

## Manichaeism's position relative to Zoroastrianism

Desmond Durkin-Meisterernst

Manichaeism, a syncretistic religion of the 3rd century arising in Mesopotamia, positions itself as the 'final' religion, the completion of religions already known and a religion with a secure and authentic written tradition. The surviving original Manichaean texts include many Christian elements (particularly clearly in the Coptic texts from Egypt) and Zoroastrian traits (in the Middle Persian texts from Turfan on the Silk Road). Rather than being completing claims these are complementary, designed by Mani, the founder of Manichaeism, for specific reasons. I would like to explore Manichaeism's claim in some Middle Persian texts to be the true successor of Zoroastrianism – a claim that the Armenian polemicist of the 5th century, Eznik de Kolb also seems to have been familiar with – to see how certain we can be that this was indeed part of Mani's original design.