[Make an inspection of] yourselves as to what your purity [really is. For it is impossible] to purify your bodies entirely—for each day the body is disturbed and comes to rest through the secretions of sediments from it—so that the action comes about without a commandment of the Saviour. The purity, then, which was spoken about, is that which comes through knowledge, separation of Light from Darkness and of death from life, and of living waters from turbid [...] . This is in truth the genuine purity.

The profusion of medical terminology in Manichaean texts, as in this address by Mani to the Elchasaites in the Cologne Mani Codex (CMC),¹ poses what Jason BeDuhn calls a “discursive dilemma”—the kind that results when medical terminology appears in a context that does not immediately appear appropriate: “If this is a medical text, why the appeal to a Savior? If this is a religious text, why is it so immersed in medical language and concerns?”²

THE NOTION OF HEALING IN MANICHAEISM

BeDuhn is the only one so far to have engaged the medical language in Manichaeism as a discursive problem; but where his focus is on the terminology itself, mine is more thematic, as I first examine the significance of the related motifs of sickness and healing in Mani’s religion, and then its use of the title of ‘physician.’ This section will conclude by dealing with the well-known Manichaean pessimism regarding the physical body, and with BeDuhn’s claim that “the engagement with


² BeDuhn, “A Regimen for Salvation”: 111.
medical concerns found in Manichaean asceticism totally belies its traditional interpretation in terms of spirit/matter duality or a disdain for all things bodily.”

**HEALING AND SICKNESS**

As with any thematic approach to Manichaeism, two caveats are in order here: (1) next to nothing is known about the social setting of the texts the movement produced; and (2) these texts represent a vast geographical range and a considerable chronology. Nevertheless, the motifs of sickness and healing appear in sources sufficiently diverse to permit at least one generalization, namely, that the condition of the soul in the material body is usually described in Manichaeism as one of pain, sickness or wounding. Ultimately stemming from the primordial battle between Good/Light and Evil/Darkness, this wounded condition is variously described as the soul’s loss of awareness of its true origin, as anomia or separation from Mani’s saving law, or as a failure to heed the call to return to the path of Light that, according to Coptic Kephalaion 65, “removes the pain of mankind’s wound.”

However, the painful, sick or wounded condition of the soul can be salvific. The Chinese hymn-scroll, *British Museum, Stein 2659* (8th

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3 BeDuHn, “A Regimen for Salvation”: 121.