

I Am Alfa and Omega

A Jewish-Christian Schema in the Manichaean Context Based on the Middle Iranian Documents in the Turfan Collection

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This paper will give an in-depth discussion of Jesus' expression "I am Alpha and Omega" (*Apocalypse of John = Revelation 1.8*) and its influence on the Manichaean writings, on the one hand, and the reason for the division of Mani's *Living Gospel* into twenty-two chapters, corresponding to the twenty-two letters of the Manichaean alphabet, on the other. The paper has explored all the related Jewish, Christian, and Manichaean texts available and strived to find out more about the reason for, and the origin of, this particular division. The deep connection between the *word* (or *letters*) and *creation* in Manichaean as well as in Jewish and Christian traditions seems to play an important role in this regard. The paper will answer many different, previously unanswered, questions and eventually propose a plausible resolution.

Keywords: cosmic potency of letters, Mani's Gospel, Jewish literature, Christian literature, Manichaean literature.

***Mysteria Litterarum* in the Creation of the Twenty-Two Works**

In her study "Der Traktat 'vom Mysterium der Buchstaben'" (2007), Cordula Bandt edited and commented on the Greek *Treatise* Περὶ τοῦ

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μυστηρίου τῶν γραμμάτων (About the Mystery of the Letters) (*ML viz. Mysteria Litterarum*), with a Coptic “Preface” (*prooimion*) that has an Arabic translation.¹ This Christian *Treatise*,² containing a mystical doctrine about the names and forms of the Greek and Hebrew letters, was probably written in the sixth century Byzantine *Palaestina Prima* (Bandt 2007, 4-8), which is at least some two centuries later than the time of Mani. It seems that the original could be older. The anonymous author of the text not only discusses each of the letters in detail but also tries, throughout the text, to identify the symbolization ΠΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ ΜΠΝΟΥΓΤΕ ΕΤΨΟΥΟΠ ΖΝ ΝΕΣΖΑΙ ΜΠΑΛΦΑΒΗΤΑ “about the mystery of God, which is [included] in the letters of the alphabet” (*ML. Prooimion* 3, in Bandt 2007, 102-3) that began with the saying of Christ “ΧΕ ΑΝΟΚ ΑΛΦΑ ΑΥΩ Ω.” (I am *Alpha* and *Ω*) (*ML. Prooimion* 102.15-16, in Bandt 2007, 102-3); “ΧΕ ΑΝΟΚ ΑΥΩΩΠΕ ΝΑΛΦΑ ΑΥΩ Ω.” (I became *Alpha* and *Ω*) (*ML. Prooimion* 102.17, in Bandt 2007, 102-3); and “Εγώ εἶμι τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ω.” (I am the *Alpha* and the *Ω*) (*ML* 2.17, in Bandt 2007, 108-9 *apud* Shokri-Foumeshi 2015, 61).

That author himself says that he compiled his *Treatise* under the influence of the *Apocalypse of John* (*Revelation = Rev.*) and the influence of this advice of Christ to John to find “παρὸν θησαυρὸς τῶν γραμμάτων” (*ML* 2: 108.6, in Bandt 2007, 108-9) “the existing treasure in letters,” (i.e., ΠΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ ΜΠΝΟΥΓΤΕ “the mystery of God”). In *Rev.* 1.8, we read: “I am *Alpha* and *Omega*, the beginning and the ending”;

1. For MS., see Bandt (2007, ‘Abbildungen’).

2. The Greek text published for the first time in 2007 by Cordula Bandt (in the above work). The unknown author of the text proposes a re-modelled Greek alphabet reduced to twenty-two letters based on the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. He interprets these letters as symbolic figures of the twenty-two works of divine creation in the biblical *Creation according to Genesis* and of the twenty-two corresponding works of salvation by Christ, elaborating this theory through descriptions of the various letters and interpretations of their shapes (Bandt 2007, 3ff.).

also, in *Rev.* 22.13: “I am *Alpha* and *Omega*, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” As a point of departure, let us first look at the parts of the text which are relevant to our study:

ML 3: 108.21-22: Εικοσιδυό δὲ εἰσὶ τῶν γράμματα κατὰ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τῶν κβ' ἔργων, ὧν ὁ θεὸς ἐν πάσῃ τῇ κτίσει ἐποίησεν·

Twenty-two letters are, however, in accordance with the number of twenty-two works, which God has created in all creation. (Bandt 2007, 108-9; similar sentences in *ML* 3: 108.23; *ML* 3: 108.24-110.10; *ML* 3: 110.15-16; in Bandt 2007, 110-11. See also Dornseiff 1925, 73)

Then follows the Περὶ τῶν κβ' ἔργων, ὧν ὁ Χριστὸς εἰργάσατο (*ML* 3: 110.18) “the 22 works accomplished by Christ” (*ML* 3: 110.19-112.13).

ML 3.4: 112.14-15: Τούτων τῶν κβ' τοῦ χριστοῦ πραγμάτων εἰσὶ τύπος τὰ κβ' ἔργα τῆς κτίσεως, ἃ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεός· ὁμοίως καὶ τὰ κβ' γράμματα ὡς προεῖπον τῆς ἀλφαβήτου·

Archetypes of these 22 acts of Christ are the 22 works of the Creation which God created. Just as the 22 letters of the alphabets, as I have already said. (Bandt 2007, 112-13)

It seems to me that “the number 22,” related to Christ’s acts here, has a parallel in a Manichaean Turfan document; namely, in the Middle Persian fragment S1, which is in fact an index of writings, and as far as I know, it is attested only here (see Shokri-Foumeshi 2015, 62-63):

S1/v/11-13/ * yyšw'yg * | 'br wɣst 'wd dw k'rc'r 'yg [3-5] | 'mdyšnyh 'yg yyšw' zyn(dk)[r]. (Salemman 1904, 6; re-edited here)

Regarding Jesus: About the twenty-two battles of ... coming of Jesus the life[-giving?] one. (Salemman 1904, 6)¹

1. Cf. the title of the Coptic Manichaean *Synaxis* of the Ninth *Logos* of the *Living Gospel*: εΤΑΝΩ ΕΤΒΕ ΤΒΙΝΕΙ ΝΙΗΘ ΠΧΡΩ “Concerning the Coming of Jesus the Christ” (Mirecki 1994, 206).

Let us return to the Greek *Mysteria Litterarum*. We can assume that older sources—the *Old Testament* and the related works—have been formed on the basis of the above-mentioned *Treatise*, and it is likely that Mani was familiar with these sources. Below, we encounter evidence of one of the well-known Jewish works that is close to the time of Mani, a work that ought to be influenced by older sources. This well-known work is called *Memar Marqah* (*Tibat marqah*), which is a collection of six books. The language of the work is fourth-century Aramaic, with some development into later “Samaritan,” influenced by Arabic (Hjelm 2000, 96). The sixth book is a *midrash* of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, understood to have originated at the time of creation, which was probably known to Mani. In the first part (Rosenthal 1939, 142) of the *Treatise on the 22 Letters* (i.e., in the 6th book), we read: “When God revealed himself in the burning bush to him [i.e., Moses], he found the 22 letters, written in flaming fire in front of himself” (Baneth 1888, 54-55); also: “He [i.e. God] had already written the 22 letters, which form the basis of the words of the teaching” (Baneth 1888, 50-51).

***Book of Jubilees* and Twenty-Two Books of the Old Testament?**

Now, we address two quotations of the *Book of Jubilees*, which is an ancient Jewish text. The second chapter of the *Jubilees* is in fact the book of creation. Here, the twenty-two works of the six days of creation are enumerated. According to *Jub.* 2.15, the sum of the works of creation amounts to twenty-two kinds. *Jub.* 2.23 takes up this number and establishes an essential link between the creation of Israel and the sanctification of the Sabbath as the seventh day of the week of creation: twenty-two works of creation have been made *up to* the seventh day; similarly, twenty-two generations have passed from Adam *up to* Jacob (Doering 1997, 181; Berger 1981, 328-29).

In this context, in all of the Old Testament, there is no mention of the twenty-two books. It is therefore very remarkable that there is no

indication in the Torah to show the work divided into the twenty-two chapters—namely, the twenty-two books; the Old Testament has more than twenty-two books. The number 24 is attested in 4 Ezra 14:45 and in the *Gospel of Thomas* 52. Some scholars believe 22 to be the older number, and date the number 24 to the fourth century.¹ However, we must also bear in mind that the number 22 was frequently cited as encompassing the whole Old Testament and that this number had to be preserved regardless of the actual contents of the canon.²

All the same, all the evidence in this context, which we have seen above, is obviously later, whereas some scholars have been willing to attribute a Jewish origin to the alphabet connection. Nevertheless, as Gallagher also pointed out, “in fact, no Jewish source transmits the connection between the number of the biblical books and the alphabet” (Gallagher 2012, 87). However, some of the Fathers of the Church, such as Origen, who did not accept the limits of the Jewish canon, stressed the importance of the number 22.³

The Hebrew *Book of Enoch* and the Cosmic Potency of the Letters

Mani opposed Moses and Judaism, and thus it may seem that he was not influenced by Jewish literature. However, we must consider the largely unknown situation of the Jewish and Christian communities in early Mesopotamia. Additionally, the Manichaean texts show that Mani was familiar with Judaism, though partly via Christianity. According to Widengren, Judaism and Christianity had a major impact on Mani and Manichaeism, though in a negative direction (Widengren 1965, 11). Without a doubt, one of the best examples is the Manichaean *Book of*

1. See Gallagher (2012, 86) for a detailed study of this issue.

2. For an influential study dating the occurrence of 22 before 24, see Katz (1956, 191-217) *apud* Gallagher (2012, 86, n. 65).

3. Cf. Origen's opinion *apud* Gallagher (2012, 90); see also below.

the Giants.¹ It is certain that a “*Book of Giants*” was known to Mani. It must have been a version of the Enochic *Book of Giants* (and not *1 Hen.: Ethiopian*, e.g.), fragments of which were discovered in Qumran (see Martínez 1992, 97-99), as it is a well-known fact that Henoch played a great role prior to Mani as a great prophet.² This is obviously attested at least in the MP fragment M 625c published by Henning, as a proof that Mani was familiar with the *Book of Henoah* (Henning 1934). Klimkeit postulates a direct line of transmission from Qumran to Mani through the *Elchasaite* community (Klimkeit 1980, 367-77).

In the *Hebrew Book of Henoah* (*3 Hen.* 13) we read that all things were created when God began to speak the words. According to the following words, God writes with a flaming stylus on Meṭatron’s crown the cosmic letters by which heaven and earth were created (Odeberg 1928, II:34-35; cf. also Lumpkin 2009, 326-27). In *3 Hen* 41, Meṭatron shows R. Ishmael the letters engraved on the Throne of Glory by which everything in heaven and earth has been created (Odeberg 1928, II: 128-29; cf. also *Sēpher Yəṣīrāh* [*Sefer Yeṣirah*] in Herrmann 2008, 31, 88-89; see also Shokri-Foumeshi 2015, 66-67).

Here, some points are considerable for our study: First, although the “cosmic potency of the letters and word” and the role of the alphabet in the creation of the world are mentioned in the *3 Hen.*, there is no clear mention of the alphabet in Hebrew by name (even if it is Hebrew), as is mentioned specifically in the Jewish works. Second, the number of the letters has not been determined here. Third, wisdom, understanding,

1. Henning published the Iranian fragments of this text (Henning 1943). In this context, see also, especially, W. Sundermann, “Ein weiteres Fragment aus Manis Gigantenbuch,” *Orientalia J. Duchesne-Guillemain emerito oblata*, Leiden, 1984: 491-505. For a comparative study on its Iranian heritage, see P. O. Skjærø, “Iranian Epic and the Manichaean Book of Giants,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 48, 1995: 187-223. Wilkens also published the Uighur fragments (2000, 133-76; 2011, 63-85). See also Morano (2011, 101-11).

2. For the references to *hwnwx* in the Manichaean texts, see *DMMPP* 194a.

knowledge, prudence, meekness, and righteousness are created here by the potency of the letters, something that is not seen in other Jewish texts. If Mani was familiar with this writing or with its related sources, which is very likely, he must really have taken these three cases into consideration, a point that could probably have had an influence on the composition of, at least, Mani's *Living Gospel*. Phrases like this, also, are in the Coptic Manichaeae *Psalm-Book*, the Psalm of Thomas that shows the cosmic potency of the voice and the word (*PsB* 203.5-22). This Manichaeae text speaks about the evocation of clouds, fire, wind, air, and mountain. C. Schmidt and H. J. Polotsky (Schmidt and Polotsky 1933, 63[64], 65[66]) correctly identified $\tau\omega\zeta\mu\epsilon$ "(be)rufen, to call, invoke, summon" with the Syriac ܩܪܐ *qr'* "to call, invoke"¹ (by Theodor bar Kōnai, see below) (Jackson 1932, 224ff) and the Arabic *do'ā* "call, invocation" (in *Al-Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadim; see Flügel 1862, 65, 5).

'lyf nxwyn 'wd t' 'stwmyn

All the same, the Jewish concept of the "cosmic potency of the letters and word," which caused the creation of the world, influenced the New Testament—namely, at the beginning of the first chapter of the *Gospel According to John*: 1:1-3, 14. The latter reference obviously shows that the "word" is considered to be Christ. Here, we remember the above-mentioned sentence in the *Apocalypse (Rev.) of John* (interestingly, in both cases "According to John") 22:13: "I [i.e., Christ] am *Alpha* and *Omega*, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (cf. also *Rev.* 1:11, 17). This passage, which, in all the New Testament, appears only in the *Apocalypse of John*, is reflected in the Turfan Parthian fragment M173/v/, which together with M 94/v/ forms a Parthian hymn dedicated to the "Father of Greatness" (*pydr wzrgyft*):

1. Also, Syriac *qryt'* "call, invocation" (bar Kōnai 314, 15 *apud* Schmidt-Polotsky 1933, 63[64] and 65[66]).

M 173/v/2^a-2^b/''lyf nxwyn tw xwd'y¹ ° 'wd t' 'stwmyn|pd tw 'ngd ° 'wd bwd 'spwr tw k'm kyrbg. (ABC 439, § 24a-b)

You, Lord, are the first *alif* and the last *tau*, | Through you yourself your pious wish has been fulfilled and accomplished. (ABC 439; GSR 32, §5)

This sentence indicates that Manichaeans, and perhaps Mani himself, made use of the *Apocalypse of John*, and were aware of the significance of the twenty-two letters hidden in the phrase (Shokri-Foumeshi 2015, 69f.).

Created by Your Word (of Blessing)

The idea of the “cosmic potency of the letters and word,” which caused the creation of the world, is obviously attested in the Turfan Manichaean texts *inter alia* in a long text concerning the Manichaean myth of the creation of the world. In the Middle Persian M 7984, in which the Living Spirit (*myhryzd*), having made the world, goes with the other gods before the Father of Greatness (here: *whyšt'w šhry'r*) to entreat him to evoke the Third Messenger, we read:

M 7984/II/r/ii/21-34/ + M 7984/II/v/i/1-5/: 'wd myhryzd 'wd srygrqrb qyrdg'r 'wl 'w whyšt'w 'hr'pt hynd °° 'wd 'b'g 'whrmyzdby 'wd rwšn'n xw'ryst °° 'wd nwgšhr'pwr yzd hndym'n 'wy whyšt'w šhry'r dstkš 'yst'd hynd °° 'wš'n ngwcyd 'wd zwwpr nm'c bwrđ 'wš'n 'wh gw(p)t kw nmbrrm tw xwdy' ky pd xwyš wrz 'wd hww'c² 'm'h 'pwryd hwm °° (Mir. Man. i, 7[179]; Reader 63, text y: 8; Hutter 1992, 30-31 § 155-173)

And Mihryazd (the Living Spirit) and the Goddess of Creation in Female Form (Mother of Life) were lifted up to Paradise. And together with the God Ohrmizd (First Man) and the most Beloved of the Lights and the Creator God of the New World they

1. Cf. also M 28/II/V/ii/34-35/ in *Mir. Man. ii*, 318; *Reader* 125, text *bu:3*; *GSR* 66, §5.3.

2. Cf. M 39/R/I/16-17/ in *Mir. Man. iii*, text *m* 16-17 (p. 39 [884]); *Reader* 118, text *bk*: 1: *z'd 'yy pt wrc*, and not *pd wrc 'wd hww'c*. According to above text, the Manichaean gods are also “born” (*z'd n*). Thanks to I. Gershevitch (1955, 479, esp. 487-88), we have a great deal of information about the concept *w'c* with the double meanings “word” and “spirit.”

approached the Lord of Paradise, greeting him. Then they bowed down deeply and venerated him, saying, ‘We worship you, Lord, for you have created us by your wondrous power and by (your) word of blessing.’ (GSR 227, as text A)

Cf. the passage cited by Theodor bar Kōnai: “Then the Mother of the Living and the Primal Man and the Living Spirit stood in prayer and implored the Father of Greatness; and the Father of Greatness hearkened to them and *evoked* [*q^erā*] the Third Evocation, (namely) the Messenger” (*apud* Jackson 1932, 240. For *q^erā* see below). In the following MP text, the Third Messenger is evoked and begins his work as follows:

M 7984/II/v/ii/11-14/ *ps h'n whyšt'w šhry'r pd xwyyš wrc 'wd hww'c 'pwryd yzd sh.* (*Mir. Man. i*, 8[180]; *Reader* 64, text y: 10; Hutter 1992, 38: 213-16)

Thereafter, the Lord of Paradise *created* three gods by his own wondrous power and (by his) *word* of blessing. (*Mir Man i*, 180; *GSR* 228, as text *c*)

It is noteworthy here that the Manichaeans made the adjective *w'c 'fryd*¹ “created by word”² from the combination of the noun *w'c* “word” and the past participle *'fryd* “created (by sb/sth)”:

Huy.VIc/10a-b/: (‘w)[d p]d rwmb *w'c 'fryd*[⊙] dyz 'br hw [lacuna] |(b)wrz 'wd ql'n[⊙] cy 'rg'w p(‘)[dyxš'n].³ (Boyce 1954, 102)

And⁴ by a spiritual invocation⁵ [he built?] on that [structure?] the fortress, high and vast, of the noble Em[peror]. (Boyce 1954, 103; slightly altered in Shokri-Foumeshi 2015, 75)⁶

1. Referring to the term, I am indebted to Dr. I. Colditz (personal communication). W. B. Henning (*apud* Boyce 1954, 103, n. 1) has recognized that the Manichaeism *w'c 'fryd* corresponds to the MP *mynewg* “spiritual.”
 2. And also “spiritual, ghostly.” See *DMMPP* 334b.
 3. Cf. M 324/R/15-16/: *w'c 'fryd hy tw | xwd'y pd 'pryn 'y yzd'n* ⊙
 4. Not translated in Boyce (1954, 103).
 5. *Apud* Boyce (1954, 103, n. 1): “Lit. ‘by a spiritual mouth.’”
 6. See also (MP) M 43/r/5/: *zyw'y 'w j'yd'n* ⊙ ⊙ *thm'tr shy(n)* 'r(d)yqr ⊙ ⊙

All in all, the above evidence shows that the creation of divinities and the spiritual world in Manichaeism as a continuation of the old Jewish and the Christian concept (which continued in Islam¹ too) has been accomplished by “voice” and “word.”² The Manichaean Turfan texts, on the other hand, confirm clearly that this was never used for the creation of the material world created by *Evil*.

“Primeval Voice” in the Manichaean Parthian, Sogdian, and Chinese Codices

Here, regarding the phrase ’lyfnxwyn tw xwd’y ’wd t’ ’stwmyn, I would like to deal nevertheless with the Parthian hymn M1178, which with the help of the Parthian fragments M259c, M2402, M529 and Ôtani 7117 as well as the Sogdian fragment So18120 (TI/TM351) (see Reck 2006, 245f.) was recently re-edited and reconstructed by Durkin-Meisterernst and Morano (2010, 10-13; after Waldschmidt-Lentz 1926, 85ff.), E. Morano (1982, 10ff.), and X. Ma (2003, 81ff.) as its Chinese version was preserved respectfully in the *Hymnscroll* S2659 (ll. 176-83) (Waldschmidt-Lentz 1926, 85ff.) and its Turkish version in Pelliot Chinois 3407 (Hamilton 1986, 55f.) as well.³ Sundermann recognizes and publishes the text as a part of *Der Sermon von der Seele* (1997, 55, 72-73). Here, the well-known text “Primeval voice” (*wcn hsyng*),⁴

nyrwg’wynd yzd w’c’fryd ☉☉ “May you live forever, (oh you) very strong, prominent, warrior, *created by the word* of God!” (Klimkeit in *GSR* 158. Cf. *HR ii*, 78; *MSt* 12; *Reader* 194, text *dw*: 1. See also *BBB* 21; *Reader* 155, text *cu*: 15; *GSR* 135; Henning, *BBB* 21; *HR ii*, 49; *MSt* 2; *Reader* 160, text *cv*: 5; *GSR* 147; Colditz 2000, 78).

1. Cf. Qur’an 2:117: “The Initiator of the heavens and the earth: to have anything done, He simply says to it, ‘Be, and it is’ (*kun fa-yakūnu*).” See also Qur’an 3:47; 6:73; 16:40; 19:35; 36:82; 40:68.
2. It seems to me that *wcn hsyng* “Primeval voice” in the Parthian M7/V/ii/17-18/ (*Mir. Man. iii*, 27[872], text *g*:12[105-106]; *Reader* 108, text *ay*: 1) and the above-mentioned “Primeval voice” refers to this term.
3. All the parallels can be found in Durkin-Meisterernst and Morano (2010, 10-13).
4. Provasi (2007, 306 and n. 76), regarded the text as a “hymn.”

divided into the twenty-two parts¹ and addressed to the twenty-two kinds of the *hsyng* “primeval,” apparently shows the characters of the Father of Greatness. The text is not abecedarian, and, as Durkin-Meisterernst and Morano point out, “while this would not be expected of a Parthian translation of an Aramaic original there is no indication that the Aramaic original will have been abecedarian either” (Durkin-Meisterernst and Morano 2010, 13, n. 11). Interestingly, the list starts with *wcn* “voice” and *sxwn* “word.” What is important for us here is that a Manichaean text with the twenty-two characters of the Father of Greatness is divided into twenty-two parts (Shokri-Foumeshi 2015, 71-72).

Mani’s *Living Gospel* and Twenty-Two Chapters

From both Manichaean and non-Manichaean writings, we know that Mani’s *Gospel* was divided into twenty-two chapters (Syr. *mēm̄rē*, Gr. λόγοι) (Böhlig 1980, 45, Anm. 134) corresponding to the twenty-two letters of the Syriac/ Manichaean alphabet (Asmussen 1987, 31b; cf. *Panárion* 13.3-4, pp. 232-33; Kessler 1889, 206; Epiphanius of Salamis 1994, 232-33). In a Middle Persian Turfan fragment, there is an obvious reference to this fact, as well as to the first and the last chapters and to the book as a whole, as follows:

S1/v/4-6/: ⁽⁴⁾’wnglywn ‘y ‘rβ ncyhyd ⁽⁵⁾’wnglywn ‘y tww² ncyhyd
⁽⁶⁾’wnglywn ‘y wyst w̄ dw wdymwštyh ‘n. (Salemann 1904: 4-5, and Tafel; *MSt* 32; Henning 1945: 155 and n. 3; *Reader* 186, text dq: 2)

He teaches (the chapter) *Aleph* of the *Gospel*; he teaches (the chapter) *Tau* of the *Gospel*, the *Gospel* of the twenty-two wondrous things. (Klimkeit 1993, 152; 1998, 206)

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1. In the Chinese *Hymnscroll*, the text is numbered for each of the references (Durkin-Meisterernst and Morano 2010, 10; Morano 1982, 10ff.).
 2. The last letter of the Syriac alphabet and the last chapter of this book.

As far as we know, none of Mani's writings start with this kind of headline. Do we consider the *'wnglywn 'y 'rb ncyhyd* as the headline of the first chapter of the *Gospel* or only as the "opening sentence" for the priest to start reading the text? We see this title once more in another Turfan fragment, M 17, which has the headline *'wnglywnyg 'rb ncyhyd* "he teaches [the chapter] *Aleph* of the *Gospel*." As is well known, the fragment belongs to Mani's *Gospel*.¹

Here, I shall compare the above-mentioned passages of the fragment S1 with the other Manichaean sources. In the *Manichaean Homilies* 94:18-19, the first and last letters of the Coptic alphabet, corresponding to the original "from *aleph* to *tau*" (see also Tardieu 2008, 35) are used as follows: "... ΠΑΝΑΘ ΝΕΥ[ΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ ΧΝ Ν]Α ΩΑ Ω ..." (My *Great Ev[angel from] A to Ω*) (Pedersen 2006: 94.18-19).² This could mean either all parts of the *Gospel* or all revelations and secrets written in this book, or both.

The Coptic Manichaean *Synaxeis* papyri clearly show that Mani's *Gospel* had twenty-two *logoi* (chapters). Among the twenty-two page-headers of the *Synaxeis*,³ only two are completely legible, and therefore we know the theme of these chapters. What is of importance here is that, as Mirecki pointed out, "the *Synaxeis* author demonstrates numerological interest in the number of 22 chapters" (Mirecki 1994, 206). According to Funk's recent study and the edition of the new parts of the *Synaxeis* by him, *Synaxeis* emphasized that this *new Gospel* revealed "the interpretation of the twenty-two *logoi* of the primeval alphabet" (Funk 2009, 117, n. 6).

1. For the last reconstruction of the Middle Persian text of Mani's *Gospel*, see Shokri-Foumeshi (2015, 99ff.).

2. Pedersen's edition (2006, 94) in this case is definitely better than Polotsky's (1934, 94).

3. Published and commented by Mirecki (1994).

A reference to Mani's Gospel as a whole ("from *aleph* to *tau*"), furthermore, is recorded symbolically in the Coptic *PsB* 46.19-22 (i.e., *Bema-Psalms* 241: 46.19-22) too:

(¹⁹) He has the antidote (ἀντίδοτος) that is good for every affection¹ (πάθος); |(²⁰) There are two and twenty compounds (μίγματα) in his antidote (ἀντίδοτος): |(²¹) His *Great Gospel*, the good tidings of all them that are |(²²) of the Light. (*PsB II, I*, 241, pp. 112-14: 19-22[81-83], Allberry 1938, 46; see also Klimkeit 1996, 592)

As Mani introduced himself in a famous auto-testimonium (MP *bzyšk hym* (M 566/I/R/18/ in *MKG* 23, text 2) /Gr. ἰατρὸς τυγχάνω (CMC ed. Koenen/Merkelbach/Römer, p. 122 *apud* Tongerloo 2000, 617) "I am a physician"), he is here also depicted as "the Great Physician" (*PsB II, I*, 241, p. 112-113: 46.1-2[71]),² who has specific antidotes to diseases, as can be seen in the Turfan Manichaean texts (see *GSR* 201ff., 363ff.), as well as in the Coptic Manichaean ones relating to the various attestations about the healing miracle of Mani presented here.³

We have no need to explain that in this case also Mani has followed his most sacred forerunner Jesus.⁴ Mani, who heals with twenty-two "compounds" in his "antidotes," is praised therefore in the above-mentioned *Bema-Psalms*. These twenty-two "compounds" refer to the *Living Gospel*, each chapter of which is an antidote against (spiritual) sickness (Shokri-Foumeshi 2015, 50-52).

1. Sic. Probably "affliction"?

2. On the theme "Das Bild vom Arzt und den Kranken," Arnold-Döben (1978, 97-107) has already surveyed this.

3. In the context, see especially Ort (1967, 95-101); Klimkeit (1996, 589-95); Tongerloo (2000, 613-21); and Coyle (1999, 135-58).

4. For an attestation in the eastern Manichaean sources, see the *Chinese Hymnscroll* translated by Tsui Chi (1943, 179-80 [36a-51b], 182 [72b]).

Conclusion

In this study, we have seen that the *Apocalypse of John*, the only book of the New Testament divided into twenty-two chapters containing the statement (*Rev.* 1:13) “I am *Alpha* and *Omega*, the first and the last: and, what thou seest, write in a book,”¹ and the corresponding passage in the *Book of Henoch*, speaking of twenty-two letters that created “both the spiritual and the material worlds,” have played a role for Mani, as the expression of Jesus is reflected in a Manichaean document as the ’lyf nxwryn ’wd t’ ’stwmyn “the first *aleph* and the last *tau*.” It is very likely that this actually happened, in particular, because both works are apocalyptic (this is of importance to me, because the theme could be compared to the apocalypse of Zarathushtra, of Vištaspā, and of Kerdir in Iran) and strongly related to astronomy. We should also keep in mind that Bardaišān (Bardesanes), from whom Mani has immensely borrowed, was an astrologer² as well as a theologian (Ephrem, *Hymns* 51.13 *apud* Skjærvø 1988, 781; see also McGukin 2004, 44b). The influence of the sixth book of the Jewish *Memar Midrash*, which is in fact a *midrash* of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, was probably well known to Mani.

Some Manichaean documents show that the creation of divinities and the spiritual world in Manichaeism as a continuation of the old Jewish and Christian concept (which continued in Islam too) has been accomplished by “voice” and “word.” In fact, the idea of “cosmic potency of the letters and word” is obviously attested in the Turfan Manichaean texts concerning the Manichaean myth of the creation of the world. Here, we have tried to show that “the number 22,” related to Christ’s acts mentioned in the Greek *Mysteria Litterarum*, has also a parallel in a Manichaean text.

1. The book must have been known to Mani.

2. A special word of thanks to Durkin-Meisterernst, who has kindly drawn my attention to this point.

My studies on this subject also conclude that the origin of the division of Mani's *Gospel* into twenty-two *mēmre* should be searched for in Babylon itself. This type of division of the *Gospel*, wherever they may come from, was so attractive to the greatest enemy of Manichaeism, Augustine, that he wrote his *De Civitate Dei* (*The City of God*)¹ with twenty-two books to be (as said by Böhlig) “a consciously (introduced) counterpart”² of the Manichaeae *Gospel* (Shokri-Foumeshi 2015, 79-80).

Abbreviations

<i>ABC</i>	Boyce 1952
<i>BBB</i>	Henning 1937
<i>DMMPP</i>	Durkin-Meisterernst 2004
<i>GSR</i>	Klimkeit 1993
<i>Mir. Man. i-iii</i>	Andreas-Henning 1932-1934
<i>MKG</i>	Sundermann 1981
<i>MSt</i>	Salemann 1904
<i>PsB</i>	<i>Psalm-Book</i> , Allberry 1938
<i>PsB II,1</i> ,	<i>Psalm Book; Bema-Psalm</i> , Wurst 1996
<i>Reader</i>	Boyce 1975

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1. For the whole text, see Augustine (1998).
2. ‘Ein bewusstes Gegenstück’: Böhlig (1980, 45; for reference, see 312, n. 134).

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