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"SEAL OF THE PROPHETS"
THE NATURE OF A MANICHAEAN METAPHOR

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Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but the Apostle of God (nâsit Allah) and the Seal of the Prophets (khâlatun al-munabiin).

(Qur'an 33:40)

Only once is Muhammad referred to as "seal of the prophets" in the whole Qur'an. Yet, this conception is of cardinal theological significance in Islam. The usual interpretation of the expression, both in traditional Islamic exegesis and in modern scholarship, takes it to signify "the last prophet" to be sent by God to mankind.¹

In his analysis of the Qur'anic expression, A. Jeffery has surmised that it "may have been... already familiar to [Muhammad's] contemporaries", pointing out that in Arabic, khulsum is a loan-word from Aramaic, and that already in Christianity the message of Jesus is implicitly considered to be the final prophetic revelation.² Jeffery points out, however, that explicitly, only Mani claimed to be the last in the succession of messengers of God, adding that "in the Arabic sources it is recorded that his followers called him "the Seal of the Prophets".³

The fact that this actual wording is to be found only under the pen of Muslim theologians and heresiologists should in itself call for our susp-

1 For a thorough analysis of the Islamic understanding of the expression, see V. Fried- 
mam, "Finality of Prophethood in Sunni Islam" in this volume, pp. 170-219. I wish to thank Prof. W. Sunderman for reading the draft of this paper and making useful remarks.

2 A. Jeffery, "The Qur'an in Antiquity", The Muslim World 40 (1950), 266. See also his The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an (Beirut: Oriental Institute, 1936), 120-221.

3 "The Qur'an as Scripture", 266-267 and n. 18; cf. my "Aspects du Manichéisme 
Prophets", a sentence interpolated by the addition "in the land of the Arabs". Ibn al-Murtaja, analyzing a book written by the Manichaean leader Yazdangbakh, says that Mani appeared as "the seal of the prophets", i.e. at the end of a series of prophets beginning with Adam and including, together with Seth and Noah, Buddha, Zarathushtra and Jesus. Yet, the fact that Yazdangbakh lived in the 9th century, in the time of al-Ma’mun (according to Ibn al-Sidr’s explicit testimony in his important chapter on Manichaeism in the Fihrist), disqualifies his testimony as reflecting a pre-Islamic Manichaean use of the actual phrase "seal of the prophets" in reference to Mani. It remains plausible, however, or even probable, that under the Islamic yoke, the Manichaeanists did insist that it was Mani, rather than Muhammad, who had been khitaam al-nbyeen.

The same argument holds for Abu al-Ma’ali, who reports that it is in a book written in Persian towards the end of the 11th century that Mani was called "seal of the prophets." The religious vocabulary of the Near East in the first Christian centuries retains a broad spectrum of senses for the vocables "seal" or "to seal". As a matter of fact, both the straightforward and the figurative senses appear already in the Hebrew Bible: for the proper sense, see, e.g., Ex. 8:8-10 for the noun, in Jer. 32:10 for the verb, figuratively in Cant. 8:6 ("Se me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm").

Buddha and Jesus as revolvers of Grace (Vol. before Mani, "The seal of prophets") of Ma’ali (in Qumayy’s Ma’ansi) on the doctrine of the mystics, the eschatologists and the mariners, Arabic Manichaicism, RVR 1873, 7-9, esp. (Passage A) "(6) [Mani] pretend to turn (Turnov)


Ibid. These sources were first collected (and analyzed) by K. Kasner, Manichaean Sources for the manichaeans and their Sectarians, 1879, and more recently by S.H. Tagaqian, Mani.

"Ibid. According to Babri, "Ibn al-Sidr’s explicit testimony in his important chapter on Manichaeism in the Fihrist", i.e. the seal of the proph-
Heavens. He will make him "like a new" (signet ring?) for He has chosen him. More precisely, even, in Dan. 9:24, we read: "Seventy weeks of years are decreed concerning your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin (אום יהוה), and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet (ויהיה רוח טעם), and to set up a most holy place." It must be noted that the root atom is used in its two senses in this last verse: to end (the first time) and to accomplish (the second time). A brief investigation did not reveal any particular interest is the word ישן (יינא) in both Rabbinic and Christian exegesis.11

These same uses of the name and the verb reappear in the New Testament. While a verse like Rev. 5:11 obviously reflects the proper sense of a seal (on a letter), the figurative meaning appears too: In John 3:33, it can only mean "to confirm," while in 2 Cor. 1:22 Paul implies that in sealing believers, God has made them His inviolable possession. Paul also reflects Jewish religious parlance when he says that Abraham "received the sign (علامة) of circumcision as a seal (מגן שמה) of the righteousness of the faith" (Rom. 4:11). Indeed, circumcision is often called a seal in Rabbinic literature: Ex. Rabba, for instance, speaks of "the seal of Abraham in your flesh," יִצְבַּא עַל בְּזֵית עַמָּם.12

The same use is found in Apostolic literature (for instance in Barn. 9:6), where ἔμφασις obviously means "attestation," "confirmation." From the Jewish circumcision, however, the term came to refer primarily to baptism in Early Christianity. The Shepherd of Hermas (Simil. IX:16; 3.17.4 and parallels) and the 2nd Letter of Clement (7:6; 8:6), preserve the earliest use of this label for baptism. In these writings, to receive the seal means to receive the name of God, to be granted life.


12 The possibility however remains that Christian writings were instrumental in carrying to seventh-century Arabia the idea of a "seal of the prophets." Abnormal, the expression is a very early one, since it appears already in the Testament of Levi (2nd cent. B.C.). See D. F. Pink and S. Sabin, "Who Scrutified the Well-Beloved in (or from) the Womb" (in Hebrew), Studies in Bible and the Ancient Near East (Jerusalem, 1978), 333 and n. 16.

The Shepherd of Hermas is particular, refers to those who have received the "seal of the Son of God," adding: סְסַרֶשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַבְּלֹא לְרָגוֹשׁ לְוי. As Boussot, after Dölger, has noted long ago:

The naming of the one, the name is probably only a weakened sacramental form for the more original, more robust custom of branding or incribing upon the person being initiated the sign (name, symbol) of the appropriate God, to whom it was consecrated.13

A similar metaphorical use of seal is to be found in various Gnostic texts, although an actual baptism of water might not be implied in all cases.14

Among the Mandaean, sealings (טומד), which protects against demons and evil powers, seems to be part of the baptismal ritual.15 The culic reference to severs in the Mandaean texts is particularly relevant for our purpose, since the Baptist Ebisunite community in which Mani grew up — and whose beliefs and religious practices he first attempted to reform, before openly and totally rebelling against them — was probably closely related to the Mandaean community, and to other Gnostic baptismal groups of Jewish-Christian descent.16

Among other aspects of his complex religious self-identity, Mani considered himself to be the Paraclete of the Endtime.18 In his very peculiar, but none the less intensely lived, imitated Jesus, Mani considered his rejection of Ebisunite ritual to be parallel to the way in which Jesus had ...
argued with the Pharisees about various points of the Law. In particular, Mani rejected the baptism of the Euchaiaste and their frequent ablutions, which, he argued, had no soteriological value whatsoever.

"From Baptism to Gnosis", the apt title of L. Koeren's systematic study, emphasizes the basic shift accomplished by Mani and his followers in their approach to ritual. If the Manichæans, however, rejected baptism, they did not reject all kinds of cult. It would seem, in particular, that they maintained a certain incantatory cult, which they called seal; the scant, but none the less conclusive evidence has been analyzed by H.-C. Puech. To his conclusions, one should add that this Manichaean seal might well have evolved from the Euchaiaste baptism.

Thus, we read in the Manichaean Psalter found in a Coptic version — and which preserves some of the earliest strata of Manichaean literature:

Receive the holy Seal (espouos) from the Mind of the Church, and fulfill the commandments (Ps. 22, 11-12)

Despite this probable original and primary meaning, however, the Manichaean metaphor cannot remain, any more than any other metaphor, univalent. Indeed, we know of various meanings of the word in early Manichaean texts and traditions. In the Psalter, again, Jesus is addressed thus:

Thou also art the seal (espouos) of every wander (60, 3-4)

Elsewhere, in the same work we read:

Receive the seal of (espouos) — call —
Receive not the seal outwardly (39, 13-15)

In the Kephalsia, similarly, the catechumen is said to be sealed in his soul with the "Seal of Faith and the Seal of Truth" (or of Gnosis; 222, 11-20)

We read elsewhere in the same work that to Spiririus Fvent has fastened all his members (i.e. the Manichaeeans) with a chain of Peace, and sealed them with the Seal of Truth (143, 25-20). It is difficult to establish whether in these examples seal refers to a precise Sitz im Leben, or whether the metaphor does not imply any specific reference. Some time


before his Passion, Mani wrote to all his churches a "Letter of the Seal" (freswepi-I-mnovw), which might be identical to his testament (kaoiwv). The corrupt passage, however, mentioning this letter leaves no indication as to the meaning of seal in this case.24 Yet another precise conception, of that of the "three seals" (Ps. 94, 11), appears time and again in the Psalter.22

Let us seal (marteths) our mouth that we may find the Father and seal (espouos) our (7) hands that we may find the Son, and guard our purity that we may find the Holy Spirit. (Ps. 118, 16 ff)

or else:

The seal (espouos) of the mouth for the sign of the Father, the peace of the hands for the sign of the Son, the purity of virginity for the sign of the Holy Spirit. (Ps. 115, 31-33)

The best description of what these three seals stood for in Manichaean theology is provided by Augustine. In his anti-Manichaean polemical works, the bishop of Hippo often refers to the three signacula, which stand for the main aspects of the ethics of his former coreligionists, whom he now calls "those false and lying saints" (Conf. V, 10).

The signaculum oris, the seal of the mouth, refers to their ritual diet (i.e. their vegetarianism and other food prohibitions) as well as to the prohibition of lies and evil words. The signaculum manus, the seal of the hand, stands for the prohibition of murder, which does not only extend to men and animals, but also to the vegetal world, which Mani considered to be souled. The signaculum sexus, finally — the seal of the bosom —

22 Puech has studied Manichaean memory and ritual practices during twenty years of lectures at the Collège de France (1952-1972). The results of his research, first published in the Collège's Annuaire are now conveniently reprinted in his Sert le Manichéisme et sauv envers (Paris, 1979). On the rise of sealing, see esp. 341-355. We have evidence of such a rite, performed by Iagabriol, one of Mani's disciples in the Kingdom of Reusa. See W. Schmidmann, Mittelalterliche manichäische Texte kirkisch-geschichtlichen Inhalts (Berlin, 1981), 47 (text 5.4).

23 This letter is mentioned in M 452 B. Andrea-Hentzsch, Mittelaltische Manichäer aus chinesisch-Turkestans III (PelJon, 1934, 193), reprinted in Hanning's Selection papers, 1 (Leiden-Paris, 14, Leiden-Teheran, 1977), 318 cf. Birks and Richardson (Adv. 423). See also Sondermann, Mittelalterliche manichäische Texte, 153 (reg. 2774). The testament is referred to in Rom. 55, 5; cf. Rom. 50 and 94-96 passim. See also Puech, Sert le Manichéisme, 381.

24 These "three seals" are also referred to by Iba (IbNäüm). See Flagal, Mani, 64, 74.
symbolize the exorcism of the Manichæan elects, their prohibition of wedding and sexual relations.28 In these three cases, the seal would seem to be something which shut up the part of the body to which it is applied, thus preventing sin through the mouth, the hand or the bosom. These three famous "moral" seals, however, are not the only connotated symbols of the Manichæan faith. As the Iranian A.V.W. Jackson showed long ago, they should be seen in parallel with four other seals, known from the Turfan texts, anc of a more doctrinal characteristic.29 These are the "four light seals", as they are called in the X'airavatī, a manual for the Confession of Sins extant only in an Uighur translation. Unfortunately, this text is not easily datable, although it stands to reason to pos-
tulate an early Vorlage.30
The relevant passage reads thus:
In Auzua tangi, in the God of the Sun and Moon, in the powerful God and the prophets have we put our trust, we have relied on (and have become Auditors. Four Light Seals have we sealed in our hearts. Firstly Love, the seal of Auzua, tangi, secondly Faith, the Seal of the God of the Sun and Moon, thirdly the Fear of (God), the seal of the Fireland God, (and) fourthly Wisdom, the seal of the prophets (Manichæans).31 (VII. 13)

28 The three seals are best discussed by P. Allin, L’Evangile intellectuel de Saint Augustin (Paris, 1913), 126-128. Augustin’s testimony that he had already been remarkably analyzed by F.C. Baur, Die manichäische Religion (1831), reprinted Gottingen (1828), 243-250.
29 See Jackson’s study of “the Manichæan seals”, in his Researches in Manichæism (New York, 1925), 331-337.
30 The most thorough study of the text is that of P.P. Assmann, X’airavatī: Studies in Manichæanism (Asia Theologica Dokumente, 7; Copenhagen, 1965). Assmann (p. 246) points out that the Parthian loan-words might reflect an early Vorlage, since in the latter half of the fourth century, Parthian was replaced by Sogdian as the “sacred language” of the Manichæans in the East. Actually, a noteworthy parallel to the idea of the four seals might be the probable Manichæan Sin of the Letter of the Manichæan conception. According to M. de Reg才行, King Anatharzam and the four seals: “Celui de l’empire... avait pour emblème la Justice; le sceau des demeures... l’Agriculture; le sceau des cérémonies... l’Empereur; le sceau des postes...”. T. Feelisch, op. cit., 1946, 193-224. It is strikingly like the four Manichæan seals, those of the Manichæan king (or rather those of anem), in his vision in the text. We add to thank Prof. Dr. Shadbolt for reminding me of this passage.
On p. 511, Kékesi discusses the meaning of haurayar which came to be identified in Buddhism and Manichæan texts with “Buddha”, while the term seems to stand for the Brahmic or “Vimanaagayragop. Pratāp”, rather than “Bhagavat” (The last word, in its turn, appears to stand for “Apaicū”, rather than “Pratāp”, in the Manichæan texts; see n. 32 infra.)

Those four light seals represent the four cardinal aspects of Manichæan theology, alluded to elsewhere in the doctrine of “the Fourfold God”, τον τετρασελφονικον πατερα τον περικαθω, as he is called in the longer Greek formula of adjuration.32
The Fibrist of Ibn al-Nadim preserves another, slightly different version of these four articles of faith, which were part of Mani’s Law, speaking of “faith of the four greats, namely (1) God, (2) His Light, (3) His Power, (4) His Wisdom”, adding, “His wisdom is the Holy Religion”33 (with its five significations: teachers, deacons, priests, the Elect... and the Healers...).
It would thus seem that the “seal of the prophets of the X’airavatī” must be connected with the “Holy Religion” of the Fibrist, i.e. the Manichæan Church.34 This hypothesis is corroborated by another passage in the X’airavatī.
If we should somehow, unspiritually, have sinned against the holy Electi, who do meritorious deeds, and bring redemption, and if we, although we called them “true messengers of God” and “prophet”, (still) should not have believed (this): “The holy Elect is characterized by good deeds.”
In other words the Electi are explicitly called prophets (bharusin), or “true messengers of God”.
Thus the metaphorical expression “seal of the prophets” is indeed found in a Manichæan text, and might well be of a pre-Islamic origin. But the prophets referred to in this phrase are in no way Mani’s prede-
cessors, but rather his followers. Moreover, the metaphor of seal does not imply either in this expres-
sion or in any of the other pre-Islamic mentions of the term studied here.
32 See Jackson, Researches, 332, C. E. Peterson, “Jesus bei den Manichäern”, Third concept of the “fourfold” Father, “they who know God”, excess, and one chorus, “one” of the Manichæans see, chronology and historian, XIV. 32 (SPA 32) 329 and 324, n. 7; reprinted in
34 See Assmann, X’airavatī, 221; “instead of the ‘Prophets’ the passage in Fibrist has the holy (shahid) religion”, which itself comes to the same thing as “the Prophets’ passage.”
35 B. I. 195 Assmann (text p. 172)
a reference to “last”, but, rather relates the idea of confirmation, or attestation.

To my knowledge, the appellation prophētes for the Electi, although it is quite explicitly stated in the Xαναναίς has not been hitherto duly noted by Manichaean scholarship. In order to understand its meaning more precisely, it might therefore be useful to give a brief analysis of the Manichaean conception of prophets.

As noted above, Mani called himself, in the Sāhvārānī “Apostle of the God of Truth to Babylonia”. Mani, in whose complex religious personality not only the imitatio Jesu, but also the imitatio Pauli, played a crucial role, also considered himself to be “Apostle of Jesus Christ” — although this figure was for him the Heavenly, or rather Cosmic Χειρ(Zeit), and not the Jesus of Paul.

In a fragment of his Living Gospel, preserved in the recently published Cognate Mani Codex, he says: “If Mani, an apostle of Jesus Christ (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἀνθρώπος) through the will of God, the Father of Truth” — adding, what Paul could in no way have added: “from whom I was also born”.

It is a striking and significant point, which, again, does not seem to have been hitherto underlined, that Mani, who willingly attributes to himself the title of Apostle, never refers to himself as a prophet. This fact does not only hold true for the Western Manichaean sources. In the Iranian texts, too, Mani is always called Ἰησοῦς (translated “Apostle”, “Gesandter”, “Enkel” by Henning and Sundermann) or else Ἰησοῦς υἱος θεοῦ (3a), while the vocable μαγισσάρι (“a prophet”, “he who brings a message”) seems never to have been used in the Manichaean Iranian texts.

This should be explained, again, by Mani’s imitatio Pauli. He conscientiously copies Paul’s language, and not this not only when he refers to himself as an “apostle of Jesus Christ”, but also when his disciples are called “the seal of his apostleship” (σφακτή ἢμαρ τὴν διανομὴν; CMC 72, 4-7) in manifest imitation of 1 Cor. 9:2, where Paul emphatically says to his own disciples. “It is you, indeed, who are the seal of my apostleship: ἐσταλμένοι ἐν τῷ ἐμῷ ἐμφανίζεσθαι ὑμῖν”,15

Mani saw himself as the last one in a succession of messengers sent by God, from the protoplast on, in order to bequeath to mankind the visions granted to them in ecstatic rapture. Thus Adam, Seth, Enosh, Sem, Enoch, up to Paul, “each one of the forefathers showed his own revelation to his elect.”16 In their turn, these elect ones are to preach, in each generation, these revelations to outsiders. The forefathers, although they are once referred to, in CMC 62, 9-14, as “the most blessed apostles, saviours, evangelists, and prophets of the truth”, are generally simply called “apostles.” Thus: “concerning the way in which this apostleship is this generation was sent” (CMC 45, 4 f.). Or again, “All apostles cries, they announced... this fight in each one of their books, from Adam... until today.”

Parallel to this chain of Biblical messengers beginning with Adam, we are told of two, or else of three, main revealer-figures appearing in history before Mani. In the passage of the Sāhvārānī quoted above, Mani refers to Buddha, Zarathustra and Jesus, while in the Ἱστορίας only Zarathustra and Jesus are mentioned before Mani “the Third Apostle” (11, 23-24; 25-27) or “the Apostle of Light” (16, 28, cf. 21 and 28).

There is no doubt that Mani considered himself the last such revealer to be sent to mankind before the Endzeit, since he thought that while previous apostles had only revealed aspects of the divine truth, his own apostleship was meant to reveal Gnosticism in its totality — and therefore was final.17

15 CMC 56, 4-5
17 This is not only by the editors of the Codex; see Zoroast. Papyri. Erg. 19 (1975), 72, n. 136; cf. Zoroast. Papyri. Erg. 3 (1979), 109 and n. 25, where total credibility is accorded to 3a. It is also Menpes’s working “Während im Koter Codex die Prophetenrede als die Siegel der Bestellung ihrer Lehrer unterschiedet, hat sich Mani selbst als das offensichtliche Siegel aller Propheten ausgewiesen. Diese Bezeichnung überrascht Muhammad im Koran.”
18 ἰησοῦς υἱος θεοῦ
19 Ἰησοῦς υἱος θεοῦ (CMC 45, 4-7).
20 Ἱστορίας 14, 29-31. The “fight” is not an apocalyptic war, as are most Apokalytische manichaei.
21 Ἰστορίας 14, 29-31. The “fight” is not an apocalyptic war, as are most Apokalytische manichaei.
As is well known, the theory which lies at the basis of Mani's conception of apotheosis is that first developed by the Ebionites, who considered Jesus to be the prophet foretold by Moses in Deut. 18:5. They called Jesus "the True", or "the Universe" Prophet, διάθεσις or δ i εἰς προφήτην, and even "the only prophet of truth", δ i εἰς λαθρεύων μόνον προφήτην. In this conception, however, Jesus was considered to be only the last incarnation of this true prophet, who had run through the ages, incarnating himself anew in each generation, from Adam on.

In this context, the clear preference shown by Mani for apostle to prophet stands to reason, if we remember that Paul, whom Mani held in such a high esteem, was depicted in the darkest colours in Ebionite theology. (In the Pseudo Clementine writings, Simon Magus is only Paul's mountpiece.) While the Ebionites never refer to Jesus as apostelus, it would seem that Ebchusian theology was on this point sensibly different. In this regard, one may refer to Heb 3:1, where Jesus is called ἀποστόλος, a title partaken by the heavenly messenger Μάνδα δ' ἀναίρετον in Mandaeic texts (Ziganda). Despite these texts, the semantic fields of αὐτάρκης and ἀπόφημεν are far from being quite distinct in early Christian literature. In the New Testament, apostles and prophets are often mentioned in one breath. Thus in Luke 11:49, where the Wisdom of God says: "I shall send them prophets and apostles", or, similarly, in Rev. 18:20 or Eph. 3:3. The synonymity between apostle and prophet is most clear in the Didache, for which an apostle staying three days or more in a community is considered to be a false prophet. Indeed, in the early Church, where apostles and prophets were known, as well as teachers (διδάσκαλος), their roles do not seem always to have been clearly distinct. In the earliest Antiochene community, for instance, there were ἐφημέρες καὶ διδάσκαλοι, "prophets and teachers" (Acts 13:1); the coupled terms call to mind the words in which Mani describes the reaction of certain Baptists to his early advocation: "some of them took me for a prophet and teacher".20

21 Pseudo Clementine Homilies 1.13.1. For numerous parallels in the Pseudo Clementine literature, see C. Frick's article "noumena ex...", in Kühn's Thesaurus Bibliographicus, 1, 445.
25 See Heinrich, "Manni and the Babylonian Baptism", 14-51. For numerous parallels in the Pseudo Clementine literature, see C. Frick's article "noumena ex...", in Kühn's Thesaurus Bibliographicus, 1, 445.

Other indications, however, would suggest that in some milieu, a distinction was made between these various titles. Paul, in particular, establishes a clear hierarchy between apostles, prophets and teachers, who constitute, together, the mystical body of Christ. And you are the body of Christ, and members each for his part, and those whom God has established in the church are first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers (1 Cor 12:27-28; cf. Eph 4:11).

The preponderance of the apostles in the hierarchy is directly relevant to Mani's self-understanding as an apostle—in opposition to those Baptists who saw in him, at first, only a prophet or a teacher. In the XΣωκραιτης, as noted, the inner core of the Manichaean Church, are designated as prophets. A similarly central role was played by prophets in some early Christian trends, the best known case being that of Montanism, an enthusiastic and chiliastic movement which flourished in Asia Minor in the later half of the second century. The success of this schismatic movement was soon felt by the bishops as a direct challenge to their growing ecclesiastical power, and charismata was readily checked and neutralized. Yet, a curious fragmentary passage found at Oxyrhynchus, and dated from the third or fourth century, provides an interesting parallel to the Manichaean designation of the electi as prophets. Speaking about those who, being filled with the Holy Spirit, reveal in their words the Spirit of Divinity, the fragment adds:

As the last words clearly show, the author of the fragment was far from any docetic attitude. And yet, his mention of a "college of prophets" who represent the body of Christ, i.e. the core of the Church, does not only allude to the words of Paul quoted above (1 Cor 12:27-28). They...
also describe a conception similar to that of the Manichaean Church. This similarity is all the more striking since we now know that this Church—which included only the electi, i.e. the "prophets", was called "the (mystical) Body of Mani", as revealed by the very title of the CMC (which probably represents only the first part of a lost History of the Manichaean Church): ἡμί οἱ γονεῖς τοῦ άναπνοήν οίκου: on the birth of His Body.\footnote{\textcopyright{} 1984-86. 
A recent analysis of this process of evolution is J. Oster, \textit{Prophet and Community: the Social World of Early Christians} (Praeger, 1980).}

If the evidence analyzed here is to be trusted, it appears that:

1. Mani does not seem to have considered himself only, or mainly, a prophet. In his own eyes, he was, more than a prophet, an apostle.

2. The term \textit{prophet}, although polyvalent, seems to have been used in the early Manichaean Church as an appellation for the electi.

3. The metaphor of "seal", although polyvalent in Manichaean literature, nowhere implies the idea of \textit{last}, \textit{end}, but rather of \textit{confirmation}, \textit{attestation}, or else sign.

4. In the only Manichaean text in which it occurs, the metaphor "seal of the prophets" can only refer to one of the four cardinal theological virtues.

5. The dosogonic evidence, all from Muslim authors, in which Mani is said to have called himself "seal of the prophets" cannot be trusted.

The persistence of prophecy, i.e. of charismatic, pneumatic trends within the early stages of development of a religious movement — and at its very core, not only on its fringe — is not a surprising phenomenon. The sociologist of religion knows that such trends are usually uprooted as "heretical" only later, when ecclesial power is stabilized.\footnote{\textcopyright{} 1984-86. 
For a recent analysis of such processes of evolution see J. Oster, \textit{Prophet and Community: the Social World of Early Christians} (Praeger, 1980).}

What seems to have been true of Christianity and of Islam might also hold for later Manichaem — but here, the sources are so scarce that they prevent even speculation.

\footnote{\textcopyright{} 1984-86. 
For a recent analysis of such processes of evolution see J. Oster, \textit{Prophet and Community: the Social World of Early Christians} (Praeger, 1980).}