Genesis as a Hidden Source of Manichaeism

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Summary

There exists an entrenched notion, supported by both Christian and Manichaean texts, that Manicheans rejected the Old Testament as a product of Satan. However, scholars have noted the presence of loans from the Old Testament in Manichaean works. The Manichaean priest, Felix, in his dispute with St Augustine, documented in Augustine's *Contra Felicem Manicheum*, cites Genesis 1:1-2 to demonstrate its agreement with Mani's teachings. This and other examples show that the Manichaean attitude towards the Old Testament was more complicated than that of simple rejection. In this report, I review textual evidence from multiple Manichaean sources indicating that Jewish texts in general, and Genesis in particular, should be counted among the sources of Manichaeism. Furthermore, I address the question how this evidence could be reconciled with the long-standing view of the Manichaean rejection of the Old Testament.

Keywords

Mani – Manichaeism – Genesis – Old Testament – Adda

Kephalaion 154 has preserved Mani's words explaining his conception of religion and of his mission as a new prophet. He aimed to establish a religion that spreads from the East to the West and disseminates its sacral texts in many languages, so that different nations could be included in the ecumenical church with ease.¹ Intending to "supersede" rather than deny other religions, Mani

1 S.N.C. Lieu, "My Church is Superior'. Mani's Missionary Statement in Coptic and Middle Persian," in: *Coptica-Gnostica-Manichaica. Mélanges offerts à Wolf-Peter Funk*, ed. L. Painchaud and P.-H. Poirier, Québec, 2006, pp. 519-527, at pp. 519-521.

proves the excellence of his religion arguing that “writings and wisdom and the revelations and the parables and the psalms of all the first *ekklēsia*s have been collected in every place. They have come down to my *ekklēsia*.”² Indeed motives, terms, ritual and even hierarchical institutions from different religions such as Iranian³ and Mesopotamian,⁴ as well as Christian concepts (especially coming from Saint Paul’s epistles) have been identified as sources of inspiration for Mani. We also see that deities from other religions such as Zoroastrian Mihr or Ohrmazd continue their life on pages of Manichaean books, where they are identified with Manichaean gods.

Even if Mani’s claim that his religion is intended to become a summa of all previous religions, their development and apogee, is taken at face value, the declared universalism could not be free from Mani’s preferences toward particular

- 2 *Kephalaia of the Teacher* 372.11-18; English translation in *Manichaean Texts from the Roman Empire*, ed. by I. Gardner and S.N.C. Lieu, Cambridge, 2004, p. 266. Two different Kephalaia, preserved in Coptic, are known to date. The first one is Berlin Codex P. 15 996, entitled *The Kephalaia of the Teacher*, the second is the Chester Beatty Coptic Manichaean “Codex C,” entitled *The Kephalaia of the Wisdom of My Lord Mani* (for more details see W.-P. Funk, “The Reconstruction of Manichaean Kephalaia,” in: *Emerging from Darkness: Studies in the Recovery of Manichaean Sources*, ed. by P.A. Mirecki and J. BeDuhn (NHMS, 43), Leiden—New York—Köln, 1997, pp. 143-159). The *Kephalaia of the Teacher* is published originally by J. Polotsky and A. Böhlig, *Kephalaia 1: Erster Hälfte (Lieferung 1-10)*, Stuttgart, 1940; A. Böhlig, *Kephalaia 1: Zweite Hälfte (Lieferung 11/12)*, Stuttgart, 1966; W.-P. Funk, *Kephalaia 1: Zweite Hälfte (Lieferung 13/14)* (MHSMB, 1), Stuttgart, 1999; W.-P. Funk, *Kephalaia 1: Zweite Hälfte (Lieferung 15/16)* (MHSMB, 1), Stuttgart, 2000; W.-P. Funk, *Kephalaia 1: Zweite Hälfte (Lieferung 17/18)* (MHSMB, 1), Stuttgart, forthcoming. All further references to *The Kephalaia of the Teacher* in the present article are to the English translation, *The Kephalaia of the Teacher: The Edited Coptic Manichaean Texts in Translation with Commentary*, ed. by I. Gardner (NHMS, 37), Leiden, 1995, with one exception mentioned above.
- 3 F. Cumont, *Le Manichéisme. Cosmogonie manichéenne*, Brussels, 1908; W. Sundermann, “Zoroastre le prêtre et le prophète dans la doctrine des Manichéens,” in: *La figure du prêtre dans les grandes traditions religieuses*, Actes du Colloque organisé en hommage à M. l’abbé Julien Ries à l’occasion de ses 80 ans par les Départements de Langues et littératures classique et de Philosophie des Facultés Universitaires Notre-Dame de la Paix en collaboration avec la Société belgo-luxembourgeoise d’Histoire des Religions (Namur, du 26 au 28 octobre 2000), ed. by A. Motte and P. Marchetti (Collection d’Études Classiques, 20), Louvain, 2005, pp. 59-72; P. Dilley, “Also Schrieb Zarathustra? Mani as Interpreter of the ‘Law of Zarades,’” in: *Mani at the Court of Persian Kings: Studies on the Chester Beatty Kephalaia Codex*, ed. by I. Gardner, J. BeDuhn, and P. Dilley (NHMS, 87), Leiden—Boston, 2014, pp. 101-135.
- 4 G. Widengren, *Mesopotamian Elements in Manichaeism (King and Saviour II): Studies in Manichaean, Mandaean, and Syrian-Gnostic Religion* (Uppsala Universitets Årsskrift, 1946:3), Uppsala and Leipzig, 1946; I. Gardner, “Searching for Traces of the ‘Utria in the Coptic Manichaica,” *ARAM Periodical*, 22 (2010), pp. 87-96.

religions or ideas. Alongside the proclaimed religious tolerance, criticism of other religions is also present in Manichaean texts.⁵ As J. BeDuhn points out, first and foremost Mani saw his religion as a supersession of previous traditions which had been corrupted and had lost their significance once the new revelation was proclaimed.⁶ Then antecedent revelations are accepted as valuable, although imperfect, and containing some truth that reappears in Mani's texts, which explains the coexistence of criticism with positive vision of previous traditions. In this context, the question of the Manichaean attitude toward Judaism and Jewish Scripture remains an enigma.

Southern Mesopotamia or Babylonia where Mani came from was a homeland for a large Jewish community under the late Parthians. Jewish communities were also established in large cities such as Edessa and Nisibis.⁷ Jews, or at least Judeo-Christians, were a large source for recruiting new adepts into Mani's church. Furthermore, Judaism of the third century presented a well-educated community with developed exegetical schools and significant number of texts that were easy accessible for Mani and the first generation of his disciples. This could make Judaism an excellent source for integrating its scripture and characters in the Manichaean doctrine. Taking into account that Mani grew up among Judeo-Christians sect of Elchasaites,⁸ we should assume that Mani had

- 5 For example, two hymns in Persian contain accusations in idolatry and criticism of previous religions: "The lands are confused by the idols that misled (them),/By the images on walls, (made of) wood and stone./They fear deception, they bow down before it and honor it./They have abandoned the Father in Heaven and pray to deception." and "And they who venerate the burning fire, do they not know that their end will therefore be by fire?/And they say that Ohrmizd and Ahriman are brothers, and because of these words they come to ruin [...]" M 28 I R i 5-13; and R i 33-R ii 4 in *Gnosis on the Silk Road: Gnostic Parables, Hymns and Prayers from Central Asia*, trans. by H.-J. Klimkeit, San Francisco, 1993, pp. 126-127. We also read in *Manichaean Psalm-Book*, 2, 15, 9-14; ed. by C.R.C. Allberry (Manichaean Manuscripts in the Chester Beatty Collection, 2), Stuttgart, 1938, p. 96: "I have heard concerning you Magians, the priests of the fire,/that you seized my god in your foul hands;/impious men, mad and godless,/the brothers of the Jews, the murderers of Christ. A fire took hold of your heart,/until you had murdered the righteous ambassador".
- 6 J. BeDuhn, "Mani and the Crystallization of the Concept of 'Religion' in Third Century Iran," in: BeDuhn, Gardner, and Dilley, *Mani at the Court of Persian Kings*, pp. 247-275, at pp. 270-275.
- 7 S.N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China: A Historical Survey* (WUNT, 63), Manchester, 1985, pp. 25-27.
- 8 Judeo-Christian origins of Mani are usually accepted with certitude by scholars. G.P. Luttikhuisen, "Elchasaites and Their Book," in: *A Companion to Second-Century Christian Heretics*, ed. by A. Marjanen and P. Luomanen, Leiden—Boston, 2008, pp. 335-364, at

a good access to Jewish thought and works in different forms. Thus, it would be natural to expect that Manichaeism would borrow from the Jewish Scripture just as it borrowed “writings and wisdom” from other religions.

Yet, a well-established view in the Manichaean studies has held firmly that Manicheans rejected the Old Testament in its entirety.⁹ W. Sundermann, in his article on Manichaeism for *Encyclopedia Iranica* written in 2009, contends that Jewish monotheism exerted only a clarifying, negative, contrastive impetus on the Manichaean doctrine. He is astonished by how little the influence of Judaism on Mani was, considering that Mani grew up in a Judeo-Christian community. For Sundermann, Judaism is present in Mani’s doctrine only in the “Manichean re-interpretation of the creation myth of Genesis 1-3”.¹⁰ M. Tardieu, in his classic work, states that nothing Jewish interested Mani.¹¹

The notion that Manicheans rejected the Old Testament as a work of Satan can be traced back to early Christian authors. The first Christian writers commenting on the Manichaean rejection of the Old Testament in the context of anti-Manichaean polemics in the first half of the fourth century were Serapion of Thmuis, the author of *Contra Manichaeos*, and Hegemonius, the author of *Acta Archelai*.¹² Of course, we know that the trustworthiness of polemical

pp. 356-363; and A. de Jong, “A Quodam Persa Exstiterunt: Re-orienting Manichaean Origins,” in: *Empsychoi Logoi. Religious Innovations in Antiquity: Studies in Honour of Pieter Willem van der Horst*, ed. by A. Houtman, A. de Jong, and M.W. Misset-van de Weg (AJEC, 73), Leiden–Boston, 2008, pp. 81-106, question this certitude. However, the reconstruction of *Book of Elchasai* and its comparison with the organization of the Manichaean church made by F.S. Jones, “The *Book of Elchasai* in its Relevance for Manichaean Institutions with a Supplement: The *Book of Elchasai* Reconstructed and Translated,” *ARAM Periodical*, 16 (2004), pp. 179-215, appears to remove any doubts as to the importance of Elchasaites for Mani’s doctrine.

9 J. Ries, “La Bible chez saint Augustin et chez les manichéens,” *REAug*, 7 (1961), pp. 231-329; 9 (1963), pp. 201-215; and 10 (1964), pp. 309-330.

10 W. Sundermann also admits the influence of Jewish apocryphal *Book of the Giants* on Mani’s canonical works (W. Sundermann, “Manicheism i. General Survey,” in: *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online edition, 2009, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/manicheism-i-general-survey> [accessed on 27 May, 2015]).

11 M. Tardieu, *Le manichéisme. Que sais-je?*, Paris, 1974, p. 42.

12 Hegemonius, *Acta Archelai* 33.1; *Hegemonius. Acta Archelai*, ed. by C.H. Beeson (GCS, 16), Leipzig, 1906, 46, attributes the following assertion to Mani: “... quia quanta voluerit malignus princeps huius mundi et quanta desideraverit, per Moysen scripserit et dederit hominibus facienda.” (“... whatever the wicked prince of this world wanted and whatever he desired, he wrote through Moses and gave to men to be done.”). English translation in *Hegemonius, Acta Archelai* (Manichaean Studies, 4), trans. by M.J. Vermes, Turnhout, 2001, p. 88. A similar assertion is found in Serapion, *C. Mani*. 36; *Serapion of Thmuis*:

heresiological works needs to be questioned. Moreover, early Christian writers did not always possess a deep enough knowledge of Manichaeism. For example, as Byard Bennett demonstrated, Didymus the Blind mistook Marcion's position toward the Old Testament for Mani's views.¹³ However, two influential Christian writers of the fourth and fifth centuries possessed excellent first-hand knowledge of Manichaeism: Ephrem the Syrian and Augustine of Hippo. Augustine was a Manichaean hearer for almost ten years; Ephrem the Syrian had access to Mani's original works and, as demonstrated by J. Reeves, quoted from them extensively in his *Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion, and Bardaisan*.¹⁴ Both of them contend that Manicheans used neither Hebrew prophets nor the Pentateuch.¹⁵

Some Manichaean works, transmitted by early Christian authors, such as quotations from Mani's first generation disciple Adimantus, who systematically criticized the Jewish Law and Prophets, seem to confirm the account we find in Christian authors.¹⁶ Moreover, the negative vision of the Jewish Scripture has been found in original Manichaean works discovered since the second third of the twentieth century.¹⁷

Against the Manicheans and Pastoral Letters, trans. by O. Herbel (ECS, 14), Strathfield, NSW, 2011, p. 106.

- 13 B. Bennett, "Didymus the Blind's knowledge of Manichaeism," in: *The Light and the Darkness. Studies in Manichaeism and its World*, ed. by P. Mirecki and J. BeDuhn (NHMS, 50), Leiden—Boston—Cologne, 2001, pp. 62-67.
- 14 J. Reeves, "Manichaean citations from the Prose Refutations of Ephrem," *Emerging from Darkness. Studies in the Recovery of Manichaean Sources*, ed. P. Mirecki and J. BeDuhn (NHMS, 43), Leiden—New York—Cologne, 1997, pp. 217-287.
- 15 For example, Augustine's *De Genesi aduersus Manicheos*; NBA, 9.58-180; or *Contra Faustum Manicheum*, NBA, 14; and Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns against Heresies* 51.14. 1-4; ed. by B. Edmund, *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen contra Haereses*, CSCO 169-170, Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1957.
- 16 Reconstruction and analysis of Adimantus' work are done by J.A. van den Berg, *Biblical Argument in Manichaean Missionary Practice: The Case of Adimantus and Augustine* (NHMS, 70), Leiden—Boston, 2010, esp. pp. 104-121.
- 17 *A Manichaean Psalm-Book*, 2, ed. by Allberry, pp. 56-57: "The God of this Aeon has shut the heart of the unbelieving and has sunk them in his Error and the deceit of drunkenness. He has made them blaspheme/against the God of the Truth and his his power and his wisdom./If it was God who created the evil and the good/and Christ and Satan then who sent Jesus, that he might .../and work among the Jews until they slew him?/When Adam and Eve were created and put in/Paradise, who was it that ordered them: 'Eat not/of the Tree,' that they might not distinguish the evil from the/good? Another fought against him and made them eat of the Tree./He cries out in the Law saying: 'I am God ... [...]'". Despite lacunas, this excerpt clearly presents the Old Testament as

On the other hand, there are multiple indications that the Manichaean attitude towards the Old Testament was far more complicated than that of simple rejection. Many authors have noticed allusions to, parallels with, and borrowings from Jewish writings in the Manichaean texts. However, these observations remained isolated; no attempt has been made to analyze the whole spectrum of evidence of the positive use of the Old Testament by the Manicheans, nor has there been any attempt to reconcile this evidence with the traditional view well supported by both Christian and Manichaean sources. The purpose of the present report is to make the first step towards such analysis. We will review and systematize some of the evidence indicating that Jewish texts in general, and Genesis in particular, should be counted among the sources of Manichaeism. We will see that Genesis motifs are present in Manichaean texts written in different languages, coming from different geographic areas and periods, which indicate that the use of Genesis was not limited to a particular tradition or messianic need, but is likely to go back to Mani's original teaching or at least to the first generation of disciples. We will then ask whether the entrenched notion of the Manichaean rejection of the Old Testament should be reconsidered in view of this evidence.

The discovery of the *Cologne Mani Codex* (CMC) in 1969 not only provided us with a detailed description of Mani's life. This miniature codex (45 to 38 mm)¹⁸ demonstrated a considerable contribution of Judaism to Mani's doctrine, especially the significant presence of Judaic apocalyptic writings.¹⁹ Since currently the *Cologne Mani Codex* is our only source of these texts, we cannot say if we deal with actual Jewish apocalypses or with Manichaean imitations. Thus David Frankfurter prefers to speak about "the idea of Jewish apocalypses," their subject and structure, which Manicheans used to construct literary authority of Mani's prophecies.²⁰ Besides apocalyptic tradition, M. Tardieu pointed out

a work of Satan. We find similar assertions in *The Kephalaia of the Teacher* 159.1-4; ed. by Gardner, p. 168. *Kephalaia* 21.15-23 also evokes Satan as an author of confusing teachings but without any direct reference to the Old Testament (p. 25).

- 18 There are critical editions of CMC in English (*The Cologne Mani Codex* (P. Colon. inv. nr. 4780): *Concerning the Origin of His Body*, ed. by R. Cameron and A. J. Dewey [Society of Biblical Literature Texts and Translations Series, 15], Missoula, 1979) and German (*Der Kölner Mani-Kodex. Über das Werden seines Leibes. Kritische Edition*, ed. by L. Keonen and C. Römer [Abhandlung der Reinisch-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, coll. "Papyrologica Coloniensia," 14], Opladen, 1988).
- 19 I. Gruenwald, "Manichaeism and Judaism in Light of the Cologne Mani Codex," *ZPE*, 50 (1983), pp. 29-45.
- 20 D. Frankfurter, "Apocalypses Real and Alleged in the Mani Codex," *Numen*, 44 (1997), pp. 60-73, at p. 62.

that Mani's vision of "a sea full of very black waters," told in *CMC* 77.4-79.12, should be based on the Syriac *Apocalypse of Baruch*, mostly on 2 *Baruch* 53.1-12 and 69.1.²¹ *CMC* also shows that the way Mani dates his revelations, visions, and important events of his life comes from the Old Testament's prophetic and apocalyptic books, such as Isaiah 6:1; 4 *Ezra* 3:1; Daniel 7:1; 8:1; and 9:1, etc.²² J. van Oort suggests that Daniel 7:10 and the cloud that guided the Jews through the wilderness can be an inspiration for the Manichaean Column of glory.²³

If *CMC* were the only text demonstrating similarities between Manichaean and Jewish texts, then the presence of Jewish motives could be explained away as Manichaean propaganda aimed at a Christian or Judeo-Christian public. The use of familiar concepts and techniques could be superficial and non-essential for the Manichaean religion, or specific for one particular region during a limited time. However, many other Manichaean texts contain biblical images and narratives. N.A. Pedersen proposes the Old Testament as a possible source of *Manichaean Homily* 14.11-16.²⁴ The "cup of wrath" can be Yahveh's cup mentioned in Isaiah 51:17, .22; Jeremiah 25:15, 17, 28; 49:12; 51:7; Lamentations 4: 21; Ezekiel 23:31-33; Habakkuk 2:16; and Psalm 75:9. He concludes: "In Jer 25:15 we find a 'cup of the wine of wrath' [...]; in 51:7 the cup is also associated with Babylon. A distant possibility is that 'at the shore of the sea' in *Man. hom.* 14:14 has associations with Jer 25:22."²⁵ Recently, W.-P. Funk suggested that one excerpt from Mani's *Living Gospel* present in Coptic *Synaxeis* codex mentions the Hebrew people and takes up a part of biblical narrative originating in the Pentateuch, namely the story of the exodus from Egypt. This excerpt does not in-

21 M. Tardieu, "La vision de la mer aux eaux noires (*CMC* 77, 4-79, 12)," *Au carrefour des religions. Mélanges offerts à Philippe Gignoux*, Bures-sur-Yvette, 1995, pp. 303-310, at pp. 306-309.

22 A. Henrichs, "The Timing of Supernatural Events in the Cologne Mani Codex," in: *Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis. Atti del Simposio Internazionale (Rende-Amantea 3-7 settembre 1984)*, ed. by L. Cirillo, Marra, 1986, pp. 183-204, at p. 200.

23 J. van Oort and G. Quispel, *De Keulse Mani-Codex* (Pimander, 11), Haarlem, 2005, pp. 66 and 129.

24 N.A. Pedersen, *Studies in The Sermon of the Great War. Investigations of a Manichaean-Coptic Text from the Fourth Century*, Aarhus, 1996, p. 76: "And also this cup of wrath that I has been mixed for Babylon (?) and her evil sons. [...] flesh, that it shall drink of it, and the king of the kingdom ... this which is at the shore of the sea, this which is like Jerusalem. This is destined to come over her because they have caused their sins to increase on them."

25 Pedersen, *Studies in The Sermon of the Great War*, pp. 78-79.

clude any criticism of Jewish lore but apparently contains Mani's speculation on Abraham's Chaldaean origin not without Mandaean mediation.²⁶

Genesis more than any other book of the Old Testament contributed to the Manichaean mythology and concepts. It has been known for a long time that biblical figures such as Adam, Eve, Cain, and Abel,²⁷ as well as Seth and Noah, are found in Manichaean texts. Among different narratives from Genesis present in Mani's thought, the most studied to date comes from the Priestly source (Gen 1:1-2:4a; 5:1-28, 30-32a; and 6:4)²⁸ and pertains to the creation of human beings. For example, the story of Adam and Eve's creation by archons told in *Kephalaion* 55 refers to the image of God as a necessary element of human being and mentions a plurality of divine beings which assure this creation. Following the authorization by God, the ambassador "displayed his image" to the whole universe. This image allowed archons to construct the humankind, because evil powers did not possess the capacity to do so on their own. *Kephalaion* 55 also stresses that human beings were created according to "his likeness". Here "his" means the ambassador, but in the ultimate case the reference is to God himself.²⁹ *Kephalaion* 55 is one of many versions of Adam and Eve's myth in Manichaean texts. Some of them underscore the role of divine image in the creation of humanity,³⁰ others point out the sexual union of archons. However, even if it is the union of Aṣaqlūn and Namrā'el that gives birth to the first man, the theme of the vision of superior reality is often present.³¹ The second kind of

26 W.-P. Funk, "Mani's Account of Other Religions according to the Coptic *Synaxeis* Codex," in: *New Light on Manichaeism: Papers from the Sixth International Congress on Manichaeism*, ed. by J.D. BeDuhn (NGMS, 64), Leiden—2009, pp. 115-128, at pp. 122-125.

27 The Manichaean story of Cain and Abel has been preserved by Ibn al-Nadim, *Fihrist* (trad. by B. Dodge, *The Fihrist of al-Nadim*, New York—London, 1970, 2 vols., 2:784-785). See also G.A.G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology* (NHS, 24), Leiden, 1984, pp. 150-152.

28 J.C. Reeves, "Manicheans as *Ahl al-Kitab*: A Study in Manichaean Scripturalism," in: *Light against Darkness: Dualism in Ancient Mediterranean Religion and the Contemporary World*, ed. by E.M. Meyers, A. Lange, B.H. Reynolds, and R. Styers (JAJSupp, 2), Göttingen, 2011, pp. 249-265, at pp. 259-260. J.C. Reeves, *Heralds of that Good Realm: Syro-Mesopotamian Gnosis and Jewish Traditions* (NHMS, 41), Leiden—New York, 1996, p. 107, also sees in Gen 1: 28-30 a source of §49 of M 7984 I R ii 33 – V ii + M 7982 R + V + M 7983 I R + V.

29 *Kephalaia of the Teacher* 133.12-15; ed. by Gardner, p. 141: "The Ambassador displayed his image [*eikon*] in the universe. The rulers and powers of the universe saw his image, and they formed their shapes [*morfé*] after his likeness [*eine*], who are Adam and Eve."

30 Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, pp. 152-161, presents a short survey of different versions of myths mentioning the seduction of Archons and Adam and Eve's creation. Both myths include "revealed image" as a necessary element of the narration.

31 Theodore bar Konai, *Liber scholiorum*; trans. by J.C. Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of*

narratives about Adam and Eve usually focuses on “male and female” nature of abortions which were consumed by archons in order to procreate humankind.³² The recurrence of themes rooted in Genesis 1: 26-27 in the Manichaean story of creation of humankind is not accidental; apparently it originates from Mani’s works. In *Epistula fundamenti* we find both concepts, although names of proto-plasts are absent in the preserved excerpt.³³

A characteristic example of the influence exerted by Genesis on the Manichaean myth of creation is found in a Middle Persian excerpt. Here we read a typical Manichaean story about the creation of the first woman which followed the seeing of the superior being by the demon of lust. Then, the leader of demons addresses the human beings and tells them that he created the universe for humans so that they should be joyful and do his will: “And this leader of the Asrēshtārs made a gathering of the Mazans and the Asrēshtārs. He said to these two human beings: ‘For your sake I have created the earth and the sky, the sun and the moon, water and fire, trees and plants (and) wild and tame animals so that you thereby might become joyful and happy and glad and do my will.’ And a dragon, Mazan and terrible, he set over these two children as a guard [...]”.³⁴ Here we clearly see the influence of Genesis 1:26-27 and 28-29, as well as of the serpent from the paradise story.

Islamicate Manichaeism (Comparative Islamic Studies), Sheffield, 2011, p. 151: “Then the abortions took counsel together and recalled the form(s) of the Messenger that they had seen and said: ‘Where is the form(s) that we saw?’ And Aṣṣaqlūn, son of the King of Darkness, said to the abortions: ‘Give me your sons and daughters, and I will make for you a form like the one you saw.’ They brought (them) and gave (them) to him. He ate the males, and the females he gave to <Namrāēl> his wife. Namrāēl and Aṣṣaqlūn then united together, and she became pregnant from him and gave birth to a son, naming him Adam. She (again) became pregnant and bore a daughter, naming her Eve.”

32 For example, T III 260 e I = M 7984, and T III 260 c = M 7982; T III 260 d I; *Manichaean Literature, Representative Texts Chiefly from Middle Persian and Parthian Writings*, trans. by J.P. Asmussen (Persian Heritage Texts, 22), Delmar, NY, 1975, pp. 128-131.

33 *Ep. fund. frag.* 9.6.1-2; *Greek and Latin Sources on Manichaean Cosmogony and Ethics*, trans. by G. Fox and J. Sheldon with S.N.C. Lieu (CFMSub, 6), Turnhout, 2010, pp. 10-11: “Then he spoke in his wicked fables to those who were with him: “What do you make of that powerful Light which is rising up over there? See how it moves the firmament and disturbs many of the Powers. It is better therefore that you give over to me whatever Light you have in your Power. For in this way I shall make a picture (*imagine*) of the Great One who appeared (to us) in glory. Through that [picture] we shall be able to rule and shall at last be freed of this sojourn in the Darkness. [...]” and 6.5; ed. by Fox and Sheldon, p. 11: “Since there was a mixed throng of those who had assembled, namely male and female (*feminarum ac masculorum*), he [the Ruler] commanded them to have sexual relations.”

34 T III 260 d I = M 7983; trans. in Asmussen, *Manichaean Literature*, p. 130.

A notable study by J. Reeves uncovered parallels between the story of “Watchers and their Giant progeny,” 1 *Enoch* 6.86-88 and 106-107, based on Genesis 6:1-4 and the Manichaean myth of creation transmitted by Theodore bar Konai.³⁵ Reeves’s study points out not only correspondences between the narratives but also linguistic similarities and parallels. More recently, E. Smagina suggested that the Manichaean cosmogonical myth can be read as a “re-written Bible”.³⁶ She focuses on parallels between the reading and interpretation of the beginning of Genesis given in some Talmudic treatises and in the Midrash *Bereshit Rabbah*, and Manichaean works. She argues that the Manichaean Primal Man can be “an allegorical interpretation” of the Talmudic “first Adam” and Living Soul of Eve.³⁷ The desire of Darkness for the Light that started the cosmic battle and provoked the creation in the Manichaean myth is compared by Smagina to the envy of the devil in Wisdom 2: 24. While some of the parallels drawn by Smagina are not entirely convincing, her study points in the same direction as the work by Reeves.

Manicheans do not limit themselves to the Priestly source. We also see an interpretation of the paradise story from Genesis 3:1-5 and 21 in different Manichaean texts. According to Manicheans, it was not the snake that led Eve and Adam into temptation in Genesis 3:1-5, but Jesus who “roused, and shook, and woke” Adam from the sleep of death and revealed to him knowledge and righteousness³⁸ by giving him to eat from the tree of knowledge (*Keph.* 15.10-15).³⁹ Reeves argues that Genesis 3:24 (Adam and Eve’s expulsion from Eden) is behind the Manichaean story of Adam and Seth’s decision to stay away from temptation as told by Ibn al-Nadim.⁴⁰ Moreover, the metaphor of the garment of the skin (Gen 3:21) becomes one of the central motif in Manichaeism. Apparently,

35 J.C. Reeves, *Jewish Lore in Manichaean Cosmogony: Studies in the Book of Giants Tradition* (Monographs of the Hebrew Union College), Cincinnati, 1992, pp. 193-196. The apocryphal *Jewish Book of the Giants* and so-called Enochic literature speak about the “sons of *Elōhīm*” who descended to earth, copulated with the daughters of men, and procreated a race of giants. On p. 185, Reeves went as far as saying that the “Jewish legend about coming of the Watchers and the deeds of the Giants played a decidedly fundamental role in the origin, structure, and development of Mani’s cosmogonical teaching”.

36 E. Smagina, “The Manichaean Cosmogonical Myth as a ‘Re-written Bible,’” in: *In Search of Truth: Augustine, Manichaeism and Other Gnosticism: Studies for Johannes van Oort at Sixty*, ed. by J.A. van den Berg, A. Kotzé, T. Nicklas, and M. Scopello (NHMS, 74), Leiden–Boston, 2011, pp. 201-216.

37 Smagina, “The Manichaean Cosmogonical Myth,” pp. 204-206.

38 Theodore bar Konai, *Liber Scholiorum*; Reeves, *Heralds of That Good Realm*, p. 79.

39 *Kephalaia of the Teacher* 15.10-15; ed. by Gardner, p. 21.

40 Ibn al-Nadim, *Fihrist*; ed. by Dodge, p. 786. J. Reeves, *Prolegomena*, n. 364, p. 197.

it comes into Mani's teaching through Syriac Christianity, but has distinctively biblical roots.⁴¹ The clothing metaphor reappears constantly in Manichaean texts and takes on numerous meanings. It can be used in the cosmological sense, for example in *Keph.* 120.28; 131.11 and 20 where sons of the Primal Man are presented as his garments. As one of the three gifts after death, a righteous soul gets the garment of Light (*Keph.* 36.12-21).

Another important testimony to the role of Genesis is given by the Manichaean priest Felix in his dispute with St Augustine, documented in Augustine's *Contra Felicem* 1.17. Felix cites Genesis 1:1-2 to demonstrate its agreement with Mani's teachings. The adversaries discuss Mani's *Epistula fundamenti* and at one point arrive at the description of the kingdom of light. Augustine raises the question about the origin of this luminous kingdom and its earth. In response, Felix quotes the first verse of Genesis: "in principium fecit Deus caelum et terram, et terra erat inuisibilis et coinquinabilis et incomposita".⁴² Felix's quote includes a characteristic of earth as being *coinquinabilis* ("the one that could be contaminated"), which sounds unusual to us. The fact may be related to the existence of different versions of the *Vetus Latina*, but Felix might have inserted the term *coinquinabilis* in the verse of Genesis in order to show that the latter agrees with the Manichaean views. A. Böhlig suggested that this interpretation was a specific characteristic of the North-African Manichaeism, but we find similar argument in Titus of Bostra's *Contra Manichaeos* 4.111.⁴³

The previous examples can be considered as related to non-specifically Jewish part of Genesis, namely to antediluvian history of humankind. This is not the case for Genesis 14 whose exegesis, according to Jean-Daniel Dubois,⁴⁴ is encountered in *Kephalaion* 77. This *Kephalaion* speaks about four great kingdoms which exist in the world (one of Babel and Persia, one of Rome, one of

41 N.A. Pedersen, *Manichaean Texts in Syriac: First Editions, News Editions, and Studies* (CFM-syr, 2), Turnhout, 2013, pp. 207-210. S. Brock, *Luminous Eye. The Spiritual world vision of Saint Ephrem*, Kalamazoo, 1992, pp. 86-87, demonstrates that Syriac Christianity knows the expression "robe of glory or light" used in Manichaean texts. "Clothing of glory" is used in Targum instead of "garments of skin". "Garments of light" appears in the Jewish Midrash Rabba on Genesis.

42 Augustine, *C. Fel.* 1.17; NBA, 13/2.446.

43 N.A. Pedersen, "Review of A. Böhlig, *Die Bibel bei den Manichäern und verwandte Studien*. Herausgegeben von Peter Nagel & Seigfried G. Richter," VC, 68 (2014), pp. 575-576.

44 J.-D. Dubois, "Une exégèse manichéenne de Genèse 14 ?" in: *Lectio difficilior probabilior? L'exégèse comme expérience de décloisonnement. Mélanges offerts à Françoise Smyth-Florentin* (Dielheimer Blätter zum Alten Testament und seiner Rezeption in der Alten Kirche, 12), ed. by T. Römer, Heidelberg, 1991, pp. 263-267, demonstrated that Manicheans were familiar with Gen 14 and different kinds of its exegesis.

Aksum and one of Sileôs). Dubois argues, on linguistic grounds, that Sileôs corresponds to Biblical Seir (Gen 14:6; 32:4; 33:14, etc). In *Kephalaion* 77 Sileôs is mentioned in the context of the conflict between the four kingdoms and Mani's word, which is the fifth kingdom of the righteous. Likewise, in Genesis 14, Seir is one of the four kingdoms defeated by Abraham (with God's blessing).

A Persian Manichaean text contains two references to the book of Genesis, the first one to the flood and Noah and the second one to the story of Joseph and his brothers in Genesis 37:24: "[They put] me, Noah-like, into an ark by force—/That (ark) which [is] ... more helplessly cast down [on] shallows./They throw me, Joseph-like, into the pit with violence—/That pit whence I shall only rise at the/Time of (last) reckoning."⁴⁵ We know that Noah is sometimes mentioned by Manicheans among righteous persons⁴⁶ and even called the "Mind of Light."⁴⁷ The figure of Noah often appears in narratives mentioning the ark and the commandment (the Manichaean one!).⁴⁸ As J. Helderma explained, the Manichaean use of ark (*kibotos*) has two meaning. It can refer to the ark built by Noah as in the Persian excerpt mentioned above,⁴⁹ but also to the ark of covenant (Exod 25: 10-17).⁵⁰ The second meaning of the ark is more frequent and, probably, dominant.⁵¹ The reference to Joseph is remarkable in that it uses a distinctively Jewish part of Genesis.

Thus a broad spectrum of evidence indicates that Manichaeans used the Old Testament in general, and the book of Genesis in particular, in a positive way. Any single piece of this evidence could be perhaps explained away. However, the plurality of borrowings, parallels and allusions encountered in multiple texts in different languages and from different periods clearly indicates that Genesis should be counted as one of the sources of Manichaeism. Needless to say, Manicheans did not accept the Old Testament the way Christians did: for

45 From M 786, Persian; W.B. Henning, "Persian Poetical Manuscripts from the Time of Rudaki," in: *A Locust's Leg: Studies in Honour of S. H. Taqizadeh*, ed. by W.B. Henning and E. Yarshater, London, 1962, pp. 89-104, at p. 100, quoted in Asmussen, *Manichaean Literature*, pp. 38-39.

46 *Manichaean Psalm-Book*, 2, 142.6; ed. by Allberry, p. 142.

47 *Manichaean Psalm-Book*, 2, 157.19.20; ed. by Allberry, p. 157: "Lo, the ship has put in for you, Noah is abroad, he steers./The ship is the commandment, Noah is the Mind of Light."

48 *Manichaean Psalm-Book*, 2, 177.1.2; ed. by Allberry, p. 177.

49 Also in *Manichaean Psalm-Book*, 2, 171.21, ed. by Allberry, p. 171.

50 *Manichaean Psalm-Book*, 2, 8.1.2.3; ed. by Allberry, p. 8.

51 J. Helderma, "Die bundeslade κιβωτος ihre geschichte als eine metaphor in der umwelt der manichaer," in: *Atti del terzo congresso internazionale di studi Manicheismo e Oriente Cristiano Antico: Arcavacata di Rende – Amantea 31 agosto – 5 settembre 1993*, ed. by L. Cirillo and A. van Tongerloo, Naples, 1997, pp. 137-141.

them it was neither divine revelation nor the scripture. Thus Ephrem, Augustine, and others are perfectly correct, from the Christian point of view, in their criticism of Manicheans for a wrong interpretation of “our Bible”. However, one cannot deny the influence of Jewish myths on the Manichaean thought. This influence may have been, in part, indirect, transformed by Gnostic readings of the Bible. Oftentimes Mani and his followers used images and themes from the Jewish Scripture in an altered form or fully cut from the context. Nevertheless, the first six chapters of Genesis clearly shaped the Manichaean narrative in a noticeable way, and the influence of other parts of Genesis is also discernible.

How can we reconcile this conclusion with the long-standing notion of the Manichaean rejection of the Old Testament also supported by abundant textual evidence? Characteristically, most of that evidence comes from Christian and Manichaean sources originating from the Roman Empire. It is quite remarkable that in the “Islamicate testimonia” of Jewish thinkers we do not see any mention of the Manichaean rejection of the Jewish Scripture. For example, Abraham Ibn Daud mentions that Mani “invented for the Zoroastrians a Torah from his own heart, and (his teachings) brought into being a mighty nation.”⁵² The “invention of a Torah” may refer to Mani’s particular interpretation of the Torah; or to Mani’s own writings established as a new canon. In any case, it was Mani’s dualism, not the rejection of the Torah that was criticized by late Jewish authors.⁵³

My conjecture is that the strongly negative view towards the Old Testament might have developed in Manichaeism in the Roman empire as a result of the encounter with the Catholic Church. Indeed, the first Manichaean work in which the negative position towards the Old Testament is laid out systematically is *Disputations*, attributed to Mani’s disciple Adda and preserved in St Augustine’s *Contra Adimantum*. It is known that Adda (not Mani) was active in Egypt (his presence in Alexandria is well documented) in the mid to late third century⁵⁴ and debated with Christians,⁵⁵ although no record of those debates

52 Akbraham Ibn Daud, *Sefer ha-qabbalah*, ed. by A. Neubauer, *Medieval Jewish Chronicles and Chronological Notes: Edited from Printed Books and Manuscripts*, 2 vols, Oxford, 1887-1895, 1:60-61, cited in Reeves, *Prolegomena*, p. 141.

53 Reeves, *Prolegomena*, pp. 136-137. Also see remarks by T. Pettipiece, “Manichaeism at the Crossroads of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Traditions,” in: *Patristic Studies in the Twenty-first-Century: Proceedings of an International Conference to Mark the 50th Anniversary of the International Association of Patristic Studies*, ed. by B. Bitton-Ashkelony, Th. De Bruyn, and C. Harrison, Turnhout, 2015, pp. 299-313, at p. 304.

54 Van den Berg, *Biblical Argument*, pp. 27-40.

55 13941 = T II K and 14285 = T II D. 136. Transliteration of Sundermann, *Mitteliranische manichäische Texte*, pp. 34-36; transl. by Klimkeit, *Gnosis on the Silk Road*, p. 203.

survived. Adda's work must have been very influential, as evidenced by the fact that St Augustine had to direct a treatise against it about a century and a half later. Later Manichaean sources such as *Capitulae* by the Manichaean bishop Faustus and a letter by the Manichean Secundinus transmitted by Augustine show dependence on Adda's work.⁵⁶ Thus Christian anti-Manichaean polemics might have been directed more against Adda and his followers than against Mani's own works.⁵⁷

We should keep in mind that Adda's views were not an official position of the whole Manichaean church. For Manicheans, only Mani's own works had the status of Scripture; apparently, Mani's works left enough space for his followers for taking different positions towards the Old Testament. In contrast to Mani, Adda preached in the Roman empire where Christianity was already strong and was forced to take positions in polemics with Christians. In his rejection of the Old Testament, Adda may have been influenced by Marcion's *Antitheses*; both works reject the ethics of the Old Testament with respect to the sexual reproduction and temporal wealth and both criticize the God of the Jewish Scripture.⁵⁸ Thus the rejection of the Old Testament might have become dominant within one branch of Manichaeism as a reaction to the encounter with Christianity and the concept of the Christian Scripture. Obviously, further research is needed to see if this hypothesis can be supported by textual evidence and can withstand scrutiny.

⁵⁶ Van den Berg, *Biblical Argument*, pp. 181-194.

⁵⁷ The second part of *Acta Archelai* contains a letter by the Christian presbyter Diodorus to Archelaus (*Acta Arch.* 44-45) very relevant in this regard. The letter focuses on Mani's objections to the Old Testament and gives multiple examples of Biblical verses denied by Mani. J. BeDuhn, "Biblical Antitheses, Adda; and the Acts of Archelaus," in: *Frontiers of Faith: The Christian Encounter with Manichaeism in the Acts of Archelaus*, ed. by J. BeDuhn and P. Mirecki (NHMS, 61), Leiden—Boston, 2007, pp. 131-147, at pp. 137-139, convincingly demonstrated that Mani's view presented by Diodorus refers, in fact, to Adda's *Disputationes*. In total, eleven biblical antitheses of *Acta Archelai* correspond with *Disputationes*. Seven out of eleven belong to Diodorus' letter; all of them coincide with Adda's antitheses.

⁵⁸ Van den Berg, *Biblical Argument*, pp. 153-160; and BeDuhn, "Biblical Antitheses," pp. 139-142.