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Abstracts

The “seal of the mouth” in the anti-Manichaean polemic of Ephrem the Syrian

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This paper examines the different ways in which Ephrem the Syrian alludes to the Manichaean “seal of the mouth” in his polemical texts (*Hymns against the false teachings* and *Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion and Bardaisan*). A range of themes emerges from this analysis: in these works, the “seal of the mouth” is implicitly linked to the Manichaean ascetical practice of fasting, in connection with the refining of Light captured in the food, as well as to their observance of the purity of words, which forbids lying and blasphemy, and to their confession of sins. Alongside the study of Ephrem’s heresiological method, which is characterized by a complete distortion and reversal of the adversary’s doctrine, I will question some Manichaean direct sources that deal with the “seal of the mouth”, in order to compare them with the polemical witness of Ephrem the Syrian. In particular, Coptic *Kephalaia* and *Psalms*, but also the new Manichaean documentation found in Kellis and recently edited, will offer the best parallels.