There is plenty of evidence that the study of Manichaeism is alive and well. Besides the recent exciting discovery and/or identification of several Chinese paintings housed in Japan as Manichaean, new texts have come to light at Ismant el-Kharab, the site of the Roman village of Kellis in the Dakhleh Oasis, in the last decade of the 20th century. These latest finds are extremely important in several respects: they have provided the first opportunity to study material from a Manichaean community in its social context (including personal letters which indicate a close-knit set of family groups within the community). Material has been found in three languages, especially Coptic and Greek, but also bilingual Coptic-Syriac glossaries. This material shows a clear concern for the Syriac origins of the texts used by the community and is evidence for the translation of Manichaean scriptures directly into Coptic. Moreover, a good number of fragments from a single codex containing a translation of Mani’s canonical Epistles have been recovered.

A further interesting aspect of the Kellis discoveries is the fact that we find in them a good number of psalms and related devotional material, such as prayers and liturgical texts. For a critical survey of a certain religious phenomenon, it is obviously essential to take into account the various dimensions which find expression in it, not only the doctrinal and mythic/narrative, but also the practical and ritual, the experiential and emotional, the ethical and legal, the social and institutional, and the material aspects. This is all the more necessary in the field of Gnostic and Manichaean studies, as the traditional understanding has narrowly focused on the theoretical aspects of these religious phenomena (supposedly determined by the

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1 I am deeply grateful to Jason BeDuhn, Iain Gardner and Josep Montserrat for their helpful suggestions and comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

2 The importance of all these dimensions, enumerated by Smart 1989, 10–21, has been often remarked upon by Birger Pearson, who has self-consciously and squarely situated himself in the camp of the history of religions, and has written all of his published work from that perspective. See e. g. Pearson 1994, 105–114; Pearson 1997, 10, 13–14, 215–216.
soteriological importance of knowledge and/or so often reduced to their protological accounts). Although traditional and idealistic approaches which stressed the theoretical elements in religion to the detriment of the ritual and material aspects have often predominated in scholarship, Manichaeism is not a mere mythical speculation, but an articulated system of beliefs and practices.\(^3\)

In this context, I intend to survey one of the literary jewels discovered (during February 1992) at Kellis, the Greek text Εὐχὴ τῶν προβολῶν, also known as *P. Kell. Gr. 98*.\(^4\) This extremely interesting piece of Manichaean literature allows different approaches, but the aim of the present article is to examine it in order to highlight its relevance for the practical aspects, which are specifically tackled in this volume.\(^5\)

*The Relevance of the Text for Manichaean Worship and Liturgy*

There are a number of reasons which make the *P. Kell. Gr. 98* so captivating a text for modern scholars.\(^6\) First, along with other Kellis texts, it enhances the number of available Greek sources (until Kellis’ discoveries, the only Greek Manichaean work was—excluding the brief epitaph of an electa named Bassa, found in Salona—that entitled περὶ τῆς γέννης τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ, better known as the *Cologne Mani Codex*).

A second reason lies in the virtual completeness of the text. While scholars of Manichaeism are sadly used to dealing with gaps and scraps, given the highly fragmentary condition of most surviving material, the Prayer, written on a single wooden board, is instead very well preserved, virtually without lacunae.\(^7\) Moreover, the text is a tidily-composed piece of work, characterized by its formal beauty: beside its title Εὐχὴ τῶν προβολῶν (which might be

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\(^3\) On the relevance of practice in Manichaeism, see e.g. BeDuhn 2000, ix–x, 211–212, and *passim*; Bermejo-Rubio 2008, 75–76, 153–154.

\(^4\) *Editio princeps*: Jenkins 1995; *Critical edition*: Gardner 2007, 111–128. The provisional numbering system used by Jenkins was later abandoned by the Dakhleh Oasis Project.

\(^5\) Although Khosroyev 2005 attempted to deny the Manichaean provenance of the Prayer, its Manichaean nature has been subsequently proved beyond any reasonable doubt. Khosroyev’s arguments were already critiqued in Gardner 2007; for a more extended treatment, see Bermejo-Rubio 2009.

\(^6\) Khosroyev 2005, 210, has convincingly argued that the Greek is better understood as an objective genitive, thus *The Prayer to the Emanations*. I refrain from further description of the piece, as it has been amply discussed by the works cited in note 4.

\(^7\) The only one is found in line 73, although it is a brief one and is not especially important for the meaning of the passage.