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TEXTS:

- Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī, *Jawāmi' Ādāb al-Ṣūfiyya* and *'Uyūb al-Nafs wa-Mudāwātuhā*. Edited and annotated by Etan Kohlberg, 1976.
- Abū al-Najīb al-Suhrawardī, *Kitāb Ādāb al-Murīdīn*. Edited and annotated by Menahem Milson, 1978.
- Abū Bakr Muhammad b. Ahmad al-Wāsiṭī, *Fadā'il al-Bayt al-Muqaddas*. Edité et annoté par Isaac Hasson, 1979.
- Judaeo-Arabic Literature, Selected Texts*. edited by Joshua Blau, 1980.
- Djalāl al-dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Aḥādīth al-Hisān fī Fadl al-Taylasān*. Edité et annoté par Albert Arazi, 1983.
- Ibn Abī al-Dunyā, *Kitāb Dhamm al-Dunyā*. Edited and annotated by Ella Almagor, 1984.

MONOGRAPHS:

- S.M. Stern, *Studies in Early Ismā'ilism*, 1982.
- M. Sharon, *Black Banners from the East — The Establishment of the 'Abbāsīd State*, 1983.

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"SEAL OF THE PROPHETS" THE NATURE OF A MANICHAEAN METAPHOR

Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa

Muhammad is not the father of
any of your men, but the Apostle
of God (*rasūl allah*) and the Seal
of the Prophets (*khātam al-*
nabiyīn)

(*Qur'ān* 33:40)

Only once is Muhammad referred to as "seal of the prophets" in the whole *Qur'ān*. Yet, this conception is of cardinal theological significance in Islam. The usual interpretation of the expression, both in traditional Islamic exegesis and in modern scholarship, takes it to signify "the last prophet" to be sent by God to mankind.¹

In his analysis of the Qur'anic expression, A. Jeffery has surmised that it "may have been... already familiar to [Muhammad's] contemporaries", pointing out that in Arabic, *khātam* is a loan-word from Aramaic, and that already in Christianity the message of Jesus is implicitly considered to be the final prophetic revelation.² Jeffery points out, however, that *explicitly*, only Mani claimed to be the last in the succession of messengers of God, adding that "in the Arabic sources it is recorded that his followers called him 'the Seal of the Prophets'."³

The fact that this actual wording is to be found only under the pen of Muslim doxographers and heresiologists should in itself call for our suspi-

¹ For a thorough analysis of the Islamic understanding of the expression, see Y. Friedmann, "Finality of Prophethood in Sunni Islam" in this volume, pp. 177-215. I wish to thank Prof. W. Sundermann for reading the draft of this paper and making useful remarks.

² A. Jeffery, "The Qur'ān as Scripture", *The Muslim World* 40 (1950), 266. See also his *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938), 120-121.

³ "The Qur'ān as Scripture", 266-267 and n. 18. Cf. my "Aspects de l'eschatologie manichéenne", *RHR* 198 (1981), 169, n. 28.

cion.^{3a} Yet, a pre-Islamic Manichaean attribution of the metaphor to Mani remains a possibility, and a review of the evidence is called for. In order to do so, I shall first seek to analyze the nature of the metaphorical use of "seal" in Manichaean parlance, and then deal with the concepts of prophecy and apostleship in Manichaean writings. This analysis, it is hoped, will help to reconstruct the *Vorgeschichte* of the Qur'anic expression.

In the chapter of his *Athār al-Bāqiya* dealing with false prophets al-Birūnī (d. about 442/1050) quotes *verbatim* the opening sentences of Mani's only Iranian work, the *Šābuhragān*:

Wisdom and deeds have always from time to time been brought to mankind by the messengers of God (*rusul allah*). So in one age they have been brought by the messenger (*rasūl*) called Buddha to India, in another by Zarādusht to Persia, in another by Jesus to the West. Thereupon this revelation has come down, this prophecy (*nubūwwa*) in this last age through me, Mānī, the messenger of the God of Truth (*rasul ilāh al-haqq*) to Babylonia.⁴

After this quotation, the *Ustadh* adds — but this time without quoting *verbatim* — that in his Gospel, Mani "says that he is the Paraclete announced by the Messiah, and that he is the seal of the prophets" (*khātam al-nabiyīn*).⁵ Although al-Birūnī's intellectual integrity is not to be questioned, one cannot exclude the possibility that here he might be paraphrasing Mani's contention by using the Qur'anic expression rather than reporting it quite accurately. The following pages will seek to unveil what al-Birūnī could have read in Mani's *Gospel* (probably in an Iranian translation) and in other Manichaean writings, which led him, *bona fide*, to report that Mani called himself *khātam al-nabiyīn*.

The other Arabic sources are even less compelling evidence.⁶ Shah-rastānī (d. 547/1153) only reports "And then must come the Seal of the

^{3a} See the careful hesitation of W.C. Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York, 1962), 281, n. 49, to accept the authenticity of the wording.

⁴ C. Eduard Sachau, ed., *Albirūnī, Chronologie orientalischer Völker* (Leipzig, DMG, 1923), 207. I quote Sachau's translation: *Albirūnī, The Chronology of Ancient Nations* (London, 1879), 190.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ These sources were first collected (and analyzed) by K. Kessler, *Mani: Forschungen über die manichäische Religion*, I (Berlin, 1889), and more recently by S.H. Taqizadeh, *Mānī vadīn-i-ū* (Tehran, 1956). To these Islamic theologians reporting on Manichaeism, one should add at least 'Abd al-Jabbār (11th cent.), who mentions Adam, Seth, Noah, Zarathustra,

Prophets", a sentence interpolated by the addition "in the land of the Arabs".⁷ Ibn al-Murtadā, analyzing a book written by the Manichaean leader Yazdānbakht, says that Mani appeared as "the seal of the prophets", i.e. at the end of a series of prophets beginning with Adam, and including, together with Seth and Noah, Buddha, Zarādusht and Jesus.⁸ Yet, the fact that Yazdānbakht lived in the 9th century, in the time of al-Ma'mūn (according to Ibn al-Nadīm's explicit testimony in his important chapter on Manichaeism in the *Fihrist*),⁹ disqualifies his testimony as reflecting a pre-Islamic Manichaean use of the actual phrase "seal of the prophets" in reference to Mani. It remains plausible, however, or even probable, that under the Islamic yoke, the Manichaeans did insist that it was Mani, rather than Muhammad, who had been *khātam al-nabiyīn*.

The same argument holds for Abū al-Ma'ālī, who reports that it is in a book written in Persian towards the end of the 11th century that Mani was called "seal of the prophets".¹⁰

The religious vocabulary of the Near East in the first Christian centuries retains a broad spectrum of senses for the vocables "seal", "to seal". As a matter of fact, both the straightforward and the figurative senses appear already in the Hebrew Bible: for the proper sense, see e.g., *Est.* 8:8–10 for the noun, in *Jer.* 32:10 for the verb, figuratively in *Cant.* 8:6 ("Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm"), or, better for our present interest, *Hag.* 2:23, where God says to Zerubabel, whom He calls

Buddha and Jesus as revealers of *Gnosis* ('ilm) before Mani, "the seal of prophets"; *al-Mughnī fī abwāb al-tawhīd wa'l-'adl*, V. ed. M. Khudeiri (Cairo, 1965), 15; cf. G. Vajda, "Le témoignage d'al-Māturīdī sur la doctrine des manichéens, des daysanites et des marcionites", *Arabica* 13 (1966), p. 122. For other texts, see G. Monnot, "Quelques textes de 'Abd al-Jabbār sur le manichéisme", *RHR* 183 (1973), 3–9, esp. 4 (Passage A): "Il (-Mani) prétendit être l'envoyé (*rasul*) de la Lumière".

⁷ W. Cureton, ed., *Shahrestānī, Kitāb al-milal wa'l-nihāl, Book of Religious and Philosophical Sects* (London, 1846), 192; *khātam al-nabiyīn ilā ard al-'arab*. See T. Haarbrücker's translation, *Asch-Schahrestānī's Religionspartheien und Philosophen-Schulen*, I (Halle, 1850), 290. Cf. C.H. Puech, *Le Manichéisme, son fondateur, sa doctrine* (Paris, 1949), 146, n. 248. On the traditions on Mani's prophecy and his precursors see also O. Klimá, *Manis Zeit und Lehren* (Prag, 1962), 303, n. 46 (=47). Cf. Vajda, *art. cit.*, 121, n. 4: 122 and n. 2.

⁸ Cited by Kessler, *Mani*, 349; transl. 354–355.

⁹ G. Flügel, *Mani: seine Lehre und seine Schriften* (Leipzig, 1862), 79; transl. 106. See also B. Dodge's translation of the *Fihrist* (New York, 1970), II, 805.

¹⁰ Cited by Kessler, *Mani*, 371; transl. 372. On the main traditions about the succession of envoys, see M. Tardieu, *Le Manichéisme* (Que Sais-je? n° 1940: Paris, 1981), 19–27, esp. 22–23.

His servant, that He will make him "like a חותם" (signet ring?) for He has chosen him. More precisely, even, in *Dan.* 9:24, we read: "Seventy weeks of years are decreed concerning your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin (ולחטת חטאות), and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet (ולחטת חזון ונביא), and to anoint a most holy place." It must be noted that the root *hṭm* is used in its two senses in this last verse: to end (the first time) and to accomplish (the second time).¹¹ A brief investigation did not reveal any particular interest in the words חזון ונביא in both Rabbinic and Christian exegesis.¹²

These same uses of the name and the verb reappear in the New Testament. While a verse like *Rev.* 5:1 obviously reflects the proper sense of a seal (on a letter), the figurative meaning appears too: in *John* 3:33, it can only mean "to confirm", while in *2 Cor.* 1:22 Paul implies that in sealing believers, God has made them His inviolable possession. Paul also reflects Jewish religious parlance when he says that Abraham "received the sign (σημεῖον) of circumcision as a seal (σφραγίδα) of the righteousness of the faith" (*Rom.* 4:11). Indeed, circumcision is often called a *seal* in Rabbinic literature: *Ex. Rabba*, for instance, speaks of "the seal of Abraham in your flesh", חותם אברהם בשרך.¹³

The same use is found in Apostolic literature (for instance in *Barnabas* 9:6), where *σφραγίς* obviously means "attestation", "confirmation". From the Jewish circumcision, however, the term came to refer primarily to baptism in Early Christianity. The *Shepherd of Hermas* (*Simil.* IX.16.3; 17.4 and parallels) and the *2nd Letter of Clement* (7.6; 8.6), preserve the earliest use of this label for baptism. In these writings, to receive the seal means to receive the name of God, to be granted life.

¹¹ On the various meanings of "seal" in the Biblical writings, in Hellenistic and Rabbinic Judaism and in early Christian writings, see Fitzer, "σφραγίς", in Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, VII, 939-953. See also W. Bauer's *Lexicon*, s.v. σφραγίς. See further F.J. Dölger, *Sphragis: eine altchristliche Taufzeichnung in ihren Beziehungen zur profanen und religiösen Kultur des Altertums* (Paderborn, 1911).

¹² The possibility however remains that Christian writings were instrumental in carrying to seventh-century Arabia the idea of a "seal of the prophets".

¹³ Actually, the expression is a very early one, since it appears already in the *Testament of Levi* (2nd cent. B.C.). See D. Flusser and Sh. Safran, "Who Sanctified the Well-Beloved in (lit. from) the Womb" (in Hebrew), *Studies in Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Jerusalem, 1978), 333 and n. 16.

The *Shepherd of Hermas* in particular, refers to those who have received the "seal of the Son of God", adding: ἡ σφραγίς οὖν τὸ ὄδωρ ἐστίν.¹⁴ As Bousset, after Dölger, has noted long ago:

The uttering of the name is probably only a weakened sacramental form for the more original, more robust custom of branding or etching upon the person being initiated the sign (name, symbol) of the appropriate God, to whom it was consecrated.¹⁵

A similar metaphorical use of *seal* is to be found in various Gnostic texts, although an actual baptism of water might not be implied in all cases.¹⁶

Among the Mandaean, *sealing* (חתמתא), which protects against demons and evil powers, seems to be part of the baptismal ritual.¹⁷ The cultic reference to חתמתא in the Mandaean texts is particularly relevant for our purpose, since the Baptist Elchasaite community in which Mani grew up — and whose beliefs and religious practices he first attempted to reform, before openly and totally rebelling against them — was probably closely related to the Mandaean community, and to other Gnostic baptist groups of Jewish-Christian descent.¹⁸

Among other aspects of his complex religious self-identity, Mani considered himself to be the Paraclete of the *Endzeit*.¹⁹ In his very peculiar, but none the less very intensely lived, *imitatio Jesu*, Mani considered his rejection of Elchasaite ritual to be parallel to the way in which Jesus had

¹⁴ It must be noted that the usual Syriac equivalent of σφραγίς in reference to the initiation rite is *rūsmā* rather than *hūtmā* (see Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, I, 1410-1411, and II, 3985-3988). In early Syriac Christianity, the *rūsmā* consisted (before the water-baptism) in an oil ointment, a rite which Old Testament prophets underwent; see for instance *I Sam.* 10:1-6, or *I Kings* 19:15-16.

¹⁵ W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos* (Engl. transl.) (Nashville, 1970), 296.

¹⁶ References given by Bousset, *op. cit.*, 296, n. 186 and 297. See esp. Irenaeus, *adv. haer.* I, 25.6 (Carpocratians); *Exc. ex Theodoto* 80 and 86.

¹⁷ See K. Rudolph, *Die Mandäer*, II: *Der Kult* (FRLANT 75; Göttingen, 1961), 155-174, and 198-201. Rudolph concludes thus his analysis of the texts: "Der Begriff Siegelung [*hatamtā*] ist ein umfassender, der sowohl die Ölzeichnung als auch eine eigene Handlung bezeichnen kann..." (168).

¹⁸ See A. Henrichs and L. Koenen, "Ein griechischer Mani-Kodex", *Zeitsch. Papyr. Epigr.* 5 (1970), 132-140 and A. Henrichs, "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists: a historical confrontation", *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 77 (1973), 23-59.

¹⁹ The evidence is presented and analyzed by L. Koenen, "Augustine and Manichaeism in Light of the Cologne Mani Codex", *Illinois Classical Studies* 3 (1978), 167-176.

argued with the Pharisees about various points of the Law. In particular, Mani rejected the baptism of the Elchasaïtes and their frequent ablutions, which, he argued, had no soteriological value whatsoever.

"From Baptism to Gnosis", the apt title of L. Koenen's systematic study,²⁰ emphasizes the basic shift accomplished by Mani and his followers in their approach to ritual. If the Manichaeans, however, rejected baptism, they did not reject all kinds of cult. It would seem, in particular, that they maintained a certain initiatory cult, which they called *seal*; the scant, but none the less conclusive evidence has been analyzed by H.-C. Puech.²¹ To his conclusions, one should add that this Manichaean *seal* might well have evolved from the Elchasaïte baptism.

Thus, we read in the Manichaean *Psalter* found in a Coptic version — and which preserves some of the earliest strata of Manichaean literature:

Receive the holy Seal (*σφραγίς*) from
the Mind of the Church,
and fulfill the commandments (Ps. 22, 11–12)

Despite this probable original and primary meaning, however, the Manichaean metaphor cannot remain, any more than any other metaphor, univalent. Indeed, we know of various meanings of the word in early Manichaean texts and traditions. In the *Psalter*, again, Jesus is addressed thus:

Thou also art the seal (*σφραγίς*) of every wonder (60, 3–4)

Elsewhere, in the same work we read:

Receive the seal of the *σταυρός* — call —
Receive not the seal outwardly (189, 13–15)

In the *Kephalaia*, similarly, the catechumen is said to be sealed in his soul with the "Seal of Faith and the Seal of Truth" (or of Gnosis; 225, 11–20). We read elsewhere in the same work that the *Spiritus Vivens* has fastened all his members (i.e. the Manichaeans) with a chain of Peace, and sealed them with the Seal of Truth (143, 25–30). It is difficult to establish whether in these examples *seal* refers to a precise *Sitz im Leben*, or whether the metaphor does not imply any specific reference. Some time

²⁰ In B. Layton, ed., *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism* 2 (Suppl. to Numen, 43; Leiden, 1981), 734–756.

before his Passion, Mani wrote to all his churches a "Letter of the Seal" (*frwrdg-i-mwahr*), which might be identical to his testament (*διαθήκη*). The corrupt passage, however, mentioning this letter leaves no indication as to the meaning of *seal* in this case.^{21a}

Yet another precise conception, that of the "three seals" (Ps. 94, 12), appears time and again in the *Psalter*.²²

Let us seal (*mar'ntōbe*) our mouth that we may find the Father and seal (*σφραγίξω*) our (?) hands that we may find the Son, and guard our purity that we may find the Holy Spirit. (Ps. 116, 16 ff.)

or else:

The seal (*σφραγίς*) of the mouth for the sign of the Father, the peace of the hands for the sign of the Son, the purity of virginity for the sign of the Holy Spirit. (Ps. 115, 31–33)

The best description of what these *three seals* stood for in Manichaean theology is provided by Augustine. In his anti-Manichaean polemical works, the bishop of Hippo often refers to the three *signacula*, which stand for the main aspects of the ethics of his former coreligionists, whom he now calls "those false and lying saints" (*Conf.* V. 10).

The *signaculum oris*, the seal of the mouth, refers to their ritual diet (i.e. their vegetarianism and other food prohibitions) as well as to the prohibition of lies and evil words. The *signaculum manuum*, the seal of the hand, stands for the prohibition of murder, which does not only extend to men and animals, but also to the vegetal world, which Mani considered to be souled. The *signaculum sinus*, finally — the seal of the bosom —

^{21a} Puech has studied Manichaean liturgy and ritual practices during twenty years of lectures at the Collège de France (1952–1972). The results of his researches, first published in the Collège's *Annales* are now conveniently reprinted in his *Sur le Manichéisme et autres essais* (Paris, 1979). On the rite of *sealing*, see esp. 347–355. We have evidence of such a rite, performed by Gabriabios, one of Mani's disciples in the Kingdom of Revān. See W. Sundermann, *Mitteliranische manichäische Texte kirchengeschichtlichen Inhalts* (Berlin, 1981), 47 (text 3.4).

^{21a} This letter is mentioned in M 454 B, Andreas-Henning, "Mitteliranische Manichaica aus chinesischem Turkestan", III (*SPAW*, 1934), 891, reprinted in Henning's *Selected papers*. I (*Acta Iranica* 14; Leiden-Teheran, 1977), 318. Cf. "Bet- und Beichtbuch, *ibid.*, 432. See also Sundermann, *Mitteliranische manichäische Texte*, 135 (frgt. 2274). The testament is referred to in *Hom.* 95.3; cf. *Hom.* 50 and 94–96, *passim*. See also Puech, *Sur le Manichéisme*, 303.

²² These "three seals" are also referred to by Ibn al-Nadīm. See Flügel, *Mani*, 64; trans. 95

symbolizes the encratism of the Manichaean elects, their prohibition of wedding and sexual relations.²³ In these three cases, the *seal* would seem to be something which *shuts up* the part of the body to which it is applied, thus preventing sin through the mouth, the hand or the bosom.

These three famous "moral" seals, however, are not the only consecrated symbols of the Manichaean faith. As the Iranist A.V.W. Jackson showed long ago, they should be seen in parallel with four other seals, known from the Turfan texts, and of a more doctrinal character.²⁴ These are the "four light seals", as they are called in the *X'āstvānīft*, a manual for the Confession of Sins extant only in an Uighur translation. Unfortunately, this text is not easily datable, although it stands to reason to postulate an early *Vorlage*.²⁵

The relevant passage reads thus:

In Āzrua tāngri, in the God of the Sun and Moon, in the powerful God and the prophets have we put our trust, we have relied on them (and) have become Auditors. Four Light Seals have we sealed in our hearts. Firstly Love, the seal of Āzrua, tāngri, secondly Faith, the Seal of the God of the Sun and Moon, thirdly the Fear (of God), the seal of the Fivefold God, (and) fourthly Wisdom, the seal of the prophets (*burxan*).²⁶ (VIII. 13)

²³ The three seals are best discussed by P. Alfär, *L'Evolution intellectuelle de Saint Augustin* (Paris, 1918), 126–143. Augustine's testimony had already been remarkably analyzed by F.C. Baur, *Das manichäische Religionssystem* (1831, reprinted Göttingen, 1928), 248–260.

²⁴ See Jackson's study of "the Manichaean 'seals'", in his *Researches in Manichaeism* (New York, 1932), 331–337.

²⁵ The most thorough study of the text is that of J.P. Asmussen, *X'āstvānīft: Studies in Manichaeism* (Acta Theologica Danica, 7; Copenhagen, 1965). Asmussen (p. 206) points out that the Parthian loan-words might reflect an early *Vorlage*, since in the latter half of the sixth century, Parthian was replaced by Sogdian as the "sacred language" of the Manichaeans in the East. Actually, a noteworthy parallel to the idea of the four seals betrays the probable Sassanian *Sitz im Leben* of the Manichaean conception. According to Mas'ūdi, King Anushirvan used four seals: "Celui de l'impôt... avait pour empreinte 'la Justice'; le sceau des domaines... 'l'Agriculture'; le sceau des contributions(?)... 'la Temporalisation'; le sceau des postes... 'la Fidélité' (var. 'l'Espoir'). I quote Ch. Pellat's translation, Mas'ūdi, *Les Prairies d'Or*, (Paris, 1962), I, 234, §626. It is striking that like the four Manichaean seals, those of the Sassanian king (or rather three of them) bear names of virtues. I wish to thank Prof. Sh. Shaked for calling my attention to this passage.

²⁶ Asmussen, *op. cit.* 196 (text p. 175, lines 173–180); commentary pp. 220–221. Jackson (*Researches*, 372) renders *burxan* by "divine revealers of religion". See also H.-J. Klimkeit, "Der Buddha Henoch: Qumran and Turfan", *Zeitsch. Rel. Geist-Gesch.* 32 (1980), 367–375. On p. 367, Klimkeit discusses the meaning of *burxan* (which came to be identified in Buddhist and Manichaean texts with "Buddha"), noting that the term seems to stand for the Iranian *hyng* ("Vorausgegangener, Prophet"), rather than *fyrystg*. The last word, in its turn, appears to stand for "Apostle", rather than "Prophet", in the Manichaean texts; see n. 32 *infra*.

Those four light seals represent the four cardinal aspects of Manichaean theology, alluded to elsewhere in the doctrine of "the Fourfold God", τὸν τετραπρόσωπον πατέρα τοῦ μεγέθους, as He is called in the longer Greek formula of abjuration.²⁷

The *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm preserves another, slightly different version of these four articles of faith, which were part of Mani's *Law*, speaking of "faith in the four greatnesses, namely (1) God, (2) His Light, (3) His Power, (4) His Wisdom", adding, "His wisdom is the Holy Religion"²⁸ (with its five significations: teachers... deacons, priests... the Elect... and the Hearers...).

It would thus seem that the "seal of the prophets" of the *X'āstvānīft* must be connected with "the Holy Religion" of the *Fihrist*, i.e. the Manichaean Church.²⁹ This hypothesis is corroborated by another passage in the *X'āstvānīft*.

If we should somehow, unwittingly, have sinned against the holy Electi, who do meritorious deeds, and bring redemption, and if we, although we called (them) "true messenger of God" and "prophet", (still) should not have believed (this): "The holy Elect is characterized by good deeds".³⁰

In other words the Electi are explicitly called prophets (*burxan*), or "true messengers of God".

Thus the metaphorical expression "seal of the prophets" is indeed found in a Manichaean text, and might well be of a pre-Islamic origin. But the prophets referred to in this phrase are in no way Mani's predecessors, but rather his followers.

Moreover, the metaphor of *seal* does not imply either in this expression or in any of the other pre-Islamic mentions of the term studied here,

²⁷ See Jackson, *Researches*, 332. Cf. E. Peterson, "Jesus bei den Manichäer", *Theol. Literaturzeitung* 53 (1928), 241–250, esp. 243; Peterson postulated, as a possible origin for this concept of the "four-faced" Father, "eine ältere jüdische Gnosis des Thronwagens Gottes..." The same *tetras* is found also in Iranian texts; see for instance Andreas-Henning, "Mitteliranische Manichaica aus chinesisch Turkestan, II (SPAW 1932) 329 and 324, n. 7; reprinted in Henning, *Selected Papers*, I, 226 and 221.

²⁸ *wa-hikmatuhu al-din al-muqaddas* 64 Flügel (trans. p. 95; II, 789 Dodge) see also Flügel's notes 220 and 223, pp. 292–293.

²⁹ See Asmussen, *X'āstvānīft*, 221: "Instead of 'the Prophets' the passage in *Fihrist* has 'the holy (hallowed) religion'... which in itself comes to the same thing, as 'the Prophets' represent the concrete, visible Church, 'the holy religion' the Church as the universal invisible quantity..."

³⁰ IV. B. 195 Asmussen (text p. 172).

a reference to "last", but, rather, relates the idea of confirmation, or attestation.

To my knowledge, the appellation *prophets* for the Electi, although it is quite explicitly stated in the *X'āstvānīst* has not been hitherto duly noted by Manichaean scholarship. In order to understand its meaning more precisely, it might therefore be useful to give a brief analysis of the Manichaean conception of prophecy.

As noted above, Mani called himself, in the *Šābuhragān* "Apostle of the God of Truth to Babylonia". Mani, in whose complex religious personality not only the *imitatio Jesu*, but also the *imitatio Pauli*, played a crucial role, also considered himself to be "Apostle of Jesus Christ" — although this figure was for him the Heavenly, or rather Cosmic *Yešu Ziwa*, and not the Jesus of Paul.

In a fragment of his *Living Gospel*, preserved in the recently published *Cologne Mani Codex*, he says: "I, Mani, an apostle of Jesus Christ (*Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολος*) through the will of God, the Father of Truth" — adding, what Paul could in no way have added: "from whom I was also born".³¹

It is a striking and significant point, which, again, does not seem to have been hitherto underlined, that Mani, who willingly attributes to himself the title of Apostle, never refers to himself as a prophet. This fact does not only hold true for the Western Manichaean sources. In the Iranian texts, too, Mani is always called *frēstag* (translated "Apostel", "Gesandter", "Engel" by Henning and Sundermann) or else *frestagrošn* (= ὁ ἀπόστολος τοῦ φωτός), while the vocable *paygambar* ("a prophet", "he who brings a message") seems never to be used in the Manichaean Iranian texts.³²

This should be explained, again, by Mani's *imitatio Pauli*. He consciously copies Paul's language, and this not only when he refers to himself as to an "apostle of Jesus Christ", but also when his disciples are called "the seal of his apostleship" (*σφραγίς αὐτοῦ τῆς ἀποστολῆς*; *CMC* 72, 4-7) in manifest imitation of *I Cor.* 9:2, where Paul emphatically says

³¹ *CMC* 66, 4-7.

³² For references, see the indices to *Mir. Man.* II and III in Henning, *Selected Papers*, I, and to W. Sundermann, *Mitteliranische manichäische Texte kirchengeschichtlichen Inhalts* (Schriften zur Geschichte und Kultur des alten Orients; Berliner Turfantexte 11; Berlin, 1981).

to his own disciples, "It is you, indeed, who are the seal of my apostleship: ἡ γὰρ σφραγίς μου τῆς ἀποστολῆς ὑμεῖς ἐστέ."³³

Mani saw himself as the last one in a succession of messengers sent by God, from the protoplast on, in order to bequeath to mankind the visions granted to them in ecstatic rapture. Thus Adam, Seth, Enosh, Shem, Enoch, up to Paul, "each one of the forefathers showed his own revelation to his elect."³⁴ In their turn, these elect ones are to preach, in each generation, these revelations to outsiders. The forefathers, although they are once referred to, in *CMC* 62, 9-14, as "the most blessed apostles, saviours, evangelists, and prophets of the truth", are generally simply called *apostles*. Thus: "concerning the way in which this apostleship in this generation was sent" (*CMC* 45, 4 ff.). Or again, "All apostles cried, they announced... this fight in each one of their books, from Adam... until today".^{34a}

Parallel to this chain of Biblical messengers beginning with Adam, we are told of two, or else of three, main revealer-figures appearing in history before Mani. In the passage of the *Šābuhragān* quoted above, Mani refers to Buddha, Zarathustra and Jesus, while in the *Homilies* only Zarathustra and Jesus are mentioned before Mani "the Third Apostle" (11, 23-24; 25-27) or "the Apostle of Light" (16, 28; cf. 28, 21 and 28).

There is no doubt that Mani considered himself the last such revealer to be sent to mankind before the *Endzeit*, since he thought that while previous apostles had only revealed aspects of the divine truth, his own apostleship was meant to reveal Gnosis in its totality — and therefore was final.³⁵

³³ This is noted by the editors of the Codex; see *Zeitsch. Papyr. Epigr.* 19 (1975), 72, n. 138; cf. *Zeitsch. Papyr. Epigr.* 5 (1970), 109 and n. 25, where total credibility is accorded to al-Birūnī's wording: "Während im Kölner Codex die Prophetenschüler als die Siegel der Sendung ihrer Lehrer erscheinen, hat sich Mani selbst als das abschliessende Siegel aller Propheten angesehen. Diese Bezeichnung übernahm Muhammad im Koran."

³⁴ ὡς εἰς ἕκαστος τῶν προγενεστέρων πατέρων τὴν ἰδίαν ἀποκάλυψιν ἔδειξεν τῇ ἐαυτοῦ ἐκλογῇ (*CMC* 47, 4-7).

^{34a} *Homilien* 14, 29-31. The "fight" is the great apocalyptic war, on which see my "Aspects de l'eschatologie manichéenne".

³⁵ Hoc enim quasi proprium atque praecipuum auctoris sui laudibus tribuunt, quod dicunt illa quae ab antiquis figurate in libris divina mysteria posita sunt, huic qui ultimus venturus erat, solvenda et demonstranda esse servata: et propterea post istum iam neminem doctorem divinitus esse venturum... Augustine, *C. Ep. Fundamenti* XXIII, 25 in R. Jolivet and M. Jourjon, trans., Augustin, *Six traités anti-manichéens* (Bibliothèque Augustinienne, 17; Paris, 1961), 448.

As is well known, the theory which lies at the basis of Mani's conception of apostleship is that first developed by the Ebionites, who considered Jesus to be the prophet foretold by Moses in *Deut.* 18:5.³⁶ They called Jesus "the True", or "the Unique" Prophet, ὁ ἀληθής or ὁ εἰς προφήτης, and even "the only prophet of truth", ὁ τῆς ἀληθείας μόνος προφήτης.³⁷ In this conception, however, Jesus was considered to be only the last incarnation of this true prophet, who had run through the ages, incarnating himself anew in each generation, from Adam on.

In this context, the clear preference shown by Mani for *apostle* to *prophet* stands to reason, if we remember that Paul, whom Mani held in such a high esteem, was depicted in the darkest colours in Ebionite theology. (In the Pseudo Clementine writings, Simon Magus is only Paul's mouthpiece.) While the Ebionites never refer to Jesus as *apostolos*, it would seem that Elchasaite theology was on this point sensibly different. In this regard, one may refer to *Heb.* 3:1, where Jesus is called ἀπόστολος, a title partaken by the heavenly messenger *Manda d'ḥayyē* in Mandaic texts (*'izganda*).³⁸

Despite these texts, the semantic fields of ἀπόστολος and προφήτης are far from being quite distinct in early Christian literature. In the New Testament, apostles and prophets are often mentioned in one breath. Thus in *Luke* 11:49, where the Wisdom of God says: "I shall send them prophets and apostles", or, similarly, in *Rev.* 18:20 or *Eph.* 3:5. The synonymity between apostle and prophet is most clear in the *Didache*, for which an apostle staying three days or more in a community is considered to be a false prophet.³⁹ Indeed, in the early Church, where apostles and prophets were known, as well as teachers (διδάσκαλοι), their roles do not seem always to have been clearly distinct. In the earliest Antiochene community, for instance, there were προφῆται καὶ διδάσκαλοι, "prophets and teachers" (*Acts* 13:1); the coupled terms call to mind the words in which Mani describes the reaction of certain Baptists to his early advocations: "some of them took me for a prophet and teacher".⁴⁰

³⁶ See Henrichs, "Mani and the Babylonian Baptists" 54-55.

³⁷ Pseudo Clementine *Homilies* 11.33.1; for numerous parallels in the Pseudo Clementine literature, see G. Friedrich's article "προφήτης, κτλ..." in Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, VI, 858-759.

³⁸ *Book of John* 66, quoted by Rengstorff, "ἀπόστολος..." in Kittel's *Theological Dictionary*, I, 443.

³⁹ *Πseudoπροφήτης: Did.* 11:3,4.

⁴⁰ *CMC* 86. 1.

Other indications, however, would suggest that in some milieus, a distinction was made between these various titles. Paul, in particular, establishes a clear hierarchy between apostles, prophets and teachers, who constitute, together, the mystical body of Christ.

And you are the body of Christ, and members each for his part, and those whom God has established in the church are first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers (*I Cor.* 12:27-28; cf. *Eph.* 4:11).

The preponderance of the apostles in the hierarchy is directly relevant to Mani's self-understanding as an apostle — in opposition to those Baptists who saw in him, at first, only a prophet or a teacher.

In the *X'ästvānist*, as noted, the *electi*, the inner core of the Manichaean Church, are designated as *prophets*. A similarly central role was played by *prophets* in some early Christian trends, the best known case being that of Montanism, an enthusiastic and chiliastic movement which flourished in Asia Minor in the later half of the second century. The success of this schismatic movement was soon felt by the bishops as a direct challenge to their growing ecclesial power, and charisma was readily checked and neutralized.

Yet, a curious fragmentary papyrus found at Oxyrhynchus, and dated from the third or fourth century, provides an interesting parallel to the Manichaean designation of the *electi* as *prophets*. Speaking about those who, being filled with the Holy Spirit, reveal in their words the Spirit of Divinity, the fragment adds:

For the spirit of prophecy is the essence of the prophetic order (τῆς προφητικῆς τάξεως), which is the body of the flesh of Jesus Christ, which was mingled with human nature through Mary.⁴¹

As the last words clearly show, the author of the fragment was far from any docetic attitude. And yet, his mention of a "college of prophets" who represent the body of Christ, i.e. the core of the Church, does not only allude to the words of Paul quoted above (*I Cor.* 12:27-28). They

⁴¹ B.P. Grenfell and A.S. Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, I (London, 1898), 8 (11. 4-15 recto). The editors' title is "Fragment of a Christian Homily or Treatise on the Spirit of Prophecy". Friedrich, who refers to the fragment ("προφήτης", 859), mentions an article by Harnack, "Über 2 von Grenfel u. Hunt entdeckte u. publicierte altchr. Fragmente". *SAB* 1898, 516-520; *non vidi*. But see Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* IV.33.10 (SC 100:824-825 Rousseau), where the Old Testament prophets are called members of Christ.

also describe a conception similar to that of the Manichaean Church. This similarity is all the more striking since we now know that this Church — which included only the *electi*, i.e. the “prophets”, was called “the (mystical) Body of Mani”, as revealed by the very title of the *CMC* (which probably represents only the first part of a lost History of the Manichaean Church): *περὶ τῆς γεννῆς τοῦ σωματός αὐτοῦ*: on the birth of His Body.⁴²

If the evidence analyzed here is to be trusted, it appears that:

(1) Mani does not seem to have considered himself only, or mainly, a prophet. In his own eyes, he was, more than a prophet, an apostle.

(2) The term *prophet*, although polyvalent, seems to have been used in the early Manichaean Church as an appellation for the *electi*.

(3) The metaphor of “seal”, although polyvalent in Manichaean literature, nowhere implies the idea of *last*, *end*, but rather of *confirmation*, *attestation*, or else *sign*.

(4) In the only Manichaean text in which it occurs, the metaphor “seal of the prophets” can only refer to one of the four cardinal theological virtues.

(5) The doxographic evidence, all from Muslim authors, in which Mani is said to have called himself “seal of the prophets” cannot be trusted.

The persistence of prophecy, i.e. of charismatic, pneumatic trends within the early stages of development of a religious movement — and at its very core, not only on its fringes — is not a surprising phenomenon. The sociologist of religion knows that such trends are usually uprooted as “heretical” only later, when ecclesial power is stabilized.⁴³ What seems to have been true of Christianity and of Islam might also hold for later Manichaeism — but here, the sources are so scarce that they prevent even speculation.

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⁴² See Koenen, “Augustine and Manichaeism”, 164–166.

⁴³ For a recent analysis of such processes of evolution see J. Gager, *Kingdom and Community: the Social World of Early Christianity* (Prentice Hall Studies in Religion; Englewood Cliffs, 1975), 68 ff.