Mani, the “Apostle of Jesus Christ,” not only copied St. Paul’s self-presentation in the incipit of his letters; he by far outdid him as a prolific writer of instructive and hortative epistles to individuals and communities of his church. His disciples followed the master’s pattern. They are mentioned as fellow-authors of some of Mani’s letters, or they composed their own epistles. Furthermore there were certainly parishes who did not hesitate to turn to Mani when they felt they were in need of an authorized decision on problems. So there must have existed a voluminous and multifarious epistolary Manichaean literature from the beginning of Manichaeism.

Thanks to a precious tradition preserved in the Dublin Kephalaia we know that Mani employed a clerical office. He dictated (as St. Paul did) letters to his staff meant to be sent to more than one addressee (and to be archived). It is small wonder that Mani’s disciples and certainly the master himself began to collect and archive this wealth of epistolary production, and that the collection of Mani’s letters was subsequently regarded as one of Mani’s canonical works, a canonized collection, it is true, which gained less reputation than his Gospel, his Treasure of Life, etc., since, according to the 148th Kephalaion, the epistles were not revealed by a deity but composed by Mani himself.

Epistolary collections have been known for a long time. An-Nadīm gave in his Fihrist al-ulūm a list of letters by Mani and, as he put it, wa l-a’imati ba’dahū (and the Imāms after him). But an-Nadīm does not clearly specify which of the listed letters were composed by people

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1 Schmidt 1933, 23 (Koustaios); Henning 1937, 18 = 1977, I, 432 (Mār Ammō).
3 Cf. in the text to be published here frg. 1, /V/12–16.
4 Quoted after Funk 1997, 158 (chapter 333).
5 Schmidt 1933, 26.
7 Flügel 1862, 73–76, 103–105; Dodge 1970, 799–800.
other than Mani. Among the Coptic Manichaean texts of Medinet Madi there was also a corpus of letters by Mani and his disciples.\textsuperscript{8} It was taken to Berlin, only to disappear for the most part in the chaotic events of 1945 and 1946 before it could be edited and published.\textsuperscript{9} What has been left is, for the time being, a couple of folios, and a reliable description of the manuscript by Carl Schmidt already in 1933.\textsuperscript{10} It is good news, however, that the editorial work on those parts which are presently accessible has been recently taken up by W.-P. Funk and I. Gardner, the first results of whose work already has been published.\textsuperscript{11}

Single letters or excerpts of Mani’s letters, intended to be read in the liturgical service, have turned up among the Iranian Manichaean Turfan texts;\textsuperscript{12} but many more letter fragments in Sogdian language are products of the Central Asian community and thus of a later date,\textsuperscript{13} as are also most of the recently found Coptic Manichaean letters of the Kellis oasis.\textsuperscript{14} Those among the letters from Kellis, however, that certainly or most likely belong to the corpus of Mani’s canonical epistles will be published by I. Gardner in collaboration with W.-P. Funk.\textsuperscript{15} In addition, some letters of Mani are quoted by Christian polemists, such as the \textit{Epistula Fundamenti}, cited so often by Augustine that it has been possible to reconstruct long passages of its text,\textsuperscript{16} or Mani’s letter to Menoch quoted by Julian of Eclanum against Augustine, but of doubtful authenticity.\textsuperscript{17}

These testimonies suffice to prove the presence of Mani’s letters wherever Manichaeism took root, and to prove the existence of epistolary collections of his letters in Mesopotamia and Egypt. It is by no means sure that such collections were faithful renderings of Mani’s original corpus of letters as a canonical book of his church. Of an-Nadīm’s Arabic list of 76 letters one can say that it represents a rather incomplete collection of what the second or third generation had of the epistolary material of the first generation. Such a re-edition may have

\textsuperscript{8} Schmidt 1933, 23–26.
\textsuperscript{9} Robinson 1992, 55–57.
\textsuperscript{10} Cf. n. 8.
\textsuperscript{11} Gardner 2001, 97–104.
\textsuperscript{12} Boyce 1960, 147.
\textsuperscript{13} Cf. the provisional remarks in Boyce 1968, 73.
\textsuperscript{15} Gardner 2001, 95–97.
\textsuperscript{16} Feldmann 1987; Stein 2002.
\textsuperscript{17} Stein 1998, cf. esp. 36–37, 39.