The Manichaeans of Kellis : religion, community, and everyday life

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Chapter 6. Tehat's Gifts and Everyday Community Boundaries

> You do not give bread to the hungry, from fear of imprisoning in flesh the limb of your God (Augustine, *Faust*. 15.7).

6.1 Introduction

A continuous stream of donations, gifts, and semicommercial interactions provide the backdrop to most of the personal letters and business accounts from Kellis. Requests for material support, grumpy complaints about lost commodities, and detailed instructions for financial transactions permeate the letters. They provide a rich source of information on the social relations and transactions of an Egyptian village economy. In the Kellis papyri, we find some short snippets on the textile industry, but more often the letters inform us about the inner workings of household economies. Geographically dispersed between the oasis and the Nile valley, families like those of Makarios and Pamour had to depend on long-distance messages to request particular goods to be sent, sold, or given away.

These transactions and gifts are said to have included specific Manichaean alms gifts to the ascetic elect, with the aim of supporting their lifestyle and liberating the Living Soul from its prison in the material world. In fact, it would be difficult to imagine Manichaeism without almsgiving and the associated ritual meal, both of which played an important role in the cosmological narrative and provided the fundamental logic behind the community's regulations. This chapter, however, will challenge this perspective by examining all types of gifts and transactions in the Kellis letters. To successfully juxtapose lived religious practice with institutional or rationalized religious prescripts, section 6.2 will discuss voluntary poverty and almsgiving in Christian as well as Manichaean sources. After analyzing five types of giving in section 6.3, the impact of the geographical distance on the relationship between elect and catechumens in Kellis and the evidence for a daily ritual meal will be examined in sections 6.4 and 6.5. In the conclusion of this chapter, I will return to the role of giving in the construction of a Manichaean group identity. We will see that despite the strongly religious themes in some of the fundraising letters, the majority of the gifts and transactions were relatively mundane, never fully corresponding to the normative expectations or ideology of rationalized religion. Instead, the role of Manichaeanness in everyday life was fundamentally affected by the specific social and geographical circumstances of the Dakhleh Oasis. This down-to-earth sketch of gift relations will, in the end, also support my claim that this community was far less "sectarian" than previously suggested.[1]

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[1] Elements from this chapter have been published in a different context as M. Brand, "'You Being for Us Helpers, and Worthy Patrons...' (P.Kell.Copt 32). Manichaean Gift-Exchange in the Village of Kellis," in *Women in Occidental and Oriental Manichaeism: Proceedings of the International Conference Held at Paris Sorbonne, Paris, June 27-28, 2014*, ed. M. Franzmann and M. Scopello (Leiden: Brill, Forthcoming). A similar observation about the blending of networks of care is made by Eduard Iricinschi, in his conference paper

6.2 Almsgiving and Voluntary Poverty within the Manichaean Ideology of Giving

The Manichaean ideology of giving cannot be understood without the context of Roman patronage and the novel Christian emphasis on voluntary poverty. In both of these systems, gifts generated the obligation for the recipient (whether supernatural of human) to give in return.[2] Christian bishops benefited from patronage ties to establish themselves as leader figures of importance. Christian thought, at the same time, was responsible for the changing expectations of these imperial and urban elites. They "came to see themselves as obliged to establish relations, through gifts of money and the provision of services, no longer to a clearly defined and overwhelmingly urban nucleus of their fellow citizens, but to the less exclusive category of the poor, in town and country alike."[3] Peter Brown's work on the role of the bishop and the new Christian discourse on poverty and wealth has shown the "rich imaginative humus" beneath the transformation of late antique gift relations.[4] Three themes stand out: (1) the emphasis on redemptive almsgiving; (2) the mediating role of the church; and (3) the social and discursive tensions surrounding the balance between manual labor and voluntary poverty. Manichaeans worked with all three of these themes, even though their social and theological logic was often firmly reconceptualized and rearticulated within a Manichaean framework.

First, redemptive almsgiving was a central theme in late antique Christian sermons, which urged the rich to give away their wealth and thereby invest in heavenly treasures. Alms were understood as religious gifts to God, who would repay the gracious giver.[5] In the New Testament gospels, where the ideal of anonymous and selfless giving is explored in various sayings and parables, the message was often combined with one of heavenly reward

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"'God bears witness that I have been sick for three months' (P.Kellis Copt. 82): affliction and therapy in the Kellis Manichaean community," September 12, 2017, International Association of Manichaean Studies Conference in Turin.

[2] M. Mauss, *The Gift* (London: Routledge Classics, 2002). Various types of gifts in antiquity are discussed in the contributions to M. L. Satlow, ed. *The Gift in Antiquity* (Chichester: John Wiley & Son, 2013).

[3] P. Brown, "The Study of Elites in Late Antiquity," *Arethusa* 33, no. 3 (2000): 338.

[4] Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, xxv. His earlier work on this theme includes, P. Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (London: University Press of New England, 2002). More recent contributions are Brown, *Treasure in Heaven*. P. Brown, "Wealth, Work and the Holy Poor: Early Christian Monasticism between Syria and Egypt," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 81, no. 3 (2016): 233-45. Brown's perspective on gift giving is discussed in I. F. Silber, "Neither Mauss, nor Veyne: Peter Brown's Interpretive Path to the Gift," in *The Gift in Antiquity*, ed. M. L. Satlow (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 202-220. At the same time, it should be pointed out that Christian modes of giving (in particular when connected to discourse about charity) did not replace previous civic modes of giving (like patronage or euergetism). These two modes blended into a type of "civic Christianity" in action, see M. R. Salzman, "From a Classical to a Christian City. Civic Euergetism and Charity in Late Antique Rome," *Studies in Late Antiquity* 1, no. 1 (2017): 65-85.

[5] This is for example set out in Leo the Great, sermon 10.4, cited in B. Neil, "Models of Gift Giving in the Preaching of Leo the Great," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 18, no. 2 (2010): 225-59. In a similar way, John Chrysostom's advocacy of almsgiving has been reconsidered as belonging to the discourse of identity-formation. S. Sitzler, "Identity: The Indigent and the Wealthy in the Homilies of John Chrysostom," *Vigiliae Christianae* 63, no. 5 (2009): 468-79.

for earthly charity.[6] The Gospel of Matthew, for example, urged its readers to "go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven" (Mt. 19.21 NIV, cf. Mk.10.21, Lk. 18.22). Ecclesiastical authorities repeated the biblical promise of "treasures in heaven" and reconceptualized charitable giving within a cosmological debt relation. Humanity, indebted to God for his gracious gift(s), could repay him (in part) through alms given to the church.[7] The prayers of either the poor or the voluntary poor with an ecclesiastical or ascetic position could, in turn, open a channel of divine forgiveness for the donor. Manichaeans, as we will see, made use of this notion of redemptive almsgiving in their theological texts, and one of the letters from Kellis alluded to this specific passage of the Gospel of Matthew.

Second, as God's blessing materialized through the hands of man, the church received a mediating role. As the traditional civic euergetism gave way to a Christian ideology of charitable giving to the poor (not defined through their civic status but by their need), wealthy donors were asked to give to the church, so that the church could support the poor in the community.[8] The third-century Syrian *Didascalia Apostolorum*, for example, admonished laity to bring their alms to the altar and leave the redistribution to the bishop.[9] Apart from centralizing power in the hands of the bishops, this mechanism imposed a widening of the conceptual polarity between the rich and the poor.[10] Where the traditional civic patronage structure led to unilateral dependency and asymmetrical power relations, the Christian rhetoric pauperized the poor, which led to the incorrect impression of starkly

[6] Some tension existed between the two poles of selfless giving and the expectation of (heavenly) rewards, which has led major philosophers to argue against the very existence of "interest-free" gifts. J. Derrida, *Given Time 1. Counterfeit Money* (Chicago: Chicago University Press), 6-31. This tension or inconsistency in Early Christian literature is for example visible in the parable of the banquet (Lk. 14), the commandment to give anonymous and expect no reward from man (Mt. 6) and the message of heavenly reward for earthly charity (as Mt. 25 the division of the sheep and the goats).

[7] L. Canetti, "Christian Gift and Gift Exchange from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages," in *Gift-Giving and the 'Embedded' Economy in the Ancient World*, ed. F. Carlá and M. Giori (Heidelberg: Winter Verlag, 2014), 337-51; D. Downs, "Redemptive Almsgiving and Economic Stratification in 2 Clement," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 19, no. 4 (2011): 493–517; C. Osiek, *Rich and Poor in the Shepherd of Hermas: An Exegetical-Social Investigation* (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1983); S. R. Holman, *The Hungry Are Dying: Beggars and Bishops in Roman Cappadocia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[8] Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 528 and passim.

[9] Cited and discussed in Brown, *Treasure in Heaven*, 24-25. Late antique Christian authors have emphasized the philanthropic activity of the bishops, see Wipszycka, *The Alexandrian Church*, 349-53.

[10] As Brown noted, it caused "a potentially acute conflict between support of the 'poor' and the support of the 'ministering poor', already felt in nuce at a very early stage." Brown, *Poverty and Leadership*, 23; Neil, "Models of Gift Giving," 225-59. It is noteworthy that this development in rhetoric presented a stark difference between almsgiving and euergetism, while in practice most affluent Christians would have embraced both. P. Brown, "From Civic Euergetism to Christian Giving," in *Religiöser Alltag in der Spätantike*, ed. P. Eich and E. Faber (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2013), 26 cites the example of Firmus, who was addressed in one of Augustine's letters but also had his name carved out in a seat of the amphitheater of Carthage.

increasing poverty in the later Roman Empire.[11] The significance of Christianity for the development of gift-giving is therefore twofold: it changed the discourse about poverty and prompted the establishment of institutions of organized charity.[12]

A third observation relates to the two diverging attitudes toward giving and manual labor within Ancient Christian traditions. On the one hand, there were itinerant ritual specialists and ascetics who rejected manual labor and claimed to depend on God for their daily survival,[13] while on the other hand, a strong ideology of manual labor was developed in the cenobitic monastic tradition from Egypt. Itinerant religious specialists were criticized by representatives of the latter tradition for their blatant requests for support. Hostile accounts with negative stereotypes of money-grubbers and tricksters convey the tension between Egyptian monastic authors and the ascetics who did not adhere to their ideology of manual labor.[14] Monastic literature rejected wandering, begging, and monks, and contrasted them with a positive valuation of the manual labor done in cenobitic monasteries.[15] The terminology associated with this "third type of monk," either called *remnuoth*[16] or *sarabaitae*, cannot be equated with specific forms of asceticism, since it was primarily a rhetorical category.[17] It included those who "refuse to subordinate themselves to anyone," wander, and

[11] Z. A. Crook, "Fictive Giftship and Fictive Friendship in Greco-Roman Society," in *The Gift in Antiquity*, ed. M. L. Satlow (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons), 61-77.

[12] Inquiries into the beginnings of organized charity are discussed by G. E. Gardner, *The Origins of Organized Charity in Rabbinic Judaism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 5-12; David Seccombe has observed that some scholars seek to demonstrate that "the Christians did it first." D. P. Seccombe, "Was There Organized Charity in Jerusalem before the Christians?," *Journal of Theological Studies* 29, no. 1 (1978): 140.

[13] This tradition was prominent in Syrian monasticism, for example in the *Book of Steps*, where the ascetics had transcended manual labor and claimed to live as angels. Brown, *Treasure in Heaven*, 56-70.

[14] On the position of Paul as a freelance religious expert in the Roman Empire, see Wendt, *At the Temple Gates,* 146-189.

[15] An extreme version of this ideology is espoused by John Cassian, discussed in Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 414-19; D. Brakke, "Care for the Poor, Fear of Poverty, and Love of Money: Evagrius Ponticus on the Monk's Economic Vulnerability," in *Wealth and Poverty in the Early Church and Society*, ed. S. R. Holman (Grand Rapids: BakerAcademic), 76-87; D. Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks. Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 49 "by the fifth century," Egyptian monks "could be caricatured as having an almost banausic devotion to manual labor." On the reality of manual labor in cenobitic monasteries, see J .E. Goehring, "The World Engaged: The Social and Economic World of Early Egyptian Monasticism," in *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), 39-52.

[16] Jerome, *Ep*. 22.34. More literature is found in M. J. Blanchard, "Sarabaitae and Remnuoth. Coptic Considerations," in *The World of Early Egyptian Christianity*, ed. J. E. Goehring and J. A. Timbie (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 49-60; M. Choat, "Philological and Historical Approaches to the Search for the 'Third Type' of Egyptian Monk," in *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium*, ed. M. Immerzeel and J. van der Vliet (Leuven: Peeters), 857; M. Choat, "The Development and Usage of Terms for 'Monk' in Late Antique Egypt," *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 45 (2002): 17; A. Boud'hors, "SBKopt. III 1314 reconsidéré: une autre attestation des 'solitaires'?," *Journal of Coptic Studies* 14 (2012): 27-32.

[17] Cassian, *Conlat*. 18.4. The translation and interpretation of terminology like *remnuoth* and *sarabaitae* has caused some problems, but Choat suggests that it came from ⲣⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲟⲩⲱⲧ, "single man" and ⲥⲁⲣⲁⲕⲱⲧⲉ, "wandering" or ⲥⲁⲣⲁⲃⲏⲧ, "one dispersed from a monastery." Gardner, Alcock, and Funk, *CDT1*, 1; J. E.

beg for money.[18] The work of Daniel Canner has shown that this "third type" of asceticism had roots in older, pre-Pachomian ascetic traditions, which lay closer to some of the Syrian ascetic practices.[19] Giving to wandering, begging monks must have been common for some time, but it was considered to be beyond the boundaries of proper ascetic arrangements by the fourth-century monastic establishment.[20]

Let us now look closely at the Manichaean understanding of poverty and the practice of almsgiving in relation to each of these three points. In relation to manual labor, first, the behavior of Manichaean ascetics in Egypt seems to correspond to the rejected third category of monk. The ascetic lifestyle of Manichaean elect was sustained by the gifts of lay people, while they themselves had to abstain from a large number of everyday practices. The alms gifts by catechumens to the elect comprised the central interaction between the two regimes of the Manichaean community, which Peter Brown described as "an exceptionally high-pitched version of the spiritual exchange between its leaders and the rank and file."[21] The symbiotic relation between the two regimens was explored in and regulated by many Manichaean texts from various regions. In the western Manichaean tradition, the *Kephalaia* described giving as one of the first tasks of the catechumenate, alongside prayer and fasting (1 Keph. 80). Gifts to the elect have to be given "in righteousness" (ϩⲛ̄ ⲇⲓⲕⲁⲓⲟⲥ[ⲩⲛⲏ]) so that "catechumen who does this will be in partnership with them."[22] The elect, often portrayed as strangers and wanderers, were to embrace poverty, as one of their psalms urges them to

> let us love poverty and be poor in the body but rich in the spirit. And let us be like the poor, making many rich, as having nothing, yet possessing power over the universe. What shall we do with gold and silver? Let us love God: his light is the power, his sage wisdom.[23]

Unsurprisingly, the expectation for Manichaean elect to live in voluntary poverty is well attested in the theological tractates and liturgical texts from Kellis. In one of Mani's *Epistles*

Goehring, "The Origins of Monasticism," in *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), 22; The phrase is mentioned twice in Manichaean texts (1 Keph. 98.20 and Hom. 92.2), discussed in W. P. Funk, "Noch Einmal Zu *Remnuoth*," in *Liber Amicorum Jürgen Horn zum Dank*, ed. A. Giewekemeyer, G. Moers, and K. Widmaier (Göttingen: Seminar für Ägyptologie und Koptologie der Universität, 2009), 35-45.

[18] Jerome, *Ep.* 22.34. Translation in Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks*, 7-8.

[19] Wandering, begging ascetics loomed large in the imagination of the Sayings of the Desert Fathers, as outdated ideal which should not be followed any longer by fourth-century monks Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks*, 19-49, where he places the text in the process of conciliating the ideology of solitary withdrawal with the increasing popularity of asceticism and the need for communal stability and accommodation.

[20] *Bohairic life of Pachomius*, 35, cited at Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks*, 45.

[21] Brown, *Treasure in Heaven*, 38. He puts the Manichaeans among the Christian "radical consensus" of third-century Syria.

[22] ⲉⲣⲉ ⲡⲓⲕⲁⲧⲏⲭⲟⲩⲙⲉⲛⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲙ̄ⲙⲉⲩ ⲉⲧ̣[…..] ⲛⲁⲕⲟⲓⲛⲱⲛⲓⲁ ⲛⲉⲙⲉⲩ 1 Keph. 80, 193.3 and 10-11.

[23] ⲛ̄ⲧⲙ̄ⲙⲉⲣⲉ ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧ̣ⲣⲙⲕⲉ ⲧⲙ̄ⲣ̄[ϩ]ⲙ̣ⲕⲉ ϩⲛ̄ⲡⲥⲱⲙⲁ ⲣⲙ̄ⲛⲁⲟ ϩⲱⲩ ϩⲛ̄ⲡⲡⲛ̄ⲁ ⲧⲙ̄ⲣ̄ⲧⲣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲓⲣⲙⲕⲉ ⲉⲛⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲙⲛⲇⲉ ⲛ̄ⲣⲙ̄ⲛⲁⲟ ϩⲣ̣ϛ ⲉⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲛ ⲗⲁⲩⲉ ⲉⲛⲉⲙⲁⲣⲧⲉ ⲁⲭⲛ̄ⲡⲓⲧⲏⲣϥ̄ [ⲉ]ⲛⲁⲣⲉⲩ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲃ ⲣⲓⲉⲉⲧ· ⲙⲁⲣⲙ̄ⲙⲉⲣⲓ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ· ⲡⲉⲩⲟⲩⲁⲓ̈ⲛⲉ ⲧⲉ ⲧ̣ⲍⲁⲙ ⲧⲉⲩⲥⲟⲫⲓⲁ ⲛ̄ⲣⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲣⲙ[ⲧ] 2 PsB. 157.5-10 (modified translation, Allberry translates "possessing power over everything").

(P.Kell.Copt. 53), the community is redefined in terms of voluntary poverty to distinguish them from all the other religious communities of the world. The author (Mani?) wrote: "[Y]ou have become people made better by blessed poverty"[24] and

> you are obliged the more now to perfect the blessing of poverty, by which you will gain the victory over the sects and the world. It is profitable for you to perfect it and be vigilant in it, because (poverty) is your glory, the crown of your victory.[25]

The emphasis on poverty as indicator or sign of community membership is translated into the pressing commandment for the elect to strip themselves of the world (P.Kell.Copt. 53, 82.12) and they are reminded in their psalms that the world will be dissolved (T.Kell.Copt. 2, 98.29).[26] The opposition between earthly wealth and the love of God is further explored in another psalm, of which a version is attested in Kellis. It appropriates a biblical parable (Mt. 6.19): the Psalmist exhorts the catechumens not to "acquire treasure for yourselves upon the earth, the place of moths and thieves," a theme that recurs in one of the fundraising letters of the elect (P.Kell.Copt. 32).[27] Just like other Ancient Christian ascetics, the elect were supposed to abstain from all material wealth and embrace the love of God instead.[28] In one of the letters of the elect, however, instead of praising voluntary poverty, the author praised Eirene, because she had acquired "for herself her riches and stored them in the treasuries that are in the heights, where moths shall not find a way, nor shall thieves dig through to them to steal; which (storehouses) are the sun and the moon."[29] In contrast to the elect, for whom acquiring riches would be a major transgression, Eirene was praised for her wealth. The rhetoric usually associated with voluntary poverty was appropriated by the author of this letter and applied in the framework of giving material riches to the elect.

These liturgical and theological Manichaean texts, then, portray the ideal of voluntary poverty for the elect and the expectation of support through almsgiving by the catechumens, supported with biblical allusions. This relates to the second observation about gift-giving as a redemptive, soteriological practice. In Manichaeism, more than in Christianity, the obligation to give was motivated by a complex belief system about the cosmos, gnosis, and the role of the purified human body. The *Kephalaia* explicitly states that almsgiving leads to the rescue of the Living Soul that "is entangled and bound in the entire universe. For it shall

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[24] ϩⲁⲧⲛ̄ ⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ⲣ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲩⲁⲛⲓⲧ ϩⲛ̄ ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧ᾽ ϩⲛⲕⲉ ⲛ̄ⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ P.Kell.Copt. 53, 51.6-8.

[25] ⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲛⲏ᾽ ⲛ̄ϩⲟⲩⲟ ⲁϫⲱⲕ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ ϯⲛⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲡⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲥⲙⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲙⲛ̄ⲧ᾽ ϩⲛⲕⲉ ⲧⲉⲓ̈ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛⲁⲧϭⲣⲟ᾽ ⲛ̄ϩⲛⲧⲥ᾽ ⲁⲛⲇⲟⲅⲙⲁ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ ⲡⲕⲟⲥⲙⲟⲥ: ⲥⲣ᾽ⲛⲁⲫⲉ ⲙⲛⲧⲛ̄ ⲁϫⲁⲕⲥ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲣⲁ̈ⲓⲥ ⲉⲣⲱⲧⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ϩⲛⲧⲥ᾽: ⲉⲡⲓⲇⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲥ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲉⲁⲩ ⲡⲕⲗⲁⲙ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲧϭⲣⲟ P.Kell.Copt. 53, 51.11-17.

[26] The Manichaean Psalmbook from Medinet Madi contains many songs praising poverty and including it as one of the honors of the Paraclete (2 PsB. 33.22). In the Psalms of Herakleides, poverty is one of the virtues summed up by the soul, as embraced and received in the process of rejecting sin (2 PsB. 97.31).

[27] ..ⲙⲡ]ⲱⲣϫⲡⲟ ⲉⲣⲟ ⲙⲛⲧⲛ̄ ⲣⲓϫⲛ̄ ⲡⲕⲁⲣ ⲡⲛ̣ ⲛ̄ⲧⲣⲁ[ⲗⲉ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ ⲛ̄]ⲣⲉⲩϫⲓⲟⲩⲉ 1 PsB. 68 98.22-23 = T.Kell.Copt. 2 A2.44ff.

[28] The comparison between the ascetic styles from third-century Syria and fourth-century Egypt is made explicit in Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks*, 75-8 and 120-1.

[29] ⲧⲉⲧⲁⲥ [ϫ]ⲛ̣ⲟ ⲛⲉⲥ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲥϩⲣⲏⲙⲁ [ⲁⲥ]ⲃⲁⲗⲱⲟⲩ ⲁ̣ⲛⲉⲣⲱⲣ ⲉⲧⲣⲓ [ⲡ]ϫ[ⲓ]ⲉ̣ⲉ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲙⲁⲣⲉ ⲣⲁⲗⲉ ⲟⲛ̄ ⲙ̣ⲁⲩⲧ· ⲟⲩⲇⲉ ⲙⲁⲣⲉ ⲗ̣ⲏⲥⲧⲏⲥ [ϫ]ⲁϫⲧ᾽ ⲁⲣⲁⲩ ⲁϫⲓⲟⲩⲉ; ⲉⲧⲉ ⲛ̄[ⲧⲁ]ⲩ ⲛⲉ ⲡⲣⲏ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ ⲡⲟⲣ· P.Kell.Copt. 32.7-13.

be freed and cleansed and purified and redeemed on account of him."[30] The fasting of the elect leads to the purification of the soul. The soul "comes into him [MB: the elect] daily in the metabolism of his food, becomes pristine, and is purified, separated, and cleansed from the mixture with the Darkness that is mixed with it."[31] The liberation of the Living Soul is the key to salvation. Almsgiving was, therefore, central to the Manichaean practice and ritual community.[32] BeDuhn summarized this as follows:

> The Elect compressed their contact with the world, which is problematic for both its profanity and its sacrality, to the single point of ingestion. Their resolution of the problematized world, therefore, was metabolic. The second class [MB: the catechumens] received absolution from the guilt it had incurred in the world by sponsoring these physicians of the cosmos, providing them with the means for their operations, and entering into a partnership with them whose ultimate goal was not only their own liberation, but also the salvation for all life.[33]

In other words, having a separate class of ascetic holy men and women equipped the Manichaean community to liberate the supernatural sparks of Light from their entanglement in the material world. The bodies of the elect were purified because of their ascetic practice, and could therefore separate the Living Soul from the food.[34] This liberation was achieved through a daily ritual meal, which was facilitated by the alms gifts brought by the catechumens. The daily repetition of almsgiving before the meal, therefore, constituted the most important ritual obligation for catechumens. It is repeatedly stressed as a *daily* obligation: "[H]is alms that he gives on every day of the year."[35] Free from its material prison, the supernatural sparks of Light were sent it up to ascent into the world of Light on a daily basis.[36]

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[30] ⲛ̄ⲧⲧⲩⲭⲏ ⲉⲧⲁⲛϩ ⲧⲉⲧⲭⲁⲗⲭ ⲉⲧⲙⲏⲣ ϩ[ⲙ ⲡⲕⲟ]ⲥⲙ̣ⲉ̣ ⲧⲏⲣⲟ̄ ⲉⲡⲉⲓⲇⲏ ⲱⲁⲥⲃⲱⲗ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ ⲛ̄ⲥⲕⲁⲑ[ⲁⲣⲓⲍⲉ] ⲛⲥⲧⲉ̣ⲩⲃ[ⲟ] ⲛ̄ⲥⲥⲱⲧⲉ ⲛ̣ⲧⲉ̣ⲫⲗⲁⲓ̈ⲟⲉ 1 Keph. 115, 277.8-10 (modified translation).

[31] ⲧⲧⲩⲭⲏ ⲉⲧⲙⲏⲩ ⲁϩⲟⲩⲛ [ⲁⲣ]ⲁⲩ ϩⲛ̄ ⲧⲟⲓⲕ[ⲟⲛⲟ]ⲙⲓⲁ ⲛⲧⲩⲧⲣⲟⲫⲏ ⲙ̄ⲙⲛⲛⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲛⲛⲉ ⲱⲁⲥⲧⲟⲩⲃⲟ ⲛⲥ[ⲕⲁ]ⲑⲁⲣⲓⲍⲉ ⲛ̄ⲥⲥⲱⲧⲏ̄ ⲛ̄ⲥ[ⲉⲓⲱ]ⲉ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ ⲛ̄ⲧ̄ⲥⲩⲧⲕⲣⲁⲥⲓⲥ [ⲙ]ⲡⲕⲉⲕⲉ ⲉⲧⲙⲁⲭⲧ̄ ⲁϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲛⲉⲙⲉ̣ⲥ̣ 1 Keph. 79, 191.16-19. See the interpretation of BeDuhn BeDuhn, *Manichaean Body*, 169-79.

[32] J. J. Buckley, "Tools and Tasks: Elchasaite and Manichaean Purification Rituals," *The Journal of Religion* 66, no. 4 (1986): 399-411.

[33] BeDuhn, *Manichaean Body*, 208.

[34] In fact, the elect were not only purified by their ascetic practice, but by their observation of the Manichaean rules, which was aimed at the stimulation of the New Man, through the power of the Light Mind, and the rejection of negative vices that seek to dominate the body. Lieu, "Manichaeism," 230.

[35] ⲧⲉⲫⲙⲓⲧⲛ̣[ⲁⲉ ⲉⲧⲫ]ⲧ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲥ ϩ[ⲙ̄] ⲛ̄ϩⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲛⲧⲣⲁⲙⲡⲉ 1 Keph. 91, 233.15-16. Cf. 1 Keph. 79, 191.29, 32 and 81 194.8.

[36] The daily ascent of Light is related to the waxing moon, which was believed to contain all the liberated light. See 1 Keph. 65, 69, and 122. Kosa, "The Manichaean Attitude to Natural Phenomena," 258-9. It is important to note the parallels not only with the Christian tradition(s) but with Zoroastrianism, in which the yasna is still the most important ritual meal. BeDuhn, "Eucharist or Yasna?," 14-36; A. Hultgård, "Ritual Community Meals in Ancient Iranian Religion," in *Zoroastrian Rituals in Context*, ed. M. Stausberg (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 367-88.

The salvation of the cosmos by liberating the Living Soul was not the only result of Manichaean gift-giving. Individuals could also profit more directly from their gifts. In return for their alms gifts and for their exceptional services, catechumens would be released from the cycle of transmigration (1 Keph. 91 and 127).[37] In fact, the *Kephalaia* assures them that their alms gift "becomes an intercessor (ογρεҷсалпсп) for you and causes you to be forgiven a multitude of faults"[38] and the Psalmbook speaks of alms like chariots or horses, bringing salvation in full speed (2 PsB. 111.25). The daily prayers also reflect this reciprocity in the final stanza, where "the righteous" are praised for having overcome all evil (most probably to be interpreted as the Manichaean elect, πάντας δικαίους P.Kell.Gr. 98. 97).[39] In return for worship and glorification, the prayer expresses the expectation of supernatural blessing and release from the chains and torment of reincarnation (P.Kell.Gr. 98. 106-123).[40]

To return to a third point observed above, the mediating role of the elect also leads to the question of whether catechumens experienced the exchange relationship as fair and balanced. A number of passages reflect critically on the transfer of guilt and sin embedded in the exchange relation. Some outsider sources report polemically about the hypocritical attitude of the Manichaean elect. An anonymous papyrus containing a polemical account of an Egyptian Church leader (P. Ryl. Gr. 469) insinuated that the elect transposed their sin unto the catechumens by secretly uttering a prayer over the donated bread: "Neither have I cast it (sc. the bread) into the oven: another has brought me this and I have eaten it without guilt."[41] In this way, the elect would transfer the responsibility for the (agricultural) transgression against the Living Soul to those who donated the food. This apology of the bread (also known from the polemical works of Hegemonius and Cyril of Jerusalem) is not the only text accusing the elect of hypocrisy.[42] Augustine shared the same understanding of the ritual exchange and points out his unease about how "the injuries your auditors inflict upon plants are expiated through the fruits which they bring to the church."[43]

Not only outsiders thought about this apparent inconsistency; the *Kephalaia* addressed it as well. In one of the chapters, a catechumen asks whether he caused a wound by his practice of alms offering to the holy ones (1 Keph. 93). The short answer is yes, but the longer answer exonerates him from any sins, because through the practice of almsgiving rest and life is brought. The catechumen is described as a physician who may cure a wound with

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[37] BeDuhn, *Manichaean Body*, 198-9.

[38] Ⲱ[ⲁ]ⲥⲣ̄ⲟⲩⲣⲉϥⲥⲁⲡⲥⲡ ⲉⲁⲣⲱⲧⲛ ⲛⲥⲧⲣⲟⲩⲕⲱ ⲛⲏ[ⲧⲛ ⲁ]ⲃⲁⲗ ⲛⲟⲩⲏⲏⲛϣⲉ ⲛⲭⲣⲁⲡ 1 Keph. 93, 238.27-28 (translation modified).

[39] On the use of this terminology, see F. Bermejo-Rubio, ""I Worship and Glorify": Manichaean Liturgy and Piety in Kellis' Prayer of the Emanations," in *Practicing Gnosis*, ed. A. D. DeConick, G. Shaw, and J. D. Turner (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 253-4.

[40] I. Gardner, "Manichaean Ritual Practice at Ancient Kellis: A New Understanding of the Meaning and Function of the So-Called *Prayer of the Emanations*," in *'In Search of Truth': Augustine, Manichaeism and Other Gnosticism. Studies for Johannes van Oort at Sixty*, ed. J. A. van den Berg, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 253n16 referring to Keph. 115.

[41] P. Ryl.Gr. 469.24-26, cited from Gardner and Lieu, *MTRE*, no. 23.

[42] AA, 10. Cyril of Jerusalem's sixth catechetical lecture, cited and discussed in BeDuhn, *Manichaean Body*, 131-2.

[43] Augustine, *Mor. Manich*. 61, cited in BeDuhn, *Manichaean Body*, 130.

the knife that has caused the wound in the first place.[44] The transgression is forgiven "because of his fasting and his prayer and his alms."[45] The apparent inconsistency, so visible for outsiders and modern scholars, was presumably solved by the differentiation in regulations between elect and catechumens, allowing the latter to conduct agricultural activities without breaking the rules.[46]

Following this line of reasoning, Manichaean catechumens were encouraged not only to give food alms but also to invest all they have in the church. The *Kephalaia* discerns three works of the catechumenate: the first is fasting on the lord's day, praying to the sun and the moon, and almsgiving to the "holy one(s)" (ⲡⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲃⲉ). The second work is to give a child, slave, or relative to the church. The third work is the construction of a house (ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲛⲁⲛϣⲱⲡⲉ) or place (ⲟⲩⲧⲟ[ⲡⲟⲥ]) for the church "so they can become for him a portion of alms in the holy church."[47] Apart from food alms, catechumens were thus instructed to give their time, prayer, children or slaves, as well as their houses to the elect. In Parthian and Middle Persian texts, these gifts are called "soul work" (*rw'ng'n*) and include all obligatory services, including (annual) gifts of clothing, which may have been the source of the psalm singers' claim to have "clothed the orphans."[48] Catechumens who wished to be perfect, in order to reach salvation without transmigration, were urged to devote all their time and property to the holy church (1 Keph. 91, 229.4–10). In these instances, the logic is less focused on the salvation of the Living Soul, and more on providing aid to those who were capable of setting the process of salvation in motion: even inedible alms gave rest and contributed to the eternal life of the donor (1 Keph. 158, 397.12–22).

Whether or not all this was practiced in the fourth century in Egypt is far from certain. Even though we have only scratched the surface of the complexity within Manichaean sources, these liturgical and theological texts bring to the fore how gifts fundamentally shaped the social organization of the Manichaean community and its daily practice. Gift-giving was the implementation of their cosmological narrative in daily life and provided the framework for the differentiation between the two regimens of elect and catechumens. Giving the right objects at the correct time to a very particular group of people under specific circumstances defines the group identity and plays a fundamental role in the salvation of the entire cosmos. The ritual gestures and utterances, as explored by BeDuhn,

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[44] BeDuhn, *Manichaean Body*, 175.

[45] ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲧⲉϥⲛⲏⲥⲧⲓⲁ ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ ⲡ[ⲉϥϣⲗⲏⲗ ⲙⲛ ⲧⲉϥⲙⲛ]ⲧⲛⲁⲉ 1 Keph. 91, 232.31-233.1, cited and discussed (with a slightly different translation) in BeDuhn, *Manichaean Body*, 199. A similar exposé is found in the, unpublished, Dublin *Kephalaia*.

[46] I note here that this may have worked for some catechumens, but still contains a large inconsistency with the fundamental narrative of the Manichaean religion. Even if catechumens are not explicitly forbidden to be involved in agricultural activity, they would still read or hear about Mani's early adventures in which the earth cried out, while trees and vegetables bled and spoke up to prevent further injuries.

[47] …ⲧⲁⲣⲟⲩⲉ̣ⲉ̣ϥ ⲁⲣⲁϥ ⲁⲩⲧⲁⲓⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲓⲧⲛⲁⲉ [ⲉ]ⲛ̄ ⲧ[ⲉ]ⲕⲕ[ⲗⲏⲥⲓⲁ] ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲃ[ⲉ] 1 Keph. 80, 193.12-14.

[48] ⲁⲓ̈ϯ ⲉⲱⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲕⲟⲣⲫⲁⲛⲟⲥ 2 PsB. 175.22. W. Sundermann, "A Manichaean Liturgical Instruction on the Act of Almsgiving," in *The Light and the Darkness: Studies in Manichaeism and Its World*, ed. P. A. Mirecki and J. D. BeDuhn (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 206 with references. See also BeDuhn, *Manichaean Body*, 135n59 and a similar reference to yearly clothing gifts in the Chinese hymnbook (strophe 260d).

defined each of the intragroup roles publicly in the presence of the entire (local) community. By giving these very particular food alms in a ritualized setting, the donor embraced his or her role in the community. Social psychological research has suggested that gifts impose identities on the giver and recipient. It is a "way of free associating about the recipient in his presence," as it reveals "the idea which the recipient evokes in the imagination of the giver."[49] To give alms was to perform Manichaeanness in semipublic situations, to allow others to recognize you as one of their own.

Gifts are potentially a "way of dramatizing group boundaries."[50] It is therefore no surprise to see Manichaean literature criticizing all other forms of almsgiving. Fish or meat were considered improper, just like undesirable behavior such as drunkenness. The gifts of catechumens had to be without such pollution, as they stood in contrast with the alms given to the "teachers of sin" in the world (ⲛⲛⲥⲁϩ ⲛⲧⲁⲛⲟⲙⲓⲁ 1 Keph. 144, 348.1).[51] But how might this system have been applied in a village setting in the desert of Egypt? The following section will discuss the documentary papyri from Kellis, which confront us with a quotidian situation in which almsgiving was not entirely absent, but certainly less clear-cut than these prescriptive texts suggest.

6.3 Five Types of Giving in the Kellis Letters

Gifts, commercial exchange, and the transportation of commodities from the Nile valley to the oasis appear frequently in the papyri. Some of these transactions have been interpreted as Manichaean alms gifts.[52] In the following section, the personal letters and business accounts will be scrutinized for various types of gift exchange. Following a modified version of the classification by the anthropologist Hénaff, five types of gifts will be discussed: gifts to the elect, economic interaction, household support structures, charity, and patronage.[53] This

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[49] B. Schwartz, "The Social Psychology of the Gift," *American Journal of Sociology* 73, no. 1 (1967): 2. His examples include gifts related to typical gender roles.

[50] Schwartz, "The Social Psychology of the Gift," 10.

[51] 1 Keph. 144, 346.28-29 on fish and drunkenness, 347.21-24 lists further unclean ingredients as eggs, cheese and poultry. Judgment is ready, moreover, for "the one who takes as much punya-food as a grain of mustard and is not able to redeem it." M6020, cited in BeDuhn, "Digesting the Sacrifices," 314 with other instances of critique on the purity of alms and false preachers. 1 Keph. 87 discussed alms gifts also in contrast with the gifts given in other religious communities, 1 Keph. 166 deals with a presbyter who kept alms for himself.

[52] Among other studies, I note here the interpretation of various letters as "breakdown in communications," revealing the complex and haphazard nature of almsgiving (for example in P.Kell.Copt. 20), in Baker-Brian, "Mass and Elite," 177-81.

[53] Hénaff distinguishes ceremonial gifts, gracious giving and solidarity based gifts, all of which are fundamentally different from economic interactions. I have split the solidarity based gifts into two sub categories, either based on household solidarity or a type of charity (often religiously defined). Both patronage and gifts to the elect, which Silber calls "sacerdotal giving," are ceremonial gifts by the fact that they are public and reciprocal. M. Hénaff, "Ceremonial Gift-Giving: The Lessons of Anthropology from Mauss and Beyond," in *The Gift in Antiquity*, ed. M. L. Satlow (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2013), 16; I. F. Silber, "Beyond Purity and Danger: Gift-Giving in the Monotheistic Religions," in *Gifts and Interests*, ed.

modular approach of presenting the material classified into these five types aims to move away from a monolithic notion of Manichaean gift-giving toward a more differentiated picture of the variety of religious and nonreligious gifts and transactions and the interaction between these types of gifts.

6.3.1 Gifts to the Elect

The Manichaean alms gifts and the ritualized meal of the elect have been considered as the background for several passages in the Kellis letters. References to the *agape* have been interpreted as the Manichaean ritual meal,[54] and one of the women, Tehat, has been described as an energetic business woman whose "heart and energy is also with the elect and her religious duties."[55] Other fragmentary passages have also been surmised as related to Manichaean alms gifts. This section will scrutinize some of these passages, to examine how Manichaean almsgiving could take place in a world defined by long desert journeys and despite periods of absence.

The authors of P.Kell.Copt. 31 and 32 used explicit and elaborate Manichaean phrases to introduce and frame the requests for material support from anonymous daughters. They stressed their dependence: "[Y]ou being for us helpers, and worthy patrons and firm unbending pillars, while we ourselves rely upon you" and "therefore I beg you, my blessed daughters, that you will send me two *choes* of oil. For you know yourself that we are in need here since we are afflicted."[56] They approached their addressees as "helpers and patrons" (ⲛ̄ⲃⲟⲏⲑⲟⲟⲥ ⲉⲓ ⲡⲁⲧⲣⲟⲛ) who supported the author(s) as "beloved daughters" (ϣⲉⲣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲙⲉⲣⲉⲧⲉ), also considered "members of the holy church, daughters of the Light Mind" (ⲛ̄ⲙ̣ⲉ̣ⲗⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲕ̇ⲕ̣ⲗⲏⲥⲓⲁ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲃⲉ [ⲛ̄ϣⲉⲣⲉ] ⲛ̣̄ⲡ̣ⲙⲟⲩⲥ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲁ̈ⲓⲛⲉ P.Kell.Copt. 31.1, 2–4). These designators indicate that wealthy female catechumens in the oasis were the primary audience of the letter. Although two *choes* of oil was not much (about 6.5 liters), similar requests were probably made more often.[57] If P.Kell.Copt. 31 was used as a circular letter, it could have amassed a larger amount of wheat and oil. We could imagine other women, like Tehat, receiving similar requests.

Eirene, the recipient of P.Kell.Copt. 31, is ordered by a "father" to "do the work and mix the warp until I come."[58] This leads us to believe that she worked in the textile business, just like Tehat and others, producing garments of various sorts. The letter urged her to

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A. Vandevelde (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 115-32; I. F. Silber, "Echoes of Sacrifice? Repertoires of Giving in the Great Religions," in *Sacrifice in Religious Experience*, ed. A. I. Baumgarten (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 291-312.

[54] See below, section 6.5.

[55] M. Franzmann, "Tehat the Weaver: Women's Experience in Manichaeism in Fourth-Century Roman Kellis," *Australian Religion Studies Review* 20, no. 1 (2007): 23.

[56] ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲟⲓ ⲛⲉⲛ ⲛ̄ⲃⲟⲏⲑⲟⲟⲥ ⲉⲓ ⲡⲁⲧⲣⲟⲛ ⲉⲩⲣ̄ϣⲉⲩ·ⲉⲓ ⲥⲧⲩⲗⲟⲥ ⲉⲩⲧⲁϫⲣⲁⲓ̈ⲧ̇ ⲛ̄ⲁⲧⲣⲓⲕⲉ· and [ⲧ̈ⲣⲁ]ⲯ̣ⲓⲟⲩ ⲇⲉ ⲛ̄ⲙⲱⲧⲛ̄ ⲧⲟⲛⲟⲩ [ⲛⲁϣⲉⲣⲉ] ⲉⲧⲥⲛⲁⲙⲁⲧ̇· ϫⲉ ⲉⲣⲉⲧⲛⲁ[ⲧⲙⲛⲁⲩ] �except ⲟⲩⲥ ⲥⲛⲉⲩ ⲙⲛ̄ⲛ̈ ⲛ̄ⲛⲏⲯ· ϫⲉ [ⲧⲉⲧⲛⲥⲁ]ⲩⲛⲉ ⲣⲱⲧ̇ⲧⲙⲛⲉ· ϫⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲣ̄[ⲭⲣⲉⲓⲁ] ⲛ̄ⲛⲓⲙⲁ· ⲉⲡⲓⲇⲏ ⲧⲛ̄[ⲗ]ⲁϫⲯ̣ P.Kell.Copt. 31.16-20, 29-33.

[57] Bagnall, *KAB*, 49.

[58] ⲁⲣⲓ ⲡⲣⲱⲃ ⲧ̣ⲉⲙⲟⲩϫⲧ ⲡⲱϯ ⲱⲁϯⲉⲓ· P.Kell.Copt. 32.31-33. Gardner suggests that Theognostos may have been the author of P.Kell.Copt. 32 and 33, but admits the lack of firm evidence. The other letters by Theognostos (from a second volume of documentary papyri) do not immediately confirm his reconstruction, although the handwriting of P.Kell.Copt. 84 is similar. Gardner, Alcock, and Funk, *CDT2*, 136.

continue her work, either for financial reasons or to produce clothing for the elect.[59] The interpretation of this request as soliciting alms is enhanced by the frame of Manichaean phrases, filled with allusions to biblical texts. The instruction to "do the work" (ⲁⲣⲓ ⲡϩⲱⲃ) is repeated a couple of lines further down as "fight in every way to complete the work."[60] The urgency of this task is reinforced by alluding to the biblical parable of the thief who could come at any hour "to dig through the house." In the original biblical narrative, the lack of knowledge on the hour a thief could come is equated with the lack of knowledge on the date of the arrival of the kingdom of God (Mt. 24:42–44 and 1 Thess 5.2). Just like a homeowner needs to be prepared for burglary, a faithful catechumen should be prepared for the kingdom of God. In Eirene's case, mixing of the warp and sending wheat and oil were presented as her preparation for the coming of the kingdom. Other Manichaean phrases in this letter, moreover, connect the biblical passage about treasures in heaven (Mt. 6:19–20) with the notion of the sun and the moon as storehouses of such treasures, as the author writes: "[S]he who has acquired for herself her riches and stored them in the treasuries that are in the heights, where moths shall not find a way, nor shall thieves dig through to them to steal; which (storehouses) are the sun and the moon."[61] In Manichaean cosmology, the sun and the moon are ships of Light that take the released Light from the Living Soul and gather it before its final ascent. By creatively mixing the biblical passage with Manichaean cosmology, the author draws different strands of thinking about gifts together in one plea for faithful and good stewardship.[62]

In these two letters, the elect may have specifically solicited alms. At the same time, there are indications that we are simply dealing with economic interactions without explicit reference to payment. The author of the letter to Eirene indicates that they will meet again and he will "settle our account" (ϣⲁⲧⲛ̄ⲣⲁⲡⲁⲛⲧⲁ ⲁⲛⲉⲛⲉⲣⲏⲩ ⲧⲙ̄ⲧ ⲡ̣ⲛ̄ⲱⲡ).[63] How this settlement will be achieved is not clear; it seems unlikely that they would have had to pay if the commodities were given as alms. A minimalist interpretation is to consider whether in this situation, gifts to the elect could have been blended with the manual labor of these ascetics. Maybe they shared in a common venture to produce textiles, something that was not uncommon for Egyptian ascetics or monks. Eirene could have worked together with the

[59] Franzmann, "Tehat the Weaver," 24. The active role of women in the oasis and the religious community is discussed more broadly in M. Franzmann, "The Manichaean Women in the Greek and Coptic Letters from Kellis," in *Women in Occidental and Oriental Manichaeism: Proceedings of the International Conference Held at Paris Sorbonne, Paris, June 27-28, 2014*, ed. M. Franzmann and M. Scopello (Leiden: Brill, Forthcoming).

[60] First in line 29-30: "fight in every way" (ⲛⲓϣϫⲉ ⲛ̄ⲥⲛⲁⲧ ⲛⲓⲙ) and later on: "flight in every way to complete the work" ⲙⲟⲛⲟⲛ ⲛⲓϣϫⲉ ⲛ̄ϩⲉ ⲛⲓⲙ· ⲁϫⲱⲕ ⲡϩⲱⲃ P.Kell.Copt. 32.40-42.

[61] ⲧⲉⲧⲁⲥ[ϫ]ⲓⲡⲟ ⲛⲉⲥ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲥϫⲣⲏⲙⲁ [ⲁⲥ]ⲃⲁⲗϣⲟⲩ ⲁ̣ⲛⲉϩⲱⲣ ⲉⲧⲣ̣ⲓ [ⲡ]ϫ̣[ⲓ]ⲭ̣ⲉ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲙⲁⲣⲉ ⲣⲁⲗⲉ ⲟ̄ⲛ̄ ⲙ̣ⲁⲓⲧ· ⲟⲩⲇⲉ ⲙⲁⲣⲉ ⲗ̣ⲏⲥⲧⲏⲥ [ϫ]ⲁⲭⲧ’ ⲁⲣⲁⲩ ⲁϫⲓⲟⲩⲉ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲛ̄[ⲧⲁ]ⲩ ⲛⲉ ⲡⲣⲏ ⲙ̄ⲡ ⲡⲟⲩ· P.Kell.Copt. 32.7-13.

[62] Franzmann, "An 'Heretical' Use of the New Testament," 155; Franzmann, "The Treasure of the Manichaean Spiritual Life," 235-42.

[63] Crum, *CD*. 527b. ϯ ⲱⲡ, "to give account."

author of this letter, just like Orion worked with Tehat and brother Saren (P.Kell.Copt. 18 and 58).[64]

A number of other letters have been interpreted within the framework of Manichaean almsgiving. Some of these will be reviewed in the next section on economic interactions, as they represent the same ambiguity concerning gifts and economic transactions. One letter that deserves to be discussed is the only Greek letter from Kellis with Manichaean terminology: P.Kell.Gr. 63. Klaas Worp, the editor of the Greek papyri, understood this letter to Pausanias and Pisistratios as a response to their request for a letter of recommendation. The author, probably an important figure who could vouch for their proper Manichaean character and conduct, replied with this elegant Greek letter, praising them for their good reputation and pious character, wishing to "reveal this as much as possible and to extend it through this letter."[65] Although such praise and the reversal of the authority structure of Manichaean patronage underlying this letter resemble the other letters of recommendation (see below in section 6.4), the letter does not contain any of the formal characteristic elements of letters of recommendation. There is no specific request for hospitality, nor is a third party addressed who should offer it.[66] Instead, the author praises the addressees directly, not unlike the introductory sections of P.Kell.Copt. 31 and 32. This similarity suggests that P.Kell.Gr. 63 may be read more fruitfully in the context of almsgiving.

Instead of asking for oil and wheat, the author of P.Kell.Gr. 63 stated: "[M]ay you remain so helpful for us as we pray" and "(later) again we benefit also from the fruits of the soul of the pious."[67] These remarks were embedded in the context of other polite phrases, expressing gratitude with fervor: "[O]nly our lord the Paraclete is competent to praise you as you deserve and to compensate you at the appropriate moment."[68] This latter reference to the Paraclete is one of three times this name is mentioned in papyrus letters. All three are Manichaean letters (P.Kell.Gr. 63, P.Kell.Cop. 19, P.Harr. 107), which share this marked

[64] Financial interactions are difficult to reconstruct in a large number of letters. See below on Orion, Tehat and brother Saren (P.Kell.Copt. 18 and 58). Struggles with financial interactions are also attested in, for example, a letter to Pshai (P.Kell.Copt. 70). Financial details are discussed with the head of the household (P.Kell.Copt. 82). Other instances mention payment include: for a cloak, paid in terms ("little by little," P.Kell.Copt. 94), or for the repairs of a *collarium* (P.Kell.Copt. 103), and see also the elaborate account and letters including financial details like P.Kell.Copt. 81, 94 and 95.

[65] [Π]ολλῆς καὶ ἀπεί[ρο]υ οὔσης ἔν τε̣ δ̣ι̣ανοίᾳ̣ καὶ στόμα[τι] ἡμῶν τῆ̣ς̣ ὑμε̣[τ]έ̣ρ̣[α]ς̣ εὐ̣φημίας̣ [β]ούλ[ομαι διὰ] γ̣ραμμάτ[ω]ν̣ ταύτην ἐπὶ̣ τ̣ο̣σ̣ο̣ῦ̣τ̣ο̣ν ἐκφᾶναι κ[α]ὶ̣ ἐπεκτεῖναι· P.Kell.Gr. 63.5-9. A reconstruction of the situation in Worp, *GPK1*, 168-9.

[66] The elements of letters of recommendation are explained in C. H. Kim, *Form and Structure of the Familiar Greek Letter of Recommendation* (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature for the Seminar on Paul, 1972). With a summary in Stowers, *Letter Writing*, 153-4; K. Treu, "Christliche Empfehlungs-Schemabriefe Auf Papyrus," in *Zetesis: Album Amicorum door vrienden en collega's aangeboden aan Prof. Dr. É. de Strycker*, ed. E. de Strycker (Antwerpen: Nederlandsche Boekhandel, 1973), 634.

[67] διαμέ̣νοιτε ἡμῖν τοιοῦτοι εὐχομένοις P.Kell.Gr. 63.35-36 and ... ἀ̣πο̣λ̣αύ[ο]με̣ν̣ δ[έ] πάλιν καὶ̣ τῶν ψυχικῶν τῆς̣ ε̣ὐ̣σ̣ε̣β̣ο̣ῦ̣ς̣ line 22-23.

[68] Μόνος γὰρ ὁ δ[ε]σπότης ἡμῶ̣ν̣ [ὁ] π̣[α]ρ[άκ]λητος \ίκανὸς/ ἐπαξίως ὑμᾶς εὐ̣λ̣ο̣γῆσα[ι] κ̣[α]ὶ̣ τ̣[ῷ] δέοντι καιρῷ ἀνταμείψα̣[σ]θαι. P.Kell.Gr. 63.28-30.

honorific language.[69] Jean-Daniel Dubois has argued that this all points to almsgiving, which may have been the case, since fruit(s) (καρπος) is used in Manichaean literature for the goods produced and given to the elect (see the parables in P.Kell.Copt. 53, 42.24).[70] The author of the letter to Eirene, moreover, used it to describe her shining exemplary behavior (P.Kell.Copt. 32.4–5). In addition, Dubois proposes to restore the word πεκουλιον (pocket money) in line 35, which could have been one of the good deeds for which gratitude is expressed.[71] In Chapter 4, I suggested that one of the addressees of the letter, Pausanias, may be identified as the *strategos* Pausanias, who may have acted as a major sponsor and benefactor of the local Manichaean community.

6.3.2 Economic Interaction

Economic interactions are notoriously difficult to distinguish from other types of gift exchange, as the financial reward or return gift is often not made explicit in writing. Few letters, even those with Manichaean vocabulary, are devoid of economic transactions. Instead of being strictly separated, the various types of gifts and commercial interactions blended. Due to these characteristics, some of the previous interpretations of the Kellis letters have tended to overinterpret the religious aspects, failing to see unmarked and quotidian alternatives.

The preference for a maximalist religious interpretation is visible when we read about a conflict over a cowl given to anonymous "brothers" (ⲛ̄ⲛⲥ̣ⲛ̣ⲏⲩ P.Kell.Copt. 58). The introduction of the letter is lost and therefore it starts halfway a description of a commercial transaction regarding "good cowls, like the one which you (pl.) sent off for me." The author continues to describe the setting:

> You wrote: "if you like it, keep it, or else 1,300 talents."So, I wrote to you that day that I had given it to the brothers. Do you have no news? I will give you its price. Lauti told me: "the one that you (sing.) want I will bring it to you for 1,200 (talents)."(But) I did not take word from [i.e. "make an agreement with," according to the editors of the papyri] him. I said that there is no need. Now, then, will you (pl.) satisfy me in every way?[72]

What happened between the author, probably Orion, and the recipients? According to the editors, the author "has given a cowl as a free gift to some 'brothers'; which probably should

[69] If that is one of the characteristics for Manichaean letters, one might wonder whether P.Kell.Copt. 34, which is too fragmentary to read completely, belonged to the same genre. A final shared characteristic is that both P.Kell.Gr. 63, P.Kell.Copt. 31 and 32 refrain from greeting other people in Kellis, which is otherwise a common feature in all Kellis letters.

[70] Dubois, "Greek and Coptic Documents from Kellis," 25.

[71] Dubois, "Greek and Coptic Documents from Kellis," 25.

[72] [….]…ⲛⲕⲗⲉⲫⲧ ⲉⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ⲑⲉ ⲛⲧⲉ̣ⲧⲁ̣ⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲧⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲩⲥ ⲛⲏⲓ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ ⲫⲁⲧⲛ̄ⲥⲣⲉⲓ ⲭⲉ ⲁⲩⲱⲡⲉ ⲉⲕⲟⲩⲁⲱⲥ̄ ⲕⲁⲥ ⲛⲉⲕ ⲏ ⲛ̄ⲓⲛⲁⲛ ⲙⲛ̄ⲧⲙⲁⲛⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲱⲉ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲱⲣ ⲫⲁⲓⲥⲣⲉⲓ ⲟⲉ ⲛⲛⲧⲛ̄ ⲛ̣ⲓⲡⲉⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲙⲟ ⲭⲉ ⲫⲁⲓⲧⲉⲉⲥ ⲛ̄ⲛⲥ̣ⲛ̣ⲏⲩ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲧ̣ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲱ ϯⲛ̣ⲁϯⲥⲟⲩⲛⲧⲥ ⲛⲛⲧⲛ̄ ⲫⲁ ⲗⲁⲩϯ ⲭⲟⲥ ⲛⲓ̣ⲓ̈ ⲭⲉ ⲓ̣ⲡⲉⲧ̣ⲉ̣ⲕⲟⲩⲁⲱⲩ ϯⲛⲁⲛ̄ⲧⲫ ⲛⲉⲕ ⲛ̄ⲓⲙ̣ⲛ̄[ⲧⲥ]ⲛⲁⲩⲥ̣ ⲛ̄ⲱⲉ ⲛ̄ⲓⲡ̣ⲓ̣ⲭⲓ ⲥⲉⲭⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲧⲫ̄ ⲡⲁⲭⲉⲓ̈ ⲭⲉ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ ⲭⲣⲓⲁ ϯⲛ̣ⲟⲩ ⲟⲉ ⲧⲉⲧⲛⲁⲧⲁⲣⲱⲱⲉ ⲛ̄ⲣⲉ ⲛⲓⲙ̣ P.Kell.Copt. 58.1-9. See the notes on this translation in A. Boud'hors, "Review of Coptic Documentary Texts from Kellis. Volume 2," *Journal of Coptic studies* 18 (2016): 198-99.

be understood as alms given to the local Manichaean elect."[73] The weaving workshop that had sent the cowl to him wrote to him in response that they wanted to have its price. Orion expressed his discontent because he thought to have indicated clearly that it was considered a gift. Moreover, with Lauti he could have had a lower price.[74] As the letter continues with further business transactions, the actual conflict may not have been a major problem.

This raises the question of whether the editors came up with the best interpretation. Does the author not write "I will give you its price" (ϯṇⲁϯсоγитс ннтⲛ̄)? Was there really a gift to begin with or are we led astray by our interpretation of the "brothers"? Instead of Manichaean elect, this term could very well designate close colleagues, relatives, and biological brothers. In the absence of more specific designators, the simplest interpretation is probably the best. The fact that Orion has "given" (ϩаϊтеєс) it to them does not necessarily indicate a gift (as in almsgiving) but could also mean that he sold it to them and will give its price to the weaving workshop.[75]

A comparison with another letter of Orion (P.Kell.Copt. 18), in which he addresses Tehat and Hatre concerning similar business issues, is very instructive in this regard. Several types of garment are to be made and dyed and wool has to be bought for at least 2,500 talents. He orders them (?) to "make them weave a cowl for the two children (ⲗⲁγ<ϵ>) of our brother Sa[..]ren, the presbyter (ⲙ̄ⲡⲛ̄ϩⲁⲛ ⲥⲁ[..]ⲣⲛ̣ⲛ̣ [п]пре[с]внторос)."[76] The name Saren reappears in the letter cited above (P.Kell.Copt. 58), where it is said:

> These fabrics and these cowls belong to our brother Saren. Now, as he will come, would you be so very kind ... bid (?) Eraklei to write to get them to come to the Oasis; and I shall also go there and see you. He wants the fabrics to make them into jerkins.[77]

For some scholars, this presbyter was clearly a Manichaean dignitary, member of the elect, to whom the cowls had been given as alms gifts, but I cannot find anything to support these conclusions. If my alternative translation is correct (ⲗⲁγ<ϵ> instead of ⲗⲁⲁγ), the cowl is

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[73] Gardner, Alcock, and Funk, *CDT2*, 23.

[74] Gardner, Alcock, and Funk, *CDT2*, 23. This interpretation is followed to the letter by Baker-Brian, "Mass and Elite," 177.

[75] I cannot find any evidence for the connections Franzmann draws to almsgiving, except for a rather maximalist interpretation of the "brothers." M. Franzmann, "Augustine and Manichaean Almsgiving: Understanding a Universal Religion with Exclusivist Practices " in *Augustine and Manichaean Christianity*, ed. J. van Oort (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 41.

[76] ⲛ̄тє[т]ⲛ̄ⲣоγсⲉⲩ оγкⲗⲉϥ̄т ⲛ̄ⲡⲗⲁγ сⲛ̣ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛ̄ϩⲁⲛ ⲥⲁ[..]ⲣⲛ̣ⲛ̣ [п]пре[с]внторос P.Kell.Copt. 18.20-22 (translation modified, the edition offers "make them weave a cowl for the double-fringed gown"). For this reading, compare ⲛ̄ⲗⲁγє and variations in P.Kell.Copt. 38.4, 40.5, 41.17, 84.3, 94.4, 102.19, 108.30. Crum, *CD*, 141B instead of ⲗⲁⲁγ on page 145b.

[77] ⲛⲓϩⲛⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲛⲓ[кⲗє]ч̣т ⲛ̣ⲉⲡⲛ̄ϩⲁⲛ ⲛⲉ ϛⲁϸⲛⲓ ⲉϥⲛⲁⲓ ϭⲉ ⲉ[……] ϩⲉⲗϭⲛⲧ тⲟⲛⲟγ то[ⲛоγ] . ϛϩⲱⲛ ⲓⲣⲣⲁⲕⲗⲉⲓ ⲁсϩⲉⲓ ⲁтрⲟγⲓ ⲁоγⲁϩⲉ тⲁ[вωк ⲁ]ⲙⲉγ ⲛ̄тⲁⲛⲟ ⲁрⲱ[т]ⲛ̄ чоγωⲱ ⲛ̄ϩⲛⲛⲉ ⲁсⲙ̣ⲛ̄тоγ ⲛ̄ϩⲛ̄ⲑωрⲣⲁ̈ⲝ̈ […..] P. Kell.Copt 58.b21-23 (translation modified). The editors note the alternative interpretation of Livingstone, suggesting a scarf as subject of discussion. Gardner, Alcock, and Funk, *CDT2*, 25; Cf. Bowen, "Texts and Textiles," 18-28.

produced for a non-Manichaean presbyter, as Manichaean elect were not supposed to beget children.[78]

Presbyters in the Kellis papyri are not exclusively Manichaean. Although the letter of the Teacher explicitly addresses this group (P.Kell.Copt. 61), another letter indicates the presence of non-Manichaean presbyters in the village (P.Kell.Copt. 124), while other presbyters are mentioned without indications of either a Manichaean or a non-Manichaean background (P.Kell.Copt. 92). In P.Kell.Copt. 58, Saren is identified as the owner of the fabrics, which he presumably sent to a workshop for repair or as material for new garments. Orion himself operated in this way when he sent fabric to Lautine for a *kolobion* and a cowl (P.Kell.Copt. 18) and the conflict with Lauti(ne?) concerning the price of the cowl for the brothers derived from identical procedures. Regardless of Saren's exact religious office, it seems likely that the maximalist interpretation has overlooked the involvement of ascetics in the textile manufacture and other religious specialists involved in manual labor, even though many may also have received support from lay followers.[79]

6.3.3 Household-Support Structures

Many other requests for commodities are part of a support structure that is more closely related to the household. Sabine Huebner has described the household as "the most important institution for the health and welfare of its members, and the basis for redistributing resources between generations," and furthermore as having "played a critical role in caring for the vulnerable members of society: children, the ill, the disabled, and the old."[80] As she points out, the social expectations about obligations, mutual support, and reciprocity are primarily informal and the traditional patterns of family support were only sometimes supplemented by legal obligations.[81] The household, widely defined as those people who share one roof, including kin, non-kin, and slaves, supported each other in times of difficulty, whether this was losing one's partner, children, or parents; not having children; or struggling with old age. The average household (as described in Chapter 3) consisted of multiple families or multiple generations. Failure to support each other had strong social

[78] Contra Franzmann, "Augustine and Manichaean Almsgiving," 41.

[79] I see no reason to follow Dubois' interpretation of the financial arrangements as belonging to a communal fund from which salary was paid to itinerant elect. J. D. Dubois, "Une lettre manichéenne de Kellis (P. Kell. Copt 18)," in *Early Christian Voices*, ed. D. H. Warren, A. G. Brock, and D. W. Pao (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 437; R. Finn, *Almsgiving in the Later Roman Empire: Christian Promotion and Practice (313–450)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 96ff; On economic interactions, see Wipszycka, *Études sur le christianisme dans l'Égypte de l'antiquité tardive*, 324; E. Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IVe-VIIIe siècles)* (Warsaw: Journal of Juristic Papyrology, 2009), 519-26; Goehring, "The World Engaged," 39-52. Discussion about the way Christian ascetics were involved in the local economy has been fueled by the economic transactions in the letters from the cartonnage of the Nag Hammadi Codices. Ewa Wipszycka and John Shelton have argued against the monastic nature of some of these letters, as initially proposed by John Barns and defended in Lundhaug and Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices*, 104-39. Examples of ascetics working in the textile industry include ascetics like Apa Paieous (P.Lond. 1920, 1922).

[80] Huebner, *Family in Roman Egypt*, 3.

[81] Huebner, *Family in Roman Egypt*, 4.

implications.[82] To neglect the obligation to care for one's parents, for example, could affect claims on the inheritance.[83] A similar tension surfaced in some of Pamour III's letters concerning his father Pshai, who somehow excluded Pamour from an important transaction (P.Kell.Copt. 64). Writing to his brother Psais III, Pamour tried to find out whether the items had indeed been sold, and he may even have tried to work around the decision of his father (in Chapter 4, I suggested that this tension may have been related to the inheritance).[84]

The household was also the primary location for most of the gifts and economic transactions found in the papyri. In the Roman world, all members of the household participated in the domestic economy, and the family has been called the "primary site of production, reproduction, consumption and the intergenerational transmission of property and knowledge undergirding production in the Roman world."[85] Women in the later Roman Empire generally worked at home. Some of the freeborn women may have held apprenticeships and a few were active in the agricultural sector, but women mostly worked at home. This general trend is clearly visible in the Kellis papyri, where the women had a central role as key figures (or hub) in the family network when their husbands and sons traveled into the Nile valley to conduct trade and sell agricultural goods from the oasis.[86]

The correspondence of Makarios, Matthaios, and Piene reveals that "mother Maria" in Kellis was kept in the loop for all daily accounts and was actively involved in the domestic economy. Some of the requests by Makarios, her husband, dealt with the everyday concerns of their household, specifically their children. An example of this is the letter in which Charis is greeted first and Maria is asked to "send a pair of sandals to Matthaios, for he has none at all."[87] In other sections of the letters, Maria has to sell particular goods (in the absence of her husband) to raise money for his journey with the children (P.Kell.Copt. 19.32). The financial situation of the household is precarious, since in the same letter Makarios suggests a number of fundraising strategies to Maria. Makarios is not able to afford the entire tariff and asks Maria to write "the woman within" (ⲧⲣⲙ̄ⲣⲟⲩⲙ) to ask her for money, while noting "these young ones" (ⲛ̄ⲛⲓⲗⲗⲁⲩⲉ) as another source of at least 1,000 talents (?).[88] Even while greeting

[82] Huebner, *Family in Roman Egypt*, 205.

[83] Like in the third-century letter P.Oxy. VII 1067, where the author urged her brother to make sure someone (?) to arrange the burial, otherwise a woman from outside the family will inherit the wealth. P.Oxy. VII 1067 (=BL 8 240) cited and discussed in Bagnall and Cribiore, *Women's Letters*, 273.

[84] There seems to be some indication of economic transaction between Psais and Pamour, even though the frustration with father Pshai could well be about the same object. See the notes in Gardner, Alcock, and Funk, *CDT2*, 45-46.

[85] Saller, "The Roman Family as Productive Unit," 116.

[86] Some references to exceptional situations with women working outside the house are found in R. P. Saller, "Women, Slaves, and the Economy of the Roman Household," in *Early Christian Families in Context*, ed. D. L. Balch and C. Osiek (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 185-204.

[87] ⲧⲛⲛⲁⲩ ⲟⲩⲧⲟⲟⲩ ⲧⲟⲟⲩⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲑⲁⲓⲟⲥ ϫⲉ ⲛⲓⲧⲉⲫ ⲣⲟⲗⲱⲥ P.Kell.Copt. 20.58.

[88] "The woman within" is a curious designator for someone who is greeted twice by Makarios (P.Kell.Copt. 19.54, 65 and 22.78). The male version was sometimes used for a minor ecclesiastical office, cited in Crum, *CD*. 687a. Franzmann has rejected the option of a secluded *electa*, as this does not appear to have been a Manichaean tenet. Franzmann, "The Manichaean Women in the Greek and Coptic Letters from Kellis."

his son Matthaios and their relative Drousiane, he suggests they could write letters in his name or talk to Kouria (Kyria?) in the hope that "perhaps she will give something."[89]

While some of these solicited gifts can be understood as support within the household, they seem to go beyond the immediate family context. The distinctions are not always easy. The heavy usage of fictive kinship terminology makes it impossible to reconstruct who belonged to the household and who to a wider Manichaean network. Despite this difficulty, I think that some exchanges took place between Manichaean catechumens. An example can be found in the postscript of P.Kell.Copt. 66, where Maria sends seven portions of pickled fish and gives two of these portions to Chares.[90] The Manichaean background of Pshemnoute and Chares is firmly attested by the fact that they are addressed in several letters with explicit Manichaean repertoire. Family support thus extended beyond next of kin to those who had become family in a Manichaean sense.

Gift exchange between catechumens may not strike anyone as remarkable, but in light of the Manichaean ideology of giving it stands out. The logic behind ritualized almsgiving suggests that food and inedible gifts, given to anyone other than the Manichaean elect, cannot support the liberation of the Living Soul. Despite this line of thought, there is one section in the *Kephalaia* where gifts to catechumens are discussed (1 Keph. 77). In this chapter, Mani proclaims that those who give are greater than the four greatest kingdoms on earth: "[W]hoever will give bread and a cup of water to one of my disciples on account of the name of God, on account of this truth that I have revealed; that one is great before God." Extending the argument, the chapter includes catechumens as the recipients of gifts: "[W]hoever will give bread and a cup of water to a catechumen of the truth, on account of the name of God and on account of the truth that has become evident to those who came near to the truth."[91] Just like catechumens are praised when they give to the elect, now the donor who gives to catechumens receives praise: "[T]hat whoever will have fellowship with catechumens who are within the knowledge, and helps them, he surpasses these kingdoms that I have counted for you."[92] The entire chapter seems to redirect the standard gift-giving pattern and expand it in order to include the catechumens. Twice in this chapter, the catechumens are the subject of Jesus's biblical commandment to give to "these little ones" (Mt. 10.42 cf. Mk 9:36–37). Indeed, the catechumens *and* the elect are inhabited by the "holy spirit," who will return the favor done for them via the "true father" (1 Keph. 77, 190.4).

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[89] ⲧⲁϫⲁ ⲛ̄ⲥ̣ⲧ ⲟⲩⲗⲁⲩⲉ P.Kell.Copt. 19.74.

[90] Ⲭⲓ ⲛⲉⲕ ⲛ̄ⲧⲥⲁⲱⲃⲉ ⲛ̄ϣⲁⲧⲥ̄ ⲛ̄ⲧⲃ̄ⲧ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲧⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲃⲟ ϫⲓ ⲧⲥ̣ⲙ̄ⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ϣⲁⲧⲥ̄ ⲉⲩⲡⲁⲣⲭ̣ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲧⲛ ⲛ̄ⲃⲟ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲩ ⲛ̄ϧⲁ̣[ⲣⲛⲥ] P.Kell.Copt. 66.43-46. See the reconstruction of the situation in Gardner, Alcock, and Funk, *CDT2*, 56.

[91] See the following note for the full Coptic text.

[92] ⲁⲛⲁⲕ ⲇⲉ ⲧ̣ϫⲱ ⲙ̄ⲛⲁⲥ ⲁⲣⲱⲧⲙ̄ ⲣ̄ⲙ̄ ⲟⲩⲙⲛⲉ ϫⲉ ⲡⲉⲧ̣[ⲛⲁⲧ]ⲁⲓⲕ ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ ⲟⲩⲁⲡⲁⲧ ⲙ̄ⲛⲁⲩ ⲛⲟⲩⲉ ⲛⲛⲁⲛⲁⲑⲛⲧⲛⲥ ⲉ̣[ⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲣⲉⲛ ⲙⲡⲛ]ⲟⲩⲧ̣ⲉ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲣⲉⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲛⲛⲉ ⲉⲧⲁⲓ̈ⲃ[ⲁ]ⲗ[ⲡⲥ] ⲁ̣ⲃⲁⲗ̣ [ⲡ]ⲉⲧⲛⲛⲉⲩ ⲉⲛⲉⲉⲩ ⲣⲁⲧⲙ̄ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ [ⲉⲩⲟ]ⲩⲁⲧⲃⲉ ⲙ[ⲣⲟⲩⲟ] ⲁⲧⲭⲧⲟⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲁ̈ⲃ ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ⲧ̄ⲣⲣⲟ ⲉⲧⲟ ⲛ̄ⲛ[ⲁ̈ⲃ ⲙ]ⲡⲣⲛⲧⲉ ⲭⲣ̣ⲣ̣ⲟⲩⲟ̣ ⲁⲛ ⲡⲁⲣⲁ ⲛⲟⲩⲛⲁⲧⲉⲃ̈ⲧⲉ ⲉⲡⲉⲓ̣ⲗ̣ⲏ ⲙ̣ⲡⲟⲩⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄ ⲁ̄ⲧⲛⲛⲉ ⲙⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲟⲩ̄ⲣⲃⲟ[ⲛⲃⲟ]ⲥ ⲛⲧⲁ̣[ⲓⲕⲁ]ⲓⲟⲥⲩⲛⲏ ⲟⲩ ⲙⲟⲛⲟⲛ ⲡⲉ̈ⲓ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁ[ⲧ] ⲁ̈ⲓⲕ ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ ⲟⲩⲁⲡⲁⲧ ⲙⲛⲁⲩ ⲛⲟⲩⲕⲁⲧⲏⲭⲟⲩⲙⲉⲛⲟⲥ ⲙ̄ⲧ[ⲙⲛⲉ ⲉⲧ]ⲃⲉ ⲡⲣⲉⲛ ⲙⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲣⲉⲛ ⲙ̄ⲧⲛⲛⲉ [ⲉⲧⲃⲁⲗⲡ] ⲙⲡⲉⲧⲙ̄ⲛⲉⲩ ⲧ̣ⲣⲛⲁⲓ̈ⲧ ⲁ̣ⲣⲟⲩⲛ ⲁ̣ⲧ̣[ⲙⲛⲉ ⲧⲉ]ⲭⲣⲁⲓ̣ ⲛⲁ̣ⲕ̣[ⲱ]ⲧⲉ ⲁⲡⲙ̄ⲧⲁⲛ ϣⲁ ⲁⲛⲏⲣⲉ [ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲡⲥⲉϧⲉ] ⲡⲉⲧⲁ ⲡⲥⲛ̄[ⲣ ⲛⲁ]ⲅⲁⲃⲟⲥ ⲧⲉⲟⲩⲁⲩ ϫⲉ ⲡ[ⲉⲧⲛⲁ⳨ ⲁⲓ̈ⲕ ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ ⲟⲩⲁⲡⲁⲧ ⲙ̄ⲛⲁⲩ] ⲛ̈ⲟⲩⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲓⲕ̣ⲩⲓ [ⲙⲡⲥⲧⲟ]ⲥ̣ ⲉⲧⲛⲁⲣⲧⲉ ⲁⲣⲁⲓ̈ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲣⲉⲓ̣ⲛ̣ ⲛ̈ⲟⲩⲙⲁⲑⲏ̣ⲧⲏ̣ⲥ̣……ⲕⲉⲛⲁ….ⲉ ⲉⲛ ⲉⲣⲉ [ⲡⲥ̄ⲏ̣[ⲣ] ⲙⲉⲛ ⲙⲟⲩⲧ̣[ⲉ] ⲁⲛⲓⲡⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲃⲉ ϫⲉ ⲕⲟⲩⲓ̈ ⲙⲡⲥⲧⲟⲥ ⲁⲛⲁⲕ ⲇⲉ ⲉⲓⲥ ⲣⲉⲧⲉ ⲁ̈ⲧⲉⲟⲩⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲛⲕⲁⲧⲏⲭⲟⲩⲙⲉⲛⲟⲥ [ⲭ]ⲉ ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲕⲟⲓⲱⲱⲛⲏ ⲙ̄ⲛ̄ ⲣ̄ⲛⲕⲁⲧⲏⲭⲟⲩⲙⲉⲛⲟⲥ ⲉⲩⲣ̣ⲏ ⲡⲥⲁⲩⲛⲉ ⲛⲧ̄ⲣ̄ⲃⲟⲛⲑⲉⲓ ⲁⲣⲁⲩ ⲭⲟⲩⲁⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲁⲣⲁ ⲛⲓ[ⲙ ⲛ ⲧ[ⲣⲣⲁⲓ̈ ⲉⲧⲁⲓ̈ⲁⲡⲟⲩ ⲛⲏⲧⲙ̄ 1 Keph. 77, 189.6-25 (modified translation, Cf. the German edition).

Technical terminology like "alms" and "fellowship," commonly used for the behavior of catechumens toward the elect, is applied here to the gifts to catechumens as well: "[H]e will give them alms and have fellowship with them."[93]

The expansion of the gift exchange to include catechumens may thus contextualize the Kellis evidence for gifts amongst catechumens. As both elect and catechumens worked in the Nile valley, they both depended on the support of family, friends, and coreligionists. 1 Keph. 77 suggests that sometimes gifts to catechumens may have had similar beneficial effects as the normative alms gifts to the elect, as a simple cup of water and bread given to the catechumen on account of the truth will not only be greater than the four kingdoms but also "his end will turn to eternal rest."[94] Unfortunately, none of the Kellis letters allude to this kind of motivation, which makes it very difficult to discern whether the gifts to catechumens were considered of as extensions of the household-support structures, or seen in light of the Manichaean doctrines of the salvation of Light.

6.3.4 Charity to Non-elect

At the outset of this chapter, I cited Augustine's remarks about food exclusivity. He said that Manichaeans never gave to beggars because it would affect the Living Soul. In fact, he notes that it equaled murder, as the Living Soul could not be released when given to someone other than the elect.[95] A thought-provoking reference in this regard is found in a fragmentary passage from a business account. The author, a woman who may be identified as Tehat, addressed her son and urged him to

> have pity for them and you set up (?) some pots for them; for they have father nor mother. And until you know (?), the baked loaves… every widow eats (?)… find it… charity (ⲛⲁⲉ); and he… and he has mercy (ⲛⲩⲛⲁⲉ) on them in their ….[96]

This passage seems to imply charity to widows and orphans, even though we have to be careful because of its highly fragmentary nature. Could this mean that the Manichaeans in Kellis gave food to charity?

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[93] [ⲩ]ⲛⲁϯ ⲛⲉϒ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲙⲛⲧⲛⲁⲉ ⲛ̄ⲩⲕⲟⲓⲛⲱⲛⲏ ⲛⲉⲙⲉϒ 1 Keph. 77, 190.1.

[94] ⲧⲉ]ⲩⲣⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲓ[ⲱ]ⲧⲉ ⲁⲡ̄ⲧⲁⲛ ⲱⲁ ⲁⲛⲏⲣⲉ 1 Keph. 77, 189.16-17 (translation modified). In fact, some of these gifts may have derived from non-Manichaeans with a positive attitude toward the church, as the *Kephalaia* suggests that these outsiders may find "rest" (ⲡ̄ⲧⲁⲛ 1 Keph. 77, 189.17). This is interesting, as the Sermon on the Great War only describes the damnation of non-Manichaeans and sees no sympathizers outside the church. Pedersen, Studies, 362.

[95] As stressed earlier, pure almsgiving is of pivotal importance to Manichaeans. Compare with the Parthian homily M6020, where the elect are warned only to accept food when they are able to redeem it. Otherwise they have commited the gravest sin against the Living Soul, one that also rubs off on the catechumen who donated the food. The homily is published and discussed in W. Henning, "A Grain of Mustard," *AION-L* (1965), 29-47.

[96] […] ⲱⲙ̄ ⲥⲧⲛⲕ ⲭⲁⲣⲁⲩ ⲛⲕⲧⲟⲩⲛ.[…] ⲭⲛⲟ ⲛⲉⲩ ⲍⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲧⲫⲩ ⲓⲱⲧ ⲟ[ⲩⲧⲉ] ⲛⲟ ⲙⲉⲭⲣⲓ ⲇⲉ ⲕⲙⲉ ⲛ̣ⲁ̣ⲅ̣ⲉ̣ … ⲭⲏⲣⲉ ⲛⲓⲏ ⲟⲩⲟⲙ ⲙⲏⲉⲉ̣…. ⲅ̄ⲛ̄ⲧ̄ⲥ̄ . ⲧⲉ ⲛⲁⲉ ⲛ̄ⲫ̄ …. ⲁⲣⲣⲏⲓ ⲛⲩⲛⲁⲉ̣ ⲣⲁⲩ ⲣⲛ̄ ⲧ̣ⲟⲩ.. ̄…. P.Kell.Copt. 43.16-22 (slightly modified translation, the lacuna's make the passage very difficult to understand).

In a recent article, Majella Franzmann has weighed the evidence from Augustine against the letter of Tehat. How should the testimony of Augustine affect our interpretation of Manichaeans in Egyptian papyri? Although Franzmann is careful in her assessment, the current scholarly consensus is on Augustine's side, interpreting the Kellis material within the framework offered by him.[97] As indicated in the first two chapters of this dissertation, I have major problems with this approach. Instead of synthesizing the available evidence, we should consider, discuss, and explain the inconsistencies, developments, diverse perspectives, and regional variations. Just as important, moreover, is the rhetorical nature of Augustine's reports on Manichaeism, in which he employed various types of literary constructions and strategies for heresiological reasons. As forcefully argued by Baker-Brian, Augustine employs all of his considerable rhetorical talents to ridicule and denigrate his former coreligionists.[98] In fact, Augustine's remarks about food exclusion have to be read in the larger context of his charge of gluttony. The elect lacked self-control and had to stuff themselves with food, since no leftovers were allowed. Augustine even reiterated accusations about Manichaeans feeding children to death to preclude leftover food (*Mor. Manich.* 2.16.52).[99] He repeatedly emphasized the vices of the Manichaeans, who are not even capable of holding the rules of the Decalogue without distorting them (*Faust.* 15.7). None of this rhetorical context is taken into account by Franzmann. Instead, following the lead of Johannes van Oort, she considers whether the orphans and widows in Tehat's letter might have been those people who had left their family: the elect.[100] This option seems legitimate, as the elect are sometimes portrayed as strangers who left the houses of their parents. They could be understood as spiritual orphans in need of support.[101]

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[97] Recent scholars who consider Augustine's testimony regarding Manichaeism as reliable and use it as a historical evidence include J. van Oort, "The Young Augustine's Knowledge of Manichaeism: An Analysis of the Confessiones and Some Other Relevant Texts," *Vigiliae Christianae* 62, no. 5 (2008): 441-66; Coyle, "What Did Augustine Know," 251-63; J. van Oort, "Augustine and the Books of the Manichaeans," in *A Companion to Augustine*, ed. M. Vessey (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 188-99. There is, moreover, an irony in Augustine's emphasis on Manichaean gift exclusivity, since he himself urged his readers to give to a common fund under the distribution of the bishop, instead of giving directly to others. Augustine, *Enarrat. Ps.* 63.11, referred to in Finn, *Almsgiving*, 46.

[98] Baker-Brian, "Between Testimony and Rumour," 31-53.

[99] Baker-Brian, "Between Testimony and Rumour," 46. With regard to ex-member testimonial, the sociologist Bryan Wilson wrote: "The sociologist of contemporary sectarianism need to rely neither on fragments nor on biased witnesses. Indeed, with good reason, sociologists generally treat the evidence of a sect's theological opponents, of the aggrieved relatives of sectarians, and of the disaffected and apostate with some circumspection." Wilson, *The Social Dimensions of Sectarianism*, 6.

[100] Franzmann, "Augustine and Manichaean Almsgiving," 42-3.

[101] Widows and orphans are frequently mentioned together in Early Christian writings (for example in the New Testament, James 1.27) and appear together in Manichaean writing as well (2 PsB. 53.24-25, 62.16-17, 175.20-24 etc). The designation of elect as orphans, widows and strangers is found in the Manichaean psalms, "thou bearest witness of my course, o blessed Light, that I have ministered to the widows, the orphans, the Righteous." ⲕⲣⲏⲓⲧⲣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϭⲓⲙⲡⲱⲧ ⲱ ⲡⲟⲩⲁ̈ⲓⲛⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ ϫⲉ ⲁ̈ⲓϣⲙ̄ϣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲣⲁ ⲛ̄ⲟⲣⲫⲁⲛⲟⲥ ⲛ̄ⲇⲓⲕⲁⲓⲟⲥ 2 PsB. 252 62.16-17. In another passage the disciples are called "wandering orphans" in need of a specific revelation. ⳟⲱⲡⲉ ⲛⲏⲓ ⲛ̄ⲃⲁ̈ϣⲙⲉ ⳟⲁⲛⲓⲟⲣ[ⲫⲁⲛⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲥⲁ]ⲣⲙⲉ "be a messenger for me to these wandering orphans" 2 PsB. 187.11-13, Cf. 53.24-25. Similar statements in 2 PsB. 175.21-2 in which the singer has "clothed thy

Despite this reinterpretation, Franzmann continues to stress local variation caused by specific "cultural ecologies," and she cautiously questions her own harmonization of the sources. "Perhaps," she rightly suggests, "Augustine was not completely right in every case."[102] I could not agree more. How would converts to Manichaeism have experienced such a rule against sharing food with outsiders? Would they have stopped supporting family members? It is hard to imagine a village life in which the boundaries of solidarity-based giving were strictly limited to people's own religious elites, even though we know modern religious groups that take a strong exclusive stance. I suggest that gifts to family and the poor continued to be given, even though this may have conflicted with some rigorists' interpretations of Manichaean normative texts. One of the Kellis letters, in fact, narrates about the care for two orphaned girls (P.Kell.Copt. 73). The Kellis papyri do not provide an unambiguous answer, but food exclusivity does not automatically follow from the personal letters. They cannot bear the weight of a sectarian interpretation of the Kellis community as a strictly bounded group.

6.3.5 Patronage

If we return to the gifts of Eirene, I wonder whether she would have agreed with being framed as daughter and catechumen. Since we do not hear her own voice, it is only the male author who brings forward his designation of her role. An alternative interpretation of her role as supporter could well be that she was a female patron of an itinerant holy man, a phenomenon well known in Late Antiquity. Although male patronage often stands out as most common, wealthy women functioned as patron on all levels of society.[103] Unfortunately, the lack of further references to the life of Eirene precludes further examination of her role in the Manichaean community as well as in the village at large.

The question of patronage in late antique Egyptian society, however, offers an interesting alternative perspective on the dynamic of gift exchange. The social structure of wealthy patrons giving commodities and/or services to their clients, in return for honor, their vote, or other services, was one of the fundamentals of Roman society.[104] In Late Antiquity,

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orphans," directly after "served all these holy ones" (ⲁϊⲱⲙⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲕⲡⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲃⲉ ⲧⲏⲣ[ⲟ]ⲩ ⲁϊⲏ ⲉⲓⲱⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲕⲟⲣⲫⲁⲛⲟⲥ). All cited examples, however, can be read as lists instead of summations. In other words, they create the impression that care for orphans and widows was almost as important as the daily almsgiving to the elect. Contra Franzmann, "Augustine and Manichaean Almsgiving," 42-3.

[102] Franzmann, "Augustine and Manichaean Almsgiving," 48. Likewise, Peter Arzt-Grabner has recently highlighted, on the basis of papyrological sources, how Christians continued to attend private festivals with traditional sacrifices and meals in temple halls. Excusivity was difficult to maintain when weddings and other private festivities were celebrated with non-Christian relatives and friends. P. Arzt-Grabner, "Why Did Early Christ Groups Still Attend Idol Meals? Answers from Papyrus Invitations," *Early Christianity* 7 (2016): 508-29.

[103] C. Osiek, "*Diakonos* and *Prostatis*: Women's Patronage in Early Christianity," *HTS Theological Studies* 61, no. 1 & 2 (2005): 347-70.

[104] Patronage is the "enduring bond between two persons of unequal social and economic status, which implies and is maintained by periodic exchanges of goods and services, and also has social and affective dimensions." P. Garnsey and G. Woolf, "Patronage of the Rural Poor in the Roman World," in *Patronage in Ancient Society*, ed. A. Wallace-Hadrill (London: Routledge, 1989), 154.

some of these patronage structures changed as a result of the increasing complexity and fragmentation of society. Urban and rural councilors, emerging bishops, ascetics, military leaders, former magistrates, and the provincial governor and his staff were all potential patrons who competed for the favor of the general population. As a result, villagers could shift allegiances, play their patrons, and seek services that benefited them best.[105] This led the fourth-century Antiochian rhetor Libanius to complain about the decay of well-structured society. In his opinion, peasants used the multiplicity of available patrons to their advantage, while it should be the rural landlord who "assumes the role of the protector, monopolizing the dual functions of a patron, as a provider of protection and resources and as a broker controlling access to the outside world."[106] Libanius himself, as seen in Chapter 4, acted as patron and friend for a Manichaean community when he wrote to Priscianus, the proconsul of Palestine, to argue for its protection.

Within the Kellis corpus, the language of patronage is only used toward catechumens. They could be addressed (as we have seen) as "helpers," "worthy patrons," and "firm unbending pillars" (ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲟⲩ ⲛⲉⲛ ⲛ̄ⲃⲟⲛⲃⲟⲟⲥ ⲉⲓ ⲡⲁⲧⲣⲟⲛ ⲉⲩⲣ̄ⲣⲱⲉⲩ· ⲉⲓ ⲥⲧⲩⲗⲟⲥ ⲉⲩⲧⲁϫⲣⲁⲏⲧ P.Kell.Copt. 31.16–18). This use of patronage is an inversion of the traditional Roman benefaction relations in which the wealthy few patronized the masses. It is, according to Baker-Brian, "one of the most significant modifications of mass and elite relations in the entire postclassical period," even though the catechumens in Kellis clearly belonged to a well-to-do section of society.[107] As a result, more emphasis is placed on the critical role and agency of women like Eirene. They were not that different from wealthy Christian women who were constantly courted for their support by Christian ascetics (like Jerome, whose association with aristocratic Christian women led to his exile from Rome).

Two other types of patronage stand out. The Kellites look at local and regional elites for legal support at the courts of the provincial governor. Two examples from Chapter 4 will suffice to illustrate the patronage ties with Roman officials: P.Kell.Copt. 20 and 38ab. In the former document, we are informed about a petition to the *comes*, who has to approach the *logistes* on behalf of Makarios and Matthaios. In the latter document, a plot of land is given to Psais II, by Pausanias, a Roman official who may have been the *strategos* of the oasis. In both instances, powerful Roman officials interact with members of the Manichaean community in typical Roman patronage structures.

One of the most important patronage relations was between a client and his landlord. At Kellis, the financial obligations to the landlord could be paid in several ways. Sometimes the rent was paid in silver drachmas (P.Kell.Gr. 62), but the KAB shows that commodities were frequently used to replace money (KAB 330ff, 1146, 1167 etc.). Likewise, wages could be paid in barley (P.Kell.Copt. 48), wheat (P.Kell.Copt. 46), or in oil (P.Kell.Copt. 47 for the production of a piece of garment).[108] When we return to the issue of food exclusivity, these

[105] López, *Shenoute of Atripe and the Uses of Poverty*, 4-5.

[106] Garnsey and Woolf, "Patronage of the Rural Poor in the Roman World," 162; Libanius, *Oration* 47.19, 22.

[107] Baker-Brian, "Mass and Elite," 181.

[108] On the numerous small parcels and array of commodities which were used to pay rent, see D. P. Kehoe, "Tenancy and Oasis Agriculture on an Egyptian Estate of the 4th C. A.D.," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 12,

financial arrangements suggest that Manichaeans at Kellis would either have participated in this system of barter, or stood out by using monetary means only. The first option would contradict the Manichaean logic as disclosed by Augustine, while the second option cannot be proven beyond doubt, as the letters with recognizable Manichaean repertoire do not deliberate about wages or rent, nor do they inform us about their relation with the landlord.[109]

6.4 Local Characteristics: Geographical Distance and the Absence of the Elect

When all this evidence for the plurality of socioeconomic engagement in the Kellis letters is taken into account, the centrality of Manichaean almsgiving fades into the background. The passages adduced in support of the normative Manichaean gift exchange reveal two local characteristics that have a major impact on our reconstruction of the community. First, I contend that the elect were mainly absent from the village and spent most of their time traveling in the Nile valley. Second, because of their absence, the Manichaeans of Kellis could not celebrate the Manichaean ritual meal on a daily basis. In this section, I will outline the impact of geographical distance on the structure of the Manichaean community. Following up on the discussion of Piene's journeys with the Teacher, I will examine how the relations between catechumens and elect were fostered without the daily recurrence of each other's presence. The next section will consider the impact of the geographical distance on the daily ritual practice, by questioning the identification of the *agape* in the papyri with the Manichaean meal. Together, this will present an alternative image of the ritual life in the local Manichaean community, challenging the normative framework as presented in Manichaean scriptures.

My first assertion is that the geographical distance between the oasis and the Nile valley caused the elect to be absent from the village. All instances in which elect are mentioned in the personal letters record their location outside the oasis. The father addressing Eirene, as well as the father writing to his anonymous daughters, was explicitly located "in Egypt," which designated the Nile valley.[110] The other members of the elect are also reported to reside in Alexandria or the cities of the valley. Apa Lysimachos is reported as residing (?) in Antinoou (P.Kell.Copt. 21), from where he could forward letters to the oasis and back. The Teacher was also traveling toward Alexandria (P.Kell.Copt. 29). In Chapter 4, I presented the evidence for catechumens who traveled with the elect, either as their retinue to support their survival, or as merchants selling their wares. The passages regarding Piene's involvement with the Teacher are most informative, but they represent an exceptional situation. Only some other Kellites traveled with the elect, probably mostly for a shorter

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no. 2 (1999): 746. He notes that wine was also used to pay for "service" (presumably wages for workers other than tenants. If *Topos Mani* would have constituted a Manichaean monastery, which I will argue it did not, it would have paid a rent in olives.

[109] One could suggest, however, that the "master" in P.Kell.Copt. 20.47 had to be sent a *maje* of something as rent. The passage is too fragmentary to be sure.

[110] Makarios wrote about "when I came to Egypt" and "we delayed coming to Egypt" (P.Kell.Copt. 22). Gardner, Alcock, and Funk, *CDT1*, 207, also 12. Known already from the early monastic period, in the *Vit. Ant.* 57, cited in Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 144.

period of time and without undergoing extensive training (as for example Philammon and others in P.Kell.Copt. 72 and 82).

The Manichaean community in the oasis was several days of traveling removed from the Nile valley and in order to keep a regional network together, letters of recommendation were sent with travelers to introduce them to their new context. Some of these letters could be identified among the Oxyrhynchus papyri, as the Kellis letters have stimulated new interpretations of letters that were previously considered to be Christian. Among these are two Greek letters of recommendation from Oxyrhynchus: P.Oxy. XXXI 2603 and P.Oxy. LXXIII 4965.[111] They do not only reveal a widespread Manichaean community in Egypt, but also illustrate the way in which travelers were vouched for. In one of these letters, Paul wrote brother Serapion about his friends: "[R]eceive them therefore in love, as friends, for they are not catechumens but belong to the company of Ision and Nikolaos."[112] Ammonius, in the other letter addressing Philadelphus, asked to "receive together with the ambassador…, you and the brethren at your place in faith of the Paracletic Mind; for nothing more holy (?) has he commanded us."[113] Both authors conveyed their recommendation to receive the travelers with indications of their belonging to the Manichaean community. In the first passage, they are identified as members of the elect, as they are not catechumens but belong to the company of two individuals who were, supposedly, known to Serapion and his local Manichaean community. Ision and Nikolaos could have been Manichaean presbyters or bishops, whose names carried some authority.[114] With such authorization and recommendation, the traveling elect could be welcomed and received in a proper way. The second passage does not identify the travelers as elect or catechumens, but explicitly reminds its recipients of their shared faith and frames the request by mentioning the "paracletic mind," which is never used in other papyrus letters outside the Kellis corpus.

As a consequence of their central role, the absence of the elect led to a distinctly different ritual setting than that found in the doctrinal Manichaean texts. BeDuhn rightly points out that "those left behind shifted to alternative modes of activity by which they maintained their Manichaean identity and practice. Certain practices were suspended

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[111] J. H. Harrop, "A Christian Letter of Commendation," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 48 (1962): 140 "numerous theological and mystical overtones." I. Gardner, "Personal Letters from the Manichaean Community at Kellis," in *Manicheismo e Oriente cristiano antico*, ed. L. Cirillo and A. van Tongerloo (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 87 they "deserve reconsideration"; C. Römer, "Manichaean Letter," in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* ed. P. Parson, et al. (London: The Egypt Exploration Society, 2009), 194-96; Gardner, Nobbs, and Choat, "P. Harr. 107," 118; See the critique in Martinez, "The Papyri and Early Christianity," 602.

[112] Προσδέξαι οὖν ἐν ἀγάπῃ ὡς φίλους, οὐ γὰρ κατηχούμενοί εἰσιν ἀ[λ]λὰ τῶν περὶ Ἴσίωνος καὶ Νικολάου ἰδ[ί]οι \τυγχάνουσι/. P.Oxy. XXXI 2603.25-28. This letter employs a curious metaphor with a mirror and mentions "elect and catechumens."

[113] σὺν τοῖς κατὰ [τόπον σου ἀδ]ελφοῖς πειθόμε[νος τῷ παρα]κλητικῷ λόγῳ [… - ca. 10 -]τος μετὰ τοῦ πρεσβευτοῦ ὑπο]δέξῃ. Οὐδὲν γὰρ [ἁγιώτερον] ἡμῖν ἔκρινεν. P.Oxy. LXXIII 4965.8-13. This letter, moreover, also mentions the "elect and catechumens" as well as "the Teacher."

[114] These two individuals are not mentioned in the Kellis letters, unless we identify this Ision with the Ision found in P.Kell.Gr 67 and P.Kell.Copt. 80, which is not entirely unlikely since Ision is a lector in the Manichaean church. Gardner, "Once More," 305n58; I. Gardner, "P. Kellis I 67 Revisited," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 159 (2007): 223-28.

without an elect present," whereby the "local cell became the sustainers of their own identification with the elusive world Manichaean organization."[115] At Kellis, this led to a new appreciation of the role of catechumens within the community. In absence of the elect, community life hinged on the active role of the nonspecialists. Catechumens played a role in death rituals (Chapter 8), were supported by fellow catechumens (Chapter 6.3.3), and were involved in book writing (Chapter 9). At the same time, the elect held some of their authoritative positions, as we cannot exclude the possibility that they visited the oasis. One wonders whether Orion included the elect in the greeting section of his letters to the oasis because they were present in the village, or whether it was simply another tautological formula indicating the entire community (see Chapter 5). We do know that the elaborate fundraising letters of the elect indicate that despite geographical distance, Manichaean support structures helped them to survive.

6.5 The *Agape*, a Manichaean Ritual Meal?

When it comes down to the evidence for Manichaean alms gifts, the identification of the *agape* (ⲁⲅⲁⲡⲏ) in four of the Coptic letters is pivotal. It is either the keystone indicating the practice of the daily ritual meal, or it reveals how little we know with certainty about everyday life in this community. From the first publications onward, a few scattered references to *agape* in the Kellis letters have been interpreted as evidence for the practice of the daily ritual meal. In the first edition, it was cautiously noted that "unfortunately, it is not explicit as to whether this is food offered to the elect, or distributed to the poor," and "if the *agape* is to be understood as the Manichaean ritual meal … then those who partook of it must be elect."[116] In other words, the few references to *agape* have been understood in the framework of the Manichaean ideology of gift exchange. If this interpretation were correct, it would offer strong evidence for regular moments of groupness, as communal meals are known for their impact on ancient group cohesion, especially if they take place on a daily basis.[117] It is crucial, then, to gain an accurate understanding of what the letters meant by *agape.* I shall contend that it did not designate the daily ritual meal of the Manichaean elect, but was used far less specifically. Before reinterpreting the six passages in the Kellis letters, we need to make three observations about the meaning and use of the Greek term a*gape* in Late Antiquity, especially since Andrew McGowan has concluded that "we should probably stop speaking of 'the agape' as through there was an ancient consensus about it that we

[115] J. D. BeDuhn, "The Domestic Setting of Manichaean Cultic Associations in Roman Late Antiquity," *Archive für Religionsgeschichte* 10 (2008): 266.

[116] Gardner, Alcock, and Funk, *CDT1*, 77n95; See also A. Alcock, "The Agape," *Vigiliae Christianae* 54, no. 2 (2000): 208-09; J. D. Dubois, "Les repas manichéens," in *Entre lignes de partage et territoires de passage. Les identités religieuses dans les mondes grec et romain*, ed. N. Belayche and S. C. Mimouni (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 110 and 115. Nils Arne Pedersen has also interpreted the *agape* in Hom. 29.1-2 as the Manichaean meal, which he now extends with the Kellis attestations. Pedersen, "Holy Meals," 1283.

[117] I. Dunderberg, "The Eucharist in the Gospels of John, Philip, and Judas," *Early Christianity* 7 (2016): 484-507 cites relevant literature and explores the role of the Eucharist in three gospels, concluding that "a great deal of identity construction is involved."

could use in clear absence of any modern one."[118] Instead, he argues, a "diversity of practices and terminologies, all of which share some relation to one another," is attested in Christian literature of Late Antiquity.[119]

First, during the first centuries of Christian literature, the *agape* designated a charitable meal, used to support to the poor. Tertullian used the phrase to describe the evening meal (otherwise in Latin *dilectio*) in which believers from all classes came together to eat.[120] By contrasting these occasions with the banquets of Roman *collegia*, he stressed the charitable nature of the *agape* and its egalitarian meaning. In Cyprian's time, communal gatherings started to take place in the morning. This morning assembly entailed the central celebration with a ritual meal, whose character was more symbolic because of the size of the community. These symbolic meals were led by the clergy, and the previously celebrated household banquets slowly became associated with rebellion and heretics.[121] In Augustine's time, the evening *agape* meal was no longer celebrated, and instead the Eucharist had become the central ritual "in which the true and pure church became symbolically visible."[122] By the fourth century, charity and the communion with the poor were no longer expressed through a weekly *agape* meal. Instead the term, now connoting (brotherly) love, charity, and meals, came to be used for a wide variety of charitable and alimentary practices.

Second, the variety of practices labeled with *agape* during the fourth century included charitable almsgiving, meals for the martyrs, and monastic meals. In the *Apophthegmata Patrum,* an Oxyrhynchus presbyter was rebuked for looking down in disgrace on a widow who had asked for grain. His disgrace was considered a minor offense, even though he was giving to her "in charity" (δέδωκας αὐτῃ ἀγάπην).[123] A similar usage of the term *agape* for almsgiving in general is visible in an Arabic biography of Shenoute, which includes a narrative of a layman who dressed up as beggar to see whether his *agape* gifts to the

[118] A. McGowan, "Naming the Feast: The Agape and the Diversity of Early Christian Meals," *Studia Patristica* 30 (1997): 317-18.

[119] McGowan, "Naming the Feast," 318; Finn, *Almsgiving,* 103-5.

[120] Tertullian, *Bapt*. 9.2. J. P. Burns, R. M. Jensen, and G. W. Clarke, *Christianity in Roman Africa: The Development of Its Practices and Beliefs* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 234-5, 240-1, 251-2 and 287-90. A more fundamental discussion of the relation between the Eucharist and the *agape* is found in A. McGowan, "Rethinking Agape and Eucharist in Early North African Christianity," *Studia Liturgica* 34 (2004): 165-76; A. McGowan, *Ascetic Eucharists. Food and Drink in Early Christian Ritual Meals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999). Earlier studies include B. Reicke, *Diakonie, Festfreude und Zelos in Verbindung mit der altchristlichen Agapenfeier* (Uppsala: Verlag, 1951); C. Donahue, "The Agape of the Hermits of Scete," *Studia Monastica* I (1959): 97-114; H. Lietzmann, *Mass and the Lord's Supper* (Leiden: Brill, 1979); A. G. Hamman, "De l'agape à la diaconie en Afrique chrétienne," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 42 (1986): 241-21. Most of these studies have been summarized in R. Halterman Finger, *Of Widows and Meals: Communal Meals in the Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

[121] Cyprian, *Ep*. 63.16.2-17.1, discussed in Burns, Jensen, and Clarke, *Christianity in Roman Africa*, 252. On the connection between the discourse of heresy and the household, see H. O. Maier, "Heresy, Households, and the Disciplining of Diversity," in *A People's History to Christianity. Late Ancient Christianity*, ed. V. Burrus (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 213-33.

[122] Burns, Jensen, and Clarke, *Christianity in Roman Africa*, 290.

[123] *Apophthegmata patrum* 13.16. Blumell and Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus*, 666-67, no. 171.

monastery were indeed distributed as alms to the poor.[124] The *agape* (αγαπη), moreover, could designate the gifts and meal associated with the festivals for the martyrs in Oxyrhynchus (P.Oxy. LXVI 3864, fifth century), just like sources from a later date refer to the *agape* festival of Apa Apollo (SB X 10269, seventh century).[125] In the description of the life (and death) of Phib, placed in the fourth century, monks of the community of Apa Apollo came together for a specific *agape* meal, which is closely associated with the burial and commemoration of Phib.[126] Papyri from this monastery also attest to the celebration of this festival, as they order wine for the *agape* of Apa Phib.[127]

Third, the association with *agape* and burial or commemoration meals is more widespread, as the *refrigerium*, the meal of commemoration at the cemetery, was also designated as *agape*. In Rome, for example, the Christian inscriptions under the San Sebastiano include the words "in agape."[128] The relation between this funerary context and the cult of the martyrs, such as the festival associated with Apa Apollo, is relatively direct. The martyrs belonged to the Christian ancestors and the meals for their commemoration brought charitable gifts and funerary meal together. In the papyri, the phrase *prosphora* (offering) is often used to designate the gifts given for the mass for the dead, as for example in the Apion archive.[129] However, these *prosphora* donations *mortis causa* are relatively late (mostly sixth century).[130] Chapter 8 will delve into the evidence for funerary meals at Kellis, as Peter Brown has suggested that the Early Christian practice of *agape* meals at the cemetery

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[124] Besa, *Vit. Shenoute*, 33-35 cited in Blumell and Wayment, *Christian Oxyrhynchus*, 672-5, no. 173; López, *Shenoute of Atripe and the Uses of Poverty*, 65 noting that similar stories circulated about John the Almsgiver (Life of John the Almsgivger 9).

[125] According to Papaconstantinou, the bags mentioned in letter P.Oxy. LXVI, 3864 were to be delivered in exchange for goods or services for the benefit of the festival at Oxyrhynchus. A. Papaconstantinou, "L'agapè des martyrs: P.Oxy. LVI 3864," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 92 (1992): 241-42. See the text of SB X 10269 and the discussion by H. C. Youtie, "P.Yale Inv. 177," *Zeitschrift fuïr Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 16 (1975): 259-64.

[126] T. Vivian, " Monks, Middle Egypt, and Metanoia: The Life of Phib by Papohe the Steward (Translation and Introduction)," *Journal of Early Christian History* 7, no. 4 (1999): 554.

[127] ⲁⲕⲁⲡⲏ ⲁⲡⲁ ϕⲓⲃ cited and discussed in Clackson, *Coptic and Greek Texts*, 6, 12.

[128] S. Diefenbach, *Römische Erinnerungsräume. Heiligenmemoria und kollektive Identitäten im Rom des 3. bis 5. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 54-55. The catacomb painting is no longer understood as an *agape* meal, but broader in the context of Roman funerary meals. The graffiti with the phrases Agape and Irene could have been names instead of similar wishes for peace and love, see R. M. Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (London: Routledge, 2000), 53-4.

[129] P.Oxy. LXVII 4620.3960 "for the holy mass (?) for our (?) grandmother, 416 artabas," discussed at T. Hickey, *Wine, Wealth, and the State in Late Antique Egypt: The House of Apion at Oxyrhynchus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 101-02; E. Wipszycka, *Les ressources et les activités économiques des églises en Égypte du IVe au VIIIe siècle* (Bruxelles: Fondation Egyptologique Reine Elisabeth, 1972), 69-77. Various other instances of *prosphora* for religious institutions include P.Oxy. XVI 1898 (receipt for received corn, 587 CE), 1901 (a testament including *prosphora* to a church), 1906 (donations for churches in (?) Alexandria). See the other references in the literature cited above.

[130] J. P. Thomas, *Private Religious Foundations in the Byzantine Empire* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1987), 77-80.

lived on in the Manichaean community of Kellis.[131] For now, it is sufficient to note that one passage in the Coptic Manichaean texts indeed used *agape* for a commemoration meal (1 Keph. 115, 279.15), but nothing in the Kellis texts relates the *agape* to burials or commemorations.

What these three observations about the use of *agape* in late antique literature show is the variety of meaning the term could carry in different circumstances. Without detailed analysis, we cannot, therefore, assume one or the other interpretative framework to explain the references to *agape* in the Kellis documentary papyri and the account book (KAB).

The *agape* in Kellis consisted of various types of food gifts (see Table 11 for a list of the texts). Oil, wheat, olives, grapes, lentils, and lupin seeds were gathered, presumably also for meals. Orion wrote to Hor that he had received oil from Sabes, and left it (somewhere), "since we take in much oil for the *agape*, in that we are many, and they consume much oil."[132] After having discussed some of the other business arrangements, Orion returns to the topic and promised to "make the *agape* for the …."[133] Earlier in his correspondence with Hor, Orion had dealt with a similar situation, this time when he had received oil from Raz, which he left (somewhere, with someone?) "for the *agape*, like you said." Just like in the other letter, Orion offers to take responsibility: "Do not bother (?) yourself with the *agape*. I will do it rejoicing," and he promises to send "his share" (ⲡⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ) to brother Pakous, who is harvesting outside the village.[134] In both instances, the *agape* clearly does not stand for a funerary meal, but was not a typical Manichaean meal either, as parts could be sent elsewhere. In fact, in a business account some of the food was requested as a gift by someone who was very much alive: "[T]he lentils and lupin seeds: make them as an *agape* for me."[135] While this may have been some sort of charitable alms gift, there is no reason to think that the author of the business account was a Manichaean elect. Similarly, another business account (more closely associated with events mentioned in some of Makarios's letters) lists "the *agape* of Theodora: she has given a *maje* of olives and a half *maje* of grapes."[136] This final example shows how an *agape* gift could be the responsibility of one individual, not unlike Orion's statements about taking responsibility for the *agape*.

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[131] P. Brown, "Alms and the Afterlife. A Manichaean View of an Early Christian Practice," in *East & West: Papers in Ancient History Presented to Glen W. Bowersock*, ed. T. C. Brennan and H. I. Flower (London: Harvard University Press, 2008), 145-58.

[132] ⲉⲡⲓⲇⲏ ϣⲁⲛϫⲓ ⲫⲁⲣ ⲛ̄ⲛⲏⲣ ⲁⲣⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲧⲁⲣⲁ̣ⲓⲛ ϫⲉ ⲧ̄ⲛ̄ⲁϣ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲥⲉⲟⲩⲱⲙ ⲫⲁⲣ ⲛ̄ⲛⲏⲣ. P.Kell.Copt. 17.22-25. Dubois' understanding of the bronze vessel in P.Kell.Copt. 47 as belonging to "l'existence d'un chaudron ou d'une poêle de bronze servant à la cuisson ou la friture. On peut donc deviner quelques aspects des pratiques culinaires des manichéens" is sheer speculation. Dubois, "Les repas manichéens," 109.

[133] ϯⲛⲁ̄ⲣ̄ ⲧⲁⲅⲁⲡⲏ ⲁⲛⲉ̣ⲓ̣….. P.Kell.Copt. 17.34.

[134] ⲙⲡ̄ⲣ̄ⲣ̣ⲓ̣ⲥⲧⲁ ⲛⲉⲕ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲧⲁⲅⲁⲡⲏ ϯⲛⲁⲉⲥ ⲁ̈ⲓⲣⲉⲫϫⲉ "Do not bother (?) about the agape. I will do it, rejoicing." P.Kell.Copt. 15.23-24. ϯⲛⲁϫⲟⲩ ⲡⲙⲉⲣⲟⲥ ⲛⲉⲩ ⲁⲣⲏⲥ "I will send his share south to him." P.Kell.Copt. 15.26-27.

[135] ⲛⲁⲣⲫⲓⲛ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲛⲧⲁⲣⲙⲟⲩⲥ ⲁⲣⲓⲟⲩ ⲛ̈ⲁⲕⲁⲡⲏ ⲫⲁⲣⲁⲉⲓ P.Kell.Copt. 47.10. The alternative spelling of ⲁⲅⲁⲡⲏ is a common error, see H. Förster, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Wörter in den koptischen dokumentarischen Texten* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002), 3-5.

[136] ⲧ'ⲁⲅⲁⲡⲏ ⲛ̈ⲑⲉⲟⲇⲱⲣⲁ ⲫⲥ'ϯ ⲟⲩⲙⲁϫ' ϫⲁⲓⲧ' ⲙⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲍ̈ ⲙⲁϫ' ⲉⲗⲗⲉ "The agape of Theodora: She has given a *maje* of olives and a half *maje* of grapes." P.Kell.Copt. 44.12.

Text no.	Objects	Sequence	Actors	Rules structuring behavior
P.Kell.Copt. 15.14	Oil, wheat (about 720 T for 6 *maje* wheat).[137]	Orion received from Raz and left it (?) somewhere (?) on instruction of Hor.	Orion, Raz, Hor; Raz consequently acts as middleman transferring goods back and forth.	Expensive.
P.Kell.Copt. 15.23	?	His "share" is sent to Pakous "if he does not come by that day."	Orion, Pakous.	Time-specific meal? Orion takes responsibility for specific task of sending.
P.Kell.Copt. 17.18	Oil (if an *agon* is half a *chous*, the price would be between 800 to 1000 T/*agon*).[138]	*Agon* of oil, received by Orion (?) and he left a portion somewhere on instruction of Hor. Idem with *agon* of oil Orion received from Sabes, also left it somewhere.	Orion, Hor, Sabes, Lautine, Timotheos. Sabes sent a *Solidus* (*holokottinos*) together with the oil.	Explicitly stated that "we take much oil for the agape, in that we are many, and they consume much oil."
P.Kell.Copt. 17.33	?	Orion will make the agape for … (someone?)	Orion.	Personal responsibility of Orion.
P.Kell.Copt. 44.12	*Maje* of olives and half a *maje* of grapes.	Theodora has given it (to Tehat? Why recorded here?)	Theodora.	Personal responsibility of Theodora.
P.Kell.Copt. 47.10	Lentils and lupin seeds.	Author requests it?	Tehat?	Can be requested?

Table 11: References to agape in the Coptic personal letters.

It is not easy to see what these passages amount to. They functioned within the variety of meanings of the term *agape*, connecting meals with charity and alms. None of the authors express anything like a Manichaean meaning or connotation, even though Orion's letters contain some of the more explicit Manichaean phrases. The baseline and most minimalist interpretation is therefore to consider these references as instances of charitable alms gifts of a general character, not unlike the *agape* gifts listed in the accounts of the large estate (KAB, see below). Before accepting this minimalist interpretation, I will examine the Manichaean usage of the term *agape* in the Coptic liturgical and theological documents.

[137] Gardner, Alcock, and Funk, *CDT1*, 144; Bagnall, *KAB*, 47-48 on *maje* and page 52 on the price of wheat.
[138] Gardner, Alcock, and Funk, *CDT1*, 64 and 61.

Manichaean descriptions of their meal ritual were deeply indebted to Christian meal terminology. Nils Arne Pedersen has shown how the Greek and Coptic descriptions of the Manichaean meal incorporated elements from the Christian Eucharist, while at the same time rejecting non-Manichaean meals, as the *Kephalaia* dismissed the Christian Eucharist (ⲧⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲉⲩⲭⲁⲣⲓⲥⲧⲉⲓⲁ “your Eucharist,” 1 Keph. 130, 308.21) in favor of the Manichaean holy meal.[139] One of their psalms explains that Manichaeans, just like Christians, collected alms during the service “when thou comest in with thy gift to set it on the altar, be reconciled with thy adversary that thy gift may be received from thee.”[140] Their ritual meal, moreover, could be designated as “the table,” for example in the description of the ideal community life after the Great War: “[T]hey will come and find the writings written and they will find the books adorned. They will find the table and those who prepare it.”[141] The same sermon also used the term *agape* for “the gifts [that] have been distributed and been [---] among the friends of the *agape* (ⲛ̄ϣⲃⲉ[ⲣⲉ] ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲧⲁⲅⲁⲡⲏ)! Behold, the sects have been smitten and destroyed. Behold, the alms (ⲧⲙⲏⲧⲛⲁⲉ) are appointed with those who give them.”[142] Whether the “friends of the agape” were the elect (as those who received the gifts) or the catechumens (as they are “those who give them [i.e. the alms gifts],” ⲛⲉⲧ[ⲧ ⲙ̄]ⲙⲁⲥ) remains a question.[143] What these passages show is that Manichaeans used the same terminology as Christians, which makes it almost impossible to distinguish Manichaean *agape* gifts from Christian counterparts.

Before we accept the ambiguity and stick with the minimalist interpretation, we may want to explore one alternative option. Although it cannot be proven without doubt, I think that a comparison with the *agape* gifts in the KAB can contribute to our understanding of *agape*’s meaning in the village of Kellis. The monthly expenditures listed in the accounts of a large estate include frequent alms gifts, recorded, although inconsistently, in the first four months of the year (during Thoth, Phaophi, Hathyr, and Choiak, with the exception listed in Pharmouthi). These expenses are strictly related to agricultural products like wheat, wine, or cheese, just like the *agape* gifts in the Coptic letters, in which oil seems to take a central position besides olives, grapes, lentils, and lupin seeds.[144] The editor of the account book

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[139] 1 Keph. 130, 307.17-310.31, discussed in Pedersen, "Holy Meals," 1267-97; Pedersen, *Studies*, 283-6.

[140] ⲉⲕⲛⲏⲩ ⲁⲣⲟⲩⲛ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲕⲁⲅⲱⲣⲟⲛ ⲁⲧⲉⲉⲩ ⲁⲡⲑⲩⲥⲓⲁⲥⲧⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ̣ ⲣⲱⲧⲡ̄ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲕⲁⲛⲧⲓⲇⲓⲕⲟⲥ ϫⲉⲩⲛⲁϫⲓ ⲡⲉⲕⲁⲅⲱⲣⲟⲛ [ⲛⲧⲟ]ⲟⲧⲕ 2 PsB. 239, 39.29-30. Compare the references to Early Christian alms boxes in church and the gifts brought forward after the Eucharist, discussed in Finn, *Almsgiving*, 41-47. Similar gatherings of (non-food) alms gifts seem to be the topic of 1 Keph. 158.

[141] ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ⲥⲉⲃⲏ̄ ⲛ̄ⲓⲣⲁⲫⲁⲩⲉ ⲉⲩⲥⲛ[ⲉ ⲛⲥ]ⲉⲃⲏ̄ ⲛ̄ϫⲙⲉ ⲉⲩⲕⲟⲥⲙⲉ: ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲃⲏ̄ ⲧ̄ⲧⲣⲁⲡⲉ[ⲍⲁ ⲙⲛ̄] ⲛⲉⲧⲱⲣⲣⲟ ⲛ̄ⲙⲁⲥ Hom. 28.10-12 (slightly modified translation).

[142] ⲁⲩⲥⲱⲣ ⲛ̄ⲙⲉⲓⲗⲓⲟⲛ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ [ⲁ]ⲩ ..[ⲟ]ⲩ ϩⲛ̄ ⲛ̄ϣⲃⲉ[ⲣⲉ] ⲛ̄ⲧⲉ ⲧⲁⲅⲁⲡⲏ: ⲉⲓⲥ ⲛ̄ⲇⲟⲩⲏⲁ ⲁⲩϣⲟⲃⲉ ⲁ[ⲩⲕⲁ]ⲧⲁⲗⲩⲉ· ⲉⲓⲥ ⲧⲙⲏⲧⲛⲁⲉ ⲁⲥⲧⲱϣ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲛⲉⲧ[ⲧ ⲙ̄]ⲙⲁⲥ Hom. 29.1-4.

[143] Discussion at, Pedersen, *Studies*, 304-5. I do not understand why Pedersen follows Merkelbach’s interpretation of love (ⲧⲁⲅⲁⲡⲏ) in 2 PsB. 171.25-173.10 as the ritual meal rather than the virtue of love. I do think, however, that these songs could have been sung during the communal gatherings with the meal ritual. R. Merkelbach, *Mani und Sein Religionssystem* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986), 57-8; See A. Villey, *Psaumes des errants: Écrits manichéens du Fayyuīm* (Paris: Cerf, 1994), 122-3 and 401-7 on this particular psalm. On their liturgical setting in relation to the meal see pages 32-34.

[144] In P.Kell.Copt. 15.14-16 oil is received and “left [with them] for the agape” (ϩⲁⲓ̈ⲭⲓ ⲡⲁⲓ̣ⲱⲛ ⲛ̄ⲛⲏϩ ⲛ̄ⲧⲟⲧⲟ̄ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲡⲛⲱϩⲣⲉ ⲣⲁϫ ⲉⲓⲉ̣ ⲁ̈ⲓ̈ⲕⲁⲁ̣ⲩ̣ ……. ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲅⲁⲡⲏ). P.Kell.Copt. 17.22-25 also mentions oil for consumption, “we take

suggested that "the usage in the KAB is certainly compatible with the view that these offerings were intended for use in a communal meal."[145] This communal meal could have been organized with a certain periodicity and may have been the result of private donations, since individual persons were listed as responsible. In both examples, the responsible individuals were women, as the accounts mention "for alms of That" and "for alms of Tanoup," which is not so different from the earlier mentioned "*agape* of Theodora."[146]

The single exception to the pattern of *agape* gifts in the KAB is the *agape* recorded in the month Pharmouthi (roughly March/April in our calendar). This month also received special attention in another section of the account book, which discussed arrangements for Easter, called the "festival of Parmouthi" (ἑορτὴ Φαρμοῦθι, 1 *marion* of wine is recorded, about 11 liters, KAB 1717).[147] Church canons, like the fourth-century canons of Athanasius, attest that Easter was supposed to be the day *par excellence* for almsgiving.[148] The combination of factors makes it tempting to consider whether at least some of these alms gifts could have been for the festival of Easter. The clustering of the *agape* gifts in the first four months of the year, a period closer to the harvest season than to Easter, may be explained as the collection and storage of gifts before the festival. The lack of references to *agape* in the months between Choiak and Easter could then partly be explained by a sober lent season (see Table 12 on the gifts listed in the KAB).[149] Likewise, the reference to a share of Pakous, which has to be sent south of where he is "harvesting," "if he does not come by that day,"[150] suggests that there is a time frame within which the food had to be delivered. Did Pakous's share have to arrive at the same time as the celebrations in Kellis?

Month	Egyptian calendar	Indication modern calendar	List of gifts
1	Thoth 1	August 29	*Agape* gifts (KAB 88, 186, 749)
2	Paophi 1	September 28	*Agape* gifts (KAB 101, 103, 755,

much oil for the agape, in that we are many, and they consume much oil" (ⲉⲡⲓⲇⲏ ϣⲁⲛϫⲓ ⲉⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲛⲏⲩ ⲁⲩⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲧⲁⲣⲁⲓⲧⲏ ϫⲉ ⲧⲫⲁϣ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲥⲉⲟⲩⲱⲙ ⲉⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲛⲏⲩ). In P.Kell.Copt. 44.12 olives and grapes are mentioned and in P.Kell.Copt. 47.10 lentils and lupin seeds. The fact that cheese and wine are included in the KAB *agape* (116, 448, 940) makes it less likely that this was food given to the elect.

[145] Bagnall, *KAB*, 84.

[146] Εἰς ἀγάπη θατ KAB 106, Εἰς ἀγάπη Τανουπ KAB 940. The identification of the former with Tehat in the Coptic accounts is considered 'stretching the evidence' by the editors of the Coptic papyri. Gardner, Alcock, and Funk, *CDT1*, 46.

[147] This is a more common phrase for Easter in Coptic, see J. Drescher, "The Coptic Dictionary: Additions and Corrections," *Bulletin de la société d'archéologie copte* 16 (1961-62): 288. Bagnall suggests that the Easter celebration of either *Pharmouthi* 9 in the year 364 CE or those of *Pharmouthi* 26 in the year 379 CE was meant. Bagnall, *KAB*, 84.

[148] Finn, *Almsgiving*, 79.

[149] As suggested in an unpublished teaching document by Jason Magnusson, which seems to neglect the difference between the Coptic calendar and the Gregorian calendar. *Agape*-gifts without date are mentioned in KAB 106 and 116.

[150] ⲙⲡ̄ⲣ̄ⲣⲉⲓⲥⲧⲁ ⲛⲉⲕ ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲧⲁⲗⲁⲡⲏ ϩⲛⲁⲉⲥ ⲁⲓ̈ⲣⲉⲱⲉ ⲁⲣⲉ ⲡ̄ⲛ̄ⲥⲁⲛ ⲡⲁⲕⲟⲩⲥ ⲫⲁⲣⲏⲥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲱⲁⲧ̀ⲥ ⲫⲕⲱⲧⲩ̄ ⲫⲩⲧⲏⲓ̈ ⲟⲩⲃⲉ ⲡⲣⲟⲟⲩ ⲉⲧⲛ̄ⲏⲟ ϩⲛⲁϫⲟⲩ ⲡⲛⲉⲣⲟⲥ ⲛⲉⲩ ⲁⲣⲏⲥ. "Do not bother (?) yourself about the agape. I will do it, rejoicing. Yes, our brother Pakous is south of the ditch, harvesting. If he does not come by that day, I will send his share south to him." P.Kell.Copt. 15.24-27.

			1562)
3	Hathyr 1	October 28	*Agape* gifts (KAB 448, 940, 1548, 1564)
4	Choiak 1	November 27	*Agape* gifts (KAB 119)
5	Tybi 1	December 22	—
6	Mecheir 1	January 26	—
7	Phamenoth 1	February 25	Death Mani (month of Adar)[151]
8	Pharmouthi 1	March 27	*Agape* gifts (KAB 1525) & Easter
9	Pachon 1	April 26	—
10	Pauni 1	May 26	—
11	Epeiph 1	June 25	—
12	Mesore 1	July 25	—
—	Intercalender days (Epagomenic days)	August 24–28	—

Table 12: Agape *gifts in the KAB per month and related to modern calendar.*[152]

In summary, one alternative interpretation of the *agape* in the KAB and the documentary papyri associates the designated gifts with annual celebrations like Easter and the Bema festival. Several features indicate that this may be a more plausible explanation for this meal than the daily ritual meal of the elect. First, there is the regularity in the *agape* gifts in the KAB, which suggests an annual event rather than a daily, weekly, or monthly obligation. Second, the names connected to the *agape* suggest that individual sponsors were responsible for gathering the food supplies. Additionally, as Chapter 7 will show, there are several references to Easter in the Manichaean documents from Egypt, including from Kellis, confirming that lay Manichaeans continued to celebrate a festival under this name.[153] At the same time, I have to admit that there is not enough evidence for a solid connection of the *agape* with either Easter or Bema. A careful minimalist interpretation as charitable gifts may therefore be preferable.

6.6 Conclusions

This chapter's overview of the various types of gift-giving and material support in the documentary papyri has sketched a relatively ordinary picture of village life. Economic interactions are not always spelled out and gifts were often recorded without any additional information. The absence of detailed exposés about almsgiving and the boundaries of the Manichaean community suggest that either religious groupness was not the common framework in which everyday life experiences were interpreted or that Manichaean features

[151] Listed as the 4th of *Phamenoth* in 2 PsB. 17.26 and 18.7.

[152] Indication from J. Rowlandson, ed. *Women & Society in Greek & Roman Egypt. A Sourcebook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), xv. I am following Bagnall's indication of the dates. Bagnall, *KAB*, 82.

[153] See also the five Easter-psalms in the first (unpublished) volume of the Psalmbook. M. Krause, "Zum Aufbau des koptisch-manichäischen Psalmen-Buches," in *Manichaica Selecta I: Studies Presented to Professor Julien Ries on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. A. van Tongerloo and S. Giversen (Lovanii: International Association of Manichaean Studies, 1991), 183.

simply never ended up in papyrus letters.[154] While scholars of Manichaeism have highlighted passages that may have been related to the Manichaean gift exchange, I have located these gifts and transactions in the everyday world of domestic support structures, economic interactions, and the occasional charitable distribution. The blending of these various support sectors is part of the development of informal networks of care in this period. Peregrine Horden has argued that individuals in ancient societies employed a broad spectrum of resources that could be called on by the needy: the nuclear family, the household, neighbors, patrons, institutions, and more formal communities. In fact, he suggests that informal networks of mutual support and care in antiquity were typically "operating *between,* at least as much as *within,* dwellings."[155] Hampered by inconsistencies and a dearth of situational information, the individual actions and transactions are often difficult to allocate to either one of these categories. As a result, the data from the Kellis corpus is often open to multiple interpretations, depending on the weight given to external descriptions of Manichaean giving practices (like those in the *Kephalaia* or in the work of Augustine).

This brings us to Augustine's claims on the limits of Manichaean gift exchange and the formation of the Manichaean community through gifts. The plurality of the types of gifts attested in the Kellis corpus suggests that Augustine's description cannot be held as the normative framework for the lives of these Manichaeans. This is, first, because of the rhetorical nature of Augustine's remarks. His claim that Manichaeans could only give to the elect, or otherwise would have murdered the Living Soul, may have been the logical consequence of some of their teaching, but it also served within Augustine's polemic against Manichaean indulgence and heartlessness. Second, it is methodologically unsound to transpose this prohibition from one historical context to another without further examination. One Kellis letter, although fragmentary, seems to suggest that charity to widows and orphans was practiced by some of the Manichaeans in the oasis. Other types of gifts, such as support within the household or economic interactions, show no trace of exclusivity. It is most probable that these Manichaeans interacted with their neighbors without restricting their transactions to fellow Manichaeans only. In other words, Majella Franzmann's understanding of exclusive Manichaean communities as constituted by strictly demarcated boundaries seems to be without direct factual support in this corpus of texts.[156]

A final conclusion relates to the specific geographical setting. Due to the distance between the oasis and the Nile valley, the Manichaean elect were mostly absent from the village. This left the community in Kellis with the elect's letters and the assurance of their prayers. Alms were requested, and probably also given, over a distance. As consequence, these elect became incorporated in a domestic network of support and long-distance

[154] Rebillard, *Christians and their Many Identities*, 91.

[155] P. Horden, "Household Care and Informal Networks. Comparisons and Continuities from Antiquity to the Present," in *The Locus of Care: Families, Communities, Institutions, and the Provision of Welfare since Antiquity*, ed. P. Horden and R. Smith (London: Taylor and Francis, 1997), 39.

[156] Franzmann, "Augustine and Manichaean Almsgiving," 42 states: "the majority of cases of almsgiving documented for the Manichaean community at Kellis appear to bear out the truth of Augustine's statements that community almsgiving, at least with food and drink, was completely exclusive."

economic interactions. What we witness, therefore, in the Kellis letters, is the disintegration of the central position of the elect. Although they were the only vehicles of salvation in the Manichaean ideology, their limited role in Kellis suggests that the Manichaean Kellites lived differently because of their absence. Most noticeable is the absence of secure evidence for a daily ritual meal. The distance between the elect and catechumens must have made it difficult to perform this soteriological ritual. Additionally, the exchange of gifts between catechumens and the single chapter on almsgiving to catechumens in the *Kephalaia* may point to an alternative tradition, with strong emphasis on lay participation.