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ARTICLE

MANICHAEAN STUDIES

IF one had sat down in the early years of this century with the intention of constructing a bibliography of Manichaeism and of setting at the head a list of original Manichaean writings, it would have been difficult to know where to begin; the writings of the Manichees had long disappeared and there was little, if any, expectation of finding them. Yet the secondary sources, the books of those who from time to time wrote more or less elaborate refutations of the heresy as it menaced Christianity or Islam or set themselves to expose its errors on purely philosophical grounds, are very full, above all S. Augustine; and I do not think that the picture of Manichaean doctrine sketched by Augustine could be called either unfinished or inaccurate. There are in his anti-Manichaean writings, especially in the *Contra Epistolam Fundamenti* and the *Contra Faustum*, statements of the highest value and fullness made by one who, himself nine years a Manichee, had a direct knowledge of his subject and was able frequently to quote from written authorities. He has writ the outlines large; and if, because it was alien to his purpose, he has omitted to give us much detail, we are able now, from our primary sources, and are likely to be still better able in the near future, to fill in the details without having to alter the main contours of Augustine's picture. And Augustine does not stand alone. S. Ephraim quotes from Manichaean books and moreover is writing in Mani's own language; Epiphanius, and especially his main source Hegemonius, gives a report of Manichaeism set in the mouth of a Manichee, Turbo, who is afterwards converted to Christianity, together with a letter from Mani beginning in the orthodox style, 'Mani, the apostle of Jesus Christ'. For all its dramatic form and content I do not see that the account of Hegemonius is not among the most valuable that we have and, though generally the details he gives must be treated with extreme caution,

in some respects his evidence can be proved to be accurate and his authority unimpeachably sound. The works of Alexander of Lycopolis, Titus of Bostra, and Serapion of Thmuis attack Mani on philosophical grounds and, though they are valuable historically in subjecting Mani's fundamental dualism to an examination of some dialectical subtlety, they supply us with little detailed information. Of the three Titus of Bostra has been latterly most neglected, though since 1925 the materials for a new edition are at hand. But Augustine emerges clearly as the most important of the secondary sources, and the Tübingen book of F. C. Baur, based four-square on him, is still, after more than a century, among the best books on Manichaeism in existence.

A further source of great value in which Manichaean originals are used is to be found in Pognon's *Inscriptions mandaïtes des coupes de Khouabir*; bar Konai's account of the Manichaean cosmogony has been very fully studied by Franz Cumont in *Recherches sur le Manichéisme*. In 1862 Gustav Flügel made accessible a highly important account by a tenth-century Arabic writer, and Kessler and Guidi have edited Arabic narratives which incorporate Manichaean material. It is from the tenth-century *Fihrist* that we learn what Mani's own writings were, as also from Kessler's sources and the *Chronology* of Albîrûnî in the east, from Cyril of Jerusalem, Timotheus of Constantinople, and the two great formulas of recantation, in the west. His books were seven in number, of which six were composed in Syriac and one, the *Shâpûrâkân*, in Persian.

But, if in the year 1900 there was next to nothing in the way of original Manichaean documents, the last thirty-eight years have produced a multitudinous and varied collection. Archaeological expeditions from France, Germany, Russia, and England were sent out to excavate in Central Asia and Chinese Turkestan; and a vast amount of documents were found, notably by von Le Coq and Sir Aurel Stein, most of them fragments of Manichaean books used by the communities which established themselves in the east as they were driven out of Persia by Bahram and his successors. Dr Burkitt, writing in 1924, has given an account of the discoveries, both of manuscripts and frescoes, made chiefly in Tuen-huang, Turfan, and Chotsko. Chotsko appears to have been the chief centre of Manichaeism among the Uigurs, and richly furnished temples, their walls gaily decorated with Manichaean and Buddhist

paintings, were unearthed there. The paintings have been published by von le Coq in the two volumes of *Die buddhistische Spätantike* (see especially volume 2, *Die manichäischen Miniaturen*) and the large volume which gives the full account of his excavations, *Chotsko*. The writings were soon perceived to be Manichaean: in 1904 F. W. K. Müller identified the script of specimens sent home to him as a Manichaean adaptation of the estrangelo form of Syriac and the language for the most part as Iranian in various dialects. But up to 1924 only a very small portion of the documents had been published, and Dr Burkitt's account must be supplemented by W. Henning's article in the *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, 1936, *Neue Materialien zur Geschichte des Manichäismus*, in place of the complete account of eastern Manichaeism which can only be written when all the documents have been made available. The pioneer work of C. Salemann and F. W. K. Müller has cleared the way for later scholars, and the initial difficulties of language and content which made their work slow have now largely disappeared. It was Müller who discovered the key without which the contents of the Asiatic material would have remained for ever inaccessible; and we owe to him besides an important series of publications, chiefly in the *Abhandlungen* of the Berlin Academy. In 1911 and 1913 the two French scholars Chavannes and Pelliot published in the *Journal Asiatique* important documents relating to the history of Manichaeism in China. But only a small fraction of the total material was published. Since 1924 a welcome acceleration has been made, at any rate by the Germans. Part of the large London Hymn-Roll, written in Chinese and Iranian, was published in 1926 by Waldschmidt and Lentz in the *Abhandlungen* of the Berlin Academy under the title *Die Stellung Jesu im Manichäismus*. In the same year the Turkologist W. Bang edited and translated in *Le Muséeon* a number of Manichaean hymns. In the years 1932-1934 three volumes of *Mitteliranische Manichaica*, containing important texts with translations, were published from the *Nachlass* of Professor Andreas by Dr Walter Henning. In 1933 Waldschmidt and Lentz returned to the attack with a further volume of texts, together with translations and notes, in the *Sitzungsberichte* of the Berlin Academy, *Manichäische Dogmatik aus chinesischen und iranischen Texten*. Such publications as these, and others diffused in the various Oriental

Journals, have provided scholars with a great deal of new material from the east; and many, such as Scheftelowitz, Bossuet, Nyberg, Andreas, Jackson, Troje, have been led to the conclusion that Manichaeism is essentially eastern and Iranian, and that the Christian elements in it were superimposed by the founder to make it more plausible in Syria and the west. Against this judgement Burkitt and H. H. Schaeder set their faces; and the one in *The Religion of the Manichees* and the other through his brilliant *Urform und Fortbildungen des manichäischen Systems* contended, in an unfashionable hour, that the Christian elements are primary and essential. This view may be established by the evidence provided in the recent discoveries of Manichaean documents in the west. Before I conclude this brief sketch of the available eastern material I should mention a further series of texts published by Dr Henning in 1936 in the *Abhandlungen* at Berlin. This he calls *Ein manichäisches Bet- und Beichtbuch*.

Let me now turn to the discoveries of new Manichaean documents in Egypt written in Coptic. In 1924 F. Bilabel published a small Sahidic fragment *Über die Begründer des Manichäismus*, identified by Professor Carl Schmidt as a translation of part of the account of Manichaeism given by Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catecheses* VI 21-24). Just such another papyrus-scrap, written in the same dialect, was published in 1929 by Professor Lefort of Louvain: it was recognized by Dr H. J. Polotsky as a literal translation from *Panarion LXVI* of Epiphanius. In 1930 an entire Manichaean library was brought to light and an account of the discovery was published by Schmidt and Polotsky in 1933, in the *Sitzungsberichte* of the Berlin Academy. Some *fellâhîn*, searching among the ruined houses of Medînet Mâdî (perhaps the site of the ancient Sokhnoutis, a few hundred yards south of the dynastic and Ptolemaic site now being excavated by Professor Achille Vogliano), to the south-west of the Fayûm, came by chance upon a wooden chest placed in a cellar for concealment, which was found on examination to contain the remains of seven large papyrus volumes. It is to Professor Carl Schmidt that the credit for the discovery belongs. One of the volumes was placed before him in 1930 by a Fayûm dealer: in the upper margin he could with great difficulty read the word $\pi\kappa\epsilon\phi\alpha\lambda\alpha\iota\omicron\upsilon\eta$, 'the *Kephalaia*'. By chance he happened at the time to be reading the proof-sheets of the third volume of Holl's edition of Epiphanius

in the Berlin *Corpus*, and he recollected that Epiphanius speaks of the *Kephalaia* as one of the works of Mani. But he shrank from buying without further evidence so badly preserved a book. On his return later he heard that Mr Chester Beatty had bought other volumes of similar appearance (the original 'find' had by this time been divided up among several dealers), and he determined at once to trace and purchase the remaining books. All, Mr Beatty's as well as Professor Schmidt's, were sent to Berlin and handed over to Dr Hugo Ibscher, the *Papyruskonservator* in the *Ägyptisches Museum*, who set to work at their reconstruction. Of the whole library discovered three and a half volumes belong to Mr Beatty and three and a half to Professor Schmidt's part, and these latter were purchased by the *Staatliche Museen*. In addition it was found that a small block from one of the Berlin books, not more than a dozen pages, had been acquired by Professor Grohmann for the Vienna Museum.

All these books are in a bad state of preservation, so bad in fact that they looked more like torn prayer-mats than papyrus volumes. Yet the papyrus they are made of is of singularly high quality, and left to themselves the books would undoubtedly have lasted for centuries in good condition, like so many of the hieratic papyri of the middle and late kingdoms or certain Greek literary papyri of Ptolemaic times; but a subtle enemy was at work, for the cellar where they were found was periodically exposed to the damp, and only the fact that they had been placed together in a wooden box prevented their utter destruction. Even so the dry papyrus material had acted as a filter and salt crystals had formed, with the result that the leaves were stuck together and it was impossible to open the books. When the dealers divided each book up they had to tear the parts asunder. The books seem to have been ripped out of their bindings in antiquity and in consequence one margin had disappeared, so that on alternate pages for the most part the beginning and the end of the lines are more often than not destroyed. Ibscher's task therefore was to prepare specimen pages from each of the books and then to reconstitute the whole of each by taking the pages apart and setting them separately under glass. Of the Berlin books the largest is the *Kephalaia*, the second Mani's *Letters*, the third apparently some kind of historical narrative which cannot at present be more precisely determined; while the half-volume was found to form

with Mr Beatty's half-volume a homiletic book consisting of *lógoi* by various writers. The other three London books are (a) the *Psalm-book*, (b) a continuation of the *Kephalaia*, and (c) a book of undetermined contents, perhaps some kind of commentary. Their publication was launched by W. Kohlhammer of Stuttgart and a special Coptic type was cut, modelled on the hand of the *Kephalaia*: in 1934 Mr Beatty's half of the homiletic book appeared,¹ between 1935 and 1937 four *Doppellieferungen* of the *Kephalaia*² appeared, the first hundred pages the work of Schmidt and Polotsky, the second hundred the work of Schmidt and Dr Alexander Böhlig; and this year the second half of the London psalm-book (the first half has not yet been reconstituted and glassed) is published.³

The *Homilies* is not a work of Mani himself, but rather a series of compositions emanating from the circle of his disciples. The first two *lógoi* seem to have been composed in the last five years of the third century, the third approximately 300, the remaining two are of uncertain date. The first homily is variously entitled $\pi\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma \mu\pi\sigma\alpha\pi\epsilon\pi$ (*the discourse of the prayer*) and $[\pi\omicron\rho]\eta\mu\omicron\varsigma \kappa\alpha\lambda\mu\alpha\iota\omicron\varsigma$ (*the lament of Salmaios*, who is known to have been one of Mani's first disciples). It is a lamentation for the dead Mani, in the form of praise and prayer addressed to the ascended Master. The second also has two titles: $\pi\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma \mu\pi\pi\alpha\sigma \mu\pi\omicron\lambda\epsilon\mu\omicron\varsigma$ (*the discourse of the great war*) and $\pi\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma \kappa\omicron\upsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\iota\omicron\varsigma$ (*the discourse of Koustaïos*, another early disciple); it contains a description of the end of things prophesied in the gospel. The title of the third homily is 'The Part of the Telling (i.e. story) of the Crucifixion', an account of Mani's imprisonment and death under Bahram I and of the persecution of the Manichaeans under him and his successor, ending with the truce made between Manichees and the State. The fourth piece contains a eulogy of the pantheon, and goes on to depict the entry of Mani into the realm of light. Polotsky's pioneer work is masterly.

If the *Homilies* are designed, as it seems, to give instruction to neophytes in the history of the founder and to give them an account of his judgement and death and the first martyrdoms of the

¹ *Manichäische Handschriften der Sammlung A. Chester Beatty*. Band I. *Manichäische Homilien*, herausgegeben von Hans Jacob Polotsky.

² *Manichäische Handschriften der Staatlichen Museen Berlin*. Band I. *Kephalaia*.

³ *Manichaean Manuscripts in the Chester Beatty Collection*, vol. ii. *A Manichaean Psalm-book, Part II*.

Manichees, the purpose of the *Kephalaia* is very different. It gives instruction in Manichaean dogma. It is *Lehrbuch* of the Manichaean system. It is detailed, full, precise, and comprehensive. The principles, the ramifications, the consequences of that stupendous dualism are dispassionately set forth. Nothing is omitted. All things in heaven and earth and in that other kingdom which in the beginning set itself up against heaven—all are explained in the light of Manichaean revelation. It possesses all the thoroughness of Lucretius, with none of his poetry and passion. In form it is exegetical: Mani is sitting in the circle of his disciples and one of them asks a question to which the Teacher gives the answer. In the *Kephalaia* Mani is no longer the apotheosized sufferer of the *Homilies*: he is the instructor of his flock, leading them in the way of all truth. The book is divided into chapters, each of them numbered, each bearing a short heading summarizing its contents; the average length of each is a page and a half or rather under three sides. So far nearly two hundred pages of text have been published, and the manuscript is estimated to contain as much again. In consequence of Professor Schmidt's death the project of printing introductory articles and then indices has been deferred, and Dr Böhlig is proceeding with the publication of the texts.

It may be not unjustly complained that the Asiatic texts present us with material which is too homogeneous and monotonous to be of very great value: what variety they possess consists less in their contents than in the languages in which they are written; and in fact they have on the whole been found more useful by the Oriental philologist than the *Religionsforscher*. This could hardly be said of the Coptic *Manichaica*. The third published volume, the *Psalms-book*, is as different from the *Homilies* and *Kephalaia* as they are from each other. The book has nothing to do with the Psalms of David, though it contains one or two quotations from them. It seems rather to have been inspired by the example of Bardaisan and his son Harmonius, of whom we are told that they composed a hymn-book of some one hundred and fifty hymns for the spreading of Daisanite ideas, a method so effective that S. Ephraim was obliged to reply by writing a counter-hymn-book for the orthodox. The part of the book now published, approximately the second half, contains psalms divided into separate groups which are distinguished either by their

subject-matter or by their authorship. We have a group of *ψαλμοὶ διάφοροι*, that is, psalms for various occasions. We have a group of *ψαλμοὶ κυρίου Ἡρακλείδου* (Heracleides was one of Mani's twelve disciples and, according to Photius, Petrus Siculus, and the two Greek formulas, an Egyptian emissary). We have psalms by the unknown Syrus. We have a number of psalms to Jesus, to whom the soul appeals in the hour of suffering and death. But the most fascinating group is the *ψαλμοὶ βηματικοί*—psalms in honour of, and to be sung at, the *Bēma*-festival, the Festival of the Judgement. Augustine (*Contra Epist. Fundamenti* p. 207 ed. Zycha) tells us at length what that festival is: 'cum saepe a uobis quaererem illo tempore quo uos audiebam, quae causa esset quod pascha domini plerumque nulla interdum a paucis tepidissima celebritate frequentaretis nullis uigiliis nullo prolixiore ieiunio indicto auditoribus nullo denique festiuore adparatu, cum bema uestrum, id est dies quo Manichaeus occisus est, quinque gradibus instructo tribunali et pretiosis linteis adornato magnis honoribus prosequamini: hoc ergo cum quaererem, respondebatur eius diem passionis celebrandum esse qui uere passus esset: Christum autem, qui natus non esset, neque ueram sed simulatam carnem humanis oculis ostendisset, non pertulisse sed finxisse passionem. quis non gemescat homines qui se Christianos dici uolunt timere ne polluantur ueritas de uirginis utero et de mendacio non timere?' I have quoted this passage in full because the Docetism it exposes is relevant in a later passage; here, to Saint Augustine's picture of the judgement-seat with five steps, adorned with fine linen, we may add certain details from the *Psalm-book*. On the throne a picture of Mani was placed to be adored by the worshippers, on it also the holy books were set. The *Bēma* was the time in the year for the confession and forgiveness of sins: 'We pray thee, merciful God, forgive us our sins', so a *bēma*-hymn begins. 'O soul, recognize this great sign, that this is the sign of the forgiveness of thy sins.' 'Paul, the glorious one, bears witness, saying unto thee, "In the *Bēma* of Christ there is no respect of persons: willy-nilly we must all come unto it"'—a quasi-quotation of Romans xiv 10, πάντες γὰρ παραστησόμεθα τῷ βήματι τοῦ θεοῦ. It is the theme of the coming judgement (of which the trial of Mani under Bahram I is used to remind the worshippers), coupled with the confession of sins and the obtainment of divine and human forgiveness, that is the main theme

of the *Bēma*. 'May the Judge see thee keeping these commandments and may he honour thee and give thee life. Complete forgiveness will he bestow on thee. Come therefore and walk on these holy steps.' 'May the *Bēma* be for thee a landing-place of thy days, a place of cleansing of thy life, an ark (κιβωτός) full of instruction, a ladder to the height, a balance to measure thy deeds. Say unto it, "Blessed art thou, great device (τέχνη) of the Word, upright *Bēma* of the Judge, the seat of the Fathers of Light that are far removed from error, foundation of the sweet victory, full of wisdom".' 'Our Lord the Paraclete is come, he has sat down upon his *Bēma*: let us all pray, my brothers, that he may forgive us our sins.' The Coptic book gives us some thirty hymns used at this festival, and Henning's eastern texts, in *Ein manichäisches Bet- und Beichtbuch*, seem to establish the order of the service—a liturgical fragment which he there publishes gives the following: A. Hymns and prayers to Mani. B. A pause. C. Praise of Mani. D. A pause. E. A copy of the gospel is taken by the minister who, with it in his hand, bows to Mani (i.e. to the enthroned picture) and to the Elect. F. Confession of sins. G. Hymns to Mani and prayers for forgiveness. H. The reading of one of Mani's letters. I. Hymns to the Apostle. J. *Mahl der Elekten* (apparently). K. *Nachmahlhymnen*. With the material at our disposal we should be able to reconstruct the content of the main festival of the Manichees.

Another group of psalms presents the Manichaeian view of Jesus, which was, as the passage from Augustine quoted above suggests, uncompromisingly docetic. Jesus was entirely divine: He was not born of woman. 'Jesus, the new God, to whose hope I hang: I have made myself strong upon his coming: he was not born in a womb unclean: not even the mighty were counted worthy of him that he should dwell beneath their roof (cf. Luke vii 2-6): how much less should he be confined in the womb of a woman of low degree.' 'Many are the marvels of thy begetting, the wonders of thy cross. When I say "thy begetting", yet who created thee?' Irony and scorn are poured on those who taught that Jesus was born of Mary: 'Heaven and earth were made in all their glory; they came to the Son of God, they cast Him into a womb unclean.' 'The Father created the sun and moon that they might give light; they came to the beloved Son,

they shut Him up in a woman's womb.' 'Who gave light to the world those nine months?' 'Shall I lay waste a kingdom that I may furnish a woman's womb?': that is, if Christ was born in a woman's womb, He cannot be divine; the whole structure of His royal origin is brought tumbling to the ground by the assertion. Christ was to the Manichees a phantom on earth, not of real flesh and blood and bones and sinews. His passion was a semblance only and it was no real body that suffered and was buried. 'By His resurrection He opened the doors that were shut. He broke the gates and bars of Hell. Death sought in Him, it found nothing that belonged to it. It found not bone and sinew which it consumes daily. It found not flesh and blood on which it feeds. In Him it found not its likeness, lust and fire. A *σχήμα* is what it found, as it were a mask.' 'Amen, I was seized: amen again, I was not seized. Amen, I was judged: amen again, I was not judged. Amen I was pierced, amen again, I was not pierced. Amen, I suffered: amen again, I did not suffer.' The particular impact which Christianity had on the Manichaean system may be gauged from such psalms as these; secondly, from the occurrence of a large number of references to the New Testament apocrypha; thirdly, from the frequent quotations from the Gospels, which seem to show a diatessaronic influence, as well as from the Epistles.

How do these Coptic books compare with the books which Mani himself is alleged to have written? It was thought at first by Schmidt that in the *Kephalaia* he had recovered in translation the work which Epiphanius ascribes to Mani; but this view is now abandoned, though the exact relation between the two is not at present clear. In the *Kephalaia* itself¹ a list of the five great, that is, chief, writings is to be found: the Living Gospel, the Treasure of Life, the *Pragmateia*, the Book of the Mysteries, the Writing (*γραφή*) of the Giants; and to these are added the Letters (*ἡ τῶν ἐπιστολῶν ὀμάς*), while a seventh is not clear. These six are repeated elsewhere in the *Kephalaia* (5. 22 ff) in the same order, as also in the Homilies (25. 1 ff). The Psalm-book contains the same list in a curious form: Mani is compared to a physician and his books to the tools of his trade: 'He has the antidote that is good for every affection, there are twenty-two mixtures in his antidote, namely his *Great Gospel* (there were, as we know

¹ See *Ein Mani-Fund*, pp. 34 ff.

from Albîrûnî, twenty-two chapters in the Gospel), the good news of all them that belong to the Light. The *Thesaurus*, the treasure of life, is his water-pot (λακάνη); the *Pragmateia* is his soft sponge that wipes wounds away. The *Book of the Mysteries* is his surgical knife (ἀκμάδιον): the *Book of the Giants* his good swabs.' This seems to be the original order of the writings: at the top stands the Great Gospel, referred to elsewhere in the *Psalm-book* as 'the king of the writings, his new testament, the manna of the skies, the inheritance of life'; and this order is preserved in the lists given by Cyril of Jerusalem, Petrus Seculus and Photius, Timotheus of Constantinople, and both the Greek formulas of abjuration, as also by the eastern sources used by Albîrûnî. All that we can at present say of the Coptic books is that three are certainly not by Mani himself, namely the *Kephalaia*, the Homilies, and the Psalm-book; that one, the Letters, is almost certainly a translation of Mani's sixth book; while the remaining three may be, or may contain, translations of any of the other six books except perhaps the *Shāpūrākān*, which seems to be totally unknown in the west. But Mani's disciples, besides being very active missionaries, were also very prolific writers; and it seems generally, and in the case of the Psalm-book and the Homilies it can be proved, that the Coptic books are translations of writings perhaps by Mani's contemporaries, perhaps by Manichaeans of the first generation.

What is the date of these Coptic books? When was the Coptic translation made? In what language were the books originally written? Was the Coptic translation made from Greek or from Syriac? When did Manichaeism first come into Egypt?—These are questions which cannot yet be answered with any certainty; for none of the Coptic books, so far as we know, is dated and no account of the history of the Manichaean mission in Egypt is contained in them. But we have a fair amount of miscellaneous evidence bearing on these questions, and one may suggest a tentative answer. There is little doubt that Manichaean missionaries came quite early into Egypt and gained large numbers of converts: we know from Alexander of Lycopolis and from Hegemonius that Mani himself sent disciples there. If we can believe Brinkmann, Alexander was writing about the year 300: the implication is that he was already in contact with Manichaeism about that time and felt impelled to issue a

refutation. Bardy, writing in the *Dictionnaire de Théologie catholique*, reminds us that Serapion of Thmuis and Didymus encountered Manichaeans in such numbers during the fourth century that they felt it imperative to write books against them; while the commentator Aphthonius (according to Philostorgus), 'se rendit assez célèbre à Alexandrie pour qu'Aèce d'Antioch vint engager avec lui une controverse'. At the same time, on the authority of Epiphanius, Hierakas of Leontopolis converted a large number of disciples to the Manichaean religion. But the most exciting piece of evidence for an early date is provided by a papyrus fragment of Egyptian provenance, which has lately been published by Mr C. H. Roberts in the third volume of *Greek Papyri in the John Rylands Library*. This is a letter, written by a bishop, against the Manichees; and Mr Roberts, whose authority in such matters is very weighty, assigns it on palaeographic grounds to the last quarter of the third century.

Unfortunately Coptic palaeography is not so exact a science as Greek palaeography, and it is not possible to say with any certainty to what age the writing of the Coptic books belongs. Schmidt is inclined to assign it to the second half of the fourth century, Polotsky to the fifth. I think we may be sure that the various hands are at any rate all earlier than the sixth century, for the tendency to exaggerate certain letters, which then begins to disfigure so many Coptic books, is nowhere visible. We assume, therefore, that the Coptic scribes were at work on these volumes earlier than 500 and later than 280. They are good scribes and their errors are few, and the various palaeographic mistakes to which texts are heir through continual copying are almost wholly absent, certainly from the three published books. Again, the numerous Greek loan-words, which in Coptic generally present a mutilated and sometimes barely recognizable appearance, are unusually well spelt; in the majority of Coptic books assignable to the sixth century and later Greek words are on the whole misspelt, owing to successive copying by native scribes. Thus in the Psalm-book I have found only three inaccuracies—*παραβολή* and *καληάγρα* for the usual *παρεμπολή* and *γαλεάγρα* and the queer form *ἀποβάλαμον*. The inference is that our manuscripts lie very near to the autograph of the Coptic translator.

We have seen already that Mani's own writings were composed in Syriac, and it is an easy assumption that his immediate disciples

also wrote in Syriac. Indeed, fragments of Syriac Manichaean books have been discovered in Egypt itself: these are to be found in an appendix to Dr Burkitt's book. Of the five small vellum scraps belonging to Mr W. E. Crum, Dr Burkitt writes: 'the most interesting word here is *athalya*, for *athalya* means "eclipse" (or possibly "dragon", as an astronomical term). The nature of the argument in the text cannot be recovered, but its subject was evidently astronomical.' This same word occurs in a fuller context in the *Psalm-book*, in an account of the Crucifixion: 'they gave him vinegar and myrrh to drink, they pierced him with the spear; the sun withdrew its light and clothed itself with the *athalya*'. According to Brockelmann *athalya* is 'ea stella quae solem tegens eclipsim efficit'. But if the Coptic books were originally composed in Syriac, it would be unprecedented if the translation were made directly from the original without the intermediation of a Greek version.

I suggest the following tentative answer to these problems: some years before the end of the third century Manichaean missionaries came into the delta to preach their new religion, bringing with them their sacred books written in Syriac. These they translated into Greek with the object of gaining converts among the Greek-speaking inhabitants of the important towns. As the menace to orthodoxy grew, measures were taken to combat it, and Mr Roberts's anti-Manichaean letter was composed. The Manichees now journeyed south and translated their books into Coptic as they came among people who did not know Greek: the dialect used in all the books is the sub-Achmimic, which was to be heard in the neighbourhood of Lycopolis or possibly farther south. At this time Alexander wrote his polemic, in spite of which the Egyptians were attracted in large numbers to the new faith and more than one churchman composed treatises to fight it. Finally, when and why it is impossible to say, the books in use among the Manichaeans in the south were taken to Medînet Mādî in the Fayûm where they were found: were the site to be systematically excavated, archaeological evidences of a Manichaean community might be discovered there also.

C. R. C. ALLBERRY.