In the collection of Manichaean psalms in Coptic entitled *Psalms sarakoton* belonging to the *Manichaeans Psalm-Book* from the Medinet Madi discovery (Egypt, c. 400 AD), we find a psalm to which French translator André Villey gave the title *Hymne à Seth* (it should be à *Sethel*) (PsB 144.1–146.13).

The work occupies two and a half pages of a papyrus codex, although it is damaged in some places. The text can be divided into four parts. In the

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1. **The so-called Hymn to Seth from the Manichaean Psalm-Book**

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2. The origin of the name ‘Sethel’ is unclear, although there have been various attempts to explain it. The suffix ‘-el’ may have been used to give divine meaning to biblical Seth, son of Adam, thus contrasting the son with the father, who lost the status of a creature created ‘in the image and after the likeness of God’ (Gen. 5:3). Another explanation suggests that ‘Sethel’ is derived from the same Hebrew root as that in the verb *שתל*, or ‘to plant’, which could be taken as an allusion to ‘another seed’, a race of people whose father and leader was Seth. A third expla-
short first section, the epithets of Sethel (ⲥⲏⲑⲏⲗ) are listed, of which three have survived: ‘the saviour’ (ⲣⲉϥⲧⲱⲧⲉ); ‘the apostle of the Electship’ (ⲡⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲱⲧⲡ̄); and ‘the giver of life to souls’ (ⲡⲣⲉϥⲧⲛϩⲟ ⲛ̄ⲯⲩⲢⲭⲁⲩⲉ). In the longer second part, Sethel is praised by the whole of the Manichaean pantheon from the Father of Greatness and his god-emanations up to Mani and the Manichaean Church. In the next part, the psalmist attempts to express admiration for Sethel through comparisons, of which, again, three have survived: he is compared to the Sun which gives joy, to a fertile flood, and finally, to a good farmer. The final part is a doxology, which mentions Sethel, Mani and Mary.

Two points in the text are of especial interest: 1. Sethel is described as ‘the saviour’ and is also compared to the Sun, the clearest manifestation of divine Light in the zone of ‘the mixture’. In the doxology he is juxtaposed with Mani, the founder of Manichaeism; 2. He is glorified not only by gods-emanations of Light but also by the supreme god of the Manichaean pantheon, the Father of Greatness, as well as by the Manichaean Church and its founder, Mani.


4 PsB 144.1.
5 PsB 144.3.
6 PsB 144.4.
7 PsB 144.5–145.20.
8 PsB 145.21–146.8.
9 PsB 145.22–24.
10 PsB 145.26–28.
11 PsB 145.29–31.
12 PsB 146.9–13.
13 PsB 144.8–10.
14 PsB 145.12–14.
The special meaning ascribed to Sethel raises the question of whether we can detect the influence of Sethianism, an important Gnostic movement in which Seth plays a crucial role. If we are to address this question, it will be necessary to determine the characteristics of Sethel on the basis of other writings from Medinet Madi and to compare these characteristics with those found in the Gnostic Sethian writings from the Nag Hammadi. It is my hope that this investigation will allow us to draw several conclusions regarding Manichaeism as a religious system.

Manichaean references to Sethel have already been studied from the perspective of Gnosticism, but never specifically in relation to Gnostic Sethianism. In addition, my analysis will also draw on the second part of the *Kephalaia* (*The Kephalaia of the Wisdom of My Lord Mani, Codex C from Dublin*) which, due to its high degree of damage, is used less frequently by scholars than the better-preserved first part (*The Kephalaia of the Teacher, Codex P. Berol. 15996 from Berlin*).

### 2. The figure of Sethel in Manichaeism according to the writings from Medinet Madi

Before we examine the Manichaean writings from Medinet Madi to determine the characteristics of Sethel, it should be stated that, in addition to the

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common form of ‘Sethel’, we also find the variant ‘Seth’ in some of the texts. In the damaged text of the third part of the Manichaean Homilies, entitled The Narrative about the Crucifixion, we find the phrase ‘crowned like Sethel’ (χι οριη ης υπνωλά) which – as Villey claims – is undoubtedly a reference to Mani who was admitted to the Paradise of Light. In the same text we also find references to Adam, Enosh, Sem, Shem, Nikotheos, Enoch, Jesus, Paul, and Zarathustra.

In the Kephalaia, an extensive Manichaean doctrinal commentary, Sethel is placed most often in the context of the so-called apostles, holy men and founders of religions who brought holy knowledge to mankind regarding the spiritual and material world. The last and most important of these apostles – according to the Manichaeans – was Mani himself, who is referred to in Arabic sources as ‘the Seal of the Prophets’. In Chapter 1 of the Kephalaia: Concerning the Advent of the Apostle, the author presents a list of the apostles of mankind, starting with Sethel, Enosh, Enoch and Sem, then Buddha, Aurentes...

20 MH 61.23.
22 MH 68.15.
23 MH 68.17.
24 MH 68.17.
25 MH 68.17. The Manichaeans distinguished between Sem and Shem, although it seems to be the same figure, see note 33.
26 MH 68.17.
27 MH 68.19.
28 MH 75.32.
30 MH 70.2.14.
and Zarathustra, and finally Jesus Christ, Paul, and Mani. Additional information regarding the Manichaean chain of apostles is found in Chapter 342 of the second part of *Kephalaia*. Here we find Zarathustra, Buddha, Aurentes and Kebellos, as well as Jesus Christ, Adam, Seth, Enosh, Sem, Enoch, Noah, and Shem. Mani himself is revealed as the last of the apostles.

It is also worth mentioning the prayer of Sethel (Chapter 10), in which the fourteen great aeons are introduced. The aeons are, in fact, the fourteen Manichaean gods responsible for creating the world in the zone of ‘the mixture’. Apart from this we know very little about the prayer. However, Sethel is also mentioned as belonging to the first generations of mankind who lived longer and were larger (Chapter 57). The author of the *Kephalaia* refers to Sethel as the first-born son of Adam, a notable departure from the book of Genesis, in which Cain appears in this role.

In addition to the *Hymn to Seth*, there are references to Sethel in two other works contained within the Manichaean Psalm-Book. The *Psalm of Endurance* refers to the martyrdom of Adam’s descendants, who are the apostles of mankind; the author lists Adam, Sethel, Enosh, Noah, Shem, and Enoch. Sethel also appears in the interesting so-called *Psalm of the Three Cries*, in which three women represent the three ways of the soul’s life on the earth. The first, a Virgin, symbolises unblemished beings of Light; the second, a Continent one, is connected to beings of Light who came into contact with Darkness but overcame it; the third, a Married one, refers to beings of Darkness. In the context of the psalm, the Virgin refers to Sethel, the Con-

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33 Chapter 342 of 2 Keph. On the distinction between Sem and Shem, see P. Dilley, ‘“Hell exists, and we have seen the place where it is.” Rapture and religious competition in Sasanian Iran’, [in:] Gardner, BeDuhn & Dilley, *Mani at the Court* (cit. n. 16), pp. 211–247, at p. 218 n. 28.

34 2 Keph. 422.28–424.19.

35 1 Keph. 12.10–11; 42.29.

36 Gen. 4:1.

37 PsB 142.3–9.
The positive evaluation of Sethel comes at the expense of Adam, who is an ambiguous figure in Manichaeanism: he is, on the one hand, created by the forces of Darkness, but also shaped according to the pattern of one of the Light gods, and then saved later by the Jesus Splendour through soterical knowledge.

3. The figure of Seth in Gnostic Sethianism according to the writings from Nag Hammadi

It should be noted from the outset that Gnostic Sethianism, one of the most significant currents of Gnosticism, has been a subject of lively scholarly discussion for years. There are various issues facing anyone who would wish to reconstruct this religious formation. Firstly, it is likely that the name ‘Sethians’ was coined by polemicists – the term would not have been self-applied. Then, the Christian heresiologists who write about the Sethians (including: Pseudo-Hippolytus of Rome, Refutation of All Heresies 5.19–22; Pseudo-Tertullian, Against All Heresies 2.7–9; Epiphanius of Salamis, Panarion 39 but also, e.g. Theodoret of Cyrus, Compendium of Heretical Accounts 1.14) differ on several significant points regarding the religious content of these communities. Furthermore, it is difficult to distinguish the Sethians known from the testimonies of the heresiologists from those who appear in the original Sethian texts (e.g. Nag Hammadi). And finally, some scholars have also proposed that Sethianism represents an interpretative tradition, rather than a religious group with clearly defined social boundaries.

38 PsB 179.22–24.

39 On this subject, see: al-Nadim, Fihrist, B. Dodge (trans.), vol. 2, New York 1970, pp. 783–786: The Beginning of Generation, According to the Doctrine of Mani: Adam and Eve were begotten by the archons. However, Jesus was sent by the gods of Light to Adam in order to give him enlightening knowledge. Moreover, these gods gave Adam instructions to avoid Eve. Eve begot Cain with the archon and Abel with Cain. Then Eve seduced Adam and from this intercourse a boy was born unlike her previous children, probably because Adam, his father, had already received knowledge from Jesus, the god of Light. Adam named his son Shâtil, i.e. Sethel. Sethel became the leader of this part of mankind who lived virtuously.

40 On the subject of Gnostic Sethianism and problems with its reconstruction, see H.-M.
While the definition of Sethianism is beyond the scope of this paper, we can at least outline its limits by listing the original writings which scholars have classified as Sethian. While various scholars have proposed different lists, they differ mostly in minor points. The texts from Nag Hammadi which appear most frequently on the lists are:

1. *Apocryphon of John* (NHC II 1; III 1; IV 1);
2. *Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC II 4);
3. the so-called *Gospel of the Egyptians* (*The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit*; NHC III 2; IV 2);
4. *Apocalypse of Adam* (NHC V 5);
5. *Three Stèles of Seth* (NHC VII 5);
6. *Zostrianos* (NHC VIII 1);
7. *Melchizedek* (NHC IX 1);
8. *Thought of Norea* (NHC IX 2);
9. *Marsanes* (NHC X);
10. *Allogenes* (NHC XI 3);


citation


In four of these texts – the Thought of Norea, the Marsanes, the Allogenes, and the Trimorphic Protennoia – we find no mention of Seth; the remainder include references to the common form ‘Seth’ (ς.Sqrt), but the variants ‘Em-macha Seth’ (ⲡⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲙⲁⲭⲁ ⲥⲏⲑ) and ‘Seth Emmacha Seth’ (ⲥⲏⲑ ⲉⲙⲁ.Formatter ⲥⲏⲑ) also occur.

In the Hypostasis of the Archons, the account of Seth’s birth does not differ from that found in Genesis (Gen. 4:25), and Seth himself has no salvific functions (Norea, who is born later, has these qualities). It is important to note that Seth was born after ‘Adam [knew] his female counterpart Eve’. The verb ⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ used here may indicate not only physical conception but also spiritual birth (the noun ⲥⲟⲟⲩⲛ = ⲧⲦⲣⲟⲩⲧⲟⲩⲧⲓⲥ = the soterical, spiritual knowledge of the Gnostics). This can be contrasted with the conception of Cain and Abel; before their birth, Eve is described as ‘the carnal woman’ (ⲧⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ Ɐⲱⲩⲡⲓⲟⲩⲧⲓⲥ) and about two parents together are called ‘the psychic ones’ (ⲧⲥⲟⲟⲩⲧⲓⲥ ⲪⲧⲆⲃⲧⲟⲩⲧⲓⲥ). The Apocalypse of Adam is also based on Genesis, although it is more mediated. Here we find references to the deluge, Noah and the ark, the division of the earth between the three sons of Noah, and the destruction

\[\text{References:} \]


45 Hypost. of the Arch., NHC II 4: 91.34–92.3.


47 Hypost. of the Arch., NHC II 4: 90.13.

48 Hypost. of the Arch., NHC II 4: 90.15.


50 Apoc. of Adam, NHC V 5: 70.6–25.

51 Apoc. of Adam, NHC V 5: 72.15–17.
of Sodom and Gomorrah.\footnote{Apocr. of Adam, NHC V 5: 75.9–16.} In this text, Seth appears as little more than a confidant of the revealed knowledge received earlier by his father Adam,\footnote{Apocr. of Adam, NHC V 5: 64.2–6; 67.14–21; 85.19–24.} but is also referred to as ‘the man who is the seed of the great generation or from whom it comes’.\footnote{ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲧⲙⲁⲩ ⲉⲧⲉ ϯⲥⲡⲟⲣⲁ ⲧⲉ Ⲝⲓⲏⲍⲕⲧ Abuse of Adam, NHC V 5: 65.7–9 (trans. MacRae, ‘The Apocalypse’ [cit. n. 49], p. 157).}

However, in the Apocryphon of John, one of the most important texts for the study of Gnostic Sethianism, the spiritual aspects of Seth emerge clearly. In the world of the Pleroma, he was appointed ruler over the second (of four) aeons hierarchically,\footnote{Apocr. of John, NHC II 1: 9.11–13; III 1: 13.17–18 (the edition: M. Waldstein & F. Wisse [eds.], The Apocryphon of John. Synopsis of Nag Hammadi Codices II 1; III 1 and IV 1 with BG 8502.2 [= NHMS 33], Leiden 1995).} and in the demiurgic world, where he appears as the image of the Son of Man, he is described as being born of Adam and the spiritual being Prognosis.\footnote{Apocr. of John, NHC II 1: 24.35–25.2; IV 1: 38.25–30.} The text also emphasises the pleromatic character of Seth’s generation, which has its place in the third aeon: it is said that the generation will descend to the demiurgic world where it will be deprived of knowledge regarding its origin, but when the spirit descends from the pleromatic world, it will return to Pleroma.\footnote{Apocr. of John, NHC II 1: 9.14–15; III 1: 19–21.}

The so-called Gospel of the Egyptians gives Seth the greatest consideration, and also presents him most fully from the spiritual perspective. Pleromatic Seth is brought into existence alongside four enlighteners (Harmozel, Oroiael, Davithe, Eleleth) by Prophaneia who, in turn, revealed herself on the initiative of Adamas (pleromatic Adam).\footnote{Apocr. of John, NHC II 1: 25.5–16; IV 1: 39.2–15.} As the son of Adamas, Seth was called upon to become ‘father of the immovable, incorruptible generation’ (ⲉⲢⲧⲉⲡⲡⲏⲧⲙⲁ υⲧⲏⲧⲕⲓⲏⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ)\footnote{Gosp. of Egyp., NHC III 2: 51.14–22; IV 2: 63.8–17 (edition: A. Böhlig & F. Wisse [eds.], Nag Hammadi Codices III 2 and IV 2. The Gospel of the Egyptians [The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit] [= NHS 4], Leiden 1975).} and is referred to as ‘the great,
incorruptible’ (πνεοῦ ἄφθορος σώ). The text informs us that the generation of Seth was persecuted by the devil through fire, hunger, plagues, and the deluge, but that Seth defended his generation; his activity is described as salvific. The text also mentions that Seth established a holy baptism, and informs us that he wrote a revelation in a book that was then placed in the mountains, to be disclosed at the end of history.

According to the Three Steles of Seth, the titled steles contain holy knowledge regarding the trinity – the son Geradamas, the mother Barbelo, and the pre-existing father – written by Seth himself. He is described here as the son of Geradamas and ‘the father of the living and unshakable generation’ (πατὴρ ἡμῶν ἁγίων ζωῆς ἄλλη ἄλλη).

The extensive (although seriously damaged) Zostrianos identifies Seth with the soterical knowledge that comes to every soul. Here we find references to ‘the children of Seth’ (ἢμὲν ἡν ζωῆς), ‘the holy seed of Seth’ (ἠγιασμένα πρωταρχήτως) and Seth as ‘the father of the immovable generation’ (πατὴρ ἡν ζωῆς ἄλλη ἄλλη).

Finally, the writing Melchizedek, also damaged, informs us of the gathering (ἐκκλήσια) of the children of Seth who are above a multitude of aeons in the Pleroma.

63 Gosp. of Egyp., NHC III 2: 61.23–64.9; IV 2: 73.7–75.24.
64 Gosp. of Egyp., NHC III 2: 63.4–8; IV 2: 74.17–23.
66 Gosp. of Egyp., NHC III 2: 68.1–69.5; IV 2: 80.15–81.2.
67 Three Steles, NHC VII 5: 118.10–127.32.
70 Zostr., NHC VIII 1: 30.9–12.
71 Zostr., NHC VIII 1: 7.8–9.
72 Zostr., NHC VIII 1: 130.16–17.
73 Zostr., NHC VIII 1: 51.15–16; 6.26–27.
4. Manichaean Sethel and Sethian Seth: A comparison of the figures

Now that we have provided a brief overview of Manichaean writings from Medinet Madi and Sethian writings from Nag Hammadi, we can compare the figures of Sethel and Seth. In Sethel of the Manichaeans, we find two noteworthy features. Firstly, there is the spiritual and even divine nature of Sethel. In the Manichaean texts from Medinet Madi, there is no close relationship between Sethel and the figure of Seth who appears in Genesis. While he is referred to in the context of Adam and the Old Testament patriarchs, these are not so much the protoplasts of mankind as the revealers of the transmundane truths, who have been highly spiritualised by the Manichaeans. References to Sethel in relation to the longevity and greatness of the first generations of mankind apply only to the topic discussed in the *Kephalaia* and not to the biblical context. It is also possible to refer to the spiritualisation and even apotheosis of Sethel; as he is more perfect than Adam, Mani can be compared with Sethel in an eschatological context. Sethel is also compared to the pure substance of Light (the Sun), and equated with the gods of the Manichean pantheon – including even the Father of Greatness – who praise him. Secondly, Sethel is considered one of the apostles of mankind, the figures who brought true religious knowledge to people. He is occasionally considered to be first among them, although the most is Mani who, as the last in the sequence of apostles, brings the fullest knowledge. In some Arabic sources he is referred to as ‘the Seal of the Prophets’.

In the Gnostic Sethian writings, there is still a clear relationship between Seth and Genesis (*Hypostasis of the Archons*), although the pleromatic approach, which occasionally deviates from the biblical context, is unquestionably more prevalent. As the son of the pleromatic Adam (Adamas/Ger-adamas), Seth was brought into being alongside four Sethian spiritual enlighteners, who assisted in the process of salvation (*Gospel of the Egyptians*). In the pleromatic world Seth has his place in the second aeon (the first belonging to Adamas, his father), whereas in the demiurgic world he will intervene as the Son of Man (*Apocryphon of John*).

In the Sethian tradition, its eponym Seth is often presented as the one who transmits spiritual knowledge. In the so-called *Gospel of the Egyptians,*
the revelation written by Seth is said to have been hidden, to be disclosed at the end of time. The *Three Steles of Seth*, in turn, discloses one of its possible contents: a knowledge of the Sethian trinity. Seth is also identified with the direct transmission of gnosis to every soul (*Zostrianos*). Although Seth himself was a spiritual being, the sources also suggest that this knowledge was given to Seth by his father Adam, who had previously received it from three mysterious men (*Apocalypse of Adam*).

Many Sethian writings also mention ‘the children of Seth’ and emphasise that Seth is ‘the father of the unshakable generation’. This generation has a spiritual nature and comes from the pleromatic world: according to the *Apocryphon of John*, the generation has its place in the penultimate third aeon. It will descend to the demiurgic world, where it will be deprived of knowledge of its identity and, once redeemed, will return to the Pleroma. According to the so-called *Gospel of the Egyptians* Seth will defend the generation when it is persecuted by the devil.

As we can see from even this cursory outline, there are both clear similarities and substantial differences between Sethel of the Manichaeans and Seth of the Gnostic Sethians. Both are spiritual beings, although the Manichaeans go as far as apotheosis. Moreover, Sethel of the Manichaeans has only a tenuous connection with the book of Genesis, while Seth of the Gnostic Sethians is still, to some extent, dependent on the biblical tradition. Yet, Sethel and Seth are both recognised as salvific figures within their respective milieus, primarily due to their transmission of esoteric knowledge. The Manichaean figure, however, is placed most often in the context of the apostles of mankind, the most important of whom is Mani, whereas Seth of the Gnostic Sethians is the founder, revealer, guardian and saviour of his spiritual generation.

We should not discount the possibility that the name Sethel was used in Manichaean writings to emphasise the more spiritual side of this Manichean figure, to distance him from the biblical Seth or to indicate his Mandaean (Śītīl) rather than Sethian origin.75

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5. Observations regarding
Manichæan Sethel and Sethian Seth

The comparison provided above does not suggest an exact overlap between the Seth of Sethian writings and the Manichæan Sethel, yet there are clear similarities between them. If we are to reconcile the two figures, we must first turn to the *Cologne Mani Codex*, a spiritual biography of the founder of 'the religion of Light'. In this exceptional (for the knowledge of the spiritual development of Mani) testimony, Sethel is discussed in the context of the apostles of mankind, and what is particularly important about their apocalyptic writings. Here, one by one, are listed the apocalyptic works of Adam, Sethel, Enosh, Shem, and Enoch as well as short quotations from the letters of Paul. This may indicate that Mani and/or the early Manichæan community had an extensive knowledge of Judæo-Christian literature, and that his/their understanding of Sethel may have drawn on many spiritual and religious traditions, not merely that of the Gnostic Sethians.

Modern scholarship has offered several hypotheses regarding how the figure of Seth became incorporated into Manichæan thought. According to Albertus F. J. Klijn, who examined the figure of Seth in 'Gnostic literature' (broadly defined to include the texts of the Mandaeans and Manichæans),


77 CMC 48.16–50.7.

78 CMC 50.8–52.7.

79 CMC 52.8–55.9.

80 CMC 55.10–58.5.

81 CMC 58.6–60.12.

82 CMC 60.13–62.9.

83 Klijn, Seth (cit. n. 15), pp. 81–117.
suggested that Jewish Haggadic literature may have provided inspiration for the Gnostic understanding of Seth. Klijn, Seth (cit. n. 15), pp. 118–120.

Gedaliahu A. G. Stroumsa, who analysed the figure of Seth as one of the motifs of Gnostic and Manichaean mythology, further suggested that the sources of certain Manichaean myths could be found in the ‘Judaean-Christian gnosticizing community’ in which Mani grew up. Stroumsa, Another Seed (cit. n. 2), pp. 49–53, 73–134.

Birger A. Pearson proposed that ‘Mani’s teachings regarding Seth were influenced by previous Gnostic traditions of a ‘Sethian’ stamp’, although Pearson’s understanding of previous Gnostic traditions is more broadly defined than the strict corpus of the Sethian writings. Pearson, ‘The figure of Seth’ (cit. n. 2), p. 155.

He also suggests that Mani would have come into contact with Sethian literature in ‘the Elchasaite community in which he was raised’. André Villey examines the development of Seth in the Jewish intertestamental and apocryphal tradition, in Gnosticism and Manichaism, and also suggests that Buddhists ‘probably played the role of an intermediary between [Gnosticism] and Manichaeanism’. John C. Reeves, in his extensive commentary on a fragment of the ‘Sermon of Baraies’ from the Cologne Mani Codex – which discusses the Old Testament predecessors of Mani: Adam, Sethel, Enosh, Shem and Enoch, (CMC 48,16–60,12) – claims that Mani’s knowledge of Adam, Sethel, Enoch and their holy books may have come from a tradition similar to Enochic literature and Christian Adamschriften. Reeves discusses...
what he refers to as ‘Syro-Mesopotamian gnosis’, a feature of Manichaeanism and Mandaism originating from ‘Jewish biblical exegesis’.

Much of the scholarship discussed above suggests the Manichaean conception of Seth was influenced by a broad Judaeo-Christian tradition, not merely by Sethian Gnosticism. Even Pearson, who refers to a specifically ‘Sethian’ tradition agrees that the Elchasate community in which Mani was brought up was also a source of inspiration; and while Villey suggests that the Manichaeans borrowed the figure of Seth from the Mandaens he also illustrates that the idea of Seth developed within a wider religious milieu which included the Jewish tradition and Gnosticism.

6. The figure of Sethel as an example of how Manichaeanism works as a religious system

In addition to examining the sources from which the Manichean understanding of Seth emerged, it is also important to say a few words about the role he plays within their religious system. As Albertus F. J. Klijn has observed, the Gnostics ‘never adapted ideas taken from their environment simply for their own sake. Such ideas were rigorously integrated into their own systems of thought’. In the case of Sethel, he was incorporated into the chain of the apostles of mankind. The ‘Sermon of Baraies’ from the Cologne Mani Codex provides us with a short version of this chain – featuring only Old Testament figures and Paul – which may represent an initial version. It also tells us that the reason this sequence of apostles was established was to demonstrate that the revelation of Mani was not so different from the revelations of previous apostles. We are, in other words, dealing with an attempt to legitimise a new religion by emphasising its ‘antiquity’ and downplaying the notion that Mani is a ‘revolutionary’.

The writings from Medinet Madi provide alternative ways in which the sequence of the apostles was used by the Manichaeans. In the first chapter

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95 Reeves, Heralds (cit. n. 2), p. 209.
96 Klijn, Seth (cit. n. 15), p. 119.
97 CMC 70.23–72.7.
of the *Kephalaia*, entitled *Concerning the Advent of the Apostle*, Sethel is listed at the beginning of the chain together with Enosh, Enoch and Sem; next come Buddha and Aurentes who are connected with the East, Zarathustra who is connected with Persia, then Jesus Christ, Paul, and ‘a righteous man of truth’ (οὐδέκαλος ἁρμάνη), who immediately precede Mani. The chain, as we can see, has grown to encompass not only the Judaeo-Christian line (plus Jesus Christ and ‘a righteous man of truth’), but the ‘eastern’ and ‘Persian’ lines as well. This version seems to emphasise the spatial and temporal universality of a tradition which was to be superseded by Mani, who claims: ‘[my] hope has gone toward the sunrise of the world, and [every] inhabited part; to the clime of the north’, and that ‘not one among the apostles did ever do these things’.

The damaged Chapter 342 of the second part of the *Kephalaia* also presents an expanded sequence of the apostles naming the regions to which the apostles were sent: Zarathustra to Persia; Buddha to India and Kushan; Aurentes and Kebellos to the East; another figure (the damaged text) to Parthia; then Jesus Christ and, one by one, Adam, Seth, Enosh, Sem, Enoch,

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98 1 *Keph*. 12.10–12.  
100 1 *Keph*. 12.15.  
108 According to Iain Gardner, this is not a name but a term for a representative of the Jain religious elite, one who has omniscience (kevalin), see Gardner, ‘Some comments on Mani’ (cit. n. 99), pp. 131–135.
Noah, Shem, and finally Mani. The fact that the text mentions the ‘eastern’ apostles before the Old Testament ones may be due to the fact that the chapter was compiled from Iranian materials. The presentation of the chain in this text was probably intended to validate the important Manichaean conviction about the existence of the Land of Light: ‘I have told you about a multitude of witnesses who have come forth from the land of light’.

The third of the Manichaean Homilies, entitled The Narrative about the Crucifixion provides a sequence of figures who are, with the exception Nikotheos, the Old Testament patriarchs: Adam, Enosh, Sem, Shem, Nikotheos, and Enoch. The text is damaged in many places, but the name Sethel, who is also mentioned a few pages earlier, may appear in the seventeenth line. In the same homily we also find representatives of Christianity – Paul and Jesus – as well as Zarathustra and, of course, Mani. As the subject of this text is the death of Mani and the persecution of the early Manichaean Church, the chain of apostles may have been invoked here to demonstrate the long tradition of holy persons who suffered for their faith in the same way as the founder of ‘the religion of Light’.

The sequence of apostles in The Psalm of Endurance is particularly interesting. Here, the Old Testament patriarchs (Adam, Sethel, Enosh, Noah,
Shem, and Enoch)\(^{119}\) are supplemented not only by Jesus,\(^{120}\) Paul,\(^{121}\) and Mani,\(^{122}\) but also by the apostle-martyrs of Jesus (Peter, Andrew, John, James, and Thomas)\(^{123}\) and the holy women-martyrs known from apocryphal Christian literature (Thecla, Drusiane, Maximilla, and Aristobulla).\(^{124}\) Before these figures are mentioned, the psalm talks about the gods of Light who, in their fight against the forces of Darkness, sacrificed themselves and mixed with them (the First Man and his five sons),\(^{125}\) and about those who carry the weight of the visible universe\(^{126}\) (five sons of the Living Spirit).\(^{127}\) A long sequence of beings of Light was thus established that ran from the cosmogonic and cosmological gods, through the apostles of mankind and the holy men and women of Christianity, culminating in the Manichaean community of the author’s day.\(^{128}\) The work which encourages Manicheans to persevere in the face of persecution presents the Manichaean Church as part of a long tradition of beings of Light that withstand suffering: ‘We are true sons, the heirs of their Fathers’.\(^{129}\)

The simplest sequence of apostles in which Sethel appears is that of the Old Testament patriarchs beginning with Adam or Sethel and ending with Enoch or Shem. In the Cologne Mani Codex the sequence is enriched with the Christian figure of Paul, while the third of the Manichaean Homilies, adds the founders of Christianity and Zoroastrianism, as well as the visionary Nikotheos who completes the line of Old Testament patriarchs. The chain is further enlarged in Chapter 1 of the Kephalaia with the addition of

\(^{119}\) PsB 142.3–9.  
\(^{120}\) PsB 142.11.  
\(^{121}\) PsB 142.31  
\(^{122}\) PsB 143.16.17.  
\(^{123}\) PsB 142.18–30.  
\(^{124}\) PsB 143.4–14.  
\(^{125}\) PsB 141.4–25.  
\(^{126}\) For the Manicheans, the visible universe is a result of the mixing of Light with Darkness.  
\(^{127}\) PsB 141.26–142.1.  
\(^{128}\) PsB 143.20–31.  
\(^{129}\) ἡμᾶς γὰρ ὑμᾶς γίνεται ἡ χιλιάδος Χριστιανῶν, PsB 143.23 (trans. Allberry, A Manichaean Psalm-Book [cit. n. 3], p. 143).
Buddha and Aurentes (a figure whose name probably means arhat and represents Buddhism). Chapter 342 of the Kephalai reorganises the sequence from Chapter 1, presenting the eastern line (Zarathustra, Buddha), the western one (Jesus Christ) and a third line featuring Adam, Seth and the other Old Testament patriarchs. Kebellos, whose name most probably refers to the kevalin and represents Jainism, also appears in the Eastern line. The Psalm of Endurance is perhaps the most interesting example as it adds the apostle-martyrs and the holy Christian women-martyrs to the Judaeo-Christian apostles of mankind (from Adam and Sethel to Jesus and Paul), and placed the cosmogonic and cosmological gods of Light at the beginning.

The sequence of the apostles, of which Sethel was a feature, was a useful tool within Manichaean writing that served many purposes. The most important purpose was to demonstrate that the founder of ‘the religion of Light’ and his message belonged to a universal spiritual and religious tradition (Chapter 1 of the Kephalai). However it is used in the Cologne Codex Mani to show that Mani was not a subversive innovator, but rather belonged to an ‘ancient’ tradition of holy revealers; in Chapter 342 of the Kephalai it offers validation for the existence of the Land of Light, and in the third of the Manichaean Homilies and The Psalm of Endurance it is used to justify the necessity of withstanding suffering and persecution. More broadly, the sequence could be used as a means of adapting the Manichaean message to different religious and cultural circles.

7. Final Conclusions

Although there are similarities between the figure of Sethel who appears in the writings from Medinet Madi and the figure of Seth from the Gnostic

It should be mentioned that the modern scholars note only one function of using the sequence of the apostles of mankind, namely that which justifies the message of Mani as a part and a summary of the great spiritual and religious tradition: G. G. Stroumsa, ‘Seal of the Prophets’, [in:] idem, The Making of the Abrahamic Religions (cit. n. 31), pp. 96–97; M. Tardieu, Le manichéisme, Paris 1997, pp. 20–22; Baker-Brian, Manichaeism (cit. n. 76), pp. 49–54; J. C. Reeves, Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism, Comparative Islamic Studies, Sheffield 2013, p. 12.
Sethian texts, it is impossible to detect a direct line of influence from the latter to the former. This ambiguity may stem from the fact that the Manichaeans drew on a broad base of Judaeo-Christian literature, and Sethelian motifs may thus have come from a variety of spiritual and religious traditions including (but not limited to) Gnostic Sethianism. Furthermore the focus on the Manichaean religious system – in this case the structure of ‘the religion of Light’ as represented by the sequence of apostles of mankind – caused outside figures such as Seth/Sethel to lose some of their characteristic features in the process of being adapted to the needs of the religion.

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THE FIGURE OF SETHEL IN THE MANICHAEAN WRITINGS

The figure of Sethel in the Medinet Madi Manichaean writings: A result of the influence of Gnostic Sethianism? Observations on Manichaeism as a religious system

Abstract
In the Manichaean Coptic Psalm-Book (c. AD 400) we find a hymn (PsB 144.1–146.13) addressed to Sethel/Seth. Hence, a French scholar, André Villey, titled it Hymne à Seth. This is an interesting work, since the biblical figure of Seth is the eponym of one of the two most important movements of Gnosticism, namely Sethianism. In my paper, firstly, I study the characteristics of the figure of Sethel/Seth in the Manichaean writings from Medinet Madi; secondly, I examine whether, as for Sethel/Seth, we can talk about the influence the Sethians on ‘the religion of Light’ or, on the contrary, whether his figure in the Manichaean writings was an original, Manichaean, reinterpretation. Finally, this analysis allows us to draw two important conclusions regarding Manichaeism as a religious system. The first of them is that the Manichaean saw a broad base of Judaeo-Christian literature, not only from Gnostic Sethianism. The other is that Manichaeism caused external figures such as Seth/Sethel to lose some of their characteristics in the process of being adapted to the needs of the mentioned religion.

Keywords: Sethel, Seth, Manichaeism, Sethianism, Gnosticism, Medinet Madi discovery, Nag Hammadi discovery

Czy postać Sethela w manichejskich pismach z Medinet Madi jest wynikiem wpływu gnostyckiego setianizmu? Obserwacje na temat manicheizmu jako systemu religijnego

Abstrakt
W koptyjskim Psalterzu manichejskim (ok. 400 r. n.e.) znajdujemy hymn (PsB 144.1–146.13) skierowany do Sethela/Seta. Stąd francuski badacz André Villey nadał mu tytuł Hymne à Seth. Utwór ten jest interesujący, ponieważ Set, postać biblijna, stał się eponimem jednego z dwóch najważniejszych nurtów gnostycyzmu, mianowicie setianizmu. W moim artykule badam, po pierwsze, cechy postaci Sethela/Seta według manichejskich pism z Medinet Madi. Po drugie zadaję pytanie, czy rzeczywiście
możemy mówić co do Sethela/Seta o wpływie setian na „religję światłości”, czy przeciwnie, jego postać w pismach manichejskich była oryginalną, manichejską, reinterpretacją. W końcu analiza ta pozwala nam wyciągnąć dwa ważne wnioski dotyczące manicheizmu jako systemu religijnego. Pierwszy jest taki, że manichejczycy czerpali z szerokiego zaplecza literatury judeochrześcińskiej, a nie tylko z gnostycznego setianizmu, inny zaś, że manicheizm spowodował, iż postacie zewnętrzne, takie jak Sethel/Set, utraciły niektóre ze swoich charakterystycznych cech w procesie dostosowywania ich do potrzeb wspomnianej religii.

Słowa kluczowe: Sethel, Set, manicheizm, setianizm, gnostycyzm, odkrycie z Medinet Madi, odkrycie z Nag Hammadi