For example, most of the Bema Psalms<sup>55</sup> are directed to Mani. One such psalm, 241,<sup>56</sup> praises as well “thy Father,” “the Aeons of Light,” “the ships of light” (i.e., sun and moon), “the Perfect Man” (i.e., Column of Glory, embodied in the Milky Way), and “thy Light-Pair, Christ.” Otherwise, the only deities to which the psalms direct honor and praise are Jesus,<sup>57</sup> the Sun and Moon (“The sun that gives light – honour it, and the moon”; “[Honour] to ... the Luminaries that are held in honour”<sup>58</sup>), Light Mind (“The physician of souls, he is the Light-Mind”<sup>59</sup>), and Perfect Man (“honour ... the Perfect Man”<sup>60</sup>), as well as the Judge and Holy Spirit, two figures whose identities have some ambiguity in these psalms due to their close association with Jesus and Mani, respectively.

The Jesus Psalms<sup>61</sup> address Jesus, of course, throughout. They also invoke the Father of Greatness ten times,<sup>62</sup> Primal Man twice,<sup>63</sup> the Sun and Moon thirteen times,<sup>64</sup> the Light Maiden in her guise as psychopomp four times,<sup>65</sup> the Light Mind once,<sup>66</sup> the (Great) Judge eight times,<sup>67</sup> the Holy Spirit (always in a Trinitarian formula) four times,<sup>68</sup> and Perfect Man/Column of Glory four times.<sup>69</sup>

The first set of Heracleides Psalms<sup>70</sup> primarily address and invoke Jesus, while the second set<sup>71</sup> does so in one instance.<sup>72</sup> This second set also includes a psalm that blesses with “Amen” a Trinitarian Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, along with the “four-faced God” God-Light-Power-Wisdom, as well as the

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55 Allberry 1938: 1–47.

56 Allberry 1938: 42–47.

57 Allberry 1938: 9.4, 34.23, 36.8, 38.8, 39.20, 41.5.

58 Allberry 1938: 35.23 and 38.7–8, respectively.

59 Allberry 1938: 40.13.

60 Allberry 1938: 35.23–24.

61 Allberry 1938: 48–96.

62 Allberry 1938: 49.29, 50.30, 57.1, 57.31, 62.30, 75.7, 84.4, 85.13, 86.4, 87.11.

63 Allberry 1938: 85.4 and 88.13.

64 Allberry 1938: 55.11, 59.16, 75.4, 76.18, 80.13, 81.10, 83.33, 85.8, 86.19, 94.23, 95.23, 95.26, 96.25.

65 Allberry 1938: 66.22, 67.21, 81.3, 84.31.

66 Allberry 1938: 59.11.

67 Allberry 1938: 50.23, 56.6, 57.29, 65.6, 69.14, 74.20, 83.2, 83.21.

68 Allberry 1938: 49.30, 61.5, 62.31, 82.31.

69 Allberry 1938: 56.10, 59.17, 83.25, 88.12.

70 Allberry 1938: 97–08.

71 Allberry 1938: 187–202.

72 Allberry 1938: 193ff.

“merciful Mother” and the sun and moon.<sup>73</sup> Psalms 288 and 289 invoke Jesus,<sup>74</sup> as do other unnumbered psalms that follow,<sup>75</sup> while another uses Trinitarian formulas.<sup>76</sup>

The Thomas (or possibly Twin) Psalms<sup>77</sup> offer a very interesting case. They sequentially survey salvation history, and so have a didactic function, in the process showing considerable independence from other Manichaean material in their terminology. Only a very small number of figures from the Manichaean pantheon feature in the psalms themselves. The Father of Greatness appears in Thomas Psalm I.<sup>78</sup> Adamas appears as a character sent to rescue the Child/Youth in Psalm IV, and the latter character is featured as well in Psalm XVII. Jesus is the subject of Psalms XII and XVI, the Sun & Moon feature in Psalm VII, and the Light-Nous in Psalm XIII. But it is another matter with the titles placed upon these psalms. Primal Man appears only in the titles of Psalms III–V, while the psalms themselves never refer to him under that name. The same is true of the Living Spirit in the titles of Psalms VI and VII, the Third Messenger in the title of Psalm VIII, and the Perfect Man in the title of Psalm IX. This imposition of standard names of the Manichaean didactic pantheon on psalms that never refer to them under those names is suggestive of an artificial normativizing of originally more independent devotional texts.

Now supplementing the Medinet Madi *Psalm Book*, hymn fragments have been recovered at Kellis. T. Kell. Copt. 2 contains one complete hymn and multiple hymns of which only the beginning of each line is given for prompting the memory of the singers. Among the latter, Jesus is directly addressed in two, and possibly the Third Messenger is mentioned in a third. The complete hymn (A5) is funerary in nature, addressed to the Third Messenger, but in its account of post-mortem ascent references several divine figures along the way: Light Mind, Light Maiden, Column of Glory/Perfect Man, Primal Man, Third Messenger, Beloved of Lights, Father of Lights.<sup>79</sup> T. Kell. Copt. 7 gives a didactic recitation of salvation history, including preserved references to the Father, Perfect Man, and Jesus. P. Kellis Copt. 1 contains a hymn directed to Primal Man, with mention of the Father, Mother, and Five Lights associated

73 Allberry 1938: 190–191.

74 Allberry 1938: 112–113.

75 Allberry 1938: 116–117, 119–126.

76 Allberry 1938: 115–116.

77 Allberry 1938: 203–227.

78 Allberry 1938: 203.1–5, 204.4.

79 Gardner 1996: 13–15.

with him.<sup>80</sup> P. Kell. Gr. 92 addresses the Father,<sup>81</sup> while P. Kell. Gr. 97 contains prayers addressed to Jesus, alongside a didactic dialogue about the cosmogonical myth.<sup>82</sup> Other Kellis hymns correspond to *Psalm Book* psalms 222 (a Bema psalm), 246 (a Jesus psalm), and 261 (a Jesus psalm), with references to the Judge and Mani, Jesus and First Man and Sun and Moon, and Jesus and Mani, respectively.

We see, then, a wide divergence of devotional attention between a small core of deities and the vast majority of the didactic pantheon, which usually features in mnemonic lists and never receives direct invocation or address. The core includes: the Father of Greatness, the Sun and Moon, Jesus, Perfect Man/Column of Glory, and Mani. Primal Man, Third Messenger, Light Maiden, Light Mind, and the Great Judge constitute a second tier of repeatedly invoked deities in the Coptic liturgical material, less prominent than the core. The rest of the pantheon possesses minimal significance for the devotional life of Coptic-speaking Manichaeans.

This information can be compared with the prayers and hymns in Middle Iranian and Old Turkic from Turfan, all dating to the 8th through 10th centuries. A good place to start is the *Bet- und Beichtbuch*, a liturgical handbook for the Bema festival, first published in 1936 by W. B. Henning,<sup>83</sup> and recently re-edited and translated by Nicholas Sims-Williams, with a codicological study by Zsuzsanna Gulácsi.<sup>84</sup> Due to the manner in which this codex is organized, we can be confident that its remains retain the bulk of the hymns used in the ceremony. The Bema hymns which open the devotional part of the ceremony (lines 23–98) closely correspond with those of the Coptic *Psalm Book*, with Mani at the center of attention. Jesus, Light Maiden, and Light Mind receive incidental praise (lines 82–83). The next set of hymns praise the Third Messenger (Narisah-yazad), although the preserved portions bless a wide array of generic angels, powers, spirits, gods, helpers, saviors, etc. (lines 99–134). The following set of hymns is dedicated to the Column of Glory (Šrōšahrāy), also called the Perfect Man (lines 135–163). Then follows hymns to Jesus, with incidental praise for the Light Maiden and Light Mind (lines 164–199). Following blessings on the community (lines 200–309), another set of Bema hymns direct reverence to God “the praised ruler and worshipful lord of the Aeons of light,” Jesus, Light Maiden, Light Mind, and then Mani, followed by the

80 Gardner 1996: 57–58.

81 Gardner 1996: 137–140.

82 Gardner 2007: 94–110.

83 Henning 1937.

84 Sims-Williams, Sheldon, and Gulácsi 2022.

hierarchy and membership of the community (lines 310–367). The remaining hymns appear to be directed to Mani once again, with incidental reference to the Light Mind and the Sun and Moon, before the ceremony moves on to the confession of sins. The deities invoked at this key annual ceremony in the Iranian Manichaean community, therefore, amounted to a fraction of the larger Manichaean pantheon.

Mary Boyce's *Catalogue* provides a convenient tool by which to enumerate the relative attention directed to different members of the Manichaean pantheon, since its valuable Register lists manuscript fragments containing hymns addressed to specific deities.<sup>85</sup> The predominating deities in this sampling include: Father of Greatness (16 mss.), Third Messenger (38 mss.), and Jesus (11 mss.). By comparison, Light Maiden,<sup>86</sup> Primal Man,<sup>87</sup> and Holy Spirit feature in three each,<sup>88</sup> while Column of Glory<sup>89</sup> and Living Spirit appear in one each.<sup>90</sup> Angels are invoked by name in eleven fragments.<sup>91</sup>

Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst has published hymns from certain of the sets listed in the Register of Boyce's *Catalogue*: those to the Third Messenger (Boyce Register #44), as well as Middle Persian and Parthian hymns written in couplets (Boyce Register #54 and 58), and "unclassified hymns" (Boyce Register #81).<sup>92</sup> Unsurprisingly, the Third Messenger prominently appears in the first set (as Narisah/Narisaf and as Mihr). Yet, even though this study specifically excluded hymns addressed to Jesus (Boyce Register #45), Jesus is invoked (as Jesus and as Messiah) thirty times in the hymns included in it. In comparison, Light Mind appears twelve times, the Five Lights six times, Column of Glory five times, Primal Man four times, Light Maiden three times, and Mother of Life twice.

The only other figure that may have multiple references in these Iranian hymns is Bam "Dawn," who appears explicitly only once, in a hymn to the Moon; after Jesus, Light Maiden, and Light Mind are invoked, the name Bamyazd stands alone without any verb, and is then followed by invocation of the Third Messenger (Narisaf) and Mani (line 3836). This god's other appearances are questionable, since the name "Dawn" may function either as an epithet (line 412) or attribute of the Third Messenger/Narisaf (lines 34, 248, 3636).

85 Boyce 1960.

86 M375, M676, M9100.

87 M41, M791a–b, M868.

88 M798b, M4590, M5650.

89 M4590.

90 M762.

91 4b, 13.1, 19, 20, 196.1, 197.1, 604, 727c, 1952, 5225, 6849.

92 Durkin-Meisterernst 2014.

Uygur texts, however, attest a definite a growth in significance for Bamyazd, as an Iranian development of the deity who in Mani's original Syriac bore the name Ban Rabba ("Great Builder"). The identification of Ban and Bam is indicated by their occupation of the same place in the hierarchy of the mythological pantheon in such texts as the *Twelve Sovereignities* litany,<sup>93</sup> and is confirmed by explicit identification in a small number of texts (e.g., "Dawn, who creates a new divine abode each day"). It has been presumed<sup>94</sup> that the similar sound of the Syriac word *ban* "builder" and Iranian *bam* "dawn" created a unique transfer of identity and attributes to this figure in the Iranian context, who otherwise is entirely a didactic character of the Manichaean myth. As this deity spread with Manichaeism into Central Asia, he became a significant object of devotion, as in the following Old Turkic hymn:

Sing of the god Bam (βāmβagīnuṣ pāš)  
 The God of Dawn (taṅ täṅri) has come!  
 The God of Dawn himself has come!  
 The God of Dawn has come!  
 The God of Dawn himself has come!

Get up, all you lords and brethren!  
 Let us praise the God of Dawn!  
 Sun God who sees, deign to protect us!  
 Moon God who is seen, deign to save us!

God of Dawn! Fragrant and aromatic,  
 Shining and radiant, God of Dawn! Ah! God of Dawn!  
 Ah! God of Dawn! Fragrant and aromatic,  
 Shining and radiant, God of Dawn! God of Dawn!<sup>95</sup>

This would seem to be a good case for a regional development in which a Manichaean deity benefited from identification with an entity previously venerated in the culture. But more exploration of the specifics of this case is needed.

Turning, then, to Old Turkic liturgical material produced by Uygur Manichaeans, recently edited by Larry Clark, we see a familiar pattern. Many

93 See Sogdian text M583 (W-L II 545f.) and Parthian text TIID60 (W-L II 549) for placement of the god Dawn in the second creation where the god Builder appears in other texts.

94 Since Schaeder 1924/25, 135.

95 III 200.I.R; Clark 2013: 194–196.

members of the full Manichaean didactic pantheon appear only in the *First Voice* and *Twelve Sovereignties* liturgies: Mother of Life, Beloved of Lights, Splendor Holder, Great King of Honor, Adamas, King of Glory, Porter, Call, Answer. A unique text, Or. 8212/133, develops the Twelve Sovereignties litany into a prayer for absolution.<sup>96</sup> Each deity is invoked from the list, and then asked to “release me from my sins on this praiseworthy small fast day,” i.e., the weekly Auditor fast. This development “activates” the gods of the full didactic pantheon in a devotional role. But it stands alone, and we find no other evidence of such devotional “activation” of the full didactic pantheon. Other deities feature, besides their place in such litanies, only in hymns reviewing cosmogonical or eschatological myths, including the Five Lights, Column of Glory, and Judge.<sup>97</sup> These hymns are not addressed to them, but mention them in narrative passages that are more didactic than devotional. Thus, even certain figures that have some prominence in other regional corpora fall into relative obscurity in the Turkic material, whether due to regional devotional preferences or the accident of preservation.

The principal deities who receive direct prayer or praise are the Father of Greatness (Azruwā),<sup>98</sup> Jesus (identified with the Moon),<sup>99</sup> Third Messenger (identified with the Sun),<sup>100</sup> Light Maiden,<sup>101</sup> Light Mind,<sup>102</sup> and Dawn.<sup>103</sup> Primal Man,<sup>104</sup> Living Spirit (identified with the pre-Manichaean Sogdian god Wišparkar),<sup>105</sup> and a god called “Powerful” (whose identity is debated)<sup>106</sup> also appear, but much less prominently.

Finally, we can compare the twenty-five hymns of the Chinese *Hymnscroll*, a collection of Auditor texts dating to the 8th century, which in some cases have captions identifying the liturgical occasion of their performance. These include the familiar *First Voice* and *Twelve Sovereignties* litanies (hymns 7, 8, and 9), along with a distinct litany to the full pantheon (hymn 4). Hymns directed to individual deities address the Father of Greatness (“Lord of Light,” hymn 11

96 Clark 2013: 273–280.

97 It is possible that either the Five Lights or the Column of Glory hides behind the designation “Powerful God,” who does receive hymnic praise in Turkic texts.

98 Clark 2013: 248–249, 251, 287–288, 295–296, 305–306, 314–315, 333–334.

99 Clark 2013: 192–193, 250, 339–347, 349.

100 Clark 2013: 196, 250, 332.

101 Clark 2013: 192–193, 197, 250.

102 Clark 2013: 192, 197, 248, 250, 291–2, 353–4.

103 Clark 2013: 196–198.

104 Clark 2013: 192–193.

105 Clark 2013: 289.

106 Clark 2013: 332, 358.

with incidental mention of the Light Mind, and hymn 16), Jesus (hymns 2 and 19, the latter including incidental references to Light Maiden, Light Mind, and Primal Man, i.e., the divine residents along with Jesus of the Moon), the Five Lights (hymn 12), the Sun (i.e., Third Messenger, hymn 17), Column of Glory (Lushena, hymn 18), and unnamed angels (hymn 10). Several hymns address Mani, with incidental mention of the Judge (hymn 3), Five Lights (hymn 14), angels (hymns 14 and 15), and the Father of Greatness (hymn 20). The sunset prayer addresses both Jesus and Mani (hymn 21); the Monday sunset penitence and prayer hymn invokes the Father of Greatness, "Twelve Kings of Light," Sun and Moon, "each of the three compassionate fathers," Column of Glory, Five Lights, Call and Answer (hymn 22). A funeral hymn addresses the Sun and Moon, and the Five Lights (hymn 24). Here again, the "active" pantheon of deities addressed in liturgical acts of devotion represents a small part of the full Manichaean pantheon.

## 5 Conclusions

We need to be cautious about drawing confident conclusions from each of these sets of material individually, due to their fragmentary state and possible unrepresentative preservation. We should always consider the possibility that the accident of survival has skewed the impression we get from Coptic, Iranian, Uyghur, or Chinese hymns and prayers. Yet, we have found remarkable consistency across these four bodies of literature. The odds are deeply against the possibility that all four have been coincidentally skewed in the same way by their respective accidents of preservation. We can be reasonably confident, therefore, that the consistent pattern among all four reveals something about Manichaean devotional life, and what portion of the pantheon had an active place in it. Most of the figures of the full Manichaean pantheon are relegated to a very minor place in devotional texts. For the most part, they appear only in litanies that list the deities without addressing them, in what appears to be didactic exercises. The lists relate closely to Manichaean myth and the latter's narrative progress through successive emanations or creations of God to combat evil. Indeed, these lists could be a kind of abbreviated mnemonic device for the myth itself, as the reciter visualizes each figure in its sequential and physical place in the mythic narrative.

When it comes to addressing deities, however, praising them and praying to them and dwelling at length on their attributes and gifts to humanity, such material invokes only a consistent small subset of the full Manichaean

pantheon. This devotional pantheon is a fraction of the full list of figures that feature in Manichaean didactic prose and poetry. This smaller core pantheon consists of:

Father of Greatness  
 Jesus (Moon)  
 Third Messenger (Sun)  
 Column of Glory (Milky Way)  
 Five Lights  
 Light Maiden  
 Light Mind

Why these gods in particular? The Father of Greatness needs no explanation, as the ultimate God of the Manichaean religion. Similarly Jesus, of course, gets singled out as the divine authority to which Mani himself devoted such attention, and as the head of the soteriological agents of the Manichaean system. The recurring prominence of the Third Messenger, Jesus, and the Column of Glory in our material seems to relate directly to their inter-related character as the Sun, Moon, and Milky Way, as celestial *qiblas*, as it were, of daily routines of prayer among the Manichaeans. The Five Lights are a focal point of Manichaean ritual activity, and naturally connect with the celestial bodies as the route they take in their liberation. With the exception of the Column of Glory/Perfect Man, these entities correspond with those expressly mentioned in the daily prayers as known to us from the Greek *Prayer of the Emanations* and an-Nadim's report. The other gods that gain attention in the regional liturgical compositions are closely associated with Jesus in the personal work of salvation of human beings, namely the Light Maiden and Light Mind.

As we have seen, some deities rise or fall in prominence depending on region. Primal Man appears as an object of devotion in some contexts, perhaps out of his association with the Moon, while the Column of Glory does not always appear in every region so strongly as it does overall. Of course, Mani appears ubiquitously as an engaged, addressed recipient of devotion, and in that sense belongs to the Manichaean devotional pantheon, regardless of his official place in the didactic pantheon as one of many messengers of light derived from the power of Light Mind.

These conclusions about a relatively small core devotional "meaningful god set" in Manichaean practice necessarily ramify into how we talk about the Manichaean pantheon. The full panoply of mythic characters no longer can be considered the whole story of how Manichaeans conceived of and related to the divine world. Mythological theology and practical theology serve

complementary functions in Manichaean life. One set of gods is learned and memorized, and another, smaller set is engaged with on a regular basis in acts of devotion. The mythic characters have importance as creating and maintaining forces of the cosmos. But Manichaean devotional practice focuses on those entities directly involved in the passage of the Manichaean soul out of this cosmos to liberation: in the inspired self-collection of the Five Lights within each person contributed by the Light Mind, in the immediate post-mortem encounter with Jesus and/or Light Maiden,<sup>107</sup> and hence through the Moon, Sun, and Milky Way, ultimately to reunion with the Father.

The comparative study of religions in general has been guilty of being held in thrall by the elite scholastic discourses of the traditions we study. We have much work to do in order to get a closer look at what the typical ordinary adherent of these religions thought about and did on a regular basis as expressions of their religious identity. I am under no illusion that the materials I have surveyed here are representative of “popular” religion, or tell us much about individual preferences among Manichaeans. These texts are products of institutional authority. Yet, they represent products tailored to routine practices of Manichaean laypeople, and help us differentiate those parts of Manichaean ideology relevant for them, from the many minutiae of scholastic concern. That scholastic discourse organized an elaborate system of inter-related divine entities according to their own sense of order, which was primarily one of the sequence of salvation history. This mythic theological structure obscures from us a separate and independent two-tiered ranking of divinities that applied in the practices of Manichaean Auditors, consisting of an upper tier of active deities with whom they regularly engaged, and a lower tier chorus of entities tied more to mythological narrative than to devotional life. Both systems, the scholastic didactic one and the lay devotional one, need to be taken into account when studying and elucidating the Manichaean pantheon.

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107 Texts make reference to encounters with one or both of these figures; how exactly they both factor into the post-mortem situation needs further elucidation.

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*Texts*, you will find it only once:<sup>4</sup> in the opening of the *Epistula Fundamenti*,<sup>5</sup> where Mani greets the recipient of the letter as follows: “Mani, apostle of Jesus Christ, through the providence of God the Father (*Manichaeus apostolus Iesu Christi providentia dei patris*).”<sup>6</sup> Mani’s invocation of *providentia dei patris* is an epistolary flair, but not without significance. As Kaatz observes, the Latin here alludes to 1 Peter 1:1–2 (Vulgate): *Petrus apostolus Iesus Christi ... secundum praescientiam Dei patris* (viz. πρόγνωσις θεοῦ).<sup>7</sup> Late ancient letters often invoked πρόνοια as part of their greeting formulas.<sup>8</sup> Yet Mani here goes further, alluding to 1 Peter 1:1–2 so as to better establish his apostolic credentials, much as he riffs on Paul in the opening of the *Living Gospel*: “I, Manichaeus, apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, the Father of Truth (ἀπόστολος διὰ θελήματος Θεοῦ Π(ατ)ρ(ὸ)ς τῆς ἀληθείας) ...”<sup>9</sup>

The situation ought to strike us as strange, since providence is an absolutely central concept not only to Greek philosophy, but to both the theological and everyday idioms of early Christian worldviews. Moreover, it is ubiquitous in our extant Gnostic sources,<sup>10</sup> upon some of which scholars have commonly assumed Mani to have been dependent. What one does find if one looks for providence in the *Dictionary of Manichaean Texts* is occasional use of other terms related to divine care and soteriological planning,<sup>11</sup> mostly found in the

4 To be sure, vol. 1 of the *Dictionary of Manichaean Texts* is not exhaustive; a dictionary with comprehensive references for all the terms found in Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Coptic would encompass many volumes. On the challenges faced by the *Dictionary*’s editors and the limits of the volume, see Lieu 2001. Nonetheless, the *Dictionary* remains a terrific lexicographical resource, and the near-absence of lemmata in it regarding the specific idiom of providence is not without significance.

5 On the *Epistula Fundamenti*, see Kaatz 2003; Lieu in Fox, Sheldon, and Lieu 2010: 150.

6 *Epist. Fund.* frg. 1 (text Fox, Sheldon, and Lieu 2010: 6; tr. Hendry, rev. Lieu, Llewelyn and Vermes, given in Gardner and Lieu 2004: 168). Further references to *providentia* do not appear in the remaining extant fragments of the *Epistula Fundamenti*.

7 Kaatz 2003: 196.

8 On greeting formulas invoking God’s πρόνοια in Greek letters of late antiquity, see Kraabel 1996: 80 (followed with additional references by Burns 2020b: 5 n. 20).

9 CMC 66.4–6, text Koenen and Römer 1998: 44, tr. Gardner and Lieu 2004: 156, slightly modified. Cf. 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1; Kaatz 2003: 196. On this passage from the CMC and further evidence of Mani’s use of the title “apostle of Jesus Christ,” see Baker-Brian 2011: 38, 51, 77–78, 91–92; Gulácsi 2017: 251–54; van Oort 2020: 26–29; Gardner 2020: 19, 34.

10 For discussions of providence in ancient Gnostic sources with attendant secondary literature, see Denzey Lewis 2013: 85–102, 127–144, 165–80; Burns 2020b: 153–88.

11 Cf. Pettipiece 2009: 51: “Unlike the monotheistic theological traditions of Late Antiquity that attempted to arrive at a philosophical solution to the problem of evil by attributing it either to human free-will or divine providence, Manichaeans offered a radically different

*Kephalaia* ('Chapters') of the Teacher (P.Berol. 15996), a scholastic compendium of Manichaean teaching preserved amongst the fourth–fifth century Coptic manuscripts discovered in the vicinity of Medinet Madi in 1929.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the present contribution offers a brief survey of this language, so as to better identify and assess the metaphors employed to discuss divine care and action in Coptic Manichaean literature. It will conclude with brief reflection and a hypothesis regarding the absence of the specific idiom of providence from these sources.

## 2 Surgical Dispensations according to 'Mani' and His Critics

The most obvious venue for divine administration of the Manichaean cosmos is the cosmos itself, which is like a great washing machine that winnows the particles of divine light out from dark matter.<sup>13</sup> The well-known Greek term οἰκονομία ('economy, dispensation, plan') was often used by ancient philosophers, heathen and Christian alike, to denote God's administration or salvific plan,<sup>14</sup> and Manichaean texts are no exception. A Greek papyrus fragment from Kellis, TK 1, refers to the salvific "mystery" which has come into being thanks to "thy dispensation" (τὸ γεγονός σου μυστήριον τῆς οἰκονομίας

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response in the form of cosmic dualism and attempted to visualize evil by means of vivid mythological images and metaphor."

12 A work called '*Kephalaia*' is mentioned in a Manichaean text that is probably quite early, the *Sermon on the Great War* (Hom 18.6), which may indicate that a version of the text today preserved in Coptic already existed at the end of the third century CE (Gardner 1995: xix; similarly Baker-Brian 2011: 69). However, Gardner has more recently emphasized that the *Kephalaia* is probably better considered "an evolving body" that accrued material over the course of the fourth and fifth centuries (Gardner 2020: 111; similarly, Pettipiece 2009: 7–13). The Medinet Madi manuscripts have been dated to the end of the fourth or beginning of the fifth century on linguistic, codicological, and palaeographical grounds, a dating that is supported by recent radiocarbon analysis (BeDuhn and Hodgins 2016). On the Medinet Madi manuscripts in general and their discovery, see Robinson 2011.

13 BeDuhn 2000: 76 (regarding the fine witness of an-Nadim in Dodge 1970, 782); BeDuhn 2020: 193. On this point more generally, see BeDuhn 2000: 72–82.

14 A comprehensive study of οἰκονομία in ancient philosophy and theology is unknown to me, but for an introductory discussion focusing on biblical literature and its background in Hellenic and Jewish environments, see Reumann 1967: 150–53; further, Burns 2020b: 60, 179, 126–27, 257, on Chrysippus, apud Plut. *Stoic. Rep.* 1051c; the Valentinians apud Ir. *Haer.* 1.7.4; Clem. Al. *Strom.* 6.15.123.1–2, 7.9.52.1–2; Orig. *Princ.* 3.1.14.

τίπος ...).<sup>15</sup> The word is loaned into Coptic and used variously in the *Kephalaia of the Teacher*, notably in Kephalaion 42, *Concerning the Three Vessels*.<sup>16</sup> Here, ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑ describes the cleansing mechanism of the cosmos – specifically, a scene where the Living Spirit removes dark elements (“the three vessels”) from the archons bound in heaven and then sweeps them away to the side of the planet, releasing particles of light to be reabsorbed into God. Mani says that “the use of the matter (ΖΩΒ), and the management (ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑ) of these vessels that were swept out and poured from above to [earth], have brought good and use [of the] twelve great deeds”.<sup>17</sup>

Notably, ‘Mani’ explains the ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑ by way of an analogy to medicine:

They (i.e., the three vessels of dark elements) are, thus, like the case of a man who has fallen into a purulent sickness, with other pains and diseases in his body, and bile and other poisons inhabiting his inner parts. At an opportune moment, he takes time for a wise doctor, who has him drink a remedy that causes [him] to vomit up the purulent sickness, and has him drink another medicine, next, that causes his sickness to discharge below ... Through the skill of [a] wise [doctor], with his pleasing, consuming cures that [remove] all infection [in] this manner and dissolve all witchcraft, the doctors shall [...] they cure through the aroma of the medicines ...<sup>18</sup>

Mani’s reputation as a doctor suffices to explain this choice of analogy, and indeed, Manichaean literature is replete with medical metaphors, primarily used to illustrate soteriological themes and practices such as asceticism and

15 Gardner and Worp 1997: 146 recalls Acts John 10:6: “therefore, stand fast in him, remembering him in all that you do, understanding the mystery of the salvific plan that has been accomplished for humankind (τὸ γεγονὸς εἰς ἀνθρώπους τῆς οἰκονομίας μυστήριον) (and) why the Lord carried it out” (text Bonnet 1959: 204.3–6; tr. Schäferdiek in Schneemelcher 2003: 2:201, modified).

16 The loan of οἰκονομία into Coptic literature is itself unremarkable. The word appears with a sense according with typical Christian theological usage (see above, n. 14) across a wide spectrum of Coptic texts, whether apocryphal (Acts Paul 12:2, text Schmidt 1965, 43–44; Pseudo-Evodius of Rome, *Homily on the Passion and the Resurrection* §70, text Chapman 1993: 99), Gnostic (*Tri. Trac.* NHC I 91.10–17, text Thomassen and Painchaud 1989: 146), or monastic (Shenoute of Atripe, *I am Amazed*, text Cristea 2011: 167). Another important attestation of ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑ in *IKē* is found in §69 169.18–19, discussed below.

17 *IKē* 42, 109.1–4, tr. Gardner 1995: 114.

18 *IKē* 42 text Polotsky and Böhlig 1940, 107.1–12, tr. Gardner 1995: 112, modified.

mission.<sup>19</sup> Yet the referent of the medical analogy in Kephalaion 42 is rather different: theodicy.<sup>20</sup> Analogies to medicine were common stock for thinkers explaining the coexistence of a benevolent God and worldly misfortune. The basic argument – that worldly pain or suffering may indicate that a caring ‘doctor’ is at work – is old, going back to Plato,<sup>21</sup> and appears in many variants in later philosophers and theologians.<sup>22</sup>

Interestingly, forms of this argument are used by two fourth-century critics of Manichaeism, near-contemporaries who sought to reconcile apparent worldly suffering with divine beneficence. One is the aforementioned Titus of Bostra, in his work *Against the Manichaeans*. In a passage explaining the role that natural disasters play in the divine plan, Titus argues that cosmic calamities and harmful pests are not signs of an evil principle at work in the work; rather, “it is God who dispenses such things” (θεός ... οἰκονομεῖ τὰ τοιαῦτα), since He wishes to shake human beings out of laziness and preoccupation with their own desires.<sup>23</sup> Just as a loving father must be forceful with a child,<sup>24</sup> so must a doctor be with the patient:

And the doctor who cuts and cauterizes the gangrene from wounds is not cruel either. Rather, following the reasoning of his art, to a certain extent does he increase the patient’s suffering of harsh cures – out of mercy! For while the patient would die from the wounds unless he were healed in

19 On the evidence pertaining to Mani’s reputation (concluding that he was a sort of *medicus*, dealing with an integrative sense of physical and spiritual health), see Coyle 2010: 116–20. On medical metaphors in Manichaean literature, see BeDuhn 1992 (focusing on asceticism) and the follow-up of Coyle 2010 (a more general assessment). On the themes of illness and health in Manichaean literature and letters, see Baker-Brian 2016.

20 The context of theodicy seems to be missed in Coyle’s discussion of *Ke* 42 (Coyle 2010: 103); cf. for instance Gardner’s synopsis of the chapter (1995, 111): “the Living Spirit discharges down to earth the dark elements ... and then ‘sweeps’ them out ... Since this process must result in some contamination on earth, Mani is at pains to explain that it has been done in the best possible manner.”

21 Plat. *Gorg.* 478a–480d, 521d–522a; *Leg.* 902d–903d.

22 Within the Platonic tradition, see Philo, *Praem.* 33–34 (cf. idem, *Prov.* 2.60); Calc. *Comm. Tim.* 270; Olympiodorus, *Commentary on Plato’s ‘Gorgias’* 19.3. Christian writers utilizing versions of the theme include Ter. *Marc.* 2.16.1; Clem. Alex. *Paed.* 1.8.64.4, 1.8.74.2; Orig. *Philoc.* 27.5; idem, *Princ.* 3.1.13. For discussion, see Bergjan 2002: 160; Gibbons 2017: 687.

23 Tit. Bost. *Man.* 2.24.1–40, esp. 34–40 (text Roman, et al. 2015: 155, tr. mine, with reference to that of Roman, et al. 2015: 221): “Consequently, it is God who dispenses such things (i.e., natural disasters, etc.) by chastising humankind (νοθετῶν θεός ἀνθρώπους οἰκονομεῖ τὰ τοιαῦτα); not out of some feeling of wrath, but out of a striving for the care (κηδεμονίας ... μεταποιούμενος) and the conversion of those who are in need. For it would not belong to the height of love of humankind, strictly speaking, to paint over human passions as what is for the best, and to allow them to increase without blame.”

24 Tit. Bost. *Man.* 2.24.40–48.

this way, he shall on the contrary be saved when cutting and cauterizing are applied, if needed.<sup>25</sup>

For Titus, God's inclusion of disasters and pests in the cosmic scheme is part of His 'therapy' for human souls, an argument popular among the Roman Stoa.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, Titus's near-contemporary Ephrem Syrus offers a similar argument in his work *Against Mani*,<sup>27</sup> in a passage defending the apparent coexistence of 'bad' and 'good' things among the works of the single God: "Thus, just as when the physician does not do bad things at the time when he does something 'bad' – especially if they are concerned with the remedies accomplished by pain and medicines – so, when he does something 'bad,' that 'bad' thing is good, whenever all the cures are begotten by it."<sup>28</sup>

Strikingly, Manichaeans and their critics both employed the argument that pain and suffering may be the sign of a good 'doctor' rather than of divine negligence, in the service of opposing views regarding the origin and character of the cosmos – and, indeed, regarding the entire salvific history put in motion by the divine οἰκονομία. However, while Titus, Ephrem, and the author(s) of Kephalaion 42 each refer the same medical metaphor, their applications of it reveal differences in nuance that are indicative of their very different understandings of the universe and God's dispensation: Titus's phrasing takes on a Stoic valence, viewing God as using worldly disturbances as part of His οἰκονομία to provide human beings a chance to recover from their passions; Ephrem is more concerned in *Against Mani* with defending the singularity of divine causes against the mixture of conflicting causes and subsequent purifications taught, he alleges, by Mani; and finally, the author(s) of Kephalaion 42 takes the Living Spirit to be running the ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑ by creating the cosmos in the first place, prior to the existence of humankind altogether.

25 Tit. Bost. *Man.* 2.24.48–54 (text Roman, et al. 2013, 155, tr. mine, with reference to that of Roman, et al. 2015: 221). See also Pedersen 2004: 27. The Francophone translators recall here (Roman, et al. 2015: 213) *1Ke* 85, 210.6–19, a use of the 'doctor at work'-analogy with a rather different context, namely the catechumens' supplying the elect with alms.

26 For arguments that natural disasters and pests are actually beneficial for human beings, see e.g. Cic. *Nat. d.* 2.161; Philo, *Prov.* 2.56–61; Marc. Aur. 6.36; for further references and discussion, see Burns 2020b: 35.

27 *Against Mani* is among the more poorly preserved of the prose works of Ephrem found in the palimpsest BL Add. 14574 and 14623 and valiantly edited and translated by Charles Mitchell over a century ago. Consequently, Mitchell's translation of *Against Mani* is obscure and does not permit much more engagement than that attempted here. On this manuscript (and other textual artifacts at the British Library that are important for the study of Manichaeism), see Sims-Williams 2013; on the importance and difficulties of BL Add. 14574 and 14623, see Possekel 1997: 10.

28 Text and tr. in Mitchell 1912: 2:201.2–15, 2:xcv, respectively, modified.

### 3 'The Will of the Father' and the 'Will of the Majesty'

Another key term associated with providence is 'will.' Passages about *pronoia* in philosophical literature often tell us that God exercises his providence by His will, to enact His will, etc.<sup>29</sup> The theme is particularly pronounced in early Christian literature.<sup>30</sup> In the Berlin *Kephalaia*, meanwhile, there is a great deal of language about divine will intervening in salvation-history, usually through various salvific agents. The most obvious example is the incarnation, ministry, and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, in the *Kephalaia* referred to as 'Jesus the Splendor.' Thus for instance Kephalaion 1, *On the Advent of the Apostle*: "His apostles have also preached regarding him that he adopted a form of a servant, an appearance resembling that of humans. He descended. He appeared in the world in the sect of the Jews. He chose his twelve [and] his seventy-two. He did the will of his Father (ⲁϥⲣ̅ ⲟⲕ ⲛⲉⲛⲧ ⲙⲡⲉϥⲓⲱⲧ), who had sent him to the world".<sup>31</sup>

An even more common locution for God's interventions in salvation-history via his agents are acts of the "will of the Majesty" (or "Greatness," Coptic ⲧⲙⲛⲧⲛⲁⲟ). In Kephalaion 17, *On the Three Seasons*, we read that "[The First] Man spent human lifetimes and [generations in the Land] of Darkness, until he prevailed [...] he completed the will of the Majesty (ⲁϥⲭⲱⲕ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ ⲙⲡⲱⲕ ⲛⲉⲛⲧ ⲛⲧⲙⲛⲧⲛⲁⲟ), which was [commanded] of him."<sup>32</sup> The Ambassador is said to complete the will of the Majesty; the same is true of one of his powers, the Virgin of Light.<sup>33</sup> If it seems as though the 'will of the Majesty' is responsible for each of the great interventions that mark turns in the Manichaean ages of the world, that is because it is so, as related in Kephalaion 5 (*On Four Hunters of Light and Four of Darkness*), which states that "there are four hunters who were sent from [the light] to fulfill the will of the Majesty (ⲟⲕ ⲛⲉⲛⲧ ⲛⲧⲙⲛⲧⲛⲁⲟ)."<sup>34</sup> These 'four hunters' are agents of the Kingdom of Light: the First Man, the Third Ambassador, Jesus the Splendor, and the Great Counsel. Another chapter denotes the so-called 'rich ones,' who appear to be the Living

29 Chrysippus, apud Calc. *Comm. Tim.* 144; Apul. *Plat.* 1.12.1–11; Atticus, frag. 4; Alc. *Epit.* 10.4; Plut. [*Fat.*] 573b; *Corp. Herm.* 4.1; cf. also Plat. *Tim.* 30a.

30 For discussion, see Armstrong 1992: 49; Smith 2013 (focusing on Irenaeus and the Valentinians); cf. also Schrenk 1932–1979: 55–60, 62 (on divine will in the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers) and Burns 2020b: 270–93 (on increased focus on divine will in Platonist philosophy of the third century and beyond).

31 *1Ke* 1, text Polotsky and Böhlig 1940: 12.24–27, tr. Gardner 1995: 18, modified. See also *1Ke* 37.22.

32 *1Ke* 17, text Polotsky and Böhlig 1940: 55.32–56.2, tr. Gardner, 1995, 60, modified. See also *1Ke* 85.3.

33 *1Ke* 115, 274.12–13.

34 *1Ke* 5, text Polotsky and Böhlig 1940: 28.5–6, tr. Gardner 1995, 32.

Spirit's subordinates during the Age of Creation, as ones who do the will of the Majesty.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, the establishment of the 'three rocks' that hold the creation together is said to have taken place by the will of the Majesty.<sup>36</sup> Even the elect do the will of the Majesty.<sup>37</sup>

Both of these phrases – 'will of the Father' and 'will of the Majesty' – recall some of the Coptic phrasing extant in our Gnostic sources from Nag Hammadi. A primary motif in the Valentinian *Gospel of Truth* and *Tripartite Tractate* from Nag Hammadi Codex I is the 'will of the Father,' executed by the Father Himself; His Son; and His earthly followers.<sup>38</sup> Other Nag Hammadi texts emphasize the 'will of the Father' at work in the creation of Adam. The *Nature of the Rulers* from Codex II, for instance, relates:

The Immortality (ΤῆΝΤΑΥΤΑΚΟ) gazed below, into the regions of the waters. Its image appeared in the waters, and the authorities of darkness fell in love with it. Yet they were unable to comprehend that image, which had appeared to them in the waters, on account of their weakness, for the animate beings would never be able to comprehend the spiritual; for they are from below, while it is from above. For this reason, the Immortality gazed below into the regions: so that, by the will of the Father (ϣῆ πογωϣ ἡπειωτ'), it should join the universe with the light. The archons held council, saying, "come, let us create a human being, being (made out of) dust from the earth." They fashioned [their creature], a being that is entirely made out of earth.<sup>39</sup>

35 *IKe* 51, 126.16.

36 *Ibid.*, 155.29.

37 "They (i.e., the elect) [are] gods, for they stand firm in the image of the gods. The divinity that is planted in them came to them from the heights and dwelt in them. They have done the will of the majesty (αὐγερε ἡποκ ἡεητ ἡτημητας)" (*IKe* 88, text Polotsky and Böhlig 1940: 219.34–220.3, tr. Gardner 1995: 227, slightly modified).

38 The will of the Father (primarily, to be known by His own): *Gos. Truth* NHC I 22.27–35, 27.34–28.4, 33.33–35, 35.30–33, and above all 37.15–37; *Tri. Trac.* NHC I 52.14–20, 55.27–36, 66.20–21, 71.35–72.9, 75.30–31. For parallels in other Valentinian sources, see Attridge and MacRae 1985: 66; Attridge and Pagels 1985: 234. The Son or Word doing the Father's will (primarily, to make the Father known to His own): *Gos. Truth* NHC I 23.33–24.3, 30.34–37 (cf. John 4:34, 5:30, 6:38–40 – so Attridge and MacRae 1985: 87), 37.4–12 (on which, Attridge and MacRae 1985, 113–15); *Tri. Trac.* NHC I (differentiating Word and Son, but both carrying out the Father's will to make Him known) 76.13–77.3, 77.11–20, 86.34–37. Exhortations to do the 'will of the Father' in the present life (which goes hand-in-hand with having knowledge of the Him): *Gos. Truth* NHC I 33.32 (cf. further 22.9–13), discussed by Attridge and MacRae 1985: 98 (recalling Matt 7:21, 12:50, 21:31; Rom 12:2).

39 *Nat. Rul.* NHC II 87.11–27, text Layton 1989, 236, tr. mine, italics mine. For similar usage of the phrase 'will of the Father' in *Nat. Rul.*, see NHC II 88.10–11, 88.34–39.1, 96.11–12.

Another treatise from Codex II, *On the Origin of the World*, offers a similar account, claiming that when the creation of Adam took place, “all this came to pass through the Providence of Pistis (κατὰ τὴν πρνοία πιστις), so that humanity might appear in his likeness, and come to condemn them through their modeled form.”<sup>40</sup> We will return to the question of the providential character of the creation of Adam in the following section, but for the time being it suffices to observe that use of the metaphor of the ‘will’ of God (or “the Father”) to denote divine care is not unique to the *Kephalaia of the Teacher*. Indeed, later Coptic epitaphs of Nubia also often refer to the ‘providence of the Father’ interchangeably with the ‘will of the Father.’<sup>41</sup> For many early Christians and particularly authors of Coptic texts, “the will of the Father” appears to have been coterminous with God’s providence.

The case may be somewhat different with the ‘will of the Majesty’ (as opposed to the ‘will of the Father’), a more distinctive expression. The *Paraphrase of Shem* from Nag Hammadi Codex VII repeats *ad nauseum* that the cosmogonic events it describes transpire “by the will of the Majesty” (πογῶν ἡπμεγεθος).<sup>42</sup> The Greek loanword μεγεθος, used in the *Paraphrase of Shem* interchangeably with ἡππνοος, appears to render the same notion and may simply be the same *terminus technicus* as the ἡππνλας of the Medinet Madi documents.<sup>43</sup> This semantic and theological overlap of πογῶν ἡπμεγεθος in the *Paraphrase of Shem* and πωκ ἡζητ ἡπειωτ, or πωκ ἡζητ ἡτῡἡππνλας in the Medinet Madi texts should be reckoned as one of several possible Manichaean influences on the *Paraphrase*, or perhaps the Nag Hammadi text’s indebtedness to a source also known to Mani or his early followers.<sup>44</sup>

40 *Orig. World* NHC II 113.5–9, text Painchaud 1995: 182, tr. mine.

41 Van der Vliet 2011: 215–20. On this complex of evidence, see Burns 2017: 41–44.

42 πογῶν ἡπμεγεθος: NHC VII 4.15, 6.30–31, 8.15–16, 9.3–4, 11.7, 13.33–34, 18.2, 29.20–21. πογῶν ἡτῡἡππνοος: 10.16, 12.15–16. Cf. also 2.29 (“will of the great light”), 21.21 (“will of the Spirit”), 25.4–6 (“will of the light of the Spirit”).

43 For this observation I am indebted to René Falkenberg (unpublished section of a conference paper read at the Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting [Nag Hammadi and Gnosticism program unit], San Antonio, November 2016). For ἡππνοος rendering μέγεθος, see Crum 1962: 250a.

44 Notably, designation of God as a “Majesty” (μέγεθος) is absent from the *Paraphrase of Seth* known to the author of the third-century *Refutation of All Heresies* (Ref. 5.19 [the myth, which has many other parallels with *Par. Shem* NHC VII.1], 5.22 [the title *Paraphrase of Seth*]). Other significant parallels between *Par. Shem* NHC VII.1 and Manichaean literature include the cosmogonic schema featuring the mixture of light and darkness, and a corresponding salvific schema focused on liberating light from aforementioned mixture (the central theme of NHC VII 1–18; cf. Ref. 5.19.2–10, 5.21); reference to some kind of ‘seduction of the archons’ and concomitant sexualized themes in creation (NHC VII 18.27–24.15; cf. Ref. 5.19.19–21; see further Burns 2016); the polemic against water baptism (NHC VII

## 4 (Un-)providential Anthropogonies

In any case, the Father's 'Will' or 'Providence' in *The Nature of the Rulers* and *On the Origin of the World* intervenes primarily in the creation of humanity via the appearance of the divine form in the sky, inspiring the archons to mold the Protoplast, Adam. A version of this scene also plays in the *Apocryphon of John* (albeit without use of the language of divine will):

And a voice came forth from the exalted aeonic heaven: "Man exists, and the Son of Man." And the first archon, Yaldabaoth, heard it, thinking that the voice had come from his mother. And he did not know from where it had come. And He, the holy and perfect Mother-Father – He, the perfect providence (ΤΕΠΡΟΝΟΙΑ ΕΤΧΗΚ'), He, the image of the Invisible One, (the image of) the Father of the universe, in whom the universe came into being – He, the First Man, taught them; for he revealed his likeness in masculine form ... And when all the authorities and the first archon looked, they saw the lower part (of the abyss) illuminated; and thanks to the light, they beheld in the water the form of the image. And he (Yaldabaoth) said to (the) authorities before him, "come; let us make man after the image of God, and after our own likeness, so that his image might become a light for us".<sup>45</sup>

While the archons have made human beings to serve their own nefarious ends, God then intervenes on behalf of humanity on multiple times throughout salvation-history via feminine divine agents (ΠΡΟΝΟΙΑ or ΕΠΙΝΟΙΑ), among whose works is the bestowal upon Adam of a kind of rational faculty that enables escape for him – and by extension, the elect – from the clutches of his archontic overseers.<sup>46</sup>

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30.21–27, 31.12–22, 40.23–31, on which see now Reaves 2019, 65–71; not paralleled in *Ref.*); and mention of the collapse of matter into a "lump" (ΒΟΛΟΣ) at the eschaton (NHC VII 45.14–20, not paralleled in *Ref.*; on these latter two features viz. Manichaeism, see van den Broek 2013: 122; with further secondary literature, Burns 2015: 101–2).

45 *Ap. John* NHC II 14.13–15.5, text Waldstein and Wisse 1995: 85, 87, tr. mine. The heavenly being here appears following Wisdom's prayer for redemption, an act whose heavenly reply is called providential in the short recension of the text (BG 8502 47.6–7; NHC III 21.10–11; see further Burns 2017: 36).

46 For ΕΠΙΝΟΙΑ entering Adam and becoming available to him on the Tree of Knowledge, see *Ap. John* NHC II 20.5–28, 21.14–16, 22.3–5 (short recension: BG 8502 52.11–54.4, 55.15–18, 57.8–12). For the figures of ΠΡΟΝΟΙΑ and ΕΠΙΝΟΙΑ and their interventions in *Ap. John* and related texts, see Barc and Painchaud 1999; Meyer 2013; Burns 2017.

Many scholars have suggested that Mani seems to have known some version of this narrative, which is why an account of it is related in so many of our accounts of Manichaean mythology.<sup>47</sup> The interventions of the feminine divine agents (Sophia, et al.) in Gnostic literature even appear, at first glance, to be echoed by work of Jesus the Splendor, who in the *Kephalaia of the Teacher* carries out the ‘will of the Majesty.’<sup>48</sup> In [*On the Five*] *Majesties who [Went Forth] Against the Darkness* (iKe 16), we are told of the Jesus of Splendor that “he annihilated them, binding and crushing them! In the way that fire burns and destroys trees, so also did he carry out his will (εταφειρε ἡπικρωκ ἡζητ) in the zone among the many powers, until he reached the mold of flesh (πλασμα νταρπζ) belonging to Adam and Eve, the first humans, [and carried out] his will in Eve. [...] He] also [gave] hope to Adam, and the [good] news [...]”<sup>49</sup> Jason BeDuhn, however, has recently argued that any resemblance between the anthropogonies found in our earliest evidence about Mani and Gnostic sources owes to a common heritage in Jewish literature (particularly exegetical wrestling over Gen 1:26–27 and 5:1–4, as well as the Book of the Watchers), rather than Mani’s ostensible dependence on Gnostic myth in particular.<sup>50</sup> However, if we leave aside the question of what Mani himself taught and instead focus on what the *Kephalaia of the Teacher* relates concerning the providential character of the anthropogony, we find a compelling and effective *comparandum* for the Nag Hammadi evidence, with which it is

47 The influence of Gnostic sources in Mesopotamia at the inception of Manichaeism is key in classic studies such as Lieu 1992: 59–69, and Reeves 1996: 77–78, 106 n. 130, 209–10 (on “Syro-Mesopotamian Gnosis”), and often asserted with minimal documentation (e.g., Schipper 2001: 202–3). On this question (deciding firmly in the negative), see now BeDuhn 2020: 188–92; similarly ambivalent is Baker-Brian 2011: 7–15.

48 Similarly Reeves 1996: 99 n. 76; cf. also *ibid.*, 100 n. 81.

49 iKe 16, text Polotsky and Böhlig 1940: 54.1–7, tr. Gardner 1995: 58, modified. See also 56.25 and 59.27, from the same Kephalaion.

50 BeDuhn 2020: 200–206, 212–16. On the reception of Jewish apocalyptic literature in Manichaeism and Gnosticism, instrumental remains the pioneering work of Reeves 1992, 1996; for the development and reception of traditions related to giants and fallen angels in Manichaeism, see the studies collected in Goff, Stuckenbruck, and Morano 2016. I share BeDuhn’s assessment that Manichaean and Sethian Gnostic literature enjoy a common heritage in Jewish apocalypticism, but am less skeptical about the possibility that Sethian Gnostic literature may have circulated or even originated among Syrian or Mesopotamian baptismal groups (a hypothesis rejected by BeDuhn 2020: 214, but suggested in Burns 2014: 143–44, 155–57, as an alternative to the history of Sethian Gnosticism devised by John D. Turner [e.g., “Sethian Gnosticism”]; cf. also Lieu 1992 [focusing on positing the presence of Valentinian and Thomasine literary traditions in third-century Syria and Mesopotamia]; Dilley 2015: 105–7, 132 [on the possible interface of Sethian and Zoroastrian traditions]).

more or less contemporary.<sup>51</sup> Specifically, *Kephalaion 55* (*On the Fashioning of Adam*) deals with a hermeneutical problem in its account of anthropogony – namely, its providential character, or lack thereof – that is central to the myths of Adam’s creation related in the *Nature of the Rulers*, *On the Origin of the World*, and the *Apocryphon of John*.

*Kephalaion 55* opens with a disciple asking Mani about an account of the anthropogony that he has heard from an unidentified source:

[There are some among us] who tell us: “We [...] that God has consented to [this (human) form] of flesh that was formed [...]” Then, after that he says: “[The Ambassador] revealed his image in the [world. The] archons and the powers of the world looked [at his image], and shaped their forms according to its likeness – [namely], Adam and Eve. [Pay attention] and see that God consents to its happening (ΠΝΟ[Υ]ΤΕ ΗΚ [ΝΞ]ΗΤ ΑΤΕΥΩΠΕ); for this reason did he reveal his image to the archons. They established [...] If he had not consented to humanity (ΕΝΕΥΗΚ ΝΞΗΤ ΕΝ ΠΕ ΑΤΗΝΤΡΩΜΕ), he would not have revealed his image, nor would they have formed human beings according to its likeness!”<sup>52</sup>

The verb in the phrase ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΗΚ ΝΞΗΤ (here rendered “God consents”) is the qualitative of ΩΚ ΝΞΗΤ, “to will” – the word identified as a common locution for providential action in the *Kephalaia of the Teacher*. In substance, the unidentified interlocutor of Mani’s disciple maintains a perspective that one could take away from the anthropogonies of *Apocryphon of John* and related Gnostic texts: God willed the creation of Adam, and therefore (the unidentified interlocutor infers, beyond *Apocryphon of John*) the creation of the human body enjoys a divine mandate. Yet ‘Mani’ is wary of such a reading:

Consider the Ambassador, at the time when he came to reveal his image. It was not the case that he came in order to reveal his image to the archons in the world; rather, he came and appeared to the world, [on account of] his soul and his son, who [...], so that he should revive him [...] and that should] carry out his release, and to free (the soul) from every bond and all the chains in which it is entangled and bound.<sup>53</sup>

51 BeDuhn largely omits discussion of *1Ke* in his article on the grounds that the Coptic Manichaica significantly postdate our oldest evidence for reconstructing the views of Mani himself, rather than later systematisers of his ideas (for exceptions that play marginal roles in his argument, see BeDuhn 2020: 194 n. 15, 207 n. 56). On dating the Nag Hammadi Codices to the fourth or fifth centuries CE, see now Lundhaug 2021.

52 *1Ke* 55, Polotsky and Böhlig 1940: 133.8–20, tr. Gardner 1995: 141, modified.

53 *1Ke* 55, 133.21–29, tr. Gardner 1995: 142, modified.

Rather, when ‘Mani’ describes how the Archons saw the Third Ambassador and were inspired to create by its beauty, he stresses that the creation of Adam and Eve was not the plan. On the contrary:

Now, it is also so with the Third Ambassador, at the time when he came [and] revealed [his] image with a show directed towards all the powers. [It was] not [the case that he came] so that all the archons and the authorities would render a form [in accordance with] his likeness. [Rather], it was on account of his son being crucified in the universe that he came; [so that] he would release him, free him, and rescue him from tribulation. Yet, when the archons looked [at] him, [they] lusted for his image. They fashioned in accordance with his [likeness] Adam and Eve, without the consent of the Majesty (ΧΩΡΙΣ ΠΩΚ ΝΖΗΤ ΝΤΗΝ[Τ]ΝΑΘ).<sup>54</sup>

It is instructive here to recall what the *Apocryphon of John* remarks about the initial act on the part of Wisdom that leads to the appearance of Yaltabaoth and, thus, the creation of the world:

She (i.e., Wisdom) desired to manifest a likeness out of herself, without [the will] of the Spirit – He did not consent (ΔΧΜ̃ [ΠΟΥΩ]Ω ὙΠΕΙΝ(ΕΥΜ)Δ̃ ὙΠΕΥΡ̃ΕΥΔΟΚΕΙ) – and without her consort, and without his consideration. So, despite the person of her maleness not having consented, and without her having found her partner, she fell deep into thought – without the will of the Spirit (ΧΩΡΙΣ ΠΟΥΩΩ ὙΠΕΙΝΔ̃), and the knowledge of her partner – and she brought something forth.<sup>55</sup>

In the *Apocryphon*, as in the Gnostic texts discussed in the previous section, Yaltabaoth has been created by mistake – “without the consent” of the Father,<sup>56</sup> and this leads to his robbery of Wisdom’s creative power and his construction of the present evil cosmos. Providence responds to the appearance of the evil

54 *IKe* 55, text Polotsky and Böhlig 1940: 135.14–24, tr. Gardner 1995: 143, modified. On this passage, cf. BeDuhn 2000: 92, emphasizing the mixed, dual nature of the protoplasts in the account of the *IKe* (also with reference to Kephalaion 57 and 64).

55 *Ap. John* NHC II 9.28–35, text Waldstein and Wisse 1995: 59, 61, tr. mine. The Spirit also withholds consent from Wisdom’s action in the short recension of the text (BG 8502 36.30–37.11; NHC III 14.13–15.2).

56 Cf. *Pistis Sophia*, where the ‘fall of Sophia’ “took place through the ordinance of the first ordinance” (ΔΟΘΩΠΕ ΘΕ ΜΝΝΣΑ ΝΑΪ ΕΒΟΛ ΖΥΤΥ ΠΤΩΩ ὙΠΩΡΩΠ̃ ΝΤΩΩ; text Schmidt, *Pistis Sophia*, 45.6–13; tr. mine). If *Pistis Sophia* does know *Ap. John* (as convincingly argued by Evans 2015: 57 n. 37, 173–76, 181, 185, 237–41), it also appears to ‘correct’ it, here.

demiurge, his archons, and their creation of the world (non-providential, without the consent/will of the Spirit) by inspiring the creation of Adam (providential, by the consent/will of the Spirit). Kephalaion 55 offers a reverse picture, almost seeming to correct the Gnostic myth: no, the creation of terrestrial humanity was not in accordance with divine will, despite the fact that the creation of the world and the appearance of the Third Ambassador were part of God's plan to free the First Man.<sup>57</sup> Even Philo, who follows Plato in assigning the creation of human soul and body to lesser beings so as to insulate God from responsibility for the evils inherent in human souls and bodies (*Timaeus* 42d–43b), does not argue that the anthropogony (or cosmogony, for that matter) took place without God's consent.<sup>58</sup>

The diverging perspectives of *Apocryphon of John* and Kephalaion 55 about the issue of whether the creation of Adam's body was a providential event may owe to the two texts' differing perspectives on the status of the 'body' and 'humanity' at the time of creation. In *On the Origin of the World* and the *Apocryphon of John*, the body of Adam created by the archons is 'animate' – i.e., made out of "soul" (ΨΥΧΗ), not out of matter (ΖΥΓΗ). Only later in these narratives does Adam's body get thrown in matter.<sup>59</sup> In a sense, matter is not really

57 Paul Dilley has independently reached a similar conclusion in his own comparison of Gnostic and Manichaean anthropogonies, in his article "The Manichaean Story of Adam and Eve: Violent Demonic Sexuality between Gnostic and Zoroastrian Traditions," forthcoming in *Gnosis* (2023).

58 Cf. BeDuhn 2020: 201–2, arguing (with reference *Fug.* 68–70; *Conf.* 181) that Philo considers God's underlings at work in the creation of human beings to be evil [cf. the evil angels of Gen 6:1–4 and the *Book of the Watchers*], given the evil things human beings do: "Although usually not read this way, Philo has already made the 'negative turn' typically associated with Gnostic and Manichaean anthropogony" (BeDuhn 2020: 202). Yet, while Philo is not clear about who these angelic subordinates are, he never says that they are bad. While he does refer to God's fellow creators mentioned in Gen 1:26–27 as angels in *Conf.* 181, the other terms he employs for these characters are of a neutral or positive tone (ὕπηκοοι, "obeying subjects" [*Opif.* 75]; συνεργοί, "helpers" [*Fug.* 68]; δυνάμεις, "powers" [*Fug.* 69–70]; ἕτεροι δημιουργοί, "other creators" [*Fug.* 70]; ἕτεροι, "others" [*Mut.* 31]); nor does Philo ever refer to these "others" as malevolent, rebellious, or disobedient. Rather than evil angels (to say nothing of archons or abortions), they recall the 'young gods' of the *Timaeus*, who obediently set out to create the human body after the Demiurge declares that he ought to be exempt from blame for any evil wrought by humanity (*Tim.* 42d–43a). The principle at work in *Fug.* 68–70 and Philo's other exegeses of Gen 1:26–27, then, appears to be that it is an imperfect disposition on the part of the creator(s) – not an evil disposition, in contrast to Gnostic and Manichaean literature – that allows for evil to result from the creation of humanity. For discussion of these passages from Philo and additional secondary literature, see Burns 2020b: 82–83.

59 For the trapping of Adam in matter, see *Ap. John* NHC II 20.32–21.14 (for the scene in the short recension, see BG 8502 54.9–55.15; NHC III 26.3–27.1); *Orig. World* NHC II 123.35–124.1

part of the true human ‘self’ in these texts. To be sure, the *Kephalaia of the Teacher* shares with *Apocryphon of John* and related Gnostic myths a tale of a primordial human being (the “First Man”). However, for the terrestrial human race that begins with Adam and Eve, matter has been part of human life from its very origins.<sup>60</sup> The “archons” who build Adam and Eve are “abortions,” the sons of Matter.<sup>61</sup> For the author(s) of this *Kephalaion*, the creation of material human bodies could not possibly be a providential event: it is a ‘counterattack’ that attempts to halt the liberation of light by the Living Spirit by putting divine light into material containers. It is in response to this counterattack that the Jesus of Splendor comes to take care of Adam and Eve – or rather, of the light inside of them – much as Epinoia-Pronoia-Sophia does for the primal Adam in Gnostic myths. Thus begins the history of terrestrial humankind, culminating in the arrival of Mani, the latest agent of the will of the Majesty.<sup>62</sup>

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(a remark made only in passing). On the ‘animate, soul-ish’ (ΨΥΧΙΚΟΣ) body of Adam prior to his entrapment in matter in *Ap. John*, useful remains van den Broek 1981.

60 *1Ke* 73, 180.15–19.

61 For abortions as the spawn of Matter (ΖΥΛΗ) produced in response to the appearance of the Third Ambassador, see *1Ke* 48, 122.24–31 (for further references, see van Lindt 1992: 201). For abortions as the creators of Adam, see *Kephalaion* 33, text Polotsky and Böhlig 1940: 93.1–3, tr. Gardner 1995: 97, slightly modified: “And a conspiracy happened in his (i.e., the Great King of Honor’s) camp – the occasion when the abortions fell down to earth and formed Adam and Eve. They begat them in order to rule the world through them.” See further *Kephalaion* 38, 93.29–31; *1Ke* 64, 157.32–158.23; BeDuhn 2020: 194. For Adam and Eve’s kinship with ΖΥΛΗ, see *1Ke* 73, 179.6–8. The creation of Adam and Eve by Matter is also maintained in a Middle Persian text (M7984, M7982, on which see Reeves 1996: 104–5, n. 120; tr. *ibid.*, 81–83; discussed in BeDuhn 2020: 197–98); not so in the account of Theodore bar Konai, where they are begotten by Saklas and Nebro’el (in Jackson 1965: 249; Reeves 1996: 79) while in the *Acta Archelai* (11–12), it is simply “archons” who create the protoplasts (cit. and discussion van Lindt 1992: 220; BeDuhn 2020: 198–99). With regards to the argument being made here, the varying details regarding the specific creators of Adam and Eve do not matter (no pun intended): as BeDuhn states, “The agents of evil construct Adam and Eve from a mixture of good and evil elements. Their intention is that the evil portion of human nature will dominate the good portion, and thus retain the latter in captivity and slavery. Yet the form of human bodies itself reflects a divine model, which the forces of evil are compelled to copy. This dual heritage of the body provides the potential for each individual to awaken his or her divine identity and take control away from the dominance of evil” (BeDuhn 2000: 89; for extensive survey of these themes in Manichaean sources, see *ibid.*, 89–117).

62 For Jesus the Splendor’s intervention on the part of Adam, see Theodore bar Konai (tr. Jackson 1965: 249–54); *1Ke* 38, 93.31–94.11, and esp. 96.13–97.6; for further references and discussion, see Lieu, *Manichaeism*, 21–22; BeDuhn 2000: 73, 89. On the figure of Jesus the Splendor in the Medinet Madi texts, see van Lindt 1992: 133–49.

## 5 The Rhetoric of Cosmic Enslavement and Manichaean Astrology

The rhetoric of escape from cosmic enslavement to fate – ἀνάγκη or εἰμαρμένη – is common to writers of the late ancient Mediterranean world.<sup>63</sup> One eludes Fate by various means: for Lucius in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, it is Isis alone who can free one from the tribulations engineered by *fortuna*;<sup>64</sup> for many early Christians, it is baptism that releases the constraints of ἀνάγκη.<sup>65</sup> And so, for the author of the *Psalms of Heracleides*, freedom is granted by Jesus's Manichaean ministry: "I sing to thee, Christ. Thanks to thy grace, I have been freed from the grievous fetters of the [...] flesh. Now I rejoice. I sing to thee, Christ ... [This world] is filled with error. I have quit it. [I] have [escaped from the] domain of Fortune (ἀ[ΙΡ ΒΑΛ ΔΙΓΓ]ΩΩ ΝΤΕΤΤΥΧΗ) ..." <sup>66</sup> We find a similar declaration, referring specifically to freedom from the cycle of reincarnation, in one of the texts written on a board at Kellis.<sup>67</sup>

The most sustained and theorized discussions of cosmic enslavement to fate and liberation from it in extant Manichaean literature are found in the *Kephalaia of the Teacher*, in the context of questions about astrology.<sup>68</sup> In chapter 69, a key question is reconciling an optimistic view of the cosmos – and particularly the notion of the sun and moon as deities – with condemnation of the zodiac and practices associated with it as the work of evil beings.<sup>69</sup> The chapter begins with the disciple's question:

63 See especially Denzey Lewis 2013.

64 Apul. *Metam.* 11.5, 11.12, 11.15, 11.21.

65 See e.g., Just. Mart. 1 *Apol.* 61; Tat. *Or. Graec.* 9.2; further, Denzey Lewis 2013: 145–63.

66 *PsBk II*, text and tr. Allberry 1938: 106.28–107.6, modified.

67 ΤΚ 22, a text written on a wooden board from Kellis, employs the classic Christian motif of liberation from Fate: "He himself (i.e., Christ) has also become for living souls the redeemer from the oppression of the inimical bond of fate (ἐκ τῆς ἀνάγκης τῶν πολεμίων δεσμῶν)" (52–55, text and tr. Jenkins 1995: 251, 256, respectively). This liberation is liberation from reincarnation: "I worship and glorify all the just, those who have escaped from all evil ... in order that all these whom I have worshipped and glorified and invoked may assist me and bless me with favour and may deliver me from all bonds and all stress and oppression and every reincarnation (ἀπὸ πάντων δεσμῶν) καὶ πάσης ἀνάγκης καὶ βασάνου καὶ πάσης μετενσωματώσεως), and may provide me access to the great aeon of light" (95–113, text and tr., Jenkins 1995: 252–253, 257).

68 For survey of Manichaean teaching about astrology, see Lieu 1992: 177–79, and esp. von Stuckrad 2000: 696–708, 726–66; for additional bibliography, see Schipper 2001: 202 n. 15. On the *Kephalaia of the Teacher* – particularly Kephalaia 69 and 70 – as the most important evidence of Manichaean reflection on astrology, see von Stuckrad 2000: 727, 743; cf. also Stegemann 1938: 214–15.

69 The deification of the sun and moon alongside literal demonization of the five planets and the twelve zodiacal signs appears, in the context of late ancient astrological schemata, to be a Manichaean innovation (Schipper 2001: 203; von Stuckrad 2000: 730–42;

We implore you, our lord, to explain to us and teach us about the twelve signs of the zodiac that are set in the sphere: how are they established, and to what place are they reckoned with respect to their nature? And moreover, from where do the five stars that turn in them come? And why did the creator establish them as authorities and guides? – He is the great builder, who ordained the entire creation; he has bound them and fixed them in the sphere.<sup>70</sup>

As Iain Gardner notes, the author of this Kephalaion shares the struggle of all writers committed to optimism about the cosmos as a whole, on the one hand, as well as the rhetoric of astral enslavement, on the other: if the world and the deity who made it (i.e., the Living Spirit) are good, but the stars that control the world are evil, why and how did the demiurge decide to install malevolent beings to carry out the work of the celestial bodies in the cosmic administration?<sup>71</sup> Kephalaion 69 answers that the archons do everything according to their own will, but only under celestial compulsion. The twelve signs of the Zodiac are powers of darkness that have been affixed to the heavens to rotate, and are assigned to the five planets, who are malevolent, unlike the sun and moon, who are agents of light.<sup>72</sup> This admittedly awkward arrangement of malevolent celestial bodies alongside benevolent ones exists, the text says, “due to the necessity of divine economy” (ἐτβε ταναρκη ἡτοικονομια).<sup>73</sup> Nils Arne Pedersen denotes this paradigm ‘anti-fatalism.’<sup>74</sup>

Anti-fatalism it is, but we can be a bit more precise. A very interesting passage regarding cosmic fatalism is to be found in Kephalaion 36:

[Then, the Apostle] spoke about the wheel that is before [the King of Honor who dwells in] the seventh [firmament ...] the root of the archons above and below in a great and cruel fetter, for the entire will of the great King of Honor is established in [it]... There are twelve seals in it. The seal [is] between each [firmament] and the rulers inside of it [...] are in it; for should one of them wish to escape, he will be bound [...] if he should wish to cheat in his bond [...] will be] apparent and known by [that] wheel

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Pettipiece 2009: 62–68). On *1Ke* 69, see Stegemann 1938, followed by Lieu 1992: 177–78; for criticisms of Stegemann’s reading (the details of which have no bearing on the present investigation), see von Stuckrad 2000: 754–55.

70 *1Ke* 69, 167.2–9, tr. Gardner 1995: 176–77, slightly modified.

71 Gardner 1995: 176.

72 *1Ke* 69, 167.11–169.18.

73 *1Ke* 69, 169.13–22.

74 Pedersen 2004: 173–74 n. 35.

[...] the spheres and stars and the leader of all the powers exist there. He is known by it, [before] the King of Honor.<sup>75</sup>

The (great) King of Honor is a benevolent figure in Manichaean mythology, who resides in the seventh firmament and is judge of demons, particularly the Watchers.<sup>76</sup> In this Kephalaion, he sits opposite a wheel with twelve “seals” in it, watching it and the rulers and archons, who, “should they should wish to escape, are recognized and revealed on that wheel, [for] the wheel is like a great mirror, since [the] discernment of all things [...] is in it.”<sup>77</sup> This wheel is fascinating, because it serves as a kind of  $\alpha\lambda\alpha\gamma\kappa\eta$  for the masters of  $\alpha\lambda\alpha\gamma\kappa\eta$ /*fortuna* for the archontic ‘soldiers of fortune’ – it enslaves the would-be enslavers.

While these Kephalaia presuppose the scenario familiar from many Christian, Gnostic, and Hermetic texts of a fatalistic cosmos from which liberation is possible for human beings given proper action in concert with divine agents,<sup>78</sup> they also subordinate the fatalistic cosmos to a layer of control from the Kingdom of Light. The subjugation of the enslaving forces of fate to regulation by the divine world – a kind of mitigation of fatalism, distinct from salvific events such as the arrival of a revelator or the innovation of rituals like baptism – is close to the view of fatalism sketched out in Hellenistic Jewish parabiblical literature, as well as the Syriac philosophical dialogue the *Book of the Laws of the Countries*.<sup>79</sup> In some Jewish sapiential and apocalyptic texts, astral bodies, like all the workings of nature, are meant to obey the rules that God has laid out for their regular operation, but sometimes rebel against and even transgress these rules.<sup>80</sup> In the *Book of the Laws of the Countries*, the character Bardaisan

75 *IKe* 36, 87.33–88.13, tr. Gardner 1995: 92, significantly modified.

76 For a brief discussion of this figure with index of references to his appearances in Coptic and Syriac sources, see van Lindt 1992: 97–99.

77 *IKe* 36, 88.28–89.33, tr. Gardner 1995: 92, significantly modified.

78 Cf. also von Stuckrad 2000: 761: “die manichäische Argumentation verläuft hier ganz parallel zur gnostischen: Die Planeten und Zodiakalzeichen als böse Archonten repräsentieren die Heimarmene ... Jene, die die Planetenkräfte zu deuten verstehen, werden ausdrücklich gesegnet, erheben sie sich doch kraft ihrer *gnōsis* über die Abhängigkeiten des Schicksals und werden der Sphäre ihrer Lichtheimat erneut teilhaftig.”

79 While it is uncertain that the *Book of the Laws of the Countries* was written by the second-century CE philosopher Bardaisan himself, the work appears to offer at least an approximation of his views and to have a *terminus ante quem* of the late third century CE. A useful account of the issue is Camplani 2003: 46. For further discussion and secondary literature, see Possekel 2012: 521–22; 2018: 82; Burns 2020b: 232 n. 49.

80 For some kind of autonomy on the part of the celestial bodies, see Gen 1:17 and Isa 45:12, per Possekel 2012: 524; 2018: 101–2. For nature and the stars behaving well, see 1 En. 2–3,

appears to offer a philosophically-attenuated version of this lore by granting the stars and planets a degree of causal efficacy in human affairs, but adding that this efficacy is mandated by God, who has given the astral powers very little free will.<sup>81</sup> The terminology is different in the *Kephalaia*, but the scheme is very similar: the stars have their own will, desires, and power, yes, but their activity is subject to regular control by the divine. It is precisely this concession of Bardaisan to the astrologers – regarding the (limited, but real) influence of the stars on the human body and the concomitant (limited, but real) efficacy of astrological practice – which was unacceptable to later Christian theologians, such as Diodore of Tarsus.<sup>82</sup> The *Kephalaia of the Teacher*, it seems, agrees with the *Book of the Laws of the Countries* that the stars do have a hand in worldly affairs, but, fortunately, the divine has a hand in stellar matters as well – here, thanks to the watchful eye of the “great King of Honor.”

## 6 Conclusions

πρόνοια and its various Latin, Coptic, and Syriac cognates almost never appear in Manichaean primary sources. This does not mean that Manichaeans denied divine care for the world. In fact, the Manichaean cosmos was built to free light from dark matter, and it is occasionally described in the *Kephalaia* as engaging in ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑ, divine ‘economy’ or ‘administration’ of salvation. The bad faith of heresiographers in arguing that Manichaeans regarded the creation itself as evil or had incoherent notions of the causality of good and evil is evident in the appearance of virtually the same argument justifying the experience of cosmic evil in both a Manichaean text (*Kephalaion* 42) as well as anti-Manichaean texts (by Titus of Bostra and Ephrem the Syrian). The *Kephalaia* often describe divine administration as the ‘will of the Father’ or the ‘will of the Majesty,’ which appear to be more or less synonymous and are carried out by the various agents of God in Manichaean-salvation history. The phrase ‘will of the Majesty’ to describe providential interventions on both the cosmogonic and salvation-historical levels also finds a close parallel in the Nag Hammadi *Paraphrase of Shem*, perhaps indicating Manichaean influence on the latter.

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5:2–3; Sir 43; 1 Clem. 20; T. Naph. 3; Pss. Sol. 18:10–12. For the stars misbehaving, see 1 En. 80–82, esp. 80:6–8 (the errant stars lead mortals to mistake them for gods).

81 Text Drijvers 1965 (the free will of the celestial bodies), 32.11–19 (the astral bodies’ limited effect on souls undergoing descent into bodies; namely, the horoscope). On these passages and Bardaisan’s teaching on astrology and fate more generally, see Dihle 1979; Possekel 2012: 526–30; Burns 2020b: 235–39.

82 Possekel 2018: 91–92.

In any case, in the *Kephalaia* this same divine will comes to the aid of Adam and Eve in the form of Jesus the Splendor, but only after their creation takes place without divine consent – a strong contrast to the Gnostic anthropogonies that emphasize the very inspiration of the creation of the primordial human couple to have been a providential affair, in contrast to the making of the evil cosmos, which came about without divine approbation. Even if BeDuhn is correct that there is not sufficient evidence to warrant the postulation of Mani's knowledge of specifically Gnostic myth, it appears that the Coptic *Kephalaion* 55 responds to a view of the creation of Adam that is distinct to the *Apocryphon of John* and similar Gnostic myths. Finally, Manichaean literature in general employs the rhetoric of liberation from cosmic enslavement common to religious literature of the period, but the *Kephalaia* reins in the degree of astral influence in a manner ultimately commensurate with the thought of the *Book of the Laws of the Countries*. By devising the mythologoumenon of the '(Great) King of Honor' and his mirror to exercise some control over the planetary rulers, the *Kephalaia* is able to offer a perspective similar to that of the Bardaisanite work: the stars exercise some influence over the body – the 'cosmic enslavement' from which Mani offers release – but at the same time, they themselves are subject to divine rule, since they are part of the cosmos created by the Living Spirit.

There is a lot of divine care here, but the word *ἡγεμονία* is never used. I can offer only a very speculative guess as to why. In the first centuries CE, language about providence generally appears in two rhetorical contexts: Greek philosophy, and Roman politics.<sup>83</sup> The distance of the metaphors used for divine care found in our Manichaean primary sources extant in Greek, Latin, Coptic, and Syriac from the metaphors concerning divine care preferred by Greek and Roman philosophers and propagandists may indicate the distance of Mani and his earliest followers from these Greek philosophical and Roman political contexts. Mani and his immediate disciples used their own metaphors, perhaps determined in part by the Prophet of Light's first language, Aramaic, whose theological vocabulary remained relatively distant from that of the Greeks in the third century.<sup>84</sup> We may see traces of that even in our Coptic Manichaean sources, despite the fact that they are decades (if not centuries) removed from

83 See Burns 2020b: 54–55.

84 The only extant Aramaic literature I am aware of that, by Mani's age had participated in the tradition of Greek philosophy is that belonging to the second-century CE Edessan philosopher Bardaisan and his circle. However, Bardaisan and his followers appear to have been more the 'exception that proves the rule' that Aramaic literature in the second and third centuries was, as a whole, removed from that of the Greeks (see esp. Healey 2011: 119–20). Extensive translation and transmission of Greek philosophical literature

Mani. Their use of the loanwords ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑ and ΤΥΧΗ – words much more common in Coptic than ΠΡΟΝΟΙΑ – are evidence not of any particular theological or Hellenizing orientation on the part of the author(s) and/or redactor(s) of the *Kephalaia*, but on the natural character of their Coptic. The fact that the translators of our Coptic Manichaica did not find the language of providence compelling fits with an assessment of these texts as insider, scholastic literature.

One wonders if a work of Manichaean teaching written for outsiders in the Roman Empire would, then, prefer to use an idiom for divine care that was widespread and immediately recognizable among Romans. Indeed, the way that Alexander of Lycopolis and Titus of Bostra – writing in the early- and mid-fourth century CE, respectively – critique Manichaean notions about providence indicates that they had encountered Manichaean missionaries who attempted to render their thought in terms of Greek philosophy.<sup>85</sup> Conversely, an ancient reader of the Latin *Fundamental Epistle* may then have found the opening phrase “through the providence of God the Father” to be most providential indeed – a claim not only to possess apostolic authority (via the allusion to 1 Peter), but also to offer divine care as specifically phrased in the dominant philosophical and political idiom of the Roman Empire.

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into Syriac appears to have begun well after Mani’s day, in the fifth century CE (Takahashi 2014: 31–32).

85 Van Lindt 1992: 227; Baker-Brian 2011: 97; van Oort 2020: 276; Burns 2020a: 145. On philosophizing proselytizers in the early Manichaean mission, see further Pedersen 2004: 74–75, 81.

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# Mani's Ascendancy: Revelatory Events and the Emergence of a New Religious Movement in Antiquity

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The study of new religious movements or NRMs, because they are literally religions in the making, can provide rich insights into the sociological processes that religions undergo as they emerge and develop organizationally, interact with culture, and authorize and naturalize themselves.<sup>1</sup> New religious movements may represent the merger of previous groups, schisms from older groups, or new organizations.<sup>2</sup> While it is true that we can study early developments of historical religions, such as Manichaeism, we are often left with more questions than we are able to answer because our textual evidence is fragmentary at best and direct observation is not an option.

Manichaean religious identity, for instance, remains an open question. Scholars have argued various positions, which reflect three basic options; the oldest found in the heresiological literature being that Manichaeism is a dangerous corruption of Christianity and Mani a heretic.<sup>3</sup> In modernity, Mani has most often been portrayed as a Persian syncretist, the creator of a new syncretic religion that stitched together elements from Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Buddhism as they were practiced during his time.<sup>4</sup> But this thesis came under scrutiny more recently, challenging us to consider Mani as a reformer of Christianity.<sup>5</sup> Related to Manichaean religious identity is the question of religion more generally, whether we see with Mani the emergence of a concept of religion that we have not seen previously, particularly as a set of doctrines, practices, and institutions that transcend nations and ethnicities.<sup>6</sup>

1 For an introduction to the study of new religious movements see Lewis 2004; Dawson 2006; Gallagher and Ashcraft 2006; Bainbridge 2007; Lewis and Tøllefsen 2016; Hammer and Rothstein 2012.

2 Melton 2009: xvi.

3 Cf. Epiph., *Pan.* 66.88.3; Aug., *C. Adimant.* 11; Aug., *C. Faust.* 20.5; *Vita Porph.* 85.

4 Colpe 1993; Tardieu 2008.

5 King 2005: 222–24; Baker-Brian 2011.

6 BeDuhn 2014.

Manichaeen religious identity remains a contested question largely because our approach to the problem has been limited to historical and literary-critical solutions, which are dependent on philological, teleological, and genealogical assumptions, and this makes us think in terms of origins, dependences, and intentions. What if we were to shift this conversation by reflecting upon the religious identity of Mani's movement by placing what we know about the emergence of Manichaeism from its textual footprint into conversation with scholarship on how new religious movements often emerge out of disillusionment with familial or childhood religion and use new revelation to establish religious reforms.

## 1 The Problem of Revelation

James Lewis was the first to present a powerful case that it is essential to study the role of religious experiences in the context of new religious movements.<sup>7</sup> This observation has resulted in a number of more expansive studies including an article on the developmental moments in the emergence of new religions by sociologist David Bromley. Bromley foregrounds the emergence of a new religious identity in an initial "moment" of revelation or set of "subjectively compelling experiences." Alternatively, he says, these moments may be described as eureka moments, that is sudden flashes of cognitive insights.<sup>8</sup> Bromley observes that the initial revelations of founders of new religious movements often include extraordinary, paranormal, or anomalous occurrences – visions, dreams, healings, ecstasies, contact with the dead, and precognition – such as the channeler J. Z. Knight who claimed that Ramtha, a 35,000 year-old warrior suddenly appeared to her in her kitchen as a purple pillar of light; or Raël, who met a representative of Elohim while hiking among some inactive volcanos.<sup>9</sup> For Joseph Smith, it was the angel Moroni, who appeared at his bedside, his countenance like lightening.<sup>10</sup> Religion scholar Olav Hammer has pointed also to the centrality of "exceptional experiences" to the founding and legitimation of new religions.<sup>11</sup> With reference to the work of Etzel Cardeña, Steven Jay Lynn, and Stanley Krippner on varieties of anomalous experience, Hammer adds dramatic experiences like hallucinations, lucid dreaming, alien abductions,

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7 Lewis 2003.

8 Bromley 2016: 100–103.

9 Bromley 2016: 102.

10 Taves 2016: 17.

11 Hammer 2016: 361–362.

and past-life experiences to the list of experiences that could be viewed as religious by founders of new religious movements.<sup>12</sup>

These revelatory experiences, Bromley argues, are moments of discontinuity, when future religious leaders experience a break with their past and a vision of a new reality, understanding something that was incomprehensible to them previously.<sup>13</sup> Their insights are perceived to be received by the leaders rather than cognitively generated by them. They typically report these experiences as the beginning of their religious careers.

In *Religious Experience Reconsidered*, religion scholar Ann Taves problematizes religious experience by showcasing how we might separate a special human experience from its religious explanation. In other words, she says, religious experience is culturally constructed in the sense that special human experiences have to be “deemed religious” in order for them to be religious experiences.<sup>14</sup> In order to talk about the connections she sees between religious experience and the emergence of new religious movements like Mormonism, Taves further problematizes revelatory experiences as “revelatory events.” She defines revelatory events as meaningful individual experiences, with the cognitive processes that determine how people come to believe that something has been revealed to them by a suprahuman source.<sup>15</sup> Part of Taves’ agenda is to develop a model to understand supernatural experiences naturally, as the result of special mental abilities (like benign schizotypy and cognitive dissociation) and the employment of cognitive manipulative practices (like extreme body stillness or repetitive exercises).

There are ample contemporary case studies that demonstrate a connection between extraordinary experiences and the emergence of new religious movements, and Mani surely fits this model. But we should not get hung up on the moment of revelation itself. The experience itself – whatever “it” was – is marginal when it comes to the actual emergence of new religious movements. What matters to the emergence of a new religious identity is the construction of meaning about the experience and its social narration, a point that Bromley and Hammer both recognize but do not heavily theorize.

Taves, however, pushes more in this theoretical direction, asserting that knowledge of this sort is constructed by communities of people. Building on the work of Rodney Stark, who argued that small intimate groups play critical roles in the religious interpretation of unusual experiences, Taves maintains

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12 Hammer 2016: 364; Cardena, Lynn and Krippner 2014.

13 Bromley 2016: 102.

14 Taves 2009.

15 Taves 2016: 1–3.

that the meaning-making process involved in revelatory events relies on group dynamics. She says that the group has to develop ways for the community to believe that the supernatural entity is guiding them and unfolding a new spiritual path. They establish a means of communicating with the entity and develop criteria for identifying “authentic communications.”<sup>16</sup> Then, in a circular logic, this supernatural guidance provides and legitimates the developing official account of the group’s origins, “bootstrapping” something new into existence.<sup>17</sup> In this way, the group reconfigures the visions of their leader as someone who is a conduit of a suprahuman presence. Once this occurs, the group is able to emerge around the instruction of the suprahuman presence and call upon themselves and others to reorient their lives around this teaching. The key to successful new religious movements lies in their ability to transform problems that were initially very personal and limited to the visionary into “paths that offered spiritual solutions to more generalized problems.”<sup>18</sup> Taves outlines several interactive processes that move the visionary and the group in the direction of creating a successful narrative about the divine guidance of their movement, from their initial experiences and emergent visions, to stabilizations of the visions, the incorporation of outsiders, and going public with the message.

## 2 The Operationalization of Revelation

We can build on Taves’ theory by focusing on how the experiences of future religious leaders are operationalized in order to interrogate and protest familiar religious identities, and to innovate and construct new replacement identities. The creation of a new religious identity rarely if ever is a momentary occurrence. Rather it happens through a series of identity iterations that occur over time and in relationship to social and historical circumstances and events. The emergence of a new religious identity typically involves a number of social dynamics including religious disillusionment and dislocation, seeker activities, disclosure of new revelation (first in close council and then publicly), public reaction, and collaborative message building. These should not be thought of as linear or sequential, but as a cluster of social dynamics that correlate to the emergence of new religious identities.

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16 Taves 2016: 230, with reference to Stark 1999.

17 Taves 2016: 7.

18 Taves 2016: 224.

Mormonism is a case in point, with numerous excellent studies on its emergence.<sup>19</sup> Central to the creation of Mormon identity are Joseph Smith's revelations. The first occurs in 1820 when Smith is fifteen. At the time, Smith was extremely disillusioned by the many competing Protestant denominations in upper state New York. His mother and father were unhappy with the competing denominations as well. His mother appears to have been a bible-thumper, but without a church home. After Smith sought forgiveness for his sins during a revival, he could not figure out which Protestant denomination he should choose to attend. Overwhelmed by his religious dislocation, he went into the woods to pray about the decision.

In Smith's 1839 retro-narration of the event, he said that the Father and his son Jesus appeared to him in a pillar of light. He was instructed that he should not join any of the churches because every church was wrong. Three years later, Smith reports a second vision in his bedroom of an angel named Moroni, whose countenance was like lightening. The angel revealed to Smith that a lost religious book was buried near his home. The book was written on gold plates and told a history of the ancient inhabitants of the New World and their lost connection to the gospel. He was forbidden to recover the plates until 1827. When he does so, he enlists family and very close friends to assist him in the translation and interpretative process.

Within three years, Smith, his immediate family, and three close friends locate Smith's revelation within a triumphant Christian protest narrative. They disclose their new revelation publicly when they publish the translation of the plates (which they call the *Book of Mormon*). A few weeks later (April 6, 1830) they found The Church of Christ for the purpose of converting the Lamanites (by which they mean the Native Americans) and restoring to Christ all Gentiles (by which they mean all the Protestant denominations). Smith is twenty-four. They publish the *Book of Mormon* and found their church because they see the Protestant denominations as failures, as corruptions of the gospel of Christ. Smith retrofits his visions to this purpose. According to them, their new Church of Christ is the restoration of Jesus' original church as it was established in the days of the apostles. Because of this, it was necessary, they said, for all current Christians to be rebaptized and join their church if they wanted be saved in these final days.

In the founding of their church, Smith, his family, and close friends promote the theory that Smith's new revelation supersedes normative Christianity. In so doing, they create a replacement identity as a Christian reform movement whose purpose it is to revive the original message of Jesus. Embroidered

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19 Cf. Bushman 1984; Gallagher 2014: 19–40; Taves 2016: 17–81.

in controversy, they decide to relocate to Kirtland, Ohio, with the intention of preaching to Native Americans and founding New Jerusalem on the western frontier. With this move, their identity shifts to accentuate their missionary intentions as eschatological warriors. So, in 1834, they renamed themselves The Church of the *Latter-Day Saints*. A few years later, they create another iteration, this time emphasizing more strongly their *Christian* identity. In 1838, they became The Church of *Jesus Christ* of Latter-Day Saints.

The creation of the Mormon identity was the result of a dialectic of protest and innovation that took place within the historical circumstance of Protestant revivalism and fantasies about the American frontier. It took some doing to settle on a “first” narrative and it took even more doing to stabilize their identity as a new religious movement. While Mormonism was born as a Christian protest movement, most Protestants at the time considered the Mormon identity distinct from the Christian identity because the Protestant denominations did not allow for new revelation and new scriptures. They rejected Smith’s claims as fraudulent. It may be that Smith reinserted the reference to *Christ* into the name of his church to combat this rejection of his movement among the denominations. But this name change did not convince other denominations which saw Smith’s movement as drastically different from their own.

Over the years, Mormons have had to negotiate this ambiguous identity.<sup>20</sup> While they consider themselves to have received a unique new revelation independent of Protestant denominations, they also consider their church the restoration of original Christianity, the only faithful replica of the religion founded by Jesus and his apostles. At once, they wish to be credited with having given to the world a new religion, but only if it is realized that it is the restoration of an old religion. It is only by denying the movement’s novelty that they can make a bid to be normative. This suggests that we must be careful with claims that emergent religions make to be Christian or some other established religious identity. These claims may tell us more about the politics of novelty and status than they do about actual identity. Like Mormonism, Manichaeism identity is a product of Christian disillusionment, which may be one of the reasons that both Mormon and Manichaean identities present themselves as new revelations that re-establish an original version of Christianity.

### 3 Disillusionment and Dislocation

In order to understand Manichaean identity, we are required to read the reports of Mani’s visions contextually and relationally, as a dialectic of protest

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20 Duffy 2014.

and innovation involving his received religious identity – Elchasaism – and the religious landscape across which his movement later migrated. It requires us to map how the dislocation and fluctuation of Mani's personal religious identity was stabilized in the reports of his visions which became repositories for a new collective identity. The shifting narration of this new identity involved both differentiation from others (who they are not) and sameness of others (who they are). The formation of Manichaean identity was a process of identity contestation and relocation that involved social negotiation and feedback about Mani's visions, and their configuration as public narratives.

What sets the stage for the emergence of new religious movements generally and Manichaeism in particular? Sociological studies point out the important role that disillusion, disenchantment, and dissatisfaction play. The founders and their collaborators typically experience social or religious dislocation. This dislocation is often correlated with personal or historical trauma, crisis, or conflict, such as Joseph Smith's existential crisis about the state of Christian denominationalism in the Burned-Over District. Bromley observes that future new religious leaders often are struggling with personally significant issues when they experience revelations that link their ongoing personal struggles with transcendent knowledge.<sup>21</sup> This is experienced by the future leaders as the opening up of a new reality in which they can now operate. Their revelations become social once they are communicated, almost always to family and close trusted friends first, who also begin operating within the reality of this new knowledge. It is the initial revelation that establishes for this small group of people the basis of protest. It forges a unique connection with the transcendent, and launches what Bromley calls a "prototype" movement.

In the case of young Mani, we are fortunate to have the Cologne Mani Codex (hereafter: CMC) which his disciples wrote after his death as a hagiography. The book contains references to Mani's words and long passages of first-person narration, suggesting that Mani's autobiographical memory was leveraged by his disciples in the retelling of his story as their religious leader. We learn from the CMC that Mani lived among the Elchasaites from age four and left by age twenty-five.<sup>22</sup> Elchasaitic Christianity remained tied to the Jewish life and commandments in the strictest sense. While they viewed Jesus as the last of a series of messiahs descended from Adam, they resisted Paul's break from the world of Jewish observance. As a young boy, Mani followed the Law of the Elchasaites, keeping Sabbath and observing their interpretation of the Jewish

21 Bromley 2016: 101–3.

22 CMC: the English translation follows that in Gardner and Lieu 2004 (see the concordance on p. 285). Critical edition: Henrichs and Koenen 1970 etc. See also Cameron and Dewey 1979.

Law. This fact is reflected in Sita's comments recorded by Baraies.<sup>23</sup> Sita wants to know what happened to Mani the good boy who had for years followed the Law. Why the change in his behavior, that he suddenly refused to help out on their community farm or wash his food before eating it? He wants to know what suddenly influenced Mani to refuse to obey the rules of their community.

This alteration in Mani is important to interrogate because it suggests that the emergence of Mani as a religious leader was marked by disenfranchisement with the religious community in which he was reared. He retro-narrates this separation from the community as divinely planned and ordained, beginning when he was a very young child. Mani says, from the time he was four years old, he experienced visions and voices.<sup>24</sup> The earliest visions he references are not about acquiring the mysteries from his Twin angel. The earliest references are about the child Mani being guarded and protected by the hands of angels of light and holy powers, of hearing multiple times out of thin air a voice (who was not his Twin), encouraging him to be strong and resolute, to live in a state of submission to God.<sup>25</sup> Repeatedly he recounts how the angels kept him safe and encouraged him with tiny visions and signs during his youth.<sup>26</sup> He talks about one of these angels being particularly reassuring to him, helping Mani to remain steadfast in his affliction.<sup>27</sup> He remained silent about his visions so that no one in the community noticed anything different about him.<sup>28</sup>

We may never know what trauma or abuse Mani experienced while living among the Elchasaites. But these stories suggest that the child Mani felt in need of protection and rescue from the totalitarian religious community he grew up in. We also have a report that he was too frightened to say anything about what was happening to him.<sup>29</sup> Later tradition interprets his predicament as "a lamb dwelling in a strange flock" or "a bird living with other birds of a different song."<sup>30</sup> Contemporary studies of trauma have demonstrated that trauma impacts the psychology and physiology of victims in specific ways. There is a correlation between the experience of trauma and psychological dissociation, including out-of-body experiences, hearing voices, and feeling presences.<sup>31</sup> These disassociative experiences can be so extreme that they can

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23 CMC 90–91.

24 CMC 4.

25 CMC 11–13.

26 CMC 3.

27 CMC 4.

28 CMC 73–74.

29 CMC 4.25–26.

30 CMC 73.

31 Cf. Krippner and Powers 1997; Rosenberg 2014.

involve detachment from reality, disengagement with the world, fugue states that involve identification with a new self and even multiple selves, and altered states of consciousness or mystical experiences.<sup>32</sup> Mani's textual footprint implies that, as a child, he experienced trauma in ways that are never explicitly recounted, but implied from his obsession with being protected by angels from harm, danger, and suffering that he associated with his religious community.<sup>33</sup>

#### 4 Seeker Activities

These visions of angelic protection from his religious community were not the only thing that Mani says he experienced in his youth. He also experienced nightmarish visions of pain and suffering all around him. In these visions, he sees a date tree and picks its fruit. The branches bleed. He cuts grain in a field. Blood spurts up from the cut stalks. I imagine the child Mani was quite horrified and frightened by these images, since, in the wake of these visions, he decides that he can no longer harvest food and instead begins to beg from his brethren. I imagine that Mani must have found himself looking for food wherever he could find it, and ended up on occasion eating outlawed bread he might have received from people he encountered outside his religious community.<sup>34</sup>

While his initial contact with people outside his community may have been related to his practice of begging for his food, the contact appears to have extended into serious conversation and exposure to literature that his own religious community did not have and even outlawed. The Elchasaites were known to have used portions of the Old Testament and "the Gospel," but rejected Paul completely.<sup>35</sup> The young Mani, however, appears to have been exposed to Gentile forms of Christianity.<sup>36</sup> One of these Christian variants was likely Marcionism, since the young Mani makes reference to the *Gospel of Luke* and the *Letters of Paul*, and knows the teaching that Christianity was opposed to the Jewish law. It was through this Gentile lens that the young Mani began to question his received religious upbringing among the Elchasaites and frame his visions. In his conversations with other Gentile Christians, he may have been exposed to the *Acts of Thomas* too, where he learns about the concept of Jesus as a divine double, and the *Gospel of John*, where he learns about the

32 Cf. Kripal 2015.

33 CMC 40.

34 Cf. CMC 80, 87.

35 Eus., *Hist.* 6.38 who quotes Origen's homily on Ps. 82. See Klijn and Reinink 1974: 147.

36 Henrichs 1973: 52.

Paraclete yet-to-come.<sup>37</sup> He may have had access at this time to a harmonization of the gospels too, or this exposure may have come later.

Mani's willingness to expose himself to religious traditions outside his closed community is a trait typical of new religious leaders, who are often defined by a seeker mentality.<sup>38</sup> Bromley shows that the revelations of future new religious leaders are correlated with extensive soul-searching which typically includes study of sacred texts, pilgrimage, and experimentation with a variety of religious traditions. Future new religious leaders often respond to their dislocation and existential dilemmas by turning to prayer and reflection on sacred texts from sources outside their received tradition, seeking a way to understand their religious experiences and increasing dislocation. While future leaders sort out their feelings, isolation is typical. Mani talks about years of isolation with reference to the silence he kept and the solitary life he led as a young person. While he wanted to tell the community leaders what he was experiencing, he was distressed enough about possible repercussions from his elders that he did not. He retro-narrates his decision to keep quiet as advice he received in a dream, that he would be opposed by the leadership and should continue to be silent.<sup>39</sup>

When he was a teenager, Mani had the first vision of his Twin who came to him with a revelation from God about "who I am and what my body is, in what way I came and how my coming into this world happened, and who I have become among those who are most distinguished in pre-eminence, and how I was born in this fleshly body, or through what woman I was brought to birth and delivered into this flesh, and by whom I was begotten."<sup>40</sup> Later Manichaean tradition frames this vision as occurring in his twelfth year (to mirror Jesus' election in the *Gospel of Luke*) and also the year of Ardashir's coronation (to suggest that Mani's new religion was meant to be a new religion for a new era).<sup>41</sup> Mani retro-narrates this vision as the beginning of his divine instruction about profound spiritual truths, including his real identity as a redeemer, a spiritual being who was born into a body of "detestable" flesh in order to rescue others from the corruption of their flesh.<sup>42</sup>

37 Cf. Coyle 2015.

38 Campbell 1972; Roof 1993: 67–88; 1999: 46–76. Cf. Berger 1992; Batson, Schoenrade & Ventis 1993; Wuthnow 1994; Fuller 2001: 1–12; Kaler 2009. For earlier sociological studies on seekership, see Lofland & Stark 1965; Richardson 1978; 1980.

39 CMC 77–9.

40 CMC 20–21; cf. Ibn al-Nadim, *Fihrist*.

41 *1Ke* 14.29–32 (for English translation of the Berlin *Kephalaia* see Gardner 1995). Cf. Ibn al-Nadim, *Fihrist*.

42 CMC 22.

Most immediately Mani understands his divine appointment to be about reforming the Elchasaite community. He thinks the Elchasaite leadership has mistakenly understood the concept of holiness by imposing purity rules from the Jewish Law in Jesus' name. His insight seems to originate from his discovery that eating forbidden food from outside his community did not impact his body any differently than food purified by his community. He shat either way. He also notices that if water were effective mitigating sin, then one baptism should be enough to do it. He reasoned that daily baptisms do nothing to get rid of the loathsomeness of the body, because the body will remain foul no matter what.<sup>43</sup> He redefines purity as an issue about the soul and its separation from the body. He stops daily bathing.<sup>44</sup> At this point, he begins to construct a narrative to justify his insight, combining his reflections on gospel stories about Jesus eating bread and dining with Gentiles with stories that circulated in his community about Elchasai hearing water and clumps of earth speak.<sup>45</sup> Mani develops a counter hermeneutic to authorize his opinion about these stories, a hermeneutic that inverted the normative reading of the stories taught by his community.<sup>46</sup> He thinks his interpretation recovers the original meaning of Jesus' activities and Elchasai's visions. The creation of an inverted counter-hermeneutic – the meaning of familiar scriptures is viewed as misunderstood, misconstrued, or mangled – is typical for new religious leaders who are trying to legitimate their distinctive views.<sup>47</sup>

## 5 Disclosure of New Revelation and Public Reaction

Because of the uncertain situation in which future religious leaders are located, they typically disclose their revelatory insights to people they trust: family and close friends. The sharing of the insight is the moment that it becomes a social reality.<sup>48</sup> This is risky business and it can carry with it both enthusiastic support and hostility. If the future religious leaders are opposed, then they must find a way to resist and persist, or abandon their insights altogether. Opposition is the force that ultimately pushes future religious leaders into the public sphere as a founder of a new religious movement.

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43 CMC 83.

44 CMC 84–5, 89.

45 CMC 81–5.

46 Koenen 1981.

47 Gallagher 2014.

48 Taves 2016: 6–7; Bromley; etc.

How does this go down in Mani's case? Some members in Mani's community start to take notice of his encounter with outsiders, wondering among themselves if Mani wanted to leave their community and live among the Greeks.<sup>49</sup> As Mani gradually abandons the practices of his community, some members of his community ask him privately why he refuses to carry wood or harvest food.<sup>50</sup> As people in the community begin to notice his deviance, Mani and his father are called before the leadership council to find out what is going on and determine what should be done.<sup>51</sup> Because his father refuses to discipline Mani, it is safe to say that Mani already had shared his revelations with his father, and they had been discussing what they might mean.

When the leaders realize that Mani's father is not going to intervene in the affairs of his son, the council members bring Mani in and for the first time they are confronted with a reprobate.<sup>52</sup> He is asked point blank what is going on that he has become friendly with the Gentiles and has been begging for food instead of working in the gardens. Cornered, he reveals the insights he has been hiding for years: about how they, as leaders of his religious community, have lost their way by demanding a code of conduct that is not supported by Jesus' commandments.<sup>53</sup> He argues that the leaders of his community departed from Jesus' teaching about the purity of the soul, when they began to teach bathing as the way to purify the body.<sup>54</sup> With reference to the last supper, Mani remarks that Jesus ate forbidden bread, that he ate with Gentiles in their homes, and that he did not command his disciples to grow food. Instead Jesus commanded them to go out and preach outside their community to the nations.<sup>55</sup> He tells them that they have misinterpreted the well-known stories about Elchasai and have mistakenly set up a Law that Jesus never intended.

Some of the community members are impressed enough with Mani's visions and arguments that they wonder if Mani might fulfil an Elchasaite prophecy that a young man would rise up from among them and become a new teacher who overturns the old teaching.<sup>56</sup> They suggest installing him as the new leader of their Elchasaite community.<sup>57</sup> But the majority balked, questioning the source of his visions, some even wondering if he had heard voices

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49 CMC 80.

50 CMC 6–10.

51 CMC 88–9.

52 Cf. Reeves 1991.

53 CMC 80.6–10.

54 CMC 85.1–13.

55 CMC 91.19–93.21.

56 CMC 86–87.

57 CMC 86.

at all.<sup>58</sup> They cast him as “the enemy” of their Law, as an anti-Christ who would lead them astray.<sup>59</sup> Some even voted for his death.<sup>60</sup> The council’s final decision appears to have given Mani a choice: either straighten up and follow the rules or leave.

## 6 Collaborative Message Building

At this juncture, I place Mani’s second vision of the Twin. This is the vision in which the Twin tells Mani to leave the community. Mani retro-narrates the vision as the moment that his Twin came, released him from the world of the Law, called him, chose him, and separated him from the Elchasaites.<sup>61</sup> He equates the Twin with the Paraclete.<sup>62</sup> He says that the Paraclete revealed to him “everything the eye shall see, and the ear hear, and the mind conceive,” so that Mani understood everything and saw “the totality,” instantly becoming one with him in body and spirit.<sup>63</sup> Ultimately his revelation is about coming to know a transcendent God, “the Father of Greatness, the blessed one of glory, the one who has no measure to his greatness, who also is the first only begotten, the first eternal” who “exists before everything that has existed, and that will exist.”<sup>64</sup> He later identifies this transcendent God with love, expressed in his self-sacrifice which was necessary to bring everything into existence.<sup>65</sup> He becomes certain that this God can have nothing to do with evil.<sup>66</sup> Prompted by this vision, Mani leaves the community with his father and a couple of senior members of his family in tow.<sup>67</sup> They flee Seleucia-Ctesiphon by taking refuge at Nasir near Sippar.

This rejection forces Mani to forge a new identity. I imagine that this identity change happened swiftly in the wake of their departure and their immediate travels. Mani and his kin must have questioned Mani’s rejection. What was Mani supposed to do now that their hopes for his prophethood had been dashed by the Elchasaites. How were they supposed to live among the Gentiles

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58 CMC 86.

59 CMC 87.

60 CMC 87.

61 CMC 70.

62 *1Ke* 14.19–23; CMC 66–7.

63 *1Ke* 15.19–24.

64 *1Ke* 34.22–27.

65 *1Ke* 156.1–8.

66 *1Ke* 267.8–18.

67 M 49, 11 in Asmussen 1975: 10.

without the Law? With this on their minds, they crossed the Tigris and made their way to Azerbaijan where Mani is said to have healed the daughter of a wealthy man. With this freelance success, Mani and his kin start to conceive a public message that is no longer mired in the narrow confines of Elchasaite Law and Elchasaite prophetic expectation.

The language that Mani now begins to use demonstrates that by this time a second identity iteration was emerging, an identity which framed his rejection in terms of a promotion to the office of Christian apostle. Instead of reforming his Elchasaite community as their long-awaited prophet, he now presents himself as a reformer of Christian churches at large. Thus we hear that the angel did not just reveal divine mysteries to Mani, but commissioned him: "Peace unto you, Mani, from me and from the Lord who sent me to you. He has elected you to his apostolate, and so it is your mission to call [the peoples] to your truth. You shall proclaim the gospel of truth in his name and devote yourself to this task with all your strength."<sup>68</sup> At this time, Mani does not have a world religion project in mind, but only sees himself as a Christian reformer, as the apostle of Jesus Christ.<sup>69</sup> He felt commissioned by Jesus to take his message to the four corners of the world at a time immediately preceding the return of Jesus as Judge. He fixates on this apostolic relationship not yet by mimicking Paul, but by mimicking Thomas whose spiritual Twin in Syrian Christianity was Jesus too. Mani understands his commission to be from Jesus, that he and his relatives are missionaries broadcasting Jesus' original message. Mani sets out to follow the itinerary that, according to the Acts of Thomas, Thomas had taken two centuries earlier, seeking out small Christian communities along the route all the way to India.<sup>70</sup>

During this formative time, Mani and his followers reflect more seriously on Christian scriptures in an attempt to make better sense of his distinctive identity and mission. Again his Elchasaite upbringing forms the basis for his prophetic location, not only as a prophet in a cycle of prophets, but also the Elchasaite idea that the "Christ" has been reborn in many people in many places.<sup>71</sup> Given that Elchasai, the Hidden Power of God, styled himself as the advocate or witness on the final day of Judgment, it is possible that Elchasai believed himself to be the last manifestation of Christ, even the Paraclete.<sup>72</sup> So Mani's identification of his Twin – who was his spiritual self – as the Paraclete

68 Ibn al-Nadim, *Fihrist*, cited in Tardieu 2008: 14.

69 CMC 66.

70 *1Ke* 15.24–7.

71 Ps.-Hipp., *Ref.* 9.14.1. Cf. Fossum 1983.

72 Fossum 1983, 273–75.

may have been a simple restructuring of an existing religious schema absorbed from his childhood religion.<sup>73</sup> Or this identification may have been built entirely by Mani as he mulled over John 14:26 in light of his visions and his attempt to understand his conviction that he was commissioned by God with spreading the truth as it was revealed to him.

During this intense period of movement building, Mani and his first followers were pressed to authorize Mani's revelations. This attempt to legitimize the revelations of new religious leaders is typically achieved with the creation of narratives about their extraordinary experiences, which report how they come in contact with transcendent entities as sources of new knowledge.<sup>74</sup> This contact narrative strategy has almost infinite permutations from Joseph Smith to Rudolph Steiner, Aleister Crowley, Rajneesh, J. Z. Knight, Raël, Helen Schucman, Bill Wilson, and others.

In Mani's case, they went even farther. Mani and his first followers did their research, locating a number of published Christian revelations, including the *Apocalypse of Adam*, *Apocalypse of Seth*, *Apocalypse of Enosh*, *Apocalypse of Shem* and *Apocalypse of Enoch*.<sup>75</sup> They began to study them comparatively, becoming some of the first comparativists of religion. When reading these materials, Mani and his followers looked for patterns of sameness, so that they could situate Mani within the revelatory context and, through this situation, authorize Mani's revelations as the same thing that happened to their heroic forefathers. Like these biblical 'Greats', Mani was contacted by God, given God's mysteries, told to write them down, instructed to pass them on to future generations, and commissioned to preach them.<sup>76</sup> They saw sameness with Paul's vision too, referencing *Galatians* and *2 Corinthians*.<sup>77</sup> Baraies records this teaching of sameness: "All the most blessed apostles, saviors, evangelists, and prophets of the truth, each of them beheld insofar as the living hope was revealed to him for proclamation. And they wrote down, bequeathed, and stored up for remembrance for the future sons of the divine Spirit, who will understand the sense of his voice."<sup>78</sup> Mani started to build his prophetology which likely included at first only the Christian heroes: Adam, Seth, Enosh, Enoch, Noah, Jesus, Paul, and Mani.

As Mani traveled to India, his identity is that of the last prophet in this succession, commissioned to preach the truth that was revealed to him in his

73 *1 Ke*, chapter 1, 14.31–15.24.

74 Hammer 2016: 361–2.

75 CMC 48.1–50.4; 50.8–52.4; 52.8–55.8; 55.8–58.4; 58.4–60.1. Cf. Frankfurter 1996; 1997.

76 CMC 47.1–16.

77 CMC 60.12–62.1.

78 CMC 62.8–24.

visions, in order to reform Christianity at large. It was not until he got to India that this identity shifted for a third time. We are told that he started to preach to Buddhists. It is hard to say if this shift had to do with a dearth of Christian churches in India, or if Mani was finding it difficult to reform Christians already entrenched within their dogma.<sup>79</sup> Stories about his mission in India suggest that he had enough success among the Buddhists that he began to be hailed as Buddha.<sup>80</sup>

This was a turning point in Mani's career, the eureka moment when he began to see a wider mission for his activities, when he began to understand the national religions comparatively with himself at the center. He was perhaps the first perennialist in the history of religions, organizing the various national religions around a singular divine revelation of truth, which he argued had been received by him and all of the other prophets and apostles worldwide. This is why he added Buddha and Zoroaster to his prophetology.<sup>81</sup>

What made his religion distinct, he thought, was not the revelation, which had been revealed to all prophets and apostles in the past. What he had to offer was the integrity of the revelation. He identified other religions as faulty and inferior to his religion because their memory of the revelation was distorted when their followers – who did not understand the message – wrote about the teachings of the prophets and organized themselves into churches.<sup>82</sup>

Mani's role as final prophet within a Christian schema had burst open. Mani now saw himself as the culmination of all the prophets worldwide, commissioned to publish his own revelations and organize his own church in such a way that the revelation could be broadcast across national boundaries and languages.<sup>83</sup> With this, I think Jason BeDuhn has captured the significance of Mani's innovative conceptualization of religion long before our modern constructions of the concept came into vogue.<sup>84</sup> This distinction is rehearsed in Kephalaion 151: "He [Jesus] who elected his church in the West, his church has not reached the East. He [Buddha] who elected his church in the East, his election has not come to the West. My hope is to administer [my church] in such a way that it reaches the West and that it may be carried at the same time to the East. And the voice of its preaching will be heard in every language, and it will be announced in every city. My church is superior, in this primary respect, to preceding churches, for the preceding churches were elected only

79 *1Ke* 184.11–185.14.

80 M48.

81 *1Ke* 12.9–20.

82 *1Ke* 6.16–9.8.

83 *1Ke* 100.23–102.4.

84 BeDuhn 2014.

for particular places and particular cities. I administer my church in such a way that it comes to all cities and that its good news reaches all countries.”<sup>85</sup>

It is no wonder that, with this expansive vision of an international perennial religion, Mani quickly made his way back from Turan to Persia (243 CE) where he began the hard work of message (re)formulation, scriptural composition, ecclesiological organization, and mission administration.<sup>86</sup> How he constructs his new religion from this point on is quite comparable with the public turn most new religions take, particularly in terms of narrative stabilization, ritual configuration, cultural accommodation, isomorphism, and social and religious confrontation and debate. Mani does not build naively, but smartly on the religious knowledge accessible to him through books available to him, seeking to unearth perennial divine revelation hidden in them. His perennialism is different from, say, Huston Smith who thought that all religions were different expressions of a singular divine truth. Mani's perennialism is the opposite, that there is divine truth and all the other religions in their construction got it wrong. Only Mani's religion was built by the prophet himself in such a way that it captured the truth. Mani's project to intentionally build a new religion was only made possible because Mani's religious identity had gone through two early iterations and finally stabilized as the universal prophet and founder of a religion superior to all others, Christianity included. Mani may have initially thought of himself as a reformer of the Elchasaites and then Gentile Christianity. But once rejected, he became something else entirely: the founder of a new religious movement with universal appetite and appeal, a movement whose perennial message found leverage from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans. Because of this, Mani's religion earns the distinguished reputation for being the first world religion and should no longer be excluded from our modern narratives about the history of the religions of the world.

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85 English translation cited from Tardieu 2008: 25.

86 Shupe 1992; Stark 1996; Lewis & Hammer 2011; cf. DeConick 2018.

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## Remarks about Manichaean Christology

*Jean-Daniel Dubois*

In the memory of my dear friend,  
John D. Turner



At the Manichaean congress in Turin, 2017, my contribution about Manichaean Christology was centered on the views of Augustine in his debate with the Manichaean bishop Faustus. We are, in fact, working in Paris with a small team of colleagues for a new publication of Augustine's *Contra Faustum*, in the *Bibliothèque augustinienne*.<sup>1</sup> The first volume came out in 2018, the second volume in 2020, and we are working on the last volume. In Turin, I tried to explain why there is a fundamental misunderstanding between Augustine and Faustus about Christology, especially as Augustine forces his adversary to admit he has a docetic understanding of Christology, a kind of theology which accepts Jesus as a divine being but with a body which is only an appearance. According to Augustine in the *Contra Faustum*, Faustus recognizes at the end the following words: “We hold that He (i.e. Christ) suffered in appearance, and did not really die” (*C. Faust.*, XXIX, 1). Unfortunately, in Manichean studies, several scholars still adopt Augustine's view on Manichaean Christology and continue to use Coptic Manichaean sources to confirm this position.

In the Medinet Madi collection of Coptic *Kephalaia*, among the pages preserved in Berlin, there is an often-quoted passage about the life of Jesus in the first *Kephalaion* (1Ke 12, 21ff.). An interesting summary of the gospel material is presented with a problematic sentence attributed to Mani: “Jesus the Christ, our Lord, came down spiritually” and “I have also written about him that he came without a body.” The Coptic text of this passage of *Kephalaion* 1 is not well preserved and shows several lacunae. A careful reading of these lines allows us to discover a double view about Manichaean Christology: Jesus the

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<sup>1</sup> Dulaey et al. 2018, 2020.

Splendor came down spiritually as an Apostle of Light, and he also came down in a bodily manifestation in the figure of Jesus born on earth among the Jews.

Now, what can be learned about Christology from the Dublin *Kephalaia*? It gives me pleasure to pay a tribute to our three colleagues, Iain Gardner, Jason BeDuhn and Paul Dilley for their work in progress. These Coptic pages are difficult to read, translate and sometimes understand. Anyone can be grateful for their first publication.<sup>2</sup> It is our intention to compare some passages of the Dublin *Kephalaia* with the better-known Berlin *Kephalaia*, and sometimes other Coptic Manichaean sources.

## 1 The Dublin *Kephalaia*

(1) On the page 423.1–12, there is a discussion of the advent of several apostles of light in the different regions of the world. Zarades was sent to Persia, Bouddas the blessed was sent to India and Kushan, Aurentes and Kebellos to the east, Elchasaï (?) to Parthia, and Jesus the Christ to the west; Christ “(also?) revealed the truth in all of the west” (423.11–12). The testimonies of these apostles of light still exist in their writings in all these countries (423.21–22). But the Spirit of truth inspired also patriarchs before them, like Adam, Seth, Enosh, Sem, Enoch, Noah, and Shem (423.23–24). Such a portrait of the diffusion of the wisdom of God illustrates the universal project of the Church of Mani. It corresponds to some paragraphs of the prologue of the Berlin Coptic *Kephalaia* which were commented upon by Michel Tardieu some years ago.<sup>3</sup> The first pages of the Berlin *Kephalaia* present the writings of the Christians (1*Ke* 7.18–26), the Zoroastrians (7.27–34) and the Buddhists (7.34–8.7) with an interesting point of view: the leaders of these religious movements have not written their writings themselves, but their disciples are the authors of the sacred writings. Mani, in contrast, has written himself the wisdom of God, and his disciples are entrusted to put into writing the numerous oral debates Mani had with his catechumens. In other words, the *Kephalaia* are the written traces of these debates and they are supposed to preserve “authentic” words of the Apostle of Light. This preoccupation with the transmission of authentic words of the Master does not seem to be present in the mentioned passage of the Dublin *Kephalaia*, except on the next page. This Dublin *Kephalaion* tries to demonstrate that all apostles of light have preached about the land of light; they have come from the land of light and have returned to the land of light.

<sup>2</sup> Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dilley 2018. All translations are taken from this volume.

<sup>3</sup> Tardieu 1998.

As for Mani, he recalls having taught the word of God about the land of light, but more. He has seen himself with his eyes the land of light: "the way that it exists" (2*Ke* 424.9). He has also seen hell, and "the way that it exists" (424.10). This Kephalaion is therefore the true witness of the sign of the land of light (424.28–29).

Curiously enough, the map of the diffusion of the word of God into regions of the world is used again in the next pages of the Berlin *Kephalaia*, in the first Kephalaion about the advent of the Apostle Mani (1*Ke* 12.9–20); once again we have access to the list of apostles from Sethel till Enosh, Enoch, Sem and later Buddha, Aurentes, Zarades and Jesus the Christ. On the next page, after a summary of the life of Jesus, comes the apostle Paul and two unknown figures between Paul and Mani. Commentators have proposed to interpret this lacunal passage in relation to Marcion and Bardesanes (1*Ke* 13. 30–34).<sup>4</sup> On this ambiguity, the Dublin *Kephalaia* brings some light. Unfortunately, there is also a lacuna, but one can read the beginning and the end of the name of Elchasaï (2*Ke* 423.9), which is a very likely proposal. The Berlin *Kephalaion* introduces the coming of that man as "A righteous man of truth appeared" (1*Ke* 14.30–31). It could very well be a reference to Elchasaï, as we know from the *Cologne Mani Codex* that Mani was born in an Elchasaïte community.

(2) If Jesus is called Jesus the Christ in the list of apostles of light on page 423 of the Dublin *Kephalaia*, there are other qualifications of the Manichaean figure of Jesus the Splendor. On page 436.10, Jesus is called Jesus the *Savior*, in a list of different "salvations"; Jesus occupies the sixth position in this list. But on page 418.1, the Dublin *Kephalaia* recalls a parable preached by the Savior; it could then refer to the Jesus of the canonical gospels, just like on page 438.3, where he is qualified as *Jesus the Blessed* (πμακαριος), in reference to a saying of Jesus. Several traces of gospel material can be found on this page 438 (2*Ke* 438.12–13, 16), up to a mention of the crucifixion of apostles and just (438.26–27).

On pages 390ff., in Kephalaion 337, Mani is asked by Goundesh to explain the mystery of the twelve and seventy-two apostles. Mani is called the *Apostle* (2*Ke* 390.20, 25; 391.12) and is to teach about the interpretation of the numbers of apostles in the Manichaean hierarchy. Therefore, the twelve "teachers" around Mani and his seventy-two "bishops" are the counterpart of the twelve apostles around Jesus the Saviour (390.28) and the seventy-two disciples appointed by Jesus according to the Gospel of Luke, chapter 10. On page 391.13–14, the seventy-two are called "apostles of the Savior". Going through the interpretation of the mystery, given by Mani, one can discover that the

4 Cf. the *editio princeps* of Polotsky and Böhlig 1940: 13.

seventy-two are designated as “guides” (περρϋμμε) established in the height of heavens having authority over the twelve (2*Ke* 390.29–31). A few lines later, on page 391, the twelve are interpreted in relation to the fathers (?) of light, while the seventy-two refer to angels (2*Ke* 391–392). In other words, Mani’s explanation adapts the twelve and seventy-two of the canonical gospels to the role of the Savior in the Manichaean cosmology. Jesus the Savior is therefore another name of Jesus the Splendor in the Manichaean pantheon. In a footnote, the editors of the Dublin *Kephalaia* noticed that the Berlin *Kephalaia* also takes the twelve and seventy-two apostles of Jesus as “prototypes” of the Manichaean Church (1*Ke* 12.27–29 and 13.11).<sup>5</sup>

(3) A last passage mentions the figure of Jesus around a famous discussion with the catechumen, Pabakos, on the Law of Zarades in comparison to the Law of Jesus (2*Ke* 416.12). Paul Dilley has written several articles on the subject.<sup>6</sup> On this debate of Mani with Zoroastrians at the Sassanian court, Paul Dilley has shown that the quotations of the Law of Zarades correspond to extracts of the Zand literature. What, then, about the Law of Jesus? Pabakos wants to be taught about condemnation after death. Some sins can be forgiven, others not. Mani interprets sayings of Zarades and Jesus without giving more authority to one or the other. Yet the three quotations attributed to the Law of Zarades seem to link condemnation to forms of denial of the religion, which Mani relates to the gospel saying about the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The gospel saying is presented along a trinitarian formula: blasphemy against the Father may be forgiven, also blasphemy against the Son, but not against the Holy Spirit (2*Ke* 416.12–15). It goes back to a saying present in a different formulation in the synoptic gospels (Mk 3:28–30; Mt 12: 31–32; Lk 12:10). W.-P. Funk rightly remarked that the Manichaean saying exactly corresponds to the version present in the *Gospel of Thomas*, logion 44.<sup>7</sup> There is even a small addition in the duplicate saying on page 417.25–29; the blasphemer “will be condemned under bonds forever”. Mani’s long interpretation of the saying only comes on the following pages (2*Ke* 418.5–419.10). Blaspheming against the Father means denial of the five elements and of the father of the cross (2*Ke* 418.6–9). Blaspheming against the Son corresponds to a denial of the cross of light (2*Ke* 418.13–15). But the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, that cannot be forgiven, is the blasphemy against the Purified Church (2*Ke* 418.28–429.10). Between the first mention of the saying (2*Ke* 416) and its interpretation by Mani (418–419), there are also several gospel sayings that are blended with other sayings or allusions to

<sup>5</sup> Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dilley 2018: 101, n. 27.

<sup>6</sup> Dilley 2015a, Dilley 2015b, Dilley (forthcoming).

<sup>7</sup> Funk 2002.

New Testament Pauline or Petrine epistles, as one can find them in the notes of the *edition princeps*.

What does this tell us about Manichaean Christology? This long explanation about the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit goes back to the Law of Jesus, but it is not strictly based on a direct quotation of the canonical gospels. This figure of Jesus may evoke the words attributed to the Jesus of the canonical gospels. But more precisely, Jesus is used here as a figure of authority, accessible to a series of interpretations, born among successive generations of followers of Jesus. W.-P. Funk has envisaged several scenarios of transmission of the saying (a gospel harmony, a saying quoted in an antithesis, a quotation from another apocryphal gospel).<sup>8</sup> Personally, we prefer to put it briefly like this: just like Mani uses the Law of Zarades, he is quoting a kind of *Zand* of the canonical gospels; it can be traced perhaps to commentaries on the *Diatessaron*.

As a whole, the different mentions of Jesus in these Dublin *Kephalaia* underline his role in salvation and correspond to the Manichaean figure of Jesus the Splendor. Even in references to sayings of Jesus, one can perceive less the Jesus born among the Jews than the figure of authority that can save through its words, transmitted by generations of believers.

## 2 The Berlin *Kephalaia*

(1) Now, if we compare the sayings of the Dublin *Kephalaia* with the Berlin *Kephalaia*, it is difficult to find their exact equivalents. In Kephalaion 91 about the catechumen, there is a question about the possible salvation of those who worshipped idols, blaspheming God and committing sins before entering the Manichaean Church (1*Ke* 231.18–24). Mani answers by promising salvation in case of proper repentance. An analogous preoccupation is expressed in Berlin Kephalaion 112 about those who blaspheme the power that supports the all, its holy light and the glorious wisdom (1*Ke* 267.1 and 10–12). The explicit reference to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the Berlin Kephalaion 39 about the two deaths. A second and eternal death is promised to those who “blasphemed and despised the Holy Spirit since every generation of the world” (1*Ke* 104.16–17), but there is no explicit interpretation about blasphemy against the Manichaean Church, like in the Dublin *Kephalaia*.

In the Coptic *Psalm to Jesus* 248, the God of this aeon is responsible for “Error and the deceit of drunkenness” when he forces the unbelieving to blaspheme the God of Truth, his power and his wisdom (2*Ps* 56.31–57.2). In the

<sup>8</sup> Funk 2002: 84.

Berlin *Kephalaia* blasphemy is several times associated with lying or rejecting the Manichaean Church.<sup>9</sup> This situation corresponds to the preoccupation about renegades that is present in the discussion of Mani with Pabakos about the Law of Zarades and the Law of Jesus in the Dublin *Kephalaia*.

(2) When we compare the edited pages of the Dublin *Kephalaia* with the Berlin *Kephalaia*, the figure of Jesus is much more present in the Berlin collection, with several denominations, just like in the Dublin *Psalm Book* and *Homilies*. Out of the nearly two hundred mentions of the name *Jesus* in the Coptic codices known before the publication of the Dublin *Kephalaia*, nearly a quarter comes from the Berlin *Kephalaia*.<sup>10</sup> As we have seen earlier, Jesus is counted among the great prophets of humanity (*1Ke* 12–13). He is known for having spoken sayings (*1Ke* 7.22) and preached his hope (*1Ke* 7.20) and parables (*1Ke* 17, 4). But his manifestation on earth is just one part of his salvific role.

The Manichaean figure of Jesus is first Jesus the Splendor. In *Kephalaion* 7, on the Five Fathers, Jesus the Splendor is the second emanation of the Second Father, the Third Ambassador. Life eternal can be given through the figure of Jesus (*1Ke* 35.13–14) that can summon the Light Mind, the Judge, and the Youth (*1Ke* 35.19–30). In *Kephalaion* 16, on the Five Greatnesses of the Father, Jesus the Splendor is the Fifth Greatness with all the powers he summoned (*1Ke* 49.29–30). The Light Mind's active role of Jesus the Splendor for conducting every Manichaean soul is described in the lengthy *Kephalaion* 38. He is acting even after the soul comes out of the body by accomplishing the will of the Father (*1Ke* 276.4–15). It is the same Jesus who gives hope to Adam (*1Ke* 56.24) and helps Adam and Eve (*1Ke* 93.30–34) in their path to their ascent (*1Ke* 94.3–6). Similarly, in *Kephalaion* 29 on the eighteen thrones of the Fathers, Jesus the Splendor is the eighth throne as “releaser and redeemer of all souls” (*1Ke* 82.20–21), while in *Kephalaion* 28 on the twelve judges of the Father, Jesus the Splendor is the eighth judge as “father of all the apostles” (*1Ke* 80.18–19; cf. 101.28–29).

The same passage of *Kephalaion* 28 also describes the cosmic role of Jesus the Splendor who is sent to execute a judgment in the firmaments after the arrival of a mass of rulers and archons (*1Ke* 80.21–24). In *Kephalaion* 20 on the names of the Fathers, Jesus the Splendor receives the name of “father” because he is established in the ship of the living waters (*1Ke* 64.2–4). He was created by the Father of Greatness at the same time with the Ambassador, the Virgin

9 Cf. *1Ke* 106.11; 149.31; 159.6, 9, 14; 165.12–13; cp. *2Ps* 43.11; 49.18; *Hom* 81.27; 81.11.

10 These calculations come from the *Lexique de trois textes coptes*, ed. Young-Hum Kwon, prepared for his *Certificat de capacité à la recherche*, Paris, EPHE, 2000: 48–49. We will use the English translations of Gardner 1995.

of Light, and the Pillar of Glory, each one accompanied by powers they summoned (1*Ke* 72.33–35). In Kephalaion 29 on the thrones of the Fathers, Jesus occupies one of the three ships of the night, along with the Primal Man and the Virgin of Light (1*Ke* 82.32–34).

The ambivalence of the role of Jesus the Splendor on a macrocosmic level and on a microcosmic level is explained by Kephalaion 60 on the Four Fathers (1*Ke* 151.5–152. 20). Mani uses the parable of the human body to express what is visible and invisible in the universe. In a human body, there are visible limbs and invisible resources, just like the Father of Greatness, hidden in his kingdom. A body has two eyes, seeing and seen, just like the two ships of light which illuminate the body or the whole creation. As for the soul, “the living soul is established in apparent silence” (1*Ke* 151.28–29), but it can be grasped, mastered or wounded. The tongue “speaks, proclaims, reprimands and reveals about everything in this body, inside and outside” (1*Ke* 152.1–3); it can speak about pains and wounds. Similarly, Jesus the Splendor “manifests and reveals about everything, both the external and the internal, both what is above and what is below.” He unveils about the ships of light, the beating and wounding of the living soul, but he also preaches about the peace of the soul, its cleansing and its healing (1*Ke* 152.7–20).

This large spectrum of activities of Jesus the Splendor is manifested by several qualifications, like the glorious Jesus (1*Ke* 59.19 and 23; 155.23), Jesus the glorious Splendor (1*Ke* 20.4), Jesus the Youth (1*Ke* 35.28; 61.27; 92.7), Jesus the Christ (1*Ke* 12. 21), the blessed Christ (1*Ke* 117.30–31; 179.10; 183.3), the beloved Christ (1*Ke* 182.20), the Son of the Greatness (1*Ke* 12.20; 37.26–27), Jesus the Son of the living God (1*Ke* 267.23), Jesus the Splendor who resides in his Church (1*Ke* 25.30–31) whose advent is expected (1*Ke* 53.18; 263.12; 264.1).

In a kind of a brief excursus, I take the opportunity to signal a possible misunderstanding about the advent of Jesus on page 53.18–20 of the Berlin *Kephalaia*. The *editio princeps* of Hans-Jakob Polotsky – Alexander Böhlig reads as follows: “Das Kommen Jesu des Glanzes, als er kam ... [lacuna]... allen, indem er in dieser Weise gleicht einem Mensch der ausgeschickt ist, um auszureißen ... [lacuna] ... verbrennen ein gewaltiges [lacuna]-feld mit dem Feuer.” Iain Gardner’s translation of this passage may lead to a slight misunderstanding;<sup>11</sup> I quote: “[The] advent also of Jesus the Splendour, the time when he came to [a]ll [...] being just like a man if he is [sen]t to pull out a [...]urn a difficult f[ig]-garden with fire”. The whole passage (1*Ke* 53.18–32) is meant as a comparison of the advent of Jesus the Splendor with a gardener who extracts with an axe bad plants of his garden and plants good trees, like the tree of life. The

11 Gardner 1995: 58.

coming of Jesus “being just like a man if ...” may be understood as a docetic opinion on Christology, if one cuts the sentence after “man.” On the contrary, we find that this whole sentence can only be understood in the following way: the advent of Jesus is compared to a gardener who extracts bad plants from his garden and plant good trees for good fruits, and there is no slight allusion to the kind of body Jesus the Splendor took for his advent.

If we take now the term “Christ,” we have already seen that “Jesus the Christ” is used in the first Berlin Kephalaion about the advent of Jesus among the Jews. It takes a whole page to evoke the life of Jesus according to a Manichaean understanding. In Kephalaion 109 on the Fifty Days of the Lord, the expression “the Christ” is used to allude to the temptation narrative of Jesus in the desert (1*Ke* 264.10). But the other mentions of Christ refer to Jesus the Splendor: when the blessed Christ has destroyed Error (1*Ke* 117.30–31), when the beloved Christ summoned the Light Mind to send it to the Holy Church (1*Ke* 182.20), when the fasts, prayers and good works of the Holy Church will be revealed to the blessed Christ (1*Ke* 183.3) or to the Son, the Christ (1*Ke* 271.25), and when the blessed Christ is Father of all the apostles (1*Ke* 179.10).

We would like to end this survey of the Berlin *Kephalaia* about Jesus and Christ with a passage that, for me, well summarizes the specific perspective of Manichaean Christology. It comes from Kephalaion 112 about humanity being smaller than the universe. Mani explains to one of his disciples that all sorts of evil cannot be attributed to God. The disciple asks then “why did Jesus come to the world, the Son of the living God? He has been revealed therein! He suffered tribulation and persecution. They hung him on the cross, and his enemies perpetrated against him the torment and shame of their evil-doing” (1*Ke* 267.23–27). In a few sentences, this Manichaean disciple evokes the life of Jesus and especially his tragic end on the cross. Mani does not contradict his disciple but answers by enlarging the perspective in order to underline the cosmic role of the Son of God. I quote:

The apostle says to him: “Jesus did not come and save the world because of mankind alone, but he came and revealed on earth [...] was strong outside in [...] And when he had finished doing his task outside in the great universe, he came [...]t further with Adam and Eve and revealed to them. Even so, he sent the apostles to the good, generation by generation, and revealed to them five great things” (1*Ke* 267.28–268.4).

Mani sums up in five points the wisdom of Jesus about the kingdom of light and its capacity to fasten the rebellious powers in human flesh. At the center of Mani’s answer lies this main Christological affirmation: “Jesus did not

come and save the world because of mankind alone.” That is why the cosmic role of Jesus is usually referred to by the figure of Jesus the Splendor, while the incarnation of Jesus in a body among the Jewish people is concentrated in the moments of the end of his life on the cross, which is as much a reminder of a historical event as a symbol of the purpose of the Manichaean system: to separate the particles of light from the matter of the world.

### 3 Back to the *Contra Faustum*

The discovery of the Coptic sources of Medinet Madi has been proven very useful in Manichaean studies in order to understand better the heart of the Manichaean theological system. These Coptic documents can also bring a fresh light in Augustine studies, about the debate of Augustine with the bishop Faustus. When one reads the *Contra Faustum* of Augustine, he can be easily tempted to adopt the opinions that Augustine attributes to the Manichaeans. Many pages of the *Contra Faustum* are dedicated to the reality or the falsity Christ's birth and suffering. For example, in *Book XVI.10*, Augustine accuses the Manichaeans of worshiping fancies of their imagination:

For you do not worship Christ, but only something that you call Christ, a fiction of your own fancy; and the gods you serve are either the bodies visible in the heavens, or hosts of your own contrivance. If you do not build shrines for these worthless idols, the creatures of the imagination, you make your hearts their temple.<sup>12</sup>

In *Book XIV.2*, Augustine is more explicit about the Christology he attributes to the Manichaeans:

If Christ hung on the tree, He must have been fastened to it with nails, the marks of which He showed to His doubting disciple after His resurrection. Accordingly, He must have had a vulnerable and mortal body, which the Manichaeans deny. Call the wounds and the marks false, and it follows that His hanging on the tree is false.<sup>13</sup>

Several times, Augustine reproaches his adversary for denying the reality of the body of Jesus, and therefore also the reality of his suffering and his crucifixion

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<sup>12</sup> According to the translation of Stothert 1887: 382–383.

<sup>13</sup> Stothert 1887: 358.

(*C. Faust.* III.6; XII.4). Augustin accuses Faustus of adopting a docetic view on Jesus. In *Book XX.11*, he mocks the plurality of the figures of Jesus:

Once more, how many Christs do you make? Is there one whom you call the mortal Christ, whom the earth conceives and brings forth by the power of the Holy Spirit; and another crucified by the Jews under Pontius Pilate; and a third whom you divide between the sun and the moon? Or is it one and the same person, part of whom is confined in the trees, to be released by the help of the other part which is not confined? If this is the case, and you allow that Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate, though it is difficult to see how he could have suffered without flesh, as you say he did, the great question is, with whom he left those ships you speak of, that he might come down and suffer these things, which he certainly could not have suffered without having a body of some kind. A mere spiritual presence could not have made him liable to these sufferings, and in his bodily presence he could not be at the same time in the sun, in the moon, and on the cross.<sup>14</sup>

In this debate of Augustine with Faustus, one should not forget that it is a literary controversy. Faustus is already dead for years when Augustine refutes the *Capitula* of his adversary. Yet, the controversy between Manichaeans and Catholic Christians forced Faustus to express himself in trinitarian terms that could be accepted by Christians. In *Book XX.2*, Faustus refutes the accusation of worshipping the sun and declares to worship one single divinity with three names, the Father Almighty, Christ his Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father resides in the primordial light, the Son in the visible light of the sun and the moon, while the Holy Spirit is present in the air and produces by “spiritual effusion,” a so-called “passible Jesus,” who is hung to the cross and who is the life and salvation of mankind. Similar trinitarian confessions made by Manichaeans can also be found in Augustine’s *Contra Felicem* 1.16 and in the *Contra Fortunatum* 3.<sup>15</sup>

In the text of the *Contra Faustum*, the Manichaean bishop never mentions the figure of Jesus the Splendor, but his use of “Christ” or sometimes “Jesus” really refer to the functions of Jesus the Splendor mentioned in the Coptic sources. Once only, Faustus clearly distinguishes Jesus the Son of God and

14 Stothert 1887: 343.

15 Cf. the commentary of Decret and van Oort 2004: 55–58, but we have some difficulty in subscribing to the docetic understanding of the Manichaean Christology of these two authors.

Jesus the son of David (*Book XXIII.1*). Similarly, in *Book XXVI.1*, he declares that Christ has assumed human resemblance according to the hymn of the Letter of Paul to the Philippians (2:7), and he has therefore feigned the sentiments of a human condition up to his death. And later, in *Book XXIX. 1*, Faustus admits that Christ “suffered in appearance and did not really die.” Such affirmations can be read in a docetic frame of thought. As we said earlier in the Turin congress, we believe that Faustus distinguishes between the Jesus of the canonical gospels, born and crucified among the Jews, and the figure of Christ who brought salvation through a “mystical passion” – the expression comes from *Book XXXII.7* (*mystica passio*) –, a passion that is based on an allegorical interpretation of the crucifixion; it means the suffering of the divine light substance caught up in the matter of the world. According to this passage, this “mystic nailing to the cross” is “emblematic of the wounds of the soul in its passion; and also the sound moral precepts of Jesus, and His parables, and the whole of His immortal discourse, which sets forth especially the distinction of the two natures.”<sup>16</sup> Just like in the Dublin *Kephalaia*, the Jesus of the canonical gospels is known for his precepts and parables. But we should not misunderstand the so-called “distinction of the two natures.” We should not make an anachronistic reading of Faustus’ opinion. He had no knowledge of decisions of later ecumenical councils of the Early Church about the two natures of Christ. Faustus only distinguishes between the Jesus of the canonical gospels and the cosmic dimension of Jesus the Splendor whose activity can result in annihilating the powers of darkness and whose Light Mind can also work in the minds of every human on earth. If Augustine does not separate Jesus from Christ, there is no wonder that Faustus cannot bear the idea of a birth from a woman about the figure of Jesus the Splendor, or worse, about the opinion that the Son of the Living God died on a cross. The cosmic drama implied by the Manichaean system with the separation of the light particles from the matter of darkness needs an active Jesus the Splendor, as well in the cosmos as in the souls of the Manichaeans, much beyond the fate of the Jesus who died on a cross.

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As a way to conclude, we will never say enough about how important the discoveries of Manichaean Coptic sources can be for Manichaean studies. The more recent discoveries of Manichaean documents in the Egyptian site of Kellis, published again by our friend and colleague, Iain Gardner, confirms this situation among Manichaean studies. If we dared today to bring up Augustine

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16 Stothert 1887: 574.

and Faustus in our thoughts, we wanted to give an example of on-going studies which can profit from the patient and fundamental work done on the Dublin collection of papyrus documents. They bring new insights about Manichaeism, but also new questions as the Dublin *Kephalaia* reveal different information from the Berlin *Kephalaia*.

At the same time, it is also needed to remind everyone about the necessity to study these documents without the long and permanent views transmitted by heresiological discourses of the Church Fathers. When we think of the number of centuries that separate Augustine from Isaac de Beausobre, in the eighteenth century, when he tried to explain the Manichaean system without the slogans of Augustine that have nourished Manichaean studies for too long, we could only regret that de Beausobre did not have the opportunity to come to the Chester Beatty Library to study Coptic documents. When working on direct Manichaean sources, it is really time to abandon the views of the adversaries of the Manichaeans, still current among scholars, in order to allow an ancient religion to speak for itself.

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# Tracing Themes from Medinet Madi to China: Changes and Core Teaching in the Development of Manichaeism as a World Religion

*Majella Franzmann*

## 1 Texts and Iconography in the Early Development of Manichaeism<sup>1</sup>

Mani as a travelling visionary set the stage for an itinerant religion that brought his own unique message to a multitude of cultures with the intention to reach as far as possible in the world.<sup>2</sup> The Middle Persian text M5794+M5761,7–11 sets out his desire to found a world religion:

Firstly: the older religions were in one country and one language. But my religion is of the kind that it will be manifest in every country and in all languages, and it will be taught in faraway countries.<sup>3</sup>

Mani was concerned that no one distort his teachings as he believed the followers of other prophets before him had done:

For the Apostles all, my Brothers, who before me came,  
[Did not write down] their wisdom, as I wrote mine,  
[Nor did] they paint their wisdom in pictures,  
As [I did paint] mine.<sup>4</sup>

Within the previous two lines of this passage, Mani is reported to say that he ordered his *Picture Book* to be painted.<sup>5</sup> Zsuzsanna Gulácsi comments: “this is the only text in which Mani states that he is the intellectual author of the *Hikōn*

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2 Mani’s early missionary travels in Syria, Armenia, Media, Persia and India are outlined in the Cologne Mani Codex (CMC); see Römer 1994.

3 Andreas and Henning 1933: 294–363, esp. 295; see also *1Ke* 371.14–19.

4 *1Ke* 371.25–29; translation in Widengren 1965: 108.

5 *1Ke* 371.24–25; the *Picture Book* is named in 371.28.

and not its actual painter".<sup>6</sup> Although lines 24–25 and 27–29 might appear to contain two seemingly contradictory statements, I interpret the passage to mean either that Mani ordered subsequent copies of his *Picture Book* or he had made preliminary sketches for someone to finish painting. While the latter may seem unlikely, Mani makes a clear statement in ll. 24–25 that the *Picture Book* contains his teaching, and it would seem unlikely that he would leave the pictorial aspect of his message to someone else.

Mani's *Picture Book* was not simply a supplement to the stories his followers would hear or read in the texts. The use of the *Picture Book* shows that Mani recognized the different ways people learn through word and image, and that his audience needed both formats as a means of learning about and understanding his message.<sup>7</sup> More than that, the *Picture Book* was itself a canonical work. As Gulácsi points out, the *Kephalaia* passage above clarifies that both the writings and the *Picture Book* were equally doctrinally important: both contain Mani's teachings, although in different formats.<sup>8</sup>

Consequently, Mani sent his followers on mission,<sup>9</sup> with his own writings and paintings, with scribes and illustrators; for example, the Middle Persian text M 2 reports that he sent Mar Addā and Pattīg to the eastern Roman empire, with scribes and his own writings, and Mar Ammō with a book illustrator to the west of Chorasan (M 2 R 1 2-R 11 16).<sup>10</sup> Such a process would require enormous effort in translating key works and producing teaching aids in centres like Alexandria, Medinet Madi, Lycopolis, Turfan, and Dunhuang.<sup>11</sup>

The Medinet Madi texts date from the early phase of the Manichaean missionary work and are the earliest in which we can trace the development of the major themes and teachings of the religion, including some writings from Mani himself, although in translation.<sup>12</sup> These translations might seem relatively

6 Gulácsi 2016: 27.

7 Much has been written on Visual Learning Theory in relation to education; see the brief summary in Williams 2009. My thanks to Dr. Toni Tidswell for her suggestions on this point. For the seminal work that forms the foundation for research into the idea of orality in missionary activity, see Ong 1982. The journal *Missiology* (2010) provides a number of more recent helpful articles focussed on research into the intersubjectivity of oral communication in missionary activity.

8 Gulácsi 2016: 27–28.

9 Thus *1Ke* 13.7–10. On the process of mission, see Franzmann 2022.

10 Andreas and Henning 1933: 301–306.

11 For a comprehensive overview of the historical movement of the mission both in the west and the east, see Lieu 1992; idem. 1998. While there was translation activity also at Kellis, it is probable that this activity was more an exercise for someone learning to translate rather than evidence of a centre for the translation of texts; see Franzmann 2005.

12 See the summary of the Medinet Madi library in Gardner 1995: xvii–xix.

easy for multilingual scribes and for simultaneous translators, although the languages spoken in a new mission context must provide sufficiently useful or approximate terms or concepts with which to translate the terms and concepts in which the original teaching is presented.

Deeper issues for the mission, however, apart from the translation of texts and copying of pictures, relate to bridging different cultural and socio-political settings, addressing or accessing the various classes that make up the citizens/non-citizens (colonisers and indigenous peoples; rich/privileged and poor) of the mission country. We know that Manichaean missionaries were successful in actively engaging the ruling elite in places like the Uighur territories, but also brought their message to colonisers and indigenous peoples alike in Egypt, where the use of Coptic as well as Greek points to a concern for reaching both groups. However, a founder who has couched his vision in contrast to his own cultural setting may make things much more complicated. Mani's inclusion of men and women within the Elect, for example, was very different from his cultural setting, and also different from the cultures to which the mission went. Those who took his message on mission first had to deal with the different view of Mani to their own shared culture, and then take into account the added difference of the mission culture.

Most importantly, the mission must find the means to appeal to people in places where there are strongly developed different, or even opposing, religious worldviews. Thus, Manichaean missionaries used a variety of means to put forward Mani's teachings – a dramatic message delivered by those whose lifestyle was also dramatic,<sup>13</sup> stories of powerful deeds that vanquish forces that people fear, and strong and convincing arguments against the generally held religious views. The early message too incorporated some of what was already familiar to audiences. Much of Mani's life is presented within the Medinet Madi texts as a kind of *imitatio Christi*,<sup>14</sup> with a special emphasis on his passion and death in Belapat as “the place of the crucifixion” (*Hom* 45, 9).<sup>15</sup> These descriptions/images would not be unfamiliar to those within the religious worlds of Medinet Madi and Egypt in general, where Christianity had also found a place together with indigenous religions and the religions of colonisers like the Greeks and Romans, but such descriptions would be foreign to those outside of these spheres.

13 Lai 2017: 56–58 writes of the missionary “tactic” of the “sensationalist” lifestyle of poverty by the Elect; thus “the striking visual features of such poverty” (p. 58).

14 See Franzmann 2009, especially 376–377.

15 For the details of Mani's trial and imprisonment with torture that led to his death, see *Hom* 48.20–23; 60.11–14; 2*Ps* 15.9–12; 18.30–19.6; 19.29–31.

At the other end of the map, we see that as Manichaeism spread eastwards there were changes to the configuration of both Mani and Jesus so that those who received the core message could more fully receive or accept that teaching. Christiane Reck proposes, in agreement with Asmussen, that the Manichaean confessional hymns from Central Asia, for example, were a product of the Central Asia area itself and the religio-historical conditions found there at the time, with Manichaeism meeting up with Buddhism as the latter developed a Mahayana “spin-off” from the earlier Hinayana tradition.<sup>16</sup> While the Silk Road itself was a meeting place of many foreign traders, with a multicultural, and thus multifaith population, the Buddhist influence was clearly strong as the texts and iconography attest. In the Chinese hymns and iconography, Mani and Jesus are presented as Buddhas with other Buddhas before them (*H* 29a, 76b, 84c, 171b, 358b, 378g–h, 383b),<sup>17</sup> and the cosmic region of Light presented as the Pure or Clean and Pure Land (*H* 35d, 41b).<sup>18</sup> Other material remains support the change of configuration as far as the east coast of China, as for example, the inscription outside the shrine on Huabiao Hill in Jinjiang: “Mani, the Buddha of Light”; and the statue of Mani as the Buddha inside the shrine.<sup>19</sup> As these changes occurred, interest moved from certain foci such as the historical Jesus and his followers, or the long lists of names of early Manichaeans who have suffered and been killed for the new religion. Thus, in the course of mission, Manichaeism appears to have lost something of the celebration of the founder’s historical context, a development that is not unusual for founder religions.

## 2 Tracing Themes in the Liturgical Texts

Texts and iconography find a key role in liturgical settings, at least in those religions which practise regular communal liturgical gatherings for their followers. These gatherings underpin much of what assists followers to remain true to the core values and teachings of the religion, in both overt and subtle ways: readings, hymns, and enactments that affirm the teaching, remind those present of what is important, and strengthen the community’s sense of itself; but the drama of the liturgy, the ritual sights, sounds and smells, the language

16 Reck 2005: 7. See further discussion in the overview by Mikkelsen 2015, especially 269–271.

17 See also Mani as Buddha Maitreya, the future Buddha, (e.g. M486/1.S./3); Reck 2005: 148.

18 All text references are from Tsui Chi 1943. See also Schmidt-Glintzer 1987; and, most recently, Rault 2019. On the Pure Land, see Mikkelsen 2009.

19 See Lieu 2012; Gardner, Lieu and Parry 2012, especially 123–128; Ma Xiaohe 2015; Wang Yuanyuan and Lin Wushu 2015.

and colour and iconography all contribute in physical and emotional ways to community and individual spiritual growth. The changes noted above, as the movement east impacted on both liturgical text and iconography, raise the question of whether eastern Manichaeism was still identifiable as the religion of Mani, the Persian visionary. While this question has been addressed before,<sup>20</sup> I want to add to previous research by tracing the theme of the human body in the liturgical/hymn texts of Medinet Madi and the eastern sources. In relation to the eastern sources, I begin with the Chinese *Hymn-Scroll* found at Dunhuang, but also include some of the Middle Persian and Parthian material, since the Chinese texts are translations from this material.<sup>21</sup>

### 2.1 *The Theme of “the Human Body” in the Psalm Book from Medinet Madi*

In an earlier work focussed on the *Psalm Book* and the *Kephalaia* from Medinet Madi, I traced the representation of the human body as seen through the lens of women’s experience.<sup>22</sup> Much of that research is of relevance for the more general theme of the body, as women’s bodies are a major focus for the hymns and teaching about the body.

For the *Psalm Book*, human bodies are problematic because they are like prisons entrapping the Light. What ensures the Light is trapped effectively in an ongoing way is human lust for a variety of evils including lust for the sexual/sensual body, which is a key theme in the Medinet Madi texts. With sexual activity, they have the ability to create more human bodies to trap the Light further in the Darkness of the world. The heart of the problem then is the female womb, described as corrupted and filthy (2Ps 55.22–26; 120.25; 122.23), and filthy twice over as it inhabits a defiled material body (2Ps 82.15–16). Men lust after women’s bodies, as women also lust after men’s bodies, but it is the women who give birth to more human bodies. The “bodies” of heavenly figures, on the other hand, are not problematical. Jesus’ descent into the world in apparently human form did not happen from a human birth, but rather he was the product of the cosmic/non-human holy “womb” of the Luminaries which could conceive him (2Ps 121.31).

With such a focus on the problem of women’s wombs and birthing, it is not surprising that women are divided in the *Psalm Book* into three basic categories according to their sexual activity: the virgin, who has not been involved

20 See, for example, Panaino 2004: 250 “Like a chameleon, Manichaeism changed its colours but maintained its basic Gnostic substance.”

21 See the useful summary of work on the Chinese texts by Mikkelsen 2015.

22 See Franzmann 2007.

in sexual activity; the continent one, who may be married but who foreswears such activity at particular times (e.g. fast days); and the married one, who engages in such activity at any time (2Ps 179.7–181.18). The positive or negative view of the three types of women is clear in the triadic imagery used in relation to them through 179.18–181.12: for example, spirit, soul, body; height, air, abyss; shepherd, sheep, wolf; fulness, faith, lack; virginity, continence, and defilement; garland, prize, defeat.

Although not a liturgical text per se, it is useful to survey the teaching text of the *Kephalaia* which supports the viewpoint of the *Psalm Book*, employing a particularly strong female imagery with the idea of lust. First, lust is itself described as a powerful female, “the goddess of the body” (1Ke 143.6–7).<sup>23</sup> Secondly, worldly riches, which tempt righteous persons away from the Light and inexorably towards the world, causing them to “stand in sin” (1Ke 220.23–25), are described in terms of jewels, the wonderful garments and trappings of kings, fine food, and the “garments of silken women, which are women with gold and pearls, made beautiful for the shape of lust” (1Ke 142.26–143.3).<sup>24</sup> While these descriptions imagine a scenario where women arouse lust in men, the text has little to say of the men apart from their risk of being tempted away from the Light.

## 2.2 *The Theme of “the Human Body” in the Eastern Manichaean Liturgical Sources*

### 2.2.1 The Human Body in the *Hymn-Scroll*<sup>25</sup>

The *Hymn-Scroll* portrays the human body as poisonous, a pit of fire, putrid, a foul body of flesh, and so on (e.g. 19b, 35c, 89a). People are said to seek wealth all for the sake of their flesh-body, which is a “greedy devilish lord” (94d), only for a man to lose this wealth – including sons and daughters, wife and concubine – with death (98c–d). Given this view of the human body, the *Hymn-Scroll* refers to human love between a man and woman as “foolish” in creating more birth and death (272). The Buddha-nature within a human body suffers and is oppressed by greed and lust (105), and it is only by being rescued from the cycle of birth-death that one may follow the road to Nirvāṇa (224b).

The Elect are the only ones who are able to move beyond the cycle of birth and death, in contrast to ordinary men and women. Even the Manichaean

23 All English translations in this section are from Gardner 1995.

24 See also 1Ke 119, 26–120.1; especially 119, 29–30: “the beautiful lustful aspect of the [wo]men who are collected together for him.”

25 All references to the English translation of the *Hymn-Scroll* are from Tsui Chi 1943. My thanks to Gunner Mikkelsen for checking the accuracy of this translation for me.

Hearers must be rescued by the Elect who are spiritual fathers and mothers to them (411–414).<sup>26</sup> The virginal bodies of the saints are clean and pure, not involved in “mundane love,” and thus not involved in creating more birth and death (193d, 284, 331–333). Their virginal state gives them power, the men overcoming female devils and the women overcoming male devils (23, 43, 199c).

While these hymns have the same negative view of women’s wombs and “dirty pregnancy” (331c), there is less focus on women’s bodies than in the Medinet Madi texts, and they are more inclusive in their language, mentioning men and women together in almost all circumstances. There are only a few examples of what we would consider cultural overlays that would fit the social position of men vis-à-vis women, as noted above for the man whose assets include his wife, concubine, and children.

### 2.2.2 The Human Body in the Parthian and Middle Persian Hymns

As with the Chinese *Hymn-Scroll*, these hymns refer to the prison of human flesh, and the body as filthy and shameful (M83/1/v/11–12),<sup>27</sup> “death’s enclosure” (M71/v/ii/14–15),<sup>28</sup> and the lying body of death (M284b/r/ii/8, 12).<sup>29</sup> Life in the body of flesh, for male or female, even for the Elect brothers and sisters (M86/r/2–4; M284a/v/i/17–21; M30/r/ii/7–9)],<sup>30</sup> is one of exile as well as imprisonment (M1872/11/R/5–12; M1873/11/R/8–12).<sup>31</sup> There is no relief for the soul captive in such a body: “Oh soul, captive and exile, who are bound/fettered in two bodies, on the outside all agony and defilement and on the inside pain and disease” (M66/v/5–8).<sup>32</sup>

Jesus and Mani act as rescuers for the believer from this deadly cycle (M311/v/13–16; M486/2.S./1–3; M785/r/11),<sup>33</sup> and it is only release from the body of death, the end of the cycle of birth-death, that will bring the reward of life in the Pure Land. This release from the body of death is said to be like a marriage, with the enlightened one as the bride of the heavenly bridegroom, the Light Nous (M30/r/i/11–15 and v/i/2–3).<sup>34</sup>

26 Women continue to have a place within the key group of the Elect even as the mission moves east, as the pictorial evidence supports (cf. Gulácsi 2001). Samuel Lieu 1998: 130 also references the Buddhist chronicler Chih-p’an who recorded that 72 women priests were among the Manichaean priests massacred in 843 CE in China after the collapse of the Uighur empire.

27 Durkin-Meisterernst 2006: 67.

28 Durkin-Meisterernst 2006: 29.

29 Reck 2005: 113.

30 Reck 2005: 99–100, 108, 176.

31 Durkin-Meisterernst 2006: 103, 105.

32 Durkin-Meisterernst 2006: 115.

33 Reck 2005: 142, 149, 166.

34 Reck 2005: 175–6.

To sum up, in both the western and eastern texts there is the same concern for the human body as the means of entrapping the Light and the necessity for a person to be freed from it. Whereas the western sources find the continuing entrapment of the Light above all first in a contaminated womb and thence in a new human body, the eastern sources focus on the round of birth and death by which one is trapped endlessly in a body. This is not to say that the eastern texts make no mention of sex and the entrapment that comes with creating more human flesh, but the emphasis is different for both sets of texts.

While the concerns about liberating human bodies from the darkness within are similar across these texts, we must also keep in mind the complexity of the situation that Jason BeDuhn has aptly demonstrated, where the body is both the entrapping agent and the liberating agent. The body itself is the means, through certain practices and with divine assistance, of conquering the darkness. It is not only a ritual agent, but also a ritual space, a ritual instrument, and a ritual offering.<sup>35</sup> In this lifestyle of “practical gnosis,” “the Manichaean aspires to negotiate the snares and pits of the world of birth-and-death and to attain the world of light.”<sup>36</sup>

### 3 Conclusion

I began this paper by raising some questions about the movement of a religion across cultures and communities, questions that are not new to studies of religious missions. They are important for Manichaeism in studying how this religion was so successful in its mission to so many different peoples and lands. I argued that the themes connected with the gaining of insight continued, while the way of couching these themes did away with some ideas that seemed important in the earliest communities but became less so in the subsequent missionary enterprise. Clearly, what is important is the core message first and foremost – that the Light conquers the Darkness. Secondly, the pedigree of the founder who brought that message is important, as he is the one who has been inspired to share the belief, but also inherits the message through a divine lineage, whether that be explained as including Jesus (whom Mani follows as apostle) and the prophets before him, or Mani as Buddha, following Buddha Jesus and the long line of Buddhas before him.

While we might propose that Manichaean missionary practice was successful because the core teaching did not change, even if the imagery or themes used to put forward that core teaching changed, we may need to pay further

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35 BeDuhn 2000: 24.

36 BeDuhn 2000: 87.

attention to the implications for communities in the way in which that core teaching was differently presented. For any religion to survive or have meaning, the community is of paramount importance. In the end, we cannot actually say for whom the “pure” core ideas endure, or the relative strength or frailty of those ideas in the face of the realities of community life. One of those realities of community life is that the individuals who make up that community are more than the sum of their physical bodies that struggle with the Darkness. The emotional life of communities, families, and human beings are also in play when core principles are taught or heard or sung about or discussed, and on occasion such emotions may seem counter to these core principles. Christiane Reck, for example, notes the paradox in the Parthian text M273/r/1–9, where the dead are mourned, even though their release from the cycle of rebirth represents the goal that believers long for.<sup>37</sup> We also find reference in Kellis letter P. Kell. v Copt. 25, from Matthaïos to his mother, to those who are mourning for a Manichaean woman known to them (“my great mother”) who has died in Antinoou.<sup>38</sup> Some passages, indeed, appear to deliberately evoke contradictory reactions, as for example when Mani is described as the one who protects the hymn writer from sin as a mother protects her beloved child (M280 1/v/3–6),<sup>39</sup> an image of love and gentleness that appears to be in sharp contrast or even contradiction to words concerning foul and putrid wombs as we have seen above.

In sum then, the themes in a literary work are important to show the major ideas and images that go together with core beliefs. However, we also need to consider carefully how they are received, how these might have played out in the community who sang the hymns or heard them in a liturgical setting, for this is the way the religion continues to live and grow as it has meaning for the community.

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## Choosing the 12 and the 72: A Diatessaronic Theme in the Dublin Volume of the Coptic Manichaean *Kephalaia* Codices

*Zsuzsanna Gulácsi*

On the occasion of celebrating the 90th anniversary of the discovery of the Coptic Manichaean Medinet Madi Library with an international congress at the Chester Beatty Library and Museum in Dublin Castle, this study is centered around the Dublin volume of the *Kephalaia*. It aims to show that the 337th chapter of this book (Kephalaion 337, 390.14–400.23) is built upon a diatessaronic theme in Mani's teaching – one that is modeled after an episode in the narration of the life of Christ in Tatian's *Diatessaron*. Thus, this study joins a growing number of publications concluding that Mani (216–274 or 277 CE) and the first generation of his followers knew about Jesus's life based on the harmonized account of Tatian, which was used across Syro-Mesopotamia in the place of the four gospels during the 3rd through 5th centuries.

The diatessaronic theme under consideration is found in one of the oldest surviving pieces of Manichaean literature both in preservation and content, referred to in Manichaean studies after its short title as the *Kephalaia* (Copt./Gr. *kephalaia* 'chapters'). As a physical object, the *Kephalaia* consists of two large papyrus codices, measuring about 35 cm in height and 21 cm in width,<sup>1</sup> which together originally held a continuous set of about 1200 pages of text in total. This pair of codices was produced in Egypt sometime during the late 4th and early 5th century as confirmed by carbon-dating.<sup>2</sup> They were discovered at Medinet Madi in the Fayyum oasis of Egypt during the early 20th century, sold separately on the antique market, and are preserved today as loose papyrus sheets framed between glass panels. The first volume, titled *The Kephalaia of the Teacher*, is preserved in the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin and

1 These measurements are deduced from the size of an associated wooden cover (unnumbered item) and a papyrus folio (LS 10.16) of the *Kephalaia* in the Chester Beatty.

2 A carbon-dating project conducted on the Medinet Madi codices by Jason BeDuhn and Greg Hodgins (2017:10–28) argued that the *Kephalaia* was produced in Egypt sometime during the late 4th and early 5th century. Although the *Kephalaia* itself could not be sampled due to its preservation, two other Manichaean papyrus turfs (associated with the *Psalm Book* and the *Synaxeis Codex*) found together with the *Kephalaia* at Medinet Madi could, yielding a 60-year range for the entire corpus.

contains 261 folios (522 pages) with an introduction plus chapters 1–201. The second volume, titled *The Kephalaia of the Wisdom of My Lord Mani*, is housed in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin. It has 254 folios (508 pages) with chapters 220–347 plus an epilogue.<sup>3</sup>

The content of the *Kephalaia* is older than the codices in which it is preserved by at least a century. Its Coptic prose is a translation of a lost work written in Syriac by unnamed disciples in order to preserve Mani's oral instructions, somewhere in southern Mesopotamia sometime during the late 3rd century, maybe even before Mani's death in 274 or 277 CE. Its text is arranged into continuously numbered chapters, each of which are labeled with an explanatory sentence given below the chapter number. The chapter starts with a formulaic opening and presents its material as the verbatim teaching of Mani, often in response to a question. Based on this organization, the *Kephalaia* is considered today a unique genre of religious literature. Although its content is apocryphal, it is regarded as a highly authoritative primary Manichaean textual source, in which Mani's words take the reader back to Sasanian Mesopotamia of Late Antiquity.<sup>4</sup> Fragments of the *Kephalaia*'s text in Iranian translation have been identified by Werner Sundermann on folios of paper codices discovered in and around Kocho in East Central Asia from the Uyghur era of Manichaean history (762–1024 CE).<sup>5</sup>

The ongoing labor of translating these two Coptic volumes has been gradually making the vast and valuable content of the *Kephalaia* accessible. The text of the Berlin codex is fully available in translation. Following an initial German translation by Polotsky and Böhlig in 1940, an English translation up to chapter 121 was published by Iain Gardner in 1995. Chapters 122 to 201 was published in German by Wolf-Peter Funk in three parts between 1999 and 2018. The text of the Dublin codex is more damaged. The ongoing work of its critical edition by Iain Gardner, Jason BeDuhn, and Paul Dilley is discussed by Dilley in his contribution to this volume. Their translation of chapter 321 to chapter 347 was published in 2018. Subsequently, the manuscript was subjected to new techniques of multi-spectral photography that dramatically improved the visibility of the faded ink on the darkened papyrus folios. This allowed for new readings, which are being prepared for publication currently. Since the quote from the Dublin codex at the center of this study derives from one of the best-preserved pages, its translation from 2018 is not expected to significantly change in the future.

3 Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dilly 2018: 3.

4 Gardner 1995: xviii–xix. Timothy Pettipiece notes that although it is probable that some authentic details of Mani's teachings are preserved in it, the *Kephalaia* itself is heavily reworked and incorporates other textual material beyond the oral memory of the community concerning its founder and his revelation (2009: 8–9). For an overview, also see Gardner 2018.

5 For a study on Goundesh, see BeDuhn 2015: 66–72.

# 1 Jesus Choosing the Twelve and Seventy-Two in the 1st Chapter of the *Kephalaia*

A longer diatessaronic passage found in the first chapter of the Berlin volume (*Kephalaion* 1, 12.21–13.11) was first identified in 2012, and subsequently subjected to a more thorough analysis in 2020 in a study conducted in the context of a seminar on *Manichaeism and Early Christianity* organized by Johannes van Oort. This passage is part of a sermon purportedly given by Mani about the life of Christ, titled “Concerning the advent of the Apostle.” In it, Mani explains how human messengers of God – called prophets in religious studies and “apostles” in the text – come to the world, using a long analogy to farming that references seasons of planting and harvesting. Before getting to his own story of prophethood, Mani lists prior human messengers, including numerous Jewish prophets (Adam, Sethel, Enosh, Enoch, Noah, and Shem) as well as the historical Buddha, Zarathustra, and Jesus.<sup>6</sup> When he comes to Jesus, Mani summarizes the life of Christ in 22 lines in the form of a list that succinctly outlines Jesus’ life story, event by event, from Incarnation to Ascension in a distinctly diatessaronic manner, including a mention of Jesus choosing his twelve and seventy-two disciples.<sup>7</sup>

In 2020, I analyzed this passage based on the standard academic classification of episodes in the life of Christ and found that it mentions sixteen events distributed unevenly across the four cycles (Table 12.1). The greatest attention is given to the Passion, occupying more than half of the text (events #4–11). The other three cycles are noted with increasing attention (#1, #2–3, and #12–16). The *Incarnation* is referenced in one event that mentions (#1) Manifestation, that is, how Jesus “received a servant’s form, an appearance as of men. He came below. He manifested in the world, in the sect of the Jews.” The *Ministry* is also discussed briefly, but in two events: (#2) Choosing the disciples, and what might be best classified as (#3) Ministry, stating that Jesus “chose his twelve [and] his seventy-two. He did the will of his Father, who had sent him to the world.” The *Passion* cycle has eight events. It starts with (#4) Satan inhabits Judas: “Afterwards the evil one awoke envy in the sect of the Jews. Satan went into Judas the Iscariot, one among the twelve of Jesus”; and continues with (#5) Betrayal and (#6) Arrest: “He accused him before the sect of the Jews with his kiss. He gave him over to the hands of the Jews, and the cohort of the soldiers.” Next is (#7) Trial: “They gave judgment on him by lawlessness in an assembly. They condemned him by iniquity, while he had not sinned”; followed by

6 *1Ke* 12.9–20 (Gardner 1995: 18).

7 Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dille 2018: 101, note 2.

TABLE 12.1      Mani’s sermon on the life of Christ in the Coptic Manichaean *Kephalaia*

| <i>Kephalaion</i> 1, 12.21–13.11 (Gardner 1995, pp. 18–19)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Sixteen events & four cycles                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| The advent of Jesus the Christ our Master: He came [... / ...] in a spiritual one, in a body [... / ...] as I have told you about him. I [...] him; for he came without body! Also, his apostles have preached in respect of him that ...                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | TITLE & MANI’S INTRODUCTION                                                                                                                                                                      |
| ... he received a servant’s form, an appearance as of men. He came below. He manifested in the world, in the sect of the Jews.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | INCARNATION<br>1. Manifestation                                                                                                                                                                  |
| He chose his twelve [and] his seventy-two. He did the will of his Father, who had sent him to the world.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | MINISTRY<br>2. Choosing the disciples<br>3. Ministry                                                                                                                                             |
| Afterwards the evil one awoke envy in the sect of the Jews. Satan went into Judas the Iscariot, one among the twelve of Jesus. He accused him before the sect of the Jews with his kiss. He gave him over to the hands of the Jews, and the cohort of the soldiers. The Jews themselves took hold of the Son of God. They gave judgment on him by lawlessness in an assembly. They condemned him by iniquity, while he had not sinned. They lifted him up upon the wood of the cross. They crucified him with some robbers on the cross. They brought him down from the cross. They placed him in the grave. | PASSION<br>4. Satan inhabits Judas<br>5. Betrayal (with a kiss)<br>6. Arrest<br>7. Trial (in an assembly)<br>8. Crucifixion<br>9. Crucifixion (with robbers)<br>10. Deposition<br>11. Entombment |
| After three days he arose from the dead. He came towards his disciples and was visible to them. He laid upon them a power. He breathed into them his Holy Spirit. He sent them through the whole world that they would preach the greatness. Yet he himself rose up to [the heights ... / ...].                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | RESURRECTION<br>12. Resurrection<br>13. Appearance<br>14. Bestowal of Spirit<br>15. Commission<br>16. Ascension                                                                                  |

two events of the Crucifixion that mention (#8) Christ's body and (#9) robbers with it: "They lifted him up upon the wood of the cross. They crucified him with some robbers on the cross." The passion narrative concludes with (#10) Deposition and (#11) Entombment: "They brought him down from the cross. They placed him in the grave." The last cycle, the *Resurrection*, contains five events. It starts with (#12) Resurrection: "After three days he arose from the dead"; it continues with (#13) Appearance and (#14) Bestowal of Spirit: "He came towards his disciples and was visible to them. He laid upon them a power. He breathed into them his Holy Spirit"; followed by (#15) Commission: "He sent them through the whole world that they would preach the greatness"; and finally, it concludes with (#16) Ascension: "Yet he himself rose up to [the heights ... / ...]." <sup>8</sup>

I showed that these sixteen events do not correspond with what is discussed in any one of the four canonical gospels (Table 12.2). The least correlation is with the *Gospel of Mark* that contains four events from Mani's sermon: (#8) Crucifixion, that is, lifting Jesus upon the cross (Mk. 15:24), (#9) Crucifixion with robbers (Mk. 15:27), (#10) Deposition (Mk. 15:46a), and (#11) Entombment (Mk. 15:46b). The *Gospel of Matthew* discusses five events: (#6) Betrayal with a kiss (Mt. 26:49), (#8) lifting Jesus upon the cross (Mt. 27:35), (#9) Crucifixion with robbers (Mt. 27:38), (#11) Entombment (Mt. 27:60), and (#15) Commission (Mt. 28:19). The *Gospel of John* covers seven events: (#1) Manifestation (Jn. 1:14), (#3) Ministry (Jn. 6:38), (#5) Satan inhabiting Judas (Jn. 13:17), (#7) Arrest (Jn. 18:12), (#8) Crucifixion, that is, lifting Jesus upon the cross (Jn. 19:18), (#10) Entombment (Jn. 19:41–42), and (#14) Jesus' breathing the Holy Spirit into the disciples (Jn. 20:22). The greatest match is with the *Gospel of Luke*, where eleven out of Mani's sixteen events are mentioned. These include (#2) Choosing the disciples (Lk. 6:13 and 10:1), (#4) Satan inhabiting Judas (Lk. 22:3), (#5) Betrayal with a kiss (Lk. 22:28); (#7) Trial in an assembly (Lk. 22:16), (#8) lifting Jesus upon the cross (Lk. 23:33a), (#9) Crucifixion with robbers (Lk. 23:33b), (#10) Deposition (Lk. 23:53a), (#11) Entombment (Lk. 23:53b), (#12) Resurrection (Lk. 24:7), (#13) Appearance (Lk. 24:13 and 24:36), and (#16) Ascension (Lk. 24:51).

In light of the above assessment, I concluded that the four canonical gospels together constitute an unlikely direct source of Mani's sermon (see Table 12.2). With its four events (#8–11), the *Gospel of Mark* does not contribute anything that was not already mentioned in the *Gospel of Luke*. Between the *Gospels of Luke and John*, Mani's sermon still contains one event, (#15) the Commission, that is found only in the *Gospel of Matthew* (Mt. 28:19). Although it is not

<sup>8</sup> 1Ke 12.21–13.11 (Gardner 1995: 18–19).

TABLE 12.2 Correlation of the sixteen events of Mani's sermon about the life of Christ in the *Kephalaia* with the four gospels and the *Diatessaron*

| #  | <i>Kephalaion</i> 1, 12.21–13.11                             | <i>Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John</i> |               |                         |                    | <i>Diatessaron</i>            |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1  | He manifested in the world.                                  | Ø                                               | Ø             | Ø                       | 1) Jn. 1:11        | 1) Diat. 3:53                 |
| 2  | He chose his twelve [and] his seventy-two.                   | Ø                                               | Ø             | 1) Lk. 6:13–10:1        | Ø                  | 2) Diat. 8:19 & Diat. 15:15   |
| 3  | He did the will of his father, who sent him to the world.    | Ø                                               | Ø             | Ø                       | 2) Jn. 6:38        | 3) Diat. 19:32                |
| 4  | Satan went into Judas the Iscariot.                          | Ø                                               | Ø             | 2) Lk. 22:3             | 3) Jn. 13:17       | 4) Diat. 44:6                 |
| 5  | He accused him with his kiss.                                | 1) Mt. 26:49                                    | Ø             | 3) Lk. 22:47–Lk. 22:48  | Ø                  | 5) Diat. 48:25                |
| 6  | He gave him over to ... the cohort of soldiers.              | Ø                                               | Ø             | Ø                       | 4) Jn. 18:12       | 6) Diat. 48:44                |
| 7  | They gave judgment on him by lawlessness in an assembly.     | Ø                                               | Ø             | 4) Lk. 22:66            | Ø                  | 7) Diat. 49:19                |
| 8  | They lifted him up upon the wood of the cross.               | 2) Mt. 27:35                                    | 1) Mk. 15:24  | 5) Lk. 23:33a           | 5) Jn. 19:18       | 8) Diat. 51:25                |
| 9  | They crucified him with some robbers.                        | 3) Mt. 27:38                                    | 2) Mk. 15:27  | 6) Lk. 23:33b           | Ø                  | 9) Diat. 51:28                |
| 10 | They brought him down from the cross.                        | Ø                                               | 3) Mk. 5:46a  | 7) Lk. 23:53a           | Ø                  | 10) Diat. 52:30               |
| 11 | They placed him in the grave.                                | 4) Mt. 27:60                                    | 4) Mk. 15:46b | 8) Lk. 23:53b           | 6) Jn. 19:41–19:42 | 11) Diat. 52:30               |
| 12 | After three days he arose from the dead.                     | Ø                                               | Ø             | 9) Lk. 24:7             | Ø                  | 12) Diat. 52:55 & Diat. 53:15 |
| 13 | He came towards his disciples and was visible to them.       | Ø                                               | Ø             | 10) Lk. 24:13–Lk. 24:36 | Ø                  | 13) Diat. 53:39 & Diat. 54:1  |
| 14 | He breathed into them his Holy Spirit.                       | Ø                                               | Ø             | Ø                       | 7) Jn. 20:22       | 14) Diat. 54:15               |
| 15 | He sent them through the whole world that they would preach. | 5) Mt. 28:19                                    | Ø             | Ø                       | Ø                  | 15) Diat. 55:5                |
| 16 | ... he himself rose up to the heights.                       | Ø                                               | Ø             | 11) Lk. 24:51           | Ø                  | 16) Diat. 55:13               |

entirely impossible, it is unlikely that Mani (or his disciples) compiled these sixteen events directly from the four gospels in a way that their harmonized account coincidentally matched an already existing and widely circulated gospel harmony known to be used by the early Manichaeans.

I argued that instead of following any one canonical gospel, or any obvious combination of them, Mani’s account of Jesus’ life compares favorably to the *Diatessaron* in terms of its sequence and key narrative details (see Tab. 12.2). Only the *Diatessaron* contains all of the events mentioned in Mani’s sermon. Moreover, their sequence follows exactly the order in which Tatian already had assembled elements from the four gospels into his Gospel Harmony. That Mani might have coincidentally harmonized elements of Jesus’ life story in exactly the same way Tatian did is historically implausible. The plausible and most parsimonious explanation of their identical sequence is that Mani based his outline of the life of Christ on the *Diatessaron*, the use of which is well attested in early Manichaean context.

The episode of Jesus’s ministry, when “He chose his twelve [and] his seventy-two” (*1Ke*, 12.27–28) is known only to Luke and the *Diatessaron* (Table 12.3). While John omits it entirely, Matthew and Mark notes only the choosing and sending off the twelve. Matthew mentions them together in one verse:

Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. (MATT. 10:1)

Mark notes these two events separately from one another in two different chapters:

And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons. (MARK 3:14–15)

TABLE 12.3      Correlation of Jesus choosing and sending his 12 and the 72 disciples in the *Kephalaia* with the four gospels and the *Diatessaron*

| # | <i>Kephalaion</i> 337, 390.14ff | <i>Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John</i> |             |           |   | <i>Diatessaron</i> |
|---|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|---|--------------------|
| 1 | Choosing the twelve             | Mt. 10:1                                        | Mk. 3:14–15 | Lk. 6:13  | ∅ | Diat. 8:19         |
| 2 | Sending the twelve              | Mt. 10:1                                        | Mk. 6:7–9   | Lk. 9:1–3 | ∅ | Diat. 12:42        |
| 3 | Choosing the seventy-two        | ∅                                               | ∅           | Lk. 10:1  | ∅ | Diat. 15:15        |
| 4 | Sending the seventy-two         | ∅                                               | ∅           | Lk. 10:1  | ∅ | Diat. 15:15        |

He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. (MARK 6:7–9)

Luke discusses all four events in three chapters:

And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles (LUKE 6:13)

Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, ‘Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money – not even an extra tunic.’ (LUKE 9:1–3)

After this the Lord appointed seventy[-two]<sup>9</sup> others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. (LUKE 10:1)

Tatian’s discussion of Jesus choosing and sending off his twelve and the seventy-two disciples is similar to that of Luke:

And Jesus, seeing the multitudes, went up into the mountain: and he called his disciples, and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles (*Diatessaron* 8:18–20).

And he called his twelve disciples and gave them power and great authority over all devils and sickness. And he sent them two and two to preach the kingdom of God and heal the sick (*Diatessaron* 12:42–44).

Now after these things Jesus appointed out of his disciples seventy[-two]<sup>10</sup> others and sent them two and two before his face into every country and city, whither he himself was about to come (*Diatessaron* 15:15–16).

9 Textual variants in the witnesses to Luke give either seventy or seventy-two.

10 Hamlyn N. Hill (2001: 62, note 2) notes that the *Codex Fuldensis* and the *Doctrine of Addai* both give the number seventy-two; and, based on Moesinger and Aucher 1876: 59 and 160, Hill adds that Ephrem also implies the same.

The choosing and sending off his twelve and the seventy-two disciples is one of sixteen events, through which Mani outlines Jesus's life according to Tatian's *Diatessaron* at the start of the *Kephalaia*. This theme, however, functions in a dual role for it surfaces once again in the second volume of the *Kephalaia* as an episode related to Mani's life.

## 2      **Mani Choosing the Twelve and Seventy-Two in the 337th Chapter of the *Kephalaia***

The Dublin *Kephalaia* picks up the theme of the twelve and seventy-two disciples in the 337th chapter (*Kephalaion* 337, 390.14–400.23). In this long chapter, Mani explains the mystery behind setting up the two upper tiers of the institutional organization of his church, serving directly below him – the twelve teachers and the seventy-two bishops.

Mani's twelve and seventy-two disciples are first mentioned in the usual explanatory summary given below the chapter number, in this case in the form of two questions put to Mani by a philosopher figure, named *Goundesh*:<sup>11</sup>

This chapter speaks about Goundesh,  
who asked the Apostle: These Twelve  
Persons that you selected, by what Mystery  
did you select them? Or these Seventy-two, moreover,  
by what Mystery did you select them?<sup>12</sup>

At the start of the chapter, Mani points to Jesus's example when he explains the rationale for selecting twelve teachers:

I have selected them by the mystery of these twelve apostles of the savior.

Shortly after, he elaborates on their role in relation to his church:

As for the twelve [(teachers?) that are established] I set them up in complete righteousness. They are the ones I have given into the hands of the church ... that they might become for it the shepherds and nourishers, guides, guardians, and helpers; and they nourish the elect and the catechumen, who are within it.<sup>13</sup>

11 For a study on Goundesh, see BeDuhn 2015: 52–74.

12 2*Ke* 337, 390.14–19 (Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dilley 2018: 101).

13 2*Ke* 337, 390.27–28 and 391.4–9 (Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dilley 2018: 103).

Goundesh then asks about the seventy-two bishops of Mani's church organization, for which Mani provides the same rationale:

I selected them by the mystery of the seventy[-two] apostles of the savior, the ones whom he selected. He set [them] up in his church.<sup>14</sup>

The example of Jesus does not stand alone, however. Mani proceeds to explain that behind the numbers of these selected community leaders stand certain theological, cosmological, and perhaps chronological mysteries:

The apostles of the apostles, they too existed by the mystery of these seventy-two guides, the ones who are established in the height of the heavens, the ones that have authority over the twelve. (And) the seventy[-two] angels, also, the guides who are established [in the height of the] heavens, they exist by the mystery of these [twelve (fathers?)] of the light, the ones who were called out from [the Father and established] before him.

Thus one arrives at the number for all these seventy-two [angels] ... The measure is this, and the number of the angels corresponding, then, to the mystery of these seventy-two angels. They selected these seventy-two ministers, the ones that I have selected. I set them up in my church.<sup>15</sup>

These recently edited passages confirm the previous arguments of Claudia Leurini that facile references of the precedent of Jesus and supposed leadership arrangements in primitive Christianity are insufficient explanations for the numerological significance of Mani's church organization, which appear to correspond to the numbers used of key cosmological structures and time divisions discussed in Manichaean literature.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, Mani seems to say that this deeper symbolism of the twelve and seventy-two already stood behind the selection of "apostles" and "apostles of apostles" by Jesus. The latter's precedent established the norm of organizing community leadership according to these mysteries of time and space, involving a pyramidal structure of one on top, below him twelve, and under the twelve, six times twelve. In this way, Mani identifies deeper meaning within the information that Jesus chose disciples in two groups with twelve and seventy-two members, respectively. It seems most likely that Mani acquired the information about these selection events in the life of Jesus from the *Diatessaron*.

14 2*Ke* 337, 391.13–15 (Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dilley 2018: 103).

15 2*Ke* 390.28–391.4 and 392.3–11 (Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dilley 2018: 105).

16 Leurini 2013: 87–157.

### 3 The Diatessaron and Its Manichaean Witnesses

The *Diatessaron* (Gr. διὰ τεσσάρων, lit. ‘through four’) is the earliest known gospel harmony, dating from the 170s CE. Attributed to the early Christian writer Tatian (ca. 120–180 CE), this text was composed in either Syriac or Greek.<sup>17</sup> In its Syriac form it was used as the standard gospel text across the Syriac-speaking part of the Christian world until the late fifth century.<sup>18</sup> This text occupies a unique position in the early dissemination of the gospels in Syro-Mesopotamia. Although it is not the only gospel harmony that existed in Syriac, there is abundant evidence for its early use in both the Roman- and Iranian-controlled parts of the region. Today, the *Diatessaron* is considered to be the form in which the gospels first appeared in Syriac during the early third century. Its use is reflected in the gospel quotations of Ephrem (ca. 306–376 CE), and Aphrahat (late third century–ca. 345 CE), which could only happen if the *Diatessaron* had been circulating in the eastern part of the Christian world from the beginnings of Syriac Christianity.<sup>19</sup> The “Persian sage” Aphrahat, in particular, is connected with the Persian side of the frontier region of Christianity in southern Mesopotamia that was shared with Mani, separated from the latter’s time by only a couple of generations.<sup>20</sup> The earliest direct evidence on the use of the *Diatessaron* in the region is provided by a fragment of a parchment scroll found at Dura-Europos. Dating from before the mid-250s CE, this fragment is one of the earliest Christian manuscripts known today. It contains fourteen Greek lines from a harmonized Passion of Christ narrative. It preserves linguistic traces of a Syriac language original, suggesting that it is a translation of Tatian’s work.<sup>21</sup> As such, the Dura fragment provides an extremely early date

17 For the assessment of the available sources, see Petersen’s summary (1994: 65–67), who notes that aside from the Arabic *Diatessaron* (discussed below), all witnesses were transmitted without a title or author’s name. In addition, little is known about Tatian. His biography is alluded to in his only other extant work, the *Oratio ad Graecos*, stating that he was “born in the land of the Assyrians” (1994: 68). Born to middle- or upper-class parents with means to travel, Tatian became a wandering student and converts to Christianity in Rome round 150 CE, where he spends an extended period with Justin Martyr (d. 165 CE) and starts teaching. He returns to his homeland probably around 172 CE and founds a school. His teachings became influential and (unlike in the West) were never regarded to be heretical by the Eastern churches (1994: 72).

18 Petersen 1994: 1 and note 5; and 39. Its Syriac title, *Euangelion da-Mehalleṭē* (lit. *Gospel of the Mixed*) is first attested from the 5th century (1994: 39), since the first pages of the Ephrem’s manuscript in Dublin do not survive.

19 Petersen 1990: 403, 405, and 407.

20 For Aphrahat and the *Diatessaron*, see Burkitt 1904: 180–186.

21 The Dura Fragment (Yale University Library, Dura Parchment 24; 9.5 × 10.5 cm; damaged on four sides, verso blank) has been interpreted as containing a very early Greek

for the circulation of the *Diatessaron* in the region – a date that coincides with the activities of Mani.

The *Diatessaron* survives through what are called “witnesses,” the two most extensive of which transmit Tatian’s text from different times and stages of transmission, copied into relatively late manuscripts. The earliest is a biblical commentary written by Ephrem Syrus (d. 373 CE) in Syriac – the language associated with the *Diatessaron* in Syro-Mesopotamia. Its full text survives only in Armenian translation from the late twelfth century (1195 CE),<sup>22</sup> while a partially preserved version in the original Syriac is estimated to date from the late 5th or early 6th centuries.<sup>23</sup> Working with a 4th-century edition of the *Diatessaron*, Ephrem quotes and comments upon only select passages. For this reason, his *Commentary on Tatian’s Diatessaron* cannot be used for identifying a complete diatessaronic sequence.<sup>24</sup> Even the fullest surviving 5th-century Syriac manuscript of Ephrem’s *Commentary* (preserved in a manuscript also belonging to the Chester Beatty Library) does not include Tatian’s discussion of Jesus choosing and sending off his twelve and seventy-two disciples. A witness suited for comparison must preserve the intact text of the complete *Diatessaron*. The only such text known today is an Arabic Christian translation

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translation of a Syriac *Vulgate* of the *Diatesseron*. See Petersen 1990, for its text (197) and summary of scholarship (196–203); as well as Kraeling 1935, for its first publication.

- 22 The Armenian translation of Ephrem’s *Commentary* survives in two versions, including one (manuscript A) written in a more archaic and the other (manuscript B) in a more recent Armenian script. They were produced independently from each other in geographically separate and ideologically distinct locations, but in the same year 1195 CE (644 of the Armenian calendar). Louis Leloir’s critical edition of the Armenian translations was published in 1953 based on both manuscripts (McCarthy 1993: 23–24).
- 23 The Syriac text of Ephrem’s *Commentary* is housed in the Chester Beatty Library under the accession number MS 709. Prior to its discovery in 1956 and first publication in 1963, Ephrem’s text was accessible only in Armenian translation. In the introduction to his critical edition of the Syriac text, McCarthy discusses its preservation (noting that about 80% of it has been identified scattered in various other manuscripts); as well as its relation to the Armenian versions (1993: 25–34). Leloir’s dating of MS 709 was based on its Estrangela script. For details, see McCarthy 1993, 28 and note 4.
- 24 Petersen (1990: 408–409) considers Ephrem’s extensive commentary to be the most important Eastern witness of the *Diatesseron* due to its early date and diction, since Ephrem quotes and/or discusses the contents of a fourth century version of Tatian’s text. Nevertheless, in her introduction to the critical edition of the Syriac manuscript (see below), McCarthy notes the problems of sorting out abbreviations, citations, allusions, and paraphrases between Ephrem’s commentary in relation to Tatian’s *Diatessaron* and some of Ephrem’s gospel citations. She explains: “even if one were to undertake a vast text-critical study in identifying the scriptural texts used by Ephrem one might not always succeed in achieving certainty, since Ephrem is basically commenting on a *Diatessaron* text and not on a Syriac form of the four separate gospels” (1993: 35–36).

prepared by Abul-Farag Abdallah ibn at-Tayyib (d. 1043 CE), who rendered a Syriac edition (now lost) available to him into Arabic during the first half of the eleventh century.<sup>25</sup> Since it preserves the full original content of Tatian's harmony, the Arabic *Diatessaron* is used as the primary point of comparison in this study.<sup>26</sup>

Reliance of Mani and the early Manichaeans on Tatian's harmonized account of Jesus's life is attested in Late Antique sources. From the Latin-speaking part of the Roman Empire, the Manichaean witnesses are isolated passages. Nevertheless, they are highly valued for they reflect an earlier stage of transmission to the extent that they document the *Diatessaron* before its text became vulgatized; that is, in their prose, later standard wording drawn from the four separate gospels were not adopted in place of the genuine diatessaronic variants, as is the case with the Arabic *Diatessaron*. Gilles Quispel argues that it was the Manichaeans who preserved the most authentic version of Tatian's *Diatessaron* in the West.<sup>27</sup> Unlike the *Diatessaron* in the Syriac Christian setting, where its content was gradually brought into greater alignment with the standard texts of the Greek gospels, the Manichaean version of the *Diatessaron* in the Latin West remained "archaic" and "wild," since the Manichaeans were under no pressure to "domesticate," that is, to vulgatize it.<sup>28</sup>

From across the Iranian cultural region, Manichaean witnesses to the *Diatessaron* are also early, in the sense that they, too, rely on likely 3rd-century editions of Tatian's harmony that survive copied into medieval manuscripts. They include three fragmentary texts with passages from the *Diatessaron* in Parthian translation written in the Manichaean script housed in the Turfanforschung of the State Library in Berlin. They are preserved copied onto folia of paper codices produced between the 8th and 10th centuries during the Uyghur era of Manichaean history. Torn pages of these books survive today. The two smaller fragments quote from the Passion. In one, Jesus addresses his disciples before his death, while in the other, the women arrive to Jesus'

25 The critical edition of this Arabic translation was published in French by A. S. Marmarji (1935). The first English translation was published by Hamlyn J. Hill (1910, reprinted in 2001), being based on the Latin translation that appeared as the preface to the first publication of the Arabic text in the late nineteenth century (Ciasca 1888). Hill's chapter and verse numbers are identical with that of the French text in Marmarji. For an overview, see Petersen 1994: 133–140.

26 This Arabic translation is considered to be the most reliable witness to the original sequence of Tatian's text. The colophons in several of the six manuscripts state that the text was translated in medieval times, suggesting that the translator's Syriac exemplar was already vulgatized (Petersen 1990: 409).

27 Quispel 1993: 374–378.

28 For a summary of Quispel's argument, see Petersen 1994: 282, 336, and 441.

tomb (M 6005 and M 18, respectively).<sup>29</sup> The largest fragment (M 4570), identified by Werner Sundermann in one of his first publications on Iranian Manichaean literature, also concerns the Passion. It is titled by its header as a *Sermon on the Crucifixion* and compares Mani's death to that of Jesus.<sup>30</sup> The Parthian language of these texts imply an early origin, most likely within the era of Mesopotamian and West Central Asian Manichaeism, sometime during the mid-third and fourth centuries. Parthian was the vernacular spoken from what is now northern Iraq, across northern Iran, to the Afghan border until its gradual disappearance from everyday use under the dominance of the Persian language in the Sasanid period (224–651 CE).<sup>31</sup> After the 7th century, Parthian was no longer a living language. It remained, however, a *lingua sacra* in the Manichaean Church during the Uyghur era.<sup>32</sup> The earliest record of the southern Mesopotamian version of the Aramaic script that later became associated exclusively with the Manichaeans, is also attested from Mani's time, for it is used on Mani's rock crystal sealstone to identify its owner in Syriac as *Mānī šelīhā d-Išō' mešihā*, that is, 'Mani, apostle (lit. messenger) of Jesus Christ (lit. messiah).'<sup>33</sup>

Quite remarkably, a visual witness to the *Diatessaron* also survives from the above noted Iranian Manichaean context in the Turfan Collection of the Asian Art Museum in Berlin. I have catalogued and described this fragmentary work of art (III 4976a)<sup>34</sup> and subsequently in 2012 interpreted its codicology and pictorial content, arguing that in original condition it contained a marginal illustration that depicted the life of Christ in at least 24 or 28 vignettes. The events – conveyed pictorially in these vignettes – follow a distinctly

29 Petersen 1988: 187–92 (M 18); and Sundermann 1973: 106–8 (M 6005).

30 Sundermann 1968: 398; and 1981: 76 and plate 33. For a comparative table, see Gulácsi 2012: 155–157; or 2015: 382–383.

31 Although it is unconfirmed whether Mani himself spoke Parthian, a variety of documentary evidence records his initiative to have church materials rendered into Parthian for missionary work among Parthian speakers, as suggested for example in *1Ke* 5.25: "the writing which I [Mani] wrote on account of the Parthians" [i.e., the *Book of Giants*] (Gardner 1995: 11; see Tardieu 2008: 51, Fig. 3); and M 2: "And when the Apostle of Light was in the provincial capital of Holvān, he let the teacher Mār Ammō come, who knew the Parthian script and language and was familiar with ... He sent him to Abarshahr" (Gulácsi 2015: 74–75). Boyce notes about prince Ardaban that he belonged to the house of the Parthian Arsacids, and thus was a kinsman of Mani's (1975: 40).

32 Lieu 1992: 106–107.

33 Mani's sealstone (INT. 1384 BIS), housed in the collection of the Département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques of the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, is the only Manichaean work of art known today from late ancient Mesopotamia (Gulácsi 2013 and 2014).

34 Gulácsi 2001: 124–125 and 237.

diatessaronic order. These vignettes are preserved on a torn folio fragment that once belonged to a luxurious, illustrated edition of an Iranian (Parthian or Middle Persian) Manichaean hymnbook made during the Uyghur era sometime during the 8th and 10th centuries. The textual content on the verso retains just enough Manichaean script lines from a cantillated hymn to verify the paintings' physical context. Likewise, the damaged pictorial content on the recto is just enough to confirm two narrative vignettes, one depicting "Judas paid in advance by Caiaphas" (Matt 26:14) and next to it another portraying the "Washing of the Feet" (John 13:1), but not the content of additional, more damaged, adjacent vignettes. The events these vignettes depict are unconnected to one another in the canonical gospels but are discussed together in Tatian's gospel harmony (Diat. 44:6–9 and 44:11–21), interrupted in the *Diatessaron* only by a brief reference to Judas hanging himself (Diat. 44:10).<sup>35</sup> Concerning their origin, I have argued that these images could not have been invented during the Uyghur era. Their iconographic clues (e.g., lack of halo around Jesus' head) and codicological clues (e.g., sideways orientation of images in relation to the direction of the writing on a vertical codex folio) indicate that the Manichaean prototype of these vignettes was most likely first portrayed in Mani's *Book of Pictures* – the only pictorial medium attested among the Manichaeans in 3rd-century Mesopotamia.<sup>36</sup> This claim is supported by other analogous cases of survival, when scenes attested in textual sources from Mani's *Book of Pictures* are later adapted to other pictorial mediums (e.g., manuscript illustration) and thus are preserved from the Uyghur era.<sup>37</sup>

#### 4 Conclusion

Based on a comparative assessment, this study has demonstrated at a minimum that the *Kephalaia*'s authors sourced the Jesus narrative from Tatian's *Diatessaron* – the earliest known gospel harmony dating from ca. 170 CE. This

35 Gulácsi 2012: 150–155; or 2015: 374–380.

36 Gulácsi 2015: 297–305 and Figs. 5/40–5/42; and 374–386 and Fig. 6/19. In order to see clearer the surviving pictorial content, the two vignettes were subjected to a digital restoration that enhanced their lapis-lazuli blue background and gilded frame; but left the pairs of figures untouched in each.

37 Gulácsi 2015: 308–312, Figs. 5/44 and Tab. 5/5. The best documented example involves a textual record (Kephalaion 92, describing Mani teaching catechumens about soteriology with the aid of a complex scene in the *Book of Pictures* used as a prop) and a full-page soteriological illustration preserved adopted to an Uyghur Manichaean service book (III 4959 verso) as a sideways-oriented image, see Gulácsi 2015: 296–300 and Figs. 5/38–5/39.

most certainly would have occurred already in the composition of the original Syriac version of the contents of the *Kephalaia*, since the *Diatessaron* was used in the place of the four gospels until the late 5th century across Syro-Mesopotamia. The *Diatessaron* has a well-documented history in this region. It has close ties to Adiabene, which had a significant Syriac Christian population by the late 2nd century that produced scholarship, including biblical translations and a composite version of the gospels attributed to Tatian, who was also native to Adiabene.<sup>38</sup> Further south along the local trade routes, the *Diatessaron* is attested from the first half of the third century at Dura-Europos, where a church with a painted baptistry (ca. 240–ca. 256 CE) also yielded a fragment of the *Diatessaron*.<sup>39</sup> In lower Mesopotamia, in the Parthian province Asoristan, Mani (216–277 CE) “the Apostle of Jesus Christ” was raised among the Jewish-Baptist Elchasaites before founding his own church and teaching the life of Christ to his followers according to the *Diatessaron*. Diatessaronic passages preserved in Parthian indicate that the reliance on Tatian’s harmony was not solely a later “western” adaptation of Mani’s church, but goes back to the original community around Mani in Mesopotamia. While C14 dating confirms that the two papyrus volumes of the *Kephalaia* were most likely produced during the late 4th and early 5th centuries in Egypt, it is clear from their content that the chapters were composed in Syriac in Mesopotamia during mid to late 3rd century. The diatessaronic passage in the Dublin volume, with Mani’s invocation of the twelve and seventy-two in response to the Iranian interlocutor Goundesh, anchors reliance on the *Diatessaron* in the earliest stratum of the Manichaean tradition. Identifying diatessaronic traits in the *Kephalaia*, therefore, is especially significant for documenting that Mani and the first generation of Manichaeans in southern Mesopotamia relied on Tatian’s account of the life of Christ.

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38 Sellwood 1983.

39 See Kraeling 1935; Joosten 2003.

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# “We Rejoice All of Us as We See Your *Bēma*” (*Psalms Book* 229, 24.19): Visualization and the Art of Memory in the Coptic Manichaean Psalms

Eduard Iricinschi

## 1 Introduction

The *Bēma* ceremony represented the highlight of the ritual year both for late antique Western Manichaean elect and for the hearers. It celebrated Mani’s death and it took place in the spring. By all surviving accounts, friendly or not, the *Bēma* festival involved an intricate and ostentatious ritual production.<sup>1</sup> After fasting and praying as a preparation for the ritual, for intervals that varied from one day or night, in Western Manichaeism, up to a month, in the Central Asian Eastern traditions, the composite Manichaean audience gathered around a five-step platform, well-adorned with refined cloth, on which there were placed a portrait of Mani, books authored by him, and possibly a reliquary chest. While the main overtones of the *Bēma* ceremony were penitential, as Mani was expected to forgive sins and wipe the misdeeds accrued by Manichaeans over the year, it also carried eschatological, didactic, and cosmological connotations.<sup>2</sup>

1 I presented my research on possible uses of the art of memory in Manichaean ritual in June 2018, at the colloquium on “Formative Exchanges in Western and Central Asia: Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, and Buddhism in Contact” (the Käte Hamburger Kolleg and Ruhr University Bochum) and at the Dublin conference on “Manichaeism in Egypt: The Medinet Madi Library after 90 Years,” organized by the Chester Beatty Library. On both occasions I benefitted from questions and comments by Jason D. BeDuhn, Mattias Brand, Alexandra Cuffel, Paul Dilley, Jean-Daniel Dubois, Yukiyo Kasai, Nils Arne Pedersen, Andrea Piras, Kianoosh Rezaia, Flavia Ruani, Zsuzsanna Gulácsi, and Håkon Fiane Teigen. I am grateful for their interventions: they considerably improved the final version of the present article.

2 The main Coptic primary sources for the *Bēma* ceremony are *The Psalms of the Bēma* (*Psalms Book* 11, 1–47; see Allberry 1938; Wurst 1995 and 1996) and *The Sermon on the Great War* (*Manichaean Homilies* 7–42; see Pedersen 2006); Middle Persian, Parthian, and Sogdian sources are in M 801 (the *Bēma* handbook, critical edition in Henning 1937; German and English translations available in Klimkeit 1989 and 1993; Italian translation in Magris 2000: 249–266; discussion in BeDuhn 2000: 41–42); Augustine mentions it directly in *Contra epistulam fundamenti* 8. For the reliquary chest, see Gulácsi 2008, available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/manichean-art> (accessed on July 16, 2021) and Gulácsi 2001: 87–88; for

The *Bēma* ceremony must have also enveloped its attendees in a sensorial bath, offering them a ritually codified immersion in sounds, sights, and possibly smells and tastes, if they partook in the ritual meal. Sleep and food deprivation before the festival, more intense and longer in Eastern Manichaeism, probably brought the Manichaeans to the intersection between a regime of *hypersensoriality* and a regime of *hyposensoriality*. To simplify: too much information, out of a richness of stimuli, poured at once on the “gates” of their previously deprived minds.<sup>3</sup> Or, to put it in Manichaean parlance: during the *Bēma* festival the Light Mind overturned the sentinels that Sin left at the gates of the senses, took over all five perception outlets, and reeducated them by projecting into their eyes “visions of love” and by reenchanting their ears with “the sounds of the lessons of righteousness, the words of the psalms and of the prayers, the praise of the hymns and the lessons of truth and the knowledge of charity.”<sup>4</sup> For one thing, the liturgical soundscape itself must have been overwhelming: during the *Bēma* festival, texts were recited or read aloud, prayers were pronounced, hymns were chanted. There was a great deal to look at during the Manichaean *Bēma* ceremony, too. At the risk of indulging in literary clichés, one can consider the *Bēma* festival a feast for the eyes and the ears. When Augustine recalled the North African *Bēma* festivals he himself witnessed as a catechumen, his memory dwelled on the visual quality of the ritual spectacle taking place before his eyes and on the interactions between the central ritual object and the audience: “[Y]ou celebrate with great honors your *Bēma*, that is the day on which Mani was killed, with the lectern raised up by five steps, adorned with precious cloths, placed in the midst and facing towards the worshippers.”<sup>5</sup>

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didactic and eschatological overtones see Gulácsi 2015: 38–39; Pedersen, 1996, 273ff; for cosmological tones of Jesus’ passion and Mani’s death, see Wurst, 1995, 110–30, and Ries, 2011: 179–89; for a general overview of the *Bēma* ceremony, see Sundermann 1989 available online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bema-festival-manicheans> (accessed on July 16, 2021); for the roots of Manichaean confession, see BeDuhn 2013; and Wurst 1995: 132–42, for a close analysis of the Manichaean forgiveness of sins within this ritual setting.

- 3 For the distinction between the sensory regimes of *hypersensoriality*, regarded as “a profusion that overstimulates the body of the worshippers” and *hyposensoriality*, as “the deprivation of one or many senses, for instance if the ritual is performed by night or in a cave” in ancient rituals, see Grand-Clément 2021: 147, with relevant bibliography.
- 4 *1Ke* 56, 142.10 and 143.17–19. I will return later to Kephalaion 56, crucial for the argument of this article.
- 5 “*cum vestrum bema, id est, diem quo Manichaeus occisus est, quinque gradibus instructo tribunali et pretiosis linteis adornato, ac in promptu posito et obiecto adorantibus, magnis honoribus prosequamini*” Aug., *Cont. Fund.* 8.9; Teske 2006: 239–240; Jolivet and Jourjon 1961, 410.

Zsuzsanna Gulácsi's analysis of the Central Asian depiction of the *Bēma* festival on the fragment of a codex folio, MIK III 4979, verso, gives us a clear idea about the ways in which the visual stimuli during the ceremony equally came from religious actors, the elect, both female and male, with their distinct white attire and headdress, and, presumably, the hearers, as well as from religious items, such as books, possibly Mani's portrait, fruit, bread, and the *Bēma* itself, covered in cloth. The ritual actors and the objects they handled rarely found themselves in passive postures: the fine technique of the artist who painted the elaborate scene in MIK III 4979, verso, conveys the tension of the ritual movement, focused on the *Bēma* and on the elect holding a book in front of it.<sup>6</sup> The ceremony entailed an elaborate ritual choreography, centered upon the *Bēma*, and including other activities such as sacramental meals, singing of hymns, and reading or recitation of sermons, catechisms, and parables. The intense sensorial landscape and the well-choreographed ritual movements of the *Bēma* festival prepared the audience, the elect and the hearers, to meet their supreme religious assessor: Mani himself was supposed to come down from Paradise, hear and judge their confessions, and forgive their sins. To the confessing, penitential Manichaean crowd, the *Bēma* brought back Mani's presence. What precisely prompted ancient Persian and Egyptian Manichaeans, as well as their medieval Uyghur counterparts, to look at a well-adorned platform and at Mani's portrait and scriptures and choose to behold a human-shaped, yet divine, being, enter in conversation with this invisible presence, achieve a highly emotional state of mind, examine their conscience, and confess major sins accumulated over the year? What were the mental ritual elements that made this extraordinary annual meeting possible?

In a book whose title, *Expériences de l'extase: Extase, ascension et récit visionnaire de l'hellénisme au moyen âge*, was probably meant both as a methodological provocation and a scholarly gesture of deference to Mircea Eliade and Ugo Bianchi, his academic advisers during the 1970s, Ioan Petru Culianu suggested reading the multilayered early Christian Sethian cosmogonies, illustrated by second- and third-century CE heresiological and Gnostic texts, as rigorous exercises in religious imagination, built upon the cognitive architecture of the Greco-Roman art of memory.<sup>7</sup> In short, Culianu believed that memorizing the endless names of archons, their place, and cosmic biographies in the order of creation carried personal religious implications for the ancient Gnostics. For the individual Sethians, Culianu argues, salvation arrived in the guise of

6 Gulácsi 2001: 74–75; Gulácsi 2005: 48, 51; for the close analysis of the same painting see also BeDuhn 2000: 156–57.

7 Culianu 1984, 11–17.

mnemonic overdrive. Yet, one might ask, how precisely did this elaborate exercise of imagination work within the Sethian ritual settings?

While I will not deal with Sethian texts here, in the next pages I will advance the proposition that intricate forms of the art of memory, derived from educational aspects of Graeco-Roman rhetoric, rendered effective the process of religious purification by allowing the Manichaeans to meet Mani every year at the *Bēma* ceremony. The following will present a summary discussion of the art of memory in antiquity, paying attention to the economy of images in relation to the creation of mental storerooms for memory; it will propose a detailed analysis of images, places, and emotional scripts in the texts associated with the *Bēma* ceremony (*The Bēma Psalms* and *The Sermon on the Great War*); it will highlight the Peripatetic and Stoic roots of Manichaean characterizations of perception; and it will finish with a discussion of the role of the Light Mind in bringing the ceremony of the *Bēma* to its conclusion.

## 2 The Art of Memory in Antiquity

Culianu's interpretation of Sethian rituals as involving techniques of memorization invites us to revisit the cognitive status of memory, beginning with the usual suspects: Plato and Aristotle. One of the most used metaphors for memory in antiquity is that of the wax tablet upon which one inscribed that which was supposed to be memorized. Written about the same time that a young Aristotle joined the Academy, 367 BCE, Plato's dialogue *Theaetetus* presents us with one of the first illustrations of the metaphor of "MEMORY-AS-WAX." Even if the metaphor of memory as a wax-tablet originated with Homer (*Illiad*, ii.851, xvi.554), as all good things did in the Athenian republic of letters, Plato's Socrates reworks it into a theory of the mind:

Now I want you to suppose, for the sake of the argument, that we have in our souls a block of wax (ἐνδὸν κήρινον ἐκμαγείον), larger in one person, smaller in another, and of purer wax in one case, dirtier in another; in some men rather hard, in others rather soft, while in some it is of the proper consistency. [...] We may look upon it, then, as a gift of Memory, the mother of the Muses. We make impressions upon this of everything we wish to remember among the things we have seen or heard or thought of ourselves; we hold the wax under our perceptions and thoughts and take a stamp from them, in the way in which we take the imprints of signet rings (ὥσπερ δακτυλίων σημεῖα ἐνσημαινομένους). Whatever is impressed upon the wax we remember and know so long as the image

remains in the wax (καὶ ὁ μὲν ἂν ἐκμαγῇ καὶ μνημονεύειν τε ἐπίστασθαι ἕως ἂν ἐνῇ τὸ εἶδωλον αὐτοῦ); whatever is obliterated or cannot be impressed, we forget and do not know.<sup>8</sup>

This metaphor carried with it a range of vocabulary which included key terms such as "seal," "image," "signet," "imprint," and "places." Most of them migrated not only into Aristotle's discussion of memory and into the later developments of the art of memory in ancient rhetoric, but also, putting on new meanings, entered the religious vocabulary of Manichaean rituals in their Egyptian expression.

Aristotle's treatment of the topic of memory, "On Memory and Recollection" (*De memoria et reminiscencia*) refined Plato's description of memory as wax tablet. According to his *De anima*, sense perception translates into a cognitive process through which the eyes capture outside information and rework it internally into a mental picture or a representation, a *phantasma*. This mental image is produced through an imprint, "as people do who seal things with signet-rings" upon a block of wax. According to Richard Sorabji's examination of the functions of memory in Aristotle's *De memoria*, for the Stagirite memory belongs to perception, not to thought processes (*nous*).<sup>9</sup> Yet both thinking and memory cannot take place without images produced and physically imprinted on the soul (*phantasma*), since "it is not possible to think without an image."<sup>10</sup> In *De anima* Aristotle holds *phantasia* to be the movement of the data provided by perception, which data receives the intermediary status of *phantasma*, or inner image, and can be further turned into thoughts (*noēmata*).<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Sorabji argues, since "an image is an affection belonging to the common sense," then for Aristotle "memory, even the memory of objects of thought is

8 Plat., *Theaet.* 191, c–e; in Cooper 1997: 212. For an analysis of how the metaphor of memory as a wax tablet became representative for the ancient uses of the art of memory, as well as for a discussion of how its system of *loci* influenced not only classical literary production in Greek and Latin but the whole system of memorials and monuments, such as the Column of Trajan, see Small 1997, chapters 10–14, dedicated to "Writing Habits of the Literate," and eadem, 209, for a brief analysis of the Column of Trajan as a memory device.

9 Sorabji 1972.

10 καὶ νοεῖν οὐκ ἔστιν ἄνευ φαντάσματος, Arist. *Mem.* 449b31–450a1. For the purpose of this article, I have followed Sorabji's translation and choice of philosophical vocabulary in English; see now Bloch 2007: 23–51, for a new edition of Aristotle's *On Memory and Recollection*, and see his important reevaluations of Aristotle's images.

11 Arist. *Anim.* III.3.428b; cf. Watson 1982, 109: "*Phantasia* comes between perception and intellect, and [...] it is *that* in virtue of which we say that a *phantasma* occurs to us. *Phantasia* must then be involved in the mutation of sense-perceptions into *phantasmata*, which are then available for the activity of the intellective soul."

not without an image.”<sup>12</sup> In Aristotle’s conception, memory works with images which affect the soul, leaving an imprint, like a seal mark on warm wax:

One might be puzzled how, when the affection is present but the thing is absent, what is not present is ever remembered. For it is clear that one must think of the affection, which is produced by means of perception in the soul and in that part of the body which contains the soul, as being like a sort of picture (διὰ τῆς αἰσθήσεως ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ καὶ τῷ μορίῳ τοῦ σώματος τῷ ἔχοντι αὐτὴν οἷον ζωγράφημα), the having of which we say is memory. For the change that occurs marks in a sort of imprint, as it were, of the sense-image, as people do who seal things with signet rings (καθάπερ οἱ σφραγιζόμενοι τοῖς δακτυλίοις).<sup>13</sup>

The act of remembering, for Aristotle, employed mental images as its very own fuel. Yet, Sorabji makes this very precise and technical point, according to which these *phantasmata* were not common images, but copies of images: “Aristotle’s theory of remembering requires not any kind of image, but an image that is a likeness or a copy (*eikōn*).”<sup>14</sup> For Bloch, the most recent editor and translator into English of Aristotle’s treatise on memory, images (*phantasmata*) have both physical and pictorial aspects; their “residual” features become active components of the process of recollections.<sup>15</sup> Mary Carruthers summarizes the post-Aristotelian manner of thinking about memory: “According to the Greek tradition, all perceptions, however presented to the mind, are encoded as *phantasmata*, ‘representations’ or a ‘kind of *eikōn*.’ Because they are themselves ‘sort-of pictures,’ these representations were thought to be best retained for recollection by marking them in an order that was readable, a process the ancients thought to be most like the act of seeing.”<sup>16</sup>

Jocelyn Penny Small details the movement from an abstract understanding of the works of memory, and their association with *topoi* in Aristotle, to the “full-blown physical system of the Romans,” that is, to the creation of mental storage places for depositing images in the Roman authors, such as Cicero, *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, and Quintilian.<sup>17</sup> For instance, in describing

12 καὶ τὸ φάντασμα τῆς κοινῆς αἰσθήσεως πάθος ἐστίν (Arist. *Mem.*, 450a.10–11); ἡ δὲ μνήμη, καὶ ἡ τῶν νοητῶν, οὐκ ἄνευ φαντάσματος ἐστίν (idem 450a.12–13).

13 Arist., *De. Mem. et rem.* 450a.27–32, Sorabji’s translation in Sorabji 1972: 50.

14 Sorabji 1972: 2.

15 Bloch 2007: 76.

16 Carruthers 2008: 20.

17 Small 1997: 77–87; quotation at 87; see also Fantham 2004: 287–98, for supporting this view of the Roman cognitive innovation in matters of memory.

the legendary invention of the art of memory by Simonides of Ceos, Cicero's *On the Orator* maintains the association between acuity of memory and the sense of sight, but it adds a clearer mental topography:

It has been sagaciously discerned by Simonides or else discovered by some other person, that the most complete pictures are formed in our minds of the things that have been conveyed to them and imprinted on them by the senses, but that the keenest of all our senses is the sense of sight, and that consequently perceptions received by the ears or by reflexion can be most easily retained in the mind if they are also conveyed to our minds by the mediation of the eyes, with the result that things not seen and not lying in the field of visual discernment are earmarked by a sort of outline and image and shape so that we keep hold of as it were by an act of sight things that we can scarcely embrace by an act of thought. But these forms and bodies, like all the things that come under our view, require a seat (*sede*), inasmuch as a material object without a place (*loco*) is inconceivable.<sup>18</sup>

As a result, for all those students or orators in training coming after Aristotle, remembering became a stroll down the images lane, an assiduous search for *phantasmata*, that is, representations of images, rigorously spaced out on a mental map, and preferably punctuated by intense emotional states. Their best help was the art of memory, a spatial mnemonic practice, derived from training techniques developed by Graeco-Roman orators and rhetors, which allowed one to store and retain a large number of memories, by associating a rigorously ordered series of backgrounds and a collection of vivid images, chosen in such a way that the emotions they stir create a solid cognitive bound between backgrounds, images, and, finally, the very matters to be memorized. A first century BCE treatise formerly and falsely attributed to Cicero, "on the theory of public speaking," *Rhetorica ad Herennium* provided instruction on how to become a convincing public speaker, by initiating its readers in matters of invention, arrangement, and the style of the discourses, in the role of memory in reproducing them, and also in how to deliver the perfect oratorical performance. The treatise identifies two kinds of memory: natural and artificial; it is mostly the latter that needs training.

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18 Cic. *De Orat.* II. 87. 357–358, I have followed Small's emendations to Sutton's LOEB translation (Small 1997: 86; Sutton, 1942: 468–469).

The artificial memory includes places and images (*ex locis et imaginibus*). By places I mean those that are naturally or artificially set off on a small scale, complete and conspicuous, so that we can grasp and embrace them easily by the natural memory (*ut eos facile naturali memoria comprehendere et amplecti queamus*): a house, the space between two columns, a recess, an arch, or the like.<sup>19</sup>

The act of writing offers the best metaphor for how to visualize the working of the art of memory: "The places are very much like wax tables or papyrus, the images like the letters, the arrangement and disposition of the images like the script, and the delivery is like the reading."<sup>20</sup> The images themselves need to be memorable, snapshots of actions, preferably of the kind that creates esthetic contradictions, stirs intense feelings, unexpected mental associations, and that is likely to leave a mark in the natural memory of the orator.

We ought, then, to set up images that can adhere the longest in the memory. And we shall do so if we establish likeness as striking as possible; if we set up images that are not many or vague, but doing something; if we assign to them exceptional beauty or singular ugliness; if we dress some of them with crowns or purple cloaks, for example, so that the likeness may be more distinct to us; or if we somehow disfigure them (*aut si qua re deformabimus*), as by introducing one stained with blood or soiled with mud or smeared with red paint, so that its form is more striking, or by assigning certain comic effects (*aut ridiculas res aliquas imaginibus adtribuamus*), for that too will ensure our remembering them more readily. The things we easily remember when they are real we likewise remember without difficulty when they are figments, if they have been carefully delineated. But this will be essential – again and again to run over rapidly in the mind all the original places in order to refresh the images.<sup>21</sup>

Writing in the first century CE his *Institutio Oratoria*, Quintilian insisted on the profit that the orators can derive, in the training of their minds, from associating memories to well-known places, which need to be "sharply impressed upon the mind" (*memoriam signatis animo sedibus*). Best would be, the rhetorician

19 *Ad Her.* III.16.29, in Ps.-Cicero 1954, transl. by Harry Caplan, modified.

20 *Nam loci cerae aut chartae simillimi sunt, imagines litteris, dispositio et conlocatio imaginum scripturae, pronuntiatio lectioni* (*Ad Her.* III.17.30, LOEB edition, transl. by H. Caplan, modified). For a new translation and discussion of the relevant passages in *Ad Herennium* see Small 1997: 88–90.

21 *Ad Herennium*, III.22.37.

born in Hispania argues, to select, as memory deposits, a dwelling one is mostly familiarized with: a well-lit and capacious house, whose topography can be easily dedicated to memory and revisited at any time upon need.

Some place is chosen of the largest possible extent and characterized by the utmost possible variety, such as a *very large house divided into a number of rooms* (*domum forte magnam et in multos diductam recessus*). Everything of note inside it is carefully set in mind (*animo diligenter adfigunt*), in order that, without hesitation, the thought could run through all its parts (*ut sine cunctatione ac mora partes eius omnes cogitatio possit percurrere*).<sup>22</sup>

Once they memorized the very configuration of the large mental house, Quintilian advises rhetoricians to place evocative insignias – which are intimately suggestive and directly related to that which needs to be memorized –, in the various rooms of the house with the purpose of demanding them back whenever the process of recollection is activated. For instance, if maritime navigation is the topic of soon-to-be memory, then its evocative insignia could be, naturally, an anchor.<sup>23</sup>

The first insignia is placed, as it were, in the vestibule, the second, also, in the atrium, and the remainder go all round the water basin of the impluvium (*tum impluvia circumeunt*) and placed not only in bedrooms (*cubiculis*) and under the porticoes (*aut exedris*) but even in front of the statues or the like (*sed statuīs etiam similibusque*). This done, as soon as the memory needs to be recalled (*cum est repetenda memoria*), beginning with the first one, all these places are reviewed (*loca haec recensere*) and whatever has been deposited is demanded, as their insignia (*ut eorum imagine*) recalls it.<sup>24</sup>

We took this long detour through definitions and uses of memory in antiquity to establish four main points which will help us advance a new understanding of the Manichaean ritual of the *Bēma*. First, in the post-Aristotelian tradition, memory could process only representations, or likenesses of images, that is, copies of *eikon*, or imprints of images in a warm wax mold. Copies of the *eikon*, envisaged as imprints of images in a warm wax mold, constitute

22 Quint. *Inst.* XI.II.18., translation H. E. Butler, modified. Butler 1922: IV.220–221.

23 *Sit autem signum navigationis ut ancora*, Quint. *Inst.* XI.II.19.

24 Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.* XI.II.20., translation H. E. Butler, modified, in Butler 1922: IV.222–223.

the condition *sine qua non* for the formation, retention, storage, and further circulation of memories, according to this cognitive paradigm. Secondly, later Roman developments of the art of memory insisted on the spatialization of mental representations meant to be inscribed in memory and recalled when needed (Cicero). They also stressed the relevance of the model of the household as the mental configuration for the process of memorization (Quintilian) and their association with intense emotions (*Rhetorica ad Herennium*). To be easily accessed and reproduced, mental representations, that is *phantasmata* or *effigia*, acquired equally a storage place, or a “bin,” to quote Jocelyn Small, and an emotional descriptor. In the third place, following a wide range of modern studies on the art of memory including nuanced analyses by Mary Carruthers and John Scheid, we can modify its definition as being less pre-occupied with increasing the orators’ power of memorization and more oriented towards shaping their inventing and adapting skills in a compositional art.<sup>25</sup> According to Carruthers, this craft enhanced visualization and educated imagination: “The arts of memory are among the arts of thinking, especially involved with fostering the qualities we now revere as ‘imagination’ and ‘creativity.’”<sup>26</sup> Thus, rhetorical practices, into which at least one famous North African Manichaean was professionally trained (Augustine), could have constituted the very medium through which the Graeco-Roman exercises of memorization, visualization, and rigorous imagination entered the fabric of social and literary Manichaean practices.<sup>27</sup> The level of literary training and

25 The scholarly literature dedicated to the uses of the art of memory throughout history remains substantial: it is not the purpose of this article to revisit it. Suffice is to note here that, while medieval texts include works by Ramón Llull, Hugh of St. Victor, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas’ commentary of Aristotle’s text and a few others, Renaissance sources refer mostly to Giordano Bruno, but also to Giulio Camillo’s theatre of imagination. All these primary sources are closely analyzed and discussed in a wide range of modern studies on the art of memory that begin with classic works by Frances Yates and Paolo Rossi and continue with more recent and very nuanced analyses by Jocelyn Penny Small (on the roles of memory and education in the Graeco-Roman antiquity), Mary Carruthers (superb analyses of the cognitive making of the art of memory in late antiquity the Middle Ages), Lina Bolzoni (Renaissance studies and the beginning of the printing technologies), John Scheid (with a marvelous and original reading of Plutarch’s *Roman Questions* as articulated by the art of memory) and Carlo Severi (anthropological studies bridging oral and written cultures, with unexpected insights on the Aby Warburg’s texts and on material uses of the art of memory). Small 1997, Yates 1966; Rossi 1960; Small 1997; Carruthers 2008 (1990); Carruthers 2003; Carruthers and Ziolkowski 2002; Bolzoni 1984; Bolzoni 2001; Bolzoni 2002; Scheid 2012; Berthoz and Scheid 2018; Severi 2015, 2018.

26 Carruthers 1998: 9.

27 See Van Oort 2020: 284–306, for a parallel analysis of the role of memory as a rhetorical device, in Augustine’s *Confessions* and the authors of the *Kephalaia*; I will return in the next pages to his conclusions.

artistic skillfulness displayed by the anonymous composers of Manichaean psalms, hymns, and homilies, cannot exclude the possibility that most of them benefitted from forms of rhetorical education available in the second and third century CE Syria. Besides acquiring a rigorous schooling of memory, Manichaean authors must have been equally trained in the art of conveying emotionally charged images through the rhetorical preliminary exercises of *ekphrasis*, that is, speeches, descriptions and even narratives, which brought, according to Theon, "persons and events and places and periods of time" *vividly* before the eyes of the listeners and readers.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, the last point that will help us advance the understanding of the *Bēma* ceremony, is that the ritual itself subjected its participants to a multifaceted sensorial context and to complex emotional intensification through the double bind of mourning and joy, with the purpose of eliciting the controlled, yet no less vivid, visualization of Mani himself in person absolving the sins of his followers and preparing his church for the challenges of a new liturgical year. We hold that the Coptic Manichaean texts preserved under the title of the *Psalms of the Bēma* and the *Homilies*, especially, the *Sermon of the Great War* provided the ritual and emotional scripts for the yearly encounter of Mani in person. The next two sections of this article advance a possible scenario for the ritual visualization of Mani during the *Bēma* celebration.<sup>29</sup>

### 3 Elements for the Art of Memory in the *Bēma* Ritual (1): Images and Places

A complex religious festival, the ceremony of the *Bēma* extolled both sadness and joy from its attendance, carrying it through repentance to renovation. This analysis makes the case that the art of memory, through its main elements, images, places (*loci*), and scripted emotions, played an essential role in the performance of this ritual. Essential for this perspective, Psalm 222 of the *Manichaean Psalm Book* illustrates the fusion between memory and images

28 "The whole treatment of *ekphrasis* and *enargeia* by ancient rhetoricians is based on the assumption that audiences can be made to respond imaginatively to a speech, placing themselves in the situation described." (Webb 2009: 26). Webb 2009 remains fundamental for the recent discussion of *ekphrasis*, as it was developed in the rhetorical textbooks, whose first surviving attestation is in first-century CE Theon's *Progymnasmata* (translation in Kennedy 2003: 1–72; esp. 45, for the quotation).

29 For the notion of emotional script, see Kaster 2005; for its application to second-century Christian writings, see Iricinschi, 2020; for the association between, and fusing of, "emotional scripts" and "liturgical script," see Mellas 2020; for a critical evaluation of this theoretical hybrid, see Iricinschi 2021.

during the performance of the *Bēma* ritual. Recent scholarship took notice of the active role of memory in the process of Manichaean redemption and explored its rich inferences. Jean-Daniel Dubois insisted on the therapeutic values of anamnesis effectuated by the Light Mind on repentant Manichaeans during the festival; he reserved to the ritual working of memory a significant place in the “intellectual arrangement (*dispositive*)” of Manichaean salvation.<sup>30</sup>

In Psalm 222, the author’s effort at establishing affective sites of memory in a ritual setting become effective with a focus on the *Bēma* itself. To achieve this, Psalm 222 develops a dialogue between three characters: the psalmist, the soul, and the *Bēma*. The psalmist addresses the soul with a verb of vision in imperative (“look”) encouraging it to develop a double vision: that of the *Bēma*, as visible sign, an insignia, and that of the soul’s stirrings for the *Bēma* of wisdom. The Psalmist behind Psalm 222 addresses the soul directly and establishes an immediate connection between the *Bēma*, its instantaneous codification into a semiotic system, and the forgiveness of the sins accumulated over the year: “O soul, know this great sign (𐭪𐭫𐭪𐭫𐭪𐭫𐭪) which is the sign of the forgiveness of your sins” (2Ps 7.12–13); “This *visible Bēma*, the Word set it before you that he might sow in you through *what is visible* the *memory* of the hidden Judgment which you have *forgot* since the day you drank the water of madness (𐭪𐭫𐭪𐭫𐭪 𐭪𐭫𐭪𐭫𐭪)” (2Ps 7.14–17).<sup>31</sup> The Manichaean psalmist educates the vision of the Soul, teaching it what to look at and what to see while looking. Its audience correlates the sight of the “visible *Bēma*” with the act of remembering the instance of divine forgiveness of sins. With a stroke of Platonic elegance, in which forgetting is associated with imbibing “the water of madness,” the psalmist translated the object of the *Bēma* into the mnemonic device, an insignia whose role is to activate the memory of Mani’s judgment. The Manichaean Psalmist wants the audience to behold the physical *Bēma*, and translate this vision into an insignia, a *post-it* note for the hidden judgment, so to speak, and alleviate the well-known state of mental stupor usually brought upon by the ingestion of the water of madness.

It will be the task of the Light Mind to shake away this stupor. Its centripetal force collects the minds of the sinners and the sinners themselves, since the Light Mind is “the awakener of those who sleep, the gatherer of those who are scattered.”<sup>32</sup> From the perspective of the editors of the *Kephalaia*, at the cosmological level, the Light Mind is both the first evocation of the Third Father (1Ke 7, 35.21) and the Fourth Father “the one who chooses all the churches”

30 Dubois 1991: 284–286.

31 Wurst 1996: 32–33; Wurst 1995: 166n3.

32 1Ke 11, 44. 11–12, Gardner 1995: 50.

(1*Ke* 7, 36.1–2; trans. Gardner 1995: 40); and it could be regarded as a social practice for the adoption and instruction of new followers into Mani’s church.

Psalm 222 also includes references to ritual movement and ritual setting. In front of the *Bēma*, the audience hears the voice of the choir, amplified by the weight of Paul’s injunction, and is prompted to move towards the judgment seat: “Come therefore and walk on these holy steps” (2*Ps* 7.32).<sup>33</sup> The visualizing exercise of contemplating the *Bēma* metamorphoses it into different objects, most of them carrying intense locative significations. In addition to seeing the *Bēma* as a box of teachings, a ladder, and a scale, the Manichaean Psalmist compels the audience to imagine the transformation of the *Bēma* into an anchoring place and a place of ritual washing for the lives of the Manichaeans. As a result, the audience is now speaking to an intermediary representation. It is not the platform anymore; it is a collection of locative objects or metaphors. “May the *Bēma* become for you a landing place of your days (ΜΑΡΕ ΠΒΗΜΑ ΩΩΠΕ ΝΕ ΝΟΥΜΑ ΜΗΑΝΕ ΜΠΕΑΖΕ), a place of cleansing of your life (ΟΥΜΑ ΝΧΩΚΜΕ ΜΠΕΩΝΞ)” (8.1–2). Yet, the Psalmist urges the Manichaeans to address, in direct speech, this intermediary *Bēma*, which is not the platform covered in precious cloth anymore, but which had not become Mani yet. It is worth noticing the persistence of locative aspects in the metamorphosis of the *Bēma* from the instrument of the Logos to a throne and foundations, and further into the “*Bēma* of the Mind (*Nous*) of the Holy Scriptures” (2*Ps* 8.13).

Tell it (ΧΟΟC ΝΕΥ ΧΕ): You are blessed, great tool (ΤΤΕΧΝΗ) of the Word, upright *Bēma* of the Great Judge, the Throne (ΠΜΑ ΝΖΜΕCΤ) of the Father of Light that are far removed from Error, foundation of the sweet victory, full of wisdom (CΟΦΙΑ). Hail (ΧΑΙΡΕ), *Bēma* of Victory, great sign of our city; joyous shining garlands of the souls that are victorious, but judgment and condemnation of sinners; hail (ΧΑΙΡΕ), *Bēma* of the Mind of the Holy Scriptures (ΜΠΝΟΥC ΝΝΓΡΑΦΑΥΕ ΕΤΟΥΑΒΕ). (2*Ps* 8.6–13)

I follow here Gregor Wurst in identifying the *Nous* as the presence of the Mani himself in his own books which were further placed onto the *Bēma* itself.<sup>34</sup> Once the Psalmist urges the audience to glorify “our Father Manichaios” (8.30) and to glorify “your *Bēma*, your throne” (8.33), the chanted psalm achieves its

33 ΔΜΗ CΕ ΝΤΕΜΑΖΕ ΖΝ ΝΙΑΝΕΤΩΡΤ ΕΤΟΥΑΒΕ; compare to Aug. *C. ep. Man.* 8: *quinque gradibus instructo tribunali*, Wurst 1995: 168n6.

34 “*Bēma* des *Nous* [der] heiligen Schriften’ das bedeutet: *Bēma* des Lichtapostels Mani, der sich als *Nous* (vgl. Bpss 225 Strophe 8; 229,3,1) in den auf dem *Bēma* liegenden heiligen Schriften, seinen Büchern (vgl. BPs 232 Strophe 6; Hom. 28,21–24), der Welt offenbart hat.” (Wurst 1995: 169n4).



following, I would like to continue van Oort’s line of inquiry and to advance that the Manichean theory of perception adopted in Kephalaion 56 presents technical connections to Aristotelian and Stoic philosophical schools. Let us start with a close reading of the relevant passages:

The moulder (πλαστής) placed in the form (πλασμα) of Adam and Eve limbs (ἡζῆμελος), outside and within, for perception and activity (ἀγαισθῆσις καὶ ὀφειεργεῖα), spread out from house to house (ἀφ᾽ ἑαυτῶν ἀλλὰ ἑῷ καὶ ἑῷ) [of the body. EI]. For everything that his perceptual organ and elements (νεφαισθητήριον καὶ στοιχεῖον) will receive externally there are internal storehouses (ἐνταμίον καὶ ἐξοῦν) and repositories (ἐναποθήκη) and caves (ἐκσπηλαῖον); and what is received into them is stored in them. Whenever they will be questioned about what is deposited in their internal storehouses (ἀνογταμίον ἐξεξοῦν), they bring out what they have received within and give it to the questioner (ἡπαπατήτης) who requested it of them. [...] The faculty of the eyes has houses (ἡνῶν ἐνὶ ἡμέρῃ) and caves (ἐκσπηλαῖον) and repositories (ἐναποθήκη) and depots (ἐκδοκῶν) within, so that every image it might see, whether good or evil, whether loveable or detestable or lustful, it can receive it into its storehouses and repositories (ἀξοῦν ἀνεσταμίον καὶ ἐναποθήκη). And when the faculty of the eyes (τενογμήσις ἡνῶν) is pleased to send out the image and ponder about it (ἡμεγεῖ ἀρα) and seek [...] and it brings it out and gives it to the questioner (ἡπαπατήτης) who requested it and the one who wanted it. [...] And thus shall the faculty (of the eyes) produce and do what it does in each section (ἐν πύργῳ πύργῳ). (1Ke 56, 138.20–30, 139.1–14)<sup>37</sup>

The author of this particular Kephalaion repeats the same process, in detail and with good educational replication, for the five senses – that is, sight (1Ke 139.1–14), hearing (139.15), smell (139.25–140.1), taste (140.1–9), and touch (140.10–15) – for the “faculty of the heart” (τενογμήσις ἀνὴρ ἡμῶν; 140.16–141.1) and for the body itself. These descriptions follow a similar pattern of the human soul whereby the five senses are engaged in a continuous commerce of images, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches between the outer world of sensations and

37 Transl. Gardner 1995, modified. Iain Gardner explains “from house to house” as “the physical and mental senses are distributed in the appropriate places throughout the body” (1995: 146n74); I would rather regard both ἐνὶ ἡμέρῃ and ἐν πύργῳ πύργῳ (translated here as “section” rather than “category,” *pace* Gardner 1995: 147) as instances of the spatialization of mental space in the Manichaean description of the soul; as it has been illustrated all throughout Kephalaion 56.

mental stockrooms. In Mani's depiction of the human mind, the senses act like skilled, detail-oriented traders, endowed with a very good memory of their merchandise. They collect all sorts of sensations, no matter their emotional orientation. They label them and stockpile them in the appropriate storehouses, and when needed, that is, whenever the rigorous *apaitētēs* calls back any of this treasure, the senses make their way back to the appropriate inner warehouse, thoughtfully search for it and present it to him.

The variations in the rote double description of the operation of the senses are relevant. For instance, any kind of sound (σωτῆς), also of a word (σελε), could be preserved up to a thousand days in the mental storeroom, after which the faculty of hearing will inspect the depot, retrieve it and "send it out from the place (ἐν τῇ) where it was first put, the place (πτοπος) in which it was kept" (iKe 56, 139. 23–24).<sup>38</sup> Further advancing down the list of the senses clarify for us the meaning of the operation of examination and retrieving of the deposited data. Smells and touches will be retrieved following the same procedure, but this time, the senses in question will bring out of the house and give the ἀπαιτητής the very "memory" (πρῆμε) of the smell or the "memory of this touch that it made" (μπρῆμε μπισαμῶν ετασῶμῶν) of other peoples' hands.<sup>39</sup>

What is the identity of the stern *apaitētēs*, the questioner in charge of recollecting the data from the five senses? There are three possible answers to this question. First, in the literary context of the *Kephalaia*, ἀπαιτητής could have been a technical term designating the opponent in a public disputation. Richard Lim made an excellent case for the Manichaean dedicated adoption of rhetorical education and its uses in public disputations.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, Quintilian's text, quoted above, points both to the trend of the spatialization of mental space in rhetorical technologies of remembrance, and to the practice of recalling an insignia upon need. Yet, this meaning is not attested anywhere else as a rhetorical technical term. As a noun, ἀπαιτητής means, almost exclusively,

38 Transl. Gardner, modified.

39 iKe 56 139.30 and 140.14–15.

40 Both Mani and his disciples engaged in public disputations, according to Lim 2011. Literary instances of Mani's religious debates appear in CMC 138.2–9, throughout *The Chapters of the Wisdom of My Lord Mani*. As for Addas, "either while on his way to Alexandria or during his sojourn in the city itself, Addas could be expected to become involved in public debates with others. In order to be able to survive in the highly competitive environment of a city in which various religious and philosophical groups competed with each other on a constant basis, one would need to be prepared to respond to attacks and criticisms." Lim 2011: 237–238. Lim connects the use of the simile of the mind as a "tax-gatherer" in Kephalaion 56 to "the metaphorical appropriation of socio-economic roles such as that of stewards and oversees in Christian texts" (personal e-mail communication, July 31, 2021).

a “tax-gatherer.” The word does not occur too often in ancient Greek, being recorded by the Liddell-Scott dictionary as appearing in two documentary texts from the second century CE (PAmh.2.72, POxy.514.1) and another two from the fourth century CE (PN.York 3.2 and PCol.137.19) and in one of the letters of Basil of Caesarea (*Epistulae*, 37, fourth-century CE).<sup>41</sup> Secondly, *apaitētēs* could designate one of the guards placed by Sin upon the five gates of perception, in the association between “the orifices and the perceptual organs of the body (ΝΑΙΘΗΤΗΡΙΟΝ ΜΠΙΣΩΜΑ)” and “the many sentinels (ΖΗΦΥΛΑΞ) and a mass of guards placed over the limbs of the body, guarding their orifices” (1Ke 56, 142.4–8).<sup>42</sup> Finally, the third option of understanding *apaitētēs* points to the “faculty of the heart that rules over all” (ΤΕΝΘΥΜΗCΙC ΔΝ ΜΠΡΗΤ ΕΤΟ ἩΡΡΟ ΔΧΩΥ ΤΗΡΟΥ), which has the task of the extracting information in the fashion of a customs official. Kephalaion 56 attests its hegemonic qualities, indicating that “it rules like the king” (1Ke 140.16 and 22) over the five senses and that its location is in the heart.

The authors behind Kephalaion 56, either Mani or first generation Manichaean intellectuals, prove themselves to be highly conversant with Aristotelian and Stoic theories of perception. The technical vocabulary that Kephalaion 56 employs indicates familiarity with late-antique Graeco-Roman philosophical schools. For instance, the order in which the Manichaean author introduces the five senses replicates the order of discussion they received in Aristotle’s *De anima*: sight (11.7); hearing (11.8); smell (11.9); taste (11.10); and touch (11.11), only to continue, in *De anima* 11.11, with the discussion of what Aristotle terms the “primary perceptual organ” (*aisthētērion de proton*).<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the Manichaean *psyche*, said to be endowed with “perceptual organs and elements” (ΝΕΦΑΙΘΗΤΗΡΙΟΝ ΗΝ ΝΤΟΙΧΕΙΟΝ), is patterned upon Aristotle’s notion of the “perceptual organ,” the *aisthētērion*, that is, “the primary thing in which this sort of power resides,” which is located in the heart, according to Aristotle’s *De anima*.<sup>44</sup>

At the same time, the monarchical qualities of the Manichaean “faculty of the heart,” which is depicted as ruling over a court, indicate, in the *Kephalaia* author, a discernable fusion between peripatetic conceptions of perception and the Stoic notion of the *hēgemonikon*, the *directive faculty*, regarded, in this case, as the chief characteristic of the Stoic material *psyche*, equally endowed

41 ἀπαιτητής: A tax-gatherer, PAmh.2.72, POxy.514.1 (ii A.D.), etc. (LSJ).

42 Gardner 1995: 149, modified.

43 Barbotin 1966: 47–66.

44 αἰσθητήριον δὲ πρῶτον ἐν ᾧ ἡ τοιαύτη δύναμις, Arist. *Anim.* 2.12, 424a24–5; I follow Victor Caston’s translation in Caston 2012: 142, which includes a technical discussion of this term.

with features of spatialization in Chrysippus and in the Kephalaion 56. Margaret R. Graver defines the Stoic *hēgemonikon* as

a kind of *clearing house* to which sensations are referred and in which behaviors are initiated. [...] The directive faculty is located in the chest, where it receives input from, and sends out instructions to, other portions of the psychic material extending into the sense organs and limbs. Chrysippus describes it as being like a spring with numerous distributaries or a tree with numerous branches, or, again, like a ruler with a network of spies.<sup>45</sup>

I reproduce below Chrysippus' extract, in Graver's rendition, to give an idea about possible sources for the material spatialization of the five senses as a network of storerooms in Kephalaion 56:

The parts of the *psuchē* flow from their seat, which is the heart, like a spring from its source, and are extended throughout the entire body: they fill all the limbs all over with vital breath and rule and govern them with countless different virtues, by nourishing them, making them grow, moving them from place to place, equipping them with sense and impelling them to action. And the entire psyche spreads out from the directive part to the senses, which are its functions, *like branches from a trunk, to be messengers of the things they sense, while [the directive faculty] itself passes judgment like a king on the things they report.* [my italics. E. I.]<sup>46</sup>

If one were to look closer for philosophical sources available to the Manichaean authors in the third century CE, one could turn, besides Chrysippus, to the Aristotelian commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias, active around 200 CE, whose theoretical blending of Peripatetic philosophy and Stoicism could have shaped the theory of cognition exposed in Kephalaion 56.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, Quintilian's specific instructions of memorizing the topography of a house for the purpose of turning it into the storeroom for memory insignias (*Inst. Orat.* XI.11.20) could have provided yet another source for authors of Kephalaion 56.

45 Graver, 2007: 21–22.

46 Calcidius, *On the Timaeus of Plato* 220 (LS 53G); Graver 2007: 22 and 226n21.

47 "In speaking of a 'leading' or 'governing' part (*to hēgemonikon*) of the soul Alex[ander of Aphrodisias] is adopting the popular terminology of the Stoics, who prominently use it for the central faculty of the soul, which they also locate in the heart" (Caston 2012: 111). See König 2020, for further substantial connections between Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, and the late antique reception of Aristotle's philosophy.

## 5 Elements for the Art of Memory in the *Bēma* Ritual (II): Emotional Scripts

*The Section of the Narrative about the Crucifixion*, a section of the *Manichaean Homilies*, develops the ritualization of mourning Mani's death with a series of associations between places, intense images, and negative emotions. The process of memorialization and ritual encoding of Mani's martyrdom and death operates by creating spaces in the imagination where to place the relevant created memories. *Bēma*, as a sign, stands for itself, as the visible platform (*Hom* 71.4) but, for the Homilist, it also stands for something else. It stands for "the place (ΠΜΔ) where he [Mani] stood firm" (71.12); for the place where "he proclaimed his wisdom" and where he "revealed" (71.13–14); "the place where he prayed" (ΠΜΔ ΕΤΑΦΩΛΗΛ, 71.14); for the "place of his crucifixion" (ΠΜΔ ΕΤΑΤΪΣΤΑΥΡΩCΙC, 71.15); and the place "where he sat" and "the place where he slept" (71.17). As a result, during the ceremony, the *Bēma* become a place-holder for all these spaces, images, and emotions. It is also a place-holder to memorialize Mani's life and death. Its remembrance at the *Bēma* ceremony transforms the ritual area into a liturgically charged place that creates the necessary emotional constellation for ritually controlled mourning of Mani's death: "if we see his great *Bēma*, we sit and weep over him because [...] his divine image" (*Hom* 71.21–23).

Nils Arne Pedersen cogently argued for the Manichaean recitation or reading aloud of the *Sermon on the Great War* during the performance of the *Bēma* ritual. Pedersen makes the case that the ritual weeping and lamentations chanted and recited at the *Bēma* festival were equally meant to commemorate Mani's death and to reunite Mani and his community in a general wailing.<sup>48</sup> The instances, appeals, and repeated occurrences of "weeping" provide emotional scripts for remembering Mani's martyrdom, mourning his death, and rejoicing at his annual return. Highly stylized in the literary composition of the *Homilies*, weeping can be interpreted as a controlled display of emotions, whose purpose could have been that of meticulous mourning of the lost social order of the Manichaeans under Mani. Its "labor of mourning"<sup>49</sup> extracts the remembrance of the Manichaean community and memorializes it through a list of objects of weeping, whose role is to create the insignias of past Manichaean brilliance and commit it to future return, during the years of peaceful restoration of the Manichaean community.

48 Pedersen 1996: 206.

49 Valeri 2018: 158.

Vocal, controlled mourning activates remembrance in the *Sermon on the Great War*. The text calls its audience to “listen to the weeping” with the purpose of stirring “the remembrance of my good children” (*Hom* 16.11). As a result, weeping acts in this case as a literary device of visualization, calling into being those Manichaean persons, religious actors, both religious objects and objects of literacy, and even the rituals that did not survive the persecution, through a ritualized display of emotion. Weeping constitutes a textual indicator in the *Sermon on the Great War*, whose purpose is to mark out objects of lamentation and to commit to memory the persons, objects, rituals, and religious institutions lost during the persecution after Mani’s death: “the elect and the catechumens” (*Hom* 15.28); the “children” of Mani’s church (16.5–6); the “female virgins” (17.5) and the “abstainers” (17.8); “the “widows” (17.11), and the “orphaned children” (17.12–13); the “male beautiful ones, the readers” (17.15).

The Manichaean Homilist borrows the rhetorical strategies of speech-in-character, *ēthopoïia*, defined by Hermogenes’ *Progymnasmata* as “an imitation of the character of a person supposed to be speaking” or even *eidolopoïia*, about which the same Hermogenes declares “they say it is image-making (*eidolopoïia*) when we attribute words to the dead,”<sup>50</sup> and impersonates Mani himself as weeping for his own vanished books, and this rigorous textualization of emotions records the titles of his books: “the *Prayers* and the *Psalms* [...] I weep for the paintings of my *Image* (ⲧⲣⲓⲙⲉ ⲛⲏⲗⲱⲣⲁⲫⲉⲓⲁ ⲛⲧⲁⲅⲓⲕⲱⲛ); I weep for the *Kephalaia*” (*Hom* 18.4–6). Weeping marks the absence and desired return of Manichaean liturgical life. Mani bewails the disappearance of the ritual life of his churches as a whole, he weeps for the “prayer-times” (*Hom* 18.11) of “glorious” (probably) hymnody (18.13); of the celebration of the “lord’s day” and the observance of rules (18.14). His bemoaning, imagined, transcribed and translated from Syriac into Coptic, made its way to fourth and fifth century Egypt as a testimony for the “reinvention” of religious traditions. The end of the Great War of persecution will witness the reappearance of all the religious persons wept for above:

Multitudes of abstainers, numbers of virgins will appear: the leader and the teachers (ⲡⲁⲣⲭⲏⲓⲣⲟⲥ ⲁⲗⲱ ⲛⲏ ⲛⲥⲁⲅ), the presbyters (ⲙⲡⲣⲉⲥⲃⲩⲧⲉⲣⲟⲥ) and all the deacons, the female virgins (ⲙⲡⲁⲣⲑⲉⲛⲟⲥ ⲛⲥⲅⲓⲙⲉ) and the abstainers (ⲛⲉⲅⲕⲣⲁⲧⲏⲥ), the catechumens and their relatives (ⲛⲕⲁⲧⲏⲭⲟⲩⲙⲉⲛⲟⲥ ⲛⲏ ⲛⲉⲩⲥⲩⲧⲧⲉⲛⲏⲥ). (*Hom* 22.3–7; tr. PEDERSEN)

50 *Preliminary Exercises, attributed to Hermogenes*, 9.20 in Kennedy 2003, 84–85; Kennedy places its date of composition in the third or the fourth century CE.



is also one who will remain pure and not be defiled, – some among the men and among the women. They will again know one another like this, whether they belong to the world or to the church. Thousands and ten thousands will be saved in every city. They will go to their (own) places once again and their houses. (*Hom* 23.2–14)

This is religious imagination at its very best: it prescribes the future by lending it a heavy textual self-authorization. The Manichaean Homilist manages at once to sink religious persons, objects, and ritual acts into the pit of loss and despair and to redeem them, virtually extracting them out of non-being, and reinstating them in an act of common-sensical hope and literary grandeur.<sup>54</sup>

Angelos Chaniotis has made the case for the intense emotional nature of Hellenistic ritual settings and, very important for the perspective adopted by the present analysis, the case for the various kinds of remembrance taking place during the ritual of mourning. Remembering the previous performance of a ritual of mourning allowed for a controlled economy of emotions.<sup>55</sup> Chaniotis's insight allows us to place ritualized weeping in the *Homilies* next to similar processes of emotional intensification in the Manichaean *Psalms*. In remembering the imprisonment, martyrdom, and death of Mani, Psalm 225 stirs the emotions of anger, recreates with dramaturgical flair the conversations between the Zoroastrians and the Persian king, and the king's interpellations of Mani. In the end, engulfed in the narrative pain of recollecting the traumatic event of his community, the Psalmist breaks into a free-style direct dialogue with the presence of the missing Mani:

How many days of fear, my Father, did you endure until you had cut and severed the race of frightful men! Twenty-six days in all and the nights of them you did spend in chains in Belapat. O the renown of the Aeons of Light! O noble holy image of the mysteries of God! (*2Ps* 16.24–28)

Psalm 225 leads the audience to emotional intensification through a path of increasing resounding dramatization of Mani's death, by using verbs indicating sound intensification. They are meant to create a soundscape for the narrative, but not as a background: they punctuate the psalm and give it a certain

54 For a comparative perspective on the role of communal ritualized weeping in late antique Egypt, see Dilley 2017: 260–291, and esp. 282–290 – an excellent analysis of the annual reading of Shenoute's *Canons* as the ritual of collective remembrance and repentance through performative weeping and rhetorical eliciting of "heart-pain."

55 Chaniotis 2006: 226–230.

rhythm when sung aloud.<sup>56</sup> Verbs of hearing, yelling, and prompts to look at, advance the narrative. The author used verbs of visualization ("I have not seen a beast, nor fire" (2Ps 15.17–18), and the imperative form "look" (Coptic: *εἰς*, in 2Ps 15.15 and 23), and punctuated the advancement of the psalm towards martyrdom with verbs of sonorous and vocal engagement: "I have heard about you" (*αἰσῶμε ἐτβε τῆνε*, 2Ps 15.9); "They all cried out (*ἀγαθὴν ἀβὰλ τῆροῦ*) in one voice to the godless judge" (2Ps 15.21–22); "When he heard these words (*ἤταρεῖσῶμε ἀνιέχε*), the foolish man, the king of these pitiless ones" (2Ps 15.27–28). Moreover, the Manichaean Psalmist associated verbs of locution with emotional notes of rage to depict Mani's last encounter with the king. The Persian monarch speaks to Mani addressing "him in anger, in a mighty voice" (*παχεῖ νεῖ ἐφναῶς ῥῆ οὔνασ ῆσμη*, 15.29–30) Finally, before Mani's condemnation, the king "roared in flaming anger" (*ἀφλῆμη [...]* ῥῆ οὔβλκε ἐςῇρατ, in Allberry's beautiful prose translation, 2 Ps 16.19–20).

If in Psalm 225, the Manichaean community heard the Psalmist crying out in distress, as an emotional script for the ritual remembrance of Mani's death, in Psalm 226 Mani talks back to his community. Emotional intensification leads to the amplification of visualization. Once the Manichaean Psalmist brings on the ritual stage the emotions warranted by the direct voice of Mani, he establishes a direct visual connection between the post-martyrdom community and the theatrically and ritually invoked Mani: "Those sinners, all of them, did not allow me to see my children and my disciples (*ναμαθῆτης*) and my shepherds and my bishops, when they saw them coming onto me" (2Ps 19.9–11). In an intense dramaturgical setting, Mani appears at the *Bēma* Festival by talking his way out of death and back into ritual existence.

Psalm 226 conveys Mani's voice telling the same story as Psalm 225, but from Mani's own perspective, in a confession told in the first person voice. The visual features of this psalm are striking. The audience hears Mani's words, voiced through the vocal performance of the psalm, and enters a dramatic *tableau*, carefully conveyed by the use of verbs of action and through vivid imagery. On the day of his death, "Our father, the blessed one, our Lord Mani, he bent his knees, imploring mercy, crying out to God" (2Ps 18.9–11).<sup>57</sup> The voice of Mani activates the imagination of the audience who is able to follow the structural modifications brought to Mani's body:

56 *αἰσῶ* is often used, as in "they all cried out" (*ἀγαθὴν ἀβὰλ τῆροῦ*, 2Ps 15.21); "he parted his lips, he cried out" (*ἀφπῶτῆ ἥνεῖσπατοῦ ἀγαθὴν ἀβὰλ*, 2Ps 16.7).

57 Following Wurst, 1995, 186n1.

They loaded me with iron, as they do to sinners, they fettered me, as they do thieves [...] They put six iron shackles (ἥκολλάριον) on me and bound me with chains (ἐν ἡλυσίδι). (2Ps 18.30–19.1; 19.6)

Mani's voice recounts the moment of his own death. In a double narrative movement, the audience can simultaneously visualize the elevation of Mani's celestial body, on its way to rejoin the Twin, and the vanishing of his mortal body, under the torture and final flaying.

Look (εἰς), the sky and the earth and the two luminaries bear witness of me in the height that I did good among them but they in their cruelty crucified me (ἀγῶνισαυρὲ ἡμᾶ). I was gazing at my counterpart, with my eyes of light, beholding (νεῦναι με ἀπασαῖν) ἐν ἡβελ νόταῖνε εἰνεῖν) my glorious Father, him who waits for me ever, opening for me the gate to the heights. I spread out my hands, praying unto him; I bent my knees, worshipping him also, that I might divest myself of the image of the flesh (ἡτοκῶν ἡτσαρῶ) and put off the human appearance (ἡπσχημα ἡτμῆτρων). Look (εἰς) his body was brought over in the city (ἐν τῇ πόλει) of those sinners when they cut off his head and hung it amid the whole multitude. (2Ps 19.22–31)

The previous paragraph shows how much this ritual was meant to increase the emotional tension. Through repetitions, detailed and excruciating first-person accounts of the martyrdom, and imaginative recreation of the dialogue between Mani and the Father before the moment of death, and especially through a masterful transition from Mani's last words to a very matter-of-fact account of his postmortem dismemberment, the Manichaean Psalmist stages Mani's martyrdom before the eyes of the participants in the *Bēma* festival. In addition to that, we hear not only gospel echoes, and clear references to Jesus' death on the cross, used in this case as a blueprint, but we also encounter reverberations of second- and third-century CE Christian martyrdom stories.

## 6 The Mind Light: Repentance and Visualization in the *Bēma* Ritual

The Manichaeans participating in the *Bēma* ceremony arrived at its denouement. They engaged in the commerce with images of remembrance and associated them with the *loci* of memory. They mourned and they wept as they engaged with intense emotional scripts and participated in a dramatical rendition of Mani's death. Yet, by the end of the night, they will have met Mani; their

sins will have been forgiven and forgotten, and they will all have emerged as “new men.” How did this take place? In the last part of this article, I will follow the work of Tanya Luhrmann, who analyzed the religious practice of “inner sense cultivation” in British contemporary magic and American evangelical culture. She describes inner sense cultivation as a practice consisting of “the repeated use of inner visual representation and other inner sensory experience,” through “interaction” with imagined contents, “interweaving” of mental constructs with scripted narratives, and “sensory enhancement.” Much closer to the ancient Manichaeans, I will also refer to the pioneering study of Paul Dilley on cognitive practices in late antique monasticism, and especially on his analysis of the “techniques of mental image cultivation,” used in Pachomian monasteries in an overall pedagogy of the fear of God, articulated both by somatic and mental regimes of discipline.<sup>58</sup>

In *Kephalaion* 38, “Concerning the Light Mind, the Apostles, and the Saints,” the editors imagine an overly zealous disciple who asked a fivefold question not only on the role of the Light Mind in metamorphosing the Old Man into the New Man, although this is the central topic, but also on a classical Platonic topic with polemical undertones: how can an infinite god even fit such a small body? They even inquired about any good reason to follow Mani, given this world’s adversity to his teaching and persecution of his followers.<sup>59</sup> Although slightly vexed at having to repeat his cosmological narrative, and set the place of the Light Mind in it, Mani proceeds to it by appealing to the *topos* of the correspondences between the macro-cosmos and the human body (*1Ke* 90.20–91.14). Since this list of correspondences, a commonplace in ancient texts of ritual power and in the *Apocryphon of John*, is followed by a cosmological synopsis (*1Ke* 91.15–94.10), one can advance the interpretation that Mani employs the human body as a mnemonic map for cosmic events to answer the question of the ontological misfit between the boundless Light Mind and its playground, the small body (*1Ke* 94.17–18).

In a classical example of what Timothy Pettipiece calls “pentadization” in the composition of the *Kephalaia*, Mani describes the delicate process whereby, in order to coordinate the metamorphosis of the Old Man into the New Man, the Light Mind undoes the works of Sin. The “five limbs” (πέντε μέλος), that is, mind, thought, insight, counsel, and consideration became

58 See Luhrmann 2012: 184–188 and Luhrmann 2020, 72–76, for a discussion of the three features of inner sense cultivation, and Dilley 2017, 148–185, on the monastic discipline of the fear of God, and idem, 210–217, on the role of prayer and the scripted nature of visions in the production of revelations.

59 *1Ke* 38, 89.31–33.

bound, under the influence of Sin, Mani explains, with respectively bone, sinew, vein, flesh, and skin.<sup>60</sup> Sin intermingles its own five limbs with those of the Old Man and paralyzes the latter with the usual wicked irregularities: lust, “worship of idols,” “erroneous opinions,” “humiliation,” and “humiliation of slavery” (1*Ke* 95.27–29). As a result, the soul “puts on error and forgetfulness (ἀσπῆφορε ντιπλανη ἡν τῷϋε) and forgets her essence and her race and her kindred (ντεσογσια μν πεσρενος μν τεσρεϊτε)” (1*Ke* 96.2–3).<sup>61</sup>

Given the proper penitent ritual circumstances, the Light Mind will retool the five limbs of the soul. Helped both by the fivefold modulation of the text as a mnemonic device and mental prop and by spatialization of the five regions of the soul under the guise of “limbs,” the readers and listeners of *Kephalaion* 38 will have little trouble visualizing the act of inner betterment effected by the Light Mind in the soul of the repentant Manichaean sinner.<sup>62</sup> They will have been able, for instance, to visualize the gentle exfoliation of the soul out of its somatic fabric and out of the “five limbs of the sin,” then the surgical binding of the sin into a somatic straightjacket, not unlike the binding promised by ritual power curses, followed by the purification of the five limbs of the soul, and by their mutation into other five superior values, namely, love, faith, perfection, patience, and wisdom.

(The Light Mind) shall loosen the mind of the soul (μῖνογς ντϣγχι) and release it from the bone. He shall release the thought of the soul (ἡπμεγε ντϣγχι) from the sinew; and so bind the thought of the sin in the sinew. He shall release the insight of the soul (τςβω ντϣγχι) from the vein; and so bind the insight of the sin in the vein. He shall loosen the counsel of the soul (ἡϣαχνε ἡτϣγχι), and release it from the flesh; and so bind the counsel of the sin in the flesh. He shall release the consideration of the soul (πμακμεκ ντϣγχι) from the skin; and bind the consideration of the sin in the skin. This is how he shall release the limbs of the soul (ἡμμελος ντϣγχι) and make them free from the five limbs of sin (ἡπτογ ἡμελος ἡτε πναβε). Conversely, these five limbs of the sin, which were loose; he shall bind them. He shall set right the limbs of the soul; form and purify them, and construct a new man of them, a child of righteousness (ογωμρε ἡτε τδικαιογνη). And when he fashions and

60 1*Ke* 38; 95.14–19. See also Pettipiece 2009: 36–37n54 for an account of the five limbs.

61 Transl. Gardner 1995: 100, modified.

62 See Pettipiece 2009: 88–89, on the possible mnemonic values of number five and its somatic associations, and on “brief, mnemonically digestible, didactic texts” as the ground for more developed chapters in the *Kephalaia*.

constructs and purifies the new man; then he shall bring forth five great living limbs (ΤΟΥ ΝΗΛΟΣ ὩΜΕΛΟΣ ΕΥΑΝῆ) out from five great limbs. And he places them in the limbs of the new man. He shall place his mind, which is love (ΠΗΝΟΥΣ ΕΤΕ ΤΑΓΑΠΗ) in the mind of the new man. Also, the thought, which is faith, he shall place in the thought of the new man; who he shall purify. His insight, which is perfection, he shall place in the insight of the new man. His counsel, which is patience, he shall place in his counsel. Also, wisdom, which is his consideration, in the consideration of the new man. (1Ke 38, 96.13–97.4)<sup>63</sup>

It is important to pay close attention to the use of “limb” (ΜΕΛΟΣ) in the above text, as the currency for spatialization, and to the visualization of the act of “placing” as being related to the art of memory, since, as good rhetoric teachers professed, there cannot be imagination and memorization without spatialization. The Manichaeans who gathered for the ceremonial forgiveness of sins at the *Bēma* festival could have thus visualized the Light Mind as a skilled soul-repairman who renovates all the nooks and crannies of the person, making it anew. In the process of restoration of the soul and restraining the “limbs of sin,” the Light Mind will have also impersonated street magicians, who sold their expertise in love binding rituals. Moreover, the repetitive, even hypnotic, quality of the text, alluding to its possible ritual humdrum, as it unfolds along the five-mark map of the human soul, lets one suspect that this portion of the Kephalaion 38 could have easily lent itself to memorization.

## 7 Conclusions

The very detailed analyses of Zsuzsanna Gulácsi<sup>64</sup> and Andrea Piras<sup>65</sup> explored the regimes and technologies of image in Manichaeism. Central to the development of Manichaean practices and doctrines, images played an essential role in religious education in shaping and expressing the Manichean cosmology;<sup>66</sup> in the process of personal salvation and sanitation of the Manichaean body.<sup>67</sup> In the above, I attempted to explore the possible use of techniques of the art of memory, as it was developed in Graeco-Roman rhetorical schools, during the

63 Transl. Gardner, modified.

64 Gulácsi 2001 and 2015.

65 Piras 2014, 2018, and 2019.

66 Gulácsi 2015.

67 BeDuhn 2000 and 2017, and Piras 2019.

annual performance of the *Bēma* ceremony, in a ritual setting in which both the elect and the catechumens expected to see Mani as a judge and divine eraser of their sins. The main argument held that The Manichaean Psalmists behind the *Bēma Psalms* could have adopted some of the rhetorical techniques, reserved to the educated elites of the Roman Empire, and advertised in public debates, to shape and convey the ritual visualization of Mani in the *Bēma* ritual. A high familiarity with educational settings of contemporary Peripatetic and Stoic schools enabled the Manichean intellectuals active in Syria towards the end of the third-century CE to develop practices of visualization during the *Bēma* ceremony, as they are attested in the Coptic *Psalm Book*. These practices were articulated by cosmological and ritual spatialization through orientational metaphors, and by emotional intensification through the ritual unraveling of carefully controlled emotional scripts of mourning and joy. As a result, I proposed that, through singing, recitation, and reading, the elect and the catechumens visualized Mani as attending the ceremony, witnessing their general confession of the sins, and as giving them forgiveness. In the above, I suggested connecting these practices of visualization with similar techniques practiced in the art of memory, which was developed as an aid to rhetorical exercises in ancient Greece and the Roman Empire. This piece investigated possible links drawn in the *Bēma Psalms* between the emotional combination of mourning and joy, as it was expressed in ceremonial settings of singing and praying, and the role of the *Bēma* as a ritual place-holder for the presence of Mani.

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# A Robber in Paradise: Luke 23:43 in Manichaean and Anti-Manichaean Exegesis

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## 1 Introduction\*

The gospel episode of Jesus' crucifixion is well attested in Manichaean texts and has received much scholarly attention. Scholars usually dedicate their attention to evaluating whether Manichaeans defended a docetic view of Jesus' death (whether he truly died or he only appeared to do so), and to studying Manichaean exegetical methods more generally.<sup>1</sup> Research has shown that Manichaeans had, indeed, a very sophisticated reading of the New Testament, and developed precise exegetical tools that allowed them to determine whether each single verse was authentic or not, and thus whether it was to be kept or rejected. The crucifixion narrative was accepted as authentic gospel material, while other parts, such as the birth and infancy of Jesus, were deemed spurious and were therefore dismissed. The narration of the crucifixion was accepted in the way it is transmitted by the Gospel of Luke, be it in the form of a separate gospel or in its inclusion in the *Diatessaron* (the harmonization of the four gospels also used by Manichaeans). The Manichaean narrative contains "the plot against Jesus, the arrest, the trial, the death and the resurrection stories."<sup>2</sup> These episodes correspond to the segment going from Luke 22:1 to 24:53, according to Michel Tardieu's reconstruction based on Middle Persian and Coptic sources.<sup>3</sup>

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1 See Tardieu 1987; see also Viciano 2006; on the Manichaean use of the Gospels, see Pedersen et al. 2020.

2 Tardieu 1987: 141. On the Manichaean perspective on Jesus' trial, see Tardieu 1997.

3 Tardieu 1987: 141. The same scenes are mentioned in *1Ke* 12.21–13.11. For an interpretation of this passage as reflecting the order of the gospel events transmitted by the *Diatessaron*, see Gulácsi 2021.

Furthermore, as is well known, Jesus' crucifixion plays an essential role in the Manichaean doctrine and in the celebration of its founder Mani, since it served as a model for the depiction of Mani's own final days, as the terminology employed in the Coptic *Psalms* and in the *Homilies* suggests.<sup>4</sup>

One particular verse belonging to this biblical scene, quoted and cherished by the Manichaeans, has not received much attention so far: it is Luke 23:43, containing Jesus' promise to the good robber, "*Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.*" This verse is interesting because it was accepted by the Manichaeans as authentic (they used it and referred to it, as we will see), but it was probably rejected by Marcion, whose biblical canon the Manichaeans knew and partially shared. Indeed, both Marcion and Mani rejected the Old Testament and kept the "Gospel and the Apostle (Paul)"; they both rejected the infancy narrative in the Gospel of Luke.<sup>5</sup> Yet it seems that Marcion also disregarded this very verse: according to Epiphanius of Salamis, "[Marcion] excised 'Today you will be with me in Paradise,'" which made Epiphanius bitterly remark about the Marcionites that "You have taken away from yourselves the entry into Paradise, for you will not enter, neither will you allow those with you" (Epiph., *Pan.* 42.11.17).<sup>6</sup>

It is thus relevant to examine how this verse has been interpreted by the Manichaeans and integrated in their doctrinal system, with which meanings and values it has been invested in Manichaean sources, and also whether it represented a *locus* for the confrontation between Manichaeans and "orthodox" Christians in late antiquity, as is the case of other biblical verses, such as the famous Matt 7:18 about the good and the bad tree.<sup>7</sup> To this end, in this contribution I retrace the history of the exegesis of Luke 23:43 in Manichaean and anti-Manichaean sources, mainly from the Mediterranean area, up to the sixth century. Curiously enough, while the robbers are mentioned several times in the various texts, the promise of Jesus to the good thief as contained in Luke 23:43 is somewhat rare.

4 See Gardner 2015.

5 On the relationship between the Marcionite New Testament and the Manichaean New Testament, see Tardieu 1987: 142–144. On the practice of antithesis as an exegetical tool shared by Marcion and Mani, see van den Berg 2010 and the recent contribution, Tardieu 2021.

6 Holl 1922: 153; and Williams 2009: 310. See also Roth 2015: 339 and 434. Mark Bilby advanced reasons to doubt the veracity of Epiphanius' statement, since he is the only author to claim Marcion's rejection of this verse. See Bilby 2012 (this dissertation was published by Université de Strasbourg in 2013, *non uidi*). See also Lieu 2015: 198, who highlights that Epiphanius could refer to the entire episode of the penitent thief and not to Jesus' promise alone.

7 For the use of this verse in Manichaean and anti-Manichaean texts, see Coyle 2009: 65–88. See also Pedersen et al. 2020.

In what follows, I will first provide an overview of the relevant sources where this verse appears; then, I will focus on the only text, to the best of my knowledge, that discusses in detail this biblical passage in an anti-Manichaean perspective, namely John Chrysostom's *Sermon on Genesis* 7 (end of the fourth century); I will compare it with a later source, Severus of Antioch's *Cathedral Homily* 22 (beginning of the sixth century), which, as I will argue, draws on Chrysostom's sermon; finally, based on the previous analyses, I will provide some concluding remarks on the Manichaean exegesis of this verse and on its role in the debates with Christian theologians.

## 2 Manichaean and Anti-Manichaean Interpretations of Luke 23:43

### 2.1 *Manichaean Interpretations*

According to the reference tool *The New Testament in the Manichaean Tradition*, this verse appears in Western and Eastern Manichaean literature, both as quote and allusion, only six times.<sup>8</sup> Three occurrences belong to the fourth-century Coptic *Psalm-book: Psalm to Jesus* 242 (2Ps 49.23–25),<sup>9</sup> *Psalm to Jesus* 271 (2Ps 90.29–32),<sup>10</sup> and one of the *Psalms of Heracleides* (2Ps 195.22).<sup>11</sup> All three, including the latter, are devoted to Jesus as the savior who can remit sins. The three other occurrences are found in Iranian sources: the first one, M390/v/1–3, is a hymn on Jesus' passion, also known as "The Great Parthian Crucifixion Hymn";<sup>12</sup> the other two occurrences appear in M5779 (v/3–5 and R/20–26), which presents an outline of the Bema liturgy and contains instructions on the hymns to be sung during the Bema festival.<sup>13</sup>

8 Pedersen et al. 2020: 264–265.

9 "A robber was saved upon the cross because he did but / Acknowledge you; you forgot all the sins that he / Had committed, you remembered all his good" (ed. and tr. Allberry 1938).

10 "I stepped in with your cross, / I hung to the right of you, because I received the / Blessing: henceforth take me with you to the Paradise of the holy Gods" (ed. and tr. Allberry 1938).

11 This Psalm is 4He6 in Siegfried Richter's edition (Richter 1998). This is a long hymn devoted to Jesus, who describes how he found his disciples, the way his persecutors killed him, and how he raised up victorious and sat at the right hand of his father. The allusion to the good thief is meant for Jesus' disciples, who endured many trials and suffering like him and were finally crowned for their faith: "They were made to go up on the fire, he made them cool with his dews. / They were hanged to the cross, he took them to Paradise."

12 For the edition and translation of this hymn, reconstructed from several manuscripts of the Berlin Turfan collection, see Morano 1998, 136: "He [Jesus] showed salvation, and opened the door to / The pupils that like him / Are crucified (...)" (ll.77–79).

13 The text was edited in Henning 1936: 45–46 (marked as T II D 123): "When you go, Lord (= Mani), save us also from the mortal existence. [...] And after the meal these three hymns

All these texts are hymns used in ritual settings, and are devoted either to Jesus or to Mani, both of them regarded as saviors and remitters of sins.<sup>14</sup> One main interpretation of Luke 23:43 emerges from this context: the good robber is the example of the good believer, the faithful one who repented. As such, he becomes the model for Manichaean believers, who identify with him when asking for the forgiveness of their sins. The quotation of the relevant stanzas of the first source will exemplify this interpretation:

I confessed you indeed because of this hour, I endured  
The mockery of all men; for I heard that he who shall deny  
You – you forgot him in his afflictions.

Lo, my faith stands fast with me; lo, my almsgivings that  
I performed in your name: lo, my prayers and my zeal  
Demand that I should receive grace upon me.

A robber was saved upon the cross because he did but  
Acknowledge you; you forgot all the sins that he  
Had committed, you remembered all his good.

All worldly Matter that surrounds me – burn it today,  
I beseech you. Cleanse me from all the sins, for  
I too have hung on your hope.

(*Psalm to Jesus* 242, 2Ps 49.17–28)

## 2.2 *Fourth-Century Christian Interpretations*

Turning now to contemporary, fourth-century texts emanating from “orthodox” Christians, apart from the prominence of the figure of Mani, which is naturally missing, we observe that they promote a very similar interpretation of Luke 23:43.<sup>15</sup> Ephrem of Nisibis (ca. 306–373), for example, who fiercely and extensively condemned the Manichaeans both through poetry and prose, basically agrees with his adversaries insofar as this gospel verse is concerned. For Ephrem too Luke 23:43 signifies the great mercy of Jesus, and the good thief is

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take place: *Commander of fair name, God, Lord Mar Mani, you go, raise me also up to Paradise*” (ll. 3–5 and 44–48).

14 On the multilayered figure of Jesus in Manichaeism, see Franzmann 2003.

15 A study on this verse in early Christian literature up to the fifth century is provided by Bilby 2012. See also *The American and British Committees of the International Greek New Testament Project. Vol. 2: The Gospel according to Luke 13–24* 1987: 223–224, which include numerous Greek, Latin, and Syriac patristic references related to this verse.

regarded as the ideal of faith, repentance, and recompense. This interpretation is developed, for instance, in his *Commentary on the Diatessaron* xx.22–26.<sup>16</sup> In other works, the thief becomes an example for Ephrem himself, who prays for the forgiveness of his sins and for access to Paradise in the robber's footsteps ("Remember me as well, together with the robber, / So that I could enter in your kingdom in his shadow", *Cruc.* 6.20).<sup>17</sup> In his hymns, we find only one explicit polemical context in which Ephrem refers to this verse. It is not against the Manichaeans, but rather against the Arians, who, in his view, impudently seek to investigate God's mystery. In the *Hymn on Faith* 84, 1–2, for instance, Ephrem recalls the example of the thief as of the one who, unlike the Arians, rightly believed and was rewarded:

1. The thief possessed faith –  
 That faith which possessed him – and it raised him up and placed him  
 In Paradise. He saw in the cross  
 The Tree of Life. That faith was a fruit.  
 And he took the place of Adam as an eater.

2. The fool who has faith  
 Alongside all kinds of questions, irritates that faith,  
 In the same way that poking the eye with a finger  
 Blinds the eye. Worse than this is  
 The one who investigates faith.<sup>18</sup>

Nowhere in his writings does Ephrem use this verse in a context of explicit accusation against the Manichaeans; this is rather unlike his clear attempts at singling out other biblical passages in his anti-Manichaean texts, in which he criticizes the Manichaeans' "wrong" exegesis.<sup>19</sup> A quick review of the other Christian writers who usually reject the Manichaean interpretation of the Bible, surprisingly did not give any result either: Luke 23:43 is not significantly mentioned or discussed in the anti-Manichaean works of Serapion of

16 See Leloir 1966: 359–362.

17 For analysis of Luke 23:43 in Ephrem's works, see Bilby 2012: 122–124.

18 Translation by Wickes 2015: 387. We notice here the establishment of a link between Adam, the one who was cast out of Paradise because of his sin, and the good thief, the one who, thanks to his repentance, entered Paradise. This connection is traditional in early Christian literature, and used in several other occurrences in Ephrem's writings: see Bilby 2012: 282–291. For an analysis of Luke 23:43 in Ephrem's polemics against the Arians, including the *Hymn on Faith* quoted here, see Bilby 2012: 143–145.

19 As the above-mentioned Matt 7:18 on the good and bad trees.

Thmuis, Titus of Bostra, Epiphanius of Salamis or Augustine, for example.<sup>20</sup> The only exception I could find is John Chrysostom, *Sermon on Genesis 7* (CPG 4410),<sup>21</sup> where a specific and extensive interpretation of Luke 23:43 is explicitly attributed to the Manichaeans and then refuted.<sup>22</sup> It is this sermon that I will discuss next.

### 3 John Chrysostom, *Sermon on Genesis 7*

The *Sermon on Genesis 7* belongs to the short series of sermons on Genesis that John Chrysostom delivered as a priest in Antioch, before being ordained as bishop of Constantinople. Specifically, this sermon was pronounced during Lent of the year 386 CE.<sup>23</sup> After speaking of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:9), Chrysostom comments on Luke 23:43. He first establishes a link between Adam and the good thief, like Ephrem before him; he mentions the episode of repentance on the cross and praises the thief's faith and Jesus'

20 My survey included the following fourth- through sixth-century authors and works from North Africa, Italy, Constantinople, Antioch, Syria, Mesopotamia and Palestine: *Acta Archelai*, Serapion of Thmuis, Ephrem of Nisibis, Cyril of Jerusalem, Didymus of Alexandria, Titus of Bostra, Epiphanius of Salamis, Theodoret of Cyrrihus, Augustine of Hippo, Severian of Gabala, John the Grammarian, and the Abjuration formulas. In these texts, Luke 23:43 is sometimes mentioned, but not in a relevant way. For example, in Augustine's *C. Faust.* XIV.1, Faustus alludes to this verse in his demonstration of existing discrepancies between the Old and the New Testaments (in particular, between Deut. 21:23, which curses everyone hanging on a pole, and Luke 23); Epiph., *Pan.* 66.62 alludes to this verse in his anti-Manichaean chapter, but to demonstrate that evil is not ontological: the thief, among other biblical examples, changed and repented of his criminal acts.

21 CPG = *Clavis Patrum Graecorum*, edited by Maurice Geerard [and J. Noret], 5 vols. Turnhout: Brepols, 1974–1987, 1998, 2003.

22 John Chrysostom's anti-Manichaean polemics remain very understudied and there is not much scholarship devoted to this aspect of Chrysostom's preaching. For a very recent overview of his anti-Manichaean topics, with relevant literature, see de Wet 2021. See also Mara 2008; de Wet 2011: esp. 94–99; and de Wet 2014: esp. 30–36, for the analysis of the anti-Manichaean rhetoric in three of Chrysostom's texts on Paul's epistles, namely *Homily 11 on Philippians*, *Homily 38 on 1 Corinthians*, and *Commentary on Galatians 1*. Indeed, Chrysostom's attacks against the Manichaeans are spread in his large corpus of writings, especially in his exegetical homilies on Paul's epistles and the Gospels. In order to gather a substantial list of Chrysostom's anti-Manichaean passages, it is necessary to combine the references discussed in the afore-mentioned articles with the information provided in Rambault 2013: 28 n. 4, and Alpi 2004: esp. 237 n. 27.

23 Edition and French translation in Brottier 1998: 300–45 (= SC 433). English translation in Hill 2004: 107–133.

mercy, by evoking the promise of Paradise.<sup>24</sup> Then, suddenly, he pauses to highlight that this promise was wrongly interpreted by the Manichaeans. He argues that the Manichaeans used this verse to deny the resurrection of bodies.<sup>25</sup> He reports this Manichaean claim in two parts, each one followed by a double refutation, mainly supported by quotes from the Epistles of Paul. The structure of this part of the sermon devoted to Luke 23:43 in an anti-Manichaean perspective can be outlined in the following way:

**Manichaean claim 1:** the thief has received the reward, the resurrection of the bodies does not exist

- *Refutation 1:* body and soul are inseparable (2 Cor 5:10, 1 Cor 15:53)
- *Refutation 2:* Paradise vs. Kingdom of Heaven (1 Cor 2:9)

**Manichaean claim 2:** Paradise = Kingdom of Heaven

- *Refutation 1:* Jesus speaks of the future (Jn 3:18, Jn 5:24)
- *Refutation 2:* Nobody has been resurrected yet (Heb 11:13, Heb 11:40)

Despite its length, it is worth quoting in full the first part of the claim, since it is unique in Manichaean and anti-Manichaean literature:

Just as the fellow had regard for divinity, so God had regard for the brigand's heart, saying, *Today you will be with me in Paradise*. At this point pay attention: an issue arises that is not a chance one, namely the Manichaeans, stupid and rabid dogs, presenting an appearance of mildness, but having on the inside the savage fury of dogs, wolves in sheep's clothing. Lest you look to appearances, however, examine instead the wild beast hidden within. These people, then, seize upon this passage to claim: "Christ said, *Amen, amen, I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise*, so reward of good things has already been made, and resurrection is unnecessary. If the brigand," says (the Manichaean), "was awarded good things that very day whereas his body has not yet risen even today, there will be no resurrection of the body in future." Surely you have not given thought to what was said, or require that it be said a second time? "*Amen, amen, I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise*. The brigand, then," says (the Manichaean), "did

24 The *Sermon* is analyzed by Bilby 2012: 154–155, for the novel interpretation of the bandit's vision of Jesus' divinity as "the eyes of faith." Bilby points out the similarities of this sermon with two other homilies, entitled *On the Cross and the Bandit* (CPG 4338–4339). Nevertheless, these two homilies do not contain a parallel section to the anti-Manichaean development present in the *Sermon on Genesis* 7.

25 De Wet 2021: 239–241, mentions this sermon and discusses Chrysostom's double reaction against the Manichaean denial of physical resurrection.

not enter Paradise with his body: How could he, when his body was not buried, and had not turned to dust, and there is no mention anywhere that Christ raised him up? If he welcomed the brigand, and the latter enjoyed the good things without his body, clearly there is no resurrection of the body; for if there were resurrection of the body, he would not have said: *You will be with me in paradise today*, but ‘at the moment of fulfillment, when there is a resurrection of bodies.’ But if he has already welcomed the brigand, and his body stayed outside and decayed, clearly there is no resurrection of bodies.” This is what they (say).<sup>26</sup>

According to Chrysostom’s report, the Manichaeans would have read Luke 23:43 as evidence for denying the resurrection of the bodies: they would have understood the promise of Paradise as applying to the day of death and would have further interpreted this as proof for the resurrection of the soul alone, based on the fact that the robber’s body was buried that very day and could not have risen.

To this reading, Chrysostom first opposes the anthropological doctrine that considers body and soul as inseparable, which is traditional in Christian thought. In support, he quotes Paul’s words in 2 Cor 5:10 (*We must appear before the court of Christ so that everyone may obtain the price of what he has done during his bodily life, either for good or for evil*) and 1 Cor 15:53 (*This mortal being must clothe immortality, and this corruptible being must clothe immortality*), in order to highlight that body and soul endured together the suffering of the earthly life and will together receive the reward of resurrection. Then, he

26 *Serm. Gen. 7.4* (SC 433), 332.305–334.333: ὥσπερ οὗτος εἶδεν εἰς τὴν θεότητα, οὕτως ὁ Θεὸς εἶδεν εἰς τὴν καρδίαν τοῦ ληστοῦ, καὶ φησι· Σήμερον μετ’ ἐμοῦ ἔσῃ ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ· Ἐνταῦθα προσέχετε· ζήτημα γὰρ οὐ τὸ τυχὸν ἐπιφέυεται. Καὶ γὰρ οἱ Μανιχαῖοι, οἱ κύνες, οἱ ἔννεοι καὶ λυτῶντες, τὸ σχῆμα μὲν ἐπιδείκνυνται ἐπιεικείας, τὴν χαλεπὴν δὲ ἔνδον ἔχουσι τῶν κυνῶν μανίαν, καὶ κατακρύπτουσι τῇ δορᾷ τοῦ προβάτου τὸν λύκον. Ἀλλὰ μὴ τὸ φαινόμενον ἴδῃς, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἔνδον κεκρυμμένον θηρίον ἐξέτασον. Οὗτοι τοίνυν ἐπιλαβόμενοι τοῦ χωρίου τούτου φασίν· Εἶπεν ὁ Χριστὸς· Ἀμὴν, ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, σήμερον μετ’ ἐμοῦ ἔσῃ ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ· οὐκοῦν ἀντίδοσις ἡδη γέγονε τῶν ἀγαθῶν, καὶ περιττὴ ἡ ἀνάστασις. Εἰ γὰρ ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἀπέλαβεν ὁ ληστὴς τὰ ἀγαθὰ, τὸ δὲ σῶμα αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἀνέστη οὐδέπω καὶ τήμερον, οὐκ ἔσται σωμάτων λοιπὸν ἀνάστασις. Ἄρα ἐνοήσατε τὸ λεχθὲν, σωμάτων λοιπὸν ἀνάστασις. Ἄρα ἐνοήσατε τὸ λεχθὲν, ἡ δευτέρον αὐτὸ πάλιν εἰπεῖν ἀνάγκη; Ἀμὴν, ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, σήμερον μετ’ ἐμοῦ ἔσῃ ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ. Εἰσῆλθεν οὖν, φησὶν, εἰς τὸν παράδεισον ὁ ληστὴς οὐ μετὰ τοῦ σώματος· πῶς γὰρ, ὅποτε οὐκ ἐτάφη τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ, οὐδὲ διελύθη καὶ κόνις ἐγένετο; καὶ οὐδαμοῦ εἰρήνεται, ὅτι ἀνέστησεν ὁ Χριστὸς αὐτόν. Εἰ δὲ εἰσῆγαγε τὸν ληστήν, καὶ χωρὶς τοῦ σώματος ἀπέλαυσε τῶν ἀγαθῶν, εὐδῆλον ὅτι σῶματος οὐκ ἔστιν ἀνάστασις. Εἰ γὰρ ἦν σῶματος ἀνάστασις, οὐκ ἂν εἶπε· Σήμερον μετ’ ἐμοῦ ἔσῃ ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ, ἀλλ’, ἐν τῷ καιρῷ τῆς συντελείας, ὅταν σωμάτων ἀνάστασις ᾖ. Εἰ δὲ ἡδη εἰσῆγαγε τὸν ληστήν, τὸ δὲ σῶμα αὐτοῦ φθαρὲν ἔμεινεν ἔξω, εὐδῆλον ὅτι σωμάτων ἀνάστασις οὐκ ἔστι. Ταῦτα ἐκεῖνοι·

Trans. Hill 2004: 125–126, slightly modified.

establishes a difference between Paradise as mentioned by Jesus in Luke 23:43 and the kingdom of heaven, where the resurrection of the bodies will take place. By quoting 1 Cor 2:9 (“Do you not hear what Paul says about those good things: *What the eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered the human heart?* Now Paradise, Adam’s eye has seen it, his ear has heard it, and man’s heart has received it”),<sup>27</sup> Chrysostom reminds his audience that God did not proclaim the kingdom of Paradise, but the kingdom of heaven, and illustrates this conception with further biblical examples.<sup>28</sup> He infers from these scriptural proofs that the robber is in Paradise, not in heaven, and that he has not been resurrected yet (“So, if he [Jesus] promised the kingdom of heaven and welcomed the brigand into Paradise, he had not yet repaid him the good things [i.e. the reward of resurrection]”).<sup>29</sup> The distinction between the physical reality of Paradise, experienced by Adam, and the heavenly reality of the kingdom, that nobody knows yet, relies on a literal interpretation of scriptures, which is characteristic of the Antiochene exegesis promoted by Diodore of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia.<sup>30</sup> John Chrysostom favors this kind of biblical interpretation against the Alexandrian, allegorical tradition.<sup>31</sup> This interpretation has led to the notion that there is an intermediate place where the souls of the deceased await the last judgment before reuniting with the bodies; and this place is Paradise.<sup>32</sup>

At this juncture, Chrysostom reports an objection purportedly coming from the Manichaeans which is directly related to his latter argument. This objection constitutes the second part of the Manichaean claim. The polemicist frames it in a fictitious dialogue between himself and a Manichaean interlocutor:

27 *Serm. Gen.* 7.5 (SC 433), 336, 352–356: Οὐκ ἀκούεις τοῦ Παύλου περὶ τὰ ἀγαθὰ ἐκεῖνα τί φησιν; Ἄ ὀφθαλμὸς οὐκ εἶδε, καὶ οὐς οὐκ ἤκουσε, καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἀνέβη· τὸν δὲ παράδεισον καὶ ὀφθαλμὸς εἶδε τοῦ Ἀδάμ, καὶ οὐς παράδεισον καὶ ὀφθαλμὸς εἶδε τοῦ Ἀδάμ, καὶ οὐς ἤκουσε, καὶ καρδία ἀνθρώπου ἐδέξατο· Trans. Hill 2004: 128, slightly modified.

28 He evokes Matt 4:17, Gen 3:18, Heb 6:4–8, Gen 2, John 3:5. In late antique Christian theological thinking, the identity or the distinction between Paradise and kingdom of heaven were subject to debate. For the general contours of these notions and their relationship, see Delumeau 1992: 1.45–46; Filoramo and Ramelli 2014: 3.65–68; Bockmuehl 2010.

29 *Serm. Gen.* 7.5 (SC 433), 338, 385–387: Εἰ τοίνυν βασιλείαν οὐρανῶν ἐπηγγείλατο, εἰς παράδεισον δὲ εἰσῆγαγε τὸν ληστήν, οὐδέπω ἀπέδωκεν αὐτῷ τὰ ἀγαθὰ. Trans. Hill 2004: 130.

30 Like the Antiochenes, John Chrysostom defends the belief in the physical existence of Paradise on earth, against other theologians, such as Origen, who understand Paradise as a spiritual entity: see Bockmuehl 2010: 205 and 208.

31 See de Wet 2021: 240.

32 On the late antique Christian notion of various heavens, among which is Paradise or Eden, see Filoramo and Ramelli 2014: 3.66, who also mention Syriac sources such as Ephrem.

In response to this they make another claim: “The Paradise he [Jesus] means here is not paradise; instead, he used the term paradise for the kingdom of heaven. Since he was speaking to a brigand, you see, a person who had heard nothing of elevated doctrines, was not aware of inspired writing, and instead had spent his whole life in isolation, committing murders, casting not even a glance at a church or participating in sacred reading, unaware of what the kingdom of heaven is, he put it this way, *Today you will be with me in Paradise*, suggesting by the better-known and more familiar term “paradise” the kingdom of heaven – this it was of which Christ was talking to him.” – “I follow.” – “Therefore,” says (the Manichaeon), “he entered the kingdom of heaven.” – “What is the proof for that?” – “From his saying: *Today, you will be with me in Paradise.*”<sup>33</sup>

In other words, the Manichaeans would have taken Jesus’ promise of Paradise as the promise of the kingdom of heaven and would have explained Jesus’ ambiguous expression as a conscious choice intended to adapt his message to the abilities of understanding of the illiterate thief. Accordingly, the good robber is truly in heaven and he has been resurrected with his soul alone.

This interpretation attributed to the Manichaeans reflects their known hermeneutical practice in two respects. First, the appeal to a social explanation is in line with Manichaean exegetical principles. As Michel Tardieu points out by referring to the reading of Matt 5:17 provided by Faustus (Augustine, *C. Faust.* XIX.1–3), the Manichaeans valued the sociological and the narrative contexts of a New Testament passage to clarify its ambiguous or obscure meaning.<sup>34</sup>

Second, the idea of an immediate redemption upon death, which is the implicit consequence of the proposed interpretation, is consistent with the Manichaean doctrine of the afterlife and of the end of times, namely with both individual and cosmic eschatology, as found mostly in Greek, Coptic, Iranian, and Arabic documents. According to it, after death, the saints’ souls ascend to the Realm of Light, also called New Paradise of Light in the apocalyptic age,

33 *Serm. Gen.* 7.5 (SC 433), 340, 388–402: Ἀλλ’ ἕτερόν τι πρὸς τοῦτο λέγουσι. Τὸν παράδεισον, φασίν, ἐνταῦθα, οὐ τὸν παράδεισον εἶπεν, ἀλλὰ τῷ τοῦ παραδείσου ὀνόματι τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν ὠνόμασεν. Ἐπειδὴ γὰρ πρὸς ληστήν διελέγετο, ἄνθρωπον οὐδὲν ἀκηκοότα τῶν ὑψηλῶν δογμάτων, οὐδὲ εἰδότα περὶ προφητείας, ἀλλὰ πάντα τὸν χρόνον ἐν ἐρημίαις διατρίψαντα, καὶ φόνους ἐργασάμενον, καὶ μηδὲ παρακύψαντά ποτε εἰς ἐκκλησίαν, μήτε μετασχόντα θείας ἀκροάσεως, μὴ εἰδότα τί ποτέ ἐστι βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, τοῦτο ἔλεγε· Σήμερον μετ’ ἐμοῦ ἔσῃ ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ· Τῷ γνωριμωτέρῳ καὶ συνηθεστέρῳ ὀνόματι τοῦ παραδείσου τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν δηλοῖ, καὶ περὶ ἐκείνης αὐτῷ διαλέγεται ὁ Χριστός. Δέχομαι. Οὐκοῦν, φησίν, εἰσῆλθε εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν. Πόθεν δηλον; Ἐξ ὧν εἶπε, Σήμερον μετ’ ἐμοῦ ἔσῃ ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ.

Trans. Hill 2004: 130, slightly modified.

34 Tardieu 1987: 135–136 (exegetical rule n° 13).

namely the place where all the particles of light will be gathered after the last judgment and the destruction of Matter. The New Paradise will finally merge with the original luminous Kingdom of the Father of Greatness. In other words, in the Manichaean understanding, the terms Paradise and the kingdom of heaven do not cover different realities, but rather the same entity, since the end, both individual and cosmic, is conceived of as a return to the beginning.<sup>35</sup>

Chrysostom considers the Manichaean solution of equating Paradise and the kingdom of heaven as “forcing” the biblical text (βιαιοτέρα ἢ λύσις αὐτῇ).<sup>36</sup> We should recall here that the same equation was popular in the thoughts of some Christian writers, such as Basil of Caesarea, who used the two terms interchangeably.<sup>37</sup> We may understand Chrysostom’s allegation of distortion, then, less against the Manichaeans themselves than against an allegorical, or in any case a non-literal interpretation of the biblical verse. In his *Homilies* 38.3 and 39 on 1 Cor, Chrysostom also refutes the Manichaean denial of the bodily resurrection, which is based, according to him, on an allegorical interpretation of 1 Cor 15: the Manichaeans would have taken the Pauline term “death” as meaning “being in sin”, and “resurrection” as being freed from sin.<sup>38</sup>

In our *Sermon*, John Chrysostom replies to this second Manichaean claim in a twofold way, as he did to the previous claim. First, he quotes John 3:18 (*The one who does not believe in the Son has already been condemned*) and John 5:24 (*The one who believes in the Son has transferred from death to life*) to show that Jesus tends to speak of the future as an already existing reality: Christ speaks of the events “as though things have occurred that have not yet occurred, so he spoke also to the brigand.”<sup>39</sup> In other words, in his perspective, the thief

35 For an excellent presentation of Manichaean eschatology and relevant bibliography, see Sundermann 1998/2012. The Coptic *Psalm of the Wanderers* 12 expresses this doctrine in poetical terms: upon death, the soul exults saying “Open to me thy Paradise (...) O holy ones, rejoice with me, for I have returned to my beginning again.” (2Ps 154.22–155.15, ed. and tr. Allberry 1938).

36 *Serm. Gen.* 7.5 (SC 433), 340, 403.

37 Filoramo and Ramelli 2014: 3.66.

38 See de Wet 2011: 97–98, and de Wet 2021: 239. It is worth noting, however, that in other cases Chrysostom seems obliged to refute the Manichaean literal exegesis and to promote an allegorical interpretation to counter Manichaean theses. See, for example, the Manichaean reading of Gal 1:4 (*God who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father*) reported in Chrysostom’s *Commentary on Gal. 1*. Here, the Manichaeans are said to take “the present evil age” literally, to mean “evil world,” which would support their notion of cosmology; whereas Chrysostom interprets αἰών in a temporal sense and as metaphorically meaning “evil actions and a depraved moral principle.” See de Wet 2014: 31–33.

39 *Serm. Gen.* 7.5 (SC 433), 342, 414–416: ὡς γεγενημένων δὴ πραγμάτων οὕτω γεγενημένων διαλέγεται· οὕτω καὶ πρὸς τὸν ληστήν ἔλεγε. Trans. Hill 2004: 131. Chrysostom further alludes

entered Paradise just in words, not in experience yet. Then, Chrysostom argues that nobody has been resurrected yet (“no one has laid hold of the reward of goods things”) and cites Heb 11:13 (*It was in faith that they all died without having obtained the object of the promises, but they saw it and greeted it from afar*) and Heb 11:40 (*God foresaw a better fate for us, and they were not to reach perfection without us*). After that, he concludes the sermon by recommending his audience to remember his words, which are useful for their education.<sup>40</sup>

How should we take John Chrysostom’s testimony, given that, to the best of my knowledge, he would be the only author, in the panorama of Manichaean and anti-Manichaean literature, to report such a Manichaean exegesis of Luke 23:43? It is possible that he invented this Manichaean biblical reading, by extrapolating it from the Manichaean rejection of the physical resurrection, which is anchored in turn on the anthropological and eschatological Manichaean doctrine, namely the opposition between body and soul, the redemption of light and the destruction of matter at the end of times. Well informed about Manichaean dogmas, Chrysostom may have linked the Manichaean doctrine on resurrection to the Lukan verse. The opinion he attributes to the Manichaeans is, indeed, fundamentally authentic, as several direct sources demonstrate, including a Sogdian fragment from Turfan (M 140), which speaks of “five resurrections,” all concerning the liberation of light. Interestingly with regard to our discussion, this text also contains polemics against those who defend the final resurrection in the flesh (including Elchasaites, other Christians, and Zoroastrians): “And if the resurrection of the fleshly bodies would occur, just like the heretics say, then a *Mazan*-like demon more disgusting than this could not be found.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, in Chrysostom’s sermon, if the *opinion* he attributes to the Manichaeans is correct, its direct *relation* to Luke 23:43 may be due to the intervention of Chrysostom himself. One may suggest that this link is prompted by the aforementioned intra-Christian, longstanding discussion over the realities of Paradise and the kingdom of heaven: John Chrysostom may have aimed at dismissing the view which defended the identity of the two

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to Gen 2:17 and interprets God’s death sentence to Adam in the same way, namely that Adam did not die after his transgression. On this interpretive technique, characteristic of Chrysostom’s exegesis but which goes back as far as Justin Martyr, see Moss 2013, 238 n. 41.

40 Hill 2004: 132–133 (slightly modified): “Hold fast to this and remember it; much has been said, and my longing is that you have a better education. Holding fast to it with precision, then, let us also prepare ourselves for what is yet to be said and all together, let us praise glory to God, to whom be the glory and the power, now and forever, and for ever and ever. Amen.”

41 Text, translation, and commentary in Sundermann 1996, 191.

realities based on Luke 23:43, among other biblical passages, by attributing it to an external enemy universally condemned, Manichaeism. In other words, he would have used the Manichaeans and their notions to target Christian adversaries and ultimately affirm his ideas in an intra-Christian debate revolving around the interpretation of Luke 23:43 and the concept of Paradise. According to this scenario, the Manichaeans would not have appropriated this verse for supporting their doctrine against the corporeal resurrection.

As likely as this scenario may be, given how frequently late antique Christian theologians used Manichaeism as a label of abuse to designate other opponents and deal with other controversies,<sup>42</sup> nevertheless there are reasons to doubt it and to consider, by contrast, the authenticity of Chrysostom's attribution of this exegesis to the Manichaeans. First, what he reports of the Manichaean interpretation is articulated and not condensed in a stereotypical formula, as is oftentimes the case when the polemicists appeal to Manichaeans for condemning a Christological doctrine as docetic or for attacking groups as dualistic. Second, this interpretation is based on the exegetical criterion of the social explanation that is attested in other sources relevant for Manichaeism, namely Augustine's *Contra Faustum*; as such, Chrysostom's interpretation looks, then, very plausible. Third, the interpretation is conceptually coherent with other opinions Chrysostom attributes to Manichaeans in other homilies as interpretations of other biblical passages, in particular of Paul's epistles.<sup>43</sup> It is well known that Paul was considered a reference figure by Mani and his followers; it is an equally known fact that Manichaeans relied on his writings also by interpreting his words in accordance with their own teachings.<sup>44</sup> In other words, we are not in the presence of a brief, clichéd, and isolated instance that would look spurious. Furthermore, John Chrysostom attests to a wider pool of biblical passages that were taken by the Manichaeans in support of their beliefs, as much as other Christian polemicists do, *in primis* Titus of Bostra and Augustine.

This is why we should try to explain the uniqueness of Chrysostom's attestation in another way. For example, it may be possible that Chrysostom accounts for a local exegesis: the exegesis of the Manichaean community in Antioch, where Manichaean presence is documented since at least the beginning of the fourth century.<sup>45</sup> It is with this Antiochene context in mind that I turn

42 The cases are numerous. For an example recently discussed in scholarship, see Pedersen 2021.

43 See the bibliography mentioned above, n. 22.

44 See Viciano 2006: 663 for some examples and relevant literature.

45 For example, the elect Julia, who debates with Porphyry, the bishop of Gaza, as reported by Mark the Deacon in his *Life of Porphyry*, comes from Antioch. See Scopello 2005,

to another well-known anti-Manichaean polemicist, active in Antioch in the early sixth century, namely the Miaphysite patriarch Severus (r. 512–518). And yet, it is not in his famous *Cathedral Homily* 123, explicitly targeted against the Manichaeans and which is a mine of citations from direct Manichaean sources, that I could find something relevant to the topic under discussion, but rather in the *Cathedral Homily* 22 (CPG 7035), that Severus delivered in Antioch on April 5, 513 and where, moreover, the Manichaeans are not overtly mentioned.<sup>46</sup>

#### 4 Severus of Antioch, *Cathedral Homily* 22

The homily focuses on Matt 27:46 (*My God My God, why have you forsaken me?*) and explicitly situates itself within the Christological debates of the fifth and sixth centuries.<sup>47</sup> Severus opens his sermon by denouncing his major target, those who defend a “dualistic view of the natures of Christ,” namely the followers of the Council of Chalcedon and of Nestorius’ doctrine. Accordingly, the sermon is a lengthy demonstration that Matt 27:46 does not contradict Miaphysite Christology, promoted by Severus, but rather offers evidence in support of the condemnation of Dyophysite doctrine. It is in this framework that Severus evokes Luke 23:43, as a further biblical proof for his argument.<sup>48</sup> This citation occasions a discussion of its various interpretations; this discussion appears in the final part of the sermon as an excursus.<sup>49</sup> For composing

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esp. 246–248 for a presentation of the historical evidence concerning the Manichaean presence in Antioch.

46 This might be one of the reasons why this homily has passed unnoticed in Manichaean studies. I will try to demonstrate below that it concerns the Manichaeans in some respects. It is thanks to the list of patristic texts dealing with the good robber provided by Van Esbroeck that this homily caught my attention: Van Esbroeck 1983: 328–329.

47 Edition of the Syriac text (in the translation by Jacob of Edessa) and French translation: Brière & Graffin 1975: 88–113. The part of the homily devoted to Luke 23:43 is also preserved in Greek, not in its original version, but in a *catena*: see Cramer 1844: 168–171. This text is reproduced in the *Patrologia Orientalis* edition, at 106–112. An analysis of the structure of *Homily* 22, and the exegesis Severus displays there, is offered in Roux 2002: 190–201.

48 More precisely, Luke 23:43 appears in the homily as the second component of the Dyophysite/Miaphysite discussion. The homily has been defined as a diptych by Roux 2002: 192, for Matt 27:46 and Luke 23:43 convey two opposite views on Christ, the former his human weakness, the latter his divine power. This opposition would have supported the Dyophysites and their emphasis on the double nature of Christ. Thus, Severus sets off to refute the Dyophysite doctrine by addressing the evangelical verses one at the time.

49 *Hom.* 22 (PO 37), 106.5–112.10 (Syr.), 107.4–113.9 (French trans.).

this excursus, I argue that Severus drew on John Chrysostom's *Sermon on Genesis* 7, without acknowledging it, and that, consequently, the polemics against the Dyophysites is suspended for a moment to refute the Manichaeans, who remain unmentioned.

The excursus is composed of a series of explanations of Luke 23:43, each one introduced by a standardized formula, "Some say," "Others say," where every party involved is left anonymous. Here is an outline of the structure of the excursus:

*"For some say"*: "How can we say that the thief entered Paradise" given Heb 11:39–40?

*"Some say (to this)"*: restrictive interpretation of Heb 11:39–40, the thief did enter Paradise

*"But others say"*: Jesus speaks of the future (John 3:18 and 5:24)

*"Others also force this verse"*: punctuation in the verse, "today" does not refer to the resurrection

*"But the true exegesis is this"*: Paradise vs. Kingdom of Heaven (Matt 3:2 and 6:10)

*"But maybe someone will say"*: Paradise = Kingdom of Heaven

Refutation: Paradise vs. Kingdom of Heaven (1 Cor 2:9) and nobody has been resurrected yet (Heb 11:40)

Modern scholars have highlighted that Severus' presentation of these various opinions represents the originality and the historical importance of this sermon.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, they have pointed out that here Severus draws on the exegetical techniques he uses to interpret Jesus' words or *dicta*, rather than narrative episodes or *facta*. Contrary to the latter, in the exegesis of *dicta* Severus is incline to present and admit as legitimate a multiplicity of opinions, if they do not contradict the *regula fidei*.<sup>51</sup> A close examination of the text allows to refine this assessment and to understand that the excursus is articulated in two movements: 1) Severus first reports one specific position, which is subsequently refuted by four opinions; only the last one of them reflects Severus' own response; 2) Severus reports an objection to his response, then refutes this too. The structure can thus be improved in this way:

50 See Van Esbroeck 1983: 333: "Sévère d'Antioche est intéressant tant par sa date que parce qu'il passe en revue les opinions diverses."

51 On this, see Roux 2002: 127–128 (for Severus' exegesis of *dicta*) and 198–199 (for the application of this exegesis to this excursus). For other examples of Severus's acceptance of multiple biblical interpretations, see Moss 2016b: esp. 805–807.



This position implies the idea that before the time of the apostles nobody could have resurrection. For this reason, it cannot be ascribed as such to the Manichaeans, who, according to their interpretation transmitted by John Chrysostom, would not deny that the robber entered Paradise, but only that he entered it with his body. Yet, there is the possibility to consider the position reported by Severus as a general challenge to the Christian doctrine on resurrection. Its formulation, in terms of a contradiction between the two passages, could support this understanding, since opponents to “orthodox” Christians would use this rhetorical strategy of antithesis. Taken this way, this position would aim to express reservations about the Christian belief of resurrection, namely bodily resurrection. Accordingly, the Manichaeans could be likely candidates for advancing this position. In addition, we remark that the scriptural proof of Heb 11:39–40 was also cited in Chrysostom’s sermon as part of his refutation of Manichaean claims (and we will see below that this passage will reappear as part of Severus’ demonstration). The following analysis will provide another piece of evidence in support of the attribution of this position to the Manichaeans.

Severus continues by reporting some replies that would counter that opinion. The first of these refutations centers on Heb 11:39–40 and interprets it literally, almost philologically, by focusing on the demonstrative pronoun οὗτος, which is used in the expression “those who witnessed the faith.” The supporters of this refutation claim that Paul excluded the thief from the list of these witnesses of the past, by interpreting οὗτος in a restrictive way, namely as referring to those who are mentioned in the previous lines of Paul’s epistle, Heb 11:4–38. Accordingly, the thief is not concerned by this passage, and did enter Paradise.<sup>53</sup>

The second refutation, by contrast, focuses on Jesus’ promise in Luke 23:43. It argues that there is no contradiction with Paul’s statement because the thief is not in Paradise yet, but that the promise was uttered in a way that would have led one to think that this was case. This claim is based on the argument that Jesus speaks of the future as of something already existing. The biblical passages quoted in support to this claim are John 3:18 and 5:24.<sup>54</sup> This opinion,

53 *Hom. 22* (PO 37), 106.12–18 (Syr.) (and 107.10–15 for the French trans.): “Some say (to this) that the apostle did not put the thief with those he listed, but ignored him, as having already earned what was promised. For this he did not simply say and without adding any difference: “All those who were witnesses of the faith, did not receive the promises,” but he said: “All those,” applying his sentence by the use of the demonstrative to those only who were listed and counted, and among whom the thief was not listed.”

54 *Hom. 22* (PO 37), 106.19–28 (Syr.) (and 107.16–24 for the French trans.): “But others say: The thief has not yet earned the stay in paradise, but, because of his sincerity and the



(Vat. gr. 1209), p. 1347, for example, a dot is visible after the word “today” (σήμερον);<sup>57</sup> considering the layout of the page and the distance separating each letter, it is probable that this dot has been added by a later hand. The specific reasons for its addition are unknown, but the explanation reported by Severus could offer a precise theological and polemical context for it: it could be a reaction to the Manichaean interpretation of Luke 23:43 as a denial of the bodily resurrection.<sup>58</sup> Two other textual traditions of the gospels emanating from and circulating in areas where Manichaean presence in late antiquity is well attested, also feature marks of separation between the two parts of the biblical sentence, so that “today” refers to the first rather than to the second part. For the Coptic tradition, this reading is attested in the oldest manuscript of the Sahidic text of the Bible. The so-called Barcelona Codex (fifth century), followed by two medieval witnesses (datable to the tenth–eleventh century), bears the variant where the particle  $\chi\epsilon$  (“that”) follows, rather than precedes, the word  $\mu\pi\omicron\omicron\gamma$  (“today”): it thus reads *I tell you today that ...* ( $\dagger\chi\omega\ \mu\mu\omicron\varsigma\ \kappa\alpha\kappa\ \mu\pi\omicron\omicron\gamma\ \chi\epsilon\ \kappa\alpha\lambda\omega\omega\pi\epsilon\ \mu\mu\mu\alpha\iota\ \epsilon\mu\ \mu\alpha\rho\alpha\delta\iota\varsigma\omicron\varsigma$ ) instead of *I tell you that today ....* ( $\chi\epsilon\ \mu\pi\omicron\omicron\gamma$ ).<sup>59</sup> In the Syriac tradition, the Curetonian manuscript, also datable to the fifth century and coming from Egypt,<sup>60</sup> contains the Old Syriac version of the gospels and has the same variant, against the rest of the tradition; the preposition *dalat* (“that” or introducing direct speech) is placed after, rather than before, the word *yawmana* (“today”): *I tell you today that you will be with me in the Garden of Eden* ( $\text{ܐܢܝܢܐ ܕܝܠܐܬܐ ܕܝܠܐܬܐ ܕܝܠܐܬܐ ܕܝܠܐܬܐ ܕܝܠܐܬܐ}$ ).<sup>61</sup>

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Among the supporters of the alternative reading, Farrar suggests Diodore of Tarsus as a possibility, given that his interpretation of this Lukan verse does not survive (at 192).

57 The manuscript is accessible online at [https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Vat.gr.1209](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.gr.1209).

58 Van Esbroeck 1983: 333 also reads the opinion reported by Severus as a response to the Manichaean interpretation: “[Sévère] mentionne pour la première fois une réponse exégétique contre l’interprétation manichéenne. Un point doit séparer ‘aujourd’hui’ et ‘tu seras avec moi.’”

59 P. Palau Ribes Inv. 181 (= Codex de Barcelone), p. 182. This manuscript, whose provenance is unknown, is edited in Quecke 1977. The two medieval witnesses are Paris, BnF copte 129(8), f. 144r (accessible online at <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b100919381/f116>); and Paris, BnF copte 129(9), f. 30r (accessible online at <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b100915550/f62>), both coming from the White Monastery. Their variant is signaled in the apparatus of the edition in Horner 1911–1924: 2.452 (designated as MSS 90 and 91 respectively). Seven Sahidic manuscripts follow the prevailing variant. This variant is not attested in Bohairic (see Horner 189–1905), and the Gospel of Luke is not preserved in Lycopolitan. I am extremely grateful to my colleague Anne Boud’hors for helping me navigate the world of the Coptic Bible and providing me with all this valuable information.

60 The “Codex Curetonianus” (= MS London, Brit. Libr. Add. 14451) comes from Dayr al-Suryan in the Nitrian desert: for its description, see Wright 1870–1872: 1. No. CXIX.

61 Kiraz 2004: 3.486 (Luke 23:43).



the borrowing of the same claims and the same scriptural proofs: Severus cites Chrysostom's very words, without acknowledging it, when he prolongs the Pauline citation with the following comment: "On the contrary, Paradise, even Adam's eye saw it, even his ear heard it." The Greek text of Severus is almost identical to Chrysostom's: Τὸν δὲ παράδεισον καὶ ὀφθαλμὸς εἶδε τοῦ Ἀδάμ, καὶ οὖς ἤκουσε (Chrysostom);<sup>65</sup> Τὸν δὲ παράδεισον καὶ ὀφθαλμὸς εἶδε τοῦ Ἀδάμ, καὶ οὖς ἤκουεν (Severus).<sup>66</sup>

Similarly, Severus concludes, just as Chrysostom did, by quoting Heb 11:40 and stating that the thief has not yet been resurrected. He thus shows that Jesus' promise of Paradise is not in contradiction with Paul's words; on the contrary, Paradise as per Luke 23:43 designates a resting place for the souls, before they are rewarded with the admission into the kingdom of heaven.

The following table offers an overview of the abovementioned correspondences between Chrysostom's and Severus' texts:

| John Chrysostom, <i>Sermon on Genesis</i> 7                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Severus of Antioch, <i>Homily</i> 22                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Manichaean claim 1:</b> the thief has received the reward, the resurrection of the bodies does not exist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– <i>Refutation 1:</i> body and soul are inseparable (2 Cor 5:10, 1 Cor 15:53)</li><li>– <i>Refutation 2:</i> Paradise vs. Kingdom of Heaven (1 Cor 2:9)</li></ul> <p><b>Manichaean claim 2:</b> Paradise = Kingdom of Heaven</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– <i>Refutation 1:</i> Jesus speaks of the future (Jn 3:18, 5:24)</li><li>– <i>Refutation 2:</i> Nobody has resurrected yet (Heb 11:13, Heb 11:40)</li></ul> | <p><b>Manichaean claim 1:</b> <i>For some people say:</i> How can we say that the thief entered Paradise given Heb 11:39–40? <i>Some say (to this):</i> restrictive interpretation of Heb 11:39–40, the thief did enter Paradise</p> <p><i>But others say:</i> Jesus speaks of the future (Jn 3:18, 5:24)</p> <p><i>Others also force this verse:</i> I am telling you today, that ...</p> <p><i>But the true exegesis is this:</i> Paradise vs. Kingdom of Heaven (1 Cor 2:9)</p> <p><b>Manichaean claim 2:</b> <i>But maybe someone will say:</i> Paradise = Kingdom of Heaven</p> <p><i>Refutation:</i> Nobody had resurrected yet (Heb 11:40)</p> |

65 *Serm. Gen.* 7.5 (SC 433), 336.355–356.

66 *Hom.* 22 (PO 37), 108–109 (in apparatus). The borrowing of Chrysostom's own words would suggest that Severus worked directly with Chrysostom's text rather than with a repertoire of arguments and scriptural proofs on the topic in question that would have also been used by Chrysostom.

We observe that all the topics present in John Chrysostom's *Sermon* have been reused by Severus, except for the demonstration that body and soul are inseparable (Chrysostom's refutation 1 to the Manichaean claim 1). Severus' relationship to Chrysostom is not univocal: one of Chrysostom's refutations (refutation 1 of Manichaean claim 2) is reported by Severus as the second reply to the main question, and he does not endorse it, whereas two other refutations by Chrysostom (refutations 2 to the Manichaean claims 1 and 2) are accepted and adopted by Severus as his own. In addition, Severus did not reiterate the order of Chrysostom's reasoning, but used it organically in a new composition, where he inserted other opinions, not present in his major source. This situation may be a sign of the evolution of the exegesis of Luke 23:43 over time.

The availability of Chrysostom's writings to Patriarch Severus can easily be explained by the geographical context of the see of Antioch and its rich patriarchal library.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, Severus' frequent use of Chrysostom is attested in other works of his: Chrysostom, together with Cyril of Alexandria, is probably the most quoted church father in Severus.<sup>68</sup> The fact that Severus does not mention Chrysostom by name as his source should not surprise us. It is the habit of late antique theologians to refer to previous authors without explicit attribution. Rather, the contrary is the exception: whenever Severus acknowledges his sources, it is in a context of demonstration where he needs to stress the authority of the proofs which would support his claim. Indeed, in *Homily* 22, the excursus on Luke 23:43, while being inscribed in the context of a demonstration against the Dyophysites, is not in itself polemical. Rather, as recalled above, this excursus is characterized by the exegetical method applied to *dicta*, which admits the legitimacy of multiple opinions. Contrary to the excursus, in the parts of the homily that precede it, which address the Dyophysites, Severus does quote by name several patristic authorities, such as Cyril of Alexandria, upon which he bases his refutation, as well as his adversaries, such as Nestorius and Pope Leo. The excursus belongs to another realm, to exegesis, rather than to theology, where there is room for diversity and the appeal to named supporters and opponents is less relevant.<sup>69</sup>

Coming back to my initial hypothesis, these similarities may thus point to an Antiochian context, and the interpretation of Luke 23:43 in support of the denial of the bodily resurrection could be the position of the Manichaean

67 Thus, Severus would have become acquainted with the patriarchal library and the local traditions of Antioch in a rather short period of time, since he was appointed patriarch in November of 512, namely only five months before delivering his *Homily* 22, in April of 513.

68 See Allen 2016 and Voicu 2014.

69 See Moss 2016b: 804–807.

community in Antioch. Yet, one element remains problematic: why does Severus leave anonymous this interpretation and does not attribute it to the Manichaeans, since, as we have just showed, he knew and used John Chrysostom's sermon which explicitly refutes the Manichaeans and their exegesis of this verse? For such an anti-Manichaean opponent like Severus, it would have been a great opportunity to denounce the Manichaeans on this front as well. To explain why he left their opinion anonymous, several possibilities, whether socio-historical, textual or content-related, come to mind: 1) given that the main target of the homily are the Nestorians, Severus strategically chose not to mention by name other adversaries, in order to keep the attention of his audience focused on what mattered the most for him in that specific occasion; 2) there was no need for an explicit attribution, since the simple mention of "some say" followed by a claim which questions the traditional dogmas of the Church would have sufficed to make the audience understand that the Manichaeans were intended;<sup>70</sup> 3) the claim is outdated and by Severus' time, in the sixth century, Manichaeans did not defend this interpretation anymore; 4) Severus knew or discovered that John Chrysostom misattributed this opinion to the Manichaeans, and he did not want to repeat a mistake, but kept the opinion as one among numerous exegeses of the verse;<sup>71</sup> 5) due to accidents in the textual transmission, Chrysostom's sermon reached Severus deprived of the mention of the Manichaeans. The first option seems to be the most likely, when we compare this homily to the other contexts in which Severus attacks the Manichaeans: the *Cathedral Homily* 123 is entirely devoted to them, and even when Severus accuses other adversaries of being Manichaeans, thus using the term as a polemical label, he never does so against the Dyophysites, but rather against the followers of Eutychius and of Julian of Halicarnassus.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, he leverages that label for doctrines that, according to his creed, diminish or deny Christ's humanity. A polemical association of Nestorians and Manichaeans would thus have not been fruitful for him, just distracting.

70 The Manichaeans were indeed mentioned and condemned in a previous intervention by Severus to the same audience: *Homily* 21, delivered two days before our *Homily* 22, namely on April 3, 513. See Alpi 2004.

71 This possibility is not farfetched, given that philological and bibliographical research characterizes Severus' use of previous writings: see Grant 1960, for Severus' attention to the textual problems in Ignatius of Antioch's and Irenaeus of Lyon's writings, as well as his avoidance of forgeries for compiling his dossiers of patristic authorities; and Moss 2016a: 206, fn. 35, for Severus' search in the corpus of 3000 letters of Isidore of Pelusium, for argumentative purposes.

72 See Alpi 2004: 234–235.

At any rate, as highlighted above, the denial of the resurrection of the bodies attributed to the Manichaeans by John Chrysostom corresponds to an authentic Manichaean doctrine, attested by multiple sources. The association of this doctrine with Luke 23:43 may provide new lenses through which we can look back at the other polemical sources and detect an *implicit* anti-Manichaean polemic in some of them, and consequently an *indirect* allusion to the Manichaean interpretation of Luke 23:43 in support of the denial of the bodily resurrection.

## 5 Implicit Anti-Manichaean Polemic

This implicit anti-Manichaean dimension could underlie Ephrem's treatment of Luke 23:43. In his *Hymn on Paradise* 8, this verse prompts a whole reasoning about the resurrection, where the emphasis is put on the unity of body and soul:

I behold a dwelling there  
and a tabernacle of light,  
a voice proclaiming  
"Blessed is the Thief  
who has freely received  
the keys to Paradise."  
I imagined that he was already there,  
but then I considered  
how the soul cannot  
have perception of Paradise  
without its mate, the body,  
its instrument and lyre.

(*Hymn on Paradise* 8, 2)

Ephrem's position is that, since the body of the robber could not go to Paradise, the resurrection has not taken place yet, and the robber is not inside Paradise, but outside of it, on the surrounding wall, waiting for the last judgment and the reunion with his body. This stanza has been interpreted as a reaction against Bardaisan and his rejection of the bodily resurrection.<sup>73</sup> I argue that it could also be targeted at the Manichaean doctrine, especially given the context

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73 See De Francesco 2006, 228 n. 5.

suggested by John Chrysostom's sermon, namely the connection with the promise to the good robber.

## 6 Manichaean Interpretations of Luke 23:43 to Deny the Resurrection of the Bodies

Finally, if, with this same connection in mind (i.e. Jesus' promise to the good thief and bodily resurrection), we look back at the Manichaean sources alluding to Luke 23:43 quoted at the beginning of this chapter, we observe that the reference to this verse is accompanied by a rejection of the body and the material world. For example, the *Psalm to Jesus* 242 cited above seems to imply such a theological assumption:<sup>74</sup>

A robber was saved upon the cross because he did but  
Acknowledge you; you forgot all the sins that he  
Had committed, you remembered all his good.

*All worldly Matter that surrounds me – burn it today,*  
I beseech you. Cleanse me from all the sins, for  
I too have hung on your hope.

Here, the interpretation of the thief as the model of the believer who is saved and forgiven, is accompanied by the notion of the destruction of matter and, consequently, by an implicit apology for the resurrection of the soul. Yet, the relevant Manichaean sources, as we said above, are all liturgical; John Chrysostom, on the contrary, attests to an exegetical practice. The two Manichaean contexts for the use of Luke 23:43 are, thus, different. I suggest overcoming this apparent incompatibility by claiming that the exegesis lies behind the liturgical expression, or, otherwise stated, that ritual hymns, like those where the allusions to Luke 23:43 are found, are theologically based on doctrinal conceptions matured in exegetical contexts. Therefore, even if we do

74 This is also the case of the other *Psalm to Jesus*, *Psalm to Jesus* 271 (my emphasis): "Jesus, king of the holy, take me ... / O Christ, whom I have loved, belonging unto you, *I fell into the snares / Of the body of death. The trappers that set traps for me brought me / Beneath their nets [...]* / *I broke their snares, I burst their nets by the faith of your Truth [...]* / I heard the power of your living cry, I followed / You, I put down the nets of Error, I took the / Nets from the man in unto life, I let the dead / Bury the dead, I stepped in with your cross, / *I hung to the right of you, because I received the / Blessing; henceforth take me with you to the Paradise of the holy Gods.*" (2Ps 89.23–90.31, tr. Allberry 1938).

not have Manichaean sources openly displaying an exegesis of Luke 23:43, the preserved liturgical documents presuppose such an exegesis.

Furthermore, John Chrysostom speaks of the Manichaean interpretation in a sermon which is situated in a specific temporal and liturgical setting: as recalled above, Chrysostom pronounced this homily during Lent 386, in the fasting period preceding Easter, which, that year, was celebrated on April 5th.<sup>75</sup> Thus, John Chrysostom delivered his homily sometime in March, namely the time in the year where the Manichaeans would celebrate their annual Bema festival. This ceremony is preceded by a month of fasting.<sup>76</sup> In opening his condemnation of the Manichaean reading of Luke 23:43, John Chrysostom mentions a concrete detail that would allude to such a fasting:

An issue arises that is not a chance one, namely the Manichaeans, stupid and rabid dogs, presenting an appearance of mildness, but having on the inside the savage fury of dogs, wolves in sheep's clothing. Lest you look to appearances, however, examine instead the wild beast hidden within. These people, then, seize upon this passage to claim ...

Apart from recurring to well-known heresiological *topoi*, such as the madness and the deceitful disguise of the adversaries,<sup>77</sup> Chrysostom highlights the “appearance of mildness” (τὸ σχῆμα ἐπιεικείας) of the Manichaeans: albeit Chrysostom uses it in the traditional way, namely for polemically opposing the inner fury of his enemies and their outward virtuous aspect, this expression may hint to the conduct of Manichaean believers, ruled by ascetical practices that provoke physical emaciation. Given the time in the year where Chrysostom delivers his sermon, it could refer more precisely to the Manichaean long fast in the month leading to the Bema feast-day. Following this reasoning, we may further deduce from Chrysostom that during that month of fasting, in preparation for the Bema festival, or during one of the Bema rituals, the Manichaeans were reading passages containing a reference to Luke 23:43. In other words, we may deduce that the *Psalms to Jesus* in particular, usually considered “psalms on the ascension of the soul to the Land of Light” at the moment of death, namely funerary psalms,<sup>78</sup> were also performed during the confession of sins

75 Grumel 1958, table at 267.

76 For a detailed presentation of the Manichaean Bema festival, see Sundermann 1989.

77 For the stereotypical portrait of the Manichaeans, and of heretics in general, in Chrysostom's works, see Brottier 1998: 165 n. 6 and 8. The deceitful appearance of the Manichaeans is stressed in several anti-Manichaean authors, such as Titus of Bostra, *C. Man.* 4.43 and Aug., *Mor.* 2.20.74.

78 See Dubois 2017.

preceding the ritual meal of the Bema, where it was believed that either Mani or Jesus himself would sit on the throne to judge mankind, in a simulation of the last judgment taking place at the end of time.

## 7 Conclusion

From the survey of the Manichaean interpretations of Luke 23:43, which promote the figure of the thief as model of the righteous believer, it emerges that John Chrysostom's *Sermon on Genesis 7* stands out for uniquely reporting a Manichaean reading of the verse as a proof denying the resurrection of the bodies. The Manichaean exegesis that Chrysostom quotes is articulated, and touches also upon the question of the nature of Paradise and its identity – or lack thereof – with the kingdom of heaven, a topic of debate since the early Christian centuries. Rather than being used only in a rhetorical way by the Golden Mouth to settle this intra-Christian debate evidently still current in his times, the interpretation he ascribed to the Manichaeans seems authentic for several reasons. In particular, the sociological explanation constitutes a strong argument in this respect, since it resonates with Manichaean exegetical methods attested elsewhere.

The comparison with a later, yet geographically close source, namely Severus of Antioch's *Homily 22*, reveals that the sixth-century Patriarch knew and used Chrysostom's work, although without explicitly mentioning it. Severus' silence about the Manichaean paternity of the position he condemned is surprising, but can be explained on internal grounds, namely on the content of the *Homily*, preoccupied with the Christological controversy and targeted against the Dyophysites. Thus, Severus' quote of the position that Chrysostom attributes to the Manichaeans as a thesis to be rejected further suggests that Luke 23:43 was taken by Manichaeans in support of the resurrection of the soul alone and of the identity of Paradise and the kingdom of heaven.

In turn, the double attestation of John Chrysostom and Severus offers a clue to the possibility that Luke 23:43 was used in this way by the Manichaeans not only in Antioch, but more broadly in the Syro-Mesopotamian area. In other words, based on their attestation, it is worth reexamining the cases where the exegesis of Luke 23:43 is present, both in Manichaean and anti-Manichaean sources. The Coptic versions of the Manichaean *Psalms* in Egypt would reflect this interpretation, where the praise of the thief is joined to an invocation of the final destruction of matter; Ephrem the Syrian could be reacting to it in his eulogy to the union of body and soul at the time of resurrection. It would be necessary to reconsider from this perspective, offered by John Chrysostom

and Severus of Antioch, all the other sources from that area to see if there are implicit and indirect traces of this Manichaean interpretation.

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## Re-reading Manichaean Cosmogonic Fragments (M1001–1032, 9000)

*Mihaela Timuş*

In the footsteps of Mary Boyce and Werner Sundermann, the present chapter starts with the idea that the Manichaean Middle Persian fragments M1001–1032, 9000 belonged to the same codex of very large dimensions.\* I hypothesize identifying this codex with Mani's *Treasure of Life*. This text includes a list of the anatomical parts of the body, a subject present in both Zoroastrian and Manichaean sources. I argue that the way the anatomical list is introduced in the portion of this text edited as KPT 363–368 (Text 1.7) points to the myth of the seduction of the archons, a topic known to have been treated in the *Treasure of Life*, thus supporting the identification of these fragments with that composition of Mani.

### 1 A Codex for Mani's *Thesaurus vitae*

In 1973 Werner Sundermann edited an important set of fragments from the Turfan collection, under the title *Mittelpersische und parthische kosmogonische und Parabeltexte der Manichäer*, which will be henceforth referred to as KPT. My work is mainly focused on the first group of texts classified by Sundermann under the category “Text 1.”<sup>1</sup> The technical detailed descriptions given to each of them by Sundermann underlined an important fact which I would like to better emphasize here, all the more so because, since 1973, it has been rather ignored: most likely, at least a good part of these fragments belonged to the same codex, of a very large size.

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\* I began the investigation of these Manichaean texts during my research stay as an Alexander von Humboldt fellow at the Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften (2017–2018), under the main guidance of Prof. Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst. I thank him, Christiane Reck and Iain Gardner for their useful critical comments on a previous version of this contribution.

1 See Sundermann 1973: 11–37. See also their detailed list in Table 15.1.

Before Sundermann, Mary Boyce had already noticed that all these fragments (M1001–1031) might have belonged to the same manuscript and text.<sup>2</sup> Afterwards, Sundermann added a list of technical details such as:

1. the columns on the page are 7.7 cm large and there is a space of 1.4 cm between; in various cases, such as Texts 1.1, 1.7, 1.8, one clearly counts four columns.
2. one can only estimate the dimensions of the original folios, given the fact that none is preserved entirely. It is likely that a folio was 45 cm width, 30 cm height.
3. the material of the paper was in use by the 7th–8th c. CE in Central Asia.
4. Even though the folios could have theoretically belonged to a rolled book, traces of binding and folding points without any doubt point to a codex (or a book of quires) in the Western style (“Zweifello sind die erhaltenen Fragmente also Reste eines *gehefteten Buches westlicher Art*”).<sup>3</sup>

Part of the fragments included in this category (“Text 1”) are too fragmentary to be easily characterized, but at least in three other cases one can identify more precise and relevant common features: the same disposition of the text, that is four columns per page, and the same dimension of the page (45 × 30 cm). In a fourth case one can see only three columns, but the dimension of the characters, the width of a column and the calligraphy point to the same style as the previous ones, making plausible the hypothesis that the fragments of Text 1.5 belonged to a folio with four columns as well. Among the three sets of fragments, namely Text 1.2, 1.9, 11, where only two columns are traceable, one can identify (only for 1.2 and 1.9) the width of a column and the space between the columns: they are the same as in the previous cases with three or four columns.<sup>4</sup> The calligraphy, type of paper and ink are the same as well. This may reasonably lead to the hypothesis that one deals here with at least seven folios (see Table 15.1, where they are indicated in bold) of what might have been an ‘extra-large non-illuminated’ codex, as according to Zsuzsanna Gulácsi’s classification system.<sup>5</sup>

2 “The 30 fragments 1001 to 1031, together with 308 and 6120, are from the same MS and contain the same text. The MS was written 3 (sic) columns to the page”, Boyce 1960: 63 ff.

3 One finds all these details in Sundermann 1973: 11. Under the category of “extra large, non-illuminated codices”, Gulácsi indexed only one folio among these texts, the Text 1.8 (M1002) in Sundermann’s edition, see Gulácsi 2005: 80. With regard to her statement “These fragments retain three columns of text, each 8.0 cm wide,” one should add that the fragments of Text 1.8 clearly display 4 columns (see also Table 15.1 in this article).

4 Sundermann did not give detailed technical descriptions for these fragments in particular.

5 See Gulácsi 2005: 78–80. It is difficult (if not impossible) to prove that the fragments displaying only two columns belonged to the folios with four or three columns. Any attempt to match them proved useless. As for the very small fragments, they are too small to build

TABLE 15.1 KPT: texts 1.1–1.15

| Text no. | Number of fragments                                           | Number of columns |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1.1      | M1001, M1012, M1013, M1015, M1016, M1018, M1024, M1029, M1031 | 4                 |
| 1.2      | M1003, M1025                                                  | 2                 |
| 1.3      | M1021                                                         | very small        |
| 1.4      | M1014, M1030                                                  | very small        |
| 1.5      | M1007, M1027                                                  | 3                 |
| 1.6      | M1009                                                         | very small        |
| 1.7      | M1004, M1005, M1008, M1010                                    | 4                 |
| 1.8      | M1002, M1006, M1017, M1023, M1028, M9000                      | 4                 |
| 1.9      | M1011                                                         | 2                 |
| 1.10     | M1020, M1022                                                  | 1                 |
| 1.11     | M1019                                                         | 2                 |
| 1.12     |                                                               | very small        |
| 1.13     |                                                               | very small        |
| 1.14     |                                                               | very small        |
| 1.15     |                                                               | very small        |

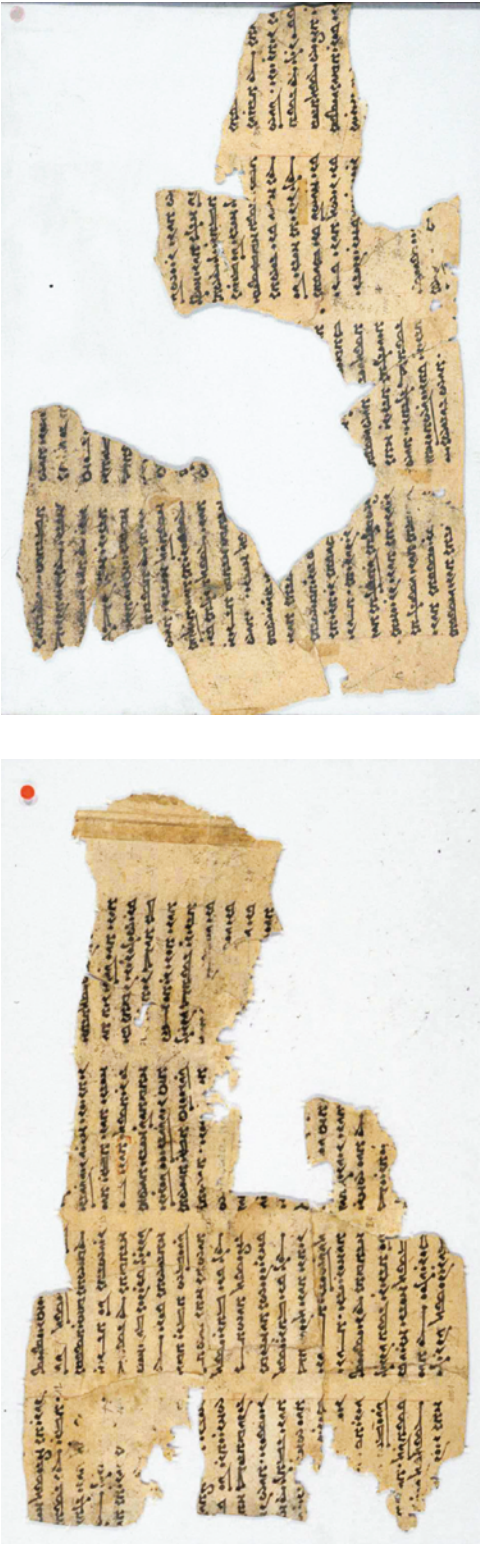
The codex has both a cosmogonic and eschatological content. Given the dimensions of a page, 30 cm height and around 45 cm width, one has to imagine that when being opened such a book occupied almost 1 m width, displaying 8 columns at once (see Fig. 15.1). The impressive physical dimension of the codex might have been directly proportional to its importance in terms of both content and ritual context.

Among the documents edited by Sundermann in 1973 there is another folio, classified under another category, namely as Text 2 (M100), with a clearly cosmogonic content as well. The folio is of smaller dimensions and counts only three columns, but it might have belonged to a same style of codex. There is another fragment, namely M795 (MIK III 38), which seems to have been even larger than any other of these folios here brought into discussion.<sup>6</sup> Important

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up any convincing argument around them. Therefore, it seems more plausible that they belonged to different folios than those including three or four columns.

6 Gulácsi proposed the hypothesis of initial dimensions 50 cm height and 30 cm width, see Gulácsi 2005: 80.



Mi001 + Mi012 + Mi013 + Mi015 + Mi016 + Mi018 + Mi024 + Mi029 + Mi031 recto (Text 1.1)      Mi004 + Mi005 + Mi008 + Mi010 verso (Text 1.7)

min. 90 cm

FIGURE 15.1      Attempt at reconstruction of the book including KPT, Texts 1  
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to add, the content of this fragment was also cosmogonic. To sum up, there are fragments and folios of Middle Persian texts, all with a cosmogonic content, which share the trait of having belonged to impressively oversized books. The fragments M1001–1032, 9000 possibly belonged to the same single codex.

I propose here the hypothesis of identifying this codex with Mani's work known as *Treasure of Life* or MP *niyān ī zīndagān*. The main reasons for proposing this hypothesis are set forth in the following discussion.

In 1973, Werner Sundermann identified in various places traces of the myth of the seduction of the archons,<sup>7</sup> without directly concluding that the M1000 fragments, which also reference this myth, would have belonged to the *Thesaurus*. In the footsteps of Isaac de Beausobre, founder of the historical study of Manichaeism, Frantz Cumont recalled<sup>8</sup> that the Manichaean myth of the seduction of the archons was included in Mani's *Thesaurus vitae* or *Treasure of Life* / *Treasury of the Living*. The myth described in this book had already been summarized by St. Augustine in *De natura boni* 44, more precisely from its 7th chapter (*hoc in libor septimo Thesauri eorum, De nat. boni* 44.16–17). St. Augustine was the first one to have mentioned that this myth was described at length in this book.

According to the Arab author ibn an-Nadīm, Mani would have written one book in Persian (in fact, to be read 'Middle Persian') and six in Syriac:

The *Book of the Giants*, which includes ----; Ordinances of the Hearers; Ordinances of the Elect; *Al-Shābuqān*, which includes: section *Dissolution of the Hearers*, section *Dissolution of the Elect*, section *Dissolution of the Transgressors*; *Book of the Living*, which includes -----; *Pragmateia*, which includes -----.<sup>9</sup>

This is one of the pieces of evidence according to which scholarship considered that Mani's *Thesaurus* was written in Aramaic, even though the precise reference to it is under doubt. While Dodge thought that the 'Book of the Living' could refer here to the *Thesaurus* mentioned by St. Augustine,<sup>10</sup> John C. Reeves doubted this, finding rather plausible that Mani's *Gospel* might be referred to here, given the fact that the term 'living' is often used in relation to the *Gospel*

<sup>7</sup> Sundermann 1973: 19, 21; Timuş 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Cumont 1908.

<sup>9</sup> Ibn an-Nadīm, *Fihrist* (Dodge 1998: 798).

<sup>10</sup> Dodge 1998: 798, note 278.

as well, this latter one being too important among Mani's books to have been missing from this list.<sup>11</sup>

A recent monograph by Markus Stein collected all references, in various languages, relating to Mani's *Thesaurus*. According to this latest stage of research, this book of Mani's might have counted 14 or 15 chapters,<sup>12</sup> each having dealt with various topics, such as: God's sadness and emanations, the myth of the seduction of the archons and the liberation of light, the nature of dualism as opposition between soul and body, ethics and soteriology, and a probably polemical consideration of Marcion's doctrine.<sup>13</sup>

Besides St. Augustine's extensive description of the Manichaean myth of the seduction of the archons, al-Bīrūnī's account, in the *Taḥqīq mā lil-Hind* ("Verifying all that the Indians Recount"), of what seems to have been the eschatological perspective in the *Thesaurus* is worth being recalled here. According to al-Bīrūnī, Manichaeism and Christianity appeared as two similar religions of the book. He found a Christian-like rhetoric in Mani's *Treasure of Life*, where "The shining warriors are termed 'maidens', 'virgins', 'fathers', 'mothers', 'sons', 'brothers' and 'sisters' because this is the style followed in the books of the prophets."<sup>14</sup>

(Nevertheless) in the region of delight there is neither male nor female: sexual organs are lacking. All of them bear living bodies. As divine bodies they do not differ from one another with regard to fragility or vigor, or to length or shortness, or to form or appearance: (they are) like identical lamps lit from a single prized lamp; it alone supplies them. However, the reason for this terminology (is due to) the contention of the Two Realms. When the lower regions of Darkness rose up from its depth(s) and were

11 Reeves 2011: 109, note 163. A more complete and accurate list of Mani's books seems to have been given in al-Bīrūnī's *Chronology* XXXIX.10–19, where the *Treasure of Life* and the *Gospel* are both mentioned as two distinct books. See al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb al-āthār al-bāqiya 'anī'l-qurūn al-khālīya* [*Chronology of oriental people: Chronologie orientalischer Völker*], ed. Sachau 1878, apud Reeves 2011: 92.

12 A proposal already made by Siegfried Richter, Stein 2016: 62. The Dublin Kephalaia brought further a possible confirmation to the number of a total of 14 chapters of this book, see BeDuhn 2015: 69, with the caution that "the fragmentary state of the text makes its full sense less than certain."

13 Stein 2016: 63. According to Reeves, "the book must have included a narrative presentation of the fundamental Manichaean cosmogonic myths, an exposition which was perhaps conducted in dialogue with the teachings of rival systems such as that of Marcion." Reeves 2011: 109.

14 Reeves 2011: 110.

perceived by the upper luminous realm to be pairs of male and female forms, the latter (provided) the same external forms to its members who departed to do battle, so that each kind stood opposed to its kind. (*Tahqīq mā lil-Hind*, ed. SACHAU 19.2–9)<sup>15</sup>

After Stein's research work, there is less doubt in considering that the same book as the one referred to as *Thesaurus* by St. Augustine, in his *De nat. boni* 44, was called in Middle Persian *niyān ī zīndagān*, or "the Treasure of the Living," according to Mary Boyce's translation.<sup>16</sup> The Apostle (Mani) reveals himself to Ammō, one of the disciples, and gives him the advice to read the chapter *harrōbišn ī darān* or "the collecting of the Gates" of the book *Treasure of the Living* (see Table 15.2).

In support to my hypothesis, I find it useful to quote here a few other texts relating to the *Thesaurus*. The accounts one finds in both *Kephalaia*, Berlin and Dublin are given in Table 15.3.

The Berlin *Kephalaia* clearly give an eschatological account, which may recall the fragment of al-Bīrūnī's mentioned above. But both *Kephalaia* underline the exceptional character of this book: "beyond price, great, strong, without pair." It might seem too bold a speculation to presume that these attributes of greatness might be read in terms of physical proportions as well. But the great importance attached to the content of this book might have become at a certain moment a reason to give it considerable physical dimension, by making of it an over-sized codex.

TABLE 15.2 *Treasure of the Living* in M 2/1/

|                                 |                                                   |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 29) (...) °° pas ān             | 29) (...) °° afterwards, I,                       |
| 30) Ammō pad dō rōzag pad āfrīn | 30) Ammō, stood in prayer for two days            |
| 31) ēstād hēm pēš               | 31) facing the                                    |
| 32) xwarxšēd °° pas frēstag     | 32) sun °° afterwards, the apostle                |
| 33) paydāg būd guft kū          | 33) revealed (himself and) said:                  |
| 34) waddil mā bāš ° niyān       | 34) 'Do not be of bad heart!' ° recite loudly     |
| 35) ī zīndagān harrōbišn        | 35) <i>The Treasure of the Living</i> , (chapter) |
| 36) ī darān pešīh pahipurs      | 36) <i>The Gathering of the Doors!</i>            |

15 Reeves 2011: 110.

16 Boyce 1975: 41. On the other hand, in the header of S9 one finds the title *zīndagarīh* (*zyndkryy*), « vivificatio », which made Salemann, and afterwards Jackson, wonder if S9 was not also part of the same book, the *Thesaurus*.

TABLE 15.3      1Keph and 2Keph on the *Treasure of Life*

| 1Keph (Berlin) 230.8–21 <sup>a</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 2Keph (Dublin) 332 <sup>b</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Behold, this is the sign and the archetype of these catechumens who shall not enter (another) body. Just like the good pearl, about which I have written for you in the <i>Treasure of Life</i> and <b>which is beyond price</b> . This is also how these catechumens are, these catechumens who shall not enter (another) body (...). <b>It is purified and goes into the land of the living</b> . Similarly, the souls of the catechumens who shall not enter (another) body resemble (the alms).<br>(20) However, as for the rest of all the <b>catechumens</b> , I have written down in the <i>Treasure of Life</i> how <b>they shall be released and purified</b> ; each one of them <b>in accordance with his deeds</b> and his contribution to the church. | f. 374<br>(17) <i>The Treasury of Life</i> is ...<br>(18) ... the revelation (?) ...<br>(19) about every thing, about the time ...<br>(20) world ... joined ...<br>(21) in this world. When Goundesh had listened [to] this lesson<br>(22) that the Apostle uttered ... [written]<br>(23) in this book. Says he to the Apostle: very <b>great</b> is [this] book !<br>f. 375<br>(1) Goundesh to him: < ... nothing compared to it (?)> in my regard; there is no <b>greater</b> and<br>(2) <b>stronger</b> than this book. |

a Gardner 1995: 11–12.  
b Gardner, BeDuhn, Dilley 2018: 69–71.

There is also a possibility to argue in favor of the ritual use of such an “extra-large codex.”<sup>17</sup> Some fragments stress the fact that the *Treasure* (parts of it) was recited loudly.<sup>18</sup> This is what Mani orders to Ammō in the M2/1/ passage quoted above. The practice of reciting this text is confirmed by the Coptic Dublin *Kephalaia* as well, where Mani, Goundesh and others gather together and read<sup>19</sup> (recite loudly) from the book of the *Treasure*:

17 When presenting one or another folio of these fragments to his students, at the *Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst invited them to imagine how big the original book could have been, making the comparison with the *Tora*. I feel indebted to mention this here, as he probably never took the opportunity to promote such ideas to a wider audience.  
18 MP **phypwrs-**, **phybwrs-**, “to recite aloud”, Durkin-Meisterernst 2004: 275.  
19 BeDuhn 2015: 69. Stein translated ‘read loudly’: “(...) und andere versammelt und *lesen laut* im *Schatz des Lebens*, der ein neues Buch zu sein scheint. Die vierzehn sogenannte

- (10) It speaks again about Goundesh, sitting  
 (11) before the Apostle, as they *read* the  
 (12) [Great] *Treasury of Life*.  
 (13) [Once again, it] happened another time, as Goundesh is sitting  
 (14)..... as they read in his presence from the *Treasury of Life*  
 2Ke 332.10–14 (f. 374)<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, in the *Sarakoton-Psalms*, Maria Magdalena is said to “make music for the *Thesaurus*,”<sup>21</sup> which may lead to the idea that the recitation was accompanied by song in some cases. The *Thesaurus*, or at least parts of it, could have been the textual support of a particular ritual ceremony where the text was loudly sung.

Nonetheless, the hypothesis of identifying these cosmogonic fragments, classified by Sundermann as “Text 1”, with Mani’s *Thesaurus vitae*, is not devoid of difficulties. For instance, the hypothesis relies mainly on an argument, based on a logical inference, which could be summarized by the following syllogism: 1. The myth of the seduction of the archons was the object of the 7th chapter of Mani’s *Thesaurus vitae*. (This is a certitude provided by St. Augustine). 2. Werner Sundermann identified traces of the respective myth in certain parts of the texts M1001–1032, 9000 here taken into discussion. 3. (Conclusion) These fragments belonged to Mani’s book *Thesaurus vitae*, particularly its 7th chapter.

Its main difficulty is not its crystal clear form against a historical process, which might have been different, but the fact that, for the time being, the presence of the myth of the seduction of the archons in these “Text 1” fragments is not fully demonstrated. In another place, I have discussed Sundermann’s identification and found as more plausible another identification, which includes instead a fragment of another manuscript of the KPT, namely “Text 3” (precisely KPT 871–872).

According to ibn an-Nadīm, *Thesaurus* would have been composed in Aramaic. It is uncertain if the Arab author referred to *Thesaurus vitae*. If that was the case, in the framework of my hypothesis, one should take into account the perspective of the translation of the original text into Middle Persian.

As for the ‘extra-large’ format of the codex, it is less likely that this Western-style book design was common during Mani’s time. Most of the books from

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großen Logoi des Schatzes werden von Goundesh mit einem kostbaren Edelstein verglichen” Stein 2016: 27.

20 Gardner et al. 2018: 69.

21 “Du [Maria Magdalena] machst Musik für den Thesaurus, du bist es, die das Testament verliest,” Stein 2016: 27.

which the Turfan fragments come, including Middle Persian, Parthian or Sogdian texts are of a different scale, indeed, much smaller.<sup>22</sup> There are exceptions though, as it is the case of what one calls Poṭhī- or Pustaka-book, known also from Tibetan, Old Turkish and Mongolian manuscripts.<sup>23</sup> A pertinent parallel to the Middle Persian ‘extra-large’ codices here mentioned would be the Pustaka-book of the Berlin manuscripts of the Sogdian translation of the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, having the measures 27 × 59 cm.<sup>24</sup> The comparison has indeed its limits, given the fact that the Middle Persian codex preserves the features of a Western-style book. Given the fact that the study of Sogdian manuscriptology is not yet enough advanced,<sup>25</sup> one may expect that future studies will bring more light into understanding of the context where the ‘extra-large’ Middle Persian codex of ‘Text 1’ fragments occurred. For the moment, it might be reasonable to sum up by temporarily concluding that it was mostly in a context where Manichaean Iranian texts were still in use, likely under Uygur rule, that such codices firstly appeared, between the 7th–8th c. CE (for the Middle Persian codex) and 10th c. CE (for the Sogdian Pustaka-book).<sup>26</sup> This parallel between Middle Persian cosmogonic fragments (‘Text 1’ of KPT) and the Buddhist Sogdian text emphasizes the pertinence of the idea that the impressive physical dimensions of the codices were in tune, in both cases, with the ‘greatness’ of the content.

## 2 The Anatomical Lists and the Myth of the Seduction of the Archons

In support of the hypothesis previously discussed, I propose in this second part of my contribution another one, according to which the presence in KPT 363–368 (‘Text 1.7’) of the list of bodily parts, introduced as being of a demonic origin, is a trace of the myth of the seduction of the archons. This second hypothesis is based on a new reading of the introductory part of the anti-Manichaean chapter, the 16th, of the polemical Zoroastrian treatise *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* (henceforth ŠGW). This second investigation analyses in more

22 Christiane Reck published a couple of Sogdian fragments with both cosmogonic and eschatological content, including ideas related to the ascension of the elements of light and the imprisonment of Ahriman, which would have all belonged to the same booklet. This latter one appears to have been of much smaller dimensions, 22.5 cm height × 12.7 cm width, see Reck 2009: 370.

23 Gabain 1973, p. 169, apud Sundermann 2006: 716–717.

24 Other dimensions of such Sogdian ‘extra-large’ codices are 14.7 × 48.5 cm or 12.5 × 40 cm, see Reck 2017: 387. See Sundermann 2006, Sundermann 2010.

25 “Eine umfassende Untersuchung zur Manuskriptologie der soghdischen buddistischen Texte liegt bislang jedoch nicht vor”, Reck 2017: 386.

26 Sundermann 2010: 81.

detail various Manichaean and Zoroastrian texts where the anatomical lists are used, and discusses certain ideas about possible mutual influences between the two traditions.

The Manichaean text is given in Table 15.4.

This fragment, even though partially destroyed, provides an important piece of information. On the one hand, it expresses the well-known Manichaean principle of the evil nature of matter, evil being equated here to demons, out of which the world was created. Sundermann qualified them as female, even though the original terminology (*drwxš'n*, *druwxšān*) points to both female and male gender.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, the number of these demons is said to have been seven, each one having embodied an anatomical part (skin, nerves and so on). Although two elements of the sevenfold chain are lacking, the fragment having been damaged, their number of 'seven' is clearly written. In his comments to this text, Sundermann had already noticed that while the fivefold lists of the anatomical elements are the most usual within Manichaeism, heptads are used as well, pointing to other texts, both Iranian (M9, M575o) and Coptic (*1Ke* 107.28–32).<sup>28</sup>

TABLE 15.4      KPT 363–368

|                                           |                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11/ [3–5](.)[2–4 'st](w)ynd               | "(...) matter                                                                                   |
| 12/ [b](x)šyhy(d) 'y xwd                  | was distributed, itself comes                                                                   |
| 13/ (h)ynd hpt'n drwxš'n                  | out of <i>seven</i> demons.                                                                     |
| 14/ ° nxwyn crm ° dwdyg                   | The first one is the <b>skin</b> , the second                                                   |
| 15/ pyt ° sdyg rg ° tswm                  | the <b>flesh</b> , the third the <b>veins</b> , the fourth                                      |
| 16/ xwn ° pnzwn py ° š(šwm)" <sup>a</sup> | the <b>blood</b> , the fifth the <b>nerves / sinews</b> ,<br>the sixth (...)" (my translation). |

a "(...) das Stoff]liche (?) / wird (ge)teilt, das selbst / aus *sieben* Dämonninen besteht. / Die erste ist die *Haut*, die zweite / ist das *Fleisch*, die dritte sind die *Adern*, die vierte / ist das *Blut*, die fünfte sind die *Sehnen*, die se(chste) (...)", Sundermann 1973: 27.

27 See Durkin-Meisterernst 2004: 141: "she-demon, demon".  
28 Sundermann 1973: 27, note 52. Later on, in his 1992 edition of the *Sermon on the Light-Nous*, he will add a few other comments, namely: 1. The anatomical pentad would be linked to the construction of the five elements of light, and this would go back as far as Mani's *Book of Giants*; 2. The order of the anatomical elements constantly follows a pattern 'from the inside towards the outside' (*von innen nach außen*), see Sundermann 1992: 85, point 4. Afterwards, Jason BeDuhn identified both a fivefold (Kephalaion 4, *1Ke* 26.33–27.12) and a sevenfold (Kephalaion 42, *1Ke* 107.34–108.1) anatomical list in the Coptic Kephalaia, see BeDuhn 2001: 6–7.

The idea of the female demonic origin of various anatomical parts of the humans will be emphasized a few centuries after Mani’s death, in the polemical Zoroastrian treatise *Škand Gumānīg Wizār* (9th–10th c. CE). In its anti-Manichaean chapter, more precisely in ŠGW 16.10–14, it is said that the sky, the earth, the mountains, the plants were made out of the skin, flesh, bones and the hair respectively of a demon named Kunī, whose female character is confirmed by other sources as well. And on the other side, the origin of water, seen under the particular form of the rain, was the only one considered to have been of a male nature: it came out of the seminal fluid of the Māzandarān demons. The transcription and MP reconstruction of the paragraph in question is given in Table 15.5.

the sky is from the skin, and the earth from the flesh, and the mountain from the bones and the plants from the hair of the demon Kunī. The rain (is) the semen of the Māzandarān (demons) who are bount to the sphere. (ŠGW 16.10–14; my translation)

In his edition of the treatise, Jean de Menasce identified the myth of the seduction of the archons as being described in ŠGW 16.28–37.<sup>29</sup> The paragraph in question begins with the statement:

The rain was the semen of the Māzandarān (demons). For this reason: the Māzandarān (demons), who were fixed to the Sphere, and who swallowed the light. (ŠGW 16.28–30)

TABLE 15.5      ŠGW 16.10–14

| Pāzand                                                     | Middle Persian reconstruction                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (10) <i>va-š dugə ku āsmən əž pōst</i>                     | (10) <i>u-š (...?) ēn kū asmān az pōst</i>                              |
| (11) <i>u zamī əž gōšt</i>                                 | (11) <i>ud zamīg az gōšt</i>                                            |
| (12) <i>u kōh əž ast</i>                                   | (12) <i>ud kōf az ast</i>                                               |
| (13) <i>u uruuar əž vars ī kunī dāβ</i>                    | (13) <i>ud urwar az wars ī kunī dēw</i>                                 |
| (14) <i>vārq šuθur i māzandarq i pa spihir bast əstənd</i> | (14) <i>wārān šus<sup>ar</sup> ī Māzandarān ī pad spihr bast ēstēnd</i> |

29 See De Menasce 1945: 226 (being the summary of the whole chapter).

Scholarship on this text seems to have ignored so far the fact that almost the same phrase is to be found two paragraphs before, in ŠGW 16.14 above translated. The comparison is as follows:

| ŠGW 16.14                                                                                | ŠGW 16.28                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| The rain ( <i>is</i> ) the semen of the Mazandarān (demons) who are bount to the sphere. | The rain <i>was</i> the semen of the Māzandarān (demons). |

It is possible that the repetition of nearly the same sentence might have been the result of distortions along the transmission process (one of the most deplorable, compared to other Zoroastrian texts) of this text. But it can also be the sign that the two distinct paragraphs where these similar sentences appear belonged originally to the same Manichaean narrative, here reshaped through a Zoroastrian polemical lens. Moreover, the content of the two paragraphs contains elements in favor of such an assumption: while the first paragraph gives responsibility for the creation of only four anatomic elements to the demon Kunī, said to have swallowed the light, the other paragraph relegates the responsibility for a fifth element to the male demons, said to swallow the light as well. While Kunī releases the light by death, the male demons release the light by means of semen. It is likely that the original Manichaean narrative here reviewed covered all three temporal sequences, which both Manichaean and Zoroastrian cosmogonies share. The Kunī sequence would belong to a first and second stage (“Kunī is the general of Ahriman, who, at the beginning of the first battle (...) swallowed the light (...)”, ŠGW 16.16–17), while the Māzandarān one to a third layer of the creation process.

It is indeed uncertain if the creation of the anatomic elements was originally distributed between various temporal cosmogonic sequences, but I find it plausible that it was related to the myth of the seduction of the archons as well. Future studies will possibly bring further arguments in favor of this hypothesis.

While in the Coptic Kephalaia, the anatomical list is not related to any demonic origin, most of the Middle Iranian sources investigated in the following pages remain solidly with the KPT texts in this respect. The exception would be the abbreviated, standardized versions in the Parthian hymns.

As one sees, the ŠGW treatise uses a fivefold anatomical chain, as one finds in Manichaean original sources (Parthian, Middle Persian or Sogdian) as well (see Table 15.6). It is very likely that the Zoroastrian polemicist had access

TABLE 15.6      Summary of the anatomical list in ŠGW 16.10–14

| Elements of creation | Anatomical part | Demon               |
|----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| sky                  | skin            | Kunī                |
| earth                | flesh           | Kunī                |
| mountains            | bones           | Kunī                |
| plants               | hair            | Kunī                |
| water / rain         | semen           | Māzandarān (demons) |

to original Manichaean sources which he changed. It would not be the sole detail supporting such a perspective.<sup>30</sup> But it is still hard to distinguish what is genuine Manichaean information in this paragraph from what is polemical contribution done through a Zoroastrian lens. As will become more obvious at the end of the present investigation, where various anatomical lists will have been explored, the Manichaean anatomical list given in ŠGW 16.10–14 is the only one which counts ‘semen’ as one of its elements. This singularity could be the marker of the polemical contribution of Mardānfarrox, the author of the treatise. The association between ‘brain’ and ‘semen’ is largely used throughout the Zoroastrian exegetical texts written down after the Arab conquest, such as: WZ 30.17, Mkh 47.1–7, Bd (TD2 110).<sup>31</sup> By contrast, the idea that the main place (origin) of the ‘semen’ is the ‘brain’ does not seem to be clearly supported by Avestan sources. Instead, specific to Avestan texts is the association of ‘semen’ with the plants and the ‘earth’. I think it is reasonable to think that ‘semen’ in Mardānfarrox’s rendering of the Manichaean list replaces the more ordinary ‘brain’ present in all sevenfold anatomical lists, be they Manichaean or Zoroastrian. By doing so, the Zoroastrian polemicist used either some Manichaean sources which were lost, or other anti-Manichaean sources where the myth of the seduction of the archons and their release of the light, encapsulated in the semen, would have contaminated the anatomical list. Or he himself simply brought this original contribution, by replacing the classical ‘brain’ with ‘semen’ in the light of the exegetical works of his own tradition. This mechanism of translating the key terminology of another religion in the terms of his own is often used in this treatise and could be identified in such a detail as well.

30 See Timuş 2018, Timuş 2020.  
31 Texts analysed in detail in Daryaei 2002, particularly 104–106.

It is also probable that the association between the anatomical list and the one of the creation elements might be a Zoroastrian polemical tool, rather than the echo of a Manichaean original text. As will be seen below, a similar list of analogies was used in Dk 3, a treatise which is known to have been a source of inspiration for Mardānfarrox, the author of the ŠGW. It seems less likely that Manichaean texts made such associations. This is, at least, what the Middle Iranian fragments investigated so far show.

A few decades ago, R. van den Broek underlined the fact that the prototype of the list of bodily elements present in the 2nd century Gnostic text *Apocryphon of John* goes back to Plato's *Timaeus*. Moreover, he identified versions of this list in various Zoroastrian exegetical texts, such as *Bundahišn* (henceforth Bd), *Dēnkard* (henceforth Dk) and *Wizīdagīhā ī Zādspram* (henceforth wz).<sup>32</sup> With a fresh outlook at these latter texts, it might be relevant to add that while in wz the anatomical chain is associated with the planets, in a mixture of astrological and medical speculations, in the Dk this same scheme (but with the elements in another order) is related to the cosmogonic chain. In other words, while wz seems to be the closest to the Greek sources of the borrowing, as van den Broek assumed, Dk seems to be more traditional. In this latter text, the borrowed anatomical chain is related to the cosmogonic one, which is as old as the Avesta, itself predating the emergence of Manichaeism. More traditional as well appears to be the series of associations in Bd, where the same chain is related to the beneficial spirits, the Aməša Spəntas. One can contemplate these three-fold analogies in Table 15.7.

These Zoroastrian texts (summarized in Table 15.7) were written down by the 9th century. While the first two anatomical lists, in wz and Dk 3 respectively, preserve an order close to the Greek originals (see below Table 15.8), the third one, that of Bd, is largely modified. The reason is simple: in this third case of analogies, priority is given to the traditional order of the beneficial spirits, which begins with Wahman and ends with the two patrons of water and plants, Hordād and Amurdād respectively. These beneficial spirits are usually associated with the elements of the creation. When they were related to the parts of the human body, is more difficult to say. It is more relevant in the framework of the present discussion that the ordinary list of the bodily parts is visibly turned upside down; another order is respected, namely that of the beneficial spirits. Moreover the analogy seems to be a bit devoid of meaning. The patron of (good) thinking, Wahman, is not associated with the brain, though.

32 He considered that all such Iranian / Zoroastrian anatomical lists also ultimately originate in Plato's *Timaeus* "through one or more Greek intermediaries," van den Broek 1981: 52.

TABLE 15.7 The anatomical Zoroastrian lists: the analogies

| WZ 30.12      |         | Dk 3.263        |         | Bd 28.22      |            |
|---------------|---------|-----------------|---------|---------------|------------|
| Astrology     |         | Cosmogony       |         | Angelology    |            |
| mazg (marrow) | Moon    | mazg (marrow)   | fire    | gōšt (flesh)  | Wahman     |
| ast (bones)   | Mercury | xōn (?) (blood) | water   | rag (veins)   | Ardwahišt  |
| gōšt (flesh)  | Venus   | rag (veins)     | earth   | pay (nerves)  | Ardwahišt  |
| pay (nerves)  | Sun     | pay (nerves)    | metal   | astag (bones) | Šahrewar   |
| rag (veins)   | Mars    | ast (bones)     | plants  | mazg (marrow) | Spandarmad |
| pōst (skin)   | Jupiter | pid (flesh)     | animals | xōn (blood)   | Hordād     |
| mōy (hair)    | Saturn  | mōy (hair)      | humans  | mōy (hair)    | Amurdād    |

By comparison, the list of analogies in the case of Dk 3 seems to respect, to the contrary, the ordinary order of the anatomical elements, but gives a rather unusual list of the Zoroastrian elements in the creation process, where the sky occupies the first position being followed by the water and the earth in the third position, in a logic slightly different from that of *Genesis*.<sup>33</sup> This state of facts is all the more surprising as the traditional and conservative character of the theological treatise Dk 3 is rather agreed upon. Why was the cosmogonic list misrepresented, as compared to its version one regularly finds in the introductory parts of the *Yasna*, for instance? It seems that the handling of the theme in such a case was less Zoroastrian than required and more Manichaean instead, an observation that leaves room open to various speculations concerning the presence of Manichaean concepts and schemes in various parts of the Zoroastrian exegetical literature. But this would be the object of another investigation.

In Broek's view, the evidence of the Zoroastrian sources, wz in particular, is important for the understanding of the Manichaean sources with regard to the use of the anatomical chains and their association to the planets. Two main sets of ideas in van den Broek's article are:

1. On the one hand, he considered that the *order* of the elements within the anatomical chains is significant, given the fact that it may contain hints with regard to filiation. In the light of this line of reasoning, van den Broek argued that among all anatomical lists found in the Zoroastrian exegetical texts, the one in wz is closer (judging according to the order

33 See Timuş 2015.

of the elements counted) to the one in the *Apocryphon of John*. This would emphasize once more that wZ relied upon Greek sources.<sup>34</sup> In van den Broek's view, the transfer from the Greek sources to Iran could have taken place by the time of Irenaeus of Lyon (2nd c. CE), whose treatise against the heresies, *Adversus haereseis*, points to elements common to the *Apocryphon of John* (*Haer.* 1.29). Other means of transmission (direct or intermediated) would have been Greek authors like Posidonius (2nd–1st c. BCE)<sup>35</sup> or Nechepso-Petosiris (2nd c. BCE).<sup>36</sup> In other words, it is likely that Greek ideas circulated in Iran already before the rise of the Sasanians and the emergence of Manichaeism. Is this proof enough of the high antiquity of the ideas (e.g. the anatomical list and its association to the stars in particular) exposed in wZ, a text written down much later, after the Arab conquest, by the 9th c. CE by a Zoroastrian priest with largely liberal views?

2. On the other hand, van den Broek put forward the idea that the theory of the anatomical parts of the body and their association with the planets reached Mani through Iran.<sup>37</sup> Van den Broek was cautious enough to identify Iran, but not necessarily Zoroastrianism, as the inspiring context for Mani's ideas. But some other of his arguments point indirectly to a possible Zoroastrian influence on Manichaeism when it comes to the anatomical lists. The main difficulty of such a perspective is the late date of the Zoroastrian wZ, used as the main argument.

Yet, van den Broek ignored that in the *Kephalaia* of Berlin one finds a sevenfold anatomical chain (*1Ke* 107, as pointed out by Sundermann), which is as close to the one in the *Apocryphon of John* as the one in the wZ, and at the same time not identical with the latter one. If one admits that instead of the reconstruction 'tendons' one could equally read 'sinews', one can fairly draw the conclusions that both lists, *1Ke* and wZ respectively, changed the order of three elements, compared to the list of *Apocryphon of John*, preserving faithfully the order of the other four elements. In virtue of this line of reasoning, one can

34 See van den Broek 1981: 50.

35 Van den Broek points to Posidonius as a possible source of several arithmological writings from Antiquity where one finds lists of seven internal organs, see van den Broek 1981: 49.

36 Where one finds the association between anatomy and astrology (the list of planets, see van den Broek 1981: 50).

37 "It is quite conceivable that in this way also the doctrine of a special relationship between the seven planets and the seven 'Platonic' elements of the body became known in Iran. In this way knowledge of these elements must also have reached Mani," van den Broek 1981: 53.

TABLE 15.8      The anatomical lists: *Timaeus*, *Apocryphon of John*, Manichaeans and Zoroastrians

|    | <i>1Ke. 107</i> | <i>Ap. John</i> | <i>wz</i> | <i>Timaeus 73B–76E</i> |
|----|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|------------------------|
| 1. | marrow          | marrow          | marrow    | marrow                 |
| 2. | bones           | bones           | bones     | bones                  |
| 3. | [tendons]       | sinews          | flesh     | sinews                 |
| 4. | flesh           | flesh           | nerves    | flesh                  |
| 5. | veins           | blood           | veins     | skin                   |
| 6. | blood           | skin            | skin      | hair                   |
| 7. | skin            | hair            | hair      | nails                  |

say that both lists, Coptic and Iranian, are equally close to that of *Apocryphon of John*, so that there would be no serious ground to consider the *wz* list older than that of the *Kephalaia*. The only detail different between the two texts is the association with the planets, which is lacking in the Coptic case.

One can see a synopsis in Table 15.8.

According to van den Broek’s line of argumentation, given the fact that certain ideas could have reached Iran before the emergence of Manichaeism, one may admit that the anatomical chain and its association with the planets in *wz* is archaic as well, despite the more recent date of the text itself. The *wz* was written down after the Arab conquest by a priest known for his more liberal ideas, because of which he went into conflict with his more conservative brother Manušcihr. But it is at least equally possible that such ideas, despite their early possible presence on Iranian soil, reached Zoroastrianism and impregnated particularly its exegetical literature much later, during Sasanian times or even after the Arab conquest, in any case after the emergence of Manichaeism. This line of reasoning introduces the possibility that the list in *1Ke 107* might be earlier than the one in *wz*. Moreover, Zoroastrian texts using this anatomical chain could, in fact, betray Manichaean influences.

Looking again at the new documents published after the edition of KPT in 1973 and van den Broek’s article, it appears that various Iranian Manichaean sources, all earlier by their date both of composition and redaction than the Zoroastrian ones, include seven- or five-fold lists of the bodily elements. Part of them, Middle Persian and Parthian texts, were already edited and known by van den Broek’s time. Many of them are summarized in the following tables 15.9 and 15.10.

TABLE 15.9 The Manichaean anatomical lists: Middle Persian and Parthian texts

| KPT<br>(MP)           | SLN IV.9<br>(Parth)  | SLN IV.15<br>(Parth) | 7982.<br>956–958;<br>1036–1037<br>(MP) | M9<br>(MP)          | M5750<br>(MP)       |
|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1. <b>crm</b> (skin)  | <b>'stg</b> (bones)  | <b>'stg</b> (bones)  | <b>'stg</b> (bones)                    | <b>'st</b> (bones)  | <b>'stg</b> (bones) |
| 2. <b>pyt</b> (flesh) | <b>pdyg</b> (sinews) | <b>pdyg</b> (sinews) | <b>py(y)</b> (nerves)                  | <b>pyt</b> (flesh)  | <b>mgj</b> (brain)  |
| 3. <b>rg</b> (veins)  | <b>rhg</b> (veins)   | <b>rhg</b> (veins)   | <b>pyt</b> (flesh)                     | <b>pwst</b> (skin)  | <b>py</b> (nerves)  |
| 4. <b>xwn</b> (blood) | <b>pyd</b> (flesh)   | [...]                | <b>rg</b> (veins)                      | <b>xwn</b> (blood)  | <b>rg</b> (veins)   |
| 5. <b>py</b> (sinews) | <b>crm</b> (skin)    | [...]                | <b>crm</b> (skin)                      | <b>w'd</b> (breath) | <b>xwn</b> (blood)  |
| 6. (...?)             |                      |                      |                                        | (...?)              | <b>crm</b> (skin)   |
| 7. (...?)             |                      |                      |                                        |                     | <b>'wd</b> (hair)   |

TABLE 15.10 The Manichaean anatomical lists: Sogdian texts<sup>a</sup>

|    | M141 + 6795<br>(/R/11–13) | M548 + M704               | M108 + M5928                  |
|----|---------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. | <b>'stky</b> (bones)      | <b>(c)rm</b> (skin)       | <b>xwr(ny)[y]</b> (blood)     |
| 2. | <b>pδδ(y)'</b> (nerves)   | <b>['](stky)h</b> (bones) | <b>'stky</b> (bones)          |
| 3. | <b>r'k</b> (veins)        | <b>y'ty</b> (flesh)       | <b>pδy'</b> (sinews / nerves) |
| 4. | <b>y't[yh]</b> (flesh)    | <b>r'k</b> (veins)        | <b>crm</b> (skin)             |
| 5. | <b>crm</b> (skin)         | <b>sn'wt</b> (sinews)     | <b>y'ty</b> (flesh)           |
| 6. | <b>xwrnyy</b> (blood)     | <b>'tyy</b> (tendons)     |                               |
| 7. | <b>mγzyy</b> (marrow)     | (...)                     |                               |
| 8. | <b>γwn'γγ</b> (hair)      |                           |                               |

<sup>a</sup> According to Morano 2019 [2020].

Some other texts have become accessible much more recently. In editing unpublished Sogdian fragments, Enrico Morano has brought to light an important piece of evidence for the present discussion: chains in seven or even eight positions were used in these Sogdian texts, bringing them close to the KPT Middle Persian texts. One of their peculiar features is that they hardly obey the usual order of the elements. For the moment it is risky to develop any speculative thoughts on this state of facts.

As a complement to Sundermann's remark that usually (or originally) these lists of bodily elements follow the order from the innermost part (brain) to the outermost one (skin), I would add that the fivefold lists were usually obtained by the exclusion of the extremities, the brain and the skin. This is by far the simple and convenient explanation of why one has these alternating lists of seven and five elements respectively.

If my hypothesis proves to be right, various Sogdian texts here quoted could be perceived as versions of cosmogonic Manichaean texts including the myth of the seduction of the archons. In other words, they could all be perceived as variations of the original lost *Thesaurus*.

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