



*Reviews of the Enoch Seminar 2019.02.04*

**Nils Arne Pedersen, René Falkenberg, John Møller Larsen, Claudia Leurini.** *The Old Testament in Manichaean Tradition: The Sources in Syriac, Greek, Coptic, Middle Persian, Parthian, Sogdian, New Persian, and Arabic, with an Appendix on General References to the Bible.* Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum: Series Biblia Manichaica 1. Turnhout: Brepols, 2017. ISBN: 978-2-503-57773-9. Pp. xlvi + 255. EUR €85.00. Hardback.

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*The Old Testament in Manichaean Tradition* is the initial volume of the *Biblia Manichaica*, a new subseries of the *Corpus Fontium Manichaeorum* series. Aiming to document the use of Old Testament scripture in Manichaean tradition and sources, the book is the offspring of a vast project initiated by Nils Arne Pedersen, professor at Aarhus University (Denmark), and a team of scholars. The volume starts with a general introduction (pp. xi–xvi) which presents the approach and objectives of the project:

The *Biblia Manichaica* series aims to document Manichaean use of or dependency on biblical texts in the widest possible sense: Firstly, it will be recorded when a biblical text is used verbatim or almost verbatim, these uses we call “quotations”; secondly, that is “allusions” of a secure or less secure nature (p. xi).

The editors then take the time to define more clearly how they understand and use the title they have chosen for the subseries, *Biblia Manichaica*.<sup>1</sup> Even if “all Manichaean texts attest to the use of biblical texts, in different ways and to various degrees,” the title “does not intend to claim that the Manichaeans possessed the Bible ... nor any conscious knowledge of the orthodox Christian idea of canonicity” (p. xii); thus “the title *Biblia Manichaica* is chosen ... because the recording of passages has been made from the perspective of the Bible not from the perspective of the Manichaeans” (p. xiii). In line with this perspective, it is perhaps appropriate to point out that, regarding the delimitation of the corpus of the biblical texts of the Old Testament, the editors decided to stick to the texts of the Hebrew canon, thus excluding the books only attested in the Septuagint, “because there is no consensus about their canonical status among Christians due to the fact that they were not included in the Massoretic (Hebrew) Jewish Bible” (p. xiii.). Despite

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<sup>1</sup> Originally suggested by Peter Nagel in “Synoptische Evangelientradition im Thomasevangelium und im Manichäismus”, in J. Frey, E. E. Popkes, J. Schröter, eds., *Das Thomasevangelium: Entstehung – Rezeption – Theologie*, BZNW 157, (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter), 272–93.

this reasoning and other pragmatic reasons,<sup>2</sup> this seems to be a rather odd choice. Considering the importance of the Alexandrian Bible in the regions and at the time Manichaeism flourished, one would have expected the editors to choose the Septuagint for reference. Although it is possible, but unlikely, that the Manichaean sources did not contain many, or even any, references to the Greek deuterocanonical books, the editors seem to have excluded these texts by principle, which is methodologically problematic.

After a presentation of the Manichaean and anti-Manichaean (heresiological) sources used (Syriac, Greek, Coptic, Iranian, and Arabic; pp. xvi–xxxiii), the Manichaean use of the Old Testament (p. xxxiv–xli), method (definitions of “Quotation,” “Allusion,” and “Uncertain Allusion;” pp. xli–xliv), and of an “entry example” (p. xlv), the “Entry Section,” which directly follows the “Introduction,” is what constitutes the main part of the volume (pp. 1–157). Despite what one might expect considering the title of the book—perhaps because of the scarcity of quotations of the Old Testament in Manichaean sources—the reader will not find an exclusive inventory of Old Testament citations in Manichaean texts, but rather a collection of 1) the very few explicit quotations we do find; 2) general references to the Bible in Manichaean sources or heresiological works that talk about Mani/Manichaeans; 3) and more importantly, a list of Manichaean texts in which terms or expressions could be considered as allusions to Old Testament texts. These “entries” also do not follow a systematic presentation: The biblical texts that are the objects of citations or allusions are sometimes cited, sometimes not; when they are cited, they are occasionally cited only in an English translation and at times accompanied by their Hebrew, Syriac, or Greek text. For each of the biblical verses, we find Manichaean excerpts selected because of their proximity, either in their original text or in translation. Each Manichaean excerpt is identified as a “Quotation” (Q), an “Allusion” (A) or an “Allusion of less certain nature” (A?). Footnotes present the editions used for the sources or clarify one or many problems of the cited parallel texts. The main goal of the volume being “to document Manichaean use of or dependency on biblical texts in the *widest possible sense*,” it is worth noting that a good proportion of the selected passages has only a distant relation to the biblical passage with which they are associated. In the English translation of the alleged parallels, the expressions or terms on which the associations are based are underlined. This helps the reader quickly grasp why these two texts were put into relation.

The “Entry Section” is followed by an Appendix on the “General References to the Bible” in selected Manichaean texts (pp. 159–86), mostly in indirect non-Manichean sources. The majority of these texts either mention or deplore Manichaean resort to the Scriptures (Old and New Testament). The book concludes with a bibliography (pp. 187–232), and indices (pp. 233–55) of “Quotations”<sup>3</sup> of the Bible, “Quotations, Allusions, and other References” to the Bible, “Parabiblical Texts” (1 Enoch, Dead Sea Scrolls, Gospel of Thomas), and “Manichaean and non-Manichaean Texts.”

Although one may find that the editors have very generously collected their Manichaean quotations or allusions to the biblical texts—allowing for a very broad understanding of the concept of “allusion”—this first volume of the *Biblia Manichaica* is nevertheless a substantial and welcome

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<sup>2</sup> “Our project would have been practically impossible within a realistic time-frame if we had extended our search to all known parabiblical texts” (p. xiii).

<sup>3</sup> It is not clear what distinguishes this index of 16 references to the following biblical index.

addition to the *Instrumenta Studiorum* already available on Manichaeism. It offers a valuable inventory of all explicit, probable, or suspected biblical parallels that can be found in direct or indirect Manichean sources, which is, in itself, quite an accomplishment.