Methodological problems have always played their part in the study of the 'Religionswissenschaft'. One of these problems is formed by the classification and the division of the different parts of the science of religion. In the course of time scholars have used different outlines. Moreover certain parts of the science of religion received different names in different countries. As a rule the difference in name stands for a different working-method. Thus we see that 'comparative religion' follows other methods than 'phenomenology of religion' and 'general history of religions'.

On the other hand one may distinguish a difference of opinion between certain disciplines of the 'Religionswissenschaft'. Sometimes we come across controversies between e.g. the history of religions and the phenomenology of religion.

These methodological questions cannot be answered in this short article. The author would rather apply the various elements of the science of religion to the study of one particular religion. The religion in which the author is interested is Manichaeism. When one surveys the works which have been published on Mani and Manichaeism, it is striking to see that as a rule only one element of the 'Religionswissenschaft', viz. the history of religions, is engaged in the study of Mani and his religion. The other elements of the science of religion are not very often connected with the study of Manichaeism.

Without laying claim to digress on all matters which present themselves, the author wishes to indicate the points of contact between the 'Religionswissenschaft' and Manichaeism. By doing this one might discover the mutual contributions of Manichaeism and the science of religion: the different disciplines of the 'Religionswissenschaft' can clarify
the essence of Manichaeism; the study of Manichaeism can bear fruit by using certain patterns offered by the components of the science of religion.

It will be clear that in this article a certain outline of the disciplines of the science of religion will be used. We shall deal with the following elements of the science of religion: general history of religions, special history of religions, psychology of religion, sociology of religion, and phenomenology of religion. This outline—which is derived from the works of C. J. Bleeker 1)—fixes the course of our article. One particular element will receive extra attention when we deal with the phenomenology of religion, viz. the extinction of Manichaeism.

General history of religions

As we have seen, the general history of religions studies the results of the contacts between religions on the historical level. This means with relation to Manichaeism that the general history of religions has to start its work as soon as Mani appears in public. When Mani receives the decisive revelation of his Twin-Spirit, he begins to preach. In one of his autobiographies Mani tells that he started to speak and to teach the things which the Twin-Spirit had taught him. This means

1) In his book “Op zoek naar het geheim van de godsdienst” ('In search of the secret of religion'), 2nd ed., Amsterdam, 1961, Bleeker defines the elements of the science of religion as follows (see pp. 10-13 and 128-109):

The history of religions can be divided into two parts: general and special history of religions. The tasks of the general history of religions are: to trace the results of the contacts between certain religions in the course of time, and to do preliminary work in connection with the solution of general problems. The special history of religions deals with the description of all religions down to the smallest detail. The sociology of religion deals with the types of religious communities, the relation between individual and community, religious and non-religious communities.

Psychology of religion describes the 'varieties of religious experience'; a number of psychological types can be distinguished; religion bases itself upon certain functions of the human mind.

The phenomenology is divided into the following elements: logos, théoria, and dynamica of the religious phenomena. The logos of the phenomena traces the logic of religion by investigating the elements which define the structure of religious data or of a complex of religious phenomena. The théoria of the phenomena wishes to survey the essence of the religious phenomena. The dynamica of the phenomena deals with the intricate problem of the development and the progress of the religious phenomena.