

Archive Notes

As classical Gnosticism was waning, another Gnostic movement developed under the inspiration of the Prophet Mani. The Manichaean movement became a true world religion, spreading to Europe, Central Asia and China; it survived as a living religion in the Orient up until the present century. Though once anathematized and little understood, the discovery of several ancient documents during the last century, including large collections of Manichaean texts in Central Asia, has stimulated a new study and understanding of one of Gnosticism's most important representatives.

For an introduction to the Prophet Mani and the Manichaean tradition, we suggest listening to a lecture by Dr. Stephan Hoeller: [Mani: Helmsman of the Ship of Light](#) (MP3 format, about 70 minutes.)

Randomly reading any ten of the following texts will give new insights into the spiritual depths of this forgotten Gnostic tradition (you might start with *Psalms to Jesus*).

The Manichaean texts come from a wide number of sources. Originally many texts in Latin and Greek certainly existed, but during the persecution of the movement in the West most of these were lost (a major exception is the Greek *Cologne Mani-Codex*, recovered in 1969). What remains to us in large part was recorded in several different and now little-studied ancient languages (including Coptic, Middle Persian, Sogdian, Parthian, Uigur, Bactrian and Chinese). These languages well represent the vast geographical area influenced by the mission of the Prophet Mani.

A useful summary of current Manichaean studies is found in [Emerging from Darkness: Studies in the Recovery of Manichaean Sources](#) by Paul Allan Mirecki & Jason BeDuhn -- [we provide here a short excerpt from the introduction](#).

In these ancient manuscripts there are lost or unreadable sections. Lost words are marked with an ellipsis (. . .) and questionable readings are marked (?).

A Manichaean Prophecy

Before reflecting on these texts, consider the startling words written by a Manichaean scribe 1700 years ago as he labored to copy, preserve, and propagate the writings that have now come to your hands:

A thousand books will be preserved ... they will come into the hand of the just and the faithful [the] *Gospel* and the *Treasury of Life*, the *Pragmateia* and the *Book of Mysteries*, the *Book of Giants* and the *Epistles*, the *Psalms* and [the] *Prayers* of my lord, his Icon and his Revelations, his Parables and his Mysteries ... How many will be lost? How many will be destroyed? A thousand lost, another thousand recovered; for they will find them at the end. They will kiss them, and say: "O Wisdom of Greatness, O Armor of the Apostle of Light! When you were lost ... where did they find you?" ... And you shall find them reading them aloud, uttering the name [of each book] among them: the name of its lord .. and the name of those who gave all [for it to be written] and the name of the scribe who wrote it... and of the one who punctuated it.... (*Homilies 23.13-25.19*)

The Psalms to Jesus

- [Psalm I.](#)
- [Psalm II.](#)
- [Psalm V.](#)
- [Psalm VII.](#)
- [Psalm X.](#)
- [Psalm XI.](#)
- [Psalm XXI.](#)
- [Psalm XXX.](#)
- [Psalm XXXI.](#)



A page from the [Cologne Mani Codex](#), in Greek. 5th century AD, found near the ancient Lycopolis, Egypt.

The Psalms of the Festival of Bema (*The Mercy Seat*)

- [Psalm CCXXIII.](#)
- [Psalm CCXXVIII.](#)
- [Psalm CCXXX.](#)
- [Psalm CCXXXV.](#)
- [Psalm CCXXXVII.](#)
- [Psalm CCXXXIX.](#)
- [Psalm CCXL.](#)
- [Psalm CXLI.](#)

Separate Psalms

- [Taste and Know that the Lord is Sweet](#)
- [Put in Me a Holy Heart, My God.](#)
- [Light Your Lamps.](#)

The Kephalia of the Lord Mani

- [Excerpt from the Kephalia:](#)
[The Three Blows Struck at the Enemy on Account of The Light.](#)

Parthian Hymns and Prayers

- [The Hymn on the Third Messenger and the Archons.](#)
- [Hymn to the Father of Greatness.](#)
- [The Hymn about the Captivity of Light.](#)
- [Invocation of Jesus the Splendor.](#)
- [Hymn on the Second Coming of Jesus.](#)
- [Hymn on the Fate of the Living Soul.](#)
- [Hymn Exhorting the Soul to Remembrance](#)
- [Hymn to the Living Soul .](#)
- [Hymn to the Third Messenger.](#)
- [Hymn in Praise of Mani.](#)
- [Commemorative Hymn for Mar Zaku.](#)
- [Homily on the Correct Preparations for the Sacred Meal.](#)
- [Invocation of the Angels.](#)
- [The Invocation of Bar Simus.](#)
- [Invocation of the Gods in the Moon.](#)
- [A Confessional Prayer for the Elect.](#)
- [The Hymn on the End of the World.](#)
- [The Hymn on Body-and-Soul.](#)
- [The Funerary Hymn.](#)
- [Hymns to the Soul.](#)
- [Hymn in Honor of the Dominions of Light.](#)
- [Untitled Parthian Hymn.](#)



Leaf from a Manichaean Book. Khocho, Ruin K.
8th/9th century AD. Painting on paper. 17.2x
11.2 cm. III 6368.

- [The Crucifixion Hymn.](#)

Hymns and Writings Ascribed to Mani

- [The Praise of the Lesser Ones.](#)
- [The Praise of the Greater Ones.](#)
- [We Would Fulfill: Mani's Hymn to Jesus, the King.](#)
- [The Praise of Jesus the Life-giver.](#)
- [Untitled Psalm fragment.](#)
- [The Opening Words of the Living Gospel.](#)
- [Apocryphal letter to Mâr Ammo ascribed to Mani.](#)

Parables

- [Parable about the Auditors.](#)
- [Parable about the Farmer.](#)
- [Parable of the Pearl Borer.](#)
- [The Parable of the Monk and the Girl.](#)
- [Parable about the Two Snakes.](#)

Miscellaneous Manichaean Scriptures

- [The Psalms of Thomas](#) (a collection of 12 psalms)
- [A Manichaean Psalm:](#) A summary of the Manichaean creation myth
- [Primal Man, a Manichaean fragment.](#)
- [Come to Me, My Kinsman, the Light, My Guide. A Manichaean Prayer.](#)
- [The End of the Deficiency. A Manichaean eschatological hymn.](#)
- [Joy Came Over Me. A Manichaean fragment.](#)
- [Salvation of the Soul. A Turkish Manichaean fragment.](#)
- [Excerpt from the Fundamental Epistle of Mani.](#)
- [O Soul, a Manichaean fragment.](#)